

"A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.

She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eye, her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither: and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

-- Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy."

-A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN
(Joyce 1964:171)

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INTRODUCTION:

SMD has a fairly strenuous response to the business of "delving into the mysteries."^{1} This is a black-listed activity that earns the disapprobation of church leaders at various levels, an activity that middle-of-the-road LDS knit their brows over and nod knowingly about. We imbibe a sinister sense about "the mysteries" with our first Bible stories. Bad business, that.

Where does this concept of mysteries, and the related issue of whether or not they are permissible study topics, fit within this model? We have two general responses to these questions:

1) the term 'mystery' is one used by mortals to classify various concepts. It is not a term that has any application within this model because it does not have meaning in regards to priesthood principles, laws of heaven or principles of righteousness; the term is a by-product of the environment and spirit constraints we are subjected to.

2) the fear of 'mysteries' is endemic to Christian faith, due to the real possibility of losing one's way by stumbling into dark holes of doctrine which can result in faith-breaking surprises.

We will elaborate on these two concepts because they are central to the **culture** of Christianity, not because they are central to the **theology**. Indeed, we believe, and will explain why, that the LDS faith **is** a Mystery Religion in the same degree as was that of the Dionysians, Elusinians, Pythagoreans, Orphics, Platonists, Mithraics, etc.^{2} The only significant difference between the

¹ Saint Augustine made a lovely joke about mysteries and delvers into the same:

"I answer him that asketh, "What did God before He made heaven and earth?"... not as one who is said to have done merrily...'He was preparing hell for pryers into mysteries.'" (1936:260)

The fear of mysteries and delving into the same has been long held in Christianity then. St. Augustine died in 430 A.D., so this fear of MMF is honestly earned, having been passed down for hundreds of years within Christianity.

² Once more we quote Grof. His text deals specifically and exclusively with death, and he notes the role of death and rebirth in mystery religions:

"In all ages and in many different cultures, ritual events have existed in which individuals have experienced a powerful symbolic encounter with death. This confrontation is the core event in the rites of passage of temple initiations, mystery religions, and secret societies, as well as in various ecstatic religions. According to the descriptions in historical sources and anthropological literature, such profound experiences of symbolic death result not only in an overwhelming realization of the impermanence of biological existence but also in an illuminating insight into the transcendent and eternal spiritual nature intrinsic to human consciousness. Rituals of this kind combine two important functions: On the one hand, they mediate a deep process of transformation in the initiate who then discovers a different way of experiencing the world; on the other hand, they serve as preparation for actual physical death." (1977:4-5)

While the LDS temple ritual doesn't frontally address death, one could argue that based on its intention, it is nonetheless about death, in which case, this quote is applicable. Grof goes on:

rites practiced by the other groups and those of the LDS -
excepting the matter of authority- lies in their nature.{³}

WHAT IS A MYSTERY RELIGION?

What are these mysteries?{⁴}

In truth, we find it hard to comprehend just what the 'bad' mysteries are -as contrasted with 'good mysteries- are or how they are so bad even though we've lived in the Faith for half a century.{⁵}

Let's use an elementary school technique to start the discussion of what a 'mystery religion' is. The Britannica states:

"Mystery religions were secret cults of the Greco-Roman world that offered to individuals a way to feel religious experiences not provided by the official public religions.{⁶}

"In many rites of passage...initiates undergo an experience of death and rebirth comparable to those occurring in ancient temple mysteries. All of the encounters with dying, death, and transcendence experienced in the rites of passage during the lifetime of an individual can be seen as profound psychological and experiential training for the ultimate transition at the time of death. (1977:5)

Grof also did experiments with the use of mind-altering drugs in terminal cancer patients with intractable pain. During these experiments, the experiences of the subjects were recorded and analyzed. He notes this:

"Those of us conducting this research kept witnessing, to our great surprise, a process that bore a striking similarity to mystical initiation and involved experiential sequences that resembled those described in the *Tibetan* or *Egyptian Book of the Dead*." (1977:20)

The finding that unsophisticated patients, unfamiliar with either text, nonetheless would voluntarily describe passages out of those texts persuaded Grof that there is some sort of underlying, cellular awareness that is transmitted between generations. The explanation is simpler: our spirits all know the same things.

³ Regarding priesthood, we personally believe that it is absolutely the ONLY characteristic of the modern LDS faith that unequivocally distinguishes it from the remainder of Christianity, and probably from the rest of the religions of the world. LDS believe that God the Father restored His power to the earth through the medium of heavenly messengers sent to Joseph Smith. In less than 25 words, that is the only claim to uniqueness possessed by SMD. No one else dares make that shocking claim.

⁴ Indeed, I suspect that much of what passes as "religion" in some circles represents excess in others, and that there is actually little difference in some respects. Joseph Wambaugh, the crusty old cop that he is, said it thusly:

"...With Marty it was probably not booze but religion. Maybe they were one and the same." (1981:13)

Mysteries to one are not to another. Liquor and religion are one to some.

⁵ A fair share of the present work either borders on that region, or rests squarely in the middle of it, which explains why I have difficulty accepting that mysteries are so awful.

⁶ John Barth "Water Message" (LOST IN THE FUNHOUSE) has several cogent comments a la mysteries and initiations:

"...Ambrose has tossed the night through in a perfect fever of imagining. It would be a secret club--that went without saying; there must be secret handshakes, secret passwords, secret initiations. But these he felt meant nothing except to remind you of the really important thing, which was--well, hard to find words for, but there had to be the real secrets, dark facts known to none but the members. You had to have been initiated to find them out--that's what *initiation* meant-- and when you were a member you'd know the truth of the matter and smile in a private way when you met another member of the Order because you both knew what you knew." (BARTH. 1968:44)

Initiated LDS understand how much of this is applicable. Rituals are the mechanism of initiation.

Etymologically, the word mystery is derived from the Greek verb *myein* ('to close'), referring to the lips and the eyes. Mysteries were always secret cults into which one had to be 'initiated' (taken in)."

(1981. 12:778)

Religious experiences which are 'secret' are at the heart of a mystery religion^{7}. Initiated individuals keep knowledge to themselves and within the tightly circumscribed community.

Using these attributes of a mystery religion, one looks to SMD only to discover that it falls squarely within this category, even more so than does Catholicism with its elaborate public pageantry.^{8} The temple rites of SMD are "religious experiences not provided" in public, and they are tightly held secrets by those who are initiated. This is ironic in that we suspect that most LDS would hold Catholicism to be in the category of mystery religions, and the LDS faith not to be. This perception of Catholicism is based on at least the following:

- 1) the elaborate costumes worn by the officials,
- 2) the equally elaborate paraphernalia utilized in the various ceremonies.
- 3) the magnificent cathedrals built to house the congregations during their worship, and
- 4) the mystical-sounding doctrines of transubstantiation of the Host, and difficult to comprehend doctrines.

However, in light of the Britannica definition, **public** displays do not qualify for being mysteries. This means, then, that

⁷ I am perplexed by one aspect of this Britannica definition. Note that it refers to "Greco-Roman" cults, implying that they had an exclusive franchise on this business. However, there were and are other mystery religions that meet the criteria of initiations and secretness. The worship of Isis and Osiris in Egypt and Mithras in Assyria entailed secret rites, so by this definition, they, too, are mystery religions. One hates to think it, but this definition smacks of an ethnocentrism that is unbecoming an otherwise world-class encyclopedia. This ethnocentrism shows up elsewhere in the same article, when the author indicated that the mysteries of 'primitive tribes' were inferior to those of the Greco-Roman world. Wow. I thought that sort of condescension was done away with 30 years ago, especially in the minds of those qualified to write about cultural history.

Being more charitable, or perhaps equally condescending, one might conjecture that the author was applying this definition of mystery religions to that particular group because the term 'mystery' is etymologically Greek. No? No. There are mysteries around the world.

⁸ This point is not a trivial one. One of my sons was in a state of shock after going to the temple for the first time. He was always an attentive, religious person, so had learned what was taught. His shock was based on the dishonest teaching, which he had believed, that LDS don't believe in rituals. This is discussed in Chapter 36. RITUALS.

Catholicism is **not** a mystery religion.^{9} It also means that the LDS faith, with its rites secured from the public, performed in structures as beautiful as the cathedrals, **does** qualify as a mystery religion.^{10}

EMOTIONAL MYSTERIES:

We pose another question however: can mysteries be things like individual emotions which are incomprehensible? How about our response to things of beauty? Isn't that mysterious?^{11} Within the context of the Britannica definition, such sublime, personal -even secret- responses don't qualify. However, it is our personal opinion that the sublime aspects of the religious experience, which are emotional responses^{12} first and foremost, are actually mysteries. We have to extend the definition, then. These experiences transcend the dimensions of this mundane world that (temporarily) bind and restrict our spirits. They allow us to briefly connect with higher powers that we can't define or see, but which we sense and respond to in a profound manner. Those rare moments stand out against the background of our otherwise dull lives as experiences that have no explanation, hence, in this narrow sense, are mysteries.^{13}

In the mind of the general public, the definition of mysteries is that they are topics which are difficult to comprehend and which are often of solemn import (whatever that

⁹ Unless there are rites practiced secretly, as in the Vatican, by initiated persons who don't divulge the nature of those transactions.

¹⁰ I hope any SMDer who made it this far, if there are any, will not be distressed to discover this about their own faith. It is actually a lovely dimension of the theology that it IS a mystery religion.

¹¹ That's the point of the quote on the title page - simply one of the most magnificent vignettes I could find, one which does convey deep-felt beauty, like the "bells of sleep". But what is it about the passage that causes such a glorious response inside one's soul? I can't tell. It is a mystery as far as I am concerned.

¹² This statement will put me crossways with some who will insist that true religious experiences are only provoked by the Holy Spirit, that emotions are not part of the process. We demur. While we, too, believe that the Holy Spirit can touch and move us, we believe that most of the religious experiences we have are primarily emotional ones, predicated on intellectual and personal history and experiences. That does not detract from their meaning. In fact, it pleases me to think that individuals CAN respond so strongly from within themselves to good things.

¹³ Another of the associations that fall into the category of mystery religion must be the Order of Masons, Rosicrucians, Knight Templers, and such. They, too, offer insight and hope to members. Mozart was an active Mason and near the time of his father Leopold's death, Wolfgang wrote the following:

"As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind, that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! And I thank God for graciously granting me the opportunity (you understand what I mean) of hearing that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness. I never lie down at night without reflecting that -young as I am- I may not live to see another day."

(Anderson 1966 quoted in LANDON 1991:20)

The aside in parentheses is to masonry. The reference to "this best and truest friend" is obviously to the Christ. It is apparent that Wolfgang found solace and hope from the mysteries of that group, which uses symbols, rituals, sacred clothing, handgrips, to express the meanings about existence and the future life.

means) which, finally, are 'dangerous'. Digging in these sorts of things is the proscribed behavior, but we must ask: does the motivation for the investigation of a particular topic mean anything? Does the underlying intention excuse -perhaps, more mystically, save- one? Is it possible to ask the difficult questions without endangering one's soul? I don't know. I don't know. ^{14}

ADAM AND THE DINOSAURS^{15}:

But I do know that the current church publications, meaning those obtainable from SLC, UTAH, are being "correlated" to the extent that interesting -even valuable- material is lost in the process. The rationale for this production of homogenized slurry is, at least in part, a desire to assure the liturgical integrity or purity of the doctrines in each publication. One of the reasons for this concern is an anxiety that not only will unauthorized interpretations be presented, but mysteries may be examined, the latter being severely proscribed.

An example of some of the consequences of this correlation business:

My dad has some fascinating insights on questions of science and religion, particularly on the issue of organic evolution. He developed these views because he was a paleontologist for 30 years, 7 years at Harvard University with Alfred Sherwood Romer^{16}, the remainder at the good ol' BY & U. His insights are unusual ones to find in the Faith, and were gleaned from four decades of intimate contact with the source documents recording how this earth was formed. Over the years, a few -and exceedingly brave, it turns out- church office folk solicited manuscripts from him. Several times, he responded with a product for their review. Always he accompanied it with an explicit request for them to please spare it from the Correlators. But each time, it returned, reshaped, unrecognizable, the challenging

¹⁴ But it is readily apparent that I hope there is tolerance for asking these questions and thinking the thoughts I have thought through the years as I have wondered and pondered and collected.

¹⁵ This is a title my dad used for some of his lectures.

¹⁶ What a miracle it was to be exposed to men like him. Over dinner one evening at home, "Al" discovered that my undergraduate minor was Classical Greek, so he proceeded to discuss the Sack of Troy at length, (embarrassing me by remembering the date correctly), the life work of Arthur Schliemann, and ended his virtuoso performance by reciting a lengthy passage from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan". His THE VERTEBRATE BODY was a standard introductory zoology text for generations of scholars. Such renaissance men are not created today, due to exigencies of a world demanding ultra-specialization in an exploding universe of information. And what a loss. Part of the reason we mention him in this footnote is to bring out the point that broad education is wonderful stuff. And the current SLC dynasty doesn't want such broad education, in the religious sense at least.

stuff smoothed out.^{17} Unfortunately, then, these manuscripts remain unpublished.

Why is this? It is as if SLC is afraid of exposing LDS to truth. It is as if they fear that LDS aren't bright enough to figure out the truth. Or it is as if they doubt LDS motivations. Or they doubt their ability to withstand the horrible onslaught of worldly truths. Sad, most sad, particularly in light of the history of free thought in the early part of the LDS church. For example, Ol' BH Roberts^{18} and company certainly didn't tolerate such silly artificial limitations on their explorations of the boundaries of the doctrines of the Church. Actually, he wasn't even subjected to such limitations. It was an exuberant time in a new faith when men and women explored the boundaries and thought thoughts that were part of this unfamiliar faith^{19}.

The upcoming generation is the brightest yet and the homogenized, pre-chewed pap published in SLC won't satisfy the needs of those who -like BH Roberts, Orson and Parley Pratt, etc.- dare look into things with a real intent to know the truth. They need, seek and deserve the full range of truth. We needn't fear for them because information strengthen one's conviction and understanding.

UNHAPPY CONTRADICTION:

The truth is that the LDS faith is filled with the most profound mysteries of the universe. For example, while MMF discourages dabbling in the "mysteries", as if that was a naughty thing, SMD preaches the most mysterious thing of all: the

¹⁷ For example, see THE NEW ERA, March 1973. He wrote about his discovery of *lystrosaurus* on Calcic Bluff in Antarctica, a momentous discovery. But right after the last page of his article, there was a one-page article by one Brother Scott, who was doubtless well-intentioned (or well-directed), that cited various scriptures, telling the unwary reader how to understand the eye-brow-raising article. Totally unnecessary, but evidence of the ossification of the LDS hierarchy that started to set in during the 1960's.

¹⁸ Sterling M McMurrin nicely points out this fact in this preface to THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF B.H.ROBERTS. Another source of evidence to cite here is J.R.Clark's pamphlet, MAN - GOD'S GREATEST MIRACLE. This pamphlet is dedicated entirely to the exploration by this counselor in the First Presidency of the church of several notions, one of which is the idea that spirits may have been prepared before coming to earth with special skills that would be required to enable them to manipulate these mortal bodies. Wonderful stuff, to think so broadly. At least that's how I feel about it because that is precisely what this whole thing has been about. But the truth is that he wouldn't be allowed to publish such outrageous ideas today because he might confuse the members, or some such silly thing.

Notice the rash of excommunications noised abroad this year (1993). Members of the church, some of whom were highly and publicly regarded, have fallen from grace. While it does appear they may have crossed over the line in the sand that was clearly drawn for them on the one hand, perhaps part of their sin lies in simply daring to ask the difficult questions. I fear that should this entire document find its way onto the desk of BKP of the 12, I would perhaps undergo a kangaroo court with automatic excommunication the result. Which would be unfortunate because I endorse the fundamental doctrines throughout this work. They are the basis of the entire thing.

¹⁹ A critical distinction needs to be made here. When I refer to SLC, I refer specifically to men in positions of power in the Church Hierarchy who appear to disguise personal prejudices and opinions under the flag of revelation, or who, more charitably and probably more accurately, can't tell the difference. This distinction is a crucial one because otherwise this criticism of "SLC" may be interpreted here as a criticism of the basic theology. Nothing could be further from the truth. This entire document is predicated on a whole-hearted faith -yes, unrelenting, unmitigated faith- in the fundamental doctrines of the Faith. But I strenuously resist the rigidity of certain men who choose to fetter our spirits and keep us from thinking and learning.

atonement. How about the resurrection? Isn't that peculiar? To tell us to not look at mysteries, but to solemnly intone the reality of the Atonement is to indulge in mysteries. Swallowing camels and straining at gnats and all that.

MMF can be heard to deride the doctrine of a God who is small enough to dwell in our heart but large enough to fill the universe. Let's be adults here. Is that really any more incredible or "mysterious" than preaching that one being was able by Himself to atone for and suffer for the sins of the 15,000,000,000 (or so) people who have, do or will live on this earth? Let's take this down to real numbers to begin to show just how mysterious this little doctrine is.

Let's talk about how many sins this is. Let's allow an average life span for mortals to be 30 years^{20}. This is 30 x 12 months or a total of 360 months. 360 months equals 10,800 days. Now let's figure that each of us commits a mere 10 sins per day. (We're talking here of every garden variety of sin possible, because a sin is a sin and the atonement apparently must account for all sins.)^{21} That means that each person commits 100,800 sins during their 30 year lifetime. Now multiply that by 15,000,000,000 people. This product is 15,120,000,000,000,000 or 15.12×10^{15} . That number is totally overwhelming. And, of course, this is actually a conservative estimation of the number of sins we commit because we actually commit more like 10 or more every waking hour instead of 10 a day. If we stay awake for 10 hours, that makes 100 sins a day so just add two more zeros to the total.

Now, how can one Man atone for that many sins? Is that any more incomprehensible than being everywhere and nowhere at once, or having lots of angels dancing on pinheads? If one will break his/her mind free from the fetters of those who try to hold it in a particular form of bondage, s/he must admit that such a doctrine is no more comprehensible. The only difference is that the atonement is an approved mystery^{22} and the latter is not.

Or what about the god doctrine? SMD preaches that mortals are gods-in-embryo, that we have the possibility of becoming gods and goddesses in the next world. Is that not a mystery *par excellence*? How outrageous an idea to suggest that beings as impaired and incompetent as we mortals are, are capable of

²⁰That may be a bit low for the whole history of the earth. But only a bit.

²¹One of the peculiar aspects of the atonement is how it is supposed to account for ALL sins. But what about those situations where individuals don't repent, for which the atonement doesn't account? The atonement wasn't needed there. So did the all-knowing One take that into account when the price was paid?

²²In fact, as one listens to discussions of the atonement, it seems apparent that the incomprehensibility of it is actually one of its selling points. Its mysteriousness is part of its attractiveness. So it is curious that those who intone its ununderstandability are probably going to sniff at the mysteriousness built into Catholicism's cathedrals, sacraments. But there is no difference really. Just a difference in what's put on the dis/approved list.

becoming such^{23}.

TEMPLE MYSTERIES:

Mysteries are central to the Faith. The very core of the doctrine revolves around these profound mysteries which are the foundation for the entire business.^{24} And the reality of and mode of action of the priesthood is a profound mystery. And a previous life and a next life are mysteries^{25}.

I have omitted so far the most-famous mysteries of the Faith, the temple ordinances.^{26} Practicing LDS have all

²³ Once more, note the contradictory nature of the SMD position about mysteries. We noted this above, but it bears re-mentioning here. This doctrine is not only a mystery, but it is flatly contradictory in one sense. SMD claims God has been God forever, etc., yet SMD also points out that He was a man like us at one point. So how is the mystery of being God forever to be reconciled with the He-was-once-a-man doctrine? I really don't care which way it is. I am just emphasizing that SMD does endorse grand mysteries, eg. God is forever, and we can become gods, so it is guilty of doing the thing it eschews. The only glimmer of humor here is that SMD compounds its problem by contradicting itself.

²⁴ The Elysian mysteries, etc. share a relationship with these Temple mysteries in terms of their central position in the faith at least. This notion of mysteries permeates religions of all types, as evident from this description of the role of Osiris and Isis:

"The Mysteries of OSIRIS and ISIS were a series of Miracle Plays in which all the events of life, death, mummification, resurrection, and enthronement of OSIRIS as king of the Other World and god of the dead were reproduced mimically. At ABYDOS all these 'mysteries' were directed by a chief priest (or KHERI HEB) who was, of course, a learned man, and he was assisted by a number of priests of the various lower grades...In the late temples at DENDERAH, ESNA, EDFU, and PHILAE, certain chambers were set apart for the performance of the 'Mysteries' of ISIS, and at SAIS there were several chambers in which the 'Mysteries' of the ancient Virgin Mother-goddess NEITH were celebrated."
(BUDGE 1934:25)

Just take out THE GOLDEN BOUGH, or Joseph Campbell's works, to get a sense of how pervasive mysteries are for human kind. The lovely cave drawings in the Lascaux caves are about mysteries, are they not?

²⁵ This is perhaps the reason that religion seems to be present in the art work of all peoples who have left art behind them. Rowland states is thusly:

(referring to the first art that appears in the Pyrenees and the Alps after the last Ice Age: "The first dawn of pictorial expression, between 40,000 and 5,000 B.C., was the art of the hunters who depended for food and clothing on the great herds of beasts that roamed Europe in this post-glacial period. This is an art magical, rather than aesthetic, in purpose, intended to give the tribe power over, and possession of, the animals drawn by artists dedicated to this cult of hunting magic. The art of the men of the Paleolithic period is located in the depths of grottoes that were used not so much for habitation as for the ritual insuring the success of the hunt." (1965:15)

So religion has been the focus of art for as long as there has been art. And its purpose has been connected with the mystery of ensuring bountiful hunts through the mysteries of drawings -and perhaps related rituals.

²⁶ Mainstreamers will bridle at this note, which I admit is inflammatory. But, as is evident from the preceding footnote, when one looks at SMD ordinances within in the framework of the rituals of mankind in general, and to the mysteries in particular, like those of the Greeks, Druids, etc. we note that LDS temple ordinances qualify as mysteries.

There is, however, a major difference that must be pointed out: SMD temple ordinances carry none of the license of the saturnalian or elusian or bacchanalian or dionysian mysteries - a most critical difference. There is no liquor, no sensuality. These mysteries are austere, subdued occasions during which each individual has ample opportunity to be introspective, and even meditative. Recommitment of self to deeply-held beliefs and covenants can occur. For these reasons, attendance at LDS temple ceremonies is a soul satisfying experience for those who enter into them with attentiveness and openness.

But mysteries is mysteries, however you name 'em. I love them, and am transfixed contemplating them. I feel awe and am inspired. That is part of the value of religion. Isn't it?

Parenthetically, I find it to be a wonderful fact that LDS temple ordinances are parallels to so many other religious systems. Egyptians, Indians, etc. The question, obviously, is:

is there a common source for these things, meaning either a common historical source, or a psychological, or 'spiritual' (whatever that is) source?

encountered questions regarding these "secret" practices, which are reported to be rather lurid, unreligious things by the uninitiated. And practicing LDS are all trained to respond that these ordinances aren't 'secret', rather are 'sacred', and then try to elaborate on the difference.^{27} But in any event, all of the temple ordinances are mysteries that aren't even divulged to the majority of the church membership. We can't get away from mysteries.^{28}

The real problem is first, that expending energy on unanswerable questions can distract one from behaviors that actually benefit spirit matter, and second, there definitely is the possibility of one being pulled into questions that do pose risks, i.e. exploration of Satan worship, blood sacrifice, etc. So the real issue is how to select the mysteries to explore and how to protect one's faith in the process, rather than proscription of all mysteries.

There is one type of activity that is definitely off-limits

I am not asking anything new by this question. For example, Evans-Wentz discusses his belief that early Aryan/Indo-European religious systems migrated to the near East, imprinting the indigenous religions with their marks. Woodroffe makes similar comments. And Joseph Campbell discusses this matter. This is really the whole point of his life work. Noone has a convincing explanation for the similarities in those cases where there is no historical evidence of migrations and borrowings. Parallel evolution seems like an explanation, but really isn't. We simply don't know why there are such similarities, if we try to be 'scientific' and 'factual' and 'objective'. But if we allow ourselves to consider intrinsic qualities of human beings, then we might approximate a theory. And if we go even further, and whole-heartedly endorse the notion of revelation and inspiration -or the possibility that we carry over with us from the PE certain recollections- there is probably an explanation.

²⁷ I don't believe there is a difference. That distinction smacks of sophistry.

²⁸ LDS aren't the only group that takes their mysteries seriously. Evans-Wentz says of the Tantric Buddhists:

"...the mantras are jealously guarded. And, for the purpose of maintaining this guardianship, lines of gurus (i.e. religious teachers) are established in whose keeping the words of power are placed. Candidates for initiation into this Brotherhood of Guardians of the Mysteries must necessarily be well tested before the Treasures can be entrusted to them, and they themselves, in turn, be made Guardians." (1960:221)

Comparable "jealousy" was expressed in other Mystery religions. In Greece, the Bacchanalian or Elusinian mysteries were closely guarded, and anyone who divulged the secrets was subject to death. (In fact, this was one of the accusations that led to the death of Socrates.)

But it is of particular interest within the context of this chapter to note some of the aspects of the Elusinian Mysteries, all Mysteries actually. Charles Anton -THE Charles Anton- said:

"The initiated were under the more particular care of the deities, and therefore their lives were supposed to be attended with more and real security than those of other men. This benefit was not only extended during life, but it extended beyond the grave, and they were honored with the first places in the Elysian Fields, while others were left to wallow in perpetual filth and ignominy." (1845:463)

These concepts certainly parallel those of SMD, though reference isn't made to Elysian fields. But to bring out more parallels, let's quote further from Brother Anton:

"The institution was performed in the following manner; the candidates...were admitted...into a place called *the mystical temple*, a vast and stupendous building. As they entered the temple, they purified themselves by washing their hands in holy water, and received for admonition that they were to come with a mind pure and undefiled, without which the cleanliness of the body would be unacceptable. After this, the holy mysteries were read to them...and then the priest...proposed to them certain questions, to which they readily answered... The garments in which the new-comers were initiated were held sacred...From this circumstance, therefore, they were never left off before they were totally unfit for wear... The design of this law was to destroy all distinction between the richer and poorer sort of citizens. (1845:465)

Mystery religions all encompass these types of characteristics, preferential treatment in the next world, blessedness on earth, ceremonies, particular clothing, etc.

in this model, which activity might qualify for the name "mystery". This is any sort of Satan worship in which individuals actively seek to either contact the black power or contact evil spirits.^{29} While there are probably considerably more claims to have successfully employed the black power than actual instances of the same, this is a high-risk activity. If there is in fact a black power which is active during our testing, then attempts to actively employ it expose our souls to its power. That is a risk of some sort. However, the real problem for this type of activity is the change that occurs in one's spirit matter. Attempts to consort with evil power will somehow transform one's spirit matter. This is probably the real risk of Satan worship.

SACRAMENTS :

As Tillich noted above, sacraments are characteristics of religions, so SMD is right in the mainstream with its richness of sacramental forms. True, most LDS will have a bad case of myopia when asked by an outsider about their "sacraments". But LDS have many more sacraments than THE sacrament which represents Christ's body and blood^{30}. Baptism and confirmation, sacrament with emblems of the Lord's body and the temple ordinances are the major ordinances.^{31}

Within this model, one asks that the value or effect of these ordinances are on the individual. The first answer is obvious and simple: they are applied to individuals through the priesthood and through their agency, new growth opportunities are available to the spirit. Without experiencing them, there is no access to those opportunities which are only accessible after the spirit has experienced the application of the priesthood. Apparently these growth possibilities are inaccessible to the non-blessed spirit.

One of the reasons that these opportunities are not

²⁹ A form of yoga that knowledgeable individuals say is dangerous to individuals practicing it is "kundalini yoga," which is a part of Buddhism. This form of yoga is named for "Mother Kali" who is the source of the power which is apparently manifested during its rites, which are capable of being injurious and harmful.

We encountered another form of black magic while in the Peace Corps in Brazil. Macumba is a form of voodoo, a cosmopolitan blend of west African, native American and Catholic beliefs, which has malignant powers. This power was real enough that the PC offices in Rio specifically recommended that volunteers not spend much time at any of the ceremonies that public could attend. Possession of viewers who became absorbed in a ceremony, was apparently possible, which posed a serious enough risk to qualify for this caveat, the only activity to earn that cautionary note.

³⁰ SMD does NOT under any circumstances preach transubstantiation of the host. The bread and water (NOW water, though in Joseph Smith's time it was wine -meaning the good ol' ETOH variety- and the word 'wine' still appears in the canonized D & C) are considered to be what they are. They are described as symbols to remind the communicant of the body and blood, which reminder is reinforced with the prayers themselves.

It is noteworthy that the only weekly meeting that is prescribed by SMD is the Sacrament meeting. That is the one where the flesh and blood of Christ are partaken of, a true mystery.

³¹ One hears whisperings of a "Second Endowment" but there is nothing that elaborates on this particular ordinance, IF it is in fact an ordinance. If it is, it is even more tightly secured than the rest of the temple ordinances because the general membership of the church is not familiar with it. Swatches of various sections of the D & C purportedly allude to this Endowment.

available is that there is a degree of worthiness, compliance with the commandments, that requisite for the novitiate seeking to experience them. This correlation between worthiness and the succeeding opportunities is an expected one. And the ordinances constitutes gateways for spirits. And the ordinances can only be applied in a strict order of escalating import.

Note one of the interesting things about these sacraments: most of them are only applied to a spirit one time, eg. baptism. But the sacrament of the last supper can be experienced as many times as one can and wishes to experience it. Why? The answer probably revolves around (a) our general sinfulness and (b) the fact that this sacrament allows us to reassess/reaffirm our baptismal covenants. Thereby we are able to repent and avail ourselves of the atonement again.

CONCLUSION:

Mysteries are central to religious life of any type. This is not surprising because one of the major functions of religion is to enable feeble mortal minds to deal -to cope- with the cosmic questions posed by our lives on this ol' mud ball, with the mind-numbing cosmos we see at night, as well as pain, suffering, goodness and badness that surround us.