



Cathedral of the Black Madonna: The Druids and the Mysteries of Chartres

Jean Markale

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Explores the connection between ancient druidic worship of a virgin at Chartres and the veneration of the Black Madonna

- Examines the Virgin Mary's origins in the pagan worship of the Mother Goddess
- Identifies Mary with the dominant solar goddess of matriarchal societies

The great cathedral of Chartres is renowned the world over as a masterpiece of High Gothic architecture and for its remarkable stained glass, considered alchemical glass, and its mystical labyrinth. But the sacred foundations of this sanctuary go back to a time long before Christianity when this site was a clearing where druids worshiped a *Virgo Paritura*: a virgin about to give birth. This ancient meeting place, where all the druids in Gaul gathered once a year, now houses the magnificent Chartres cathedral dedicated both to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and to one of the most venerated Black Madonnas in Europe: Our Lady of the Pillar. Coincidence? Hardly, says Jean Markale, whose exhaustive examination of the site traces Chartres' roots back to prehistoric times and the appeal of the Black Madonna back to the ancient widespread worship of Mother Goddesses such as Cybele and Isis.

Markale contends that the mother and child depicted by the Black Madonna are descended from the image worshipped by the druids of the Virgin forever giving birth. This image is not merely a representation of maternal love--albeit of a spiritual nature. It is a theological notion of great refinement: the Virgin gives birth ceaselessly to a world, a God, and a humanity in perpetual becoming.

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