

# WISDOM OF THE DRUIDS

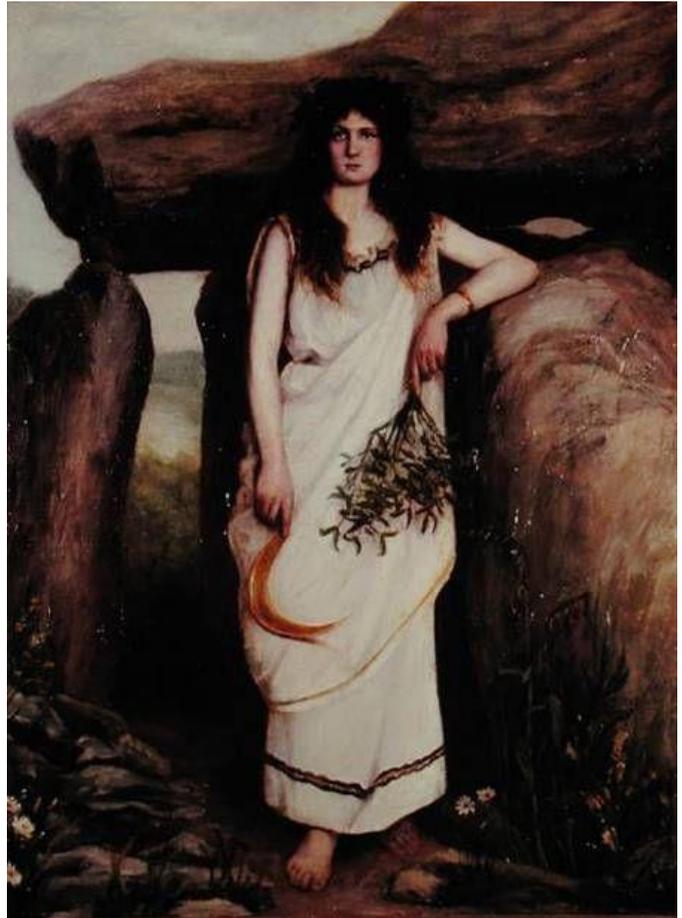
Most people today have heard of the Druids, at least in the parts of the world where the Druids once thrived, namely England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and France. The Druids should therefore be of particular interest to those of us who live in the very lands where they once walked and worked. But who were they in reality?

Using general and standard sources, one can learn that the name “Druid” is most likely derived from ancient Celtic words for “seer” and “magician” and also that the earliest recorded mention of them was 2,400 years ago and that they had been suppressed and wiped out by various means over 1,900 years ago. Modern history therefore only acknowledges with any definiteness an approximately 500 year period of their existence but just because they were apparently only first written about 2,400 years ago this does not mean that they were not in existence for a long time *prior* to that. Historians and scholars do inferentially admit this by saying that the Druids had a vast, detailed, and intricate system of philosophical teaching, knowledge, and practice, which could not have been invented overnight but seemed to have been handed down – always orally, never in writing – for generations.

The Roman emperor Julius Caesar, an opponent of the Druids, provided what is perhaps the most detailed – although very incomplete – surviving summary of their teachings from the eyewitnesses of that time:

“With regard to their actual course of studies, the main object of all education is, in their opinion, to imbue their scholars with a firm belief in the indestructibility of the human soul, which, according to their belief, merely passes at death from one tenement to another; for by such doctrine alone, they say, which robs death of all its terrors, can the highest form of human courage be developed. Subsidiary to the teachings of this main principle, they hold various lectures and discussions on astronomy, on the extent and geographical distribution of the globe, on the different branches of natural philosophy, and on many problems connected with religion.”

But now we will see the light shed upon the Druids and Druidism by Theosophy, i.e. by the esoteric knowledge of some of today’s Initiates and Adepts, given to the world through H. P. Blavatsky, Their Representative. Some of these details will be unclear unless one has a familiar and accurate acquaintance with the fundamental Theosophical teaching about the Root Races. This can only be gained with any depth by a study of “The Secret Doctrine” but can be briefly summarised as follows.



“The Druidess,” a 19th century painting by Armand Laroche.

## THE SEVEN ROOT RACES

Humanity, the human family, evolves on this Earth, during this “Fourth Round” period, through a series of seven successive “Root Races.” Each Root Race lasts for a vast period of time and represents a major Epoch in world history.

Four Root Races have been and gone and are referred to as:

(1) Polarian – born under the occult influence of the Sun

Location: a mysterious “Imperishable Sacred Land” somewhere in the region of the North Pole and which is never destroyed, unlike the other subsequent (see below) continents and land masses.

(2) Hyperborean – born under the occult influence of Jupiter

Location of “Hyperborea”: “the land which stretched out its promontories southward and westward from the North Pole to receive the Second Race, and comprised the whole of what is now known as Northern Asia.” (S.D. 2:7)

(3) Lemurian – born under the occult influence of Venus

Location of “Lemuria”: “It included some portions of what is now Africa; but otherwise this gigantic Continent, which stretched from the Indian ocean to Australia, has now wholly disappeared beneath the waters of the Pacific, leaving here and there only some of its highland tops which are now islands.” (S.D. 2:7)

(4) Atlantean – born under the occult influence of the Moon and Saturn

Location of “Atlantis”: “The famous island of Plato of that name was but a fragment of this great Continent.” (S.D. 2:8) “a large continent, first divided, and then broken later on into seven peninsulas and islands (called *dwipas*) . . . It covered the whole of the North and South Atlantic regions, as well as portions of the North and South Pacific, and had islands even in the Indian Ocean (relics of Lemuria). The claim is corroborated by Indian Puranas, Greek writers, and Asiatic, Persian, and Mahomedan traditions.” (S.D. 2:405)

The 5th (born under the occult influence of Mercury; see S.D. 2:29 for these details) is still underway and is referred to as the Aryan, in the original and ancient sense of that term, i.e. Indo-Caucasian, originating in Central Asia and old India. The 6th and 7th are still to come. Each of these seven *Root Races* is comprised of seven *sub-races*. Each sub-race includes seven main family-races.

The Root Races and their sub-periods all follow on consecutively from one another but there is always a certain amount of overlapping, as one race begins to fade out and another, originating from it, begins to slowly appear, increase, and expand.

The present evolutionary period is that of the fifth *sub-race* of the fifth *Root Race*. As of the present day, the fifth Root Race and its sub-races, family races, and offshoots, has spread out over a large part of the world, particularly the Western world. We are looking now toward the development of the *sixth* sub-race of the fifth Root Race, this sixth sub-race coming into being primarily in North (but also South) America. Our sixth and seventh sub-races will form the basis for the future sixth *Root Race*, in many thousands of years from now.

Keeping this in mind, we can now better comprehend and appreciate HPB’s statements about the Druids and their origins.

## H. P. BLAVATSKY ON THE DRUIDS

“**Druids.** A sacerdotal caste which flourished in Britain and Gaul. They were Initiates who admitted females into their sacred order, and initiated them into the mysteries of their religion. They never entrusted their sacred verses and scriptures to writing, but, like the Brahmins of old, committed them to memory; a feat which, according to the statement of Caesar, took twenty years to accomplish. Like the Parsis they had no images or statues of their gods. The Celtic religion considered it blasphemy to represent any god, even of a minor character under a human figure. It would have been well if the Greek and Roman Christians had learnt this lesson from the “pagan” Druids. The three chief commandments of their religion were:– “Obedience to divine laws; concern for the welfare of mankind; suffering with fortitude all the evils of life.” (“Theosophical Glossary” p. 105)

“The mystery veiling the origin and the religion of the Druids, is as great as that of their supposed fanes is to the modern Symbologist, but not to the initiated Occultists. Their priests were the descendants of the last Atlanteans, and what is known of them is sufficient to allow the inference that they were eastern priests akin to the Chaldeans and Indians, though little more. It may be inferred that they symbolized their deity as the Hindus do their Vishnu, as the Egyptians did their Mystery God, and as the builders of the Ohio Great-Serpent mound worshipped theirs – namely under the form of the “mighty Serpent,” the emblem of the eternal deity TIME (the Hindu Kala). Pliny called them the “Magi of the Gauls and Britons.” But they were more than that. The author of “*Indian Antiquities*” finds much affinity between the Druids and the Brahmins of India. Dr. Borlase points to a close analogy between them and the Magi of Persia; others will see an identity between them and the Orphic priesthood of Thrace: simply because they were connected, in their esoteric teachings, with the universal Wisdom Religion, and thus presented affinities with the exoteric worship of all.

“Like the Hindus, the Greeks and Romans (we speak of the Initiates), the Chaldees and the Egyptians, the Druids believed in the doctrine of a succession of worlds, as also in that of seven “creations” (of new continents) and transformations of the face of the earth, and in a seven-fold night and day for each earth or globe (*See “Esoteric Buddhism”*). Wherever the Serpent with the egg is found, there this tenet was surely present. Their *Dracontia* are a proof of it. This belief was so universal that, if we seek for it in the esotericism of various religions, we shall discover it in all. We shall find it among the Aryan Hindus and Mazdeans, the Greeks, the Latins, and even among the old Jews and early Christians, whose modern stocks hardly comprehend now that which they read in their Scriptures. . . .

“The Druids understood the meaning of the Sun in Taurus, therefore, when, while all the fires were extinguished on the 1st of November, their sacred and inextinguishable fires alone remained to illumine the horizon, like those of the Magi and the modern Zoroastrians. And like the early Fifth Race and later Chaldees, the Greeks, and again like the Christians, who do the same to this day, without suspecting the real meaning, they greeted the Morning Star – the beautiful Venus-Lucifer. Strabo speaks of an island near to Britannia, “where Ceres and Persephone were worshipped with the same rites as in Samothrace (lib. iv.) and this island was “Sacred Ierna,” where a perpetual fire was lit. The Druids believed in the rebirth of man, not as Lucian explains: “that the same *spirit* shall animate a new body, not here, but in a different world,” but in a series of re-incarnations in this same world; for as Diodorus says, they declared that the souls of men, after determinate periods, would pass into other bodies.\*

“These tenets came to the Fifth Race Aryans from their predecessors of the Fourth Race, the Atlanteans. They had piously preserved the teachings, which told them how their parent Root-Race, becoming with every generation more arrogant, owing to the acquisition of super-human powers, had been gradually gliding toward its end. Those records reminded them of the giant intellect of the preceding races as well as of their giant size. One finds the repetition of those records in every age of history, in almost every old fragment which has descended to us from antiquity.”

\* “There was a time when the whole world, the totality of mankind, had one religion, and when they were of “one lip.” “All the religions of the Earth were at first One and emanated from *one* centre,” says Faber very truly.” (S.D. 2:756, 759-760)

“In the West we find magic of as high an antiquity as in the East. The Druids of Great Britain practised it in the silent crypts of their deep caves; and Pliny devotes many a chapter to the “wisdom” of the leaders of the Celts. The Semothees, – the Druids of the Gauls, expounded the physical as well as the spiritual sciences. They taught the secrets of the universe, the harmonious progress of the heavenly bodies, the formation of the earth, and above all – the immortality of the soul. Into their sacred groves – natural academies built by the hand of the Invisible Architect – the initiates assembled at the still hour of midnight to learn about what man once was and what he will be. They needed no artificial illumination, nor life-drawing gas, to light up their temples, for the chaste goddess of night beamed her most silvery rays on their oak-crowned heads; and their white-robed sacred bards knew how to converse with the solitary queen of the starry vault.

“On the dead soil of the long by-gone past stand their sacred oaks, now dried up and stripped of their spiritual meaning by the venomous breath of materialism. But for the student of occult learning, their vegetation is still as verdant and luxuriant, and as full of deep and sacred truths, as at that hour when the arch-druid performed his magical cures, and waving the branch of mistletoe, severed with his golden sickle the green bough from its mother oak-tree. *Magic is as old as man.*” (“Isis Unveiled” Vol. 1, p. 18)

“We find . . . the “Dragons” held throughout all antiquity as the symbols of Immortality and Wisdom, of secret Knowledge and of Eternity; and . . . the hierophants of Egypt, of Babylon, and India, styling themselves generally the “Sons of the Dragon” and “Serpents”; thus the teachings of the Secret Doctrine are thereby corroborated. . . .

“The hierophants, moreover, of Egypt, as of Babylon, generally styled themselves the “Sons of the Serpent-god,” or “Sons of the Dragon,” during the mysteries.

“The Assyrian priest bore always the name of his god,” says Movers. The Druids of the Celto-Britannic regions also called themselves snakes. “I am a Serpent, I am a Druid,” they exclaimed. The Egyptian Karnak is twin brother to the Carnac of Bretagne, the latter Carnac meaning the serpent’s mount. The Dracontia once covered the surface of the globe, and these temples were sacred to the Dragon, only because it was the symbol of the sun, which, in its turn, was the symbol of the highest god – the Phœnician Elon or Elion, whom Abraham recognised as El Elion. Besides the surname of serpents, they were called the “builders,” the “architects”; for the immense grandeur of their temples and monuments was such that even now the pulverised remains of them “frighten the mathematical calculations of our modern engineers,” says Taliesin.” (S.D. 2:379-380)

## ESOTERIC IRELAND

We just read from “The Secret Doctrine” that “The mystery veiling the origin and the religion of the Druids, is as great as that of their supposed fanes is to the modern Symbologist, but not to the initiated Occultists.”

So those Occultists or Esotericists who are initiated by the Adepts – the Masters of Wisdom, as They are sometimes called – into *the SECRET DOCTRINE itself*, are not puzzled, confused, or ignorant, about the real origin of the Druids nor of any other people, religion, tradition, or culture.

And HPB revealed that **“Their priests were the descendants of the last Atlanteans.”**

That is presumably referring to the very last island of Atlantis, the one spoken of by Plato. The main destruction of Atlantis occurred around 850,000 years ago according to “The Secret Doctrine” but its last surviving remnant – sometimes referred to as Poseidonis – held on until as recently as 11,500 years ago and then met the same watery fate as its original parent continent.

William Q. Judge says the following in his article “Ireland”:

“It [i.e. Ireland] is called the Isle of Destiny, and its hill-men will tell you that it has always been a “saintly island.” It teems with tales exactly duplicating those of Hindu yogis; the very grass seems to whisper as with the footfalls of unseen beings. One tradition is that in very ancient times, before the island of Albion [i.e. Great Britain] rose from under the water, there was an ancient college – or *Ashram* as the Hindus would call it – on the island, where great adepts lived and taught disciples who from there went out to all lands. They stayed there until a certain great cataclysm, and then migrated to . . . . In connection with this the following quotation from some remarks by H. P. Blavatsky in *Lucifer* will be of interest, in reading which one can also profitably remember the Greek tradition that near Britain there was an island called Ierna to which men went in order to learn more about the secret mysteries. She says:

“It is a tradition among Occultists in general, and taught as an historical fact in Occult philosophy, that **what is now Ireland was once upon a time the abode of the Atlanteans, emigrants from the submerged island mentioned by Plato.** Of all the British Isles, Ireland is the most ancient by several thousands of years. Inferences and “working hypotheses” are left to the Ethnologists, Anthropologists, and Geologists. The Masters and Keepers of the old science claim to have preserved genuine records, and we Theosophists – *i.e.*, most of us – believe it implicitly. Official Science may deny, but what does it matter? Has not Science begun by denying almost everything it accepts now?”

So it may be that Britain’s Druids came to her via Ireland from the last Atlantean island.

The above passage which WQJ quotes from HPB is nowadays published in the book “Theosophical Articles and Notes” on p. 205.

## NEO-DRUIDISM

Today there are quite a few people who call themselves Druids and who even claim to be Druid Priests and Priestesses. This is technically known as *Neo-Druidism* or *Neo-Druidry* because – as asserted by both Theosophy and accepted history – the genuine Druids of the past did not commit any of their teachings to writing and those who adopt the name of “Druid” today are honest enough to confess that they do not have access to, or knowledge of, what the ancient

Druids truly taught and practised, other than the extremely miniscule amount which has come down to us through standard history.

Those who have examined Neo-Druidism, which began in its present form in the 20th century, have found that its teachings, beliefs, and practices, are almost solely derived from modern Pagan movements such as Wicca and some “New Age” ideas. It thus cannot be said to be a legitimate continuation of the noble lineage of Druid Adept-Initiates of ages past. Some Neo-Druid groups assert that Druidism has no teachings, philosophy, or principles whatsoever, and accepts anything and everything as being true and valid. As has been shown above, this is just not true; the real Druids had a very specific and distinct philosophy and doctrine, even if they did not permit very much of it to become widely publicly known.

However, Neo-Druidism does some good and valuable work in raising awareness of ecological issues and promoting proper reverence and respect for the Earth and the sacredness of physical Nature and all the life it contains and nurtures.

## STONEHENGE AND OTHER ANCIENT STONE MONUMENTS

Because the Neo-Druids flock to Stonehenge at the Summer Solstice and other times, such old stone circles and complexes have become linked in many people’s minds with the ancient Druids, with some supposing that they were built *by* the Druids. But here is what Theosophy explains about it:

“Had there been no giants to move about such colossal rocks, there could never have been a Stonehenge, a Carnac (Brittany) and other such Cyclopean structures; . . . These “hinging stones” of Salisbury Plain [i.e. Stonehenge] are believed to be the remains of a Druidical temple. But the Druids were historical men and not Cyclopes, nor giants. Who, then, *if not giants, could ever raise such masses* (especially those at Carnac and West Hoadley), range them in such symmetrical order that they should represent the planisphere, and place them in such wonderful equipoise that they seem to hardly touch the ground, are set in motion at the slightest touch of the finger, and would yet resist the efforts of twenty men who should attempt to displace them. . . .

“The archaic records show the Initiates of the Second Sub-race of the Aryan family moving from one land to the other for the purpose of supervising the building of *menhirs* and dolmens, of colossal Zodiacs in stone, and places of sepulchre to serve as receptacles for the ashes of generations to come. When was it? The fact of their crossing from France to Great Britain *by land* may give an idea of the date when such a journey could have been performed on *terra firma*. . . . The modern archaeologist, though speculating *ad infinitum* upon the dolmens and their builders, knows, in fact, nothing of them or their origin. Yet, these weird, and often colossal monuments of unhewn stones – which consist generally of four or seven gigantic blocks placed together – are strewn over Asia, Europe, America, and Africa, in groups or rows. Stones of enormous size are found placed horizontally and variously upon two, three, four, and as in Poitou, upon six and seven blocks. People name them “devil’s altars,” druidic stones, and giant tombs. The stones of Carnac in the Morbihan, Brittany – nearly a mile in length and numbering 11,000 ranged in eleven rows – are twin sisters of those at Stonehenge. . . .

“It is with the so-called Druidical remains, such as Carnac in Brittany and Stonehenge in Great Britain, that the travelling Initiates above alluded to had to do. And these gigantic monuments are all symbolic records of the World’s history. They are *not* Druidical, but *universal*. Nor did

the Druids build them, for they were only the heirs to the cyclopean lore left to them by generations of mighty builders and – “magicians,” both good and bad.” (S.D. 2:341, 750, 752, 754)

“**Carnac.** A very ancient site in Brittany (France) of a temple of cyclopean structure, sacred to the Sun and the Dragon; and of the same kind as Karnac, in ancient Egypt, and Stonehenge in England. . . . It was built by the prehistoric hierophant-priests of the Solar Dragon, or symbolized Wisdom (the Solar *Kumaras* who incarnated being the highest). Each of the stones was personally placed there by the successive priest-adepts in power, and commemorated in symbolic language the degree of power, status, and knowledge of each.” (“Theosophical Glossary” p. 74)

## THE LAST OF THE MYSTERIES IN EUROPE

Our study now concludes with this remarkable and poignant information from “The Last of the Mysteries in Europe,” a posthumously published article by HPB:

“In Central Asia and on the northern borderlands of India, the triumphant sword of Aristotle’s pupil [i.e. Alexander the Great] swept away from his path of conquest every vestige of a once pure Religion: and its Adepts receded further and further from that path into the most hidden spots of the globe. The cycle of \*\*\*\* being at its close, the first hour for the disappearance of the Mysteries struck on the clock of the Races, with the Macedonian conqueror. The first strokes of its last hour sounded in the year 47 B.C. Alesia [i.e. now called Alise-Sainte-Reine, in the Côte-d’Or of France] the famous city in Gaul, the Thebes of the Kelts, so renowned for its ancient rites of Initiation and Mysteries, was, as J. M. Ragon [i.e. the famous French Masonic writer] well describes it:

“The ancient metropolis and the tomb of Initiation, of the religion of the Druids and of the freedom of Gaul.”

“It was during the first century before our era, that the last and supreme hour of the great Mysteries had struck. History shows the populations of Central Gaul revolting against the Roman yoke. The country was subject to Caesar, and the revolt was crushed; the result was the slaughter of the garrison at Alesia (or Alisa), and of all its inhabitants, including the Druids, the college-priests and the neophytes; after this the whole city was plundered and razed to the ground.

“Bibractis, a city as large and as famous, not far from Alesia, perished a few years later. J. M. Ragon describes her end as follows:

“Bibractis, the mother of sciences, the soul of the early nations [in Europe], a town equally famous for its sacred college of Druids, its civilisation, its schools, in which 40,000 students were taught philosophy, literature, grammar, jurisprudence, medicine, astrology, occult sciences, architecture, etc. Rival of Thebes, of Memphis, of Athens and of Rome, it possessed an amphitheatre for gladiators, surrounded with colossal statues and accommodating 100,000 spectators, a capitol, temples of Janus, Pluto, Proserpine, Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva, Cybele, Venus and Anubis, and in the midst of these sumptuous edifices the Naumachy, with its vast basin, an incredible construction, a gigantic work wherein floated boats and galleys devoted to naval games; then a *Champ de Mars*, an aqueduct, fountains, public baths; finally fortifications and walls, the construction of which dated from the heroic ages.”

“Such was the last city in Gaul wherein died for Europe the secrets of the Initiations of the Great Mysteries, the Mysteries of Nature, and of her forgotten Occult truths. The rolls and manuscripts of the famous Alexandrian Library were burned and destroyed by the same Caesar, [The Christian mob in 389 of our era completed the work of destruction upon what remained; most of the priceless works were saved for students of Occultism, but lost to the world.] but while History deprecates the action of the Arab General, Amru, who gave the final touch to this act of vandalism perpetrated by the great conqueror, it has not a word to say to the latter for his

destruction of nearly the same amount of precious rolls in Alesia, nor to the destroyer of Bibractis. While Sacrovir – chief of the Gauls, who revolted against Roman despotism under Tiberius, and was defeated by Silius in the year 21 of our era – was burning himself alive with his fellow conspirators on a funeral pyre before the gates of the city, as Ragon tells us, the latter was sacked and plundered, and all her treasures of literature on the Occult Sciences perished by fire. The once majestic city, Bibractis, has now become Autun, Ragon explains.

“A few monuments of glorious antiquity are still there, such as the temples of Janus and Cybele.”

“Ragon goes on:

“Arles, founded two thousand years before Christ, was sacked in 270. This metropolis of Gaul, restored 40 years later by Constantine, has preserved to this day a few remains of its ancient splendour; amphitheatre, capitol, an obelisk, which is a block of granite 17 metres high, a triumphal arch, catacombs, etc. Thus ended Kelto-Gaulic civilisation. Caesar, as a barbarian worthy of Rome, had already accomplished the destruction of the ancient Mysteries by the sack of the temples and their initiatory colleges, and by the massacre of the Initiates and the Druids. Remained Rome; but she never had but the lesser Mysteries, shadows of the Secret Science. The Great Initiation was extinct.”

These terms “Mysteries” and “Mystery Schools” are terms for Schools of Initiation and their presence and existence was documented by history throughout the whole world. The term “initiation” is used a lot by Theosophists but what does it actually mean?

In its most basic meaning, initiation is the expansion of the soul into a new and higher level of consciousness.

But in its deeper meaning, initiation is also a Path undergone over the course of numerous lifetimes by one who aspires to join that hidden esoteric Brotherhood which guides and watches over the spiritual evolution and advancement of humanity. Such initiation – presided over in its higher levels by some of the Masters belonging to the Brotherhood – confers *knowledge, powers, and perceptive insight*, upon the successful candidate, and all for the entirely unselfish, selfless, altruistic work of helping, guiding, and teaching one’s fellow human beings.

Genuine “Mystery Schools” still exist in various places today, albeit now operating in secrecy and silence as regards the world at large. The Brotherhoods and Fraternities of the various Masters behind the Theosophical Movement are such Mystery Schools and it was stated by HPB, Mr. Judge, and those Masters Themselves, that there is nothing to stop anyone aspiring towards them, as long as the motive is a pure one.

But it all starts with a commitment to learn, comprehend, and put into practice, the almost astoundingly vast Body of Knowledge They have given to the world under the name of “Theosophy.” For if one does not know and understand *that* to the deepest and most accurate extent possible, how can one expect to be able to understand or make use of anything *more* advanced?

What the Druids taught was the same as that which is disclosed, in a partial way, through the Theosophy of our time. It is what H. P. Blavatsky once called “the anciently universal Wisdom-Religion.”

**THE UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS**

62 Queen’s Gardens, London, W2 3AH

**[www.theosophy-ult.org.uk](http://www.theosophy-ult.org.uk)**