

MEZLIM

Practical Magick for the New Aeon

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PRIEST & PRIESTESS



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MEZLIM

STAFF

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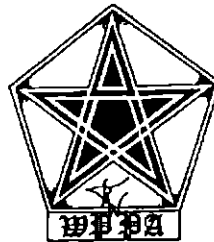
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EDITOR'S FORUM

How can we - as a Community - move to include a wider spectrum of Earth's spiritual traditions?

Watching President Clinton scramble to put together a cabinet which "reflects the cultural and ethnic diversity of the people of the United States of America" has given me cause to consider just how much our own community reflects the diversity of our culture.

Granted, we go a whole lot further than most when it comes to accepting women in positions of Power, but what about other minorities? Even at Starwood, one of the largest Neo-Pagan gatherings in the country, there are depressingly few "ethnic" faces staring out in the veritable sea of Celtic and Germanic complexions.

It's not just that there are few representatives of different races and cultures among us, but that, in focusing on the Indo-European Traditions, we have neglected a great part of the global village, which also belongs to the Magickal/Pagan Community.

While I realize that this is due in a large part to the Celtic and Euro-centric nature of the religions that form the core of the modern Pagan movement, I also feel that it's time we begin opening up our horizons - and our community - to include folk traditions beyond those we are most accustomed to.

There are some very good examples of this "reaching out" already occurring in our ranks. There are many people who take the time to study and connect with other traditions such as Voudoun, Santaria, Buddhism, Hindi, Native American Spirituality and many more. However, these people are only a small fraction of the whole.

I would like to go to Starwood in ten years and be able to watch interactions of a mixture of cultures reflecting the whole Earth. We have so much to learn from each other. We have only to open the gate and begin looking beyond our own backyard.

Namaste,



ON THE PAGAN PRIESTHOOD

by Ember Craycraft

As the Pagan community grows, more and more people are questioning the nature and function of the priesthood.

What does it mean to be a priest or priestess in a community of religions which emphasize the ability of each individual to interact with the Godhead without the intervention of clergy? What roles should the clergy fulfill? What rewards does the priesthood offer?

Two aspects of the priesthood emerge from reflection on these questions: The initiatory and the ministerial. Both are necessary, and each is sometimes undervalued.

The initiatory aspect of the priesthood reflects the concept of the priesthood of all believers, expressed in Wicca as the idea that each of us must serve as our own priest or priestess, making direct contact with the Divine rather than relying on any intermediary. It is up to each of us to

celebrate the presence of the Divine in our lives and invoke the Godhead, the Gods and Goddesses, as we work to become one with Them. Ultimately, the transformation of our lives by our contact with the Divine is our own



responsibility. A priest or priestess acknowledges, and even celebrates, that fact.

Additionally, however, the priesthood functions in a ministerial capacity. This is the aspect with which most people are most familiar, although sometimes in a distorted form. Within mainstream faiths, a priest is a combination of spiritual guide, teacher, challenger, public speaker, counselor, ritualist, and administrator.

In the Pagan community, however, we do not generally have access to the training in ministry that the mainstream religions require of their ministers or priests. Priest/esses in our community are rarely required to be effective public speakers, although they may be, and are seldom called upon as formal counselors or administrators—most of our priest/esses lack the training for intensive counseling, and only the lucky few have buildings or bank accounts to be administered! So do our priest/esses

function as ministers?

Ritual work, teaching, and community leadership are all part of the ministerial function of the priesthood. Many Wiccan traditions emphasize the ministerial role of the priesthood by connecting the initiation that grants the title of priest or priestess to increased responsibility within the group. Typically, a new priest or priestess is expected to begin to design and lead rituals, to assist in teaching new members, and to be able and willing to assume temporary leadership of the group, whether on a rotating basis or in the event of the disability of the High Priest/ess.

No single group is likely to be able to support a full-time priestly ministry.

Eventually, a priest/ess may leave the group with which he or she trained and start a new group, since most groups which emphasize training for the priesthood function best when membership is kept small. At this point, a priest/ess assumes responsibility not only for designing rituals or teaching the history and practices of the tradition, but for guiding people as they search for their own contact with the Godhead. The priest/ess cannot do this work for another person, but it is his or her responsibility to offer opportunities for this development, whether that means shocking someone out of an habitual worldview, or supporting someone in a gradual shift of consciousness. In either case it must be emphasized that the role of the priest/ess is supportive, not intermediary.

Whether working with a group, leading a group, or working as a solitary, a priest/ess may often act as a leader in the community,

through writing, public speaking, networking, or other activities for the benefit of the Pagan community or the larger world. If these activities are undertaken out of a conviction that one is called to this service, they become ministerial activities. One need not be a member of an organization to act as a priest or priestess.

Assuming that one has successfully balanced the inner and outer aspects of the priesthood, neither neglecting one's own development because of the press of responsibilities, nor denying the importance of involvement in the lives of others to focus on oneself alone, the question remains of what the appropriate role of the priest/ess is. Is it appropriate to accept payment for one's service? When? Why, or why not?

Most individual groups in the Pagan community are quite small—certainly under 100 members, and generally under 20. No single group is likely to be able to support a full-time priestly ministry. Also, introducing significant “dues” in a small group setting is likely to cause friction as the question of whether or not a member is paid up, or can afford to pay up, begins to assume weight equal to the question of that member's devotion and ability.

Many Wiccan priestesses feel strongly that the work they do in teaching, particularly in training people for the priesthood, is a gift they give to the Lord and Lady; they received their training free of financial charge, and they are therefore obligated never to charge for the training they offer. This has the strong advantage of ensuring that no one will ever be denied training in Wicca because she or he is too poor to afford it.

The idea of holding one's religion apart, offering it only to those with sufficient funds, is completely contrary to Pagan

theology, which emphasizes the role of the worshipper as active participant, not passive recipient. If group membership were ever to become dependent on financial status, it would be all too easy to begin to see members as passive recipients who have "paid" for their religion in money, and need not pay in effort.

Pagans must find ways to resolve the issues that are arising from our growth.

The risk that is run in restricting the priesthood from any ministry-related salary is that as more and more people find their home in the Pagan community, and go looking for groups in which to work and worship, the priesthood may be completely overwhelmed. Bearing the responsibility for a group of 8 or 10 people need not interfere with holding a paying job; upholding the same responsibility for a group of 50 or 75 may make it impossible for the priest/ess to fulfill outside employment responsibilities without slighting the members of the group.

Pagans must find ways to resolve the issues that are arising from our growth. Whether that means that growing numbers of ministerial priests and priestesses are needed to support the newcomers to the community, or that we must find a way to offer financial support to the priesthood without compromising the intimacy of working groups, or that we find some other way to resolve those issues, they must be resolved. At the same time, as Pagans become more numerous it becomes more important that the society at large, and particularly the clergy of other religions, understand who we are and what we do. How can we gain the understanding and acceptance of the culture in which we live without sacrificing the strength of our

position as "outsiders"? Social acceptance has been the death-knell for more than one religion before us!

The strength of Paganism as a religion is in its emphasis on the individual and the small group. The weakness of Paganism as a religion is in the general historic unwillingness of Pagan individuals and groups to work together, despite conflicts, without the sort of authoritative structure provided by Christian denominations. In resolving the questions facing Paganism as its popularity grows, it is important that Pagans—and particularly Pagan leaders—find ways to work together without losing the dynamic strength rooted in small groups and individuals.



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CLERGY FOR HIRE!

by Sam Webster

I have laid down a bet, an approximately \$25,000 bet, that there is a need of and value for Pagan clergy. I have written on this subject for the last several years. Some of this has been published in Fireheart in a panel discussion with Andras Corban Arthen, Isaac Bonewits, Judy Harrow and Oriethyia. Since that discussion took well over a year to finish and we all kept talking throughout, my views on the subject have changed and will keep changing, but it remains that I feel we need to institute a Pagan clergy.

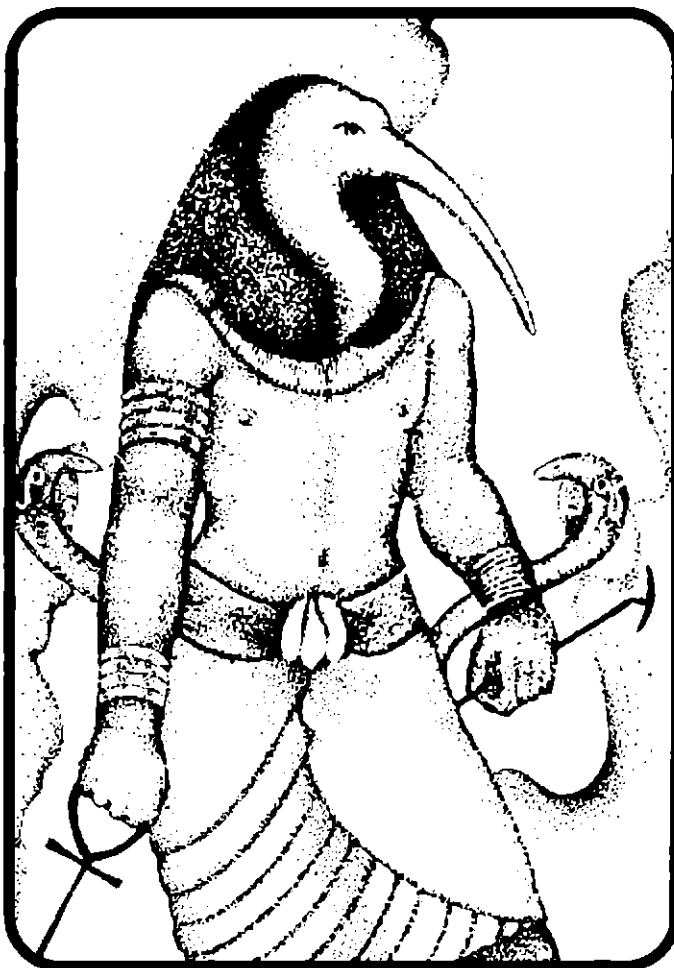
Pagans tend to be radically egalitarian in their relationships. Either every one is priestess or priest in the group or there is little difference recognized between those who are and those who are not. Yet, when the difference in knowledge and experience between members of a group is great there is a real power imbalance present. The person(s) with the greater knowledge ends up teaching and leading the group, which

may be to its great advantage. However since this also takes preparation, both in time and materials, the demands upon the leaders to lead and serve must be reckoned with. If there is no explicit compensation for this effort, the leader will either extract compensation covertly, often abusively, or

will become resentful and eventually burn out. I'm sure we all know many examples of these. However, if we had a clergy mandated to do this work and compensated for their efforts, abuse and burnout would be decreased.

This issue becomes even more pressing when we factor in the festival movement. At festivals many come to make their most significant contact with Paganism or

at least their first one. But this has its problems. For example at Rites of Spring a few years ago the attendance was hundreds of people over what was expected and many of the attendees did not really understand our Pagan culture. This led to frictions and difficulties during the festival, and burnout for the organizers. Worse still, here was an opportunity to bring more people



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into the fold of Paganism. But, due to the lack of sufficient numbers of a trained group to guide the newcomers at the festival and support them in their learning and 'faith development'* afterwards, many of them were lost. No one had the time to follow up with them and lead them into working groups where they could participate in and contribute to Pagan culture. However, if we had a clergy mandated to lead and teach, supported so they would not have to be spending forty hours a week working for survival, this could have been done. Those people, hungry for the Pagan Way could have been fed and cared for. The question then becomes do we feel we have the responsibility to do this?

We are among the very few religions that explicitly make living in harmony with our physical world an ultimate priority.

Other religions, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism in particular all feel they do. They are very careful not to loose those who come to their doors and are very active about integrating them into the community. In a profound way we are struggling for our survival, as a people, as a culture, as way of living in the world. We are among the very few (if not only) religions that explicitly make living in harmony with our physical world an ultimate priority. Also, we are certainly one of the even fewer who make a point of welcoming in those interested in this Way, in contrast to the aboriginal or native cultures into whom one must be born. Do we have a responsibility to serve the needs of those who desire to learn and grow in our world-affirming Pagan Way? I say yes! But those who are to do the

teaching and provide the guidance need support.

This is where my bet comes in. I am a Pagan priest. I am a priest of Hermes and Hekate, of Inanna and Ishtar, of Tahuti and Maat, of the Thelemic deities, and a number of others. This is my 'calling'. I have learned in my practice that to work the Pagan magickal path and to help others do so as well, through leadership and teaching, is my life work. I will never be satisfied doing anything else, and in this I will find my greatest growth, and give my greatest service. However, contemporary Pagan folk are not known for paying their clergy. With little hope in finding support among my own people for my work I chose to study with the Unitarian Universalists, because some of them have been lately trying to practice Paganism. I went to study in their seminaries and found the experience most valuable. It greatly deepened my appreciation for the task of ministry. I found their theologies very well thought through, but so often a scramble to preserve orthodoxy. I acquired many skills and specialized varieties of knowledge that can only be learned in such an environment.

Ultimately I discovered the truth that I am a Pagan, with Pagan culture and values, and thus can not serve as a minister to Unitarian Universalists. We are not the same people. And so having harvested what I could from the vast store of knowledge and practice the Christians have accumulated, I turn back to my own people. How may I serve you?

I have trained myself the best I could. I have dedicated my life to the task. I have laid down a bet of some \$25,000 in student loans to go to seminary so that I could do this work. I doubt I would have taken this

risk if I did not originally think that there was a job with the Unitarian Universalists at the other end, but now knowing that there is not, I still value the journey and the risk, and feel myself lead by my deities and ultimately by the belief in the value of the Pagan Way for our world and time.

I can teach many of the skills of magick and the craft. I can lead and design rituals. I can give pastoral counsel. I know our histories and our stories. I can organize and lead groups. Would you be willing to compensate me for this work? Here I speak for myself, but many other Pagan elders could say these same words. Are you willing to support those who will spend their lives giving you these things? Or should we keep our daytime jobs and try to squeeze in our priestly duties in our off hours? Do you deserve haphazard leadership or full-time, proficient service? Ultimately this asks the question: What shall the future of Paganism be?

What shall the future of Paganism be?

I see that the task of today's priestcraft is to reawaken the practices of the old deities, to manifest their presence here again. The cults, the practice of worship of the old deities was disrupted by the Christian hegemony, making their powerful and worthwhile presence hard to find. I see that the first task of the priestcraft is to bless,

therefore I feel that all those who have the power of making felt the presence of a deity should do so on all appropriate occasions. In this way the deity's nature may be widely experienced, and its power may be of good

effect again in the world of humankind. This would spread their fame and thus strengthen their presence here. The second task would then be to rebuild the worship of those deities. The purpose of this is to enliven and reform our human world by revaluing our physical world as being of ultimate value. As a culture, we are like a bull running toward a cliff. If we do not change the course of our human world, we will destroy it and perhaps our physical world as well. Our Pagan Way embodies these changes.



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But who will do these things? I have bet my life and my fortune on the value of the Pagan Way in our world. I intend to work its way and spread it to those who desire its harmony. As yet I can but teach and charge for my teaching. I can lead workshops and charge for the event. I can write and receive payment for my writings. Many others similarly skilled have what they have to offer. Will you support us as we seek to serve and support you?

[* from time to time I will use some of the terms I've learned in seminary. I do so because they are useful for describing the key issues of our situation.]



COMMENT ON “THE PRIESTHOOD”

by Nema

I'm entrusting the text of "The Priesthood—Parameters and Responsibilities" to the Kindly Editors of Mezlim in their wielding of the blue pencil sword. "The Priesthood" was published as a 22-page chapbook by Black Moon Publishing in 1985. Given the differences in type sizes and formats, I have no idea how much of it needs to be trimmed to fit. I'm guessing that less than half will remain; you can get the original from Black Moon at Box 19469, Cincinnati OH 45219-0469.

Eight years after its first appearance, it seems to be holding up well in the light of subsequent experience. The collapse of Communism in the former USSR and its satellites has ended the Cold War and its threat of mutual nuclear annihilation, but the legacy of radioactive pollution and nuclear arsenals lingers on. In addition, there remain many chemical toxins in the environment; the loss of many species of plants, animals and habitat; and, the socio-economic chaos of change. We are still at risk.

The Priestly responsibilities remain personal and global, with perhaps a bit more emphasis on World Magick. The personal, individual Priesting is still paramount, with and for whomever the Magickal Current brings your way. An Adept or Initiate may function as a Priest in various situations, even though they may not fully appreciate all the ramifications of that function.

Even though the way of Initiation is spoken of and presented as a linear system, it's diffuse and holistic, permeating your entire self simultaneously. The Mystical process of realization and the Magickal process of manifestation fuel each other's expansion and velocity. There are certain quantum gaps that mark definite stages of attainment, even though all the faculties we activate are ours from the beginning.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about Priesting is that it's not a mediation of the Divine to the human, nor a spigot for the delivery of or withholding of Divine grace. It's the proper way to live a life that belongs to the Universe and THAT from which it emanates.

The Priesthood is a condition of a soul on fire with love.

The Priesthood is a way of life demanded by a certain level of spiritual responsibility, a way of life that focuses action and non-action toward universal enlightenment.

Like any other course of action and non-action, the Priesthood deals with the many aspects of illusion, or Maya. However, a Priest lives to eliminate the veils of illusion for him/herself and others, to ever strive for a better approximation to truth.

We are in a new Aeon of Priesthood, a double Aeon of the Son and the Daughter. Today's Priesthood is a vocation to the work of unity. For some individuals, this vocation is evident from childhood as a growing natural interest in matters of the spirit. For others, like Saul of Tarsus, the call comes in a blinding moment of revelation. Perhaps, for the larger number of the spiritually aware, the call to Priesthood manifests as a course of action arising from one's own developing wisdom gained from progress along the Initiatory path.

No matter what method, the Priesthood arises, for its practitioners, as a choice beyond choices, a natural inevitability that cannot be denied. To investigate the nature of this condition, it's necessary to trace its evolution within the individual soul.

Some western Mystery schools or Orders have grades or degrees of attainment that are ranked into a number of divisions. There appear to be three major stages of

individual development: Initiate, Adept and Priest. These stages are cumulative rather than serial.

Initiation means beginning. In the specialized sense that's intended here, the process of Initiation begins with a profound dissatisfaction with conventional wisdom and the exoteric doctrines of established religions. There are too many unanswered questions and inadequate answers in the major western religions, philosophies and life-ways. The Initiate seeks knowledge, and through knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and transformation.

The Initiate's Will is to learn; the Adept's Will is to do.

Knowledge proceeds from the known to the unknown, so each of us begins with the basic facts of our own existence and experience. We know that at some point in our life we will die, and what happens beyond death is a mystery. We know that we experience intangible events and facts. We can observe our own mentation and reactions; we accept the reality of such abstractions such as love, beauty, truth and spirit.

We live a spiritual as well as a physical life. Our span of incarnation is finite, but our spirit is infinite. The sense of infinity creates the call to Initiation; answering that call is an act of joy.

We feel a growing certainty that there's more to life than meets the eye; more to living than we're taught in school, at home or in church. Determining to seek the Unknown is the first step in Initiation. Instinct leads us to books written by Initiates. We need to get a tangible entrance to our Path.

If the flow of Magickal Current brings solitude at the beginning, one develops into a voracious reader, tracking down leads and

references to further information. One searches out and finds occult shops, bookstores and groups of Initiates in the local environment.

It's not unusual for there to be peer-group blocs of Initiates in certain cities at certain times, who often find each other through occult shops. By "peer-group bloc" is meant a group of friends and acquaintances who share an interest in the occult sciences. These blocs often formalize their relationship or gestalt as a Coven, a Lodge, an Order, etc., for the purpose of sharing knowledge and performing group rituals.

Individuality is in no way compromised in the bloc; indeed, Initiates are usually rugged individualists in the extreme, and the unity of the Great Work doesn't preclude lively debate.

It's recommended that Initiates who work solitary balance solitude with personal participation in the Brotherhood of Initiates. It's always a good idea to check one's Work with one's peers; at any level of Initiation one can become unbalanced in one's development. The love of the Brotherhood demands truth in all dealings. An opinion honestly asked is honestly given, courageously listened to, impartially judged, and, if correct, applied.

Conversely, Initiates whose Work is mainly with a group should balance this activity with solitude in Temple, or better still, in the woods, fields, rivers, and mountains.

The Initiate's search for truth usually leads through a series of Ordeals, or learning experiences. A wise Initiate leans to anticipate Ordeals and make the needed self-corrections before the learning experience occurs. There is no virtue in pain.

When an Initiate achieves sufficient understanding through study and practice for generating his or her own rites, the level of Adept has been attained.

The performance of classical or traditional rituals is vital to the attainment of Adeptship. Just as painting students copy the works of the masters in order to place themselves in a creative condition similar to that of the masters, and to learn the secrets of the masters' techniques, so also does the Initiate re-create traditional rituals in order to place him/herself in a creative condition similar to that of the Adepts who generated and perfected the rituals, and to learn the secrets of those Adepts' techniques. Upon grasping the underlying principles of Magickal ritual, the Adept is enabled to create new and timely rites which are effective and efficient.

In a broad sense, Initiation deals with theory and knowledge, and Adeptship deals with practice. Of course, theory and practice are mutually assisting. An Initiate practices and an Adept theorizes; the distinction is one of emphasis.

The Initiate's Will is to learn; the Adept's Will is to do. One can only cease learning by adopting a blindness to events and their meaning. One can only cease doing by rendering one's actions chaotic and scattered.

There are dangers in Initiation and Adeptship.

A misplaced ego or domineering intellect can convince the Initiate that he/she has attained to the perfection of Art and need strive for excellence no longer. The

uncontrolled force of emotion can cause either Initiate or Adept to act in ways contrary to his/her ethical realizations.

For the new Initiate-Adept, there is the danger of relying too heavily on the information or advice of the Elder Brother or Sister. At times it is possible for one to begin following a person rather than the Path, and fall into the trap of a "cult of personality." We see this often in the disciples of famous gurus. The disciples become a means of support, both financial and emotional, for the guru, and the guru becomes a substitute for self-responsibility. There is little difference between a follower of a living guru and a devotee of established religions with established priesthoods.



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For those who are in the position of imparting information, there is the danger of becoming attached to the devotion of one's listeners. Respect and admiration from others is a slow poison, dangerous in the extreme.

It would seem obvious that those in a teaching position should be free of all attachments. One's responsibility toward one's listeners and to Truth is too great to give any place for the ego's wrongful manifestation.

Increasingly, the Adept perceives his/her Will and Work as aligning with, and therefore becoming, the flow of things, the Magickal Current, the Tao; and, increasingly, the Adept's main function

becomes that of removing obstacles to the manifestation of Tao-Teh. It seems to be that the only species capable of acting contrary to the flow of things is humanity—at least on this planet. Even demons follow natural law.

When the Initiate-Adept realizes that one's function consists of removing obstacles to Intelligence's reunion with Itself, when one perceives that opening the ways to Tao is necessary, sufficient and inevitable, then the Initiate-Adept arrives at the point of Priesthood.

A Priest is one who undertakes the responsibility of working in all possible ways for universal awakening, not ceasing until the reunion of Intelligence be completed. This same concept is phrased in the Boddhisattvic Vow: "I shall not cease from existence until every sentient being in the Universe in enlightened."

When one experiences the unity of Intelligence, one sees that the fragments of Intelligence, which manifest as individual beings of all kinds, are already/still united with the universal Intelligence and thereby with each other. Intelligence is integral. Even though most individuals are not consciously aware of this unity, it nevertheless provides the ground of being for all, and all things participate in it.

It is impossible to cause enlightenment for another shard of universal Intelligence. The individual must reach the experience of unity on his/her own, although it is possible to offer hints and clues, to point to the direction in which this experience lies. The Priest assists others in preparing for this experience, but in no way can the Priest give the experience to another. Each individual is his/her own Messiah; "salvation" can be earned, but not granted.

Intellectual agreement with the concept of the Priest's responsibility for universal enlightenment is not sufficient to sustain a lifetime of work and dedication. The vision of the unity of Intelligence must be experienced first-hand. This experience is

attained by means of hard work and perseverance in the task of removing obstacles to the vision.

The Priest functions in a number of ways. Perhaps the most important function is that of the Priest as living talisman of the entire human race. The vow of responsibility forges a Magickal Link between the Priest and the rest of the species. This link, based on profound love, enhances the influence of the Priest upon other people. As he/she lives and grows, so grows the spirituality of others. In a sense, the Priest is a pioneer, an explorer, a trailblazer. By accomplishing change within him/herself, the Priest opens the way for others to duplicate his/her accomplishments. Essentially, the opening of the way is achieved through direct talismanic action, i.e., doing something once, for the first time, makes it easier for it to be done again.

At the present writing, the human race does participate in the universal Intelligence through the "Racial Unconscious" as postulated by Jung. The talismanic link of the Priesthood operates through this Racial Unconscious as well as through the higher realms of pure spirit. Because of the deeper vision and greater power of the Priest, he/she has the ability to influence large numbers of his/her fellows; the influential flow from the mass of humanity to the Priest is of a lesser order, but is also real. There is a danger of falling back into a narrower and more primitive condition of reality should the Priest neglect his or her responsibilities of constant awareness and unflagging work.

The talismanic function obliges the Priest to strive for personal perfection at all times: The fate of the species depends on it. This does not mean, though, that the Priest should ever regard him/herself as a kind of Messiah or Savior, for such self-regard would reverse the effect of the Priestly work.

The Priest is not a Messiah or Savior; his or her function is not one of redemption or salvation, but of realization and evolution.

A Priest is a human among humans, motivated by enlightened self-interest. The sooner universal enlightenment is complete, the sooner the Priest will be free of the obligation of individual continuity and can resolve into pure undifferentiated Intelligence.

A second function of Priesthood is that of information-sharing. As mentioned earlier, the elder Brothers and Sisters share wisdom with the younger, the younger Brothers and Sisters share new points-of-view. At our present stage of evolution, the Priest shares information in ways suitable to his/her partners in dialogue.

Through his/her own experiments and experiences in self-knowledge, the Priest becomes ever more accurate at assessing the spiritual level of development of another person. From this assessment the Priest fashions and uses the most appropriate persona or Mask, through which he/she communicates with the other person. The Priest seems familiar, compatible, comfortable; the other person relaxes and opens in receptivity.

In addition to the talismanic and information-sharing function, the Priest performs Temple-work as a ritualist in order to augment sensitivity to the flow of the Magickal Current, to formally align his/her being with the Current, to add all the power and energy he/she is capable of channelling to the Current.

The Priesthood is a condition of a soul on fire with love.

The Priest and the rest of the race participate in the actual generation of the Magickal Current. The collective electromagnetic energy of the human nervous system imparts a particular signature-signal on the carrier wave of the flow of time and universal energy. The

force of our human signal returns amplified by its circuit of intergalactic space. Upon returning to Earth, the signal is received by all those with any degree of psychic sensitivity. The evolved signal is very attractive to those with clear vision. The sensitives begin to put the signal into practice, and the next pulse of the human signal is much stronger going in. Our physical/technological history grows exponentially, and so does the force of the evolved signal.

The ritualistic function of the Priesthood is as important as the other functions. A Priest's ritual technique differs from that of the Adept in that it is minimalist and often done in motionless silence.

The Priest functions as spiritual counselor, healer of souls, speaker of truth. He/she is an explorer who returns to tell of high adventure and wondrous visions, then works to help all interested listeners to benefit themselves for the journey. The Priest has experienced humanity's next step in evolution and from this experience works wholeheartedly for the rest of the race to take the step also.

The Priest functions as a warrior who battles restrictive dogmas in all their many guises. When appropriate, the Priest participates in and encourages the Outer political processes, doing whatever is possible to restructure the forms of society to better reflect the unity of Intelligence in the legislative process.

There is no such thing as resting on one's laurels or retirement in the Priesthood. It's truly a life's work, and more. Death itself is merely a short vacation—or sabbatical—that permits one to obtain a fresh and energetic vehicle through which to operate. An individual who has developed enough to see and embrace the Priesthood has also developed the strength of personal integration sufficient to survive intact through any number of deaths and births. To those who see personal survival as the antithesis of our course of returning to the

Nothingness from whence we came, it might be said that personal dissolution cannot be complete until all are able to release their hold on illusion. The unity of Intelligence prevents selective dissolution.

The Priesthood's task is to make the unity of Intelligence obvious to the whole of the human race, so that this unity can also prevent the nightmare of nuclear annihilation. We live in a crucial time; each individual is responsible for our continuity and development. The Priesthood is the cadre of those who have fully accepted this responsibility.

Every facet of life participates in the work of the Priest. No ordinary motivation could inspire total dedication to such an enormous task. Only the experience of the unity of Intelligence, the experience of participating in the universal pattern of Consciousness can enable one to actually love one's neighbor as oneself. Our neighbor is ourself in the unity of Intelligence, and much of ourself is in pain through ignorance of this fact.

The Priesthood is a condition of a soul on fire with love.

"For I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union."



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Servants Of the Light



School of Occult Science 1993 Workshop Schedule

The following workshops will be offered by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki:

Seattle, WA

April 3 - May 2 *Walking in Two Worlds* - Crossroads Learning Center - \$175. There is such a thing as real communication between "Us and Them" - it is MEDIATION. In this workshop Dolores goes into detail about the training needed to safely walk between the worlds.

San Francisco, CA

May 7-9 *The Magick of Dion Fortune* Isis Oasis - \$300 Includes lodging & meals. During this fascinating workshop, Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki will take you through an exploration of the rituals, meditations, and pathworkings contained in Dion Fortune's novels and text books. A special ritual based on the ritual's from Dion's books will take place Saturday evening.

Los Angeles, CA

May 14-16 *Egyptian Mysteries I* Astarta Conference Center - \$300 Includes lodging & meals (\$225 workshop only). The ancient Egyptians were Masters of Magic. Their priesthood had a training beyond anything before or since, and part still exists today. In this workshop we will explore the origin of Egypt and its Gods. A special ritual, "The Hymn to Isis, the Great Mother" will take place Saturday evening.

Guadalajara, Mexico

August 8-9 *"Magical Horizons"* - \$100 This workshop is open only to those who have completed the "First Steps in Ritual Workshop." Topics include: Empowering the Temple Altar, Bringing in the Power, Assumption of God-forms, The Old Religion In Modern Magic, Psychic Self-defence, The Changing Face of Magic in the 21st Century, and many more. Ritual drama presentation: The Judgement of Osiris.

Albuquerque, NM

May 21-23 *Walking in Two Worlds* Madonna Conference Center - \$275 includes lodging & meals (\$200 workshop only). There is such a thing as real communication between "Us and Them" - it is MEDIATION. In this workshop Dolores goes into detail about the training needed to safely walk between the worlds.

Atlanta, GA

May 28-30 *Egyptian Mysteries* Lenox Pointe - \$200. The ancient Egyptians were Masters of Magic. Their priesthood had a training beyond anything before or since, and part still exists today. In this workshop we will explore the origin of Egypt and its Gods. A special ritual, "The Hymn to Isis, the Great Mother" will take place Saturday evening.

New York, NY

June 4-6 *The Magick of Dion Fortune* NY Open Center. During this fascinating workshop, Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki will take you through an exploration of the rituals, meditations, and pathworkings contained in Dion Fortune's novels and text books. A special ritual based on the ritual's from Dion books will take place on Saturday evening. Please call the Open Center at (212) 219-2527 for more information.

SOL American Conference

"The Re-Membering of Osiris"

Phoenicia, NY

The first Servants Of the Light American Conference will be held at the Phoenicia Pathwork Center **August 5-8**. "The Re-Membering of Osiris," is the theme for the conference this year. The reuniting of the paths of the Western Mystery Tradition under the auspices of Great Isis. Seminars, pathworkings and rituals will be included. Co-hosts will be Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, SOL Director of Studies, and Adam Forrest, a senior Adept in a living branch of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This exciting conference is the start of a series designed to help bring Magic into the 21st century. This conference is open to everyone interested in magick and it's place within today's world.

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NEO-PAGAN SEMINARY

A PROPOSAL

by Alan Salmi

This proposal has been edited to allow it to appear in this issue in the space available, and does not contain the complete text of Mr. Salmi's proposal. -the Editor.

What the Neo-Pagan community needs is a Seminary devoted to the professional training of Wiccan/Pagan clergy. This paper will commit itself to consideration of several problems inherent in this, as well as showing that there is a need for the Seminary.

I. Pagans Current Need for Training

Pagans are already going to seminaries that are primarily Christian (or close to it, such as Unitarian Seminaries) for their training, thus showing an interest in that type of training.

One example of this is Christa Heiden Landon, D.Min. She attended the University of Chicago for her M.A. and Meadville Lombard Seminary (Unitarian-Universalist) for her D.Min. She is a founder of Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans and one of the people most active with Panthea (Pagan) Unitarian Church here in Chicago. There have been several other Pagans at Meadville (two of whom I've met) and there are others going to Starr King Seminary in California (where Starhawk teaches classes in ritual). There is a Qabalist who was at Meadville, Sam Webster, (*See article in this issue. -ed.*) but it's not known if he's finished. There is also a Wiccan in the Doctoral program in History of Religion at the University of Chicago Divinity School, but she's in the closet. So there are at least a few examples of Pagans active in Academia.

Some may argue that the small group format and personal training program of most Wiccan groups would overcome the need for seminary training. While Wiccans make up the vast majority of Pagans, there are many other traditions that might be interested in a seminary training program. There are many

people out there who would be inclined to a NeoPagan, but non-Wiccan, form of worship, just like the Greek or Roman temples (or Egyptian for that matter). Wicca isn't the only possible model of Pagan worship, just the most popular at the present time. Of course, someone coming to the Seminary would, as a matter of course, learn the diversity of models and it would be hoped that the Seminary would meet the scholarly expectations of those such as ADF and the Church of All Worlds, as well as, say third degree Gardnerians who may want to expand their training and understanding.

II. Pagan Ministry

A non-Pagan seminary is inadequate for training because of the special needs of our religion. These needs are outlined below.

A. Unifying Principles

While there is a large amount of variety in groups, certain values are familiar to all groups and many people can and do read the same material. A seminary would study all of this and give people the ability to go to their individual group and compare and contrast, as well as help organize worship for their own particular brand. Many Christian seminaries for instance, have people of several denominations and get along quite well. They look at things in wide perspective and don't teach particular dogma as much as how to study religion and practice it, whatever brand you may have.

While Neo-Paganism is a very broad term, encompassing several traditions, inclusion in the seminary would be very broad, but would essentially be aimed at those groups which had the following principles in common:

1. The Divine is an immanent force: Meaning that the numinous spiritual reality is not only transcendent but here in everyday reality.

2. Revelation through personal Gnosis and/or through Nature: This implies the priesthood of all believers, that special powers are not needed to contact the divine, although some may be more gifted in this than others.

3. Circularity of Time: This is closely connected to revelation through nature.

4. There are certain spiritual techniques for changing consciousness and/or material coincidences to bring about your will: Magick. What a Christian would call a technology of prayer is essentially spellcraft for a Neo-Pagan.

These practices and beliefs are what is meant by common values. More properly, they are ways of organizing our view of the world and they point to certain values from their metaphoric nature (e.g., a company who believes "business is war" will have very different behaviors and values than one that believes "business is a game").

B. Subject Matter Taught

One possible objection to a Seminary would be that it might become a base for the establishment of dogma. This would not necessarily be the case. Many religions (even Christian ones) exist without official dogma. Many seminaries, particularly of liberal churches, teach not so much their own dogma as how to think about and practice religion from a comparative viewpoint. They often have several different religions present and have to be sensitive to their viewpoints also. The Divinity School of the University of Chicago has Buddhists, Christians, Jews and a few closet Pagans. They all find excellent education in a comparative fashion.

A Seminary would not formulate dogma, merely study it (if it even existed in certain groups). Policy is a matter for individual groups and churches, not for seminaries. As for teaching spiritual practices it would hoped that there would be a practicum requirement, magical work, prayer, meditation programs, journal writing and such for all students, as well as the study and practice of rituals and how to deal with groups. A student could use the knowledge gained to work with their own

group, improving liturgy, organizing special functions, helping to form a Pagan school, or whatever the group wanted. It would be possible to find representatives from every major group to be on the Board of Directors in order to facilitate the input of everyone. Seminaries are for working clergy, as well as for scholars.

Special programs for people continuing their education would also be possible. Imagine someone was settled into their own group, didn't necessarily want a degree that was professional, but could take a summer off for intense study of ritual or mythology. The Seminary could well provide for that type of need.

While topics such as counseling skills, etc. that are taught to all seminary students would be included in the course of study, there would be particular emphasis on certain subjects useful to Pagan beliefs. Certain subjects would be included that would obviously not be included in the curriculum of an ordinary seminary. Topics would include: Mythology of the world's diverse religions, their differences and similarities; Ritual construction, liturgical theory and practice; Spellcraft, specific forms of change of consciousness and/or coincidence; History of Paganism, ancient and modern, with particular emphasis on scholarship and research of fact; Dealing with other religions (especially Christianity); New forms of organization and consensus building; New forms of weekly worship, as well as seasonal worship; Psychic skills, energy work; Divination; Specific courses such as Goddesses, Gods, sacred sexuality, tantra, hermeticism, etc.

C. Exclusion of Certain Groups

This is a difficult subject, but essentially, the Seminary would not be appropriate for groups that would not subscribe to the above mentioned general principles. Individual members would, of course, be able to study at the Seminary, but affiliation on an organizational level with, for instance, Temple of Set or Church of Satan would not be possible because of their explicit differences in viewpoint.

III. Interfaith Legitimacy

The legitimacy that a Seminary would add to the Neo-Pagan position in the community of religions and in the eyes of the law would be very useful in the long run. Various problems still continue to come up, not the least of which is custody battles over children because a parent is a Witch.

On a society wide level, being considered legitimate by other churches helps the Neo-Pagan community socially in areas of discrimination, etc. Please remember the situation with the Jesse Helms bill a few years ago when he tried to take away tax exempt status from Wiccan and Saranic Churches. Liberal churches flooded congress with letters of protest and the bill died quickly. This shows a certain level of social acceptance already, however, much more could be done to strengthen ties with liberal churches and to protect each other in adverse times.

While it is one answer to disappear again into the woodwork if the burning times come back, much gets lost that way to future generations. As Gwydion said "We are stronger than before!" Neo-Pagans don't have to hide!

IV. The Issue of Professional Clergy

A. Advantages Organizationally

Helping to establish a professional clergy would help Pagans to organize in a more effective way for community worship and the needs that can only be met by an organized community effort [insurance, Pagan Nursing Homes, childcare centers, private schools, graveyards (full of trees planted on the graves?), study groups, self help groups, etc.]. This would be one of the best arguments to having professional clergy. These kinds of efforts would require full time people who could devote themselves to the kind of projects that would help the community as a whole.

Organized efforts make for organized love, love that's shared in community, by rituals for their children, by funerals for their loved ones, by marriages, by classes and counseling and by

having that organization that they can turn to for support when they're being discriminated against. Many would want to go to a Pagan retirement home where their views would be accepted and they would be seen in their proper role as an elder with experience to be respected, instead of a body simply occupying space.

B. The Role of Clergy in Pagan Worship

With the current situation of unpaid clergy you will have some people who will be spending a vast majority of their non-work hours doing things for their circles/covens/groups. Unless measures are taken, leaders burn out or members grow resentful of the person in command for having all sorts of imagined power (when really they're just working for the benefit of the community). Certainly in ancient times the temples had full time Priests and Priestesses, and in medieval times the midwife was paid for her efforts. A paid clergy would allow some to devote their full time to the work of the Gods. It might also make some people appreciate all the time and effort it takes to run a group.

A Seminary presupposes a professional clergy which also supposes people who are willing to spend their lives working for just the sake of the God and Goddess. More people would be willing to do this if given the chance and the organizational structure to do so. Not many do now, the few that are well known are Otter and Morning Glory with CAW (who actually make most of their money from editing and artwork) and Selena Fox at Circle.

While some religions do use clergy as the intermediaries between the individual and the divine, most, in fact, do not. Many churches believe in individual revelation and personal contact with divinity, yet have professional clergy. Clergy can function in a variety of ways. Unitarian clergy are more like worker bees, helping to keep everyone active with their faith, no matter what their idea of faith is (one Unitarian Church has Pagans, agnostics, Christians and atheists in it). Wiccans have a priest and priestess conduct the rituals and guide the energy (as well as aspect the divinity themselves). Many get around the problem of excessive control from/by central figures by

rotating Priests and Priestesses, thus showing that Neo-Pagans can use new and different forms of organization and worship. Trained professional clergy would be able to help in these efforts to seek new, non-hierarchical models. In certain churches, the ministers are prevented from conducting services past a certain number each year, the congregation does the rest. This model is applicable to Neo-Pagan groups also.

C. The Problem of Money

Many are uncomfortable or even believe strongly (taken from some of Gardner's Craft Laws) that clergy should not be paid. Obviously, those groups would have little to no interest in establishing full time clergy and would continue to work on a small group basis. Even small groups, as stated above, might have members interested in short-term study to enhance their training.

However, a Seminary implies paid clergy. The difficulty with money is in separating the prevalent culture's values (in other words the Protestant work-ethic money culture) from the emerging values of Neo-Paganism. Some of the Protestant culture believed that wealth was a sign of God's favor, that poverty was a problem that developed from a sinful nature. Others saw money as being a "worldly" trap that one must be careful of ("the root of all evil"). This worldly trap then becomes a repressed force that may come back to haunt one (a shadow force in Jung's terms). Whatever the viewpoint, money was viewed as something either to control and have as a gift from God or as something to avoid as being of the devil. This love/hate relationship clearly shows in the current problem of television evangelists and their money gathering efforts. However, whichever the belief, both cases see money as an objective reality separate from spiritual things, in other words, something profane or mundane.

Pagans typically believe that money is connected magickally with the element of Earth, with material things. One of the key concepts of magick is the principle of balance, especially balance of the elements as they relate to our lives. While Earth is only one of four, it's still important as being the base from

which everything is worked, especially since we happen to be incarnated in the material plane. Earth and earth energy are not profane, but sacred, not separate, but part of life and spirituality.

Sadly, there seems to be some antagonism in the Pagan community against those of wealth or those simply well off. Part of this is due to the values (which they believe conflict) of trying to maintain a spiritual life, not being bogged down in material things. Part of this is also due to the rebellion of Pagans against the dominant culture's values overemphasizing material things. However, this antagonism against money and wealth is NOT a Pagan value.

The basic point is, since Neo-Paganism shouldn't have this love/hate relationship with money and material things (we don't seek to have dominion over the earth, just live on it), Neo-Pagans may be far less likely to have the shadow aspect of money appear in clergy. While no one is perfect and they may become unbalanced in this area, seeing money as energy and a process, instead of a thing, would certainly be a perspective that will help in the future. This problem could easily be worked into the curriculum of the Seminary, with special emphasis on the above issues.

V. Rapid Growth of the Neo-Pagan Community

The growing number of Pagans requires a shift in the present ways of training people in the faith. Estimates range from 100,000 to 250,000, with a possible doubling time of five years. Neo-Pagans are at least as numerous as Unitarians (100,000) and possibly more so, especially since a lot of Unitarians are now turning Pagan. The recent Starwood festival, which had 1,000 people in attendance is a case in point. It probably did not draw one in five Pagans in the United States. While 250,000 may be high, it would not be unreasonable to estimate that there are about 100,000 now who would describe themselves as Pagans. That would have put 1 in 100 Pagans at Starwood, a more reasonable guess, allowing for numbers on the West coast who couldn't come because of distance, etc.

Festivals are having larger and larger numbers of people coming to them; magazines such as *Magickal Blend*, *Gnosis* and such which would have been unthinkable a few years ago because of lack of a large enough readership base, now exist and are putting out frequent issues with good writing.

All this means that there will be a need to minister to and help with the spiritual education of a larger number of people than existing systems can now handle. Indeed, much is done by individuals themselves and, while self study is useful and should always be admired, a trained hand can cut through much of the poor quality material that exists in published form. A Seminary and professional clergy would help to deal with the influx of people to the Neo-Pagan community.

VI. Influx of Other Clergy to Neo-Paganism

With the growth of Neo-Paganism and its literature, clergy from other religions may well be interested in converting. The existence of a Seminary and a professional clergy in the movement would allow for these people to use their talents for their new beliefs and add considerable experience to the Neo-Pagan movement. This point would doubtless raise some concern from people about the issue of the sincerity of those coming in, and a host of other issues as well.

VII. Networking Goals

1. Representatives from each of the major groups (Gardnerian, ADF, Church of All Worlds, etc.) could be brought together to develop a curriculum that would meet their ordination requirements. These representatives would function either as a long standing curriculum committee or be based directly on a Board of Directors model to help make the approach of the school balanced among major viewpoints.

2. As stated previously, the Seminary could serve as a study center with certification in various topics for those groups not wanting a professional clergy but needing advanced training. Certification could be imagined in areas such as large and small group liturgy,

comparative study of mythology, theory and practice of magick, and pastoral counseling.

3. The Seminary would serve as an organizational point for referral to different groups and for groups to work together for common causes.

4. Religious scholars could use the Seminary as a study center for advanced work in ancient religion or in modern day Neo-Paganism. Historians of religion from advanced institutions might be able to use the Seminary as a resource for their study, thus gaining valuable ties to other academic institutions.

VIII. Problems in Developing and Maintaining of the Seminary

1. Where does the money come from?

Money problems wouldn't necessarily be insurmountable, but would take some time and effort. If Circle Sanctuary could acquire enough money over the period of some years for their land, with enough backing of the Pagan community at large, it may be possible to put together sufficient initial money.

A correspondence course to start would be a possibility, but it would have its own troubles, not the least of which would be difficulties with accreditation. Also, materials and faculty for correspondence courses have to be set up totally differently. If one wants a full time Seminary, then one should aim for that.

A Seminary could not be opened quickly; about 5-7 years would be a good target. This would allow for time to create the necessary critical mass for support. As an example, in Chicago there exists Panthea, the first Unitarian Universalist Pagan church. The vast majority of the people there are under 30. That church has a budget of about \$18,000 a year, supported by Chicago-area Pagans. They are only a few years old and continue to grow, having just added Sunday school classes. This phenomena points to the possibility of larger structures in the Neo-Pagan community, with a Seminary certainly in the realm of possibility.

2. Where would the students find jobs?

It would be hoped that the initial students would be able to form and/or go back to groups that would be able to support them as full time clergy. If the timing of the Seminary is worked out well enough, the community will be large enough to support them upon graduation. A particular challenge, and an important part of the curriculum, would be to develop organizational skills for starting new groups based on a professional model of clergy.

If the Neo-Pagan movement develops enough in the time between the initial starting of the Seminary (5-7 years) and graduation of the first students (in three years), there should be enough critical mass to start formal groups around the country.

3. What specific curriculum/degrees would be offered?

The base of any seminary is the Master's in Divinity degree, a three year degree that offers training in theology, ritual, history, interpretation of scripture, education (preaching), and organizational development (how to run a church). All these are real needs in the Neo-Pagan community, but, obviously the emphasis would be different.

Other degrees that are commonly offered are short-term Master's degrees in Religious Studies (1-2 years), Religious Education, and advanced degrees in Divinity (Doctor of Divinity), Ministry (D.Min.), Theology (Th.D.) and the like.

4. Where would it be located?

As for location, one would have to have the Seminary in a large metropolitan area. The possibility of combining resources with other seminaries exists in a metropolitan area. Seminaries often share libraries, etc., as well as classes. In Chicago, there is an affiliated group of seminaries that offers a joint catalog of courses that are recognized by all the different schools.

Because of the needs of Pagan students, trips to the country to work with nature, camping, vision quests, etc. would also be set up. Students should be encouraged to

maintain the connection with nature and to look to it for inspiration even in the midst of academic study in the city.

5. Would it be affiliated with any particular denomination or would it be free standing?

This would most likely be settled by whomever gets the funding and/or organizational backing for the project. Even if a seminary is affiliated with one denomination, the curriculum could be wide enough to attract the rest of the Neo-Pagan community. In fact, it would have to be, because no single denomination would be large enough to support a Seminary at this time.

6. Would accreditation be possible?

It is relatively easy to have a school legally accredited to give degrees in a number of areas by the state in which it resides. A state accredited school has legally recognized degrees; however, to be taken seriously by the academic community, a school needs regional accreditation by the appropriate regional body. Regional accreditation would take some doing, but would not be impossible. One would have to meet certain standards (of curriculum, etc.), but with teachers of (mostly) Master's degrees and above, most accrediting bodies would be willing to accept such a school.

In fact, in the Chicago area, there is an association of theological schools that might be able to accept students into their classes for exchange credit. This is frequently done in the larger centers in the country. As a case in point, Starr King Theological Seminary (Unitarian Universalist) is very small. Students take classes throughout the Bay area to meet the requirements of Starr King, since the institution can't offer that many classes per quarter.



THE PRIEST AND PRIESTESS

by Phaedron.

Man (meaning humanity; both male and female) is a creation and model of the universe. Being part of existence, mankind shares the same properties. These forces of nature exist within each individual.

The priest and priestess relate the forces of Creator to the world by personifying and utilizing the powers of nature. Not all magickal groups have the luxury of both a physical priest and priestess. However, every group must contain the priest and priestess energy. This is mandatory.

To ascertain the higher and profound particulars of the priest and priestess, the total concept must be established.

Both officers "imitate" nature. Both are serious, respected representatives of God. Although many self-appoint themselves to such high attainment, these offices are very rarely bestowed, when genuine. The aspirant understands that "God" is all the "gods" and "goddesses", together. Those who regard only the "goddess" or "god" are ill-informed and invite severe imbalances.

The phenomena the magickian works with are both active and passive. Both are essential and complements of each other. Together they comprise the whole. Too much activity prevents the magickian from being able to receive that which is invoked. Too much passivity prevents the magickian from actively pursuing that which can and should be obtained. The current intellectual concept of "active" or "passive" is merely foolish social stigma.

The attained magickian has properly established the inner balance of his or her

nature. Such balance is explained in the Magus card. The officer who operates alone is able to invoke and receive, but when there is the availability of having both a priest and priestess, they can operate as one single unit. This situation is explicitly shown in the Art card.

The priest is the point (microcosm) within the circle (macrocosm) that is the priestess. He is activity while she is manifestation. He desires to expand, radiating outward in all directions. She desires to consolidate to a finite point. The priest disseminates life into the priestess who will develop it into one single form.

The priest is the expounder of mysteries. Yet no one may receive Mother Nature's mysteries unless Isis (the primeval goddess, herself) consents to raise her "veil" which (ordinarily) conceals these mysteries. Thus, the priestess is the true initiator ¹, and the priest the true "teacher". The aspirant must be deemed worthy to be granted entrance to the "circle". (Much is elaborated about this "discovering" process in "The Practica Arcanum" as well as the Monographs of The International Academy Of Hermetic Knowledge.)

The question often arises concerning the priest and priestess's relations with the aspirants (students, members, etc.). The Hermetic system teaches that he is the embodiment of wisdom while she is the expression of understanding. As the priest force invokes an energy, the priestess force manifests it. Together they are like opposite poles of a battery, and in the conjoining of the two, this "battery" of magick is developed. The aspirant in such a situation is fortunate. Neither officer (in this system) engages in sexual relations with the student.

Why? Because outside affiliations can drain the battery. And what would be the benefit for all if the battery is drained, anyway? (Some organizations differ in this regard and find it beneficial to engage the officers with the members during some ceremonies.)

Found in the upper levels of Hermetic magickal attainment, however, is recorded the position of two complementary priestesses. It was said that these represented the Maerti twins (Isis-life force; and her twin sister Nephthys-the giver of form to that life force).

Briefly, here is the formula: There are four "worlds" or levels of existence. The first is Divine/active/secret. The second is creative/passive/amorphous. The third is intellectual/active/cognizant. The fourth is physical/passive/receptive. God is the first world. One priestess is the senses of the second world. Her compliment is the priest of the third world, of knowledge. The bearer of manifestation is the other priestess of the fourth world. (For those of you knowledgeable in alchemy, this is the marriage and transmutation formula of the court cards.) It is the choice of the Master of the lodge as to whether or not to employ this historical system. Often this is not feasible in today's modern world.

What does each officer do? The priest teaches the literal/applied facets of magick and is the link between "esoteric" and "exoteric" ². The priestess instills those intangible mysteries. While he is accessible to very few, she is the expression of all that is mysterious. As he is the supreme interpretation of the sun, she is the supreme interpretation of the moon. He contains the magick; she contains nature's mystery!



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It is said, again according to the ancient texts, that no one approaches the priest without first approaching the priestess. As he is the disseminator of mysteries, she is that which receives the seeker and, therefore, the link to him and those mysteries. Thus, both officers nurture the student in their different ways.

The priest is the custodian of the heart of the organization and its "link to the Superiors". She is the custodian of its relationship to the outer world. He annoints and passes power on. She cleanses and builds. He charges the form that she gives. The organization uses him to bring forth, and her to admit that which the organization wills.

In our Hermetic system of ceremonial western magick, attainment occurs by mastering the sephiroth on the Tree Of Life. A sepherah (sephiroth, pl.) is the

energy of any form of manifestation. There are ten sephiroth. The priest (called Hierophant) must be master of at least the first six sephiroth inclusive of the sixth called Tiphareth. Tiphareth means "balance", and is also the state where one has knowledge and use of his or her own true Will. Connecting the sephiroth are 22 "paths" represented by the tarot trumps. The paths symbolize the forces of nature which manifest change. For example, the rising of the Nile is a change providing irrigation. Yet the force that causes it to rise is unseen. The spreading of its waters can be called the priest force. The reason it rises can be called the priestess force. The two officers are proficient in the balance of both.

The priestess force is attributed to two places on the Tree Of Life. The "outer" priestess is the physical embodiment of the ultimate priestess—the goddess, Mother Nature herself. She is attributed to the intersection of the two paths assigned to the Art card and the Tower card. Art is the process of transcendence using that which the priest has invoked. The Tower is the connecting path between Hod (intellect) and Netzach (senses). The "inner" priestess corresponds to the eleventh path on the Tree, directly linking god/Kether and the supernal triangle to the Hierophant.

Students approach the mysterious Lady who symbolizes nature, to request entrance to the chamber of the Hierophant. The Hierophant may consent to teach them or not. Ironically, the mysteries he represents are those of Nature herself that originally welcomed the aspirant!

(1) See *Mezlim*, Vol. IV, Iss. 1 on Initiation.

(2) Inner, hidden working of nature and its outer physical manifested existence, respectively.



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MAGICIANS, PRIESTS AND THE NEW AEON

by Richard Kaczynski

Whether you call it the New Age, New Aeon, Age of Aquarius, Atomic Age or Information Age, we are living in rapidly changing times. Nobody knows yet where this surge of change will lead. As New Aeon spokesperson Aleister Crowley wrote in 1944: "Many people, most perhaps, have not yet mastered the Osiran formula and, of course, it still works and has in fact to be used for nearly everything by most people. But what we need is a genius to work out the dynamics of the formula of Horus. Of this I am, for all practical purposes, totally ignorant."

- Letter to W. B. Crow, 31 July 1944,
Binder 24, Warburg Institute, London

Fifty years later, some trends have definitely emerged. They turn up in books the way hot new self-help techniques spawn volume after volume. They spread over festivals and gatherings like the smoke from huge bonfires. They change individuals in the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways a new hairstyle or wardrobe can alter the way you behave. Only time will tell whether these ideas go the way of leisure suits and love beads, but I think they point to a fundamental change in the way we work our magick.

The Nature of Magick

Absolute vs. Relative Morality

Take, for example, the motto popularized by Crowley: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

Although it literally says that each of us ought to find our Will (or purpose in life) and work exclusively in that direction, it implies that each of us has a unique moral code defined by our Will; so long as we all follow that Will in our conduct, we ought never to conflict with others. A similar sentiment appears in the Wiccan rede, "An it harm none, do what you will." These exemplify a philosophical shift toward moral relativism, which means each member of the community has a personal code which, so long as it interferes with nobody else's liberty, is valid and deserves respect. The book *Megatrends 2000* likewise notes a shift in thinking toward greater individualization as does, in a sense, the debate about "victimless crime", i.e., if there's no victim, how is there a crime? This is a far cry—even a long distance call—from the regimented morality of the Ten Commandments and Seven Cardinal Sins of ages past.

Hierarchy vs. Network

Handfasted to moral relativism is a shift away from hierarchical power structures in favor of networks. Since moral relativism requires a *laissez faire* approach to the conduct of others, it also requires the acceptance of every person's magical experiences and claims as legitimate. (Within each tradition, however, there are guidelines to determine what is a reasonable claim.) The dismantling of hierarchies was a cornerstone of the Bate Cabal in the 1970s, and has stood the test of time. One advantage of this approach is that it removes the Old Aeon's paternalistic power structure, which bloats and distends the ego

over high attainments.

Since all paths are legitimate under this New Order, the power base now comes from networking, as predicted on the mundane level in *Megatrends*. Networking has long been the hallmark of paganism, and its spirit is reflected by networks like Circle and the Metaphysical Alternatives Group Information Center. As Margot Adler observed in *Drawing Down the Moon*, paganism differs from other religions in that it has no doctrine or centralized power structure; instead of proselytizing or seeking converts, pagans seek contacts with other groups.

Networking implies that modern magicians should become well-rounded by sampling the variety of paths available, rather than hiding in an intellectual fortress. Fortunately, the variety of books, festivals and organizations out there makes it easy to make new contacts on both intellectual and social levels.

With *Megatrends 2000* noting a coming shift toward global lifestyles—with world cultures diffusing and influencing each other in much the same way, I suppose, we've seen world music emerge—networking also suggests that magick is moving toward synthesis of all systems into flexible “global” traditions. This has certainly been the case with emerging hybrids like Native American Wicca, pagan Christianity, Voodoo tarot and the like, and is ultimately the goal of comparative methods like tables of correspondences.

Reductionistic vs. Holistic

In a networked system, every individual is an integral part of the whole, yet that whole operates as a system greater than the sum of its parts. This idea emerged in

Gestalt psychology, systems theory, communications, Gaia, complexity, and other scientific fields only in this century. As it enters into community-based prevention strategies, the result is a stunning folk-wisdom approach: Want to prevent alcohol abuse in your town? Be nice to that waitress; that way, she won't go home and yell at the kids, who in turn go to their friend's house, hide behind the garage, and drink.

The implications for magick are great. We've all heard the Hermetic maxim “*Quod superius, quod inferius*”; science is now coming to the same conclusion. As part of a system (or, more likely, many systems), we are empowered to effect change in the interconnected spheres of our existence: Personal, social, political, global and magical. And the more the members of the system work together, the faster the systemic change (a sound basis for group ritual).

Secrecy vs. Disclosure

Another popular tradition of the Old Aeon which has taken a beating as of late is secrecy. “Truth” used to be a prize which teachers guarded jealously, reserved only for the most deserving and persistent students and protected from the prying eyes of the profane. It was also a basis of power over others, enforcing the student-teacher relationship. Times have changed, however. In a networked system, the student-teacher relationship yields to an exchange of ideas between colleagues. The secrets of the Golden Dawn, O.T.O., Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Witches—you name it—have been published. Magic can be kept secret in today's world no more than British royalty can conceal its indiscretions from the ever-watchful eyes of the press. And why should spiritual truths be hoarded? Anthropologist Joan Halifax has noted that

even among ancient shamanistic traditions, there is a growing sentiment that the time of secret teachings is past.

Difficult vs. Easy Attainment

It would be interesting to count how many magicians claim they've crossed the Abyss, channelled a divine writing, or even spoken the magical word of this (or some other) Aeon. Surely all these people can't be Secret Chiefs, Masters of the Temple, or Magi.

Or can they? (Cue the sound of the Old Aeon Guard moving restlessly.)

In the middle ages, the highest attainment the average magician could work toward was the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, as described in *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*. This contact with one's genius or inner self is attributed to Tiphareth on the Tree of Life (the sixth sphere counting up from ten). Attainments beyond that were reserved for truly exceptional and advanced souls: the Christs, Buddhas and Mohammeds of history. In the 1800s, the idea of "Secret Chiefs" or "Mahatmas" spread to the West, suggesting that a council of souls—so advanced on the Tree of Life that they didn't even have physical bodies—supervised the spiritual development of the human race. Similarly, the Golden Dawn had to devise new rituals for the Adept grades as they found themselves moving beyond the veil of Tiphareth. That Golden Dawn maverick Aleister Crowley bucked the system further by claiming that he, a flesh and blood being, had crossed the Abyss to the three highest grades on the Tree of Life; and he said that anyone else could do it, too.

(The Old Guard murmurs to itself in horror.)

Today, magicians routinely take the Oath of the Abyss and the Oath of the Magister Templi, and *voltigeurs* hop around the backside of the Tree of Life without the ego-crushing consequences of generations past. It's a time when Qlippothic pathworkings are described as "fun". Are they all kidding themselves into thinking they've achieved something they haven't? The similarity of peoples' experiences suggests not. Besides, it's not our place to question the attainment of others, remember? We must conclude that higher grades are becoming easier to attain, thereby devaluing the power structure of systems of attainment and driving those hungry for new experiences to explore new traditions. Think of the phenomenon as a magical analogue of Rupert Sheldrake's theory of "formative causation": The more people cross the Abyss, the more it effects our collective experience and the easier it becomes for others.

At this point, the Old Aeon Guard revolts: "Wait just a minute! The Abyss experience is necessary to destroy the ego." True, the ego must be dealt with because it impedes certain types of spiritual growth; but then again, we've also dispensed with the power structure which tends to inflate it. Next.

"A Magus only comes around once every 2,000 years!" Untrue. Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed, if one accepts them as Magi, appeared in close proximity. Next.

"How can you have all those Magi running around proclaiming the Word of the Aeon?" Easy: Since every person's path is unique, they are uttering the word which destroys and recreates their own personal universe. As we've determined, nobody's moral law is for everyone. All these Words of the Aeon and channelled Holy Books that keep sprouting up in occult circles are

intended for the magician's private consumption, not as the basis for global conduct: Even *The Book of the Law* is largely devoted to information specifically for its recipient. (Likewise, any "holy book" is bound to contain some universal truths.) With the Seth, Ramtha and other books out there, it's obviously become easier for people to channel writings. The trick is in trying not to foist one's personal instructions upon others.

Ideals vs. Needs

In the 1950s, psychologist Abraham Maslow changed the way psychologists understood human motivation by introducing his "hierarchy of needs". Simply put, Maslow said we all have priorities in life. Basic needs like food and shelter almost always take precedence over the quest for finer things in life like love and spirituality. The practical implication is that magicians should make sure their basic needs are covered before reaching for spiritual heights. If you don't have a job, make getting one the object of your rituals. (Just be careful you don't get greedy and lose sight of your ultimate goal and worry only about things.)

Accompanying this view is a new attitude toward the material world, which was traditionally the source of all evil, suffering and sin: *Sabbe pi dukkham* says the Buddhist, renouncing possessions as the cause of sorrow and reincarnation. Christianity likewise views natural responses like sex and jealousy to be bad—physical instead of heavenly—and encourages an ascetic stance. In occultism, all magick dealing with the physical plane is dubbed "low", resulting, in part, in the poor pagan stereotype. The New Aeon views the physical world in a more positive light. It says that there's nothing wrong with the pleasures of this physical world so long as we

don't lose sight of the spiritual.

"Ah", the Old Guard, not yet completely banished, interjects, "but using magick for material benefit may be taking that same thing from somebody else. Remember 'The Monkey's Paw'?" This would be true in the closed system view of the old age, but newer economic theories postulate an infinite pool of resources: If I use magick to get a job, then I have money to pay the grocer, my landlord, my gas attendant, and my taxes. This, in turn, puts more money into the system so that the grocer can hire a new cashier or stockboy, and so on down the line, thus making the pool of opportunities larger for everyone. Thus, using magick to help tend to mundane details of your daily life helps the general community.

The Practice of Magick

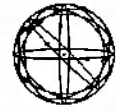
Tithe: Deific vs. Communal

So, now that you've evoked the spirit of Jupiter and asked for a job, how do you settle your debt to the spirit? In bygone and herestill times, people have either tithed to their church or offered sacrifices/oblations to the deity. If the new aeon has taken us away from centralized power structures, there will be no organizations to which one can tithe. Similarly, the consensus is that, in this age, there is no need for sacrifices as in the distant past. What to do?

The holistic worldview holds the answer: Return those resources to the system. If a ritual for prosperity brings you money, spend it in your community (magical or domestic). While it may cost a little more, it keeps your community alive. If you live selfishly, then the system will work no better than trickle-down economics (which counts on big




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Magick: Authoritarian vs. Cooperative

Another shift in emphasis has been on our relationship to the powers that be. Magicians used to exorcise, compel, bind, threaten, command and banish spiritual beings (which must have felt to them like being bossed around by a tadpole). Increasingly, magicians are leaving such paternalistic attitudes in favor of inviting, asking, thanking and excusing entities, showing them more of the respect they deserve. [The implications of this approach must be tested and examined further, however; less refined entities may not respond well to polite society.]

Asceticism: Abstinent vs. Sated

Early in his career, Crowley parted ways with the traditional requirement for magicians to remain pure during a magical retirement. In Judeo-Christian culture, which is simultaneously obsessed yet repressed about sex, this took the form of abstinence (sex, after all, being dirty). Impulse control, to be sure, is an absolutely essential discipline for the magician. However, Crowley, satyr that he was, found it more expedient to simply satisfy the animal instinct for sex and return to spiritual work than to have this hunger constantly gnawing at him. This shift in approach is reflected in the life positive morality of the New Aeon: Without sex, there would be no Child.

The Child

This new age has been assigned by some to the Crowned and Conquering Child, and there is everywhere evidence of a shift in this direction. Ever since Ariès showed everyone that children were more than just little adults, attention has turned

increasingly toward childhood. Labor laws and social programs were geared to protect children; psychologists from Freud to Spock have emphasized the importance of those formative years; and, most recently, pop psychology has emphasized the importance of each of us recognizing and reclaiming our Inner Child. And just as those individuals who were hippies in the 60s are now moving their ideals up the corporate and political ladders, so will the children of magically-oriented parents bring those values into adulthood and thereby change the world, a world in which we will be the ancestors they look back on and (hopefully) respect.

Conclusion

These are some ways in which the theory and practice of magick are changing as we advance into the New Aeon. There are certainly others I've missed, some I've taken for granted, and others which haven't even taken hold yet. Some may go the way of fads, others will go the way of tradition. Either way, changes will result. These are exciting times to be living.



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES OF THE FUTURE

By Donald Michael Kraig

It has been suggested by some that the rise of Christian Fundamentalism in America in the late '70s and '80s came as a direct response to the massive societal changes of the '60s and early '70s. While there has been no sociological study made confirming this hypothesis, it certainly has a high degree of likelihood. To many people the parade of history is a straight line. I see it more as a spiral which repeats patterns on different levels. When a generation is known for a certain set of behavior patterns (and I am writing here in sociological terms—individuals, of course, may either go with the pattern or against it), the following generation frequently opposes it. The end result, tends to be neither the original pattern or its opposition, but rather an amalgamation of both. In philosophical terms this is known as the Hegelian dialectic: thesis—antithesis—synthesis.

Putting this into concrete terms we can look at just one attitude of the '60s and early '70s: "Let's help people in need." It started with the Peace Corps and the share-what-you-have attitude among the counter-culture, the so-called "hippies." As we moved into the '80s, this had changed to a "me first!" attitude. We are just now seeing the birth of the synthesis of the two, and only the future will determine how the synthesis will evolve.

Of all the changes which created a response, perhaps the most important one was the change in sexual mores. This was a direct result of two things: a response to the asexual '50s and the freedom that the birth control pill allowed women who wished to explore their own sexuality. Perhaps more than anything it was the sexual revolution of that period which gave rise to the Christian Fundamentalism that is still rampant today. Many televangelists constantly berate what they consider to be the evils of the free expression of sexuality. Others have created their own monster, a mythical satanism, which is responsible for sexual child abuse, sex orgies and sexual practices which they condemn (psychologists would see their denunciations as forms of repression of their own inner desires). Although they may protest, Fundamentalist Christians are in the process of "demonizing" sex.

Unfortunately, they are not the only ones to have done this. The new moral conservatism of the past 15 years has resulted in a confusing blend of "conservaliberalism" when it comes to sex. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the mass media. Sexual images are used to sell everything from shaving cream to motorcycle handlebars. In the movies, nudity (primarily female nudity showing the sexism that exists in that industry) is rampant. The nudity frequently is a precursor to sexual activity which is hidden in shadows or under covers and lasts for mere seconds lest the film receive the dreaded, money-losing "X" or "NC-17" rating. The apparent liberalism (nudity) is blended with conservatism (hiding the sex act and having such a "dirty thing" only take a few seconds on the screen). The mechanicalness of "adult films" (certainly a misnomer—how can stupid plots, bad acting, bad dialog and terrible direction be adult?) is no improvement.

Further, our society's desire for instant gratification has resulted in the overuse of antibiotics. The result has been increasingly strong diseases that are resistant to the current strain of disease-fighters. Many people do not know that the current strength of antibiotics is many times stronger than those of just a few years ago. The development of such stronger antibiotics has been necessary to fight the stronger pathogens which have developed as a result of the overprescribing of antibiotics. This is a vicious circle. New strains of diseases, most notably tuberculosis, are making a comeback and are highly resistant to many treatments.

But the true scourge of our time, the plague of the '80s and '90s (so far), is AIDS. Because one of the modes of contacting the disease is through sexual activity, AIDS has played right into the hands of the Fundamentalists and the neo-conservatives.

As I write this I have good news about this terrible disease. First, it seems quite likely that there will be a vaccine against AIDS in the near future. If we treat this like we treated polio, AIDS can become a terror of the past. Second, although some scientists believe that there will never be a "cure" for AIDS (I personally debate the use of the term "never" in scientific thought), it should be pointed out that AIDS never killed anyone. Rather, AIDS allows the body to be attacked by other diseases and it is these diseases which harm the body. Many scientists believe that we will soon have ways of stopping the weakening of the immune system caused by AIDS. The result will be that although a

person might still have AIDS, he or she may not be effected by it and may not suffer the terrible current results of that disease. It may acquire a level of importance similar to Genital Herpes, another disease which can be controlled but which never goes away.

I do not mean to imply that this is a "done deal." We still need education, understanding and research to fully overcome AIDS. What I am saying is that in the near future AIDS will not be the force that it is today in society.

Neo-conservatives, Fundamentalist Christians and a lack of understanding of AIDS have helped to fuel the neo-sexual-conservatism that is expressing itself in all levels of society. I have even seen the growth among the occult community of what I call the "Prude Pagans." I do not debate their right to have their own beliefs and follow their own practices—more power to them. But to make claims that Pagans never have rituals in the nude and never have sexual rites (except in private with their own, long-term partners) is historically false. Their existence shows how the neo-sexual-conservatism has invaded even the most unlikely of places.

But with the coming end of the threat of AIDS, and the end of the "me-generation" as marked by the symbol of the election of a liberal rather than a conservative to the Presidency, the movement of history along the spiral is reaching a new level. I believe that when the threat of AIDS ends we will have a second sexual revolution, one which makes that of the '60s look amateurish by comparison.

Many of the adolescents today are children of those who grew up during the days of the Doors, Hendrix, Joplin and far more sexual freedom. They are aware of what their parents did and would like to do the same. They see sexuality portrayed (poorly) on TV and on film. They are constantly enticed, yet many fear sexual activity due to the possibility of contracting AIDS. They are told to "just say no."

To all of the Christian Fundamentalists and neo-conservatives out there who are trying to legislate the norms of sexual behavior, watch out! In a few years a new level of sexual freedom is going to break out.

At this point you are probably wondering exactly what the above discussion of philosophy, sociology and history has to do with the priests and priestesses of the future. It is because this article is a call to men and women who feel a desire to help society move on its historical spiral to prepare for the change that is going to come. In the first sexual revolution of the '60s-'70s, people were told that

they were entitled to express their sexuality and experience orgasmic pleasure. If the second, coming sexual revolution is to move society to a higher level—physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually—those who wish to be teachers must prepare themselves to spread the sexual gnosis frequently hidden in occult orders and among Tantrikas.

An angry poet of the '60s wrote, "The revolution will not be televised." Similarly, the coming sexual revolution will not be sold at \$300 weekend seminars. The person(s) using the name Lao Tsu wrote that the Tao which can be described is not the true Tao, then went on to write page after page describing what is called Taoism. Similarly, although many people have written about the sexual gnosis, the fact is that the transcendent experience which may be reached as a result of sexuality must be experienced. Millions of words have been written about love. A person can only know love, however, by experiencing it.

I urge those who wish to help society by becoming the priests and priestesses of the coming sexual revolution to begin preparing now. Read all of the books you can on sexuality, psychology, philosophy and magick, especially the magick of the sexual gnosis. Experiment with your own energies. Discover where your predecessors were right and where they were wrong.

The priestesses and priests of the coming sexual revolution will not be those who have large followings. Instead, they will teach and transform their partners one at a time. As you anoint your partners with the sexual gnosis, request—no, require—that they share what you have taught them with any future partners. In this way, the wisdom will transform society one person at a time.

Begin with yourself. Learn about the psycho-sexual energy which manifests during erotic excitation. Learn to work with it, control it, expand it and put it to use. You may learn the techniques from books or verbal instruction, but you will not know it until you do it.

Continue your studies and practices. When the second revolution comes you can be at the vanguard, helping to direct society to a happier, freer and more spiritual life. The last sexual revolution had no real direction, no real leaders. The priests and priestesses of the next one must be ready to both direct us and meet our needs.

Take thy will and fill of love when and with whom you please, but always unto me! Unto me!

To Protect and To Serve

by KIA

What does it mean to be a Priest/ess? You have your Wiccan H.P.'s, your ceremonial pomp and speeches, your tribal shamans, and many initiates running around justifying their shit by declaring, "I am a Priest/ess." What are the criteria? Is there a degree you can earn? What are the prerequisites?

Hopefully, declaring oneself a Priest/ess is more than taking on another label. Remember our ancient traditions, where Priestesses were revered as teachers and leaders. Coming out of the dark times, we have to re-member what it was like, to preserve the purity of our traditions and ensure that "Priest/ess" is more than just an empty title.

The Initiations

Life gives initiations, ordeals. Whether they are formal or not, in circle or out, we can recognize them if we are continually conscious of the mythical model we live. Elders are generally recognized as having lived a great number of ordeals, and so we often look to them for wisdom and leadership. Let us revere the Crone but not overlook the Virgin, as we pagans often do, thinking that the nubile state-of-mind is more an excuse to party than to live as an initiation, as a valuable experience. If you learn nothing in your experience as the Young Lord, you better go back and take that class again. This type of ordeal is where we all step onto the path. Also, there is much to be said for retaining the neophile state of mind — a balance of recognizing that a man who hath learned his own ignorance hath learned much, but perhaps does not know everything.

The respected elders, knowing the weight of their words and actions, take responsibility toward the younger folk of the tribe. It's a social thing, it's caught up in that cycle of life and death, and the directions of the DNA towards evolution. We humans seem to progress from

self-centeredness (as children) to socially-concerned beings, and take an interest in the continuity of the existence of our tribe; we produce offspring and raise them. The Priest/ess is concerned with the spiritual well-being of the tribe including the new offspring. We know that spiritual traditions can die out and leave a people without purpose, which leads to all kinds of social decadence. Spiritual traditions, by their nature, are ethereal, and need to be grounded in something physical — something besides a book. For it to be a living tradition, it has to reside within a person. The Priest/ess will be concerned with the continuation and development of the tradition — for if the tradition does not evolve to the changing conditions of life on earth, it sets a foot on the path to being preserved only in books. Therefore the Priest/ess will nurture the basics of the tradition, and the imagination of the folk who hold it.

Teachers can do the job of preserving the information of a tradition, but it takes a Priest/ess to guide the tribe into that groove of living the myth. Obviously the Priest/ess must then be one who lives the myth Himself. By the time one can genuinely declare oneself a Priestess, one must have the tradition's basic info and purpose; one must have lived through life's ordeals, interpreting them through the tribal myth structure; one must have integrated the ordeals, to understand them and the aspects in which they may occur; one must have the wisdom to manipulate the ordeals to produce the desired effect in others; and finally, one must have passed through the transcendental ordeal that teaches them that in this role, they are but the servant of the people. This ordeal is the one true test of the Priest/ess. Does that one who calls Himself a Priest/ess serve the people?

Consider Castenada's Don Juan, who took Carlos through many years of individualized training — for what? For his own selfish gain? Consider the Sacred Prostitute current, inherently feminine, yet within the current Priest and Priestess offer their very bodies for the healing of another being. Consider the H.P. that you look up to. What is Hlr Prime

Directive? And for that matter, consider the people you do business with every day. Aren't they far more substantial (and interesting) if they work for a goal greater than themselves/their money/their self-preservation? Admittedly, each person must act as Priest/ess unto themselves, but until then, our spiritual leaders provide examples for us to follow.

Hey Waitress! Bring me some Oysters!

Crowley wraps this all up very neatly in the Chapter 3 koan of *The Book of Lies* (falsely so-called). 3 is the number of the Hebrew letter Gimel, which is ascribed to the High Priestess of the Tarot. On the Tree of Life model, the High Priestess is the path which leads through the Abyss to the Supernal Temple, the domain of the A.'.A.'.; symbolically, the home of the folks who guide evolution. It is said that to cross the Abyss successfully and enter this Temple, one's ego must be destroyed, and the true self will be reborn a conscious member of the A.'.A.'. This is the ordeal of servitude, wherein a great amount of power is amassed, yet the nature of that power prohibits personal inflation. An example is seen in the higher grades of the Caliphate O.T.O., where even personal property must be donated to the Order, so that one will not be weighed down by trifling earthly concerns; can devote all one's energy to the service of those in the lower grades; and the point is driven home (literally) that one is a servant of the Order.

3

The Oyster

The Brothers of A.'.A.'. are one with the Mother of the Child.

The Many is as adorable to the One as the One is to the Many. This is the Love of These; creation-parturition is the Bliss of the One; coition-dissolution is the Bliss of the Many.

The All, thus interwoven of These, is Bliss. Naught is beyond Bliss.

The Man delights in uniting with the Woman; the Woman in parting from the Child.

The Brothers of A.'.A.'. are Women: the Aspirants to A.'.A.'. are Men.

Uncle Al remarks first off that the Brothers of A.'.A.'. are One with the Mother of the Child, alluding to the nature of guidance and life-giving qualities of the Priest/ess. He continues this allusion by writing that "the Woman [delights] in parting from the Child." The Woman delights in birthing a Child, in bringing life to another holy being, with yet another chance to hack away at the shackles of humanity. Furthermore, "...creation-parturition is the Bliss of the One...": symbolically, the One is that originating force beyond the Abyss, which takes joy in creation and guidance. You parents, consider the joy of watching your child take HIR first steps, ride HIR bike without training wheels, leave the nest and live on their own. There is a deep sense of accomplishment and pride here, in yourself and in that lovely independent being which you helped bring into the world. Parents are not vassals, yet they do humanity a great service by raising the next generation. Finally, "The Brothers of A.'.A.'. are Women: the Aspirants to A.'.A.'. are Men..." closes the allusion with at least two points: It re-emphasizes the passive guidance qualities of the A.'.A.'., and declares the Yin nature of the members of the A.'.A.'. . Aspiration is active by its nature, hence the relationship of "Aspirants" to "Men". Also, the word "aspiration" comes from the Latin root *aspirare*, which means "to breathe"; when placed in juxtaposition to "expiration", from the Latin root *expirare*, "to breathe out", "aspiration" seems to refer to the Yang part of the breath cycle, the inhalation.

So, the nature of the force that guides evolution is ministering rather than dominating. Things cannot be forced to fit or to change. Wisdom and experience provide the substance of a Priest/ess; a desire to see a better world, alleviate suffering and bring others to the knowledge of their inner light, is the motivation. The neophyte who is concerned about being led astray might consider what master their Priest/ess serves. After all, the spiritual leaders of a tribe wield a great deal of power, which can be illusory. The tribe will be strengthened through the critical eye of each contributing member.



SNAKE OF FIRE, SNAKE OF EARTH

by Mishlen

What could possibly be a link between Voudoun and Stellar magick? So my consort and I pondered as we looked for some way we could work together, he a voudun, and I, a Thelemic magickan. So we entered the Temple, nothing in our minds, to see if our geniuses would reveal anything. This is what we did:

Back to back we sat, so that our kundalini would rise as one. We linked our hands together, which increased the power a hundred-fold. This position sent waves of energy trembling through our bodies. We began singing low notes, in the mode of Tibetan overtone chanting, and as we lifted our voices to ever higher notes, so did the power flow upwards through our conjoined spine.

Next to nothing is written about the higher chakras, those that are ABOVE the Crown chakra. There are a few illustrations which show their images, but no explanations. I believe that these chakras may actually be the Ains, the spheres of light surrounding the orb of Kether. Our linked arms and hands were touching the ground, forming the (\wedge) image that is found in the sigil of the Haitian Loa of the Marassa (\times). It is also the part of the image which represents the rising upward, just as the rest of the image (\vee), represents the descent. And so we made of ourselves a human Marassa.

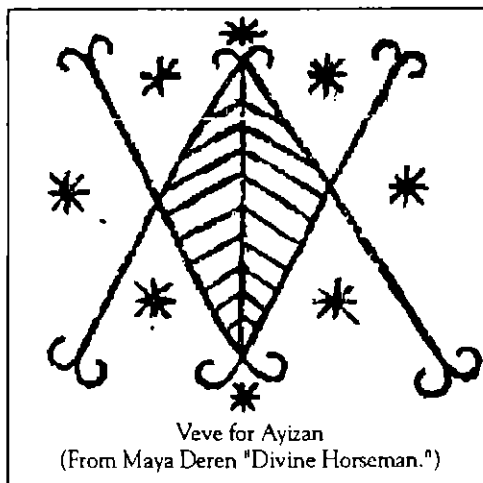
The Marassa are depicted as Twins, the Haitian manifestation of divine duality. What better image for a priest and priestess, completing each other and rising to the stars. So we continued to raise our voices ever higher, allowing the Kundalini to maintain its upward surge. Reaching the Crown, instead of allowing it to spill, fountain-like to the surface, we tightened our focus and continued up, beyond the knowable limits.

And so we came to the stars, and then beyond the stars, where the Hadit-point is dissolved into the eternal light. With difficulty, we lifted our arms, becoming the downward arrow of the Twins, plunging back into the awareness of duality.

Once we re-turned to ourselves, I asked one final question of our genius, to give to us an emblem encapsulating our experience.

The veve of Ayizan appeared before me. How obvious it seemed, in the light of our

Working. Ayizan, patron of ritual purity. Ayizan, surrounded by the Stars. And so our Working ended.



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The Hebrew Earth Festivals

Spring



by Sabra

Pesach - A Pre-Exodus Festival

Spring of course, brings to mind the festival of Passover. We call it *Pesach*. I'd like to begin by dispelling a common myth about it. Despite claims that it means "passing" or "passing over," and though there is a Hebrew verb "*passach*" meaning just that, the old meaning of the word is lost in antiquity - or in scribal screw ups.

Pesach is a pre-Exodus holiday. It is an ancient Nature Festival - more precisely, a combination of two of them; one of Hebrew shepherds and one of Hebrew/Canaanite agriculturalists - which got a third meaning attached to it - that of the holiday commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. This last myth eventually obscured - but did not totally erase the older origins.

The tale of Exodus as such is known. I have little comment to add to it. In Israel, those who are not orthodox see in it a paean to the endurance of the human spirit, rather than Yahwist propaganda. I will touch upon this at the end. First let us talk about the Earth connections of the Pre-Exodus Festival of *Pesach*.

The oldest of the three streams that form *Pesach* today, is rooted in a shepherd folk tradition. Just imagine this scene. The winter

rains have fallen, the grasses are growing, and as you and your clan lead your flocks over the rocks from one green patch to the next green patch, the ewes feed, and grow fat and happy. Eventually, when the season is right, the rams get the ewes with lamb. The Mother has been good to you, so far, and when the month of *Pesach-Nissan* (March-April) arrives, the lambs are born. Now, if you are a shepherd, the lambing time would be cause for a holiday, wouldn't it? Your flock is suddenly growing. A fresh supply of milk and meat, and wool and skins (food, clothing & shelter) for the upcoming year is added to your probably meager stores. The Hebrew shepherd folk, like all shepherding peoples, would have utilized their lambs and goats the same way that the American Indian utilized the Buffalo. Nothing got wasted.

So the lambing is on and you feel rich. You are grateful to the Gods and so you offer up a sacrifice of thanks. To ask Them to continue to be kind to you in this same way the coming year. Now this is not something you'd forget to do. One does not neglect to thank the ancient Gods. Or else. Terrible things could happen if they felt slighted. A sterile herd next year, Goddess forbid, or the ewes' heads might fall off, or the milk might be too thin, or two headed lambs might even be born, like they say happened in that tent camp over the third hill eastwards. Or simplest of all - and by far the

worst of all - no winter rain might fall next year. Then the flock will begin to die, and next your children too, since it is the little ones that die first when there is a drought and hunger.

So the gift has the character also of an averting magic. You select the very best gift you can think of. Something that falls just short of giving up your own firstborn - which may be necessary in time of drought and misery and maybe was a custom long ago, but is not usually done in normal times for children are scarce in shepherd tribes. So a very young lamb gets picked instead, the firstborn of your fattest ewe. This truly is the very best thing you have. A fully grown animal could feed many people if you could only let it grow bigger; and this little one, as the firstborn of this year's batch, has rarity value as well. Nor does it hurt that it has the tenderest meat. You are a person of practical religion and what pleases the people usually pleases the Gods as well. After the Gods have gotten their share on the altar, the people will share what remains of those tender portions of sacrificed meat and greatly enjoy them.

You and your clan, with other clans forming the tribe, meet in a suitable location. An oasis that is large enough to offer shelter, water and grass for many people. There aren't many of those; so this is probably a traditional location. This is arid land; few places can offer grazing and water for a large group of people and their animals for any length of time. The Bedouins today get-together in large numbers only at the larger oases and only for the very greatest of occasions.

There, when the time is right, the family offers up a sacrifice. Shepherds are simple folk and have little use for an independent priesthood; so usually it will be the daddy of each clan officiating. But if the women own the flocks, as is the case today in some mid-eastern shepherd nations, then they are the ones who officiate. Either way, each extended family or clan offers a lamb in sacrifice.

It is a sad fact of life that ancient Gods don't always see all the good things you do for them. Perhaps they have too much to do, or their good will is fickle. Who can tell? But they are not always appreciative. So you mark

the post of your tent with the sacrificial blood, to show the Gods - and also your neighbors - that this is a household where the right thing was done and evil consequences have been averted.

This reassures everybody, because if even one family in the tribe has neglected their obligation, thus angering the Gods, then your mark on the post shows that it was not you or your immediate clan that is at fault. So when the God strides through the tented camp to punish the offender, He will know, going past your tent and seeing the blood, that you and yours were innocent of such offense; and He will spare you, and pass your tent over.

One of the powerful beliefs that has lingered from this ancient practice is that blood-marks are a talisman to avert the wrath of the God(s). Even in the later Exodus tale, the myth is that the Angel of Death passed by the Houses of the Israelites without killing the firstborn within, because of the blood from sacrificed lambs painted on the door posts. In fact, the power of this averting magic is so great in human minds that to this day, the Samaritan sect of Israel, a people who maintain some very ancient Hebrew rites, will smear the forehead of every firstborn child or adult with the blood of the Passover lamb they have just ritually slaughtered. They would never see it as a remnant of magic, but they never forget to smear the blood mark, either...

Today's mainstream *Pesach* is a sacred banquet, nothing but a big dinner feast of thanksgiving for the Exodus from Egypt. But the old lamb symbolism from the shepherd days is still there, powerfully so. Today lamb is eaten at Middle-eastern *seders* where available; and, in continental Europe, where lamb was often hard to come by, they maintain a tradition of having at least a lamb bone on a platter; and failing that, a bone of anything, to "remind one of the lambs." So the ancient "lamb connection" remains strong.

How do we know that this was a major pre-Exodus holiday?

Because the lambing time is a major holiday among most shepherds to this day. And,

obviously, Hebrew shepherds would not have waited for the Exodus to celebrate the lambing of each year. Besides, we know about the ancient lambing festival from the Bible. Go look up the part when Moses says to Pharaoh, "let my people go out to the desert to celebrate their holiday." Had this been some minor holiday, then daddy or mummy would have quietly sacrificed some small bird, then gone on with their daily tasks. There would have been no need for a big meeting. So what holiday could that have been? Surely the Hebrews couldn't be celebrating Exodus, since they had not left Egypt yet.

So the Hebrews must have been on the verge of celebrating something big. A festival that they already had, and, since this was the month of Nissan, it likely was the lambing festival.

Another interesting point to note is that the current version of the tale we have is that the Hebrews were getting ready to run away from Egypt and so had to select the lamb, skin it, dress it and cook it whole, and eat it standing ALL IN ONE NIGHT because they were in such a hurry to be gone.

But if you are in a rush - and in fear for your life, you don't start cooking a lamb whole, which takes hours and hours. Not unless there is a major religious duty that you cannot under any circumstances, fail to observe. For there is no way of quickly cooking an animal whole, not even in a modern oven, let alone a clay one burning dung or soft woods.

Yet the tradition says the lamb must be eaten whole. And in one night, before the moon is gone. So maybe the presence of the Moon is an important (maybe the most important) part of the ritual? Indeed, to this very day, *Pesach* is always celebrated between the fourteenth and fifteenth of *Nissan*. Since we have a lunar calendar, this is always a night of full Moon.

The rule, I think, was not so much to eat the sacrifice before daybreak, but, if you just shift perspectives ever so slightly, that the ritual must happen while the full Moon is high, with its light illuminating the rites. Or, as one might

have put it in ancient times, while the Moon's Eye is still open. This is all important, if the Moon is the one who the sacrifice is FOR in the first place.

The insistence on it all happening while the Moon is still up could be to make sure that *Sin*, *Yareach*, or *Levanah* (Semitic Moon gods of antiquity, only the latter being female) can see the lamb being offered and ritually eaten in His honor. Let us remember: Gods in those ancient days didn't always know what they could not see. Before some of them went up in rank and became all Powerful and all Seeing, most ancient Deities were nothing of that sort. So what we see here is the stuff of very ancient beliefs.

Imagine, once again, being camped in the desert, near some hills. The Moon-God is coming up, over the hills. As He rises, His light sweeps down from the top hills, down into the tented camp, lighting every rocky corner. It sweeps silent, white and cold over the remnants of your sacrifice, the bloodied tent poles visible proof that you have done your duty. You hold your breath, and the Moonlight passes on. The God does not take your firstborn child. The magic has worked!

These were ancient days and the Moon God *Yareach*, or *Sin* was nothing like the laughing benevolent Moon Goddess described to me by friends from the European Nature Religion. He might punish a child for the mistake of an elder or simply take the child, because it was His due.

In these ancient times, the Moon was seen as an utterly merciless, real, and relentless Force; entirely beyond mercy, understanding or pity; just as distant and cold as the light of the physical desert moon, and just as real. You cannot fight such Powers of Nature. You cannot reason with Them and you cannot plead with Them. You either play by the rules or - if you are really lucky - come up with some strong averting magic to counterbalance them.

The second tradition that flowed to form the *Pesach* Festival is an agricultural one. The Hebrews probably picked that one up from their Canaanite neighbors, once they quit fighting

and herding and settled down to plant their own food instead; continuing their herding on the side. Rabbinical sources inform us of a Festival in the month of Nissan, called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was connected to the various grain harvest celebrations; feasts happening after the cutting of the barley, or the reaping of the wheat. In Israel, that is about seven weeks after the lambing, so naturally over time the two ran together.

Before the Festival of the Matzoth - that is, of "Unleavened Bread", which took place before the barley harvest, all the old bread people possessed would be gotten rid of. Probably they discarded not only old bread, but also batches of old yeast as well. Perhaps to signify that nothing bad from the old year must remain as they move into the new agricultural year, which is a great renewal. New yeast, new life. This symbolism of discarding old yeast and yeast products was eventually incorporated into the Passover ritual we know today.

Now if you were to throw out the old yeast starters, and didn't have a grocery store to dash off to, you'd find it takes a while for new dough to become a usable starter. So in the meantime, any bread you eat will be unleavened; a homemade Matzoh, something like an Indian chapati. Hence the name, Feast of the Matzoth, or of the unleavened bread. Rabbinical sources say that in addition, when the first sheaf of the Omer, (the cut barley) was reaped, it was offered, on the first day of the harvest, as a gift to the God/dess.

Now, that all this celebrating and giving thanks was taking place right in the middle of a rich harvesting season; the peasants were busy, and would not have left their homes to go to some sanctuary far away; so for the longest time people celebrated this grain harvesting festival at a local High Place. There stood the Metzubah, the stone table or altar; next to it, a Tree, the Goddess Tree, in the form of either a stone pillar in arid areas, or a real tree - an Asherah.

In joyous procession the people would go up to the nearest High Place, to bring the first sheaf that has been harvested, just as one once had donated the first lamb. The Priest/ess of the

High Place would take the offered sheaf of barley, and chanting, wave it over the altar.

The sources say that certain religious ceremonies took place in all the High Places of Israel, continuing all the way into the days of the Temple, which was built as a replacement for these widely revered local High Places. The building of the Temple was part of a priestly effort to bring worship under the control of the Jerusalem Temple clergy, which eventually succeeded. It was in Jerusalem, that the blending of the ancient and the more recent holidays was finalized.

The spring Festival called *Pesach* finally gained primary importance with the violently enforced ordinance from King Josiah of Judah, ordering the people to celebrate *Pesach* only in Jerusalem.

We'll note in passing that this reform also gave whoever was the boss over the religious rites in Jerusalem control over the income from the pilgrims as well.

Yahwism had had a lot of ups and downs, but this last reform under King Josiah (639-609 B.C.) of Judah, beneath the looming, threatening shadow of the Assyrian invasion, was its triumph. The Prophets of Yahweh had made a long sought after alliance with the Temple priests. Between them they convinced King Hezekiah of Judah (King Josiah's Grandpa) that only their jealous God could save him and his people from the Assyrian enemy. Naturally, He would only do this if everybody repented and did Yahweh's bidding. So to propitiate jealous Yahweh, in a hope - perhaps a last ditch effort - to save the country from invasion, sweeping last minute pro-Yahwist reforms were instituted. Thus the celebration of Nature got taken away from the people even before the Assyrian's deportations finalized the forcible divorce of the people from their Land. All this by the simple device of moving every religious celebration under the control of the Priests' Temple. This is how the Hebrew Nature Beliefs began to lose all their ancient local character, becoming less bound to their own land and local conditions; and becoming gradually more typical of a high religion, a religion of Temples and High

Priesthood. Upon deportation, this process accelerated.

All this happened in the last few decades before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, in the time of Josiah, King of Judah.

Like their southern neighbors, Judah, the North, in the hope of saving themselves at the last moment, had allowed Yahweh the jealous God and his guild of prophets to get their way and smash their opposition. But though they claimed that only such "cleansing" Yahwist reforms would turn the rising hostile Assyrian tide aside, in the end their jealous God was not much help to either Kingdom.

The *Am HaAretz* moral to this story is simple, as all our beliefs are: Beware of anybody who claims that there is only One True Way - Theirs. That is done often, frequently with some subtlety. It is the oldest lie known to humankind, and has not become any truer with time.

The other teaching we see in the tale of Passover is that of the tale of Exodus: This component of the Spring Festival contains some potent, healing symbolism.

The tale, once you take out the Yahwist propaganda, is that of an archetypal human journey. A people - by no means only Hebrews! - went from slavery in Egypt into the privations and hardship of the desert, to follow a dream of fulfillment and freedom, to follow their bliss. They endured the crucible of wandering, hunger and thirst in the desert for the sake of it. And while going through the process of wandering alone, sometimes lost, sometimes starving, left to themselves, no longer told by masters what to do, having to find their own path and their own answers, they grew. Or, as the story tells it, they went from being slaves and thinking like slaves to becoming a free people who could stand tall in their own promised Land; be it physical or spiritual.

Because of this very powerful and positive healing imagery, we do not discard the Exodus symbolism of this Festival, but add it to the older Earth related symbolism.

So how would one of the *AmHaAretz* go

about celebrating this wonderful three pronged Festival?

First of all, by eating unleavened bread. Some choose matzoth. Some make unleavened chapati, which is what the matzoh probably was in the first place. We prepare a festive dinner of lamb. Wouldn't miss that for the world. In fact, the dinner feast is rather Israeli, and not necessarily specifically of the *Am HaAretz*, in that it is a severely shaved down *Seder*, the Israeli non-religious version.

At the table, the Exodus tale gets told, for it is good to pass on and refresh one's memory about the high price - and rewards - of freedom. As we eat, we take time to think about the gifts from Nature, giving thanks for the meat we eat, for the milk and cheese and other food that come from the lambs; for the wool that is woven into protective (and pretty) clothing; for the joy it is to have friends over and have the leisure to retell the old tale of growing to freedom. This may seem unnecessary, but in a country at prosperous peace like the USA, it is easy to take all these gifts for granted.

City people get their lamb in the grocery store. Farmers and kibbutzniks might raise a lamb just to eat on that day, as many sephardic communities still do in Israel today.

Also, though the Moon is celebrated every month (particularly by the women), it gets special attention on this night. This is the greatest of the Moon Holidays to us. Just as its light shone then, averting evil, it shines today within us, averting the evil of darkly hidden festering pain within.

Finally, we enjoy retelling the old folk tales; savoring the joy and comradeship with the friends around us. This is a holiday that definitely merits an especially big bonfire, with plenty of food, celebratory drumming and ecstatic dancing.

Simplicity is the key character of our tradition. To us, the good fellowship with people we respect and love is what makes us treasure this Nature Festival from our past, helping us to find our way into the future.



NEOPHYTE'S NICHE

The First Festival

by Donna Stanford-Blake

I have taken my first wobbly step into the Pagan community - I went to my first festival! This seemingly simple event has stirred such a plethora of emotions, I realized there must be an article waiting to be born somewhere in all this confusion. Other newly Pagan people must have had similar feelings about their first "outing", I thought. So, with pen (er, Mac?) in hand, I set out to find them and began asking questions.

The first person I asked was easy to find, I just looked in the mirror. "Tell me", I asked in my best journalist voice, "What were your feelings and emotions prior to your first festival?"

Well, I found I had a bad case of "first festival" jitters. To begin with, I am not the type of person who commits easily. I must weigh and compare, ask and question, and observe, observe, observe. I have been nibbling around the edges of the "New Age" for quite some time, but I could not find anything that even remotely passed my commitment test. I had pretty well resigned myself to being a solitary Me. After I sort of "fell" into my job at *Mezlim* and began to open up to the idea of Paganism as a way of life, I felt the beginnings of recognition stir. Could there possibly be a group of people whose ideals and philosophy of life complement mine? I was fascinated. When I began this column, I was more than a little reluctant. I was (and still am) a true neophyte - what could I possibly be able to contribute? Well, I had plenty of questions, but I was astounded when the answers aligned with my own perspective or so easily

illuminated some gray area I had on a subject. I felt myself growing. I also started identifying myself as a Pagan. No tradition or specific path yet, but I was sure I had found my "niche" - or had I? I still hadn't met too many of "those" people - my data base for commitment was still not complete. So, when I was asked if I wanted to go to WinterStar, the answer was an emphatic "YES!"

Unfortunately, I had six long weeks to wait for the festival. So, I used the time to gather as much mundane information as I could. What do you wear? No skyclad - it's winter! (Self-conscious sigh of relief!) How about food? Now, what exactly does one do at one of these things?!? After assuaging all the petty little anxieties, it occurred to me that I was still apprehensive about the coming event. After a little gentle mental probing, I finally realized that I had set this up as the final test for commitment. Recognizing the reason for my unease helped, but the week before we left I was still a nervous wreck! I wasn't even able to completely verbalize why I was so distraught. Only in retrospect is the cause apparent; I was terrified I would not find what I so desperately wanted - a group of like-minded, intelligent individuals to interact and grow with spiritually. I wanted to commit but I was afraid that Paganism would fail my test. I needn't have worried.

When I asked Aravah the same question, she also admitted to having some "jitters": *"My feelings and expectations prior to my first festival? Hmm. Nervous. Excited. Would I be accepted? Did I have the right clothes?"*

"I was so new to all this. I'd only been practicing Sheya for four months. Before that I thought Magick was tricks, illusion, and hocus pocus. Now, here I was, a practicing Pagan going to my first festival. What a trip!

"There were obstacles. The person who was to care for my fourteen year old daughter conveniently forgot. But that didn't stop me - I just took her along. She had a blast!

"I wanted to drum, dance the fire, experience (I hoped) a new sense of freedom. I soon discovered that freedom is - at times - a state of mind."

Jim was a little more relaxed about his first gathering: "Camping-out in September in Minnesota is a good way to personally feel the changing of the seasons; Mabon is a wonderful time in this part of the country, and I was very much looking forward to attending the gathering, despite reports of possible frost. Contrary to popular opinion, Minnesotans do not particularly enjoy frost bite. Quite a variety of people, from various groups and traditions - even a few solitaires - signed up for the weekend. Many of us had never been to any sort of a festival or gathering before, so I didn't feel too out of place. The folks who organized this event planned all sorts of rituals, discussions, and whatnot. This was something to look forward to, maybe even get excited about."

In contrast, Carol's first festival sort of snuck up on her: "One of my closest friends told me, 'We're going to Starwood!' I had no idea what to expect and she shared no further information except that we would be camping and some people would be nude. I actually thought it was a nudist colony!

"Although I had been a solitary for some time, I had only recently become connected with the local Magickal community. I never knew Pagan festivals even existed. So, since I had no expectations, I went with a wide-open mind."

On the other hand, Holly had her own ideas about festivals: *"My plan for my first gathering was to hang out in the merchant lodge (I am a merchant), catch a few workshops, do some kitchen time, go to rituals, get back in touch with my energies - and get LOTS of sleep.*

"I went with every intention of staying on the fringe. I felt intimidated even before I arrived. The place was going to be teeming with these incredible magical people who, I was sure, were way out of my league. Images of black robes, solemn ceremonies and secrecy were what I envisioned for the next five days.

"All I was hoping for was a break from work and some time to re-establish my link with my own internal energies and some external ones as well. I was looking at this gathering as a starting point to ease back into a magickal way of living and thinking."

Obviously everyone brings more than physical baggage to their first festival. But how does the real thing compare to all those expectations? That brings me to my next question: "What were your experiences and how did they impact you emotionally and spiritually?"

For me, I found the release from the intense anticipation of waiting such a relief that it was surprisingly easy to relax into the atmosphere of the festival. I realized almost immediately that my fears had been unfounded. These were people that I felt comfortable with - almost like I already knew them. Of course, I did know many names from working at the magazine, but it was so wonderful to finally see the faces that belonged with them.

I spent time wandering through the merchant booths, catching snatches of conversation, getting the general flavor of the event. Then I ventured into attending workshops. Fascinating! I never once felt out of place or ignorant. But my very

favorite thing was the drumming. Although it was inside, I could only imagine what it would be like outside, under the stars, around a bonfire. Bliss.

The whole week-end was intense - as though a week (or longer) had been condensed into a scant forty-eight hours. My cabinmates were strangers when we met Friday evening, but by Sunday we were exchanging addresses and hugs. It was hard to leave. I felt I had found lost parts of myself - parts I didn't even know were missing.

Now I'm looking forward to sampling a summer camping festival. Next time I won't be quite as anxious - that group of intelligent, spiritual people I've always been searching for really does exist!

Aravah: "On that first night, while my daughter was dancing joyously around the fire, I sat miserably on a log thinking how much I wanted to dance, too. I was so uptight and afraid.

"Fear. I've dealt with it a lot since then. Mostly the fear of being myself. The rituals and workshops quite often pulled this out of me in one way or another. I realized I couldn't keep running from myself. I didn't WANT to! Scary as it was, I was ready to start being me, not the person I thought I was expected to be.

"It sounds like I was having a difficult time and in some ways I was, but that's far from the whole experience. I enjoyed all of it - from the painful self-awakenings to the joyful ones - for they were in equal measure.

"My first experience chanting around the fire was - to use the only adequate term I can think of - mind-blowing. It expanded my life tremendously. The rituals opened paths toward self-transformation. The workshops offered growth and awareness. And watching my daughter blossom in the atmosphere of freedom was pure joy."

Jim: "Just the chance to unwind away from everything was incredibly nice. Our walks in the woods, climbing hills covered with thick brush, exploring places off the established trails - just generally running around in the woods in the Autumn sunlight and cool breezes of September - was great fun. Our group shared food, sang songs, and told stories around our fires like a small tribe, even though many of us had come into this place complete strangers to each other. Random discussions on all sorts of topics just happened. Spontaneous rituals grew out of many of these group conversations as the daylight dimmed into night. My partner and I guided a newfound friend through the process of consecrating their newly acquired sword for practicing Magick. The feeling of being in Pagan territory surrounded by our own people was intoxicating. It was difficult to go home."

Carol: "The first thing we did, after setting up camp, was to attend a handfasting. I had no idea what one was! All those unclothed and semi-clothed people dancing and chanting - I wasn't real sure I wanted to get involved. But, since no one pressured me one way or the other, I decided to join the group. It was GREAT!

"As I soaked up the atmosphere of the festival I noticed coven banners around some of the campsites. I had never seen them before and thought they were pretty cool. But they also represented an investment. That's when I realized that this Pagan stuff wasn't just play to most of these folks.

"I had kinda thought I was the only person who felt a deep connection to the earth and sky. But, as we sat around eating, drinking, and talking, I felt like I had come home after a long exhausting journey. I wasn't the only one! Yeah!

"In the middle of the night, when I couldn't sleep, I met some people. Although they were 'strangers' we sat and talked for hours. They answered some newly formed questions that

had been whirling through my mind. That's when I made the conscious decision to learn as much as I could while I was there - instead of partying as much as I could. I already knew how to party! For all I knew, I might never get the chance to be with these kind people in this great loving atmosphere again. I learned a lot that Starwood and I haven't stopped.

"The hardest part was leaving - it always is. So I never do a closing ceremony at any festival I attend. I take it all home with me!"

Holly: "Where are all the black robes? I think I saw one, maybe, but I could be wrong!"

"The incredible sense of community was overwhelming. Everybody was helping to make the festival run smoothly. The people were friendly, interesting and knowledgeable. They were willing to talk about their experiences, paths and Magick. This was a small gathering and I felt like I was a real part of it. I was comfortable and safe with these people.

"I danced around the fire and allowed myself the freedom to let go. This was a safe place to be vulnerable and explore ME. I was lucky to have had that festival as my first - it spoiled me rotten for all the rest!"

First festivals are intense, full of discovery and learning - about yourself and being a Pagan. When I began asking people their initial impressions, I was struck by how many voiced the feeling of "coming home" and not wanting to leave. I experienced those feelings, too. I think a first festival is much like a first love - you never forget it.

To help new festival goers have a memorable "first", I asked my last question: "what advice would you give first time festival goers?" Using my author's prerogative, I'll let the others speak first.

Aravah: "My advice for first time festival goers? Just go. Don't let obstacles stop you. I went desiring growth and the experience of freedom. I received both.

"Throw out any preconceived notions. What is true for others may not have validity for you. If anything gets too tough to handle on your own, seek help. I found people who were more than willing to nurse my bruises. Be open to and aware of what you are feeling for therein lies growth. Most of all, enjoy yourself tremendously! See you around the fire!"

Jim: "GO!"

"If further advice is necessary: Try a smaller camp-out with a more limited group, first, before going to the 'big-name' festivals. If only to get an idea of what it's like to live within a quasi-tribe of like-minded individuals. Once you've started, there is no turning back. You'll want to go to ALL the festivals. There is something contagious about this sort of thing."

Carol: "Go with an open mind. No matter whether you have been practicing as a solitary or with a group or coven, you are going to find lots of new people, new ideas, and new paths to discuss. You may spend your whole first festival talking and getting new ideas - some to keep and some to discard.

"If you are just beginning or just becoming interested. WOW! Everything is a choice. Do I chat with these interesting people I just met or go to that great sounding workshop? Party or observe? Participate in my first opening ritual? Maybe you're a little shy but skyclad seems like it would feel great. But you've never done it before and there are all these people you don't know... Follow your heart - follow your feelings. No one will think less - or more - of you for walking to the beat of your own drummer. Oh, and have a great time. There is only ONE first festival!"

Holly: "Go with an open mind. Try drumming or dancing around the fire or just sit back and see what there is to see. Sometimes that is just as magical. Challenge yourself by participating - you'll know a safe environment when you are in one. Take advantage of what the festival has to offer, especially the

workshops. This is a tremendous opportunity to pick the brains of people who have been on one or more paths. These people have invaluable information that they clearly wish to share. Often they will give you practical exercises you can use later to further your own explorations. Take notes! Take advantage! Have a great time!"

What advice would I give? Well, it is hard to add anything to what the others have so eloquently stated. Except, perhaps, if you are nervous - don't be. If you are only vaguely interested - watch-out! Dramatic or not, your first festival WILL alter your perspective on reality. You are not "crazy". There really are other people "out there" like you. It's O.K. to be YOU. To borrow Arava's phrase, this can be "mind-blowing", but it is also a whole lot of fun! You have not truly experienced the meaning of being Pagan until you have attended your first festival. So GO!

As I was looking at my calendar this morning, I noticed that LumensGate is just around the corner. Hmmmm... I wonder... Uh-oh, these things are habit forming!

Editor's Note: For more information on Pagan festivals please refer to Mezlim, Beltane 1992 (Vol.III, issue 2) as well as the Mr. Keenan's update in the Letters column of this issue.

Reviews

A Victorian Grimoire

by Patricia Telesco

\$14.95 from Llewellyn Publishing
St. Paul, MN 55164-0383

Reviewed by Donna Stanford-Blake

The sub-title promises "Enchantment,

Romance, Magic", and Patricia Telesco has compiled a volume that pretty well fulfills that promise. This book covers a wide range of subjects and gives a beguiling glance at life at the turn of the century. It may be little romanticized but isn't that part of the charm of nostalgia?

The illustrations in sepia and the period poetry set the tone. But I was a little confused when I first flipped through the book. I was expecting every detail to be vintage Victorian. Instead the author has intertwined many modern concepts with those from this era. I found that a little disconcerting; I wasn't expecting to see Sesame Street mentioned in a book about the turn of the century! But, after a little more exploration, I decided that perhaps the goal was to aid people in living a more Victorian life TODAY.

So many subjects are covered — from "Victorian Symbols for Magic" to "Animals in Magic and Natural Pet Care". I feel that some of the rituals included are probably not authentic - just modern interpretations. But they are valid and useful if you don't already use similar ones. The historical background was what I found especially intriguing.

The wealth of information contained between the covers makes this a useful reference book. I particularly enjoyed the look and feel of it. Very Victorian. But I'm still uncomfortable with the mix of modern and vintage information. It feels a little uneven and the transitions between the two are not well defined. In spite of this flaw, I would still recommend this book as a useful addition to anyone's magickal library.



Letters

Dear Mezzim:

Many thanks to William Scott who wrote in your Lammas '92 issue about my Festival Pilgrim article report on Heartland Fest.

I'm very pleased he updated us on the '92 festival. My information came from friends who attended the '91 fest. The article was written in February of '92, so the Summer update about location and skyclad are welcome. Be sure to use your sunscreen, William, and thanks.

Since festival season is approaching, some other updates will be helpful.

"Rites of Spring" has found a home that welcomed them back. The site is in the rugged Western Massachusetts mountains on a good sized lake. Last year skyclad was permitted at the beach except during the few hours the lifeguard was on duty. Drumming was strangely quiet and inhibited in the first few nights, and cold rain prevented drumming outside on the weekend.

Rites gave us appealing visions of Pagan culture unfolding, with a beautiful handfasting in the woods, complete with Pagan choir. A concert by Mothertongue charmed one rainy night. New coming of age rituals were done for young men.

Wic-Can fest provided an international class pilgrimage/initiatory/pageant main ritual last June.

Mitchell, the body artist, attended several festivals and brightened up Free Spirit and Starwood with his painted people, who got the rest of us wondering about these creatures.

Starwood was bigger and better last year and was the best of the Summer's festivals. More pagans attended Brushwood and danced around the giant bonfire than ever before. The fire in the fog made it mystical; and the local fundamentalist-fascists stayed away.

LumensGate should draw a bigger crowd this year, now that its schedule conflicts with other festivals are corrected. It was well planned and drew great responses from those who attended previously.

Last August, Church of All Worlds hosted CAWCON, their festival at Laytonville, in Northern California. Pagans gathered at a strange site—with a lot of poison oak and severe drought restrictions limiting fires and even matches or

candles or cigarettes. Drumming was forbidden at night so as not to offend neighbors, but some neighbors practiced regular gunfire over several days. The main ritual was designed as a Sun ritual and was delayed until pitch dark. Those who attended weren't sure what was going on.

Strong points were good workshops, a delightful skyclad lake, and an area called "pirates' cove" that had its residents speaking in "piratese" (begin every sentence with "Arr...") and partying for three straight days.

August this year promises two new surprises on the festival calendar. The weekend of the sixth will see World Magic Fest, inspired by stage magician and Pagan magician Jeff McBride. When he gets together with Brushwood, good things should happen.

Panathena Festival in downtown Nashville at the Parthenon should be interesting, public, and Pagan. Permits have been secured for the weekend in the middle of August.

Festival season is upon us. It is the best of what Pagan culture offers us now.

Richard Keenan, Ph.D.

To the Editors,

Since I was out of the U.S. at the time of the "Death" issue, I missed it. However, judging by KIA's response in the Candlemas '93 issue it was no great miss. I'm not entirely miffed that my article wasn't printed, and if the emphasis of the issue was as he stated then I guess I shouldn't have wanted it there.

The theme I see emerging from your editorial direction is this: You wish to create a social platform for magickal activities, and are thus overlooking non-social options of magickal evolution. In practice magick seldom panders to the dictates of its practitioners, and is well known to cause dispersion of such groups intent on making social changes before perfecting their magickal studies. Hitler, need I remind, was one of those who chose a social outlet for his magickal experiences and discarded the intensive training an initiate must undergo. It is nothing less than foolish to regard oneself as a chosen one beyond the traditional

Letters continued on page 48.

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fraternities such as the A.'.A.'. , and to then institute a program of social reform. Yet this kind of thing happens regularly to this day. To those interested in a social platform there are many secular outlets already established, and it may be a useful thing for such people to submit themselves to the processes of such secular groups before complaining about a lack of occult representation in worldly politics. Most occult misfits wouldn't survive such processes without undergoing a revolution in both magickal and social methods.

But to get back to the point, the central activity of the magician is, according to most reliable sources, to invoke the Holy Guardian Angel. Isolation is indeed required but we still have the need to eat and maybe even contact our spiritual senior in whatever order we belong to. If you've actually attempted to go the full course of a retirement such as that found in Liber Samek or Liber 418 you will know how much garbage gets churned out not only by you, but by the very pivotal act of your removal from the Western current of daily activity. This produces so much chaos that there's little hope for the social practice of magick "between meals" so to speak. The magician's very body is liable to warp unexpectedly during the invocations: Skulls change shape and heights alter. Time lapses and mysterious ailments come and go with no reason. Unless you're of the world-hating type of mystic you'll probably return to earth with a heightened sense of worldly responsibility—but you'd be less likely to mistake the missiles for the trees this time out—and more likely to understand the general loneliness of most people. Cliques and splinter groups usually obstruct initiation, requiring elaborate infiltration schemes enacted on the inner planes. My advice is get back to the roots of practical experimental magick.

The other bone I have to pick is the article called "Initiation" by Phaedron. . . . What he is referring to is perhaps a more old-style Golden Dawn type fraternity. Such still exist, and are currently hyping themselves on the basis of people's sensitivity to change and general feelings of inferiority. Yet other types of fraternities do exist, and whatever biases your editorship may have, it is your responsibility to inform your readers of these. A rigid curriculum is the sign of rigidity. Modern versions of pre-existing orders such as the A.'.A.'. or the Golden Dawn are not as dogmatic as one might expect. For instance there is this nonsense about being killed or eaten by wolves or some other severe penalty if Probationers reveal their inner order activities. Probationers aren't even in the inner order, and in the A.'.A.'. at least, are required to expound their knowledge as they see fit, to do otherwise is against the oath of the grade. The

OTO initiations are hedged with a "death 'n' dogs" clause—but then the OTO has always been a rather arcane, slow moving establishment. The idea that I would be killed for revealing my 1* initiation is something more than ridiculous—imagine some high OTO council voting "death to so-and-so" for violating a secrecy oath. More likely by doing so I would alienate myself and ruin the fun and mystery for myself and others. It is historically valid to say that Aleister Crowley indeed devised his A.'.A.'. scheme along lines laid down by the G.'.D.'. , and that this structure finds no basis in the Book of the Law, which speaks of only Three Grades—The Man of Earth, Lover and Hermit. Such is the nature of occultism that magicians are always seeking to improve upon the simplicity of spiritual truth, and have devised all sorts of "interpretations" of what to fill into those Three Grades. Experience: Live and Experiment: "Abrogate are all rituals, all ordeals, all words and signs." So realize that if you so choose to take the oaths of a 0=0 or a Minerval that you have done so of your own choice and not in consequence of an external dictate from any God or Authority. The other stuff about being given "permission" to enter is a bit stiff too. What I see is this: It is easy to obtain admission to an order, the difficulty lies in staying within it. Many people change their minds, or get de-railed by some other prospect, people are people. Few get expelled, most simply drift away or become lethargic. Even a high grade is no guarantee of success; this idea that a 5=6 has some obscure power that makes him Mr. Right that a neophyte lacks is pure mythology. Ordeals of initiation can also be terrifying, they can also cause periods of insanity, and sometimes years must pass before the initiate finally understands what's been going on.

Finally, as Antero Alli has noted, we are living through a Capricorn glut astrologically. Both the occult Neptune and the revolutionary Uranus are "stuck" in Capricorn until 1995. This has meant that, among many other things such as the rampant consumerism we've been seeing, magick is not very easy to perform. Easy to read perhaps, in practice not very yielding. Inverted spiritual values do not make for easy passage. According to my sources, take it up with the white noise bureau if you're incensed.

I hope this goes some way in annoying somebody out of his antipathic allergic apathy formula.

'93
Regards,

The Abominable TV Snowman
Box 579, Sta. P
Toronto, On. M5S 2T1

CANAAN IN THE NEW WORLD

Tools for Creating a Hebrew Paganism

Part II

by Jacob Rabinowitz

The Canaanite Myths

*In the name of El, the merciful,
the compassionate, creator of humans,
maker of Time, father of years,
Bull of heaven, spiller of stars,
who loved Asherah the walker of waves:
after six days labor she bore him earth,
the heavens above it and the seventy gods:
Baal Hadad, breath of the world;
Mot its swallower; Yam its strength;
and all the rest too many to name.
In the name of Jah who is all the gods,
in the name of the name beyond all names,
I sing these utterly truthful lies.*

This is a reconstruction of Canaanite mythological material based on translations of the Ugaritic texts. Not myself conversant with the language, I have confined myself to reordering, transcreating, and otherwise gussying up the work of other scholars. The surviving accounts are, be it noted, extremely fragmentary, and even the scholars listed below can claim no certainty for their sense of sequence and significance—so, even following them I tread the thinnest of historical ice. Though I have been at pains not to distort the content, and very little of what follows is my own invention, this is still emphatically not an academically fastidious transmission of the material.

It should be fairly clear where I have introduced anachronistic parallels to deepen the meaning. My justification for these is that the Scriptural verses I sometimes introduce represent a traditional

development of the original material. As for the historical and astral allusions, they are essential to adapt the material to our apprehension: For we who live in radically secularized time, myth has most importantly survived in History and her shadow Science Fiction. Accordingly, references to historical events and to outer-space are essential for us to form a living relationship with the material. these then are my additions; to taste the unadulterated wine one should consult my sources (listed at the end of this essay).

The Epic

*Then Anat blew the horn that ended the exile,
a long bitter blast on shrill shofar,
from earth's end we heard it a trumpet of war!*

*"You people of Baal, returned to your land
that thirsted for you like the desert for rain,
you've drained the swamps, made morass into garden,
made dry rock a vineyard, made desert bloom.*

*"Now beat your ploughshares into swords, then hammer
your scythes into spears: forget about help
from the Ancient of Days.*

*"Old father El resolved to shake
all care and business from his age,
conferring them on younger strengths
while he, unburdened, drank wine in the shade.*

"(El, the Bull of Heaven, said:)

*"Look up into bottomless outer space,
I made it, setting the moon in her spin,
suspending all the stars high in mid-nothing,
I'm tired now, I've done enough."*

*"El withdrew to his cool contemplative heaven,
now Chaos reigns Leviathan kings it
here on earth, his waters pass shores
like another Flood.*

*"Forget about prayers to senile El;
the seventy gods cower on their mountain,
I alone help you and I am War."*

The crocodile Yam swam up, metal-scaled,
modern dragon, gliding on tank-treads, breathing
artillery fire. Leviathan ruled!

The ocean boiled over like a pot behind him,
the sea went white with monster's wake.

Anat arose, the high right hand
of Jah Tsevaoth, spinning sword,
making a roar like Israel's warplanes
tearing the air overhead.

Like a drunken psycho wrecking a bar,
breaking tables, shattering chairs,
Anat dances the dance of war.
The embodiment of battle, she's on nobody's side.
She swings her sword and severed hands
fly past like locusts, heads cut off
hurtle by like balls. She dunks in blood
and thinks she bathes, cups hands to sip it,
thinks it's wine. She braids by the hair
a necklace of heads, hangs hacked-off limbs
from her warrior belt, wading hip-deep
in blood and laughing, the goddess of Reason
is drunk, the virgin sister of Baal,
battle-mad dyke.

Within her Baal fought Leviathan,
Order with Chaos, god against god.

Yam is strong, Baal is strong;
they kick like horses, bite like snakes.

Cloud-riding Baal raised hammer high,
slipped it vicious through fingers down,
slammed it, precipitous,
an eagle sky-diving from topmost cloud.

That mallet whacked water dragon,
Leviathan fell. Baal sank beside—
sucked him up! Like sun steams ocean,
burns it to mist rising to feed
and form the clouds, so storming Baal
drank up that sea, his thunders roared hoarse
as song of surf.

Pouring water-chaos oceded into Baal's veins,
and Baal got drunk on Leviathan!
What he killed he half became.

Baal jabbed earth with lightning spears,
made desert quake and mountains melt.
Drunken Baal stumbled thundering
over the hills, rolling black clouds.
Autumn rains hissed silver down

while wind-whipped Ocean gnawed the shores,
waiting. Chaos never dies.

* * *

Baal the conqueror spoke: "I have

no house of my own like the other gods.
Kothar, hurry, build me a palace
atop Mt. Zion, reaching sky"

Kothar built a house of cedar,
torched it to burn for seven days,
then the bricks had turned to silver,
all the beams became fine gold.

Baal made a feast for the seventy gods
—all except Mot; sent this excuse:
"Not even Baal the god of gods
can feed to fullness the hunger of Death."

Mot sent reply from his home in mid-nowhere
soundless and cold as outer space:
"No offense taken, my brother Baal,
in fact consider yourself always welcome
to descend into sheol and dine with me."

Here earth gaped open in invitation,
—blast of icy air reeking of moisture—
Baal expressed thanks but excused himself.

All things are gathered into one place
for the Feast of Nations in the palace of Baal
who slaughtered oxen, poured out wine,
all the gods drank, Anat got drunk.

Up on Mount Zion, in the palace of Baal,
Anat dances the dance of war!

Breaking tables spinning her sword,
splashing in wine she thinks is blood,
the goddess of Reason is drunk, the virgin
sister of Baal, crazy dyke.

Anat sings out the will of Yahweh,
a goddess and a prophet of God to the gods,
stamping out dances of Zion's brink:

"Root up warfare from earth and plant
love in its place, weave no more the net
of strategy—loom the garments of joy;
nation shall not take up sword against nation,

Writer's Guidelines

Are you interested in writing for Mezlim? We are seeking submissions of articles, artwork and photography in a Magickal vein.

Articles may range in length from 500 to 4500 words. All submissions should be typed, black ink on white paper. Please enclose S.A.S.E, a cover letter with your contact information and the name under which you wish to be published. We request that we be informed if your submission has been printed previously in another magazine, or if it is being simultaneously submitted to any other publisher.

Please address all submissions to the Editor.

we've learned enough lessons in the school of war.

*"Plant aphrodisiacs across the ground,
make love in the fields to delight the earth,
blow out the candles, drink and be wise,
become like the gods, naked, not knowing
good from evil or evil from good,*

*"but comprehending the language of trees,
what pebbles remember, what rocks recall,
the winds whisper of sky to earth,
how ocean feels when she mirrors back stars,
able to read what lightning writes,
what thunder mutters, what no man knows."*

* * *

*Baal said: "I'm king from eternity
to eternity, Death himself's my slave.
Send a message to El's son Mot,
invite him to come and bow to Baal."*

*Mot gaped like the grave for all that lives,
chin resting on earth, the roof of his mouth
was the blue roof of sky, with his tongue he licked up
stars like sugar.*

*Baal took his hammer, leapt at death,
fell, thunder and all, down the throat of the Tomb.*

*El poured dirt on his head for a mourning,
tore his clothing, rolled in the dust,
gashed his arms like a plough rakes field,
sat in sack-cloth. Baal was dead!*

*Anat marched to where Mot stood,
a thousand acres at every stride.*

*Mot bragged: "I killed your brother Baal,
the breath left him like breeze, like smoke,
I chewed the thunderer up, like lamb,
crushed him under my gravestone teeth,
made his blood spurt out like cum.*

*"What do you want with me, Anat?
Wherever I walk I scorch water dry,
fresh things blacken and all life dies.
My home's the soundless cold and nowhere
of outer space in which earth floats,
a dusty mud-clamp in the black unwaters
by my dead rock-gardens of asteroids
where the light shines forever, useless and pure,
unsoftened by mist, unmuffled by cloud.
Baal claimed the world since he made it live,
but all that lives is finally mine.
Worship me, Anat, Baal is dead,
Now I am god from eternity
to empty eternity."*

*Anat laughed then she split Mot
with sword, chopped fine, mill-ground his bones,
scattered Mot over the earth like seed,*

*Drunk on grief, on the wine of tears,
Anat staggered over the scraggly green region
at desert's edge—the shore of death.
The fields were dead, plants dried black,
pastures barren—even animals had to
fast in grief. For 2,000 years
the land stayed sterile; Anat waited waiting
by the western wall of the thunder-god's house,
the widowed Shechina, pacing and weeping,
weak as a ghost.*

*Heavy as shekels her big slow tears
—Autumn's first weighty raindrops struck
dust from sun-split dried up mud,
flood-shot gullies gushed sudden as blood.*

*That night El, Creator of all,
dreamed the rivers ran red wine,
fountains bubbled honey, land bristled grain.*

*Shamash, sun-god, called to Anat,
said "Baal and Mot have both come back.
Life and Death, fighting forever:
only brothers hate like that."*

EPILOGUE— ANTI-KABBALAH

As the Jewish people's most grandiose mythological creation, the Kabbalah must be taken into account by the Hebrew Pagan project. Though I consider it in content a deplorable instance of world-slander, and myself the world's foremost anti-kabbalist, I believe the only way to get rid of it is to transform it. "The process of growth knows no waste." To simply excise it is pretty crude and improvident economics. Because it's been for a thousand years our people's collective vision—of which one of the consequences is the state of Israel—remember there were practical kabbalists and strange mystic theoreticians in the Stern gang—we have to deal with it or lose psychic energy repressing it. Kabbalah won't just go away. However, being a virtually perfect system, it can rather easily be perverted by simply inverting it. Let me sum up the Zohar's major mythic visions to show how this is to be done.

Looking at a Tree of Life diagram you get the impression that the Zohar is an incredibly sophisticated system that can be applied in a rather structural way, as if it were an ideology. Well, this is true, though the application is only within the hermetic universe of Halachic life, and attempts to apply it to the universe at large—as the Christian Kabbalists & Ritual Magicians do—produce farcical results. Theories and number-juggling mostly.

What Moses de Leon created that made it possible to generate so much abstruse gnostic theorizing was a vision of the female aspect of god—actually a double vision—on the one hand the martyred widow Shechina, who represented Israel and all Human sufferings, on the other Lilith, who represented (in a horrific manner) all the sensual splendors and pornographic glories of life that European Judaism, in the shadow of Christianity, was persuaded to try and repress. De Leon created a double mythology of Woman. For a thousand years, the Hebrew goddess(es) has been yoked to the chariot of Kabbalah. Woman as Martyr, Woman as Whore, these are the central obsession of the Zohar which has very fairly been called a “mystical novel.” In this sense the Kabbalah is a particularly European phenomena—the same mythology of woman animates all post-classical literature—Shechina and Lilith are the sophisticated Jewish equivalents of Desdemona and Lady Macbeth.

The principal myth I’m proposing is an anti-Shechina one. Rather than the martyred ghost stalking the western wall, we have Shechina-as-Anat, the warrior goddess who embodies the rage of the earth, which we see not as a mere victim of Eco-catastrophe, a prostrate form weeping on the Tel Aviv beach, attempting to wash with ineffectual tears the oil-slick from her hair, but an angry goddess, whose toxification is a concretion of rage. Anat’s

eye fires sun-rays unfiltered by ozone, scorching our skin to cancer, that we hide from with indoor-pale skin and eyes sunglassed into skull-like shadows. The poison in our water is Anat’s venom sinking obliquely into everyone’s blood. The polluted air her smoking breath! The paving of nature the armor of her dragon form! Steel and aluminum, glass and concrete, earthquaked by her motions into the clash and crash of her scales! Her helmet plumed with a mushroom cloud!

Anat as the banner of the angry earth, like Egyptian Hathor-Sekhmet sent for vengeance on mankind. That’s the primary myth image for the earth’s survival-battle, powered by the momentum of the history which preceded Judaism.

Anat as the angry Earth fits into Zohar mythology through the Sin of Adam—the most limited access secret in the entire book: the Tree of Knowledge in the context of his transgression means the Shechina (the material world) which he partook of exclusively—i.e., without bearing in mind her connection to her husband Tiferet (= Yahweh) and the higher spheres. In effect, he became a materialist, and this exclusive admiration of the material world disrupted the unity of the cosmos—*quitsets be netii’ot*, “he severed the young trees”—a Talmudic expression for heresy.

The result of Adam’s intellectually severing Shechina (the Earth) from the rest of the Tree of Life (Spiritual Reality) is that Shechina (as the spiritual implications of matter, i.e., the Presence of God in the world) receded from immediate access into the center of matter—endured a fall; thus the work of the Kabbalist is to reconnect the scattered exiled sparkly fragments of Shechina to their upward connectedness—to “unite the name of God.”

This is of course just another and more

elaborate version of the “shattering of the vessels” myth. What’s interesting is the more prominent role given to the female principle, the Shechina. The results however are the same: The Material world and whatever divine Presence it contains are lost, floating or rather falling at random through chaos and outer space. We’re enjoined to take merciful care to redeem our wandered lost and crying realm.

My reversal of Kabbalah is this: Shechina, as world and as world’s implicit spirit, is not lost. It’s here with us, and is in fact all we have left. What was lost is Tiferet and the higher spheres. You see, the interpretation of Shechina as fallen implies that matter is at best a pedestal for spirit and at worst its prison. Even Adam was expected to ignore it and contemplate the higher spheres, not “taste of it.”

I would now say that Adam’s sin was in staring up at the Tree of Life, in seeking for heaven in the skies: In response, the higher sephiroth modestly withdrew. He tried to stare at the sun (Tiferet), finally blinded saw only blackness, and assumed this world was a prison of night. Were he to seek the higher spheres as they are reflected in Shechina, which is also called in Zohar “The Mirror of the Higher Sephiroth” he would not only recover his heavens but realize that Shechina was never lost but always with him, underfoot, sustaining all.

In short, because of Adam’s sin, Shechina didn’t fall away from God and into matter—rather, God and the higher spheres fell upwards into apparent inaccessibility when Adam tried to scale the Tree of Life. The war-cry of Anat then is that of the outraged Shechina, saying “Cease to seek for heaven in the skies!”—not a metaphysical long-distance call whose charges we can’t accept without mortgaging the planet, but a summons from within, lonely as a choice, obstinate as a heartbeat, optimistic as a weed.

Sources for the Reconstructed Canaanite Epic:

Michael David Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, Pennsylvania, The Westminster Press, 1978. (Though a mite uninspired, this is the most readable version of Canaanite epic material I know, and contains an excellent introduction which will be appreciated by the non-specialist. If you read only one book on the subject, this should be it.)

G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Old Testament Studies no. 3, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1956. (Basically a trot, with facing page transliterations of the texts. Driver gives clear indications of how he interprets the often delphic material—this makes his work excellent for clearing up or indicating the problems which other translators either whitewash or blandly convey in all their mystery. The synopsis/explication of the tablets he gives in the introduction is exceedingly thoughtful and frequently brilliant.)

Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1978, chapters 48-52 (pp. 149-161). (This treatment of Canaanite religion is indispensable to an understanding of how the myths fit together to form a coherent world-view. Includes a superb critical bibliography.)

Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, Anchor Books, NY, 1961. (This superlative study of how the myths were used in a seasonal cycle of celebrations, drawing on Hittite, Canaanite, and Egyptian sources, with copious parallels from Hebrew, Classical and Modern traditions, is a virtual how-to calendar for revived paganism. Also it contains some of the most ingenious interpretations of the Ugaritic texts.)

H. L. Ginsberg, “Ugaritic Myths, Epics and Legends,” pp. 129-155 in J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd. Edition, Princeton U. Pr., 1969. (This was the most stilted and least helpful of all the translations consulted.)

Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts*, Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949. (This by the father of modern Ugaritic studies, has great authority. It is however so preoccupied with preserving every ambiguity of the mutilated tablets as to be almost unreadable. Only useful for fine-tuning your take on the texts.)



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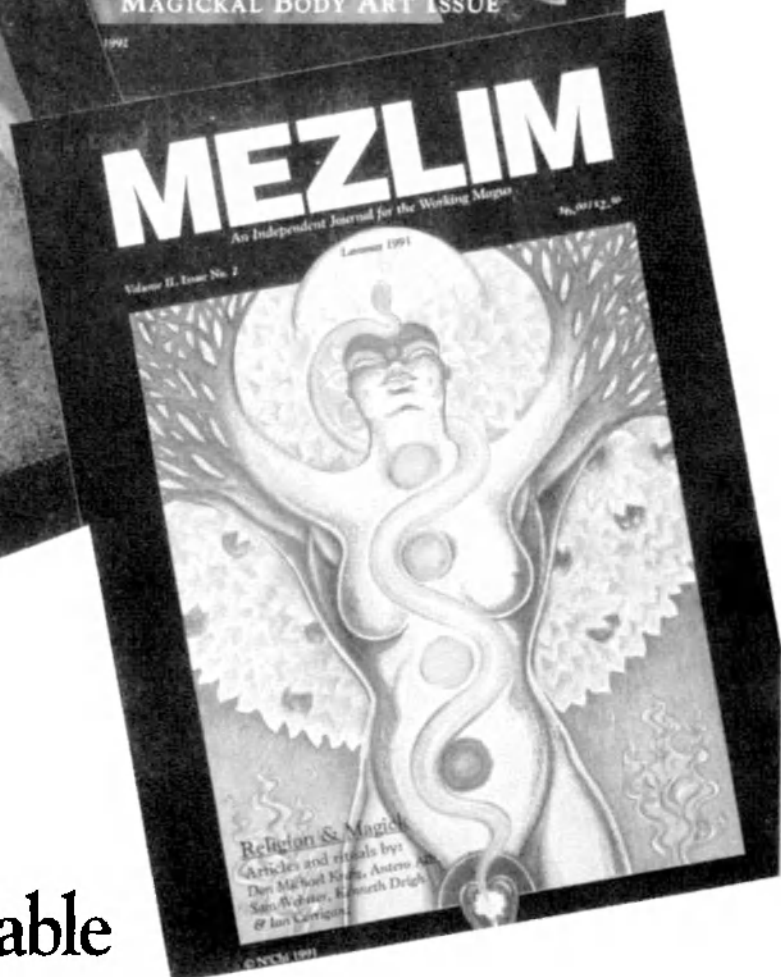
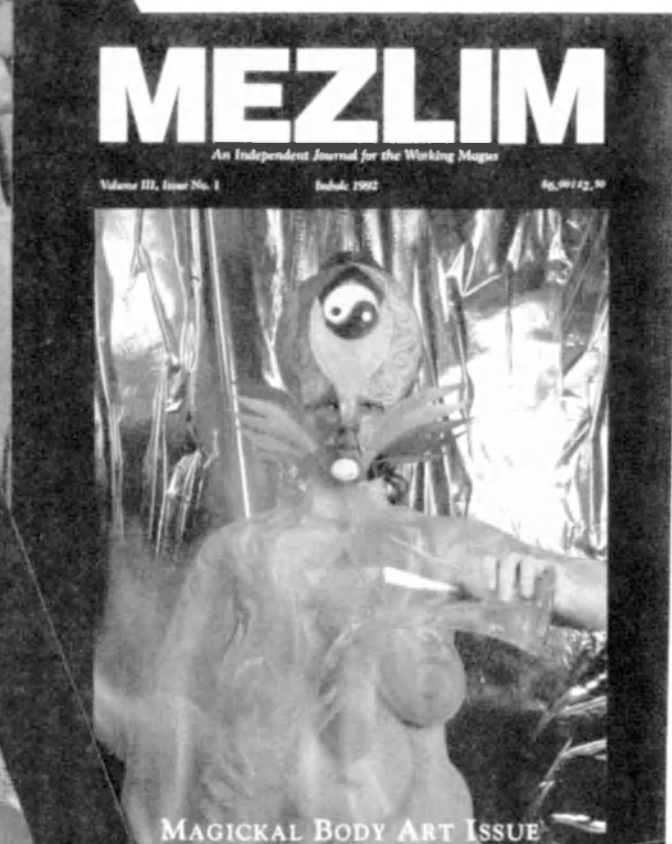
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