

BASIC WICCA

According to Journey To The One

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THE ABSOLUTE BOTTOM LINE - - - FIRST - - -

- **The Concept of Deity Within**

We believe that we are part of the universal cycle, part of the Creator, part of all. Deity is not something to be looked at a distance or feared. Every molecule, every atom, everything contains the essence of the universal power we identify as deity. As hard as it can be to accept, this also includes accepting deity within everyone else, whether they seem to manifest it or not.

- **Self Responsibility and Constant Improvement**

Taking responsibility for your own life probably keeps as many people from Wicca as anything else. It's a hard concept for some to swallow – when you mess up, it's your fault! So many well meaning folks just can't accept that, they still want the concept of "The Devil made me do it." Sorry, when you're part of deity, part of everything else in the universe, you are the ultimate responsibility. This includes the responsibility of ever growing, ever learning, ever growing closer to this deity within us and accepting it within everyone and everything else.

- **The Balance and Harmony of Opposites**

Just as everything in the universe is composed of the One creative power, this One is split into Projective and Receptive forces, sometimes referred to as Male and Female, or God and Goddess. Each of these, in turn, is broken into many different attributes called by many different names. Everything depends on the balance and harmony of these opposing forces.

- **The Cycles of Nature**

We celebrate the cycles of Nature, specially the Sun and the Moon. The Sun gives us our seasonal cycles and the Moon gives us the monthly phases. These are not arbitrarily manmade or based on some supposed event in history but are fixed by the universal powers. This is a natural way to celebrate and worship and places us more in tune with the universe and deity.

- **The Wiccan Rede**

The primary law of Wicca is the Rede: Put simply "Do as you will but harm none". The word "Will" as used here means doing your true calling effectively. Harm none means just that. Since it's impossible to go through life without harming anything at all (even vegetables give their lives for our nourishment, and they are a form of life) the basic Mission Statement of Journey To The One is:

To live life with joy and happiness doing one's true will, harming as little as possible, while living in balance and harmony with Mother Earth.

- **The Threefold Law**

Another major law of Wicca is that we get back three times what we give out. This includes both good and bad. We give love, we get back more love. We give trouble, we get back big trouble. So, how can we do anything but try to do the best we can in every way and follow the ideal of Harm None. A law of retribution similar to this exists in most all religions. Wicca gives this common law a multiplier of three, not meant to always be exact. Retribution may come back in the multiple of 2, sometimes it may be 10, but it WILL come back.

Summary

When we recognize deity in everybody and in all things, accept the fact of difference but equality of male and female in all peoples of the world, and stay in tune with the universal cycles, we cannot help but do as little harm and as much good as we can knowing it will return to us several times over.

That's pretty much it in a rather small nutshell - - now - - - - -

LET'S MOVE ON WITH SOME BASIC DEFINITIONS?

The below words are not in any particular order, just listed as they seemed to make some resemblance of sense.

• Pagan

From the Latin *Paganus* (plural *Pagani*), which means country-dweller(s). Originally the spreading Christian religion became a religion of the cities. The country folks still practiced the older ways tied to the seasonal and agricultural cycles, thus the *Pagans* were often looked down upon.

The New Webster's Dictionary describes *Pagan* as one who is not a Christian, a Jew, or a Mohammedan. It also goes on to say that a *Pagan* is a person with no religion. We seriously dispute that second definition as *Pagans* simply follow an older path than the Christians, Jews, or Mohammedans. A path that is in tune with the Earth and the cycles of nature. One that believes in the existence of deity everywhere in everything and does not accept the belief that we are all a bunch of horrible sinners!

• Heathen

Basically the same as Pagan. The *Heath* in England is the country side, therefore *Heathens* are dwellers in the country side. *Heathrow Airport* in London, for example, one of the world's largest airports, got its name from its original location way out in the country or *Heath*.

The word *Heather*, shrubbery that grows wild in the country, can also be an example.

The New Webster's Dictionary describes *heath* as a tract of open, uncultivated wasteland, often overgrown with heather and other shrubs.

A modern word similar to the above may be the sometimes seemingly slanderous Country Bumpkin. Of course a knowledge of folk medicine and close to the earth ways have been mastered by a lot of these Bumpkins, just as by the Pagans and the Heathens.

• Magick

First of all, why is Magick spelled with a "K"? You can hear several different explanations for this and our belief is that it boils down to the fact that we simply do it to differentiate between what we call magick (explained below) and stage illusion for entertainment. It's that simple !!!

There are several good definitions for magick and this writer's favorite comes from the controversial and cantankerous ol' curmudgeon, Aleister Crowley. *Magick is the science and art of causing changes to occur in conformance with will.*

That's pretty simple now, isn't it! It's a science, as there are specific rules we can follow that will result in specific outcomes. It's an art, as it is something we must learn, practice, and become adept at. Also, when we are doing our true *will*, as will be pointed out further on under our discussion of the *Wiccan Rede*, we have the *inertia of the universe to assist us* (Crowley again).

Think of what we know about magnetism and electricity. Actually it's not very much! Our greatest scientific minds know the rudiments of using these forces and what we can do with them, which keeps improving with each passing moment, but they don't know what magnetism and electricity really are! What we do today with electronics would be considered as magick just a few short years ago. In just a few more years we will look back upon the scientific status of today as rather primitive.

Here's a few more definitions of magick that we like:

Today's magick is tomorrow's science.

Magick is simply what is not understood.

The laws of magick are simply the laws of nature.

Magick can be nothing but a change of attitude or perception. This is all part of living a magickal life. We can learn to control where we go as long as we do it in conformance with our true *will* and the ways of the Goddess. The same laws that apply to the movement of the stars apply to the path of an ant. We can learn to live in accordance with those laws (or are they habits? See below) and our life will go much smoother.

A scientific theory has come along that tends to explain magick more than anything we've ever found. It's the theories of Morphic Fields and Morphic Resonance as put forth in several books by Rupert Sheldrake. Laws of life, even the universal ones, are simply energy fields that can be and are being constantly changed by our own input, though it may take eons in the case of universal laws. Therefore, the most rigid of all laws are basically learned habits from the microcosm to the macrocosm.

As Above So Below - - - - -

• **High or Ceremonial Magick**

Journey To The One is not going to go much into High or Ceremonial Magick but just so you know a little bit about it: It pretty much comes from the Masons with probably some influence of the Knights Templar and has been brought to us through the Golden Dawn of the late 1800's.

This very structured discipline is very regimental and ritualistic, much more so than most basic Wiccan and Pagan ceremonies. It also has the belief of commanding the presence and the direction of the various spiritual entities. They also work with some of the demons of ancient times. These are not horribly evil as most people think, even a lot of Pagans, as evil is always in the mind of the beholder, but they can be very undisciplined, mischievous, and difficult to control at times. Demons are neither good nor evil, they just are, as is every other spiritual being. The belief of High Magick is that these entities can be directed to do your will as long as you can keep them under control.

Our belief is that you can accomplish what you want without playing games with these troublesome critters. We can do the same thing working with the God and Goddess in their various archetypes and, as long as you respect and accord them the honor they deserve and expect, they will be for you without nearly as much trouble as some of the nasty beings of High Magick.

Ceremonial Magicians are also very picky about positions of planets and astrological signs in the planning of rituals. They believe that certain things must be done at certain times to take advantage of specific planetary alignment. There may be something to this and we do use astrology in our work but not to the extent of the High Magick folks.

• **Spell**

What we may call a spell could simply be referred to as a prayer by many. A spell is just a means of getting our mind in the right place to accomplish good for ourselves or others. The difference between a prayer and a spell (or magick) is mainly this: A prayer is usually a supplication to a distant deity to do something for you because you are incapable of doing it yourself. A spell is usually doing something in a ritualistic format of some kind, even if it's just anointing and burning a candle and saying some meaningful words, and knowing that it will be accomplished by the deity within.

So many people hear the word *spell* and immediately think it's evil! It's really just a different way of doing things other than by what they call prayer. As mentioned above, the main difference is that when we do a spell we know that the power within us will accomplish what we set out to do. We do not need to beg some distant and fearful power or use an intermediary of some sort to intervene for us. We are responsible!

Oh yes, we do pray too. We sometimes do ask the deities directly without any fancy rigmarole, never an intermediary, to try and help us accomplish something. We just understand that the deity is right here within us, we are part of it, Him, or Her,

When unknowing people call us *Spell Casters*, we simply ask them if they consider Baptists to be *swimmers* or *dunkers* and Catholics as *wine drinkers* or *idol worshippers*.

A spell is just a tool for us, just as prayer and praise is a tool for others.

- **Neo-Paganism**

A blending of the old ways with the ways and technology of today. Much of the current heavy activity in Paganism is carried on through the Internet at this time. This is one of the reasons that Goddess Worship and Neo-Paganism are the fastest growing religions in the country.

A survey has been taken and it showed that the biggest profession among Pagans is some kind of involvement in computers.

- **Satan or The Devil**

The concept of Good versus Evil and the belief in some kind of an all evil deity (or anti-deity) figure goes back to Zoroastrianism, about 600-700 BCE. It was transmitted to the ancient Jews through the Persians and picked up by the Christians. The only major religions in the world that have a belief in the Devil or Satan are Christians, Jews, and Islamics.

This evil concept was been brought to today's beliefs during the inquisitions, the 1400's through the 1700's as a means of control and assessing guilt. It works too!!!! There is nothing in any holy book that says the Devil has horns and hoofs and this image became based on the Pagan Horned Gods, which had nothing whatsoever to do with the current concept of Satan. The Horned God, one of the best known being Pan, is just a representation of a man in touch with his more primitive animal nature and at one with the forest.

We don't need such an all evil deity figure as we believe in taking responsibility for our own actions. Evil is a choice, maybe a bad one, but a choice nevertheless, not an entity to blame our actions on.

- **Witches**

The Wise Woman of the country village, the healer and the midwife, was one of the early Witches. The term seems to come from the old English *Wic* meaning to bend or shape. The same root as *wicker* furniture or baskets.

There is really no such thing as "Black" Witches and "White" Witches, Witches are just Witches! Is there any such thing as good Presbyterians or bad Presbyterians? Is Mother Nature good or evil? Neither, She just is -

- **Warlock**

This word is not used by Wiccans as the real meaning is an old Scottish term meaning "traitor" or "oath breaker". Men and women alike are called Witches if they so desire. To call a Witch a Warlock is very derogatory.

- **Wicca**

Many sources are quoted as the root for this word, including *Wic* as mentioned above. Another source is the word *Witan* in Old English, which meant *to know* and is the root of *wit* and *wise* in Modern English.

- **Coven**

This is no more evil than the word *Witch* and simply derives from the word *covenant*, "an agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing some act; a contract." *New Webster's Dictionary*.

How many Christian churches contain the word *Covenant* in their name? Quite a few!

Wiccans often form Covens which are very close to a family, being very close knit groups. There are even some instances there they live together under one big roof or on a big piece of land, the individual families being autonomous yet part of the group. The story that a Coven must contain 13 members is just that, a story! When Covens get too big they get out of hand and 13 does seem like a reasonable amount for a top end figure. Actually most Covens are smaller than that.

Some folks call an *outer circle* of a Coven, usually made up of new students, a *Grove*. This just usually designates a looser knit group, often being a study group with aspirations towards initiation and possibly coming into the Coven.

A current trend among some Wiccans is to form legal churches. This is relatively easy to do and gives many benefits, but can be a tremendous amount of work. The churches operate similar to Christian churches in that they provide services for members such as counseling, marriage (called *handfastings*) ceremonies, and just about anything else you could put in the category of a church.

The largest percentage of Wiccans in the country are still classified as *Solitaries*, meaning that they are not connected with a Coven, Grove, or Church. Many prefer it that way and often will join with other groups for the bigger celebrations.

- **Ritual**

A ritual is simply a ceremony, a series of acts focused toward fulfilling a particular intention. Everything we do is a ritual, from the way we brush our teeth to which shoe we put on first. There's nothing evil or diabolical here, just normal acts of life performed in a repetitive manner.

Though rituals are not necessarily religious, all religions are full of ritual. We find that by doing things in a prescribed manner each time we can focus on what we do much better. We also find that by doing things the same way our ancestors did them, we can tie into some of their power. Rituals form their own thought forms and morphic field. They build power the more they are done.

More further on about ritual.

BASIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Most people will say when first becoming involved in Wicca, "I've believed this way all my life, I didn't know it had a name or so many people involved!" It's amazing how many people really have rejected the sin and guilt and the concept of a distant fearsome deity somewhere "out there" a long time ago and have already accepted that deity dwells in everyone and everything and the belief that we must take responsibility for our own life. It's a wonderful feeling when we realize that there are many more like us.

Wicca is a modern religion with ancient roots. It's based on the pre-Christian European societies, and the Mediterranean nature religions such as Celtic, Norse, Greco-Roman, and Egyptian cultures. The roots of Paganism are from the ancient hunter/gatherers carried through the development of agriculture. Think of what events and elements of nature these ancient people would have accorded worship. Thunder and lightning in storms, extreme heat or cold, volcanoes, all types of fire, etc. Think of what they would have thought of the Sun, the Moon, the stars, and the various planets. They would have linked the Goddess to the nurturing and birth giving attributes of the Earth and the God to the characteristics of the powerful horned animals of the forest.

Pagan beliefs are nature based, in accordance with the laws of the universe. Nature is the manifestation of the divine and humans are simply a part of all nature.

There are many different traditions of Wicca but the basic belief system is pretty much the same for all. A group called the Council of American Witches met April 12, 1994, strictly for the purpose of putting down some principles that are as close to universal as you can get for the variations in Wiccan traditions and beliefs. The group was disbanded shortly after that as it's purpose had been met. These thirteen principles are listed in Appendix I. These aren't perfect by any means but they're close.

Wicca is what's known as a *Mystery Religion*, yet we can not teach or be taught the great mysteries of life. We can only be prepared to accept them when they are given to us. If any teacher claims to be able to impart the mysteries to you after great study, run as fast as you can in the other direction. The *Mysteries* are different for everybody. They will be applied as applied to our own life. You will receive them directly from spirit when you're ready, no sooner, and no other way. There are no great secrets in Wicca either, all the principles of the various traditions can be found if you dig deep enough and long enough. When anyone tells you you're being taught great secrets that no one outside of this tradition or this coven may know, another reason to run! Bottom line, there is nothing new in the universe and there are no great secrets.....

- **Wicca is a Nature Religion**

It's already been stated that we consider ourselves and all of nature to be the same basic emanation from the Creator. We're all part of this energy flow. We learn to live everyday in tune with these energy cycles.

From St. Waldo (Emerson): "In the woods we return to reason and faith..... Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space.....I see all; the currents of the Universal being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God.....I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages."

From Thoreau: "The most alive is the wilderness.....Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps."

Nothing can say it better than the above two quotes - - - - -

- **Paganism vs. Wicca.**

Paganism can be likened to Christianity and Wicca likened to a denomination. Paganism may include Druidism, Asatru, Shamanism, Buddhism, Environmental Paganism, along with many others, including Wicca. Wicca itself has its roots in Northern European Shamanism stemming from the early and middle second millennium, a lot being brought to this country in the 40's and 50's by Gerald Gardner who combined many teachings including Aleister Crowley's experience in the Golden Dawn and other magickal societies. The followers of Gardner's teachings are still with us as *Gardnerians* along with many other traditions of Wicca.

- **Honoring the Divine in everything.**

One of our most basic principles is that of *Deity Within*. This vast, unknowable spirit that runs through the universe, seen and unseen, dwells within everything, including us. We seek union with this Divine Spirit - ourselves, not through an intermediary. We are all Priests and Priestesses, serving as our own link with the Divine. We do not see the need for anyone to suffer and die for us as we have no need for salvation, being responsible for our own lives. Also, as pointed out above in the definitions, we have no need for a Devil to blame things on when they go wrong. We have the ultimate responsibility for our own lives.

- **The balance and harmony of opposites.**

This is one of this writers favorite principles of Wicca and all of life. Everything in the universe, from the galaxies with their mighty stars down to the atom and even sub atomic structure, runs on the balance and harmony of opposites. Everything has a positive or negative charge, flows one way or the other, attracts or repels, resulting in an opposition of all forces but a necessary balance that makes everything work in harmony. We can look at the opposites of power and compassion. Too much power is cruelty and too much compassion is wimpyness. The same for honor and humility. We often speak of both reverence and mirth being present in our rituals and in our everyday life. Both are absolutely necessary.

And, of course, male and female, projective and receptive, the fill and the form. Nothing can work without these principles being in use and in balance.

- **Ethics and Values.**

The basic Wiccan *rules* (if there is such a concept in Wicca!) can be pretty well summed up in the Wiccan Rede: *Do As You Will But harm None*, and the Threefold Law: *Whatever You Put Out In The World Returns To You Three Times Over*. Much follows a bit further on concerning both of these.

We have a love of life in all its forms, honor and respect all living things, and serve the life force. This is serving the Goddess to the utmost. We work to preserve the diversity of all natural life, preventing the poisoning of the environment and the destruction of species of any type.

We honor the natural cycles of the year and the phases of the Moon. These are the cycles of the Earth around the Sun, our own personal star, along with the cycles of the Moon around the Earth. These cycles are the normal actions of the universe, ordained by natural laws, not by mankind.

We live knowing that the law of Karma dictates that all actions bring about changes and effects. These actions and results may be instantaneous or the effects we feel at times may be from actions in past lifetimes. We're here to learn and we accomplish that by Karma.

We try to live according to the law of Dharma, right livelihood. If we're not happy doing what we do, we will never do it good. We're all better at something than someone else and what we're best at is what we should strive to be doing. This is known as our true *will* and, as listed in the definitions preceding, we have the inertia of the universe behind us when we're doing out true will.

We strive to always honor our word. A person's word should be as the bond that holds the universe together. We don't ever give our word lightly, the Karma will come back and haunt us for lifetimes to come, not to mention the effects in this lifetime

We honor and respect all things, all people equally, regardless of gender, race, or preferences. As mentioned previously we believe in the balance and harmony of opposites. Male and female are necessary for the universal wheels to go around. We insist on a balance of power between men and women, neither being greater or neither being submissive. Priests and Priestesses within Wicca share the duties and the responsibilities. We accept all races as being descended from the same creative power that pervades the universe and all are equal under the eyes of the God and Goddess. Sometimes controversial, but necessary, is that we accept individual sexual preference and orientation as being a natural part of body and soul. We accept alternative sexualities and alternative family situations as much as anything else.

We accept the responsibility for what we do and accept the rights of every living soul; human, animal, plant, or rock.

- **We reject the notion of original sin.**

There is nothing shameful about our bodies or sex. Everything in the universe, every event, every star, every planet, runs on the energies of what we can aptly call sex. Remember the balance and harmony of opposites? Everything is based on two forces in perfect balance and absolute harmony with each other!

Since there is no need for shame and never was a *downfall* of humankind, there is no need for salvation. Life is an ongoing learning experience, this is our salvation. Besides, there was another civilization outside of the Garden of Eden, according to the Bible, called the Land of Nod. A land where the "downfall" never took place! One legend says the Pagans are descended from the Land of Nod and the followers of the War God, Jehovah, are the ones descended from the Garden of Eden.

- **Reincarnation**

Just as our basic following of the natural cycles of the universe, life, death, and rebirth are a basic requirement of all living things. Energy is never destroyed, it just cycles into something else. What are we but divine energy!

We accept a belief that we go to a place called the Summerland upon leaving our physical bodies, where we can rest up for the next cycle of life and learning. This is a happy and restful place where we can recover from the rigors of our most recent life on Earth and take stock of what we have learned. There is no proof that such a place as this actually exists, of course, but just as is the Christian belief in Heaven, we need such a belief to sustain us through the rigors of life.

Some believe we choose our birth circumstances in order to continue the learning process. This would give some credence to the science and art of Astrology as we would chose the proper alignment of planets in

order to give us the characteristics and tendencies we need for the next chapter in our evolution. It makes us firmly connected to the lessons we need to learn in any lifetime.

- **Divination**

All forms of divination are a only a road map showing where the bumps in the road are and where the sweet spots may be. Divination is nothing to worry about, nothing to be afraid of, just simple guidance. There is nothing written in stone and they are meant to help you plan your course of action throughout life, not to tell you what fate has irrefutable got in store for you. Astrology is the influence we're born with and in using various divination methods such as Tarot, Runes, and others we're simply guided by a higher power as we place the cards or whatever, and as we interpret them.

Astrology

We're born under the magnetic influence of the planets, no matter how far away and how weak the influence is. This makes each of us very individual in our own way. The Natal Astrological Chart and various Transit Charts at critical periods in our life can give us an idea where the stress points and challenges in our life may be. That isn't as bad as it sounds either, as challenges, properly met, are necessary for our growth throughout this incarnation as a part of our complete evolution as a spiritual being.

The Sun Sign, which most everybody is acquainted with is just a part of the entire Natal Chart and a full chart must be drawn up and examined thoroughly for Astrology to mean anything. We must know our Rising Sign and our Moon sign, to name two of the important ones, as well as the relationship of various planets, signs, and houses to each other. The Daily Horoscopes in the newspaper don't really mean much more than a decaying hill of very small beans!

Most staunch believers in Astrology started out to debunk it by trying to apply it's teachings to their own lives and subsequently prove it to be hogwash. Nearly all those who start this study end up as believers!

Tarot Cards

The wisdom of the Tarot has been around for a long, long time, some say thousands of years and it's been at least hundreds. It's one of the most popular forms of divination used in Wicca and most people learn at least a little bit about it. The Major Arcana is a complete trip through all the areas of your life and the Minor Arcana shows you what to do with it.

We use the Major Arcana, and it's connection to the Qabalah, as a meditation and study method for complete life effectiveness. Many believe that the original intent of the Tarot was to study a life pathway and only evolved into being used for divination later.

The Major and Minor Arcana can also be easily connected to the Qabalistic Tree of Life for a good divination method.

Runes

The Runes are said to have descended directly from the Norse God Odin as he hung on the World Tree contemplating wisdom. He finally found this great wisdom in the Runes.

Runes are probably more blatant than the Tarot Cards and not very subtle at all. This writer often ends a Tarot reading with a pull of one Rune from the bag. It's a nice touch and has never failed to bear out the card reading and add a bit more insight.

Others

There are many other methods of divination and we advise you to use whatever works for you. Anything is valid as long as you believe that you are being guided in it's use and listen to that inner voice.

- **The Qabalah (no matter how you spell it).**

The Qabalistic Tree of Life explains a lot of our basic concepts of the One Creator. It gives us an understanding of God and Goddess, male and female, projective and receptive, mildness and severity, mercy and judgment, emotion and intellect, which all blend together in the balance and harmony of opposites. This writer

believes that the relationships established in the Qabalah is one of the most important parts of the Journey To The One study.

The Qabalah lends credence to our belief that we are basically a monotheistic religion, contrary to some opinions. There is One Creator, One Power, known by many different names. That One is split into the two major attributes of Projective and Receptive energies known as God and Goddess. These are further broken down into various archetypes which give specific characteristics to these energies and are known by many different names in the vast diversity of Earth's cultures, past and present.

The Qabalah is simply one of the best teaching and study tools to put all this into an understandable perspective.

- **Proselytizing**

NO! That's the bottom line. Simply NO!

We do not try to convert. People come to us only if they want to. We only try to let people know that we exist. They will find us when they are ready to take that big step into the deeper meanings of life.

We feel attempting to convert another is a form of religious bigotry. Wiccans or Pagans may talk your ears off if you ask them but they'll never insist they are right and you are wrong. They'll never leave tracts on your car or hand them out on a street corner.

- **We can never be considered a cult, unless your definition of *cult* is *them not us!***

Cults require unquestioning obedience from the followers of an infallible authority figure claiming all wisdom. They usually exercise power over all areas of your life, including your finances and even your sexual activity.

Cults have rigid dogma and commonly exercise a great deal of control over preventing dropouts, even resorting to violence to getting them back. On and on - - No, Wicca is definitely not a cult. Wiccans do not accept ultimate authority and are much too independent to ever fit into a true cult environment.

THE WICCAN SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE

Remember, nothing said here is to be construed as the belief of *ALL* Wiccans but is a general belief structure.

There is really only one type of energy in the universe. The only thing close we even sort of understand is electro magnetic force and the energy called light, composed of both particles and movement (mass and vibration). The great 19th century French writer, Eliphas Levi, wrote "*There exists a force in nature.....it is diffused throughout infinity; it is the substance of heaven and earth. When it produces radiance it is called light. The will of intelligent beings acts directly on this.....Being the instrument of life, this force naturally collects at living centers; it cleaves to the kernel of plants as to the heart of man.....*"

Everything is composed of vortexes of moving forces, swirling into an existence of linear time and out again. This force can be called *God* if you like or the creative power of the universe. We believe that reality exists and operates on many planes, each with its own set of laws. These laws are compatible with each other and can interact.

All manifestation arises from the interaction of opposite forces that are complimentary. Positive and negative; light and dark; form and content; old and new; left brain and right brain; intellect and emotion; projective and receptive; male and female; "good" and "evil" (actually nothing is good or evil, just opposing forces working in creative tension); even birth and death.

- **And From A Little More Spiritual View**

The beginning of everything is the Goddess force, the Mother, the Beginning of all. This is then projected out till it forms the God force. Both are necessary for any kind of existence. The projection continues till existence

ends and everything starts all over again. Thus the Goddess is the birth and the God is the death. A continuous cycle.

More below on this in Seasonal Celebrations.

Again, it all boils down to the Balance and Harmony of Opposites!

HISTORY OF THE GODDESS GIVING WAY TO THE GOD

- **Ancient concepts.**

Numerous sculptures of women, usually exaggerated forms, have been found in Europe and the Near East that date back to 30,000-25,000 BCE. This is throughout the Upper-Paleolithic period in Europe and the later Neolithic Age of the Near East. It is believed that the concept of a female deity came from the belief that women were the sole creators of children, thus the sacred Mother.

- **The Mesopotamian and Babylonian societies.**

Mesopotamian society (3500 BCE-540 BCE), existed in what is now the Southern part of Iran. In the beginning they worshipped one primary Goddess under many names sometimes known as *Queen of Heaven* or *Lady of the High Places*. This Goddess, also called Inanna, Irnini, or Eriskegal, evolved into the great Babylonian Goddess Ishtar.

In about 1600 BCE the Hittites seized power and, in their warlike way, took over the temples by a male dominated priesthood. They called their Goddess Tiamat, who was overpowered and killed by their God Marduk in a great battle for control of the region.

Note - male dominance was rising.

The study of early scientific advances made by the Babylonians, such as in the fields of mathematics and astronomy, were restricted to the priesthood. This enabled them to make magickal predictions and occupy a space far above the average citizen.

Note - *priesthood* - male only!

In about 1100 BCE the Goddess Ishtar, her worship being kept alive by underground followers, was married to the God Asher and produces a son named Ninurta. This is the first recorded triad of Goddess, Consort, and Divine Child in the Near East.

- **The Egyptians.**

In another ancient society, Egypt (3100 BCE - 30 BCE), the Goddess existed in one form as Nekhebt and the derivations of Nut, Net, or Nit. Some writings tell of the Goddess Hathor as the Mother of all, even putting the great Sun God, Ra, in the sky. She evolved into one of the best known Goddesses of all times, Isis.

Isis, with her husband Osiris, produced Horus, another instance of the Holy Trio of Mother, Father, and Divine Child.

The Egyptians and Babylonians both lived a minimal existence in a theocratic society with their simple science and technology providing for the necessities of life. Of course, then we have the pyramids, sphinx, etc. Was their technology really that simple or is there something we yet do not understand?

- **The Greeks.**

The Greeks also had somewhat of a society going at this time and made contact with the Babylonians and the Egyptians about 1000 BCE or so. They took the rudimentary science of these cultures and combined it with their own more dynamic outlook and a more mutual consent type of government instead of a theocratic state.

They had all developed mythical explanations for creation with their many deities being responsible for the major aspects of the world. All this combined to make the early beginnings of what we know as philosophy. The

thinkers of the society sought explanations to the world around them and found ways of exploring nature in order to explain and control it.

- **The Hebrews and the Biblical period.**

The Biblical land of Canaan, comprising the area now including Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and part of Syria, had their own Goddesses known as Ashtoreth, Asherah, Astarte, and many other names.

The ancient Hebrew society, as emerging from Egypt as reported by the Bible, brought with them the worship of Isis and Hathor along with a reverence for the Goddess and was a matrilineal society. Most Jews today still consider you to only be a true Jew of your Mother was Jewish.

- **The Hindus**

Another worldwide religion with roots in both the Goddess and the God is Hinduism. Recorded history of this in India goes back as far as 3000-2500 BCE with the poems of the Rigveda dating to around 1200-1000 BCE. The Hindus have always had Goddesses as well as Gods. An offshoot of this is Buddhism which has spread to many parts of the world in one form or another. They accept that there are many enlightened beings in this universe, one being the Buddha (623-543 BCE) and have many Gods and Goddesses.

- **The Romans**

Romans date back to the Etruscans in Northern Italy in about 1200 BCE, the civilization spreading by conquest throughout the Western World including Britain, Jerusalem, and Egypt. War was a constant occurrence till they withdrew from Britain in 407 CE and gradually lost foothold thereafter. The Christian religion was formally adopted by Emperor Constantine and the doctrine solidified at the Council of Niceae in 325 CE. The Goddess was losing power steadily during the Roman Empire and early Christianity although a lot of the ancient beliefs and knowledge were salvaged by the Italian Strega, dating back to the Etruscans. Many Strega today work hand in hand with Catholics in Italy who still want the peace and love only the nurturing Goddess can give us.

- **The Arabs**

We won't go into this much other than a brief mention as it is not a part of the history of the Goddess religions, but is a major religious power in the world. The Arabian Peninsula was solidified under Islam in the 7th century, Islam being founded by Mohammed in 632 CE. Islam is a very conservative, tradition oriented religion based on a strict interpretation of the Koran, usually thought of as not very friendly to woman except in their traditional roles.

HISTORY OF WICCA

Wicca is based on old religions and old traditions but is not *THE* old religion as so many claim. Modern Wicca (modern as related to the 1940's anyway) is based on Witchcraft, Paganism, magick, Goddess worship, and a few other old ideas. What counts is the practice of Wicca works and gives peace and inner strength. It wouldn't be of much value to anyone if it didn't!

No one can really say for sure what knowledge our spiritual ancestors really had or how they practiced. There will never be one true way of practicing the religion of Wicca or Witchcraft and any teacher worth his/her salt will tell you this up front and not make outrageous claims about their own background and lineage.

Wicca is basically a combination of several old belief structures, mentioned above, put together by Gardner, with the aid of Aleister Crowley and others, in 1946-47. Crowley, who gave a lot of ideas to Gerald Gardner, came out of the Golden Dawn, which came into existence in 1888 and took a lot of it's practices and teachings from the Masons, the Rosicrucians, Theosophy, and the early Magicians.

Two very good books avidly studied by Gardner, *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* by Charles Leland and *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer, both published in 1890, lent a lot to Wicca. These are still studied today as basic texts.

We believe that to really get into modern Wicca, you have to go beyond the sometimes restrictiveness of Gardner and look at more of an overall picture of Paganism, Witchcraft, Goddess worship, and magickal practices all put together and constantly evolving. The evolving part of modern Wicca is one of the most important parts, as we are growing constantly with the evolution of the adherents who keep bringing more and more revealed knowledge into the fold.

The truth about all this is not to be found browsing in the fantasy section of your local bookstore wearing your huge pentagram and dingy black clothing. It's more to be found in history and anthropology libraries of universities. Most of all, it's to be found within us and our union with the God and Goddess.

GOD AND GODDESS

Just a bit about our beliefs of the God and Goddess here, starting with a basic question: Are we monotheistic or are we polytheistic? Most Wiccans will say polytheistic but is that really the correct answer? We believe the answer is basically monotheistic with polytheistic overtones, or another way of putting it, One Creator known by many names. That sounds complicated but it's not, really. There is but one great creative power, both male and female yet neither, everything yet nothing, a power so vast as be uncomprehensible by the human mind. This power is split into the male and female attributes, projective and receptive, God and Goddess. These are further split into archetypes which comprise the various Gods and Goddess we know. The Gods and Goddesses are also grouped into Pantheons, meaning the culture they represent, such as Celtic, Norse, Egyptian, Greco-Roman, etc.

We firmly believe in the divinity of both male and female as there is an absolute necessity for both projective and receptive forces for anything to work properly, evolve and grow. The Qabalah tree of life explains this as well as anything as everything being dependent on the balance and harmony of opposing forces. This makes it necessary for us to hold both the God and Goddess to be of equal power and both essential to a well balanced spirituality. We may use specific names for the God and Goddess to correspond with the powerful forces that have been built up around those names, or many of us use the generic *Lord* and *Lady* at times.

Many people, especially women, are drawn to Wicca because of the lack of a feminine divinity in the mainstream churches, in fact many times the downgrading of the feminine anything. Wiccan (although not necessarily called that) belief goes back to a very ancient time where it seems that the feminine deities prevailed and women had just as high a place in society, or higher in some cultures, as men. Wicca is not strictly female dominant societies either, just as in the ancient times, as both men and women work side by side, equal and in complete partnership. This is so different to what is prevalent in most modern society, in fact for several thousand years now, where the male is always the superior one and holds most of the power. This is classed as a partnership society versus a dominator society. We choose the partnership one - - - -

THE LAWS

- **The Wiccan Rede.**

Often attributed to Doreen Valiente, the full form being included in Appendix II. The basic "Harm None" clause is what it boils down to so let's take a look at that concept.

Olde English version - An it harm none, do what ye will.

Modern English version - If it harms none, do what you will.

Harm can mean physical, mental, or psychic damage. That about covers all the bases!

We are related to all life, the earth, the planets, and the stars. Everything we do affects everything else in the great web of life. A stone dropped in the water affects everything around it by the ripples and even disturbs the mud on the bottom no matter how deep. That's why anything we ask for, any spell we do should include, "For the good of all and harm of none."

Will means right livelihood, doing what you're meant to be doing. Everyone has his/her own true will and to not follow it is one of the worst things you can do. This may surprise a few people that take *will* to mean doing whatever you feel like doing. There is a connection though, as when doing your own true will you should also be doing what you positively feel like doing anyway.

"A person who is doing his/her true will has the inertia of the universe to assist him/her." Crowley.

"A person whose conscious will is at odds with his/her true will is wasting his/her strength. He/She cannot hope to influence his/her environment efficiently."
Crowley

"In practical life, a person who is doing what his/her conscious tells him/her to be wrong will do it very clumsily. At first!" Crowley

All Crowley quotes are changed slightly to reflect our non-gender biased attempt at writing and speaking. He was definitely a product of his generation, a flaming chauvinist!

Will is basically the same as the Hindu and Buddhist belief in Dharma, or *Right Livelihood*. Dharma is a way of life that is right for one's self, the correct understanding of one's place in the present incarnation.

Doing one's proper will is to push evolution to mankind's fullest capabilities. Therefore the real interpretation of the Rede is to follow your true will in life while causing harm to no one or no thing.

● **The Threefold Law.**

The Threefold Law simply means that which you put out into the world will come back to you threefold. Now, don't take that absolutely literally in that everything you do is going to be done back to you exactly three times. Some things you do may not return to you at all, although this would be very rare, and some 100 times. It basically means that what you do will return to you one way or the other, and return more than you put out.

Most every culture there's ever been has some variation of this, including the almost universal concept of *Do Unto Others, etc.* This is all tied to the *Law of Karma*, again a universal concept although not always called by that name. One important thing to remember is that we always accept responsibility for our own actions and know that they will return to us in one form or another. We have no one to blame but ourselves for what we get out of life.

One thing we may discuss here a moment is what do we do when we have been seriously wronged by someone. Do we take revenge? Look at the concept of *Justice versus Revenge*. We need never take revenge, we just ask the Goddess that justice be done. We then release it and go about our business, knowing it will be handled by the Old Ones in accordance with natural laws and right will be done. We know that Karma will take care of what needs taking care of and we will have no responsibility for it and draw no Karma of our own.

Always remember, what goes around comes around.

● **Morals and Values.**

In addition to the above two laws, the morals and values of a Wiccan person and family aren't really that much different from mainstream society. One difference from some is that we look within for our values, not needing something or someone outside of ourselves to tell us what they should be. Listen to your conscience and you will never go wrong.

We believe that morals and values must be individual to some degree, and are not always representative of the religion as a whole. The values of Wicca also include keeping promises, not attempting to gain power over anyone, going the extra mile, practice uprightness and honor, and always attempting to do what is correct and for the good of all.

The closest thing we probably have to *sin* is the violation of someone's free will. That's why coercion in any form and predatory acts are not part of our way.

Above all, it is about holding high the names of the Old Ones, keeping their ways, and caring for the Earth.

- **The Mission Statement of the Journey To The One:**

We thought long and hard and spent many hours, days, and months looking for a mission statement that would accurately reflect the purpose of our journey on this pathway, the Journey To The One. The *Harm None* concept is wonderful and what we should ultimately strive to follow, but is it always possible to the last degree? No - - - - - We harm grass when we walk on it. We kill fireants. Even the vegetarians among us will agree that fruits and vegetables are living cellular structure, to exactly what extent we don't really know. The fact is that we must nourish our body with that living cellular structure - we can't eat rocks!

We will also hurt other people occasionally as we go through this life, usually inadvertently but sometimes on purpose. If someone is attacking your child with intent to harm and you have the means at your disposal to stop that from happening by causing harm to that person, will you do it? Of course you will! You make decisions like that on the spot and take your chances with the Goddess and with Karma later. We do what must be done.

Taking all this into consideration with the rest of our principles, the mission statement of the Journey To The One has evolved as follows:

To live life with joy and happiness doing one's true will, harming as little as possible, while living in balance and harmony with Mother Earth.

That just about says it all - - - - -

THE WRITINGS

Now, this was a tough one, since Wicca really has no Holy Book or ancient scrolls to lead us on our pathway. We have sprung from many different sources. So, to be real basic about it, we feel there is only one document that is pretty universally accepted by Wiccans, and that is the Charge of the Goddess.

The Charge is usually attributed to Doreen Valiente, an associate of Gerald Gardner's, and is adapted from writings in *Aradia, Gospel of the Witches*, written in 1890 by Charles Leland. It is sometimes said that the original Charge was given to the Strega (Italian Witches) by Aradia Herself.

Our favorite version, that in the First Person of the Goddess, is in Appendix III.

THE NATURAL CELEBRATIONS

- **Ordained by the Universe (God, if you want to use that term).**

These are not man-made, they existed before man (or woman) existed on this earth. They existed before the dinosaurs or any form of life on this earth, and they will exist in their present form long after we're gone. Our celebrations are based on the movement of the planets, primarily the Earth, Sun, and Moon, within our Solar System. They made sense to early agrarian societies and still do today. These are the cycles of nature.

No matter what significance we assign holidays based on supposed events, nothing will ever change the fact that there is one day a year when there is a longer amount of sunlight than any other, and of course the opposite with the shortest amount of sunlight. There will also be two days when the amount of Sunlight is 12 hours pretty much on the button, making day (in reference to sunlight) equal to night. It's also a cosmic fact that the Moon travels in it's orbit around the Earth once about every 28 1/2 days going through it's various phases.

- **Solar.**

The Solar holidays called Sabbats usually honor the deities pertaining to the particular season and is where extended communities often get together.

The 4 commonly called *Major Sabbats* are taken from the Celtic societies and are halfway between the Solstices and Equinoxes. They occur at approximately the middle of each of the fixed astrological signs. The 4

commonly called *Minor Sabbats* are from the agrarian holidays of old and fall on the solstices and the equinoxes. They occur on the first day of each of the cardinal astrological signs and signal the beginning of each season.

Just why the terms *Major* and *Minor* came into being we cannot explain but it probably has something to do with the fact that a lot of what we study and practice came out of various popular writings on the Celtic culture. What the popular writers term the Major Sabbats are based on Celtic holidays and what they term Minor Sabbats are more based on the agrarian holidays of ancient times.

We kind of lean to reversing these terms since the important ones would seem to be the ones corresponding directly with the natural solar events and the less important being the in-between ones. However, the most important thing is to know the fundamental aspects of all.

Here's a very brief run down of the eight Sabbats, usually termed the Wheel Of The Year, starting with the first spoke, Samhain, commonly celebrated as the Wiccan New Year,

Samhain, also known as All Hallows Eve or Halloween, occurs in the middle of Scorpio. This would make it usually the 5th or 6th of November. However, it's become common to celebrate it on the day that the mainstream world has assigned to Halloween, October 31st. This is customarily thought of as the evening when the veil between this dimensional plane and the next is the thinnest and we can make contact with the spirits of our ancestors. We honor the departed ancestors in our celebrations of Samhain.

Yule, the day with the shortest amount of daylight in the year, the Winter Solstice, the first day of Winter. It's also known as Midwinter's Eve and is the beginning of Capricorn, usually somewhere from December 21st to the 23rd. This is what also has evolved into the Christian celebration of Christmas and also coincides with the birth of many other Solar Deities or Sun Gods throughout the cultures of the world, ancient and present. We look to Yule as the rebirth of the Sun each year as the days start to get longer after that point, and take stock of the promise of things to come.

Imbolc, sometimes called Candlemas, is celebrated by the Catholics as the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It's also groundhog day in the United States, when the shadow, or non-shadow, of the groundhog predicts the length and severity of the rest of Winter. Now, is this Pagan or not? Using an animal for divination of things to come! It's customarily celebrated on February 2nd but actually occurs in the middle of Aquarius which would usually make it February 5th or 6th by the ancient Celtic calendar. We celebrate Imbolc, as the name *Candlemas* suggests, with lots of candles lighting the way to a brighter future as the days are now noticeably longer, a nice tribute to the increase of the daylight hours.

Ostara is the Vernal Equinox, when the hours of daylight and night are equal. It's also the first day of Spring when the earth is coming back into bloom after Winter. The Christians celebrate Easter, the resurrection of their savior, just as the Earth is resurrecting itself, based upon this time of year. Easter is held on the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox, or the next Sunday if that Full Moon falls on a Sunday. The first day of Spring is also celebrated as the Feast of the Annunciation, the announcement of the Christian Holy Mother, Mary, being with child. The Vernal Equinox falls at the beginning of Aries, usually occurring March 21st, 22nd, or 23rd. We celebrate Ostara as the rebirth of the Earth, a beautiful time of year, and the time for the birth of new ideas to take place in our lives.

Beltane, the fertility festival, also called May Day, is celebrated on the first day of May. Maypole dances are held throughout the Western world in celebration of this every popular festival, although most people have no idea they're actually performing an ancient fertility rite. May Day has become a symbol of the earth coming alive as Spring is really upon us now. May First has become the popular day to celebrate Beltane even though the ancient tradition of celebrating Beltane in the middle of Taurus would place it on the 5th or 6th of May.

Litha is the Summer Solstice, the day with the most daylight hours of the year. Also called Midsummer's Eve or just Midsummer, it occurs at the beginning of Cancer which will fall somewhere from June 21st to the 23rd. This is the first day of Summer where we celebrate the long days and warm weather of the season. An agrarian culture will be tending the crops placed in Mother Earth in the Spring in preparation for the coming harvest. Litha is a time of rest and relaxation where we nurture the new ideas that were sown at Ostara.

Lammas, coming from the old English Loaf Mass, a celebration of the grain harvest, is the first of three harvest festivals. It's often called Lughnasadh after the Celtic God Lugh. It's usually celebrated on August 2nd, even though the middle of Leo, it's home sign, would be August 5th or 6th. We usually celebrate the first harvest of the grains at this time, corn and wheat being very symbolic. We give thanks for the harvest and come to understand that some of the grain must be saved for the planting next year. A sacrifice back to the earth (a death of kinds) so the new birth and growth may occur.

Mabon, sometimes called Harvest Home, bring us to the last spoke in the Wheel Of The Year, the second harvest and beginning of Fall, the Autumnal Equinox. Mabon is the beginning of Libra usually occurring in the area of September 21st to the 23rd. We continue the harvest celebrations, thanking the Deities for the bounty and putting it away for the upcoming Winter. This also teaches us the lesson of preparedness.

Coming around full circle back to Samhain, we're ready to celebrate the third and final harvest in addition to honoring our ancestors as mentioned above, and preparing for the year ahead. This will be the middle of Fall and colder weather is definitely on the way. We close out the year with respect for those who have gone ahead and are prepared for Winter as a result of our planting, nurturing, and harvesting the bountiful growth.

Think about the Wheel Of The Year in reference to your own life. It's a constant circle of death and rebirth, destruction and creation, always one depending on the other.

- **Lunar.**

The Lunar celebrations, based on the cycles of the Moon, called Esbats, are usually held by the smaller groups, covens, or families. More serious work is done at these times as the group is closer and more used to working together than at Sabbats. Usually this is where healing and more powerful magick is done.

Wiccans celebrate the Full Moon more than anything and the theme here is usually one of abundance and fullness. Whatever we need to work on requiring the force of increase and growth will be well to work on at the Full Moon. The same theme prevails for the two weeks before the Full Moon, where the waxing Moon is constantly growing each night. When we need to banish something the powers of the waning moon, the two weeks after the Full Moon are best. The New Moon as listed on calendars is actually what we call the Dark Moon as this is when the Moon is completely covered by the shadow of the earth and receives very little sunlight to reflect. We consider the New Moon to be that first little sliver of Moon to show when moving into the waxing phase.

The Dark Moon is a perfect time to look deep inward and reflect on life. Many folks are afraid of the very powerful forces available for our use at this time but it is that power within, not necessarily shining bright on the outside, that will cause us to reflect on what's really going on in our life. The force of letting go is a necessary prerequisite for any building to take place in our life. It's all part of the wonderful cycle of nature, which we talk about so much and what forms such an integral basis of our religion.

- **The Natural Cycles of the Planets, the Universe, and Everything.**

This is really what it's all about. These cycles help us to harmonize with natural cycles of the planet and the solar system we inhabit. Since everything revolves around beginnings and ends, they celebrate the life-ing force of the Goddess and the death-ing force of the God.

The cycles of the God are celebrated by the solar cycles and the seasonal Sabbats. They can be Child, Youth, Adult, and Elder; Youth, Poet, Father, and King; or Son, Lover, Father, Sacred King. Just some of the ways different traditions and cultures refer to the cycles of the God.

The cycles of the Goddess are celebrated by the lunar cycles and the Esbats. They are usually referred to as the more standardized Maiden, Mother, and Crone.

Life and death are both aspects of each other. The Universal Vortex of swirling forces swirls into existence and out again in a continuous cycle. The death or stoppage of anything is a positive thing, being necessary for the continuation of life. Even some of the seed must be sacrificed in the earth for new growth to occur. The two forces are always in perfect balance and absolutely necessary for continued existence and our learning experiences. It's all part of the habitual cycle of nature.

THE ELEMENTS

Many of the people of old lumped everything into four categories called Elements and, according to some historical data, assigned them to the four cardinal directions. The Elements are termed as Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. They are most commonly, but not always, assigned to East, South, West, and North respectively.

The matching of Elements to directions, according to most data, seems to have been the brainchild of Paracelsus in the 16th Century. A few sources lay claim to this happening much earlier. Who really knows!

These are basically energies within our realm of reality, and as such, together make up everything we know. Here's the fundamentals - - - - -

- **Air.**

Element of the East. Represents imagination, new beginnings and communication, among other things. It's often represented by the color yellow, symbolic of the rising Sun.

- **Fire.**

Element of the South. Fire is passion, creativity, strength, and more. Usually assigned the color red.

- **Water.**

Element of the West. Health, emotion, and love are found here and represented by the color blue.

- **Earth.**

Element of the North. The attributes here are power, stability, and protection, all representing the element of Earth. It's usually assigned the color green.

- **More**

Many systems also use Spirit as a fifth element, with the direction simply being up. This, obviously, represents the ultimate power of the universe and the deities, a psychic attribute not of this world.

In some systems, the elements of Air and Earth are reversed, Air being in the North and Earth in the East. There are valid reasons for this that are a subject all by themselves. This, and other subjects such as a discussion of the Elementals, spiritual entities expressing the aspects of the four Elements, are subjects for much more extended discussion than is possible here.

If you investigate many systems and traditions, you will find the elements placed in every which direction. This, as presented here, is probably the most common but is not the only way by any means.

TOOLS, CLOTHING, AND MAGICKAL NAMES

The Journey To The One does not dwell tremendously on the absolute necessity of the use of what is termed *proper* ritual clothing but there are reasons for it. The main reason being that it puts us in the right frame of mind for communing with the deities. When an item of clothing or a tool is dedicated to this purpose and this purpose only, it helps to bring our mind to the right point when we use them.

We do believe in making our own tools and robes as much as possible. That doesn't mean it's absolutely essential to do so, just that the more of our own energies we put into something, the more it will become totally ours.

- **Robes**

Ritual robes are used by most Wiccans as a means to signify that it's time for the ritual frame of mind. When we put on a robe dedicated to ritual use we know exactly what we're doing, why we're doing it, and our

mindset will change to that of a more spiritual one. That doesn't mean that we can't do serious ritual in street cloths either, anymore than we can't do serious spiritual work without the special tools listed below.

Some well meaning folks wear robes when teaching a class or even for everyday street wear. Journey To The One finds this practice to be somewhat pretentious and softens the real meaning of the ritual robe. We don't need to look "Witchy" to be serious in our pathway.

We will also give a brief mention here about the practice of doing ritual skyclad, or completely unclothed. This is a standard practice in a few traditions and is neither looked upon by the Journey To The One as right or wrong. There is certainly nothing wrong with it if all agree and are comfortable. Also, there is nothing sexual about it, so let's not even go in that direction. Whatever works for you or your group, do it ! ! !

- **The Athame.**

A ritual knife simply used as a pointing device, just as a finger on one's hand would be. Usually quite dull and not used for cutting.

- **The White Handled Knife.**

A sharp knife used in ritual for cutting herbs, cords, etc. Also often used for carving messages or runes in candles to be burnt for a specific purpose.

- **The Sword.**

Used as a pointing device, just as an athame, just bigger! Often used as a symbol of the guardian of the circle.

- **The Wand.**

Again, used as a pointing device, just as an athame or sword, but "softer" in meaning. A wand could be used for calling in the deities where an athame would be considered disrespectful. It's also used rather than an athame in many public ceremonies where outsiders are present such as handfastings as it presents a more benign appearance.

- **The Staff.**

Another pointing device or sometimes just used as a holder for various banners or flags. Also good to lean on when you're tired or have a long ways to walk!

- **The Broom.**

The Witches' broom, often called the besom, is used for symbolically cleansing ritual areas. It's also a symbol of the home, therefore, is often jumped by newly handfasted couples at the end of the ceremony. Said to be good for fertility, so don't jump the broom if you don't want this aspect of a relationship!

- **The Cauldron.**

A common symbol of Witchcraft usually found by the fireplace in all homes in the old days, coming in many various sizes. It represents bounty and blessings and is often used to hold just about anything you want it to including a small fire for a multitude of purposes. It's also a very female symbol representing receptiveness.

- **The Chalice.**

Often used on the altar to hold the element of Water and to represent the receptive principle. Also used to hold the wine or juice for the ale part of the consecration of cakes and ale. Some groups use their own personal chalices for this part of the ritual and sometimes in very small groups all will drink from the one used for the consecration.

- **The Paton or Altar Pentacle.**

A disk or plate inscribed with a pentacle often used on the altar to represent the element of Earth. Sometimes used as a base for the chalice or other magickal object.

- **The Thurible or Incense Burner.**

A container for the hot coal used for the altar incense and may even represent both the elements of Air and Fire.

- **Magickal Names.**

Most Wiccans, but not all, take a magickal name of their own choosing. The history of this is said by some to date back to the time when some Witches were only known to each other by their magickal names, making it impossible for anyone to turn a casual acquaintance in to the authorities during the inquisitions where rewards sometimes were great, one reward being to keep your own life! These names also give a persona during ritual when a person steps into the body of that magickal person and leaves their mundane self outside the circle. This serves basically the same function as a robe and the use of dedicated magickal tools.

SYMBOLS

- **Pentagram or Pentacle**

First of all, let's take a quickie look at the Pentagram vs. the Pentagon and the Pentacle. Technically the Pentagon is any 5 sided figure and is usually thought of simply as a box type figure with five sides. We think of the Pentagram as the star type figure with the five lines crossed to form a star with five points. The Pentacle is the Pentagram enclosed within a circle, although many Wiccans will also refer to this as the Pentagram.

The Uses of the Pentacle date back to about 4000BC in China and the Uruk period around 3500BC at Ur of the Chaldees in Ancient Mesopotamia. It has been a symbol of peace, truth, and protection for many thousands of years. We look at it as representing the four Elements ruled by Spirit at the top.

Whether it is worn point up or point down is under some contention. In the United States it is normally always worn with a point up by all, that point representing spirit. In England someone working on a Second Degree will wear the Pentacle with one point down to signify that status. We feel and recommend that it always be worn point up so as not to be confused with Satanists who wear it point down. They feel the point up is "wimpy" and that's just fine with us!

The Pentacle is not an ancient symbol of Satan worship as many will try to say. Anton LaVey, The founder of the Church of Satan, did not start using the Pentacle as a symbol of Satanism till the 1960's (not exactly ancient, huh!) which causes much. Satanists wear the cross upside down, as a symbol of disrespect to Christians, as well as the Pentacle with one point down, opposite to that of most Wiccans. Wicca is not Satanism in any way and the Pentacle is one of the most sacred symbols of our belief.

- **Hexagram**

The Hexagram, a star type figure made up of two interlocked triangles with points up and down, symbolizes *As Above So Below*. It is often called Seal of Solomon or the Star of David and is used by the Jews as their sacred symbol.

The uses of the Hexagram have paralleled the Pentagram throughout history and in some places, even overtake the Pentagram as a symbol of Wicca or Witchcraft.

- **Cross**

The simple equal armed cross, often within a circle, is one of the oldest spiritual symbols ever used and was used in ancient times to represent truth just as was the Pentacle, corresponding to the four directions and the elements. It has been used throughout the ages parallel with the Pentacle and the Hexagram and is probably older than either.

The unequal armed cross, as used in modern times by Christians is a symbol of the suffering and death of their savior, Jesus of Nazareth. We feel this makes it a symbol of execution and torment rather than a symbol of peace and truth. We'll choose peace and truth anytime!

RITUAL

- **What Is It?**

The very word *Ritual* scares some folks as they seem to have assigned some sort of subversive and evil meaning to it. Actually the subconscious rituals of life are those things we do every day without thinking such as putting one or the other shoe on first, getting up at a certain time, etc. The conscious rituals are those which we plan and do for occasions such as rites of passage (below) or Sabbats and Esbats.

The word, as used in connection with spiritual ceremonies, is actually a kind of extension of the word *Rite*. Rites being the formal procedures used in solemn ceremonies by all religions. Ritual is the entire ceremony consisting of subsets of rites. As an example (more on this below) a Wiccan ritual may consist of the rites of consecration, calling the quarters, invoking the deities, cakes and ale, and the dismissal proceedings.

- **Wiccan Ritual.**

As mentioned before, rituals are usually connected with Sabbats or Esbats and can take many forms. We can't possibly go into great detail here as every tradition and even every purpose is different. They can be an enactment of a myth, meant to tell a story or teach a lesson. They can be a conscious contact with the powers of the ancient ones by repetition of certain words, actions, etc. This brings us to the fascinating subject of Morphic Fields and Morphic Resonance, which is a massive subject of it's own and we recommend highly books by the author *Rupert Sheldrake*.

Basically we believe that all memories (yes, even laws) of the universe are held in thought forms called Morphic Fields, which are habitual rather than absolute law. These are formed over thousands of years, millions in cases of cosmic occurrences, and are constantly being changed by the addition or modification of the habits contained within them. Morphic Resonance is when we can tap into these fields or thought forms and resonate with the powers of the ancient ones and ceremonies conducted thousands of times by even more thousands of people. Through ritual we can enter a state of timelessness and actually an altered state of consciousness that will bring us into contact with the thought forms or Morphic Fields we desire.

Participating in the design of the ritual is empowering in itself. This is why students should be involved in ritual planning every step of the way. Sometimes the planning of a powerful ritual is equally as effective in making contact with the thoughts of old as the ritual itself.

The average Wiccan ritual will consist of several parts including the casting of the circle, the calling of the quarters, the invoking of the deities, the central theme sometimes called the conetum, the cakes and ale, and the reversing of the initial rites to close the ritual and the sacred space.

I want to say a little extra word here about the sacrament of the cakes and ale. This is one of the most important parts of the ritual and is seldom accorded the reverence it deserves. Look first at the word *sacrament*. The word comes from the ancient Roman *sacramentum*, a military and commercial practice of taking an oath of allegiance and making a down payment towards a future settlement. The common modern practice of making a down payment on a home is actually a sacrament according to these terms.

The Greeks added the spiritual concept of mystery to this designating a change of status, or transforming something from one state to another. The blessing and ingesting of the cakes and ale is our way of honoring the God and Goddess to the fullest extent. The blessing itself is a symbolic joining of the male and female, the projective and receptive powers of the universe. Remember our concept of the balance and harmony of opposites? That's what the universe runs on!

- **The Circle.**

Circles have been used since ancient times for rituals and group meetings of all sorts. It's one of the simplest geometrical figures possible, it has no beginning, no ending, and it contains the energies well. Everyone is on an equal basis in a circle, no one has a better seat than anyone else.

We will also try to cast our circle and do our rituals outdoors if possible. We are a nature religion and should be as close to nature as possible. Remember, God and Goddess are in nature, they ARE nature, and we are part of it all. The closeness afforded by outdoors worship just brings us that much closer to our spiritual self.

rites of passage

Wiccans go through several rites of passage throughout a lifetime just as in all cultures and religions. These are turning points in one's life and should be celebrated with friends and family as well as with the deities.

Judeo-Christian society has weddings where two people make some sort of commitment to each other in front of others and are legally joined in what they call the Holy Bonds of Matrimony. This is also taken as a civil contract that deals with many aspects of life including the ever present death and taxes. We have **handfastings**, a term going back many hundreds of years where the hands are actually loosely bound together to symbolize the joining. We will do these either as a simple handfasting, or as a legal marriage, usually with pledges written by the participants spoken to each other in front of family and friends. Many Wiccan High Priests and High Priestesses are also ordained ministers legally able to sign the civil certificate and the handfasting will also be a legal marriage. In many states a notary public may also do this. Most Wiccan leaders will also join more than two if it is desired or join same sex couples even though, at the present time, legal marriage is not recognized with either of these arrangements. Our feeling is that if the members of a family are dedicated to one another and want to express this dedication in a ceremony in front of friends and family, then they should be permitted to do so regardless of gender and number.

What the Christians call baptism, christening and confirmation or the Jews call Bar Mitzvah (male) or Bas Mitzvah (female), we have somewhat of the equivalent in **Wiccanings**. A Wiccaning is usually done by the parents of an infant just to ask the deities to watch over the child, sometimes choosing a magickal name and God (or Goddess) parents for the child. This is never taken as an absolute that the child will follow the Wiccan pathway or keep that name. Children are always completely free to make their own choices when they grow up.

It is believed that the majority of Wiccans follow a system of Initiations and elevations throughout various degree systems. The most common arrangement of this is as follows:

Dedication is undertaken in private or with a group and is simply a decision to study that pathway diligently and often choosing a teacher to work with.

initiation or **First Degree** is when a decision is made to definitely declare that, "Yes, this is my pathway and I want to follow it throughout life." This is a big step and one not to be entered into lightly. You must be sure before taking this step as it will affect you throughout the rest of your life. You will now be known as a Priest or Priestess of Wicca being that our belief is that we need no intermediaries to commune with the deities. We are all Priest or Priestess in our own accord. Most people that have been initiated will verify that things do change when you take in the deities as a definite part of your everyday life. Things may not be easy either as the deities will show you where they believe you should be and help, but not force, you to take the steps necessary to get there. This is usually not done till at least a year and a day after Dedication.

Second Degree is a decision that you are ready to give some of your hard earned lessons back to the world and help others achieve the happiness and enlightenment you have realized. You will move more into the leading of rituals at this time and, in general, much more of a leadership role within the Wiccan/Pagan community. Many traditions consider you to be a High Priest or High Priestess at this point although some do not take this step till the Third Degree. The Second Degree is usually not undertaken till at least a year and a day after Initiation or First Degree.

Third Degree is simply an extension of the Second Degree and a complete dedication to the pathway, all it stands for, and a great desire to help others. One tradition we know of even makes an ongoing *Great Work* a requirement for maintaining the Third Degree.

A relatively small percentage of those who are initiated will ever go on to the Second Degree and the same thing applies to Seconds going on to Third.

The above is not to say that there are not other systems that are just as valid and effective. In fact, some traditions don't even use the degree system at all, preferring not to get into a hierarchical structure of any kind.

WHERE DO WICCANS PRACTICE?

The largest part of Wiccans in the country are probably the *Solitaires*, which means that they practice mostly alone usually joining others only for major celebrations such as Sabbats and special occasions. This may be by necessity with no other Wiccans being around or by choice simply desiring it to be that way. Unfortunately, when Wiccans and Pagans get together in groups or congregate in any fashion the gossip and rumor mongering can run rampant just as in any other group. Yes, we should be above that but, in real life, so many are not, which is one of the main reasons so many good folks choose to do their own thing alone or with immediate family.

A lot of Wiccans practice with a small close knit group called a coven with no specific minimum or maximum size no matter what the rumors of "13" say. Most covens are probably quite a bit smaller than 13 and a few are much larger. Like the word *ritual*, the word *coven* seems to scare the more mainstream people. In reality the word *coven* simply comes from the word *covenant* meaning people of a like mind gathered together for some specific purpose. How many Christian churches do you know with the word *covenant* in their name? Still, old habits and false ideas die hard!

A current trend is also for Wiccans to form churches which are set up just like the mainstream churches as legally incorporated non-profit organizations. They are fully recognized by the IRS the same as any church.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of the above ways and you will often find them all existing side by side in the same area. They all offer different things to different people. All we can say is look into everything and make your choices very carefully.

THE BURNING TIMES

The inquisitions, which we refer to as the *Burning Times*, during the 15th through the 17th centuries took the lives of a great many innocent people judged to be Witches or Heretics. The number has been popularly placed by many at 9,000,000 but, in reality, is probably somewhere between 80,000 and 200,000.

These times were fueled by fear, greed, and brutality carried to bizarre extremes that have few parallels in all of recorded history. The most bizarre part of the whole thing is that this was carried out, not by the *Evil Witches* which were supposed to be so terrible, but by the church and the government!

On December 5, 1484, Pope Innocent VIII, concerned by the rise of Witchcraft, issued a Papal Bull in which he declared that all Pagan practices, including witchcraft and devil-worship, are heretical and thus punishable by death. This was commissioned as the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of the Witches) and was written by the Inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. It was used by professional witch hunters as the guide to tracking down witches, obtaining confessions with and without torture and prosecuting and executing those individuals accused of witchcraft. This book was used for nearly three centuries for the express purpose of rooting out and destroying witchcraft. Women were the primary targets.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* repeatedly links witchcraft to abortion and child sacrifice: "Witches who are midwives in various ways kill the child conceived in the womb and procure an abortion...." In Italy and other European countries of the Renaissance, witchcraft was repeatedly linked to the practice of child sacrifice and abortion.

The view of women is made pretty clear: "Because the female sex is more concerned with things of the flesh than men; because being formed from a man's rib, they are only 'imperfect animals' and 'crooked' whereas man belongs to a privileged sex from whose midst Christ emerged."

"But the natural reason (as to why women are more inclined to be involved with witchcraft) is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which

is bent as it were in a contrary direction to man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives."

According to a Dominican of the same period, woman is "the confusion of man, an insatiable beast, a continuous anxiety, an incessant warfare, a daily ruin, a house of tempest ...a hindrance to devotion."

The witch hunts also demonstrated great fear of female sexuality. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, describes how witches were known to "collect male organs in great numbers, as many as twenty or thirty members together, and put them in a bird's nest..." Wonder what the birds thought about that ! ! ! !

It is quite an unsettling fact that many of the superstitions and outrageous beliefs from the *Malleus Maleficarum* are still perpetrated by the church today and are attributed to modern Witchcraft practices. There is a group right here in this writer's home town that has repeatedly published the connection of Witches to abortion because of our need for "child sacrifice." They actually base these beliefs on the *Malleus Maleficarum* of 1484 and believe every bit of it ! ! !

Would you believe that the last law in England making Witchcraft a crime was repealed in 1951? ? ?

WHERE DOES THE BIBLE FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

The Bible is a wonderful blend of literature, legend, and mythology. We just do not accept it as the all encompassing word of God. The old testament was written by numerous people and probably has some of the greatest tales of man's cruelty to man ever put forth in words. It also contradicts itself frequently. The new testament was put together out of many, many tales of the times of Jesus, the four gospels being written largely by people who never met Jesus ranging from 50-150 years after his untimely death.

Christianity became the legal religion of the Roman Empire in the year 313 and it's policies and creeds, most still standing today, were formulated at the Council of Nicea in 325. It's holy book, the Bible, has been translated over and over again from obscure languages, the old testament being in ancient Hebrew and some Aramaic, the language most likely spoken by Jesus. The new testament was written mostly in ancient Greek. The translation used most today for Bible interpretation and the "rules" of the Christian church is the King James Version, translated into the common English language of the era in 1611. There is nothing glamorous or spiritual about the thees and thous of this translation, it was simply the common language of the day.

A little more history of the King James Version: While it was initially published in 1611 it has undergone several changes since still being known by the same name. It was originally translated by 47 scholars and based on the Bishop's Bible from 1568 which was a revision of the Great Bible of 1539. This was based on Tyndale, Coverdale and Matthew's Bibles from 1525 through 1537 which were pretty much based on the Latin Vulgate. Get the picture ? ? ? ?

Just a quick look at the first words of the Bible. The original version in ancient Hebrew began *Berashith Bera Elohim*. *Berashith* means The Spirit of God brings into continuous expression the dual principles of life and death. *Bera* means simply Creation. *Elohim* means a Deity or God incorporating both the male and female principles. Therefore, the first words of the Bible should have been translated as *At initial creation, the Spirit of God, who is both male and female, brought life into expression requiring a continuous cycle of death and rebirth.*

Enough said about this for now, you get the idea - - - -

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Religious freedom is one of the greatest things the Constitution of the United States of America stands for, but it does not exist in real life. Minority religions have been suppressed for so long that it is taken for granted. Simply put, unless you're a Christian churchy type, you really don't count. The very word *religion* or *religious* is taken by most all to automatically mean Christian. Now, this is not to put down Christians or a few of the other more popular minority religions in this country such as Judaism, it's just a fact.

We are put down in public places and even on national television by fanatics like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell as those who practice sacrifice of children and worship Satan. We are denied the rights to wear our sacred symbols, such as the pentacle, in public schools while crosses abound. There are several national organizations standing up for these rights and we can only encourage everybody to become part of one or more of these and support the ongoing issue of religious freedom for ALL. Some of these are listed in appendix IV.

We also have behind us The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions which took place in Chicago, IL August 8th through September 5th, 1993. This was the first time Wiccans had ever been admitted to this prestigious council. The effort on behalf of all Wiccans was spearheaded by the Covenant of the Goddess, headed at that time by Phyllis Curott. See appendix V for the basic write up of Wicca accepted by this council which publishes one of the most used books for comparative religion study in the world today.

We also have a fairly extensive write-up in the US Army's Handbook for Chaplains. Yes, the United States Armed Forces MUST make provisions for Wiccans as well as the mainstream religions. Still we are opposed and misunderstood in all places, even in some of the courts of this land which will take a child from a dedicated mother just because the mother has professed faith in the Wiccan religion.

We don't want any preference from anybody. All we ask is that we be allowed to practice our religion without prejudice as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States of America.

WHAT IS OUR REAL BELIEF ABOUT SACRIFICE?

For some completely wacky reason, one of the most common and bizarre misunderstandings of Wicca is that we practice animal and even human sacrifice. We revere life in all forms so how could we sacrifice anything? Wiccans believe in the sanctity of all life and do not feel the life of another creature is ours to take. You will find most Wiccans have more pets than average. They just seem to not be able to turn away a needy animal when it shows up on the doorstep, and animals do have a way of knowing where to go. Wiccans also communicate with animals very well so how could we possibly take the life of what we consider to be kinfolk? Another myth blown away - - -

A large percentage (compared to the general population) of Wiccans are vegetarian, not only for health reasons, but because of the reverence for life in all forms. Most of us abhor what the modern meat industry does in bringing this to our dinner tables, both in the raising of such animals and the mercilessly way they are slaughtered.

We also revere Mother Earth and try to do what little each of us can in taking care of Her. Some basic facts such as that cattle ranching is the main cause of the destruction of Central American rainforests and 95% of human exposure to the potent carcinogen dioxin comes from consuming meat, poultry, and dairy products. Enough of that, you get the idea!

Modern animal sacrifice, as practiced in some religions, is much more humane than the practices of the modern meat industry. Some of the Caribbean bred religions with roots in Africa, such as Santeria and Voodoo, do practice animal sacrifice occasionally, but not all the time. We do not really believe this is necessary as a spiritual practice but this writer has come to an understanding of why they believe as they do. If we are to do our part in making freedom of religion equal for all, we must, at least, understand this practice even though we do not condone it.

YES, THERE ARE EXTREMIST WICCANS TOO!

Just as in all the mainstream religions there are the extremists way out there on the fringes of Wicca. There are those few who hate everyone else with a passion. There are those who will take advantage of our sometimes more lenient ways and can give us all a bad name.

There are those who constantly bash other religions, just as the extremists in all sects. This is NOT our true way.

SEX, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Sex, that often forbidden word, can be a very difficult subject for many to approach. The bottom line first: Affairs, swinging, divorce, etc. do not happen any more among Wiccans than among people of the mainstream religions. We're just more open about the subject. A long time acquaintance of this writer's was in a foursome swinging group quite some time ago, before he got involved in Wicca. All had met in a Methodist Church!

We do believe that sex is just a part of the balance and harmony of opposites, the basic universal law of everything and is sacred to the God and Goddess.

One of the things that gets us in trouble occasionally is our acceptance of all sexual orientations. We believe that sexual orientation is in our genes at birth and we have no choice in how we feel as we come of age. It just happens. The ancient people accepted this with no problem and we feel the same way. Some of the greatest spiritual teachers, philosophers, artists, and musicians of all times were and are homosexual or bisexual. Who cares -----

We are very strict about underage contact, coercion is never acceptable under any conditions, everything must be completely mutual, and *NO* means *NO*. Consenting and knowledgeable adults only. Sexuality shall never be used to cause harm in any way, emotional or physical.

PAGANS ARE EVERYWHERE

Pagans and/or Wiccans are everywhere, in every profession from major entertainers, doctors and lawyers, laborers, public servants - - - your next door neighbor. A very large percentage of Pagans are involved in the computer technology profession in one form or another.

Modern Wicca and Paganism is a religion in all forms of the word, has been granted the same tax-exempt status as churches, synagogues, and mosques. We have ordained clergy that perform all the standard services such as weddings, counseling, teaching, even prison ministry, in addition to leading the rituals and ceremonies throughout the year. There is no central authority or infallible holy text and most groups are small, such as under 20 members or so.

**Wicca is definitely not a hobby, a philosophy, or mainly a way of practicing magick.
Above all — it IS a religion.**

APPENDIX I

PRINCIPLES OF WICCAN BELIEFS

Adopted by the Council of American Witches

April 12, 1974

The Council of American Witches finds it necessary to define modern Witchcraft in terms of the American experience and needs. We are not bound by traditions from other times and other cultures, and we owe no allegiance to any person or power greater than the Divinity manifest through our own being.

As American Witches we welcome and respect all life-affirming teachings and traditions, and seek to learn from all and to share our learning within our Council. It is in this spirit of welcome and cooperation that we adopt these few principles of Wiccan belief. In seeking to be inclusive, we do not wish to open ourselves to the destruction of our group by those on self-seeking power-trips, or to philosophies and practices contradictory to ours, we do not want to deny participation with us to any who are sincerely interested in our knowledge and beliefs.

We therefore ask only that those who seek to identify with us accept these few basic principles:

1. We practice Rites to attune ourselves with the natural rhythm of life forces marked by the phases of the Moon and the seasonal Quarters and Cross Quarters.

2. We recognize that our intelligence gives us a unique responsibility toward our environment. We seek to live in harmony with Nature, in ecological balance offering fulfillment to life and consciousness within an evolutionary concept.

3. We acknowledge a depth of power far greater than that apparent to the average person. Because it is far greater than ordinary, it is sometimes called "supernatural"; but we see it as lying within that which is naturally potential to all.

4. We conceive of the Creative Power in the Universe as manifesting through polarity-as masculine and feminine-and that this same Creative Power lies in all people, and functions through the interaction of the masculine and feminine. We value neither above the other, knowing each to be supportive of the other. We value sex as pleasure, as the symbol and embodiment of life, and as one of the sources of energies used in magical practice and religious worship.

5. We recognize both outer worlds and inner, or psychological, worlds-sometimes known as the Spiritual World, the Collective Unconscious, Inner Planes, etc., and we see in the interaction of these two dimensions the basis for paranormal phenomena and magical exercises. We neglect neither dimension for the other, seeing both as necessary for our fulfillment.

6. We do not recognize any authoritarian hierarchy, but do honor those who teach, respect those who share their greater knowledge and wisdom, and acknowledge their greater wisdom, and acknowledge those who have courageously given of themselves in leadership.

7. We see religion, magick, and wisdom in living as being united in the way one views the world and lives within it-a world view and philosophy of life, which we identify as Witchcraft, the Wiccan Way.

8. Calling oneself "witch" does not make a Witch-but neither does heredity itself, nor the collecting of titles, degrees, and initiations. A Witch seeks to control the forces within him/her-self that make life possible in order to live wisely and well without harm to others and in harmony with Nature.

9. We believe in the affirmation and fulfillment of life, in a continuation of evolution and development of consciousness giving meaning to the Universe we know, and our personal role within it.

10. Our only animosity toward Christianity, or toward any other religion or philosophy of life, is to the extent that its institutions have claimed to be "the only way" and have sought to deny freedom to others and to suppress other ways of religious practice and belief.

11. As American Witches, we are not threatened by debates on the history of the Craft, the origins of various terms, the legitimacy of various aspects of different traditions. We are concerned with our present and our future.

12. We do not accept the concept of absolute evil, not do we worship any entity known as "Satan" or "the devil" as defined by the Christian tradition. We do not seek power through the suffering of others, nor accept that personal benefit can be derived only by denial of another.

13. We believe that we should seek within Nature that which is contributory to our health and well-being.

APPENDIX II

THE WITCHES' CREED (LONG FORM)

Generally credited to Doreen Valiente

Hear now the word of the Witches,
The secrets we hid in the night,
When dark was our destiny's pathway,
That now we bring forth in the light.

Mysterious Water and Fire,
The Earth and the wide-ranging Air,
By hidden Quintessence we know Them,
And we will keep silent and dare.

The birth and rebirth of all Nature,
The passing of Winter and Spring,
We share with the life Universal,
Rejoice in the Magical Ring

Four times in the year the Great Sabbat,
returns, and the Witches are seen,
At Lammas and Candelas dancing,
On May Eve and old Halloween

When daytime and nighttime are equal,
When sun is at greatest and least,
The four lesser Sabbats are summoned,
Again Witches gather in feast.

Thirteen silver moons in a year are,
Thirteen is the Covens array,
Thirteen times at Esbat make merry,
For each golden year and a day.

The power has passed down the ages,
Each time between woman and man.
Each century unto the other,
Ere times and the ages began.

Then drawn is the Magickal circle,
By sword or athame of power,
Its compass between two worlds lies,
In the land of shades of that hour.

Our world has no right to know it,
And the world beyond will tell naught,
The oldest of Gods are invoked there,
The great work of Magic is wrought.

For two are the mystical pillars,
That stand at the gate of the shrine,
And two are the powers of Nature,
The forms and the forces divine.

And do what thou wilt be the challenge,
So be it in love that harms none,
For this is the only commandment,
By Magick of old be it done.

Eight words the Witches Rede fulfill:
If it Harms none, Do what Thou Will!

APPENDIX III

THE CHARGE OF THE GODDESS

This version of the ever popular *Charge of the Goddess*, we think one of the most meaningful documents ever written, is attributed to Doreen Valiente, adapted from Charles Leland's *Aradia, the Gospel of the Witches*.

Listen to the words of the Great Mother; She who of old was also called among men Artemis, Astarte, Athene, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Cerridwen, Diana, Arianrhod, Isis, Brid and by many other names.

Whenever ye have need of anything, once in the month, better it be when the moon is full, then shall ye assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of me, who is Queen of all the Wise. There ye shall assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery, and yet have not won its deepest secrets; to these will I teach things that are yet unknown. And ye shall be free from slavery; and to show that ye are free ye shall be naked in thy rites; and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love, all in my praise. For mine is the ecstasy of the spirit, and mine also is joy on Earth; for my law is love unto all beings. Keep pure your highest ideal; strive ever towards it; let naught stop you or turn you aside. For mine is the secret door which opens upon the land of youth and mine is the cup of the wine of life, and the cauldron of Cerridwen, which is the holy grail of immortality. I am the gracious Goddess, who gives the gift of joy unto the heart of man. Upon Earth I give thee knowledge of the spirit eternal; and beyond death, I give peace and freedom, and reunion with those who have gone before. Nor do I demand aught of sacrifice, for behold, I am the mother of all living, and my love is poured out upon the Earth.

Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess; She is in the dust of whose feet are the hosts of Heaven, and whose body encircles the Universe.

I, who am the beauty of the green Earth, and the white Moon among the stars, and the mystery of the waters, and the desire of the heart of man, call unto thy soul. Arise and come unto me. For I am the soul of nature, who gives life to the Universe. From me all things proceed, and all things must return; and before my face, beloved of Gods and men, let thine innermost divine self be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite. Let my worship be within the heart that rejoiceth; for behold all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals. And therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you. And thou who thinkest to seek for me, know thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not unless thou knowest the mystery; that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, then thou wilt never find it without thee. For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning; and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

When this is used, the first and third paragraphs (the short ones) are usually said by the High Priest, the second and fourth paragraphs by the High Priestess. This is often used after a drawing down of the Goddess into the High Priestess, which makes the first person language appropriate.

APPENDIX IV

SOME REPUTABLE ORGANIZATIONS TO BE ACQUAINTED WITH

In Alphabetical Order

Alternative Religions Educational Network
Office of the VP
PO Box 1893
Trenton, FL 32693
352-463-9318
www.aren.org

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, Inc.
PMB 335, 8190 Beechmont Ave.
Cincinnati, OH
45255-3154;
817-557-3949
cuups@uua.org
<http://www.cuups.org>

Circle Sanctuary
PO Box 219,
Mt. Horeb, WI 53572
circle@mhtc.net
608-924-2216
FAX 608-924-5961;
<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/liberty>

Military Pagan Network
PO Box 253
Ellicott City, MD 21041-0253
410-750-3327
coordinator@milpagan.org
John Machate, Coordinator/CEO
<http://www.milpagan.org/>

The Witches' Voice Inc
P.O.Box 4924
Clearwater, FL 33758-4924
813-723-0734 (press Star button for fax)
WebMaster@witchvox.com
<http://www.witchvox.com/>

Pagan Educational Network
PO Box 1364
Bloomington, IN 47402-1364
[please send business-sized SASE for snail mail requests]
pen@bloomington.in.us
<http://www.bloomington.in.us/~pen/>

Sacred Earth Alliance
c/o Larry Cornett
890 Alhambra Rd.
Cleveland, OH 44110
216-692-2124
lcorncalen@aol.com
<http://journey1.org/rights>

APPENDIX V

A PORTRAIT OF WICCA

From A Sourcebook For The Community Of Religions

by Michael Thorn, Public Information Officer, The Covenant of the Goddess,
for the Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, Illinois, August 28 through September 5, 1993

Modern Witchcraft (or Wicca) is the most common expression of the religious movement known as Neopaganism. According to the Institute for the Study of American Religion, Neopaganism is the fastest growing religion in the United States. Its practitioners are reviving ancient Pagan practices and beliefs of pre-Christian Europe and adapting them to contemporary American life. The result is a religion that is both old and new, both "traditional" and creative. The easiest way to grasp this "new" religion is to consider Native American religions, but with a pre-Christian European cultural setting and informed by modern American science and technology. Both Wiccan and native American paths tend to agree on respect for all life, observation of the seasons and cycles of the life through ritual, belief in the Divine as immanent in all things (as well as transcendent); belief in the Divine as manifesting in many gods, both male and female; and the practice of magic to help with the day-to-day trials of life.

Witches focus their liturgy and worship around a Goddess and a God. Rituals and services are timed to the phases of the moon and to the Wheel of the Year (i.e. solstices, equinoxes, and the days falling midway between these such as May Day and Hallowe'en). Most Witches treat their practice as a priesthood, somewhat akin to the mystery cults of classical Greece and Rome, involving years and training and passage through life-transforming initiatory rituals. All Witches agree on the ethical code, "An it harm none, do what ye will"; in other words, "Do what you truly believe is right, but let no one be harmed by your actions."