



Maiden Moon

An Advanced Wicca 101

Simon Craft

1st Edition, 1.1

Provided in cooperation with
Wiccan Clergy Association TM

Maiden Moon

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Dedicated to all who value religious freedom.

Special thanks to the co-authors, research assistants, and elders
for their support, guidance, and wisdom.

Written by Simon Craft who is solely responsible for the contents.
Opinions expressed are those of Simon Craft and do not
necessarily reflect those of the contributing co-authors.

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Preface

The title '*Maiden Moon*' is a reference to the Goddess in Maiden form. It was chosen with respect to her symbolism of growth and idealism. It is hoped that the spirit of your entrance into Wicca will be the same.

Maiden Moon is a self-study guide for dedication into Wicca. It is not the ultimate resource on Wicca, nor is it meant to be. The teachings included are sufficiently broad to present Wicca with minimal bias. It is possible to use this book as an entrance to eclectic practice or any Wiccan tradition and apply what you have learned.

You will likely find that Maiden Moon is quite different from most modern (1990s+) books on Wicca. This book covers Wicca in all three forms namely: Eclectic, Reformed Traditional, and Orthodox Traditional. Most of today's books only cover Eclectic Wicca and as such, present an incomplete and seriously biased teaching. Another difference is that Maiden Moon is quite open about issues commonly avoided by modern authors who overlook sensitive issues under the guise of being politically correct. When given the responsibility of honestly teaching Wicca, I cannot and will not overlook such issues.

I will not apologize if this book is more difficult than most. Wicca is a participatory religion that requires effort and self-discipline to learn. If you want a soft friendly "Easy Wicca in Ten Minutes" then this book is not for you.

On a final note, please be aware that I am not trying to push you into Wicca; in fact, quite the opposite is true. If Wicca does not fit you personally, then keep looking for what does fit. It is not my place to tell you what to believe.

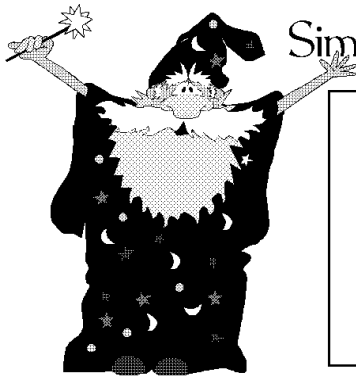
Best Wishes,

Simon Craft

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Comment Boxes

There are two types of comment boxes used in this book:



Simon says...

This is a 'Simon Says' comment box. When you see a box like this it contains my personal comment or opinion...

I separate these from the rest of the book so you realize that it's just ol' Simon's opinion. :-)



Dragon Tradition Wicca

This is a 'Dragon Tradition Wicca' comment box.

It denotes a comment that applies to Dragon Tradition but not necessarily to any others.

Introduction

So, what is Wicca?

Wicca is a religion that when practiced carries with it a philosophy and way of life. As a religion, it fits our inner beliefs on spirituality. As a philosophy, it provides our path for personal growth and idealism. As a way of life, it is reflected in our day to day living.

Wiccan theology is based on the duality of Goddess and God who reflect the balance and harmony of nature. When joined the two produce fertility and life. The Goddess and God are the living magickal divinity manifest in us, in nature, and in the Universe.

Many religions reduce empowerment and personal involvement with their restrictive dogma. Wiccan teaching places the practitioner in a position of empowered freedom regarding both life and spirituality. Keep in mind that with freedom comes responsibility to use it wisely. Freedom and responsibility are both emphasized in Wicca.

Wicca stresses that we take the responsibility of choosing our own actions wisely. Wicca holds no regard for divine predestination or interference by a devil. There is no one else to blame when things go wrong. Our lives are in our own control and are our own responsibility.

Wicca makes no claim to be the one true path to divinity. For this very reason, Wicca does not recruit new members. You will not find us knocking on doors trying to convert others. Instead, Wicca stands on the sidelines letting people make the free will choice to seek it.

Magick as practiced within Wicca is the art of communicating or causing change by nonphysical means. Wiccans do not regard magick as supernatural. Magickal abilities are considered very natural; a natural part of who and what we are as part of the natural magickal divinity.

In short, Wicca teaches us to live in a world where nature is sacred and magickal. Wicca gives us an opportunity to discover, develop, and use our natural talents. Wicca accepts us for who we are without telling us who we should be. Wicca empowers us with freedom and teaches us to use it responsibly. Wicca embodies a path to the divine while never claiming to be the only path.

Wicca, Witchcraft, Witches & Pagans

Although the terms Wicca, Witchcraft, Witches, and Pagans are related, they are far from being synonymous. As a Wiccan, it is important to understand their definitions and the relationships between them in order to communicate clearly and effectively.

Wicca & Pagan Religions

The term Pagan has definitions developed over thousands of years. Here are the four most common along with their relationship to Wicca:

1. **'A rural peasant'**

The first use of the word Pagan is etymologically rooted in the Latin 'Paganus' which means a country dweller.

2. **'A religion existing inside the Roman Empire at the same time or shortly after the Roman Empire was converting to Christianity'**

As Christianity took hold of the Roman Empire, the religious practice of the country dwellers (*Pagans*) also caught on as a definition of Pagan.

3. **'Any person who is not, or any religion that is not, Christian'**

Eventually the above definition came to mean the religious practice of any non-Christian (although Judaism and/or Hinduism are often excluded).

4. **'A modern follower of, or a religion which is, an earth/magick centric religion that is usually polytheistic'**

Since the 1970s practitioners of earth/magick centric religions both new and old claimed the right to the term Pagan as a reference to their revival of ancient Pagan religions.

The term Pagan relates to Wicca in the following manner:

By definition #1, there is no connection because this use of Pagan is purely indicative of geographic location and economic status with no religious connection whatsoever. A modern synonym would be a hick or hillbilly.

By definition #2, Wicca is not a Pagan religion because Wicca did not exist at the time of the Roman Empire or shortly thereafter.

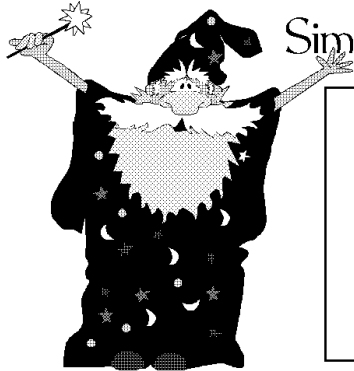
By definition #3, Wicca is a Pagan religion because it is a non-Christian religion. This use of the term Pagan is a catchall term most commonly

used among Christians who consider themselves right and everyone else wrong. Other than its usefulness in religious bigotry, it has little specific connection with Wicca.

By definition #4, Wicca is a Pagan religion because it is a polytheistic earth/magick centric religion in practice since the 1970s. This definition is the most closely connected to Wicca. However, this is still a broad definition because it includes religions of both modern origin and of antiquity.

NeoPagan

Rather than settle for the broad definition of Pagan in definition #4, the modern Pagan community has coined the term NeoPagan. NeoPagan specifically refers only to modern earth/magick centric religions (usually polytheistic). Of all of the classifications, Wicca is most precisely described as a NeoPagan religion.



Simon says...

There is a common misconception that the term Paganism refers to a single religion.

There is no one religion named Paganism¹. Pagan refers to a group of religions.

Wicca & Witchcraft

There are four common definitions of Witchcraft:

1. witchcraft (diabolical)
The alleged act of having a pact with Satan (*the Christian devil god*) in exchange for magickal powers.
During the 'burning times' the Christian church was after people practicing diabolical witchcraft.
2. witchcraft (folk)
The practice of low (folk) magick with no connection to any religious practice.

¹ The modern application of the term Paganism referring to a single religion resulted from a group that promoted Paganism as a singular religion in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The basis for their 'Paganism' was actually the teachings of Wicca without the need for formal initiation from a coven. This is detailed in a later chapter.

People practicing magick, but not the old religions, were practicing folk witchcraft

3. Witchcraft (Ancestral)

The continued practice of existing European religions after the conversion of Europe to Christianity, even into today's times.

People who practice (or think they practice) the old religions often call it Ancestral Witchcraft.

4. Witchcraft (NeoPagan) - The practice of modern magickally oriented religions with some links to, but not accurate recreations of, Ancestral Witchcraft.

Wicca is one form of NeoPagan Witchcraft, but there are several.

Wicca is a form of NeoPagan Witchcraft. Based on this, it is clear that Wicca and Witchcraft are not synonymous. There are people who practice Witchcraft who are not Wiccan.

Which Witch is Which?

Of the four types of witchcraft, (diabolical, folk, ancestral, and NeoPagan) which of the practitioners is a real witch? They all are! By definition, a witch (or Witch if referring to religious practice) is a practitioner of witchcraft. They are all forms of witchcraft.

Wicca, Witches & Warlocks

Because Wicca is a form of NeoPagan Witchcraft, Many Wiccans consider themselves Witches. However, some are offended by this usage due to negative stereotyping of the term Witch and prefer to use the term Wiccan.

Among Wiccans the term Witch, if used at all, applies to both male and female. In Old English, the term warlock meant a traitor or liar. Calling a male Wiccan a warlock is deemed very insulting and is not suggested.

How is Wicca Classified?

When you add it all up, Wicca is a NeoPagan religion, which is a form of NeoPagan Witchcraft. The practitioners of Wicca are termed Wiccans and they may or may not prefer to be called Witches.

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The History of Wicca

Wiccan history is intensely complex and can be a little confusing. Two things to keep in mind when reading: The term Wicca is defined herein as a form of NeoPagan Witchcraft based on the Witchcraft revival of Gerald Gardner and his group in the 1940s. The term Witchcraft is a much broader term referring to practices ranging from ancient to modern.

The Roman Occupation

Europe had religions before the invasion of the Roman Empire. The specifics are beyond the scope of this book. One thing important to note is that pre-Roman Europe had not one, but several religions.



A History of Pagan Europe by Prudence Jones & Nigel Pennick covers a broad range of the old European cultures and their religions.

Published Routledge; (March 1997)

The Roman Empire gradually invaded and occupied Europe around 100 CE. At this time, the official religion of the Empire was still based on the Roman Pantheon (Greco-Roman Gods). European religions were not exactly displaced by the Roman invasion; many of the old religions were merged with Greco-Roman practices, but some survived semi-intact.

Around 250 CE Christians were starting to get into positions of power in the Roman Empire. Although there were attempts to stop it, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire around 390 CE.

With the Roman Empire in power in Europe, Christianity spread through the nobility and upper class. In the peasant class and in the rural areas the old religions survived, although perhaps in a form mutated by the Greco-Roman Pantheon.

The peasant and rural practice of the old religions continued like this for hundreds of years. This appears to have been accepted by the Christians because it was not proving to be a problem. However, by the 10th century it had become

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enough of a problem to get recognition. In 906, the official church policy (as stated in Canon Episcopi) was that these people were confused and “perverted by Satan” and that no one should follow them.

This was the birth of the fictitious concept of “diabolical witchcraft”, namely witches worshipping Satan. Keep in mind a commonly accepted theory is that it was not Satan who was being worshiped, but rather the gods of the old religions. To the Christian Church, the old Pagan gods and Satan were the same.

The Dark Ages

By the 15th century things had changed for the worse. Pope Innocent VIII issued a formal declaration that anyone accused of consorting with demons (*practicing anything other than Christianity*) was to be arrested and tried (*tortured convicted and executed*).

That began what many call “the Burning Times”. The torture at the hands of the Christians was unspeakable. It is not clear how many of those executed for “consorting” were actually practicing the old religions. It is very likely that some if not most of those found to be “consorting” were either unpopular people or those accused so they could be eliminated and their wealth and property seized.

The spread of the Burning Times into the United States is evident in the Salem trials of 1692. It is very unlikely that any of those accused, convicted, and executed for the crime of diabolical witchcraft were practicing anything of the sort. It is likely that it was just a symptom of the Christian paranoia at the time.

19th Century

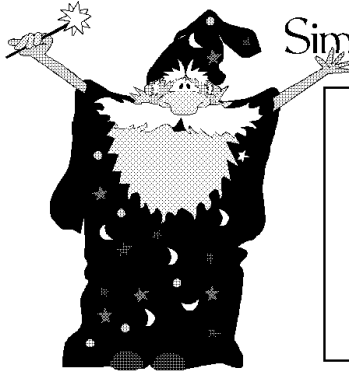
The 19th Century brings us to the early stirrings of Wicca. In the 1800s and early 1900s, historians and scholars, and I use the terms loosely, started researching and speculating about the practices of Witchcraft and the Witch trials of the earlier centuries.

Some authors expressed that during the ‘Burning Times’ a form of an ancient fertility religion had been flourishing and was being systematically stamped out by Christianity which feared being overthrown. In almost all cases the academic quality of the research was... and I am being nice here... definitely substandard.

Gerald Gardner, Grandfather of Wicca

Gerald Gardner was an Englishman, a civil servant, and amateur anthropologist. Gardner had an interest in religion, the occult, and magick. Gardner studied a great deal on these topics, anything he could get his hands on, including much of the “research” mentioned above.

In 1939 (after his retirement) Gardner made friends with, and was initiated into, the New Forest coven. The exact nature of the New Forest coven is uncertain, although it appears to have been a subgroup of occultists from a Rosicrucian theatre.



Simon says...

Many books state or imply that 'Old Dorothy Clutterbuck' was the High Priestess of the New Forest Coven.

The best information available to date indicates that Old Dorothy was involved in the theatre, did own the house where the coven practiced, but was not involved herself.

In 1947, Gerald Gardner was introduced to Aleister Crowley and the two had a few meetings that spring. Gardner had an interest in Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) which is, to my understanding, a magickal order¹.

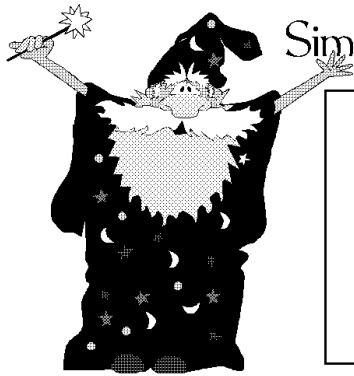
In this year, Gardner received, most likely purchased, a charter from Crowley to start an O.T.O. encampment with the intent of reviving interest in the organization. It appears that Gardner had little luck in gaining an O.T.O. following or perhaps had a change of heart regarding promoting O.T.O. Shortly after his return from a trip to the United States, Gardner's emphasis appears to have shifted back to his earlier interest of Witchcraft.

Somewhere in this period, most likely 1947-48, Gardner created a manuscript known as Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical possibly based on the operational grimoire from New Forest Coven. In today's' terms Ye Bok was the very first Book of Shadows, and its creation marks the beginning of Orthodox Traditional Wicca.

In 1949, Gardner released High Magic's Aid, which was a fictitious novel most likely based on the ritual in Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical. Although the book was a bit of a flop, it did establish Gardner as a known individual in the occult circles. It was also in this period when Gardner left New Forest Coven and started his own coven based on Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical. That new coven was the first Wiccan coven.

It is possible that both of these events happening so closely together was not by coincidence. One theory has it that Gardner may have been thrown out of the New Forest Coven because of his writing the book.

¹ a fraternal organization with emphasis on ceremonial magick (definition correction from O.T.O. is welcome if I am in error)



Simon says...

At the time of the creation of the first 'Wiccan' coven, the religion was not called Wicca.

It was referred to as Witchcraft or 'The Old Religion'.

In 1951 after the repeal of the last of the witchcraft laws in England, Gardner went public as a witch and started giving interviews as the 'resident witch' at a Museum of Witchcraft.

In 1953 Gardner bought the Museum and shortly after met Doreen Valiente. Doreen initiated into his coven and shortly after became High Priestess. Doreen opposed how much of Gardner's Book of Shadows was 'borrowed' from Aleister Crowley¹. Doreen helped rewrite sections of it developing the 1953 Book of Shadows to be used for years to come.

Wiccan ritual (circa 1953) actually bore little resemblance to Ancestral Witchcraft because so much of the practice was 'borrowed' from other sources. Few Wiccans even today realize just how much of Wicca is not from Witchcraft. Here is an incomplete list of aspects of Wicca, which are known or believed to have been derived from sources other than Witchcraft:

- the degree system to reach Priest/Priestess status
- the term 'The Craft'
- the term 'Book of Shadows'
- the pentagram symbol
- the tool 'athame'
- ritual in a cast circle
- altar at the center of the circle
- use of incense in a circle
- entering a circle from the northeast
- calling the quarters
- the elements Earth, Air, Fire and Water at the quarters
- most of the unnamed Goddess/God theology
- several of the rituals

¹ The public image of the late Aleister Crowley was extremely negative at the time, so having 'borrowed' writing from Crowley clearly visible in Gardner's Witchcraft was not at all desirable.

As you can see, this list represents a significant portion of early Wiccan practice, much of it still common in today's practice.

In 1954, Gardner published a book titled Witchcraft Today which became quite popular and pushed Gardner into the public spotlight. This exposure resulted in Gardnerian Covens being seeded all over England. Later books, The Meaning of Witchcraft (1959) and Gerald Gardner Witch (1960) furthered his public exposure, publicized his 'Craft' and Gardnerian Witchcraft continued to develop.

In 1964, Gerald Gardner passed on, leaving the Witchcraft community with no public spokesperson. I suspect there was a struggle between those in the inner circle to take over where Gardner left off because it meant fame and money to do so. One such person was Eleanor "Rae" Bone. Rae was a former High Priestess in Gardner's own coven, liked and respected by those who knew her, and not afraid of potentially negative public reaction.

Do not be upset if you are not familiar with Rae Bone, most Wiccans are not aware of what happened. Rae never achieved the position of spokesperson for the 'Craft' community because a man with a real knack for media exposure outpublicized her. That man was none other than Alex Sanders.

Alex 'King of the Witches' Sanders

Alex Sanders was an English showman who knew what to do and say in order to get public recognition, even if it was not quite the truth. Alex claimed to have been initiated into Witchcraft by his grandmother while he was still a boy, having accidentally walked in on her while she was working ritual. According to one account, he claimed to have received his Book of Shadows (a very close copy of Gardner's) by the age of nine.

In retrospect, it does not take long to see that Sanders' claim does not quite fit with the history. The book that Sanders would have received was not written until at least 15 years after he claims to have received it. It appears that what most likely happened was that Alex Sanders had been a practicing ceremonial magickian when he, sometime around 1963, connected with a person from Gardnerian practice who provided him with a Book of Shadows. A few minor modifications to the Gardnerian Book of Shadows and it became the 'Alexandrian' Book of Shadows.

From there the details are vague, but by 1965, only a year after Gardner's passing, Alex Sanders was getting media exposure based on his claim to having nearly 2,000 practicing Witches in over 100 covens. Supposedly, it was these Witches who insisted that he take on the role of 'King of the Witches'. Of course,

this claim appears to have been fabricated as a way to take over where Gardner had left off as spokesperson for Witchcraft.

It was through this series of events that Alexandrian Tradition was the first tradition to break away from Gardnerian.

Alex gained much publicity through flamboyant media exposure in the late 1960s. Alex seemed to have quite a lot of luck getting young, firm and quite naked young female Witches to pose for media photographers. Of course, the media had a field day with this. Sensationalist stories about Witchcraft with nude pictures are a great way to sell newspapers.

If a pretty girl can sell anything, it certainly worked for Alex Sanders, and what he was selling was himself. Soon Alex was a celebrity, and his media exposure brought thousands into the Alexandrian Tradition of Wicca.

Raymond Buckland

While Alex Sanders was busy in England, Ray Buckland was, rather quietly in comparison, bringing Gardnerian practice to the United States. From the mid 1960s forward, he and his wife seeded Gardnerian Craft from their home in New York. In 1969 his first book on Witchcraft [A Pocket Guide to the Supernatural](#) was released, followed shortly after by [Witchcraft Ancient and Modern](#).

Ray's contribution to the development of Wicca far exceeds his seeding Gardnerian Craft in the United States. More on this in a bit...

Paganism Splits Away From Wicca

Unless you are completely new to NeoPagan Witchcraft, you have probably noticed that there is a fairly strong following of a religion called 'Paganism' that very closely resembles Gardnerian derived Witchcraft (Wicca). The fact that 'Paganism' exists as a singular religion is a curiosity because none of the definitions of Pagan refers to a singular religion, hence there should be no religion referred to as Paganism.

Since many aspects of this 'Paganism' are clearly from sources other than the old religions of Europe and closely parallels Gardnerian Craft, it is clear that Gardnerian practice was the source. How this came about is still a mystery to many. In my research, I have discovered what happened. I suspect that very few of the Pagans who practice this Gardnerian derived 'Paganism' religion are even aware that their religion is based on Gardnerian practice.

Gardnerian practice requires formal training and initiation to 'become' a Witch. In the United States during the late 1960s it was painfully clear that there was no

way to meet the demand for training into Wicca using conventional methods. Something needed to be done that would allow the masses entry level access to the practice of Wicca.

It was a violation of the 'law' of Gardnerian practice to simply package up instructions including a real Book of Shadows. In addition, without initiation by a High Priest or High Priestess, the person would not really be a Witch anyway (in the eyes of Gardnerian practice). This left the dilemma of how to handle the demand for entrance into Wicca.

Somewhere around 1968, the solution was developed. The plan was to send out a package of very basic instructions¹ of a simplified form of Gardnerian Witchcraft without divulging the origin of the material. Since one cannot be a 'Witch' without initiation (at that time) then the practice of this simplified version of Witchcraft had to be called something other than Witchcraft. It was decided that the name of the religion would be 'Paganism' and the practitioners referred to as Pagans. It appears that, according to the plan, Wiccans were to be the priestly class and Pagans were to be the general populous.

An organization that did not identify its origin as from Gardnerian Wicca was created to distribute the training material. From what I can gather, this 'Paganism' was quite successful. In fact, it appears to have been a little too successful, because it grew so quickly that it started replacing formal Wiccan coven practice. After all, why study and work through a degreed system to become a Witch when it was easier to just 'be' a Pagan?

I know I will get more than a few nasty-grams for disclosing this secret, and some may feel that I am attempting to discredit 'Paganism'. My intent is simply to reveal what I have discovered (as is the role of a teacher) in order to explain to my students what would otherwise appear as a paradox (an old religion patterned after a new one).

For those who are going to flame me, before you do let me make one simple challenge. First, ask yourself if your practice of 'Paganism' includes the tools: athame, wand, and chalice, ritual in a cast circle and the four elements at the quarters (none of which are from the practice of old European religions). If so, show me one book that details 'Paganism' as a singular religion (not called Witchcraft) using an athame, wand, and chalice, with ritual in a cast circle, and the four elements at the quarters, which was written before 1968. If you can, I will modify this section of my history teaching accordingly and publicly apologize for my error.

¹ I have a reprinted copy of this material in my personal library.

Lady Sheba

There was one person who complicated matters in Wicca, but whose actions eventually led to the general public having access to what they wanted all along, which was Gardnerian material. Her pen name is Lady Sheba.

In 1971, Jessie Wicker Bell a.k.a. Lady Sheba sold her Book of Shadows (a close copy of Gardner's) to a book publisher. Jessie then declared herself "America's Witch Queen" following in the steps of Alex Sanders, but was never accepted as such.

With the release of Lady Sheba's Book of Shadows, many of the great secrets of Wicca were no longer secret. The laws and rituals, even those never to be divulged except to upper degree initiates, could now be purchased in book form by anyone for \$2.95. Obviously, this did not go over well with those in Gardnerian practice.

Academic Scrutiny

In the early 1970s, Wicca came to the attention of the academic community and the history of Wicca came under scrutiny. The Lady Sheba Book of Shadows may have been the catalyst for the academic curiosity into Wicca/Witchcraft. The occult academics of the period would have been familiar with the work of Crowley/Regardie and spotted the obvious 'similarities' in the Book of Shadows.

The result of the scrutiny caused quite a shock. It was revealed that major aspects of Wicca were either recently written or borrowed from Freemasonry, Ceremonial Magick and the books of Margaret Murray, Charles Leland, Israel Regardie and Aleister Crowley among others.

At the time, people practicing Wicca believed that Wicca was authentic Ancestral Witchcraft and thousands of years old. You can imagine their shock when they found out that this was not the case. At first there was a lot of academic bashing denying what was being said, then many felt betrayed and lied to by the Wiccan community. This began the downfall of the popularity of Gerald Gardner, a name that is now nearly a dirty word in the NeoPagan community, despite his role as a founder in the movement.

Reformed Traditional Wicca is Born

It was in the mid-1970s that Reformed Traditional Wicca as we now know it today was being born. The father was none other than **Raymond Buckland**. The book The Tree: Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft (Weiser, 1974) introduced revolutionary concepts into Wicca, the most significant being that it was possible

to create a new tradition. The book was so revolutionary that many¹ consider it the birth of modern Wicca. This book was the introduction of the modern tradition, Seax-Wica.

Wicca was ripe for change, and the creation of Seax-Wica marked the turning point. Wicca began heading away from coven practice, ritual nudity, coven initiation, and emphasis on ritual magick, toward the Wicca we know today with solitary practice, self-initiation and emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the religion.

By the late 1970s, Reformed Traditional Wicca was in full swing. Several traditions followed Buckland's lead in breaking away and established themselves as alternative forms of Wiccan practice.

Feminist Wicca is Born

It was also in this time period (late 1970s) when the feminist movement latched onto the Goddess aspect of Wicca as a female oriented alternative to male dominated Christianity. Several feminist traditions started and with a bit of creative writing shifted their flavor of Wicca away from balance toward female deity domination.

Starhawk Breaks New Ground with Spiral Dance

Modern Wicca had another boost in available information in the late 70s from **Starhawk**. Her book Spiral Dance from 1979 has been required reading for hundreds of thousands of Wiccan students for over 20 years.

Janet & Stewart Farrar

If modern Wicca's father was **Raymond Buckland**, then its Aunt and Uncle were none other than **Janet and Stewart Farrar**. Their books from the 1970s and beyond were a rich source of information in this, the middle era of Wicca.

Janet and Stewart's lineage is from Alexandrian tradition, although their writing leans heavily toward Gardnerian practice. One of their collaborators was Doreen Valiente whose lineage in Gardnerian Craft goes back to 1953. I suspect that their books in the mid 1980s were the solidifying force tying together all the haphazard information into cohesive form. To this day, their books are authoritative even among the most conservative Wiccans.

Eclectic Wicca is Born

With the late 1980s came an opportunity to make huge piles of money selling books teaching Wicca. With the new crop of authors came a new crop of confusion. If Wiccans are no longer going to practice in covens, why did they

¹ myself included

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even need a tradition? Many of the late 1980s books fail to mention that there was even such a thing as traditions in Wicca, let alone describe the history accurately. The prevailing attitude became “Who needs a tradition? Let’s do whatever we want and call it Wicca!”

New Age Wicca

By the 1990s the book publishers were treating Wicca as a “New Age” religion and other practices having nothing to do with Wicca started being mixed in. Soon there were pentacle wearing Wiccans with Native American spirit guides, studying Yoga chakras, and practicing Reiki (an eastern healing technique).

Fluffy Bunny Wicca is Born

The 1990s was also the start of a dark time for Wicca. While it was a boom to the number of people claiming to be Wiccan, it was also the birth of the “Fluffy Bunny”¹. Many Wiccans of this decade’s generation were the most poorly educated and least dedicated of any group of Wiccans to date.

Wicca Today

Over the years, Wicca has mutated or developed from a secretive mystical coven practiced tradition to a modern alternative religion with solitary practice and self-initiation.

Although the history of Wicca has been tarnished by individuals of questionable ethics or character, the potential for it to shine does exist. That potential can be made reality if those in Wiccan practice shine as individuals, which when combined will be the shimmer of a respectable religion.

¹ Please do not assume that I am implying that everyone coming into Wicca in the 1990s is a Fluffy Bunny. There are many from this period who are well educated, open minded, and seriously committed in their path. Unfortunately, there were also many that excelled at being none of these.

Branches on the Wiccan Tree

After reading the history, you have probably noticed some terminology that you have not seen before, specifically the names of the different branches of Wicca.

The three branches are:

- Orthodox Traditional Wicca
- Reformed Traditional Wicca
- Eclectic Wicca

Orthodox Traditional Wicca

The term orthodox as used here means 'accepted and conventional, rooted in established practices'. The term traditional as applied means 'organized around a tradition'. As applied in this book, Orthodox Traditional Wicca means 'a branch of Wicca where things are done the old way and a tradition (denomination) is followed'.

Orthodox Traditional Wicca dates back to 1948. It existed before New Age, before the 'Learn Wicca' books, and before use of the term Wicca¹ as a religion.

Orthodox Traditional Wiccan traditions are easy to identify by the following pattern:

- coven practice for 3 to 13 members
- High Priestess leads ritual
- solitary practice is rare
- formal initiation is required
- self-initiation is NOT considered valid
- three degrees of initiation
- coven training required
- hand copied book of shadows
- oath of secrecy (at least some topics)
- oath to not divulge another member
- oath to not divulge the coven or covenstead

¹ I acknowledge the origin of the term Wicca is Anglo-Saxon meaning a male sorcerer, however such use was not a reference to a religion.

Maiden Moon

Orthodox Traditional Wiccan ritual is for the most part quite formal. While freedom is somewhat accepted, in general one is taught to practice according to the ways and beliefs of the tradition.

Coven training is required, and the tradition's Book of Shadows is gradually revealed to a dedicant who hand copies it over the period of one year and one day training.

A partial list of traditions¹ includes Gardnerian (1948), Alexandrian (1963) and Georgian USA (1971). Others which may fit in this category are Frost² (1968) and 1734 (1964) although their practices and lineage appear to be somewhat different from the others.

Reformed Traditional Wicca

As applied in this book, Reformed Traditional Wicca means 'a branch of Wicca where new practices have replaced some of the orthodox ways and a tradition (denomination) is followed'.

Reformed Traditional Wiccan traditions are identified by the pattern:

- solitary practice is most common
- coven practice is rare
- self-dedication and self-initiation are welcomed
- formal initiation is not required
- no degrees of initiation
- self training is the norm
- coven training is seldom even available
- the tradition's defining document is a Wicca 101 style book, or a series of books by one or more authors

Reformed Traditional Wicca dates back to the mid-1970s. The first Reformed tradition was Seax-Wica originated by Raymond Buckland. Others that followed include Faery, Celtic, Dianic, Correllian, Shamanic, Dragon and countless others.

With solitary practice being the most common, ritual tends to be fairly freedom oriented. Ritual in coven environment varies significantly between the individual traditions.

¹ Dates expressed are approximate

² Sometimes referred to as 'Church and School of Wicca'

Eclectic Wicca

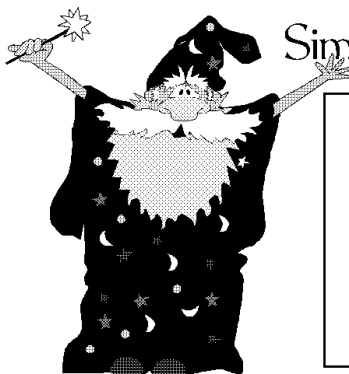
As applied in this book, Eclectic Wicca means “a branch of Wicca where individuals are free to pick and chose what they believe from any Wiccan tradition or other spirituality” .

Eclectic Wicca is not a tradition unto itself. It is the void of tradition filled with aspects based on an individual’s preference. In essence, an eclectic creates and practices his or her own tradition.

Since there is no Book of Shadows in eclectic practice, an individual often creates their own scrapbook of rituals, beliefs, and practices and uses it as their personal Book of Shadows. In essence, they are creating their own tradition. One of the first authors¹ to advocate this style of practice was Scott Cunningham.

On the conservative side, many practicing Eclectic Wicca are truly Wiccan, the Goddess and usually the God are regarded, nature is sacred, magick embraced, the threefold law acknowledged, and they strive to abide by the Wiccan Rede.

On the extreme side, Eclectic practice often becomes so diluted that it is completely unrecognizable as a form of Wicca.



Simon says...

The stuff people mix in with Wicca really amazes me.

Wiccan Vampires ?!?!?

What will they think of next?

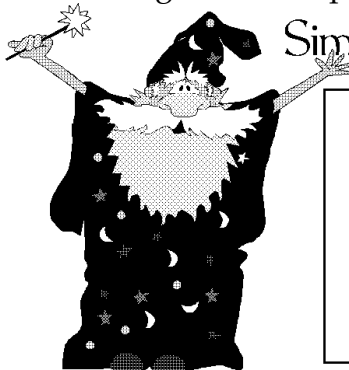
¹ possibly the very first author

Wiccan Beliefs & Theology

Wicca is considered a polytheistic religion because it embraces two gods, namely the Goddess and the God. In Wicca, the Goddess and God represent the balance and harmony of nature, with the two generally being viewed as equals. The Goddess is symbolized by the moon, the God by the sun.

Even so, Wicca is not as polytheistic as the old religions of Europe, which had large pantheons of gods and goddesses. To fill in the gaps, the other goddesses and gods are often included as aspects of (names of, or sides of) the Goddess or the God. In essence, this is saying that all gods are the God, and all goddesses are the Goddess. In this way, Wiccans may choose the gods of old that they are drawn to and it is still perceived as worshiping the same primary deities.

The above refers to Orthodox Traditional Wicca (Wicca in its 1953 form). Some of today's traditions have a different theology. Some downplay or completely eliminate "the God" deity from practice while others welcome the old gods from Celtic, Greco-Roman, and Egyptian pantheons on their own behalf, without treating them as aspects of the unnamed goddess and god.



Simon says...

Some of my description of Wiccan theology may sound sexist compared to what is acceptable today. Wicca is a religion with close ties to both nature and fertility, and the sexes are a vital function of nature. Wicca is not demeaning to either sex. In nature, both sexes are essential to survival.

The Goddess

Because Christianity is a patriarchal religion (male god), people sometimes have trouble relating to the Wiccan female god, the Goddess. With a little bit of adjusted thought about the role of gods, the Goddess being female can make a lot of sense.

The role of the Goddess is to bring and nurture life, which is very similar to a woman's typical role of bearing children and caring for them. All things of life are the children of the Goddess; hence, she is our mother, which relates well with a feminine deity image.

The God

The role of the God is hunter, protector, and provider, which is similar to a man's typical role in nature. Another significant role of the God is to fertilize the Goddess so she can bring life. In their joining, the circle of life is completed and that which is born lives and dies to be reborn again.

The Elements

Wicca treats the forces of nature with respect and mysticism. The role of the Elements Earth, Air, Fire, and Water in Wiccan practice varies by tradition. Some see them as terrestrial deities, others as aspects of the Goddess and God. The alignment of the Elements with the directions North, East, South and West plays a significant role in formal ritual.

Many traditions also regard a 5th element, Spirit. The element Spirit is often seen as representing the Goddess and God although this too varies by tradition.

Beliefs

Wicca regards nature as sacred and magickal and is very much tied to the earth, nature and magick. The holidays of Wicca, known as Sabbats, relate to nature and its seasons, fertility and harvests.

Wicca is unique in that there are no long lists of rules laid down as to how we are to live our lives. There are only two dogmas in Wicca that are common to all Wiccan traditions. These two are the Wiccan Rede, and the Law of Threefold Return. Beyond these two, the individual traditions have their own doctrines and accepted beliefs.

The Wiccan Rede is "Do as thee will, an harm thee none". The Law of Threefold Return is "That which one sends into the world returns to the sender threefold". These are detailed in a later chapter.

Book of Shadows

The individual traditions keep their own doctrine of accepted beliefs and practices known as a Book of Shadows. In Orthodox Wiccan traditions the Book of Shadows is commonly kept secret and gradually revealed during the process of the year and a day training. Reformed traditions generally publish their Book of Shadows for anyone to read. In eclectic practice it is common to keep a scrapbook of personal practice and refer to it as a Book of Shadows.

Some traditions also have practitioners keep a spell book which is referred to as a 'Personal Book of Shadows'. Modern authors often confuse this with the tradition's Book of Shadows. Most traditions have very specific rules as to what may be added to, or removed from their Book of Shadows.

Reincarnation

To my knowledge, it not specifically stated that reincarnation is a tenet of all Wiccan traditions. On the other hand, almost all of Wiccan theology points to the natural pattern: birth, life, death and rebirth. Many traditions appear to accept this as well.

Maiden Moon

The Goddess and God

Wiccan theology is based on the equal duality of Goddess and God who reflect the balance and harmony of nature. Without one the other is unbalanced. She is life without substance; he is substance without life. When joined the Goddess and God work as a partnership combining aspects of both. Their union is nature, which is considered as the ultimate manifestation of the living magickal divinity.

Though some may tell you otherwise¹, in Wicca both Goddess and God are regarded. Wicca is a religion of nature and nature balances gender. An entirely matriarchal religion embracing only a Goddess is just as unnatural as the way Christianity embraces only a God.

The role of the ancient pantheons in today's Wicca varies depending on which tradition is practiced. The orthodox traditions treat all of the old gods as aspects of the Goddess and God. Some modern traditions treat the old gods as individuals who are regarded based on their own identity and welcomed as well.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

Dragon Tradition Wicca is one of the traditions that welcomes the old gods as individuals.

Dragon Tradition teaches that the concept of 'All gods are one god' contradicts the ancient Pagan belief in multiple gods.

In Wicca you may find those who regard goddesses and gods from the Egyptian, Roman, Celtic and Greek pantheons, as well as many others. Wicca views them all as being relevant and valid because they represent the divinity of the ancients, and as a whole, they contain the complete balanced energies of male and female with neither dominating the other.

In Wiccan practice some stay strictly with the unnamed Goddess and God with no regard for the old named gods even as aspects of the two. Although this is an acceptable practice, I personally feel that in doing so, they miss an incredibly diverse range of lore and legends which adds substance and heritage to Wicca.

¹ commonly heard from feminist traditions

Maiden Moon

In Wicca, the Goddess is commonly expressed in a triad called the Triple Goddess. This denotes her aspects based on the three stages of life as Maiden, Mother and Crone. In Wicca the triad is symbolized in the three moon phases: waxing, full and waning and in the symbol we call the triple moons.



The Maiden as symbolized by the waxing moon represents newness, excitement, and idealism as seen in early life. The Goddess in Maiden form is often viewed as a woman in her teens playing, learning, discovering, and enjoying life and the world around her. To a Wiccan, the maiden moon represents youth, growth and the unplowed field ready to be planted with seed. She is ignorant of harshness and cruelty and an advocate of beauty and happiness in life. Calling on the Goddess at this stage brings youthfulness and idealism to empower new projects and endeavors.

The Mother as symbolized by the full moon represents adulthood, fertility, as well as the bearing and nurturing of life. She is more mature than the Maiden and has acquired wisdom and responsibility. She is in the prime of her life and at the peak of her power. To a Wiccan, the full moon represents full maturity, projects in their prime, coming to full fruition and manifestation. Just as a woman grows a child in the womb giving it life and energy, magickal work with the Mother lends us her life and energy at her peak.

The Crone as symbolized by the waning moon represents the later stages of life. She is wise and stands as the protector of her offspring. Even in her twilight she is shrewd and shows great responsibility in dealing with the darker issues of life. To a Wiccan, the waning moon represents age-old wisdom and the protection of young. In magick, she lends protection and guides with wisdom.

The God is represented in Wicca as the sun and his life by the sun's travel through the skies. He is seen as the provider of essential life-giving sustenance and energy. Without the sun, the Earth would be cold, dark, and dead. He is the provider to all life and central to our being.

The Wiccan God is definitely not like the all-powerful omnipresent stern and judgmental deity of Christianity and Judaism, nor is he simply the submissive companion of the Goddess. He is not feared or vengeful. He is seen as gentle yet strong and wise. The God of Wicca is often illustrated with horns or antlers on his head to symbolize his connection with the animals of this world and his association with the hunt. He is not in any way equated with the Christian concept of an evil devil god named Satan.

The God's association with the sun is reflected in the change of seasons and the celebrations centered on seasonal events. Events associated with the God include spring planting, the crops coming to maturity, and the fall harvest. Wiccans to this day observe the same solar festivals believed to have been practiced by those in ancient Europe. Monoliths, which measured the sun's movement in the skies, are regarded as magickal and with mysticism.

The God's joining with the Goddess is considered sacred. The honor of that joining is Wicca's highest ritual. The 'Great Rite' is represented symbolically with magickal tools in ritual or physically by the act of sexual joining. Sexuality is not hidden or considered evil in Wicca, nor is it practiced carelessly or considered trivial. Sex creates life through the joining of energies in the same way that the joining of Goddess and God creates life and fertility on Earth. Joining is the force behind creation.

The Wiccan Goddess and God are not simply fertility gods, they are linked with all aspects of human life. They are called upon to assist with our troubles in life, to enhance spiritually vacant lives, and to give us purpose and movement. Wiccans regard the Goddess and God as part of our spiritual family. The relationship is not unlike a mother and a father to looking over us, guiding and advising, and lending us their strength and energy during magickal rites, which we use to help others and ourselves.

If you choose to practice Wicca, take your time in developing your relationship with the Goddess and the God. Explore their energies and commune with them as you would a cherished elder and friend. Relate to them and let them relate back to you. See them reflected in the living Earth and make contact with them.

Maiden Moon

Nature

The significance of nature in regard to Wicca cannot be overstated. Nature is an integral part of Wicca. In Wicca, to walk with the Goddess and the God a person need only walk in the natural woods, by a pond, or at the coast of a great ocean. To a Wiccan, the timeless existence of nature is the ultimate manifestation and presence of divinity on Earth.

Christianity teaches that the Earth, plants and animals were created for use by man, and man is master over all. This concept is foreign to Wicca. In Wicca mankind is not master over nature but rather a part of nature born from it and completely dependent on it. The emphasis is that we humans are one with nature. We are not masters over it, nor subservient to it. An owl is your brother in that both you and the owl are life from the Goddess.

While this may sound like a beautiful concept, in reality it is a difficult practice. If the owl is your brother, so is that groundhog you hit with your car. So are your dog and your plants. All of a sudden, there is a whole world that is now your family and simple things like squashing a spider have ethical implications.

In Wicca, nature is the ultimate manifestation of divinity, in fact to some nature is divinity. The displacement and destruction of nature by mankind is in direct contradiction with our spirituality. As such, many Wiccans are involved in efforts to save what is left of nature.

When looking at the Sabbats from ancient cultures one realizes that these people were truly dependent on nature for survival. A failed crop meant only one thing, starvation. The fertility of the Earth and being prepared for the changing of the seasons literally meant life or death.

With modern society, it is easy to think we are insulated from our connection with nature. Food does not come from the Earth; it comes from the supermarket. To stay warm in winter simply means turning the thermostat up a bit. Are we still dependent on nature? Yes! We have traded a dependency on nature for a dependence on commerce. Commerce is now the one dependent on nature.

Nature's Perfect Design

Let's talk a bit about the perfection of nature. This takes us into an aspect of Wicca which is more philosophical than theological, but the two areas are intermingled.

Maiden Moon

As science advances, we learn more about the inner workings of biology. This combined with a realistic look back at the timeline of evolution of life over millions of years and it appears that life on Earth exhibits patterns which are a design (either developed or created) to continue itself indefinitely.

Personally, I use the term 'natural' to describe these patterns. To many Wiccans that which is 'natural' is perfection.

This has many applications. First, as a Wiccan it is appropriate to learn from nature. It is far older and wiser than anyone, and the lessons are free. All you have to do is watch.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

Dragon Tradition teaches that through an understanding of nature we develop a better understanding of ourselves and our role in the Universe.

Secondly, as Wiccans we know that we are a part of nature and totally dependent on it for survival. Every act of killing nature is an act of killing ourselves. If nature dies, mankind dies... period. While that is grim, it is not as hopeless as it seems.

I believe nature will survive. One of the patterns that I have learned from nature is that nature abhors an imbalance. It appears that an aspect of nature's design is that it will allow an imbalance to exist until it reaches a critical level and then counter the imbalance swiftly and firmly.

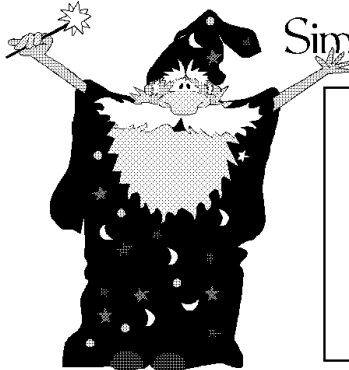
Overpopulation of humans is reaching a critical level. What will be nature's reaction? I do not know, but frankly, I wouldn't be the slightest bit surprised if in the next thousand years or so the human population will exist at a mere fraction of what it is today.

How does this affect you as a Wiccan? There is a line from a song, 'The Earth is our mother, we should take care of her'. I think this is good advice.

The Wiccan Rede & Law of Threefold Return

The Wiccan Rede¹ (counsel) is “Do as thee will, an harm thee none”. (‘An’ in Old English roughly translates to ‘if’.)

While the Rede may seem excessively simple, it is actually quite elegant in its simplicity. It is the basis for determining personal ethics and appropriate behavior. It can be seen as Wicca’s equivalent to the Christian Ten Commandments.



Simon says...

There is a much longer version of the Wiccan Rede that was not present in Orthodox Traditional Wicca and apparently written in the mid 1970s.

It is not universally accepted as the Wiccan Rede.

The Rede is definitely not permission to do anything you want. Its message of freedom of choice with regard for harming none is quite clear.

Part of the elegance of the Rede is that it is the basis for a wide range of derived meanings. With reflection and perhaps a bit of intuition there is much that can be gained from its study.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

Dragon Tradition’s emphasis on taking responsibility for one’s own actions is partly derived from the Rede. If a person does as he or she will and it does harm another, the responsibility of that harm falls on him or her directly.

¹ the exact language of the Wiccan Rede varies by tradition. The verbiage I use is recent. Rather than change now and confuse those who I teach, I have stayed with it.

Maiden Moon

An example of a derived lesson from the Rede is that of tolerance of the freedom of others. The Rede does not say, "do as thee will, an harm none provided that you do it MY way". The Rede implies accepting that another person's freedom includes doing things in a manner which you might not feel is appropriate as long as they are not causing harm.

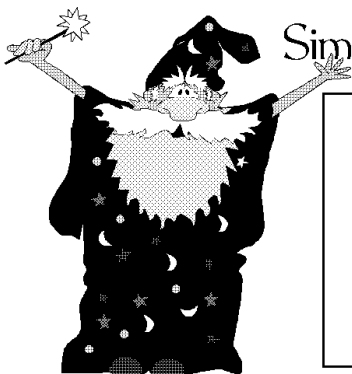
As you can see, those eight little words have meaning far beyond the obvious and represent a solid foundation for both personal ethics and an enlightened view of freedom.

Law of Threefold Return

The Law of Threefold Return is "That which one sends into the world returns to the sender threefold". It is seen as a law of nature and represents responsibility to a Wiccan. Taking responsibility for one's own actions is very much a part of Wiccan life.

The Law of Threefold Return serves as a healthy reminder that if we harm others we will be bringing harm to ourselves. We live in a world of the same energy as we send out into it. If a person sends out anger and hatred, they will live in a world of hatred and anger.

The Law of Threefold Return does not just work against you, it can be applied to work for you as well. Consistently send to the world the energies that you wish to live in and in time, you will live in a world of those energies.



Simon says...

Dreading a family function because of the negativity?
Put the Law of Threefold Return to work for you.

Charge an amulet to help keep you
full of positive energy and take it with you.
Your energy can affect those around you.

Sabbats

In Wicca, the eight Sabbats commemorate the natural cycles of the Earth and her seasons. Often referred to in different ways, 'power days, holidays, festivals, etc.' these eight are both new and old. They are new in that, as a whole, the Sabbats are unique to NeoPagan practice¹, and old in that many are revivals of ancestral holidays.

The Sabbats are roughly based on the solar calendar. Four of the eight fall on the summer and winter solstice and the spring and autumn equinox; these are called the minor Sabbats. The remaining four are close to midpoints of the solar events and roughly correlate to the peaks of the four seasons; these are the major Sabbats, which are connected with the fire festivals of England and Ireland.

As a student of Wicca, it is very likely that you will find it difficult to grasp the relationship between the Wiccan Sabbats and the ancestral festivals/holidays. Simply stated, the reason for this is that Wicca is not an accurate recreation of any single ancestral religion, but rather draws inspiration from many.

If you approach your study of the Sabbats with the intent of having everything 'fit' historically, then I suspect you are headed for a disappointment. My suggestion is to apply what you learn of the Sabbats in such a way as to 'fit' you personally, and in time delve more deeply in the ancestral heritage.

While there are many legends related to the Wiccan Sabbats, one that is commonly overlooked is the Wheel of Life. The Wheel of Life is a story representing the continuing relationship of the Goddess and God as repeated year after year.

Let me tell you the story in a humorous format that will be easily remembered...

October 31st - Samhain a.k.a. Mid-Autumn

The Goddess: "Okay, well the crops are harvested, the leaves fallen and ..."
baby kicks

The Goddess: "Ouch! I'm definitely pregnant."

The Goddess: "There's not much life here on Earth, I'll head down to the underworld where it's warm and have some private time".

¹ Wicca is a NeoPagan religion, but not the only NeoPagan religion to use these Sabbats.

Maiden Moon

December 21st (approx.) - Winter Solstice a.k.a. Yule

The Goddess: "Whoah, those contractions are getting strong"

pant pant pant *puuuushh*

The Goddess: "This giving birth to the God is no picnic"

pant pant pant *PUUUUUUUSSSHHH*

baby crying heard in background

The God: "Hi Mommy, I'm back!"

February 2nd - Imbolc a.k.a. Mid-Winter

The Goddess: "Well this baby stuff is getting too me..."

tosses rattle aside

The Goddess: "I miss being on Earth. Maybe I'll go up for a peek and see how it's going."

returns to Earth

The Goddess: "Bbbrrrrrr, it's c-c-c-c-cold here..."

sends fire energy to the sun

March 21st (approx.) - Spring Equinox a.k.a. Ostara

The God: "Look Ma, I'm not a baby anymore"

brings green to the Earth

The Goddess: "hmmm, very impressive"

April 30th (or May 1st)- Beltane a.k.a. Mid-Spring

The God: "Wow, I have grown into a man. Here is something pretty for you"

brings the first flowers

The Goddess: "Hey, you're kinda cute!"

snuggles

The Goddess: "Ya know, this would be a good time for a baby!"

June 21st (approx) - Summer Solstice

The God: "I am now at my peak of manhood."

flexes muscles

The Goddess: "Hubba hubba!"

The Goddess: "... and oh, by the way, I'm going to have a baby!"

July 31st (or August 1st) - Lammastide or Lughnasadh a.k.a. Mid-Summer

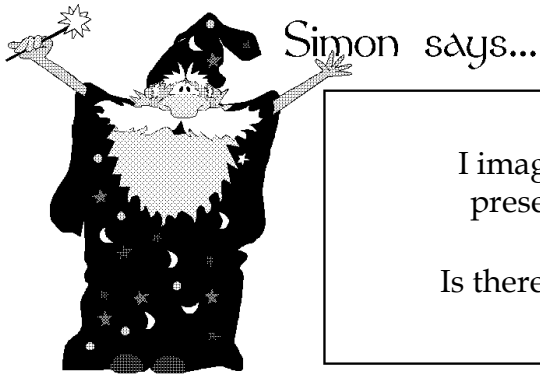
The God: "Whew, this God stuff is hard work. I'm getting tired."

The Goddess: "Don't worry darling, you'll be young again..."

September 21st (approx) - Autumn Equinox a.k.a. Mabon

The God: "I'll be back in a bit, I'm off to go hunting".

The Goddess: "Have a nice time Dear, I'll see you at Yule"



I imagine that I will get a few NastyGrams for presenting 'Wheel of Life' in this manner. :-)

Is there a rule that says religion must be boring?

Samhain (major) - October 31st - Samhain (pronounced Sow'-win, Sow'-een, or Sew'-win) represents the final harvest and time to store crops for winter. It also reflects the 'blood harvest' when excess livestock was to be slaughtered and preserved for winter.

Samhain is often regarded as the Wiccan New Year. To many, this is the night when the veils or doorways between worlds are at the thinnest. For this reason, Samhain is a holiday of divination and a time of the dead. It is a night where spirits of life and death are celebrated side by side. In some practices, it is a time for reflection, recognizing our own part in the cycle of Life, and a time to honor the ancients and ancestors.

One tradition is a feast in honor of the Dead. It is often believed that at Samhain the dead can return to earth to visit with the living. As such, it is considered polite to set a place at the table for wandering souls and those recently passed. There is also a tradition of placing candles to help guide the spirits on their earthly travels.

Yule (minor - Winter Solstice) - ~ Dec. 21 - Yule is the Winter Solstice which marks the shortest day of the year and the beginning of winter.

The religious significance of Yule is that of the divine rebirth of the God. In some traditions, it refers to the death of the Oak King at the hands of his son and successor, the Holly King. In ritual, Yule is commonly seen as a time to regard the passed God, and welcome him anew.

Imbolc (major) - Feb. 2 - Imbolc is also known as Oimelc, Imbolg, or Brigid's Day. In Wicca, Imbolc is often associated with the Celtic goddess Brigit, keeper of the sacred fire.

The religious significance of Imbolc is the peak of winter leading to the first stirrings of spring. Imbolc is celebrated primarily through the lighting candles or fires. This is seen as a way to help give energy to the sun and encourage the

Maiden Moon

return of warmer weather. In some traditions, this is the time of year where covens will initiate new members.

Ostara (minor - Spring Equinox)- Mar. 21 - Ostara is celebrated on the spring equinox and is also known as Lady Day and Oestara. Ostara is named after the Teutonic¹ Goddess Eostre. While many modern Wiccans equate Ostara with the spring equinox, to my knowledge, this is not historically accurate. The original Ostara was a lunar holiday celebrated on the first full moon following the equinox.

The religious significance of Ostara is the beginning of spring, the season of new life and fertility. It is the celebration of the arrival of spring and the renewal and rebirth of nature herself. It is seen as a time for personal growth and is a favorable time for rituals promoting new projects.

Beltane (major) - May 1st - Also known as May Day, Beltane is the peak of spring, seen by Wiccans as the day the God and Goddess unite in sacred marriage and the relationship consummated. Their union celebrates new life in all forms.

In practice, we draw Beltane inspiration from nature with the greenery, blooms, and life springing forth. It is a time of fertility and new life. This can also be a season to explore the celebration of sexuality. Beltane is also a traditional day for handfasting.

One of the traditional events of the day is the maypole dance. The tree used at Yule is stripped of all but the top branches and entwined with red and white ribbons. The members would then dance around the pole weaving in and out. The symbolism is sometimes interpreted as phallic.

Some Beltane customs are similar to those of Floralia, the Roman feast of flowers. This was a 3-day feast of unbridled fertility starting on April 28 and coming to climax (no pun intended) on May 1st.

Summer Solstice (minor) - June 21 - Summer Solstice is celebrated usually on June 21st although in reality it varies between the 20th of June to the 24th. It is the start of summer with the longest daylight and shortest night. It also marks the beginning of the descent back into darkness.

The Solstice honors the fatherhood of the God with the Goddess, who is now heavy with child. Practices at Summer Solstice revolve around the full

¹ Ancient Germanic

abundance of nature. This abundance is reflected in the ripening of the crops to first yields. Many Wiccans find this evening ideal for outside ritual/ festivities because of the favorable seasonal conditions.

Lammas or Lughnasadh (major)- August 1 - Lammas marks the middle of summer, a time when days are growing progressively shorter. In religious significance, Lammas heralds the God who is beginning to lose his virility and old age is fast approaching. In practice, Lammas represents the first harvest of Summer, a time of festivity and yet cautious optimism in that the colder months are coming. Decorations include corn dollies and sheaves of grain as well as fresh fruits and vegetables.

Some traditions inline with Irish or Gaelic heritage refer to this day as Lughnasadh, a feast to commemorate the Irish god, Lugh. In turn, the Welsh counterpart of Lugh is Llew, son of Arianhrod. This Grain god is remembered for his fast growth and for his full head of golden hair, which is reflected in the way a field of golden grain is planted in spring and grows quickly to be harvested at Lammas.

Mabon (minor -Autumn Equinox) - September 21 - Mabon marks the Autumn Equinox and is the Welsh name for the Equinox. With equal hours of sunlight and darkness, Mabon is the second harvest.

Mabon begins when the sun enters the sign of Libra, the Balanced Scales, which fits the Equinox quite appropriately. As part of the Second Harvest, Mabon is likened to the holiday of Thanksgiving. Most of the crops have been harvested and abundance is everywhere.

In terms of practice, Mabon is a time to celebrate and give thanks for the experiences of the year. It is also a time to look to the future which lies ahead. In doing so, we are reminded once again that all endings are followed by new beginnings. Rituals often emphasize the making of sun wheels, dressing a corn stalk in cloths and burning it in celebration of the harvest¹, collecting leaves, acorns, berries, and other things symbolic of nature's bounty. Seeds and grains can also be set out as offerings to our fellow creatures.

¹ No, Wiccans do not have a death wish for the scarecrow; this practice refers to the god Lugh who is seen as embodied in the last standing stalk at Mabon.

Esbats

Unlike the Sabbats, which are solar based and measure the seasons by the journey of the sun across the sky, Esbats are based on lunar phases and mark the full moons.

The solar year contains 13 full moons. With the 29.5-day lunar cycle¹, we have 1 full moon per month plus one extra called the Blue Moon when more than one full moon occurs within a month. The full moon is seen as a reflection of the Goddess in peak magickal power as the Mother. This is one reason why covens gather to celebrate the full moon and use its great magickal power.

The origins of the Esbats are unclear. Some attribute them to directly to an ancient Celtic Tree Calendar, while others believe they originated in the writings of Robert Graves. In either case, most of the Esbats closely echo the correspondences of the Sabbats.

"A co-author sent me some interesting advice and personal interpretations on the Esbats. I really like the way he expresses these, so rather than distort them with my own writing style, I am publishing them as-is². You will see them below in printed in italics." - Simon

JANUARY- Wolf Moon is a time for self-evaluation and working on that which is within. Envision yourself as a seed, which has been planted, now dormant with the winter, but preparing to sprout in the spring. This is similarly compared to the God who is young upon the earth and his mother, the Goddess, who cares for him.

A.k.a. Cold Moon, Time to curl up with friends and other close ones, and give thanks for the inner warmth they offer. As the trees are well asleep, let us not be. Study well for the projects to come this spring.

FEBRUARY- Storm Moon is a time of self-forgiveness, self-purification, and mental house cleaning in general. Its a time to clean out that which is no longer needed or wanted and to discard that which holds you back. The God is beginning to grow stronger and take his place beside the Goddess.

Beware for as the season starts to change so does life around us. This is a time that you can be easily distracted and frustrated. Stay Focused. The true warmth is almost here.

¹ approximate

² only editing a few of his grammatical nuances :-)

Maiden Moon

MARCH- Chaste Moon is a month when spring is upon us and the earth starts to come alive again with rebirth of plants and animals. This is the moon of the Maiden who does not yet pursue the God, hence the name Chaste Moon. Now is the time for new beginnings, new projects, and the setting into motion that which you wish to cultivate.

A.k.a. Worm Moon, Time to start implementing those projects we planned from last fall. As the rains come and cleanse the grass and trees, time to clean ourselves inside and out. Plant those seeds that take time to germinate. Get started on finishing that project that you couldn't finish because winter came too soon. Some days through here we can open windows and change the air in the house. Let's change our air also and look forward.

APRIL- Seed or Growing Moon is planting time whether it be planting an herb garden, flower beds or planting of ideas and thoughts. It is also reflective of the fertility of nature and that of the Goddess and God. It is a time for the energy of creation.

April showers bring May flowers. The cold sleet storms of winter are now past. Get ready for a soaking. Ideas can flourish and be set in motion. Bulbs that were planted last fall are coming up fast, giving us the hint to get a move on. Quit being lethargic and do something.

MAY-Hare Moon is the celebration of love and the life it produces. Romance is emphasized with the wild abandonment of inhibitions. It is a time for embracing our natural self, a time to kindle, or rekindle, love.

A.k.a. Planting Moon, Time for those gourds, pumpkins and watermelon to be set to Earth. Ready for Summer? Bet not, but it'll be here real soon. So now that you didn't do what you should have done last month, Guess what? If you don't do it now you are simply going to not get it done! Some things just can't be hurried; but you are about to start rushing around waiting for the perfect day that wont come. Either get it done or give up and do something else.

JUNE- Dryad Moon is a time to honor the Goddesses and give thanks for life. With summer underway, we see the greenery and life that has grown around us. The old has died out and the new has flourished in its place. It is a time of splendor in nature and for working to strengthen ourselves as well.

A.k.a. Rose Moon, Ahhh those summer nights to walk on the beach and just lay back and look at the stars. What do you mean no time? Well gee, you should have listened last month. The time is now, take your partner for an evening walk. Now is the time to lay down your tools and pay attention to your love life.

JULY- Mead Moon is a time when we see nature overflowing with its now mature produce and a time to start thinking about storing for the winter to come. It is a time for divination, dream-work, and meditation. Magick work especially blessed at this time of year.

Remember those seeds you planted in March? Well they should be ripe. Summer storms are coming to soften up the Earth for you. This is the time for really relaxing. Floating on the waves of water and time. No hurry. Just relax and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

AUGUST- Corn Moon marks time for harvest. It is a time to reap the benefits of our kindled friendships and community, when we share and all is plentiful, and a time of giving thanks to the Goddess who has blessed us with the bountiful harvest.

A.k.a. Wort Moon, Time for the grain harvest. Now that you had a month to relax and enjoy it is time to get moving for the next 11 months. Time for bread and feast with friends. Get the big house projects done; for it will be getting cold sooner than you want. Need a new roof or siding? Better be getting it done this month or it will be next summer before you will even want to try to work on it. The days are still long and you will have plenty of time to party in the warmth of the night.

SEPTEMBER- Harvest Moon marks the time when light and darkness are again in balance and the second harvest has arrived. This moon is a time for celebrating with the Goddess for all the harvest season brings. It also represents the beginning of a time to straighten up and organize the spiritual and emotional clutter from summer.

Now time to start gathering all those vegetables for storage. Bring in the outside furniture and start thinking of winter projects to do. Reflect on the past year and see if anything is still missing from your life. Do we need to harvest some good will?

OCTOBER- Blood Moon is a time for hunting and storing food for the upcoming winter. It is also a time for meditation on death and rebirth and reincarnation, a time to look at where you have been, where you are and where you want to go. With this moon we are coming to the end of the Wheel of the Year and the focus is on the circle of life.

Party time for most of us. Coming soon is the big party, Samhain. Time to honor those beloved who have passed. Also put to rest bad habits, not just the physical ones but the emotional ones too. Blessings to all for we have made it through another year.

Maiden Moon

NOVEMBER- Snow Moon is a time of transformation and preparation. With autumn now in full grip, the Earth grows cold and the warmth is withdrawn. It is a time for the final preparations for the coming winter.

That's right, Winter is coming really quickly. Pretty soon all those outside projects will be covered under a veil of white. If you haven't already you should be making peace with yourself and those around you. Soon you will be holed up with yourself and them for awhile.

DECEMBER- Oak Moon is the month of spiritual rebirth. The God has waned and the Goddess is ready for rebirth. It is a time of celebration balanced with determination of endurance and strength to last us to the coming spring.

Here comes the longest night of the year. Are you ready for Winter? Too late it's here. Dump the old crap in the fires of these nights. Reflect on what to keep and what you should have dumped in October. With friends near the coming cold nights will be much warmer. :-)

2nd MOON - Blue Moon is a rare and special time magickal workings. In essence, it is a surprise visit from the Goddess. Because of the unique aspects of the Blue Moon, it is an excellent time to heighten awareness of the magick in our lives.

Getting Started in Wicca

This section applies to Reformed Traditional Wicca and Eclectic Wicca only. The Orthodox traditions teach that the only way to become a Wiccan is through formal training and coven initiation.

I am often asked, “How do I become a Wiccan?”

Getting started in Wicca is not like getting started in Christianity. In Christianity, the majority of practice is done at church; hence, to become an active Christian, one goes to church.

Wicca is nothing like that. The vast majority of Wiccans practice as solitaries in their own homes. This leaves the responsibility on the individual to orchestrate their own education and initiation into Wicca.

Getting started in Wicca boils down to two steps.

- **Learn it,**
- **Live it.**

If you wish to be a Wiccan, then simply “be a Wiccan”. Of course when you first start, you do not know how to be a Wiccan so you have to learn the basics as you get started.

Dedication

The first step in Wiccan practice is ‘Dedication’. Dedication is a ritual where a person dedicates him or herself to beginning the practice of Wicca. The title of a person on this level is ‘dedicant’.

In Orthodox Traditional Wicca, there are commonly four levels of practice, dedicant, then first, second, and third degree initiate. First degree initiation takes a minimum of a year and a day study as a dedicant. On completion of training, the High Priestess or High Priest initiates the person into the coven.

As a solitary in reformed or eclectic practice, the process is similar although there is no teacher or High Priestess. One dedicates, studies, and eventually initiates into Wicca completely on his or her own. This can be a real obstacle for those expecting to have evangelistic style ‘hand holding’ like in Christianity. Most in Wicca feel that if a newcomer is unwilling to make the effort to learn the practice, then their failure to learn is their own responsibility.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

In Dragon Tradition, there are no formal degrees of practice because we see no need for them.

Dragon Tradition teaches that the only real determination of status is how a person lives their life.

I have heard some interesting stories about dedication rituals. In one case, a woman sat outside wrapped only in a blanket and watched the moon shining brightly overhead. She was deeply moved by the experience and considered it a turning point in her life.

In another, a person stretched out on the living room floor and said “okay I’m here, visit me” and had a strong psychic experience with divinity. The result was a seriously motivated dedicant.

How you choose to dedicate is up to you. The essential element is you making the conscious decision to begin study eventually leading to initiation. Dedication ritual often includes an evocation (calling into the room with you) or an invocation (calling into yourself) of the Goddess and God through meditation.

As for the details, ask yourself what kind of ritual is appropriate for you to signify the commitment to a religion and the eventual transformation that will follow. If you have friends in Wicca, ask them about their dedication ritual. If you are thinking about doing a formal ritual, you will find a general outline in this book.

Self-Training in Wicca

The fact that the majority of Wiccans enter Wicca through self-training is perhaps the single largest obstacle for newcomers. In general, people coming to Wicca do not expect that they will need to work to become a practicing Wiccan.

Often people enter with the attitude that they are somehow doing a favor to the Wiccan community by joining¹, and carry an attitude...

- Newcomer: hey, I'm here, aren't you going to teach me?
- Clergy: *chuckles* Well, uhmmm, no... but I will help a bit with advice on reading material.
- Newcomer: You mean I have to read? but I don't like reading... I learn better if someone shows me everything.
- Clergy: *sigh*

Usually this type of conversation fades out with the newcomer leaving with a chip on their shoulder. While this is unfortunate, it is unavoidable... there simply are not enough teachers to 'hand-hold' newcomers, nor does 'handholding' fit with Wiccan beliefs. The reality is that reading is going to be a significant part of self-training.

How Much is Enough to Start?

Determining how much to read before actually starting practice is a personal judgement that many take to extreme. I have run across people who have been reading and learning about Wicca for years, but never actually started the practice. Frankly, I think that is excessive. Yes, it is true that I stress learn it then live it, but I am not implying become an expert before you start.

Another aspect is that while books are essential, there is much in Wicca that is learned from within, not from books. No amount of reading can teach you the 'feel' of circle. The thrill the first time you pop an energy ball from your projective hand cannot be experienced from reading. One cannot reach their destination by only reading the map; they need to walk the path.

Reading

It can be difficult to choose books for reading. In general, I suggest staying clear of books written after 1990, at least at first, if you would like to have anything

¹ Wiccan clergy hear this attitude quite often because people assume that Wicca parallels Christianity on the concept of evangelizing to non-believers. In Wicca, we do not get extra bonus points in heaven for each person we bring into the Craft. :-)

close to a balanced perspective presented. There were some post-1990 books written that are superb, but many are seriously lacking or are highly biased. The New-Age influenced and commercialized eclectic books dominated this era.

I also suggest reading material from a variety of authors, rather than placing too much emphasis on any one in particular. Everyone who writes books on Wicca has a different perspective. If one were to read Scott Cunningham, Raymond Buckland, and Starhawk, it would appear that they were writing about different religions because the perspectives are so greatly varied.

Reading from a variety of book publishers is also advised. A conservative estimate of the total book sales to the Wiccan market is at least two MILLION dollars annually. Book publishers are not in this to do a good job teaching Wicca, they are in this for profit. As such some publishers tend to push books with a specific 'brand' of Wicca with the intent of optimizing their sales potential. While this is great for sales, it appears to me to be bad for Wicca.

An additional aspect to watch for is an author who contradicts themselves in their own books. It is common to find authors who stress that Wicca is primarily a religion in chapter one, and then fill 75% of the book with spells designed for the kiddy-witch market. Others talk about the Wiccan Rede, then contradict it by including material to harm or control others. There are only a few who authors who write this way, and they are easily avoided.

Off hand, the best that I can recommend from the pre-1990 era are:

- Janet & Stewart Farrar (The Witches' Way & Eight Sabbats for Witches)
- Doreen Valiente (Natural Magic & Witchcraft for Tomorrow)
- Raymond Buckland (Complete Book of Witchcraft)
- Starhawk (Spiral Dance)
- Scott Cunningham (Living Wicca)

All of these except Starhawk and Scott Cunningham are from Orthodox Traditional background. Starhawk presents a unique blend of Feri Tradition, perhaps some 1734 Tradition, and a dash of feminism, but her detail is superb on many aspects of theory and practice.

I may get a few groans from readers regarding my suggesting Scott Cunningham. Scott's 'Wicca - A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner' was quite possibly the book that spearheaded the explosion of eclectic practice, however it is precisely for this reason that I mention it. If you do read it, pay close attention to not only what you read, but also what you do not read in it. I am not saying

that it is a bad book, on the contrary, it is a great book... almost. It most certainly has had a huge impact on the development of Wicca.

Mentors & Study Groups

Self-Training can be quite difficult in that it lacks any kind of mechanism to help with motivation. I have found in my own practice that working with a mentor or study partner is quite helpful, even if they are below your current level of knowledge. The occasional meeting to discuss and share what each of you has learned is an excellent source of motivation and personal satisfaction.

Sometimes groups are available which provide a similar opportunity, except that a half-dozen or more may meet. While these tend to be more structured than one on one mentoring, the amount that can be learned from the others is greatly increased. Although they do tend to be more social than educational, attending meeting of the local NeoPagan group can be an excellent source of motivation, not to mention provides the potential of meeting a study partner.

Maiden Moon

Life as a Wiccan

Life as a Wiccan is a splendid experience. Our religion is well known and well liked. The people from other religions respect us. We are known for our embrace of nature, our ethics, and our emphasis on personal responsibility. Those who are inside our religion respect that we each chose and walk our own path, and we all coexist peacefully...

Is this true? NO, not even close.

If Gerald Gardner had been interested in, and caused a revival of, any religion other than Witchcraft perhaps things would be different, but he did not. As such, the 'Old Laws' of Orthodox practice have become a self-fulfilling prophecy...

So be it ordained that no one shall tell anyone not of the Craft who be of the Wica, nor give any names or where they bide, or in any way tell anything which can betray any of us to our foes.

Many, if not most, Wiccans keep their religious beliefs to themselves out of fear or in the simple wisdom of avoiding unnecessary conflicts. While some do continue normal life coming 'out of the broom closet'; others experience the wrath of the stigma connected to the words Witch and Witchcraft. Otherwise acceptable employees are fired, families turn their backs on loved ones in disgust, and even well cared for children are taken from a parent. I have seen all of the above. If you think, "It can't happen to me", then please ask those who have had it happen if they thought it could happen to them.

Okay, so maybe I am being too harsh... perhaps absolute secrecy is not required, only the wisdom to know when, and when not, to disclose one's practice of Wicca. If anything, I hope that message is clear to those who read this.

So, how does one deal with the religiously intolerant? It is my opinion, for religious tolerance to be achieved; Wiccans need to stop adding fuel to the fire. I believe that hatred only begets hatred, which fits with the teaching of the Law of Threefold Return.

My theory¹ on dealing with the situation is:

**Understand why they hate you;
educate the ones you can,
and avoid the ones you cannot.**

There are four primary aspects regarding the negativity toward Wicca:

- Witchcraft Definition Confusion
- The “Your God is My Devil” Phenomena
- Failed Salvation
- Defiant to the Word of God

I. Witchcraft Definition Confusion

The definition of diabolical witchcraft is “The act of having a pact with the devil in exchange for magickal powers”. This definition was handed down in the fifteenth century by the Roman Catholic Church and it was heresy (a crime punishable by death) to believe otherwise. Unfortunately, this definition is still commonly believed to be the only definition for Witchcraft. Since Wicca is a form of Witchcraft, it is assumed that Wiccans are devil worshipping Witches.

Wicca is not a form of diabolical witchcraft. Wicca is a form of NeoPagan Witchcraft. While we realize the two have nothing to do with each other, some people do not. Wiccans are seen as an ally with the ultimate enemy of the Christian faith and all they hold dear. That enemy is their devil god Satan. In being seen as an ally of their enemy, we become the enemy.

II. The “Your God is My Devil” Phenomena

In fundamental Christian theology, there are only two sources of magick. First is the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Second is the Christian devil deity known as “Satan”. Based on this theology, any magick not coming from the Trinity can only be coming from “Satan”; therefore, any religion with practitioners displaying magickal abilities must be in league with “Satan”.

Wicca clearly embraces and encourages the practice of magick. As such, we are in the same situation as before where we are seen as an ally of their enemy and hence we are the enemy.

It should be noted that the “Your God is My Devil” concept is still the viewpoint (to my knowledge it has never been rescinded) of the Roman Catholic Church even today. It

¹ I do not feel it is your responsibility to try and fix this mess, nor am I suggesting that you put yourself in harms way.

most certainly is the viewpoint of several major Protestant Fundamentalist Christian organizations in the United States.

III. Failed Salvation

According to Christian theology, a human soul is destined to afterlife in Hell unless the person receives salvation through Jesus Christ. When a loved one leaves Christianity and embraces another religion, the participants of the other religion are seen as having led the person astray, dooming the person to lack of salvation and hence an afterlife in Hell.

If I was a Christian and I truly believed that someone dear to me was going to spend an eternity in a torturous afterlife, I too would be upset. The difference lies in that some Christians believe in the damnation of souls as factual. Wiccans generally consider the devil and hell as a curious creation of Christianity as it mutated out of Judaism. This leads to a question, should we be blamed for a soul being sent to a place of torture that we do not believe even exists?

Our religion teaches respect for freedom and regard for another's beliefs. In my opinion, as such we should respect them and understand why they feel as they do, even if we disagree. Should a Wiccan teacher take a student from a family that will believe that the student is going to hell? I cannot answer that for you. If you are the teacher, then it is your place to make that decision.

IV. Defiant to the Word of God

Christian Theology teaches that Christianity is the only way to receive salvation and helping others find Christ is an active role in Christian life. When an evangelizing Christian realizes a person is Wiccan¹ a special case scenario is often created. This is not just some lowly sinner refusing to join the ranks of the washed out of ignorance or laziness. This is someone who openly rejects the theology of Christianity.

Wiccans tend to see any religious prosletization as an inappropriate attempt to interfere with free will.

And so the lines are drawn in the sand.

Religious Tolerance Inside Wicca

Beyond the intolerance outside the Craft, the struggle within contributes to the fragmentation in the Wiccan community. There is a common pattern in Wicca, that if anyone is not doing it MY way, then they are doing it the wrong way. When groups start rivaling each other, this is called a 'Witch War'.

¹ more accurately Witch, because I doubt the differentiation is significant.

Maiden Moon

To be completely honest, the only significant Witch War that exists inside Wicca itself is a struggle between Orthodox and modern Eclectic practice, but even this is becoming more uncommon as times goes on. Eclectics seriously outnumber the Orthodox, many of whom have given up on trying to regain the identity and repair the “fluffy” image of Wicca. Since a tenet of Orthodox practice is working in secret, many have simply gone back into the shadows.

Inside the broader ranging NeoPagan community, the Witch Wars are more common. Wiccans vs. Pagans vs. Witches are often hotly divided on issues concerning definitions and the legitimacy of each other’s practices. This combined with the tendency for isolation and the NeoPagan population stays largely fragmented.

I will use myself as an example. I live in an area with approximately 50,000 other people inside a half-hours driving distance. At the calculated national average of .005 NeoPagan population density (that’s 1/2 of 1%), it means there are 250 NeoPagans in my local area. How many do I know personally? Around a dozen, and I have semi-regular contact with only around half of them.

This fragmentation is unfortunate, in many aspects. In a world where Wiccans already feel isolated and alone, there are likely others of similar belief who live close, but the fragmentation keeps them isolated from each other. In addition, it is also quite difficult for the NeoPagan community to express itself clearly concerning promoting a positive image while the feuding and fragmentation continues.

There are efforts underway to try to unite the NeoPagan community, or at least promote communication and positive public image. While a few of these have been largely unsuccessful, some are making real headway. Perhaps the most influential is The Witches’ Voice, on the Internet at www.Witchvox.com. Their mission appears to be to promote networking and provide informational services and resources for the Pagan, Heathen, Witch, and Wiccan community.

Some people, myself included, consider the attempt at promoting Pagan unity to be an effort of futility because the rifts between the different factions are too significant to overcome and maintain any form of cohesive identity. However, I believe that there is a solution...

I believe it is time to stop trying to force Witches, Wiccans, and Pagans together as a single religion. There are unavoidable contradictions between the three systems. Pigeonholing all three together reveals these contradictions and becomes the source of the bickering. If there is ever to be any unity, it will be in

the form of the cooperation of three different religions, each accepted by the others as 'kin'. A Pagan may be a brother or sister to a Wiccan, but that does not make the Pagan a Wiccan.

Maiden Moon

Choosing a Tradition

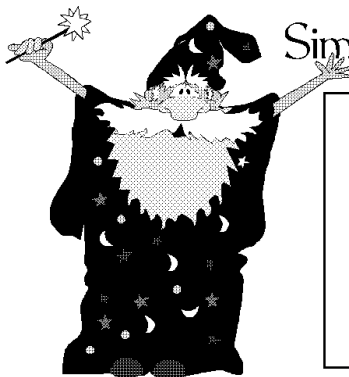
Many people completely overlook this step. Personally, I blame this on the lack of organization of the traditions and the book companies spewing forth tons of books that completely ignore the fact that Wiccan traditions even exist.

The act of choosing a tradition takes you a step further than eclectic solitary practice. It gives you an edge because others in your tradition will respect you, and it gives you a sense of identity. Indeed, it makes you special in a religion where most are ignored. By aligning with a tradition, you also enrich your own practice with the heritage, beliefs and practices of that tradition. In a world where Wicca is so confused and diluted that it has become almost meaningless, your practice will have meaning.

The tradition you align with is up to you. Choose something that fits who you are, or who you would like to become. You do not have to choose right away, but you should before initiation. Frankly speaking, if you cannot make an intelligent personal choice on a tradition, you probably are not ready to initiate anyway.

Alexandrian Tradition

Founded by the late Alex and Maxine Sanders sometime in the mid-60s, Alexandrian tradition is one of the oldest traditions as well as one of the most formal. It is a close copy of Gardnerian with additional emphasis on ceremonial magick. To my knowledge, the most famous author of books on Alexandrian Tradition is Stewart Farrar. What Witches Do was written by Farrar in 1971.



Simon says...

There is a public domain version of the Alexandrian Book of Shadows floating around the web.

I cannot verify its authenticity, but I have never heard that it was a forgery.

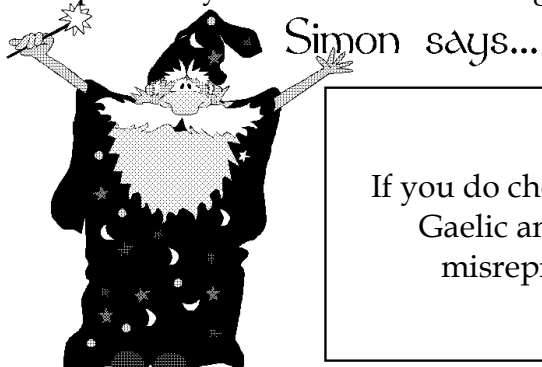
AlGard Tradition

Founded in the early 1970s, AlGard is a combination of Alexandrian and Gardnerian traditions. The practices are very similar to Gardnerian although it

appears they allow more room for eclecticism. It is an Orthodox tradition so locating information may be difficult unless you bump into one of their covens.

Celtic Tradition

The Celtic Tradition of Wicca is controversial because many assume that it is a recreation of historically correct Celtic spirituality. It is not. It is a form of Wicca flavored by Celtic spirituality. There is quite a bit known about the Celtic spirituality as handed down in legends through the years.



If you do chose a Celtic Wiccan path, please be kind to the Gaelic and Brythonic Reconstructionists and do not misrepresent Celtic Wicca as the old Celtic faith.

Correllian Tradition

The Correllian Tradition is philosophical in nature, and emphasizes spirituality and the inner mysteries of the Wiccan religion. Correllians are committed to working for the advancement of the entire Pagan community and believe that all Pagans are equal; this should be a reason to stand together no matter what tradition you are involved with. The Correllian Tradition places importance on celebratory as well as initiatory Wicca, and is strongly committed to accessible public ritual.¹

<http://www.correlliantradition.com/>

Dianic Tradition

There are two distinct lines both calling their practice Dianic Tradition. Old Dianic is based on the Roman Goddess Diana. It is fairly mainstream in terms of traditions and reasonably balanced. The Goddess and God are regarded and men are welcomed.

Feminist Dianic is a tradition that emphasizes women, exclusively. Only the Goddess is regarded and it does deviate quite a bit from other Wiccan Traditions in doing so. In many cases Feminist Dianic covens only accept females and have a strong lesbian backing.

Faery Tradition

Perhaps not what you might think, Faery Tradition is steeped in a diverse range

¹ Description provided by Correllian Tradition, used with permission

of teachings and practice. The Faery Tradition implementation of magickal theory is superb.

Unfortunately, things become confused because there is not one, but at least three different traditions using the name Faery. The spelling is not sufficient to differentiate between them. The oldest and most likely the original is named Feri Tradition, which was formed by Victor and Cora Anderson.
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Rhodes/5569/>

Gardnerian Tradition

Gardnerian is the grandma of all of the traditions. While her age shows at times, she is well loved. With formal ritual and full regalia, there is nothing more real than Gardnerian Tradition for coven practice, or more strict for that matter, depending on the High Priestess. The documentation on Gardnerian Tradition is superb and its teachers some of the wisest in the craft.

Georgian Tradition

Georgian Wicca is similar to Alexandrian and Gardnerian practice in that it is an initiatory line and oath bound. Many of the rituals are similar to those published in various books on British Traditional Wicca or Orthodox Traditional Wicca.
<http://www.angelfire.com/wa/georgian/>

NROOGD Tradition

Formed at San Francisco University in 1968, this long lived tradition coined its name "New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn" as a new tradition based on the older practices. To my understanding there is much diversity in their practices both from Wicca in general and even inside their tradition on a coven by coven basis.

Reclaiming Tradition

Reclaiming is a community of women and men working to unify spirit and politics. Their vision is rooted in the religion and magick of the Goddess the Immanent Life Force. They see their work as teaching and making magick the art of empowering each other and ourselves.
<http://www.reclaiming.org/>

1734 Tradition

Founded by Robert Cochrane who said "We teach by poetic inference, by thinking along lines that belong to the world of dreams and images. There is no hard and fast teaching technique, no laid down scripture or law, for wisdom comes only to those who deserve it..." The name 1734 is not a date, it is a cryptogram style riddle.
<http://wiccanet.net/wicca/1734>

Dragon Tradition

Dragon Tradition was created to fill the need for a Wiccan tradition that fits the spirit and encourages eclectic choice. It was named Dragon Tradition as a new tradition with an attitude of strength, honor, self-determination, and confidence.

You will find that Dragon Tradition is not buried in strict archaic rules or swimming in medieval mumbo-jumbo. Dragon Tradition embraces nature and magick in a way that is truly Wiccan and yet is flexible and clearly defined.

Dragon Tradition teaches how to be eclectic in beliefs and ritual practice without losing touch with the spirit of Wicca. In breaking from the norm of strict circle work and degree hierarchy, we feel we bring a much happier and cleaner energy to the circle.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

Dragon Tradition is one of very few traditions, which does not consider tradition alignment to be exclusive.

Those aligned with other traditions are welcome to align with Dragon Tradition without renouncing their current alignment.

The full Book of Shadows is online and completely free. There is a formal church organization supporting Dragon Tradition on a national level with authority to ordain legally recognized clergy (Priest/Priestess).

<http://www.DragonTradition.com>

<http://www.ChurchOfMagick.com>

Personally, I am aligned with, an ordained Priest of, and a founding Elder of Dragon Tradition Wicca, so I might be a bit biased in my enthusiasm - Simon :-)

Initiation into Wicca

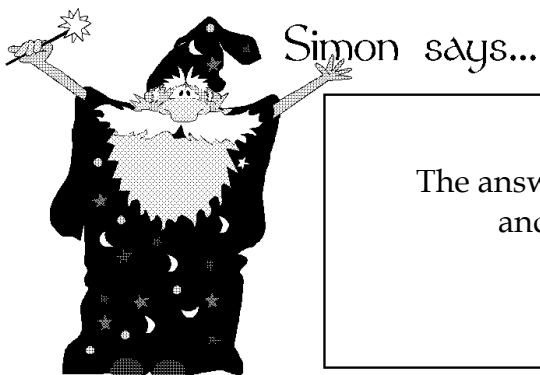
When you are ready for initiation, you will not need me to tell you how to initiate. If you do, then you are not ready to initiate anyway. Think back to your dedication. Reflect on your study and practice. Ask yourself if you are ready to be considered as an initiate of Wicca. If so, then it is time to do so, and you already know how.

Initiation into Wicca is both a big step forward and not a step at all. Initiation will not make you a better Wiccan. Initiation is simply an acceptance that you have already become a better Wiccan. Initiation is a step to a new phase; it is a beginning of a new time and the end of an old.

As an initiate of Wicca, the goal is no longer to reach the level of being Wiccan. There are new goals... goals that only you are aware of. Your peers are no longer the struggling dedicants. Your new peers are those who have initiated and work toward their personal goals in life as Wica¹, the wise of the craft.

Will your new group of peers accept you? If you walk the path wisely, with respect and responsibility, then yes they will. Any who do not accept you are not truly your peers. They need not be considered as above you or below you, but rather on a different path than you.

Walk the wisdom you have learned while others walk theirs and you will find a hidden meaning in **"do as thee will, an harm thee none"**. Yes, it is a puzzle, and you are very close to the answer.



The answer to the puzzle can be found on this page and is explained elsewhere in this book.

¹ Spelling is intentional (Wica, as in one who is wise, not Wicca as in the name of a religion).

Solitary and Coven Practice

Wiccan practice is generally divided into two types. Solitary practice is that which is done alone. Coven practice is that done as part of an organized group. Each type has advantages and disadvantages over the other.

Solitary Practice

The advantages of solitary practice are that it offers great freedom, does not require one to get along with others in a group, and does not allow others to hinder one's progress. The disadvantages are that it requires a tremendous amount of self-discipline, it provides no group synergy to keep motivated, and it offers little or no opportunity to learn from an experienced teacher.

Most Wiccans who practice solitary do so in their own home or out in nature. The worship space required for Solitary practice is minimal, usually with a small table serving as a home altar. Some solitaries practice more often than those in coven practice do, usually whenever a need or desire arises. Others seldom practice due to lack of self-discipline, motivation, or conflicts with a hectic schedule.

Solitary Wiccans worship when they like. There is nothing in Wicca that says we must practice on a specific day of the week. The closest to that is the practice of worshipping on the Esbats (full moons) because magickal energy peaks at that time and each has a seasonal significance. Ritual on Esbats is especially common for those who practice outdoors.

Coven Practice

The advantages of coven practice are that it can offer much in the way of teaching, synergy and group motivation. The disadvantages are that it does require one to work as part of a group, can be restrictive of freedom, and a dysfunctional group can actually hinder one's growth.

Because coven practice requires the coordination of multiple people, practice tends to be much more organized. Covens tend to meet in the home of the High Priest, Priestess, or perhaps an elder in the coven. Rituals are commonly scheduled on Esbats and Sabbats.

Coven organizational structure is normally a High Priestess, a Maiden¹, a High Priest and a Summoner. The High Priestess and Maiden are both female. The High Priestess performs the majority of ritual. The Maiden is generally a person

¹ sometimes referred to as 'Maid'

in training to become High Priestess who assists and occasionally stands in for the role of Priestess.

The High Priest and Summoner are both male. The High Priest co-performs ritual with the High Priestess. In some traditions the High Priest is seen as equal to the High Priestess, in others his role is subservient to her. The Summoner is generally a person in training to become High Priest who assists and occasionally stands in for the role of Priest. Part of the duty of a Summoner is to serve as security for the coven and as liaison¹ or messenger between the coven and the outside world.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

Dragon Tradition covens have an uncommon organizational structure. There is no High Priestess, High Priest, Summoner or Maiden.

Coven ritual is overseen by a 'Watcher' and the decision making process is normally democratic.

The process of looking for a coven is called seeking, and the person doing so is termed a seeker. There are far fewer covens in operation than people who are seeking one. This is partly because of growing interest in Wicca and due to the fact that running a coven takes a lot of work, time, and effort.

A coven environment is very much like a family; in fact, many Wiccans consider their coven to be their spiritual family. During group ritual, the energies of all blend together and as such most covens are quite careful about the people welcomed into the coven as some energies are unwanted.

If finding a coven is difficult, then finding the right coven is very difficult. It should be one where you and the coven fit each other. The varied perceptions and beliefs inside of Wicca complicate this fact.

An operating coven will have a tradition that it follows which serves as the common denominator of the beliefs of the individuals. If a coven's tradition does not fit the seeker, or if the seeker does not fit their tradition, it is not likely that the two will get along.

¹ This is easy to spot in coven announcements. Many times announcements from a coven are from a male who makes no disclosure of his role. His service prevents the High Priestess from having to speak publicly which would place her and the coven at risk of abuse.

Keep in mind that if you feel that solitary practice is unfulfilling, then practicing with the wrong coven will be far worse. However, it is not nearly as grim as it may seem. By finding the right coven and keeping a good attitude as an active productive member, coven practice can be a very fulfilling experience.

Wiccan Teachers

There is a grass roots trend of local teachers working outside of a normal coven environment. These teachers are a unique breed of Wiccan who unselfishly devote much time and energy in helping students of Wicca.

Do not confuse these with the “Be a Witch in 1 Easy Lesson” ads that you see in the back of the newspapers. There is a difference between a teacher and a con artist whose magick is turning your \$150 into their \$150 and having you leave without realizing that you have been ripped off.

The grass roots teachers do not need to advertise, although you may occasionally see them listed on witchy web sites or in metaphysical shops. The reality is there are at least ten times more people looking for a real teacher than there are real teachers with room available to teach.

If you do come across a grass roots teacher willing to take you in, there are three things important to remember.

1. If you are not seriously dedicated, don't sign up
2. Expect the teacher to try and scare you off
3. You are there to learn what the teacher wants to teach, not what you want to learn

Sounds ominous huh? It is not once you realize why these things are. Here are the reasons:

#1. A teacher can only teach a limited number of people effectively. Taking three classes out of twelve and then dropping out has kept another person who would not have dropped out from getting into the class. As a Reded Wiccan, you have caused harm. It is like killing an animal and not eating the food.

#2. The teacher will try to scare you off because it weeds out people who are not dedicated, thus eliminating the wasted space syndrome described above. Do not take it personally. It is just like Army boot camp. Keep a good attitude, study seriously, do the work and you will be fine.

#3. One of the hardest aspects for students is realizing that the teacher is going to teach what he or she wants to teach, and not necessarily what

Maiden Moon

you want to learn. The classes are designed long before you signed up and will not be changing even if they are not what you seek.

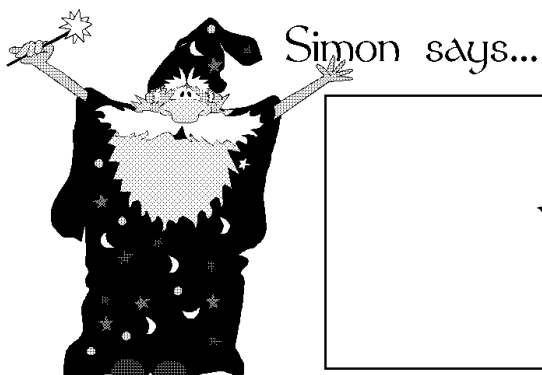
Let me tell you about an experience I had. I responded to a listing posted by a local teacher. She screens students by having them read a piece of literature and having them write a commentary. If the commentary is positive then she screens further. For me the screening was effective. I never even submitted my commentary because after reading the piece I knew that I would not be a good fit in the class. She was not displeased when I did not sign up for the classes; in fact, I think she was more impressed that I was honest with her regarding why I did not sign up.

I have a comment on teaching and money. Some Wiccan hold it as a general rule to not charge for teaching. How this is interpreted varies by individual.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- expect to buy your own books
- expect to buy your own tools
- expect to buy your own supplies or offer to replenish supplies used in classes
- remember that offering gratuity is not the same as being charged for classes. A thank-you card with \$50 during a three-month course is nothing compared to the cost and time involved, yet it can mean a lot to a teacher oath-bound to not ask you for anything.

I am not implying that all teachers who set rates for teaching are con-artists. There are teachers who do an excellent job of teaching who are simply tired of not being compensated for their efforts or the costs involved. If you have doubts, trust your intuition or ask around.



A note to the teachers,

Your efforts are being noticed... :-)

Simon

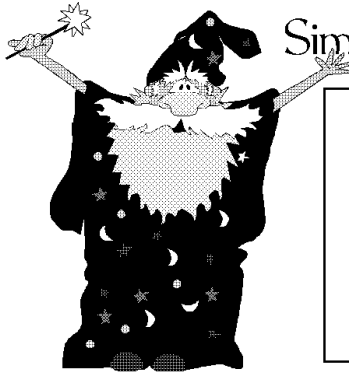
Shops & Groups

Learning your way around the Wiccan community can sometimes be as much of a challenge as learning the beliefs and practices.

Local networking for a Wiccan can be tough because Wiccans tend to hide extremely well. There are generally three ways to meet others, the Internet, local metaphysical shops, and local groups.

Metaphysical shops vary greatly depending on the proprietor. Some are simply cashing in on the greatly untapped market of running a new age department store. Others are run by devout NeoPagans who see their shop as a way of giving back to the local community and perhaps barely scraping a living out of doing so.

When visiting, ten minutes of browsing, perhaps a question or two¹, and it is quite easy to spot which kind of shop it is. If you are comfortable that the shop is for real, it is acceptable to ask if there is a local Pagan group that they know of which accept visitors.



Simon says...

A big taboo (in my opinion) is to ask if the clerk knows of any local covens. That is the easiest way to shut off a potential source of information because it is the first question asked by people who harass covens.

When browsing the shop look for a bulletin board with local activities or newsletters posted. If it does have one, look for information about local groups.

It may not be clear what I am referring to when I talk about groups. A local Pagan group is generally a social or community service group that meets monthly in a park (summer) or restaurant's back room (winter). Their public meetings are often referred to as "Pagan Night Outs" or as "Pagan Meet and Greet".

¹ my favorite question is "Do you have this athame with a white handle?" Since athames traditionally have only black or dark handles, this can be quite revealing of the knowledge of the person behind the counter.

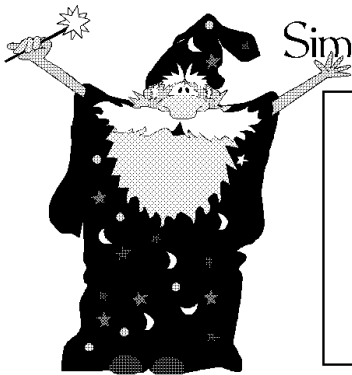
Maiden Moon

These local group meetings are a superb way to see and be seen in the local community. In my experience, they are the single most effective method of local networking inside the Wiccan community.

Keep in mind that the term Pagan includes far more than just Wicca. There may be all sorts of beliefs present ranging from Wiccans, Eclectic NeoPagans, Ancestral Witches, Celts (Gaelic or Brythonic Reconstructionists) and Asatruars (Norse).

It may take some time to get used to the diversity when getting to know the group. You will also quickly learn to watch how you phrase statements in conversation. A statement like "All Witches believe..." is guaranteed to be corrected or contradicted.

Do not be too surprised if you meet a few people who you would not let wash your car let alone share in your religious practice. That is to be expected. I suggest treating the situation for what it is... the most valuable networking resource available in the Wiccan community.



Simon says...

Networking on the Internet is becoming a popular alternative in finding local Wiccans to meet.

Try a visit to <http://www.WiccanDirectory.com>

Tools, Clothing & Jewelry

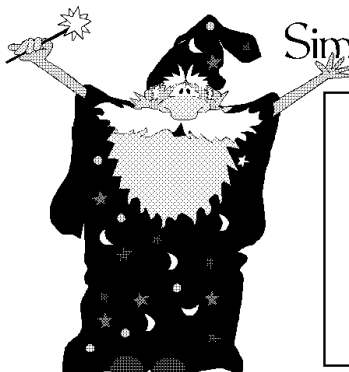
Tools, clothing, and jewelry have specific roles in Wiccan practice:

- Magick/Ritual Tools are used in preparing sacred space, invoking deities and directing energy.
- Divination Tools aid the process of opening the mind to other states of awareness.
- Ritual Clothing and Jewelry add formality to ritual and enhance magickal abilities.
- Magick Jewelry functions as an amulet or a talisman.

The role of tools, clothing, and jewelry in Wicca varies depending on tradition or a person's magickal system. Some believe that magickal tools are required in the practice of Wicca. Others believe that tools are useful to enhance magick and ritual, but are not required. Some teachers say that tools are only useful as a training aid and should be discarded once no longer needed. Some experienced practitioners barely use any tools at all.

Most Wiccans are comfortable with the use of magickal tools and continue to use them regularly even into advanced practice. In my opinion if a practitioner likes tools and finds them useful for whatever reason, then their use is appropriate.

One common misconception is that tools are, or need to be, magickal when they are acquired. In some instances that can be somewhat correct, for example a wand bringing with it the spirit of nature, or perhaps an athame created in a magickal space by an experienced magickal toolsmith. However, in most cases the practitioner brings the magickal characteristics to a tool through charging it, or through repeated magickal use.



Simon says...

Some traditions have some unusual rules regarding the acquisition of tools.

A couple of examples are: you must make your own tools, never haggling over the price of tools, only using tools received as a gift, and never buying your own tools.

Your collection of tools

You may want to assemble a few tools when you begin your practice in Wicca. It is not necessary for you to build a full collection right away. A reasonable minimal set of magickal tools is an athame, chalice, censer or incense burner, and a couple candles. From there, you will be able to determine what it is that you need, if anything.

It also is not necessary for you to spend a lot of money on your first set of tools. A plain athame is usually around ten dollars. A glass stemmed goblet for five dollars will work fine as a chalice. A simple incense burner with stick incense is only a couple bucks. A small box of white tapers, votives or jar candles will serve the need for candles.

I do suggest taking the time to find tools that fit your personality and not settle on the very first ones you find. You will be most comfortable with tools that you relate to strongly. The reward of your quest will be more than worth the work you put into it. Also, do not assume that tools manufactured specifically for ritual will be better than ones you find on your own or ones that find their way to you.

Look at my collection of tools for example: My chalice came from an antique show. My wand is one that I made from wood dropped by a tree near the old covenstead and tipped with gentle quartz purchased from a metaphysical shop. My athame was a gift from a close friend, divining rods a gift from yet another, and my dragon pendulum came from the circle where I was practicing.

These tools are dear and have meaning to me, and that meaning makes them even more effective in my hands. For me, none could be better.

Wand

A wand is used to project and direct energy to a specific area, object, person, or even dimension. It can be used for tasks like stirring a cauldron if its construction allows this. In some traditions, it is used in calling the God and the Goddess to join a ritual.



Wand

Although traditional wands are made of wood, you can find wands today in a variety of materials. The ancient Druids held woods sacred and tools from wood were considered to carry the spirit of nature. It is not suggested that wood from

a living tree be cut to make a wand. A piece of fallen wood is much more appropriate as it can be considered a gift from divinity.

There are few rules about the size of the wand. Some Wiccans believe wands should be the length of a persons forearm and hand, but in general wands commonly range from as little as 10 inches up to 3 feet in length. Some people like to hold a wand that is more massive because they feel more powerful. It is equally acceptable to use a wand that is compact and lightweight. In my opinion the wand should be of a length and weight that feels comfortable.

A wand can be as ornamental or as plain as desired. Anything from a wand fabricated of sterling silver and encrusted with gems to a piece of tree branch still covered in bark is acceptable for use. Each will serve well if the person wielding the wand is comfortable with it. The only real concern is that it feels comfortable and right to you.

Athame & Sword

The athame is used for directing and manipulating energy within a ritual. The wand and the athame are basically

interchangeable in this function. The preference is practitioner's unless specified by tradition.



The athame is a double-edged knife with a black or dark handle. The handle and blade are sometimes engraved with magickal symbols. The athame's blade is commonly left dull because it is never actually used for cutting, at least nothing on the physical plane.

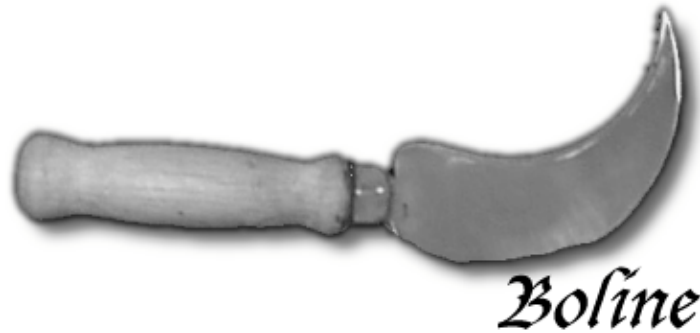
It is common for shops to sell knives for magickal use, which are not athames but called athames anyway. This is acceptable to many, but some traditions are quite strict on what is and is not an athame. The athame pictured in this section is a reasonable example of an athame that would be acceptable in most circles.

Some covens use a sword in place of the athame in specific segments of group ritual because such use is customary in their tradition, usually by the High Priest.

Word of Caution: If you use an athame or sword in an outdoor public setting, you are taking the risk of being arrested, fined or at the very least your prized sword or athame can be confiscated. The law usually regards these items as lethal weapons not as ritual tools.

Boline

The boline is a white handled knife, which clearly distinguishes it from the black handled athame. In many cases the blade has a distinct curved shape.



It is a simple working knife used in ritual or ritual preparation for tasks like cutting herbs from a garden, inscribing candles, cutting cords, etc. Even though its ritual use does include it as a tool for cutting, it is not to be used for mundane purposes as opening mail, cleaning fingernails, as a spare screwdriver, etc. ;-)

Besom

A besom (ritual broom) is used in Wicca for the preparation of magickal space. The magickal significance of a besom is twofold. First, as a



magickal tool directing energy for cleaning, and second in the heritage of ancient Druidic regard for the woods from which a traditional besom is made.

In Wicca, the besom is used to clear the negativity and residual energy from space being prepared as sacred. The sweeping of ritual space is not to clear debris in the physical environment. The besom does not even have to touch the ground at all. The sweeping motion in the air combined with visualization clears the negative energies lingering from the mundane world.

The traditional besom has many legends associated with it. It is said to have been used in fertility rituals where it was ridden hobbyhorse style through the crops. It is also said to have been used in handfasting ceremonies promoting fertility in a newly wed couple.

Besoms are commonly made using an ash staff, birch twigs and willow binding. The ash wood serves to protect, the birch is for purifying and the willow is sacred and holy to the Goddess.



Cutting a branch from a living tree for one time use as a besom is not suggested. Wiccans regard nature and harming a tree is against the Wiccan way. Using a branch already fallen or an alternative such a store bought besom or even a common broom saved for this special purpose is preferable.

Chalice

A chalice is a long stemmed cup used to share wine during a ritual, and used during ritual. Chalice are made from a variety of materials including, wood, brass, silver and glass and can range from plain to ornamental.



Chalice

The chalice represents the Goddess and fertility. It is essentially the symbol for the "womb" of nature. In ritual, the chalice represents the female and the athame the male. The symbolic lowering of the athame into the chalice during the symbolic Great Rite represents the God and Goddess in divine union.

Bell

The bell is another ritual tool representing the Goddess and can be used to invoke the Goddess during a ritual. It can also used to evoke positive energies, other gods, spirits, and the quarters.

Cauldron

The cauldron, like the chalice and bell, is also symbolic of the Goddess. In Wicca, when a cauldron is used it is often central to the ritual, usually linked with fertility or transformation.



Cauldron

Some of the lore of the cauldron is based on the legend of Kerridwen's cauldron. Kerridwen is a goddess from the Celtic pantheon. The story begins where Kerridwen bore a son who was the ugliest and most rotten tempered man in the world. She wanted to fix this by brewing a potion to transform him into the

Maiden Moon

wisest man in the world. To do so she brewed a potion for a year and a day (a period still recognized as significant in Wiccan practice). At the end of that time, there were three highly concentrated drops left. Kerridwen hired a boy to stir the potion and a man to stoke the flames. On the very day that the potion was ready, the 3 drops splashed out onto the boy's fingers. The boy fled knowing that Kerridwen would be very angry. Kerridwen took after him in pursuit. During the chase, both the boy and Kerridwen changed into several animals. When Kerridwen finally caught up with the boy, she ate him and became pregnant. She had planned to kill the child but when he was born, he was the most beautiful boy she had ever seen, so she kept him and he grew to be Taliesin the Bard, one of the most inspired poets. As you can see, throughout the story, the concept of magical transformation (the symbology of the cauldron) is prevalent from beginning to end.

Cauldrons are usually made of iron and stand on three legs with the opening of the vessel being smaller than the inside. You can find cauldrons in a wide range of sizes from the very small altar top varieties to gigantic pots big enough for headhunters to cook a few explorers in.

Crystal Ball

While many forms of divination tools have been used, the crystal ball has been the longest surviving. When used for divinatory purposes, the practitioner gazes into the ball and pictures are perceived either inside the ball itself or in the mind's eye of the crystal gazer.

When used in Wiccan ritual, the crystal is placed on the altar to represent the Goddess. Some Wiccans use the ball during the ritual for scrying but it can also be used to store energy raised from the ritual. The crystal ball is often at the center of full moon rituals where it represents the Goddess in Mother form.

Of all the tools, the crystal ball is often considered as one of the hardest to charge magickally. Many recommend that the crystal be exposed to moonlight to increase its charge after cleansing in a saltwater bath. This is seen as aligning the crystal and filling it with energy from the Goddess.

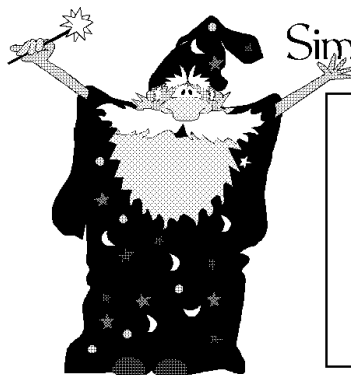
Incense & Censer

Incense is an aromatic, available in several different forms, that is burned to produce fragrant smoke. Many altars use the granulated incense burned on charcoal. However, cones or sticks are quite common as well.



Censer is the name for a vessel that holds the burning incense. Censers range from the ornate bulbous hanging censers used in the Catholic church or as simple as a glass ashtray.

In Wicca, the most common use of incense is as an aid to creating magickal space during ritual. The smoke from the incense is a visual reminder while the fragrance helps set the mood toward a more spiritual plane.



Simon says...

Use your own creativity to determine which incenses work best for you.

The goal is to aid concentration and enhance the focus of ritual.

Altar Tile

The altar tile¹ (also called a pentacle) is used on a Wiccan altar as a focal point for ritual work. It is commonly made of metal, wood, or clay stoneware. The tile itself is usually inscribed with the pentagram (five-pointed star) and sometimes with other symbols.



Altar Tile

The star symbol represents the four elements of earth, air, fire, water and a fifth element of spirit, as represented by the Goddess and God. The tile is positioned with the spirit tip pointing up to signify that the spirit rules over the elements.

Your Tools

You will need to be familiar with your tools and use them often in order to get to know them. Cleanse them and charge them with your energy. They will bond to you as you bond to them. It is ideal for the use of tools to become second nature to you. In time they will fit you and you them.

While finding your tools can take a lot of time, effort, and sometimes money, it can also be a very significant experience. Many teachers will judge you by your relationship with your tools. It is often used as a test to see how serious a person is and how deep his or her interest and dedication runs.

¹ The term Paten is occasionally used when referring to an altar tile. I personally am unsure of the implications of this usage and tend to avoid it because the origin appears to be Catholicism.

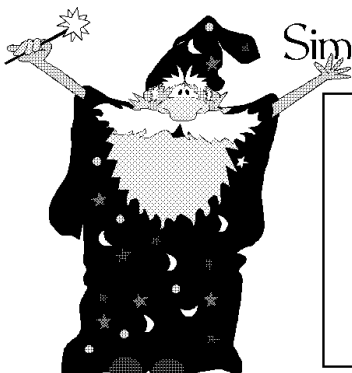
As you collect your tools, you can prepare them for ritual use. Tools should be stripped of all associations and energies unless you are 100% positive the energies that came with the tool fit you and your intended usage. Cleansing a tool can be done by infusing it with your own energy, by allowing the tool to be washed in moonlight, by burying the tool in earth, or by cleansing it with consecrated salt water.

Clothing

The choice of what to wear for ritual varies quite a bit by individual and the traditions. In Orthodox traditions, ritual nudity called worshipping “skyclad” was the accepted norm, but many now worked robed also. Some Reformed traditions express that robes lend a formality to ritual. Some Wiccans feel robes are excessive and unnatural for ritual and consider it acceptable to work ritual in street clothing.

Ritual robes are available in many styles ranging from simple smock designs to fully hooded robes with or without billowing sleeves. Robe color can be chosen based on the magickal work you are doing, by the elemental color you find yourself aligned with, or it is sometimes specified by a circle’s tradition. The most common robe color by far is basic black sometimes with a lining of another color.

This brings us to the topic of skyclad practice. The most common reason for practicing skyclad is that of being totally exposed and in connection with nature. Others feel that the wearing of any clothing impedes magickal abilities. The practice of skyclad is more common among solitaries than in coven environments. In general the Wiccan community tends to downplay skyclad practice because it tends to be misunderstood and draws ‘curiosity’ guests.



Simon says...

Skyclad practiced indoors is a curious contradiction and is jokingly referred to as practicing “houseclad”.

Still as with almost all aspects of Wiccan practice, it is considered a personal decision.

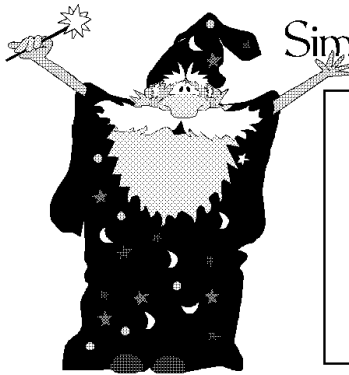
Word of Caution: Skyclad coven practice is uncommon except in Orthodox Traditional circles. It is extremely uncommon for such a circle to invite casual

guests or visitors let alone require them to be naked. Realistic skepticism is suggested if you are invited to a skyclad circle.

Robes, street clothes, hoods or no hoods, sleeves or no sleeves, or even no clothing at all, whatever you decide, it should be appropriate to both you and the circle you practice in.

Jewelry

Jewelry worn for ritual shares many of the same aspects as clothing. In general, it should fit you, your tradition, and your circle. Many people select jewelry with Wiccan symbols such as the pentacle and triple moons. Designs with celestial symbols like sun, moon, stars, comets and spirals are also quite common. Another aspect of jewelry is many believe that wearing jewelry with stones or magickal symbols can be beneficial in magickal practice or ritual.



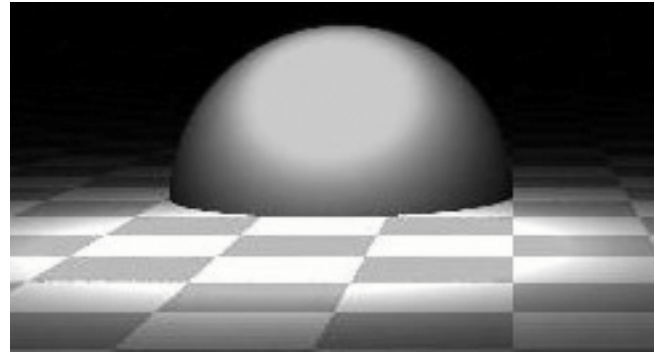
Simon says...

In some Wiccan traditions, certain jewelry is to be worn only if the right to wear it has been earned. Showing up as a guest at ritual wearing a High Priestess's crescent moon crown is not likely to be well accepted.

Circle & Altar Layout

Ritual in Wicca is practiced in an area of magickally created sacred space called a circle. The circle serves both to keep the unwanted energies outside and the desirable inside. The shape of the magickal space is actually that of a sphere. The intersection of the sphere and the earth or floor is in the shape of a circle, which is how it gets its name.

If this is hard to imagine here is a rendered image of what a ritual circle would like from the outside.

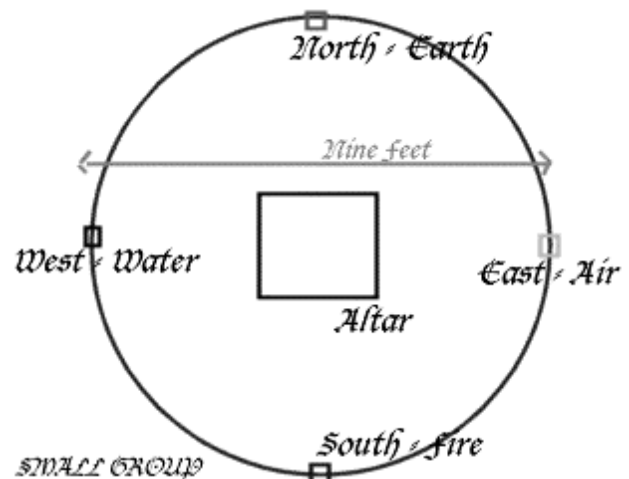


Circles are created by a technique called 'casting', which will be covered in a later section.

The layout or arrangement of items inside a circle largely depends on the tradition practiced, whether the location for circle is indoors or outdoors, how much room is available, and how many people will be working in the circle.

Circle Layout Small Groups

For a small group meeting indoors the typical circle is 9 feet in diameter with an altar in the center. This size circle is quite comfortable for four to six people, however with more than six it can be quite cramped. It is common for the altar itself to be round or square, but it is almost always quite small to save floor space.



In this type of a layout, the quarter candles on the floor are easily kicked, especially when working in dim lighting. Setting them on small tray tables is probably a bit safer. A common variation of this layout is to place the corner candles on the altar aligned with the appropriate directions. If space permits, having a larger circle can make moving around a lot easier.

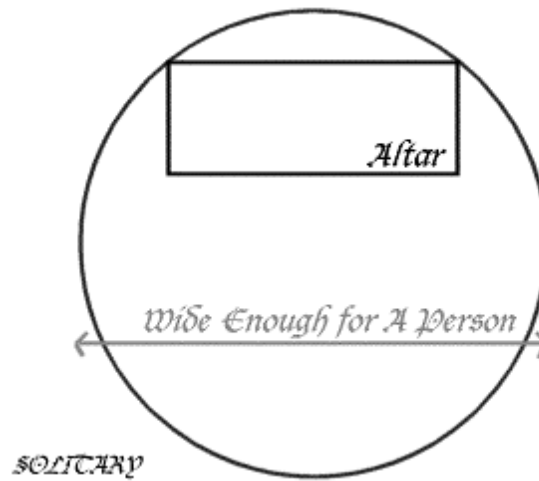
Maiden Moon

Note: One curiosity was brought to my attention while this book was being reviewed. A nine-foot circle has a radius of four and a half feet. An average height man or woman standing even in the very center where the sphere is tallest would actually have their head sticking out of the top of the circle. hmmm... Feel free to adjust the visualization as needed, or perhaps practice with very short people. :-)

Circle Layout Solitary

There are many ways to setup a circle for solitary practice. Some use the identical layout as small groups, which provides plenty of room for movement and fits easily in an average sized living room.

An alternative layout is to omit the quarter candles and place the altar to the north. This is space efficient and handy for those who wish to keep a permanent altar setup but do not dedicate a room as temple.

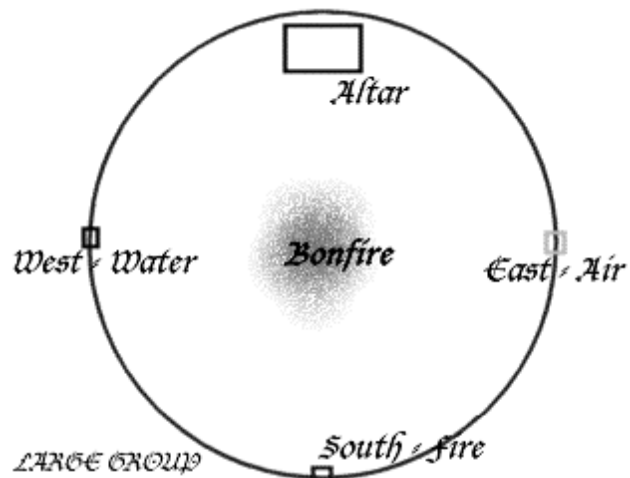


Working in such a small area can hinder the visualization of the sphere of magickal space. I worked with a layout like this in a rather cramped apartment a few years back. It felt odd visualizing my circle extending into the neighboring apartments. My alternative visualization that I was standing in a cone wide at the floor and pointed at the ceiling. This left little room for movement but it did quell the feeling that my private magickal space was being intruded.

Circle Layout Large Groups

For a large group practicing outdoors, it is common to have a bonfire¹ in the center of the circle and an altar to the North. The North quarter candle can go on the altar with the other quarter candles either on the ground or on surfaces placed in alignment with the directions.

I have seen circles setup this way that are 40 feet or more in diameter. Using a circle this large for a small group may sound excessive but is very comfortable.



¹ also called a bale fire

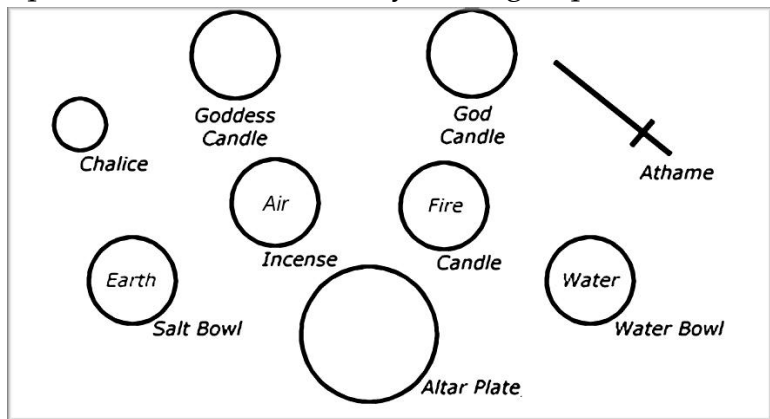
Altar Tools & Layout

With the diversity in Wicca, items needed in circle range from nothing at all to an elaborate setup of tools, props and regalia. As with most aspects of Wicca, Orthodox Traditional tends to be the most formal in circle setup, Reformed Traditional perhaps a bit less and in Eclectic, it is a matter of choice.

The most common altar tools are the Goddess and God candles, incense, an altar plate, an athame and a chalice. As mentioned earlier, some altars also include the quarter candles.

Here is an example of an altar layout that would commonly be used with an altar off to the north. This layout puts the four Elements at your fingertips each with the appropriate symbology.

The chalice and athame are positioned in appropriate alignment with the Goddess and God candles.



The Goddess and God candles are set to the rear of the altar with nothing behind them. This is ideal because you never have to reach over their candles and endanger catching your robe or sleeves on fire.

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The Elements

There are magickal forces other than the Goddess and God. These forces representing the forces of nature are called 'the Elements'.

Element	Direction	Human	Magick
Earth	North	stability	grounding
Air	East	thought	change
Fire	South	strength	energy
Water	West	emotion	cleansing

In Wicca, each of the Elements is aligned in direction, human influence, and magickal influence. In Wiccan ritual, their application varies depending on tradition or the magickal system in use.

When called (summoned) in circle they:

- coexist inside the circle as spiritual representatives of the forces of nature
- feed the circle as a source of a source of energy
- stand guard protecting the circle from outside forces



Dragon Tradition Wicca

In Dragon Tradition, everyone is welcome to establish his or her own connection with the elements during coven ritual. It is not uncommon to have each of the quarters called or aligned with four or five times.

Direction

Directional alignment is significant in ritual. Based on which corner of the circle you are in; you will be in an area influenced by the associated element. This is far more than symbology. Once you are comfortable with sensing natural energy you can walk a fully cast circle with the quarters called and actually feel the energies shift as you move from quarter to quarter.

Human Influence

With the spiritual presence of the element or perhaps the energy that each element brings to the circle¹, each quarter has an influence on a person's state of mind. Meditation in that field of influence is a useful technique in harnessing that influence. For example, if an emotional situation is troubling you and you are having difficulty identifying it then spending time meditating in the West quarter can usually bring it to the surface. The other quarters work in a similar fashion enhancing stability, thought, and strength.

Magickal Influence

In much the same way as each quarter has a field of human influence; the quarters also have an influence on magickal practice. An example of this is drawing energy in the South quarter. In a fully cast and called circle approach the south. Show regard for the element of fire, I do this by bowing gently, and start drawing energy. I do this by inhaling slowly with visualization of drawing in yellow orange flame and being aware of the sensation of my inner self being charged.

The reverse applies at the North quarter. If overcharged or perhaps charged with negativity, slowly drain it off to the element of Earth. Careful though, if overdone this can leave you pitifully exhausted. The other two quarters are useful magickally as well. The West is an ideal place to work magick for cleansing, with the East being ideal to work magick to influence change.

The Elements & You

As you develop your own skills and wisdom you will also develop your own rapport with the Elements as well as your own techniques in relating with them.

I think of them as real world spirits, almost like genderless terrestrial element gods. In a circle, the Goddess and God are at the center and standing at each of the quarters is the god of Earth, the god of Air, the god of Fire and the god of Water. Now that is a powerful circle!

¹ depending on how you treat the role of the elements

Ritual

The literal definition of ritual is 'a religious ceremony with a prescribed order of events'. In Wicca, it refers to our formal religious practice. Rituals range from simple solitary practices to elaborate coven ceremonies.

In the practice of Wicca, anything can be a ritual. Even mundane tasks can be ritualized to increase their spiritual significance. The common denominator of ritual is the use of magick, usually within sacred space, with a specific intent or purpose.

Communing with Divinity

In most cases the process of ritual involves communing with divinity. While this may sound obvious, I would like to explain it in more detail. The communing with divinity is often understated by teachers or misunderstood by students.

Here is an example that may help you understand this. Let us say you have a close friend named Lisa. She is the kind of person you simply enjoy being with. You can call Lisa on the telephone, but you find it more personally satisfying to have her come over to your place and visit. When the two of you visit, you and she talk, relate, and enjoy sharing in each other's energies. During the visit, the two of you share a real world, right there with you, connection with each other.

Ritual in Wicca is very much like you and Lisa hanging out together and sharing personal time, except that in ritual you are sharing personal time with divinity. I am talking about a real world physical hanging out with the Goddess, the God, or possibly others. This may sound bizarre, but yes, I am talking about literally hanging out with divine spirits in a real world environment, perhaps right in your own living room.

The best way I have found to describe this is by comparing it with prayer. In prayer a person establishes a psychic connection with divinity and communicates with divinity through that connection. Prayer is kind of like calling the Goddess or God on the telephone. Prayer is contact with divinity, but it is not nearly as fulfilling as hanging out in person. During ritual, the communication with divinity is up close and personal. You are literally inviting divinity to come to where you are and hang out with you in person.

So how does one invite divinity to come visit? That is where the procedures of ritual get involved. What I am going to teach you is how to create a magickal space and invite divinity to come and hang out with you. Keep in mind that

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very few Wiccans do ritual the same way. Solitary and coven rituals are often quite different, and in many cases, the individual traditions have specific procedures on how ritual is to be performed.

In Orthodox traditions and some Reformed traditions the procedures for ritual are often laid down in extreme detail. "Stand here, do this, say this" is quite common. In those traditions, you do it their way, because that is the way it is done. In some Reformed traditions the procedure used to do ritual is extremely flexible. They teach that any ritual can work if it fits you personally. In those traditions, the emphasis is on developing the magickal skills involved and producing the desired results.

This leads to an obvious question of why do ritual? I am sure there are numerous reasons, but I have narrowed it down to four that are most common:

- Magick Ritual - the working of magick
- Worship Ritual - to honor the Goddess, God or other deity
- Sabbat Ritual - to celebrate a Sabbat
- Personal Ritual - for personal satisfaction (hanging out)

In many cases, especially in a coven environment, these are combined. It is common to have rituals that include all four.

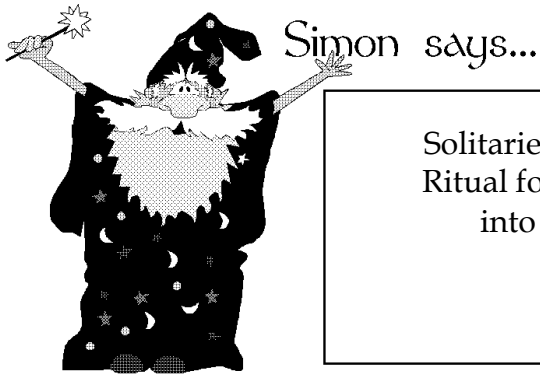
For practical purposes there is no way I can cover coven ritual in this book. The traditions have varied procedures on doing ritual, and a detail on Gardnerian coven ritual is enough material for a book in itself.

Solitary Ritual

What I describe here is a guideline on Solitary ritual. It covers most of the common aspects of ritual and is similar to Dragon Tradition coven ritual. Please do not treat this as a word by word statement on how ritual must be done. That is not my intention at all. This is a guide. The best way to learn ritual is by doing. Start simple and go from there.

Basic Steps of Ritual

- Getting Setup
- Personal Preparation
- Creation of Magickal Space
- Welcome the Magickal Ones
- Align with the Esbat or Sabbat (if any)
- Personal Magick
- Cakes and Ale
- Return of the Space



Solitaires enjoy a great deal of freedom in practice. Ritual for a solitary could be something like hiking into the woods, finding a comfortable tree, and working personal meditation.

I. Getting Setup

I suggest taking the time to set up ritual space before doing anything else. While this may seem a bit odd, it is helpful. I for one hate going through the effort of personal preparation only to lose my focus by running all over the house to find whatever I am missing¹. For me, walking into the ritual space should be like climbing into a clean bed after showering. All laid out and ready to get comfortable in.

II. Personal Preparation

Once you have the circle setup, the next step is personal preparation. This helps you enter ritual clean, dressed, and in the right state of mind. While clean and dressed are obvious, preparing your mindset is important as well. When you enter ritual, you will be carrying your own personal energy into the circle. As such, it needs to be prepared. Trying to work magick in a cluttered, frenzied, or negative state of mind will only muddle or distort your efforts. Take the time to ground and center (earth any negative energy and find a calm state of mind) before beginning.

III. Creation of Magickal Space

The creation of magickal space can be done in three steps, cleansing, casting, and sanctifying.

The purpose of cleansing is to remove lingering energies from the area. Often the only room large enough for circle is the living room, which tends to be the hot spot for daily life in a household. Activity in a physical area leaves residual energy in the area. Cleansing the area of this energy is kind of like tidying up before company arrives.

Start by putting a pinch of salt into the water bowl and stirring with the athame. Visualize the salt destroying any impurities in the water and you charging (pushing natural energy from you) the water through the athame. Then a make

¹ For me there is always something missing. Most days I am lucky if I can find my shoes, let alone remember where I set down my incense.

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clockwise walk of the circle gently sprinkling drops of water at the perimeter with your fingertips. This consecrates the circle as pure and clean. It does not take a lot of water, the intent is not to kill bacteria with the salt water, this is a magickal cleansing.

An alternative to the salt water is the use of smoldering sage to cleanse and purify the area. This can be done by lighting a sage smudge at one end, allowing it to burn for a few seconds, then blowing it out so the fire is reduced to a glowing smolder. The smoke of the smudge is dispersed into the air in a clockwise walk of the perimeter of the circle.

Casting the circle is the process of constructing a magickal bubble around the space that has just been cleansed. Casting is also done during a clockwise walk of the circle. With your athame pointed at the perimeter of the circle, direct a stream of energy that reflects off the floor and builds the magickal structure around you.

Sanctifying the circle may be something peculiar to my personal practice. I seldom, if ever, see it referenced in books on Wicca. I do it because it has meaning to me and well, because it just feels like the right thing to do. For me a cleansed, cast circle just is not quite finished without adding a touch of magick to the air with incense (I personally use stick but a censer is appropriate also). A clockwise walk of the circle with incense shifts the entire area enclosed by the circle to magickal. This marks completion of the creation of magickal space.

IV. Welcome the Magickal Ones

Now that the space is prepared it is time to invite your guests. The magickal ones are the Elements (deity personifications of the forces of nature), the Goddess, the God, and optionally any personal gods. The process of inviting them is often referred to as 'calling'.

The first to be called are the Elements, located at the quarters. The quarters are usually called in the order: East, South, West, then North. How you call them either is a personal preference or it may be dictated by your tradition. Here is an example:

Face East and say "Yae to the guardian of the East, join me and charge this area with the wisdom and energy of Air". This can be done in combination with lighting the quarter candle if your circle is setup that way. Some Wiccans draw an invoking pentagram with an athame while calling quarters¹.

¹ I have mixed feelings on the use of an athame while calling quarters. I am aware that this practice is traditional but I, for one, am not sure I would meet a guest at my front door with an exposed blade.

This process is then repeated for the remaining quarters using the appropriate elemental alignment. It is not necessary to use the same calling phrase at each quarter. I just explain it this way because it makes it easier to remember.

I have noticed a trend where people 'calling the quarters' are often just going through the motions or treating the process entirely as symbology. **This is not symbology**, nor are these just words to be said. You should believe that you are doing **the magickal act of summoning a spirit**. If you do not believe in magick, you will seldom do magick.

Also keep in mind, the reason you call a quarter is that you expect a response. The response can be an awareness of a shift in the energy or an empathic sense of a tangible spirit in close presence. This does not always happen on the first try especially if you are new to magick. Even experienced practitioners have trouble with certain elements not responding¹.

If you are unsure that quarter has responded, it is acceptable to ask. Telepathically project a request that the element cause the candle to flicker. It sometimes takes a few seconds to get a response and then the candle flickers. If it does not flicker, it is okay to call the quarter again.

The next two steps are calling the Goddess and the God. The process of calling the Goddess and God is similar to calling a quarter and the intent much the same. It is seen as a personal request to join in the circle and an honor that they do so.

There is little agreement on the order in which this is to be done. To some, she is called last out of respect, to others she is called before the God. Your choice is up to you or your tradition.

The actual method of calling the Goddess that I use is not a summoning. To me the Goddess is all and everywhere and to summon her is a contradiction of my beliefs. I simply light the Goddess candle in her honor and say "Welcome M'Lady". Nor do I summon the God, for he too is all and everywhere. The God candle is lit with a respectful "Welcome M'Lord".

The shift in energy on welcoming the Goddess and God is unmistakable. It can be so profound that the reactions of those who are empathic borderlines on funny. To be aware of the shift, it is important to keep an open mind, a closed mind will refuse to acknowledge feeling anything it does not want to feel.

¹ Sometimes I have a difficult time getting a response from Air and on occasion have to call three or four times.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

In Dragon Tradition, the personal gods (gods or goddesses which a person regards on their own behalf) are called at this time, with candles if desired.

V. Align with the Esbat or Sabbat (if any)

If the ritual is to include aligning with an Esbat¹ or Sabbat² it can be done at this time. The observance of an Esbat or Sabbat varies based on the associated customs. I obviously would not do the same thing at Samhain as I would on Imbolc. The chapters on Esbats and Sabbats go into more detail. Also, do not hesitate to look for other sources of information. There is a great deal of associated lore on the Sabbats and Esbats, both historical and recent.

VI. Personal Magick

Personal Magick is magick done inside of ritual space but not necessarily related to religious practice of Wicca. This is time to do magick either for yourself or for another if you have permission to do so. It is also common to spend part of this time working meditation. The meditative aspect provides time for communion, reflection, and untangling of the confusion of day to day life.

When working magick inside of ritual, one thing to keep in mind is that you have the resources of the Elements, Goddess, and God with you. You can put this to good use and increase the effectiveness of your magick³. For example, if you are working candle magick light the charged candle from the Goddess candle asking that she bless your spell.

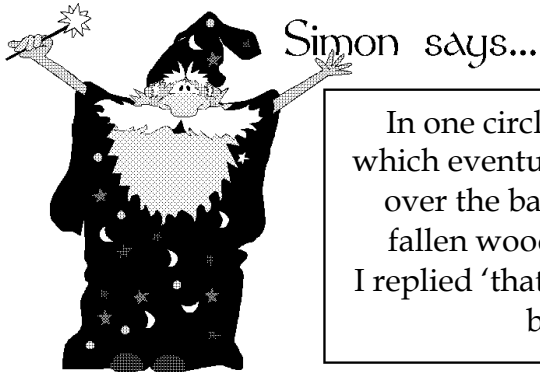
VI. Cakes and Ale

Cakes and Ale marks the end of formalities and a shift back from the headiness of magickal work. In coven practice, this can be a time of socialization. In solitary practice, it serves as a time for grounding. The name Cakes and Ale may seem a bit odd. It does not mean Twinkies and Budweiser. Wine from the chalice and crescent moon shaped cookies are common. If outdoors, a spill of the wine on the ground is common in thanks for the food and fits with the spirit of sharing with your guests.

¹ traditions honored at full moons

² the 8 seasonal festivals

³ if that feels right to you



In one circle, we got a little carried away at Cakes & Ale which eventually included sandwiches and hot dogs roasted over the bale fire. One night I was crafting a wand from fallen wood and someone mistook it for a hot dog stick. I replied 'that's not my hot dog stick, that's my wand' which became a running joke in the coven.

VII. Return of the Space

At the end of ritual, space is returned to normal by

- dousing the incense
- thanking the Goddess and God and snuffing their candles
- thanking the Elements and snuffing their candles

In some practices, the circle is deconstructed and the energy collected, which is then either grounded or stored. Others leave the circle up all the time, simply reinforcing it as needed. I for one consider it unplugged once the ritual is over and that the energy will simply dissipate on its own.

This has been an overview of a minimal but realistic ritual for a solitary. My advice is to keep things simple at first while you get comfortable with the basics. From there, you will probably find that one of two things happen. Either you will desire more formality in ritual or perhaps you will find your rituals growing more informal. Both are acceptable. Your ritual should feel right to you. Everything else is just window dressing.

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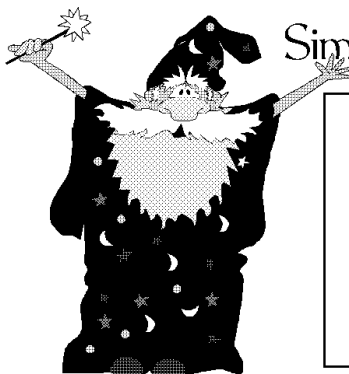
Great Rite

A common central element of Wiccan ritual is the Great Rite. The spelling of the word rite is significant. It is not right, as in right and wrong, or right and left. It is rite as in ritual. The greatest of all Wiccan rituals honors the union and fertility of the Goddess and the God.

The ritual practice of the Great Rite has changed significantly during the evolution of Wicca. While the original practice of Great Rite is appropriate for a heavily nature oriented religion, it became a source of controversy primarily due to negative publicity.

In the ritual of some Orthodox traditions the High Priestess would invoke (call into her) the Goddess and the High Priest would invoke the God, then the High Priest would physically join with the High Priestess. It was seen as a way to honor the divine creation of life. In most cases,¹ this was rarely if ever done with the rest of the Coven present.

In Reformed traditions the practice of physical joining of the High Priestess and High Priest is seldom done. It has been replaced with a symbolic joining of the Goddess and the God using a chalice (stemmed cup) and an Athame (ceremonial knife). The ritual still honors the divine creation with some finding it more appropriate than the earlier practice



Simon says...

Myths of modern coven orgies are largely unfounded.

Such practice is virtually unheard of.

If you would desire to do some research on your own, may I suggest that you look into the past and present practices of the Great Rite. Is the physical joining of High Priestess and High Priest inappropriate or unethical? If so, why and based on whose standards? Is there any aspect of Wiccan teaching that sees a physical Great Rite as being unacceptable? I am not suggesting that there are

¹ from what I have been told and read in my studies

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right or wrong answers to the above questions. What I do suggest is that you not accept anyone else's conclusion, but rather reach your own.

Rituals at Life Events

Because Wiccan practice tends to be mostly solitary, it is quite often a “me” oriented religion. However, there are times when the “us” aspect of it comes into play. The gathering of a the spiritual family in the form of a coven or group meeting in honor or celebration of an individual is called a Life Event Ritual.

There are many parallels between these gatherings and life even gathering in Christianity, but there are a few differences as well.

Common Life Event Rituals include:

- Birthing
- Wiccaning
- Saining
- Puberty (Rite of Womanhood or Manhood)
- Handfasting or Wedding
- Croning
- Passing or Passing Over

Birthing

I have no personal experience regarding the ritual of Birthing. It does appear in a couple of the reference books but the details are sketchy and contradictory. I will have to defer comment until I have more information.

Wiccaning

Wiccaning based on my experience is somewhat controversial. Some consider the ritual applying to the parents promising that they will raise the child in the Wiccan path. Others consider it as a blessing of the child by the Goddess and God (similar to a saining), or simply of a presentation of the child to the Goddess and God for viewing. Where the controversy lies is that some consider a Wiccaning to be the entrance of the child into the Craft. That has obvious free-will implications.

Saining

A saining ritual is a blessing ritual of a child by the Goddess and God, which is also one definition of a Wiccaning. Personally, I am not fond of the term because it appears to have been borrowed from Catholicism, but I am not 100% sure of that. The term is based on the Latin ‘signare’ which is to mark.

Puberty (Rite of Womanhood or Manhood)

I have to defer comment on the ritual regarding puberty as well. It would appear to be the transition into womanhood or manhood, but I have no personal experience with this.

Handfasting or Wedding

A wedding is the legally binding ceremony of marriage, which is also often termed a handfasting. In some beliefs there is another type of handfasting which binds the couple for a period, usually a year and a day, but is not synonymous with a legally binding marriage.

Croning

Croning marks the passing of a person into 'elder' status. This is not (necessarily) an indication of rank inside a coven or Wiccan church in that many church Elders are not of the age to be croned. I have seen it described that croning is limited to women who are post-menopausal, normally between 50 to 56, but I see no reason why it could not also a mark man's passing into 'elder' status.

Passing or Passing Over

Although a Passing Over ritual may parallel a Christian funeral as an event, it does not mark the welcoming of the individual into heaven. It is seen as a passing between worlds, a step to the in-between stages of incarnation.

Magick

Magick is the craft of exerting the nonphysical force of will harmonized with natural energy to cause change. The term Magick is spelled with the trailing “k” to differentiate it from stage magic in which an illusionist appears to do the impossible¹.

So where does Magick fit into Wicca? Before I answer this, let's talk about the relationship between magick and religions in general. Magick and religions go hand in hand. When a Catholic Priest gives communion he is calling on God to change the wine to the blood of Christ, and the bread to his body. When a Christian prays to God with a need, they are asking their God to do magick for them. In Christianity, Magick is reserved for the Priests and God.

In Wicca, there is no such restriction on the use of magick. We have the abilities of the divine within us. We are free to use those abilities providing we comply with the Wiccan Rede and respect the Law of Threefold Return.

There is a line from a song² “You see magick in your god, we see magick everywhere”. To a Wiccan all of nature is magickal, and we consider ourselves part of nature.

The religious use of Magick in Wicca is primarily as a tool to worship or achieve a connection with divinity. The secular (non-religious) uses for Magick are virtually limitless.

Magick is a tool, and quite powerful a one. Used wisely it can improve your life and help those around you. Used carelessly, even with good intent, it can have disastrous results. I would not give a chain saw to a five-year-old because they do not understand the power, danger, and responsibility of operating one. Magick is very much the same. Used responsibly, the results of magick can be very beneficial.

How do I do Magick?

When first getting involved in Wicca, many people are fascinated by magick. I am sure the fact that magick is empowering is part of the appeal of Wicca and rightfully so. However, it is important for them to understand that magick is only one aspect of Wiccan practice.

¹ The spelling of magick with the trailing K is often credited to Aleister Crowley.

² Dar Williams Christians and The Pagans from the CD Moral City (1996)

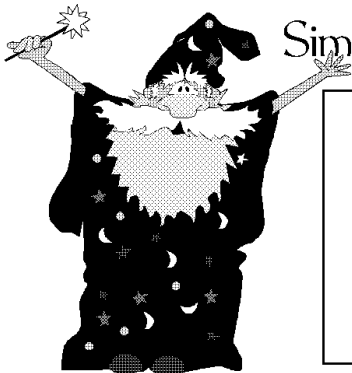
How do I do magick? That is a common question, but the key to learning is actually “How does magick work?” Once understood, the actual ‘how-to’ of magick is easy.



Dragon Tradition Wicca

There is an extensive section of the Dragon Tradition Book of Shadows, which is dedicated to the theory of magickal practice and how it relates to the mind and spirit.

Wicca considers humans to be part of nature, and nature to be magickal. For clarity let me explain that magickal means “with aspects beyond the explanation of science”. Wicca considers humans to have abilities that are magickal. These abilities are not super-natural because they are naturally occurring.



Simon says...

One of my favorite lines to explain the relationship between magick and nature is:

‘Plastic is super-natural, magick is not.’

So how does magick work? Science does not know. If science could explain the abilities that we now consider magickal, then they would no longer be magickal; they would be known to science. While no one knows exactly, there are theories about the different types of abilities and how each works. What I will be sharing with you are the theories that I am familiar with, all commonly used in Wiccan practice.

There are three types of magick common in Wicca:

- Psychological Magick is magick ranging from empathy to divination.
- Divine Magick is magick done by a deity in response to a request.
- Energy Magick is the ability to sense and manipulate the natural energy of the universe.

The different types of magick often overlap quite a bit, but it is usually easy to determine which family a specific magickal technique is from. The three types of magick naturally separate regarding the theory on “how” the magick is performed, so I am detailing them individually in the next chapters.

Other Magicks

There are several areas of magick not detailed in this book, but I would like to touch on two briefly.

Astral Projection and Ethereal Travel are both well beyond the scope of this book. They represent the separation of the spiritual self (away from the physical body) which travels either through normal dimensions or to planes of existence unproven by science.

Divination is a mix of Psychical and Divine magick where the magickian opens to intuition and foretells potential future events or unknown information. Divination is done through various techniques, some a mix of methodical and psychical with others being primarily psychical. Popular forms include Tarot, Scrying, Runes, and Astrology. Many Wiccans place a great deal of emphasis on the practice of divination.

Magick & Wicca

What I am presenting here should be enough to give you a general overview of magickal abilities, at least from a common Wiccan perspective. The only aspect of magick significant to the religious practice of Wicca is Psychical Magick used as connection with divinity. That connection enables you to develop your spiritual relationship with divinity itself. How you do this, be it through prayer, ritual or meditation is your choosing. If your interest in magick exceeds relationship with divinity, then so be it. The Wiccan way is to treat magick as an action and to use it ethically.

Magickal Power the Narcotic

One aspect that is seldom taught to students is how becoming magickally empowered can affect who you are as a person. A person unprepared for what may come can do damage to him or herself without realizing what is happening.

The process of becoming in tune and magickally powered can have almost narcotic effects on a person. The flush of energy is beyond description. In some cases people lose control and act irresponsibly. It can lead to a big head, extreme arrogance, delusions, and loss of touch with reality.

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Did you ever see the movie *The Ninth Gate*¹? In this film, a character name Boris Balkan (Frank Langella) sends Dean Corso (Johnny Depp) on a quest to recover pages from a series of ancient books which Balkan feels will allow him to summon the Devil incarnate. In the film, the way Balkan loses touch with reality is very similar to what can happen in Wiccan magickal practice².

Power from magick is like a narcotic. It consumes some people. Nice people in magickal growth sometimes become judgmental as the people around them begin to appear as inferiors.

Another thing that happens is 'Authority Syndrome'. It is common for a person to hit a moderate level of practice and start jamming their own personal truths as gospel onto others. This is not easy to avoid if one is unaware that it is happening. If you ever hear yourself telling others that there is only one way to do something and any other way will not work, that is your personal warning.

There is also a tendency to lose touch with reality during periods of spiritual growth.

Here is a quote that I like:

**"Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away". --
Philip K. Dick**

My suggestion is, if your beliefs start becoming as real to you as the rest of reality, then it is time to take a break. If you ever feel that you are getting overwhelmed in your practices set them aside for a while and do something totally unrelated.

¹ Artisan Entertainment, 1999 - Comment for reference purposes only, no association is implied.

² This is not limited to Wicca, it happens in any type of empowering magickal practice.

Psychical Magick

The textbook definition is that psychical refers to communication or perception by means other than the physical senses. Psychical abilities can be both projective and receptive.

I use the term Psychical Magick because I can find none other that describes it effectively. Psi is a close second, but I doubt the paranormal psychology people would approve of Witches being tangled in their area of research. The closest religious oriented term that would fit is Spiritual Sensory Abilities and that is about as clear as mud. Still the meaning is the same, the natural ability to sense or communicate through the individual's spiritual connection with other life.

Have you ever been in a room and had the creepy feeling that someone was watching you only to turn around and catch someone staring from the other side of the room? That is a clear example of Psychical magick. A projector (the person watching) set off a sensory mechanism in the receiver (the person being watched) that told the receiver that someone was watching.

This is a form of telepathy, a natural self-defense mechanism to warn prey that a predator is watching them. The receiver was not trying to do magick, did not need to be trained to do magick, and yet did magick naturally¹.

The abilities of Psychical magick include:

- Telepathy - the ability to send/receive thought
- Empathy - the ability to send/receive emotion
- Clairvoyance - the ability to see remotely
- Precognition - ability to sense events from the future
- Retrocognition - ability to sense events from the past
- and countless others.

So what is the common denominator in all? There are two minds communicating through an unknown connection. The theory behind how this works is where things start to get interesting.

The theory that I teach² is that all of life has a spirit. The spirit is separate from the mind but coexists with it. Life spirits are seen as being connected to, or a part

¹ This example fairly clearly describes how magickal abilities are simply natural abilities beyond scientific explanation.

² a fairly common theory held by Wiccans, but not all agree

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of, the Goddess. As such all life spirits have the ability of natural communication with each other. The only issue commonly argued in Wicca is if all spirits communicate through the Goddess or directly with each other. Does it really matter? The communication exists.

Okay, I bet you are thinking right about now that old Simon has lost a few marbles. Humans have a psychical connection to divinity? Yes, and I can offer some supportive evidence.

“Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the...” This is an example of prayer. Prayer is an ageless technique of communicating with divinity. The sounds of the prayers do not fall on the ears of a god; in fact, prayers need not be said aloud. Prayers are heard through a psychical connection with divinity. All kinds of religions use this connection through prayer or meditation.

Here is an easy way of visualizing the connection using a telephone as an example. I pick up the telephone and dial your number, your telephone rings, and you answer. Now you can hear me, right? Not exactly. You are hearing a mechanical device producing a sound that is a reproduction of what I am saying.

me --> my phone --> phone company --> your phone --> you

I talk, my phone records it, sends it to the phone company, the phone company sends it to your phone, your phone plays back the sound, and you hear what came from me even though you cannot hear me directly.

Let us look at the how telepathy works using the same type of diagram.

I think -> my spirit -> ?? - your spirit -> you sense my thought

The ?? indicates the unknown central part of the connection. It could be some kind of giant shared-consciousness of all things alive. It could be divinity. Maybe it is like radio where we all broadcast and our minds can selectively tune in on each other.

There are many different types of communication that can ride on this unknown connection. Telepathy (connection carries thought) is a given. I have known far too many telepaths to doubt it. Another that I do not doubt is empathy (connection carries emotion) because I myself am empathic. Other types of information that can be carried include physical sensations (sympathic), sounds (clairaudience), images (clairvoyance) and countless more.

Psychical magick even goes beyond this in that some people have the ability to “touch” the mind of another and get impressions of memories, things that the projector’s mind is not thinking of. This shared memory technique is something I have been practicing for quite a while.

The key to developing Psychological magick ability is realizing that these communications exist. They are constantly bombarding us and through our lives we have learned to either suppress the ability or tune out the messages as background noise. With practice, the conscious mind can be opened back up to the Psychological communications. From there, the abilities can be developed even further.

Speaking of no limits, I should mention that Psychological connectivity is not limited to a connection between humans. With practice, it is possible to “touch” just about any mind, human or animal. There is nothing more tranquil than the mind of a cat relaxing on the back of a sofa basking in shaded sunlight with a gentle breeze.

Psychical magick raises all sorts of ethics questions. When is it okay? When is it not okay? Do you tell people you can sense them? Do you actively try to sense without permission?

I cannot honestly tell you what the accepted guidelines are for Psychological connectivity because I really do not think there are any. I would think the extremes would be to never use it without expressed permission, with the other side being that it is perfectly acceptable to use Psychological magick on any occasion for any reason. My general rules are: to not use Psychological magick to cause harm, and to not divulge what I sense if I feel that doing so would cause harm.

I do have one word of caution. Heightening awareness of Psychological communications can be disruptive of a person’s life. Personally, I have been actively developing my Psychological abilities since the mid-1980s and it is now difficult for me to be in environments that are strongly emotional. The best advice I can give is taking it slow and working with an experienced mentor if possible.

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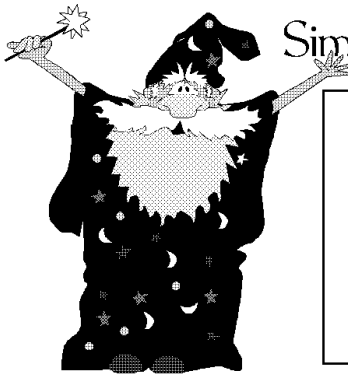
Divine Magick

Divine magick overlaps significantly with Psychical; in fact, an essential aspect is a psychical connection with divinity established through prayer, ritual, or meditation. To my knowledge, the Psychical/Psi community places no emphasis on divine magick; however, it is an integral part of Wiccan magickal practice.

The technique is simple. When in connection with divinity you present a need and ask that the need be met. Stay clear and focused in making the request; be polite and positive. Groveling, whining and/or excessive rambling is only likely to muddle the request with negative energy.

I have seen a person 'need' a scarf for an outfit and have it show up in a bargain table at the mall for ten cents on the dollar within days. The obvious question is, did the magick produce the scarf, or did the magick 'tune' her in to the need for the scarf? I do not think it matters either way; the magick worked.

Do not assume that the prime application of divine magick is materialistic. Wisdom, information, healing, guidance, and many other applications exist. A giant oversimplification is that prayer can work miracles, but it does appear to be accurate.



Simon says...

I tend to stay quite shallow on detail when it comes to writing about divine magick.

Personally, I feel it is best if people develop their own relationship with divinity in whatever form it is perceived.

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Energy Magick

Energy magick is defined as 'the use of natural abilities to sense, direct, task or otherwise manipulate natural energy'. Energy magick is quite broad and is the basis for nearly all non-Psychical magicks including virtually all types of spell work, energy work and healing.

Well, that is the definition that assumes the reader understands the theories behind energy magick, but to a beginner I am sure it is not very helpful.

Life and nature is driven by energy, in fact the entire Universe is driven by energy. Without energy, the Universe would be black cold mass with no life or motion. Fortunately for us, the Universe has an abundance of energy.

The name and characteristics of the energy used in magick is seldom agreed upon. For simplicity, I will call it 'natural energy'. Natural energy is all around us and constantly in motion. A common belief among Wiccans is that this energy can be sensed, directed, and manipulated to produce a desired result. That utilization of natural energy is what we call energy magick.

There are four basic requirements needed to work energy magick, will, skill, energy, and belief.

The formula for Tasked Energy Magick is:

The **will** for it to happen +
The **skill** to make it happen +
The **energy** to make it happen +
The **belief** that it will happen = It happens!

It is actually a simple process because the ability to work energy magick is naturally within us. An example of energy magick is candle magick. In candle magick, the candle is charged with tasked energy, then the candle burned, and the energy streams to complete the task.

Sensing Natural Energy

The easiest way that I have found for students to learn how to sense natural energy is by learning stone sensitivity. Stones act like batteries for natural energy. Humans can sense this energy when a stone is placed in a person's receptive hand¹. Within moments, the energy from the stone will cause a

¹ See the magick lesson 'Stone Sensitivity' for details on receptive and projective hands.

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physical sensation in the hand or arm, often in the form of a tingling or eerie muscle tension like a mild electrical shock.

The sensation from stones varies by the material of the stone. Some stones have a strong energy signature, while others are quite mild. Stones also vary as to whether they are projective or receptive of energy. Projective stones practically drip energy from them, while receptive stones tend to absorb the energy around them.

Directing Natural Energy

Once a student is comfortable with sensing natural energy, the next step is learning to direct (move) natural energy. An example of directing energy is the ability to 'charge' a stone. Charging a stone is literally increasing the amount of energy contained in the stone. The simplest way to charge a stone is for a person to direct some of his or her natural energy into the stone. To do this, a person holds the stone in his or her projective hand and visualizes energy being directed into the stone. When another person senses the stone after it has been charged, it produces a significantly stronger physical sensation.

The key to learning energy magick is having the mind communicate the intent of the magickal act to the spirit because the spirit is the source of magickal abilities. In this example, it is done by visualization. The mind imagines seeing the energy streaming into the stone and the spirit makes it happen.

Tasking Natural Energy

The final aspect of energy magick to be learned by a beginner is the ability to task energy with a purpose. An example of this is a healing stone. In creating a healing stone, a person charges a stone with energy and adds the task of healing to the energy. Think of it as natural energy with a mission. The process is similar to charging except that a second visualization is included in the charging process. This can be a visualization of the person being well, or perhaps free of pain. The visualization is held in the mind of the magickian while the energy streams. Once the stone is charged for healing, the stone is then placed in the proximity of the injured area and the energy fulfills its task.

Note: There are ethical implications of masking pain with magick. If by masking pain a person discourages the recipient of the healing from seeking medical help allowing the condition to worsen, then the magickian is harming the recipient.

Another example of tasked energy magick is candle magick. Let us say that a friend of mine calls me, nervous about an upcoming test and asks for help. Energy charged in the candle is tasked to help my friend have a clear head and

steady focus on the test. When burned, the energy is a gentle stream¹ on its way to complete the task.

The creation of magickal amulets is another example of tasked energy magick. An amulet is an item carried or worn which carries magickal energy tasked with a general purpose. A common purpose for an amulet is that of protection. Protection amulets serve a dual role as both a shield and a watchdog.

Here is an example of how an amulet can protect its bearer. Let us say you are in a warehouse walking down an aisle and you are paged to answer a telephone call. You turn around and while on the way to the telephone a crane drops a crate smashing to the ground where you would have been standing. On answering the telephone call, your friend says they just had an urge to call and say hello. Pat the little amulet in your pocket, it may have just saved your life. Did it really or was this just coincidence? Who knows? Does it really matter?

Another example of tasked energy magick is a talisman. A Talisman is an object magickally charged with the purpose of attracting something to the bearer. A talisman serves as a 'something' magnet. The 'something' attracted by a talisman can be energy, attention, luck, or even perhaps love.

What I have described here are just a few of the most common examples of energy magick. There are numerous other techniques and examples. It would take a full book just to explain them² and even then, it would only represent a single perspective.

Common misconceptions on energy magick include:

- I have a fixed limited amount of energy in myself.
No, rest, raising energy or drawing energy can increase a person's natural energy.
- I need to draw energy into myself before tasking and directing it.
No, drawn energy can be tasked and directed without drawing it into oneself. There are many instances where it can actually be counterproductive to draw the energy into oneself before tasking and directing.
- I need to be physically with someone to affect them with energy magick.
No, not exactly. It can help to be with the recipient of the magick, but all a person needs is some sort of a connection with the person to reach them with the magick. Magick is not limited by distance.

¹ One characteristic of candle magick is the transmission of energy in a gentle stream as opposed to a giant pulse. A gentle stream is much friendlier to receive and less likely to be disruptive than one huge 'whack'.

² That would be a fun book to write, but not this summer... :-)

The last of these is a bit controversial so let me explain. Keep in mind this is all theoretical so different opinions do exist.

In my thinking, I cannot go to a New York phone book, pick out a person's name at random, and affect that person with magick. I have no idea who Jody Brotcowski is or anything about her. With no connection to her, magick I would perform with her as a recipient is not likely to be meaningful or effective.

On the other hand, a person with whom I have had contact or some kind of connection with is easily reached, without regard for distance. For example, I could receive a telephone call that a friend of mine 'Boo' injured herself and seeks magickal energy to aid recovery. Boo is not with me, in fact, I do not even know where she is, but that does not prevent me from working magick to help her.

Increasing Your Energy

Running low on energy when working magick, or in any aspect of life is a miserable feeling. Fortunately it is possible to increase your personal energy level naturally and there are techniques of magickal work that aid in avoiding running low on energy.

In any type of working magick, energy is essential. With no energy to expend or use, there would be no magick.

You have energy at all times. It is needed to live. In some cases, magick is done with a person's own energy. This is handy because you can tap your personal energy to do magick quickly, but it is not an ideal source because your personal energy is limited and can quickly become depleted leaving you feeling tired and run down. There are three ways to increase your personal energy: rest, raising energy, and drawing energy.

- Rest is the natural process of rest and recuperation. Getting enough rest is vital. Rest is the slowest method of replenishing energy.
- Raising Energy is encouraging your body to raise its own energy level. Techniques include chanting, singing, listening to music, or physical activity like running, dancing or even sex.
- Drawing Energy is literally tapping into a source of energy and pulling it to you. Anything that has energy can be drawn from.

A common misconception is that to do magick you need to pull the energy into yourself prior to use. Not only is this unneeded, there are a couple of reasons why this is actually counter productive. Let us say you have a task, which is to

charge an amulet of protection for a friend and you happen to be having a low energy day yourself. You draw energy from the Universe into yourself and then push the energy into the amulet. All is well, right? Wrong. You will probably notice that you yourself feel much better after the ritual. Can you guess why? The energy you drew into yourself is still in you. While you succeeded in helping yourself feel better, the amount of energy you pushed into the amulet is probably minimal.

Let us look at the same task done a bit differently. You start with your left-hand palm open to draw energy from the Universe; your right hand is on the amulet; a symbol for protection is either imagined or in plain view so your spirit knows what to do. Start drawing energy from the Universe and imagine a yellow cord from your left hand to your right hand. The cord is glistening with energy. See the energy flowing from the receiving hand to the sending hand through the cord and into the amulet with the purpose of protection. In doing this you have tapped the energy of the Universe and charged the amulet with tasked energy and wasted not even a drop.

This kind of technique can be applied to anything. Once mastered, you should see a significant increase in your ability to do large-scale energy work, and you will avoid the feeling of being drained of your own personal energy. Energy is by definition unlimited. Why run low when there is no need to? ¹

¹ Portions reprinted with permission from 'A New Walk Down an Old Path' 2nd Edition .

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Ritual Magick

Ritual Magick is not a type of magick on its own. It is a technique of practicing one of the three types (Psychical, Divine, or Energy) in a formal ritual environment.

In 2002, I wrote a teaching web site called 'Wicca for Beginners'. I was constantly being hounded because I did not teach any type of magickal work on the site. I did not, and still do not, think it is appropriate to include anything more than a basic explanation of magick in an introductory course.

In response to the nagging, I added a section 'A Free Spell For YOU!' which took them systematically through a simple example of ritual magick without explaining why the steps were taken. At the end I strongly expressed that magick is not simply following the steps. Knowing why each step is done and doing it appropriately is needed to work magick effectively.

I am going to walk you through that very same ritual and this time explain each of the steps in moderate detail. Keep in mind that this is simply one of many perspectives of ritual magick practice. It is not the right way to do ritual magick; it is simply a way that it can be done.

Acorn Protection Amulet

A charged amulet spell based on a system of Magick known as Ritual Magick. It falls under the category of tasked energy magick.

Tools Required:

- Acorn
- Altar
- Pentacle (altar tile)
- Water bowl,
- Salt bowl,
- Goddess Candle,
- God Candle,
- Wand,
- Athame,
- Incense, and incense burner

Procedure:

Setup the altar in traditional fashion.

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Yes, that is kind of vague but I didn't want to explain altar setup.

Light the incense and let it fill the area around the altar.

The incense serves as a cue that the space is being transitioned to magickal space. I really should have included a personal and space cleansing before this, but excessive detail was not my goal at the time.

Face East and say "Yae to the guardian of the East, join me and charge this area with the wisdom and energy of Air".

Face South and say "Yae to the guardian of the South, join me and charge this area with the wisdom and energy of Fire".

Face West and say "Yae to the guardian of the West, join me and charge this area with the wisdom and energy of Water".

Face North and say "Yae to the guardian of the North, join me and charge this area with the wisdom and energy of Earth".

Calling the quarters. Some see this as drawing on the elements for energy in creating the circle. Others see it as a summoning of the elemental spirits for participation in ritual. Some with a background in Kaballah might be inclined to see it as summoning the Archangels. I would think it could also be any combination of these.

Lighting quarter candles is common in some traditions. Some also ring a bell and/or draw an invoking pentagram symbol with an athame.

Take the athame from the altar and point it at the ground while drawing a circle on the ground starting at north and going clockwise (east, then south, then west, and then back to north). Set the athame back on the altar.

Casting the circle. The athame is used to direct energy to the perimeter and build the circle around you. Visualization of the stream of energy triggers the stream to flow. Pacing can be a little difficult. Sometimes moving too fast will leave it feeling half formed, while moving too slow can leave you feeling excessively drained.

Next light the God candle while saying... "oh great horned one of ancient mystery, join me bringing your wisdom and energy."

Inviting the God to join. Consider the flame of the candle a torch to light his path to the circle or perhaps as a vessel for his spirit.

Next light the Goddess candle while saying... "oh great mother of all of the universe, join me bringing your wisdom and energy."

Inviting the Goddess to join. Also as above a torch to light the path or a vessel for her spirit.

Pick up the acorn and dip it in the salt bowl saying "let this be cleansed with the purity of earth".

Before any amulet is charged with tasked energy, it is normally consecrated (cleansed). The salt is symbolic of the element of earth and seen as a natural purifying agent.

Dip the acorn in the water bowl saying "let this be cleansed with the purity of water".

This is the second half of the consecration. This time it is with the symbology of the element of water, another natural purifier.

Set the acorn back on the pentacle.

The altar plate is the focal point of most altar-oriented rituals.

Touch both the candles (not the flames) drawing the divine energy into you. See yourself as glistening with white sparkly light.

Drawing divine energy. At this point, you are essentially tapping into the spirits of the Goddess and God. The drawing process is in a way like sipping on a straw except you are sipping with your fingers. The visualization of white sparkly light represents the charge of energy.

Pick up the acorn and hold it in your right hand. Visualize that sparkly energy going into the acorn. When you can see it in your mind's eye, repeat the following 13 times:

"balanus, bona, phylacterium"

Pushing the tasked energy into the acorn. It is important to focus on tasking the energy at least as much as pushing the energy into the acorn. Tasking can be done with symbology or with words symbolizing the task. In this case, I used words, which I rarely do in my practice. To give it a mystical feel, I chose Latin.

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*balanus is Latin for acorn, chestnut or date
bona is Latin for good
phylacterium is Latin for "to watch or guard"*

Basically the phrase means "acorn good guard". It isn't an ancient phrase, nor need it be. Personally, I am quite poor at Latin so I used translators on the Internet to help me figure it out.

The repetition of the phrase 13 times is significant as the indication of the tasking process while charging. 13 times was chosen as plenty (perhaps excessive) and with the mystical association of 13 moons in a year and perceived by some as a lucky number.

Set the acorn down in the center of the pentacle.

Back to the focal point.

Take the wand and draw a circle around the acorn three times saying "Bind this spell to the amulet, as I will it, so mote it be."

Charging is only half of the task of amulet creation. The second half is binding the energy so it stays in the amulet.

The phrase "as I will it, so mote it be" is extremely common in this type of magickal work in that the magickian is now affirming that the magick will work. Note: mote = will, so the phrase means, "as I wish it, so will it be".

Snuff the Goddess candle (blowing it out is okay only if you do not have a snuffer) and say "Thank-you M'Lady for your wisdom and energy".

Thanks to the Goddess. NOT a dismissal, more like a goodbye type of pleasantry. A mere magickian does not release the Goddess.

Snuff the God candle and say "Thank-you M'Lord for your wisdom and energy".

Thanks to the God. As above, it is a pleasantry.

Face North, bow and say "Thank-you for your wisdom and energy".

Face West, bow and say "Thank-you for your wisdom and energy".

Face South, bow and say "Thank-you for your wisdom and energy".

Face East, bow and say “Thank-you for your wisdom and energy”.

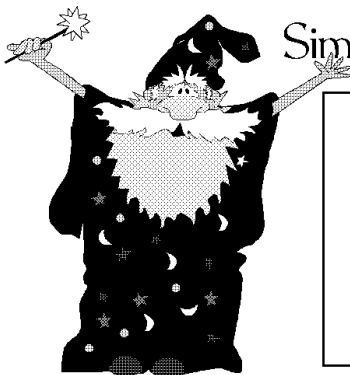
Thanks to the elements. As above, it is a pleasantry.

Cap the incense or douse it in water.

Starts the space on the process of returning to normal. Some people actually “take down” the circle. I, for one, see no need because I see it dissipating over time since it is not being charged. I can see why some collect the lingering energy and store it (a common practice), but to me that is a wasted effort.

As you can see, applying ritual to magickal practice gives it a sense of formality. Do I need such a ritual to charge an amulet? No, but it may improve my focus.

Another aspect of ritual magick is when a group is working magick together. While free-form magick may be quite easy when you are by yourself, in a group it is far too chaotic. Having someone lead the ritual keeps everyone on the same task.



Simon says...

It is absolutely amazing how much energy can be raised and directed in a group ritual. Once experienced, it is something that will not be forgotten or taken lightly.

Visualization & Meditation

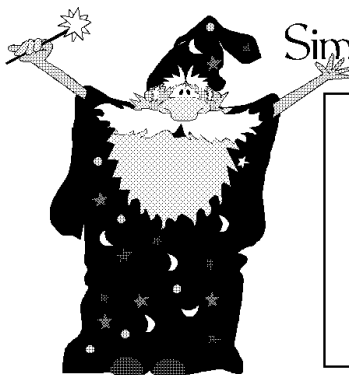
How many times have you picked up a book on magick and read something like “... now visualize the energy streaming into the item”? If you have done much reading on magick, the answer is probably quite a few times.

However, exactly what is visualization and why is it such an integral part of magickal practice? Visualization is often called the key to all magickal operations, and indeed learning magick without understanding visualization is nearly impossible.

Visualization is the process of using internal images to provide a focus of intent. It is literally a skillful application of imagination. In some cases, the visualization is extended to full sensory input, which makes these images seem very real.

Visualization is quite useful because it can link the practitioner quickly to a state of mind represented by the visualization. When a person visualizes a calm lake at sunset, the visualization links him or her to a calm, balanced, restful state of mind. If a person visualizes him or herself in an argument, that too induces a state of mind, one of frustration and anger. It has long been said that thoughts create and visualization is the very art of creating with thoughts.

While the above is certainly significant, there is a great bit more about visualization which is not immediately obvious. In delving deeper into why visualization works so effectively, we start to unfold the inner layers of our person and discover the application of visualization goes quite deep. How deep? To the inner most reaches of your human existence, what some traditions call the human spirit or inner self.



Simon says...

The magickal theory expressed in this chapter may not fit with all traditions. It does however fit closely with Dragon Tradition as well as Feri (Faery) Tradition and perhaps a few others.

If the source of magickal abilities in all life is the spirit, the prime asset in learning to develop these abilities is learning to communicate effectively with the

life spirit within. In nature this communication exists naturally, but in mankind the skill has been unlearned replaced primarily with spoken communications. The use of visualization (and meditation) allows humans to reestablish that communication and hence is the oft-overlooked key to developing magickal abilities.

Visualization can be approached in two different ways, active or passive. To do active visualization, a person chooses a directive or a goal and keeps the mind focused on that directive. Consequently, the directive is communicated with the spirit (or inner self/subconscious) and the directive is¹ fulfilled.

Passive visualization is simply seeing a blank screen and letting images appear and either interpreting them or responding to them much like an interactive story. This kind of technique can be applied to all sorts of applications, the most common being divination.

There are many creative ways to develop visualization skills. For example one can practice doing visualizations of natural energy. This skill is seen by many as being vital to the process of directing the energy forces around you. By visualizing the energy filling and surrounding oneself, a person has prepared himself or herself to work magick. In turn, the visualization can then be applied to direct the energy for the task at hand ranging from charging tools, charging candles for magick, or even healing².

To practice visualization, start out in a comfortable relaxed position with eyes closed. In your minds eye use your imagination to visualize an item. I will use the example of a lemon because it evokes strong reaction when done correctly. In your mind take a few minutes to mentally hold the fruit, feel its waxy bumpy exterior. Smell the sharp citrus scent. You may find your mouth salivating, or you may even begin to pucker at the thought. After this, visualize taking a paring knife and cutting the lemon in half. Feel the juice dribble down your hands. Squeeze it; feel the spray of juice on your face, and then lick the lemon to taste the sour flavor.

By now, you should definitely be aware of the visualized reality of the lemon. You have an anchor of what a lemon tastes, smells, feels, and looks like because you can vividly recall all that information. However, this goes far beyond recall. You are combining your past experiences with a lemon and incorporating them with the visualization.

¹ or at very least may be

² energy magick is covered elsewhere in the book.

With a multitude of personal experiences, you have literally thousands of anchors relating to objects and events that can be used to help you visualize. In visualizations where you have no real world anchors to draw from, your imagination can creatively develop images for you.

In reality, visualization skills are quite easy once you establish in your own thinking that you have the capabilities of doing so. From then on, visualization can be accomplished with little effort anytime you please. In doing so you have taken a large first step in your magickal training.

Meditation

While meditation has many applications, the primary application being covered here is the use of meditation in magick. In magick, a common use of meditation is becoming more in touch with what's going on inside you, and to communicate with your spirit (inner self, subconscious) what it is you want to accomplish or in our case, manifest into reality. The communication is done with visualization.

When learning meditation, you should be aware that it really doesn't matter what music you choose, what you wear, how you sit, stand or lie down, if you use candles or incense or any of the other external amenities that are commonly involved. These are simply tools or techniques to help you. Meditation is about the inner you and your state of the mind. Only through experimentation will you find out what works best for you.

There are many ways to meditate, and while the techniques may vary, the basic concept is universal, the ability to relax, reach an altered state of mind, focus on one thought and block out distractions. While that may sound obvious or easy, it is not something that is achieved without regular practice.

Relax

Usually the more effort we make the greater the result. The harder you hammer a nail the sooner does it go into the wall. The exact opposite is the case with trying to relax. Any attempts at mental pressure will likely result in failure because it induces tension. So how does one relax? To relax, find a comfortable spot with eyes closed and use visualization to start your muscles relaxing. As the muscles will relax, your heart and breathing will slow, and your thoughts follow along.

Reach an Altered State of Mind

When you start to relax, you let yourself ease into a slightly altered state where the conscious mind is suspended and direct communication with the subconscious is possible. This may sound difficult, but in reality you already reach an altered state of mind each night when you fall asleep. Think of it as an

in-between state, not hyper-alert like normal waking state, and not sleeping either. It is more like a mix of the two, a relaxed waking dream world where you can interact with your inner self.

You may find it easier to reach an altered state of mind if you listen to music when meditating. The music can be something to help you to remain in a relaxed state and yet stimulate the meditation. The subconscious mind loves rhythm. Listening to drumming can help in reaching a meditative state.

Focus on Thought

Once a meditative state has been reached, it is time to bring thought into play. You have the channel open to the spirit¹. Where your mind goes now is a critical step because as soon as the spirit accepts any idea, it immediately begins trying to put it into effect. The spirit will use all resources available to it and these are far greater than accepted by science.

Meditation can put the spirit to action on both good and bad ideas, so caution is highly advised. Whatever you allow to occupy your mind, you will magnify in your life. For example, the more you think about your good fortune, blessings, abundance, and good health the more you will attract it to you. However, the more you focus on negativity, the more you magnify it as well.

A useful method in controlling meditation is substitution. It is difficult to dismiss a thought directly. The more you tell yourself not to think about something, the more you do. However by substituting another thought, the undesired thought is displaced and discarded.

Block Out Distractions

It can be quite disconcerting to achieve a meditative state only to find it slipping away due to distractions. Distractions can come from both the outside world or in our own minds. It tends to be easier to deal with outside world distractions. For me, closing the door, turning off the telephones, and turning my fan to a gently whirring makes the entire world go away, leaving me in peaceful space.

For distractions from inside my mind, the only solution I have found is to prepare myself for meditation similarly to how I prepare for ritual. Discarding the day to day junk before beginning meditation is for me far easier than constantly trying to displace them with substitution.

Magick and Meditation

The application of meditation in magick goes well beyond what has been touched on here. The combination of meditation and ritual opens some unique

¹ in some traditions this is called inner-self or higher-self

opportunities. For example, if working circle with a group, you can try working meditation during personal magick time. The energy of group circle and the highly charged magickal space can yield some surprisingly effective meditation, specifically in divination.

Another example, one that I am personally fond of, is working a virtual circle, complete with stone pillars and an ornate altar while completely inside a meditative reality. Once practiced in visualization, calling the Goddess to join circle and actually seeing her shimmering form appear, even if only in imagination, is a powerfully moving experience.

Once you learn meditation and visualization, there are no limits except those that you place upon yourself.

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Herbs & Oils in Magick

My application of herbs¹ in magick is a bit different from those commonly stated in the modern crop of books. I feel that a differentiation of two aspects is appropriate, namely medicinal, and spiritual.

Much of herb lore dates back to the time when mankind was barely aware of the existence of chemistry and the effects of chemicals on the human body. As such, these chemical effects were viewed as being magickal.

Do we now consider Aspirin to be magickal? No, of course not. We understand that as a medicine Aspirin has a chemical effect on our bodies to reduce pain. To the ancient herbal healer, chewing on the bark of a willow tree² was magickal. There was something that worked, but it was not understood by science.

Today many Wiccans feel a connection to the ancient herbal healers and study the naturally occurring medicinal uses of plants. In a way, this is a practice of magick, perhaps not as it fits with the Crowleyan definition, but in that the practice is based on knowledge beyond science. I am confident there are herbal healers using herbs in ways that science has not even noticed.

The other aspect of herbs in magick is more spiritual. Herbs are infused with magickal energy and then made into incense, sachets, bath salts, or anointing oils. While this practice is common in Wicca, it is not required. It is seen as a way to enhance magick.

These items are used in the following ways:

- incense - to aid in creating magickal space
- sachets - as charms in much the same way as amulets or talismans
- bath salts - to aid in ritual cleansing
- anointing oils - rubbed on candles, amulets, etc to enhance their magick

Incense

Incense is made by harvesting, drying, and blending a mixture of herbs. Incense is then burned over a briquette of charcoal made specifically for this purpose. This type of incense should be stored in an airtight container and kept cool and dry to prevent decay or mildew.

¹ oils in magick are extracts from herbs. When I refer to herbs, the oils are implied as well.

² a natural source of an aspirin like substance

Sachets

Sachets are made by creating a charged blend of mixed herbs and tying the herbs in a small sack made of felt. Sachets are then worn or carried as an amulet or talisman. Another popular use for a sachet is to place it under your pillow while you sleep to calm sleep, promote well being, or induce dreaming.

Bath Salts

Bath salts are made by grinding herbs into an extremely fine powder with a mortar and pestle. Once ground, the herbs are then mixed with any of a variety of base salts ranging from table salt, Epsom salts, to baking soda. Herbal bath salts are used by mixing a small amount in bath water.

Anointing Oils

Anointing oils are created by wrapping herbs in cheesecloth and allowing them to soak in a natural oil base for several days. The natural oil from the herbs seeps into the base oil and fragrances it. These oils are then used for anointing candles or in other magick rituals.

Growing herbs for magickal use is a common practice among Wiccans. Many find that it increases their own awareness of the connection with nature, as well as producing herbs that are personally meaningful.

There are many books written on the subject of herbs in magick. They tend to be stuffed with magickal associations of herbs and their usefulness. In my opinion, the magickal as opposed to medicinal uses of herbs is best based on a personal understanding rather than what a book teaches. Do not get me wrong, some of the information is quite useful, but to me some of the associations border on the absurd and are often dangerous.

Another use of herbs is smoking or ingesting herbs to produce mind and/or mood altering effects potentially inducing spiritual visions. This practice is NOT suggested. Some herbs used for this purpose are poisonous and potentially lethal.

Scheduling Magick

There are many who feel that 'when' is just as important as 'how' when it comes to working magick. On the other hand, many place no emphasis on 'when' and simply do magick as the need arises.

The most common variable in determining when is the phase of the moon.

- New Moon is seen as a time for healing.
- Waxing Moon is seen as a time for growth and new projects.
- Full Moon is seen as a time for fertility and parental related magick, and as a time with maximal power available.
- Waning Moon is seen as a time for banishing, protection and gaining wisdom.

Other variables include time of day, in which astrological sign the moon is present, seasons, and of course, specific Esbats and Sabbats. There are far too many to explain them all, but they are not hard to figure out on your own.

For example, dawn is considered the time of day for awakening. As such the symbolism implies that magick to awaken oneself to psychic abilities would be appropriate out of doors at the first hint of day.

Another example would be working magick with the moon in Taurus when strength and utmost determination are required.

Is it helpful to schedule magick this way? It will be, if you feel it will. It is your magickal system. You are the one making the rules. If you feel that appropriate scheduling gives you an advantage, then do so.

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Magick Lessons

This section of Maiden Moon consists of courses reprinted from American Magick Institute. The AMI collection of online courses was never completed. The goal was to build an online Grimoire of hundreds of courses written by a variety of contributors. Attempts at finding contributors failed miserably and the project mothballed.

Keep in mind that some of these courses may be controversial or outdated¹. Opinions expressed in the courses are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the average Wiccan practitioner. Also, the courses should be considered as individual works. They may contradict what is taught in this book.

Although the courses are dated, the topics covered are generally of interest to those learning Wicca, and hence the decision to include them in Maiden Moon.

¹ I shudder when I look at my teaching from a few years ago. Ouch!

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Magick Lesson

Those Magickal Stones

Reprinted from an American Magick Institute course.

Those Magickal Stones
An online course

There are many correspondences on the magickal uses of stones. This course will contradict some of the entries in the correspondence charts. This shouldn't be interpreted as saying that the charts are incorrect. Stones are not unlike other tools of magick in that what they are useful for is largely dependent on how the individual practitioner feels about a given stone.

There was an entry for stones in the course on magickal tools

Stones - Many precious and semiprecious stones are used in Magick. They can be used as:

- a source of energy
- a receptacle of unwanted energy
- a vessel for tasked magickal energy worn as an amulet
- a tool for healing.

Let's look at each of the four uses in more detail

A source of energy

In the book "A New Walk Down an Old Path" it talks about vibrational life energy in stones, and stones which are projective dripping in energy. Holding a projective stone in your receptive hand will gradually increase your personal energy level. It's basically like a battery of life energy recharging you. The energy may feel foreign to you depending on your elemental alignment and the alignment of the stone.

A receptacle of unwanted energy

Other stones described as receptive can receive energy from you. Energy will gradually seep from you while holding a receptive stone in your projective hand. It is possible for this to drain wanted energy from you, but it is most commonly used as a tool for grounding unwanted energy.

A vessel for tasked magickal energy worn as an amulet

There are two ways to create an amulet. One way is to start with a projective stone that is naturally charged and to add a task to that energy. Adding a task to energy already in a stone isn't as easy as it sounds. I have known people who could retask a stone's energy in a few moments, or even shift a stone's alignment or its projective/receptive nature. The other method is to drain the projective stone of its energy and refill it with energy that has the task already established. This gets a little tricky in that the practitioner should take into account three alignments, theirs, the stones, and the person who will be wearing it. I've seen a normally calm water aligned person flooded with air/fire energy from an amulet get nervous and giddy from the effects of energy in their person.

A tool for healing

With a stone's characteristics of alignment and its receptive/projective nature, they are sometimes used as therapeutic tools to aid healing. This is quite possibly the only time where it is the nature of the tool itself to promote healing as opposed to the spiritual skill and energy of the practitioner.

Another use for stones in healing is that of a healing wand used by the practitioner in their active use of their own skill and energy to promote easing pain and healing. This is not necessarily exclusive of the other method and the two combined would seem to be, if done correctly, the most effective.

Determining the Alignment of a Stone

A friend of mine shared an idea with me a long time ago that changed the way I determine the elemental alignment of a stone. While his theory on alignment is not infallible, I personally find it to be quite accurate on most stones. His theory is that in most cases, the nature and alignment of a stone can be determined by the its color.

EARTH - Calming and Grounding - Black Brown Green
AIR - Intellect and Divinity - White Clear Yellow
FIRE - Energy and Determination - Red Orange Yellow
WATER - Psychic and Healing - Blue Green Purple

Let's take a look at how these apply to some commonly used magickal stones.

Amethyst - Water - Receptive

The lovely purple beauty. A psychic stone that is receptive of energy. I personally use it as a psychic wall stone.

Green Aventurine - Receptive - Water

This is the classic “luck” stone, often used to attract financial gain or fortune. Is luck an aspect of healing? Receptive

Blue Lace Agate - Projective - Water

The delicate healer, unusual in that it is one of the few projective healing stones. From my experience it is tied with inner self healing as well as physical healing.

Carnelian - Projective - Fire

If any stone is going to sing in your receptive hand, it will be Carnelian. Projective and dripping with energy.

Quartz Crystal - Projective - Air

One of the most common stones in magickal use is the Quartz crystal. While being projective in nature it also serves as a focusing point for directed energy.

Hematite - ??? - Earth

Hematite is unusual. It is receptive, in fact so much so that it tends to shatter if exposed to too much energy. However, it does have a “sing” when held in a receptive hand.

Jade - Receptive - Water / Earth

Next to Obsidian, Jade is one of the most receptive grounding stones, but it also is often used for carved figures with the task of healing or luck.

Red Jasper - Receptive - Earth

Red Jasper is a ruddy (brownish) red. It doesn't seem to be a fire stone, but its alignment seems to be more with earth. Very grounding.

Blue Lapis - Projective - Water

Lapis is, in my opinion, the pride of the water stones group. It sings deeply and strongly with a subtle energy. It is not the healer that blue lace agate is, but rather is balanced between healing and psychic.

Lepidolite - Projective - Water

In many ways Lepidolite is as much of a psychic stone as Lapis, perhaps more. Its projective nature is moderate but when it tune with its psychic energy hang on for a wild ride.

Lodestone - Projective - Earth

A projective earth stone seems to be a contradiction but there is no mistaking the “sing” of this stone when held in a receptive hand. So much so in fact, that some air/fire aligned people find it uncomfortable.

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Moonstone - Receptive - Air

If there is a stone to help touch the divine, it's Moonstone. Other than the obvious symbolism with regard to the moon and the Goddess, there is a sense of depth in Moonstone that is difficult to explain.

Obsidian - Receptive - Earth

Obsidian is in my mind, without a doubt the most receptive grounding stone. It's great for earthing into after magick and is practically a healer in that it easily sucks up all sorts of physical and emotional garbage and negativity.

Rose Quartz - Projective - Fire

She is the lady of the Quartz family. I have known more women who carry rose quartz than virtually all of the other stones combined. Rose Quartz charges easily and hums a strong energy.

Snow Quartz - Projective - Air

The little sister to Moonstone, Snow Quartz is definitely air aligned and its projective nature makes it useful as an airy energy stone.

Sunstone - Projective - Fire

Sunstone can be accurately described as the brother of Rose Quartz. It too is a projective fire stone which charges easily, but the energy from it has a completely different feel.

Tigers Eye - Receptive - Earth

This stone is as beautiful to look at as it is to hold, but don't expect it to zap you with energy. It is definitely receptive and grounding.

Are there more stones? yes definitely... many more. But here is where I've chosen to stop. My goal isn't to share with you what I've learned about stones in magick. I would like you to understand the basics and come to your own personal understanding of stones.

The next course in this series is on stone sensitivity. When you've completed that, you're on your own, off to explore the world of magickal stones.

Magick Lesson

Stone Sensitivity

Reprinted from an American Magick Institute course.

Stone Sensitivity
An online course

One of the elders tells me “explaining stone sensitivity in writing is like trying to explain color to a blind man”. Unfortunately that is true, so what I will teach you is an exercise so you can learn it on your own. I’ll do my best to explain as much as I can.

Before you begin, you will need around a half dozen stones of different varieties, and preferably tumble polished. If you have access to more, that’s all the better. It helps if the stones are at least the size of a quarter. If you have a friend in the craft perhaps they can bring some stones and help you with the exercise. Two stones that I suggest are rose quartz and carnelian.

Okay, listen up. This class is not about stones, they are just toys in the material world. This class is about learning to sense energy... magickal life energy. This is important because you need to know how to sense energy before you can learn to move it, and moving it is vital to doing magick.

Okay, our first topic is your hands. Generally speaking most people have one hand which is more receptive to energy than the other. It’s kind of like being left-handed or right-handed. Very few people have equal abilities with both hands, but it does happen occasionally.

What we’re solely concerned with in this course is you figuring out which hand is more receptive of energy, and what energy feels like. Even if you think you already know which it is, try it anyway. You may be surprised.

Sit in a chair within reach of a table. Put the stones together in a pile where you can reach them easily.

When you are in a relaxed comfortable state hold a stone in the palm of your left hand with fingers closed around it. Don’t squeeze it, just relax. Some people prefer to close their eyes to block out distractions. If the stone is an energy stone within 30 seconds, often much sooner, you will sense a mild tingling sensation in

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your hand and/or forearm. You don't have to think about the stone being there. Don't try to probe or analyze anything. Just relax and wait for the sensation.

After the thirty seconds, repeat the above but this time with the stone in your right hand.

There are four possible outcomes:

1. You sensed the tingling more in your left hand.
2. You sensed the tingling more in your right hand.
3. You sensed the tingling about equal in both hands.
4. You didn't sense any tingling at all.

Here is the analysis of each.

1. Your left hand is more receptive.
2. Your right hand is more receptive.
3. Both hands are equally receptive (rare)
4. The stone is probably not an energy stone.

Set the stone aside and get another stone from the pile and repeat the process until you have gone through all of the stones in the pile.

By the time you get done you should have a pretty good idea which of your hands is more receptive and what the sensation of an energy stone feels like. You can confirm this by going through the stones again, this time only in your receptive hand. As you set the stones aside, divide them into two piles (weak and strong) based on how much sensation they produce. You will need the strong pile in Part II of this course.

Okay, what have you learned so far?

You know which of your hands is more receptive. Not only will this hand be used in sensing energy, it will also be your "draw energy" hand. (We'll cover that in a later course) Your other hand is your projective hand. You will use it to direct energy.

Part II

In the last section you created a pile of strong stones. For this exercise you will need a stone from that pile, preferably the one which you felt the most energy from.

Find a comfortable spot and relax. Hold the stone in your receptive hand and let the sensation tingle your hand/forearm. Close your eyes if you wish. This serves as the baseline for this test.

What I'm going to show you next is how to push energy from yourself into this stone. You will be increasing the amount of charge in it, and hence the amount of energy you sense from it.

Move the stone to your projective hand, get comfortable, relax and close your eyes. Visualize a stream of bright sparkly light, either white or yellow starting from your heart (yes, inside of you) and streaming down your arm toward your projective hand. See the energy streaming through your hand and into the stone. As you see this energy flowing you may feel a warmth in your arm as it conducts the energy toward its destination.

Keep this up for around a minute. It takes a lot of focus to push a charge for that long, so be firm in your will. See the energy flowing, and will it to flow to the stone.

After the minute, open your eyes and drop the stone into your receptive hand and relax. The energy sensation from the stone should be significantly increased. You may notice the stone's energy has a different feel. Can you guess why? It's your energy that you are sensing from the stone.

You just took a BIG step into the world of magick!

One word of caution. You are using your personal energy to charge the stone. Too much practicing and you will run yourself down. Take it easy.

A cool way to test your progress is with a friend who is also of the craft. Have them sense a stone, then give it to you to charge. After you charge it give it back and see how much of a charge you put into it.

Keep in mind that trying to charge a receptive stone* is like trying to overflow the ocean with a squirt gun. At this point, stick to charging energy stones (projective stones). For more information on the nature of stones, read this course if you haven't already.

*Simons note: Yes receptive stones can be charged if they have been magickally altered, but that's way beyond this course.

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Magick Lesson

Candle Magick

Reprinted from an American Magick Institute course.

Candle Magick
An Online Course

Editors note: This course is two documents merged. It is presented this way because candle magick is very diverse and we wanted to include the perspectives of both authors.

Tasked Energy Candle Magick

The basic theory of tasked energy candle magick is that energy is tasked and directed into a candle (not necessarily in that order) which when burned releases the energy to the recipient in a slow smooth stream. The process of tasked energy candle magick varies from simplistic to a formal ritual.

I often get phone calls at while I'm at work like "Sherry's got a job interview at two o'clock and she's nervous, she asked if you could do something". It's not like I can just stop what I'm doing and produce a full ritual, but I also don't like to give an answer of no if a friend calls for help. My simplistic version of candle magick is to grab whatever candle is at hand and light it with the intent of the magick clearly in mind. I keep the candle nearby so I can keep an eye on it, and go back to my normal activity. When I see the candle, I reinforce the intent in my mind for a moment and perhaps touch the candle and add to the energy.

There may be some who think that this isn't formal enough to be effective, but what is really needed to work magick? Energy, Skill, Will and Faith. My personal energy and the energy of the flame are directed to the task with the will for the magick to work and faith that it will be effective. So mote it be, even if done in a few minutes with whatever I happen to have handy.

A more formal example is tasked energy candle magick being the focus of a ritual. I won't go into excessive detail because how you do ritual is up to you, so treat this as an example.

- Prepare yourself and your space
- Summon / Welcome / Invoke elements, quarters, deities etc.

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- Cleanse / Bless / Anoint the candle
- Raise, draw, invoke or otherwise increase energy and direct into candle
- Task the energy (either during or after directing into candle)
- Burn the candle (optional)
- Thank / Bid Merry Parting / Dismiss elements, quarters, deities etc.
- Return the space to normal

There are many schools of thought regarding the burning of a tasked energy candle, and it most likely depends on the task as to which is appropriate. Some prefer to burn the entire candle in one shot, others burn it for short periods of time over a period of days or even weeks. Some burn the candle while in circle, others wait until the space is back to normal feeling that the circle itself keeps the energy in the circle hindering the flow to the recipient.

Feel free to be creative. Sometimes I like to prepare the candle, package it nicely and send it to the recipient in a priority mail package and have them burn it. For one it gets them involved in the ritual and heightens (hopefully) the intent and direction of the magickal energy. There are no strict rules... do what you feel will work best.

Colour Associations

There has been much written about candle magick. Most books will differ on what colour means what. This is when you have to make a decision and stick to it. I, most of the time, associate the colour of anything to the element of similar colour. Stones, crystals, paper, paint, candles, whatever it may be. I use the following list:

White: clearing, cleansing
Black: protection, grounding, banishing
Red: passion, courage, strength, self-love
Orange: energy (give a boost to another candle)
Yellow: communication, thought, intellect
Green: prosperity, gaining
Blue: health, healing, nurturing, tranquility
Indigo: inspiration, deep wisdom, meditation
Purple: intuition, psychic energies

Element/Quarter associations:

Air: white, yellow, or any other air-ish colour:
thought, mind, communications, intellect

South: red, orange, yellow or any other fire-ish colour:

strength, courage

West: blue, purple, green or any other water-ish:
health, healing, meditation

North: black, brown, green or any other earth-ish colour:
grounding, protection, banishing

Do what feels best to you when choosing candle colours. But, whatever you choose stick with it. Consistency is very important to the subconscious. If you cannot find just the right colour then grab white and visualized the colour required. A thousand years ago candle colours were very hard to come by. Most times all at hand were plant dyes to colour the outside of the candle. I am sure that many fine spell casters only had oil lamps. Do whatever you need for good clear focus.

Uses of Candle Magick

The many uses of candle magick far exceed this document. Some of the uses are:

Scribing

Scribe a symbol or words of a spell onto the candle. What the candle burn and cast your wants into the Universe. You may ask "If this be true, no wax drip down the side."

Scrying

Light a candle and look deep into the flame, watching for symbols. Let the flame stabilize and then asked logical questions and the flame flickers for "Yes" and does nothing for "No".

Bonding

Spiritually bonding two people together. Take a candle representing each person. Burn them in such a way that the wax melts together. Also, be sure you want your spirit tied to the other person for the remainder of your time here.

Banishing

Invoke the situation you wish to be rid of into the candle and watch it burn away forever.

Gaining

Draw the energy from the candle as it burns to gain your desire. It is often helpful to scribe the intent onto the wax.

Meditation

Light a candle (preferably jar type), and get the flame to flicker slowly. If you have to open a window or turn on a fan. Place the candle to one side of you so

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the pulse of the flicker is barely seen. This usually makes it easier to relax and get into deeper 'Alpha'.

That is the basics of candle magick. Be very careful to not have any 'accidents' and start fires. Most of all be extremely careful of what you ask for, you most likely will get it!

Magick Lesson

Understanding Empathy

Reprinted from an American Magick Institute course.

Understanding Empathy
An online course

Empathy is the psychic ability to sense another being's emotions and physical sensations¹. It usually doesn't take long to start seeing the results of learning empathy, but it can take a significant amount of practice to be proficient at it.

All living things radiate emotional energy. The ability to sense and interpret this energy is called empathy. Learning empathy is not learning the ability to sense other's emotions. You are probably doing that all the time without realizing it. To an unskilled empath the sensed emotions are simply interpreted as background noise of his or her own emotions. Learning empathy is to learn how to quiet your own emotions and focus on and identify emotions coming from a single person. Once focused, you sense their emotions as if they were your own. If they are sad, you feel sad. If they are angry, you feel angry.

It is easiest to sense people who are experiencing strong emotions. Children are very easy to sense because they live in a world of constant emotion. The stronger the emotion a person experiences², the stronger that person radiates emotional energy. People who are not feeling much (if any) emotion are the hardest, if not impossible to sense.

The technique for empathy is: target, touch, sense and identify.

An easy way to start your empathic training is to visit your local mall and find a bench that is near where people walk and positioned so you can see them. Try to find an area that isn't crowded with lots of people. Have a seat and get comfortable. Clear your mind of thoughts. Clear your mind of emotions. Okay, you're ready to find a subject.

¹ I include physical sensations in the definition because it is not unusual to pick up both skills at the same time while learning. The commonly accepted definition of Empathy does not include sensing physical sensation.

² This does not apply to people who intentionally or naturally block the transmission of their emotions.

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Pick a person and visualize a ghost hand that appears a few feet from them and then moves to touch them. Think of it like a mouse pointer on a computer. The hand shows your mind who the person is that you want to touch. When it touches them, you will feel your own emotion shift from nothing to something. That something is the emotion of the other person.

Don't be surprised if you touch some people and feel nothing. At first you may only touch, sense, and identify emotions from two or three people out of fifty or so.

Don't touch a person for more than a few seconds. When you are practicing you will only have a few seconds of "touch" per person until the person can sense it. If you don't want to attract attention to yourself, you don't want the person to sense your touch.

Have you ever had an eerie feeling that you were being watched? That feeling is caused by a psychic touch. It's a creepy feeling that depending on the person can really freak some people out.

In my younger days, my friends used to get a kick out of my empathic abilities. They would pick out a person and have me get them to look around. What I was doing was touching the person for a long time so they would sense my touch and they would look around trying to figure out what it is that they were sensing.

There are several important notes of caution:

1. Don't overdo it when you practice. A half an hour should be plenty. Much more than that and you'll start to wear out your own energy and get exhausted. If you do burn out, hang it up for the day and give it a rest.
2. Empathic connections are not one direction only. When you touch someone, you are giving them access to your inner self also. In most cases, this is no big deal because they are not aware of it and lack the skills to use it anyway. Touching someone who does know how to exploit the connection is a bad idea unless you really trust them.
3. Be careful of what you bring into you. Touching the mind of someone who is in a dire emotional condition can be quite disturbing. Even after disconnecting the emotions can linger with you. If this does happen, consider it important to stop what you are doing, then center and ground out the unwanted emotions.

4. Consider the ethics of what you are doing when you use empathy. You have in essence, taken the lid off of a person's soul and peeked inside. This is extremely touchy in regard to personal ethics. Its not like you can ask permission¹. Also to be considered from an ethics point of view is what are the appropriate uses of information gained from empathy. In most but extreme cases, what I sense stays with me and goes no farther. It's my ace in the hole when it comes to relating with people.

5. Using empathy to determine if someone is lying is not infallible. If a person is lying but really believes that what they are saying is true, then their emotions will reflect this. If an honest person lies, it can usually be picked up right away. If a dishonest person lies... good luck. I've been burnt a couple of times before learning this lesson. Also, if you can't be objective about a person it is very difficult to get an accurate reading. No one is more blind to reality than someone in love.

Advanced Empathy

In time you won't need the ghost hand to guide your touch. You will become more in tune with the sensation of touching another and be able to touch, sense and identify emotions much more quickly and accurately.

As you are practicing you will occasionally get unusual things when you touch. Sometimes you may get impressions of things other than emotions. Physical sensations, images from memories, odors, and even tastes are not uncommon. What you are doing is crossing the line into telepathy (a much more difficult skill to master).

Empathy doesn't work only touching people. You can also touch the minds of plants and animals. There are few things as tranquil as touching the mind of a contented cat who is sitting on the back of the sofa relaxing and watching out the window.

To be honest I haven't spent much time trying to touch the minds of plants. I have experimented with it on a few occasions and what I discovered was enlightening. Trees don't perceive the passage of time in the same way that people do. Their world moves much slower than ours. Their daily cycle of wake up, eat, grow and then sleep lasts an entire year. For them what we call a day is more like a single breath. I wonder if that makes evergreen trees insomniacs? - BIG GRIN-

Simon Craft

¹ At one time I was trying to make it a point to ask permission before "touching". The results were disastrous. People get all offended and empathy takes way too long to explain. I eventually gave up and keep my empathic abilities secret.

Maiden Moon

Glossary

- Alexandrian Tradition - An Orthodox tradition of Wicca
- Algard Tradition - An Orthodox tradition of Wicca
- Asatruars - Practitioners of Asatru, a Norse religion which its followers tend not to classify as Pagan
- Athame - Ceremonial knife used in Wicca. The term Athame appears to have been a creation of Gardner, not a historically correct name.
- Beltane - A Wiccan Sabbat
- bok - Archaic spelling of Book as in Ye Bok of Ye Art Magical
- boline - Knife used in Wiccan ritual, not ceremonial in nature
- Bone, Eleanor - Relatively famous High Priestess in Gardnerian practice circa 1960s and beyond
- Brigid - a Celtic goddess
- Brigit - an alternate spelling of Brigid
- Brythonic - a specific branch of the Celts
- Buckland, Raymond - Famous Wiccan author and Witch Priest
- CE and BCE - Common Era and Before Common Era, a method of dating with no religious connection
- Celts - a broad term often used to imply a singular culture in Europe
- chakras - an internal energy point used in some magick systems
- clairaudience - The act of hearing remotely
- Clutterbuck, Dorothy - Associated with New Forest Coven but not believed to be High Priestess, although it is commonly stated that she was High Priestess
- Cochrane, Robert - An early practitioner of Witchcraft not directly connected to Gardnerian practice. Sometimes considered as the founder of 1734 tradition although occasionally disputed
- Correllian Tradition - A Wiccan tradition
- covenstead - The area from which members of a coven reside
- Craft, Simon - A founding Elder of Dragon Tradition Wicca
- croned - Past tense of having gone through a croning ritual
- croning - Ritual for passing into latter stages of life
- Crowley, Aleister - An (in)famous ceremonial magickian often related with Satanism although the connection is unclear
- crowleyan - Related to or attributed to Aleister Crowley
- Cunningham, Scott - Famous author of books on Wicca
- dedicant - A person in training for Wiccan practice
- Dianic Tradition - Wiccan Traditions named for Diana, at least 2 exist
- Druidic - Related to druidism

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- earthing energy - a process to drain off excess natural energy
- empath - A person capable of empathy which is sensing emotions psychically, related to empathy
- Eostre - A Teutonic (Germanic) Goddess
- Esbat - Meeting of a coven on full moon for ritual
- Faery Tradition - alternate spelling for Fairy or Feri Tradition
- Farrar, Janet and Stewart - Famous couple, authors of Wiccan books
- Feri Tradition - Wiccan Tradition founded by Victor and Cora Anderson, In Victor's writing this is the correct spelling
- Floralia - Roman festival of flowers
- Gaelic - a historical language common in Ireland
- Gardner, Gerald - One of the initiators of the Witchcraft revival, credited with Wicca
- Gardnerian Tradition - The Wiccan tradition descendant from Gerald Gardner
- Georgian Tradition - An Orthodox Wiccan Tradition
- Grimoire - A magickian's spell book, sometimes attributed to only black magick
- handfasting - A ritual joining a couple in wedlock or near wedlock
- houseclad - Simon's term for people who practice skyclad indoors
- Imbolc - A Wiccan Sabbat
- Imbolg - Alternate spelling of imbolc
- Kaballah - A remnant of Jewish mysticism with several alternate spellings sometimes indicating a branch
- Kerridwen - A Celtic goddess
- Lammas - A Wiccan Sabbat
- Leland, Charles - Prolific author on folk-history, wrote Aradia which influenced Wicca.
- Lepidolite - A type of stone
- Lugh - A god
- Lughnasadh - An alternate name for a Wiccan Sabbat
- Mabon - A Wiccan Sabbat
- magick - The use of non-physical means of will to influence change or communicate
- magickal - Either relating to magick, or something beyond the explanations of science
- magickian - A practitioner of magick
- Murray, Margaret - A famous author speculating on the old religion of Europe and its continued practice known as Witchcraft, VERY influential on Wicca
- nastygram - Simon's expression for getting yelled at in e-mail
- NeoPagan - Relating to modern Pagan religions

- neopaganism - A term describing the largely erroneous concept that somehow all modern NeoPagan religions are one and the same
- Oestara - Alternate spelling of Ostara
- oimelc - Alternate spelling of Imbolc
- Ostara - A name used for a Wiccan Sabbat, perhaps inappropriately
- poppet - A doll used in magick, not of Haitian origin like a Voodoo doll
- prostletization - Coerced conversion of another to a different religion
- Psi - modern term for the Psychical research community and their study
- rede - counsel or advise
- Regardie, Israel - Famous teacher and author on Golden Dawn style practice
- reiki - Eastern healing technique
- retrocognition - Psychical ability to perceive past occurrences
- Rosicrucian - A Christian magickal order
- Sabbat - One of eight religious holidays in Wicca
- saining - Ritual for the blessing of a child
- Salem - A town, and also the name of Simon's personal animal friend (a cat)
- Samhain - A Wiccan Sabbat
- Sanders, Alex - Leader and founder of the Alexandrian Tradition circa mid 1960s
- Sanders, Maxine - Wife of Alex Sanders and his High Priestess, virtually vanished after her split from Alex
- Satan - One of the personal names for Christianity's devil god
- Saxon - A culture in Europe
- scrying - The act of seeing visions as a method of divination
- Seax Wicca - A Wiccan tradition
- Sheba, Lady - An author of books on Wicca
- showstone - An alternate term for a crystal ball
- skyclad - The practice of ritual nudity in Wicca
- Starhawk - A famous author of Wiccan books
- summoner - A position in an Orthodox Wiccan coven
- telepath - A psychical ability to sense thought
- Teutonic - A European culture
- theurgy - A form of magick related to divinity or religious growth
- Valiente, Doreen - Former High Priestess to Gerald Gardner, very influential author
- Victor and Cora Anderson - Founders of Feri Tradition
- Wicca - A religion developed based on the Witchcraft revival of Gerald Gardner which has developed into many forms
- Wiccan - A practitioner of Wicca

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- Wiccan Rede - "Do as thee will, an harm thee none" or something worded very similarly
- Wiccaning - A ritual related to the child of a Wiccan
- Yule - A Wiccan Sabbat