

Pagan World 25
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PAGAN FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL

PAGAN WORLD



PAGAN WORLD The Newsletter of the Pagan Federation International

'Hi, everyone and welcome to another issue of Pagan World!' With about such words Diana Avertina might have welcomed the readers of this edition again. However, Diana had asked to resign as editor and her request was accepted. Therefore, on the behalf of the PFI and the many grateful readers, the honour to thank Diana wholeheartedly, for all her work and for her many efforts that she had invested during the previous years into the Pagan World, turns to another editor:

*Thank you, dear Diana, for all that you have done!
We wish Bright Blessings to you on your path onward!*

Diana set the stage for Pagan World, also for the time to come. The gate she pushed open for a great variety of articles will remain open. A warm welcome, thus, for yet many more contributions, at least if they will not contain anything racist, gay-bashing, child molesting, overly sexual, overly political, complaints about another Pagan, or anything that condones breaking the law.

Already during the last year, the new editor took on the printing and the distribution of Pagan World. When the PFI asked him to take on the editorship, too, he hesitated, felt and thought for a while. By experience, he has a notion of the amount of time and work that can flow into such an enterprise. Finally, maybe due to the power and magic of a dear witch's smile, he gave in and agreed to take it on for a year and a day.

What else can one say about the man? During fifty-two springs he saw and smelled at flowers and blossoms, most of them common, only a few exotic. He lavished of the fruits of various trees before re-discovering for himself for further exploration Paganism. Experience with professional writing, printed media and broadcast should help him in his task.

Inspired by the late J. R. R. Tolkien he chose for here a name from the old language Sindarin. The adjective *celeb* refers to being 'like silver, in hue or worth' (The Silmarillion 1984: 429), and, *lebethron* is known as a fair tree in Gondor. The staves that Faramir gave to Frodo and Sam for their wild quest were of this wood and had the virtue of finding and returning (The Two Towers 1990: 303).

Calah Lebathron

News from PF International, 21 March 2005

PFI Italy

The most recent addition to the PFI tree has been "PFI Italy". Although classical paganism has strong roots in Italy, think of the Roman pantheon, neo-paganism has not taken root so easily. In a country where Church laws are still firmly in place it is certainly not easy to stand up and say, "I am a witch".

However, in recent years changes have taken place. Phyllis Curott – American author of the bestseller "Book of Shadows" and founder of the Temple of Ara has been particularly active in Italy. In fact, Chronos, our National Coordinator for PFI Italy, has trained with Phyllis. He is an initiate of the Temple of Ara, although he started his Craft "career" as an Alexandrian, coupled with some experience within the Reclaiming Tradition from Starhawk.

He has been a PFI member since 2001. He is also the President and the founder of "Circolo dei Trivi", the first Wiccan volunteer association in Italy that publishes "Athame". This was initially an internal bulletin, but is now a regular magazine about Wicca and Paganism. They co-organise the National Wicca Conference with another association called "Antica Quercia". In October 2004, the third conference took place. It was during this Wiccan conference that he read my welcome-message and introduced PFI-Italia.

In "Vento tra le Fronde" a Celtic Magazine, he wrote an article in the Yule issue, to explain what PFI is. In December, he organized a small conference in Modena about Yule. He was there as PFI national coordinator, as a guest of Mondo Albero a pagan cultural group which is Asatru oriented.

In January of this year, a book called "Il paganesimo" has been published. Chronos contributed two chapters and included some information about PFI. In the near future, he is hoping to complete some more web pages on the website in order to promote PFI in Italy. Of course, this is the first time our information is available in Italian.

We are also hoping to be involved in more events in Italy. So watch this space!

PFI Turkey

As I write this report, we are also busy establishing PFI Turkey. See below for details of the website, which will be up and running by the time this issue is available. I have had close contact with Athenesis who lives in Istanbul. She was in Holland in December and we spent a few evenings discussing how we should go about organising it.

As Lowell McFarland wrote in the newsletter "Pagan Unity" (January 2005): "the Pagan Federation in Europe indicated that they added Italy last year and hope to add Turkey soon - the first official Pagan group in a Muslim nation." Indeed this is a premiere, as far as I know. Since Turkey is a secular nation, paganism is not illegal, but it is certainly not a well-known phenomena. I hope that we can play a significant role in supporting pagans there. I am looking forward to introducing Pagan Dawn readers to Athenesis later.

Bright Blessings,
Morgana

www.paganfederation.org Email morgana@paganfederation.org
www.it.paganfederation.org Email chronos@paganfederation.org
www.tr.paganfederation.org Email atheneris@paganfederation.org

Your Own Celebrations of Spring

By Anthony Link



"Spring Ritual"
Zu Ming Ho
www.larrysmithfineart.com

Three months. Three glorious months. After a long cold winter, it comes just when you need it most: Spring. We may not realize it, but we spend 25% of our lifetime experiencing Spring. While many people mark the first day of Spring with ritual, Spring itself is a ritual. It is a celebration that lasts for three months. You already may be celebrating the season in more ways than you think.

The Ghost of Springtimes' Past

Keep a journal? (Of course you do, even if it's in your head!) Page back through your memoirs of last Spring. What was going on in your life? What troubled you? What filled you with joy or kept you busy during those months? What was life like for you just a wheel's turn ago? Now page back even further, back into the memories of Springs sprung long ago. How many Springtimes back does your journal go? Two, three, a

dozen? Frolic through your own recollections of things that took place in late March, April, May and early June. Do you see a pattern? Do similar challenges keep springing into your life around this time of year? Look at how your situation has changed since then, and see the progress you've made over the seasons. Note both what has changed and what has stayed constant. Now, after looking back at your own life through your journal, look ahead at what you might expect for this coming Spring.

Divination

If Springtime looks ahead toward things to come, why not try doing a special form of divination tailored for Spring? How might divination methods vary with the seasons? What method fits best for you, and with Springtime's unique energy? In addition to the time-tested traditional tools of divination, you might try using a few objects naturally associated with Spring. Try using the seeds of seasonal fruit, ones that are abundant in your area come Spring. Maybe you could scry into a bowl of water collected from April showers. Or perhaps use petals from the May flowers? (She loves me; she loves me not... only a daisy knows for sure!)

Spring Rituals

Spring is a time of looking ahead; it is full of promise for the Summer to come. Its gentle warmth is just a tease of Summer's heat. It's the time where we look ahead and plan the outdoor events we savour. Ever notice that first sunny Spring-day when all the toys come out? People enjoy the outdoor fun that they waited for all Winter long: riding the motorcycle, washing the car, opening up the windows, walking barefoot and being free of sleeves and coats and gloves. Springtime is freedom! If you live in a place that springs its clocks ahead an hour, how do you spend that extra hour of daylight? See that hour as your own private celebration of the season!

In addition to play, Spring is often filled with its own unique work to prepare for the coming season. Whether caring for a simple garden, or tilling acres of farmland, Springtime is rooted in preparation for Summer growth.

Spring-cleaning, a seasonal ritual in itself, can be a magical event. In addition to dusting out a year's worth of clutter, use your Spring-cleaning to shed whatever emotional, physical or spiritual baggage you no longer need. Use this as a time to separate yourself from things you might not want to "replant" within your life this coming season. You might shed a bad habit, or a few people who hold you back. Don't be afraid to "pull a few weeds" this Spring...

Spring as a Rebirth

Many cultures celebrate Spring as a rebirth, as rejuvenation, where something or someone springs back to life: Ostara, Easter, and even wearing green on Saint Patrick's Day (March 17th, near the first day of Spring – when the Earth itself is about to start wearing green again too!) What do you look forward to rekindling this Spring?

While you can mark these formal holidays, you can also mark a few informal celebrations of Spring. Students have Spring Break; sports fans mark baseball's Opening Day. Even paying your income tax can be a celebration of Spring. Here in the US, once a year taxpayers square their debt with Uncle Sam on April 15th. See your taxes as a magical tool, channelling energy towards positive social change, funding our schools, libraries, hospitals, protecting religious freedom and fuelling social progress. If you have a refund coming this year, celebrate it as one of Spring's many gifts. (For numerologists, you might try listening for a little message hidden in the exact numbers you see when you do your taxes this Spring.)

Spring Activity Around Us

In the Spring, we re-open our windows after shutting out Winter's chill. We take the fresh Spring air into our homes and lungs. Likewise, with these open windows, we take in the sounds of the season too. The birds singing, the children playing outside, the neighbours laughing – these are the sounds we missed when Winter's windows were shut tight!

Look around. Springtime is a busy time. Those who flew south for the Winter and now have migrated home are rebuilding nests. Leaves are sprouting, flowers blooming. However, remember, the growth we see above the Earth is a reflection of the less-visible growth that occurs beneath the Earth. Once the soil thaws, it allows roots to grow a tiny bit deeper and take in what they couldn't during Winter's deep freeze. Sometimes it's easier to understand what you can see by looking beneath the surface, acknowledging the things you cannot see.

We're not all that different from what we see out in the yard. In the Spring, we too change with the seasons. Where Winter keeps us indoors, looking inwardly, Spring takes us outside, out of our homes and out of ourselves. Look at the trees -- their sap begins to run again in the Spring. So do our own creative juices. However, unlike trees, we are not physically, tangibly rooted. Much of our essence is less tangible. You can't see our "roots" but they are there none the less. We hibernate when it's cold; we spring back to life when it's warm. At the same time the Earth paints Herself with colour and anoints Herself with fragrance – we too are breaking out our Spring wardrobe! As reincarnated beings, our cycle of life is like the seasons. We too once sprang back to life,



American Animals
www.stormwildlifeart.com

growing until we peak and bloom. We eventually wither and fall, to rest again for a Winter-like sleep, dreaming of things to come the next time around...

Nevertheless, remember that the seasons are regional. Not everywhere in the world celebrates Spring when you do. When it's Spring in the southern hemisphere, it's Autumn in the northern hemisphere. Thus, the seasonal celebrations are often reversed as well, where most people celebrate the first day of Spring on September 21 and Beltane on October 31. Earth is an extremely diverse place!

However you celebrate the season, make this year's Spring something special!

Link (Anthony)

6538 Collins Avenue, #255, Miami Beach, FL 33141, USA, AnthLink@aol.com

Robust Paganism

By Ian Elliott
For Khalida

In what follows, I would like to discuss the broad outlines of Pagan religion. By 'Pagan' (the capitalization is deliberate) religion I mean any religion falling outside the traditions of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This obviously covers a lot of territory, and I am not concerned to represent the wide variety of religions, from Buddhism to Huna, that come under this heading. Nor will I be describing any particular religion of this sort. Instead, what I want to present is a general outline of answers to religious questions that differ from those provided by the traditions listed above. In the course of their history, the four religions above have persecuted other faiths and these have often responded by compromising their own views in favour of those of their persecutors. In contrast to such accommodations, I am here setting forth what I call 'robust', that is, uncompromising Paganism. I do not pretend that what follows is representative of any particular religion; just that it fits the sort of conceptions found in many Pagan traditions before these became corrupted.

Creation

Before discussing the creation of the world, it would be well to settle what we mean by 'the world'. Some ignorant people think that references to the 'world' in their scriptures refer to the planet Earth. Let us get over that *pons asinorum* immediately. 'World' in ancient accounts refers to the cosmos, seen as a sphere comprising the sky overhead, the land underneath, air in the middle, and water. The water surrounds the land as a great engirdling river, called 'ocean' by the Greeks. It also lies under the land, which explains geysers and rivers and fountains. The Mesopotamians and other ancient peoples also believed that the sphere of the cosmos floated in an ocean, and that

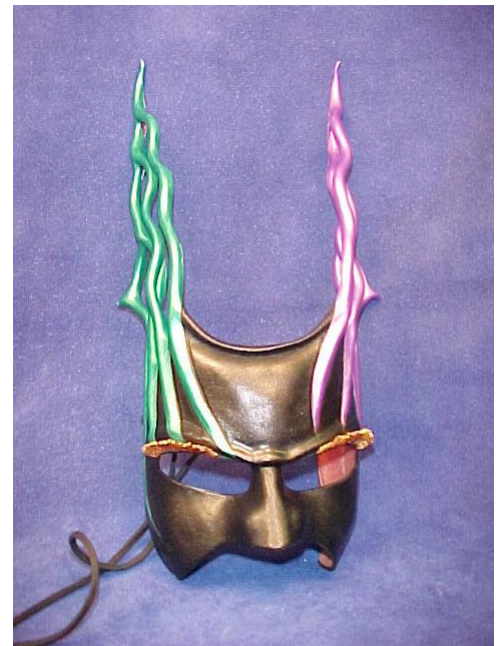


Voyage of the Ho'okalea

Christian Riese Lassen
www.elmspuzzles.com

this ocean dripped through chinks in the sky-dome at times, and so we had rain. This is what the Hebrew scriptures are referring to by the 'firmament that divides the waters above from the waters beneath'. So 'world' means 'cosmos', the ordered universe, but it needn't mean the whole universe as we understand it. For one thing, the universe we know of today is inconceivably vaster than that known to the ancients. For another, their cosmos was based on simple observation and was, in effect, the universe as it appears to us without telescopes or astronomical theories. That it included stars was due to the fact that they believed stars to be relatively close, at a remove about equal to that of comets. In fact, the word 'star' really meant any light in the heavens. The word 'planet' comes from the Greek word meaning 'wanderer', so planets were simply 'wandering stars'.

Thus, 'cosmos' in the ancient sense includes the land, sea, sky, sun and moon, with planets and stars as a backdrop. The earth is not one of the planets in the cosmos in this sense, for the simple reason that we cannot see the earth as a planet, at least not in our everyday lives (for astronauts it is a different matter).



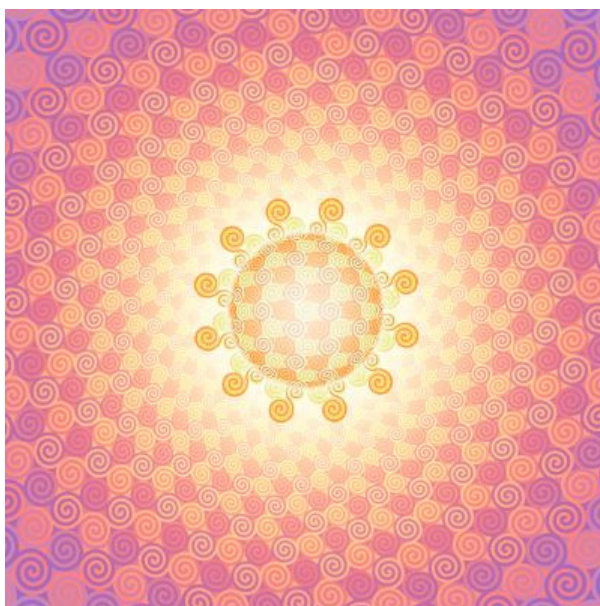
Mardi Gras Mask
64.51.54.101/Elaborate/elaborate.htm

That the cosmos was conceived of as local is borne out by the method of creation, which always involves the ordering of pre-existing material. This material is called 'chaos,' which means it had no particular form and needed to be put into shape. The Gods arise in some way from chaos and then set it in order. However, chaos still exists outside this order and always threatens to break through and dissolve it. For this reason, the creation of the cosmos needed to be repeated at intervals, and humanity participated in this re-creation at such occasions as the yearly Akitu festival in Babylon at the spring equinox. Every year the order slipped and we had a brief period of riot and disorder, commemorated in these latter times by spring carnivals and Mardi Gras. These culminated in a sacred rite that lasted several days and involved, among other things, the recitation of a creation myth. The notion of chaos surrounding cosmos is also evident in the very ancient practice of drawing a magical circle when invoking the extra-cosmic powers, so that they do not overwhelm the magician.

From this, it can be seen that the cosmos created by the Gods was not co-extensive with all of existence, but rather was limited in extent, being surrounded by chaos.

World Cycles

In the same way, the cosmos we inhabit is limited in time, not, as in the four religions mentioned at the outset, by an absolute beginning and ending, but by an ever-recurring series of world cycles, as described in the very ancient Hindu scriptures, the Vedas. The cosmos, or each cosmos, goes through cycles of creation,



New Chaos Of The Sun
luna.moonstar.com/~nedmay

growth, decline, destruction and quiescence. While it is in the quiescent state, a divine womb contains within itself the seeds of future souls, including the Gods who will emerge at the beginning of a new cycle and start the ball rolling again. This womb containing the seeds and eggs of all future life is called the womb of Kali in India, the dark Goddess. She has counterparts in most of the cultures of the ancient world. In Greece, she was called Nyx, meaning 'night', and it was said that even Zeus stood in awe of Her. As the Goddess Scotia, meaning 'dark', she gave Her name to Scotland, and as Skadi, she survives in the name Scandinavia. She it is who determines the course of each world cycle, when it will start, how long it will last, and when it ends. In the Norse poem 'Voluspá', the imminent end of the present world cycle is described thus:



The Fenris Wolf
www.worldofmidgard.com

Wind-age, wolf-age, Ere the World crumbles. Sword-age, spear-age, Shields are broken. East in Ironwood Sits the Old 'un; Watches it over Fenris's children. The Old 'un is Skadi, the Dark Mother of the world cycle, the mistress of fate, the source of creation, chaos, night. She is the foster-mother of the children of the great Fenris-wolf who will devour Odin at Ragnarok, and it is she who will release them when it is time for the present world cycle to come to an end.

When a new creation begins, the souls who have developed to an exalted state in the previous cycle are born early, in the perfected initial state of the world. Some may even come back as Gods. It is important to realize that spiritual evolution does not end with becoming a God, and some of those spirits who served as Gods of our cosmos in a previous cycle may have grown beyond our cosmos and been reborn in a higher or vaster cosmos. What this means is beyond our current ability to conceive. In this way, however, our relation to the Gods (generally speaking) is maintained even when we evolve to a super-human state, for most of them are evolving right along with us, and thus they stay ahead of us.

However, there are also Gods of the old cycle who preferred to pass out into chaos rather than be dissolved with the world in its previous destruction. These are identified by the Hindus with the outer, invisible planets, beginning with Uranus. Now that a new cycle is starting up, they attempt to interfere with creation and must be fought and vanquished, usually by the thunder-God. As beings inhabiting chaos, they are traditionally depicted as having the form of serpents, and so many creation myths from ancient cultures include a battle with the serpent of chaos, who must be overcome so that the new cosmos can come into ordered being. This myth survives in our folklore as St. George and the dragon (though earlier it was Jehovah, not St. George, who killed the dragon). The dragon also appears as the serpent in the Genesis story, and Christians later identified him with the devil. However, for the Pagans, there was no devil lurking at the heart of the world, only the Midgard serpent coiled round the base of the World Tree. The forces of chaos had



Uranus From Ariel by Marilyn Flynn
www.tharsisgallery.com

been conquered at the beginning of the world cycle, and were kept at bay by the vigilance and valour of the Gods, notably by the thunder-God, who also served as the guardian of the world pillar and thus of the 'upright' order of things. Each world cycle passes through four stages, known to the Greeks as the ages of gold, silver, bronze and iron. Each stage is shorter than the one before and conditions continue to worsen with each succeeding stage. Less developed souls reincarnate in the later stages (a doctrine making for our own humility), until at the end truly depraved and bestial souls preponderate.

As there are cycles within cycles, so the first thing to be done in a new year is to clear out the old energies left over from the previous year. Thus, it is bad luck to keep your Christmas lights up late, and before fire ordinances were passed, people always burned their Christmas greens in January. The custom of re-creating the cosmic order by banishing the spirits of chaos can also be seen in the universal practice of spring-cleaning,

Spirit and Matter

The anti-Pagan doctrine that the cosmos was created from nothing involves the notion that spirit is something qualitatively different from matter. This concept underlies the anti-Pagan denigration of nature, sexuality, and everything that belongs to matter, and is also the reason why the deities of nature are denied their divinity and condemned as devils, that is, angels fallen into matter. Thus, we see that the nature of spirit and matter is central to the difference in outlook of these two very different types of religion.



Ex nihilo
Frederick Hart
www.benedict.com

For Pagans, spirit is not qualitatively different from matter. It is a sort of matter that is finer, subtler than the matter known to science. Some Hindu teachers liken it to water filling the interstices of a sponge. Traditional Celtic folklore has it that the soul is not in the body, but the body is in the soul, which permeates the body and extends beyond it, enveloping it in a sheath. This sheath is known to Hindus (and New Agers) as the aura, said to be photographable via Kirlian photography. Spirit can thus be thought of, as either a less dense state of matter, or as energy existing at a higher frequency. Either way, it is easier to imagine how spirit can interact with matter if both are essentially the same sort of thing and only differ in their degree of concentration.

If spirit and matter essentially is the same sort of thing, then spirit as well as matter must come out of chaos and go back into it, either in the world-womb or outside it, in free chaos, like the Asuric beings of previous world-cycles. According to these ideas we are considering, therefore, awareness or spirit is not destroyed by re-entering chaos; and as chaos itself is a great Goddess, we may picture Her as a great dark sea of awareness. This being so, there is no possibility in Paganism for the destruction of spirits, and we are therefore assured of eternal existence, both in the past as well as the future, at least for so long as matter endures.

Death and Beyond

In ancient traditions, we encounter a variety of descriptions of what happens to the soul after death. In Mesopotamian and Homeric Greek religion, the soul survives at best as a sort of shadow in an Underworld, and whose only consolation comes from offerings of food and water made regularly by dutiful descendants. Note that this is not the same as non-existence, though it descends, in modern orthodox Judaism, to a belief in non-survival that is vaguely modified by the notion that “we survive in the memory of our descendants.” Because they have accepted the later doctrine of non-existence, modern orthodox Jews are really incapable of understanding their own religion’s teachings on this matter.

The teaching in Hinduism has always combined the notion of places of correction and reward with that of reincarnation. The full doctrine, in the Prasna Upanishad, seems to be that after death we go first to a place

of punishment or rather purification, where we expiate our sins. After that, we go to the Moon, where we enjoy the fruits of our good deeds. The number of bad and good deeds for any individual being finite, our sojourn in these two realms comes to an end, and we then reincarnate on the earth for another try at enlightenment. When a soul becomes enlightened, it does not go to the places of purification and reward, but instead travels to the Sun, from which it never returns. The Sun is Brahma, the creator, and in his sphere, the soul becomes glorified, perhaps uniting with Brahma and staying with him till the very end of the world-cycle. These are the exalted souls mentioned earlier, who are reborn as Gods or Demigods or enlightened sages at the very beginning of the next world cycle.

The pattern of birth and death thus resembles the experiences of a child growing up in the old British boarding-school system. He leaves home, goes off to a strange place, and is taught his lessons for a whole term. Then he comes home for the summer, takes any remedial courses to make up for what he didn’t learn in term, gets a whipping or two for his truancies, is given ice cream for his honours, and then, all too soon, is packed off to school again. This goes on for quite some time until he comes of age and graduates, at

which point he either goes off to the university or is put to work. Similarly, each life we are meant to learn certain lessons; if we don’t learn them, we must repeat the grade, as there is no automatic promotion in this school. Between terms, we return to our true homes in the spirit world, hobnob with our ancestors and dead friends, get some correction for our misdeeds in the previous life, and are prepared for the next one. When we are ready, we no longer reincarnate but go through a transmutation and become beings of light, not unlike the fairies.

The pre-Islamic Berbers of North Africa believed that if you could stay on the other side for a hundred years, you would become one of



Moon Dancer
ainero.persianblog.com



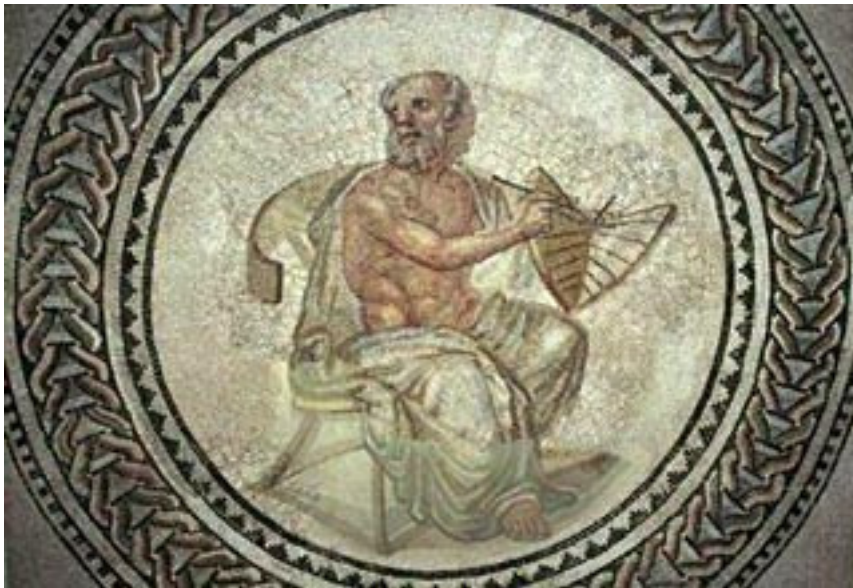
Two Berber Girls
www.afropop.org

the djinn, i.e., a genie or fairy. These beings have the ability to materialize a body for themselves on the spot, and then dematerialize it when they are finished with what they wanted. The ancient Egyptians also believed that 'exalted ones' could do such things.

It would seem, then, that Gods and men and all beings in between, as well as animals and plants and even rocks, are spirits involved in an endless journey of evolution. Some resist this evolution and even go backwards for a time, like Hitler, but the Hindu teaching is that all must, in the long run, evolve. There is no damnation, and therefore also no need for salvation, just periodic purification and the school of hard knocks.

The Gods and Fate

One important consequence of spirit being a form of matter is that there is only so much of it. If spirit is the same as what physicists call dark matter, it outnumbers visible matter by 99 to 1, and there is thus a vast amount of it around, but not an infinite amount. The idea of an infinite, transcendent God who is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-benevolent is not only inconceivable but also self-contradictory. Take infinite power: can God create a rock too heavy for him to lift? Or take infinite knowledge: if God knows everything, he knows my acts in advance, and what becomes then of my free will? But apart from these logical quibbles, the anti-Pagan concept of God simply does not fit the facts; and in saying this, we are proceeding more as Pagans would, from observation of the world instead of from theory.



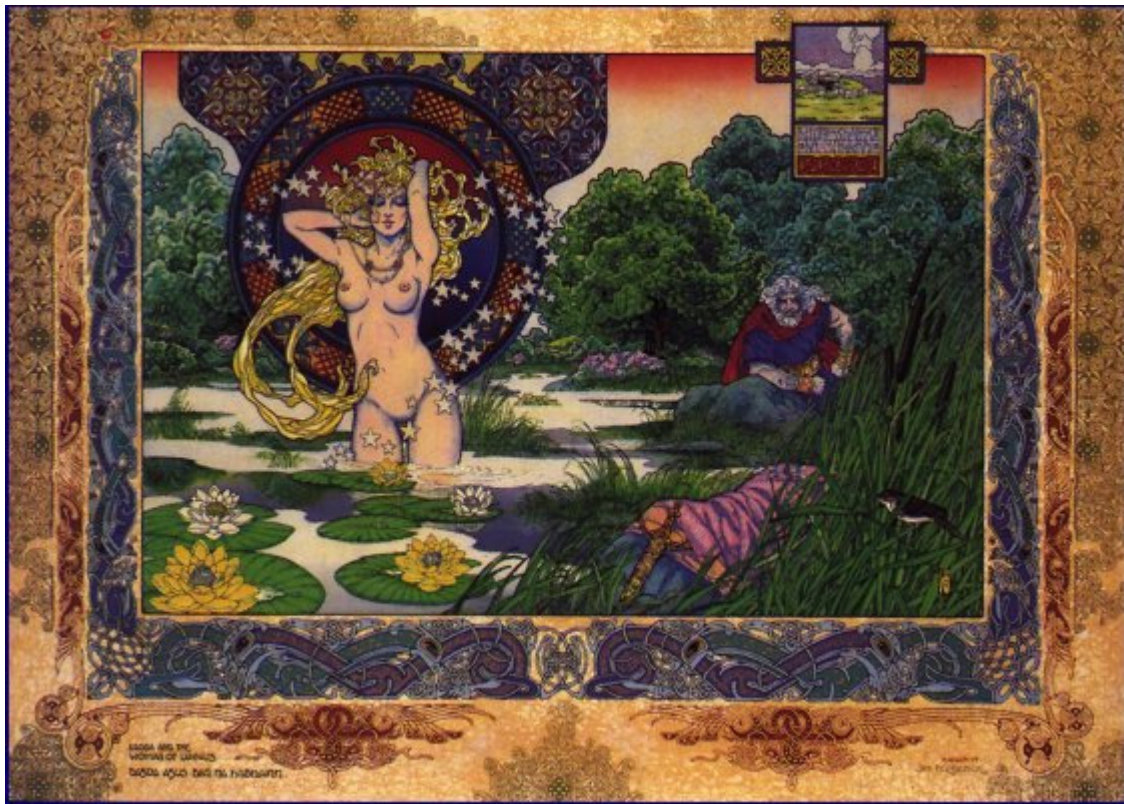
Anaximander
www.stenudd.com

The world (that is, the cosmos) has many marks of design about it, but it is not a perfect design. The Christians would say, this is because it is a good design gone bad, spoiled by the devil. But then you have to account for the fact that an infinitely wise, infinitely powerful and infinitely good God permitted a devil to exist and gum up the works, knowing all along in advance that he would do so. The Catholics reply that it is a mystery, but the same rationalization could be offered for a defect in any theory.

Pagan religions note that the world is a mixture of good and evil, of intelligent and defective design.

It is a world in process of development (it was Anaximander, a Pagan philosopher, who first thought of evolution), and appears to be designing itself as it goes along. We can accept the scientific idea that the process proceeds mechanically, in which case we are hard put to it to understand the origin of intelligence and of values like truth, goodness and beauty. Alternatively, we can propose the existence of intelligent beings who are guiding the process, and who are the source of those qualities in us that seem to imply an intelligent rather than a mechanical origin.

The idea of the Gods, of spiritually advanced beings who are less than perfect and who are involved in the ongoing creation and evolution of the world, provides a satisfactory answer to a number of problems. First, as there are many Gods, this accounts for



Handy and clever Dagda
technovate.org/retreat

the fact that the overall design of things seems at points to be at cross-purposes with itself. To take an example, humanity needs to be healthy, but viruses need to proliferate.

Secondly, there is a problem with the moral law being dependent on the will of a person. If that person is himself amoral, then the moral law is arbitrary and simply reflects his arbitrary choice. If we ascribe goodness to deity, the deity or deities in question must themselves be subject to moral law. And if they are not good but simply amoral and arbitrary, why should we obey them, except out of fear, which is an ignoble motive? The Pagan answer is that the law of right and wrong stands over all deities; it is something inherent in the nature of things. At the same time, there is no absolute goodness (or absolute evil either, for that matter). Good, like other qualities, is a direction rather than a location. So it makes sense to say of two actions that one was better than the other, but not that either one was wholly good or wholly bad.

That the Gods are superior to mortals is a truism for Pagan religion, but they are not to be held up to one single standard. It would not do, for instance, to judge Aphrodite by the standards of chastity, nor Ares by those of compassion. Each deity possesses his or her own excellences, and the same viewpoint applies to mortals as Pagans see them. Thus, for a Pagan, the important question about someone is not, "Is he good?" but "What is he good for?" The Irish God the Dagda is the "good God," meaning that he is handy and clever at many things. The social virtues of harmony, charity and hospitality all applied within a civilized context. The Cyclops is not considered evil for disregarding the laws of hospitality to his victims; he is merely barbarous, a wild being. What we should call evil men, such as the D.C. area snipers, are simply men who have rejected the laws of civilized society and reverted to those governing wild beasts. A ravaging lion loose in the city will be shot; so should they, for the general safety.

So the Gods are constrained, first of all, by their own limited power and wisdom; and secondly by each other. The ultimate limit on their power, however, comes from Fate, from the Goddess mentioned above who is chaos and night, the source and ultimate destination of the substance of all worlds, and their resting place between cycles. It

is she who determines the course of a world cycle and the life-course of every being within that cycle. This determination is not fixed, as some mistake it, but is itself an on-going and dynamic process. Laima (to give her her Baltic name) must balance several factors in her work of determining the course of one's life. She must work within the available DNA pool in assigning inherited characteristics; she must consider a person's karma and current developmental needs (his lessons at 'school'); and she must work within the conditions obtaining in the current phase of a world cycle. Even the most sublimely divine intelligence would find it difficult, I think, to give everyone an optimum allotment of luck in life under those conditions.

Accordingly, what Laima does is to start off painting one's destiny with a broad brush. Then, as a being (mortal or otherwise) begins making choices and thus narrowing his possibilities, she starts filling in the details of his current life until he reaches a point where his fate, as the saying goes, 'is sealed,' and nothing more can be done for him. Until that point is reached, a wise and pious mortal will do well to pray to the Gods and Goddesses for help in optimizing his possibilities and chances, within the limiting designs of his fate. Thus, Zeus helps Hector until the latter slays Patroclus, Achilles' boyfriend, at which point the God knows the hero to be doomed; he then reluctantly withdraws from Hector and leaves him to his fate.



Achilles bandaging Patroclus
www.androphile.org

Why I Prefer the Old Religion

There are a number of reasons why I prefer the above doctrines to those I learned in childhood. The first one is privacy. The infinite, transcendent God always seemed to me like a super-snoop. He was far too interested in everything I did, felt and thought. I felt like an animalcule spread out on a microscope slide, quivering nakedly under his beady eye. The Gods, bless them, love us but are not obsessed with us. They have their own fish to fry. We can call on them as peasant farmers called respectfully on the local gentry, but it wouldn't do at all to bother them unnecessarily about every little thing. And they are not inclined to read our minds; in antiquity people prayed aloud, because they believed that only thus would the Gods hear them.

The second reason I prefer Paganism is that I see that there are many different kinds of people in the world, and there is no one right way to live. Certain acts, such as kidnapping and torturing people or animals, are certainly beyond the pale of civilized society; but within that border, there is a lot of leeway for individual differences that can't be covered by the limited tastes of even a supposedly infinite God. Sexuality comes to mind here. The anti-Pagan religions have almost all condemned sexual license, not to mention minority sexual behaviour. Polytheistic religions, with their variety of divine tastes and standards, provide a broader basis for tolerance.

Even within the life of a single individual, there is no one answer to the question "How should I live?" There are only decisions and consequences. Thus, one man will resist sexual temptation and remain faithful to his wife, while another will have affairs and perhaps land in divorce court. Which man made the right choice? The Christian answer is invariably, the faithful man. But are the sexual repression, bitterness, unhappiness and mutual hatred that not uncommonly result from marital fidelity necessarily preferable to the early uprooting of a family that sometimes settles down later on with more happily remarried couples and a quieter home environment?

Here as in other things, the modern world has learned to weigh the pros and cons of each case, and this is essentially the Pagan approach to such matters. The freedom from the One God is as vital for human happiness as the freedom from the ten commandments. The Pagans of old were blessed with possessing neither a divine revelation nor a set of inviolable moral rules hanging over their heads. May we be so blessed again.

General References and Comments

Creation

1. "World" – for discussions of "world" in the ancient cosmic sense, see the early Ionian philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Empedocles.
2. For discussions of the Mesopotamian world-view, see *Ancient Mesopotamia; Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, by A. Leo Oppenheim; and *Ancient Iraq*, by Georges Roux.
3. For "ocean" as a great, world-engirdling river, see for instance Homer's *Odyssey*.
4. For the "firmament" dividing the waters above from the waters beneath, see Genesis, chapter 1.
5. Planets: for Greek astronomy, see Claudius Ptolemy's *Almagest*.
6. For the creation of cosmos from chaos, see Hesiod's *Theogony*.
7. For a discussion of the Babylonian Akitu festival, see the references in #2 above, and also discussions of the epic "Enuma Elish" in for instance, *The Babylonian Genesis*.
8. For Assyrian magical practice, see Oppenheim in #2 above.

World Cycles

9. For Hindu world cycles, see the introduction to Nikhilananda, Swami, ed., *The Upanishads* (4 volumes). Compare with Hesiod, #6 above.
10. For Nyx, see Hesiod, #6 above. For discussions of the Crone, see Barbara Walker, *The Crone*. For Kali, see Ajit Mookerjee, *Kali; the Feminine Force*. For the Old 'un and the Norse Ragnarok, see Voluspa in *The Poetic Edda*, edited by Carolyne Larington.
11. For a discussion of the Golden Age and exalted souls reborn at the beginning of a world cycle, compare Hesiod #5 with discussions in the *Upanishads*, #9 above.
12. That the Gods continue to evolve is implied in the ending of *Voluspa* (#10 above), and in the imperfect nature of the Gods as depicted in the Norse and other Germanic and tribal European pantheons. See also Buryat shamanic notions of the Tenger in, for instance, Sarangerel, *Riding Windhorses and Chosen by the Spirits*.
13. For the Titans as Gods of the previous world cycle, see Hesiod, #6. For similar notions regarding the Hindu Asuras, see *The Daily Practice of the Hindus*, by Srisa Chandra Vasu.
14. For the goietic choice of survival in chaos instead of cosmic death and rebirth, see for instance the discussion of the sex magical order *Fraternitas Saturni* in Stephen Flowers, *Fire and Ice*. Though he conceals his true sources, Carlos Castaneda reports much of the same concerning the "old seers" in for instance *The Fire from Within*. The connection of these with Asuric beings and the forces of Kingu (see *Enuma Elish*, #7 above) is a speculation of mine.
15. For the pedigree of St. George from Enlil see the sources in #2 above.
16. For the ages of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron see Hesiod #6, and compare with the *Upanishads*, #7 above.
17. For cycles on different levels, see discussions of the wheel of the year in for instance, Pauline and Dan Campanelli, *The Wheel of the Year and Ancient Ways*, and the discussion of the spring Akitu festival in # 2 above.

Spirit and Matter

18. For the Celtic notion of the soul as containing the body, see for instance Caitlin Matthews, *Singing the Soul Back Home: Shamanic Wisdom for Everyday*. For similar Hindu notions, see for instance #9 above.
19. For Kirlian photography, see *Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain*, by Ostrander and Schroeder.
20. For the relationship of density of matter to frequency of energy, see for instance P. D. Ouspensky, *The Fourth Way*.
21. "The dark sea of awareness" is a phrase of Castaneda's. I posit a rough equivalence between Night, Chaos and Anaximander's "indeterminate" (see #1 above). These may find a scientific counterpart in dark matter, which I suppose to be in some way sentient.

Death and Beyond

22. For the Mesopotamian underworld, see #2 above. For Hades, see Homer, #3 above.
23. For the after-death paths of the reincarnating and non-reincarnating souls in Hinduism, see the Prasna Upanishad, #9 above. Compare with discussions on *stregheria* in Raven Grimassi, *The Way of the Streggha and Italian Witchcraft*.
24. Becoming one of the djinn: I am unable at present to recover this reference. Pre-Islamic Berber religion was related to African spirit possession religions such as Ife that gave rise, in the New World, to Vodun, Macumba and its cognates. Grimassi (#23 above) describes transmutation into a daimon or elemental as an ultimate expectation of Tuscan *streggheria*, and a similar idea can be found in Nigel Jackson, *Call of the Horned Piper*.
25. The analogy of reincarnation and spiritual evolution with British boarding school is my own.

The Gods and Fate

26. One of the best discussion of defects in Biblical doctrine about God can be found in 'Why I am Not a Christian', by Bertrand Russell.
27. Of the consequences of the limited amount of spirit and spiritual qualities following from spirit being a rarefied form of matter, see P. D. Ouspensky in #20 above.
28. For the Pagan emphasis on practical good (being good for something), see discussion of the Dagda in *Celtic Myths and Legends*, by Peter Beresford Ellis. See also the Norse ethical teachings in *Havamol* in *The Poetic Edda*, #10 above.
29. For the Cyclops see Homer, #3 above. Compare with the account of Procrustes in Carl Kerényi, *Heroes of the Greeks*.
30. For an account of Laima, the Baltic Goddess of Fate, see *Of Gods and Holidays*, edited by Jonas Trinkunas, obtainable from the site www.romuva.lt.
31. For the concept of fate in Homer see for instance the essay "The Relationship of Fate, the Gods, and Man in 'The Iliad' ", at <http://www.bookrags.com/essays/story/2003/10/14/21524/973>.

Why I Prefer the Old Religion

32. Prayers were read aloud in antiquity because that is how people read then. Spontaneous prayers took the form of requests with pledges and offerings, also aloud. People who felt timid towards too-intrusive divinities were regarded as superstitious.

Overcoming Religious Violence: A Pagan Perspective

By Rev. Angela Buchanan
Circle Sanctuary

Iraq is the land of Mesopotamians, Sumerians, and Uruks, the place where great Pagan civilizations shaped the world through the development of writing (cuneiforms), law (The Code of Hammurabi), and agriculture (the Hanging Gardens of Babylon). It is ironic that relative to the abuses in Iraq, religious leaders all over the world are speaking out. Nevertheless, apparently, it has not occurred to those leaders to include or consult with Pagan religious leaders, who have for the most part been excluded from these discussions or denied a place at the table.

In part, this oversight may be due to the fact that Pagans as a religious and spiritual community are still largely invisible to the world, dismissed or discredited by those who don't take them seriously. Pagans know that to bring attention to themselves or their communities, often bears the risk of being left open to violence and discrimination. However, regardless of this risk, Pagans have become increasingly aware of the necessity of education of and dialogue with others.

For Pagans, dedication to overcoming religious violence is nothing new; as past and current victims of discriminatory practices they are already painfully aware of and familiar with the devastating results of intolerance. Religious violence is born of ignorance and fear, which evolves into discrimination and progresses to subterranean rumblings of dissent that eventually erupt. At its height religious dissent pits people one against the other, culminating in war and shameful acts against humanity perpetrated in the name of god. Pagans have been the targets of such hostility for thousands of years.

Today the news is full of egregious reports of religious violence and intolerance around the world. Iraq and Afghanistan dominate the media as we sit on the edge of our chairs watching to see what fresh atrocities are being committed by the peoples of those lands -- and to them.

We watch in disbelief at the footage of the wreckage of a train in Madrid, blasted to oblivion, ripped open like a sardine can, precious contents spilling over the landscape. We hear about car bombs detonated in Belfast, the suicide bombers in Israel, the rapes and beatings so prevalent in Uganda and Somalia. We wonder how it all got started and then how it was allowed to get so out of hand, we shake our heads in perplexity. All this in the name of god.

The fact remains that fundamentalists all over the world still routinely subject Pagans to blatant and illegal bigotry on a daily basis. This typically involves religious harassment at work or bullying at school, arbitrary refusal by landlords to rent to them, vandalism of their cars or homes, and desecration of their outdoor sacred spaces. However, those stories are rarely reported.

In Britain, sacred stone circles, monolithic sites that pre-date written history have been vandalized and destroyed by those who seek to promote their own faiths. The gov-



Law-giver Hammurabi

www.atlastours.net/iraq/hammurabi.jpg

ernment of Ireland believes that running a road across the property of the Hill of Tara, one of the oldest Pagan sites known today, is perfectly acceptable. Indigenous Pagan peoples of Africa, Australia, Asia and South America are being oppressed, tortured and murdered for adhering to ancient spiritual beliefs and traditions of their ancestral Tribes. In the United States, where we feel safe and protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution, the rumblings of



Chun Quoit, Cornwall
Celeb, 2000

religious discrimination are present. (The First Amendment promises “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”)

Just last week, Texas state Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn’s office ruled that the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church was not a religious organization for tax purposes. The status was denied, the state said, because the church “does not have one system of belief.”

Last month, Bob Barr, former member of the House of Representatives for the state of Georgia reiterated that Wiccans should not be permitted to worship on military bases because it “deteriorates the fabric of American values.” (Barr was voted out of office in 1999, he now works for the A. C. L. U., the one organization Americans thought would protect their Civil Liberties. Rather, the proverbial fox has been given access to the hen house.)



Wicca
www.wicca100.com

Last April in Tennessee, two men told a young Pagan college boy “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”, after they ran him down with a pickup truck, tied his hands behind his back, and proceed to beat him with a cane and a hose. One then cut him with a knife, from his neck to his hip, saying that “as soon as you repent and you accept God, the pain will stop.” They eventually tied him to a tree and left him. He was able to free himself and call friends. Also in April, an Alabama court denied a grandmother visitation with her grandchild in her own home based solely on her practice of the Wiccan religion.

Last year, Lt. General Jerry Boykin, deputy undersecretary of defence for intelligence, said, “I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real god and his was an idol.”



Freedom Riders — 1961
www.voicesofcivilrights.org

leaders by their clergy. When political leaders begin to blur the lines between gods and governments, by crafting laws based upon religious dogma, they sow the seeds of conflict, unrest and destruction.

As a general rule, Pagans are a peace-loving people. Our intent is to live lightly on the Earth, in harmony, cultivating and developing a love for and kinship with Nature. We hold a reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death. The Pagan ethic is a positive morality expressing the belief in individual responsibility for discovering one's own true nature and developing it fully, in harmony with the outer world and community. We recognize the Divine, which transcends gender, acknowledging both the female and male aspect of Deity. We do not exempt ourselves from the potential for violence for even Pagans are vulnerable to bigotry and hatred toward those of other faiths. We need to recognize it, address it and stop it. We have to start somewhere.

As Pagans, we call upon the followers of all paths to actively practice the peace, humility and compassion they preach in their own faiths, and witness true spirituality to those of their own faith who arrogantly presume that the mandate to convert others gives them god's permission to indulge in bigotry and bullying. At the very least, consider that non-believers aren't likely to be convinced of the power of "god's" love when so many of the most vociferous advocates behave as if possessed by some unholy demon of hate.

We urge other moderates of conscience to take action to curb extremist members of their faith and hold them accountable for their words and actions. Perhaps religions might consider withdrawal of credentials and financial support for those religious leaders who support and encourage bigotry or violent dissent.

Like the Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights movement, peace-loving peoples could attend local rites with the purpose of educating themselves and reining in their intolerant brethren, to help ensure that freedom of religion for their fellow human beings is protected. Church leaders could produce a positive position paper stressing tolerance for spiritual diversity. Those in schools and workplaces could make the effort to learn about their colleagues' views on religion and seek out the similarities linking people of faith rather than attacking their differences. As the Baha'is say: "There is unity in diversity."

No one takes kindly to being hit over the head with "god's love." Warlike spirituality rarely endears others to its cause. In most cases, rabid

How do these individuals (and those like them) come to believe that such conduct is acceptable? I suggest that we, the religious leaders of the world at the top of our organizations, are responsible when we fail to recognize and address extremist behaviours within our own circles and congregations and refuse to allow them to continue.

This hate-mongering descends from the front of the sanctuary, spread by fundamentalist, hypocritical "men of God" who exhort their followers, even children, to despise and disrespect those of any religion that differs from their own. It has infiltrated the laws of our society through the advisement of political

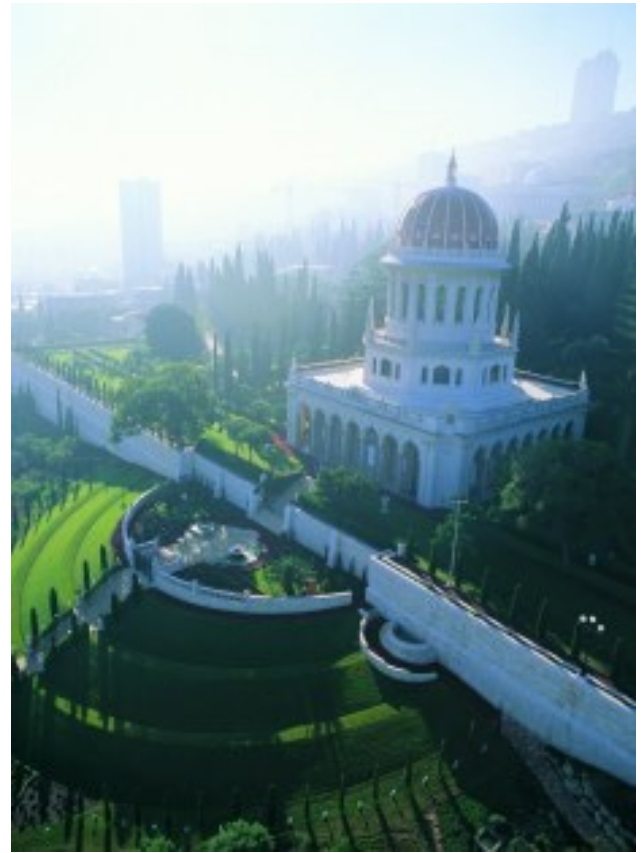


Freedom Riders — 1961
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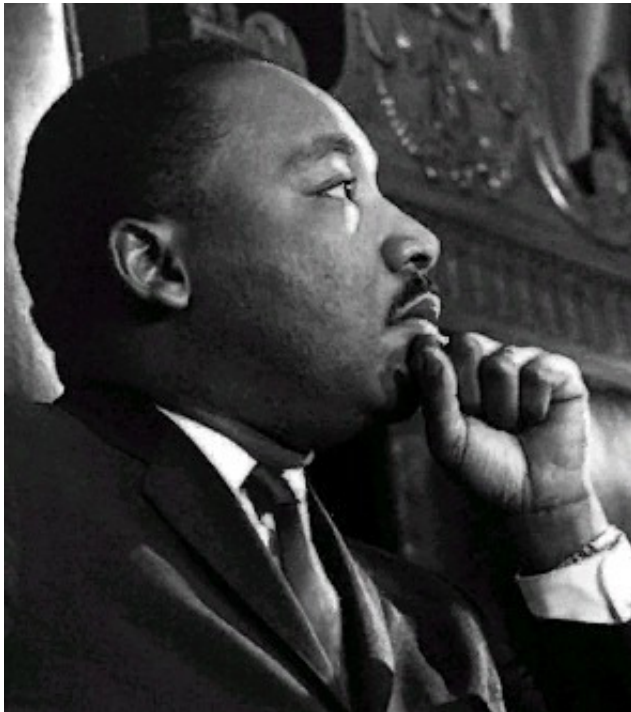
proselytizing is counter-productive. We need to make a conscious effort to be aware of the war-supportive nature of the language we chose to employ. For example, consider the following terms: “Christian Soldiers,” “Entry by Troops,” “Weekend Warriors” and references to “winning” souls and “holy revolutions” as though religion were some sort of competitive sport. It is not.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said; “Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” It is a rule to live by.

Today we are presented with unique opportunities. Never before have so many resources been available: The Internet provides us with the ability to communicate with each other easily across time, distance and cultural divide, to share the wisdom of the spiritual traditions of the world. We have an increased awareness to celebrate the Earth’s diversity of



Baha'i Shrine
Mount Carmel, Israel
www.tour-haifa.co.il



Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

Martin Luther King, Jr.
www.kycourts.net

cultures and religions and of the need to respect basic human rights; we have the wherewithal to address the painful problems of poverty, injustice, inequality, and violence.

Pagans are not easily swayed from the Old Religion, because it brings us deep joy, wisdom, and strength. Our solidarity has been finely honed after centuries of being caught in the middle of monotheistic holy wars, and the near-daily bigotry many of us encounter simply has the effect of steeling our resolve and cementing our beliefs, rather than eliminating them. Moreover, having experienced the sort of spiritual satisfaction we receive from our path, we also tend to be more accepting of those who have attained similar satisfaction on their own paths. These are tools of experience to be de-

veloped and shared. We ask that you allow us to join you, and that you join us as we prepare to spread our wings and ride the winds of change.

Acknowledgement and thanks to Lowell McFarland of Tuan Today, and The Pagan Federation for contributions to this article.

Christopher Penczak: “Gay Witchcraft”

By Morgana, January 2005

According to his biography found in “The Encyclopaedia of Wicca and Witchcraft” by Raven Grimassi - Llewellyn Publications, we read:

“Christopher is the author of the books including City Magick (Samuel Weiser, 2001), Spirit Allies (Samuel Weiser, 2002), The Inner Temple of Witchcraft (Llewellyn 2002), Gay Witchcraft: Empowering the Tribe (Weiser Books, 2003) and The Outer Temple of Witchcraft, The Inner Temple of Witchcraft, The Witches Shield, and The Magick of Reiki (Llewellyn 2004). He is an eclectic witch, healer and teacher in the New England area.

“Born in Lawrence, Massachusetts on May 10, 1973, Christopher was raised in an Italian/Polish family while living in Salem, NH. After twelve years of Catholic school and becoming an avowed agnostic, he initially pursued an interest in chemistry, stemming from a childhood fascination with alchemy and herbalism. As a youth, he had an out of body experience, passing out in a fourth grade science class, but observing the whole scene in spirit, from above the room. While in high school, he was visited by an apparition of his recently deceased great aunt. These two experiences made him question his dedication to science and pursue a study of the mystical and occult, as well as his artistic pursuits. He attended the University of Massachusetts as a vocal major, earning a Bachelor of Music Performance/Music Business in 1995 and set his sights on becoming a full time performer. While studying classical voice, he founded a band called Doctor Soulshine that fused mystical imagery and shamanic concepts to traditional rock music.

“While in college, a long time friend and teacher introduced Christopher to the principles of witchcraft, meditation and spell work. At first he was sceptical, but his experience with a healing spell at a full Moon ritual was enough to convince him that there was truth to these ideas and he sought to understand more. He took classes with Laurie Cabot, in her Witchcraft As A Science tradition. He was fascinated with the science and philosophy of her teaching, grounding witchcraft in sound thinking and personal experience. A psychic healing experience left him with a sense of empowerment and spiritual connection. After this initial training, he studied with an assortment of witches, shamans, yogis, psychic readers and healers in the New England area, developing an eclectic path of personal witchcraft. He later focused on the healing arts, completing training as a Reiki Master (Teacher) in the Usui-Tibetan and Shamballa traditions and certification as a flower essence consultant.

“After graduation from college, Christopher began work at the A&R department of Fort Apache, a recording studio and record label in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He soon found himself leading meditations and ritual groups for friends seeking to know more about the Craft. During his time in the Boston area, Christopher experimented with the



Christopher Penczak
Ash Russell, November 2004

ideas he later wrote about in his book *City Magick: Urban Rituals, Spells and Shamanism*.

“Although having no real interest in teaching formally, Christopher received a message during a meditation in 1998 to start teaching more and begin writing. Thinking it was his imagination, Christopher ignored it, saying to himself and the universe, “I’m too busy with my music career. If you want me to teach, give me the time.” The next week he was laid off from his job and had plenty of time. Although with a booming economy and many job opportunities, Christopher had no luck finding a position in the music industry, or a more traditional office job. When he posted a few flyers about meditation and witchcraft classes at a local shop, the response was immediate and he began teaching classes in his home. Soon he was asked to present workshops at local new age stores and centres. Christopher’s practice focuses on introspection, encouraging others to find their own path and create their own traditions while having a solid foundation in the art, science and spirituality of witchcraft.

“Christopher published [The Second Road Newsletter](#), A Journal of Alternative Spirituality (1997–2002) as a quarterly community forum for not only paganism in New England, but also for other traditions of spirituality and healing.

“In 2000, Christopher Penczak was ordained as a minister by the Universal Brotherhood Movement, Inc. He is also a part time faculty member at the North Eastern Institute of Whole Health and a founding member of the Gifts of Grace Foundation, a non-profit organization in New Hampshire made up of individuals from diverse spiritual backgrounds dedicated to joyful service to the local communities.

“Continuing with his writing, Christopher has since penned *Spirit Allies*, *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* and *Gay Witchcraft*. In 2002, *City Magick* won Best Magic book from the Convention of Visionary Retailers. In 2003, he won the same award for *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*.

“Currently Christopher continues to write books and articles while holding a teaching and healing practice in New Hampshire, where he lives with his husband, science fiction/fantasy author [Stephen Kenson](#).”



Christopher Penczak and Stephen Kenson
Ash Russell, November 2004

Christopher was invited to speak at the Pagan Federation International Convention November 2004. This was his first visit to London and he writes on his website about the visit.

“My partner Steve and I also visited London for the first time. I was invited to speak at the [London Pagan Federation](#) conference. The theme was Unity and Diversity. London surprised me in many ways. First, I was not prepared for how psychically thick the local astral is. I tried to explain it to a few U.K. witches, but they just didn’t get it, because it is their background energy that they grew up with. For an American, even though we have ancient Native sites, nothing in the U.S. is that densely and magically populated

for as long as the British Isles have been. They have bars and pubs that are older than our country. I don't think there was a square foot where we travelled that someone had not been killed, died or been buried. It's tough if you are sensitive to those things. I was very emotional for the whole trip. It reminded me a bit of New Orleans in that psychic soup kind of way, but a very different vibe. Also going in and out of the cold damp air to warm, dry and smoky air was not helpful when you have to give a talk. Between the environment and the long plane rides, I was a bit under the weather for part of the trip, but doing much better now.

“Due to a serious of mishaps, I didn't get a chance to meet or speak to the other presenters of the London Pagan Federation. I was particularly interested in hearing Tania Ahsan speak on witchcraft and paganism in Pakistan. I did get to spend lots of time with darling soul sister and fellow author Kala Trobe, so that was quite wonderful. She showed us the sights and offered her hospitality to us. We went to the London Museum and saw the mirror and wax tablets that John Dee and Edward Kelly used in their Enochian Rites. We also saw the mummy of Cleopatra, which really disturbed me. I had never really thought of Egyptology as being so disrespectful before, but seeing the corpses on display bothered me. We rounded out the trip with a visit to Stonehenge and Bath to see the Roman Baths. Though many pagans claim to feel "nothing" at Stonehenge because they don't let you touch the rocks anymore, but I felt a profound sense of sacredness there and really enjoy our visit, despite the cold.”

Fortunately, I had arranged to meet up with Christopher and although it was a brief encounter, we talked about numerous things. The theme of the convention was “Unity and Diversity” and was one, which he felt, was important and one that he could empathise with. Moreover, many of my questions he answered during his talk. In his talk he described how he came out as a gay person and how he entered the world of Witchcraft. In the first instance, perhaps because of his Catholic background, he felt the need to be asexual. However, he found in Wicca a sense of harmony, a harmony based on diversity. To him the personal initiatory experience was concerned with becoming awake and had little or nothing to do with "Lineage".

Although his Art teacher helped him in many ways, it was Laurie Cabot who influenced and inspired the most. Her emphasis in the classes he followed was not on what is (perhaps quaintly) called BTW in the States (British Traditional Witchcraft), but on self-healing and first hand experience. Sexuality played no part in it the teachings – in fact it was no big deal. However, this was in a time when homosexuality and Wicca were not really talked about in one breath. At that time he was still in the closet. He gradually found contacts in the LBGT (Lesbian Bisexual Gay Transgender) scene. There he found even greater diversity.

However Laurie had indicated that in many of the Ancient or Antique Religions homosexuality was in fact not only accepted but was openly part of the religious practice. The link between sexuality and sacredness was made. For him this was ground breaking. Although Wicca is a fertility Religion it is also a religion of balance and the correct balance between genders.

What does it mean to be a gay witch/gay man? He felt that initiation had made him stronger. It was in some respect traumatic – he felt it was truly a “trial by fire”. He went on to explain that he felt as though he had two clear initiatory experiences, into magical and into sexual reality. First, his “coming out” was an identification of self and an identifying “with”. He became empowered. Secondly, the Craft initiation was a process on an inner level. Coming to know the difference was for him a revelation and also coming to terms with it was a challenge.

In the realm of psychic healing he was working with magic and having success. It seemed to blow open more avenues for him. Things were much more colourful but he



Christopher and Morgana
Ash Russell, November 2004

also recognised the need to take responsibility. There was also a need for self-love and the growing need to feel truly Perfect Love and Perfect Trust. In coming to terms with sexuality he felt a sense of “coming home”. In coming out of the closet as a Witch and as a gay man, he felt the two aspects mingled into an overall pattern. He also saw how this could affect his relationship to the world around him. There was also empathy and no longer feeling alone.

It was then that he began to seek the “community” and between the communities (non-gay/gay and non-Wiccan Wiccan). He felt that these were processes and he was able to transform himself. After Salem, he felt confronted with what to him were controversial subjects. There were for example the traditional views and concepts such as polarity and fertility. Many of his views were, by now, not traditional. In the traditional view fertility rites depended on the ritual being worked by a man and a woman. There was after all a God and a Goddess. He had been used to a solo practice, in which he had for example performed the rite of “Drawing

Down the Moon”. He had come to know the man/woman within and his rites were free of traditional roles. For him it was the blending of the sacred. He emerged from his training having tried out these rites. For him fertility is not only the process of procreation but also the need to preserve, having a fertile, creative mind. It is well known that there is a high percentage of gay artists. However, everyone should remember that we are our own centre.

In our rites we draw on our current – our own creative energy. In Dianic groups (all-women group) women raise the energy. In an all-male group, the men raise the energy. Whether we stand in an all-male or all-female group, we still need to create “elemental balance”. We see this in the symbol of the Yin Yang but we can also visualise the rainbow with all its many hues of colour. We are not talking about absolutes but a blend of extremes – a spectrum within.

Many of the fears however come from the Church. When asked which deity we should follow we should really follow our heart. In the history of queer spirituality there are many homoerotic and cross-gender themes. In some respects, we should be working on a New Mythos. When sexuality is being expressed, it is as if we are building bridges. We are in a sense “between the worlds”. This is not always understood. In the past there have been guardians and “keepers of the mysteries”. This is a concept familiar in both Wiccan and Gay circles. Whilst there may still be a Wiccan community and a Gay community with their own goods, arts and cultures, we should be looking at a wider community. A community where we can share our spirituality.

Pagan World

I really enjoyed Christopher's talk and am looking forward to reading his new book "Sons of the Goddess – a young man's guide to Wicca" (April 2005 – Llewellyn ISBN 0-7387-0547-0)

For notes see also <http://members.aol.com/torcboy/biography.html>
<http://www.christopherpenczak.com>

“Religious symbols to be banned in the European Union...” (Well nearly!)

Dear Readers,

In the news columns in the newspapers and on the radio about 18th January 2005 it was announced that, as a result of an initiative in the European Parliament (started by 3 German members), the European Commissioner for Justice considered a union-wide prohibition of the use of “nazi symbols”. The European ministers would discuss this at the “Justice and Home Affairs” on the 27th January. It was not quite clear what was meant by nazi symbols, although the Swastika was mentioned in the news as an example (thanks to the British prince Harry for that). Therefore, the same day I wrote a letter to European Commissioner Franco Frattini **and** the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Why did I do that? To prevent stupid decisions being taken on the 27th January and to guarantee that the ministers would know the consequences of such a decision, before taking it. Although I still don't know which symbols could be hampered in their use, it is clear that we are talking about holy symbols for Hindus and also those who follow the Northern or Saxon traditions, just to name a few. Symbols like the Sun wheel have been in use for thousands of years and runic signs also belong to an old European culture and are part of the tradition in North West and Northern Europe.

Just because a certain political system, in a relatively short period in history, **abused** our holy signs cannot justify its prohibition as it would:

- ❖ hamper the use and dissemination of one's own culture;
- ❖ limit the fundamental right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion as acknowledged by the member states of the European Council (composed of more states than the European Union).

Germany already had a limiting provision for the use of “nazi symbols”.

Although, at the moment that I'm writing this, I still did not receive an answer from the European Commissioner and I haven't read either whether and if so which decision has been taken, it was remarkable that on the 29th January I read in the Dutch Newspapers (and heard on the radio) that the Dutch minister for Justice considered a prohibition of the aforementioned symbols.

As I said before, Germany already has such national regulations. It is remarkable that the Netherlands now considers making such regulation by the beginning of March. Even if you are living in another country of the European Union, it could be worthwhile to find out what's happening there, before being confronted with propitiatory regulations.

There are two kinds of European regulations:

- ❖ **Regulations by the European Union that apply directly for the European citizens;**
- ❖ **European Directives that have to be implemented by the Member States.**

Until I have received a letter from the European Commissioner for a Justice, or have received other information of what exactly was decided on 27th January in Brussels, it looks as if it was decided to make some kind of a Directive in this case. If you would like to raise complaints, there is a good chance you should bring charges against your national authorities (too), if you want your culture, belief or philosophy of life, as guaranteed in an international convention by the same national authorities, to be respected.

Therefore, I wrote to the Dutch minister for Justice, that in limiting symbols, he would have to make clear that **it only applies to the political abuse of such signs**. They belong to a very old and continued cultural and religious tradition of north-west and northern Europe, our country included, and to Theosophy and Hinduism. So that someone wearing such a symbol will not be arrested or given a penalty, because he or she is wearing a "nazi symbol" while manifesting his or her belief or religion or old traditional culture. I'm still waiting for his answer and curious what will be decided in March.

We will see clearly that these developments affect all of us who share the pagan ways, but also the other belief of religious systems. It's about wearing (Islamic) headscarves, Sikh turbans, wearing a crucifix, Star of David around your neck, or a pentagram! Accepting that followers of the Northern and Saxon path or Hindus would no longer be able to use and carry Swastikas or runes and runic symbols that have been in use for thousands of years, would create a very dangerous precedent. In the end, it could effect us all. It is also about solidarity.

From the European Court of Human Rights I received the complete text of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights and an official form with which to lodge the application. In principle, this should be done before a six months period after the decision has expired. I heard that the Hindu community in Great Britain already raised protests against a limitation to use their Swastika on personal jewellery, on their temples and altars. To them it is a sign of life and of good luck. I don't know if they have found the way to the European Court of Human Rights already (*Postal address: Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg CEDEX*).

We are so much stronger and more successful if we join forces. An action, supported by individuals and organizations who consider their basic rights, as guaranteed by an official Treaty that is "higher" than national law, violated, is of a far-reaching importance to the pagan community. It would form a precedent of the expression of your basic cultural en religious rights that could help in later and other situations. In that way, a clear decision by the European Court in this case would help us all.

*Light and blessings,
Dominick LL. M., h. pr. O. M.*

PS Dominick emailed on 26th February with the following:

"De huidige voorzitter van de EU, Luxemburg, heeft blijkens een bericht in onder meer De Volkskrant van vandaag (25/2/05, blz. 3) het plan losgelaten om "nazisymbolen", zoals het Hakenkruis, te verbieden. Op dit moment zouden binnen de EU alleen dergelijke verboden op grond van nationaal recht gelden in Duitsland en Oostenrijk"

“The present Chairman of the EU, Luxembourg has, according to the announcement in The “Volkskrant” (25-02-05, p. 3), withdrawn the plans to forbid nazi symbols such as the Swastika. At the moment there is already a general ban, based on national rights, in place in Germany & Austria.”

As Dominick mentions too, it is good that the decision has been made, but paradoxically it is also a shame, since this could have served as a precedent for other countries where paganism is practiced virtually underground. Either way it is good to see that we can and must use our powers of protest and demonstration.

Morgana



1 maart Chestita Baba Marta

Door Fjierra Maris



Over de ganse wereld kijken mensen met hoop en vreugde uit naar de nieuwe lente, maar enkel in Bulgarije wordt 1 maart gevierd als een eeuwenoud en heilig gebruik.

Volgens de oude Bulgaarse verhalen zijn de maanden van het jaar elf broers en één vrouw (grootmoeder Marta). Op de eerste dag van de maand maart wensen Bulgaren elkaar "Chestita Baba Marta" (Gelukkige Grootmoeder Maart) en geeft men elkaar Martenitza's; rood en witte stukjes wol die geluk, liefde en gezondheid brengen. De meest populaire Martenitza is 'Pizho en Penda', twee poppetjes, een wit jongetje en een rood meisje. Niemand weet exact waar het gebruik vandaan komt, maar het zou een oudheidens gebruik zijn, ontstaan in de 7de eeuw dat het einde van de koude winter en de komst van de lente aankondigt.

Martenitza's worden opgespeld of aan de pols gedragen tot je de eerste zwaluw of reiger ziet (eentje die terugkeert uit het Zuiden, niet in de Zoo ☐). Daarna wordt de Martenitza met een wens aan een boom gehangen of onder een steen gelegd voor divinatie (een dag later gaat men terug naar de plek waar de Martenitza werd achtergelaten en een steen net naast de Martenitza-steen wordt opgetild. Zie je een worm dan wordt je jaar heel gelukkig, zie je een mier dan wordt je jaar ook gelukkig maar zal je ervoor werken en een spin is zeker geen goed voorteken).

De rode kleur staat voor het vrouwelijke, bloed, geboorte en de zomerzon en de witte kleur staat voor het mannelijke, materie, dood en de wintersneeuw. De twee kleuren samengevoegd in een Martenitza staan symbool voor de unie tussen de beiden die nieuw leven doen ontstaan in de lente.

In Bulgarije wordt de maand maart nog steeds gepersonifieerd als Baba Marta (Grootmoeder Maart), een oud vrouwtje wiens stemming even onvoorspelbaar is als het weer in Maart. Als ze boos is stormt en sneeuwt het, als ze goed gehumeurd is schijnt de zon. Baba Marta houdt zich vooral bezig met ruziemaken met haar broer Kleine Sechko (Februari), die wel van een borrel houdt.

Op een dag in eind februari kwam de lente vroeger dan gewoonlijk, en een stokoud vrouwtje besloot om haar geitjes wat vroeger mee te nemen naar de velden in de bergen. Officiële mocht dit pas vanaf de feestdag van Baba Marta op 1 maart. "Och, waarom zou

Baba Marta dat erg vinden?” vroeg ze zich af. “Tenslotte is zij, net als ik, ook een baba, een oude vrouw. Van grootmoeder tot grootmoeder, wat kan ze mij doen?”.

Baba Marta hoorde wat het vrouwtje zei en woedend zag ze hoe deze haar kudde geiten de bergen in leidde. Onmiddellijk stormde Marta naar Kleine Sechko. “Broer,” gilte ze. “Nu is de tijd aangebroken waarop je mij gaat terugbetalen voor al die wijn die je al van me hebt gestolen... Leen mij 3 van jouw dagen zodat ik die vrouw die mij uitdaagt door haar geiten te vroeg naar de bergen mee te nemen kan doden.” Kleine Sechko herinnerde zich die keer dat Marta had gedreigd op zijn lange baard te plassen, en gaf zijn zuster wat ze wilde.

Marta ging als een furie tekeer en blies zo hard dat een nooit eerder geziene storm met ijskoude wind en hevige sneeuwstormen over de bergen gierde. Drie dagen en drie nachten lang bleef ze razen. En de oude vrouw met de geitjes bibberde op de koude bergflanken tot haar bloed bevroor, haar hart ophield met kloppen en haar lichaam in steen veranderde.

Na drie dagen kalmeerde Baba Marta, haar boosheid trok weg, het weer werd beter en de zon glimlachte. De mensen in het dorp vroegen zich af wat er was gebeurd met de oude vrouw tijdens de verschrikkelijke sneeuwstorm en nadat de storm was gaan liggen trokken ook zij de bergen in om naar haar te zoeken. En daar vonden ze hun dorpsgenoot, veranderd in steen. Maar aan haar achterwerk was een nieuwe bron ontstaan.

Hoewel de mensen van het dorp dorst hadden na hun lange klim de berg op, konden ze zich er niet toe brengen om neer te knielen en van het water te drinken omdat het zo een gek zicht was. En zo had Baba Marta haar wraak genomen. En dat is ook de reden waarom volgend de legende vanaf die dag Baba Marta 31 dagen heeft en haar broer Sechko slechts 28.

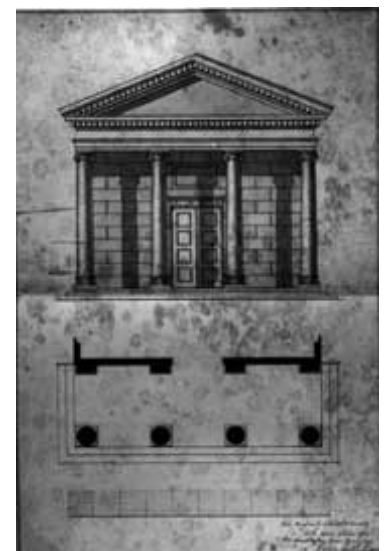
“Levensbeschouwing en Diversiteit – samenleven in een multicultuur”

Thema-discussiedag, 13 februari 2005
Culturele Werkgroep Synagoge Delft en Humanistisch Verbond – Delft.

Na een korte wandeling op een zeer gure zondag ochtend bevond ik me in de mooie maar simpel aangeklede synagoge in Delft. Ik was uitgenodigd om de discussiedag bij te wonen. Door de dag heen hebben vertegenwoordigers van 5 gevestigde religies en het humanistisch verbond drie vragen beantwoord:

- ❖ Hoe hun stroming zich verhoudt ten opzichte van andere levensbeschouwingen
- ❖ Hoe hun stroming staat ten opzichte van autoriteit en gezag
- ❖ Wat de positie en rol van de vrouw is binnen hun stroming.

Na een korte inleiding werd de discussie geopend en geleid door Paul van Seters. Vervolgens kamen de sprekers uit het hindoeïsme (Raj Gaiinda), jodendom (Aviva Pels) boeddhisme (Ineke Vrolijk), protestants christendom (Karel van de Wetering), islam (Sajidah Abdus Sattar) en humanisme (Rien Brderode)



Ontwerptekeningen
voorgevel Synagoge
Delft, 1862
www.jhm.nl



www.humanistischverbond.nl/



<http://www.tilburguniversity.nl/>

De meeste gaven een kort overzicht betreffende de hoofdprincipes van hun religie en zodoende werden de drie vragen gaandeweg beantwoordt. Vragen vanuit de zaal waren natuurlijk aanleiding tot verdere discussies. Na de lunch kwamen de laatste sprekers aan de beurt en daarna gingen we verder in een algemene discussie.

Natuurlijk is de aanleiding van zo een dag de toenemende onrust als gevolg van gebeurtenissen als 0 9/11, de moord op Pim Fortuyn en Theo van Gogh. En met name de groeiende intolerantie richting de moslimgemeenschap.

Wat mij opviel in alle discussies is het feit dat wij ons kennelijk niet kunnen losmaken van het feit dat mensen er anders uitzien. En dus denken we ook dat ze van binnen anders zijn dan wij. Op het commentaar “wat jammer dat er zo weinig allochtonen zijn...” stak ik mijn hand op: “Maar wij zijn er wel”. Hoezo? was de reactie. Ja ik viel niet op als blanke, terwijl ik 100% buitenlandse ben. En zo werd het duidelijk dat de problemen niet zozeer van religieuze maar van culturele aard zijn. Uiteraard bepalen de religieuze normen en waarden voor een groot deel hoe een gemeenschap zich opstelt, maar toch bekruipt me het gevoel dat veel van de problemen stoelen op de zoektocht naar identiteit.

Een paar mensen vanuit het onderwijs, die daadwerkelijk het niet zien zitten, herinnerden ons aan het echte probleem, namelijk dat jongeren zich verscheurd voelen. Met één voet in de traditionele cultuur (vaak thuis) en één voet in de aangenomen cultuur. We praten nu over “nieuwe en oude Nederlanders” alsof of we met een politiek correcte oplossing willen komen. Het is inderdaad erg moeilijk een natuurlijke manier van integratie te vinden. Respect, tolerantie, openstellen voor anders denken en voelen, we kennen de kretten, maar om daadwerkelijk te veranderen kost tijd. Een dialoog is wat dat betreft zeer wenselijk.

Het was heel boeiend om de verschillende achtergronden te horen, ook de visie vanuit het humanisme, en de verschillende problemen waar we mee zitten. Ik heb persoonlijk contacten gelegd met mensen die zich inzetten voor interreligieuze samenwerking. Interfaith, zoals het heet in het engels, is niet zo een bekend fenomeen in Nederland. Maar ik heb me voor het eerst als pagan laten zien en dat was op zich een grote stap. Op dit moment heerst er een sfeer van pessimisme maar ik denk dat we toch moeten proberen naar elkaar te luisteren. Nieuwe wegen vinden naar een daadwerkelijke multiculturele samenleving, waarin iedereen hun spiritualiteit naar eigen wens kan en mag beleven.

www.tilburguniversity.nl/globus/activities/symposium-13022005.html