



[Return to Missal-Any News Desk](#) or [Return to RDNA homepage](#)



An Un-Official Publication  of the Reformed Druids

## Spring Equinox, Year 42 (March 20th, 2005)

Volume 21, Number 2



### CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE:

- Spring Equinox Essay: Festivals & Eggs
- News of the Groves
- Republished Druid Chronicles (Evolved)
- What is Modern Druidism?
- Varieties of "Druidic" Experience
- The Curse of Eclecticism
- NEWS: Science Points to a 'Sixth Sense'
- EVENTS: Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Week
- RESOURCES: OBOD
- Calendar



**Equinox**, a Minor Druid High Day, the emphasis is on balance. Some customs of the season which are hold overs from pre-Christian times include the colored and fanciful eggs and the "Easter Bunny" who brings them, though this was not the original sequence nor association.

Nora Chadwick, a noted historian, describes the spring rite of the "offering of the cakes and eggs," recorded by classic authors in their descriptions of Druidic customs. Egg hunt, egg rolling games and rituals are still current in Ireland, Lithuania and Eastern Europe, and may have a Pre-Indo-European origin. Decorated eggs and painted clay models of eggs are a frequent theme of Aryan Balkan culture. They are part of the ensign of the Bird Goddess, whose worship seems to have been particular to spring and to the time of the spring rains, to judge from holdovers into Classic Greek times. Eggs are also part of the imagery of the

Supreme Goddess of Old-European culture. In this connection they represent the Cosmic Egg, laid by the swan or Nile Goose, which was said to have begun the world. Small painted clay eggs were included inside statues of this Great Goddess, as in Marija Gimbutas drawings reproduced here.



A Cosmic Egg may also be associated with the mythical water bird of Creation. This myth is almost universal between Africa and the Arctic; it was recorded in the scripts and hieroglyphs of the literate civilizations and sung in the oral traditions of hunting and fishing tribes.

In an ancient Egyptian myth, the Cosmic Egg was laid by the Nile Goose which was worshipped as the "Great Chatterer," the creator of the world and of language.

According to the Orphic story, uncreated Nyx (Night) existed first and was pictured as a great black-winged bird hovering over the vast darkness. Though unmated, she produced an egg out of which flew gold-winged Eros, while the two halves of the shell Ouranos and Gaia (Heaven and Earth) were created. The beginning of the myth must lie in the Paleolithic era.<sup>1</sup>

The Egg, plus chatter, that is words, began the world.



The Easter Bunny wasn't at all. It was a hare. The hare, not the rabbit, was the sacred animal of the Celts and Germans. Julius Caesar, in his war commentaries on Gaul, describes the Gauls and keeping "hares and certain other animals to amuse themselves, and which they do not eat" (nor hunt.) But the motive was more likely propitiation and divination than "amusement." The hare was seen as a messenger animal capable of travel between this and the Other World, and was associated with both prophecy and madness. The March Hare brought in the spring and gave the seeds their fertility, or withheld it. To run afoul of him caused madness. By the Middle Ages, the madness element predominated, and he came to be regarded as a demonic species. Many pagan ensigns and symbols suffered similar defamation and prophecy has always been associated with madness in Indo-European traditions, And, unlike the egg theme, the theme of the March Hare is solidly Indo-European. Its sacred and tabooed nature extends to most of the Western European languages groups and cultures. If language is the oldest witness to

history, as Lockwood asserts,<sup>2</sup> then the Hare cult must go back to at least 3,500 B.C. and the second wave of the Indo European expansion before Celtic and Germanic and Italic diverged from one another. In these language groups the true word for hare, hara/haso, was tabooed and euphemisms were commonly invented for it in everyday speech.

Our American Ground Hog Day may be a dim and distant reflex of the March Hare theme with its element of prophecy of the early or a late spring. In the days of plowing and sowing magic, it was by the hare's behavior that people foretold the spring: weather and the prospects for the seeds about to be sown. By the shadows of posts and menhirs, not ground hogs, and by the points of the sun's risings, the priestly castes at the Great Henges determined the day of the Equinox kept the calendar of sowing and reaping in time with the Heavens.

(It bears saying again: The Druids did not build Stone Henge. Nor as far as we know did they make use of it as a calendar. This was the work and genius of the pre-Celtic peoples of the British Isles.)

<sup>1</sup> Marija Gimbutas, *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, U. of California Press, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Lockwood, *Indo-European Philology*, Hutchins University Library Press, 1969.

By Emmon Bodfish, reprinted from *A Druid Missal-Any*, Spring Equinox 1988.



# News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)

## Carleton Grove: News from Minnesota



The Carleton grove has been relatively quiet this month, between winter and the comps of its leaders, but has been happily continuing along its way. Our weather just today decided it was bored of being cold. Bittersweetly, Will has decided to graduate a term early, and Ian is going off to Russia for a term. We will miss them at Beltane (and particularly any time we need to plan something), but are happy to see them move on from Carleton and see more of the world.

?azel

## Akita Grove: News from Japan



Pat's "physical" letter, in addition to a bunch of fun songs (you're just not going to outdo me, pal, give it up) says that, "Nozomi, Taiyo and I are doing fine here, despite unusually cold arctic months here and rather significant snow falls of 2 meters in the mountains. This has put a damper on our outdoor pursuits, but living in a mountain in a poorly heated shrine building complex has significant drawbacks on spirituality, shall we say." Another letter mentions that Pat may be visiting Idaho and Montana in April to see some relatives.

## Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.



I've been rather busy since Oimelc working on a number of mini-Druid projects, while preparing to go to Korea this May for a year abroad. You could say, I'm running out of burners on the stove for all my pots I'm cooking in during this publishing spree before I leave. I'm redrafting the 80 page "Druidical Treasure" adventure story, published the Stephen Crimmin's reprint of the 250 page 1976 "Druid Chronicles (Evolved)," working on a 20 page guided pilgrimage pamphlet for people wanting a spiritual map of Carleton College (should be ready by Beltane), and Sister Stacey and I are in the final throes of getting the Magazine Volume published before I leave for one of the more dangerously-troubled regions of the world (even worse than L.A. from the news).

I've also begun Hatha Yoga classes with my wife (Sun & Moon salutation - eow Druidical!) at the nearby Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, and I've resumed daily practice of Tai Chi Chu'ang meditation. Cherry Blossoms are going to be here in about 3 weeks or so, and Washington DC will turn pink for about 10 days, and hordes of cicadas...I mean tourists...will climb around the trees making click click noises with their cameras. Being in the Japanese Embassy, I'll be part of the annual Cherry Blossom Japanese Matsuri (festival), probably in the beer tent (you know me). Bring Back the Snakes Day on March 17th, will have their usual influence on me, a new "Irish" pub opened up nearby next to the Marine Barracks, so I'll have to go in and bless the spirits, and be blessed in return, shall we say.



## **Palm Grove: News from Florida**

Well It has been Warm and cold and wet and dry alternating here in Florida.

The Grove is building its ranks. We openly welcome the six new regular members to our Grove. Devon, Treva, David, Paula, and Erran. Welcome we hope you enjoy your stay with us and come to the celebrations and festivities we have planed for this year.

I have seeded the herb garden and it should be ready for replanting by the end of the frost season. I Have gained my 3rd level attunements in the fine art af Rieki and Shemzin (the healing powers of white and colored light energy). And I am studying the fine art of Quantum Touch. to add to my healing services.

The Palms will be replaced and added to as soon as the warm weather stays permanently here, as it has turned a bit cold again.

The WebGrove is growing and being added to on a more or less frequent basis as time permits. and we hope to have more visitors this year. Any one that is interested in chat or discussion boards please visit. <http://palmgrove.bravehost.com>.

It is becoming a gathering place and study area for any and all Druid Solitaires in the world. We are working on a system for all the solitaires to join in the celebration days online so that they will not feel so isolated. It is coming along slowly but we hope to have it up in the summer months. All are welcome to attend.

That's it for now, Happy "Spring Equinox."

Rev. (HighDruid) James



## **Rowan-Oak Grove: News from Tulsa, OK**

hello stacey! well changes are in the air here in the tulsa grove. i am currently a member of the conclave helping myrddin a maeglin revamp our liturgy manual as we revamp the mocc. i have been greatly honored in this hoping that when we ratify the new liturgy at beltane mocc will emerge the stronger and better for it.

it has not always been an easy undertaking. but then nothing truly worthwhile is totally easy or i'd never appreciat it. along with the changes within our organization, rowan-oak grove is making changes to better conform to mainstream druidic thought. certain things which we were once very open about now have become a closed chapter in our history, or put entirely on the back burner. our gray angels grove checked in and they are doing well although having some changes occurring there as well. my time and efforts have been so well split between my struggling home business and the troubles with mocc i seldom know if i am coming or going. it is ever so in laboring for a new arrival, a new chapter in ones life. once we are through the portal of mocc's rebirth and the re-establishing of rowan-oak groves purpose within that organization i will probably again return not only to more scholarly researchings trying to track down historical and archaeological evidence to back up certain stories from my childhood, and the work in activist and ecological organizations...but to the finding of which organization in tulsa will recieve our charitable outreach award for 2005. last year it was crossroads inc a fountainhouse club here in tulsa for mental health paitients who recieved the award. they got a siggie to place on their web site and a gift from my business in recognition of that honor. they may be the ones recieving it this year as well since a main requirement is that the

organization receiving it is not a religious organization but one that meets the needs of the mentally ill, homeless or low income segment of the population in a particular fashion such as food, counselling, clothes, employment and is mostly a self-supported organization. there are not that many worthy charities that do not rely heavily on help from the government financially. it is our desire to on day be able to found a pagan charitable organization that helps others in this way. we have returned to the practice of holding our worship services on a regular basis, which because of our troubles last year we had allowed to fall by the way side. in several ways we had lost sight of our original vision and the Old Ones were not pleased. now that we are on the right track again we are in hopes that this will be reflected in the way others perceive us as a members of a serious credible druidic order that has survived the trials by fire and emerged like the phoenix unscathed.

hugs to everyone!  
healing, light, and peace

m.s. white raven  
rowan-oak grove, tag for the mocc



### **Canine Grove: News from Oregon**

The wandering solitary here...I've made the short move away from Salem, Oregon to a small town west of Portland called Cornelius. There is a WCUUPS (the W is for Washington County) group here that identifies itself as Eclectic Celtic Irish Druidic Witchcraft(?). Well there is only one way to find out what Eclectic Celtic Irish Druid Witches in Wash. Co. do, so off I go to join them in their Spring Sabbat.



### **Rogue River Grove: News from Oregon**

The Rogue River Protogrove just enjoyed a weekend long Imbolc celebration which included rituals, workshops, divinations and Reiki healing sessions at the Jackson Hot Springs among other locations through southern Oregon.

Our Beltane ritual will be led by Archdruid Stephen Abbott. His ritual will be followed by a slide show on the origins of the RDNA. This event will be a fund raiser for Mr. Abbott. Please contact us for more information by emailing: [aigeann@earthlink.net](mailto:aigeann@earthlink.net)



### **Nemeton Awenyddion: News from Cohasset**

Spring is coming in beautifully here. Some of our old Hearth members from years ago came back recently so the spring celebrations and ceremony will follow with much joy. We have a new/old member, her name is Fern, she's about six feet tall and weighs about 700 lbs and she's our horse and an old family member returning. I'm boarding her now but she will be here at my place before the next equinox. Right now I'm working on building Fern's paddock to the East of our Stone Nemeton out around 200 ft. and only 30 ft. from our Bardic ring. The last month I've been delving deeply into equine massage, being an energy/massage therapist now for fifteen yrs. I've found the horse to be remarkably similar in electrical circuitry to humans. They respond quite well and merge minds easily. I'll be curious to see how she takes the ceremony and her space being in alignment with



our Nemeton.

Rhiannon Fugatt of Nemeton Awenyddion  
Cohasset, Ca.



## Sunset Proto-Grove: News from California

Today is the day that Mother Earth has  
chosen to release her folded arms and  
unleash spring!

In all her fervor the sun, the sky and the earth with their vivid colors offer me a share of their life giving energy. So generous are they that all they offer cannot possibly be completely absorbed.

Wild Mustard's and Poppy's cover every field and the wild cherry trees have fresh pink tresses. The hills glow a beautiful green. An emerald green, borne of wild grasses, that only comes to this area for an amazingly few short months each year.

Life is emerging and mingling. The yellow breasted finches enjoy a brunch of newly unfurled rosemary blossoms, just outside my window. A buzzing bee ignores their chattering and sips from the same blooms.

As I close, a ladybug joins me through the open window and plays with my fingers as I write, beckoning me to leave my pen. Oh so glorious, the senses are overwhelmed today!

I have not even left my home for the grove site yet, and already I am one with it all, so strongly spring entices me...'come and play!'...and so I go, smiling.



## Poison Oak Grove, News from California Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"

More from the Javacrusians:

Finn may have his Salmon of Knowledge, but we have the elixir of Strength and Awareness! Coffee is what has enabled this editor to get through the task of proofreading the old and new editions of the Missal-Any for inclusion in ARDA2. |  
With an all too short a break to work on the Spring Equinox (which is why this issue

is so late, with our great apologies), it's back to finishing up the proofreading so the magazine section can be published before Mike goes to Korea.

In late January we planted a bare-root apple tree outside below the kitchen and bathroom windows. It is a White Winter Permain, an old English variety that has been traced back to 1200 A.D., which would make it the oldest known English apple. We were worried because it was just a bare root tree in a plastic bag with some dirt and waited a week and a half before planting it. We wassailed it and poured some of the last of the Yule ale on it and every day greet it as we go out for the day. About two weeks later the buds began to swell so we knew the tree was still alive. I am proud to say that little tree has already blossomed and seems to be doing better than two other established apples trees I know of. This ritual stuff works; we've seen it before our very own eyes!

Like at our parent grove Live Oak Grove in 1982, work is underway to make the new site of Poison Oak Grove. After looking at a couple of sites, the third one felt the best. When the Arch Druid spent some time there after ground was broken it was the first time she had felt happy and elated in a grove site since the land trust took over the old grove site. The new site gets sun and is flanked by golden back ferns, bay laurel trees and live oaks. Thus far the trail to site has been widened and the lower retaining wall has been put into place. The next step is to level the earth. We have enlisted the help of a retired firefighter who has built similar retaining walls in the Angeles National Forest in Southern California who is sensitive to the land and its spirit.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### The Republishing of the 1976 Druid Chronicles (Evolved)

Brother Stephen at Carleton has painstakingly re-assembled the original contents of the ground-breaking DC(E) and we are now pleased to republish them at the ARDA download website at <http://www.rdna.info/arda.html> for free. This 225 page book, the largest book of a modern Druid group in the 1970s, was quite controversial within the RDNA when it was first published. Some thought it was too heavily slanted towards Neopagan forms of Reformed Druidism, others claimed that it was open to additions, so just write up any objections and stick them in there. And so the materials kept pouring in, so that by 1996, we had about 500 pages of material on the exploits and thoughts of Reformed Druidism. So go back and take a look at this historic document, print out a copy, bind it, and put it on your shelf.



### What is Modern Druidism?

Every so often the subject of "What is a Druid" crops up in Druid discussions in groves, email lists, and bulletin boards. Since there is no body of Arch Druids to set standards for what a Druid is, there is a whole range of folks from those who call themselves Druid because they like to take a walk in the woods and recycle to those who have devoted themselves to serious study and practice. This issue of the Missal-Any I offer two articles that deal with the question in very different ways. The first is an article by Croman mac Nessa who describes the different types of Druid groups.

The second is a debate from the email list [RDNAtalk@yahoogroups.com](mailto:RDNAtalk@yahoogroups.com) on the effects of eclecticism on modern Druidism. Some of our readers might remember the quite lively and heated debate on what is a Druid in the mid 1980s between Tom Cross and Albion Guppy. With the return of Albion to the RDNA he brings with him the spirit of debate once again, to shake us out from the last cold days of winter and get us to think about what defines Druidism for ourselves. As always, the Missal-Any welcomes comments.

### Varieties of "Druidic" Experience

By Croman mac Nessa

Version 3-4



We (Corcu Nemedhiann) are a Celtic Revivalist group (I coined the term "Celtic Revivalist" which has since been borrowed by several groups that used to be considered "Gaelic Traditionalist" and which now call themselves "Gaelic Revivalist"), not strictly a Celtic Traditionalist group. In the most general terms, "Celtic Revivalists" are those "Celtic Traditionalists" who reject Christianity as alien to Celtic culture, and endeavour to Revive the pre-Christian and pre-Anglo-Norman Tradition(s) of Ireland and/or Scotland (theoretically, "Celtic Revivalism" also pertains to the other Celtic nations, though I don't know of any "Manx Revivalists" or "Brythonic Revivalists" around at the moment). If this were all there was to the Celtic Revivalist movement, it would put us somewhere between Celtic Traditionalists and Celtic Reconstructionists. I chose to go with Celtic Revivalist rather than Gaelic Revivalist because the Tradition I am primarily concerned with is Ivernian, and that predates the arrival of the Fény (Goidels) into Ireland (if T.F. O'Rahilly was correct), even though the Ivernian Tradition exists in both Ireland and Scotland (and maybe Man, too, but I must admit that I don't know much about Manx Tradition at all).

Celtic Revivalist and Celtic Traditionalist are only two of the different types of groups which claim some connection with "Druids." In fact, several different types of groups exist which have claimed some "Druidic" status, and I'll refer to these various types as "camps" in this essay, and my discussion of each is naturally based on my own personal perceptions (Caveat lector!). As with any religious group, there are good and bad representatives of each of these camps, and my experiences may not be definitive; I have therefore made frequent use of modifiers like seem, tend, in my experience, and generally, but, again, these statements reflect my own perceptions based on my own experiences and studies. These camps include "Celtic Traditionalists" and "Gaelic Traditionalists," "Celtic Revivalists" and "Gaelic Revivalists," "Celtic Reconstructionists," "Neo-Druids," and "Meso-Druids" (also sometimes called "Druid Revivalists," not to be confused with "Celtic Revivalists" or "Gaelic Revivalists"). I don't think these different terms should be seen as restrictive, but more as a general description of tendencies.

I'm going to discuss Celtic Reconstructionism, Celtic Traditionalism, Gaelic Traditionalism, Gaelic Revivalism, and Celtic Revivalism first, as these tend to be more alike than some of their membership is willing to admit. However, they do have their differences (although it should be noted that there is some overlapping).



Gaelic Traditionalists are actually a sub-camp of the Celtic Traditionalist camp. I'm not really sure how they differ aside from one focusing on Goidelic cultures, and I've not personally encountered any Celtic Traditionalists, so anything I could say about them would be, at best, second hand. Gaelic Traditionalists (GTs) believe that the Tradition of Gaelic culture(s) is still alive, and believe in living in Tribal communities, and are insistent on the learning and everyday use of Gaelic, Irish, and/or Manx. They also accept so-called Celtic Christianity as a valid part of Gaelic Tradition. They also tend to be Warrior-led societies (and some of them even view the indigenous Priesthood as "a defunct caste" or "a useless waste of space," and these are their own words I'm quoting—some have also inherited the Roman Catholic notion of Priest and justly reject that notion, but therefore also reject any notion of a Priesthood, as if there is no model for Priesthood other than the Roman Catholic one). Finally, some GTs have a tendency to a more or less fundamentalist attitude (in my experience). Clannada na Gadelica and its various offshoots have discussions of what GT is on their various websites. I don't have URL addresses for the current incarnations of the CnG websites; the last working URL addy I had was to the Leabharlann site, but it has apparently been shut down.

Celtic Reconstructionists work mainly with texts and research materials, and archaeological discoveries, and generally pay much less attention to the Tradition (many of them deny that it still exists, in fact). They tend



to be groups which focus on the Priestly class (Aos-Dána) only, with little or no encouragement of Warriors and Producers within their membership (though I suspect that the larger portion of their membership actually falls into these two castes). They also tend to see no need to live in Tribal communities, and many of them never attempt to learn a Celtic language. Some of their members tend toward Neo-Paganism, but very few of those members are New Agers. In fact, the Celtic Recon movement itself is neither New Age nor Neo-Pagan (at least not Neo-Pagan in the negative sense, meaning hyper-relativistic and overly syncretistic, or "eclectic"), and should probably be called Modern Pagan. To look at them from their own perspective, you can see:

[http://www.imbas.org/imbas/what\\_we\\_mean.html](http://www.imbas.org/imbas/what_we_mean.html)  
and: [http://www.witchvox.com/trads/trad\\_cr.html](http://www.witchvox.com/trads/trad_cr.html)

I don't know that anyone refers to their belief/practice as Gaelic Reconstruction. I am aware of a Scottish Reconstructionist group, which, as far as I can tell, falls under the umbrella of Celtic Reconstructionism.

Gaelic Revivalism is made up of groups that are essentially the same as Gaelic Traditionalists, except that they reject Christianity as alien to Gaelic culture. Some of these groups refer to themselves as "Gaelic Traditionalist Polytheists." Most of these groups seem to be run by the Warrior caste, but this situation is not universal amongst them. They also tend to be easier to get along with than most GTs. For further information on this sort of group, see:

<http://users.indigo.net.au/darke/treubh/index.html>  
and: <http://ciarraide.org/briefing.html>



Celtic Revivalism is us here, Corcu Nemedhiann. I know of only a small handful of other groups who use this term, and most of them are connected to us in some way. Adder Oaks, for example, which uses the combined term "Celtic Traditionalism-Revivalism," was founded and is run by one of our own Comhairle members. Essentially, we believe in the things listed in our Mission Statement on the Croman's Grove's site (which most of these other groups believe in, too, to a greater or lesser extent, though most Celtic Recon groups, as noted above, apparently don't see any need for the inclusiveness of Tribe, nor do they see a need for the cooperation of Tribal community, nor do they see the value of living in community). The characteristics which distinguish us from other groups already discussed here are:

1. We believe Tradition is still living;
2. We have a connection to the Tradition;
3. We have as a goal the establishment of Tribal community/communities;
4. We emphasize Celtic languages (Corcu Nemedhiann emphasizes particularly Gaelic, Irish, Old Irish, and Gaulish [and Cornish, to some extent, though we emphasize the vestiges of Old Cornish more than any current manifestation of Cornish], all of which may have some connection to the Ivernian culture), and hold them to be of the utmost importance, but we do not insist on the learning and daily use of any of them until our community/communities is/are founded (we in Corcu Nemedhiann may also use Broad Scots for "official" dealings with the "outside" world);
5. We view Christianity (whatever its form) as alien to Celtic cultures, though we do accept, of course, that certain pre-Christian Celtic traditions have survived within Celtic Christianity;
6. We are Sophocratic, Tribal, and Confederate, meaning that, generally, we prefer our societies to be led by the Wise (primarily the Aos-Dána, but also other Nèamhaidh, such as Champions and Master Craftspople; i.e., the "Elders" of the Tribe—which means that we are not a Warrior-led society), we have a cooperative way of living and doing things and sharing (this is about a Co-operative, not a Collective; we are Tribal, not Marxists), and we prefer stronger authority to rest with the individual Hearths within the Tribe than with any sort of Central government of the Tribe itself—and we believe in Rìoghalachd (Sacral Kingship, which is NOT the same thing as Autocracy or Monarchy);

7. We also work with texts and research and archaeological discoveries;
8. While not Luddites or reactionaries, we do endeavour to Revive a cultural Tradition (and its values and religious ideals) that last existed in a more or less "pure" form in the Iron Age (see later about social advances before leaping to conclusions, please);
9. We eschew fundamentalist attitudes;
10. We are inclusive, a cultural and not a racial group, and we welcome those who are Warriors and Producers (laypeople) as well as those who are Aos-Dána.

Generally, I'm not inclined to go around telling the world that so-and-so isn't a "real" Druid or whatever. If so-and-so is a liar, a child molester, or a fool, I feel more inclined to issue a public or semi-public statement, but when it comes to mere doctrinal disputes, who really cares? There are people who are Druids in their own Traditions whom I wouldn't recognise as Druids in the Nemedhian Tradition (unless they demonstrated the competence I would expect of a Draoidh Nemedhiannach), but that doesn't mean they aren't Druids in some sense. By the same token, I'm not inclined to make claims like "I'm more Celtic than thou." Basically, I think "we eschew fundamentalism" can be summed up by saying "we're not anal retentive." I've always liked that statement by Jesus "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." In other words, the people he was addressing would believe (swallow) some of the most ridiculous notions, but when it came to simple and relatively self-evident things, they couldn't let go of their prejudices that prevented them from accepting those things due to being so anal retentive. And yes, that statement is from a canonical Gospel (Matthew XXIII.24), but I bet you won't hear many Christian ministers explain its meaning as related to intellectual constipation induced by doctrinal arrogance. However, in saying "we eschew fundamentalism," I also mean to point out that we have no holy book and are willing to look at new archaeological finds and newly published texts and new theories, and consider them in the light of Logic and consistency with what we "know" about Celtic cultures.

For more info on Celtic Revivalism, see the Croman's Grove site  
[http://groups.msn.com/CromansGrove/\\_whatsnew.msnw](http://groups.msn.com/CromansGrove/_whatsnew.msnw)  
and <http://adderoaks.com/aodcmain.htm>

As noted, there are a variety of groups these days who may claim to be somehow Druidic, or claim to have something to do with Druids or Draoithe or Draoidhean, and these groups have some pretty diverse views and practices. In fact, there are roughly five different camps, each made up of several different groups. The following are the five camps (given in more-or-less chronological order as to when they got organised, and discussed based on my personal perceptions):



1. Meso-Druids—Also known as followers of "the Druid Revival" (not to be confused with Celtic Revivalists and Gaelic Revivalists). Generally call what they do Druidry (most of the groups in this camp view Druidry as a philosophy, instead of a religion, and believe that "Druidry" need not be associated with any particular religion). This camp is also primarily fraternal, rather than religious.

2. Neo-Druids—May call what they do Druidry or Druidism, depending on personal preference. Highly individualistic (thus difficult to discuss) and usually Neo-Pagan/New Age, though some individuals in this camp may consider themselves more Universalist than Neo-Pagan, and some may consider themselves adherents of more mainstream religions. Most Neo-Druids don't like the word religion and refer to what they do as spirituality, which is based on Christian baggage, in more than one way. Many Neo-Druids also have no connection to or interest in Celtic cultures, and many of them don't think Druidry or Druidism needs to have any connection to Celtic cultures.

3. Celtic Reconstructionists—Call what they do Druidism or Senistrognâta and view it as a religion. Celtic Recons often seem to neglect the non-religious aspects of the Celtic Cultures, especially in their still-living forms.

4. Celtic/Gaelic Traditionalists—Believe that the religion is inseparable from Celtic culture, and may or may not have a specific name for the religious aspects of those cultures. Typically accept Christianity as well as Heathenism/Paganism as being compatible with Celtic/Gaelic Tradition.

5. Celtic/Gaelic Revivalists—Most of us call our religion/philosophy/lifestyle something like "an Rian Sínnsearach" or "Sínnsearach" or the like, and refer to the praxis of our Priesthood as Draoidheachd or Draíocht or Derwyddiaeth or something sib. Sometimes called "Celtic Traditionalist Polytheists" or "Gaelic Traditionalist Polytheists" (though not all of us are insistent on the "Many vs. One" debate). Do not accept any religion other than an Rian Sínnsearach (or whatever one might call it, in its many forms and expressions) as compatible with Celtic/Gaelic Traditional cultures.



Each of these camps has several representative orders or tribes or whatever:

Meso-Druids/Druid Revival—OBOD, BDO, ADO, AOD, and most of the British Orders of Druidry. Note, however, that OBOD could be said to straddle the fence between Meso-Druidry and Neo-Druidism.

Neo-Druids—RDNA, ADF, and several other groups, mostly based in the USA. Note that RDNA could be said to straddle the fence between Meso-Druidry, Neo-Druidry, and Celtic Reconstructionism, and ADF could be described as straddling the fence between Neo-Druidism and Neo-Pagan Reconstructionism (which is broader in scope than Celtic Reconstructionism).

Celtic Reconstructionists—The Henge of Keltria, IMBAS, and several other groups, mostly based in the USA.

Gaelic Traditionalists—Clannada na Gadelica and a few other groups in the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and perhaps other places. (I know there are also Celtic Traditionalists, but I don't know the names of any of their groups—FCT is apparently not what I'm talking about here, but I'll keep checking on this.)

Celtic and Gaelic Revivalists—Corcu Nemedhiann and Clann Nessa, CnB, Adder Oaks, Tuath na Ciarraide, Clann Eoghanachta, Clann na Fhaoil-Choin, the Grove of Danu, and a few other groups in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland, and perhaps other places.

There really is no such thing as one label for modern-day Druidry or Druidism or whatever. The differences between these camps can at times be rather pronounced.

As to the origins of these terms...

I think Gaelic Traditionalism was originally a term applied to the nationalistic movements in Ireland during the late 1800s, who sought to revive Gaelic Tradition in a cultural sense, as a means of encouraging a sense of Irish identity apart from the Anglo-Norman culture which was a result of the occupation and domination of Ireland by the English government. The essay by Breandán Uí Ciarraide (link provided on p.1 of this essay) discusses this to some extent. Some of the Gaelic Revivalist groups also use the term Sínnsearach (usually taken to mean genealogy) to refer to their beliefs/practices. I'm not sure where the term Celtic Traditionalism comes from.

Celtic Reconstructionism was a term coined by one of the Celtic Recon groups (I believe it was either Imbas or Nemeton, not sure), partially in order to distinguish themselves from the so-called Meso-Druids of the "Druid Revival" (largely fraternal groups founded in England in the late 1600s and early 1700s, which now base most of their doctrine and praxis on the writings of Iolo Morganwg). The Meso-Druid groups have tended to have little connection to Celtic culture, and their Philosophy is usually more akin to Gnosticism

(and in most cases, Gnostic Christianity) than Celtic Heathenism (though some of these groups have, in more recent years, done research into Celtic cultures and incorporated such into their teachings). The Celtic Recons, in referring to themselves as Druidic, didn't want to be confused with these groups, and wanted to assert that what they saw as Druidism was something different from what the Meso-Druid groups saw as "Druidry." Somewhere along the way, the term Senistrognâta (reconstructed Proto-Celtic, "ancestral customs") was also applied to Celtic Reconstructionism, and that term was introduced by Alexei Kondratiev.

Part Two to be continued in the Beltaine issue.

\* \* \* \* \*



"Some peoples say the Druids are a fringe religion, but the benefits are worth it."  
Submitted by Anonymous



## The Curse of Eclecticism

Dear Friends,

I originally wrote this piece about teachings that come from people that have received them from other family members or other Clan members. It's been very slightly modified to fit the Celtic Druid mold here. Although, I still think that it "fits," so to speak.

-Albion

Eclecticism has become a curse in (in my opinion) not only the world of (so-called) of neo-paganism, but is even now trying to creep into the world of Celtic Druidism too. We see the neo-pagans merrily mixing different spiritual paths and different God and Goddess forms, as though they all should fit together.

But they DON'T.

The neo-pagans really DON'T see any benefit to trying to keep a spiritual path in a singular fashion. Nor the value of keeping it over an extended period of time. They don't really seem to understand how the past



affects the present, nor why traditions should be maintained. And the strength of a stream that flows from one person through another over a long period of maintained time.

I used to think that this sort of curse could be overcome, and through education, one could teach people WHY the Old Ways are good, and how they can be prospered spiritually by learning from others that have learned from others, and so on.

But I no longer think this. I think that this very eclecticism prevents clear thinking and keeps one from having a kind of "aerial view" of a spiritual tradition evolving, but yet maintaining its core teaching, at the same time.

I cannot see how Celtic Druidism will survive completely intact, when it's up against the hordes of neo-paganism eclecticism. These neo-pagan crowds that think that a book can actually show one HOW TO LIVE. And they believe that "magic" can be learned from a weekly course.

These ideas are like a deadly plague to real Druidism, and I wonder how what we see as Druidism now will change within another 50 years, when stacked up against this pagan bargain store eclecticism? Will it be recognizable?

People can think that I want to remain in the past, but that's not really true, but I would like to see is people willing to learn from those who know more, and who have been taught for years, the things that DO they know. But the average neo-pagan has NO desire to understand this spiritual cycle, much less to try to learn from it. Nor to live within it.

At some point in our lives we have to say; "This doesn't work for me anymore," and then, give up whatever that might be that no longer works for us.

I see the whole of the neo-pagan movement rife with a lack of understanding the Old Ways, and riddled with a rather "know it all," and very poor spiritual attitude in general. When you say to them that there is something older, and per chance BETTER, because it DOES have the strength of time behind it, they look at you as though your completely mad. They basically thin... "Why should I DO all of THAT when I can read it in a book, or go to "classes?"

And THIS, is the true curse of spiritual eclecticism.

Comments invited.

-Beannchd, Albion

---

Ric Knight:

When I was growing up my sister and I used to eat peanut butter sandwiches for lunch. I was staunchly Conservative; bread, butter, peanut butter -period. No more, no less, as the gods rightfully intended. My sister added all kinds of other things to her sandwich; banana, chocolate chips, honey, jam, and the worst of all, to my mind, brown sugar. Sometimes it got so bad that I could not bare to look at her over the lunch table, apostate that she was.

The point is, my experience of peanut butter was traditional hers was not. It mattered a great deal to me when I was six, it does not seem to be that important anymore. The same can hold true for our view of the religious spiritual views of others. They may seem funny, they may seem superficial, but they are not ours. We have no way of discerning the truth these other views speak to these people, but in Reformed Druidism, we try to

appreciate and respect them, while holding fast o our own truths. And once in a while, I now add a few raisins to my peanut butter sandwich, an you know? It's not so bad.

---

Mike Scharding:

I sometimes wonder if orthodox followers' true concern is that a certain tradition will not be continued if everyone does it their own way. Most traditions, over time, accumulate a lot of baggage, customs and elaborations, which usually take several well-informed people to coordinate and practice. Like a big oak hidden among maples, these large trees are easy to see at a distance, but obscured at closer quarters and might be lost. Sad indeed. But I feel that those who search will find these older traditions, and perhaps be more appreciative when they do find it, despite the added inconvenience of going through non-satisfactory traditions along the way. But others will be satisfied with the eclectic traditions they find, and I wouldn't say they would be happier in an orthodox "old" tradition.

Just some thoughts.

---

Stacey Weinberger:

Why do you see tradition as bad? It doesn't have to be orthodox. It can be enjoyed, reveled in, built upon, altered, praised. It doesn't have to be seen as non-satisfactory. Why do you? Is there something in your upbringing in church, temple (and I am directing this towards everyone, not just Mike), synagogue, what have you that leads you to believe tradition is bad, old, and tired? When people get old do you advocate sticking them up on a hill to die because they have accumulated a lot of baggage, customs, and elaborations, and aren't pretty shiny and new to look at any more? Or do you learn from them?

Why is it every time someone comes along in the RDNA who likes tradition that person is shot down and only the "eclectic" druids are accepted. I thought the RDNA had room for everyone. Or has it changed in the last 20 years?

Just some other thoughts.

---

Willem:

I don't think tradition is bad. It's just that we have all different ways of dealing with them.

We all follow traditions. I don't believe that we make things up ourselves. It's just that 'eclectics' are combining the information of the past in more creative ways than 'traditionalists'. And 'eclectics' don't feel the need to guard 'their' historical information.

But we're all taking bits and pieces from the past and putting them together in our own tastes.

Even very traditionalist people, for instance catholics, will still interpret the info from history in their own way, most often inconstant. Hence the saying 'there are as many forms of...ism as there are...ics.' Replace the dots with any type of belief; druids, catholics, hindu, etc.

And I've seen most of those that fall into another tradition still interpreting the new tradition through the eyes of the old one, the one they were born in and grew up in. For instance: French that become buddhist, quite big here, or neopagan, still are Catholic and Cartesian in character.

Personally I'm rather eclectic. Druidic, Quaker, Asatru, Quasi Christian, Chaotic, etc. But I have no problem with anyone being more traditionalist. On the contrary, I cherish different approaches and believe it enriches life.

But then again I don't believe at all, sorry Albion, that eclecticism is a threat to Celtic Druidry.

---

Stacey:

"Two, one two three four  
Ev'rybody's talking about  
Bagism, Shagism, Dragism, Madism, Ragism, Tagism  
This-ism, that-ism, is-m, is-m, is-m."

Maybe it was my own upbringing (Conservative Judaism, attended Sunday school and confirmation classes, observed Passover, went to temple all of two times a year for the High Holy Days, was (ok I'll say it) forced to go to Hebrew school), but I didn't get a sense of tradition being rammed down my throat and something to be obeyed. The stories from the Torah we were told were wonderful and colorful, the holidays involved wonderful foods (even though after the fourth day of Passover matzos kind of lost their once a year novelty) and practices surrounding them (I always wanted to build a sukkah in the back yard, maybe it was my druidic leanings even then?).

Maybe the thing I came away with that is close to interpreting druidism through Jewish eyes was thinking and asking questions and imagining. We were encouraged to do so in Sunday school to have a better understanding of the stories (like having the parting of the Red Sea explained to us intellectually by Moses crossing in the eye of a storm or tornado...could happen!) We were not told what to believe, no questions asked.

An example of a tradition growing and changing with the times yet still being tradition can be seen in the evolution of Passover foods (again, the Jews and food relationship). When I was a kid the pickings were slim. There were only so many things one could make or buy made out of matzo meal and it got pretty boring and old. Now you can get all kinds of things at Passover that look like "normal" food! You can hardly tell the difference and don't feel like you are making some sort of penance by day five.

I too "borrow" from other traditions, but they help me understand my druidism better. But I don't call them druidism which some eclectics in Wicca do that I've seen. A Bodhi tree is still a Bodhi tree and not a Hazel.

---

Ric:

On the contrary, the reform is big enough for orthodoxy and heterodoxy of various colours. It's just not the same for everyone. No one way is correct, nor should it be portrayed as the best or better way. Perhaps the language we use to describe our beliefs and thoughts should not call into question beliefs and thoughts of others. While the original post talked of the need for tradition, there was an intolerance in it when describing non traditional beliefs. So I have nothing against those who seek spiritual awakening in the ways of our ancestors, I have nothing against those who seek it in the ways that are new. My objection is when we slag each other (even politely) as a way of promoting the belief system we adhere to. The very title of the post hints that Eclecticism is a bad way of going about exploring one's own spiritual being. It may be so for the author, but not so for another.

The Reform is not about one way, the reform is about many ways.

---

Gandalf:

As usual, either extreme has its perils. Blind obedience to hidebound tradition is what drove many Druids away from more traditional religions. On the other hand, you have to stand for something. I see these as personal decisions that, having been made, are the basis for deciding what, if any, group affiliations to choose. Incidentally, I'd be interested in a working definition of "Celtic Druid."

The Gods and Goddesses from different traditions may not be a perfect fit but, to me, they have a common source, having evolved from observing the cycles of nature. The Sun God is just that, regardless of whether you invoke the name Belenos, Ra, Helios, or Malina. Mythologies about the relationship of the seasons to the sun's apparent place in the sky are probably some of the oldest religious concepts of all. Do the differences in how your tradition explains the Sky Father's relationship with the Earth Mother really matter? All of the other Gods and Goddesses may be extensions of these first attempts to describe divinity.

---

Hawk:

Call me ignorant, but I sincerely do not understand some of the opinions within your piece. I was left asking "but why" more than anything else. So instead of pulling my hair and asking myself "but why" I thought I would ask you. Since you're the author I'm sure you'll have better answers:

> We see the neo-pagans merrily mixing different spiritual paths and different God and Goddess forms, as though they all should fit together.

But they DON'T.

Why don't they? Why do complementary teachings from different cultures and religions not fit together? Why must deities be restricted to their originating cultures/religions? Since deities are real "people" to me it doesn't make sense to me why they can't visit India, Scotland, Peru, and Ohio and I can.

> The neo-pagans really DON'T see any benefit to trying to keep a spiritual path in a singular fashion. Nor the value of keeping it over an extended period of time.<

Are you sure? How do you know this? What event or person or number of people brought you to this conclusion? Have you kept up with them over the years to see if this bears out?

> They don't really seem to understand how the past affects the > present, nor why traditions should be maintained.<

I'm going to sound like a broken record, but are you sure? Or is it that they're understanding is simply different from yours?

>>one could teach people WHY the Old Ways are good<<

In using the word good here, in reference to the Old Ways, are you meaning that newer ways are bad? Why are they bad?

> But I no longer think this. I think that this very eclecticism prevents clear thinking and keeps one from having a kind of "aerial view" of a spiritual tradition evolving, but yet maintaining it's core teaching, at the same time.<



Why does eclecticism prevent clear thinking? In what specific ways does it muddy the mind to keep a person from having the "aerial view" you speak of?

> I cannot see how Celtic Druidism will survive completely intact, when it's up against the hordes of neo-paganism eclecticism.<

Why is it important now for Celtic Druidism to survive (unchanged, which is what you seem to be implying) when it was not important to the historic Celtic druids?

> These neo-pagan crowds that think that a book can actually show one HOW TO LIVE.<

Can you blame them? Books are held up all the time as showing humans how to live.

> And they believe that "magic" can be learned from a weekly course.<

So, calculus can be learned from weekly coursework but magick cannot?

> These ideas are like a deadly plague to real Druidism<

Apparently I'm very clueless. I didn't realize there was a "real" Druidism and a "fake" Druidism. Please enlighten me to the specifics of "real Druidism".

>>Will it be recognizable?<<

Why does it matter so much if it's not recognizable in 50 years?

> People can think that I want to remain in the past, but that's not really true, but I would like to see is people willing to learn from those who know more, and who have been taught for years, the things that DO they know.<

It doesn't seem to me that you want to remain in the past. It does seem that you want to control what Celtic Druidism is. Why is that control so important?

> But the average neo-pagan has NO desire to understand this spiritual cycle, much less to try to learn from it. Nor to live within it.<

I still don't understand why you say this. Isn't it quite possible that all the eclecticism that makes you so uncomfortable is part of the spiritual cycle? Living outside the cycle of spirituality sounds a lot like living outside the cycle of nature (because I feel that spirituality is inherent in the nature of creatures, humans at least). I'm not living outside of said cycles is possible.

> At some point in our lives we have to say; ...This doesn't work for me anymore... and then, give up whatever that might be that no longer works for us.<

Yes, but shouldn't individuals be given the freedom to determine when something no longer works, and be allowed to go through the process of giving that up at their own pace?

> I see the whole of the neo-pagan movement rife with a lack of understanding the Old Ways, and riddled with a rather "know it all," and very poor spiritual attitude in general.<

I have to admit, I'm probably one of those people with little understanding of the Old Ways;<sup>a</sup>most likely because I have very little understanding by what is meant with that term. But I don't know it all, and I'm

asking for a little enlightenment as to your position.

---

Mike:

I believe that is what I said, I think you misunderstood me as advocating the eclectic faith only, as I was wont to do strongly once. I'm now approaching the middle path again, Stacey.

I merely meant is that old traditions are hard to manage due to the amount of information that has to be transmitted, and as Albion states, it is sometimes difficult for the seekers of such to find them due to the efflorescence of often short-lived eclectic groups in the foreground.

If the orthodox path should disappear, how would the reformed one continue to identify itself?

---

Albion:

Greetings Friends,

Wow...a little storm it seems.

First, I wrote that post ORIGINALLY to people that are interested in the survival of "The Old Ways" of Britain. I received a bit of magical training from a Wise Woman from an authentic Hereditary ("Family") Tradition called 'The Derwent Amber Wove.' This olden Family Tradition was around back in the 17th Century and perhaps as far back as the 16th Century. Rudyard Kipling's wife was a member of this Tradition at one time. This I believe, explains Kipling's interest in magic and the occult. He MIGHT have been a member of this old group himself, but I'm not certain.

As for "the Old Ways." There is a group of people in Britain who understand exactly what this means. They live up and down the British Isles. They practise a magical and spiritual tradition(s) that is/are very much alike (but ARE NOT just alike, in some cases) from place to place. They might even use a certain set of ritual words that are very much alike. For example, I met someone from Brittany who knew and used a "Blessing" that I was taught by this Wise Woman from the Staffordshire area of England (along the River Dee, and the Welsh Border area). This "Blessing" was almost just alike... word-per-word. Was this some "accident," or some "co-incidence," I seriously doubt it.

These olden Wise people will also use a certain set of olden magical implements that will again be just alike, in many cases. However, none of what I describe here is Druidism, but is something different. It's olden traditional/country British paganism. It's NOT "Celtic Druidism" either. However, the PROCESS in my opinion, is the SAME.

Let's take Emmon Bodfish as an example. OK? He formulated a SET of rites that were particularly CELTIC. He "worked" (MY WORD) with a pantheon of "Celtic deities." Now, this isn't my imagination, I corresponded with Emmon, and I know for sure, that this is correct.

Now Emmon may have had A SET BASE of RDNA material that he was formulating these rites from...ORIGINALLY, but he was cooking at a pretty high temp with the old Celtic Gods and Goddesses Themselves. The end process was a 'soup' that was exclusively CELTIC in taste and flavor. The "Tradition" (remember Tevye, in "Fiddler On The Roof?") here was RDNA in the BASE, but as Emmon cooked it, and his spiritual attitudes formed it, IT WAS EXCLUSIVELY CELTIC.

Was it, at that point, a "Celtic Tradition?" Was it "Celtic Reconstructionist?" YES. It WAS. Was it "olden,"

in the sense that I spoke about ABOVE? NO, it wasn't. But was it DRUIDIC, in the way that our Celtic (Irish, Bretonic, Gaelic, etc., etc.) Ancestors would have understood it? YES, I believe that it WAS. However, this is just my OPINION ONLY.

There is a value in NOT mixing-up spiritual systems, there is a value that I tried to point out in my post ,in learning from others who have learned from yet others, and they in turn have learned from others....and so on.

I believe with all of my mind and heart, and I told Stacey this personally, that I think next Samhain someone simply needs to Journey to meet Emmon in the Other World, and ASK HIM what he would like to see done. I'm totally serious, and If I can find a way to where ever this might take place, I'd be Honored to take part in such a rite, if it WAS to happen.

It's time to stop playing Druid, and start Living Druid.

If we're serious about our Ancestors of old, our ancient Druidic Ancestors I mean here, Let's find a few good mediums ("We're looking for a FEW GOOD MEDIUMS...can't ya see the sign even NOW?" LOL), and fire up the cauldron, get off of our collective Druid butts, and get to work! And I'm speaking every bit as much to MYSELF, as I am ya'll.

OK, let the bashing begin...I can take it!

---

Aidan Odinson:

I see what you're saying, and I suppose it could also be said that there might be as many forms of eclecticism as there are eclectics - whether they admit to it or not.

Some might call me eclectic due to the "wells from which I drink" even if I do not see myself that way. And I don't see myself that way for the basic reason that I do not dabble in anything spiritual or religious that I do.

When I think of "eclectic," I know what comes to my mind. For me, the term "eclectic" conjures up images of the people who come to gatherings primarily in hopes of getting drunk, high, and/or laid. And, having friends who are Native American shamans, I have heard many tales of people who come to them thinking that they're going to get their hands on peyote!

---

Norm Nelson:

I'm probably the most "traditional" one here, since I still remember the original services, customs, practices, etc. I never "evolved."

However, I'm not bothered by the various accretions that have come to modern Druidism. I don't mix traditions myself (unless you count the day I went to Eucharist and realized I was wearing my sigil!), but I realize that in any living thing, there are only two alternatives: change or death. If you've ever worn a cast, you've seen how much skin you shed and replace!

I think we all must recognize that no two of us can be in complete agreement on the practices of RDNA today. We weren't in 1963!!!

---

Maukatt:

> And THIS, is the true curse of spiritual eclecticism.

> Comments invited.

Well, to some extent, I agree with that. There are certainly a lot of "Instant Experts" who want the Magick Powers and Special Secret Knowledge and (more importantly) the implied respect given to them by Being A Mystical Person and such. But that happens in the so-called traditional religions, too. Especially in Protestant Christianity, where one can create their own denomination based on "New Special Revelations" or "Going Back To The True Faith As Jesus Really Meant It To Be" etc. any time they want to, and there will be people who will follow them.

But here? With the Reformed Druids of North America? That might be a wee bit difficult, considering that the religion itself was invented in the 60s, along with one of the Gods. (Bej̄al and the Earth Mother were adapted, but Dalon ap Landu was created pretty much from scratch, I think.)

From what I understand, many within RDNA seek to follow the traditional Celtic and Druidic paths, as best as those can be found (since those revered ancients didn't really keep written records of their beliefs and practices), but all of us pretty much do what seems best to us. Much of that is based on traditions and long-held-and-taught teachings, but from a wide variety of religious paths. And somehow, it seems to work for us...just like the creation of RDNA did back In The Beginning. One thing we all seem to agree on is the more knowledge, the better.

But then wasn't it Isaac Bonewits, that Maestro of Celtic Reconstructionism himself, who called the RDNA a bunch of zen anarchists?

All hail Zen Anarchy! lol...

Oh well...All those who have read it before, please feel free to disregard the following:

\*\*\*\*\*

Cats in the Corner

or

On The Importance of Spiritual Tradition

There was a master in a monastery that had about thirty disciples. They used to conduct meditation, prayer, and other spiritual exercises. The master loved cats, and therefore had a cat in his monastery. During meditation, the cat would run around disturbing the meditation. The disciples complained to the master, so the master tied the cat in the corner of the meditation hall during meditation time, in order that it would not cause a disturbance.

Thus, things went on. During meditation, the cat would be tied in the corner, while at other times it was free to roam. Several years later the master died, but the cat remained, and the disciples continued to tie the cat in the corner during meditation. Eventually, the disciples changed; the new disciples did not know why there was a cat inside the hall during meditation, but they nevertheless continued to tie it in the corner at the appropriate time. And when in time the cat died, they went and bought a new one, and tied that one in the corner during meditation time, too.

As time went by the group grew and founded new monasteries. The new master, though he did not know the origin of the cat in the corner, said that it helped the meditation and therefore declared, "Let us have a cat tied in the corner during meditation time in all our monasteries." So in all of their monasteries, there was a cat



tied in the corner during meditation time. Soon many learned treatises were being written about the spiritual importance of tying a cat in the corner during meditation. Some disciples even wrote that it was impossible to meditate properly without the cat.

And this is how Theology and the Philosophy of Religion are created.

---

Maukatt:

Hey Stacey,

I don't hate tradition...I love tradition! Just not "tradition for the sake of tradition." And from what I've seen of those on this list, I don't think we shoot down any new person who likes, or prefers, tradition. I just don't think people here have an easy time with Fundamentalism, of whatever stripe. We don't like to be told what to do, or that One way is the Only way. All are welcome here, traditionalists and eclectics alike. The more the merrier! We all can then learn even more from each other that way. IMHO, traditionalists protect and nurture the homestead, eclectics open new paths and explore new territory. Traditionalists keep that which is worth preserving and passing on, eclectics get rid of that which is stagnant and hinders or even chokes off growth. We are checks and balances on each other, ideally, and each contributes to the health and well-being of the whole. (Again, ideally.)

> It's time to stop playing Druid and start Living Druid.

Okay, I've been pretty mellow about this. Didn't really take offense. But this statement? In the RDNA, of all places??? The RDNA is NOT a reconstructionist belief! We have been drawn to it for our own reasons. In all seriousness, I ask you: Who are you to decide who is "playing Druid" and who is "living Druid"?? By whose criteria do you judge? Yours? By my criteria, I am totally serious. And yet, I am also playing. THAT IS WHAT THE RDNA IS!!!! It's as serious, or as goofy, as each of us wants it to be. That IS our Tradition! (Ever hear of the tradition of "The Holy Fool?") Read our Two Tenets again; especially the part that says "...but this is one way, yea, one way among many."

If I were in a Celtic Druid group, or a Celtic Reconstructionist group, or any other sort of Traditional group, then okay, you'd have a point. Since I am a member of the Reformed Druids of North America, I reject your judgment, and further, your right to make it against me.

(Or rather, you have the right to make all the judgments you want, but not to levy them against people in a group to which they - the judgments - just don't Fit.)

((Or maybe; "I'm rubber, you're glue, bounces off me, sticks to you!"))

So, neener neener neener!

---

Mike:

As always, these are my own opinions on the topic.

I agree with Alyx in that tradition keepers are needed (why look at me republishing all those moth-eaten texts) but we also need tradition innovators, people who bring in game from the wild woods to supplement the carefully tended gardens of the traditionalists.

---

Stacey:

Excuse me...ahem...#\$\$@!^&\*!!!

Who ever said my garden was carefully tended? Why does it always have to be black and white? Sure we use the OCW but we have added to it, look for new ways to deepen our beliefs or express them. How is that staid? For example for Oimelc we went to a cheese factory to watch cheese being made and ate fresh goat cheese. Next regular service day we are going to the local pagan convention. I am in the process of scouting out a new grove site on or near my land. I will be planting the researched eight sacred trees like we had in the old grove site (not in the OCW), digging a new offering shaft (not in the OCW), rebuilding the stone altar (ok, in the OCW).

I have never said it must be done this way for every grove. There was recently a grove that wanted to do ordinations during the Season of Sleep. I disagreed with it and was "traditional" by saying ordinations usually don't happen this time of year except in an emergency, BUT I also did not say no don't do it and that it was a matter between the ordainees and their ordaining Third Order.

You "eclectics" are tired of being misunderstood and assumptions being made about you, this "traditionalist" is tired of the same.

Ahem.

---

Oriana:

> > It's time to stop playing Druid and start Living Druid.<<

I whole heartedly agree, this comment is not applicable to our RDNA tradition (or non tradition).

Unfortunately, during my time in the pagan community, I have heard it way too much. From various people in person as well as on lists.

I know I myself am not serious enough for some, or nearly as much has been said to me...But I don't think its seriousness that was really the issue. I think it's truly just the non-tolerance of different beliefs, and different ways of manifesting those beliefs.

For instance, I don't always have a whole service. I would rather walk among the trees, take care of the grove itself and leave a small offering, than wave my hands in the air and thank some gods, or ask for favor. (not that that is not a valid method of worship, I'm just more about the action of it than the verbiage.) but that's MY WAY, not everyone's. I am just glad I am able to be tolerant of the differences in traditions. (Although I still have issues with the whole necessity of the skyclad thing...but that's my personal issue and I'm working on getting over it.)

---

Stacey:

Why do you say traditionalism equates fundamentalism?

I think what Albion meant (and I could be wrong) is get out and do druidism. Don't just read about it in a book, don't just talk about in online. Take a walk in the woods, plant a tree, wassail it, do a service, meditate, interpret your dreams, leave an offering, notice the lengthening and shortening of the days, note the High Days, etc., etc.

---

Norm:

Nicely put! I haven't the foggiest idea what "living Druid" would be. I do try hard, though, to think Druid. RDNA is a state of mind, not a set of (frozen or totally fluid) rituals. Remember, the original ritual was carefully crafted not to offend any other religious beliefs. Use of whatever changes or accretions have accumulated over the years in different groves is, IMHO, optional. Whatever is "right" for you is your own thing.

---

Mike:

Um Stacey, I'm glad you shared that, even though it was not directed at you personally. You're obviously sensitive on this subject too.

(Where's that soapbox I left around here? Hmmm...)

Ah the lack of visual clues in e-mail! Now really... Give the words of people more credit, they rarely have as many barbs as you might think, especially from those who admire you. No one said your garden was carefully tended (as if that's a bad thing), my words were directed at a straw-man group of categories. I said "traditionalists" (not necessarily implying you) who carefully continue the lineages of the plants in their garden that have been entrusted to them by previous caretakers of the soil. I suppose that some have sloppily tended gardens too. And sometimes a few seeds brought by birds that land in their gardens are welcomed and nurtured. My comparison of eclecticists and traditionalists with hunters and farmers naturally only can be stretched so far, as each often does a little of the other.

Each path has their inherent strengths and limitations, and yes, few traditionalists won't add a few changes here or there, and yes, not all eclecticists don't eventually begin to build around a core of a tradition that provides a base. It's when one fears to sit down and rationally consider one's course in preference to a polarity purity that one is in true risk of error. No one says it has to be B&W; but we can usually tell who's leaning more one way than the other, even if the labels that express that observation usually don't indicate the gradation of a 51%/49% split much more than a 99%/1% split; such is the peril of pigeon holing.

But fear not, this "eclectist" (if that is what I am) sincerely desires for all the "traditionalists" to continue their ways in mutual respect. Do what is right in your heart, and I'll do likewise.

I hope I have spoken well here too.

---

Madrigalman:

Well I guess I have been lurking long enough.

I find myself in a position where I must applaud Albion (and his supporters}. Although why he chose this forum to make a stand on this issue escapes me. From its inception the RDNA has been at best a druidic fringe group giving non aligned neo pagans and pagans a place to call home. All loosely bound together under the heading of druidism.

As A traditional druid I am irked by self proclaimed druids who are unable to tell an oak from an ash and who live within a very limited perception and practice of druid ideology. I must applaud Albion. I feel his article {The Curse Of Eclecticism} was very apt and of great intellectual importance to druids everywhere. I for one and whole heartily agree with him.

Eclecticism has a vital role to play in any religion and I must admit I did my fair share of it in my younger days. I do not see it as the traditionalist Vs. Eclectics. There is a point when eclectic druids must in all good conscious abandon the term "druid" and move on into whatever descriptive terms suits their new ideological realm. Druids who believe in the Jesus myth are not eclectic druids they are eclectic Christians.

The difficulty arises when you try to find a measuring rod to discern the critical point at which reformation equals abandonment. At which point does the term druid loses any tangible reference to the traditional ideology. How does one decide which standard of ideological reference to use? Who am I to arbitrarily decide when a druid is a druid? Of course as an old order druid, I have my standard, which is an arguable standard at best. In a larger sense, just as the pope in Rome sets the standard for Catholics worldwide. Traditional druids set the standard for druidic ideology and practice. Eclectic druids must decide for themselves if they fall within or without this standard.

It is the responsibility of the traditionalist to keep the eclectic in check without ascribing blame or heretic labels. In my opinion Albionj's post did just this. Judging from the veracity of the response truth must hurt.

---

Albion:  
Dear Gary,

You said;

"Although why he chose this forum to make a stand on this issue escapes me."

I'll tell you exactly why.

I did not know Emmon Bodfish that well. We corresponded some, maybe a year and a half or so, perhaps once a month. But when Stacey told me that Emmon had died, I literally broke down and wept. For a few minutes I honestly felt Emmon's presence right here in our computer room, with me.

I then wrote that poem 'Hail Emmon' as a tribute to him. But I wanted to set down a living memorial to him, and to what he was trying to achieve with Live Oak Grove. Emmon was devoted to the RDNA, just as he was to living out a Celtic ("Reconstructionist") ritual lifestyle. I don't think that he would have thought fondly of the eclecticism that seems to have overwhelmed a lot of modern "Druidism." I feel strongly that he would have stood against this current wave of eclecticism, and I think that he would have done so by writing about it.

So, there you have it. That's the only real motive that I had for writing that right here at 'RDNA Talk.' Maybe it's selfish, but I don't really think so, I hope not anyways.

---

Maukatt:  
> Why do you say traditionalism equates fundamentalism?

For me, personally, I'm not saying that. But traditionalists (generally speaking) are much more likely to be fundamentalists, since fundamentalism is usually based upon a code, dogma, etc that stays the same and must be adhered to in detail in order to be considered correct, orthodox, proper, "right," etc.

I have no problem whatsoever with traditionalists as such; I was a staunch traditionalist myself, back in my Evangelical Christian days, for a long time. And like I said before, I love tradition; I try to incorporate

tradition into my own life and worship. It is the belief that "THIS way is the ONLY way" that I have a problem with, and the judgment that what I do (or anyone else does) is not "right" because it doesn't accord with the accuser's belief or practice that I have the problem with. (Again, this is speaking generally; I'm not targeting anyone specific anymore with this reply.)

---

Stacey:

I don't think of tradition in religion in terms of religious beliefs but rather in religious practice. Like lighting the shabbat candles. Every family probably does it a slightly different way, maybe singing, maybe just saying the prayer. There was no one way to do it.

Or another example could be opening up Christmas presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Or trick-or-treating at Halloween.

In a secular example, it's kind of like Thanksgiving and having turkey, mashed potatoes, yams, pumpkin pie, or a variation there of. You know, the get together and have a big meal thing. I've seen vegetarian Thanksgivings even. This year we went to a southwestern themed one.

Not having grown up in an evangelical culture, I don't draw any connections between fundamentalism and tradition. I'm sorry they've been blended for you.

---

Maukatt:

> In a larger sense, just as the pope in Rome sets the standard for Catholics worldwide. Traditional druids set the standard for druidic ideology and practice. Eclectic druids must decide for themselves if they fall within or without this standard.

Okay, that is a valid point, and a good one. However, I must point out;<sup>a</sup>Catholicism is part of the larger umbrella of Christianity. True, the Pope sets the standard for Catholics worldwide. But the Pope does not set the standard for Christians worldwide. And because a believer in some small non-denominational Charismatic "holy-roller" church in Podunk Arkansas does not believe in any thing the Pope pronounces, that does not make them any less Christian.

> It is the responsibility of the traditionalist to keep the eclectic in check without ascribing blame or heretic labels. In my opinion Albion's post did just this. Judging from the veracity of the response truth must hurt.

LMAO!!!! No, it just means that the whole point of the RDNA was missed. I think the problem comes from traditionalist Druids seeing the word "Druid" within the name of the RDNA, and expecting it to mean what they mean by it. To use the above analogy, they put the name of "Druid" in the same category as "Catholic," and expect all who claim the title "Druid" to follow the dogma (such as it is) of the Druid Pope (okay, the analogy is breaking down a bit...lol...) Whereas I, and I'm guessing even the Founding Fathers (if I may be so bold to speak on your behalf, Norm) put the name of "Druid" into the same category as "Christian" and thus accept other Druids without requiring them to follow their own "denomination."

Leaves a lot of room for variation, IMHO.

No, I'm not "hurt by truth." LOL! I just get cranky when people try to shove me into a box of their own making.

---



Stacey:

Excuse me? I am a so-called traditionalist druid and I am not putting the name of "Druid" in the same category as "Catholic," and expect all who claim the title "Druid" to follow the dogma of some Druid Pope. If I did, I wouldn't be in the RDNA.

You should be careful who you shove into a box of your own making and not speak for those who are traditionalist.

---

Albion:

You know what I think? If I counted right, this post has a string of 57 different posts about it. No matter what one's stance is on "traditional Druidism," I'd say that it was maybe past time to talk about this subject.

While I don't help operate this e-list, I've only got two rules on our e-list. You must be kind, and you must be polite, even when you disagree with one another. And mostly, I've noticed, people here have done that.

I'm glad that that first post has drawn all of this response, I think that it's good to explore our stance on our own spirituality, and to check those borders, and to see where we stand.

---

Croman MacNessa:

> > Why do you say traditionalism equates fundamentalism?

>

> For me, personally, I'm not saying that. But traditionalists (generally speaking) are much more likely to be fundamentalists, since fundamentalism is usually based upon a code, dogma, etc that stays the same and must be adhered to in detail in order to be considered correct, orthodox, proper, "right," etc.

/\

Maukatt agus a h-uile duine,

I was tempted to respond to this point the first time I saw it, but I chose not to do so. I'm not generally inclined to preach to the RDNA, since I'm (more or less) an outsider here. I am, though, a Guest, and that entitles me to claim the right of Hospitality. I'm also a Draoidh, and that also entitles me to Hospitality, and moreover, it entitles me to have a say.

At this point, I feel I must have my say. Personally, I've seen a hell of a lot of eclectics who have been extremely fundamentalist, insisting that those of us who are Traditional, who are faithful to one culture instead of picking and choosing from a variety of cultures, are somehow misguided or "not Pagan" (or even "bullies" or "dogmatic" or any number of other insulting terms, which are all examples of the fallacy of the ad hominem) or whatever, if we ever dare suggest that the eclectic is even just being disrespectful of those cultures (most of us would put things in stronger terms, such as "cultural appropriation" and "cultural rape" and make references to "the Borg" of Star Trek, especially when it comes to endangered cultures like the Celtic cultures). Yes, I've seen this a lot amongst eclectics, an attempt to define all of Neo-Paganism as necessarily eclectic, if not outright in word, then implied in their deeds (their reactions to the Traditional Pagans/Heathens).

This insinuation that what you're calling "Traditionalists" (and really, I haven't seen any actual Traditionalists in RDNA, at least not "Celtic Traditionalists," who really do seem to have a tendency to fundamentalism, so count your blessings that you haven't been exposed to their ilk) are more likely to be "fundamentalists" than anyone else is a prime example. Most of us here in the Heathen/Pagan/Neo-Pagan milieu (and in fact, most

everyone here at RDNA talk, whether they be Heathen, Pagan, Neo-Pagan, or otherwise) will naturally recognise the term "fundamentalist" as anything but a term of praise. As such, the allegation is, at least in this forum, an ad hominem.

> LMAO!!!! No, it just means that the whole point of the RDNA was missed. I think the problem comes from traditionalist Druids seeing the word "Druid" within the name of the RDNA, and expecting it to mean what they mean by it. To use the above analogy, they put the name of "Druid" in the same category as "Catholic," and expect all who claim the title "Druid" to follow the dogma (such as it is) of the Druid Pope (okay, the analogy is breaking down a bit...lol....) Whereas I, and I'm guessing even the Founding Fathers (if I may be so bold to speak on your behalf, Norm) put the name of "Druid" into the same category as ;°Christian;± and thus accept other Druids without requiring them to follow their own "denomination."  
> Leaves a lot of room for variation, IMHO.

Here's the rub: the term "Druid" is not nearly so hazy and open to interpretation as it was thought to be by the Founders in the early 1960s. There really is a lot more known about what the ancient Druids did and believed than the average person, even the average intellectual (and by "average" here, I'm not implying "mediocre" or anything of the sort, just that those who go into Celtic Studies are hardly in the majority), knows. There are numerous texts which have never been translated from Old Irish into modern Irish, let alone modern English, and most of those texts have never even been standardised and published in Old Irish. Those of us who can read a little Old Irish and have access to the manuscripts (directly or in facsimile) are thus in a slightly better position to "pontificate" (as you might call it) about what the term "Druid" means. If you want to call the establishment of a standard based on fact by the name of "dogma," feel free, but once again, that's an ad hominem.

The simple fact of the matter is that Gary was quite correct in saying that there comes a time when the eclectics must, in all good conscience, abandon the term "Druid" and move on into whatever descriptive term best suits their ideological realm. And that's BECAUSE the term "Druid" is NOT a blank slate on which anyone may write whatever they please, but is intimately connected with a specific cultural context. Yes, there's a lot of room for variation (after all, there are six still-living Celtic cultures, which makes at least six main variations, not to mention the Gaulish, Pictish, Ivernian, Cumbrian, and other old Celtic cultures), but the term "Druid," in its strictest sense, is about a custodian of Celtic Heathen culture. Culture, see, and Celtic culture, and more specifically, Celtic Heathen culture...not just "anything goes" or "if it feels good, do it."

I and others in the Celtic Revivalist camp (and those in the Celtic Traditionalist camp) are fighting for our way of life, our cultural heritage, which is almost gone completely, thanks not only to global corporatism and the Culture of the Shiny Thing, thanks not only to several hundred years of cultural imperialism foisted upon Celtic peoples by Anglo-Norman and French governments (actually a couple of thousand years if we go back to Gaul and the Roman invasion, and the subsequent culture of Christianity, which is...with apologies to Norm and others here who are probably more Christian than Christianity itself is...which is a form of imperialism itself, as its goal is, after all, to take over the world). Those are not alone in the causes of the endangered status which the Celtic cultures now face. For in fact, it is the very New Age/Neo-Pagan literature published by "tolerant and enlightened eclectics" which pastes the word "Celtic" or the word "Druid" onto any sort of garbage that gets published, simply as an advertising gimmick, and which distorts the meanings of those terms;³to the point that the average person in the street, if he or she even has a concept of what "Celtic" means, or what "Druid" means, will in fact be the one who is truly misguided.

Now, my saying all of this is unlikely to sway anyone to my view of "Druidism," nor is it my intention to do so by saying these things. These debates have raged back and forth for several decades. I've probably said nothing new. But perhaps my view of "Druidism" will be better understood by those who haven't seen the previous incarnations of these debates, leading to less antagonistic/provocative talk when it comes to these debates, and that's all I can ask.

Maukatt:

> I don't think of tradition in religion in terms of religious beliefs but rather in religious practice.

Yep, that's the part of tradition I like. Those examples you gave are examples of the things I like to do traditionally, or I've come up with some traditions of my own, both in secular and religious practice, that are meaningful to me.

> Not having grown up in an evangelical culture, I don't draw any connections between fundamentalism and tradition. I'm sorry they've been blended for you.

Eh, the way they've been blended is for people to say that their traditions, their way of religious practice, the things that they do, is the only way, and any other way is wrong (or heretical, depending on the religion one is in).

No problem, 'tis cool.

---

Maukatt:

> Excuse me? I am a so-called traditionalist druid and I am not putting the name of "Druid" in the same category as "Catholic..."

I didn't accuse you of doing so. I didn't even say that all, or even ~most~, traditionalist Druids do so. I was referring only to those traditionalists who do seem to try to put anyone with the title "Druid" into their own box.

I should have been a bit more careful in my wording: "...those traditionalist Druids who see the word 'Druid' within the name of the RDNA and expect it to mean... 'rather than' ...traditionalist Druids seeing the word 'Druid' within the name of the RDNA, and expecting it to mean..."

My apologies.

---

Aidan:

It sounds like you have a good working definition of tradition.

It seems to me that the most important thing in tradition, as with religion, is that it should work.

There was a time when one of my favorite things to do was to participate in the Latin Mass, and anything else that was done in Gregorian chant. I never was a Roman Catholic, but I did get a wonderful feeling joining my voice verbatim with those of all those others over all those centuries. To this day, my rituals contain parts which are done in ancient languages for the same reason. But the point is not what is done, but \*that\* it is done, and that it works.

One of my favorite "zingers" that I use when someone of the "my way is the only way" variety want to argue with me is to say "Religion is like underwear: what works for me might be entirely inappropriate for you." Unfortunately, someone decided that what purports to work for them absolutely must work for everyone else if they have any kind of a relationship with the divine.

---

Maukatt:

> Personally, I've seen a hell of a lot of eclectics who have been extremely fundamentalist,..

lol...yes, I know what you mean. {g} (Although "eclectic fundamentalist" is a very humorous-sounding oxymoron, you have to admit. {g} )

All of your arguments are very valid. And yes, I have "run into" the Celtic Reconstructionists, even of the "fundamentalist" ilk. I know many personally. And I have nothing whatsoever against Reconstructionism, Celtic or otherwise. In fact, I hold such groups in high regard, for the reasons you yourself gave. But the RDNA is not a reconstructivist movement in and of itself. People within it can be whatever they feel the Deities leading them to be.

This is an interesting point, though. True, the term "Druid" does have cultural identity and trappings attached to it, perhaps even to the extent that "Jewish" does (although in the public mind [not the scholarly one], the "Druid" trappings are perhaps a lot less specific than the "Jewish" ones, and usually involve Stonehenge to some degree {g} and burning people alive in wicker cages). And more has come to light in the public forum about Druids than was available back in the 60s at the RDNA's inception. But then again, when the RDNA was created, it was created as a humorous protest against mandatory religious participation, so the founders weren't really seeking to recreate historical Druidism. (Again, Norm, you can speak to this better than I; I'm just going by what I've read; any mistakes in assumption are my own. {g} ) So, should the RDNA abandon the title of "Druid" altogether? That is perhaps a valid argument, though it is one I do not agree with.

However, whatever its inception, even though the creation of the RDNA was of a protest bent, it did take on a life of its own and continued to go on. People found meaning within it. In my own personal opinion, and if I may be so bold as to assume on their behalf, some deities somewhere seemed to find favor with it. I take that to mean that they, at least, didn't have a problem with the title of "Druid" within the name, or at least didn't object to it to those who followed them within the RDNA's structure. [And this paragraph may be taken with as many grains of salt as one feels are necessary, too.]

---

Croman:

/\

Maukatt,

I wasn't talking about the Celtic Recons, but the Celtic Traditionalists, more specifically certain groups among the Gaelic Traditionalist camp (not to be confused with Gaelic Traditionalist Polytheists, who are also known as Gaelic Revivalists). I've not encountered a lot of Celtic Recons whom I would consider fundamentalists; not by a long shot. Like I said, count your blessings you haven't encountered those to whom I was referring, if you consider think there are some fundamentalist Celtic Recons, because the GTs to whom I am referring (and note that not all GTs can be put into this category, either) make Celtic Recons look...well, tame.

I myself am a Celtic Revivalist (which is essentially the same thing as a Gaelic Traditionalist Polytheist, or Gaelic Revivalist), and I consider the Celtic Recons to be generally not serious enough about the cultural context, because they tend (from what I've seen) to focus on the religious aspects of the cultures alone, whereas I'm into the whole cultural shebang, including (but not limited to) the religious aspects of the particular Celtic culture that is my heritage.

Whether or not RDNA was established as a Reconstructionist group (and it wasn't, of course), there have been (pretty much since the beginning, if I may consider Robert Larson to be a Celtic Recon, or more precisely, to coin a term, a Celtic Proto-Recon, since there weren't any Celtic Reconstructionists calling themselves such around at the time), and continue to be, Celtic Recons within RDNA.

Hopefully, I'll have my discussion of the various camps which use the term Druid (or the like) finished before much longer, and it should explain the differences and similarities between these various viewpoints in greater detail. For now, I'll just point out that there are five main camps into which Druidic groups fall, which are: Celtic Traditionalists, Celtic Revivalists, Celtic Reconstructionists, Meso-Druids, and Neo-Druids. I probably should add a sixth camp (FamTrad Druids) in there somewhere (though they are mentioned in connection with Celtic Revivalists and Celtic Traditionalists), but the article is already three pages long on MSN (and I have several more pages of notes which I'm still going through), and I'm bound by the page size limitations of MSN (for the moment), so adding more in to what I've already got would be a rather annoying task. Perhaps I'll discuss them a bit more on later pages.

At any rate, if you want to encounter people who view anyone else involved in Celtic or Druidic groups as heretics (though they don't use that term specifically, at least in my experience), look no further than certain groups within the Celtic Traditionalist camp. Those people wouldn't be caught dead on this list, btw, and seeing RDNA "Traditionalists" referred to as "fundamentalists" really would be quite amusing if it didn't boggle my mind so much.

---

Mike:

An intriguing point, Sister Alyx (my feisty friend), on whether Druidism is a general category without specific leaders and numerous more or less independent traditions (such as Christianity has a bajillion or so), or whether Druidism is a governed tradition like Catholicism (which is a monolithically large single group with clear leaders & trend setters). First time, I've heard it put that way. I'm quite impressed.

What is missing however from your admirable response, would be a note or two of how it's hard to ignore those on similar titled paths. If I'm a baptist christian minister, I'm more likely to pay attention to the declarations of the catholic christian pope than I am to the Dalai Lama or Ayotallah Sistani, even though the latter two might be wiser or actually have a truer solution actually at hand to my problems. Playing the law of averages, the standard person tends to look for solutions to sources WITHIN their own general category. (Naturally, I think Judaism, Islam & Christianity are one category and firmly in the same boat, but they tend to be looking out over different ship-railings rather than acknowledging their shipmates.) What I think is a bit special about the RDNA type of Druidism, is that we purposely look OUTSIDE our category which would linguistically be (more or less celtic) Druidism "now and then", rather often for some.

But the RDNA is not so unique here, either you know. Different Druid groups within the general category of "Druid" have chosen different restrictions. Take like Keltria Druidism the focus on either Brythonic or Goidelic Celts (you know the one with Goiters, hee hee), ADF Druidism focuses on Indoeuropean religious sources (each grove usually on one culture, although individuals vary), and then there's RDNA can draw on nearly anything on or off the planet. Yes, we really push the limit of the envelope! OBOD, although tending to be British, ranges quite wide in sources.

I think the Founders made some assumptions about what a "druid" is back in 1963, without too many specifics to work with. So while certain RDNA groves have a reconstructionist Celtic bent going on, and that's fine, but I personally think Reformed Druidism is simply applying the Basic Tenets, a (ir)reverent sense of humor, avoiding unwanted accretion, lots of outdoor time, a bit of well-timed whiskey, and serious honest reflection onto ANY set of beliefs and sit back and watch the fireworks that result. Who knows WHERE it will go?

I love Richard Shelton's analogy of Reformed Druidism being like Mistletoe attaching itself to different trees (Epistle of Richard), while I prefer it to being a set of green-colored glasses or a cybernetic implant or a downloaded program to an existing platform.

Again, my own opinions, only.



---

Mike:

> There was a time when one of my favorite things to do was to participate in the Latin Mass, and anything else that was done in Gregorian chant. I never was a Roman Catholic, but I did get a wonderful feeling joining my voice verbatim with those of all those others over all those centuries. To this day, my rituals contain parts which are done in ancient languages for the same reason. But the point is not what is done, but that it is done, and that it works.

I love ancient language services/re-enactments too, once in a while, but without proper linguistic training, I'll only be admiring the outside of the tradition. It's nice to be part of something that's been around a while, part of my attraction to Japanese culture, by the way.

> One of my favorite "zingers" that I use when someone of the "my way is the only way" variety want to argue with me is to say "Religion is like underwear: what works for me might be entirely inappropriate for you."

Indeed. Underwear does support "the naughty bits" which do come in different sizes on different frames, but underwear has to be washed occasionally, and I think most of change sizes occasionally too. Maybe I'm going too far with this analogy...

---

Norm:

Two points:

1) When I read "traditionalist Druid" I thought of those who try to reconstruct the actual Celtic practices. We're "neo-Druids," and no doubt scare the [in that sense] traditionalists.

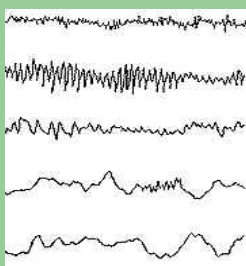
2) There is real validity in the idea that there are "many ways;" in the "real" denominations. There are "Catholics" in eastern Europe who do not recognize the supremacy of the pope, and no-one would suggest that "Christian" means "Roman Catholic". In the Nicene Creed, Christians proclaim that they believe in "one, holy, catholic church" ...the word catholic means universal, not a church ruled by the Vatican. [I don't know what they say today, but in the 1960s some of the Lutheran churches used to be so scared of that word that they proclaimed belief in "one, holy, Christian church"!]



## Science Points to a 'Sixth Sense'

By Ed Edelson

Yahoo News HealthDay Reporter



THURSDAY, Feb. 17 (HealthDay News)- Ever get a gut feeling something just isn't quite right, and make a decision accordingly? Science is beginning to suggest those

instincts may have roots deep in the brain.

Research in young volunteers points to some kind of "sixth sense"- a mechanism in the brain that picks up on subtle clues, then sends out subconscious signals of trouble ahead.

The finding could help explain certain intuitive phenomena seen among humans. For example, in the recent Asian tsunami, aboriginal people sought out higher ground in the moments before the disaster, as did many wild animals. Could subtle changes in weather or the environment have warned them early on?

Just such an early warning system may exist in the anterior cingulate cortex, a brain area important in processing complex information, according to a report by psychologists at Washington University in St. Louis. Their findings appear in the Feb. 18 issue of the journal *Science*.

In their experiments, the researchers challenged healthy young volunteers to a series of tricky visual tests aimed at setting up conflicting choices within the brain, explained Joshua Brown, a research associate in psychology who performed the study with Todd Braver, an associate professor of psychology.

During the experiments, the St. Louis team observed each participant's real-time brain activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

"We used a situation where we presented signals on a computer screen," Brown said. "If it was an arrow pointing left, they pushed the left button. If it pointed right, they pushed the right button."

But then the tricks began. First, the computer screen would occasionally show a larger arrow that required a participant to push a button other than the one just indicated by a first arrow. The time at which the second arrow was presented was gradually made longer, so that a participant was more likely to have pushed the wrong button.

Second, the arrow signals were preceded by colored dashes- white for left, blue for right. The experiments were rigged so that participants eventually had an error rate of about 50 percent when shown a blue dash, but only 4 percent when shown a white dash.

While the volunteers weren't told of the rigging, "some of them had begun to figure it out, at least on a subconscious level," Brown said. As this dawning awareness emerged, the fMRI images showed increased activity in the anterior cingulate cortex whenever the blue dash was flashed.

"The purpose was to see if the brain picked up on the blue color being associated with a large number of errors," Brown said. "It appears that this part of the brain is somehow figuring out things without you necessarily having to be consciously aware of it."

The report "has the potential of unifying different approaches to the anterior cingulate cortex," said William J. Gehring, associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. "Researchers have been looking at the response to errors people make and also the response to negative events. This is tying those two together."

Still, Gehring said, "this is the sort of thing where you need additional research. The report is not specific about what is going on, and how closely the response is tied to awareness."

Gehring and Brown agreed that the findings have potential applications to psychiatric practice, but they lie far in the future.

Abnormalities of the anterior cingulate cortex have been associated with a number of mental illnesses,

including schizophrenia, Brown said.

"It's a little premature to say how this might help us treat individuals with mental illness," he said. "There's a lot we don't know about what goes wrong in mental illness. But if we understand how this works in healthy individuals, we will be in a better position to understand what goes wrong in mental illness."

Abnormal activity of the anterior cingulate cortex has been linked to obsessive-compulsive disorder, Gehring said. "It's been shown that there is too much activity in this area. There is a general sense that things are going wrong, when actually they are not."

\* \* \* \* \*



So if the Gauls and Bretons are "continental celts", does that make the Irish and Welsh....incontinental celts?

Submitted by Mike Scharding, with apologies.



## Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week

Sponsor: An Comunn Gaeilge, America (The Gaelic Society, America)  
Dates for 2005: Sunday, July 3 through Friday, July 8  
Location: Lees-McRae College, Banner Elk, North Carolina

Nearby attractions: Grandfather Mountain and the annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games that are held this year from July 7 - 10, 2005

This year's Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week, sponsored by An Comunn Gaeilge, America, will run from July 3rd through the 8th in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina.

Gaelic song classes covering a range of traditional forms will be offered, including waulking or milling songs and mouth music. Scottish Gaelic language classes for beginner, intermediate, and advanced speakers will also be offered. Teachers this year will be Mary Ann Kennedy, a founding member of Ciar and well known BBC radio broadcaster; Mairéad Sine Chaimbeul, a native Gaelic speaker, member of the faculty at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the 2004 and 2005 ACGA National Mòr-judge; and Jamie MacDonald, a member of the faculty at St. Frances Xavier College in Nova Scotia and founder of the North Carolina Mòr and the Grandfather Mountain Song and Language Week. Mary Ann and Mairéad Sine will teach both Gaelic song and language while Jamie will teach beginning Gaelic.

There will also be plenty of opportunities outside of class to practice speaking Gaelic with other students and instructors. Additional activities include evening cèilidhs, Gaelic videos, a silent auction, and hikes in the

beautiful surrounding mountains. A Gaelic m@? or singing competition, will be held on the Saturday following the workshop at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. Participants in the Gaelic Song Week are urged to stay for the Highland games and compete in the m@?.

The workshop is housed at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina. Participants stay in one of the school's charming spacious dormitories and three nutritious meals a day are provided by the college food service. Fees for the week are \$410 for ACGA members and \$445 for non- members. There is a \$25.00 discount if final payment is postmarked by May 15. This price includes all instruction, room, and meals from Sunday evening dinner through Friday lunch.

The workshop concludes just as the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games are getting underway down the road at MacRae Meadows on Grandfather Mountain. As usual there will be a Gaelic tent at the games, and the North Carolina Gaelic M@? will take place on Saturday at 3:00 PM.

Contacts: Cam MacRae at [acmacr2@uky.edu](mailto:acmacr2@uky.edu) or Libit Woodington at [LibitW@aol.com](mailto:LibitW@aol.com) . For more information see the Grandfather Mountain Song and Language Week information at [www.acgamerica.org](http://www.acgamerica.org) .

\* \* \* \* \*

A Baptist minister, a Wiccan priestess, and a Druid were out in a boat fishing. After a while, the Wiccan stood up, walked across the top of the water to the shore, got something from the car, walked back across the top of the water, and got back into the boat. After a bit, the Druid did likewise. Not to be outdone by these two "infidels," the Baptist stood up and stepped out of the boat. He promptly sank to the bottom.

The Wiccan looked at the Druid and asked "Do you think we should have told him about the rocks?"

The Druid looked at her and asked "What rocks?"



The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD) over in Britain (mostly) has revamped their extensive web-page last month and it's starting to look quite professional with a plethora of interesting articles to while away you time during the remaining winter. <http://www.druidry.org>



Spring Equinox, when the Sun crosses the celestial equator, will occur this year on Sunday, March 20 at 4:34 a.m. Pacific Standard Time.

A Druid Missal-Any is published eight times a year. Post mail subscriptions are \$8.00 and email subscriptions are free. Or write an article or send us a cartoon and receive a year's post mail subscription free.

Write to:

A Druid Missal-Any  
P.O. Box 406  
Canyon, CA 94516

Please note the new mailing address!

E-Mail: [poppinjay@earthlink.net](mailto:poppinjay@earthlink.net)

---

This is the end of the Spring Equinox Issue



[To return to the main news page.](#)

Where you can read our many back issues.

[Read RDNA magazines from 70's, 80's, 90's & 00's](#)

## Comments on the Missal-Any?

[Sign Guestbook](#) / [View Guestbook](#)  
Submissions to [poppinjay at earthlink dot net](mailto:poppinjay@earthlink.net)



Webmastered by Mike Scharding

---