

# Crane Chatter

## Imbolc Edition

2006

In Ireland, it is around this time of year when the livestock begin to give birth, and the ewes begin to lactate again. The ice and snow begins to melt and the days start their climb to warmer temperatures, echoing the lactation that figures so prominently into ancient mythologies. This is a fertility festival, and shows the triumph over winter.

The modern folktale that if a groundhog sees his shadow on Feb. 2 is tied to this as well. There is a certain amount of fear that this winter is going to last much longer than we are prepared. In the ancient world, food was in short supply at this time, and the new birth and lactation signaled the continuance of the cycles.

Looking at Norse myth, we see that this is the time of year that the Norse were assured that the Nagalvinter (three consecutive winters) had not come this year. There is likely to be a certain amount of fear and anxiety at this ritual, and worries about the coming spring not occurring are likely high.

In Neo-Pagan myth, it usually represents the birth of the God, and the closest depiction to the relationship between Goddess and God at this point would be the Madonna and Child representations the Catholic Church uses. The Goddess is still a maiden figure, but she cares for the child who will grow to be her husband one day.

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Liscannor -photo by meaghan



# GREEN LIVING

## Cleaning your home & hearth

It is easy to get caught up in the disposable craze; it's been the biggest thing to hit the cleaning product market in decades. You can buy disposable window wipes, toilet brushes, mop heads, dust cloths, cleanings wipes and more. They help make housework fast and easy - but at what cost? These products are adding considerable bulk to our already overburdened landfills, and they are not biodegradable. They contain harsh chemicals that may not be safe for humans or animals (and are certainly not safe for the environment.)

But what are our alternatives? Can we get our houses clean without these products?

Yes, we certainly can! And it will spare the both environment and our wallets. While products labeled as natural and biodegradable may be quite expensive, it is possible to clean your entire house with just a few products from the kitchen. Two inexpensive items can handle a large portion of your cleaning: baking soda and white vinegar.

Baking soda is one of the most versatile products in the home: we can bake with it, bathe in it (soothing for dry, itchy skin), brush our teeth with it (removes stains and whitens teeth), keep our refrigerators and garbage pails free from odor, and soften the laundry. In addition, it makes an excellent scouring powder for the bathroom sinks and tub. Treat clogged drains with 1 cup of baking soda followed by 1 cup of vinegar. Wait five minutes, and then flush the drain with a kettle of boiling water. You can also use the baking soda/vinegar combination to clean the toilet.

White vinegar is an excellent cleaner, disinfectant and deodorizer. It should be placed in a spray bottle and diluted in water, with no more than 1:1 ratio (though some people prefer a milder mixture). You can add a teaspoonful of essential oils to give the mix a nicer scent (I like to use cedar, lavender, and clary sage). Shake the mixture well and use to clean countertops, appliances, mirrors and windows. (A nice trick for cleaning windows or mirrors: spray on the vinegar mixture and use a crumpled sheet of newspaper to wipe it down. It's any easy way to get a great shine with limited effort!)

Baking soda and vinegar can't quite clean everything in the house, but darn close. I like to supplement them with a biodegradable soap like Dr. Bronner's Sal Suds. It's especially good for washing floors and cars, and is made with natural fir pine needle oil (so it's reminiscent of a classic cleaning product, but much more pleasant!)

Don't feel badly if you've fallen prey to the disposable cleaning product market; it is easy to do. If you can learn to rely on them a little less, it will make for a cleaner planet!

Anne





# Where's the belief?

## Piety in the DP

The Dedicant Handbook defines Piety as follows: "Correct observance of ritual and social traditions, the maintenance of the agreements (both personal and societal) we humans have with the Gods and Spirits. Keeping the Old Ways, through ceremony and duty."

Wait, something is missing here: Where's the belief?

Every so often, ADF goes through an episode of, "What do we all have in common?" We go back and forth, throwing around big words like "orthopraxy" ("right practice") and "orthodoxy" ("right belief"). The majority belief seems to be that what unites ADF is not our belief, but our practice.

It is sometimes hard to understand why we take this route. In reality, this is nothing new to Paganism, and it goes back as far as we have records for Indo-European societies.

In discussing the Vedas in his paper *The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu* (a good read, I must say, and available in .pdf online), Dr. Michael Witzel indicates the following:

"Most of these canonical texts were composed by Brahmins for Brahmins. The texts stress proper *praxis* rather than belief, and one would be justified to speak of *orthopraxis* rather than *orthodoxy*. However, the Kuru system of *aranta* ritual comes along with a complete set of mostly *unstated* (and largely unstudied) presuppositions and beliefs, which are the basis of this authoritative system, an *orthodoxy of sorts*. The most important among them, perhaps, is the very act of *belief* in the efficacy of the system itself, by *araddha*. In this sense, I think, we can speak of a Kuru *orthodoxy*. Other peoples of Vedic Northern India did not believe (*urad-dhā*) in these tenets of Kuru *orthodoxy* and therefore did not follow Kuru *orthopraxy* (the post-Rgvedic *aranta* ritual)."

This particular passage makes an interesting point about an early Indo-European society. What it basically says is that most of the Brahmins of the Vedic world found the *practice* of ritual to be more important than the *belief* behind it. Some, of course, were interested in the belief, but the majority merely (as we would say today) *went through the motions*, and this was perfectly acceptable.

The Vedics aren't the only example, and you can go further afield than just IE societies in order to find ancient peoples *going through the motions*. Christ said, "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." There is no native Mesoamerican word for "religion," and yet we have elaborate rituals and sacred centers.

Things have changed, though, and now piety means many different things to many different people. To some people, belief is the key to piety. To others, piety is about action. For many people, piety falls somewhere in between the actions of worship and the belief in the ability of those actions to re-create the world and reconnect us to deity.

In our modern world, we are more likely to be concerned with the belief behind what we do. Not only do many people who come to Paganism cite that the members of their previous church had merely *gone through the motions*, but they come to the religion with a renewed belief system that is very important to them. Because of this, the idea of *going through the motions* as the extent of piety does not sit well.

Yet others involved in Paganism are more interested in their practice than their belief. They see ritual as re-ordering the world, and thus a responsibility that they must fulfill. Like the Brahmins who were faced with the threat of their wife dying if they did a ritual wrong, those Pagans focused solely on practice



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are more interested in *getting it right* than in *getting the feeling*. To them, the integrity of the world depends on their correct observance, not their belief.

ADF members are likely to know this split best as the pair of statements, "Sincerity is no substitute for competence," and its corollary, "Competence is no substitute for sincerity." It says a lot about ADF that we are more likely to quote the former than the latter.

These may seem like two divergent schools of thought that can have no middle ground, but many of us have found one. We can believe that correct observance is important, but so is your belief and your feeling. Piety generally deals strongly with doing a ritual for each High Day, as well as (depending on the person) more frequent rituals, whether those rituals be daily or corresponding with a moon phase. But it also deals strongly with our belief, and with the feeling that we get from the rituals we do; most Neo-Pagans, myself included, are unlikely at best to continue working in a system that doesn't bring us fulfillment on a spiritual level.

While it may have been enough for the ancient Pagan to go through the motions, it no longer seems to work for the Neo-Pagan. We tend to *want* that belief, that feeling of religiosity that our ancestors may not have needed. It's important to remember that we need it, and to seek it out wherever we can.

So while piety may be defined *sans belief* in the DP, it is never without the feelings in our hearts. It's just up to the individual to decide how much belief they need in their rituals.

Witzel, Michael. *The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu*. P. 260  
<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/canon.pdf>

Michael J. Dangler

### Brighid Chant

We are singing here to honour bright and shining Brighid  
You who forge in fires brilliant lands of fertile green

Kindle hope and thought inspire,  
Dancing like the flame.  
Light our hearts with sacred fire,  
Dancing like the flame.

You of healing, smithing, feeling, bright protectress Brighid:  
Guide us now with strength and purpose, root us like the trees.

Kindle hope and thought inspire,  
Dancing like the flame.  
Light our hearts with sacred fire,  
Dancing like the flame.

-Anna



savage waters

far to the north,  
the setting sun scatters embers  
on black water.

below it,  
life burns  
with the intensity of blue flame.

it is there that the loon's haunting call  
touches the black mirror of the surface,  
there that the omens of autumn unfold like ebony lilies  
on unreadable depths.

echoes collapse into the mantra of genesis,  
the age-old river-dirge of stones being sculpted.  
the tiny bells of the wild hunt sound  
in the silvering of the rapids.

wings approach,  
and the crescent moon  
suddenly opens her door.

an ancient question is spelled in the vastness,  
the savage poetry of the north.  
the sound of a gate unlocking is heard faintly at first  
and then louder from the shoreline.

unseen footsteps create perpetual rings on the black  
stillness of the water;  
and then the shadow of a heron  
falls abruptly like silence along the banks.

Anna



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## The Worlds and the Kindreds - ADF Neopagan Druidism

**The Three Realms:** The universal pattern of the four 'elements' is understood by Celtia differently from the broader magical movement. The classical system of the four arranged as a cross is replaced by the three realms of Land, Sea and Sky, with the Sacred Fire in the center. These are not abstract principles, but interacting homes of all the world's teeming life, whether human, beast, plant, stone or spirit.

**The Land:** is the home of our human kindreds and of our closest allies. The land is our common world where most of us live out our lives. When we look for our part in the great weaving of thing it is the patterns of the land that are our first teachers. Fresh water that wells up in the earth can also be part of the realm of the land.

**The Sea:** is the wild waste that lies outside our common land. The sea is the home of a vast and teeming life, different from our own. It is also the place of the Otherworld Isles, the home of the Sidhe - heroes and the Land of the young. Thus, the sea is connected with the Otherworld as a place of concealed potential.

**The Sky:** is the source of Light and Shadow, the place of the Shining Ones. The Sky overarches the Land and Sea, as the sight of the Gods and Goddesses watches over all. The turning and waxing and waning of the Three Lights of Sun and Moon and Stars, and the wheeling of the stars around the Pole display the Order of the Deities and Their blessing to us.

Among these Realms, all common life is sustained between the Chaos of Potential and the World Order. The ancient Celts made their oaths by saying: "May the Sky not fall, may the Sea not burst its bounds, may the Land not open beneath me, so long as I keep my oath."

In the midst of these Realms is found the Sacred Grove, the place of flowing Together. There the Sacred Fire burns, by the Well of Wisdom, beneath the World Tree.

**The Otherworlds:** Within and behind our common realms, as near as the far side of a tree, as far as the misty deeps, lie the Otherworlds. The Otherworld lands are the home of the Spirits, the Tribes of the Noble Ones and the Shining God/desses themselves.

The Otherworld is reached by strange pathways. It may appear as trackless, misty pathways through forested glades, or as vast waters with Isles of Wonder in them, or as many wild places. It is always a place of challenges, of connection and of learning for the Seeker of the Way.

Within the misted borders of the Otherworlds are many places of wonder. The Land of Youth, where the Gods and Heroes feast; the Land of the Dead, where the blessed Ancestors have their rest and comfort; the Land Under the Hill, where the Noble Ones have their court. All of these can be reached with the skills of Magic. The Otherworld is both cause and reflection of our common realms. Thus the Wise seek to know its ways, to better understand the flow of events in the world and to exert the subtle influences on life that are so much of Magic Art.

**The Kindreds:** All beings are the Children of the Mother, descended through the lines of countless Mothers and Fathers. As well as the many mortal kindreds, there are the countless tribes of Otherworld beings. The Druid will deal with, and make offering to, many kinds of Spirits.

**The Shining Ones** are the eldest, mightiest and wisest of the beings in the Great Weaving. The First Mother and First Father, the Triple Kingship and the Goddesses of Sovereignty, Inspiration and Bounty; the powers of Love, Artisanry and Healing; the Child of light and Shadow; all are reflected in the many cultural pantheons of the Celtic peoples.

**The Mighty Ones** are the Ancestors, those of our folk who are presently resting in the Land of the Dead. they watch over their descendants and lend their power to aid us. It is proper for every Druidic worshipper to honor her immediate ancestors, her Grandmothers and Grandfathers, as well as the Heroes, those great women and men who are honored by her folk.

**The Noble Ones** are the Spirits of non-human evolutions, both mortal and never-born. They are of a multitude of kinds. from small spirits of stone and herb and beast to the very Queen Under the Hill and Her Consort. Each has their own power and should be approached with respect, whether a simple herb-spirit or a mighty mountain.

Thus are the Three Kindreds. It is well to remember that these are not hard and fast categories. The greatest spirits may be reckoned God/desses, even though they come from other kins, while one folk's Deity can be the Ancestor of another, etc. So let the Wise do honor to all the Spirits.

There are Nine Ways of the Druidic Cosmos. The Fire, the Well and the Tree define the Sacred Center, the vertical axis of Underworld, Middle World and the Heavens. Around this axis turn the Three Realms of Land, Sea and Sky and the Otherworlds of each. Within these Realms the Three Kindreds follow their Fates.