Latest Selections:

The Carleton Revival

The Speaking of Beliefs

(By Heiko Koester, 1987)

(New to ARDA 1)

Chapter the First

1. Dear Friends,
2. We are here to celebrate the creative powers of the earth-mother, of nature.
3. To celebrate the wonder of nature.
4. To think of any sunset, any rock, any river whose beauty and symbolic power have existed in your past.
5. Feel the force of those experiences with nature and to let it become a force to help build and sustain you.
6. The force of nature is represented to us here in this fire.

Chapter the Second

1. We're here to celebrate and feel the power of a group.
2. There is true power in a circle.
3. Circle is unbroken, is continuous.
4. We are all equal here and able to send energy in a complete way to each other in this unbroken circle.
5. We are not in rows or in single file and I am not speaking to you from a pulpit, but from within the circle.
6. An essential force of this circle is human love.
7. Without love, support, understanding, and giving, our ritual here tonight and our existence here at Carleton would be empty.
8. Let us keep this always in mind in our daily lives and during our ritual, that love and support is essential to our humanness and to our survival.

Chapter the Third

1. We are also here to celebrate the masculine and feminine natures of the universe to recognize their dual presence in each of us, their cosmic interplay, their equality and interconnectedness.
2. To think of the ying and the yang.

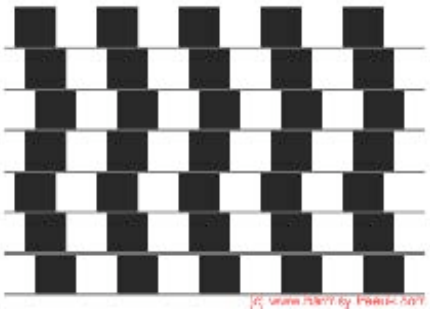
Chapter the Fourth

1. We are here to celebrate not just the nature outside of us, but also the nature within us.
2. We all have tremendous forces and powers which are not let out in daily life.
3. They are physical forces of motion, we find them in dance and making love.
4. They are mystical forces of intrigue, we find them in deep, searching eyes, in beautiful faces.
5. They are our natural feelings of power, of helplessness.
6. We all have tremendous psychic powers of change and tremendous helplessness and vulnerability, and we have to admit this.
7. In the same vein let us not idolize one thing over another.
8. One pointedness, whether it be of heroes or of ideas, is not our way.
9. Rather, let us celebrate the unique beauty of each season; weather, tree, mountain, and mood.
10. This extends to religion.
11. To regard each religion as unique and wonderful in its own right.
12. Especially to practice tolerance, the tolerance of all peoples, all objects, all religions.

Chapter the Fifth

1. Finally, we are here to celebrate the cycles of life.
2. To celebrate the circle in all we see, the cycles of seasons, the cycles of childhood, youth and old age, and to celebrate each in its own right.

Heiko Koestler
Farm House, Carleton College
Autumnal Equinox 1987



Mike's Farewell Epistle

(By Mike Scharding, 1994)

(New to ARDA 2)

1. December 11, 1994
2. To Hrobak, Graham & Curtis
3. Dear Sisters-In-The-Earthmother,
4. All in all, Druidism at Carleton can be wearing upon the Priests of the RDNA. It requires so much quick-planning and is filled with worries of whether one is "doing it right."
5. I ask you to remember that Druidism is first and foremost, a personal journey; which may intersect other's paths for a while, will ultimately be your own. No two people's Druidism is identical (or it seems like it, so far).
6. Yet we are called to "leadership" of Druidism at Carleton. Whatever that means.
7. Matt Cohen, a Druid from Carleton '92, told me that the secret of Druidism to him was doing what you normally like to do. If you do that, then others will be interested by your positive attitude towards the subject.
8. The unfortunate problem is that if you wish to "save Druidism" or actively recruit, people get turned off. Truly a pickle, this one is.
9. Carleton is much different than it was in the 60's and 70's, freedom of expression and appreciation of foreign cultures and religions is much more accepted now. That aspect of Druidism is now kind-of assumed as a basic tenet by most people coming to Carleton.
10. However, just because it's assumed doesn't mean it is carried out in practice.
11. To me, Druidism is an active/passive attempt at living a life of accepting & exploring the diversity, which is in the reality around us. It's that simple and it's that difficult.
12. Sure we can explore Wiccan beliefs; in fact it's probably a very good starting point for many. The term "Witch" conjures up so many of our culture's fears, that overcoming those fears of "witchcraft" is a great step towards overcoming our fears of other strange, non-Christian religions.
13. Another area that could well benefit exploration are the Asian, Native America & African religions; although the materials on the first two are far more accessible.
14. There is so many wonders, treasures and insights available from the many religions/philosophies of the world; wonders to be explored in class and social settings. Let us not stick to just one: there are many other student organizations capable of doing just **one** focus!!
15. Above all, let us not represent our personal paths as that of all Druidism.
16. Druidism is also very vague about it's purposes and provides a nice umbrella-organization for all other sorts of activities associated with practicing/exploring many religions: Candle-making, cloak-making, bonfires, vigiling/camping, offers experience in leadership roles in religion, debates, sweatlodges, vision-quests, arb-walks and meditations.
17. Druidism is a unique activity that Carleton is blessed with, unlike many colleges, because it is accepting of diversity and disparaging of dogma at a critical time in a person's life: college.
18. Thus, the trick, for me, was doing all the activities of a Druid, because I wanted to and inviting other people to join me, if they felt like it.
19. I kind-of wish I was better at group organizing, had encouraged yet more members to lead activities, and excelled at group-image-consolidation, but (in hindsight) that would have been unappealing to the easy-come/easy-go atmosphere of Druidism.
20. Similarly, I wish I could have encouraged greater study of the International Druid Archives by the members, because of the wisdom stored there that is so much like our own.
21. But, to indirectly force members to use any one source is as bad as the Bible-Thumpers' practice of only listening to arguments based on excerpts from the Bible. It remains an immense resource or rituals, debates, articles, opinions, poetry and humor at your disposal.
22. When time permits, please reflect upon the progress of your spiritual journeys. For some of you, it may be a time of unbridled exploration and dissent from rules, and for other it may be a time of intense scrutiny of a new system being sold to you by a bookstore.
23. Whatever the case may be, keep the Reformed Druids open to many types of people, be they pagan, Christian or "just plain don't know."
24. Avoid the dangers of over-ritualism and try to have quiet reflection, by group & individually, plus study nature in scientific & philosophic terms.
25. Read widely from as many traditions as you can. you never know where wisdom may hide! Your opportunity here at Carleton is so unlimited that you have no idea of what kind of person you will be in 4 years!
26. If Druidism should die in the next five years, I'm quite certain that it will spring up anew with someone exploring the archives, reading old Carletonians, a visit by an Alumni-Druid, etc. Druidism may have trouble flourishing, but it has no trouble reviving.
27. So release any anxieties about an "active grove." Trying to "save" one form of Druidism and you will fail, but if you explore the ways of the Mother, then she will bless you with abundance.
28. Enjoy your ever-so-brief stay at Carleton and share your joys and insights with whomever wishes to join you. I've enclosed $50 to help fund your pursuits, as I have tried over the last 5 years. Use it frivolously!
29. Be Druidic, whatever that means to you and allow the same freedom to other members in the group.
30. I wish you the greatest of experiences, AWARENESS.
31. Write to this lonely Druid and tell me of your Druidic studies.
32. I, an old Druid with wist-full memories, have rambled on long enough.
33. I hope that I have given you some encouragement for the upcoming Summer half of the year.
34. Try not to take Druidism as over-seriously as I did.

-Michael

The Third Epistle of Robert

(By Robert Larson, 1996

(New to ARDA 1)

An fh'rinne in aghaidh an tsaoil. (the truth against the world.) -old druid motto (really)
Everything you know is wrong. -The Firesign Theater

Chapter the First: Greetings

1. Dear Siblings in-the-Mother,
2. Go mbeannai an Mhathair sibh go léir. (May the Mother bless all of you.)
3. I wish to convey to you some thoughts that occurred to me while I was helping edit this edition of the Chronicles. I believe they may well give you something to meditate upon as you progress along your druidic path.
4. Of course, some of you may well think I'm crazier than ever.
5. Be that as it may, I ask you to think about my ponderings, which result from both long study and sudden illumination. (It is longer than I intended, but it just growed.)
6. I believe you'll find them interesting and, I pray, helpful.

Chapter the Second: What am I?

1. To those who are uncouth enough to ask my religious persuasion I normally reply that I am a devout pagan. However, I've always felt ambivalent about the term "pagan" or "heathen."
2. On the one hand, I prefer the tolerant and inclusive attitude of the vast majority of "paganisms" toward other belief systems to the exclusive and intolerant attitudes that have historically adhered to monotheistic and dualist creeds.
3. Also, most paganisms are pretty vague about their concepts of deities, which I find suits my druidic view very well.

Chapter the Third: The Term "Pagan"

1. On the other hand, "pagan" has periodically had a pejorative taint, and the present is one of those periods.
2. This pejorative context did not originate with the Christians, but with the ancient "pagan" Romans. "Pagus" in Latin means "countryside," and urban Romans considered "pagans" to be "hicks."
3. "Pagan" religion was looked down upon by the adherents of the more "sophisticated" State polytheism, much in the way that High Church Episcopalians look down upon Holy Rollers.
4. Also, Roman soldiers used "paganus" as an insulting term for civilians. This usage was picked up by the "soldiers of Christ" who used it as a generally pejorative term for non-Christians. "Pagan" has vacillated between being neutral and being pejorative ever since.
5. During the 19th century it was used in both ways when colonialists applied "pagan" or "heathen" to any non-European people, culture or belief system.

Chapter the Fourth:

The Term Neo-Pagan

1. Nor do I find "Neo-Pagan" truly acceptable. "Neo-Pagan" is a term first applied pejoratively (surprise!) to pre-Raphaelite artists which was later adopted as a self-description by another artistic group in the early 20th century.
2. The history of this latter group is curiously similar to that of the RDNA. It started as essentially a group of people who liked to take nature walks but had no real interest in restoring pagan religion.
3. One of its members was Francis Cornford, a follower of one Jane Ellen Harrison, who was a pagan reconstructionist, basing her reconstruction on Frazer. These people influenced others, including Margaret Murray, whose work underlies wicca.
4. An interesting parallel to us, isn't it?

Chapter the Fifth:

Neo-Pagan Pantheonizing

1. Parallels and linguistic connotations aside, one of the problems I find in "Neo-Paganism" in its current context is its tendency to over-define and personalize deity concepts.
2. In this "Neo-Paganism" models itself after the polytheistic pantheons of "established" mythologies, such as those of Greece and Rome, and tries to extend this structure to other vaguer pantheons, such as those of the Celts or Norse.
3. In this attempt they make the same mistake that the Romans did in their attempts to describe Celtic gods in terms of Roman deities.
4. Such a description seizes upon one aspect of a deity and equates it with a familiar god who has a similar aspect, even though it may be the only one the two gods have in common. The result is rather like a Christian identifying all healer entities with Jesus.
5. The attempt to structure Neo-Paganism is a mistake that confuses paganism with polytheism. They are not totally synonymous.

Chapter the Sixth: Folk Religion

1. Paganism or heathenism is, as the terms imply, folk religion.
2. As such, paganism is an accumulation over time of a myriad of traditions and beliefs, which are sometimes contradictory and always confusing to those outside the belief system or culture (and often to those in it!)
3. One should not look for consistency in paganism, such a search will lead only to confusion and frustration.
4. While some structuring exists, and a loose hierarchy of deities often emerges, paganism is essentially an organically grown mélange of beliefs with roots deep in the past. It is religion built from the bottom up.
5. Deities are numerous and each has many aspects, often overlapping. Most deities are localized.
6. For instance, there are some 400 deities recorded in the Celtic "pantheon," the vast majority of them mentioned only once, similar concepts and representations appearing under different names in different locales.

7. While the basic concepts may well be seen to be universal, the deities are different for each has different accretions overlaying the basic concept.

Chapter the Seventh: Organic Religion

1. It is this very organic quality which leads me to believe that paganism is "truer" in human terms than "revealed" religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and their like. Such cults are fine as parts of a greater whole, but when they become the whole, much human quality is lost.
2. The organic quality of paganism usually leads to its being open to new cults and religious concepts.
3. The average pagan of ancient times found no difficulty or contradiction in belonging to many cults. While he would respect and venerate all god concepts and spirits, he would only worship those which he believed impacted on his life or in which he had a particular interest. (Household gods, craft patrons, ancestral spirits, etc.)
4. Intellectual and curious pagans would always find themselves attracted to new cults.
5. The normal pagan did not differentiate between religious and secular life as we do today. Rather, religion was an integral part of life and imbued all its facets, as the spirits and gods were imminent.

Chapter the Eighth: State Religion

1. Structured polytheism and mythology, on the other hand, were constructs of the state and literature.
2. Though built from native beliefs, they were constructed from the top down rather than from the bottom up.
3. The political powers, priestcrafts and writers took one concept/god/myth from here, another from there, a third from yonder, etc. and set up a hierarchy and accepted mythology.
4. Essentially a state religion was built artificially. Similar deity concepts are amalgamated and their powers and responsibilities more rigidly defined.
5. For instance, under the Romans many local chieftain/thunder gods were amalgamated and called Jupiter or Jove, using their original names or localities as subtitles. Differences between the original deities were either submerged or particularized to a sub-cult.
6. The gods became eminent rather than imminent and adopted homes such as Mount Olympus.

Chapter the Ninth: Religious Persecution

1. Such a state religion, while still tolerant of other beliefs, has much tighter boundaries to its tolerance than does paganism.
2. While pagans found no difficulty in including the state-based religion in their belief systems, messianic and revelatory exclusivist cults did.
3. Though conflicts between cults are not unusual in paganism, and such conflicts could lead to "theological debate by other means" (to paraphrase Clausewitz on war,) such conflict rarely disrupted normal life for long; some accommodation would be reached.
4. However, with a state religion in place, some cults found themselves in conflict with the state, which led to the sporadic banning and/or persecution of the cults.
5. The most famous of these persecutions (because the cult eventually won) was that of the Roman state against the Christians.
6. While the Christians are the most famous example of Roman persecution, they are hardly the only example, nor are they the first. That honor probably belongs to the Dionysian cults.
7. The Roman state, as the era's biggest control freaks, had real problems accepting ecstatic and mystery cults, they were just too disorderly. Mithraism, Egyptian mysteries, Great Mother cults, and, of course, the druids among others were all banned or persecuted at some time.
8. Note, though, that these persecutions of religious cults were for political reasons, and usually occurred when the state was having troubles. They were essentially scapegoating operations.
9. As such the severity varied greatly according to the time and place, and many magistrates made great efforts to avoid punishing members of proscribed cults.
10. Of course, once a Christian sect won power, it banned pagan worship and persecuted both pagans and other Christian sects. That, however, is another sad story, one of persecution for religious reasons using state power.
11. Other examples of religious persecution for state purposes include Confucianist China against Buddhism, Shintoist Japan against Christianity, the Nazis against the Jews and Gypsies (and the other pogroms against the Jews), the U.S. government against Native American religions (still going on), and the Egyptians against the Aten cult.
12. This last example, however, is better seen as a case of revenge for Akhematon's religion-based persecution of the polytheistic Egyptian priestcraft.
13. Other persecutions for religious reasons include the Christian church against the German, Slavic, and Baltic paganism (among others), Islam against pagans (Islam has historically been tolerant toward other "people of the book," i.e. Christians and Jews, but has always been intolerant of paganism.), the Crusades, the Inquisition, the medieval witch-hunts, Communism against all other religions (counting Marxism as a religion), and Cromwell against the Irish Catholics.
14. The RDNA may well evolve into a true pagan religion given a few centuries; it certainly has the openness to do so, but it can only so evolve if it continues to avoid over-structuring its belief system in a Neo-Pagan manner.

Chapter the Tenth: Christian or Pagan?

1. For further illustration of the dichotomy between paganism and polytheism I'm making (and just for the fun), let's apply it to present day Christianity.
2. Catholicism can be seen as polytheistic with a triune god at the top, a mother cult, and myriad subsidiary deities (the saints).
3. Belief and structure are imposed from the top. The same is true of Eastern Orthodoxy and High Church Anglicanism.
4. Mainline Protestantism is a mixture of polytheistic structure and pagan belief. Fringe Protestantism, such as the Holiness Church, Primitive Baptists, snake handlers, Christian Science, etc. are essentially intolerant pagan cults.
5. (Well, I've always been a hillbilly at heart.)
6. Most pagan of all are the African-American churches, especially the small denominations which freely mix Christianity with African traditions.

Chapter the Eleventh: Getting Out of Bed in the Morning.

1. Having talked about my concept of paganism at much greater length than I originally intended, I will now take on the concept of "ritual."
2. Some of us consider ritual a hindrance in our druidic paths, Isaac is a ritualist par excellance, and the majority don't care about it.
3. I believe that everyone is using an overly tight definition of ritual. In truth, ritual is unavoidable.
4. The second time a baby cries and is fed, changed, or cosseted a ritual is born, both for the supplicant (the baby) and for the deity (the adult).
5. Ritual pervades human life, though it is normally unperceived.
6. For instance, we each have our own ways of starting the day. If we must rush, leave something out, or do things out of order we get upset. We have "gotten up on the wrong side of the bed" because our "morning ritual" has been disrupted.
7. Similarly, each of us has his own way of doing every habitual task, our personal rituals, though the individual differences are often masked by the similarity of the tasks.
8. But if we try to do a task in a different way, we'll usually screw up. At the least we'll feel we're doing something wrong until we learn a new ritual.

Chapter the Twelfth: Unconscious and Conscious Ritual

1. Most of these rituals in our lives are carried out unconsciously, of course.
2. If we had to think our way through every task, life would be much more difficult, if not impossible.
3. The ritualization of a task puts the body on automatic pilot, freeing the mind to concentrate on the goal of the task or to think of other matters.
4. Ritual can thus best be seen as an enabler and liberator rather than as a hindrance and encumbrance.
5. The freedom of mind brought by ritualization applies to both unconscious and conscious rituals.
6. Whole conscious ritual is not as necessary to life as is unconscious ritual, it is a normal human tendency and desire.
7. To suppress this desire is to suppress a part of our humanity.
8. Indulgence in conscious ritual, however, raises an important question. Will we control the ritual, or it control us?

Chapter the Thirteenth: Internalizing Ritual

1. Any conscious ritual, such as the druid liturgy, should be memorized and, preferably, rehearsed until the officiant can run through it in his sleep.
2. An officiant who does not do this, for whatever reason, does a disservice to both himself and the congregation.
3. The ritual will stumble and will not feel right. If it doesn't feel right to the congregation and the officiant, its results will be at best problematic.
4. A ritual must be done right to be truly effective.
5. This is one reason for a ritual's increasing power with repetition.
6. To use a theatrical parallel, an actor who must concentrate on remembering his lines and blocking will be unable to give sufficient attention to his actual performance, which necessarily will suffer.
7. Internalization of ritual permits the officiant to concentrate upon actually performing it and accomplishing its goals.
8. Instead of restricting his freedom, internalization enables the officiant to better pace the ritual and to improvise meaningfully in response to events and the congregation, leading to greater interaction on both physical and psychic levels.
9. The end result is a better more purposeful ritual.
10. A parallel to what internalization of ritual accomplishes can be found in traditional music or jazz.
11. The musician has internalized the basic tune; he knows where he's been, where he is, and where he's going at all times without having to think about it.
12. This enables him to experiment to ornament the tune and improvise around it as he plays, while maintaining the tune's basic structure.
13. The result is that every playing of the tune is both different and the same, increasing its meaning and personalizing it, and giving greater entertainment to both the audience and the musician.
14. What an officiant is trying to accomplish with a ritual varies with both the ritual and the officiant.
15. Some may try to invoke actual powers, external or internal; others may seek to increase the sense of togetherness in the congregation.
16. In the standard druid liturgy I believe that the entire purpose is summed up in the line "cleanse our minds and hearts and prepare us for meditation."
17. It is in the meditation, after all, that each druid pursues his understanding of the Mother in his own way in the group setting.
18. A well-run service can assist this pursuit, which is really the thrust of Reformed Druidism.
19. So, fellow druids, do your rites right, each in your own way.

Chapter the Fourteenth: Facts and Myths

1. So much for old business, now on to new(ish) business.
2. On a deep level myth is truer than fact.
3. "Facts" are ephemeral; they change as new facts are found or current thinking is revised. Myth is much longer lived.
4. We all know that the Washington and the cherry tree story is false, it was invented by Parson Weems.
5. Yet the story has entered the American mythos.
6. Intellectually we discount it, but it still affects us and inspires us.
7. Similarly, few today believe in the literal truth of ancient myths (in fact, it's likely that few ancient pagans believed in their literal truth), but we can still be moved by them.
8. Biblical debunkers and fundamentalists make the same mistake about the factual content of the Bible.

9. Whether certain events happened or not, whether the Bible is factually true, doesn't matter. To a believer the Biblical mythos rings true; even to a disbeliever it is moving.
10. Facts speak only to the intellect; myth speaks to man's heart and soul.
11. With the longevity and tenaciousness of myth in mind, I will now address some myths about the RDNA, myself, the Berkeley grove, the Celts, and the ancient druids.

Chapter the Fifteenth:

Celtic Culture in the Early RDNA

1. In his history of the RDNA Brother Michael reaches some conclusions on the Celtic influences in the founding at Carleton of the original grove to which I would answer, "Yes, but..."
2. He is correct in saying that the Celtic trappings were there only to lend the name "druids" some legitimacy, and that reading were from various religious traditions with a heavy Zen influence (especially when Frangquist was Arch Druid).
3. My own interest in Celtiana was actually sparked by my involvement with the RDNA, probably due to my innate tendency to seek out the roots of ideas.
4. At Carleton, however, I knew Celtic culture only through song and poetry, both in English.
5. At that time (1963/64 c.e., 1/2 Y.R.) little was generally available on Celtic society or religion.
6. What was available usually relied upon classical sources and was either pretty basic and sketchy (and often wrong) or highly speculative.
7. Being a language freak, I started my research by learning Irish, which further sparked my interest.
8. Then the flood of Celtiana, which persists to this day, began.
9. For the most part I've swum in the more serious scholarly and semi-scholarly stream of this flood while dipping into the metaphysical and speculative eddies.
10. (Some of this stuff is quite good, much of it has some good perceptions, and some is downright ridiculous. Caveat.)
11. As I learned, I shared with others of my acquaintance. As a result, the Celtic veneer became thicker in the Berkeley Grove, but it was never more than a veneer.
12. For services I stuck to the original liturgy with appropriate additions for the High Days.
13. Meditations were often taken from the Chronicles.
14. The Celtic thing was my personal search, but I never consciously attempted to impose it upon the grove as a whole, though I welcomed fellow seekers.
15. (Thus my involvement with Clann na Brocheta.)
16. Some seem to think I became some kind of druid evangelist.
17. Nothing could be farther from the truth. While it is true that I desired a somewhat higher profile for the RDNA, my purpose was not to recruit, but to enable those who were searching for their religious footing to find us more easily.
18. I believed, and still do, that the RDNA has something to offer to such people, the same thing many of us found in it, a chance to define their own religious beliefs without preaching, pressure, or persuasion in a supportive group.
19. I've always found active proselytizing repugnant, however worthy the cause.
20. My attempt to increase the organizational coordination of the RDNA was similarly motivated.
21. The goal was to enable the most organizationally active druids and Archdruids to better serve other's searches for awareness by setting up a forum for discussing problems which groves and individuals encounter.
22. The hallmark of the Third Order is service, after all. This should be especially true for Archdruids.
23. One of the problems a priest runs into after setting up a grove or becoming an Archdruid (especially when the members are not living in close proximity and are not well acquainted with each other as at Carleton College) is that grove members look upon the AD as an authority figure (at least at first).
24. One of the problems of hierarchy.
25. This in turn rather constricts the A-D's search for "awareness," unless he wishes to hopelessly confuse the congregants.
26. A similar problem to that of Zen "masters" and "students.
27. How can you lead another to "awareness" if you're looking for it yourself, when they have to reach their own "awareness"?
28. You can tell them this, but it is often difficult to get through their own preconceptions. (Gee, you're the teacher, so teach!)
29. What I found myself doing (and, I suspect, other A.D.s too) was using their preconceptions to aid my own search, hoping they'd grow in their awareness, too, or at least become aware of their unawareness.
30. Thus, at least partially, the growing Celtic flavor, though I would often take my readings from meditations.
31. The Celtic flavor was always more window-dressing than substance, though.
32. When a congregant asks a metaphysical or philosophical question, the priest should always encourage the congregant to find his own answer.
33. If an answer is insisted upon, the priest should make clear that the answer is only his opinion.
34. All in all, Arch Druid can be a very comfortable position, if you go for anything deeper than having a good time sitting under the oak.

Chapter the Sixteenth:

Those Amazing Celts

1. Despite what I have written of Celtic influence on the early RDNA, I would suggest that it was unknowingly greater than intended.
2. This influence was inevitable, for the Celts made many contributions to our own culture, though these are usually overlooked.
3. Certainly we seem to have evoked the Celtic talent for disorganization.
4. Much to their sorrow (and our loss) when they ran up against the Romans, Germans, Saxons, and Normans, the Celts in their own culture rarely displayed much talent or desire for tight organization.
5. Celtic society, though structured and somewhat hierarchical was essentially libertarian and individualistic with a distinct tendency to surface anarchy.

6. To those who may wish to build a tightly-run pagan religion or organization I would suggest that Celtic deities and society are poor models to invoke.
7. Try the Romans, Greeks, or the Germans (though Himmler sort of ruined the last).
8. The picture that most people have of the Celts is that of a savage, bloodthirsty people who fought naked.
9. This myth is largely the result of Roman writings and can be laid to cultural differences, racism, and propaganda.
10. The centralized and orderly Romans found themselves repelled by the disorderly Celts, who refused to be quietly enslaved.
11. Romans had been racially traumatized by the Celtic sack of Rome early in their history, and the Celts frequently allied themselves with Rome's enemies, notably Hannibal.
12. Celts wouldn't play the Roman game.
13. Instead of pitched battle, Celts preferred raid and ambush.
14. Instead of whole armies facing off against each other with a resultant general slaughter, the Celts preferred individual combat, which might or might not escalate.
15. The fact is, the Celts simply had different cultural values from the Romans (and later the English).
16. The picture is now emerging of the Celts is that of a sophisticated society with a technology that was in some ways more advanced than the Romans', especially in agriculture and iron-working.
17. In fact the yields produced by Celtic agriculture were the best in Northern Europe prior to the development of modern agriculture.
18. Many roads in Gaul and England which are credited to the Romans have proved to have substantial Celtic foundations.
19. The conflict between Celtic and Roman aesthetics can be plainly seen in their art.
20. Celtic art was complex, elaborate, and intricate but was largely nonrepresentational. Roman art was mostly severely representational.
21. Perhaps worst of all to the Romans, Celts had little concept of private land ownership, and belonged to the tribe, not the individual, and no concept of primogeniture.
22. They even "allowed" their women to fight in battle and participate actively in their society and would even follow female leaders.
23. Surely such a people must be total savages!
24. True, the Celts had their savage side, but don't all societies?
25. True, some warriors fought naked. In fact, some Scottish Highlanders stripped for battle as late as 1745.
26. The reason was both religious and practical.
27. Symbolically, fighting naked relies upon the gods and upon one's own skill for protection, and better displays that skill to the gods.
28. Practically, a wound is less likely to infect without dirty cloth pressed into it.
29. If you didn't have armor, which was rare and expensive, you were better off fighting naked and unrestricted.
30. Also, cloth is expensive, mon! (Scots joke)
31. True, the Celts were headhunters.
32. Again the reason was religious, and the practice may only have been that of one warrior cult.
33. But the Romans enslaved conquered peoples and humiliated and murdered their leaders, not to mention their gladiatorial games and mass executions.
34. The English displayed the heads of executed felons until the 18th century and taught the Amerindians the quaint custom of scalping.
35. Who were the savages anyway?!
36. Certainly the Irish considered the English uncouth savages.
37. The same culture clash that led to their misunderstanding and fear of the Celts made both the Romans and English oblivious to or unable to acknowledge the Celtic contributions to their own cultures.
38. Many Latin writers and poets were in fact Romanized Celts from Cisalpine Gaul and Iberia.
39. Some Roman emperors, even, were Celts by descent.
40. Many "English" writers were really Irish, Scottish, or Welsh and thought of themselves as such. (I may be British, laddie, but I am NOT English!)
41. The most basic contribution to English culture is usually totally overlooked. It lies in the language itself.
42. Lexicographers will tell you that surprisingly few English words are derived from Celtic languages.
43. They're right, especially considering the long contact between the peoples.
44. The Celtic contribution is more basic and is found in the structure of the language itself.
45. English relies heavily upon the progressive tenses for the subtlety and flexibility of its verbal system.
46. These tenses are not found in either Anglo-Saxon (or other Germanic languages) or Latin.
47. In Celtic languages, however, such tenses are those most used, sometimes almost exclusively. (As I recall, linguists count some 26 tenses in Irish Verbs. This may be an undercount if various compound constructions are taken into account.)
48. All in all, then, Western culture owes a great unacknowledged debt to the Celts.

Chapter the Seventeenth:

Interrelated Religions

1. I would also suggest that there is a greater relationship between Celtic paganism, Hinduism, Christianity, and even Zen than is usually realized.
2. Let us look again to the roots, Celtic paganism, like all European paganisms except those of the Basque, the Magyar, and the Finns, evolved from the same Indo-European root as did Hinduism.
3. Hinduism gave birth to its own salvation cult, Buddhism, one sect of which became Zen. So Zen is actually a very distant cousin to Celtic paganism.
4. In the centuries before Christ, Judaism was influenced by both Hellenism and the dualist ideas of Zoroastrianism, another salvation cult outgrowth of Indo-European paganism.
5. These influences can be seen in both the messianic idea and the increased emphasis on Satan as a worldly power.
6. Buddhist ideas were also penetrating Judaism at this time.
7. All this influx of ideas led to the development of Jewish mystery cults, such as the Essenes and Christianity.

8. During its early years of development, Christianity absorbed yet more Greek influence, along with Egyptian ideas, which were themselves heavily Hellenized by this time.
9. Many influential early Christian theologians were from Alexandria or God, both places where persecution was relatively light.
10. Most of those from Gaul were, of course, Celts, and it is likely that some druidic beliefs and philosophies found their way into early Christianity.
11. Therefore, we should not be surprised when we find similar ideas expressed in all these religions and cultures.
12. Nor is it a total coincidence that some early Irish Christians wrote epigrammatic poetry similar to haiku, or that some surviving druidic teachings resemble Zen koans, for there is a root connection.

Chapter the Eighteenth:

Who were those old Druids?

1. The standard myth about the druids is that they were the primitive Celtic priesthood who conducted bloody rites in the deep woods and practiced human sacrifice.
2. The revisionist myth sees them as the priesthood of a nature-revering Celtic paganism, but discounts the human sacrifice as Roman propaganda.
3. Both those myths are based upon the Romantics' misreading of classical sources and ignorance of Celtic sources and society.
4. To take the human sacrifice question first, I know of only one Irish source that mentions such a practice, and there it is presented as a heretical aberration.
5. Surely, if human sacrifices were common the early Christian monks would have used the practice to discredit the druids.
6. Even Julius Caesar does not claim that the druids conducted such sacrifice; he says merely that the Celts would not sacrifice without the presence of a druid.
7. To me, this implies that the druids were required mainly to see that it was done right.
8. Caesar also admits that most sacrificial victims were convicted felons and prisoners-of-war, the ensnarement or execution of whom was common in all early societies.
9. Physical evidence of Celtic human sacrifice, though extant, is sparse.
10. We are led to conclude that human sacrifice was not a common practice, and probably only took place in times of great danger, if at all.
11. Such acts may have been a hankering back to earlier practice, much like the constant Roman theme of returning to the practices of the early republic. (We have deserted the way of our ancestors and must return to them if we wish to avert disaster.)
12. Certainly the ancient Irish and Welsh law texts that have come down to us prefer restitution to punishment. Capital punishment is unknown.
13. The myth that the druids were a priesthood has, in fact, no basis in either classical or Celtic sources.
14. Though they certainly had sacral duties, we must remember that religious duties were an integral part of every pagan's life.
15. In fact, neither classical nor Celtic writings refer to the druids as priest, and one, Dio Chrysotom, distinctly differentiates between them.
16. My own opinion is that some druids had a priestly function, but most did not.
17. Their privileged, sacred status is explained best by the druids' many important functions in Celtic society. They were the Celts' poets, seers, judges, doctors, philosophers, teachers, and repositories of tradition (Historians and genealogists).
18. No one druid practiced all these professions, of course.
19. Even the most primitive societies have specialists, and the Celts, as I have shown, were hardly primitive.
20. In historical Irish society all these trades ran in families, members of which were trained in the family trade from an early age, with some cross-training through the custom of fosterage.
21. It should be noted that in early Irish society all these professions were open to both sexes.
22. Only after the victory of the Roman Catholic Church over the Celtic church, a victory due more to organization than theology, did women disappear from the professional class.
23. It is as a professional and intellectual class that we can thus best define the ancient druids, and it was as such that they won the respect of both Greek (who found most of Celtic society as frightening as did the Romans) and early Christian philosophers.
24. This concept invites comparison with the Brahmin caste of India, and this comparison has often been made.
25. It is likely the Brahmins and the druids (and perhaps the Persian magi) had a common root in early Indo-European society.
26. Certainly many parallels exist between the Celtic and Hindu societies, and both mythological and even musical similarities exist.
27. If we look upon the druids as an intellectual caste, rather than as a priesthood with repugnant practices, Roman antipathy towards them is better explained, for a society's intellectuals are always the first target of a conqueror.
28. We can also see that the original druids did not die out with the coming of Christianity (there are mentions of them as late as the 9th century in Irish texts). Rather they metamorphised and maintained many of their positions under a new name.
29. In Ireland, they were known as the aos dana (people of art/learning) who retained much of the sacred status and privilege of the druids.
30. It is likely that the early Celtic Christian church owed some of its beliefs and philosophy to the druids, which it would later reintroduce to the continent through missionaries.
31. Pelagius, either a Briton or an Irishman, was specifically attacked as trying to "revive the natural philosophy of the druids" for his stands against the doctrine of original sin and in support of free will. (He believed Augustinian predestination theology led to immorality.)
32. He was finally condemned as a heretic after long political manipulation by Augustine and his followers.
33. It is certain that the knowledge preserved in Ireland which made it a magnet for those seeking education during the Dark Ages was not only Roman, Greek, and Christian, but also druidic.

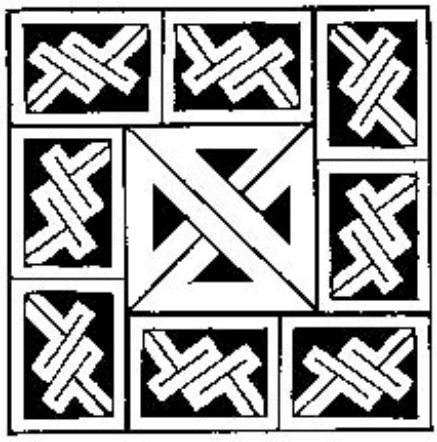
34. We can only mourn the loss of knowledge caused by St. Patrick's boasted destruction of 180 druidic books and by England's later banning and destruction of Irish books, even as we deplore the destruction of the library of Alexandria by Christian zealots and Mayan books by the Spanish priests.
35. Truly all these acts were crimes against all humanity.
36. If we wish to stretch a point, it can be argued that the original druidic caste did not totally die out until England's final suppression of the bardic schools and the brehon law in the 17th century.

Chapter the Nineteenth:

So Where Does That Leave Us?

1. If we accept the original druids as an intellectual caste, we can see a parallel with early Reformed Druids. For what were we at Carleton if not a somewhat mischievous group of intellectuals?
2. But surely I'm not suggesting that any real connection to the ancient druids existed, am I?
3. Certainly not. But, as I have shown, Western thought may well owe an unconscious debt to the druids.
4. No, certainly not, but I'll leave you with a short bit from a story from the Life of St. Guénolé, a 6th century Breton saint, by Wurdistan, a 9th century monk.
5. The story recounts the meeting of St. Guénolé with the last Druid in Brittany!
6. After the events of the story and a brief theological argument, which is essentially a draw, Guénolé offers the Druid refuge in his abbey.
7. The Druid declines and takes his leave, saying, "Do not all tracks lead to the same center?"
8. How druidic!

Peace Siochain Heddwch
Is mise,
Robert D.A.L., Be.
Spring Equinox XXXIII Y.R. (1996 c.e.)



The Book of Lacunae

(By Mike Scharding, 1996)

(New to ARDA 1)

Chapter the First

1. I believe Gerre would agree with me that, "It's a gift to be simple, it's a gift to be free."
2. In my personal form of Druidism, I consider this cliché to be an unspoken Third Basic Tenet.
3. Despite my quest for simplicity, you may have noticed that I have put together this huge tome.
4. Without exaggeration, I have probably spent more time collecting, analyzing, and commenting on Reformed Druidic laws, customs, rituals, letters, and calendars than anyone else. Has this helped me?
5. I have read thousands of our pages, interviewed scores of Druids from every Branch, and spent the better part of three years of my precious youth in this process. As Garfield said, 'Big, fat, hairy deal!'
6. Do you know what I've really discovered?
7. I think that I now know less about Reformed Druidism than when I started, and yet this is good.
8. Do you understand this?

Chapter the Second

1. Many was the long hour that I wended my way through the twisting trails of Carleton's Arboretum; down footpaths of which only the trees and I knew.
2. I would go to those quiet woods to escape the noise of student life in the Goodhue Dormitory.
3. Although I walked in the hoary homeland of Druidism, I was not always Druidical; instead I often puzzled over the intricacies of the Reform's organizational history, with a stubborn drive to somehow "prove" my form of Druidism.
4. Then suddenly!, I'd be distracted by some noise or scent, and I'd be totally enraptured by the starry sky of a Minnesota night; watching my tiny friend, Pleiades, try to escape from big old Orion.
5. In a moment such as that, I would forget about Provisional Councils, Ribbons, and Higher Orders.
6. I would then truly be a Druid; gawking in abject awe, trying to comprehend the Universe in all of its unimaginable vastness and layers of complexity; yet all the while knowing that it was impossible.
7. I would sometime try to compensate for such "limits" by trying to master something so banal and unimportant as the vagaries of our Council's voting methods. But that is, truly, the work of the dying.

Chapter the Third

1. Do you know how I now regard most religions?
2. It's much like story telling, "One mouth speaking and many different ears listening."

Chapter the Fourth

1. My dictionary (AHD) defines a grove as "a small wood or stand of trees that lacks dense undergrowth."
2. If the undergrowth creeps into a grove, it will no longer be a grove, but it becomes a woodland.
3. Woodlands are better than gravel pits, but realize that the old trees will now be more difficult to be discerned or even to be approached, and the youngest saplings may be choked of life-giving sunlight.
4. I sometimes wondered if this desire to remove undergrowth underlaid the practice of the ancient Druids when they removed mistletoe vines from their oak trees, in order to protect their grove's simplicities from parasitic complexities?
5. Likewise, tend ye thus to your groves, not in designing complexities, but in seeking simplicity.
6. Do not fear innovating to suit temporary needs, but be aware of the tenacious nature of traditions, once they become established.

Chapter the Fifth

Chapter the Sixth

1. It is a delicious irony that we, as a simplistic group, have accumulated so much hokey literature.
2. This collection from 33 years of Druidism contains about 800 leaves. Yet I tell you, verily, that a single shrub can match this feat within a year.
3. Perhaps the ancient Druids never wrote down any books about their beliefs, because Nature doesn't write in words, but in a rich tapestry of changing interrelationships and new experiences.
4. This book will probably never change, although you may very well change between your readings.
5. Unlike this book, there are billions of shrubs, which will grow, produce offspring, die, and return to the soil. This book will only sit on a shelf.
6. Would you rather be "of the shrub" or "of the book"? Would you rather be "now" or "the past"?

Chapter the Seventh

1. At the site of Carleton's first Druid service, on Monument Hill, there is a four-sided marble obelisk.
2. On one side is an inscription commemorating the first Christian service held in Northfield.
3. On the second side, a man chiseled in a reminder that the first marriage in Northfield was held here.
4. On the third side are details about the first Christian baptism of a baby in the whole region.
5. But the fourth side is smooth and blank.
6. Richard told me this side tells about Druidism.

Chapter the Eighth

1. Bruce Lee once told a story about a professor from a large university, who visited a Zen Master to seek more wisdom and to have a tea ceremony.
2. Now, he actually went there to impress the Master with his thesis on the Diamond Sutra, which is a difficult work. The Master listened patiently to him and presently he said, "Let us have some tea."
3. The Master carefully poured the hot tea into the professor's cup, but then would not stop pouring. The tea began to overflow and spill over onto the fine *tatami* mats, thereby ruining them.
4. The professor finally could restrain himself no longer and he cried out, "The cup is full, no more will go in!"
5. The Master smiled, and replied, "You, like this teacup, are full of your own opinions and theories. How can you hope to benefit from my words, unless you first empty your cup?"

Chapter the Ninth

1. A bowl's true usefulness requires emptiness, although you could still try to use it as a hammer.

Chapter the Tenth

Chapter the Eleventh

1. It is one of the remarkable aspects of "awareness" that with every breakthrough of understanding, I realize more about the flawed or irrelevant nature of so many dogmas that I carry around.
2. Yet, I am not disturbed by this.
3. Truths have risen and fallen amongst the many cultures of the world, and yet new systems will always arise and pose new solutions to us. We must be ready to choose wisely, or even to contribute.

Chapter the Twelfth

1. Do you know what most people have told me that they most fondly remember about their days of active participation in a Grove?
2. It's not something they can put into words.
3. Richard Shelton, may his camel herds thrive, told me that he had spent far too much of his time in Ann Arbor explaining what Druidism *was not*.
4. I have heard similar words from most Archdruids, and many of them as a result have despaired of passing on the awareness that they achieved at Carleton College (or elsewhere) to other seekers.
5. But where did you get your awareness? Did it come from the words of an Archdruid or did it come from just being

out there with Nature, perhaps with other Druids being present, so many years ago?

6. We can only try to help those who want our help. An unwanted gift, no matter how beautiful it may seem to us, is a burden unto the receiver.
7. But what is this obsession with proselytizing? Some evangelists are like problem drinkers; they do not set responsible limits on their vice and they do not know when its time to leave the bar.
8. Do not consider yourself a missionary out to spread "the truth," for that is not our way. Rather be like a humble traveler and teach wisdom to yourself. Ask good questions and listen to the answers.
9. But if your interests and pursuits of "awareness" should only find wooden ears and you receive a cold shoulder from your Grove, and yet you still need to talk, then go ye into the woods and talk to the trees.
10. For though a tree's ears are wooden, and their shoulders are cold, at least they will listen patiently and provide welcome support for your weary back.
11. When it is time, people may notice what is wise in your words, no matter where you are at the time; whether it be at a Druidical circle in a deep wood, at a New York coffee shop, in the classroom, at the assembly plant, at a hospital, or even (God forbid!) in distant lands during a bloody war.
12. Verily, the Earth is our Carleton College, and all of us are merely pupils in her classrooms. We have to tune our ears to her lectures and occasionally focus away from the voices of other students who murmur around us and pass notes to each other.
13. Let us boldly ask questions in our classes, listen to our classmates, do the best on our exams, exceed our homework's teaching objectives, play hooky, enjoy the games during recess periods, go on field trips, and work together on class projects.
14. Some say that we forget 90% of what we learned in College, but do not forget that there is no end of to lessons that can still be learned out there.

Chapter the Thirteenth

1. I have also heard complaints that too many Reformed Druids are "going back" to a monotheistic faith, or moving on to another religion.
2. Why do you now seek to bind other people solely to the ways of Reformed Druidism?
3. Many of us joined Reformed Druidism, not because it was the only way to find spiritual truth, but because we agreed that it was "one way, yea, one way amongst many."
4. I would also remind you that many of us never officially "left" our previous religions, because Reformed Druidism does not require us to abandon our previous affiliations or commitments.
5. When people judge that they have sufficiently explored our ways, who are we to begrudge them a chance to explore yet more ways?
6. I consider Reformed Druidism to be a spiritual way-station for pilgrims who are seeking for spiritual truths. They come from everywhere, they stay until rested, and they eventually go somewhere.
7. If we have been good caretakers of this way-station, they will remember our hospitality and perhaps they may return for a visit, but certainly they will fondly remember us and our ways.
8. May our gift of Druidism to these travelers not be a heavy ball and chain that will bind them to our ways, but rather may we give them a set of wings and a telescope to aid their journeys.
9. Perhaps you are worried that their relationships with the Earth-Mother will deteriorate or disappear under another religion?
10. Look ye at the Green Book and note ye how every religion of the world has wisdom in it, and that at least one voice in every religion has incorporated a respect or reverence for Nature.
11. If the people have truly met the Earth-Mother while they were with us, then when they leave they may naturally gravitate towards such voices.
12. Finally, I would ask you if such a preoccupation with other people's spiritual welfare is perhaps an indication that you are avoiding the tending of your own spiritual growth?

Chapter the Fourteenth

Chapter the Fifteenth

1. I tell you that when you develop "awareness" you can gain wisdom from every word, every book, every encounter, and from every possible silence.
2. No longer will you need to keep to the outer structures of Reformed Druidism, except as one keeps a beautiful painting on a living room wall; yet one still goes outside for a breath of fresh air, and to see what the squirrels & foxgloves are up to today.
3. If your copy of ARDA distracts you from the rest of Reality, then it is only worthy of recycling.
4. Keep it simple, stupid (KISS).

Chapter the Sixteenth

1. Indeed, after reading the ARDA, some of you may wish to adopt all those old customs, or perhaps even to revive the Reform's organization above and beyond the Grove level (i.e. a new Council).
2. Please, do not be surprised if you find that most of the older Reformed Druids (and myself) will refuse to participate in such a revival.
3. It is not because we disdain the past forms of Reformed Druidism, for I and the others will always be glad to advise you and help you on your journey, but consider this story:

4. "Chuang Tzu was fishing in the P'u when the Prince of Ch'u sent two high officials to ask him to take charge of the administration of the Ch'u State."
5. "Chuang Tzu went on fishing and, without turning his head, said: "I have heard that in Ch'u there is a sacred tortoise which has been dead now some three thousand years, and that the Prince keeps this tortoise carefully enclosed in a chest on the altar of his ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead and have its remains venerated, or be alive and wagging its tail in the mud?"
6. "It would rather be alive," replied the two officials, "and wagging its tail in the mud."
7. "Begone!" cried Chuang Tzu. "I too will wag my tail in the mud."

Chapter the Seventeenth

1. That's about all that I can think to write about, but you can find more of my thoughts in the selections of Volume 2 and 3 of the Green Book.
2. I hope that this Apocrypha has shown to you the problems of Druidism, or of even knowing what is Druidism! "The never-ending search for religious truth" must continue for me, as it will for you.
3. Blessings of peace be upon you!

Michael James Anthony Ulhail Scharding
Grand Patriarch of the Ancient Order of Bambi
Day One of Samradh
Year XXXIV of e Reform
May 1st, 1996 c.e.

The Epistle of Amanda

(By Amanda, 1997)

(New to ARDA 2)

1. Dear Michael,
2. Thank you for your long-distance support, it's nice to know that because of our devotion to the Earth we can share our experiences and friendship.
3. There are many people who follow a Druidic path and call it Buddhism, Catholicism, etc.
4. I always find it interesting to attend the religious services of another faith, or get into a discussion with someone who think they believe differently, and see just how much we have in common.
5. We're all seeking, taking the paths that seem the most fitting for our beliefs, but we're all going to end up in the same place.
6. What, may I ask, pulled you to Druidism?
7. For me it was the combination of religion and Nature, the fact that it doesn't require me to think that other religions are "wrong."
8. [Many people have always believed that there is only one "right" way to spiritual awakening or whatever one would call it. However, you are right in that so many religions are very similar, they probably ARE the same religion, but some people found things they didn't like about one, changed it, and denounced the original.
9. Also, Christianity DID borrow from the Pagan religions in order to get more Pagans to convert.
10. These similarities aren't limited to Christianity and the Pagan religions of Western Europe, though. In Indian religions three is also a holy number, and there is a trinity of the Buddha, his Spirit body, Enjoyment body and Dharma(human) body, and there are parallels with Indian religion in Native American religions. Sorry about the run-on sentence. (24 Oct 1996)]
11. You asked about my vigil. It was one of the most surreal experiences of my life. Michelle started out with me in the lower Arb shortly before sunset. She shared with me information I would find valuable through the night.
12. As darkness fell, I expected it to bring fear, but I felt fear only once that entire night when something ran across a field and I though it came at me through the foliage lining the trail.
13. I did a lot of thinking before the sun rose that morning, mostly about the mother-daughter relationship I have with the Earth/Goddess (I'm Wiccan).
14. I saw it as an omen that I stood on the hill at sunrise, a doe and her fawn stepped into view in a nearby field. I can think of nothing else to say about the experience, it was beyond any verbal description.
15. Things are going well with the Druids. We have good participation for most things, but for our last full moon ritual no one showed up. Probably, because it was fairly cold and there were three inches of snow on the ground.
16. All in all a good fall term.
17. I don't have an Anthology yet, so I'm borrowing the Religious Diversity House copy for now.

Have a good Yule.
Amanda

The Sigil Letters

(By Various Authors,1997-8)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First: The Sigil Vigil

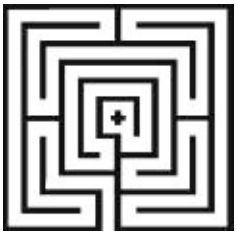
1. Dear Siblings
2. You asked me what I see when I look at this neat little sigil you sent to me? Is it now traditional to wear Druid Sigils as jewelry, this smacks of prosyletization, don't you think?
3. I had always preferred retaining the sigils for liturgical work and carving them on the winds at the close of the service with our hands (Peace, Peace, Peace), thus showing vividly how temporary is our mark on the world.
4. But, it was a good question, so I stayed up last night and thought about it, which is not hard since we have 23 hours at the South Pole.
5. Here are the more comprehensible thoughts that resulted;
6. I see two parallel lines intersecting a circle. (is there more to it than that?)
7. I see the original ritualistic gestures of its shape carved on the winds (where do they go?)
8. I see a fork and a knife on a plate (what was for dinner?)
9. I see two chopsticks resting on a bowl (is it full or emptied?)
10. I see a lid to a pot with bars to keep it from falling in (what's for dinner?)
11. I see a grate to filter out the flow of something (what's to be kept out?)
12. I see two boards placed on a well-top (are you thirsty?)
13. I see two pins and a ring, holding up a hairdo (how fancy is it?)
14. I see a drum and two drum sticks (what music does your rhythm accompany?)
15. I see two saplings with the sun rising behind them (what will happen today?)
16. I see two bars on window (is it locked?)
17. I see a galloping turtle with his head pulled in. (what is he afraid of?)
18. I see the world's tropics of cancer and Capricorn. (where will you go?)
19. I see a thing that cannot be described (do you see it too?)
20. I see a raggedy baseball in mid-flight (how will you swing?)
21. I see a bridge spanning over a pond (is it deep?)
22. I see rabbit ears on TV antenna. (What channel are you tuned to?)
23. I see a drawbridge of a castle entrance (what is protected?)
24. I see a Celtic cross, with swords unlocked (why were they fighting?)
25. I see some planks laid over a chasm (what made the hole?)
26. I see eyelashes on a half-closed eye (what does it see?)
27. I see the stalactite & stalagmite lined entrance to the Earth-Mother's womb (what will come out?)
28. I see three enclosed spaces (what else in there?)
29. I see the trails of two friends in a grassy meadow (which flowers will they pick?)
30. I see two streams of a waterfall pouring over the mouth of a cave (must you get wet?)
31. I see infinite space stretching away from the sigil (what is out there?)
32. I see the refined end-product of some melted rocks, hauled far from home (just like us, isn't it?
33. I see a division of a perfect year into two half seasons and two "days between the years"
34. I see analogies that have gone on too long (when will I stop?)
35. I see a short tube when viewed from the sides (details depend on the vantage point)
36. I see two parallel lines intersecting a circle on the other side. (sometimes opposites are similar)
37. It is a lump of pewter, than I hung on my computer.

-Ian Friesland, June 1997

Chapter the Second: Sigil Musings

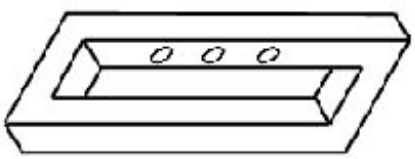
1. November 11th, 1997
2. Dear Amanda Bradley, Sister-in-the-Mother.
3. I wish you a happy Celtic Year and beginning of the Time of Sleep in Reformed Druidism (Samhain to Beltane).
4. As a present I offer you this Druid Sigil which I usually give to new 3rd Orders. What does it mean?
5. It is merely a lump of silver to some, worth $20.
6. To others it is a symbol of weirdness, of people who refuse to accept societies predetermined paths of spirituality.
7. To others it is a symbol by which to recognize other Druids, but verily I believe that there are many people in many faiths or codes who follow the Druidic path but use a different name for it. Seek these people, too.
8. To others, it is a symbol of their desire to control the "magic" of Nature. I have done this too, but beware of egotism, because the control of Nature's magic can be abused just as we have abused Nature's other resources.
9. To others, it is an indefinite thing. This simple symbol has seemingly never been adopted or named before by any known group before 1963. It can be used as a tool without existing prejudice for teaching.
10. To you, it will mean whatever you wish. If you wear it, people will associate your deeds and words with this symbol.
11. I give it to you with this in mind.

Yours in the Mother,
Michael
Druid Missionary in Japan



Chapter the Third: My Vision of the Sigil

1. I've thought a bit about the sigil. The following is born out of my experiences with a Rosen Method practitioner, my experiences with the Mists of the Stone Forest Grove in Minneapolis, as well as the events of the night of my vigil. In Neopagan Druidism, such as we are, there is a tendency to three-ness.
2. There are a number of three aspected Godheads in Celtic mythology, for example.
3. There is also the aspect of three in time, which has Gaelic names for past, present and future that I cannot remember.
4. Also, the three realities that the Cosmic Tree unites: Upper World, This world, Lower World. Another "three" that we at Mists worked with is that of Gods & Goddesses, Nature Spirits, and Ancestors. In our rituals we invoke these three.
5. The sigil of OBOD is the three-rayed sign, commonly translated as the rays of spirit, mind, and body.
6. My view of the RDNA sigil is that the two vertical rays represent spirit and soul. Soul could alternately be called mind. I see the difference between spirit and soul as being the two parts of life that reach for the heavens(spirit), and that which embraces the Earth(soul). I won't say that this is a sharp definition.
7. They could just as easily be two aspects of the same immaterial aspect of a human as two different things altogether.
8. However, they have a body around them, and I believe that is very effectively symbolizes the unity of Life, especially within a Pagan worldview.
9. The two rays extending in both directions beyond the "body" can than have significant meanings of the need to have the balance of an inner life coupled with the outer life of experience.
10. I am a believer in the mind/body connection, and this sigil could well symbolize that too.
11. That has been my experience of late with this Rosen Practitioner. It's a subtle form of touch that reads the soul as kept in the body. I was doing some experiments of my own in my last session, and the results were outstanding.
12. This practitioner I see is good. If I changed my mind in mid-stream, he felt it. I was changing my energies, by centering very deeply. When I hit core, I get body rushes, and when I did, he immediately noted it.
13. I was being silent the whole time, and experimenting with the method because I see this as being a powerful tool for healing souls, which is a desire of mine.
14. So the sigil to me is very profound. I wear it constantly, and it serves to remind me of my Third Order calling.

-Robert Harrison, ODAL,
Carleton Grove (associated)

Chapter the Fourth: History of the Sigil

1. What is a sigil?
2. The circle bisected by two vertical parallel lines is known as the Druid sigil in modern Druid groups. It is one of the many symbols now widely used by Reformed Druids of North America, its offshoot called Ar nDraoicht Fein (ADF) which started in 1983, which also had an offshoot The Henge of Keltria. Therefore, it is a prominent symbol of Druidism in America.
3. Any group can use the sigil, if they wish, we're not possessive about it, just send us a copy of your artwork for our gallery collection.
4. False Origin Myth #1
5. There is a well publicized myth that it came from a photograph of a Celtic-Romano temple's foundation which had a square Roman foundation over laying an older Celtic circular structure. It looks remarkably like the Druid sigil with two of the rectangular while parallely intersecting the circle. However, this shot published in Stuart Piggot's seminal work "The Druids" was first published in 1966, three years after the RDNA was already documented as heavily using the symbol.
6. So that can't be it. None of the founders probably had the background knowledge in 1963 of obscure archeological digs, so they couldn't have come across it anywhere else in the first two weeks of the founding of the RDNA.
7. Closer to the Truth Story
8. David Fisher, the founder of the RDNA, was eating lunch at Goodhue Dorm Cafeteria on Carleton College Campus in Northfield, Minnesota, USA in early April 1963 (perhaps April 1st?) and talking to Norman Nelson and a few of his other friends.
9. They were complaining about a mandatory requirement to attend weekly religious services by the college. They decided to start THEIR OWN religion to see if that was satisfactory, and they decided on the name "Reformed Druids of North America."
10. So they traipsed up to the hill of three oaks soon thereafter (April 17th, 1963) and had the first ceremony. David Fisher claimed to have been initiated into a Fraternal Druid order in Missouri, but they didn't believe him, because he had also tried to set up three other semi-secret farcical organizations on the campus with a similar story. But the others recognized the power of continuing an older tradition.
11. The sigil was apparently used during that ceremony. So from whence did it come? Probably from David Fisher's fevered imagination (divine inspiration?, definitely inspired by spirits of whiskey).
12. I have conducted over 21 hours of research through various books of symbols and magical runes, but I have found no trace of the circle with two vertical lines. The closest thing is a Greek letter of a circle with one vertical line (and David was possibly interested in starting a Greek fraternity style group, which were banned at Carleton). The alchemical symbol for oil is similar to that Greek letter.
13. What does it mean?
14. Good question. There is no definitive answer on this subject. It both means what you think it means, and it means something you don't think it means.
15. Various designs have popped up, but there were no ornate designs until 1969. It had always been simple three strokes

of a pen until that date. Recently, people have tended to draw it as a wreath pierced and supported by two wooden poles.

16. Since then, various designs, visualizations, and descriptive readings have been attempted of the Sigil. I'm in the process of collecting and listing them

Michael Scharding,
Former Arch Druid of the Carleton Grove,
Current Arch Druid of Monument Grove

The Epistle of Sam

(By Sam Adams, 1997)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. April 31, 1997
2. Dear Michael,
3. I hope you are well and enjoying your present circumstance, which I believe is very likely the case.
4. It was very good to hear form you and to receive your weighty tome on the Carleton Druids, a work which shall certainly bring you some degree of fame and/or notoriety in days to come.
5. I was just reflecting on the irony that this same organization, this merry band of "Zen anarchists" should remain so dear to my heart, closer, even, than some of the other manifestations that my spirituality has taken on over the years.
6. I am still intent on becoming Catholic. I am a member, still, of the Henge of Keltria. These are parts of my personality as well.
7. Yet I shall always remain a Druid, and I realize the flaws in the codifications of belief and expression that these latter institutions have adopted, limits and snares that the RDNA avoided by never defining itself so rigidly in the first place, and never, ever being that serious.

Chapter the Second

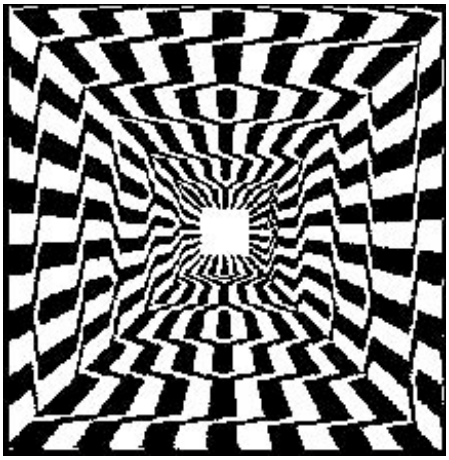
1. I continue with my studies of Celtic music, performing occasionally with a rather untraditional Irish musician, Sean Egan, who plays the clarinet: a strange instrument for Irish music, though familiar in Breton music, and most pleasant in combination with the accordion.
2. I have also a little one-drone bagpipe now, a "veuze," which I am struggling with-- I need to get some hemp and wax and get it sealed up properly before I shall make any progress, I fear. Hopefully I will gain some degree of competence over the next few years.
3. I have not been speaking much Welsh, but I have found some excellent resources on the Web, and soon shall subscribe to the WELSH-L e-mail list to get more practice in it.
4. So as you see, my Celtic interests continue unabated, as they are part of my soul life now and will no doubt continue as such.

Chapter the Third

1. Yet I marvel at my past preoccupation with "Real Druidism" and the attempts to force it into Reformed Druidism, which Bonewits made so fervently all those years ago, and which I perhaps harkened back to, in my own small way.
2. I remember a couple of rather prickly articles I posted to NOTES about such matters as the appropriate activities for an Imbolc ceremony -- it all seems rather ridiculous now, as perhaps such things always do.
3. It is interesting how the whole "druid" label seems to have been a massive red herring in the context of the RDNA - there was a real interest in Celtic stuff, which I have seen in Richard Shelton and his wife, but a more immediate preoccupation with personal development through Zen and Taoist concepts.
4. Still there is the sense though, that "Druid" stands for something noble and lost to the present culture, something to be reintroduced as a thing that is new, yet very old, native to us though unfamiliar. And that is what still draws me to it.
5. There are Neo-Pagan Druids who can quote chapter and verse from the Tain and plan elaborate Neo-Indo-European rituals, as though mocking something, which they really hold to be dead.
6. Then there are people who enjoy sitting around in smoky pubs with fiddles and pipes and accordions. I'm somewhere in between now, I think.
7. Have a nice time and be sure to call when you get back. Write and let me know when that will be! Heather Gruenberg sends regards. I'll be at Carleton for Beltane.

Yours in the Earth/Sky Mother/Father,
Sam Adams

P.S. Words for the day: Never be an "ex"-anything. Just keep adding things to your resume, and leave behind only the pain; ex-rascist, ex-classist, ex-xenophobe, etc. Never ex-Catholic, ex-Christian, ex-Pagan, ex-Druid. Thanks for the brandy!



What Are Druids?

(By Irony Sade, June 6, 1998)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. Irony, I will be writing a short press release for the college news bureau about the Carleton Druids.
2. The news bureau's press releases are sometimes published in local newspapers or call the attention of a newspaper to send down their own reporter to do a longer story.
3. I would like to take the angle of how the druids give an environmental consciousness to religion.
4. On the druid web page, it says "Everyone today realizes that we have to be environmentally aware of the earth's cycle and druids often go a step further."
5. If you could, please expand and maybe give some examples. (which I might quote) I will e-mail you the final press release before sending it out.
6. The news bureau is really just a public relations office and only wants to publicize the positive about our college.
7. Thanks! Jeff email: radkej

Chapter the Second

1. The Carleton Druids cannot help but give an environmental consciousness to religion.
2. We have only two tenets, or fixed beliefs. The first is an awareness that the quest for spiritual truth is an important and life long search. The second is that through study, awareness, and reverence of nature one can further this endeavor.
3. No one will claim that this is the only path to spiritual truth and understanding- it is merely one that we have chosen to follow.

Chapter the Third

1. Druids are by nature fairly solitary creatures, so the ways in which this reverence for the natural world plays itself out is as varied as we are.
2. Of the druids at Carleton, some become Biology majors, taking the path of rigorous study of nature and the environment. Others throw themselves into Philosophy.
3. All of us tend to spend an inordinate amount of time outside, and to think seriously about life- our own and that which we see around us.
4. We try to teach each other and those who approach us what little we have learned about nature, life, and living; for us, none of those are separate things.
5. Even as the hypothetical leader of the Carleton Druids I cannot tell you what being a druid means to every one of us, nor how that belief encompasses an environmental consciousness.
6. I can only tell you of my own experience in such matters, or of those things that the group as a whole has done concerning nature and the environment.

Chapter the Fourth

1. As a group we celebrate between four and six major festivals a year, each firmly connected to the seasonal changes in the world.
2. The most recent of these was Beltain, a celebration of the returning spring. It is marked by a recognition that the flowers are finally back, the Wood Ducks are nesting, herbs are growing in the forest again, and the Minnesota winter is finally really gone.
3. The celebration was held on Mai Fete island over midterm break, and held a bonfire, two weddings, a may pole, and hours of music and story telling. At the end of the day the northern lights came out in a display to pale the best that anyone there had witnessed.
4. Our other major holidays occur in the late autumn, midsummer, and midwinter, each focused around the season that it falls in. We also celebrate the solstices and equinoxes throughout the year.

Chapter the Fifth

1. One thing that will help to clarify the great importance that we place in the changing cycles and patterns of the natural world is to realize that the year is seen as a pattern for the life of man.
2. In its growth, maturity, decline and death, we see an endlessly repeated microcosm of our own lives. By celebrating these elements as they occur in the world around us we can acknowledge their existence in our selves.
3. Beltain is a time for celebrating not only the budding life in the world, but for becoming aware of the elements in our own lives that are passing through the spring of the soul - new projects, new loves, new life. It is a time of rejoicing in the beginnings that are always happening in the world and in our selves.
4. Samhain - the autumn festival- is similarly a time for recognizing death and sleep in the natural world and in ourselves. When all the world is preparing for winter we take the time to reflect and remember, to say good-bye to those who have died over the past year, and to the parts of ourselves that have changed, moved on, or withered.
5. By celebrating the endless and cyclic process of natural change in the world, we can also see it in ourselves.
6. By witnessing nature within our own lives, we create a framework within which to grow, to embrace birth, death, maturity, decay, and to endlessly recreate ourselves throughout our lives.

Chapter the Sixth

1. But perhaps you wanted more material stories of what we as a group have done.
2. This year the Carleton Druids have led sweeps through the Arboretum to clean it of litter after the spring floods.
3. Members of the group have bussed out to St. Peter’s to witness the destructive power of the environment and to build new roofs over houses that were divested of them by tornadoes.
4. Less recently we have led Arb walks to acquaint new students with the landscape around Carleton, and arraigned herb gathering expeditions in the early spring.
5. We take care of the Arboretum in all the little ways that we can, collecting litter, clearing trails before the grounds

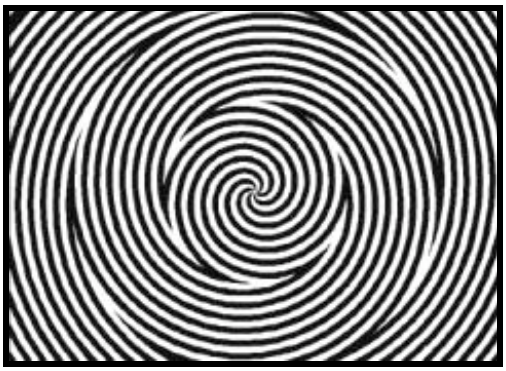
crew arrives, keeping fires in the areas that are safe for them, and occasionally assisting lost and benighted folks who cannot find their way out.

6. Through our daily interactions we try to instill a sense of respect and reverence for the environment in those we meet, telling them the stories behind the constellations, pointing out the wonders that they are missing, and making them aware of the casual damage they do to the world without ever realizing it.
7. Last year we arraigned and created the stone circle in the upper Arb as a place where people can come to enjoy the peace and beauty of the natural world in the closest thing we will ever have to a shrine.

Chapter the Seventh

1. I guess I don't really know what else to say.
2. Our 'environmental consciousness' is more of a cosmology than anything else.
3. It is something that affects everything we do, not a list of activities that we publicize.
4. If you want entertaining stories of the various ways that this has played out I would much rather talk in person.
5. There is a wealth of wonderful anecdotes even from just the years I've been here.
6. The time security interrupted a sweatlodge - twice! - and it was only luck that we all had our clothes back on when they came...
7. The time the folks at Farm House were dying for snow the day before winter carnival - they approached the Druids who adapted a rain-dance, half as a joke, and dropped a foot of snow over just Rice County the following night...
8. A time when one of the druids walked into a misplaced party and put out an illegal fire by trampling it barefoot...
9. Let me know if any of this is useful to you in your writing. If you have any questions, or other areas you would like me to address, give me a call.
10. Good luck getting the article printed - I hope to see it before it goes to press.

Yours,
Irony Sade
Current Archdruid at Carleton College



The Exile Letters, Part One

(By Irony Sade, 1998-9)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

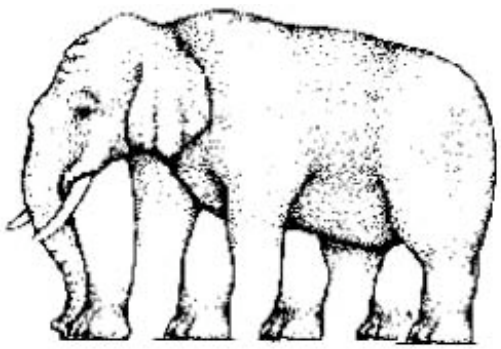
1. Dear Mec, [i.e. Mike Scharding]
2. My friend Chrissie is coming to Carleton in the fall, and I will teach her all I know about the workings of this place and to the dubious wisdom and traditions of the last three years.
3. She has that rarest of gifts, true initiative. NO one remaining here does. There is no feedback, no suggestions are offered.
4. Things happen only when out of the nothingness, I, or alas more rarely Michelle Hajder, decides that they will. Then people come participate and wander off again without comment.
5. Chrissie, though, creates her own schemes and is inspired by those she sees. She arrived at my door with a bag of tricks and announced that we were to celebrate.
6. After the feeling I have here of having to force things through by my will and my presence - All the while trying not to be a leader- it was unspeakably refreshing to have someone enthusiastic, creative in their own right and willing to walk beside, instead of behind or before.
7. I feel vaguely bad about planning for her to assume the leadership here and even a tad of humorous guilt for 'importing' an active and dynamic Druid when there were no local ones forth coming.
8. I have known Chrissie since before she could walk. Promoting her to Archdruidcy feels almost dynastic sometimes.
9. And now I've returned [to Carleton].
10. I have designed the first ethics major at Carleton, which may open up a new concentration.
11. Someone has stenciled John Lennon upon the north facing stone of the circle. Somehow it does not bother me much. The place is well loved by the people here, the lady has a path beaten down to her and I find flowers and offerings there at times.
12. I performed the weddings at Beltain to the great delight of the couples and onlookers. One was a couple from my class. The other, Harriet Erwin and her boyfriend - the secretary of philosophy/religion/classics if you don't recall.
13. We danced the maypole into the ground and Michelle led the last dance so that I could watch it all happen for once.
14. I am happy in a peculiar way with the near future looking full, serious, and wonderful. I miss my love immensely but we will be together again for another while soon. I am sorry to have missed your wedding.
15. Enough for now, for one letter,

Yours in service,
Irony
Carleton College, MN

Chapter the Second

1. Date: Fri, 06 Nov 1998 14:44:00 –0600
2. Druidism, as I practice it, is at its heart the recognition of only two things:
3. That the spiritual search is important, individual, and life long, and that nature presents one avenue down which to take this search.
4. What it requires is simply a great degree of intellectual honesty with ones self. You do not simply choose what you will believe; you search out what might be true and subject it to some rigorous examination.
5. Approach life with the premise that everyone and everything can teach you something you don't yet know, and knows something that you never will.
6. Druidism is about actively learning as much as you can about life and yourself- not merely on the spiritual plane.
7. I could go on forever, but it will become a description of my search rather than classical reformed druidism if I continue much.
8. It may help you to know one of the very basic suppositions and assertions of that system. You have a right to believe what you know to be true, no matter what anyone thinks of it.
9. I would be glad to talk to you in person about anything. An important learning technique is sharing with others the things you have learned, unlearned, or wondered about. Through their reflections on it, you gleen a lot.
10. Give me a call if you wish, or stop by.

Irony



The Epistle of The Rising Sun

(By Mike Scharding, 1998)

(New to ARDA 2)

1. Dear Brethren and Sisthren, a zestful spring to all of you from the land of the rising sun.
2. Every day I greet the sun while all of you are slumbering; a fitting place for a priest of Belenos, isn't it?
3. It is interesting how so many of us are interested in meeting space aliens from across the universe, but are reluctant to go next door and talk with the neighbors or to research the Maori culture of New Zealand... An idea that struck me today.
4. Recently, I've acquired a new "convert," or at least a new brother, Ikari Segawa who lives in Shikoku.
5. To further his studies (perhaps to retard them?) I've loaned him my copy of A Reformed Druid Anthology. Well, its a pretty boring book full of irrelevant historical trivia, old debates and (to me) interesting anecdotes.
6. Strangely enough, after I mailed him the book, I felt strangely NAKED. I felt like a bible-thumper who had to enter a debate without making a reference to the bible.
7. Why was this? I had gone through Druidism at Carleton, quite happily anarchic (sometimes autocratically, I suppose) without a book, what had changed?
8. I suppose instead of living each day in a Zen-like renewal of appreciation in the multitude of joys and pains of my life in Nature, I have instead come to dwell upon written memories and past experiences.
9. Now for you who are still at the College, this might sound like a cliché, but you are darn lucky for 4 (or 5) years.
10. Carleton, while not true wilderness, is a magical wonderland for Druidical pursuits both in the classroom and in Nature's own classroom-- The Arb.
11. I wholly recommend unto you that you frisk and frolic and meditate outside as much as possible in Minnesota's short spring season! Your precious days at Carleton ARE numbered.
12. While in Japan, I've had a field day with all the Shinto festivals and the general lackadaisical attitude toward religion here, which to me is almost Druidical, except most of them don't have that drive to search out and contemplate new religious ideas that I believe is essential to nurturing Druidism.
13. If you folks ever get the chance, please spend a year here on the JET program, teaching English with no qualification other than a BA (you don't have to know a word of Japanese). It's quite pleasant right after college....
14. As a parting thought, remember that Neo-Paganism are but a drop in possibilities of religion, and there are alternatives to religion (like philosophy and atheism).
15. I would like to hear more from you fellows, maybe some pictures. I don't know your names, but I'm sure we would be friends/companions if we were together.

Your in the Earth-Mother,
Michael, wandering busy-body
Akita, Japan Day 65 of Earrach,
Year XXXV of the Reform (4/6/98)

16. P.S. Has it been eight years already since my entry into Druidism? What have I learned? What have I forgotten?

Freedom Within and Freedom Without

(By Mike Scharding, 1999)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First: Greetings

1. Ho fellow Druids! Blessings of the Mother upon thee and may you revel in her fields and woods!
2. Come hear my words and ponder what I have to say.
3. It has long been the custom at Carleton and other groves that each congregation of a grove may choose its leaders, rituals and customs, as is fitting.
4. Now those at Carleton have been deeply moved by the purpose of the Reform, to ask questions from the heart and listen for the heart's answer.
5. Yet again, they have targeted the Third Order with their inquiries.
6. I regret to inform you of this as a fait accompli, but the ways at Carleton have changed. Now let me explain my reflections on recent history.

Chapter the Second:

Past Changes in the Ordinations

1. Since the Founding until the great sleep of the 80s, those entering the 2nd Order have had to answer questions about the Order of Worship, and the 3rd Order offered meditations during the services.
2. Indeed, for in answering of these and other questions, the congregation has been enriched by these two orders at the services.
3. Since the Great Revival of the 80's until my time, the Order of Worship has faded in importance and services have changed, but the roles of the 2nd and 3rd Order have retained the role of asking challenging questions and offering their own insight to the problems of the grove.
4. During this time, the initiates of the 1st and 2nd Order were asked some questions during ordination and if deemed fit, they were proclaimed to have entered the Order in question.
5. In fact, from 1985-1993, because the 3rd Order liturgy was lost, vigilers to the 3rd Order were only briefly visited in the morning and the vigil was mostly a personally overseen activity separate from the assumption of the role of priesthood.
6. Indeed in those times, the performance of rituals was the right of any with such interest, regardless of their order, a practice that has continued to this day. Many who had vigiled performed services, many who had not vigiled also did great work; and knowing "which was which" was not easy.
7. As a result of my studies of our past, I reintroduced the 3rd Order liturgy, with the help of Brother Richard, in 1993 and have seen its usage prosper.
8. In fact, many who had vigiled on their own in earlier days, sought to vigil again so as to re-enter the Third Order through the liturgy, but we both knew that they had been already working many years for Dalon ap Landu.
9. From that date, at Carleton, no one to my knowledge has vigiled without using the Third Order liturgy, and many were their number. As much as I've enjoyed the liturgy, I have longed for the spontaneity of the style in the Great Revival.
10. Regardless, the idea up to my time has been, that Nature has wrought the change in the initiate of all Orders, not the ordainer. And Nature would often instigate subtle changes to each vigiling.

Chapter the Third:

What's Wrong With the Ordinations?

1. Now, two Druid generations since my Arch Druidcy, in the time of Irony and Michelle's Archdruidcy (1999), many questions have arisen upon the importance of the Third Order Liturgy.
2. Indeed, we have much debated the role of the Third Order here in the Apocrypha and I need not repeat all the previous points, but I feel that one point has emphasized greatly; mainly that the Third Order must guard against the fossilization of religion and/or ritual experience.
3. And yet, in our very own backyard, we have rigidly stuck to a rigid reading of our 3rd Order liturgy, which is one of last strict customs of the Reform.
4. Don't get me wrong, I love to use it (perhaps too much) and I've been present at its usage before 17 vigilers at the time of this epistle, so I know its power and effectivity.
5. However, even I must admit that there are some things in the Third Order liturgy which are Fisherisms, and which have little relevancy for the Druids of today.
6. The Ordination services of the 2nd and 3rd Orders are patterned after the Order of Worship, which is not used at Carleton very much any more.
7. They invoke Be'al, Dalon ap Landu whose names are not used often any more.
8. Many in the Grove do not know if they believe in a God/dess so why invoke one anyway?
9. It is a bit patriarchal in style and language, isn't it?
10. But some have found new ways to be declared into the order, which they feel make a greater contribution to the grove.

Chapter the Fourth:

Liturgy Bends to Our Needs

1. Over the years we have bent the liturgies to our needs and exceptions have been permitted
2. We used to require attendance at a grove's services for a year and a day before ordination to the Third, now we generally let Nature choose her own timing.
3. We used to ordain only during the Summer Half of the Year, now some cold ordinations have occurred.
4. We used to require only an Archdruid of an active grove to perform the liturgy of the Order of Worship and all ordinations, now anyone can ordain anybody to their own order or lower at Carleton.
5. Some groves would only have one Third, now many groves allow simultaneous members to be of the Third Order.
6. We've also performed Ordinations over the phone.

7. And I can provide examples both in my times and in the 60's/70's.
8. Anything to get the job done, right?
9. So we when we talk of change, we are not talking of a new trend, but a continuation of a long process.

Chapter the Fifth:

Recent Changes in the Ordinations

1. Let us look at some of the ways that Irony & Merri have offered.
2. During my time till Irony's, we have changed from a 7 hour+ solitary night vigil of stationary meditation to a 7 hour vigil, which may be stationary or perambulatory, preceded by a 1 or 2 hour pre-vigil meeting with friends and well-wishers asking questions and giving advice on what to think about during the long hours.
3. In the morning, there was the liturgy, the Ordeal of the Waters and the Breakfast of Peers, in which the new Third bought people breakfast and the boozing continued.
4. This year, the morning pattern has changed a little; a simple invocation of the winds was done, Waters then consecrated, and all were thus served the Waters, and the Waters returned. Nothing too unusual. They were now Third Order.
5. And then a shift of sites to the Great Stone Circle and the Ordeal of Questioning began: various members of the Grove surrounded the new Third and fired question upon question at the groggy Druid, ultimately seeking to reduce the Druid to an honest, "I don't know," thereafter the Druids decide (in a light=hearted seriousness) whether they accept this person's role as a leader of the grove.
6. As a side note, much the same thing seems to happen with the 2nd Order service, nowadays there.

Chapter the Sixth:

Personal and Public Roles

1. Now it appears that there are two forms of ordination being used at Carleton.
2. The first being the affirmation of a personal search for spirituality, similar to the Liturgy.
3. The second being an assumption of responsibility in a leadership role.
4. In the old days, while a grove could choose their Archdruid from the current Third Order members, the Archdruid could (theoretically) choose to ordain or not ordain her future prospective successors, but now it is up for the grove to choose whom it calls teacher, based on the wisdom shown.
5. For where does a grove's power come from: the Arch Druid or the people of the grove?
6. Now some of you will note that many have joined our council who are of the quiet nature and not much inclined to teaching or preaching. I'm sure it would be acceptable for them to avoid the questioning or simply respond with silence (or perhaps a Zen response), which may actually be a more enlightening response.
7. But in any case, the Third may call themselves priest of the Third Order regardless of the result of the questioning in the Ordeal, the only point being decided at the questioning is whether the grove chooses to follow this new priest.

Chapter the Seventh: Self-Initiation, A Dangerous Precedent?

1. Some may say that such ritual is nothing but self-initiation, and that the world may become overrun with self-proclaimed Third Order Druids, with no contact, tutelage or raising in a Reformed Grove.
2. Or perhaps you are worried that one bad apple may spoil the barrel? [She is as fine an apple as I've ever seen.]
3. Each decade has examples of Reformed Druids fearing some runaway permutation: Fisher in the 60's, Shelton in the 70's, Abbot in the 80s and Scharding in the 90s. Yet we have overcome these fears through patience and wisdom.
4. Are we not ourselves self-declared in some way, even if others were ordaining us?
5. If there is a bad apple in Druidism, it is myself, for writing down all this fluff and nonsense to misdirect future generations of Druids.
6. Why even do an ordination? Being ordained with the liturgy doesn't make you a better Third Order anymore than being married in a church makes you a better spouse. In fact, many couples living together, have stronger & open relationships with each other than married couples!
7. Every religion has been afflicted by con artists who irreverently pretend to bear their mantle of leadership and fool the people, who never check their background of the teachers very deeply, then leave the seekers with a bad taste in their mouth.
8. Others are more thorough and go to the seminary first before professionally unleashing their shenanigans.
9. As was said before about the Council of DAL in the 70s, a Druid will be known by their (in)action and words (or silences).
10. If a faker comes along to start a grove, those who become aware (by accident or nature) will soon realize this. Druidism is as Druidism does.
11. Anyway, if someone wanted to do this to the Druids, they can do it easily, and perhaps already have done it! Cons are easy, a liturgical format won't slow them much.
12. Unlike Isaac's goal of making the ordinations easily available to other Neo-Pagans, which is essentially recognizing the Druid already in them, this system is merely allowing for more personal participation and responsibility in the transformation of roles from 1st to 2nd to 3rd.
13. For each step and each person has special needs that we must address.
14. If there is really some magical power transferred by a previous Third Order Druid through the Liturgy (like a well-pipe from an underground aquifer), it may be more natural to roam and seek a spring or lake for the water we crave; rather than staying tethered to a well-head.
15. Essentially we are trying to teach them where to find water, not use a faucet.
16. As the saying goes; "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you give a man a fishing pole, you feed him for a lifetime."
17. So it is with the priesthood, for me.

Chapter the Eighth:

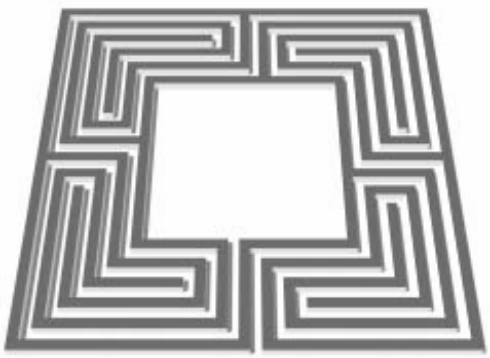
Apostolic Succession?

1. But what about the Apostolic Succession?
2. In what meaning is this question?
3. If you mean the act of people reading the same words at each other for 40 years after sitting up all night, is that the extent of transference and exchange between the generations of a grove? I hardly think that is sufficient!
4. Each applicant, ideally, has been in apprenticeship to the Earth-Mother for a long time and they have shared these insights with a previous member of the Council such that we invited or resigned ourselves to their entrance into a quest for awareness, one they may choose to share with other. This will continue to be the norm.
5. Change is a fact of life, and I can see the role and needs of the Third Order changing over the years. Our spiritual connection of purpose, to me, is far more important than the reading of any specific paper's words.
6. Most of us agree that we are merely recognizing a change already wrought.
7. If it is a mere pat on the back, as such, one may pat a back differently in many ways. We should concentrate on aiding their search rather than concentrating on the back-patting.
8. Indeed, following the example of none other than David Fisher, they are making up tradition as they go and it works.
9. Let us think about continuation, I quote from Idries Shah;
10. "Ordinary people, only through lack of experience in reflection, are without the means to judge such situations as these. They therefore tend to accept mere imitators who step into the shoes of a teacher and reject those who are indeed carrying on his work.
11. "When a teacher leaves a community, by dying or otherwise, it may be intended for his activity to be continued - or it may not. Such is the greed of ordinary people that they always assume that this continuity is desirable. Such is their relative stupidity that they cannot see the continuity if it takes a form other than the crudest possible one."
12. I'm not calling any of us stupid, although we often are, but I would guess that leaders have always felt uneasy about the changes of their successors.
13. Will these unorthodox vigilers be strangers unto us?
14. How well do you know yourself that you call others stranger?
15. Surely they have shaken up my preconceptions of my own role and where my "authority" comes from, as perhaps they have of yours.
16. That, after all, is the purpose and sign of the Third Order, to test preconceptions for falseness.
17. If their lives and activities are like unto ours, what's amiss if 15 specific minutes of ritual activity doesn't coincide with our own past?
18. I am sure they will continue to find new ways to innovate and restructure the Reform such that they can meet the needs of the Reform and groves in the new millennium and (perhaps) beyond.
19. Should we support them?
20. What else could we in good conscience do? We are not to obstruct the spiritual growth of others, we must merely to pursue our own growth and share our thoughts with others.
21. I know some of you will disagree with this, and that is why I am discussing it with you.

Chapter the Ninth: The Conclusion

1. I, for one, welcome them and their new ideas and I hope you do also.
2. For we and they have the same goals and hopes for the Reform and may that be the basis of our kinship relationship.
3. Warm, deep relations will continue between Druids as they learn from each other and Nature and most will enter the orders after deep consideration for the responsibilities, both to themselves and others.
4. The old script of the liturgy, and the ways of its usage, will continue to be passed down to new Third Orders, to be used or not as is willed by the initiate's own choice.
5. Some will choose to use it. Some will choose not to use it.
6. Hopefully, regardless of the style, the appropriate spirit has been conveyed to the next torch bearers.
7. But the greater choice has already been made, to enter a new life as a Third Order Druid and begin another stage of the search for Awareness. May they attain such goals.
8. Let us have Freedom Within and Freedom Without.
9. I wish you all wisdom and welcome your responses.
10. Peace! Peace! Peace!

Michael J.A.U. Scharding
Pursuant of Bambi
Arch Druid of the mysterious Akita Grove
Day 18 of Samhradh, Year XXXVII of the Reform (May 18, 1999 c.e.)
Written at Yuwa Town Junior High School, Akita Japan on a lazy afternoon.



Being A Druid

(By Robert Harrison, Aug 1999)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. Being a Druid is an appealing experience.
2. Since my practice of Druidism has a strong element of introspection, I have a tendency to investigate my motives and prejudices that are still hanging around. I have discovered in my experience that I have had to think seriously about what it means to be a Druid.
3. So I hope this little letter will help shed some light on this subject, which I believe is still relevant late in this century.

Chapter the Second

1. I used to think that there needed to be a specific cultural element involved in one's life if you claimed to be a Druid.
2. Preferably Irish, but Scottish would do. I happen to be Irish, so I have that bias. It also happens they were the last Druids to exist as a historical group.
3. I have come to rethink this idea though. Mind you, I'm glad to be Irish. But I'm also Scottish, with a wee tad of English, so I'm British by heritage.
4. The culture that existed on the British Isles was the Celtic culture. And who wouldn't want to identify with a colorful culture like the Celtic, which lived out loud in their dancing, music, and festivals?
5. So surely that at least was the cultural identification that was needed.
6. My studies of late have given me different ideas about the cultural and national origins of the Druids. I'm not so sure that the Druids were a creation of the Celtic race.

Chapter the Third

1. When the Celts settled in Southern and Western Europe, there existed a group of people that are referred to as the Megalithic, and little is known of them. Part of the reason for this designation is that the multitude of stone dolmens that exist in Europe, and the Stonehenge, were built during the times the Megalithic people existed, before the Celts arrived on the scene. Many of these stone structures required a great deal of knowledge in physics and mathematics, knowledge that is usually attributed to the Druids.
2. My opinion is that the Druids were possible exiles of the Old European civilization (South and East Europe) that existed roughly 7000 B.C.E..
3. The Old European civilization apparently had the level of knowledge needed to build the dolmens.
4. When the Kurgan invasion of Old Europe occurred, the invaded people moved into the western portion of Europe. The Celts then moved in many years later.
5. There are characteristics of the Celts and the Megalithic folk to indicate that so far as the Druids are concerned, a wedding of the two cultures occurred.
6. The Celts were known for their personified deities, and a zeal for learning, but other characteristics that the Druids possessed seemed lacking from Celtic culture.
7. The Megalithic people had the rituals, the doctrines, and the Druids. It would seem that the Megalithic also had understandings of social organization, a characteristic that the Celts never fully appropriated.
8. The wedding of the two cultures then brought forth the Druid schools, the personified deities that hallmarked the Celts, the rituals, and doctrines included.
9. So to be realistic, we have to consider the possibility that the areas from whence Druids could have come would be more in the area of southeast Europe: south to Crete, north to Czechoslovakia, east to the Black Sea and west to Austria.
10. So what cultural element do we identify with? Right, now you know why I found that a groundless meaning for being a Druid.

Chapter the Fourth

1. Another distinction I discovered was that between pagan and Druid.
2. Pagan is a Latin term that means country dweller. If you lived out of the city, where civilization existed, you were pagan no matter what you believed.
3. However, part of this distinction took into account that most country folk had their beliefs shaped by their relationship with the Earth around them.
4. At that time in history, it was a mostly undomesticated Earth. They had mostly local deities, and ceremonies that were related to seasons. Their calendar was based on the moon and stars and sun, nothing else.
5. There were likely local shaman, but neither level of knowledge nor group sizing such as the Druids had.
6. Jump ahead now several centuries.
7. Pagan as we currently know it are Earth based religions, or belief systems. Native American beliefs could be called pagan. Most indigenous belief systems can be.
8. Yet being Pagan does not make one a Druid.
9. If my take on history is correct, most likely the Druids were city dwellers before the Kurgan invasion.
10. After the invasion though, I believe many of them exiled to the wilderness of Europe.
11. Their demonstrated knowledge of natural sciences and celestial sciences would indicate a rather intimate knowledge of their environment.
12. However, there was a difference between the Druids and the rest of the culture.
13. Most people were not Druids. The Druids became the scholars of their culture due to their commitment to learning.
14. So one can be pagan and not a Druid.

Chapter the Fifth

1. So just what does it mean to be a Druid?
2. Personally, I believe it means to identify with the Druids as a level of knowing.
3. If you want to call yourself a Druid, I believe you should aspire to the level and breadth of learning that we are told the Druids achieved. That to me is the most important criteria.
4. From Julius Caesar we learn that the Druids studied for up to twenty years.

5. There were different classes of Druids, and if one reads the accounts of them in Celtic history, besides being masters of natural sciences, they were masters of High Magic.
6. They were doctors, judges, counselors, poets, musicians, magicians, herbalists, and astronomers to name just a few of the subject matters they learned.
7. Obviously today because of societal changes we can't expect ourselves to be doctors and lawyers. But we can learn justice and healing.
8. And the power of words and music.
9. And how to combine these energies in a ritual to a specific purpose, in other words, magic.
10. Of course we should anticipate a lifetime of learning for this!
11. That's what separates the real Druids from the "New Age" fluffy bunnies (to borrow a phrase from Isaac Bonewits) who want the mysterious image and read a book on quick spells and think they are Druids.
12. They give up though when a spell goes awry and their personal energies get jazz-balled and they don't know how to correct it.
13. It's easy to quote the myths. Anyone can read those.
14. But can I identify herbs in the garden or woods, and their uses?
15. Can I look into the night sky and tell what time of the year it is by identifying the constellations and their place in the heavens?
16. What of my ability to heal?
17. My understanding of justice, and how to apply these things to current world problems?
18. What relationship do I have with poetry?
19. After all, the Bards were considered the *creme de le creme* of the Druids, and there's a good possibility that the Ogham was a poetical way of speaking that coded the speakers true message.
20. How good is my magic?
21. Does it really accomplish that which I set it out to do? And am I aware of what the myths symbolize, and can I teach those truths to others?
22. So to me, the challenge is to come close to what was known by the Druids, not just quote what I've read about them.

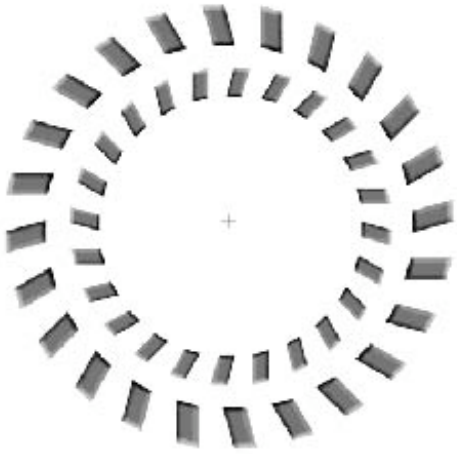
Chapter the Sixth

1. The only cultural identification I would stipulate is one that I learned from my own experience.
2. Having left the Funny-Mentalist Charis-Maniacs (no puns intended) I felt spiritually adrift.
3. While I was studying chemical dependency counseling there was a great deal of discussion of spiritual nature.
4. There were some indigenous Natives in class, and their lifestyle struck me as to how whole their spirituality seemed.
5. Wanting what they have, I adopted the Medicine Wheel as my path, yet I had a nagging feeling that it wasn't mine. Well, it wasn't.
6. It belongs to the Red Tribe for the most part. Mind you, the White Tribe is part of their Wheel, but culturally the Wheel they live by isn't ours.
7. So I searched my own background. What Wheel did my ancestors live by?
8. As I mentioned, I'm British. The British have several centuries of Anglican, Catholic, Protestant, Pilgrim, and Puritan history.
9. But no Wheel. Several centuries of violence, I might add, and a lot of that violence against indigenous people.
10. So I asked myself, what preceded the advent of Christianity in Britain, and the world opened up to me.
11. Now among those who seek ancestral paths in America, there are numerous possibilities.
12. There are Teutonic (German) religions. There are the Scandinavian Runic systems and religions. Remember Thor, and Odin?
13. There are the Gypsy belief systems of the mid Eastern Europe area.
14. Italian and Greek beliefs.
15. I just happened to be Irish, thus Celtic.
16. I chose the Druid path because of its needed commitment, its pagan philosophy, and the breadth of learning.
17. It fit me, and it fit my culture.
18. To me, that's what it means to be a Druid.

Rob Harrison, Third Order
28 Fomhar, 5th Meton. 6th Era of Moytura
37th Year of Reform Circa August 28, 1999

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Celtic Reader - J. Matthews;
The Chalice & The Blade - R. Eisler;
Celtic Myths & Legends - T.W. Rolleston;
Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe (and various articles) - M. Gimbutas



The Exile Letters, Part Two (2000-1)

(By Irony Sade, 1999-2001)

(New to ARDA 2)

(Full Text in Part Nine: Book of Exile)

Chapter the Third

1. Dear Mec,
2. After nearly four years, I am no longer Carleton's Archdruid. It is an odd feeling. My sigil necklace broke on the trip home and there was a longish space of time where I felt that I could no longer do magic, like that was a thing that went with the position... How was your severance experience?
3. It seems that I am still a servant of whatever it is I've finally begun calling god. Its strange.
4. I feel like this is another training period for a task I can't see yet. The other side of my brain thinks it's all hogwash of course. Who is to say who is right?
5. I enjoyed our contest last night. However long it took to recover from it...
6. I would be honored if you would come to my wedding.
7. For the Apocrypha: "Tread lightly on Fairy toes, and beware all drinking games with past Arch-Druids."
8. You taught me alot, Mec, I thank you.

Til next time. Irony
June 1999, New York

Chapter the Fourth

1. Dear Mike
2. I read all the books you sent me. Thank you deeply.
3. Machiavelli was fascinating, deserving of further study. The one truly disturbing thought it produced was this: will any system of thought, that does not make the acquisition of power one of its objectives, eventually become a tool for one that does? If so, what are we to do about it?
4. As my mother kindly pointed out one must distinguish between force and power, but still I suspect the quandary remains.
5. The Buddhist answer -- I suspect-- would be to distinguish between inner and outer power. Have enough power in yourself and noone can wield power over you (or have no self...)
6. When I think of Reformed Druidism as a "system" of thought, it seems that its goal - if it has one - is understanding.
7. (I also suspect it is also too small and esoteric a way for any external power monger to notice!) The old Druids though, were very powerful, and very hard to manipulate - which is why Rome had them killed. Bears thinking about....
8. Fate seems to enjoy messing with my mind. Each time I get something all planned out the wyrds weave some new thread past mine that sets me all adrift again. I don not know if I will aim for Japan.
9. The need to do useful work I can believe in is nagging at me and I am struck with Socrates' truth that the philosopher needs to be a citizen of the world. The U.N.'s calling me.
10. The creation of a cooperative peaceful, culturally diverse and environmentally sound planet is something I could work for whole heartedly. I know not by what means I would do this, nor how, nor where, but it tempts me to try.
11. My worry is the assertion that the world's ills are not susceptible to political solutions, but spiritual ones.... There seems to be some truth in that.
12. The Bahai's (worth intensive study - they are practically Druids already!) maintain that the purpose of religion is peaceable union and understanding, a cross cultural binding force - and insist further that it is better to be without religion than to support one that serves division. Them too I must learn more about....

Yours truly, Irony

Chapter the Fifth

Dalon ap Landu: Lord of the Palm Trees
Irony Sade, ODAL, VCN, in Tonga

1. Spring 2001?
2. Druidism becomes exactly as serious as you take it to be (not serious-dull, but rather, important, personal, life affecting.) You and I have taken it more seriously than most, and have (I hope) been rewarded accordingly.
3. I have moved in this year from the pyrhhic and phoenix-like sacrifice of leading, loving and leaving a grove and into what must be old territory for you: the life of a devout, wandering, groveless and lonely Druid priest.
4. Tonga is a lonely place in which to be a druid. The land and the people both challenge and passively assault my understanding and values.
5. Much of what we do as druids harks back to the life and cycles of Mother Earth. The seasons, Beltain, the living and dead halves of the year, growth and rebirth...
6. Even if you do not postulate the horned king, consort to the Goddess, whose life is that of the changing seasons - birth in mid-winter, love in spring, growth, Maturity and sacrifice at Samhain - there is much that is tied implicitly to the mysteries of the natural world.
7. But now I am thrust into confronting what I had always wondered about: the cycles we follow are those of a NORTHERN TEMPERATE world. Here in the tropical South, things differ. There is no spring, no autumn, no time of general death and growth.
8. The moon remains, bless her, but she travels widdershins. An anti-clockwise sky! I knew it would be that way in my mind, and I have adjusted my internal compass for the navigation, but then deeper questions begin to spring.
9. Clockwise, I have learned and practiced (during the rare occasions when I engage in ritual or external magic working) is the natural and appropriate direction of things.
10. Beginnings, summonings, progressions, growth, movement, callings- every natural "Good" ritual movement begins clockwise. North East South West, with endings, banishments, etc. being the opposite.
11. All that was explained and justified by the movement of the heavens and anti-clockwise movement is now regarded as "un-natural." The "left-hand path" was never, explicitly mind you, to be avoided as destructive and evil.

12. Now the stars move widdershins above me, and I must ask if the practice of magic is relative to geography (for every ritual culture I know of in the north proceeds clockwise...)
13. Now there are no seasons, and I must wonder if different gods and goddesses hold sway. The Earth remains - the Goddess is eternal- but does the Green Man peer between the coconut palms? Does Llyr swim amidst the reefs I see?
14. Does the Wild Hunt of the Northern Climes hold any truck with hurricanes? Do the Gods I know and serve even visit these regions or have they siblings I have yet to meet and love?
15. It is easy to say that all the gods and all their lovers are but facets of one Brahmanian whole, but it is a difficult thing to act upon.
16. I was consecrated a priest of the Lord of the Groves (though by my well-meaning, but foolish tongue I may have been the last) and I am faithful to that charge, but if Landu's son is a purely temperate beast where does that leave me in the tropics?
17. Such questions are the product of a fevered mind. The spiritual quest may be furthered through the study and experience of nature- all of her.
18. If I have wandered farther a field than our linguistic predecessors, it is absurd to blame my confusion on their ignorance.
19. The Goddess is Mother of all, and the lord of the Groves is present even amongst palm trees. Let not the Welsh name I met him under distract me from that fact.

Chapter the Sixth: What Do Druids Do?

1. June 2001
2. Dear Mec,
3. One of the men I work with here, Saia, by name, has been asking me about Druidism.
4. Religion plays a huge role in Tongan life, and I often ask him to describe parts of its impact.
5. Invariably he returns the questions; "What are the religious duties of a druid?" "What money does the church collect, and what is it used for?," "What are the requirements for being a priest?", "What obligations do they have?", "Do they serve for life?", "Can they marry?", "Are there Druidic schools?", "To what moral code are Druids bound?"
6. As it is the delicious doom of every Druid to answer such things for his or her self, I can only pass the questions on. May they stimulate much thinking.
7. A thing that fascinates me about his line of questioning is its purely practical focus. Not "What do you believe?" but "What do you do?"
8. In a way it is not such a bad place to start. Actions are driven by values, which may be derived from and supported by wildly divergent beliefs. Thus, if it be found that a group of Druids hold similar values, they can act in concert, even if those values are supported by different or even incompatible beliefs which each individual has developed through his or her independent search for spiritual truth.
9. The forum then becomes: I value X; therefore I will do Y. This shift in paradigms has immediate consequences. Not the least being that it moves one out of the highly contested and poorly articulated realm of theology.
10. Values, furthermore, seem to have a longer half-life than beliefs, which may suddenly shift in the light of new experience. Changes in what people value come only - I suspect - with a distinct change in a person's character, which experience shows is rare indeed.
11. The challenge is that one must engage in serious introspection to discover to which values one is really committed.
12. I did tell Saia the three moral commands supposedly taught by the old Druids: Act Bravely, Honor the Gods, Do No Evil. Tongan is a tongue of many puns, and I discovered as I said it that the last statement also translates as "Don't Fu*k Badly," a commandment bound to enthuse a certain class of Druids….
13. Life here is good. Much of my work involves counseling and advising rather than hands on work. Sowing seeds of reason into the discussion of kindergarten politics, suggesting accounting changes in the youth groups budget, encouraging people to engage in continuing education (and walking them through the application!)
14. To a large extent, I am simply living here, being part of an alien community, understanding and participating in its life, caring for my neighbors. The island's doctor has started referring me his patients, which is a bit ridiculous.
15. Most important to me I am starting to understand how people here think and am now able to engage in the same sort of thinking myself. That competence snuck up on me. Its existence was highlighted by the recent arrival of an anthropologist who stayed for a month at the other end of town.
16. She has been studying the culture of Tonga (actually the cultural change and how housing reflects that) for nine months, but apparently only the more diluted samples you find on the bigger islands. She tried to play a game which I have long learned to avoid, and was in too deep within two days and had to flee the island under threat of imminent marriage. Very entertaining.
17. Somehow or other I have now been here over a year. Next Beltaine will mark my release from the Peace Corps. Still no clear plan on what is to follow. Japan is looking less likely.
18. So is traveling right round the world, a trip many ex-volunteers arrange. I have gotten too deeply into this culture to enjoy a touristic whirlwind of several dozen others. I intend to see many other countries, but I wish to know them personally, and that will take time.
19. I know I will return to the states, see my family, maybe publish a few stories. If possible I would like to criss-cross the country a time or two, visiting all my scattered friends and correspondents. Perhaps I will build a new harp and simply be a bard for a while. Tis still too soon to tell..
20. There is yet another Pai Kava running across the road, possibly the last one with electric lights for some time. The island is out of gasoline again.
21. I've had to cut back on my kava intake. I hit a stretch where I was drinking every night for three weeks running. Several gallons a day. The stuff is a drug, after all. Turns you into a lizard if you don't watch it.
22. Much of the business gets transacted at such gatherings, so they are still obligatory, but I try not to drink so long these days.
23. Hope all is reasonably well state-side. How's that Washington Grove coming?

Yours in service. Irony.

Chapter the Seventh: Rampant Chickens

1. December 19, 2001.
2. Rain. Thought we might be in for a hurricane last night.
3. We had to seal all the windows of the town hall and to keep the water out. Now the wind has left for somewhere cooler and we retain only a solid perpendicular drizzle.
4. I can't recall if I mentioned my chickens.
5. For the longest time, I held off adopting any, figuring I could have either them or a garden. With zero local vegetables, the latter was more important.
6. One day, I came home to find two young hens hiding under my bed. I took the hind, tied them up and built a large cage to keep them in.
7. One puzzling fact about chickens is that after a week or two in a new environment, they forget having lived anywhere else. Once these two were thoroughly brainwashed I let them roam free.
8. First thing they did was devour my cabbages and tear up the onions. They haven't even produced any eggs yet!
9. Still, they are adorable – and I can always eat them if they bug me too much.
10. Time flies like a hummingbird. Magically still while sucking life's nectar, then gone too fast to follow. My time approaches the latter phase. Twelve weeks till escape from paradise. With luck I will be home for Beltaine.
11. Send nothing to Tonga after March 16.

Till then, I remain your sun burnt emissary.
Irony.

Chapter the Eighth: Burial Shenanigans

1. The following account is perfectly true and factual. The events happened last Friday. Makes you wonder just how thorough the missionaries were:
2. **HARD CORE PAGANS IN TONGA**
3. After being assured by the Doctors that there was nothing wrong with him, Siona Pko (false name) visited a good Christian card reader to diagnose on-going pains in his abdomen.
4. The reader examined his playing cards and announced that two of Siona's deceased in-laws were trying to take the family with them. Siona's wife had died just before his pains started, her brother only months before. Unless the spirits were stopped they would haul off the whole family.
5. Siona returned to his island and tearfully related the story to the surviving relatives. "I know I'm going to die," he told them.
6. Two of Siona's good Weslyan cousins decided enough was enough. They stole into the graveyard in the early morning and dug up the bones of the two offenders.
7. Carrying as many parts as they could, they snook to the lava field, doused the bodies in kerosene and burned them in the night. The skulls they carried to the wharf and then threw them into the sea, which promptly spat them back out.
8. "We are Christians!" the local priest bellowed at Mass the next Sunday. "Stop doing this! Haven't I taught you anything?"
9. Villagers were somewhat sympathetic, "Sure, we dig up our families graves … to clean and oil the bones sometimes."
10. Said one woman who spoke to me on conditions of anonymity; "The Spirits occasionally make us sick then show up to complain about tree roots prying their ribs apart. Once we clean the grave they always leave us alone."
11. Others were merely terrified of ghostly reprisals because the bones had not been completely destroyed. According to the police officer who recovered the ashes, the deceased were still alive and well and prevented his car from starting when he tried to leave for work.
12. "Go away and let me do my job!" he cried. Under Tonga's very Christian law such acts carry a ten-year sentence.
13. The local Druid when pressed for comment, smiled quietly behind his tea cup and simply asked if Siona Piko had recovered.

Fresh off the coconut wireless report
Irony Sade Reporting
P.S. Still digesting Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations." Very good. Definitely high class paganism.

New Selections:

The Internet Years

(The Parenthetical Epistle of Mike)

(By Mike Scharding, 2001)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. As always, I speak for myself, and certainly do not represent the opinions of the Reform or other members.
2. Why, in fact, I don't often agree even with my self.
3. Sometimes, I have the most interesting conversations when I talk to myself…
4. Few people join the Reform, or any other Druid group for that matter, without some pretty strong preconceptions already established.
5. Man has always wished to control Nature, rather than be controlled (or rather, just a part) of Nature, so myths are rife with gods, demi-gods or even mere mortals can twist or manipulate mighty Nature to their own whims and needs.
6. "Man" is often defined 'as the animal which uses tools', although we know that chimps use sticks and some birds sew their nests.
7. I would redefine "Man is an animal that uses drugs," which may make you smile (I refer you to the 5th Order for further guidance), but in a real way we all wish that we were something that we are not.
8. There are several avenues to accomplish this goal, mainly: drugs, insanity, and fantasy.
9. Religion tends to wander in and betwixt these three options, acting as a possible accelerant to their flames.
10. Fantasy is by far the most socially acceptable option in our present society.
11. This can take on many forms; day-night-wet dreams, the entertainment media which provides us a brief respite, living our dreams vicariously through other more famous people (i.e. soap operas), myths, gossip, stories, drama and games.

Chapter the Second

1. Tolkienn is often credited with being the grand-daddy of the Fantasy movement, so we all should add "The Hobbit" to our Grove libraries.
2. I seriously believe that without Tolkienn, there would be no Reform. (Or if there had been no McCarthy, or inquisition.
3. As all of you Dr. Who fans know, changing the past in reality is a very dangerous activity, but changing our understanding of the past is big business).
4. So, let's talk about Dungeons and Dragons, an influential off-shoot of this Fantasy movement.
5. We all know that Role-Playing Games (RPG) and the medieval Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), both starting in 1971-ish, grew hand-in-hand with the Neo-Pagan/Wiccan/New-age emergence.
6. Perhaps, those evangelists are correct in saying that RPGs are a breeding ground for Paganism; which they add is a "bad thing."
7. Strangely enough, I kind of agree with them.
8. I first played D&D in 4th grade in the school yard, exploring the "S2: White Plume Mountain" scenario, as, can you guess? Yes, a 6th Level Druid named "Magoor," if I remember rightly.
9. My understanding of magic was heavily influenced by that game over the next 8 years, as well as by the definitions of the 9 alignments (Lawful Good, Neutral Evil, True Neutral, Chaotic Neutral, etc.), and the ordering of the Planes of Existence. (I dare not touch the topic that experience points and advancement are only gained by slaughtering others, which is actually capitalism….)
10. D&D provided a structure for me in which multiple pantheons of deities, ruling separate realms, could co-influence their respective spheres of activity over our mortal plane of existence (a concept that is no doubt conducive to my own eclectic brand of Druidism).
12. Yet it wasn't until College, that I began to depart Catholicism (the True Paganism!, according to some people.)
13. I am sure that Brother Isaac Bonewits (refer to his academic "Real Magic" tome or his RPG "Authentic Thaumaturgy") would be the first to agree with me, that these popular visions of fireball-flinging wizards are perhaps detrimental and distracting to the more practical magic that we are usually inclined towards practicing (although it would be fun to unleash a ninth-level "creeping doom" (i.e. a cloud of bugs) upon certain opponents….)

Chapter the Third

1. So that brings us back to Nature and our relation to it.
2. In numerous fantasy novels (in particular, the "Shannara" series), computer games ("The Druid," and the game "Mystery of the Druids", advertised in this issue, etc) and also in AD&D (where we are a special sub-class of Cleric); where we have been laden with the image of a rather crotchety old man, usually robed with a deep hood, who is rather neutral of human concerns (because nature does not concern itself with good or evil), hauling rocks around the landscape for no apparent reason (perhaps they were the inventors of the construction cartel?), in control of secret powers related to the control and protection of Nature, and loitering in dark leafy groves singing groovy tunes (that sounds like me, except the "old" part, I'm only 30).
3. Unlike most clerics, the powers of fantasy figures come through the study of Nature not the imploration of the god(s), and "absorbing of energies," or the gruesome activities of which the Ancient Druids are often accused (perhaps rightly), we can also change shape!
4. Adding to this stew, are the Celtophiles; who claim the Druids could do anything your ancestors could do, and could do it better (if they really wanted to try), including an imposing list of cultural, judicial, musical, medicinal,

philosophical & astrological skills that would make a modern renaissance liberal-arts student blush in shame.

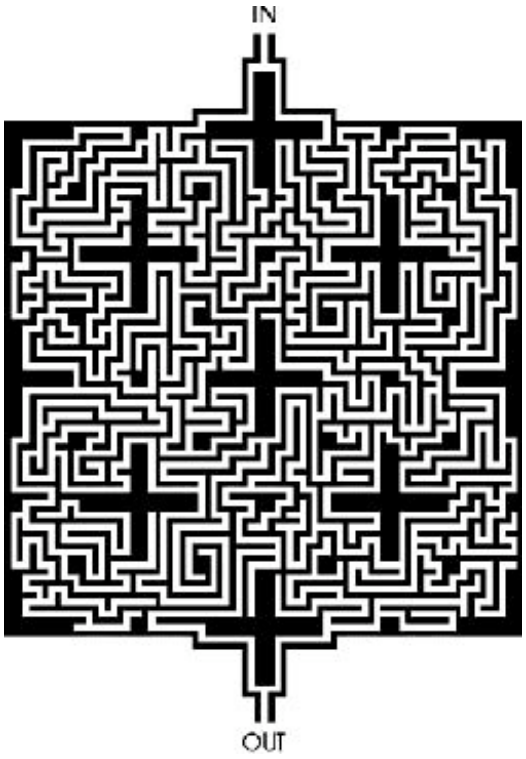
5. I suppose they didn't have specialists back then?
6. Don't forget that famous verse of "Gimme that old time religion" goes "We will worship like those Druids, who drink fermented fluids, waltzing naked through the woo-ids, and that's good enough for me!" (This, at least, describes the Carleton Grove rather too perfectly.)
7. As for the general public's opinion, don't forget lead guitarist Nigel's adept summary, in the movie "Spinal Tap," with his introduction to the song Stone Henge; "Long ago, in a mystical land, were a strange race of people, the Druids. No body knew who they were, or what they were doing…. But their legacy lives on in…. STONEHENGE!"
8. Of course, the Wiccans bring over their ideas, thinking we that we must also like athames, pentacles and quiet moonlit walks on the beaches… (which are cool too.)
9. Finally, there are our siblings in the UK & Europe, who are dotty over dolmens, heady over henges, and have a really poor fashion sense towards ridiculous headgear, unflattering robes, & gaudy jewelry. (I'm sorry, perhaps I'm really AM talking about us?)
10. This has been going on for at least four centuries, (see "The Famous Druids" by Owen in 1979)!

Chapter the Fourth

1. Whew! For good or bad, this is the image and mental baggage, which nearly all our recruits bring with them to the RDNA.
2. What's the problem with it, because it sounds really exciting and it's great for marketing our image (except that bit about sacrificing, which I might discuss further next time)?
3. Well, nothing I guess is really wrong, but I believe the founders of the Reform had different key elements; simplicity, revolutionary defiance and a love of whiskey (which I might add are key Scottish attributes…).
4. The RDNA began over the issue of not being coerced into worshipping the way other people want us to do (and perhaps it still is?).
5. Now, I'm a rather antagonistic person myself, being 41.32352% or so Celtic-ish ("The easiest way to make an Irishman to decline an action is to order them to do it"), always taking up an opposite view to balance things (there's my lasting imprinted notion of "neutrality" again), so I hate being defined by other's fantasies (mine are sufficiently strange, thank you!).
6. But it is only by examining your presumptions and preconceptions that you can know where you're coming from and going to.
7. The previously described image (the word "describe" also has a meaning of corralling or limiting) is rather similar to the one that many in the ADF, OBOD, Keltria & some of us are (perhaps willingly) striving towards, I believe.
8. What has made us stand apart from the pack of other Druid groups, is probably our well-developed sense of sarcastic humor (an ancient Druid trait) & our skillfully inept organizational skills (unfortunately, also an ancient Celtic trait).
9. However, borrowing the Taoist image of "the un-carved block of wood," whose future shape is yet undetermined, and therefore infinitely versatile; I believe each and every grove, yea!, every Druid in the Reform should consider stripping away these accretions (there's that "Waltzing naked in the woods" cry for simplicity!), return to the seed of Druidism (which may be something about Nature, isn't it?), then allow their trees (& groves) to follow Nature's course (please be reserved on pruning the mistletoe that clings to your boughs, too).

Chapter the Fifth

1. Like it or not, as a group, we are diverse, anarchic and eclectic. In the past we had Norse, Zen, Celtic, Hasidic, Wiccan, Non-Aristolean, Humanistic, Orthodox and others paths which had no easy labels (take a look at www.geocities.com/mikerdna/wheregrove.html for a fuller list).
2. In all honesty, our group has not been conducive to a Reform-wide mythology, theology, voting rules, set ritual, long-term membership, powerful-lobbying body, fund-raising, recognition by IRS, or fashion (Och lord, how I've tried, but I am a color blind Scot, yowsers!)
3. For most, that sounds like failure. But a leopard shouldn't complain about its spots.
4. I heard once that a sign of a good teacher (hopefully, one of ours is the Earth-Mother) is not the answers she gives, but the kinds of questions that she raises.
5. I believe that, under her tutelage, we have produced a healthy crop of really good questions about some very basic concepts and issues, (bull-shit is very good fertilizer).
6. As long as that activity continues, whether we call it Druidism or not (an oak is an oak is an oak), then the RDNA lives on.
7. What a long and twisting journey that was! Now that I've said my piece, what do you think?



Why Are We Called Reformed?

Reflections on Judaism and Calvinism

(By Mairi Ceolmhor, ODAL, DC Grove, 2002)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. Ogmos, and other gods interested in elegant speech, please guide my words to present my own personal views and reach the hearts of my readers; who will not mistake my views for those of the RDNA in general.
2. I'm sorry it's so long, so perhaps it should be read in two parts if you have a short attention.
3. Enough said, let's roll

Chapter the Second

1. What's in a name? Depends on the person, I guess.
2. Many people take great pride and derive much support by the names and associations, which they adopt.
3. Labels, much as we hate pigeonholing, provide a reference point for understanding someone.
4. How about members of the Reformed Druids of North America?
5. We've certainly spent a lot of time researching, defending, deprecating and defining the term "Druid," because in the RDNA, we call ourselves "Druids."
6. It is natural to understand the background and implications of that term.
7. But why are we also called "Reformed?"
8. What are we referring to "Year XXII of the Reform" or when we speak of our movement as "The Reform?"
9. Where exactly does the word "Reformed" come from?
10. The word "*reform*" first appears in surviving English literature as "*reformen*" in 1340, derived from French "*reformer*" or Latin "*reformare*" with a meaning of "make again" or "restoration."
11. After 1440 it added the nuance, "to improve"; and in 1563 "changed for the better" was added.
12. Around 1663, it was used popularly to denote "improvement by removal of some abuse or wrong," due to its use in describing the 16th century religious movement of the "Reformation."
13. "Reformatory Schools" began in 16th century to "reform" juvenile offenders (did the Founders belief they were in a prison-like school?). In days of Prohibition, it was also used to refer to drunkards who have given up the habit.
14. Today, the Oxford English Dictionary describes it as:
15. 1 a. to put or change into an improved form or condition.
16. 1 b. to amend or improve by change of form or removal of faults or abuses.
17. 2. To put an end to evil by enforcing or introducing a better method or course of action.
18. 3. To subject hydrocarbons (gasoline) to cracking to produce new products. (And most Druids like carbohydrates and they are "crackers")
19. Some members of the RDNA understand it in the "recasting" or "re-creation" or "re-constructing" modes with moderation. But, it is primarily under the religious and moral meaning that the term is now used in our general society.
20. So in order to appreciate this term, I looked at two churches (I'm not sure if we really are a church) that use "Reformed" in their title; Reformed Judaism and Reformed Christianity (sadly there's no Reformed Islam, I think.)
21. Let's hypothesize how their traditions may (or may not) have affected our own self-identity in the early 60s.
22. If nothing else, when discussing your "reform" during inter-faith dialogue, we should understand what their "reform" means.

Chapter the Third

1. We know that a movement, known as "Reformed Judaism," solidified around 1810, see www.ccarnet.org/platforms/principles.html It is described on several sites on the internet as:
2. "Judaism marked by a liberal approach in nonobservance of much legal tradition regarded as irrelevant to the present and in shortening and simplification of traditional ritual." -Anonymous
2. We Reform Jews are heirs to a vast body of beliefs and practices embodied in TORAH and the other Jewish sacred writings. We differ from more ritually observant Jews because we recognize that our sacred heritage has evolved and adapted over the centuries and that it must continue to do so. And we also recognize that if Judaism were not capable of evolution, of REFORM, it could not survive. Reform Judaism accepts and encourages pluralism. Judaism has never demanded uniformity of belief or practice. But we must never forget that whether we are Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Orthodox, we are all an essential part of K'lal Yisrael -- the worldwide community of Jewry. **http://rj.org/index.html**
4. The vernacular language is used in most services. Judaism is adapted to contemporary conditions. The spirit of the law, rather than the letter of the law, is observed. Revelation is seen as coming through the human spirit and nature, as well as sacred text. Traditional home rituals are not as highly valued as in other traditions of Judaism**. www.interfaithcalendar.org/ReformedJudaism.htm**
5. Reform Jewish services allow for women cantors, choirs, organs and pianos as well as other instruments, and "music" as well as chanting. Women are also allowed to read from and chant the Torah, as well as pray aloud. The worship service involves the congregation much more than Orthodox and Conservative counterparts. This allows for quite a bit of variety in worship, especially with regards to the musical language used in worship. http://simplechemistry.w00tcentral.com/Kyles/rejud.htm
6. Gosh, that sounds quite a bit like us!
7. I believe, there were at least a few members with a Jewish background in the Founding Days of the Carleton Grove, such as Howard Cherniack and Deborah Frangquist.

8. Throughout our history, some members have knowingly called ourselves "Drues," and cracked jokes like "That's funny, you don't look Druish" in Berkeley.
9. We also had our very own Hassidic Druids of North America branch in St. Louis Missouri during the mid-70s (for more info see, ARDA part 5 at :

   www.geocities.com/mikerdna/arda.html
10. This belief seems also to niche in with the neo-old-testament style of the early Druid Chronicles of the 60s; e.g. rebuilding the altar, the psalm-like meditations of "David" Frangquist, lonely hermits seeking god in the wilderness, invocation of weather, prophetic ranting at authorities, and images of a persecuted people seeking release ("let my people go" by Cherniack). The prevalent "Cult of Carleton" has an apparent belief that Northfield is a special holy-land (let's see, that makes Israel in the Middle East and Carleton in the Mid-West…)
11. That, plus an innate desire for academic excellence, love of dancing & song, self-deprecating humor, a world-wide Diaspora, a tendency to delve into anti-defamation and fight persecution, adaptation to various cultures, and inveterate kibitzing, plus being human beings is as far as the resemblance seems to extend.

Chapter the Fourth

1. Of course, there are points of difference.
2. We look to the possibility of more than one divinity.
3. Most of the Druids aren't obsessed with returning to Ireland.
4. We don't have sacred scriptures, and don't read what few words we do have recorded.
5. The ancient Celts were illiterate, and we proudly continue that tradition by not "liter"-ing indiscriminately.
6. We also try to not blow our own horn, "sho far" as I can tell.
7. Nor do we have no dietary customs, except to eat enough to live and limit whiskey during the winter season (which sounds backwards in practicality to me), although the vegetarians amongst us are rather noisy and self-righteous. (I'm a Texan; we worship cows best when they're inside our bellies and on our feet.)
8. There is a definite lack of a sense of racial separatism (i.e. "us vs. the gentiles") among Druid (with the Celtophiles excepted), and we have no objections to marriage with members of other religions (in fact we seem to practice a bit of all of faiths) as long as they are civil.
9. And, we don't require members to cut off pieces of their bodies (either gender), although the Orthodox Druids have this thing about lopping off the heads of their enemies….
10. Finally, except for Brother Peter, most Druids don't seem to wear strange headgear.

[She added in 2003:

11. I'm not sure if we are a chosen people, but we are certainly a people who have chosen.]

Chapter the Fifth

1. We also know that many of the Founders were also members of the Protestant branch of Christianity, such as Fisher, Nelson & David Frangquist, and so the term "Reform" must have had several inescapable meanings that were attractive to them (although the first image of Presbyterian-style Druidism is a bit comical at first.)
2. "Reformed" often indicates a Protestant church that is related to the Calvinist branch, as formed in various continental European countries.
3. Calvinism had a "strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God and especially by the doctrine of predestination."
4. At first, this seemed like a strong mis-match for the RDNA, so I further investigated a lengthy sermon at a "Reformed" site at :

   www.geocities.com/mikerdna/arda.html
5. This is when I discovered other meanings latent in the term. The lecture taught that;
6. "This position commits us to a high view of Scripture. We receive it as the infallible and fully inspired Word of God. **We will bow to no higher authority**. Historically this has meant that we do not elevate church tradition to the level of Scripture - as the Roman Catholic Church has done. But neither do we canonize our own experience, no matter how spectacular or supernatural it may be. Church tradition and personal experience have no independent status and are always subservient to the teaching of the Bible." (My emphasis)
7. Again, much of that does not mesh well with most Reformed Druids' beliefs (or, at least the Druids I know).
8. However, the revolt against the original Roman Church (the history of Catholicism is about warring factional beliefs), by a strong-willed minority of the oppressed, is quite heroic (despite what many of them would later do to other minorities) and well paralleled by the early Grove at Carleton.
9. The Founders of the RDNA revolted against the Deans of Men and Women for the imposition of mandatory religious attendance, but perhaps not to the extent of nailing 95 complaints onto their office doors (I'm sure they would have used thumb-tacks).
10. The distrust of "experience" part written above doesn't jive that well with us either. Again, the RDNA apparently does not look highly upon its own literature.
11. Attempts were made to stop publishing the 1976 Druid Chronicles (Evolved) and that 1996 A Reformed Druid Anthology, because the works were seen as encouraging dogmatism by providing too much material in a portable format that could encourage spiritual dependency on others' past experiences in written form (i.e. Bible hugging).
12. Brother Mike, an assistant editor of ARDA, recommended the book as a doorstopper or paper-weight on a desk; rather than as a 'brain-stopper' or 'dead-weight on the soul'. He is pleased to report that, "very few people have read it."
13. Indeed, the RDNA seems to lean more toward the individual's experiences as having greater spiritual power, rather than asserting the institutionalized fossilized customs of past members.
14. Reading further, I noted:
15. Because God is sovereign, He is Lord of all of life. Hence, we seek to live all of life to the glory of God. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Lo, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (I Cor.10:31). This is a far-reaching command, which Reformed people have generally taken quite seriously.
16. Hey, I'm not a Christian myself; but, change that deity to "Earth-Mother," remember that every sovereign has court officials, and add a flavor of Zennish "Everyday life as

religion" with unexpected moments of enlightenment, and I can swallow that pretty well.

Chapter the Sixth

1. A bit further:
2. "Hand in hand with this missions emphasis goes a concern for revival. Although this word has suffered abuse in recent years, there is nothing unreformed about revival! Again and again throughout the history of the church God has poured out His Spirit to bring times of refreshing."
3. IMHO, my own Reformed Druidism believes in the cycle of revivals of Nature and the pressing need for a continual discovery of Awareness and Wisdom through introspection and revelation from the gods.
4. And Gods know!, how the Groves crash and need a good rejuvenating jolt every few years.
5. The coming and going of members, or a change of focus, often breathes new life. So I can parallel with this thinking again.
6. As for missionary activity, I am rather neutral.
7. Make your presence findable and those who come, will come.
8. Don't be a public nuisance (unless it's necessary). That's my system.
9. I'm not a missionary of Druidism or grove-oriented like Brothers Isaac, Larson or Mike.
10. I think a well-balanced RDNA Druid can enjoy fulfilling participation in any religion's congregation, without forming their own "druid" grove.
11. This is what I plan to do. It's called "Guerilla Druidism," but I'm not into aping those around me (that would be "Gorilla Druidism," something I'm not bananas over.)
12. I'm definitely a "Solitary Druid," see my song in http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/bard.html (Salvo #5).

Chapter the Seventh

1. Further on, it continues:
2. "To the Reformers the Roman Catholic sacramental system seemed to be part of a transaction that was always going on between man and God. In it, people made sacrifices designed to appease and please God. They would attend the mass, bring offerings, show sorrow, do penance--which might involve self-punishment or compensatory good works--until God would be gracious. The leaders of the church, from priests through bishops and popes, mediated the transaction. The Reformers believed that such an arrangement could easily be misused as a political instrument for forcing rulers to comply with the church's wishes and as a personal instrument for keeping people in uncertainty or terror. It was this vision of Catholicism that helped inspire the Protestant leadership to rebel and to define justification in other terms."
3. The RDNA doesn't fit in with this, as we definitely are into pleasing the Gods, sacrificing, and seeking their wishes, although remaining doubtful of its effectivity.
4. I think, if you're going to live somewhere, you should ask those in the neighborhood what the rules are (including Nature, the first resident) and follow them.
5. The Brothers David (Fisher & Frangquist) say much on this subject of sacrifice;
6. "For one man, the sacrifice of life is the offering up of himself to a god or gods. To another, it is an offering up of his mind to a search for truth. As a priest, I repeat the great Answer to calm men's hearts and minds, not as a magical formula of absolution; but some the Answer is an absolution, washing away the distractions of a week of worry, and reaffirming confidence in the idea of a purpose in life." Book of Faith, V.9. The Apocrypha. www.geocities.com/mikerdna/arda.html
7. I feel, that if the Gods don't like us at all, then they shouldn't have made us (or we shouldn't have made them).
8. We all have our good days and bad days, and any omniscient deity should realize that and take it into consideration on what to dish out to us.
9. I also believe that a mother knows what her child needs, no matter whether it gurgles, coos or grimaces; so we should remember that when the debate on "proper" ritual is brought up.
10. Brother MaDagda & Sister Tegwedd claim that the "Reformed" part of our name refers to some ancient practices which we have "reformed"; notably, our decision in 1963 to end the sacrifice of animals for religious purposes (including humans -and arguably- even politicians) or the offering of blood.
11. Sister Tegwedd recommends getting consent from the plant sacrifice by some means.
12. "The Book of Customs in the "Druid Chronicles (Reformed)" recommends several Celtic customs and practices, but does not require their mandatory obeisance.
13. Now, I'm not a bible-stroking, verse quoting, steely-tongued debater; but Cherniack once said,
14. "Have ye not forgotten that we are reformed, yea, we do even call ourselves by the name of Reformed, wherefore we must put behind us those things which do bring offense to our senses;" –Book of Latter Chronicles, Ch 5 Vs 9

Chapter the Eighth

1. The RDNA has been firmly silent on issues of an afterlife (and strangely reticent on a "before-life," by the way!).
2. Rather, I think most people to concentrate on this existence, or basically to "get a life."
3. Some members use the RDNA as a garnish or decoration attached to other religions that provide full-service after-life systems; other members treat the RDNA as the main-course and consider it to provide for all their needs.
4. Call me a Humanist, but I think there are enough good reasons to be gentle, responsible and caring member of a community or have a religious life without an "afterlife bribe/threat."
5. I believe that Confucius said, "How can a virtuous man understand the world of ghosts and spirits when they can't even program a VCR to stop blinking 12:00 on its clock?! Oi vey!" or thereabouts.
6. The Protestant "priesthood of believers" revived an ancient concept of a direct link to God(s) without the mediation of professional priests (who still have a role).
7. Members of the RDNA appear to be very careful not to vaunt the offices of the three orders; and we certainly don't get paid well enough to make a living off it.
8. I, personally, see them more as undertaking extra responsibilities rather than as an achievement of "perfection" or "completion" of Druid-ity.
9. In other words, a life-long First Order might just as speedily reach enlightenment or Awareness as a high

muckety-muck 9th Order Patriarch, without vigiling or drinking the Waters of Life every weekend.

10. Surely, the Earth-Mother knows her own, and all our fancy titles won't bias her relationship with us.
11. More than likely, according to the ARDA history, these orders were both an attempt to overthrow Fisher's control of the Carleton Grove, plus a carry-over from the Fraternal groups that David Fisher wanted to simulate at Carleton.
12. Yet, I believe they still have proponents who've found a use for them.

Chapter the Ninth

1. Going back to the "Reform Sermon";
2. "In theory, Protestantism has stood throughout its history for a principle of protest that calls under judgment not only the beliefs and institutions of others but also one's own movements and causes. On those grounds, however, most students of Protestantism would recognize that the Protestant tradition has not been substantially more successful than have other faiths at remaining self-critical or at rising above institutional self-defensiveness."
3. This last aspect seems the firmest legacy of Protestantism for the RDNA.
4. I have heard, "Show me two Druids and I'll give you at least 3 opinions on any topic."
5. Well, in my opinion, we are a rather argumentative, critical bunch of curmudgeons, who take matters into our hands, and are fiercely suspicious of hierarchy and the institutionalization & fossilization of religion. (And some aren't.)
6. Our name does have a potentially empowering meaning that could encourage activism and rebellion, without demanding it. Yet, like the last part, we also sometimes slip into ruts, avoid hard choices, resist natural adaptations and don't seek to know or correct our errors.
7. Remember the expression that, "It is easier to see smoke coming from a neighbour's kitchen window than to notice the burning roof on top of our own house?"
8. At the end of the ritual, we have to go home, sweep our corners, air the linens, and wash the dishes like our other fellow mortals.
9. I would add one last shade to the word "Reform" as in OED's 1A definition; its first meaning. That is to change into a new form.
10. As Nature breaks down and rebuilds all things (vegetable, animal or mineral), there is no "eternal," only change and adaptation.
11. Again, in my opinion and twelve years of experience, the RDNA's greatest power has been the power to take older diverse creeds, traditions, rules, and faiths and transform them into a new product (perhaps even "improved") by using our humor, reflection and piercing inspection such that could meet the current needs of our grove members.
12. As Brother MaDagda states, "As a reformed druid, I take what I can from our ancestors of the Oaken Brotherhood and reshape, reform it to fit within this time, this age."
13. Until now, the usual response to "Why are you called Reformed?" has always been (and Brother Mike just loves this joke), is "Because we also worship bushes… except elected ones…"
14. I hope that this essay will help you to go beyond that sort of reply in some way and start a good dialogue with other faiths.

Peace!
Mairi Ceolmhor

P.S. Proudly call yourself Reformed Druids when the Celtophiles criticize you. We can stand up to them also. Perhaps you can console them that without a "Reformed Druid" you can't have an "Orthodox Druid"?

Responses to Mairi

(Various Authors, 2002)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. Date: Tue, 16 Apr 2002 07:09:28 -0400
2. In the Vernal Equinox edition of the Druid Missal-Any, Mairi Ceolmhor speculates that Reformed Judaism "sounds quite a bit like us!" (in reference to the RDNA).
3. Though this may be only one perspective on the historical similarities between the RDNA and other "religious movements" throughout history, and not to reflect on other Groves beyond an historical anecdote, Silent Grove does not in any way, past or present, draw parallels to any aspect of Judaism, whether Reformed or not, or it's natural extension - Zionism.
4. Indeed, Silent Grove strongly disengages itself from the current atrocities committed by the Zionist regime, and does not wish to have its Grove sullied by any suggestions of connections, associations or similarities with historical or contemporary Judaism/Zionism in part or as a whole.

-Glen
Silent Grove

Chapter the Second

1. Dear Glen,
2. I'm glad you've broken your silence to speak out on issues that matter to you. :) The following, is of course, my personal opinion in reply to your personal opinion for the possible benefit of the readers' opinions. :)
3. Each grove in the Reform is naturally free to choose its sources of inspiration, and equally free to choose which one's not to be inspired by (if it is possible to ignore a "purple rhino" once the idea is mentioned to you.)
4. I believe what you most object to here is the collaboration between politics and religion.
5. Any religion, once it has a desire to achieve and keep political or military power, will then proceed to protect that power, usually against rival religions.
6. This is the sad fact of Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, Israel/Palestine, Timor, the Wild West and numerous other locales.
7. I understand the dilemma that possible association or resemblance to any group can bring about unfavorable comparisons.
8. I'm still proud to have German ancestry, although I disdain the Nazism of the 20th century.
9. I'm proud to be part Irish, but deplore the violence of North Ireland.

10. I speak English, despite the millions of Celts killed, disenfranchised or enslaved (etc.) by Anglo-Saxon & French descendents.
11. I doubt that any western institution (especially a religious one) or academic environment that hasn't been affected, influenced or involved with Judaism or Christianity (which is Judaism blended with Mithraic and Greek Mystery cults) or Islam for that matter, which was Mairi's argument.
12. While I'm sure some Reformed Judaics support Zionism, I believe the underlying purpose of that movement is to adjust Judaism to the realities of modern life, rather than to adjust the world to Judaism, which is more Zionic to me.
13. If there is one lesson I've learned in Reformed Druidism, it is that there are allies and good lessons in nearly every religion, if you know where to look (the opposite also holds true) and search well.
14. But I will agree with you, that the current situation in the Middle East, with its messy blend of racism/ politics/ religion/ class/ lunacy is just plain discouraging.
15. I hope that America doesn't go any further down a similar road of its own, towards extremism or preferential treatment for population based on religion.
16. But, I do not know enough of the details and history behind these religious conflagrations which touch so many related topics. But I am applying myself to a growing understanding.
17. After all, the last reason why we're "reformed" is that we're trying to fix our mistakes, and we can learn much by relating to and engaging ourselves in the dilemmas of others, and we'll need your help.
18. This reminds me of what Isaac told Carleton-graduates in the 70s about "throwing the baby out with the bath water" (2nd Epistle of Isaac) when it comes to magic and associations with neo-paganism.
19. Interestingly, Isaac (of all people) was accused by several people of being Jewish because of his name (which resembles the founder of Reformed Judaism), involvement with founding the Hassidic Druids of North America, and a few other reasons.
20. I believe his reaction was "I'm charmed, but you're very mistaken."
21. On a final thought, I'm reminded that poem by Issho (Zen Harvest #19):

    Over the pond

    Every night casts its light

    But the water won't be soiled

    The moon won't be either.
22. But, I hope you at the very least found Mairi's article to be thought provoking? I welcome other input on dealing with PR issues of association with other groups and movements by the readers.

Yours moderately,
-Mike
April 16, 2002

Chapter the Third

1. Dear Mike,
2. Actually, Brother Mike, all I am saying is that Silent Grove does not consider itself, in any way, influenced by historical or modern Zionism.
3. We despise the situation in the Middle East, as provoked by war criminal Ariel Sharon in 1999 by his visit to a Palestinian holy location. We also despise the fact that your nation continues to fuel Zionist arrogance by providing $3B/annum in aid to a bellicose nation whose hegemonistic aspirations in the region are a detriment to world prosperity.
4. Any Druid would plainly see that the balance is completely torn asunder by misguided foreign policy that funds 'war brokers' to pad their corporate coffers.
5. This is not the wish of the Mother. As such, and I am sure you feel it as well, things will be corrected in the near future. Divination would tell you as much.

With warm regards,
Glen

Chapter the Fourth

1. Dear Glen,
2. It seemed a poor choice on his part, wasn't it?
3. Canada is a wonderful country, after all, I've thought of moving there. In a way, your grove appears to be negatively influenced by Zionism, as is shown by your outrage.
4. It doesn't take a Druid to realize such matters of the world exist. But it would take a Druid to know how to respond wisely. Without time travel, what would be a good course to take?
5. Most of my divination is about the Earth-Mother's acceptance of my sacrifices, not those of others'. I'm sure the gods hear those.

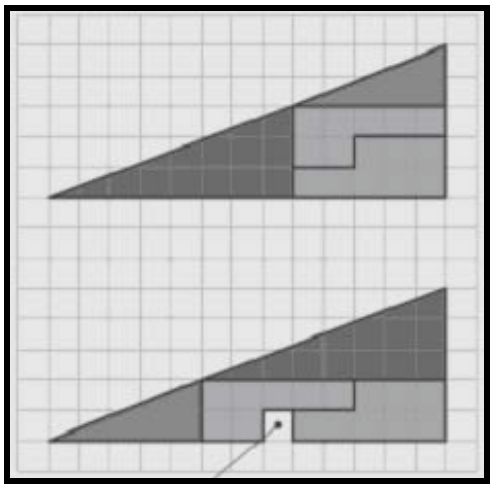
With warm regards,
-Mike

Chapter the Fifth

1. All in the Mother,
2. It is in the spirit of good ale, good music, and a good heart, that I need to rectify Brother Mike in his assumptions as to my sunrise message.
3. Indeed, the message is that each Grove delivers unto themselves the deeds they see as fit.
4. It is simple to be an editorial proxy, however to be representative, that has been the downfall of all political/ religious movements.
5. I welcome, each and everyone of you, to visit our website in the weeks to come, as we begin to practice "Druidism" without getting lost on provocations such as, "What is Reformed?" and glorify far more important trivial frivolities from days a' yore! Indeed, you may find our catalogue will soon surpass the "un-official website" of the RDNA.
6. Tsk! Such a shame that your arrogance exudes in statements that extol the self, rather than the Grace of the Mother. An old Taoist once proclaimed, "visit the river and sit there until you forget yourself. Only then can you become selfless."

7. As far as the Zionist regime is concerned, our Grove feels no bitter hatred, only a sullen remorse that such a wondrous group of people could degrade themselves to the pit of hate once again, such that many societies will reward them with violence as they have done throughout history.
8. BTW, I'm glad you left in question marks.
9. A Zen Buddhist once dropped by a pizza parlor called "Zen Pizza."
10. He ordered one with everything.
11. The pizza came, and he paid, but he complained when the clerk didn't give him any change.
12. The clerk quickly pointed out that, "change comes from within"
13. Therein lacks the wisdom.

With the Mother in our hearts,
Silent Grove



The Epistle of Adaptation

(By Dusty White, 2002)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. From Dusty White
2. All of this spirited thought has caught my eye. It is good to see some serious and intelligent exchanges of thought in neo/pagan (pick-your-favorite term and leave me alone!) circles - as it has been a bit dry around here locally.
3. I most highly agree with "Brother Glen" (hmm.. Can I be different and call him "Unca Glen?") in philosophy and perceived fact (I was not there; therefore I must assume what is reported is somewhat factual).
4. But there is so much more to this. I just wanted to put that in first! :-)
5. In as short of a statement of my view as I can squeeze this:
6. Hmm... "Reformed." I will avoid whipping out the dictionary and will just go straight into my personal diatribe here.
7. The druids of old are dead. (Or they are rrrrrrreally old and hiding with the faeries under the cairns!).
8. They were hunted down like so many other wonderful indigenous civilizations of the earth by the "conquering empires" (I blame the x-ians mostly - but that is entirely personal) and most of the records we could hope to have to trace a solid lineage or collection of rituals and purposes are lost.
9. This means that we in a very real sense are indeed practicing one of the most mysterious of all religions of the world in this day.
10. Because no one alive (except for the afore mentioned rrrrrrreally old druids) knows exactly what they did and how they did it and why... We have only our best guesses.
11. I hope I do not need to point out the fallacy of "modern science" over the past few millennia to show how mistaken we may be on them.
12. But I like to think we have a pretty good idea of "what drooids did."
13. They like trees. Hey! I like trees! And there we have a start.
14. This reaches into the shadowy realms of Celtic-recreationism and I am bound to (hopefully) offend some here with my line of thought.
15. Anything we do today is nothing more than an educated guess of those who walked before us. But this can be quite liberating!

Chapter the Second

1. With all due respect to my Wiccan(tm) friends - including those I have to meet - Wicca(tm - Gerald Gardner circa 1964?) is a "re-formation" of a collection of beliefs from all over Europe.
2. Pre 1960 there was no "Wicca." There were a variety of indigenous beliefs on every spot of dry land where people resided and the gods there reflected the environment of that locale.
3. Now we have a hundred different official sects and a million different interpretations, blending Egyptian,

Assyrian, Celtic, Hindu and other beliefs and calling it "Wicca(tm).” Hence it is an amalgamation of beliefs.

4. Okay - that's cool as long as we can see it for what it is. Today's Wiccans(tm) are as eclectic as today's fast food establishments. A burger at Mc Donald's is vastly different from one at Burger King ("they use microwaves!") but they are both lumped into the category of burgers or the larger grab-bag term of American "fast food.”
5. So my mini-point here is that the systems of beliefs are varied even under the umbrella title of the predominant defacto "pagan" line of thought.
6. So - to bring this all together; "if" the druids are dead and gone (not to worry - we ALL die someday) and most of the records we could hope to enjoy have been destroyed then what we really have is a base of ideas and a completely new era.
7. The planet is the same, but the world has changed. Some of us may choose to be "guardians of history" and keep to what little we do know - calling ourselves purists (I like that term btw) and that is all good.
8. But... Isn't the very essence of life - of nature herself the ability to adapt and survive?
9. As druids we (should) all look around to the grand old lady herself and seek guidance by example. What does nature do? Nature adapts.
10. The lion eats the zebra (yum!). If there are not enough zebras the lion eats something else or starves. Nature allows the cycle to evolve. Where there are fewer zebras and giraffes (for example) the trees grow more plentiful and the grass grows taller.
11. Humans punch giant holes in the ozone and nature says - okay kids; playtime is over - you die now. "Next!"
12. All in all, nature just adapts and keeps going on.
13. So if the world is a different world than it was back in the days of our fun-loving, golden-sickle wielding forebearers, then "could" (note: I did NOT say "should" - do NOT flame me for implying "should") our beliefs not adapt also?
14. Would not those who went before us be disappointed if we did not see the world and create new songs and rituals to honor and bond with nature that are contemporary to our times and world around us?
15. This is not to imply abandoning old beliefs at all - but more that the term "re-formed" could well be taken as: solid ideas based on a sound premise ("nature is good") and applied to the world around us in a contemporary style that has the maximum impact of intended purpose ("nature is cool").

Chapter the Third

1. I mean we could all build a house using only an axe. We "could" make a 'Lincoln Log' cabin of sorts (note that I expressly do NOT condone the abuse, murder or butchering of trees or any plant-life - EVER!!!) but we have air-hammers now that shoot these really cool nails into (ahem) wood and build solid, well insulated houses -- in a fraction of the time -- it took our grandfathers and even more so those before to build homes for their families.
2. Should our personal spiritual beliefs remain in the Stone Age while all of our realities and perceptions advance forward at blisteringly divine speeds? Is this not the very reason that x-ianity has suffered such an attrition of real followers over the past 600 years and more so in the now deceased "2nd millennia"?
3. The Renaissance came about as the "common man" (a sexist term I know) had more free time from labor and thus better health, more time to learn and thus a chance to look above the rantings of the Church and local nobility and say something to the effect of "screw this! This makes no sense at all!.” Europe's collective eyes were opened and the world started a change that has led us to this very moment of internet debates.
4. None of this discounts any basic precepts ("nature is good") but it DID invalidate the forced dogma of the previous generations as they had infected current religious thought of that time ("nature is good because God is better than thou and so is the Earl and therefore thou musts toil in the fields of thy Earl in service to him , in all of his holiness, so thou mayest achieve a servile position in his garden in paradise"). I realize this is a lot to chew on - but it is blissfully simple.
5. If we strip away all but the premise of what those who came before us held true then we have a tree (no?). Okay - so let's consider decorating that tree one belief at a time.
6. Add the ornaments of old by examining them to see if they are kept because of their timeless truth - or simple nostalgia. Can some broken and soiled ornaments not be placed in a jeweled box on display at the base of the tree in an honored position while new ornaments that reflect the time and the base notion ("nature is cool") be placed on the tree in their stead?

Chapter the Fourth

1. This is how I see us as reformed druids. I believe we laugh at nothing our forebearers did. If they thought the sun rose every day, and not that the earth revolved around the sun - cool!
2. But we know differently now; our understanding of that fact may negate a certain ritual that is focused on making the sun rise (I am being whimsically hypothetical here for example only) - but our songs of love of the sun rising are an extremely personal expression , as we know that it is to our eyes that the sun rises and that is how we romanticize the moment and draw power from it.
3. The eternal flame has long-been extinguished. Okay - we still know how to make fire. Drop the torch - light a new one. Hell! Use "Hazel" or "Birch cut under the light of the first smiling crescent when Venus and the moon make a one-eyed smiley face just after sundown" if you like - but the fact that the torch is lit and carried and protected from harsh winds seems more important to me than trying to use the same old charred stump soaked in gasoline.
4. I think that we all have our own interpretations of druidism - just as we all have our own beliefs on sex and monogamy/polygamy and polyandry.
5. But one thing I do know for a fact is that whether we choose to like it or not - we all are products of this world as it is - not as it was "back when" and those beliefs are inherent in us.
6. We can no more reject the world as it is today in our spiritual belief systems than we can live without the wonder of toilet paper, washing machines, refrigeration, toothbrushes or readily available soap and hot water.
7. So we are "21st century druids.” Cool! I still like trees. But I also like my computer.

8. Okay - enough of my proselytizing! Thank you for reading - please feel free to write and tell me how sacrilegious I am.

Chapter the Fifth

1. One last fun note though:
2. Mike wrote:
3. “I doubt that any western institution (especially a religious one) or academic environment that hasn't been affected, influenced or involved with Judaism or Christianity (which is Judaism blended with Mithraic and Greek Mystery cults) or Islam for that matter, which was Mairi's arguement.”
4. X-ianity draws from Hinduism as well - this is a fun factoid I always like tossing at Jehovah"s Witnesses (because I AM an ass): The "forbidden fruit" of the Vedas (circa several thousand years pre-xianity) was a Banana!
5. So.. if x-ianity is the one and only "true belief" - why did the Hindus (heathen bastards :-) get the idea first? And what about when Sid (the Buddha) said a full 500 years before Jesus "I am the representation of the Buddha on earth.
6. But I am also the eternal spirit of the Buddha and I am the creator of all of this being the Buddha eternal" (I need to get the actual quote for you scholarly types - but it is there in the lotus Sutra).
7. Ain't life great?
8. Okay... faeries to you!

Dusty the passing druid
April 16, 2002

The Silent Cacophony

(Disgruntled Druid, 2002)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. April 24th, 2002
2. Our Grove has decided, not in haste, that we share no connection with the RDNA, and since our actions will be fairly robust in the weeks, months and years ahead, that we should singly represent ourselves as the Canadian Druid and Bardic Society.
3. We initially toyed with the idea back in January, prior to Imbolc, but recent events leave us little doubt that this is in the best interests of our Grove.
4. In the Mother, please notify all that we are leaving the Reform, and wish to have little to no contact with your organization, up and beyond the people we have met on a one-to-one email basis.
5. Best of Luck!

Chapter the Second

1. April 29, 2002
2. With good food, immaculate manner, and a belly full of ale we warmly greet you.
3. Just to let you all know, our Grove has broken with the RDNA.
4. The reasons are many, some that we wish to retain for ourselves, but others that should be glaringly obvious to others.
5. The Carleton Grove is nothing more than some faded venture, using its name for some place in obscure history.
6. The facade that each Grove manages itself is diaphanous as the day is long.
7. Most Groves have one member.
8. In essence the whole organization, at least the initial mandate as laid down by the original, founding organization is wind-worn and lichen bound.
9. It is time to shake the moss from your beards!
10. It is time for us to truly encapsulate the love of nature that we so, seemingly, cherish.
11. Am I not to hear so much as a mouse fart from the RDNA when your US government plans on allowing mountain mining ventures to completely ease their dumping restrictions?
12. Or is it just some sort of "past-time" with most of you?
13. How do you do druidism??
14. Everywhere, they all ask the question.
15. Up! All of you!
16. Make your organization again the robust entity it once was.
17. Principles are empty vapours. Seeming wisdom is nothing more than foolishness.
18. It is time to rise all!
19. Let us not miss this opportunity!

The Epistle of Alyx

(By Alyx, 2002)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

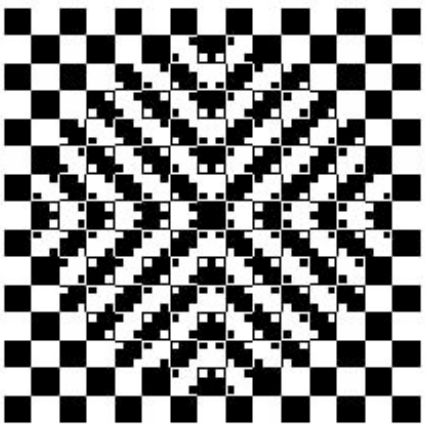
1. May 1, 2002
2. If you are looking for the RDNA to be an organized protest movement, waving the banner of environmental protection (or any other "protest cause of your choice") in the vanguard of the counterculture, you are doomed to disappointment. It isn't going to happen.
3. You talk of the organization's initial mandate; what you forget is that its founding came as a protest ~against~ compulsory behavior (in this case, religious attendance). Compulsory political protest or even compulsory political ~belief~ is no different.
4. However -- to take the lack of "Organized RDNA Presence" in the protest lines and conclude from that that the ~members~ of the RDNA are likewise uninvolved is an egregious and quite frankly careless error in judgment on your part.
5. Members of the RDNA, perhaps even individual groves, may be involved in all sorts of protests, causes, and yes even organizations of which you know nothing about. How one person or one grove lives out their spiritual belief is not a matter for you to judge, especially when you possess a remarkable lack of factual information about them.
6. If your concepts of "druid" and "grove" involve organized and visible political action on the part of and in the name of same, then perhaps it ~is~ best for all that you have disfellowshipped yourselves to form your own body.
7. I truly wish you all the best.
8. But to make sweeping and ill-informed judgments about the group, its members, and the validity and expression of our beliefs (even stooping to compare us to Nazis and Aryanism) because the RDNA does not meet your own personal expectation of "What It Really Means To Be A Druid" (or even a Reformed Druid) is in my opinion childish, inflammatory, and wholly unproductive.

Chapter the Second

1. Back in my more-or-less conservative Christian days (well, okay, a little bit on the "less" side by this time) and during my several year stint as a "career temp," I found myself coincidentally assigned to the headquarters of a national conservative men's ministry, which was located in our city and used my temp service.
2. During a lunch conversation with a Hispanic coworker one day, I discovered that the name "Chui," (pronounced "Chewie"), was a nickname for "Jesus" (pronounced "Haysoos."..). Inexplicably (and rather wickedly) delighted by this revelation, I wondered out loud if that meant one could then pray to Lord Chewie Christ....
3. I got some very odd looks around the office for a while.
4. But my intent, both then and now, was not to be disrespectful or sacrilegious.
5. There are many religions floating around these days, and many personal beliefs and faiths of people within those religions. And many people argue, fight, and even war over which religion is "right" or "correct" or "The One True Way."
6. But if one's beliefs are so "sacred" as to allow no examination, no questioning, (or dare I even say, no fun) then what on earth good are they?
7. It's not the form of a religion that is the useful part - it's what is inside.
8. To me, religion is like a pinata. On one hand, a faith or belief system that can't withstand some thumps or whacks is nothing but an empty shell; although it may look pretty hanging from the ceiling, but in the end it's nothing more than a decoration.
9. But more importantly, it's not the container that matters, but what's inside. Like the pinata, no matter what shape it is, how fancy it's made, or how elaborately it's decorated, religion is ultimately of no use to you unless you smash it open to get to the goodies inside.
10. And whether the stick is need, hardship, or even humor, eventually you're swinging it blindly until, finally, you connect.

Chapter the Third

1. "In the old days men used to worship sticks and stones and idols, and prayed to them to give them luck. It happened that a man had often prayed to a wooden idol that he had received from his father, but his luck never seemed to change. He prayed and he prayed, but still he remained as unlucky as ever. One day in the greatest rage he went to the Wooden God, and with one blow swept it down from its pedestal. The idol broke in two, and what did he see? An immense number of coins flying all over the place."
2. ("The Man and the Wooden God," pg. 268 of ARDA, pg. 46 of Part Six The Green Books.)



The Second Epistles of Norman

(By Norman Nelson, 2002-2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. 12 Nov 2002 12:58:26 -0700
2. I've been waiting a couple days for someone to come up with a definitive reply to you, but Druids, too, have a bad case of manana syndrome.
2. Let me introduce myself briefly, I'm Norm, and I'm about to turn 61. I'm one of the "Founders" and was the second Archdruid. [However, as you'll see below, that doesn't mean that anything I say is definitive!]
3. There is no single route to being a "Druid"; in fact, I would believe that every individual has found his/her own path. The Reformed Druids of North America have no creed; we used to say, "Look around you at the natural world; there must be something bigger than we are, and we choose to honor it as the Earth Mother."
4. That honor may be called worship, or just appreciation, or _____ [You fill in the blank]. The RDNA has *never* required anyone to give up another faith to become a Druid. We've always been complementary or supplementary, not exclusive.
5. Similarly, those who have attended RDNA services (or had other contact with RDNA) have either agreed with our premise and added it to their own beliefs (I know there are Druids with Jewish, various Christian, Shinto and Wiccan backgrounds, and there are probably representatives of other faiths, major and minor) or else have gone away and had nothing to do with Druidism. For a few, it has become their only religion; that's okay, too.
6. The whole RDNA "religion" started as a joke, anyway; a protest against required attendance at religious services at Carleton College in Minnesota. The day I graduated in 1964, the Board of Trustees repealed the requirement, thereby rendering RDNA moot, but to the surprise of the Founders, RDNA kept on going, and is now approaching its 40th birthday!
7. For some, including me, it remained a "supplement" to another belief (e.g. a way of getting in touch with the feminine, creative side of a patriarchal god, or whatever).
8. For others, it became their core belief because it answered their questions [which seems to me to be the real function of humanity's need for any religion].
9. If someone were to take a poll of RDNA today (don't worry, it won't be done because most folks wouldn't bother to reply!) I think you'd still find a whole spectrum of beliefs.
10. Consequently, there has never been a successful attempt to codify what Druids believe. As the joke goes, if you have two Druids together, you have at least three belief systems!
11. Imagine!!! A do-it-yourself religion that lets you pick and choose from a whole buffet of options. Start doing some reading (Mike Scharding's book is the obvious place to start) and devise your own "book" of readings, etc., to answer the questions you have. It won't match anyone else's, but it'll be right for you.
11. And, as I like to say, "Funny, you don't look Druish."

Chapter the Second

1. 21 Dec 2002 12:34:24 -0700
2. I concur that there is no authority that can "unmake" a Druid, just as there is none that can make one. You're a Druid if you feel Druish. I guess you could be kicked out of a particular (pun intended) Grove, but that doesn't mean you cease to be a Druid.
3. In the early days, everyone who partook of the Waters was automatically made a member of the Carleton Grove, including John Nason, the then president of Carleton, and his wife, to whom I served the waters the weekend before my graduation (with my fingers crossed, on a campus where the discovered possession of alcoholic beverages was an automatic 10-day suspension). By that standard, there are a lot of Druids out there, even if they don't know it.
4. The long-defunct Council of Dalon ap Landu never, to the best of my memory, ever tried to excommunicate anyone (even Isaac!). Given the above criterion, I don't think we even thought it possible.
5. The closest thing to a "head of the RDNA" would probably be David Fisher, since I think he's the highest ranked Patriarch. However, he's no longer practicing Druidism (at least officially he's not) and the opinion of any Patriarch is worth just as much as the opinion of any member of RDNA. For us to have a "head" would be the tail wagging the dog!
6. "The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; and the pessimist fears this is true." -- James Branch Cabell

Chapter the Third

1. 28 Oct 2002 16:16:36 -0700
2. Excommunication? Can't have that unless we first have communication!
3. As I noted to someone recently, the "founders" didn't give up sacrifices. We gave up virgin sacrifices (couldn't find anyone willing to lose theirs in public), but we sacrificed plant life.
4. Given the cannibalistic overtones of the Christian communion [there's that word again!] sacrifice of some sort seems to be integral to most religions, serious or otherwise, be it a literal shedding of blood or the sacrifice of self during Lent or Ramadan.
5. Meseems that the Reform can stretch far enough to encompass almost everything. I'd qualify that by saying that "everything" should be limited to what's legal, but I also remember that I once served the Waters of Life to the president of Carleton on a campus where possession of alcoholic beverages was an automatic 10-day suspension (and the pop machine in the dorm parlor sold lemon sour and club soda!), so we've been stretching the limits since the Founding.

Chapter the Fourth

1. Sun, 4 May 2003 18:38:16 -0600
2. I'm just back from the reunion at Carleton; I'll tell you more later, if anybody is interested.
3. During the weekend, I had an insight that I want to pass along: one of the things that has attracted people to RDNA over the years is that, when we put it together, we forgot to include something that is a major aspect in most other "religions" - guilt.
4. While the service begins with "forgive three sins" (some modern versions say "three errors"), there's none of the "I'm a miserable sinner and have to spend the rest of my life trying to atone" that's a major aspect in most of the other major faiths.
5. Ergo, Druids are free to enjoy all the aspects of Nature, and to revel in them, without having to worry about crossing some invisible line and winding up among the damned. We don't have a hell... nor a heaven.
6. We don't object to those faiths that do, and if an individual believes in them, that's his/her business. We won't criticize them, as long as they don't try to demand that we share their beliefs.
7. As I said, this came to me this weekend as a genuine insight, one I'd never thought about before. Just thought I'd pass it along to see what others think about the concept. Several people to whom I mentioned the concept over the weekend agreed that it was a good point.
8. Right now, though, it's still "firmly carved in Jello", so if you want to dissent, go ahead. On the other hand, I think it could be a real revelation about what RDNA has meant to so many people from so many backgrounds.

Chapter the Fourth

1. Sat, 11 Jan 2003 12:05:11 -0700
2. I'd bet that each of us has had similar feelings at one time or another; it's one of the things that has led us to seek answers in Druidism, in communication with and honoring of Nature.
3. I've been extremely fortunate in finding another person who feels about these things as I do (although I don't think she's ever considered Druidism).
4. She used to live here, and now lives in Delaware, but she tries to arrange her schedule so that she can spend a month every summer at my family's cabin in one of the most beautiful spots in the Black Hills. And, as she likes to say, she just sits on the porch and stores up memories to hold her for the rest of the year when she's not here.
5. I've often found myself seeing something special, from a dew-spangled spider web to a lone pine tree growing out of a solid wall of granite, and showing it to her or telling her about it.
6. We don't use any mystical language to try to describe these things; in fact, we often don't use any language at all but to nod in appreciation. With her, I know I've found a kindred soul to whom such explanations are unnecessary.
7. Keep going out into Nature. I second the suggestion to get linked with some sort of group (mine is Sierra Club) that takes like-minded people into Nature, perhaps you'll find such a friend there.
8. Sierra Club also has something they call "Inner City Outings": they take young people from the inner city out on camping trips, etc. Such a trip could give you an excellent chance to pass along to others (it's easier with strangers) some of what you feel without worrying about being thought odd.
9. Most of all, keep seeking... spirituality is not something you find, it finds you. It has found many of us, in one form or another, and somewhere out there there's a person with whom you can have that silent understanding I feel you're seeking.

Chapter the Fifth

1. Sat, 18 Jan 2003 13:14:49 -0700
2. Here's a suggestion for "following your own path" in a contemplative way. An ancient (Celtic? it looks like it) tradition in Christianity is the Labyrinth, a pattern laid out on a cathedral floor or paths in a garden, etc. I've even seen one made with duct tape on a carpeted floor in a church "parish hall".
3. There's no reason you couldn't make one in your own living room or yard. It's NOT a maze, just a winding walk from outside to the center and back again.
4. The concept is that tracing the pattern allows you to center yourself, to think the necessary thoughts; it can be used for prayer, or meditation, or just relaxation. It can be very powerful to use.
5. (Also, it is customary not to acknowledge someone if you meet in one; they're there for their own reasons, and shouldn't be interrupted.) It's also something that would fit well into Druidism! Look into it, one and all.
6. [I haven't looked, but I'm sure that a search at Google, etc., would lead you to more information. I first encountered the idea from a young Episcopal priest who was heavily into Celtic spirituality; she laid out one at our church for a couple weeks.]

Chapter the Sixth

1. Sun, 19 Jan 2003 13:21:14 -0700
2. Ineffable is not secret, it's just impossible to describe. Words can not communicate individual experiences, because there aren't the right words for that.
3. Make up one and give it a specific meaning, and you can use it to communicate, but the subtle nuances will never be there.
4. Perhaps this is why many groups use metaphor to discuss internal experiences. I remember a group that once spent two hours discussing "having the chair pulled away as you're sitting down" to describe various experiences in their lives. Each had an ineffable experience, but all shared the common feeling(s), and true communication happened.

Chapter the Seventh

1. Tue, 21 Jan 2003 11:59:24 -0700
2. It will be interesting to see the interchange on this. I don't think I've ever sat down and tried to define it for myself; could be fun to try to work it out.
3. A good discussion group (or bull session) can force you to do that kind of thinking. You can't express [to others] what you've not found the words for.
4. Breathing is certainly part of it (if you don't breathe daily, you'll have a hard time worshipping), but worship is something more. Perhaps that sharp intake of breath when something really hits you, like the autumn tree.

Interestingly, the Greek word translated as spirit in the Bible is pneuma, breath.

5. Falling down prostrate when struck by something special is optional, obviously. Getting a little weak in the knees is pretty common, at least for me. Awestruck is one word that comes to mind.
6. Finally, I'd note that worship is not just something done in your church, mosque, synagogue, or grove. If the pneuma is there, you're worshipping. If you're just tracking along through life without being aware, you're not.

Chapter the Eighth

1. Fri, 24 Jan 2003 11:48:49 -0700
2. From the very beginning, RDNA was *not* (yea, verily, *never*) intended to replace any other "religion", but merely to be a supplement recognizing the importance of Nature in the individual's life.
3. For some, it has become their sole belief, but many others find no conflict between Druidism and whatever else they practice.
4. I once said (literally giving the sermon from the pulpit on an Earth Day Sunday!) that until the 1979 revision of the Book of Common Prayer, when Episcopalians heard the word "stewardship" they knew it was Pledge Sunday. The new BCP has a dozen or so references to stewardship in the meaning of caring for the creation.
5. My favorite is from a section of additional prayers and thanksgivings in the back of the BCP. Thanksgiving #5 [For the Nation] is probably a good one (with appropriate changes) to use for Druid meditations. {incidentally, I usually refer to it as "the zingers") In usual usage, the leader reads each paragraph, and everyone joins in the responses. It is not copyrighted, so if you want to use it, feel free.
6. For the Nation [p. 838]
7. Almighty God, giver of all good things: We thank you for the natural majesty and beauty of this land. They restore us, though we often destroy them.
8. Heal us.
9. We thank you for the great resources of this nation. They make us rich, though we often exploit them.
10. Forgive us.
11. We thank you for the men and women who have made this country strong. They are models for us, though we often fall short of them.
12. Inspire us.
13. We thank you for the torch of liberty which has been lit in this land. It has drawn people from every nation, though we have often hidden from its light.
14. Enlighten us.
15. We thank you for the faith we have inherited in all its rich variety. It sustains our life, though we have been faithless again and again.
16. Renew us.
17. Help us, O Lord, to finish the good work here begun. Strengthen our efforts to blot out ignorance and prejudice, and to abolish poverty and crime. And hasten the day when all our people, with many voices in one united chorus, will glorify your holy Name.
18. Amen.

Chapter the Ninth

1. Wed, 29 Jan 2003 11:17:31 -0700
2. But I heard just last weekend that they're ice-fishing on Lake Wobegon... Did you hear about the [fill in your own favorite ethnicity] who went ice-fishing?
3. Caught two 25-pound blocks and a sack of cubes!
4. Wed, 12 Mar 2003 15:07:53 -0700
5. This Explains Everything!
6. In preparation for the Earth Summit, the UN conducted a world-wide survey. The only question on the survey was: "Please give your honest opinion about solutions to the food shortage in the rest of the world."
7. The survey was a complete failure. The Chinese didn't know what "opinion" meant; the Middle East didn't know what "solutions" meant; the East Europeans didn't know what honest" meant; the West Europeans didn't know what "shortage" meant; the Africans didn't know what "food" meant; the South Americans didn't know what "please" meant; and the USA didn't know what "the rest of the world" meant.

Chapter the Tenth

1. Mon, 3 Feb 2003 10:48:36 -0700
2. I don't think it's a benefit to ANY religion to make it compulsory that one must attend the services.
3. If you're getting something from it, you'll go to services or practice the rituals or meditate on your navel or whatever. If you're only there because somebody made you go, you're going to become restless and rebellious - dispirited in several senses of the word.
4. I would guess that exactly that happens to a majority of teens, for a shorter or longer period of time. I'll further guess that many in this discussion quit going to "church" for exactly that reason.
5. In other words, if you want someone to NOT practice a religion, make them do it.
6. RDNA was not started to protest religion; it wouldn't still be here if it was. It was started to protest making people practice religion. As I've noted before, at Carleton even the atheists had to meet to get chapel credit!
7. Carleton was founded by the Congregationalists, and the requirement was a left-over from the 1870s, when the population was much more homogeneous.
8. To end on a lighter note: I once was in a town where the Congregationalists and Baptists had combined; everybody called it "the Congo-Baptist Church", which always gave me some really great mental pictures.

Chapter the Eleventh

1. 5 Feb 2003 12:34:35 -0700
2. Phrased that way because we wanted everyone to be able to participate. Most religions are either/or -- you're a Christian or a Jew or a Buddhist or a Muslim or whatever, and can't be true to any combination thereof; you've got to pick one.
3. In that Tenet, RDNA very carefully described itself as a "supplementary" religion -- it was not necessary to give up any other beliefs to participate. We were consciously trying to be non-threatening to any other belief system.

4. And when I read that last sentence, I realize again that we expected RDNA to be ephemeral, and not to continue after its purpose was completed.
5. Please don't try to make RDNA one of those either/or types. You can believe almost anything and still get the benefits of contemplating the lessons of Nature, the Earth-Mother.

Chapter the Twelfth

1. Thu, 13 Feb 2003 11:00:11 -0700
2. Rather than respond to several postings individually, here's a sort of all-encompassing string of answers. You are cordially invited to thank me for not filling up your mailboxes with 4 or 5 postings!
3. If you'll check, you'll find that in the early 1960s the Christian fundamentalists were a very small minority, not the behemoth they've become today.
4. I very much doubt that any of them ever saw the Chronicles. They wouldn't read anything that smacked of paganism, anyway. [And remember: the Religious Right is neither!]
5. As for the "style" of the early Chronicles, bear in mind that they were written ONLY for the few of us who were at Carleton at the time; since most of us were also practicing Christians, the parody of the Biblical style only added to the fun.
6. Frangquist may dispute this, but I don't think they were meant to be enduring. I certainly never thought so. They were just a little "in joke" for us, because we could read between the lines and know what was actually being referred to.
7. For example, the "altar which was small and portable" was a wire phonograph stand from somebody's dorm room, draped with a sheet.
8. I don't think anyone outside our little group ever saw them when they were first written, so it was not necessary to write in a style intended to be "taken seriously".
9. Only when it became obvious that RDNA would continue to have real meaning for some did they become our "scriptures", subject to all sorts of interpretations. The theologists among us still enjoy that game.
10. I don't think that at the "founding" any of us thought that RDNA would have any life after we beat the religion requirement. Remember that it took more than a year to accomplish that goal. We held services in the spring of '63, fall of '63, and spring of '64.
11. By that time, all of us began to realize that we'd hit some sort of a chord that had real meaning to some folks; this is when the exploration of antecedents and meditations, etc., became more than a joke.
12. I'd say that it was also the time when the Chronicles evolved from the parody to serious thinking about our relationship to the world. I believe that it was also at this time that we began to realize that RDNA might continue to exist.
13. When you are reading the meditations, etc., which were recorded for use at services and as individual exercises, you're looking at RDNA after some people began to take it seriously.
14. Dr. John Messenger, who became our "faculty advisor", contributed some of the Celtic poetry which made it into the book. It became part of the service to read some meditation (including much not in the Chronicles--I sometimes used appropriate portions of the Psalms when I was A-D) aloud, and have a period of silence for people to think about it.
15. We didn't have a "sermon", with some leader telling us what to think, but each person was free to make his/her own interpretation (or just twiddle thumbs during the silence).
16. In the initial stages, only a Third Order could consecrate the Waters. (Actually, he/she didn't *do* it, just verified that they had been consecrated by the Mother.)
17. Everyone who partook of the Waters was considered a First Order, so there were lots of people who only attended one service but (usually without their explicit knowledge) became First Order Druids, including the Nasons.
18. As I recall, subscription to the Tenets was only necessary for Second and Third Orders. Again, note that the Tenets were written to be supplementary to other faiths, not exclusionary. [And remember that the Tenets weren't written until after the first few services.]
19. I hereby add the disclaimer that the above are my own opinions and memories. Others may have differing viewpoints. After all, it was 40 years ago!
20. I still think that the RDNA we know today was a process of evolution from joke to serious Weltanschauung. What's important is not what it was meant to be, but what it means to each of us today. If it still has validity, it lies in that.

Chapter the Thirteenth

1. 5 May 2003 11:03:44 -0600
2. The vigil, I'd say, can be any of these, although I think your "chapel in the woods" is closest to the intention, unless you have a nearby Bo Tree where you can find enlightenment. You need to spend the night thinking about Nature and your place in it. (This would presumably rule out a snipe hunt.)
3. A few hours of personal meditation and contemplation. A few hours of finding out WHO you really are. A few hours of finding out who the other people in your life are. A few hours of finding out WHY you are. A few hours of finding out WHAT you're here on earth to do.
4. Do a little digging and find out about the vigils of young men about to be knighted. There are some obvious similarities in intention, if not in rituals.
5. An unexpected side effect of being a Third Order is that, in the eyes of others, you become oracular. You're expected to know "the answers" to life's questions (and "42" doesn't count!).
6. You've got to find the answers inside yourself, for yourself. This will NOT equip you to counsel others with "the" answers, since the answers you find will be personal, but it'll give you some insight into how to help others find their own answers.

Chapter the Fourteenth

1. May 25, 2003 3:11 PM
2. It is a curious phenomenon by which, when you learn something new or get into a good discussion about something, it starts popping up all over the place. I remember once learning a fancy new word in 4th grade, and there it was in the funny paper that night!
3. I suspect that the "something" has been there all along, but you're newly sensitized to it, so it jumps out where

previously you wouldn't have noticed it. I think we've all experienced it, though. Which brings me to:

4. As we were having our discussion on morality, I was reading a science fiction book, *The Parafaith War*, by L. E. Modesitt. In it, I found the following, supposedly taken from the sacred text of one of his future societies. It seems worth passing along.
5. "...As cultures advance in knowledge and power, the conflict between reason and faith becomes apparently greater. Not only have people attained through technology the powers of old gods to cast thunderbolts or to heal or to destroy, but they have exercised those powers, and they know that divinity is not required. They can determine that sufficient power determines destiny.
6. "The problem with technology is that it rewards the able while also empowering those who are less able. A man who cannot fathom a computer or an infonet can destroy those who can, and who have been rewarded for their skills.
7. "Yet, if each individual obtains and wields the power within his or her scope, few individuals will survive. By placing power in a greater being, a deity, in some force greater than the individual, or even into a belief that the community is greater than the individual, an individual is expressing a faith in the need for an entity greater than mere personal ambition or appetite. That faith ... allows the individual to refrain from exercising power, yet it also places such an individual at the mercy of those without such faith.
8. "While it can be and has been argued that all people are created equal, genetics and environmental analyses have verified that such equality ceases at birth, perhaps even earlier.
9. "With unequal power and unequal ability the lot of humanity, religion has sought to establish a common ground by subsuming all to a mightier god, yet reason and technology have conspired to communicate that no such god exists -or that such a god does not interfere- and that some form of might makes right. And no god has, in recent historical times, destroyed the side with the bigger battalions and mightier technology.
10. "So ... how can a rational individual confront the problem of power? In the same way that all the faithful have throughout history - any sharing a set of ideals and a spirit of community more highly valued than individual application of power....
11. "One of the cries of the true believer is that there are moral absolutes that can only be set forth by a deity. Yet if life is sacred, as many deities have proclaimed, how can a deity command people to kill in his name, as most deities have done? How can we even exist, since we must consume, in the natural state, some other organism, and that means killing? Likewise, if life is not sacred, then the injunction to be fruitful and multiply is a military command, not a deistic one...."

Chapter the Fifteenth

1. June 19, 2003 1:22 PM
2. Everybody has/had two parents. Each of them, two likewise. Run this logic
3. back a few generations, and the number of ancestors of each of us is greater than the population of the whole earth at that time. Ergo, we're all related, in one sense.
4. The path that is right for you is not necessarily the path of your people", even if you know who they were. It's probably not even the path of your own parents. It's your path, and it's probably pretty eclectic.
5. I've maintained for years that much of the famous "adolescent rebellion" we all went through (and some of you are now seeing from the other side!) is a process of questioning the beliefs (not just religious, but almost everything) that have been handed down to you; from the whole buffet available, you eventually pick your own, personal, set of beliefs, and when you've internalized them, they're your own beliefs.
6. (Most of the time, for most people, they wind up being very close to the parental version, but by being tested, they've become internalized, instead of imposed.)
7. Accretions to your own personal beliefs can come from anywhere, and usually do. This one reason some people find Mike's books of meditations so fascinating. Just pick out the parts that fit!
8. I doubt that you could find two pastors in the same Christian denomination who share identical personal beliefs. Then throw in all the other denominations that call themselves Christian, and consider the number of individual paths involved! Yet they're all aimed at the same end. [Or do the Catholics believe all roads lead to Rome?]

Chapter the Sixteenth

1. Wednesday, July 2, 2003 1:01 PM
2. Some time in the late 70s or early 80s, I was up at the local mall and met a guy in a Carleton sweatshirt; I ask if he went there, and he said "Yes". I told him I was Class of '64, and he said, "Wow! We really admire your class, because you were radical before it was fashionable!"
3. The founding of RDNA was only a small part of what was going on there at the time... lots of other revolts against the Administration and the archaic "in loco parentis" rules (of which the religious attendance requirement was a part). Women's hours were enforced at almost every college in the country at the time; remember, we were only a couple years away from the 50s!
4. >Of course the whole chronicles are a biblical allusion in language, esp. book 5 which is something like the druids "sermon of the mountain".
5. The earliest part of the Chronicles was a deliberate parody of the Bible; it was part of the in-joke we were playing. I've long believed, and finally confirmed from Frangquist's own lips at the Beltane reunion, that as a couple years pass, in the later Chronicles you can literally watch RDNA change from a protest joke to being quite a serious philosophical system.
6. The idea of a personal search for "truth", for meaning in life, indeed for meaning beyond one's own life, is (to me) the best explanation for the continuation of the RDNA.
7. For many people, even those such as me who continued to belong to "traditional" religions, that mind-set of seeking for meaning continues to hold a powerful sway.
8. I took a 4-year seminar through an Episcopal seminary to learn about the history and theology of the church, and it was incredibly meaningful to me.
9. If you don't think questioning the articles of your faith is a widespread phenomenon, ask any priest or pastor or rabbi or imam about their own spiritual path.
10. They've all had the questions; they've found the answers that they sought in their faith, whatever faith it is. As has

been pointed out many times before, you cannot find faith by logic; you have to work it out for yourself.

11. Our "mission statement" (if you will) remains "Look around you at the world. There's got to be something bigger than we are." RDNA honors that concept by praise of the Earth-Mother.
12. RDNA may have started rather haphazardly, but at the same time it was carefully crafted to supplement, not supplant, any other faith.
13. For some, it became their sole practice, and that direction has attracted many other people to those Groves or as solitaries. For most of those who were there in the early days, RDNA remains an adjunct to their was of finding their own view of their faith.
14. Given the origin, RDNA really has little control over who calls him/herself a Druid! By announcing to the world (or just to yourself) that you are a Druid, you become one!
15. Originally, we considered anyone who attended a service and partook of the Waters to be a First Order Druid automatically. Today, apparently, to become a First Order requires a ritual of commitment of some sort in many Groves.
16. At the same time, I'll bet that some of you in this class consider yourselves Druids without ever having attended a service. No problem, at least in my mind.
17. Well, this has turned into more of a sermon than I intended. Take it all with a grain (or a block!) of salt.

Chapter the Eighteenth

1. Wednesday, July 9, 2003 12:00 PM
2. I'm reminded of two or three things by this discussion The JWs, working from some obscure Bible passage (in Revelation?) have as an article of their faith that only 144,000 souls will be saved at the end of the world. When I find them at my door, I ask them to verify this, and then ask how many members their sect has (it's above that number). They usually go away, then.
3. Back in the days when Mormon missionaries were easily recognizable (18-year-old boys wearing suits and hats, with nametags saying "Elder So-&-so"), my dad was sitting on the front porch when a pair of them approached, and politely asked if Dad would be interested in learning about their church. Dad, equally politely, replied that he wasn't interested, because he "belonged to a church that was in the apostolic succession".
4. They then made the fatal mistake of asking, "What's that?" For the next 30 minutes, my dad gave them a lecture on the history of the formation of the Christian church, the apostles having laid their hands on the bishops to pass along their "powers", the bishops ordaining the priests, etc., etc. The poor Mormons were too polite to interrupt him! They, too, went way as soon as they politely could.
5. I've also found that you can get rid of most door-to-door missionaries by telling them either that you're a Druid or that you're a Roman Catholic. They're afraid of the former, and know that it's hopeless to try to convert the latter!
6. And, of course, there's the option that's been discussed here: politely invite them in, start to undress, and ask them to assume the missionary position!!! [If that doesn't work, at least you'll have some fun!]

Chapter the Nineteenth

1. Sat Jul 26, 2003 11:56am
2. Some important points here. Every faith has something to contribute to the personal growth of one who reads their writings. Western civilization tends to be Bibliocentric, but that's unavoidable, given European history.
3. I once saw a very neat (and very hard) quiz which presented short quotations; all you had to do was decide if each came from Shakespeare or from the Bible. I consider myself well educated and well read, but I only got about half of them!
4. I strongly urge each and all of you to start your own "Green Book" - there's an old word for it, "chapbook"; a collection of quotations, etc., that have particular meaning to you at the time you collect them.
5. Your book will evolve, of course, as you do; today's incredibly apt words may be meaningless next year, but if you've gotten a year's worth of value from them, you're ahead!
6. The collections in the Reformed Druid tradition are items that have, at some time, appealed to somebody, and been deemed worthy of being passed along. Bear in mind that you were not the compiler(s), so some of them will have no relevance to you. Others will strike just exactly the right chord for where you are in life right now. And you'll add your own gems to your collection.
8. Some traditions are shared by RDNA and others. In fact, it's possible that our practice had its origin in a practice with which I was familiar before the founding.
9. Our family has a cabin up in the Black Hills, along with several other cabins, all owned by Episcopalians, and there's a little chapel there where they've had services every summer since the early 1920s. It's beautiful, with a window over the altar looking out at the Hills and with only waist-high walls and a roof where the congregation sits. [If a priest is not available, I'm licensed to read Morning Prayer, but so far this year I've not had to do it.]
10. Long ago, the then bishop decided that any priest who was staying there was on vacation: if he took the service, he shouldn't be asked to prepare a sermon, which was too much like work.
11. Consequently, the tradition for many years has been that after the readings from Scripture, where the sermon would normally be, we just say "be silent and look around you for a few moments".
12. Readings and meditation! In fact, I've been told by some who've attended there that they've never heard a better and more meaningful sermon!

The Epistle of Eric

(By Eric Powers, Feb 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Beltane 2003, A Druid Missal-Any

Chapter the First

1. Dear Mike,
2. I apologize for not being able to attend the Reunions at the Mecca of Druidism, but please read this at a service, if you think it of suitable quality.
3. I was inspired, this morning when I was taking out my liturgical ribbons for a service, and noticed that an application for employment was being yet again delayed.
4. The rest followed naturally.

Chapter the Second

1. On Beltane, the Reformed Druids have a custom of switching from white ribbons to red ribbons, for the six months until Samhain.
2. My understanding of this custom goes back to the origins of the RDNA, which was a protest against the unreflecting organizational tendencies of religion, and the tendency of authorities to categorize and vaunt past practices over current experience, by the liberal use of red-tape.
3. Since the 1700s, bureaucrats had the habit of tying up legal documents with red string and whenever they needed to reread them, they had to be cut open again; which they were reluctant to do. As a result many thing were never examined again.
4. In the Reform, it is the Third Order Druids who are most beset and bound by self-imposed restrictions, copious literature, and the encrustation of customs, many of them conflicting.
5. If you notice, most Druids loosely hang their red ribbons around their neck, this symbolizes that they have not locked away the sources of their tradition, but keep them open to constant review.
6. Indeed the constant questions by new Druids, keeps them on their toes, and their understanding timely.
7. The ribbons are more than a decoration; they are a tool held in reserve.
8. What you choose to bind, will be bound, for a while; and what you unbind, will be unbound, for a while; so speak with caution, but with a full heart.
9. And don't forget, even the newest of Druid will wield the colorful ribbon of Beltane's maypole; wherein the beauty is in the motion of weaving and unweaving; not the unfocused ribbons in the beginning, nor the snug final pattern.
10. During the Season of Life, we also add the whiskey to the Waters of Life, and should remember that alcohol too is a poison, but one that in moderation may stimulate, assist in the expression of joy, and build communion; yet used too much, and it often brings sickness, despair and discord.
11. And the basis of those Waters, is simple water; the universal solvent and the supporting medium of life through our liturgical year.

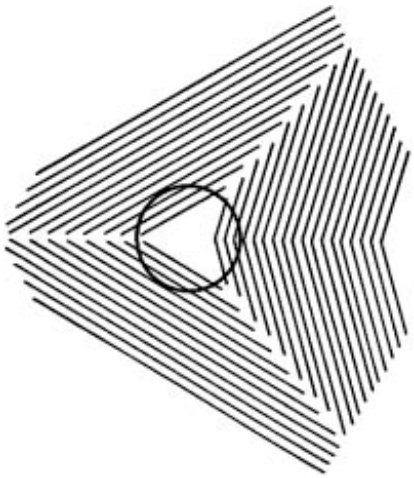
Chapter the Third

1. The hand that is always clenched, or always open and flat, is considered deformed, but a healthy hand is one that opens and closes when bidden.
2. We understand that some rudimentary organization is necessary to function, but we leave the options open and flexible to the current needs, rather than building a structure that will outlast our purpose.
3. We cannot always be celebrating and carrying out duties, for we must also have periods of inactivity and contemplation.
4. The Earth is a good example, in which the forces of life themselves have a period of rest during the winter, coming out leaner and hungry.
5. And so we have the Season of Sleep, in which groggy Druids do not partake of the grog, but rather pull up their settled thoughts for review and purification.
6. This is the meaning of the white ribbon, that of cleansing, crystallizing and reinvigoration, whilst the white snow blankets the earth, storing waters that will melt and flood the streams and fields in the spring.

Chapter the Fourth

1. These are my thoughts that I wanted to share.
2. So I ask you on this 40th Anniversary to think about those ribbons when you put them on your necks, what do they mean to you?
3. There are yet many more mysteries in them.

Yours in the Mother,
Eric Powers, O.D.A.L.
February 10, 2003



Wind Borne Seeds

(By John Slattery, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. After reading several messages posted here dealing with paths or religions, if you will, I'm struck by the thought that everyone's point of view contains some grain of truth.
2. I feel that I must stop here to state that I follow no strict path or religion. Please don't misunderstand. I do believe in a power greater than the human race. If pressed I'd have to admit that I believe in the religion of nature.

Chapter the Second

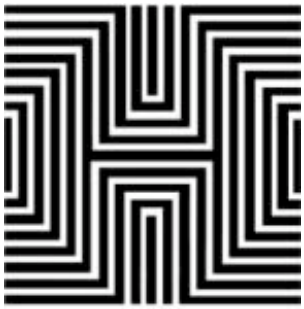
1. Take a moment and look to the trees. They will easily show you the religion of nature.
2. Sure, you can say that trees stand alone or in clusters of their own kind. I'll agree.
3. I've seen stands of Pine or Oak or Maple tightly grouped as if guarding against intruders. But in truth they're not.
4. A gust of wind could carry the seed of a Maple amongst a stand of Oak. The groundcover consisting mostly of oak leaves and downed branches will freely nurture the maple seed.
5. As a seedling the maple will be protected from the harmful direct rays of the sun, by the mighty Oaks towering canopy. That same canopy will soften a downpour into gentle thirst quenching raindrops.
6. Another concern of the sapling is erosion, but once again the Oak plays a role. This time its extensive root system holds the ground fast.
7. They live together in harmony for years until finally the oak dies. But not before it drops an acorn. Now it's the Maple's turn to nurture and protect.
8. Through all this shared life, they are still different, one never wanting or able to grow to become the other, the stronger never forcing the weaker into change, neither thinking themselves the better.
9. In this way they share the world as one. Giving freely of their resources. Teaching the right of it through example.

Chapter the Third

1. You might say it's just the way of things. You may well be right.
2. I, on the other hand, think of it as that higher power giving us guideposts, examples of the way.
3. On the path through the woods one should never focus on the path. The true knowledge is gleaned from the woods.
4. When dealing with narrow-minded people it'd best not to buy into their agenda. Rather, look to the whole for something of value.
5. When dealing with good people learn as much as you can. Absorb the knowledge.
6. Don't think you have to change yourself to receive the knowledge. Knowledge is a nutrient of growth, and growth brings change naturally.
7. Remember the Oak and the Maple.

Chapter the Fourth

1. By applying what I've noted of nature's ways to the people I encounter I'm able to sift the good and the valuable unknowns from the chaff.
2. Walk in the woods every chance you get. Feel the harmony.
3. Look for more of the connections that I've touched upon today.
4. If you know that, along with knowledge, friendship, kindness, understanding and tolerance are the food of growth, then whatever path you're on will be smoother.
5. I wish you enough.



When Leaves Leave Us

(By Mike the Fool, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Fall Equinox 2003, A Druid Missal-Any

Chapter The First

1. Those of us in the northern half of the American continent are treated to the spectacular cycle of the four seasons.
2. With our Druidic tendency to learn from trees, I thought it appropriate to write a little about what I've raked up from our teachers.
3. Trees and plants offer so many possible models to understand the world and our place in it.
4. Naturally, this consists of only my own opinions.

Chapter the Second:

The Science of Leaves

1. Leaves amaze us. They come in many shapes and sizes, some are single leafed, others are compound (like an ash or locust).
2. It appears that the shape has much to do with strategy. The vascularization of the leaf (the plumbing) tends to be radiative from the stem and spine, and the farther you are from that "backbone," the harder it is to supply and receive nutrients.
3. It's more efficient to keep the edge of the leaf equidistant from these veins. Thus you tend to see lobing like oaks, maples, and such rather than just round leafs.
4. No leaf can utilize all the sunlight that falls on it, and by being slightly transparent and lobed, lower branches can pick up the excess that is missed.
5. If they are so wonderful, then why do leaves change color and fall off in the autumn?
6. Actually leaves are never constant, they change from the first pale greens of spring, to the dark greens of summer, and then finish in a blaze of rainbow glory.
7. This is all due to the varying concentration of chlorophyll, a vital green pigment, that is present in the leaves.
8. This chemical aids in transforming water and carbon dioxide from the air into sugars and starch that will feed the rest of the tree, something science is still trying to imitate.
9. There are also yellow to orange pigments hiding in those leaves, which are completely masked from view by the abundance of chlorophyll for most of the year.
10. In the fall after the fruits, nuts and seeds are ripened, due to dropping temperatures and declining sunlight, the tree turns off the mechanisms of the leaves, and begins to withdraw the sap from the leafs, and the chlorophyll is allowed to degenerate.
11. The more hardy pigments like orange (carotene), yellow (xanthophylls) or red (anthrocyanin) gradually become more visible.
12. Different trees tend to have different colors in the fall, and the amount of sunlight or water and temperature will also affect the display. Aspen, birch and hickory tend to be yellow.
13. Oaks are usually brown from the tannin. Beech can be bronze. Dogwood and sumacs range from purplish to red due to the anthrocyanin formed by trapped glucose.
14. In order to slowly suffocate the leaf and protect the branch, a fragile cuticle of cells begins to build a barrier from the branch to the leaf. Eventually the leaf will be broken off by the wind or from its own disintegrating weight.
15. Much can be understood about Druids by contemplating these matters.

Chapter the Third:

The Philosophy of Leaves

1. Leaves are the faces of the trees. Such tender, thin, flexible and fragile on the fringe of the organism.
2. If they were made of the same sturdy materials as the branches, they would be unable to accomplish their tasks.
3. It is their short, sad duty to be bombarded by the sun, munched on, blighted and live short lives; while sustaining the larger organism.
4. For me the leaves are representative of our interaction with the environment.
5. We all have these little "antennas" out to bring in nourishment to different parts of our lives raining on us in all directions. Some of these leaves are attuned to sports, love, religion, food, politics, relationships, environment, entertainment, music, etc.
6. The new ones on the top of our consciousness, tend to get more attention and sunlight, while the older ones down a few stories, live in shade, doing the best they can to get the sun's eye. In such a way, our irregularities can nourish others near to us, allowing them to supplement our weaknesses with what they pick up.
7. Every season of the year has its rough storms and strong winds, but most of us have gone through a few periods of "autumn" when we have pulled away from our outer world, shunned tradition sources of comfort, withdrawing resources inside ourselves away from extremities, and hunkered down for a long winter of re-examination of our identity and roots.
8. But these leaves, when they fall, also will land on the outside of our roots, enrichening the exterior soil; and next spring, new leaves will likely emerge in most of the same spots as before on the branches.
9. Sometimes a branch or limb may not grow back in the spring, but that's the changing palate of life.
10. I now must leave you with these thoughts.

The leaves never know
Which leaf will be the first to fall...
Does the wind know?
--Soseki

Thoughts on Chaos

(By Fearadyn Arendelinn, June 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. TAG all, *good read by the way, I enjoy tongue in cheek and Norm, I am very glad you are here, my thanks.
2. Ok, I'll start. The beginning's of this movement interests me first as a part of the larger whole.
3. The cogs of human evolution had pretty much slowed to a rusty stop in the fifties. Or you could say the mass consciousness creative juices had begun to stagnate.
4. I am very much a chaos theorist. And any period in history that reaches this state of stagnation is a prime target for rebellion of youth, who are designed for just such a thing.
5. Chaos is something handled much better by the young, whose lives are usually this. Once a certain age is reached, comfort of the known becomes more important, except by the few oddballs who are goaded by something in their lives to produce radical change.
6. Our parents accepted what they were taught, by society, government, and established religion, and this was pretty much across the board. They lived a known and comfortable life, they knew what to expect down the road.
7. Any `rebels' were extremely visible. However as the sixties rolled in, a few strategically placed adults planted seeds that were tailor made for the now simmering pot of mass chaos that was fixed to boil over. This who and what fueled the pot is of especial interest to me.
8. Once the ball started rolling and youth realized that adults could truly only do so much - then many `stagnant' ideas were questioned and discarded as being mostly useless for the growth spurt needed to propel us to where we are now.
9. In a word it was needed. The mass conciseness of humanity desires to evolve. The only way this can occur is to keep stagnation to a minimum.
10. Now granted any form of chaos will fist turn all in its path upside down and inside out. Only the strongest creatures or ideals survive this. The ones that do are the next step.

Chapter the Second

1. Creativity flourishes in such an environment. However- stability always will occur. This is balance - my species represent balance. This is good. (Just realize chaos is also balance.)
2. But all too often the flows of such are dammed by those who have an extremely difficult time riding the waves of chaos flows.
3. These creatures also happen to be ones who are really really good at organizing. (its is like being an accountant-I don't see it as a fun job - so there are not to many who are good at it)
4. And so, as most really good ideals are something the authors wish to share - a group occurs. Groups can only move in unison by organization.
5. Any visionary or dreamer will happily give the responsibility of organization to someone else - "Good to and make it work, I want to dream and have more visions."
6. Organization is held together by rules. Rules tend to become dams of creativity. And progress of such groups tends to become measured in how well you follow the rules.
7. Which means the members of the group are kind of discouraged from independent thinking and urged to follow the now well-trod path to whatever. This leads to allowing oneself to become spoon fed.
8. Once this begins to happen, beings who are leader types (usually the good organizers, the dreamers having wandered off somewhere else confused as to why the dream is not taking shape as he first saw it) take the ropes of such to hold those under them together.
9. The leader then usually holds the keys to any new creativity and rules are changed or broken according to what he or she finds. Their group most of the time will follow, if what is changed is not damaging to them.
10. Which will eventually lead to stagnation.

Chapter the Third

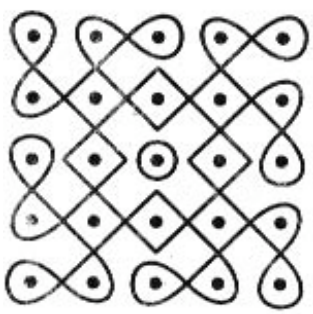
1. The next thing is the rules to keep a group like modern druidism together and growing in numbers are copied by studying other groups to see what works.
2. The uncertainty of this early group to decide if it was a religion or not shows how we tend to copy what works. I am comparing “A spring Thaw” by David Frangquist- passage where he is claming RDNA is a religion to be counted among the others. "Yet several churches have not been granted the privilege of credit. Among them is the Reformed Druids of North America."
3. As opposed to `The Book of Faith' David Fisher- passage # 30 - where he states "Since Druidism has never claimed to be a religion.”
4. A `religion' tends to carry more weight than just an organization. It (this weight) was needed to make a point. So, I see this as normal seesawing.
5. Though it is of immense interest to me to see a `nature based group' that accepted so many norms of organized religions. Nature is chaos in action. It never stops. Life in such is dangerous. Long life is rare is such an environment.
6. And yet almost one of the first things they did was to make an altar the Monument Hill "over a ton rock.” Altars are not needed in nature. But they are in most religious models we have.
7. Ritual was also an almost immediate addition to this- and I disagree with David Fisher in ‘The Book of Faith’ passage33-38 where he says " It has been asked, and again with good reason: if your purpose is to ask and to inquire, they why your use of ritual? Can not men seek for answers without the crutch of a ritual, which has no real religious purpose? I can only answer that the Druid ritual has a value because it can be used by different men in different ways."
8. Sure it can and all with the same base of purpose. I see ritual the same as I do the medical language. Those that know it can dole it out to those that do not.
9. There is always someone who knows it more than the one who comes after- if only because the first guy has had more time to learn it. It keeps power in certain places or with certain people.
10. There are always those who have a talent for this. And those that don't. Just as creatures who love to organize will always find their way to disorganization.

11. Why, because they are good at it. And it feels good to do something you are good at.
12. I think the pendulum of druidism leaned more into the religions category than just an organization.
13. There is the wording by David Fisher in `The book of Faith' passage 34-10 where he calls himself `priest', and again in passage 34-10.
14. And then when we get to David the chronicler we have Bishops. And this guy by now is dead serious. As compared to the more easy going Norm who he has some (well more than a few) concerns for.
15. He clearly by this time surrounded himself with all the trappings of organized religion- and you better damn well follow the rules buster!! Lol
16. He goes on to show that he has swallowed all the garbage most religions use to keep power to themselves.
17. The religions we know of are most likely composed of two parts (chapter the Third) 63-1) philosophy and the ritual.
18. I mean hey, it works. But, I argue that it is not essential. Philosophy can be completely free flowing changing as the flows change.
19. If we keep a (third) eye open all the time for opportunity to learn of our truer selves, worship can occur every second we are aware.
20. It is all and only a matter of perspective. But if you allow this, don't count on numbers of followers. It is a one on one thing.

Chapter the Fourth

1. I have to say in admiration- there were enough loopholes and creatures who allowed chaos in this mix so that it could be a manageable organism.
2. And so we see mutations of it without to much flack from the group the mutation occurred from or at least this is what I am gathering so far.
3. This being very healthy.
4. And I love that a person need accept nothing else except the truth of "nature is good."
5. Ok, dig in guys! Lol I'll come back at it in another perspective, but not tonight.

huggs
feara



Thoughts on Discord

(By Anonymous, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. From: C de Malmanche <mist42nz@hotmail.com>
2. Date: Saturday, April 12, 2003 3:19 PM
3. Subject: Re: [druidcraft202] Are We Alive?

4, I've just finished reading of the Isaac affair.
5. I do think we're moving through this way too fast for the volume of reading material that there is to absorb. It takes a while to swap mindsets to see where people are coming from in their Epistles.
6. It would be easy enough to skim through and treat them as "just someone-else's opinion." But that would, IMHO, destroy the Druidry woven into each letter.
7. People have put time, effort and their life position into their replies. No matter how simple or not-particularly-heavy the persons thoughts on their druidry, each piece is truthful and honest. Is that not amazing... and worth taking a moment to understand?
8. For those with a background in the people, the organization or the druid philosophies, it might take them much less time.
9. For example, as I mentioned I have a long neo-pagan history - yet I formed completely the opposite opinion to the one Isaac formed.
10. The strength of the RDNA is no dogma, no grovely teachings, and all "outside" religions are welcome (encouraged even).
11. That is why I think this method of teaching is quite clever.
12. Once we understand the formation and history of the group then we can understand the dilemma that occurs when Carleton's Compulsory Religious Service is revoked.
13. Sure RDNA looks and acts like a "real" religion. That was its purpose, no?
14. If it had not had the appropriate parts then the Universities Administration would have stopped it.
15. So what parts did it have? The simple, most reductionist pieces of religion (and Carleton qualifiers.)
16. Surprisingly enough, they seemed to have stumbled onto the core consciousness that builds "real" religions.
17. So what to do with it when the initial purpose of its creation is gone? Forget it? Destroy it? Bury it in Bureaucracy in an attempt to keep it? hmmm...

Chapter the Second

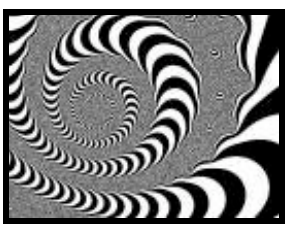
1. And of young Isaac. He so reminds me of a neo-pagan in their 2 to 5 year period. so so sooo reminds me :) IMHO, with my background.
2. He didn't throw the baby out with the bathwater - he just kept the bathwater and threw out the baby!
3. Of course RDNA looks like neopaganism. RDNA created a real religion. It *should* look like *any* other religion. It was created that way!

4. If anything, RDNA looks like the spiritualist (i.e. non-authoritarian/heirarchial. i.e. community-based not clergy based) versions of its founding faiths.
5. To say druidry is "this" religion, is the anti-thesis of the original intent if I read the histories right. If I read the forming of the church and the liturgies correctly. If the description of the rituals and attendances are accurate.
6. The founders were of different religions and they laid aside there differences in favour of what they agreed on (in the Mother :)
7. They declared all was good, and that only those who wanted to destroy that union (i.e. the anti-druids initially or latter those that decided others could not have their own druid path) did not understand what the druid path was.
8. I'm glad the schism occurred as it did. It would have been a sad day had it resulted in the eclipse of the original purpose by evolving the existing RDNA.
9. This way Isaac could have his own religious path as he should (called Druidry just to confuse the issue) and the others stayed on their own religious paths.
10. This, as I understand it, is the nature of it, of RDNA (and possibly of Be'al?)

Chapter the Third

1. All very heavy. Yes I'm catching up.
2. Near the end I find Norm's comment important. That the rituals were supposed to be fun, lighthearted.
3. It is hard to be fun & lighthearted, and oppose somebody or create a mission of conversion.
4. In this we can see that the RDNA was not to be a teaching institution (as people already had their faiths), it was not a body to perform formal duties (marriages, funerals, etc) and it was not a place to force people to observe correct religious protocols.
5. All things that are bogging down and destroying the spirit of modern churches.
6. All things that Isaac was promising (threatening?) to bring to the RDNA.
7. I'm not surprised there was such a reaction.
8. Yet how could a druid reply? Force? Teach? Over-rule?
9. The only way I see to stay true to the original principles (non-coercion, non-dogmatic, nature is good) was to let the vine grow on its own path.
10. I wonder what Isaac's learning on the RDNA is these days?
11. I wonder whether he has got passed his 2-5 year rush and matured into a druid Druid, or whether his hiding of his own sight has blinded him further (as happens to other churches that take on the principles that RDNA left at the door when the founders sat to their first meeting?)

Yours in the Mother,
Anonymous



A Whole of Druidry

(By Dana Felber, 2003)

(Reprinted with Permission)

(New to ARDA 2)

Summer Solstice 2003, A Druid Missal-Any

What is the "whole" when it comes to Druidry? Since Druidry is a spirituality that largely looks to the past for its practices and beliefs, this begs the question of, what was the whole of Druidry when there were actual Druids in the world? We tend to romanticize our ancestors, certain that they were not stumbling around in the dark as we are, wishing they were here to teach us their supposed certainties. But...is there such a thing as a One True Druidic Way to seek for? Did such a thing ever exist?

The Celts were a dominant force in Europe for the better part of a thousand years. As moderns in a culture that changes significantly from one decade to the next, we tend to telescope time when we think about the past and speak of Celtic culture and spirituality as though it were a neat, easily-defined package and that what was valid at the end when things were actually written down was bound to be already in place in the beginning. But no culture, especially a fragmented tribal one such as the Celts' is going to ever be consistent across the board, let alone over a period of a thousand years. Moreover, Celtic spirituality is rooted in venerating the spirits of place, which can differ drastically from location to location and even change over time. The nature of those spirits—temperament as it were—will also effect that particular tribe's outlook.

A lot of people today base their Druidry to a greater or lesser extent on the Irish materials that date to around 400 CE and later. It's very tempting to do so because there's a lot of it, more documentation than for any other place or time. And this is fine of course if this is what truly calls to an individual. But to exclusively focus on this material as what should define Druidry for everyone contains some inherent and flawed assumptions.

One assumption is that, coming as it does from the period when Druidry either died out or went underground, the Irish material represents all that was best in the whole history of Celtic culture, a synthesis and summary as it were. This in turn contains an underlying--erroneous--assumption of its own: that a culture or spirituality "progresses" in a linear fashion, i.e., that what comes first is "primitive" and what comes later is "advanced" and therefore "better." But is this in fact the case? If it is, then it would logically follow that the spirituality we possess today is what is truly superior. Why on Earth are we looking back to a "primitive" past for anything worthwhile or valuable? Or...perhaps our more remote ancestors possessed wisdom we have in fact lost, but that could be regained, if we make the effort.

Another assumption is that one Celtic culture is interchangeable with another because "we're all Celts." Yet Irish culture is very distinctive from Welsh, Scottish, Manx, Breton or Cornish culture, as anyone familiar with them or living within them would explain. Indeed, those could be fighting words to actual individuals living within these cultures today and seeking to keep them from being overwhelmed and lost. It's also frustrating and ultimately offensive to the many people living outside the Isles on the European continent who are reaching back to their ancestors of the Celtic tribes of their region. Some of these people are working very hard to discover that culture, their sacred sites and local spirits, yet when they reach out beyond their locale to share or to learn from other groups, they

are often met with indifference or dismissal or an attempt to assimilate them into a thinking they have no resonance with.

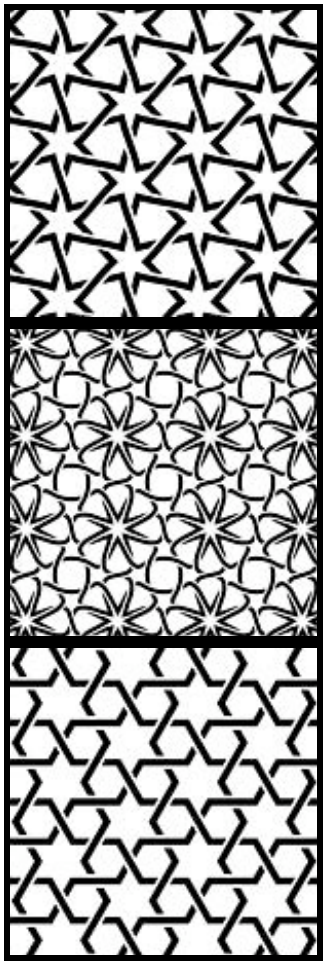
So...what is the whole of Druidry? That which, by rights, we should be giving our allegiance and devotion to even as we seek to uncover what it is out of the obscuring mists of the centuries? I think most people here would agree that no modern Druidic group has the exclusive corner on our wisdom. In my experience of the larger groups, the leaders themselves would agree with that. And Celtic culture itself was so steeped in intense individuality as to preclude such a thing. Yet one continues to run into this notion in the broader modern Druidic community. How does it come about?

A lot of people come to paganism and/or Druidry with the Judeo-Christian model of spirituality/religion so embedded within them that they can't conceive of something significantly different that can legitimately be called "spirituality." There must be deities, there must be hierarchy, of both pantheon and clergy, there must be set rituals, liturgies, practices, prayers, creeds and beliefs common to the whole group. So that's what they go looking for—and it's easy enough to find exactly that in certain segments of Druidry. But what about the rest? What about the people in the next newsgroup, next email list, next Druid organization? Are they wrong? Sometimes that's the reaction that occurs—we've all seen it. But that gets right back to attitudes found in Judeo-Christian thinking, the Protestant who tells the Catholic they're going to hell because they pray to saints, or the Jew who smiles smugly at the Gentile neighbors because he/she is certain of being one of "God's chosen people." Why do people who have - apparently - broken free of these molds want to go there? There's so much more to Druidry and Celtic culture and history than any one tribe's piece, or one person's interpretation of that piece. But it demands that we stretch ourselves, be willing to take some risks and be willing to think outside the box we've grown up with. Ultimately it's a quest for a Grail that will heal the very real Wasteland that's all around us. But we have to strive for what the warriors of the Red Branch and Arthur's Logres had: courage to step into the unknown. In this day and age, this kind of courage is less about facing a challenging enemy or dangers in a physical contest and more about opening our minds.

It's tough. We come to a new spirituality not knowing the ropes, uncertain of what we're doing. If someone takes a stance of authority and declares, "This is the way it is!" we often don't know enough in that neophyte stage to be able to judge whether or not the pronouncement is valid for us. Add to that that we want to belong, be a part of a group, a community. Accepted, validated even, in what is often a scary decision taken in defiance of friends and family. So even if these authoritative pronouncements strike us as not quite right, we tend to say, "Well, that's the way it is. The group needs me to go with them." Which all right as long as there's an adequate comfort level. But that doesn't mean we should stop seeking for our personal Truths (and we all have them) or refuse to accept them when they lead us away from the group, however difficult that parting might be. Because putting acceptance in a group above that seeking flies in the face of the Druidic maxim "The Truth against the world."

I think it's no accident that the hero who goes on a quest into unknown and dangerous lands is revered in the Celtic cultures and held up as an ideal to emulate. Imagine someone like Cu Cuchulain or Gawain coming back home, eager to tell of his adventures and the strange things he saw and experienced—and being told to shut up because he might upset people. Or being called a liar by the elders because they've never seen or heard of what he's talking about, so of course it doesn't exist. The seeking of adventures was expected of Celtic warriors and was encouraged by the institution of set occasions when the tribe would gather to hear--and praise--what had befallen them. Perhaps it's because our ancestors didn't have the kind of access to information we do today—we tend to think we can know it all, or at least be able to look it up. They lived in a world full of unknowns and, if the tale s are true, valued an eagerness to learn about what lay outside their sphere, an open-mindedness and acceptance of the unexpected that anyone would do well to emulate. The Druids were acknowledged the intellectuals of their day, and as modern intellectuals on a Druidic path, we too should be always striving for the open mind, and be alive to the spirit of inquiry that is part of the concept of awen/imbas. It's true, this may take us outside our comfortable notions of who and what we are, but to me this is what every story ever written about a quest is all about: leaving what is comfortable to take risks and achieve something. It's no accident that overcoming fear is an integral part of these stories. Fear is what keeps thinking narrow and what truly breeds differences, persecutions and wars, what alienates people and causes their voices to fall silent. Water needs to flow free to be clear and healthy; trapped, it stagnates, grows foul and breeds poisons.

So what is the Druidic "whole"? What else can it be but every person who comes to this path heeding a call of ancient voices with a sincere desire to learn and a willingness to be open to new ideas and teachings but who also has the conviction to hold to their own Truth against the world, however nascent and unarticulated it might be to begin with. They may come by unlikely or unpromising paths, enamoured of teachings they will later discard in quiet embarrassment, but the point is that they do come and they should be welcomed with encouragement rather than contempt for their ignorance. For the wisest person who ever reads these words will remember that he or she once knew no more than they.



Sacrificial Sentiments

(Dialogue of Various Druids, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

From: Oriana May 13, 2003 4:01 pm

Here is one that's been banging around in my head a lot lately, it kind of goes along with yours... What is morally/ethically correct/incorrect? And once you figure that out, does it stand for all cultures? If so, why? and... If not, why?

Does it really boil down to...if it harms none? What about human rights issues? Other countries have far different views on what is ethical and moral.

-O.

From: Tegwedd May 14, 2003 5:32 pm

There may be some universals but as fragmented as we are, we don't know the answer to that yet.

"An it harm nane" is as good a place to start as any but you can't carry it to extremes. Balance in this, as in all things, is vital.

Tegwedd

From : gandald952 May 18, 2003 10:49 AM

But then we come to the thorny task of defining "harm."

There's also the issue that, since we never know the full ramification of any activity (the snow flake that starts an avalanche), there is always a possibility that the best intended action will ultimately end up causing harm.

I think that we are essentially obligated to making a "good faith effort" to cause no harm.

-Gandalf

From : sybok33 May 18, 2003 3:11 PM

I don't believe we are obligated to any such thing.

"Harm none" is from the Wiccan Rede. WE are Druids, not Wiccans.

The rule simply does not apply to us. Culturally, we Druids come from the ancient Celts, whose idea of tasteful decorating included the heads of their enemies displayed on staves.

Not exactly a "harm none" culture, eh?

nt -- Sybok /|\

From : Ric Knight May 18, 2003 3:46 PM

True, Wiccans we are not, but "Reformed" Druids we are (though some too be Wiccans, yet I digress greatly as always)....

What distinguishes us from the Celtic Druids of ages past is that we don't do those "icky" things or to quote "The 15 Lousy Lessons of Merlin the Schlep":

"No Bad Stuff. Well, we've succeeded, so far, at least. Like the vast majority of Neo-Pagans; we don't do blood/ animal/human sacrifice (although we occasionally offer a carrot or zucchini) because we are "Reformed" and we think that's yucky. We are however divided on whether fungi should be ritualistically categorized as animal or plant because they do possess characteristics of both. Likewise, we don't do such un-cool things like brainwashing (who wants a clean mind?), orgies (which is obviously a fast way to get STDs), take money/ property, or abuse our members (who'd want to be in such a group?). We treat our members with respect, and they freely come and go."

And does not the Fifth Chapter of Early Chronicles demonstrate the reluctance of the Druids to engage in animal sacrifice?

I refer you to verses 9-13 and the wisdom of Howard the Preceptor and the compromise of Jan.

These things from our RDNA culture form the basis of our obligation.

Thus endith the lesson

Blessed be Dalon Ap Landu...

Cheers, Ric

From : Norm Nelson May 18, 2003 4:18 PM

Well put! But I keep thinking these sniggly little thoughts, such as "If we don't do human sacrifices, why do I have a mental list of candidates?" :-) [Norm hums Gilbert & Sullivan... "I've got a little list..., they'll none of them be missed...."]

Or as I sometimes say, "Not only do I support abortion, I have a list of people for whom it should be retroactive!"

From : sybok33 May 18, 2003 4:55 PM

Ric Knight wrote:> or to quote "The 15 Lousy Lessons of Merlin the Schlep"....

I'm giggling uncontrollably at the last line..... But "nature is good." In nature, we have the Cougar, who has no qualms about taking down the innocent, vegetarian doe.

We also have the owl, who feasts on innocent, vegetarian rabbits, and mice, and (if we didn't keep ours in the house at night) pet cats.

By living and being a part of nature, we harm other beings all the time. Every time you walk out the door, you risk stepping on something smaller than yourselves. Every time you take a breath, you inhale countless numbers of microscopic organisms who die a horrible death.

How many spiders have you killed on purpose because they got into your house? How about wasps? Yellowjackets?

We rip innocent radishes and lettuce and cabbage, etc., out of the ground, torture them to death in steamers, or eat them alive in salads.

We eat meat -- sure, most of it's from Safeway in nice sterile plastic wrapped trays -- but still, we know where it comes from.

"Nature is good." So the tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, wild fires, tsunamis, etc,, that kill millions every year, are "good" also. It's all part of "nature." And we, as Reformed Druids, celebrate this nature we are part of. In fact, celebrating nature, proclaiming it's inherent "goodness" is our entire raison d'etre.

Yes, "nature is good," but it's not 'harm none." And neither are we. At best, we are "humane." We're for the most part anti-war, or at least we are against killing others of our own species.

But "harm none" is both far too broad of a brush, and impossible to live up to.

nt -- Sybok /|\

From: "Dee" May 14, 2003

I agree wholeheartedly. We have had this debate in our own group, and I'm glad that we have people who are able to see beyond black and white. Sometimes you must choose a lesser evil, or a greater good.

B*B Cerrulis /|\

From : Mike, A Capitol Fool May 19, 2003 8:06 AM

Dear Sybok,

I always preferred "Nature is complete and instructive" as a short hand for the basic tenets. As for the Wiccan Rede "An it harm none, do as thou wilt," I first heard it and immediately asked, "an it harm one, what should I do?" and my friend answered me, "be careful, consult, and considerate."

I also believe that the bad after effects of the "three-fold law" of cosmic karma, does not rebound on the individual, but on the community; which if you are "one with them", will affect you as if it hit you individually.

For the ostracized loner, the effects are not felt as strongly.

-Mike

From : Norm Nelson May 19, 2003 1:16 PM

To me, animal sacrifice is simply the taking of the life of an animal (people are animals, too, but that subset is usually called human sacrifice) as part of a ritual.

Whenever the topic comes up, I visualize some small, furry creature (for some reason, I usually think in terms of a gerbil!) having its throat cut and the blood spilled on the altar with some sort of incantation.

Invertebrates don't count, in my thinking at least. Stepping on an ant in front of the altar wouldn't be a sacrifice, unless it was done deliberately and with some ritual calling attention to the sacrifice involved.

Thus, stepping on it accidentally during the course of doing the Booty Sigil wouldn't be, because that ritual is not a sacrificial one.

I don't know how we would have considered the famous grasshopper that jumped into the chalice, had it not been removed before the waters were shared. Can suicide be considered a sacrifice in the sense discussed here? Until right now, while writing this, I've never thought about the possibility of sacrificing an amoeba or a lobster, although both are obviously invertebrates.

The sacrifice of vegetable life, on the other hand, seldom means the death of the plant, since I've always used only a few leaves or a flowering stem.

From : Mike, May 19, 2003 4:54 PM

The atheist would ask if it was to appease various psychological elements of the worshipper. By the way, would religious preparation of animal food products (holy butchering) be considered animal sacrifice?

I still consider capital punishment as a continuing indirect form of human sacrifice to the Gods of Justice and Revenge.....

-Mike

From : Ric Knight May 19, 2003 1:39 PM

You are giving the Cougar and Doe elements of morality they cannot posses. The Doe cannot be guilty or innocent as it lacks the moral agency to do so. Likewise the Cougar cannot have qualms.

The Cougar eats the Doe. It is nether good nor evil. It just IS. Nature IS Nature. The rest is pathetic fallacy. We however are moral agents. We divide actions into good and evil and order our communities along those lines.

Is there a RDNA morality? What is it?

Cheers, Ric Knight odm

From : popinjay June 16, 2003 4:25 PM

I have to agree with healingline and Ric.

"Nature is nature" is a Schardingism. You *can* adopt that philosophy as your own but it does not apply to all of RDNA.

Stacey, Weinbergerisming

From : sybok33 May 19, 2003 6:27 PM

The Cougar's morality is survival. That's it's entire raison d'etre.

We don't say "nature is nature," we say, "Nature is good." We've assigned "nature" (and all it's complexities, whether beneficial to us or not - whether nature kills us or not) a value -- "good." Therefore we are saying all that nature does and is "good."

Therefore killing another being for food is "good." Morality is a human invention, and changes from culture to culture and from religion to religion, and even, from person to person. There are no absolutes.

You asked, “Is there a RDNA morality? What is it?”

Good question for Norm I think. I would say that the RDNA is amoral, but that is strictly from a study of the ARDA, which doesn't seem to have any moral guidelines (but I haven't seen the new ARDA yet). But in general, religions without dogma tend to be amoral as well.

nt -- Sybok /|\

From : Ric Knight May 19, 2003 10:28 PM

We actually do say Nature is Nature... It is simple and brings about less debate than the entire 2 basic tenets.

Good is subjective, but only in the eyes of a moral agent. Beings incapable of moral judgment don't see the "goodness" they see the "being.” If Morality is Human then the Cougar's Morality cannot be the Cougar's... but rather the subjective view of the human watcher.

The question of absolutes is yet to be determined. Various sides in the debate may choose to believe or not depending various factors.

It changes with the whims of the Humans and the gods, but in no way do the animals and plants share in this. ARDA points out several moral incidents of morals.

The decision not to sacrifice animals and avoid the first schism. The decision of the Druids to refrain from ever using the Druid's Curse again. These are moral choices made by the founders. An amoral group would not have cared.

Cheers, Ric Knight odm

From : Oriana May 19, 2003 10:33 PM

There is also the discussion of acting "contrary to nature.”

It is the Cougar's nature to kill the doe.

If the doe were to turn carnivorous, would it then be evil, or amoral? So, then, what is "human"? Nature? Cruel? Benevolent? Immutable? Changeable? Is simply acting against our nature, be it good or evil, immoral?

B*B*, Cerrulis

From : Ric Knight May 19, 2003 10:57 PM

Nature is good the same way Beer is good. Both are pleasing to humans.

It is not a comment on the moral state of either nature or the nectar of the gods. Contrary to nature is hard to nail down as nature can oft be so contrary.

A carnivorous doe (or rabbit with huge sharp gnarly fangs) would be neither good no evil since it lakes the moral capacity to choose between the two concepts. I agree with Sybok that morality is a human thing, but I disagree that nature is a good teacher of morality.

Nature can be inspiring, it can up lift us, and fill us with wonder and awe, but only after humans apply intellect to the sensory inputs.

Were human morality to be solely based on nature... woe to the infirm and weak. Human morality can make allowances for the weaker and infirm... Nature does not.

Cheers, Ric Knight odm

From : gandald952 May 19, 2003 3:53 PM

Is it your position that deliberately trying to cause harm is acceptable?

I consider the "cause no harm" concept to be universal. I belief that we all have an obligation to make a conscious effort not just to avoid causing harm, but to help each other. The evils of this world will not be solved by any dramatic revelation.

Instead, it will take all of us making small contributions whenever we can.

Gandalf

From : Mike, A Capitol Fool

Sent : Tuesday, May 20, 2003 8:47 AM

>An amoral group would not have cared. Maybe moral decisions can be made by individual practitioners, while the teaching and group remains amoral?

-Mike

From : Ric Knight May 20, 2003 11:24 AM

Possible, but I rather think that, as with most groups, the morality of the group is molded by the collective morality of the practitioners.

If a particular grove decided that animal sacrifices were OK, then RDNA would become known as the group that practices animal sacrifices.

Group literature would need to be altered... the whole "Less is More" document on the unofficial website is rife with non-amoral statements.

I think a RDNA morality of sorts exists even though it is understated and subtle.

Cheers, Ric Knight odm

From : Norm Nelson May 20, 2003 1:04 PM

Aren't the moral agents the guys who work for Atty. Gen. Ashcroft? Abetted, of course, by the Religious Right. (Which is neither.)

From : Norm Nelson May 20, 2003 1:49 PM

>Maybe moral decisions can be made by individual practitioners, while the teaching and group remains amoral?

There was, as I recall, no specific discussion of moral issues at the founding.

Since we all came from "the Judeo-Christian tradition", there were obviously certain unstated assumptions, such as that sacrificing people was not a good thing.

Since (as we understood it) the original Druids were nature worshipers, and since it therefore seemed like the services should include a sacrifice from and to nature, it seemed appropriate to choose the sacrifice of plant material, rather then animals or humans.

The assumption that there was a superior power (we phrased it, "Look around you at the world; there's got to be something greater than we are; we choose to honor it in the name of the Earth Mother.") clearly implied that we were subordinate to something.

The word "honor" was specifically chosen as an alternative to "worship", since we didn't intend to supplant any other faith.

The whole "do no harm" mantra opens a wide area of philosophical discussion (as has already been demonstrated here!).

To me, the implication of "do no harm" is not to do harm *intentionally*. [Thus, when the (in)famous Druid curse seemed to work, we agreed not to pass it along to our successors.]

I referred to this in my previous posting about "sacrificing" an ant. There is, to me, a world of difference between stepping on ant unintentionally and doing it with intention. I must admit that I do sometimes step on them intentionally, but I don't do it as a sacrifice in the context of a ritual. When I'm walking down the sidewalk, I usually don't stomp on them, but once in a while,.... But is it "doing harm" to stomp the scorpion that you find in your boot at the campground in the morning? The implication of that question is that there must be a hierarchy of harm, no? Can you blame the snowflake that starts the avalanche? Or, in the metaphor I prefer, the straw that breaks the camel's back? That comes closer to the question of intention.

Does the drover load a little more fodder to kill the camel, or to save its life in the event that the trip is longer than planned? Since, as someone else mentioned, each of us has worked out his/her own morality, I would venture that RDNA is not amoral, since it assumes a certain widely-accepted morality among its practitioners; it just doesn't spell out its morality explicitly. I didn't intend to be so long winded here, but this is a topic in which each thought seems to lead to another.

A pity we can't get together in a chat room and toss it around with each of us being able to toss in the thoughts as they occur to us!

From : gandald95 May 20, 2003 4:00 PM

For some, all food preparation has religious significance. If an animal is going to be slaughtered, then thanks to the Gods were in order.

The part that I disagree with is using animal sacrifice (or any ritual for that matter) as supplication to the Gods for them to grant some kind of boon.

Gandalf

From : sybok33 May 20, 2003 4:10 PM

>Is it your position that deliberately trying to cause harm is acceptable?

That depends on how you define "deliberate."

But I think "intent" is more important.

If men come into my village, armed to the teeth, with the stated intent to harm my family or my tribe, then it's acceptable for me to attempt to disable (not kill) as many of them as I can (unless one proves to be sufficient).

OTOH, if I walk into a neighboring village, and decide to punch out the first person I see, just for fun, that is unacceptable. In either case, I have deliberately chosen an action, but the intent is different.

> I consider the "cause no harm" concept to be universal. Well, even stated that way, it's still too broad.

Originally though we were talking about "an it harm none," known as the Wiccan Rede. Not the Pagan Rede, not the Druid Rede, not even the Witches Rede. "Rede" means "advice," not law. So it's not even an absolute. "Harm" is abstract. Do we mean actual physical harm? Or psychological harm? Is stress harm?

If I, a Pagan, move into a neighborhood and my neighbor on one side is Christian, have I harmed him? He would probably perceive it so. And who is "none?" Humans only? Or any life form? For something to be "universal" everyone must believe / adhere to it. Well, it simply is not. Some embrace it, and some do not, and some fall in between.

>I belief that we all have an obligation to make a conscious effort not just to avoid causing harm, but to help each other.

I agree with that, and that is why I am a Socialist.

Human nature is such that most would never consider the condition of another without it being pointed out, and then they still might decide to follow Ann Rand.

Capitalism will never provide enough adequately paying jobs to employee everyone (and thus eradicate poverty and homelessness) because it's not in Capitalisms best interest.

The law of supply and demand insists that there must be unemployment (over supply or under demand of labor) in order to keep the cost of labor down, and profits up.

>The evils of this world will not be solved by any dramatic revelation. Instead, it will take all of us making small contributions whenever we can.

Agreed: "We're not trying to start the world on fire. We just want to light a few candles." -- Adam Walks Between Worlds

My problem with the whole "Rede" thing came when some began to interpret it way too broadly, so that it became impossible to live a normal life without worrying that some small thing I do would harm another life.

We examine this whole issue early on in *Druidcraft 101. On balance, we try to instill the sense that we value human life, and other plant and animal life as is necessary to sustain human life, but "harm" is too ultimate a value. In order to sustain human life, we have to harm some plants and some animals.

"Nature is good," and the whole cycle of nature, of life and death and rebirth, and of one life ending so that another life can live, is also "good."

nt -- Sybok /|\

From : Tezra May 20, 2003 6:31 PM

> Is it that we are squeamish, or that we are in agreement with modern mores and laws, and are therefore "Reformed"? I think it's because animal sacrifices make more of a mess than plant sacrifices, and they're yucky, blood, gore, and guts getting all over the place.

The Founders would have had a lot more to explain had they sacrificed animals, remember they were at a Christian college in a small town..

> Maybe moral decisions can be made by individual practitioners, while the teaching and group remains amoral?

I think you've hit the nail on it, Mike. Groups tend to be amoral or even become immoral when they become a mob.

Tegwedd

From : Norm Nelson May 21, 2003 1:01 PM

Barbecuing sacrifices is an ancient tradition. Reference all the instructions for temple rituals in the Old Testament. I don't recall any mention of small, furry animals there, but it's easy to consider by extension. Of course, such critters would have to be killed in accord with the laws of kosher slaughter...

Naaahh, that's too much work. I'll stick with leaves and flowers!

From : Tezra May 21, 2003 8:31 PM

Norm, thank you for bringing up another consideration that I didn't even think of. But I think that can comfortably come under the "ick" factor.

Tegwedd

From : sybok33 May 21, 2003 8:46 PM

Reminds me of a "Northern Exposure" episode called "A Hunting We Will Go," where, in the opening sequence, Fleishman berates Maggie about the buck she just killed that is laying in the back of her truck.

Her response was timeless:, "You eat meat don't you Fleishman? Well, meet meat."

BTW, those bbq'd animal sacrifices of the ancient Hebrews were eaten by the Priests themselves (I wonder if they had a "special sauce"?). According to my old Rabbi, the "sacrificial" aspect of these offerings was in the "giving up" of property.

Today, the religious generally take up monetary "offerings" ("sacrifice" = "offering"). The extent of the sacrifice" is dependant upon the wealth of the postulant. That also takes care of the "ick" factor.

nt -- Sybok /|\

From : Dee , May 22, 2003 10:48 AM

Here's another aspect of the "ick" factor. The Hebrews knew the mystical significance of blood. Their scriptures state that the life resides in the blood, and that there could be no remission of sins without the shedding of blood (theoretically the basis of Jesus' sacrifice).

The ancient pastoral traditions sprinkled blood on the fields for fertilizer, to bless the fields and ensure good crops, and I'm sure that practice eventually came from generations of observing the lush growth that would eventually spring up in fields where battle had been done. Even as children, we knew that a blood ritual would seal friendship between us forever. (Of course, this was before AIDs was an issue).

Cleansing the sacred space at Beltane fell to me this year, and, having reflected on the above thoughts regarding blood, I decided that I would make a personal sacrifice of my own blood in the cleansing and dedication. I presented my idea to the rest of the group. No one was comfortable with it. The "ick" factor hit full force.

So I wonder how we got from acceptance of ritual slaughter and use of blood, to a resistance to a small pinprick and 2 or 3 drops. I think it is because of the society we live in. People who don't live on farms (or work in meat packing plants) are not familiar with the slaughtering process. We find our meat in neat, bloodless packages in a refrigerated bin in the supermarket.

Even the butcher counter is a thing of the past; and I remember that in the early 70's. No more neighborhood butcher coming to the counter in a bloodstained apron. Anyway, that's just my 2 cents.

B*B*Cerrulis/|\

From : Norm Nelson May 22, 2003 1:44 PM

It’s difficult to gross out a biologist.

Back in the middle 1960s, I had taught a comparative anatomy laboratory in the spring while I was in grad school, and my sister was an undergraduate biology major and had just taken an anatomy class.

That summer, she and I were staying at our family cabin up in the Black Hills, and we drove into the little town of Custer to buy some groceries.

As we stood in front of the butcher counter, we started to "anatomize" the T-bone steaks [which come from the sides of the cow's spine, behind the ribs. The "T" is actually half a vertebra]: "There are the dorsal and ventral processes of the spine, and the lateral process, and there's the neural arch..." "Look, there's one that still has the spinal cord in the neural arch..."

We then looked at the butcher, and saw that he had turned a definite shade of green! Apparently he had never given any thought to where meat comes from!

From : Mike, A Capitol Fool May 22, 2003 4:21 PM

I was sitting on the Subway the other day and got to thinking about what the medieval and iron age Europeans would have been most concerned with praying for.

Yes, it was Health and Wealth, with wealth being primarily defined through fertility of crops, children and livestock.

When's the last time you worried about if there was going to be enough food (not whether you could afford it, but would it be available)?

And yet with the assured supply of near-continuous availability of food throughout the year in America.

The impact of the seasons, the joy of Hazel gathering, and other seasonal delicacies has, I believe, been stripped from modern culture. It is another barrier to surmount to understand what ancient religion must have been like.

From : Ric Knight My 22, 2003 4:31 PM

Well... I think it's the age old division between the city and country mice... I'm sure Alberta Beef ranchers are praying hard to their "god(s)(ess)(es)" TM of choice for good old health and wealth of their livestock right now... what with BSE (mad Cow) and all.

As we become more "Urbane" (and Urban) we start to loose track of natural rhythms...

This was even a problem for the Romans who spent a considerable percentage of their government time on arranging wheat shipments from Egypt to ensure a well-fed populace who had no notion about troubles down on the farm....

From : Norm Nelson My 23, 2003 1:22 PM

O Tempora! O Mores! Our ancestors made sacrifices in their fields to ensure the fertility of their crops and cattle. Today, we sacrifice pieces of government-issued paper at the Safeway to ensure having enough food to sustain us. True, we're disconnected from the source of that food, but have we lost something, or gained something?

An orange in the toe of your Christmas stocking was a rare treat 100 years ago, because such tropical fruits were not readily available year around.

From : sybok33 June 6, 2003 4:29 PM

There's a bumper sticker available from AzureGreen that reads: "Vegetarian:" Ancient word for "lousy hunter."

“Mike, A Capitol Fool" wrote:

I've heard that one, and my room-mate replied to it: "How much intelligence does it take to realize that there are plentiful nutritious roots under the grass you're stomping upon like a Neanderthal, looking for the occasional scurrying critter out trying to feed its family." He was great at debates. :)

Mike

From : healingline June 16, 2003 4:20 PM

Folks, we say "Nature is good" because it is one of our "human limitations", being humans, to judge things.

Compare Krishna's justification of worship of divinity in human shape, to the questioning Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. Divinity kindly makes allowances for our human limitations. That is why, the first time I heard the first lines of the Liturgy, I knew at last what I was, which was this sort of Nature lover.

In the old days, us humans sacrificed and prayed in all sorts of ways we now find outlandish, and were suffered to live and reproduce up till the present, despite it all. Hallelujah!

Katya Luomala

The Third Epistles of Norman

(By Norman Nelson, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

The Forty-Year Long Protest March

Summer Solstice 2003, A Druid Missal-Any

1. Imagine yourself and a couple friends organizing a protest march to correct what seems to be an injustice.
2. A year later, the injustice is irrevocably ended. Forty years later, the march continues! What happened?
3. Since I find myself in exactly that situation, I was asked, "What do you think about the continuation of Druidism?"
4. These comments are mine only, but from conversations with some of the other founders, I believe they represent a consensus of opinion.

Chapter the Second

1. First, some forty-year-old history:
2. Back in the long-ago days of the early 1960s, several students at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, decided that the college's religious attendance requirement was actually doing a disservice to religion by forcing people to attend.
3. (A graduation requirement, it said that, seven weeks out of each ten week term, students must attend a religious service of some sort.)
4. Most of us were religious, but we felt that forced religion turns people away from faith, rather than attracting them.
5. Most students at Carleton attended the weekly Congregational services at the college chapel, conducted by the chaplain.
6. Some attended the downtown churches of their own denomination, and then filled out "chapel slips" to be handed in to the deans for credit.
7. For those who belonged to churches or religions not represented in town (such as Jews), there were official campus organizations which gave them credit for attending their meetings.
8. The situation had actually become so ridiculous that even the atheists had a campus group which met for chapel credit!

Chapter the Third

1. To organize a protest against the requirement, we decided to start our own "religion" and apply for chapel credit. If we got it, we would show how ridiculous the requirement was; if we didn't, we would protest and accuse the administration of hypocrisy, since we were attending religious services.
2. In the early spring of 1963, the Reformed Druids of North America was formed; we even drew up a constitution for ourselves as a campus organization. The official date of the founding was Beltane, 1963.
3. We were very careful to structure our "religion" so that it didn't require giving up any other faith; we didn't want to antagonize any one. (I've always called Druidism supplementary, not designed to supplant any other belief.)
4. After six or seven weeks of Saturday afternoon services, at the end of the school year in mid-June, several men and two or three women submitted chapel slips for the last Druid service of the school year.
5. We were careful also to go for our "regular" chapel credit, just in case. (The Druids met on Saturday so as not to conflict with any Sunday services people wanted to attend.)
6. The slips for the women were accepted by the Dean of Women's office, while the Dean of Men's office rejected credit for the men.
7. After the rejection, one of the founders went to the Dean of Men's office and asked why we had been turned down. He took along a list of "strange" religious groups from the Minneapolis phone book, and asked "Would this be acceptable? Would this? Would this?"
8. Finally, with all his other reasons exhausted, the Dean said that we couldn't receive the credit because we weren't "an officially recognized campus organization;" we didn't have a faculty advisor.
9. The next fall, the speaker at one of the first (also mandatory) weekly all-student convocations was a new professor, who spoke about his anthropological work in the Aran Isles, where Druid practices still continued under a thin veneer of Roman Catholicism. Before he left the room that night, RDNA had a faculty advisor! We knew we had outfoxed the Dean!
10. That fall, we received chapel credit for our services, and again when we started at Beltane for the spring. We felt that we had definitely won our protest.
11. It gets even better: the day I graduated in 1964, the college Board of Trustees met and abolished the religious attendance requirement.
12. I learned recently that one of those who most favored the repeal was the Episcopal bishop of Minnesota, who also argued as we had that the requirement was a disservice to religion. I've also heard that the college chaplain supported it, and that subsequently, enrollment in religion classes increased dramatically.
13. So, in June of 1964, there was suddenly no more need for protest, and therefore no more need for the Druids. Our victory was total, and most of the founders fully expected our organization to disappear very quickly.

Chapter the Fourth

1. However, for some participants, RDNA had begun to take on a meaning of its own. (We joked that, for the students who couldn't stomach organized religion, our disorganized one was perfect!)
2. In reality, through their meditations and study of their role in nature, they had begun to find a personal, meaningful realization we had never intended to impart.
3. RDNA met their requirements for a faith that explained their lives. For them, it was no longer a joke.
4. You can see this happening with David Frangquist, the author of "The Chronicles," as his writing changes from a parody of the Bible in the first chapters to a serious examination of what it meant to be a Druid.
5. Now, forty years later, here we are. Not only is Druidism still here, it's thriving! RDNA continues in its original form for some, but numerous "offshoots" have also arisen, attracting different sorts of people to their different emphases. While I've not looked into them, I salute them for answering the religious needs of their participants.

6. Personally, I still believe that RDNA is a supplement to other faiths, as I think do the other founders. But I must respect those for whom it has become their exclusive faith. Given our origin, I'm a little bemused by that, but I think I can understand it.
7. And, more importantly, I think that Druidism, in its various manifestations, should and will continue.
8. Even if it eventually becomes meaningful only to one person, it still deserves recognition for that. I guess we wrought far better than we thought we did when we started our little "protest march."

Chapter the Fifth

1. 10 Aug 2003 21:12:13 -0600
2. IMHO, an AD doesn't "head" a Grove... s/he is the person appointed/elected to conduct the services, not to speak on behalf of or to determine the thinking of the Grove's members.
3. The reason we've had a "meditation" instead of a sermon is that the AD doesn't tell the members what to think or believe, s/he just suggests ways for each member to make up his/her own mind.
4. Since the demise of the Council of Dalon ap Landu (due to the individuality of its members, who couldn't/didn't bother to reply to questions put to the Council), there has been no governing body of RDNA.
5. Ergo, each person who calls him/herself a Druid is one. There is no higher authority to determine orthodoxy or to declare excommunication.
6. This may be embarrassing to us old-timers, but it's a fact of life, and we've learned to live with it. We may fervently disagree with what a particular group is doing, but there's no way we can stop them from doing it.
7. From the beginning, RDNA has prided itself on being a "disorganized" religion; neither then or now is it time to start imposing criteria for what makes one a Druid.

Chapter the Sixth

1. Wed Aug 13, 2003 1:50pm
2. Isn't the term "orthodox Druid" a bit of an oxymoron? How can any group or "religion" which can be joined by saying "I'm a Druid" have an orthodoxy?
3. RDNA has been eclectic since its founding (believe me, I was there!) and remains so to this day. There may be some people calling themselves Druids whose practices are peculiar to me, but it has never been my job to determine what Druidism is (at least in its RDNA version(s)).
4. I suspect that to the Druid groups in Europe which are not part of "our" Druidism, we're as bogus as you can get! And it's highly unlikely to me that they, any more than we, are practicing the "true" Druidism of 2,000 years ago.
5. Originally, you became a Druid by partaking of the waters. Period. Belief that "Nature is good" quickly cropped up as an additional criterion. Remember, these were people whose "robes" were bed sheets and whose first altar was a small metal phonograph stand from someone's dorm room!
6. Most importantly, if we were to succeed in our purpose of ending the "religious attendance" requirement at Carleton, we couldn't do anything that would give the authorities an excuse to shut us down.
7. All the founders were Christian and Jewish, and we didn't want (and couldn't afford) to offend anyone. I've always maintained that RDNA was conceived as supplementary and/or complementary to "organized religion", not as a replacement for it.
8. The only reason that I can find for the continuation of RDNA 39 years after it became unnecessary is that for some people it is a means of the search for "truth" (yea, one way among many). For some it has become their exclusive "faith"; for others, be they Wiccan or other pagan or Christian, it remains a supplement.
9. For me as an Episcopalian, it gives new emphasis to the many places in the Book of Common Prayer where we are exhorted to take care of creation as a way of honoring the Creator.

Chapter the Seventh

1. 15 Aug 2003 11:08:55 -0600
2. I've been trying to distance myself from the OMS debate going on in RDNAtalk, but I do have a comment or two which may be relevant.
3. To my way of thinking, anyone who wants to call him/herself a Druid is one. To be a Reformed Druid, part of the RDNA, I'd add that one must partake of the Waters consecrated by an Archdruid in the RDNA.
4. Sorry if this makes a hardship for solitaries, but it's in the original Constitution, etc., and I can't change it unilaterally. [I'd be glad to send you some Waters, if you need them! You'll have to do your own ceremony, though.]
5. Likewise, anyone who is associated with RDNA can call her/himself a member of RDNA, or "a Druid" for short.
6. BUT, and this is the important thing, nobody (repeat, NOBODY), not me nor any other founder nor you nor any "offshoot" or Grove or individual member, can claim to *speak for* RDNA.
7. You can proclaim your own beliefs from the rooftops, or go door to door proselytizing, or whatever turns you on, but by the very nature of RDNA, you can't say "this is what RDNA thinks" or "this is what RDNA believes".
8. We don't have a pope, a moderator, a Sanhedrin, a senate, a General Assembly, or whatever you want to call the central authority.
9. The Council of Dalon ap Landu, which consisted of all ordained 3rd orders, was to be such an authority, but in the days before e-mail, it was impossible to get a quorum to make any decisions after the first couple years (and would probably have been so even with easier communication), and the CoDaL died a quiet death. I don't think it would be possible (or sensible) to try to reconstitute it.
10. If we're to continue as a "disorganized" religion, which I think is one of our great strengths, we should not have any such central, final, (and probably arbitrary) authority.
11. One of the serious problems in which any group, secular or religious, can find itself is to have such an authority, which must inevitably lead to that authority wanting to perpetuate itself.
12. This is what leads to schisms in religions, and to anarchy in civil organizations. RDNA does not want or need such an authority. "My way or the highway" is not a Druid attitude!
13. That little tirade doesn't really answer your question, so: First, bear in mind that the "original intent of the founders" was very specific - to get rid of a graduation requirement at Carleton College.

14. After that was accomplished, most of us never expected RDNA to continue. I've gone into my thinking on why it's still around elsewhere, and won't take the time or space here to repeat it.
15. To the extent that any group, splinter or symbiotic, carries on the "purpose" of RDNA - the search for [personal] truth with the assistance of Nature - that group is good because it carries on the purpose of RDNA for its members.
16. Someone noted someplace that any time you have two Druids in a room, you have at least three different opinions.
17. There is one thing we all agree upon, however, and that each Druid's search for "the truth" must be a personal search. We've never been a group which tries to impose "The Truth" on anyone. I don't think we've ever capitalized the word "truth".
18. To the extent that any group has found *the* truth, and begins to try to make others think exactly their way, they are doing a serious dis-service to RDNA.
19. Indeed, I'd go so far as to say that they have left RDNA by their own choosing, because that's inherently not the way RDNA does things.
20. I believe it was the wonderfully cynical Mark Twain who said, "Mankind is the only animal that has ever found the True Religion. Thousands of them!"

Chapter the Eighth

1. 15 Aug 2003 13:37:15 -0600
2. There are plenty of Archdruids. Every Grove has to have one. Each AD is, automatically, autonomous. Add in the "retired" ADs, and you're into the hundreds of people. But, and this is important, there is not, never has been, and organizationally can't be an "Arch-Archdruid", one supreme head of the RDNA.
3. When the "higher Orders" were conceived, it was never intended to make them leaders of the organization; rather, they were "honorary" higher levels for the ego of the participants. [Note that we made Fisher the Patriarch of the 4th Order, thereby limiting him from being patriarch of even higher orders.]
4. In a way, it's similar to Masonry: every Mason receives the first three degrees. There are additional degrees (two sets of them, in fact), but they are both adamant that there is no "higher degree" than Master Mason, the third degree.
5. There is no-one qualified to accept or reject any person or any group as part of RDNA.
6. If Mike chose to accept OMS stuff for ARDA2, that's his decision as an archivist. If ARDA is to represent the whole spectrum of the original RDNA and its subsequent manifestations (as I think should be its purpose), it needs to be all-inclusive.
7. Putting something in ARDA is not giving it the imprimatur of RDNA, since that's not the function of ARDA. There's a lot of stuff in there that's not "official".
8. ARDA is not an official RDNA publication, it's Mike's contribution to the RDNA. RDNA has no control over it (and vice versa).

Chapter the Ninth

1. 20 Aug 2003 11:46:34 -0600
2. Security Council of the United Druids? SCUD? Why not? Then any correspondence between the members would be guided missives?
3. Actually, deep in my heart, I don't like the idea of any body able to make decisions for me on what my version of RDNA is or will be or should be.
4. The original (now, if not dead, somewhere beyond moribund) CoDaL was a good idea at the time; there were only a dozen or so members, and many of them knew each other personally.
5. They all had a shared background. They could, therefore, be said to be the "collective thought" of RDNA at that time. As the number of Thirds grew, and as the Reform moved beyond Carleton, the Council became impractical, logistically.
6. There were members who had no connection with the original grove, and there were members nobody even knew about.
7. In the era of snail mail communication only, it was impossible to contact every member, let alone to force them to respond to anything they did receive.
8. How do you establish a quorum for a body so nebulous you don't even know who's in it?

The Missionary Im-Position

(By Mike Scharding, Jul 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Printed in Fall Equinox Issue, A Druid Missal-Any

Chapter the Zeroeth

1. [This chapter's contents written in August 2004.]
2. The "P" word, proseyltization, is rarely evoked in the Reform without scorn, bewilderment or anger. It seems that everybody has a story to tell or a lesson they learned from an experience with a zealous evangelist.
3. It is a sad fact, that without some type of recruiting, the thousands of members in the RDNA would not exist beyond the one or two dozen Founding members; not that that would be an all together bad thing, but that would be the reality.
4. Whereas other Groves may have had core membership stretch with little interruption for a decade or two, Carleton has had to constantly acquire more members due to the fact that members keep graduating and leaving to start new lives elsewhere, involving some type of missionary activity both at Carleton and abroad.
5. We try to go about it with a good sense of humor, but in some ways, it still bothers many of us, but I think that it is in the manner in which you advertise your presence and the reasons you give to join that make a big difference from the ways other religions and organizations recruit.
6. As I'll mention, we're just so odd and strange, that word of mouth soon spreads that we're Druids, and eventually everyone knows. And the one who wants to be a Druid will indeed be looking for such type of people and will find us, rather than we find them.
7. If a grove shrinks down to one person, that's fine, we have the seeds to sprout anew within us when the climate or circumstances turns fortuitous again; and if not, there is always correspondence to give us a taste of interaction.
8. Don't worry so much about the quantity, but focus on the quality whenever possible. It will be okay, whatever Fate has decided. Now let's go to my original epistle.

Chapter the First

Some Opening Comments

1. Naturally, I speak here only for my own opinion. As you may have been following in the RDNAtalk conference, my thoughts have been turning to those young MIB who knock on my door to share the Good News with me.
2. I'd like to share some thoughts based on my own limited experience in door-to-door sales of the mundane variety, although I have little academic marketing experience. However, perhaps some of the parallels may be interesting.
3. I should start off by admitting that I actually admire the dedication and sense of inquiry that most door-to-door missionaries possess.
4. I am also a somewhat reluctant spiritual missionary myself, as is shown by the fact that most of you are reading this essay because of my outreach internet efforts, providing access to RDNA historical material.
5. My strategy is however naturally passive. I make suggestions but do not insist on them to the exclusion of others. I am just there. People come, sometimes stay, and often leave soon. Like a tree, I passively watch their passage and shade them while they are near by. I occasionally invite a friend to attend. Many pass under my limbs without even knowing a Druid is present.
6. This I feel is a rather common RDNA method of grove dynamics, it may not be the most organizationally effective way, but it is the most satisfactory method I have found. It is one way, yea, one way among many.
7. Now, if I was a Treant, like in the Tolkienn movie, I could pull out my roots and walk about lobbing boulders about and being a noisy nuisance. And in certain circumstances, I might contemplate such action.
8. Others make this a matter of course, and we see them at our doors every month or two, because we have a large Mormon barn in our neighborhood, so we tend to get the lazy ones who are not willing to travel far.
9. It pains my cynical post-modernist heart to credit them, but most of those to whom I talk to are actually rather nice, wholesome people with more community spirit that my hermitic nature can muster up. But there is something rather unsettling about the whole door-to-door thing, and I'm not sure that they are aware of it.
10. Occasionally, you'll get the hard sell from some door to door friends, that reminds me of a past part-time job that I once had, I think you'll see the parallels and be forewarned.

Chapter the Second

Nature Abhors a Vacuum Salesperson

1. In 1995, I answered one of those "Big money for part-time fun work" posters, and got sucked up into a scam-filled operation selling well-known expensive vacuum cleaners in Minnesota. I learned a lot about the way you set up a campaign with many applications to missionary activities.
2. First you divide up a town among the employees, distribute invitations for a free "no-obligation" comparison test via newspapers or coupons, with free complimentary present and literature.
3. When someone bites at the bait, you send out the young commission-paid worker to the address at the appointed time, with promises of how well they will be awarded on the often slim chance of a successful sales (10% conversion rate is considered high, with a 10% cut of the overpriced good).
4. Other times you just knock on doors up and down the neighborhood taking advantage of your sad tired visage to entice compassionate people to invite you in.
5. What happens next is you give your spiel, and start doing good deeds (such as vacuuming like a madman around the house) and showing off the features of a professional cleaner.
6. Now most people, (and few will admit it), don't mind a little grime in the corners, dust on the lampshade, or dirt under the sofa-cushions. People get by with a simple system of their own, but feel a bit guilty about it, and this is your entry point.
7. You, as a seller, by your zealous example associate your vacuum cleaner with a virtuous clean lifestyle. Mites and dust are a natural part of life, and for most of us they actually build-up our immunological defenses against real

parasites; but if given a choice in life, people would like to live in aseptically clean environment, free of grossness.

8. The odds are, even if they buy your brand of cleaner, that they wouldn't put that much more effort into cleaning, but they COULD if they wanted to.
9. This is called "overbuying" and the car and computer salesmen ply this trick just as often as door-to-door salesmen.
10. The customer is also acquiring "membership" or association with great clean people, who like mountains, are more often admired from afar or bypassed, rather than climbed and imitated.
11. Certainly, some will actually read your cleaning suggestions book and may actually follow the instruction manual you provide; but similar results could probably be had by diligently using any other cheaper vacuum cleaner.

Chapter the Third

Cleanliness is like unto Godliness

1. Mark Twain once said, "A cynic knows the price of everything but not its worth." Every salesman must truly believe in the product that they are selling.
2. You must study the other brands of vacuum cleaners only so far as to know their weaknesses, to be able to denigrate them, and then select tests that you know are going to show those faults.
3. Few people are prepared to defend their own cleaners to a well-prepared offense that they are not expecting.
4. The salesman makes it a matter of faith that your own product's deficiencies are more than matched by its strengths; and the cleaner must naturally be taken as a whole item.
5. I spent 30 minutes being instructed in the cleverness of its foaming carpet cleaner head. All types of methods of agitating the cleaning liquid were attempted before the inventor realized that a simple cheap cloth mesh over the end would foam-up the liquid.
6. When explaining this to the people, they begin to associate a few clever features of the cleaner to the rest of the whole contraption, which may indeed be pretty standard fare.
7. Now the vacuum cleaner sales pitch would start by discussing how much it cost to attain this marvelous product, for which a newly invented need was now apparent.
8. For those of you interested, this $900 vacuum cleaner really only cost $250 to produce, and were sold to the local head agent for $300. The salesman would naturally calm down the customer and "call his boss" to cut a deal, say to $750, which was still too much. Eventually you barter down to a reasonable $500 in regular payments.
9. They get a slightly sup-ed up cleaner, and probably put on a list of "easy marks" for other high-pressure sales agents.
10. You and your boss split the profits. My idealism got the better of me, as did low sales performance, and I left soon afterwards. [Naturally, I thought the job sucked.]

Chapter the Fourth

What to do with Door Knockers

1. I know that most missionaries perform their actions as a matter of testing the strength of their faith, a sign of compassion to the benighted followers of the wrong faith, and to follow the instructions of their superiors, and these I tolerate and a few I admire.
2. A few are witless and naïve people with but a few scraps of scripture to cover their nakedness, and I try not to scare them in their delicate condition.
2. For some, their sense of self-worth is painfully dependent on getting others to follow their own pathway, and I feel sorry for these.
3. Indeed I generally feel that those who come to my door may well indeed be the gods in disguise and I feel obligated to assist them in some fashion, even salesmen and missionaries.
4. However, others are belligerently bigoted and seek to stamp out anything that disagrees with their vision, and these I abhor.
5. I suspect that many of these groups are outward oriented, sometimes in a pyramid scheme, with all the spiritual profits rising organizationally to the founder.
6. It is true that perhaps some form of spiritual community is better than none, but I like to think that the ones that I choose are better, than the ones that choose me; assuming there is free will, of course.
7. Most people, I believe, tend to belong to a faith that operates nearby out of convenience more than avid support of their "small print" of social policies and theological beliefs outlined by their inner circle of organizers. I have always wondered why they don't apply this strong energy into improving the members that are already part of their community?
6. Some groups even seem to exist only to recruit more members. The Mormons are so desperate for growth, as to actually convert the already deceased ancestors of current members, and as a result, they have one of the most massive genealogical collections in the world, as my parents found out in their own family research.
7. Quite likely, several of your own ancestors have been converted in this manner already! Thus much good occasionally does appear to result indirectly from these activities.
8. There appears to be a few common responses in the Neo-Pagan and Druid community towards these wandering door knockers.
9. Some choose the "duck and cover" maneuver and refuse to answer the door, which is avoiding the whole issue.
10. There a few (like me) who politely listen and refuse to respond either way, giving neither support nor denial to their cause, basically taking up their time to save some other unknown resident the experience.
11. The most popular and funny, but probably rarely performed, are the "shock and awe" responses of overwhelming these people from narrow backgrounds with lavish displays of "see how weird and unsettling my lifestyle is! oooga booga!"

12. However, if you think you can surprise them with your Druidness, your mirthful days may be numbered. I recently came across a book which I read a 92 page point-by-point book of a series by Zondervan Guides to Cults and Religious Movement that teach how to witness to Pagans.
13. It is called Goddess Worship, Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism. (ISBN 0-310-48881-8 $6.00) If you want to go head to head against the toughest bible-thumper, I recommend you read it to see what arguments are coming.
14. It was an interesting applying logical methods to sell rather non-sensical fantastical spiritual myths. It is another of those circular argumentative systems that once you accept one point, you are locked into a series of semi-logical faith-based points of belief. Maddening as I found it, it provides intriguing insights into the whole process.
15. A nice counterpoint is to realize that world views are a dollar a dozen, and I'd recommend reviewing the following two books: The Truth About Neo-Paganism written by one-time RDNA member Anodea Judith (of Chakra fame), ISBN 1-56718-567-3 which is $3 at 60 pages.
16. Another book is Pagans and the Law: Understand Your Rights which is a good handbook to simple legal questions that many Pagans should know, if you get flak for your religious beliefs. I'll hopefully be reviewing this book in a future issue.

Chapter the Fifth

In Conclusion

1. In conclusion, I believe that the best preparation for dealing with the missionary is to follow the Druidic path of asking yourself the hardest questions ahead of time, to know what you really believe; and find out what areas of your spiritual life can be met with community involvement, psychiatry, lifestyle modifications and simple greater awareness.
2. After you've done that you should be able to explain the satisfactory nature of your beliefs and perhaps give them a little useful insight to take back with them.

Newer Selections:

The OMS Affair

(By Various Druids, Aug 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

The OMS Affair deals with the discussion by various Druis in the RDNAtalk conference about the manner of relationship that existed or didn't exist between the RDNA and the OMS groups. The debate raged fiercely throughout most of the month of August of 2003 and totaled about 500 posts or so, from which I have boiled it down to about 350 documents in the form of an epic dialogue of 60 or so pages that will be more easily readable. The main topics discussed are about the manner in which groups and individuals join the RDNA, the role of the Council of DAL, and the ways in which we understand the qualities of being a Reformed Druid. Your average Hairpull.

The whole mess ended up with much of the OMS withdrawing most formal associations, but keeping much in the way of culture and tradition of the RDNA, and I haven't heard much from them since then. The rest of us had a good venting, and will be much more careful in the future in our relationship with other organizations, and think deeply about the aspects of belonging that ties us together.

However, due to the very lengthy nature of this exchange it would unduly mess up the printing plans for the Apocrypha, and the extensive editing and disjointed manner of interaction are too much to blend into our current format, so they are being made available at the following on-line address in September;

http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/2part2-3.doc
http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/2part2-3.pdf

Newest Selections:

Rambling Onwards

The Epistle of Corwin

(By Corwin Troost, Oct 20, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. Dear Brothers Stephen and Mike,
2. It has come down to me that our predecessors in Druidism wrote `epistles'. It would seem that these are merely letters written in a stilted, silly, Druidic style. This is for the best.
3. During my studies of Japan, it has come to me to return my gaze to that of the Grove, verily the grove of Carleton, for that is where my heart lies.
4. In these times, some of the wisdom of the ancient [aka 1960s] druids has been revealed to me through the works of the Heiman who did Mark and of Mike of the Schard.
5. For it is written in these works the epistles of those who came before, the wisdom they did impart therein.
6. Verily, though these be of less certain value than the Chronicles, it could perhaps be said that in their uncertainty they possess more value, for they impart direction. (but the Meditations are also pretty good, and the Isaac stuff gets old fast.)
7. The wisdom imparted to me through the joint efforts of tree, human, and breath (and... umm... what does ink come from?) is of three parts:

   A) Ritual is of great importance.

   B) Druidism began as a protest against standard(ized?) religion, and I think that much of its continued value lies therein.

   C) Carleton Druids/prospective Druids as a whole do not have enough spiritual common conception, experience or elaboration to have productive spiritual discussion.
8. Lo, but the one is three and the three are one!
9. For where lay the protest of druidism but in its ritual, its silliness and newness combating both the fist of fundamentalism and the emptiness of the mainline?
10. Where lies the protest or the irreplaceable, the spiritual, in quietly sitting down to discuss said spirit?
11. Verily, to speak is good, but to do is better, for in the doing comes speaking, and where lies common experience but in ritual?
12. Does not thinking arise more readily from the implicit provocation than the blunt query?
13. If we are truly a group without dogma and received teaching, then the lowliest, most ignorant initiate may participate at all levels-- yet in discussions, previous spiritual knowledge and confidence create a substitute hierarchy.
14. Further, if we are truly a experiential and material-embracing religion, then discussion, with its head-centeredness, lack of interaction with nature, and lack of shared starting points/beliefs/assumptions is not the Druidic path.
15. Simply put, we are NOT outdoor UU's-- particularly if we stay inside.
16. [Sorry about lapsing in the silly style, I can only keep it up so long, and only communicate so much in it]
17. I hope that Druidism is doing well on campus-- I have no way of knowing at this point. It might perhaps be good that I'm not there... there are times when I'm a bit too serious and Isaac like. <sigh>

Chapter the Third

1. Let's ponder what 1) we think Druidism is and has been, 2) what is good about Druidism (what we have liked?) 3) What Druidism should become.
2. Certainly, the survival of Druidism in others should be secondary to the quality of what Druidism we create.
3. My suggestions for what are good about druidism are: lightheartedness, nature, indy search for spirit, non-hierarchical, questioning.
4. I'm at best marginally satisfied with teas in their current form.
5. I really liked the rituals of the Elder Druids, with their silliness-- though I think we could come up with a form that wouldn't require too much preparation and would allow people to free-form participate.
6. I'm thinking like the calling the winds thing in the sweatlodges, but instead of just winds, whatever it is that we've picked out to praise/worship/recognize.... including anything from a Colonel Sanders statue to a tree to one particular grain of sand on the sidewalk, but other forms are cool too...
7. One of the epistles said that playacting can become sincerity, and I sort of believe it....
8. The other thing is that I think we need to promote the 2nd and 3rd order ordinations, I think, cause they really do have an effect... mine made me much more into the whole thing, and really worked out a lot of stuff for me.
9. Perhaps we could reinstitute some 1st order ceremony.
10. I'm also thinking that we always have at least a minimal trip outside, be it most of the tea/event or just 5 minutes.
11. I think it'd be cool if, when the weather permits (oops, I'm too late for this) we make a habit of meeting at Nourse for 15 minutes to have tea, processing to the circle or to the bald spot, meditating for 5 minutes, and only then doing something... it might take some time, but I think that it would actually have more and better effect than having more discussion.
12. Further, do silly things in public.
13. I am but a feeble monk, whose eyes cannot see the way, yet I pray that my words may find some harbor in your breast.
14. Nor should you consent to trust them more than words from thine enemy, for I am young and of quick temper, soon to speak and late to listen. But if the Reform will be aided by my speech, I am well rewarded.

Humbly,
Corwin, Arch-Druid in Exile

The Epistle of Stephen

(By Stephen Crimmin, November 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. My brother in the mother Corwin,
2. I was elated to see your epistle, and it has weighed long upon my thoughts this past month for it did not deserve a hasty reply.
3. I am glad that you have turned to history, for history is ever present.
4. Though, yay, we are also removed from history, and must be wary of it. And there is much that history can tell us.

Chapter the Second

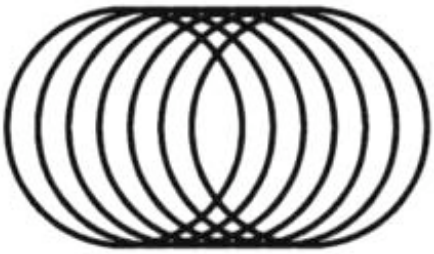
1. Certainly many have benefited from the old rituals. From the earliest days there have been some rituals.
2. Yay, even between the days of the lapse in the parly eighties and till the revival of Mike the Fool, those druids who did rebirth in the late eighties did have some ritual. And yay, it did work for many of them.
3. But verily I note that you are right, that we have in many ways forgotten the rituals, we do not consider them as closely as we might.
4. And so I can see that you are wise in asking to restore such rituals. And because they are, indeed silly.
5. Lo, the Druids do misstep and founder, and they must be guided, hand held along a reasonable path.
6. But be wary, I warn you. This is not an easy path to follow, and think careful about this path and others, for the path of the ritual is a difficult one, and this I have come to realize early this year.
7. Having departed on a similar journey as you, though through the documents that Mike the Fool and his partners did first look at before they did compile more than their compilation.
8. And I myself saw that we do miss much of the ritual of our forefathers.
9. And yay, I too did mourn that loss, and I did also mourn the loss in our current situation our the great numbers of Druids which hath preceded us.
10. And upon opening I did decide to hold such a ritual, thinking that this may be right.
11. But, lo, I did arrive at the circle, and did commence to spake those old words, in a slightly altered state (the words, not me), but they did not feel quite right to me.
12. For, though I had seen the paper upon with Brother Larson did write his third Epistle, and though I had read it thoroughly and gained much understanding from it, I had not truly understood it.
13. For Brother Larson talks of ritual, and says most wisely that we cannot just speak the ritual, as I spake it, but as we speak it we must breath it.
14. Wary be! It was not just that I had not practiced, but I have not seen a true good ritual, in good form, as Brother Larson might suggest, except for two or three, in the year of the anniversary.
15. And lo, I thought I could mimic those, but I certainly could not mimic the power to be had in them.
16. Even our former Brother who does instead now Fish, had the experience of his previous days, of the Episcopalians to guide him in his rituals.
17. And in the days since the Druids have had one always who has heard the words in some lineage from our Fishing Brother.
18. Even Mike the Fool, Foolish for reestablishing the rituals bolder than he might have been wise to, had an experience to help him.
19. For it is off said that the Episcopalians are but Catholics without a Pope. And so in many ways their service, that inspired Brother Mike did look similar to the service that did inspire our Fishing Brother.
20. In the days of later eighties they did not follow the older rituals. And in this they were wise, though they, like you and me and Mike the Fool, were all fools; for they did instead bring in the ritual of that which they knew and were already keenly interested, of various Neopagans and of the Native Americans.
21. And there is more, for the rituals that I have heard never quite spoke to me.
22. In trying to use them, with just lightly altering, I was quite the fool. For how could they speak through me if they did not speak to me.
23. And here I give you some positive advice. Look not to the old rituals, for if you are to use them you must have either great experience with them, or you must utterly rework them, going so far as to be barely recognizable.
24. They do not speak to me, and I am not sure that they speak exactly to you. Before you can speak them, you must find a ritual that speaks to you, in it's words, in it's rhythm, in it's everything.
25. And that ritual will speak through you brilliantly, if that will be your choice, though it will be a hard work.

Chapter the Third

1. And here I will give you more advice, though be wary of it, for it may lead you astray. You have many ways to look.
2. The first, which I am quite eager to see, is this. You have been in exile these past months, and I can only hope that your exile has taught you much, that your time as peregrinatio is not to be wasted.
3. I have often heard from Brother Mike that Japan is a land of Paganism, and that it may offer much to us, if you have seen it, and if anything it speaks to you.
4. But more generally, you must consider all that has spoken to you, and all which has not. And then write a ritual from what has spoken to you, be wary not to merely write what you think may speak to you.
5. And then I say this more, look not just at the early rituals, but look at all the rituals that you can find, if you want to reestablish rituals. There are many sources for those.
6. I would say, first, go down to the basement of the building of the Explorer President, and ask Eric the Hill Man to see the archives of the reform, first, and all the rituals that are recorded there, even the rituals of Isaac.
7. And look also at the descendents of the Reform, and look at their rituals that are recorded, for they are resplendent in variety.

8. And those that speak to you, diligently copy them in the scriptorium, so that you may work from them in creating your own rituals.
9. And then look even further. Look at the (inter)net that A Druid Fellowship has cast, because it also contains many rituals.
10. And look also at the rituals of the Henge an hour to our north, either at the site of a similar net or, if need be, write to them to see what rituals they perform.
11. And then widen your search even further, for other brothers, and for all the rituals that you might glance at.
12. And having collected those that speak to you, see what it is that speaks, and then begin to right anew and afresh from those rituals, and drawing them into the framework of the reform, without considerable reference to the original rituals, except that which truly speaks to you.
13. Yay, it would be a hard long path in front of you, fraught with much which could make you stumble, but if that is your journey, than you must tread it.
14. Moreover, I cannot help you. Though I also cannot stop you, and cannot but release you to look for an appropriate ritual, and wish you look, for indeed, now, the time of the comps is at hand, and I must heed that.
15. You then must walk a path that you will find, and learn in doing. I can only offer a few words here and there.
16. And I see that you already have many new ideas, and for that I am thankful, but do not let them say that you have what speaks to you.
17. For if you merely add little effects to a base that does not help you, you only gild the ritual, rather than make it work.

Yours in the Mother
Stephen Crimmin
Arch Druid of Carleton



Mike's Mini-Missive

(By Mike Scharding, 2003)

(New to ARDA 2)

1. Dear Brother in the Mother, Stephen
2. Your words are legion and confusing, which is a sign of Druidic obfuscation in good tradition. :)
3. I agree with you both that every generation must look to the old for some strand of the rope to the continue, but must weave in new strands where old ones can stretch no further, and no single strand of a rope reaches the whole length.
4. And so no one tradition can be expected to continue uninterrupted from beginning or end, if one looks close enough.
5. Indeed, I encourage you to know what has been done, pay attention to what you're doing now, and think about what you would like to do, then do it.
6. Use any tool that you have, if it will accomplish your task adequately, we are the sum of our experience.
7. Go to your source of inspiration, if it be by the stream or on a hilll and speak with the tongue of the trees, let their words and your words merge, and let that be the message you share.
8. The Earth Mother and DAL, among many, are ready to give advice if you'll give them an ear.
9. You need not speak the same words of the ancient Druids, for they are not there to hear them.
10. You have new Druids who need to hear the new words that our times need; and if you can find a way to express them from your studies of the past, so be it.
11. But words without action are soon lost in the winds that you call forth, may those winds that you move, also move you to realize your potential in changing this world.
12. I also hope that brother Corwin will learn much from his sojourn in Japan.
13. "Exile" has also greatly changed me, but I reflect that as Socrates said, the Earth is our home, and as long as I walk on its face, I am "home," even if I be out of sight of my friends and relatives.
14. Although the Japanese do not see through the Monotheist lens, their vision is also clouded by other matters, such as modernism and a growing disconnect from Nature as they move from the farms to the cities.
15. Yea, verily each culture has its blindspots and sharp insights into the condition of Man and Nature, so draw your conclusions and give praise & critique carefully.
16. As I've stated before, Druidism existed at Carleton before the first student set foot in Northfield, and will continue long after the last student graduates.
17. It is the very connection and relation between materials and living creatures, of which we are but one, and whose mysteries we can only participate in part, limited by our form and schedule.
18. Strengthen your understanding of it with whomever else is also interested during your few years there, and beyond. But do not fret about it. :)
19. I have talked more than enough.
20. Fare thee well.

21. You're doing fine and my thoughts drift to you nearly every day,
22. May my prayers be carried to you with the sun that I see.

Mike the Fool
Day 31 of Geimreadh, Year XLI of the Reform
Dec 1, 2003

The Alphabet Epistle

(By Ian Friesland, 2004)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First: Cordial Greetings

1. Dear Brother Michael,
2. How I wish the tyranny of distance did not so separate you and me, alas I have not written as often as I could or should, but things are well with me….
3. …I now have a letter for you, a most remarkable one, yea, one among many. Pardon me if I go too long now, as it is a common error in my Order, perhaps even a requisite one.
4. There is now more than I must relate to you on the further mysteries of the Druid sigil.
5. As you'll see, I'm afraid my sanity has cracked further after another frost upheaval from leaving the extreme of a long cold wintry place and returning to warm climates.
6. New seeds have sprung from that crack in the ground.
7. Such is the renewing nature of Druidism in Minnesota with every year too, isn't it?
8. May my words find welcome eyes and hearts, for I would speak wisely, for a change.

Chapter the Second:

The Vision of "S" Appears

1. The other day, I stood by a slender willow sapling on a hill, looking down at the slinking stream situated on the plain below me.
2. The branches of the tree swayed in the wind. As my ego deflated in awe, I felt the letter "S" sibilantly hissing syllables at me in the rustling of the dead leaves at my feet.
3. I held up the mighty Druid sigil, upon which I have so often gazed rapt in thought, and the sigil blazed against the setting sun as if the sky itself was aflame.
4. In this setting, my sigil uncurled before my eyes as circle & straight lines melted into a single curved line, twisting like a Chinese dragon in a majestic dance amongst the clouds, briefly forming a Celtic knot and finally silently assuming the shape of an "S."
5. And I realized that the "S" is without voice, only the fricative escape of air through a narrow trap's entrance, and so did my soul sail forth from my solid heavy body, in joy at the wonders of pondering a single letter.
6. A famous Druid two centuries before mused that "To see the world in a grain of sand" was to know the whole from a piece. Verily, great wisdom sometimes comes to us unobserved in an overlooked tiny package.
7. Precious is the message of this sigil then. From the sigil's nature's perfect endless "o" and man's straight and limited "i" come the primordial "s," naturally bending but with a start and finish, but able to return to the original form.
8. The letter "S" is the same upside down, but flatten it's head and it is a "5" and flip in over and it become a "2." In this way, the "S" can be of the literary world of the left-brain and mathematical world of the right-brain.

9. Nature works in curves and man thinks linearly, but in that way Druidism melds a compromise between these opposites, which are both part of a single system, each dependent on the other for existence, with a myriad of children in between in search of adoption.
10. Therefore, Druidism holds the number three sacred, since between the opposites is a third choice, "The Middle Path," espoused by the Buddha, between the purely rational & systematic path and the irrational & creative path.
11. Like a sigil tied by two rubber bands to opposing trees, the closer it is pulled to one side, the less stress on that side, and the increasing pull from the other side.
12. A solution to this tug-of-war is to seek a natural equilibrium between the two, or snap both rubber bands; and the resulting awful amount of freedom.
13. Like so many clues in our lives, we pass them without even noticing them. I must endeavor hard to keep every-moment Awareness, even in the darkest night or brightest day, until it become effortless and self-renewing.
14. Indeed, you know not when or where a window on the universe will be quietly and quickly thrown open. Then the terrible immensity and complexity of the universe will be comprehensible for an all too brief moment.
15. For this was one of those moments of synergy.

Chapter the Third: The Rede of Read

1. And my soul was moved by these thoughts, such that a great prayer did come from my lips, saying:
2. Lord "**S**," or **s**hould I call you **s**ire? Or **s**avior?
3. You are not in the Holy Land, but in our heart**s**.
4. In oppo**s**ite**s** and **s**imilaritie**s**.
5. You are in all phonetic **s**yste**m**s, **s**o flexible, **s**o primordial.
6. You are the most appendable to all **s**ound**s**.
7. From the first in-ru**s**h of breath to the la**s**t out-pouring of death'**s** **s**igh.
8. The great multiplier of thing**s** by your very pre**s**ence.
9. I can hardly talk without invoking your name.
10. Nor can I go anywhere now Lord "**S**" without being aware of your go**s**pel.
11. You are a**s** pre**s**ent in the library of book**s** a**s** in the curve**s** of **s**tream**s**, bend**s** of gra**ss**, and neck**s** of crane**s**, in the movement**s** of the wind**s** during the **s**ervice.
12. You are in the **s**un & **s**tars of the skie**s** above and in the **s**cum and **s**lime in the **s**ewer**s** below, and all in between.
13. You are not ju**s**t on the paper, you are al**s**o in our ear**s**, oh "**S**."
14. You are not ju**s**t in the paper, but unwritten in our ink and our very blood.
15. Life i**s** like an alphabet, which emerge**s** with an alphic bang, full of word**s** and event**s** in the beginning.
16. Life follow**s** with up**s** and down**s**, and i**s** thicke**s**t and mo**s**t reliably filled in the middle.
17. But life all too often taper**s** off with a zedi**s**h whimper of partly-filled year**s** in the end.
18. Only when we reach "x, y & z" in our **s**tudy do we truly "now know our a, b, c"**s**.
19. A**s** your **s**ervant, Lord Zed who learned the alphabet and came and left the world of the immortal**s** in a flying head to find hi**s** Alpha, he learned the **s**olution lay in the union of the **s**eparated.
20. I now know your vi**s**age and nature, regardle**ss** of thy font, **s**ize and formatting!
21. May I be further enlightened, O king of con**s**onant**s**, by your brother con**s**onant**s** and **s**i**s**ter vowel**s**, punctually arranged and filled with **s**pace**s** for growth and re**s**t.
22. May I and you not ob**s**cure the page but adorn it like jewel**s**.
23. What more **s**hould I know of you?

Chapter the Fourth:

The Sybil of the Sigil

1. In reply, the radiant sybilic sigil looked ready to speak.
2. I again asked it; "What **s**aith the letter "**S**" about Druid**s**?"
3. It said, "You are indeed wise in my ways, and learning well, so I would teach you further, young Druid.
4. The letter "S" has provided the beginning of many virtues and vices, but only you can spell out and complete the remainder in your deeds and thoughts.
5. Ian, sear these short sentences to your soul:"

6. Be a staunch supporter of civil liberties, especially those of others.
7. Be savage and scornful for the servile submissive sycophant to the State.
8. Be Sisyphean and steadfast in noble causes, but not squeamish and sickly of a challenge's chores.
9. Be speedy in certain matters, but slow in uncertain ones.
10. Be strange, surprising and stealthy to your enemy's traps, but sure, servicing and stable to your friend's entreaties.
11. Be stout in virtues, but sickly in vices.
12. Be still, silent and sophisticated amidst racket, but swift, sonorous, and strident when men fear to speak.
13. Be subtle and sensitive in delicate matters, but straightforward and spiky in ordinary ones.
14. Be sacramental and sentimental in spiritual matters, but not superstitious or slavish.
15. Be studious, but not stupidly bookish.
16. Be safe and secure, but not scared or skittish.
17. Be scrupulous in your resources, but not selfish.
18. Be sincere and succinct in your expressions, not sly or superfluous.
19. Be sumptuous to your guests, not stingy.
20. Be sensible in judging, not subjective.
21. Be skillful in the arts, not a sham.
22. Be strategic and systematic in your projects, but not slovenly and sloppy.
23. Be strict and supportive to your grove, but not sadistic or stifling.
24. Be stark, simple and spartan in your structure, but not sterile, secretive, or snobby.
25. Be scientific and shrewd in secular matters, but sacred and sublime in saintly ones.
26. Be syncretic and synthesizing in your beliefs, not sporatdic and scattered.
27. Be soppy, sweet and sensual in matters of the heart, but stolid, stony and stoic before the hate-monger.
28. Be sedate and serene in thought, but sprightly and sporty in activity.

29. Be splendid and sensational in achievement, not sullen and sad in reluctance.
30. Be serious and sober in dire straits, but silly and sassy in farces.
31. Be solemn in times of grief, but spirited in times of joy.
32. Be stylish, spacey, surreal and screwy in humor, but not stiff, staid, stodgy and stale.
33. Be sarcastic and skeptical of fools and liars, but supplicative and sympathetic to wise sages and noble heroes.
34. Be sexy, steamy, seductive and sleek in courting, but not sordid, seamy, skanky and sleazy.
35. Be soft and smooth in eroding great obstacles like a river or wind on a mountain and strong and sturdy in blasting small obstacles like a tornado or thunderbolt.
36. Be ye never shady, shaky, shallow, shitty, shabby, shirky, shadenfreudish, shameful, shadowy, shameless, shapeless, shifty, shocking, showy, shlocky, or shrewish. Better to say "shhhh!" to yourself these than hear "shhhh" spoken of your character. [It is okay to be Shaggy or shiny.]
37. It is not a matter of which letters are used, but in how they are arrayed, and which words are sought and followed.
38. Know ye that "S" is but one letter, yea, one among many.
39. Keep one foot in the middle, lean towards the first, but know well the ways of the latter, lest your foes trick you.
40. Be a master of letters, lest letters be the master of you.
41. Do you understand all of this, Ian?

Chapter the Fifth: The Afterletter

1. And it was too much too bear and I cried out;
2. "By thy 26 way**s**! The choice i**s** mine to be made.
3. Many are your way**s** I have ma**s**tered, but much more are your way**s** that I haven't.
4. May I live up to my word**s** and my letter**s**."
5. The sigil cooled and I collapsed, lay exhausted and rested for I know not how long.
6. When I awoke, I was under the willow tree which swayed by the river which flowed, while clouds sailed above in the sky; all doing their roles in this world, as I must do and be Druidism.
7. I can do no other.

Chapter the Sixth:
Final Thoughts on Words

1. Indeed in this way, the Ancient druids learned many things from the trees, streams and stone around them.
2. Druids found guidance in Nature, for it was their holy book with uncountable chapters, always being rewritten and edited.
3. Druids did not write down words, but stored them deep in their hearts, to be replayed and sifted for edification.
4. Modern Druids transform many trees into papers and books, especially in the Reform, but do the words transform us?
5. Words and gestures rarely express our thoughts perfectly, so much harder through squiggles on compressed wood fiber.
6. The ink of scholars last longer than the blood of martyrs, but both change the world in a different way.
7. What an amazing discovery speech and writing!
8. What unlimited potential with a finite set of 26 tools!
9. Many men complain about being unable to speak of the ineffable, while I bemoan conveying the inessable.
10. We all have ways to express these thoughts.
11. You have given me words, and are part of those words, as I am too.
12. These words you read as your eyes snake across this page are part of you and us too.
13. I must finish this letter here as I grow weary from the recounting, fearing my skill with words will not be able to better convey my message.
14. Know ye, that this epistle was brought to you by the letter "B" and "S," by the numbers "2" and "5," and by your local Grove's tutelary deity.

Ian the Lettered Scholar
S-squire of ODAL
Day 13 of Foghamhar, Year XLII of the Reform
Friday, the 13th of August, 2004 c.e.

Chapter the Seventh

14. P.S. Sorry if I have made an "S" of myself, but it is me, and I am it.
15. As one last question. We have heard much of how to become a great Druid in the letters of our siblings, but how does one become a good Arch Druid?
16. I ask this, for I am considering a Grove with humans here in Europe, and I know you have led several Groves and talked to many Archdruids, so please share in your wisdom on this issue.

The Arch Epistle

(By Mike Scharding, 2004)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. Dear Brother Ian,
2. Thank you for your welcome e-mail on Friday the 13th, alleviating an otherwise thankfully uneventful day.
3. I was deeply moved by the sigil inspiration you have drawn from B & S, which is a good part of every conversation I can remember on Druidism. Your words will fertilize much contemplation in the future.
4. Coming as it does in the middle of the Athens Olympics, I can not refrain from appending comments on the Greek alphabet, for Caesar said that the Druids (at least in Narbonia) only used Greek letters when it was necessary to write down matters. Greek keys open some Celtic mysteries.
5. Have you not noticed that the letters alpha α and omega Ω are but the same line twisted and crimped?
6. Omega reminds me of the strongly twisted Druid's torc worn around the neck, from whose synaptic terminals a leap of faith is required to complete of a perfect circle.
7. And is it not also amazing that the letter phi ϕ or Φ are so similar to our Druid Sigil? And is it not strange that pi π so irrationally resembles the megalithic henges?
8. Now that I'm done with my letters, I will continue with your letter.

Chapter the Second

1. I noted the question at the end of your missive, "How can I be a good Arch Druid?" I thought you already knew.
2. But, I feel like the Japanese monk who exhorted his disciple, "Strike me hard like a bell, that I may peal even louder in my reply."
3. You will indeed have more of a challenge organizing humans, as opposed to your ministrations to penguins and monkeys in your last few Grove attempts.
4. I caution you to be careful as the former are less forgiving and far more unruly, for they resemble cats when herded.
5. I feel a word to the wise on the matter of Arch Druids is enough, but in your case, a single letter should suffice.
6. As you mentioned, locked into every word of our language are associations and roots which give a hint as to what a word means and what we should do.
7. The word Arch Druid (or its alternative Archdruid), doesn't appear in the dictionary, so I will instead concentrate on "arch."
8. As I attempt to define "arch", I must paraphrase Brother Irony that "Like a moth before a flame, the Druid is doggedly drawn towards their doom in definitions."
9. I also hesitated to write this as every bit of advice I will give here is often a painful reminder of a lesson learned by failure or missed opportunity.
10. Hopefully, you will avoid my mistakes and surpass my successes and find the path to greatness more well-lit and cleared of obstacles that trip or slow you.
11. Yet, so I must try to define the indefinable.

Chapter the Third

1. Literally, the prefix "arch" in Arch Druid is derived from Latin "archus" or Greek "Arkhi," meaning "chief, highest or most important." And much is hidden in that meaning.
2. In the Roman Church, there are Archdeacons, Archpriests, Archbishops who are the head of the deacons, priests or bishops in their domain. In this way, you are the chief of the Druids in your Grove.
3. You are high, in that you are raised by the election to hold much responsibility. No matter how high you go, do not forget those who support you.
4. You are most important, in that without an Arch Druid, the Grove cannot function well as we know it. However, beware of pride, for although the role is often necessary, you are not irreplaceable; and it were far better for a Grove to have no Arch Druid than a bad Arch Druid.

Chapter the Fourth

1. The most obvious origin of the arch is a bow, the tool from which the archer derives his occupation [L. Arcus], and you are indeed a tool of the Grove.
2. The bow directs immense power to the task of flinging objects; whose speed, distance and trajectory are uniquely determined by many combined factors: the degree to which the bow is flexed, the direction & strength of the winds, the skill of the archer, the angle fired, the whims of Gods, the laws of Physics, and most importantly; the strength, shape and material of the bow and arrows.
3. Take these elements into consideration when assisting fledgling [fletching?] Druids on their way, and do not quiver before the task, and so be of good aim and choose your targets well.

Chapter the Fifth

1. Some history about buildings and its relation to Druidism.
2. The ancient Greeks, although they used bows, did not significantly use the arch in their largest buildings, which relied on columns to support the dead weight of roofs vertically.
3. As a result, the space between columns had to be kept short, resulting in large building being filled with a forests of columns, choking out the interior space; but the columns could be shifted a little without endangering the building, which is important in an earth-quake zone.
4. The ancient Romans lacked the immense marble slabs of the Greeks, and used smaller materials like bricks and molded-concrete, so they adopted the arch and oval as their standard.
5. Roman architecture abounds with arches, bridges spanning unthinkable rivers, and domes providing more spacious and taller buildings at lower cost with less materials and difficulty.
6. But the graceful arch has many weaknesses in addition to its strengths; for if one stone in the arch should be removed the whole structure will collapse, and an arch requires a solid, immovable foundation, pulling the bases of support towards each other.
7. Using this analogy, an Arch Druid's authority rests on two foundations; first their wisdom and Awareness of Nature, and secondly the trust and goals of the membership which elected them. Without that, there is rubble and grumble.

8. But remember, of course, that we Druids are an outdoor people, for even the grandeur of the cathedral pales before the majestic canopy of an oak forest.
9. Indeed, our churches are without walls, roofs or boundaries, ever present in the world around and within us.

Chapter the Sixth

1. Arch also implies an attitude that is "mischievous or roguish," as in an "arch glance."
2. For though an Archdruidcy is a serious undertaking, it need not be a dull or stuffy one.
3. Since our beginning, the RDNA has been a thorn in the side of many pretentious civil and secular authorities; and the Arch Druid has often been the wry mouthpiece of the Grove.
4. Verily, in those ventures, we are a bit like foxy outlaws, bound together by circumstances and camaraderie, on the fringes of the respectable mainstream of religions; without the laws or the easily recognizable traits that most large traditions have embraced. Mobile, clever and stinging in our forays of Guerilla Druidism.
5. Without our humor, impishness and joviality we would become dour and disapproving.
6. Without our rebellious nature, we would congeal into a ossified religion of superstitions and dogma.
7. It is a delicate balance, like riding a tiger, too much disorder and the group loses its focus or becomes frenetic; too much order and it is unable to adapt or adopt new practices or goals.
8. It is your job to steer the Grove towards its goals in this manner.

Chapter the Eighth

1. The term arch is also used to mean "principal or strongest," as in archfoe, archenemy, archfiend, archangel, archrival, archconservative or archliberal.
2. This term implies a bit of extremism that discomforts me, for Druidism is about the moderate third way between the unlivable environment of the extremes.
3. Like it not, you are the role model for new Druids, and your virtues and vices will be noted and scrutinized; so act and speak with care in times of trouble and historic moments.

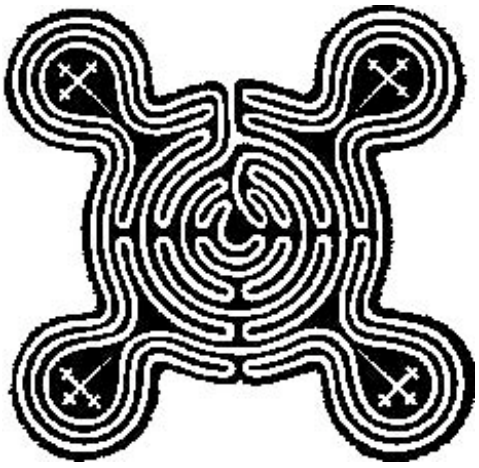
Chapter the Ninth

1. Finally, there is the term archetype, archive and archaic which have implications for Druidism, derived from Greek "Arkhi," meaning "beginning" or "primordial."
2. The Arch Druid is often the first Druid in an area, and the one who bears the seeds of wisdom, Awareness and traditions for founding a Grove, always in a unique blend.
3. Choose carefully, for the Grove will undoubtedly in the beginning mistakenly believe that all Druidism is in your mold; but you should always make them aware of alternatives, for one day they may have to steer a new course in uncharted waters without your assistance.
4. The Arch Druid must archive the actions and words of her Grove, either on paper or in her heart, so that they can be brought up again for review and amendment. To know a Grove's future, you must know and understand its past.
5. The Arch Druid must also avoid the deadening hand of archaic tradition, for if the origin of customs becomes too difficult to recognize or justify, then they must be dropped to better utilize the time and effort of the Grove's members.
5. Thus, by carefully selecting, creating, collecting and explaining the terms and practices of Druidry to incoming members, instead of relying on blind faith, you will soon realize how many and which customs and traditions can be best borne and applied by the Grove.

Chapter the Ninth

1. And so Brother Ian, these are my rambling thoughts on running a Grove as an Arch Druid.
2. I may have more advice on the topic later, but this should be enough to get started.
3. You need not do it all, for you will often rely on the other Druids in your grove, nor need you be the only Arch Druid.
4. I hopefully can live up to my own advice, which I'm far better at giving than following.
5. Finally, I must add that it is in service to others that we best serve ourselves, for that is why we are called to Archdruidry, and we will often have to choose the more difficult course if we are to succeed.
6. I wish you the best of luck in your endeavors.
7. Write more often, even if things go well.

Yours in the Mother,
Mike the Fool
Day 20 of Foghamhar, Year XLII of the Reform
August 20th, 2004 c.e.



The Epistle of Ric of the North

(by Ric Knight, odm, Aug 2004)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter the First

1. By the grace of the Universe that gives birth to us all, I, Ric of the North, do write these words to the assembled Druish folk in the 42nd year of the reform. I had originally thought to name this document “A Knight’s Tale” however copyright law and lawyers being what they are, and my desire not to have the movie of said name and this document confused in any way, I chose another title. (Note: The jousting in the movie is much better)
2. This would be the place, in any decent epistle, where Druids of the Reform admonish the readers to not pay too much attention to the following words. Reasons for this are varied. My words are not your words, my thoughts are not your thoughts, you may look at the universe in a much different light than I do, and quite frankly I may have written this whole thing while enjoying the company of a very lovely bottle of fifteen year old scotch. So beyond here there may be dragons. You’ve been warned.
3. Reformed Druidism is not so much a faith for me as it is a way of being. A way of being each moment of every day. It is not enough to profess the Reform, for me the Reform must be indistinguishable from breath,
4. How can this be accomplished? What is the nature of the Reform? These are questions that you may well expect an answer to, and with any luck I may eventually give one, or at least a hint of one.
5. I arrive at the Reform without any history of participation in it. I am not associated with any grove derived from any of the various groups of the Reform. I can trace no apostolic succession to Fisher, nor have I every set foot on the Hill of Three Oaks, at Carleton. My conversion to the Reform was sudden and complete. Call me Saul and reading ARDA on Brother Mike’s website was my road to Damascus.
6. The Reform is a revolution in spiritual thought and practice for two reasons; Anarchy of organization, and complete openness and acceptance of membership. The Reform is ruled by none and, as history has shown, has resisted all attempts by anyone to organize it for more than a weekend BBQ. The membership is fiercely independent and guards with tenacity their rights to believe whatever they choose. There are no complicated membership requirements and anyone searching for a spiritual truth can find company, encouragement, and wisdom within the Reform’s embrace.
7. The ties that bind us are the Two Tenets.
8. Verse seven was short and to the point and deserved therefore to stand solitary on the page. It falls to the following verses to explain. There has been much debate, discussion, yelling, hair pulling, and general mayhem whenever the Druish gather and discuss either the Tenets or anything more organizational than a BBQ (good humour is self referential). Anyone who cares to review the RDNATalk archives for August of 2003 will see this in abundance. The cause of the debate is not important. Other causes will spark other debates and the wheel will turn again.
9. Perhaps it is the Reform’s circadian rhythm that requires a hair pull ever so often about what the Reform is, how it should grow and what being "Reformed" truly means. Rather than being the road less traveled it becomes the road oft taken. Schism unto schism, Reform without end, forever and ever amen. When really, what it means to be Reformed is intensely and immensely personal. It defies structure. It confounds order. In the end I know what it is to be a Reformed Druid for me as well as any other will know what it is to be a Reformed Druid for them. It is our search and while we may walk together for a spell, our footsteps are our own to make.
10. We find ourselves in the Reform and in doing so find this community of interest. The "structure" grows organically. It may be imperfect, it may not be a straight path, but nature abhors a straight line. It's not up to me or any other Reformed Druid whether anyone joins the Reform. It is up to the searcher to discover for themselves whether the Reform has something to offer them, and by that search awareness comes.
11. While there is a history and a tradition for the Reform it is also adaptive and ever evolving. The trick is to adequately balance the two. To be a Reformed Druid is to search for the truths through the guidance of Nature. Other Reformed Druids can help in that search; some can offer us no help for their search does not resonate with us. But we all agree that we are searchers together, and we respect each other and the revelations that are received, even if these revelations have nothing to show us. It's not about getting anywhere; it's about the journey.
12. How do we judge who is or is not from the Reform? We cannot. What makes my interpretation of Reformed Druidism significantly different or qualitatively better than anyone else’s? Nothing. The Reform is a university of sorts. We agree (sort of) on a common approach to investigating questions concerning faith and belief, but there are vast differences as to what those beliefs are. Once we start stamping things as "officially recognized by the Reform" we will quickly approach the dreaded state of dogma. Better that we remain the contentious, debating, questioning, hair pulling lot that we are.
13. But no one is bound to accept more than the two tenets. It's our way.

Chapter 2 Oh Canada!

1. The Reformed Druids of North America sprang into being 41 years ago as an American group and has since surfaced in many different parts of the world; Europe, Japan, Turkey, and even Antarctica.
2. As Canada is a sizeable portion of North America, at least in sheer landmass (we are the large pink blob on most maps just north of the U.S. of A.), it would seem fitting that a Canadian should shed some light on the North American nature of the Druish folk as it appears from under the maple trees. I realize that North America includes Mexico and is in fact a triad, however not being Mexican, I cannot comment on the Mexican contribution to the Reform. That must be left to a future Epistle from a much more reliable source. I do however, love Mexican food (if that helps any).

3. Canada is big. It's incredibly mind bogglingly huge in a way that say Liechtenstein is not. But in our bigness we have inner smallness. We are one-tenth the population of our American cousins and suffer a kind of size performance anxiety as a result (not that size matters).
4. Canada, vast land of resource and opportunity, itty-bitty population.
5. The United State on the other hand is big with a capital B. Everything is big. Big territory, big budget, big cars, and big army. It's as if the entire nation is a vast colony of Texas (the "biggest", just ask a Texan and Alaska doesn't count).
6. A Canadian Prime Minister (Trudeau – loved and reviled by Canadians and Americans alike) once said that the Relation between Canada and the United States is much like a marriage between a mouse and an elephant. While the mouse is glad of the protection the elephant's size affords, it is always nervous that the elephant might roll over in its sleep.
7. Canada and the United States are the best of childhood friends. Sure we've had scuffles; The Revolutionary War (or as we like to call it Treason), the War of 1812 (which incidentally we won, but that would be a whole other epistle), and various Fenian raids during the later 19th Century. Otherwise, on the whole relations have been peaceful and friendly.
8. But like most friends of childhood, we have grown and followed different paths. We feel different things. We have different values. We love each other like siblings, but we just don't really understand each other.
9. In the beginning (1867) Canada was formed rather peaceful and boring with a founding principle of "Peace Order, and Good Government" which is a stark contrast from the "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" (1776) which is the creed of the United States (our rebellious older sister who stormed out of the house while we stayed on good relations with our mother country).
10. This is an important point as it sheds light upon the national character of our two distinct North American societies. The United States is the embodiment of individualism Canada is more communally oriented. "Canada and the U.S. have grown up with substantially different characters: group rights, public institutions, and deference to authority have abided north of the border, while individualism, private interests, and mistrust of authority have remained strong in the south."[i]
11. The Reformed Druids of North America is a truly North American group as it combines the essential character traits of both.
12. There is a fierce independence about the Reform that won't be dictated to by anyone, including other Reformers.
13. There is also a strong sense of community and inclusion that welcomes all, accepts and adapts to changes, and grows stronger as a result.
14. Perhaps this "Canadianism" aspect of the Reform is due in no small part to Howard Cherniack. A boiterous Canuck and founding member of the Reform who was instrumental in the forming of the ties that bind the reform together - the Two Tenets and Constitution (Canadians, Compromise and Community oh my).
15. The path of the Reform is a successful balancing act between the two polarities. Too much towards the individualism of the south and we will see splinter and schism as new groups form in protest of some slight or disagreement. Too much towards the communalism of the north and the reform risks becoming dogmatic, traditional and a barrier to new ways.
16. It is the combination of the North American genius that forms the successful middle way of the Reform.
17. It is my hope that the Reform will continue to include and promote the best virtues of the North American nations as it lives and grows into a brighter future

.

The Sixth Epistle of Isaac

(By Isaac Bonewits, 2004)

(New to ARDA 2)

Chapter One

1. Brothers and Sisters in the Mother, I write this epistle with a sad heart, having just heard about the death of Br. Robert Larson, DAL, BE around Lughnasadh of 2004 c.e.
2. As many of you may know, Robert was the graduate of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota who first introduced me to the Reformed Druids of North America and who eventually ordained me as a priest of the Earthmother in 1968.
3. It was his (accidental?) omission of early non-Pagan materials in the RDNA teachings (in his copy of *The Green Book)* that led me to believe that Druidism was and should be a Neopagan path; which belief I made into a self-fulfilling prophecy, much to the annoyance, amusement, and/or approval of various other Reformed Druids.
4. Robert was the priest who showed me how powerful invoking Celtic deities in a Celtic language could be and whose love of trees influenced my environmental concerns.
5. He was the one who encouraged me to edit, write parts of, and typeset *The Druid Chronicles (Evolved)*, which eventually became *A Reformed Druid Druid Anthology* under Br. Scharding's care.
6. Although health problems have erased many personal memories of my younger days, I still have an image of the two of us burning hundreds of printing plates and offset printing *TDCE* day after day, working at his printing job after hours, then collating it and shipping it off to as many Reformed Druids as we could find.
7. If Robert had not thought of doing this project, who knows what would have happened to the Reform? The new *Apocrypha*, rituals, and the unforgettable *Great Druish Books* raised a ruckus and got people back in touch with each other, if only to argue!
8. The Carleton Grove was revived—twice!—because students found copies of *TDCE* in the college library, which ultimately became home to what may be the world's largest Druid Archives.
9. To this very day, the pages Robert Larson printed are still there in the library, a legacy to future generations of Carleton students.

Chapter Two

1. But his legacy is greater than this, even if by accident.
2. If I am the father of a few Branches of the Reform, including *Ár nDraíocht Féin:* A Druid Fellowship, then Robert Larson was the unknown grandfather.
3. Without him, there would have been no New Reformed Druids of North America, no Orthodox Druids of North America, no ADF, no Henge of Keltria, and none of the other Neopagan Druid offshoots of the Reform.
4. His humor, his laid-back attitudes about religious orthodoxy, and his teachings live on in hundreds (perhaps thousands) of people he never knew.
5. Another memory of him that survives is of the day I asked him about Druid holidays. "Robert," I said to him, "today's the fall Equinox. Aren't we supposed to observe it or something?"
6. He put his banjo down, got up and went to the balcony of our apartment and looked at the setting sun.
7. "Yep, looks like an equinox to me!" he said and went back to his chair and resumed his playing.
8. Though I was mildly annoyed at the time, years later this incident was a source of much fruitful meditation for me.

Chapter Three

1. I have not been to California for many years and long ago I lost touch with Robert.
2. Occasionally I would hear about local groves out there and someone who had moved or passed away, but seldom news about him.
3. I bitterly wish that I had made more of an effort to connect with him, for this week I was informed that he had become another example of a disposable elder.
4. For this is America, where those who are old, sick, and poor are free to simply curl up and die.
5. After all, universal health care would be "socialized medicine" - a horror beyond belief to those who profit from the current medical-drug-insurance industry (even though every other civilized nation in the world has it).
6. The tale of Robert's death is not a pretty one, but it is one that some of us may expect to repeat.
7. Like many inside and outside of the Reform, he had no retirement savings. He wound up being evicted from his apartment May 5th of this year.
8. Now there's a Happy Beltaine for you!
9. He moved into a residence hotel with the help of a family member and lived there for about three months.
10. Naturally he had no medical insurance, so he was unable to buy medication for his diabetes.
11. The diabetes eventually caused a heart attack around Lughnasadh and killed him.
12. As far as I know, he was alone at the time.

Chapter Four

1. I'm fairly sure that Robert never thought of himself as a "Pagan Elder," but he died like one.
2. Non-Pagan Druids may be unaware that many of the founders and older leaders of the Neopagan movement have died over the last several years, most of them alone and in poverty.
3. For while creating mythologies and temples and clergy and festivals and traditions, we have somehow neglected to create a safety-net for our elders.
4. There don't seem to be any Pagan nursing homes, hospitals, homeless shelters, or retirement communities.
5. I have often remarked that most of the good things and the bad things about American Neopagans have to do with the fact that we are Americans who happen to be Neopagans.
6. Like most Americans, we have simply not thought much about the future, or assumed blithely that everyone had enough money in a Social Security account to protect them.
7. All too often we also assumed that "somebody else" would take care of anyone needing help, so few Pagan charities have been started.

8. Ironically, the women and men who have spent the most time and energy helping to birth and nurse the Neopagan movement usually live at a much lower standard of living than the majority of their students or congregations.
9. For hours spent serving others don't count for salaries or retirement plans, and those who claim to know magic are assumed (erroneously) to be able to conjure whatever they might need.
10. So Pagan Elders who spend 40 or 50 or even 60 hours per week helping their community often wind up living on the streets or turning down the heat in their homes to save energy costs.
11. And whereas members of other faiths would be horrified to see one of their clergy living in genuine poverty (without an oath to do so), while most of their members are middle-class, Neopagans all too often simply don't bother to look.
12. For they have decided that money is evil and that spiritual people shouldn't really need any.
13. Besides, they need to save their money for beer and pizza and CDs and DVDs and a faster computer and trips to the beach and other sorts of self-indulgence.
14. None of this may be of interest to some of you, for hardly any of the Reformed Druid clergy function as such on a full time basis, which may be just as well.
15. But Robert's death, following on so many others, has renewed a determination on my part to see to it that my Neopagan brothers and sisters start paying attention to these issues.
16. In his death I fear I see my own and the deaths of many of my colleagues.
17. So I will be focusing much of my personal time and energy over the next several years working with others to create the long term resources we will all need sooner or later.
18. Pagan communities both urban and rural, some just for elders and some with a full range of ages, as well as homeless shelters, food pantries, visiting nurse services and more are on the table.
19. Eventually we will have Curmudgeonly Acres and the Pagan Old Coots home, as well as Bridget's Maternity Services and Thor's Lodge for Pagan Veterans.
20. You my sisters and brothers in the Reform are most welcome to join the planning now and use the results later.
21. I will post information about these projects on my website, which should be <www.neopagan.net> for the next ten years or so.

Chapter Five

1. I had planned to make this epistle a cheery one, for we have much to celebrate; though Robert's passing has (no doubt much to his amazement) sobered me.
2. It is really amazing that the Druidic memes planted so long ago should still be bearing fruit today.
3. Now there are tens of thousands of people calling themselves Druids, all around the world, and the Founders of the RDNA deserve a bit of the credit.
4. I thank you all, living and passed over, for the joy and beauty you created, accidentally or deliberately.
5. And this Samhain and every Samhain thereafter, let us raise a glass of the Waters to Robert Larson, priest of the Earth Mother and now one of the Mighty Dead.

The Last Epistle of Robert

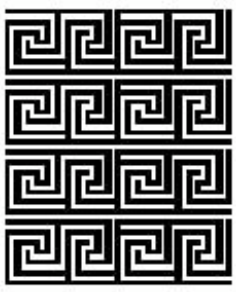
(By Robert Larson, 2004?)

(New to ARDA 2)

An fh'rinne in aghaidh an tsaoil. (the truth against the world.) - old druid motto (really)
Everything you know is wrong. -The Firesign Theater

1. The First of these sayings should, I feel, serve as a motto for all druids, whatever their personal belief systems.
2. As druids, we have committed ourselves to the search for that which we believe to be true.
3. By implication, then, we commit ourselves to maintain our truth even though the entire world disagree, much less other druids.
4. After all, virtually all the generally agreed upon truths of today began as individual or minority opinions.
5. For instance, atomic theory, which most accept as demonstrable scientific fact, has its basis in a philosophical truth of Epicureanism.
6. As the ancient Druids believed, truth will be recognized, sometimes suddenly, when truth will shake the world, or other times gradually.
7. The belief in the moral force of truth was not the exclusive property of the druids, of course.
8. Indeed, it is found throughout the Indo-European realms, from the Hindus through the Persian and Greeks to Ireland.
9. From the Greek Stoic philosophers it spread itself to early Christianity in the form of the logos. More about this later.
10. For now, let me say that each druid must maintain his truth, come what may, even if it leads to the conclusion of the second motto.
11. Well it may lead to this conclusion, for history is written by the victors and the beliefs that are most familiar are those of the majority.
12. Familiarity and victory are, however, no guarantee of truth, nor have they ever been.
13. With all this modestly in mind, I will expand in this epistle some things that seem to me to be true.
14. Some of you may think that I'm crazier than ever, but my hope is not to convince you, but to give you some insights into matters druidical which formulated themselves to me as a result of my studies while I was reading Brother Michael's history of the RDNA…..

[The text ends abruptly at this point.]



Some Final Thoughts

(By Norman Nelson, 1976)

(Carleton Apocrypha Only)

1. In creating the RDNA, we took as our basic philosophy what I usually sum up as, "Take a look around you at nature there must be something bigger than we are!" For many people, this came to be a deep and abiding sort of faith. Many who could not stomach 'organized religion' were attracted to Druidism, which was most definitely a disorganized religion.
2. RDNA never asked people to renounce their own religion, but was rather supplementary to the "standard" religions. If you read the Tenets, you will see this. For some, Druidism remained supplementary; for some, it became primary; and for the majority, I believe, it was an interesting experiment which was soon dropped and probably forgotten.
3. It is difficult from my perspective, remembering the beginnings of our "joke," to know what Druidism means to those who encountered it in later years, after the founders were gone. It has remained viable, which means that we must have tapped some sort of fundamental need in people; it is taken quite seriously by quite a few, which means that we created something deeper than we originally intended.
4. To all who have experienced it, in the various Groves which have been established or through the telling of the story, THE BLESSINGS OF THE EARTH-MOTHER BE UPON YOU.

Peace! Peace! Peace!

A Conclusion, 1996

It would be false for me to imply to you that everything was milk and honey amongst the Druids after the *A Cup filled to the Brim with Druidism* in 1976 until the *Book of Lacunae* in 1996. There were quite a few more broadsides fired between 1976 and 1982, but rarely with any great amounts of debate or essays of introspection. Most of the surviving essays from that period are found in the Part Twelve collection of Druid Chronicler newsletters. I just feel that the Druids stopped writing really interesting letters, or they were just repeating, in less flowery prose, most of the points that we have already covered. The further study of other letters in the Archives is always available to you.

Please remember that the authors of the Apocrypha cannot be considered as speaking for anybody in the Reform but rather for themselves alone. The Apocrypha was a collection of opinions about how Druidism has been experienced by various Druids, at different times, in various ways. Each is but "one way, yea, one way among many."

May the Blessings of the Earth-Mother be apparent to you everyday of your life.

Mike the Confused

Reference Selections

Between the Lines

End Notes for the

Books of the Apocrypha

Essentially, this is a collection of small commentary by Isaac Bonewits (IB), Richard Shelton (RMS), Norman Nelson (NN), and Michael Scharding (MS).

The Book of Faith

1 David Fisher, retired and became a somewhat embarrassed Instructor in Christian Theology at a Southern University. He is now an ordained Anglican Priest and occasionally wishes that everybody forgot about the Reformed Druids. IB

8 All original sexisms have been left intact. IB

9 "Every form of religious ritual is magickal." IB

10 Others do, however. IB

Epistle of David the Chronicler

1:1 To Norman Nelson from David Frangquist; written originally in Aug. of 1964. IB

1:5 Nelson was in what was then known as the "missionary quandary": if all three officers were needed to consecrate the Waters, and if consecrated Waters are necessary to create First and Second Order Members, how could a single Third Order Druid/ess star a Grove? This was later solved by a vote of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu (see Records). "I held my own services during the Summer of 1964 at our cabin in the Black Hills of South Dakota. My sister acted as Preceptor in an abbreviated Grove." NN

The Missionary Quandary was settled by the Council in 27 January 1965 Missions (a). When celebrating with no 2nd Order present, the priest has the entire congregation give the responses in unison. RMS

1:7 The Episcopal Bishop of South Dakota, who was staying in an adjacent cabin. IB

1:8 As David Fisher mentions in the Book of Faith, "none of us at first thought the RDNA would continue: it had started out as a joke to protest the religious requirement, which was now accomplished. Given the perspective of ten more years, I know we created more than we suspected. The self-mocking ritual to which David Frangquist refers (in chapter three below) was what led to my comments about playacting." NN

2:1 A summer scout camp in Northern Wisconsin where Frangquist was a counselor that summer. RMS

2:8 "The Grove there died out after two years, when Hirsch and Helding moved out of the area and lost touch." Frangquist.

2:10 "In the Fall of 1964, I started a Grove at Vermilion, South Dakota (where I was in Graduate School) and found much the same results as described in this chapter." NN

3:1 "Another way in which this is frequently stated is that a religion is a combination of a magical system and a philosophical system, although there is usually a mention of an orientation towards Higher Beings." IB

3:3 See note to The Book of Faith 8 above.

3:7 There is a great deal of disagreement among Druids concerning this and the subsequent references to the negative aspects of rituals. For a totally opposite opinion, see The Second Epistle of Isaac. IB

3:11 This can prove difficult, as we know very little about the Ancient Druids. Some Reformed Druids now hold that any Paleopagan religion may serve as proper inspiration for new rituals. IB

The Outline of the Foundation of Fundamentals.

Written by David Frangquist in 1970 c.e. [Shouldn't that be 1966? MS] The note of the Book of Faith 8 above applies here as well. "This particular book can be said to represent the original philosophy behind the founding of the RDNA (insofar as any one person's opinion can) better than any other Book currently in the Apocrypha. Which may go a long way towards explaining why so many of the older members of the RDNA were so upset at the ideas that later led to the forming of the various offshoots." IB

The Discourse of Thomas the Fool

III: 1 See Customs XI. See the End-Notes for Customs XI. RMS

The Wisdom of Thomas the Fool

2:2 A reference to the Consecration of the Waters of Life in the Order of Worship. MS

2:3 This is his own interpretation. MS

2:4 The Wisdom of the Waters appears to be his own creation. MS

2:8 Druid numerology perhaps? The Seven-Fold powers are called upon when consecrating the Waters of Life and the Thirteen-Fold mystery was discussed deeply in the Discourse of Thomas the Fool. MS

The Book of Changes

1:6 For an explanation of all these terms, see *The First Epistle of Isaac.* IB

1:11 "At the time of the writing of this letter, I knew of only the Berkeley and the Twin Cities Groves as still active. I later found out that the Chicago and the Stanford Groves were also still alive (the first vigorously and the second barely)." IB. It now turns out that the Ann Arbor Grove was also in existence at this time, however, their ArchDruids did not disseminate this news widely. It is also claimed that the Carleton Grove was also active. (see notes to 1:13, below).

1:12 Although it is confusing to monotheistic theologians, Neopagans apparently suffer no difficulties in being clergy in several religions at the same time. It should be noted, however, that at least one ArchDruid of the RDNA has emphatically stated his belief that being a priest/ess in a Neopagan religion does not automatically constitute a conviction or qualification to be a Third Order Druid/ess in the RDNA. -IB

1:13 It certainly seemed to be defunct at the time, however, your Editor [IB] is now told that it actually was not officially defunct at all, merely less active than in the past (though there is some disagreement among Druids as to what constitutes an "active Grove). One ex-ArchDruid of Carleton has offered this explanation for his position that the Carleton Grove has never actually been defunct: The Grove has seen several lean years, he says, but with one exception, its continuity has never been broken. This exception was the Great Interim in 1968, which lasted only a few months but caused multiple difficulties. ArchDruid Thomas Carlisle left Carleton during the Winter, leaving behind an active Grove with no one to lead it. David Frangquist helped start it up again the next Spring, "but much tradition and lore had been lost and it took us nearly two years to recover them, " through much correspondence with David Frangquist and Norman Nelson (most of it now in the Carleton Grove Archives). Since then, personal friendships and a concern for the Grove's continuity has led to deliberate efforts to keep continuity going, which have been for the most part, successful.

He notes officially, the Grove still exists during the Summer Vacation and that (even if there are no meetings) the ArchDruid still gets much work done. The "chaos of the last two years" (1972-74) was caused by all but one of the Third Order Druids deciding to take a year off and go abroad at the same time, so that interest on campus lagged. But '"the tradition at Carleton is" that anyone elected ArchDruid/ess stays as such until a new one is elected, so the Grove continued to officially exist as an "active Grove."

In any event, at the time this letter was composed, the author had received a written note from Carleton indicating the demise of that Grove ("The Druids are dead, long live the Druids!") IB

1:18 As this verse obviously show, this letter was not edited at all, except to correct spelling an punctuation. It was felt that historical accuracy was of more importance than felicitous phrasing in this Book. IB

1:27 It is important to note that verses 2-27 of this chapter were written before The First Epistle of Isaac, but that Chapters 2-4 were written shortly afterwards (and were meant to go out with it). As explained in Chapter 5, things didn't work out as expected.

2:8 The Berkeley, Chicago and Stanford Groves wanted a coup, while the Twin Cities Grove wanted to Schis. IB

3:8 A matter insisted upon by the ArchDruid of Chicago, as necessary to further the existence of Reformed Druidism. IB

4:4 At least one Bardic Order has been founded since then, the Order of Oberon, by Br. David Geller. A Healing Order called the Order of Diancecht is being started by Sr. Joan Carruth and an Order for the practice of Pagan Ceremonial Magick, called the Order of Merddyn, by Adr. Isaac Bonewits. IB

4:6 Actually, the only drastic removal of material done by Bonewits was the removal of Customs 8:13-15. The other editing was primarily the altering of sexist phraseology. IB

5:11 "It is a remarkable tribute to the basically antipolitical character of Reformed Druidism that even we revolutionaries tend to be incompetent at politics." IB

5:12 This was founded by Isaac Bonewits, who stopped en route from his previous position as ArchDruid of the Twin Cities to his subsequent position as ArchDruid of the Mother Grove which was also located in Berkeley. Sr. Vicki Rhodes became the new ArchDruidess of the Twin Cities and was a member of the PCoADs. Hasidic Druidism is a Branch of the Reform out of the SDNA, consisting of Neopagans of even greater piety (see the writings of the Hasidic Druids) The name of the "Arch

Grove" was chosen because (a) they did not want to name their Grove after a Christian Saint, and (b) because of the magnificent 630 foot Arch that is the symbol of the City of St. Louis. The HDNA has agreed to continue to use the same ordination ceremonies as those of the other Branches of the Reform (with its own additions), so as to retain the Apostolic Succession; and to encourage those who are interested in Reformed Druidism, but not Hasidic style, to get in touch with the other Branches. MJS

5:15 Isaac was notified just before the DC(E) went to the printers, that Richard Shelton, had founded a Grove in Ann Arbor, MI during the summer of 1973. IB

5:16 The PCoADs did not as of August of 1975, include ArchDruids Shelton (Ann Arbor), Morrison (Carleton) or Corey (New York 2). Therefore these have not approved of this Book of Changes nor of the DC(E), although Shelton and Morrison did provide publication feedback. IB

Some Final Thoughts

You may have seen some tiny numbers occasionally in the text. This was Norman's numbered endnotes for the Carleton Apocrypha.

1 i.e. The Druid Chronicles, for which this book was once intended. Many Druids would not use the word "canon" in this context.
2 See the Between the Lines entry for this verse.
3 A summer camp in Wisconsin where David worked as a counselor.
4 See Cus. 8 and Med. 4.
5 Cus. 11.
6 Tao The Ching. Chapter 17.
7 President of Carleton College when Druidism was founded.
8 Professor of Religion at Carleton, and later Dean of the College. For a time he served as the faculty advisor for the Carleton Grove.
9 From his introduction to The Sufies by Idres Shah.
10 Gerre Goodman, in a letter to Isaac dated 9/3/74.

Historiography of the Books of the Apocrypha,

(By Mike, 1996 & 2003)

A.K.A.

The Dirty Laundry of the Reformed Druids

Note to the Reader

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a historiography is: "The writing of history based on a critical analysis, evaluation and selection of authentic source materials and composition of these materials into a narrative subject to scholarly methods of criticism." Essentially I am writing a history of Reformed Druidism by discussing trends shown in the letters of past Druids, and I expect you to disagree with me and write to me why you disagree. These analyses of the contents of the Books of the Apocrypha put them into a historical context and timeline, making them more meaningful. If you have no prior familiarity with Reformed Druidism, you might find this historiography confusing and boring, and you might be better off by first reading my "History of Reformed Druidism." After that, you may be more interested in the historicity of the Apocrypha.

A Spring Thaw?

This is a rare and interesting look into a young and passionate David Frangquist in the spring term of 1964. The chapel requirement had not yet been lifted, the Chronicles had not been finished, and the Third Order was not created. Many of the early Druids at Carleton had a connection with the local radio stations (KARL AM and KRLX FM) being broadcast from Willis Hall (then the Student Center). David had obviously done some of his homework on Celtic matters and was beginning to show us his ability to inspire and lead at this point, just at the point when Fisher was beginning to have his first doubts on his participation in the RDNA.

The Book of Faith

This book was written by David Fisher, the founder of the RDNA, on 4/12/64.

Fisher at this point was ending his junior year at Carleton and felt deeply that he was going to enter the Episcopal Seminary after graduation in 1965, which he eventually did. He was slightly worried by how Reformed Druidism had taken on a life of its own, and that he may have founded a full-blown religion. There may have been some anxiety that the review board of the Seminary might frown on his Druidical activities. Fisher knew that Nelson and Frangquist would be succeeding him as ArchDruid in May and November, respectively, and that Frangquist was currently writing the Druid Chronicles (Reformed). Fisher wanted to add some commentary to the Chronicles, perhaps to keep readers from taking the Reform too seriously. The Book of Faith was Fisher's attempt to reconcile all these points and leave some guidance as the Reform left his guardianship.

The Book of Faith was never appended to the Druid Chronicles (Reformed), which people felt should be kept as a self-sufficient document. The Book of Faith has been looked

upon in many ways by different people. Some saw it as more meddling and control-attempts by David Fisher, others as a valuable lesson. Whatever their opinion, it has been one of the more widely read letters in the Reform, and it provides a rare insight into the mind of David Fisher. It is the only real document of any size left to us from Fisher's pencil. It is also a good book to read when a Druid feels that their faith is under assaults of credibility. Outside of the three Apocryphas, the Book of Faith has never been published.

The Epistle of David The Chronicler

This book was written at the end of the summer of 1964 from David Frangquist to Norman Nelson. Norman Nelson had been a summer stand-in ArchDruid of Carleton, after Fisher stepped down, from April of 1964 to September of 1964, at which point Frangquist became ArchDruid of Carleton until April of 1966. Norman Nelson had graduated in June of 1964 and moved back home to South Dakota. As mentioned in the End-Notes, above, the grove in question was his cabin. He later started a grove at Vermilion, S.D., at his grad-school.

David Frangquist was writing this letter after having published The Druid Chronicles (Reformed), and Frangquist was about to begin his two year Arch-Druidcy of Carleton. In many ways, Frangquist was a major shaper of how Druidism would develop at Carleton for decades. Frangquist wrote the Druid Chronicles (Reformed), assembled the Green Book, (and with his wife Deborah Gavrin Frangquist) restarted the Carleton Grove on at least three occasions, been a mountain of resources & advice to countless Archdruids, and has played a major role in the Isaac Affair. This letter, therefore could be construed, with the Druid Chronicles, as showing Frangquist's view of Druidism at the beginning of his Arch-Druidcy. It is a good statement on how and why a Third Order Druid should undertake a missionary Grove. I, myself, wish that my own Druidry had been so far advanced after only one year! Like the Book of Faith, the Epistle of David the Chronicler has never been "published" outside of the three Apocryphas.

The Outline of the Foundation of Fundamentals

David Frangquist wrote this on June 6th, 1966 at the close of his ArchDruidcy at Carleton. Dick Zempel was taking over at this point. David had just completed the last touches on the Green Book and was probably thinking back on his two productive years at Carleton. It is difficult to know how many levels of humor are buried in this work, even the dating 6/6/66 is a joke. Outlines are the strictest forms of thought, yet there is no strict binding of Reformed Druidism in this Outline. Frangquist appears to have had a love-hate relationship with form and officialness. Many of his other early letters show him spoofing officialness and talking strictly with his tongue in his cheek. This is perhaps the last of these jokes. Outside of the Apocryphas, this has never been published, although it seems to have been widely-read.

Leabhar Toirdhealbhaigh

These poems was written by Robert Larson in the spring of 1967 before his Archdruidcy while of Berkeley (1968-1976). The title is Irish for "Book of Torvel" and could be pronounced as "Lyow-ur Turuli(g)" (it could also be pronounced "kkakzzpopzidkdkaltzt," but that would be very silly). At the time of its publishing in 1975 for DC(E), Robert was in the SCA and ran under the name "Toirdhealbhaigh MacLorcain, mainly to bedevil any herald attempting to pronounce it. The grove jokingly called me Turlock MacGargle (At least, I think it was a joke.) Earlier, I might have called it "Leabhar Aedha," later "Leabhar Chathail," or whatever."

Robert Larson is an old Carleton Druid, present during the birth of the RDNA, although like Frangquist, he only joined the RDNA after the initial weeks. Robert Larson, like I mention in his interview in Part 10, never graduated from Carleton, but left midway through Frangquist's ArchDruidcy. Larson had drunk deeply of Carleton Druidism and was a proto-hippie. He was also deeply interested in Paleo-Celtic material, far beyond any of the other Carleton Druids in the original Grove. Larson was the one to introduce much of the Celtic flavor into Berkeley Druidism and start its leanings toward Celtic Neo-Paganism (which Bonewits later accentuated). However in Larson's own life, Druidism was a quiet and contemplative activity, as is shown in this poem. His reference to being Archdruid of Clann-Na-Brocheta was a foreshadowing of his founding the Orthodox Druids of North America in 1977 with a group of Celtic reconstructionist entertainers (who performed at the Northern California Renaissance Pleasure Faire). That group met occasionally for outdoor parties (Paddy's day, Bealtaine, Solstice) usually on Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, all dressed in costume with lots of swords around.

This poem was rarely seen by Pre-1976 Druids outside of Berkeley. It is of a similar flavor to Letter to My Brothers. The verse "Softly go, wanderer, Where the wood calls, And lives." Somehow was not in the 1996 version, and has been re-inserted.

Letter to My Brothers

This was written by Steve Savitzky who was ArchDruid of Carleton from 1968 to 1969. He was the last Carleton Druid to have personally met one of the Founders until a reunion in the 80s. Steve went onto to found the long-lived Stanford Grove (a.k.a. the Southern Shores) in California. The original copy of this letter is not extant, and has only been published in the Carleton Apocrypha. Compare it with Leabhar Toirdhealbhaigh.

The Discourse of Thomas the Fool

This document was probably only known to the Carleton Druids of the 1970-1978 period, or the Age of Shelton, as I humorously call it. The author was Thomas McCausland (CL70: Shelton) and it was probably written as a sermon after May 1970 but before June 1971. It is perhaps one of the most mystical pieces of writing to ever come from the Carleton Druids. It is also a very rare example (along with The Wisdom) of an detailed opinion of a Carleton Druid upon their own literature. I suspect that many sermons and discussions have been made orally by dozen of Druids about the Book of Meditations of DC(R) or the Green Book, but this is the only example in writing that we have. Thomas experienced what I call, "Way Deep Druidism." It is a pity that we only have two of Thomas' sermons, because I really like them. The Discourse was only released in the Carleton Apocrypha and Isaac probably never knew of its existence.

As was explained elsewhere, the Thirteenfold mystery, is a powerful poem composed by Amherghin the Druid, as described in the well known "The Book of Invasions of Ireland." Most Druid groups in America agree that is very special meditational poem. The version possessed by the Reform was translated from the original Gaelic by Prof. John Messenger. It is a poem of union with Nature, and of full self-Awareness. It is commonly used in the Invocation phase of the Order of Worship.

The remainder of the Discourse concerns itself with trying to describe Be'al. Be'al, as is mentioned elsewhere, is one of the strange terms used in Reformed Druidism. The Book of Meditations in DC(R), which Thomas must have read many

times, devotes chapters in trying to describe Be'al, and acknowledges its failure. Although it may be related to the Irish Bel, I suspect most Druids use the term "Be'al," because it sounds like "be all," as in "the be-all and end-all." It is a neutral term, perhaps, for what Christian Mystics call "God," or perhaps "the Holy Spirit." No one agrees with me on a definition.

The Wisdom of Thomas the Fool

Again, written by Thomas McCausland, but we know the specific date of August 25th, 1970.

It is another rare letter, because it examines the underpinnings of liturgical terminology of the Reform. It was probably put in the Carleton Apocrypha by Richard Shelton as a Zen-ish experiential counterbalance to Isaac's meticulous and dogmatic examination of the Order of Worship, as was shown in *The Second Epistle of Isaac*. Indeed, this is a very Zen-Druidic piece, which is filled with Carleton Druidism, in my opinion. Sometime in the early 70s, an abbot (Eshin Nishimura) from a Japanese Zen monastery taught courses on meditation and religion at Carleton. Thomas attended every one of them.

One detects more clearly here, than in The Discourse, the unusual tone of fervency, perhaps even an evangelistic overtone? This would not be due to fear that Carleton Druidism was in one of its "down-phases." Richard Shelton was in the middle of his prosperous two year ArchDruidcy at Carleton and he had groomed Glen McDavid as his successor. If anything, this was a time of Druidic Renaissance. Some Zen masters have been very intense in their attempts to "awaken" their pupils out of ignorance; perhaps this is what Thomas is trying to do?

The purpose of this sermon is about "True Names," a term that I have not heard used anywhere else. However, I suspect that Thomas was deeply inspired by the Zen in the Book of Meditations from DC(R), as was shown in the Discourse. Perhaps the idea of "True Names" was taken from Med. 1:11, where Frangquist (on his Third Order Vigil) heard his "name" called three times? With that verse, Thomas may be interpreting "name" to mean the inner reality & consciousness of Frangquist, what Reformed Druidism calls "Awareness." Thomas's discussion of "True Names" seems to have a similar purpose as the Zen master's question; "What was your original face (or name) before you were born?"

As is common with Carleton Druidism, Thomas wonderfully attacks the role of ritual in Reformed Druidism (see the Book of Faith and Epistle of David the Chronicler). Thomas appears to be putting a heavy stress on the importance of Vigiling, which I believe all Druids should do regardless of whether they choose to accept the burden of the Third Order. Another interesting reference is 3:7, that "The Patriarchs know your Name." That is a very strange statement. He is, uniquely, also playing here with a bit of numerology.

The Smiley Letters

The Smiley Affair began at the end of the Savitzky Archdruid, and finished by the start of school at the beginning of Richard Shelton's formative Archdruidcy. Richard Smiley (CL67:Frangquist) returned to Illinois after Carleton and went to Purdue University for Grad School. It was during the Vietnam war and after graduate school, he faced the possibility of being drafted again for a war he did not believe in. Like the Cherniack affair in the Chronicles, it was a direct confrontation with authority on the issue of recognition of a religious group. What I find so fascinating about it is the way it was resolved without having the group recognized, but accomplishing its mission and dodging definition. Also it raised the thought to me of why the government authorities allowed religious authorities not to go to war, but the laymen had to go. Are priests always more conscientious in their objection to war, or is it one scratching the other's back?

The Following is some commentary by Richard Shelton who assembled these letters.

On Thu, 30 Jan 2003 17:40:24 -0500,

Dear Michael --

I owe you a profound apology for putting this off so long. When you first asked for the Smiley stuff, I did look, but couldn't find it. Your continued prodding prompted me to look further-- and further. Finally after your last phone call, I ransacked all my files. (It took several hours.) I still haven't found *my* copies of the letters, but in about the last place I expected to find anything-- a file marked "New Stuff" -- I ran across some copies I made recently of Dave's copies, which he had given to Eric. So anyway, I found something. The "originals" (themselves copies) are all in the Archives.

One look at them made me realize they wouldn't FAX very well, so I tried scanning them in and applying some image processing before hitting them with optical character recognition. That worked pretty well; I only had to re-type two of the letters, though manual editing of the optical scan was required throughout. Anyway, I give you the letters in electronic format, so at least you won't have to key them in.

Some notes about the format:

(1) The file is an ordinary .txt file, so you should have no trouble reading it and importing it into whatever text processor you're using.

(2) The letters are in chronological order, each separated from the next by a line of hyphens.

(3) All the originals were typewritten, so a monospaced font like Courier would be appropriate -- but suit yourself. I did take care to preserve the line breaks of the originals, but I regularized the indentations to 3 spaces and 33 spaces.

(4) I used slashes / / to delimit comments about the format: e.g., / letterhead/ to indicate that the SSS letterhead is preserved in the copy, /s/ to indicate that a signature is preserved in the copy. Comments that are not in slashes are typed or handwritten on the copy. (Exception: the "[sic]"s are my additions to this file. You can ignore them if you like.)

(5) I used the HTML <u> ... </u> tags to mark underlining. But I cheated: in the typescripts, each word is underlined separately (not the intervening spaces), while I put the tags around the entire underlined phrase.

(6) I was pretty careful about preserving non-standard punctuation (including absence of punctuation). I don't know how much flavor of the original you want to preserve.

-Richard

Mike: What was your view of the Smiley affair? Was it just helping a friend, a feeling of ministry-ship in the RDNA, or a protest against the war's categorization of people? I'd like to know how it affected you.

Richard: Principally, it was just an understanding that what Smiley was asking was something that came as part of the Archdruid's job: verifying that he was a priest, that priesthood answered our notion of minister, that insofar as I was aware, he was holding services. Of course, it didn't hurt that it was a way to help someone stay out of Vietnam -- though I was not yet a staunch anti-war partisan. Steve was way ahead of me on that; my political radicalization (such as it was) came only after the bombing of Cambodia and the frightening conservative backlash unleashed against the anti-war movement. [See Exorcism of War, Part Three of ARDA.]

However, the categorization of young people for military service is not something that bothers me per se -- how else will you raise an army in need? The SSS was a creation of Congress; how else is a democracy going to meet the necessity of raising an army? I will agree that the idiocy of how people were chosen for service bugged me (still does), and the stupidity and vengeful unfairness of many of the people they got to serve on the draft boards was criminal. Also that the argument for raising an army for *that* war was never well established. But that there needs to be *some* fair mechanism for raising defensive man-power was not an issue for me.

Mike: When was his status finally deferred, due to age? Can't remember how it closed.

Richard: I don't remember the date, but it was not long (weeks?) after my last letter of 1 August 1969 to his draft board. He knew the 4-D deferment was hopeless, but he also knew that since they had scheduled his personal appeal on his 26th birthday, the board was effectively offering him a deal: they would let the matter drop without giving him the deferment, but also without giving him a motive to push things any further, lest they get into real legal difficulty. He intended to give them a good argument at the hearing, but he didn't expect to convert them.

But this was not really about 4-D deferments at all, or about whether the Druids should be recognized as a bona fide religion. My interpretation of Smiley's entire strategy is that it was one long delaying tactic to stave off the draft for several months until he turned 26. He did not raise the issue at all until the draft board finally figured out that he was no longer in grad school and reclassified him 1-A -- and then he waited to the last possible moment at each stage before sending the board the requisite letter to prolong the process into the next stage. Whether he could string it out long enough was something of a long shot -- but he was lucky in that the board (or the executive secretary) made a couple of procedural errors that bought him more time. (Boards were notorious for making such errors; draft evasion handbooks gave careful instructions for capitalizing on them.)

The real wildcard (and what makes the story interesting) is that RDNA had just the right whiff of legal complication about it that the draft board decided to play it easy.

Peace,

-- Richard

The Codex of Form Missive

It was with great trepidation that Shelton released this document into the young eager hands of Mike the Packrat, and with great hesitance that I publish it now. Every Arch Druid makes mistakes, and this is the one that Brother Richard regrets the most. Not so much for the content, but for the manner in which it was phrased and presented. A bit too official sounding. Too much, too fast, too soon. Brother Richard is now a glacially slow Druid, but back in the early 70s, he was a rocket of energy and organizing. Perhaps in this respect, he parallels the rise of Isaac Bonewits, except that Shelton pulled back eventually, and Isaac kept going.

There had been a period before Savitzky during which much tradition had been lost, due to a poor overlapping of members, or perhaps it was a period of reformulation? Regardless, Shelton felt the pressure of the Smiley Affair, and wanted to tidy up the ship before leaving the port at the beginning of his two year Archdruidcy that Fall Term in 1969. The records, a blue binder of past documents, was without rhyme or reason, and difficult to fathom; perhaps being planned so. Missing services and inconsistencies bothered the young Archdruid. Thus, this letter was a request for clarification.

Things that had been traditionally understood, were seemingly felt to be unnecessarily canonized here as the only way by some of the recipients, who naturally began to respond back rather vigorously at the believed imposition. In Shelton's view it was mostly a paraphrasing of what previously passed measure had stated, in a more full description. However, not all things need to be said. It is possible that many Third Order Druids had not read the Record of the Council or had fuzzy memories, and over-reacted also, as the following sample letters will attest.

Mike: By the way, you were involved in the Smiley Affair during the beginning of your tenure as AD, so I was wondering if the scramble for officiality influenced the Codex of Affair into being?

Richard: No. The Codex of Form owes far more to the grove's near brush with extinction in 1967. I wanted to be sure that what was in the Record of the Council was known; I wanted to be sure that tradition was not lost. I wanted people to let the AD know when they moved and when new priests were consecrated -- because keeping track of that is the AD's responsibility. While the Codex (as I came to understand) was not the apposite solution, it addressed a problem that many besides me (including both Frangquist and Bonewits) also felt (as witness later proposals to the Council): we all realized that communicative inertia would hamper orderly change. But we finally gave up on that; gave up even on adopting a regular voting scheme (despite two or three tries). I did take the role of being the "head of a national religion" seriously. I think the Order of Investiture (Spring, 1969) reflects many of the same concerns that later engendered the Codex of Form. But the main concern was Continuity, not Recognition.

The Reply of David

This reply by David the Chronicler left such a fierce mark on the memory of Richard Shelton, who didn't originally feel he had done anything wrong, from a person he had only just begun corresponding with over the Smiley Affair. In addition, perhaps enough years had passed to inflate the memory of Frangquist? Frangquist at the time was in Illinois, but also a few years earlier had been stationed in Korea, with a belly full of military red-tape. What a shocking reply! Glenn McDavid, in 2002, told me that, Shelton read the letter and read it again, and sat quietly stunned for a long time after that. In many senses, this letter would set Shelton on a new path for subtler expression, and perhaps steel his responses to Isaac in a few years, at what he saw was a repetition of his own mistakes in the Codex Affair.

Perhaps, with the encouragement of Frangquist, Shelton better organized and looked after the Blue Book of the Archives, despite its adventures of being shuffled between Druids and lost on several occasions.

Reply of the Other David

Sadly, despite the professed belief that RDNA Druids could also belong to any religion, the Founder David Fisher, felt that he could no longer be a Druid. After 1976, contact did not resume with Fisher until 2002, despite repeated attempts on my part. Perhaps, like Shelton, I did not sound in the original tone of the Reform, and therefore couldn't muster a response from him. Fisher's study for the priesthood would continue until the mid 1970s, and would later go on to be a Professor at a university; rather Druidic, I believe.

Fisher's Farewell

Fisher, five years after leaving Carleton, and a brief attempt at a grove in New York City, had found greater solace in the Episcopal church, and no longer felt need to continue the RDNA services. The letter shows a strong awareness of the different actors involved in founding the Druids, perhaps an attempt to distance his creation from himself? I recollect how difficult it had been for Nelson and Frangquist to pry the Archdruidcy from Fisher for 1964-1965. Most of the early rules of the Council of Third Order were quickly pounded out in person, and the priestess issue was a sticking point for Fisher, despite ordaining Jackie Hotz, early on the days of the Reform.

The passage about Jan Johnson writing most of the Chronicles is rather puzzling, and is not discussed anywhere else, even in Frangquist's writings. We know that Jan Johnson wrote an epistle in the summer of 1963 after he graduated, it's mentioned in the Chronicles, but nothing else is mentioned about the letter, which was not kept in the records, although Shelton mentions having it in 1976. One wonders, did Frangquist incorporate the material into the early Chronicles, or was Fisher simply mistaken? Fisher had been rather unhappy with Frangquist's publication, which made him sound too much like a prophet for a new religion, which is why Fisher attempted to have "Book of Faith" added to the Chronicles; thus starting the tradition of the Apocrypha.

The Polite Refusal

Now chastened, Shelton had quickly determined to withdraw the Codex, but was still standing rather firm on the matters of protocol in regards to the Order of Grannos (4th Order), whose Patriarch had to be appointed by the Council. This problem of distant Patriarchs would continue to plague the RDNA debates into the mid 80s, as priests wished to join existing Higher Orders, but were unable to travel easily or locate the necessary Patriarchs.

Apology for Simplicity

This letter refers to the new attempt by Shelton to yet again redress the Priestess issue, by making them identical in all respects with that of Priests. Fisher was considered the last holdout in the search for unanimity on the issue. As Shelton would be cautious of Isaac's reforms, so Frangquist and Fisher and Larson would apply brakes on Shelton during this period of campus unrest and revolutionary fervor.

The Report of Richard

The Priestess vote, the last to be passed by the Council, would consume the remainder of Shelton's two years in office, as this report shows at the end of his first year in the role as Arch Druid. A taxing precision of protocol would later pay off during the Isaac Affair. The feminist movement, I believe had not yet reached its peak, when this issue had been raised; and it may seem like semantics to some viewers, but was the longest simmering debate in the Reform, only resolved in 1971. The choice to remove the phrases in the Book of Customs in DC(E), and other "objectionable" material, caused some discomfort in 1976.

The Epistle to the Encyclopedist

The last writing that I have from Fisher before his disappearance from records. Gordon Melton is a rather famous publisher of encyclopedias on religious matters. After this letter, the RDNA would begin to show up in his various works, with information gathered from Fisher's correspondence with Melton. During this period at Carleton (1971-74), there are few letters of correspondence available to me, and there is some indication, that Druids after McDavid were not very concerned about the Council, until Isaac showed up.

Book of Changes, Part One

As was mentioned elsewhere, I broke this Book into three parts, in order to facilitate the model of a dialogue. This first part contains the letter sent by Isaac Bonewits to the many members of the Council on July 18th, 1974. I fully describe the impact of this letter in my "History of Reformed Druidism in America." Essentially, the last few Archdruids of Carleton had been lax in their Chairship of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu, such that Isaac had assumed that Berkeley & Twin Cities were the only groves left. Isaac by this point had fully embraced Neo-Paganism, which few of the other Druids had ever heard of, and he wished to redefine the Reform into a Reconstructionist Neo-Pagan religion. There were other Reconstructionist Neo-Pagan religions at the time such as Nordic, Egyptian and Greco-Roman; but no exclusively Celtic ones (except possibly Celtic Wicca). Thinking the rest of the Third Orders had "given up" on Druidism, he wanted to make the simple necessary changes for reconversion of the RDNA.

This was not the first time that members of the Council had heard of Isaac. Most knew that Isaac had been ordained to the Third Order in 1969 by Larson. We have letters of communication with Isaac between McDavid, Frangquist and Shelton from the early 70s which are congenial and discuss his interest in the occult. Surprisingly, during those early years, Isaac disapproved of proposals for incorporating more hierarchy or dogmatizing the Chronicles. This letter must have seemed a complete about-face to the Druids in 1974 who thought that they had known Isaac. However, I can understand this as Isaac seeing the growing developments, and wishing to take a greater role, especially after working in a national publication like Gnostica in Minneapolis.

The problem was, as the letters point out, that Carleton and many other groves were still operating, just not talking. Also, the Druids not active in Groves, disagreed with the idea that they were lesser Druids than Grove-active Druids. In short, Isaac should have tested the waters before starting a hurricane in a teacup. A few reconnaissance letters could have avoided most of the acrimony that the Isaac Affair brought up. It is also my opinion from hindsight, that Isaac really had little idea of what Carleton Druidism was, because he only had really known Larson, who was not one to aggressively correct the mistakes of others. Sometimes, such brinkmanship is necessary to goose a response out of the Council.

This one letter, along with the First Epistle of Isaac, which came a month later, rudely awoke the slumbering Druids throughout the Reform. It galvanized them to reaffirm their distaste of several aspects of organized religions. This is probably one of the most important letters every written in the RDNA, at least from an Archival perspective, because it generated controversy and a flood of letters which give us a good idea of the mindset of Reformed Druids during the mid-70s. It also gave us a chance to see their condensed Druidic instruction to Isaac, what would normally take years of living at Carleton to absorb naturally. The resulting letters also show, pretty effectively, what Druidism WAS NOT.

As the following letters will explain, their were several aspects of Isaac's letter that disturbed them, primarily: a need for definition, an interest in evangelizing (and quickly at that), swapping priesthoods with non-Druidic Neo-Pagans to assure the survival of the Apostolic Succession, an assumption that Druidism for everyone is really Neo-Paganism, sexist language (on the Reform's part), a desire for stronger National organization, a feeling that Carleton Archdruids were not suited for the Chair of the Council, that the Higher Orders should be restarted, the issue of majority (instead of unanimity) for settling votes in the Council, the incredible haste of the voting proposal deadline (within 3 months, by November 1st), and what appeared as the dogmatizing of the Druid Chronicles.

All very alarming, considering that it all came from out of the blue. However many of the issues of communication, first raised in the Codex of Affair and Priestess voting letters, would not so easily be put to rest.

The Epistle of Renny

Renny was the second female Archdruid at Carleton, and had taken over from Steve Corey, who had left a mess. Now normally Renny, titled "the Silent," is not one given to anger. Much of the bitterness in this letter, which I am uncomfortable with, is due to the fact that she did not access to a copier and would have to distribute handwritten copies of Isaac's July 18 1974 letter to dozens of past Carleton Druids in time so that a vote could be done by Isaac's imminent deadline.

Her complaints (unbrotherly tone, undemocratic presentation, haste for growth, and concern with restrictive definitions) were commonplace among the replies to Isaac's original letter, and were not assuaged by the First Epistle of Isaac that soon would follow it, as you'll soon see. It should be remembered that Isaac probably didn't really expect a response from Carleton, thinking it was moribund.

The Epistle of Ellen

Ellen Conway wrote this on almost the same day as Renny's Epistle and the Words of Green. This is not unusual since, Richard Shelton and Ellen Conway were good friends, Carleton Druids of the early 70s, and were then studying together at University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Ellen would later marry Richard. She also founded the Ann Arbor grove and worked hard with Richard to control the Isaac Affair. Here we see the first instance in the debate about the primacy of the Basic Tenets and the need to distinguish between personal beliefs and Reformed Druidism. I suspect that Ellen's comment on Neo-Paganism, probably did not sit well with Isaac.

The Words of Green

This was a letter from Richard Shelton to the entire Council on 8/14/74 to begin an actual discussion of Isaac's two letters, something that Isaac's letters had neglected to do (instead of putting things up for a near-immediate vote). Its title comes from the fact that Richard chose green ink when mimeographing copies for people. Shelton, as I mention in his biography, was similar to Frangquist and myself in that we three have a deep long term dedication to preserving the existence of Druidism at Carleton. We three also were involved in producing some of the literature of the Reform. At the time of writing this, his wife, Ellen Conway was currently ArchDruid of the Ann-Arbor Grove (where they were in grad-school); to which Shelton succeeded her. Since Shelton had written to most of the Druids up to this point, it was natural that he would be the one to put the "Carleton Response" into a dignified order. In many ways, Shelton's letter quickly turned Isaac's seemingly belligerent letter into an intensely interesting debate.

An ironic background fact to this letter, was that Shelton had naively proposed the Codex of Form back in the summer of 1969 which had sought to clarify the literary history of Druidism, formalize certain definitions and to clarify the structure of the Council to enable legislation to proceed more smoothly. Isaac at that time, along with Larson and Frangquist, had felt that such codification was too restrictive on Druidism. Now here in 1974, Isaac was seeking codification (among many of the items on his agenda) and Richard was opposing it! Richard was also the only Chair of the Council, besides Frangquist, to oversee the successful passage of legislation through the Council. In fact, Shelton was probably one of the few Druids who understood how the Council worked!

As you can see, Richard succinctly crystallized some of the important points of objection; the non-necessity for extensive self-definition, the inherent non-authority and humbleness of the priesthood in Reformed Druidism, the need to apply Reformed Druidism upon one's own personal religion (and not vice-a-versa), and the need to dialogue in a calm manner befitting Reformed Druidism.

The First Epistle of Isaac

As Isaac mention in his endnotes to DC(E), that this Epistle was written after the letter in the Book of Changes Part One, and that the First Epistle was intended to have been mailed with that letter. The Letter was mailed out, and the Epistle followed about four weeks later in late August of 1974, although we do not have an original copy in the Archives. This delay may have caused even more discord, because the July 18th letter was too curt to really explain Isaac's intentions, and, arriving all by itself, may have negatively predisposed the Druids to any further mailings from Isaac (not that the First Epistle improved their opinion of Isaac). Isaac apparently had already gotten some strong feedback before he had a chance to mail out the First Epistle, and you can see some "Damage Control" being performed through out this Epistle to soothe irritated Druids (see Chapter One). It is likely that he had already received letters from Ellen Conway '72, Richard Shelton and Renny Seidel (who was then currently the ArchDruid of Carleton). Isaac is therefore especially carefully to explain Neo-Paganism, because it is unlikely that any non-Berkeleyite knew much about this term, which was created in 1970 or so. Reformed Druids up to that point had faced many verbal attacks from outsiders that they were practicing "paganism," and now here was one among them who was claiming that it was!

As I discuss in my History, Isaac has a knack for analyzing and micro-labeling things into categories, although he can also be very creative and satirical. Isaac wrote a book, "Real Magic" in 1971, after his graduation and became famous for receiving the first degree in Magic in the entire world. The First Epistle, along with the Second Epistle, shows how Isaac put his sharp mind to examining Reformed Druidism and to show how easily the forms and purposes of Reformed Druidism could be interpreted as being complementary with Neo-Paganism. This was nothing really new, in principal, to Reformed Druidism. Since the beginning, Reformed Druids have always related Reformed Druidism to their own religion; whether it be Christian, Jew, Zen, Taoism, atheism, etc. What was new to most Reformed Druids, was that Isaac was claiming that Reformed Druidism **was the same thing as** Neo-Paganism because it practiced magic, worshipped (what he felt were) authentic gods and goddesses, and had its own scriptures and priesthood. As the responding letters pointed out, many Reformed Druids considered these to be mere outer trappings around a basic common activity and experience of Awareness.

Gobbledegook and Red Tape

I always enjoy reading Gerre Goodman's letters because she constantly reminds us of the need for simplicity in our Druidism. Gerre was at Carleton during Richard's and Glenn's Archdruidcy, but she never really played a big role as a leader. Isaac never got this first letter or her second one, or if he did, he soon forgot about it (based on my talks with him). Which is a pity, since hers was one of the most calming letters that he could have received.

The Epistle of Norman

This letter was written by Norman Nelson to Isaac (and others) on November 10th, 1974.

As I mentioned earlier in the notes to the Epistle of David the Chronicler, Nelson had been deeply involved in the original founding of the RDNA at Carleton, a stand-in Archdruid for a few months, led many services at Carleton, helped to found the Higher Orders, was a Patriarch of the 5th order, had run at least two official missionary groves, and was a general resource for confused Druids. It was apparently rare for Norman to intrude upon the folly of others, much like Larson, but he decided to step in after receiving Isaac's letters. Norman would later help Isaac's preparation of The Druid Chronicles (Evolved), by providing commentary about the early Days of the Reform.

Norman's letter has a few prominent themes; the value of humor in the Reform, the role of "dis-organization," the independence of Reformed Druidism from allegiance with any other religion/philosophy (including Neo-Paganism), its applicability to any religion or philosophy, the unimportance of external trappings, and the viable existence of solitary Reformed Druidism outside of Grove activity. Perhaps, not readily apparent, was the understanding attitude that he conveyed while still holding to his own opinion; the hallmark of good Druidical communication.

Norman has recently joined the RDNAtalk conference on yahoogroups.com in 2002, and is now contributing more of his insightful (pun-filled) mini-epistle on how things all got started. He has always been jovially friendly to phone-calls for assistance in Druidical matters.

The Book of Changes, Part Two

The Book of Changes was written by Isaac near July of 1976 as he was doing the final preparations for printing the Druid Chronicles (Evolved). "Changes" is essentially his look back on the early half of the Isaac Affair, which never really ended until he started ADF in 1983, and to relate to the world his analysis of the situation in mid-1976. Chapter two shows the voting results of his July 18, 1974 letter. The issue of voting methods is covered more fully in my History of Reformed Druidism. Essentially, I believe that most of the Druids had come from Carleton (about 80% of the voters) and many declined or abstained (abstaining is particularly Druidic in that it is a show of independence from organization). It is questionable if anybody "won" since each side was using different standards of "winning"; the Carleton contingent believing in unanimity and Isaac believing in majority-rule, or at least 2/3. Those Druids who did agree on some points (esp. the current ArchDruids of Carleton origin) were primarily concerned that greater communication was required amongst members of the Council, so that future debates would not be so bitter, and founded the New RDNA.

As I've stressed before, this split into three branches is confusing. The New RDNA (NRDNA) was primarily a collection of Third Orders who wanted greater communication and organization than the RDNA felt was necessary. This first variant of the NRDNA primarily existed as long as the Provisional Council of ArchDruids existed (up until about 1977) to discuss possible issues to bring up for vote with the Council of Dalon Ap Landu. The Schismatic Druids of North America were predominantly, if not officially, a Neo-Pagan enclave headed by Isaac. When the NRDNA & Provisional Council fell into disuse after 1977, the remaining Post-Larson Berkeleyites and the SDNA Mother Grove assumed the abandoned name of the NRDNA, with the provision that non-pagan members would still have equal rights. Therefore be aware of the existence of essentially two versions of the NRDNA, especially in the interregnum year of 1976-1977, when the transformation of the NRDNA took place.

Indeed as Chapter Three explains, most people agreed on what the existing traditions of voting and hierarchy was, but wished to discuss possible adjustments to organization, liturgy and other minor points.

The Epistle to the Myopians

This was written by Joan Carruth on March 25th 1976. The title means "Letter to the Near-Sighted," which I think was appropriate. She was an Archdruid or at least a Co-ArchDruid of Berkeley from around 1975 to 1981, with various gaps. She was one of Larson's protégés and a close friend of Isaac, although she would eventually oppose Isaac's full plan of transforming the NRDNA. She also at various times edited the Druid Chronicler magazine and proposed the modest organizing referendums of the Coalition Council of the Order of Dalon ap Landu in the late 70s (that were more modest than Isaac's) when Carleton Druidism had once again lapsed. From my interviews with her, she is an aggressive debater and a leader of people. An overabundance of leadership was one of the factors leading to the Diaspora of Berkeley Druidism. She currently runs the Birch Grove in New Hampshire.

Her Epistle is part praise of the universe, and partly a reminder to the Reform that the world around us (The Earth-Mother) exists above and beyond the dualism of monotheistic thinking. As with Isaac's letters, the issue of ecological awareness and feminism is encouraged. She brings up a good point that Carleton Druidism, or rather most of the US, had to change from a nodding appreciation of Nature to a responsible stewardship of the Earth. It is a valuable lesson to us all. The letter had also been mailed independently of the Druid Chronicles to many members of the Council.

Lessons for a New Archdruid

Isaac was planning to visit Carleton in the Mid-summer of 1976, during school break, just prior to publishing the Druid Chronicles (Evolved). Despite Shelton's early attempts to produce a reading collection for future Archdruids, Richard did not really trust Isaac's motivations, after the earlier Isaac Affair debacle and the introduction of a full-fledged religion such as Neo-paganism. After a very difficult transition of Archdruidcy, the very young Donald Morrison had just taken office, and we can tell that Shelton didn't want an impressionable young Archdruid being confused by Isaac, or leaving Isaac the impression that the current Chairman of the Council of Dalon ap Landu was a novice. Shelton almost appears to be a regent guiding a young prince, not unlike when he took me under his wing in 1993. In retrospect, this letter paints Richard as a frightened schemer, which is certainly not the case anymore, but in the context, we can understand why he was being so cautious, with all the debates that were being raised about replacing the Carleton Archdruid in the organizational hierarchy.

This letter and the succeeding letter, "Post Carleton Perplexations," give us an interesting window into the progress of the publication efforts by Shelton to produce an alternative

text to the Druid Chronicles (Evolved) and to disassociate with Larson & Issac's pet project. It also gives us his rationale for the stage instructions of the Beltane service that you'll find in Part Three. Much of this lore could have been lost without this being written down here.

The Epistle of Richard

This was written by Richard Shelton sometime in May of 1976 to Isaac, but circulated to others. Richard was then the ArchDruid of Ann-Arbor, Morrison had returned from France and finally took up the responsibilities of ArchDruid of Carleton, and Isaac had left Minneapolis to return to Berkeley; an opportunity lost. Richard had spent the last year and a half as a reference source for Isaac, and Isaac had spent the last 18 months putting the Druid Chronicles (Evolved) together with Robert Larson. The initial rift between the two Druids had narrowed as they worked together and talked more. Isaac, at some level, had come to the general assumption that he was the odd-man-out in the Reform and was using the Druid Chronicles (Evolved) as a kind of self-inspection tool to work out a blue print for a new Druidic Neo-Pagan religion. Apparently the previous letter from Shelton had picked a raw nerve, probably telling him that most of the Carleton RDNA wouldn't be interested in the DC(E), which was Isaac's new baby. There was some dissent at Berkeley also in this period as Larson's unifying influence began to recede and control of the Mother Grove pass to Joan and Isaac.

Shelton provided a useful look back at the Isaac Affair and tried to explain this to Isaac. He reiterated that the Reform needs to avoid formalism, must keep itself separate (but applicable) to other religions, the need for sober and responsible discussion, the avoidance of Archdruid "kingship" over the lower Orders, the independence of each Grove, and the omniportance of the individual within Druidism. Is it well known to all the Druids, that the publication of DC(E) (and Isaac's further public interaction) would forever form a connection in the public's mind between "Neo-Paganism" and "Reformed Druidism." Up to this point, most outsiders didn't know squat about Druids, and this vagueness had been a boon to Reformed Druidism. In all likelihood, even without Isaac Bonewits, a Celtic form of Neo-Paganism would have adopted the name of Druidism and influenced public perception of the word Druid.

The big debate of this time period was the provisional Council of ArchDruids which was, as described above, an attempt to improve communication between the Groves. One of the points that the Sheltons were especially worried about was idea of the Chair of the Council of Dalon Ap Landu being chosen from members of the Council of Archdruids. Shelton, amongst others, feared that without the influence of the Carleton environment upon the current Chair of the Council, that the Council might actually abandon the traditional ways of Druidism and start willy-nilly passing legislation or definitions that would force older-Druids to drop out as minority losers. It is also noteworthy that Shelton had just managed to finally relocate the Blue Book of the Archives, and was not interested in having it travel through the Postal Service.

The phrase "questions not tending to edification" is a favorite of Frangquist and Shelton, and comes from a reading in the Green Book.

Post Carleton Perplexations

Despite the calm demeanor of the Epistle of Richard, Shelton was seriously bothered by the activities of the DC(E), the formation of the NRDA, and their tinkering with the Council. In addition, Shelton was reformulating his Druidism after some disappointing years at the Ann Arbor Grove. What to do, but write to Frangquist for further guidance, and explain his background strategy during the current and previous debates?

More is written here about his attempts to get the Green Book and Carleton Apocrypha. To the best of his recollection, neither was officially distributed or published, due to lingering copyright concerns, graduate school, and burnout over the current issues. A rather deliciously enticing mention is made of the Epistle of Jan, but we cannot locate this letter.

My own feelings about post-Carleton blues are rather similar. One of the great difficulties for life after Carleton, is getting the requisite frequent interaction, facility use, and friendship with other Druids. For every Druid service at Carleton, there were several folk-dances, sing-a-longs, plays and shared classes to improve and deepen the relationships. I guess one comparison to the problem is that for some Carleton Druids, being away from Northfield is like a Jew being away from Israel; things don't come as forcefully the farther you go from your origins, unless you can adapt them to new circumstances.

The First Epistle of Robert

This missive was written by Robert Larson and postmarked as May 26th, 1976. For more information on Robert Larson see the Historiography on "Leabhar Toirdhealbhaigh." Larson wasn't one to butt in other people's business, but there comes a time when you must step in between the combatants and heal the peace. Larson, a printer at this time, was in the process of preparing the Druid Chronicles (Evolved) for publication.

There are several points of interest for the historian about Robert's two epistles. It is one of the few glimpses into the originator of Berkeley Druidism, an old-time Carleton Druid, and the ArchDruid nurturer of the Berkeley Grove from 1968 to 1976/7. From the sheer literary output, one would assume that Isaac was the most dominant spokesmen for the Berkeley Grove. After a dozen interviews with other Berkeleyites, it appears that Isaac was merely the most vocal and liberal with the pen amongst them. The people might have listened to Isaac, but they followed Robert. There was scattered interaction between Frangquist, Shelton, Sherbak, Savitzky, Carruth and Larson up to the mid-70s. Larson's was the quiet, steady voice of Berkeley.

In this letter we get another idea of what form of Druidism was being pursued in Berkeley, and why so many of the Berkeley Druids resisted Isaac's changes over the next decade. It also provides us with an eye-witness description of Isaac's behavior that we don't have elsewhere in our records. This letter gives more depth to NRDNA than Isaac's letters alone would have provided to us.

Robert's First Epistle is essentially discussing his idea of a Provisional Council of Archdruids among the original NRDNA, but also being open to the RDNA. Its purposes are plain and simple; dissemination of news, record keeping and a safeguard for keeping communication open amongst the Council; in case the Carleton ArchDruidcy should go into remission. In those circumstances, the Chair of the Council of Dalon ap Landu would annually rotate around the members of the Council of Archdruids, until Carleton got back on its feet. The letter spends a great deal of time reaffirming basic Reformed Druidic ideals of traditional disorganization and independence, which Larson understood as a member of the original Carleton Grove.

The Second Epistle of Ellen

Ellen's snappy response to Robert's proposal is to lay the red-tape even thicker on the process, ensuring that things can't progress without safeguards. Rather ingenious, I do believe. It makes you wonder if the red-ribbons on the third order are a symbolic reminder of our tendency to get dogmatic and officious, despite our best intentions, thus acting as a warning to Druids, that this is a person to avoid, or does it indicate we're already hopelessly bound already?

Felicitous Communications

A very calm response to relax and not let things eat you up. Just what Shelton probably needed at the time. Having dealt with his own attempt at a schism (see Epistle of Midsummer and Early Chronicles), Frangquist knew how to deal with division in the ranks; with calm words and a ready ear.

The Frangquists were in Germany during the Mid-70s to work on several computer projects as civilian computer programmers for the U.S. Army. An earlier overseas posting in Korea in the late 60s had also given Frangquist sufficient experience with red-tape. The Epistle of Midsummer was the second part of this letter.

The Epistle of Midsummer

This was written by David Frangquist and Deborah Gavrin Frangquist to be read, in their absence, at the Midsummer service at Carleton's Monument Hill on June 21st, 1976. Don Morrison was the current Archdruid and many of the older Druid alumni were returning for their class Reunions. It was also the hope that Isaac Bonewits would come down from Minneapolis to heal some bitter wounds. Unfortunately, Isaac had to leave Minneapolis a few weeks earlier and return to Berkeley, postponing the final reconciliation between him and the Carleton faction for 17 years when he returned to Carleton in April of 1994. The atmosphere at the time of the reading of this Epistle was a bit frantic. The last two years had seen some fierce debating, unsettling accusations, the schisming of the Reform, the soon-to-be-published DC(E) which threatened dogmatization of the Reform and the realization that the Carleton ArchDruidcy was a shaky institution at best with an uncertain future viability. The movement felt exhaustion, distrust and nervous confusion. Wounds needed healing.

Realizing this, David & Dee brought up the essential foundations of Druidism to re-enforce the strength of the listener's Druidism. They reaffirmed the listener's memories of how Carleton and Reformed Druidism overlapped so heavily as to be indistinguishable and pleasant. Druidism served its purpose by helping the present Druids, which was sufficient now, even if the organization disappeared tomorrow. The present was all-important, by looking ahead you defeated the purpose of Druidism. Druidism existed to ourselves outside of labels, definition, or the opinions of others. The Basic Tenets were dredged up again as the only basic definition for Reformed Druids, regardless of whatever else a Druid later professed. Finally the Council was recognized as a tool for communicating within the Reform, but not as the only sign of the existence of Reformed Druidism, which would live in the hearts of every Druids. If the Council changed its purpose, such as to become a tool to divide the Druids, then they should ignore it and continue on with what they believed was the Reform.

Soothing as this letter was, the debates on the Council of Dalon ap Landu and the provisional Council continued on for another two years until most Carleton Druids promptly decided to drop the issue completely. Druidism among enrolled Carleton students kind of disappeared after a few years too. The West Coast NRDNA, pretty much was left to its own devices not so long after this point. Contact between the RDNA of Carleton and the NRDNA was resumed in 1992, but has been consistently spotty since then.

The Second Epistle of Robert

This letter was written by Robert Larson on July 2nd, 1976. As mentioned in the First Epistle of Robert, Robert has emerged from silence and had entered into the debates of the Reform, providing us with an opinion of a Berkeleyite besides Isaac. It was also written after Robert had assumed the Chieftainship of the Council of Archdruids. As far as I know, no one officially succeeded him in that role after the first year. Due to the instability of the times, the Council of Archdruids collapsed along with many groves. Most of the communicative and record-keeping functions proposed for the Council of Archdruids were undertaken by Isaac & Joan Carruth with the publication of the Druid Chronicler newsletter for the next three years, then by the Pentalpha magazine, and finally by the Druid Miscellany newsletter.

Robert acknowledged the Sheltons' objections to overformalization, but pointed out several practical points to the Council of Archdruids. Most of these points have been repeated before. An interesting prediction was that most of the future Third Orders would not be from Carleton. Had the NRDNA not stumbled at the end of the 1970s, this might have held true. By my estimates, there has been a 50/50 mixture of post 1976 priests coming from the NRDNA and Carleton.

Most delightful, he gives us a story that can be examined on many, many levels. I love stories.

The Second Epistle of Isaac

This was written by Isaac Bonewits in the summer of 1976, probably in late July 1976, two years after the First Epistle of Isaac. It is generically addressed to the Council, but it is uncertain if he actually mailed it or if he merely published it to be read in the DC(E). The first half of 1976 had been filled with a resurgence of letters between Druids, after an interestingly quiet 1975. It appears that the Second Epistle, was Isaac's way of explaining himself in full-blown-detail, to clarify his terms, to prove his competence, to drive home his point that Reformed Druidism could indeed be easily converted into a Neo-Pagan religion, and to better express his world view. Like Chapter Eight explains, he has acknowledged that the Epistles would not change many peoples' view of Reformed Druidism, but at least they would understand what he was going through.

Most of the themes of the Epistle are apparent to the reader and need little review here. What is perhaps interesting is the fact that the First and Second Epistle are very good examples of how the Neo-Paganistic worldview could be interpreted by a Reformed Druid. Like Gerre's letter, each Druid often reinterprets their own religion after their experience with Druidism. One should not assume that all the Neo-Pagans of the NRDNA from 1976 until the present are in agreement with Isaac in his world view, just as no one would assume that David Fisher's view of Christianity is identical to Norman's or even my own. Isaac's Epistles are perhaps best read alongside of Larson and Carruth's to give the reader an idea of the opinional diversity amongst the Neo-Pagans in the NRDNA.

The early seventies were the nascent years of the Neo-Pagan movement, which had emerged from Wicca and the occult scene. As with any newborn religious movement, there were some people who were interested in defining and shaping their own movement, and Isaac was amongst the forefront. Isaac, since around 1972 when Neo-Paganism first identified itself, had been deeply involved in this movement and is still

considered a knowledgeable expert on the Neo-Pagan movement today. With this in mind, one may reinterpret the Epistles as his way of laying down a path for future Reformed Druids to investigate the possibilities of the Neo-Pagan movements. In fact, the entire Druid Chronicles (Evolved) serves this purpose well. Indeed, the original Druid Chronicles (Reformed) and the Green Book appear to be laying down a path oriented towards the East and towards personal philosophy. Isaac would, however, continue to encourage the Neo-Pagans of the NRDNA to redefine Reformed Druidism as a Neo-Pagan movement, adopt the strength of a clear religious structure and (perhaps more importantly) follow Isaac. Most of the Neo-Pagans chose not to go with Isaac, for reasons I detailed in my History. Suffice it to say, many objected in the same way the Carleton Druids did.

The Epistles also foreshadowed the kinds of questions that Isaac was dealing when he sabbaticaled in 1979 (to return briefly in 1981). He had begun to formulate the structure and rules of what would become "Ar nDraiocht Fein" (ADF), a definitively Neo-Pagan religion, in 1981 to 1983. Although Isaac did go on to formulate an unquestionably definable religion in ADF, it should be noted that each Reformed Druid essentially did so also in that they either returned to their religion in a new interpretation or formed a new solitary religion or philosophy. Isaac's religion, merely had more followers than the mostly solitary religions/philosophies of the other Reformed Druids. Something to think about.

The Book of Changes, Part Three

As Isaac describes in Chapters four and five, everything was in a big confusing mess during the summer of 1976 when Isaac & Larson were working on the DC(E), published in August. Procedural steps had been skipped, diplomacy dropped in favor of speed, and issues voted upon before opinions had solidified. The next couple years saw a grudging acceptance of DC(E) as a reference tool for secluded groves, as a fountain of trivia, a nostalgic look upon the early traditions, and a recruiting tool for the NRDNA. Interestingly enough, it was the publication of DC(E) that permitted the reconstruction of Carleton Druidism in 1985, after yet another cyclical collapse.

The Provisional Council, as mentioned earlier, didn't operate effectively after 1976 due to Grove-closings through the country. The idea of a majority vote in 4:13, was never widely accepted, even inside of the second NRDNA. The long-term result of the Provisional Council of Archdruids was that everybody had come to the conclusion that their Groves were independent, as were all the individuals in a Grove. Indeed what authority does an organization have, except what you give to it? Somehow the anarchic underpinnings of the Reform would continue to pester Isaac within the NRDNA, until he finally quit in 1981 and went to make a fresh start with ADF. Interestingly enough, the same problem cropped up again in ADF, but in a more manageable form.

Cup Filled to the Brim with Druidism

This letter was written by Gerre MacInnes Goodman on October 21st, 1976 to Isaac, but circulated widely amongst her friends and enemies. Gerre Goodman was a participant of that Druidic renaissance that occurred under Savitzky-Shelton-McDavid during the height of the Vietnam War. Her letter comes after the Druid Chronicles (Evolved) had been published, and all the sides were getting tired of the debate.

Her letter was a letter of healing. It is also a deeply personal letter and self-examination, not uncommon amongst Reformed Druids, but very topical to the debates of her time. Her message is simple; love and tolerance; although that message has been harder to practice than to preach. One can see in this letter, one more attempt to break Isaac of his now legendary habit of categorizing and labeling everything around him. With labeling comes exclusion, with exclusion potential experiences are denied, with experiences denied spiritual growth may be stymied. The letter also shows another attempt by yet another Reformed Druid to analyze their own religious heritage with fresh eyes, but being cautious not to redefine Druidism as their newly rediscovered religion that they now have joined. Druidism is a tool, not the final products. Like Isaac, she feels that Druidism is related to her own Christian religion, much as Druidism is related to his Neo-Paganism. While she may go further into "oneness" than most other Druids, it still an admirable example. The last vital note for the researcher is her opinion of the impossibility of defrocking or excommunication with the Reform, an activity vital for a serious organization to maintain its sense of separateness.

Salutations

A pleasant, brief poem from Dale, a Carleton Druid. I cannot remember who she wrote this to, probably Morrison, Shelton or Frangquist.

The Third Epistle of Isaac

After a few years of experimenting with the Pentalpha organization (see Part 4 & 11) and designing ever more complicated rituals (see Part 3), and noticing that the Carleton Faction of RDNA was not corresponding very much anymore, he felt the need to preach again on the matter of ritual strength. I believe he was becoming more result oriented, and not very happy with certain inadequacies in the existing format traditionally performed by the RDNA.

This era of the Reform, as yet, has very little documentation outside of Pentalpha and Live Oak publications. Hopefully with the further examination of personal archives from NRDNA members, greater light will be shed on the reasons for the schisming of the Mother Grove at this point.

Musings of an Ancient Religion in A Modern World

Shirine had posted a few articles to the Pentalpha/Druid Chronicler, which reached most of the NRDNA, SDNA and other interested Druids on the scene in 1979; but the Carleton network was apparently dispersed, so few will have seen this letter or its original publication. I was particular enthralled by the simple question that this letter posed, on where we draw our traditions from; the spoken or written word. I believe that much of RDNA tradition is found in the customs, odd quirks, mannerisms, method of discussion, character, and a hundred other small actions that are picked up in the traditional year of following an older member through the cycle of the seasons. You can't get salvation from a book (or a bottle), but a book may help in that journey towards truth; but never taking its place.

The Fourth Epistle of Isaac

Another editorial by Isaac in the Pentalpha Journal. Isaac's research and writings mentioned appear to be the nucleus of the establishment of a new system that was to develop into the ADF. However, it might have been one of the many book projects of Isaac that never got around to publishing. It is around this time that Isaac caught the "Indo-European Fever" that was beginning to garner interest in the Neo-Pagan community.

The Fifth Epistle of Isaac

After a rather disastrous re-election conflict in the Mother Grove, when it became apparent that the majority in the NRDNA would not accompany Isaac on his changes, Isaac decided to break off more completely than before.

I really admire Isaac for breaking out of the two weak bonds of the Reform, and proceeding to give birth to a new (and more complicated) creation that many others would lovingly assist in raising. It must have been as much a relief for him as when he left the Catholic seminary high school as a youth. However, he also took with him, his ability to keep the RDNA moderately in communication with each other. This job would soon be taken over by Emmon Bodfish and his Druid Missal-Any newsletter (see Part 11).

Epistle of Sally

I included this letter from one of Isaac's earlier wives, to show the enthusiastic support that he received in those early 80s as he began a Neo-Pagan religion, based on several years of planning and experimentation. Sally apparently was a big help to Isaac in the Pentalpha project, and apparently married him for a few years.

The Beginning of ADF

Now obviously this was not meant to be an RDNA epistle, however, it shows Isaac's first steps out in the new religion of ADF. After a year of planning, the basic framework was set and he wrote quite an excellent letter for the first issue of the Druid's Progress magazine. This letter has been floating about on the internet and gets quite a bit of press time, and is referred to unconsciously whenever Isaac speak. Isaac by this time had spent over 13 years in the developing Neo-pagan movement and was well known in the community.

Open Letters to the Grove

There are at least two types of Druids in the Reform; those who write a lot, and those who don't. Emmon joined in the late 70s, and became a very important member of the Live Oak Grove that split off from the Berkeley Mother Grove's satellite. Larry Press nominally ran the Live Oak Grove, but it appeared that it was the diligent and forceful Emmon who produced the newsletter, provided and maintained the Grove site, and kept track of the official matters since the Live Oak Grove had incorporated as a tax-recognized charity (i.e. a government approved church). Unfortunately, after a few years of bliss, there was a difficult period leading up to an election, in which several new members (including a token third-order Bob Blunt) elected themselves as the officers of the Grove, in effect forcing out Larry, Emmon and Susan. Emmon's response was to refuse access to his property for rituals to the corporation and continue business as usual, just un-officially. Grove services would continue on his property until 1993, but in a diminishing sense after 1990.

Druidism and Truth

Now the Druid Missal-Any publication by Emmon was a fine publication in the pre-computer age, and showed a great deal of artistic ingenuity, that isn't really captured by my republication efforts in Part 11. One of the more constant authors of articles was Tom Cross from Post-Oak Grove in Texas, who was a linguist by training, and an educator by profession. His specialty was Ancient Gaul, which is a difficult specialty since there isn't much surviving material on that culture, and is also easier for the same reason.

This letter, in his standard didactic manner, was the seed of the ensuing year long debate. In his writings, I catch the faintest parallels with Isaac; that here is another NRDNA Druid who has the embryo of a new system, and yet remains in the NRDNA during the gestation period; sharing all those hormonic creative reflections every time they feel a kick in their womb. Isaac and Tom are not currently friends, and appear to avoid each other; yet they both are rather allergic to monotheism and sketchy scholarship, claiming rather high standard for themselves and others.

Letter to the Editor

In contrast to Tom, Albionn seeks inspiration from doing things, rather than reading and reconstructing them. Albion is a gentle sort of soul, the water to Tom's fire, so to speak. When they mix you get smoke and steam. Apparently Albion had been taking some type of correspondence course with Tom up until this letter, which was published in the Missalany by Emmon, and had had disagreements with Tom, but had been unable to resolve those either. The resulting debate here in our records is not unlike overhearing a married couple who airs their private argument at a public restaurant. Like most 70s cop shows, the two partners are opposites, whom we love to watch argue on their beat.

A Rebuttal to Albion

While the ancient Celtic Bards were renowned for their prowess with satire and sarcasm, I think Tom overreacted a bit to Alibion's letter; perhaps demonstrating the rather touchy pride and short temper that gets the Celts so often into trouble. He has taken Albion's light defererence to scholarship as a personal affront and unleashes a torrent of ink. After reading this, you can imagine Albion's feeling; no, actually, you can read it, since it is the next letter.

A Rebuttal to Cross

Despite being baited by Tom, Albion shows restraint. I find it an eloquent and conciliatory response, an equally important bardic skill.

The Balanced Epistle

Les Craig was a "solitary third" order druid in Humboldt county in California, who apparently had epic battles trying to maintain her garden against the beasties and weather. I wanted to put in several dozen of her regular correspondences into this Apocrypha, but instead decided to make a collection of seasonal essays along with Emmon's introductory letters. However, even this laid-back Druid with pronounced Bardic skills (she founded the Order of Oberon) had to step into the ring. If anything, this debate centers around knowledge, tradition and authority; topics which she gently weaves together.

Spring Equinox Salvo

People will get angry at what they wish to be angry about. You'd think the two didn't realize that scholarship and experience were both necessary together in some ration. Tom Cross however brings up an issue that Isaac had always eluded to, the rather tenacious refusal of Reformed Druids to accept being labeled, Isaac usually referred to it as anarchistic, but Tom comes at the issue from a linguistic angle. The next letter describes this further.

Druidaxta

When I reflect on Tom's arguments, in some ways I do try to defer hard choices by refusing to take sides, but sometimes, I feel the harder choice is to refuse accepting standard categorizations. From this letter and other references, Tom had done his research into the Indo-European theory of a distant prehistoric common culture to the people of Europe and India, but he preferred to focus on that of the continental Celts. We can see that Tom has his act generally together, and yet it lacks the self-effacing humor that I normally see in Reformed writings. Having standards for oneself is one thing, but must one take it so seriously, in order to accomplish them? The final part of his letter reveals a lot of interesting details of the diverse nature of the Post-Oak Protogrove that he ran in Texas.

Albion's Response

It appears that Albion can lose his temper also. It is said that even the Buddha does not smile after the third slap.

The Gift of Horses

Les reenters the debate, after it has dominated the Druid Missal-Any for about six months. This kind of debate would have erupted and finished in a few weeks on the modern Internet conferences, but perhaps it would not have waxed so eloquent as the old "paper battles." I think she brings up all the salient points of the debate, and puts them into perspective, while offering a viable third alternative of moderation to Albion and Cross mud-slinging soap-boxing.

Farewell of Tom Cross

Apparently calming down, or perhaps sulking, Tom feels the necessity of pulling out of the Reform. Not too long thereafter, he published the book "The Sacred Cauldron" under the name of Tadhg MacCrossan, and founded Druidiactios; a group centering on practices drawn from ancient Gaulish religion and culture (a rarity in the English literary world).

This letter gives a rare insight into the character of Emmon's fascination with scholarship. For Tom, and to me to some extent, the contemplation of concepts and perusal of documents are a ritual in and of their own. While Celtic scholars were beginning to release new research in the 60's and 70s, it wasn't until the late 80s that a sort of renaissance boom of books flooded the market due to the bountiful consumers willing to buy their works.

Tom departed to ride on that wave. Many rumors floated that he was hostile to Neo-Pagans, rejoined Catholicism, or that he was working with a French Fraternal Druidic order of some type. Wherever he's gone, I do appreciate the time he spent discussing his views on the Reform, and I will also ponder on those questions he raised.

Albion's Thoughts

After Albion's conclusion to the debate, Emmon decided not to publish any more letters from the two until both had cooled down some more. Albion would continue to read the Druid Missal-Any and submit more articles of his experiences.

Epistle of Gruntwork

My will is weak, but I had to include at least one of Les' wonderful semi-seasonal letters as it dealt with how to build a Druidic community, and it appears to show her final thoughts from the debate. She raises rather organic issues of family life that have been rarely raised by the more individual-oriented letters of past Druids.

Balance & Synthesis

Perhaps I shouldn't have included this letter, but it somehow stands on its own as separate from the acrimonious preceding debate and stands as a reminder, that there was more to Emmon's vision of a Druid Community that two bickering Druids.

The Speaking of Beliefs

Written by Heiko Koestler, who with Alice Cascorbi, helped to restart Carleton Druidism in the mid 80s. This speech, originally in crude outline, is from the Fall Equinox ritual of 1987. Heiko was one of the first Carleton Druids to self-identify himself as a Pagan. The Druids at Carleton since 1985 have shown a greater interest in liturgy and magic, but still moderate by most standards. Although Heiko is a bit more ceremonial than most, you can see that little has really changed in the message at Carleton over the missing years. I therefore suspect this continuity has less to do with oral transmission by fellow Druids than with the natural beauty of the arboretum, the friendliness of the rural landscape, and the respectfully fierce academic discipline of Carleton College.

Mike's Farewell Epistle

Written in the closing months of Mike's Archdruidcy at Carleton, in which the torch was being passed to the Triple Archdruidcy of Becky, Michelle the Dark and Ann, which would last until 1996. Despite Mike's best efforts, grove attendance was usually only 5 to 6 people at service and sweatlodges, although there were about 80 people on the mailing lists. Since the latter two were definitely into Wicca, I just wanted to caution them to keep it open to members of all denominations and explore widely and have fun. It is a difficult thing relinquishing what little authority I did have, but they had capable hands, and I could go off to spend the next two years feverishly typing up ARDA, while occasionally checking up on them, in the most unobtrusive ways (monthly visits to the science fiction club).

The Third Epistle of Robert

Well, this was quite a long one! Robert wrote this epistle on the Spring Equinox of 1996 to discuss his reaction to my General History in Part Eight or ARDA. In particular he was intent on providing a much simpler alternative vision of Paganism, as opposed to Isaac's more grandiose schemes that eventually became Ar nDraoicht Fein. Neopaganism can search for the simple, seemingly chaotic roots or it can choose to build as complex a structure as many of them are trying to escape from.

I wonder if he was inspired by my comment that the early Founders were impressed by the anarchic resistance of the Celts and Druids to centralized government and religion. As he well puts it, the Monotheism isn't necessarily the problem with religious persecution, but rather it is the organized aspect of some religions when married with the power of the state. While such a match may increase a religion's resources for helping

people, it can also magnify the ability of the occasional petty religious individuals to crush and repress the views of minority dissenters. While his message may seem a bit harsh and rough compared to his normally quiet contemplation, it should be remembered that freedom of religion has not always been achieved without struggle. Compared to some of the persecutions mentioned by Robert, the state of the early RDNA at Carleton seems rather tame and bearable.

It is also refreshing to see the old topic of ritual being brought up again in such an unusual way. I feel that Larson's view is pretty much in between my disdain for ritual and Isaac's fascination with the issue. For Larson it is a matter of practicality. The lines in 15:23-34 were lifted from another letter I received from Larson on that Equinox, and which I felt should have been included with the Epistle proper. A final topic that I enjoyed reading about was the inter-connectedness of religions, how they adopt and borrow from each other, even if they won't admit it.

It is entirely possible that The Last Epistle of Robert was a discarded prologue to the Third Epistle of Robert.

The Book of Lacunae

Some wild ramblings written by Michael Scharding between December 30th 1995 and May 1st 1996, ironically about the same time (unbeknownst to Mike) that Isaac was preparing to announce the end of his ArchDruidcy of ADF. How cosmic can you get? This was Michael's weak attempt to stick his foot into the Apocryphaic tradition, to add a happy note to the end of the Apocrypha, and to bridge the twenty long lacunal years of Apocryphal-style letter writing from 1976-1996.

The term Lacunae (Latin Lacuna, meaning a gap or a space] as you may guess refers to the holes in my logic, or to the emptiness of Form, the need for leaving "personal" time, the virtues of simplicity, hearing the pauses in a stream of music, and in the blank chapters of this epistle. You may imagine whatever you wish to exist in those blank spots. If you like these blank spots, look around through ARDA, I'm sure you can find more empty spaces to stare at.

The Epistle of Amanda

I received a call from Amanda, apparently not long after Michelle the Blond ordained her and then became disinterested in Druidism, and Irony had gone to Germany to become a blacksmith's apprentice. During their Archdruidcy, a great number of members had joined, pulled by their charisma, and rather powerful sense of fun experimentation (free of Michael's boring speeches, perhaps) She somehow spotted me on the campus, and knew who I was, perhaps old pictures. We chatted for awhile, and I gave her the standard advice of most Archdruids; think for yourself and search widely. This is the letter, I received in gratitude. Only met her twice after that, but quite a joy each time. For a brief time, the Druids were using the newly created Religious Awareness House to anchor the group's social activities, much like Farm House had been in the 1980s, this idea had been floated in the 93-95 period, but never enacted as Druid House.

The Sigil Letters

Before I left St. Cloud to go to Japan, I made up a big batch of one ounce silver sigils, and began to give them out to people at Carleton. Druids apparently are drawn to big clunky jewelry and clothes with a poor fashion sense, so apparently they were quite fetching and inspired people to write about them.

The letter by Ian Friesland was written not long after he left St. Cloud and went on to do scientific research in various parts of the world. Never did ask him what he was studying, but it would take him to the South Pole and the jungles of the Amazon.

The letter by myself was in response to the Epistle of Amanda, and I sent her a sigil.

The letter by Robert Harrison was a delight, that he wrote in 1998, but I don't believe that I read it until 2003, when Mark sent me a number of files that were sent for the 2000 ARDA edition, that never got produced. Robert comes from a Keltria background, with long studies into Tibetan Buddhism. Being about 40 years old at the time, he was able to give a lot of mature advise to the Grove members.

The History of the Sigil, was something that I wrote on the internet to start spreading a counter-history to the popular theory that we got the sigil from Stuart Piggot's 1966 "The Druids." We can only assume that Fisher just made it up.

The Epistle of Sam

I got this letter in response from Sam after I mailed him a copy of ARDA in early 1997, while I was in Japan. Sam is one of the more unusual and special members of Carleton's legacy, precisely because he is from the neighboring college of St. Olaf; a Lutheran private institution, but still in the top 30. Sam graduated in 1991, and is a native Minnesotan with a deep and abiding interest in Welsh culture and language. His interaction with the Carleton group was greatest from 1988 to 1995, when he played the ornery outsider, widening our understanding of social causes. He also played the head monk, Plexus, in the movie Gatorr, for which he was widely considered the best actor in the film.

What Are Druids?

Irony was ordained in 1997 and proved to be one of the most charismatic druids I've ever met, despite his interesting quirks. He expanded membership rolls, kept the group in funding, wrote this letter to the Carletonian newspaper, published many poems, sang lustily at SCA events, built the great Stone Circle, brought in ecological concerns, started the RDNA conference at Carleton, encouraged para-psychological research by members, traveled the world, stomped out a fire with his bare feet, broke many hearts, glowed in the dark, worked for Peace Corps in Tonga, wrote the twenty page Sociology of Reformed Druids, and was just outstanding as the first Ethics major at Carleton. Currently running the Hemlock Grove in New York.

The Exile Letters, Part One

These letters reveal a bit of Irony's late discomfort with running the grove and encouraging members to initiate activities; a perennial problem faced by Archdruids, now two years into a long Archdruidcy (since 1996). However, he has brought in a few old friends to bolster him as he enters his senior year.

The Epistle of the Rising Sun

After publishing ARDA in summer 1996, I spent four years in Japan and started the Akita Grove at the Minnesota State University of Akita, a sister school of St. Cloud University in Minnesota. I met Nozomi and Pat there and I ran the Akita Grove for a few years before turning it over to them, and someone forwarded Ikari's address to me while I was there. Having been nostalgic for Carleton since my Sophomore year journey to University of Glasgow, I naturally began to pine for her forests again, despite the charms of Japan. Upon hearing of the difficulties that Irony was having, I thought I would send a

letter to cheer him up, since I wouldn't be going back to Carleton than often.

Freedom Within and Freedom Without

This was one of the hardest experiences I had in the Reform. For a long time, including my Archdruidcy, there had been little interest in the traditional service, upon which the 2nd and 3rd Order were designed. Upon hearing of the contents of the Third Order, Merri naturally didn't find that it spoke to her, and asked if DAL could be removed and a stripped down version be performed. Being on the border between the self-ordination and traditional ordination periods, I feel caught in the middle by the pros and cons of both positions, and in the end, I decided to support Carleton students to choose the one that made more meaning for themselves. I think it is more important to have them do a good job, then give up over semantics.

Being a Druid

One of the tasks that I gave to Robert after his ordination was to write an essay on what it means to be a Druid. Again, I didn't read his completed essay again until 2003. Those Celts are such malleable images for the essayist. In the end, the essay always returns to the more important question, who are we and who do we want to become?

The Exile Letters, Part Two

Well, Irony finally put Carleton behind him, after a very long Archdruidcy and returned to the world of mortals, only to head off on a journey to Tonga, a volcanic island in the Pacific Ocean, that managed to avoid being colonized, by eating all the missionaries, then converting to Christianity on their own, thereby becoming a self-declared Christian kingdom (you are what you eat), and immune to colonization according to the rules of the 17th century. He spent his time teaching sanitation planning, industrial arts skills and whatever else was needed. He was located on one of the smaller of the islands in this chain, with a dormant volcano and a crater lake. Naturally, transplanting his Druidism to the tropical jungle was as difficult as transplanting mine to the mountains of Northern Japan, and I enjoyed hearing how he adapted, and during this period, I constantly kept his spirits up by sending care packages, and druidical readings.

The Parenthetical Epistle of Mike

Since the Druids have started on-line mailing lists, the number of letters has vastly increased to several thousand a year, most being quick replies, and not that many of epistle length or quality. Perhaps by piecing them together, I will be able to get a sizeable amount of material for future epistles, but the long letter writing tradition of the past seems to be the exception.

I have a terrible habit of rambling when I talk and getting into side-conversations even when thinking to myself. This letter is rather illustrative of my wit, and we should all pity those who have to deal with it on a regular basis. Like the interview in Part 10, it talks about what brought me to Druidism, and what I believe are our society's main image of Druidism, and how that affects the views of incoming new Druids. As Shelton said, we spend a lot of time, dispensing with cherished myths about the Druids. I was inspired by reading a similar essay by Daniel (which is in Part 7).

Why Are We Called Reformed?

This is by Mairi, a person who used to hang around in the 1995 period at Carleton, but she wasn't a student, but rather, a very interesting lady. We ordained her in 1996, and then we happened to meet again in Washington DC, since she was working in the Pentagon from 1997-2002, before going off to Guam (I think). I believe her mother's side is Jewish and her father's side was Presbyterian, so I guess she had Reformed ancestry on both sides, and she wrote this fine essay and delivered it to my door, wrapped in a little red ribbon. I think it is an excellent example of comparative religion, and would like to see more examples in the future, perhaps Zen or Taoism would be particularly productive? Not everyone enjoyed the comparison.

Responses to Mairi

One person in particular, a Canadian named Glen from the Silent Grove on Lake Ontario, and was quite eager when he first joined. However, he appeared rather activist oriented, which is fine, but intolerant of those who were, which caused problems. Druids tend to be rather sluggish, and he had places to go and things to do, and we apparently weren't his preferred vehicle for pursuing Druidism and politics. Sadly, a few harsh words were exchanged, but I do hope he understood that few things in this world are unconnected, even if we do not appreciate those linkages. The interchange was then published in the Missalany.

The Epistle of Adaptation

Dusty is a strange fellow from southern California. Never ordained, that I can recall, but a wonderful writer and free-spirit. His take on the whole debate, was wonderful, and I'm glad to have a chance to share it with you. This was also published in the Missalany. His sense of humor and self-deprecating simplicity, are truly in the vein of Reformed Druidism; but sadly he hasn't posted with our group in a long time.

The Silent Cacophony

While I was hesitant to support an Anti-Zionist tirade in his first batch of letters, despite my own concerns, I did admire his energy and enthusiasm for activism, but of course, the Reform does not speak as a group, only as individuals, and so we were unable to please him.

The Epistle of Alyx

Alyx was from Colorado, and I ordained her in 2002, near Denver. A witty girl, I always enjoy getting her occasional letters, and she very succinctly summed up the group's feeling about Glen, to much kudos. Unfortunately, Glen, soon left after that, and we do miss him. Alyx's other contribution was the delightful image of the piñata, with religion needing a good whack once in awhile to keep it interesting.

The Second Epistles of Norman

These are a collection of Norman's first year of thoughts from the RDNAtalk conference and D202 study of ARDA 2's early version. He can ramble on, so be careful when talking to him on any subject!

The Epistle of Eric

The last of the Epistle to make it in by the deadline of Feb. 14th. Eric is a graduate student in Washington DC, who attended my services regularly, and always wrote great off-the wall stories for the Missal-any on cleaning, Lucky Charms, Druidical diets, and then helped to run the 2002/2003 Bardic contest for the RDNA. Like the Sigil Letters, this epistle gives us more to think about a symbol of the Reformed Druid, those ribbons. Since he couldn't make it to the 40th Reunions in 2003, he wanted me to read this as one of the meditational readings at the service.

Wind Borne Seeds

Occasionally in the RDNAtalk conference we will have a rather quiet member, John Slattery in this case, just suddenly post something and then resubmerge. He apparently had been working on this thought for awhile and found the conversation on some point in March 2003 to be a bit combative and so posted this little reflection. I have not much since from John, but I rather liked the grove imagery and decided to insert it. I'm not quite sure I totally agree with the analogy, since I think Nature is indeed "red in tooth and talon," and that trees and plants do indeed fight for space in the sun and for resources under the ground, but still an interesting letter.

When Leaves Leave Us

Once I decided to add Wind Bourne Seeds to the Apocrypha, this one by my own hand came to mind immediately as a natural complement. Brother Robert's death a year later in August 2004 when I was releasing the Main Volume, also reminded me of the poignant message of falling leaves. Druids are inescapably drawn to trees with their expressive nuts, leaves, roots, bark, sap, wood and spirit. This was a result of a bit of study on what particuliar aspect, the departure of leaves in the fall every year. We all reflect on it, but many do not know why it happens, so I wrote it. The original article was also accompanied by a chart of un-named leaves that the person would have to guess. I suppose I should take out chapter two, but Druidy is not simply the artistic wonderings of chapter three, but the observation of science, so I guess I'll leave it in.

Thoughts on Chaos

This letter was lifted from early on in the D202 conference that was initially set up by Sybok of OMS to teach the ways of ARDA 2 to the members of Mithril Star. I later was given the conference, but it petered out mid-way through the study course, naturally, due to the immense length of ARDA 2. These people had access to an early version of ARDA 2 that I had hoped to have published by July 2003 by Mark Heiman. Fear's comments were directed towards the Earliest Selections.

If there is one thing Druids are it is unstable and constantly reshaping itself, especially at Carleton with its high rate of turnover in membership. There are certain parameters on this cauldron of chaos, and even some continuity of spirit, but the spirit of chaos is prominent in the questioning ways of the average Reformed Druid who often re-opens cans of worms and re-examines the very foundations of their beliefs to inspect their soundness and make adjustments. I enjoyed his comments on the prominent issues of that period and his theory of how generations and groves renew their sense of period by a transitory period of re-evaluation.

Thoughts on Discord

Naturally, what would a discussion of Chaos be without mentioning Discord? Since the 1980s, at least, Discordians have been an active part of the interplay of Druids at Carleton and abroad. Like Thoughts on Chaos, this was a response to the examination of the Middling Selections of the Isaac Affair, which I thought was an interesting summary, in which she takes the side of the Carleton faction, despite her neo-pagan background, due to her knowledge of the cycles of group forming. Isaac himself has mentioned often, that if he had understood group politics better at that time, and known that the other groves were still alive, he might have been able to head off much of the the problems of the later years of the Berkeley Grove.

A Whole of Druidry

Dana Felber, as far as I know, is not a Reformed Druid, but Sister Stacey snagged this article off the internet discussions list and published it in the Druid Missal-Any.

After a few re-reads, I think the reason that I decided to insert it into our "inner cannon of bickering" is that it offers a very well-thought examination of why some people from monotheistic backgrounds have made their way into adapting elements of the ancient Druid traditions to their modern spiritual quests.

She also does a good job of explaining that the ancient Druids and the Celtic practitioners did not have a monolithic common system, but were an fractious, individualistic lot in some ways and had diversified into several pantheons, story cycles and customs. There is much to learn in here.

Sacrificial Sentiments

In the RDNAtalk conference we got into a spirited discussion of the Wiccan Rede, Druid Tenets and the underlying concepts of why we don't do animal sacrifice. The original debate on animal sacrifice was in the Spring of 1963, but we only have one quote from the members, so it was perhaps appropriate that 40 years later, the Reformed Druids re-examined their notions of why and what they sacrifice.

Most people wrote rather short notes, and there were dozens of side-conversations on various topics that I pruned from the conversations. Due to the dialogue nature, I dispense with individual chapters for each letter and grouped them together in a serial format, stripped of versification. It's nice to depart from the system once in a while.

The Third Epistles of Norman

Norman, Frangquist, Shelton, Carruth, Press, Steinberg and a handful of other old-timers attended the 40th Reunion at Beltane 2003 at Carleton College and mingled with the current students and discussed many matters of common concern after chatting only on-line for 2 years.

Norman's summary of the event is standard, but I felt, giving the timing that it was time to repeat it again! I also appended several other letters from the summer and fall of 2003 which I thought would fit in by providing more thoughts of Norman.

The Missionary Im-Position

Missionary activity is naturally a sorepoint and hot button issue for me, especially in the David Fisherian sense of having promoted something that will inevitably take on a life of its own, to who knows what purpose. All the events in this epistle occurred while I was the Arch Druid of the Big River Grove in St. Cloud Minnesota, and looking for a decent paying job. We all get taken in by these schemes sometimes in our lives, and hopefully we emerge wiser for the interchange.

I hesitated until the last minute to include this letter, but after reading Norman's encounter with the Mormons, and hearing of the hardships that Irony, Corwin and so many have had with recruiting, that I thought a little warning on the perils of proselytizing might be in order, so that they don't walk down that dark road, and withstrain themselves from excess. And yes, I can't help but love that response, "How well did you do at your job selling vacuum cleaners?" "Oh, I sucked."

The OMS Affair

As the introduction mentions, this was a long raucous affair that spanned too many pages to be neatly inserted into the Apocrypha, yet I felt I needed to insert a link to that affair, so as to not ignore it. Unfortunately few of the letters, as in Sacrificial Sentiments, were of sufficient length and quality to be extracted as summary letters for representing the whole debate. Perhaps in the Third Edition of ARDA 2, I'll add them to the printing, but not quite yet, despite their importance.

I guess I started the whole mess by encouraging the OMS to join as a group, rather than individually, but I doubt the end resulting structure of the OMS splinter would have been radically different, but I suppose it would have been in better protocol for some of the old hands from California who felt left out of the process and suspicious of the intentions and reputation of OMS's first Arch Druid, Sybok, accusing him of posting under various names, unsubbing dissentors and being generally unpleasant and rude.

The Epistle of Corwin

It has been quite rare for a sitting Archdruid at Carleton to actually get off their butt and write a decent letter on Druidism, much less to send out their State of the Groves letter on retirement. It is like prying teeth out to get them to put pen to paper, since they appear to prefer frolicking in the woods to laboring over a piece of wood pulp…. Hey that does sound good doesn't it?

Any way, Corwin had taken a page out of the Book of Frangquist and Scharding and decided to go off to Japan and learn more about their ways. After the Reunion, she stopped by Washington DC's grove a few days before departing and I shared some thoughts on the liturgical practice and Zen and such, and sent her on her merry way.

Naturally, after the long Archdruidcies of Irony, Merri and Ehren, it was time for the Carleton Druids to re-examine their style of liturgy and grove structure. They were facing a low membership and need to rebuild the grove from scratch, but a vision was necessary first.

The Epistle of Stephen

Stephen always seemed more down-to-earth than the flighty red-headed Corwin. He was much more interested in the ancient customs and lore of the Celts, and wrote his Comps project on an arcane aspect of the Brehon laws. He, like Irony, had also written a few tracts on what was Reformed Druidism. Stephen has also acted as my Johnny-on-the-spot to rendez-vous with the archives and do some research, look up matters and keep the archives in good shape. I, in return, recompense him and chew his ear off with dull archival discussion.

Ritual does seem to be the obsession of Druids, either they love it or hate it; but seem unable to avoid it. I expect many more epistle from this young Druid over the years.

Mike's Mini-Missive

My letter was simply a summary of theirs and an encouragement to keep on the same paths of Reforming the Carleton Druids into a format that fit their times. As with counseling young lovers hoping to get married, is to ask what they want and generally advise them to do it.

The Alphabet Epistle

What to say on this epistle? On the one hand, every once and a while one of your fellow brothers or sisters goes off into la-la land and has a stunning visionary experience that's rather hard to respond to. On the other hand, you have to support and encourage them through the strangest of times.

I suppose Druids, like most modern people, have their thought processes bound up into words; both spoken and written which affect the way they relate objects to eachother due to resemblance, similar spelling, word-origins, homonymns and a score of other historical factors and nuances. In this letter, Ian has focused simply on the letter S and B, which goes to show you that even the most little clue can help to solve a big mystery.

I don't like the exhortatory tone, which seems a big like the ten commandments, but I think he did so in a rational manner, without going too far. The reference to Lord Zed is apparently from the movie "Zardoz" with Sean Connery in a trippy 1973 science fiction movie.

The Arch Epistle

My reply, also crafted during the Athens Olympics also has a bit of a Greek theme running through it. According to my interview with David Fisher, the sigil might actually have come from his feverish imagination, as he was minoring in Latin at Carleton, and had been studying the Greek alphabet in early preparation for a classics major, that later switched to history.

Perhaps the epistles of the Apocrypha are too plentiful in their advice for young aspiring Reformed Druid priests, but the purpose of the Arch Druid had not always seemed as well discussed. Most Third Order Priests go on to become Arch Druids, but not always.

I also enjoy puns and references to words with a common root origin, so I wrote this response after re-reading how Sister Mairi focused on one word "Reformed", and I in turn focused on the word "Arch." Hopefully there is a bit of wisdom in there.

The Epistle of Ric of the North

Ric Knight lives over on the northern shore of Lake Ontario in Canada. As you'll remember, Howard Cherniack, one of the Founders, was from British Columbia, and gave us the Druid Tenets, a constitution, and petitioned the authorities to accept the Druid's religious services as fulfilling the religious requirement. Since then, we have not had many prominent Canadian Druids, although we do call ourselves Reformed Druids of NORTH AMERICA, which should ostensibly include Mexico, Greenland, Canada the Caribean and Central America.

Ric is not technically an ordained Druid, having forsook the Orders as too hierarchial, much like Gandalf, and has lived a more or less solitary lifestyle with his fellow canine grove members. He runs the Order of Druids Minor, and operated an

on-line confernce for that group. He is a frequent puckish poster to the RDNAtalk conference and obviously a funny fellow.

The original Epistle he sent had a chapter for the group's constitution and three chapters of mediations that I will include in the Green Book 11 next year.

At my request, Ric gratiously added a chapter on Canadian/U.S. relations lambasting us for our shortcomings and offering some advice from our big neighbour. A picture of Ric should be in the liturgy section somewhere.

The Sixth Epistle of Isaac

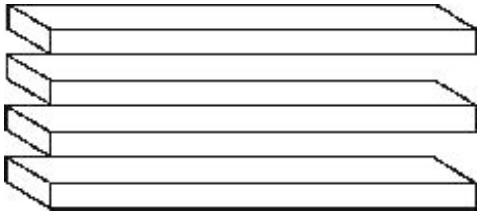
This striking epistle eulogizing Robert's departure, has several arguments that Isaac has been making in ADF for many year about the need to compensate priests for the long unrewarded efforts they have made for their parishioners. Even ADF is currently far from fully funding it's handful of Third Circle priests, as is true throughout the various Neo-pagan movements, due to the aversion to handling money or charging for services, as being "too churchy".

The Last Epistle of Robert

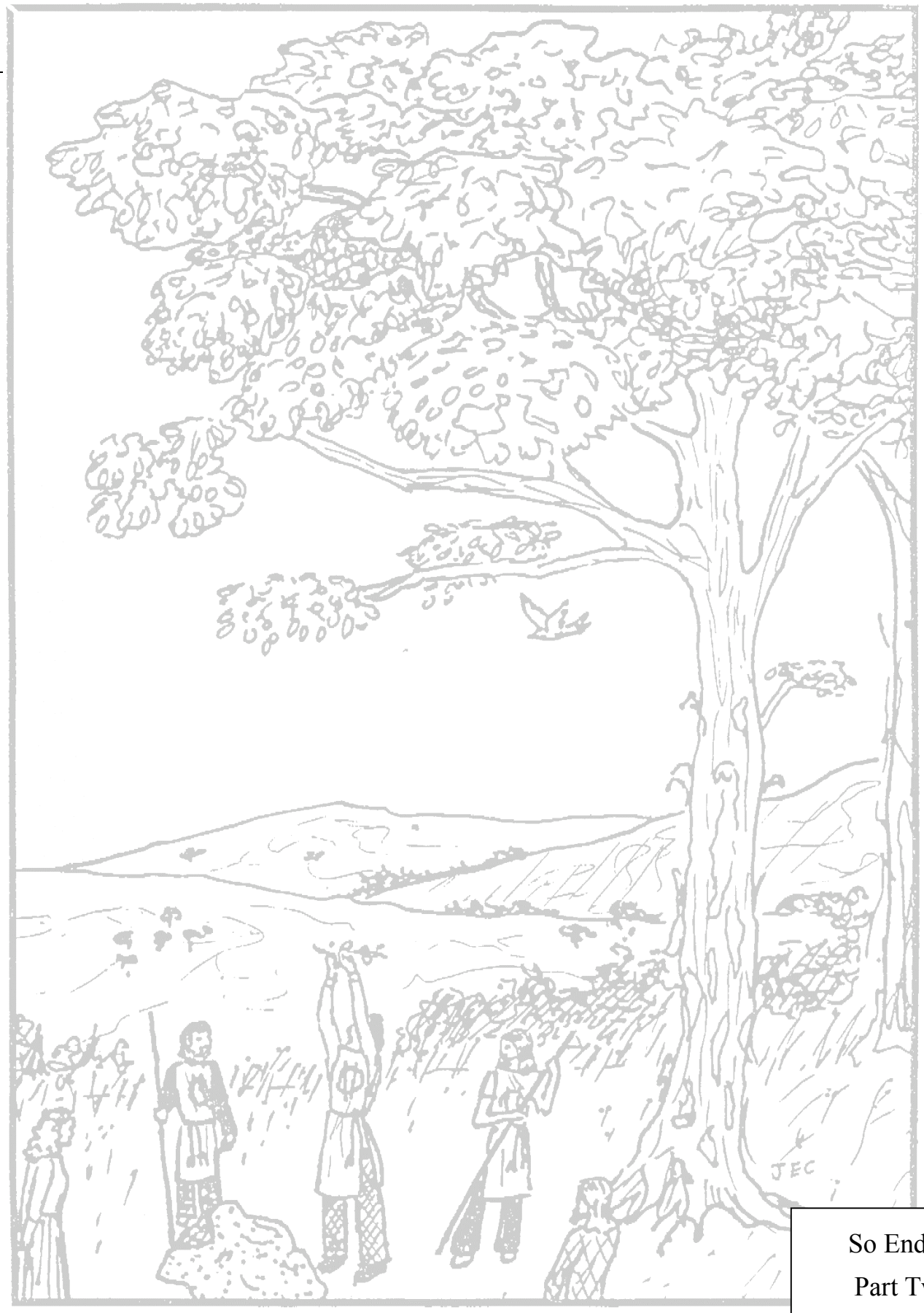
Sadly, even Druids must pass on, and Robert was mortal like the rest of us. He died suddenly on August 6th, which was Lughnasadh, and Sister Stacey received a letter from his brother on August 16th. Included was a single page Epistle of an unfinished nature, that was found among his few remaining possessions in his Spartan apartment. I suspect that it might have been a discarded prologue to the Third Epistle of Robert, but it might indeed have been of a long letter whose contents I will never know in this world.

There is this adage of "Truth against the world" that the British Druids cooked up a century or two ago, and it makes me a bit uncomfortable. While there may be relative truths, I think if the entire world does disagree with you, that's a pretty good sign that it is time to do a bit of re-evaluation. The phrase, naturally, doesn't excuse being wrong or allow you to defend an ill-inspected belief or superstitious dogma to be held, but only a well contemplated and rational position.

Being the probable last letter from Robert, I felt it appropriate to end with his words.



Ye Olde Scratch Paper



So Endeth
Part Two
Of ARDA 2