Understanding Wicca Essay, Research Paper

Understanding Wicca By Its Principles.

To me, the word Witch is delicious, filled with the most ancient memories that go back to our earliest ancestors, who lived close to natural cycles and who understood and appreciated the power and energy that we share with the earth. It is filled with the scent of a breeze after rain, the swirl of homemade incense smoke, and the twinkle of the north star on a crisp winter night. Within this word, the five elements dance (Cabot, Back Cover).

So what is Wicca? Like most religions, nothing is cut-and-dry. Many different people believe many different things. One thing is for sure never hurt anyone or anything. Most Wiccans worship a God, a Goddess, and the Five Elements. The Pentacle is a symbol which represents these five sacred things . The first four elements earth, air, fire, and water are represented by the four directions on a compass. Each of these things are needed to survive, and each plays a vital role in nature. The Fifth Sacred Thing spirit signifies the energy, courage, and love that Wiccans share with mother earth, themselves, and others. This is where Starhawk got the title for her novel.

An harm ye none, do what ye will. This is the quote probably best known to Wiccans. It comes from the Wiccan rede, a poem written by the ancients that touches on the 18 principles of the religion. The quote mentioned above is quite easy to understand. As long as you re not causing harm to anything or anybody, go ahead and do what you want. Along with obeying this law, most Wiccans worship a God and Goddess equally, and have great respect for the five elements, or five sacred things.

What do the elements stand for, and how can they be classified? The Earth element is associated with the North. Its primary colors are green and black; It stands for money, success, business, fertility, stability, and prosperity. Earth is a feminine element. It is nurturing, moist and fruitful (Cunningham, 23). Material things in nature represent this sacred thing trees, plants, stones, crystals, dirt, and sand. An instrument that is associated with Earth is the drum.

The air element is affiliated with the East . Its color is yellow, and its season is spring. Air is most often called upon for matters dealing with intelligence, knowledge, travel, instruction, freedom, and discovering things that have been lost (Cunningham, 23). A masculine element, Air possesses the power of the winds and the clouds, as well as lightning. One might light incense, or play a flute when calling upon Air.

The hot, dry South is the direction for the element Fire. Represented by the colors red or orange, Fire is the element of change, will, and passion (Cunningham, 24) , as well as authority, sex, and the destruction of things like negative habits or diseases. Candles and stringed instruments are often used to call to this masculine element, and the sun represents Fire quite nicely.

Finally, West is ruled by the calming element of Water. The color blue is always associated with water something that everyone knows! Water magic is usually concerned with friendship, love, relaxation, calming, happiness, sleep/dreaming, purification, and psychic travel/prediction (Cunningham, 24). This feminine element is often called using a dish of water or shells, and any metal instrument such as a cymbal or a triangle .” Water controls the rains, lakes, rivers, and seas, as well as fog and mist.

So where does Spirit come in? Well, because Spirit is not a material element, it is often overlooked and not given the same attention and time as the four basic elements. This, of course, is silly. Spirit is perfectly equal to, if not greater than the other four sacred things. It is the embodiment of the four elements together. It is love and courage, as well as willpower. The colours white and violet are often associated with spirit.

In Starhawk s The Fifth Sacred Thing, spirit and courage are key elements in the plot. The main character s name is Madrone. She is a Wiccan member of a utopian socialist community, and must make a long and dangerous journey away from her village to bring home a badly needed medicine. In order to be strong, Madrone must use courage, love, and strength. Throughout the course of the book, her spirit grows stronger as she makes many new friends and eventually returns to help her village. The title of the novel is fitting; an obvious tribute to the Fifth Element, Spirit, as Wicca is an underlying theme in the story.

Now, we ve all seen religious jewelry. Crosses, Stars of David, Crucifixions, Hands of Fate, and so on and so forth. But a pentacle? Sure! Why not? All of the symbols listed above are worn as symbols of protection and to represent individual religions.

The pentacle is an upright five pointed star, or pentagram, surrounded by an unbroken circle. Starting with the uppermost point, the directions represent the five elements, or five sacred things. Clockwise, they go: spirit, water, fire, earth, and air. The circle represents the totality of all intelligence. It is the sign for the God and Goddess (Cabot, 96). The circle represents many other comforting things, like unity and protection. Many Wiccans wear this symbol as proudly as any Catholic might bear a silver crucifix.

It s important, however, to understand the ugly myths that sometimes accompany this symbol. Does it represent the Devil? Chaos? Evil? Destruction? No. Wiccans don t believe in the Devil, or in Hell at all. What you re thinking of would be an inverted pentacle, with the top point facing down. This altered emblem is used by Satanists, much like they use an upside down cross. By turning the symbols upside down, Satanists poke fun at established religion. Don t be fooled! Too many people are close minded to Wicca because of this misunderstood emblem. Used properly, the pentacle is a symbol of light, unity, and love, tying together the five sacred things and surrounding them with a perfect circle.

The title of Starhawk s second fictional book, The Fifth Sacred Thing , is a tribute to Spirit, the fifth element. Spirit is the driving force behind the main character s mission to bring a badly needed medicine back to her village. Wiccans are firm believers that the five elements are important in order to be in touch with the earth, themselves, and others. Different Wiccans have different beliefs, but a constant philosophy is for sure an harm ye none, do what ye will. Some Wiccans wear a pentacle, a five-pointed star enclosed in a perfect circle, to remind themselves of the five sacred things earth, air, water, fire, and spirit and what they stand for.

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