

# THE CRAFT TODAY

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## **PENTAGRAM (2) NOVEMBER 1964**

Witchcraft, according to those who are modern witches, is the Craft of the Wise. A simple pagan belief, full of old traditions which are appealing, simple virtues, and--if we are to believe their detractors--some ancient vices. According to further information it is a traditional religion based upon an exceedingly simplified concept of the works of Nature. It is by inference from their rituals as reported, an attempt to bribe Nature by various actions and beliefs into a malleable state, so that Nature will function according to the needs of the coven, and what the coven believes to be good for society in general, rather than Nature carrying on in her own sweet way. If we are to believe various interviews carried out by television and newspapers, this has an effect not upon Nature but upon the witch, since there is a report of a witch who claimed that she believed the sun would not rise again if she did not undertake her rituals.

The interesting facet to be gained from such blazes of publicity is that it would appear the Craft has rapidly become an escape hatch for all those who wish to return to a more simple form of life and escape from the ever-increasing burden of contemporary society. In many cases the Craft has become a funkhole, in which those who have not been successful in solving various personal problems hide, while the storm of technology, H- bombs, and all the other goodies of civilization pass by harmlessly overhead.

Modern Witchcraft could be described as an attempt by twentieth-century man to deny the responsibilities of the twentieth century. It is a secure and naive belief that Nature is always good and kind. It is also a belief, or so it would appear, that if you personally can go backwards in the evolution of thought, then perhaps the rest of the world might follow suit. Good enough, the Craft is all things to all men, if it is a simple pantheistic belief to those who think it so, so it has become, since the Mysteries were evolved for all men, and Man was evolved for the Mysteries. Which of necessity leads one to ask what the Mysteries are.

All mystical thought is based upon one major premise: the realisation of truth as opposed to illusion. The student of the 'mysteries' is essentially a searcher after truth, or as the ancient traditions described it, "Wisdom". Magic is only a by-product of the search for truth, and holds an inferior position to truth. Magic, that is the development of total will, is a product of the Soul in its search for ultimate knowledge. It is an afterthought upon a much larger issue, the ability to use a force that has been perceived while searching for a more important aim within the self. No genuine esoteric truth can be written down or put within an intellectual framework of thought. The truths involved are to be participated in during comprehension of the soul. Truth of this degree is not subject to empirical thought and is only apparent to the eye of the beholder, and to those who have followed a similar path of perception. Throughout the history of humanity there have been myths, schools of wisdom and teachers who have shown a way to attain a working knowledge of esoteric thought and philosophy by using inference rather than direct method to teach the approaches to cosmic truth. The secrecy of these Masters has nothing to do with protecting the Mysteries, since all that can be said about the Mysteries has already been written into folklore, myth and legend. What is not forthcoming is the explanation. It was recognised that these legends, rituals and myths were the roads through many layers of consciousness to the area of the mind where the soul can exist in

its totality. These and their surrounding disciplines and teachings became what the West describes as the Mysteries. The Mysteries are, in essence, means by which man may perceive his own inherent divinity.

During the persecution the adherents of the Mystery system went underground and joined forces with the aboriginal beliefs of the mass, and so became part of traditional Witchcraft. Centuries passed and the meaning behind much ritual was forgotten, or relegated to a superstitious observance to elemental Nature. Much of the old ritual that has survived became ossified and repeated by rote, rather than by understanding. Consequently it has become static and remote from its original purpose, which was to enlighten the follower spiritually. In what generally passes as Witchcraft today there is as much illusion and unresolved desire as there is in the outside world. In the closed circles of some covens there is greater bigotry and dogma than there is in many sections of the moribund Christian church. Many witches appear to have turned their backs upon the reality of the outside world and have been content to follow, parrot-fashion, rituals and beliefs that they know have little or no relationship with the twentieth century and its needs. There has been no cause for a fertility religion in Europe since the advent of the coultershare plough in the thirteenth century, the discovery of haymaking, selective breeding of animals, etc. To claim, as some witches do, that there is a greater need in the world for fertility of mind than before is understating general facts, since Western Europe morally and socially has advanced more without the Old Craft and its attendant superstitions than it ever did with them.

The value of the Old Craft today is that in it lie the seeds of the Old Mystery tradition. Through this the witch may perceive the beginnings of that ultimate in wisdom, knowledge of themselves and of their motives. The genuine Mysteries are open to all, because anyone having experience enough can understand that basic Message. To close the human mind in order to protect it from outside circumstances that are hostile, is not a way to discover that within oneself which is most profound, but a return to a claustrophobic mother who will eventually smother the child. If, as is claimed, the Gods are kind and They are all things, then why does the twentieth century witch run so rapidly away from them in the practice of the "age old Craft"? In fossilised superstitious tradition there are profound secrets hidden, secrets folded within the most mediocre belief and action. These great secrets, secrets of the soul and of destiny, are only apparent in the open light, not in the illusionary world of Ye Olde English Wiccen. If the witches are to survive then the religion must undergo some violent and radical changes. Changes that will open the ritual for examination, so that the spiritual content may be clearly seen. Changes that must kick over many sacred cows to see whether these old cows still give milk. The inherent philosophy of the Craft was always fluid, and fluid it must become again before it gasps its last breath under a heap of musty nonsense, half-baked theology and philosophy. Witches cannot retreat from the world any longer, there is no room for us in this society unless we have something valid to offer it, and participate in its social evolution.