

HENGE HAPPENINGS

ISSUE 74—PUBLIC EDITION

BELTAINE 2007

FROM THE PRESIDENT

BELTAINE 2007

I think sometimes that I am the happiest person alive when Beltaine finally rolls around. The sun becomes noticeably warmer, the birds sing early in the morning, the trees and flowers in this part of the world begin to open, and all creatures “get busy” with the business of life. I point and smile at new green shoots emerging from the soil. I revel in the sight of returning migratory birds. Life energy is vigorous at Beltaine. Those of us on the farm also do our part to restore life after the Long Dark. Our onion crop is usually planted by now, and we are often getting ready to plant potatoes. The beginning of the Light Half of the Year usually feels long overdue by the time it gets here, at least from my perspective in the “Great White North.”

Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, all this bustling, cheerful activity that tends to also refresh and invigorate my soul hasn’t started yet. In fact, we are battening down the hatches for another Nor’easter, which intends to drop several inches of snow and/or ice on us. And the last time I checked the weather report, I took note of the fact that we won’t see the sun here for another week. It is this sloppy, wet murkiness, the sodden grey-ness of it all that gets to me after a while. You see, I have Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known by its acronym, SAD. My symptoms were extreme this year, for we had a very long sun-less winter, in which it either rained or snowed an unbelievable amount at once. Thankfully, I have friends in warm places, places where the sun shines a great deal more than it does here in central NY. I did manage to get away for a long weekend, which refreshed me a great deal.

However, in the midst of the darkness, at my lowest low, when I wasn’t communicating with anyone (which, by the way, is a bad thing to do when you’re depressed), in the throes of wading through waist-high snow to get my poor snow-bound horses outside after days of captivity, I fell – and that fall changed everything. As I lay in the snow on my back, physically unharmed but looking skyward with tears streaming down my face, I thought how futile my life seemed, and I had no energy to keep going, to even move from where I had fallen. I could see no reason for my continued existence, no reason...

As they say, it’s always darkest before the dawn. I then heard a crow yelling from a nearby tree, and that call sharply pierced the blackness of my despair. I suddenly realized that the sun had come out. The sky was a perfect blue, with

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PRESIDENT
TOPAZOWL

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

THE DREAM:

I was in Paris standing on a bridge, paint box and easel in tow, looking for a place to paint. I looked into the waters of the Seine and a movement caught my eye. I moved closer aware that there was no railing on this bridge, and I need to take care lest I fall into the water. I dropped to my hands and knees to get a better look. I saw a man completely submerged in the swirling, crystal clear water busy at his easel. He remained concentrated on the work in front of him and took no notice of me. I moved closer, feeling the rock of the bridge crumbling under me when I lost my balance and my paint box. I became afraid for my life and backed away from the edge even though I had lost something very precious to me.



DANTE'S INFERNO

Scene shift: I'm in an apartment that I'm sharing with two friends who are well known to me. I know that I must get to the airport for my flight home. I implore each in turn to hurry. Time is running out and I will miss my flight if we don't leave immediately. They both say in turn that their flights aren't until later so they have no reason to hurry. They turn their backs and continue with mundane occupations. I'm frustrated and pacing when there is a knock at the door. It's the man from the water returning my paint box. I immediately open it to check for damage, and a bright, golden light washes over my face. Everything is fresh, dry and more perfect than when it first left my hands. I am relieved and grateful to have that piece of my soul returned.

Scene shift: I'm alone in a small yellow car frantically driving myself to the airport. I'm weaving in and out of traffic going faster and faster sometimes on four wheels, but more often on two. I must not miss my flight. Panic. Then the thought occurs to me that I have a one way ticket and there is no one to take responsibility for the vehicle once I have left it at the airport. A voice in my head says that the vehicle doesn't matter anymore; the important thing is that I don't miss my flight.

THE REALITY:

One of my friends from the dream was visiting for the weekend. She was taking refuge from the cold north in the sunny south when I received the news of my dear friend's suicide. He was one of the most creative, sensitive human beings that I know; a man who wore his heart on his sleeve. At age forty-two, he was also a young man. I was devastated and grateful for my companion's comfort. My first reaction was denial. This could not be; he had so much to live for and he was so well loved. This was followed by anger. How could he do this? I felt myself thrust into the stages of grief. My next emotion was fear for his immortal soul. Suicide is a sin, isn't it? Or is it? As I assume we all do, I looked to my religious beliefs for comfort and answers.

Many of us came to an alternative religious path after a Judeo-Christian upbringing. It was a conscious choice to pursue a path that was more sensible to our sensitivities. I caught myself thinking how odd it was that I would immediately snap back to the roots of my youth in a moment of crisis. The voice from my past intoned that suicide is a sin and my beloved's soul is damned to a Dantesque Hell for eternity. That is a terrifying thought for a loved one. I reached down deep, grabbed my bootstraps and pulled for all my worth, effectively putting on the brakes, and I turned my tear stained face toward the Beliefs of Keltrian Druidism.

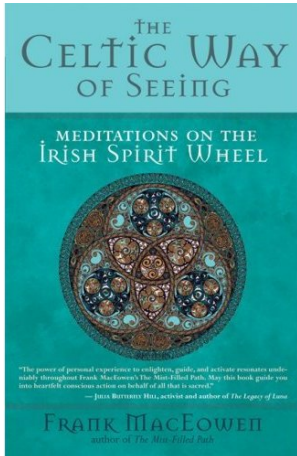
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I TURNED MY
TEAR STAINED
FACE TOWARD
THE BELIEFS OF
KELTRIAN
DRUIDISM



VICE-PRESIDENT
WREN

REVIEWS



THE CELTIC WAY OF SEEING: MEDITATIONS ON THE IRISH SPIRIT WHEEL, BY FRANK MACÉOWEN

These essays represent valuable contributions to the still-living world of Celtic mythology.

Frank MacEowen brings alive an obscure Irish story and, through his essays, helps us apply its insights to *our* lives, in *our* time. He invites us to explore an intuitive way of seeing that, he asserts, reflects the way our Celtic ancestors lived and viewed the world.

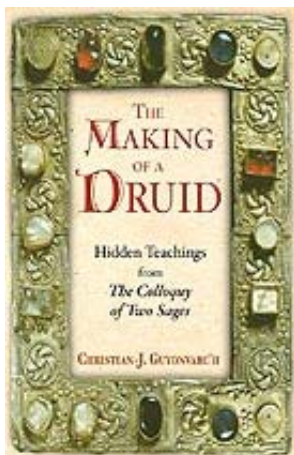
He not only relates the Wheel to our individual lives and to our social problems, but also shows how the aspects of the spirit wheel are aspects of our own souls. They are, he says, a “map of the soul – in process.” Thus, he not only brings it alive, but puts it in service to our own vision of the world and to the evolution of our lives.

To his credit, he does not present his musings as the final word, but invites us to meditate upon, elaborate and apply our own experience to his offerings. Nor is this some dry academic exposition, but includes personal experiences and those of friends and people whom he has counseled.

There are some small sections with which I might take issue – or after which I yearned for deeper exploration; but they, then, become *my* quest and *my own* vision to fulfill. In addition, I found the mix of Eastern and Western concepts somewhat distracting. (The ego of the East is not the ego of the West that would have been the subject of Jung whom he quotes.) These, however, are minor and somewhat esoteric issues that in no way detract from the value of MacEowen’s insights.

The Celtic Way of Seeing: Meditations on the Irish Spirit Wheel, by Frank MacEowen; 288 pages; published by New World Library, March 2007;.ISBN 1577315413, \$14.95. **Highly recommended.**

*Karl Schlotterbeck, MA, CAS, LP
Psychologist, Druid Elder, Author*



THE MAKING OF A DRUID: HIDDEN TEACHINGS FROM THE COLLOQUY OF TWO SAGES BY CHRISTIAN J. GUYONVARCH,

We all have them. A pile of books we’ve been meaning to read for a long time. I always have about a dozen in my “I need to read” pile. I particularly hate it when a book languishes in the pile for a long time and it was a gift from someone who basically said, “You need to read this.” Luckily, the person who gave me this book didn’t ask me, “How was it?” when I last saw her, thus saving me some embarrassment. It is a

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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light fluffy clouds making their way across my field of vision. And I realized that the snow was very comfortable, so I reclined there and watched the sky for a bit longer, my tears freezing as they rolled from my cheeks. The crow's call in my ears seemed to change, and, in a most amazing revelation, it dawned on me that crow was *speaking* to me, yelling at me, "Get up! Get up! Why do you lay there?! Don't give up! Get up! Get up!"

Don't give up.

Imagine my surprise. It didn't take a great leap of faith to understand that a certain Goddess was speaking to me through one of the black birds that are often associated with Her. *Fight on*, I heard in my head. So I did. I wiped my tears, heaved a great sigh, and climbed up out of the snow, with the crow cheering me on, and then more crows. Urged on by their cacophony, I continued to struggle onward through the snow. And yes, it was a great struggle, but I finally got my horses outside in the sun, where they needed to be.

Of course, the encouragement from the crow was more than it seemed at the time. It was really more about the inner journey I had been experiencing than the outer struggle of the moment. I was yanked abruptly from my depression by this experience, for it occurred to me then that, although I am not the center of the universe by a long shot, I am, in fact, a very necessary part -- as we all are necessary to the lives of others. My vision expanded outward from the recent wintry obsession of my inner Self hunkering miserably in darkness -- to the sky, the clouds, the crows, the horses, and,

ultimately, understanding. I understand now that it isn't all about me, but rather, that I am a servant, a vassal, a productive arm of the Gods of my People, put here on this earth and in this time to do the work They ask of me. Whether I know it or not, I am important, for many reasons. And there are people and creatures that depend on me; not just my family and my horses or pets, but the crows and other wild animals, trees and plants and water spirits that live here under my physical and magical protection. I rolled the thought around in my mind again: *it isn't all about me.*

When you come outside of yourself in such a way, you realize with a blush and a start how selfish you have actually been, withholding your bright energy from the world, withholding that spark within you that is Deity. You understand how your own self-absorption has produced negativity in a world that needs all the positive energy you can muster for it. You make a conscious choice to continue to crouch selfishly in the shadow, or to become a light in the darkness for the benefit of all. Sometimes we are so far gone that only a kick in the ass from a warrior goddess can bring us back into balance -- and sometimes we are blessed enough to actually *recognize* that kick in the ass when we experience it.

At this Beltaine, the dawn of the Season of Light, I hope we all join with the Mother and the spirits of the Land in renewing our positive, life-affirming energy. But more than that, I hope we feel the urge to share our own particular bright energy with everyone and everything we encounter.

May the warmth of the Beltaine sun bless you with the energy to continue your life's work with a renewed depth and sense of purpose!

*Walk with Wisdom,
The Topaz Owl*

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

(Continued from page 2)

The pertinent beliefs for this situation begin with number four: "We believe that all life is sacred and should be neither harmed nor taken without deliberation or regard". Okay. From what I understand, my friend deliberated much in his journal entries, and this was not his first attempt in recent weeks. I must accept that he gave this decision much thought as far as his situation was concerned. On the other hand, it's difficult for me to see that he weighed the terrible impact

that his choice would have on those who loved him well.

Number five states: "We believe in the immortality of the spirit." Period. Okay. I see nothing here that indicates there are any caveats regarding how a person enters the world of spirit. I will admit that my husband and I disagree on the matter of spirit surviving cremation intact. It's fine to disagree on the details; to agree to disagree.

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FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

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On to number six: “We believe that our purpose is to gain wisdom through experience, and that we may undergo several incarnations to facilitate the variety of experience necessary to gain wisdom.” Okay. Suicide is an experience, I suppose, although I’m not sure how wisdom is gained from that experience. If I have a concern here, it’s the reincarnation bit. Does a soul set himself or herself back when a life is consciously ended before its time? At least there is the opportunity for a do-over. I’m reasonably certain that in my perception of these matters, first-hand knowledge does not follow into the next life. The danger of repetition is very real for me in this instance.

Number eight is giving me some problems: “We believe that morality is a matter of personal conviction based upon self-respect and respect for others.” The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states:

“The term “morality” can be used either:

- 1) descriptively to refer to a code of conduct put forward by a society or,
 - a) some other group, such as a religion, or
 - b) accepted by an individual for her own behavior
 or
- 2) normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons.”

Okay. I’m not sure how suicide reflects self-respect as stated in this belief. I suppose there is an argument out there for it, but I don’t have the energy nor the heart to pursue it at this writing. I certainly do not see how suicide demonstrates respect for the others whose hearts are left with torn holes in the ragged shape of that loved one. These are wounds that take a long time to heal; if they heal at all.

Regarding item 1a from the *Stanford Encyclopedia*, the Henge does not dictate dogma. Our belief in this matter states that morality is “a matter of personal conviction”. It’s unlikely that we will hear from the Council of Elders on this matter; however, it would be an interesting and most likely lively discussion.

The second usage, the normative, indicates specific conditions and refers to rationality. I’m having a hard time seeing that my friend was being rational. This may be selfish on my part, but my personal view is that suicide is a selfish choice. No matter how many lemons you are handed in life, I feel we are obligated to work things out in the here and now. In my estimation, life is about learning and our experiences, good and bad, all contribute to building the character of the spirit. We all have to eat our peck of dirt as my sainted mother is fond of saying. If it doesn’t kill you, it makes you stronger, which is a good thing. You accumulate universal brownie points so to speak.

Finally, number eleven states: “We believe that every individual has the right to pursue knowledge and wisdom through his/her chosen path”. Okay. I can see how knowledge of the Other Side, could be gained through deliberately ending one’s life. I’m having trouble understanding the “wisdom” of it, though. I went back to the web, as I did for number eight and chose three definitions:

The *Random House College Dictionary* defines “wisdom” as: “Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with good judgement”

Okay. I can accept that “truth” is subjective. What is true for me may not be true for someone else. The same goes for what is “right”. I’m a tad iffy regarding the “good judgement” bit. I really can’t see that killing yourself is good judgement in most cases, although, it appears that my friend thought about that long and hard.

The dictionary on my computer desktop offered this: 1) “The quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement; the quality of being wise.” 2) “The soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of such experience, knowledge and good judgement.”

Okay. I’m back to “good judgement” again. Usually, when I’m faced with a decision, I seek out friends and family for a reality check; especially when my choice affects them, and/or has permanent ramifications. In this case, my friend avoided specific people who would sense his despair, and subsequently attempt

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FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

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to talk him out of hurting himself and those around him.

Lastly, the generic web answer was this: “Wisdom is defined as one’s use of one’s intelligence, creativity, and knowledge for a common good, over the long and short terms, as guided by values, through a balance among one’s own, other people’s and higher interests (such as community or global ones)”.

I saved the best for last. The key words for me here are “intelligence” and “creativity”, as well as “common good” and “higher interests”. As I mentioned above, my perception of what is right and good is not necessarily the same for my neighbor, so that would cover my friend’s apparent grasp of “common good” and “higher interests”. I’ve always regarded my friend as extremely intelligent and incredibly creative. I suppose that explains the depth and breadth of my grief. I do not understand how he possibly could have reasoned that the world would be better off without his light and laughter in it. Distance prevented me from attending his memorial service, which was a disappointment for me. I heard reports indicating that the room was packed. He was well loved by the community

Conclusion

My house guest and I filled the day walking a lot and doing touristy things around town. She said that we didn’t have to leave the house that day, but being busy and stimulated with fun, happy things seemed the right thing to do, so off we went into the sunshine, arm in arm, seeking adventures in life. Later that evening, she and I sat on the deck in shirtsleeves, watching lightning bugs float through the trees and scanning the sky. Without looking at each other, we started to sing Don McLean’s *Starry, Starry Night*. Well, she sang and I cracked and croaked, but we both felt better for it.

In the three weeks since my friend’s passing, I have philosophically wrangled with my emotions and my intellect. I was concerned that he was stuck between the worlds due to the emotional violence of his death. I was also disappointed that I had no message from his spirit. Then came the dream.

The dream was a gift from my friend. The bridge was a dangerous place; there was no railing. He did not

make it across from the sources of his dilemmas to the solutions. I nearly fell in myself. He’s separated from me - under the water. He has clarity - the water was clean. He is no longer blocked - the water was moving. He is involved in a new and totally engrossing project - he didn’t acknowledge my presence on the bridge. His life was out of control - the little yellow car careening down the highway. He just simply couldn’t miss his flight even though the people around him weren’t ready to go. It didn’t matter where he left the car, his body, the vehicle of his life. Other aspects of the dream are personal although I included them for continuity of the story. People who know me well will understand the imagery.

So what do I think I know? I do believe that my friend thought long and hard about his decision. I’m also convinced he believed in the immortality of his spirit, and setting himself up for a “do-over” may not be the best path, but at least an acceptable one to him. Although I have a hard time seeing self-respect and respect for others, morality is a matter of personal conviction. Finally, my friend had the right to choose his path leading to knowledge and wisdom.

No, my friend was not a Keltrian, although he was of the Neopagan persuasion, and embraced many of the beliefs of our sub-culture. However, I am a Keltrian and must go to our beliefs to seek succor when faced with these questions that flap in the wind like tattered banners in Tragedy’s wake.

Is there ever a case for suicide? I certainly could not deny a terminal patient morphine when the physical pain was unbearable. I heard about a study conducted in Europe once. The conclusion was that some people lived longer than clinical expectations simply because they had a choice when their pain or physical debilities became unbearable. Other than that, I still think suicide is selfish and cowardly - at least for me.

The bottom line is that I cannot impose my beliefs on another human being. Even though my fear and anger was born out of concern for my beloved friend, it is not my place to impose my philosophies on another spirit. The only thing I can do is look for answers using the vocabulary of the Keltrian Beliefs to guide me through my time of grief.

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FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

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I rarely put forth my own interpretations and perceptions in a forum such as this. It's important that my own thoughts are not tangled with the secular office of vice president. Therefore, these are my own opinions and not those of the Henge of Keltria. I thought that my process may be either helpful or interesting. I will also mention that I have left out many personal details in my writing regarding my friend and me. I have tried to share a personal process and journey here while keeping personal information private.

I hope that what comes to light, is that the Keltrian Beliefs have quite a bit of wiggle room, which allow for somewhat differing opinions while folks can still walk

the same path. My hope is that we can begin a discussion in these pages, if anyone thinks it might be helpful.

I will close by saying I wish my seasonal message could have been..... well, more seasonal. I acknowledge that the content of this writing is more appropriate for Samhain. Due to current circumstances, I am just not in the head space to twitter about green growing things and bunnies playing in the grass. On the other hand, I have to ask myself whether or not I feel better; the answer is yes, I do. Do I have all the answers? No, I don't, but that's fine. My fears for my friend are mitigated and I have moved to acceptance.

WWW,
Wren



Best Dressed *Ban-draoithe* wear the Henge of Keltria Tank Top

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Best Dressed Druids wear the Henge of Keltria Hooded Sweatshirt

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Reviews

(Continued from page 3)

little book, only 144 pages in a small format (8.1 x 5.5 inches) hardcover. I figured I could crank through that in a night or two. Was I ever wrong....

The Making of a Druid: Hidden Teachings from The Colloquy of Two Sages by Christian J. Guyonvarc'h is no easy read. At first glance, it looks fairly easy (The Fog Index is only 10.2) but it is the complexity of ideas that will enthrall you. It begins with a long introduction that is the meat of the book. The author explains what the *Immacallam in dá Thúarad* (The Colloquy of Two Sages) is all about and what it means. That is followed with a translation of the ancient story. A substantial set of notes regarding the story follows as the third major section of the book. The Colloquy itself is a dialogue between two Druids concerning the knowledge required for advancement to the grade of "Doctor." This as a teacher's examination for his student. The questions and answers provide a fascinating look at ancient Celtic teaching style.

Guyonvarc'h provides an analysis of the story, its

meaning, and how it reflects Celtic Culture. Although I might disagree with Guyonvarc'h's opinion that The Colloquy contains eschatological references that predate Christian influence, from his explanation, I can understand why Guyonvarc'h believes that it does. He fills the book with much insight into Celtic training, he explains the "Seven Degrees of Wisdom," and he includes descriptions of the nine grades of *Filid*. He reminds us that, "the best of pedagogies are ineffective against foolishness and the [strictest training methods] never hinder an intelligent student from learning. In effect, Guyonvarc'h captures much of the ancient Celtic worldview. Complex and thought provoking, I **highly recommend** ***The Making of a Druid*** for Bards and Druids seeking Intermediate to Advanced understanding of Celtic Studies or Celtic Training. ***The Making of a Druid: Hidden Teachings from The Colloquy of Two Sages*** by Christian J. Guyonvarc'h, 144pp; Inner Traditions; ISBN-10: 0892818743; ISBN-13: 978-0892818747; hardcover, \$19.95.

Review by Tony Taylor
Archdruid, HoK



Best Dressed Druids wear Henge of Keltria caps.

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ON THE WEB AT
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DRUIDISM FOR THE
21ST CENTURY™

Keltrian Druidism is a spiritual path dedicated to revering the Nature Spirits, honoring the Ancestors, and worshipping the Deities of our ancient Irish ancestors. The Henge of Keltria is a nonprofit church (501(c)(3)) dedicated to providing information, training, and networking to those who practice or who are interested in Keltrian Druidism, Druidism in general, and the evolution of mind, body, and spirit through an Irish context.

Keltrian Druid Beliefs

We believe in **Divinity as it is manifest** in the Pantheon. There are several valid theistic perceptions of this Pantheon.

We believe that **nature is the embodiment of the Gods and Goddesses.**

We believe that **Natural Law reflects the will of the Gods and Goddesses.**

We believe that **all life is sacred** and should neither be harmed nor taken without deliberation or regard.

We believe in **the immortality of the spirit.**

We believe that **our purpose is to gain wisdom** through experience.

We believe that **learning is an ongoing process** and should be fostered at all ages.

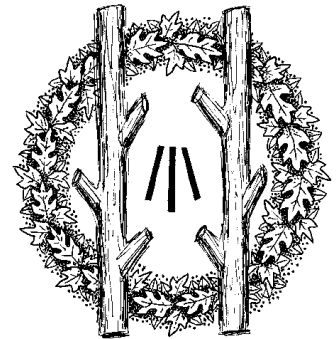
We believe that **morality should be a matter of personal conviction** based upon self respect and respect for others.

We believe that **evil is not a matter of inheritance but of intent**, therefore actions are not in themselves evil. Rather, it is through the **intent behind actions** that evil can manifest.

We believe in the **relative nature of all things, that nothing is absolute, and that all things, even the Gods and Goddesses, have their dark sides.**

We believe that **individuals have the right to pursue knowledge and wisdom** through his or her chosen path.

We believe in a **living religion** able to adapt to a changing environment. We recognize that our beliefs may undergo change as our tradition grows.



KELTRIAN DRUID SIGIL