

Witchcraft alive, well and practising

by Anne Stephen



photo by Zane Harker

It's the season of the witch. The word witch conjures up an image of an old woman with a wart on her nose and who flies on a broom.

But Corwin Gryphon is a witch, and he contradicts this image. Not only does he not have warts, but he is not an old woman and he prefers to fly by plane.

He and countless people around the world practise the religion of witchcraft, also referred to as Paganism. "We're the oldest religion," says Gryphon, who requested he be referred to by his magical name.

Witchcraft, as a religion, is not equated with Satanism. On the contrary, the followers worship ancient goddesses such as Isis.

The (Christian) church said that Satanism and Paganism were the same. We don't believe in Satan; you can't if you don't believe in God," says Gryphon. He adds, "The Christians made up the image of Satan to smash the Pagan cults."

He says the two religions cannot be equated because Satanism was "developed in the 17th century by ex-priests and nuns, who were members of the ruling class, the Aristocracy," and pagans are by definition farmers, peasants, and village dwellers.

The Craft is "an ecology-based religion; we worship life." The holidays, or festivals, are related to the changing of the seasons, fertility, and the stars. Sabats, or seasonal festivals, take place on the equinoxes and the solstices, thus quartering the year.

Followers of witchcraft have other important festivals such as Beltan, on May 1, a celebration of fertility; Lamas on August 1, a holiday

"dedicated to the final form of the male deity absorbed by the female sun," which also hopes for a good harvest; and Samhain, the "month of the dead," which according to Gryphon is between the fall equinox and the winter solstice.

The constellation Scorpio, prominent in this time, represents sex, energy and death, says Gryphon. On a circular calendar, Hallowe'en is directly across from Walpurgisnacht (April 30), the night of the demons.

The Virgin Mary is really Isis in disguise

"This is exactly the same as Hallowe'en in the old religion," adds Gryphon. Hallowe'en is timeless, eight hours of being between the worlds, beyond time and beyond space. We can contact forces both inside and outside ourselves, on the astral plane."

He says in the old religion, both were a time of ancestor worship, when the dead would walk again.

Hallowe'en is "a celebration of the ability to send energies out to space; we can travel into space without spaceships." Gryphon continues that it is a time when people can tap into the collective unconscious, and contact gods outside of the human culture. As an example, he says the pyramids in Egypt were "built to focus energy on certain stars so they could contact extraterrestrial intelligences in that nature."

Corwin Gryphon belongs to the organization called the Fellowship of Isis. It has temples in 47 countries around the world.

"There has been a definitive

interest in a return of goddess worship."

According to Gryphon, witches have been persecuted at least since 1100 a.d., when the Catholic church called Paganism heresy. The Christians then "made the pagan festivals into their own holidays, and they assimilated our religion. They took our sacred sites and our rituals."

He says most of the sites where the Virgin Mary has been seen are former sites dedicated to Isis, and that "the Virgin Mary is really Isis in disguise."

Persecution of the witches by the witch hunts and burnings has continued through to 1982 even with the Canadian Constitution, and the criminal code as law. The constitution guarantees the freedom of religion but it defines a religion as something with the supremacy of God, which limits the definition, and thus excludes Witchcraft.

In the criminal code (section 223), the witchcraft act says, according to Gryphon, "if you're caught fraudulently practising witchcraft, you can be charged." If you aren't a witch and are practising witchcraft, such as tarot or teacup readings and someone charges you with fraud, you must either agree or prove you really are a witch, a Catch-22 situation.

Since the Craft worships Goddesses, and is the only religion which does not discriminate on the basis of sex or race, many women have become interested in joining, says Gryphon. His organization has handed out literature at rape rallies, and other women-oriented gatherings.

For more information on Witchcraft, call 439-3595 or write to Box 1075, Edmonton, T5J 2M1.

Struggle of Beirut lives

MONTREAL (CUP) The recent military defeat of the Palestinian Liberation Organization has fortified the Palestinian will and determination, a PLO official said recently.

"The Palestinian struggle did not start in Beirut to end in Beirut. We started 50 years ago and we will continue for another 50 years. A people can never be destroyed or defeated," Shafiq al-Hout, former head of the Beirut PLO office, told an audience at the Arab-American University Graduates convention in Montreal.

Al-Hout said the PLO must rethink Palestinian objective, problems and solutions.

"Many revolutions go through stages and problems. We have to reconsider all we have done and not done. The revolution has made mistakes and we have to learn lessons. It is the beginning of a new start in the Palestinian struggle," he said.

According to al-Hout, the PLO has yet to develop future strategies because it is still suffering shock from the Israeli invasion and the refugee massacres.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian cause has entered the victory stage, said Fathi Arafat of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (a Red Cross equivalent) & A BROTHER OF PLO leader Yasser Arafat. He said he hoped the PLO's victory would be achieved through political means.

Columbia University delegate Edward Said claimed that land is the cause of the Middle East conflict. According to Said, all people are entitled to enough land to support their lives. Denial of this right can transform peasants into revolutionaries, he said.

Pierre De Bane, federal fisheries minister, and Jaques-Yvan Morin, Quebec's minister of inter-governmental affairs, both addressed the conference.

"Canada would not rule out the possibility of a Palestinian state and it supports their right to participate in

negotiations to determine their future," said De Bane. But he added that Canada is "firmly committed to Israel's existence, legitimacy, security and well-being as an independent state in the Middle East."

Meanwhile, an angry and noisy demonstration was taking place outside the conference hotel. An undetermined number of Palestinian supporters and about 500 anti-PLO protesters lined up on opposite sides of the street facing the hotel, heckling and shouting at each other.

"We are against Israel. They don't have the right to protest after the fighting in Lebanon," said one Palestinian supporter. "There are hundreds of groups who have more of a right than the Palestinians. Armenians ask the world to recognize that their people were murdered, but nobody says anything about them," said one anti-PLO demonstrator.

Several times demonstrators led 'charges' across the street but Montreal police pushed them back. Near the end of the demonstration the police threatened to revoke the protesters' demonstration permit if they didn't keep to their side of the street.

Hundreds protest Jerry Falwell's Right

TORONTO (CUP) — The supporters of the People's Church in North York were expecting visitors so, in the North American tradition, they made coffee for them.

Jerry Falwell, the Moral Majority leader, they were prepared for; the more than 300 demonstrators were a surprise.

Ellen Wexler, spokesperson for the Toronto Fight the Right Network, the group that organized the protest of Falwell's visit, said the Moral Majority should be taken seriously because its members take themselves seriously.

The coalition is a network of feminists, socialists, disarmament activists, concerned Christians and

Jews, lesbians and gay activists.

"The Right is not just in the United States but is in Canada in the form of the Right to Life, Ken Campbell and the Renaissance campaign, Positive Parents, the Ku Klux Klan and the People's Church," said Wexler.

Joan Armistad, a spokesperson for the Students' Christian Movement, said her group joined the protest because of Falwell's right-wing views. "Jesus is a liberator, not an oppressor. Concerned Christians feel that Jerry Falwell's message is contrary to the Gospel message of love and justice," she said.

The People's church's only response was a large poster placed

beside a "coffee table."

"The Christ of Chaos in Confederation Committee (Falwell's Canadian campaign) Welcomes all who have come tonight to Demonstrate Your Support for our Committee to the Liberation of All the Oppressed — which include most Canadians at present."

In case anyone had doubts, the Church listed individuals it considers oppressed:

"Women, children (born and unborn) and victims of drug, alcohol or sexual disorientation."

Jerry Falwell will be saving souls all over the place in Jubilee Auditorium tonight at 7:30.

For Advertising information and rates please contact Tom Wright or Margriet West 432-4241

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Note: These events are open only to U of A students, staff, and guests. Absolutely no minors admitted!

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