

Manchester Comet, June 30th, 1965

WHY I AM

A WITCH

by Alex Saunders

in collaboration with Paul King

"LISTEN to the words of the Great Mother, who was of old also called among men, Isis, Diana, Astarte, Kerridwen, Aphrodite, Bride and many other names." So begins the "Charge," or creed of the "Hidden Children of the Goddess," known better as witches.

Hidden, because of the great wave of persecution that overtook them during the middle ages. Persecution that claimed the lives of 9,000,000 men, women and children in Europe alone.

Violent and cruel deaths because the old Gods that they worshipped were regarded as being devils and evil spirits by the followers of the comparatively new religion.

Witches, or the "People of the Wica" have existed for many centuries. The cult of the Wica is a genuine religion which has its origins in the mists of time and antiquity.

Earliest recorded examples of this can be found in the famous wall-paintings executed by pre-historic man in the world renowned caves of Southern France and Spain.

The religion of the Wica is pre-Christian and did not originate as a result of Christianity, and the practice of the rites and ceremonies in the cult can be found in the remains and excavations of all the great past civilizations where the Mother-Goddess forms the main figure of worship. Kerridwen of the ancient Britons, Bride of the Celts, Isis of Egypt, Astarte of the Babylonians, Diana of the Romans and so on.

ANCIENT

The word 'witch' stems from the ancient Saxon word Wica, meaning "the wise one" and the witch, contrary to popular belief, is not just a woman, but is a description applicable to both men and women.

The religion of the witches, by virtue of its ancient origins, is based on the laws

of nature, people of those far off days being mainly concerned with rural occupations, such as hunting and agriculture. It is probably because of this that the "Old Religion," as it is called, is to be found in the countryside rather than in the towns.

Briefly, the beliefs of the witches are that everything in nature has a positive and negative force, hence the God is always thought of as wearing horns on his head to represent the virile and productive force in nature.

The Goddess is thought of as the passive, or negative force, and is the Eternal Mother, the womb of nature from whence all life springs and to which all life must return.

A chief witch explains his cult after the controversy of last week's story in the Comet.

Wica is a matriarchal cult, women being identified with the moon and its twenty-eight day cycle. As the moon's power waxes and wanes, so the fertility cycle of woman waxes and wanes through twenty-eight days also.

The Goddess wears the symbol of the moon upon her brow. She was also known as the Queen of Heaven, which is one of the titles of the Virgin Mary of Christianity.

This may be one of the reasons why Christians who come into Wica find it easy to accept the worship of the Goddess of the Witches. They are not required to sever their connections with the Christian Church. If they wish to attend Christian

services, they are quite at liberty to do so.

In the middle ages, before witchcraft was made an indictable offence, the members of the Covens would attend their parish churches on Sundays and feast-days. Often, the local priest would take part in the coven-rites, and the lord of the manor would provide the feast and he and his family would attend.

MYSTERY

Present day witchcraft is not illegal and the laws have been repealed since the early nineteen-fifties. Unfortunately, the great necessity for secrecy in the past has caused many stories to be invented about it. Because of the mystery and these stories, people come to regard witchcraft as something fearful and evil.

Even in this age of enlightenment, it is equated with such things as sex-orgies, voodoo, satanism and black magic, and all the forms of perversion that one could mention, beliefs that are encouraged by the leaders of the various religions.

In fact, the witch is doing no more than carrying out a function similar to that given to a priest or a rabbi when he is invested with power and authority at his ordination.

This is what the 'wicked' witches do and believe. Fundamentally it's not so very different from Christianity which preaches "love unto all men."

We believe that those who have received the touch of the Goddess have received the gifts of life, and are blessed with the fullness of life.