

***The American Council of Witches'
"Principles of Wiccan Belief" (1974)***

Seventy-three Witches founded the *Council of American Witches* in 1974. At the Spring *Witchmeet* in Minneapolis, MN (April 11 to 14, 1974), they adopted the following document. At the time, Wicca and other Neopagan religions were greatly misunderstood in North America. This document helped to clarify Wiccans' points of view. The thirteen statements are necessarily vague. They do not precisely or completely match any one Witchcraft tradition. But they do provide an introduction to the full range of belief systems found within *Wicca*.

Introduction :

In seeking to be inclusive, we do not wish to open ourselves to the destruction of our group by those on self-serving power trips, or to philosophies and practices contradictory to those principles. In seeking to exclude those whose ways are contradictory to ours, we do not want to deny participation with us to any who are sincerely interested in our knowledge and beliefs, regardless of race, color, sex, age, national or cultural origins, or sexual preference.

Principles of Wiccan Belief :

1. We practice rites to attune ourselves with the natural rhythm of life forces marked by the phases of the Moon and the seasonal Quarters and Cross Quarters.
2. We recognize that our intelligence gives us a unique responsibility towards our environment. We seek to live in harmony with Nature, in ecological balance, offering fulfillment to life and consciousness within an evolutionary concept.
3. We acknowledge a depth of power far greater than that apparent to the average person. Because it is far greater than ordinary it is sometimes called "*supernatural*", but we see it as lying within that which is naturally potential to all.
4. We conceive of the Creative Power in the universe as manifesting through polarity-as masculine and feminine-and that this same Creative Power lies in all people, and functions through the interaction of the masculine and feminine. We value neither above the other, knowing each to be supportive of the other. We value sex as pleasure, as the symbol and embodiment of life, and as one of the sources of energies used in magickal practice and religious worship.

5. We recognize both outer and inner, or psychological, worlds -- sometimes known as the Spiritual World, the Collective Unconscious, Inner Planes -- and we see in the interaction of these two dimensions the basis for paranormal phenomena and magickal exercises. We neglect neither dimension for the other, seeing both as necessary for our fulfillment.

6. We do not recognize any authoritarian hierarchy, but do honor those who teach, respect those who share their greater knowledge and wisdom, and acknowledge those who have courageously given of themselves in leadership.

7. We see religion, magick and wisdom-in-living as being united in the way one views the world and lives within it -- a world view and philosophy of life which we identify as Witchcraft, the Wiccan Way.

8. Calling oneself a "Witch" does not make one a Witch -- but neither does heredity itself, nor the collecting of titles, degrees and initiations. A Witch seeks to control the forces within her/himself that make life possible in order to live wisely and well without harm to others and in harmony with Nature.

9. We believe in the affirmation and fulfillment of life in a continuation of evolution and development of consciousness, that gives meaning to the Universe we know and our personal role within it.

10. Our only animosity towards Christianity, or toward any other religion or philosophy of life, is to the extent that its institutions have claimed to be "*the only way*," and have sought to deny freedom to others and to suppress other ways of religious practice and belief.

11. As American Witches, we are not threatened by debates on the history of the Craft, the origins of various terms, the origins of various aspects of different traditions. We are concerned with our present and our future.

12. We do not accept the concept of absolute evil, nor do we worship any entity known as "Satan" or "the Devil", as defined by Christian tradition. We do not seek power through the suffering of others, nor do we accept that personal benefit can be derived only by denial of benefits to another.

13. We believe that we should seek within Nature that which is contributory to our health and well-being.

Notes & comments:

It appears that in some recent copies of this document, the sentence about ritual sex has been omitted, perhaps because of its potential to be misunderstood by the public. Although the practice of ritual sex has a very long history, the concept is strange to many people.

Strangely, one of the primary activities of modern covens, the use of magic to actively attempt to help and heal others, was omitted in this statement of Principles.

The concept of Satan (referred to in principle Twelve) is found not only within Christianity, but in Islam and some other religious traditions.