



The Wiccan Rede: A Historical Journey

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Today's Wiccan ethics largely center on the Wiccan Rede: If it harms none, do what you will. Long versions are in circulation adding poetry or personal views (or both), but these eight words are the basis of these variants and best sum up the nature of Wiccan ethics: to harm none.

The history of the Wiccan Rede proved more complicated to research than expected. Although by the 1980's the Rede was a standard inclusion in books on Wicca, there were very few references to it prior to the mid-1970's [1]. This may have partly been due to the fact that Wicca was primarily a secretive religion to non-initiates prior to the end of the 1960's, but also because ethics were not a topic of focus in the early years of Wicca when more emphasis was placed on history and defining witchcraft practices. By the early 1970's both the Gardnerian and Alexandrian traditions had gained momentum, having become established in the United States where they quickly spread. As Wicca received more public attention, and solitary practice

begantoexplode,manypublicWiccansfelttheneed to emphasizeWiccanmorality.Inthe1980'sauthorssuch asRaymondBucklandandScottCunninghamhadintroducedsimplifiedhandbooksthatcateredtotosolitary practitioners.

AnotherproblemresearchingtheRedeisthatbookenottheonlymeansthroughwhichinformationwasshared.Newsletters(manywithshortlifespansgatherings,andbythe1980'scomputerbulletinboardsystemsandtheInternet,allprovidedameanstodissemminateinformation.Oftenthisinformationlackedreferencesandpropercredit,makinganyattemptataccurateresearchdauntingatbest.

Oraltraditioncanalsobeforgotten.Justasmany popularchantstodaywereintroducedatpagangatheringsandpassedonthroughothergatheringsbeforemakingitswayintoprint,manyyearlyaspectsofthe Craftwerenotnecessarilyformallyincorporatedinbookofshadowspublicationrightaway.Thatwhich ispassedonorallycaneasilyslipintoobscurity,loosinganyassociationwiththeonewhooriginatedit.

Thisessaywillrelyprimarilyonwrittenresources althoughsomefirst-handaccountshavehelpedtotie the fragments together.Iwelcomefeedbackandencourageyoutoshareyourowninsightsandresearchto helpfillinthegaps.

Seebibliographyforalistofbookspriorito1980 (thatI read)thatdidanddidnotcontainmentionoftheRede.

Part Two: The Early Years

InresearchingtheoriginsoftheRede,Istartedwiththe worksofGeraldGardner(1884-1964).Whetherornot

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Footnotes

Part2:TheEarlyYears

- [1]GeraldGardner,TheMeaningofWitchcraft,p127inthe1982and1999printings—notsureaboutearliercopies.
- [2]ItisratherironicthatGardner,whowasoftentastedintoWiccanpractice(suchasworkingskyclan initiation)wouldspecificallysiteLouÿsas theba sisofawitch'smoralitysince Louÿswaswellknownfortheeroticnatureofhiswork.lbringthisupmoreforthe humorthanasanaccusation.RegardlessofGardner's intentions,hisworkwas modernreligion.Formoreinforma- tionontheliterarycharacterKingPausole,seemy essayKingWho??
- [3]PierreLouÿs,CollectedWorksofPierreLouÿs, 1932,page321.
- [4]Kelly,Aidan,PubliccontentsoftheGardneria nBookofShadows(webpage), sectionD.1TheOldLaws(1961)orkelly,Aidan,Cr aftingtheArtofMagic:Book1, 1991,page159
- [5]AleisterCrowley,TheBookoftheLaw,Chapter 1,verse40.
- [6]FrancoisRabelais,Gargantua,1534
- [7]DoreenValiente,1991InterviewwithFireHeart Journal page44
- [8]DoreenValiente,WitchcraftforTomorrow,1978, page44

Part3:EightWords...

- [1]HansHolzer,TheTruthaboutWitchcraft,1971, page128
- [2]JustineGlass,Witchcraft,TheSixthSense,196 5,page58
- [3]Dr.LeoLouisMartello,Witchcraft:TheOldRel igion,1975,page42
- [4]Baker,J.(ed.),TheAlexSandersLectures,198 4,page67
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- [6]LaterknownasLadyGwynne
- [7]NewEnglandCovenoftheTraditionalistWitches website(Seelinkspage).
- [8]IamindebtedtoToriMcElroyforcontactingme inreferencetoanearlyversion ofthispaperandbringingmeincontactforMr.Wi lson,andgratefultoMr.Wilson Pentagram.
- [9]DoreenValiente,WitchcraftforTomorrow,1978, page41
- [10]DoreenValiente,WitchcraftforTomorrow,1978 ,page72
- [11]DoreenValiente,WitchcraftforTomorrow,1978 ,page74
- [12]DoreenValiente,AnABCofWitchcraftPast&P resent,1973,page55
- [13]DoreenValiente,1991InterviewwithFireHeart Journal
- [14]Thephase"imperfectloveandperfecttrust" wasinusebyothertraditionslong beforetheprintingoftheRedeOFTheWiccaeinth eOstara1975GreenEgg.
- [15]AidanKellytracethisbackto1949inCrafti ngtheArtofMagic:Book1,page 55.SeealsothePublicContentsoftheGardnerian section BookofShadows(webpage),

Part5:Conclusion

- [1]Thelawsweresaidtobe"ofold"andsoreflec tedthementalityofwitchesdur- ingthetimeofthewitchpersecutions.Thevalidit yoftheseorigins,however,is debatable.(Ihopetoexplorethecrafftlawsinmor edetailatsomepointinasepa- rateessay.)
- [2]Kelly,Aidan,PubliccontentsoftheGardnerian BookofShadows(webpage), sectionD.1TheOldLaws(1961),startingat[L:40] orKelly,Aidan,CraftingtheAr ofMagic:Book1,1991,page156A.4.

Garnerrevivedadyingreligionorcreatedonefrom scratchwasnotanissue.Debatesaside,Gardnerwas instrumentalinbringingtheCrafttothepublican dhis work,alongwiththatofDoreenValiente(1922-1999), becamemuchofthefoundationofwhathasbecome modernWicca.

KeepinmindthatGardner'sversionofwitchcraftwas nottheonlyformavailable.Amongthesevariations werehereditarywitchesandothertraditionalists, many ofwhichdidnotcarefortheGardnerianvariety.M any oftheseformsofwitchcraftwerelessreligiousin form, andoftenmoreintellectualinemphasis thantheGardnerian/Alexandrianvarieties,whichweremoreemo- tionalinemphasisandmademoreuseofchantsand dancing.Sadlymanyoftheseformswerenotasvisi ble andsomewhoclaimedtobehereditarywerenotina c- tuality,althoughitwasausefulwaytojustifyth eirper- sonalpracticeorviews.ModernWiccahasbecome suchameltingpotofbeliefsandtheincreasingse nse offreedomhasencouragedthesharingofideasto suchanextentthatitisoftenquitedifficultto discover theirorigins.

InresearchingGardner'sworkIsoughtonlytofind mentionoftheWiccanRede,beitincontextorver ba- tim,andifpossiblefindearlierreferences.Prior tohis thirdbookTheMeaningofWitchcraft,publishedin 1959,Gardnerdidnotdiscussethics.Eveninthis the Redewasnotyetformalizedasitisnow,butrath e rit onlytoucheduponitsessenceoftheWiccanethosa s "harmnone".

[Witches]areinclinedtothemoralityofthel egen- daryGoodKingPausol,"Dowhatyoulikesolongas youharmnoone".Buttheybelieveacertainlawto be important,"Youmustnotusemagicforanythingwhi ch willcauseharmtoanyone,andif,topreventagre ater

wrong being done, you must discommodate someone, you must do it only in a way which will abate the harm. [1]

Although the above quote has been cited many times in previous essays on the origin of the Rede, there was no indication of who this "Good King Pausole" was. It turns out that King Pausole (not "Pausol") was a literary character in the story *The Adventures of King Pausole* (1901) by Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925), a French novelist. [2]

This specific quote Gerald was referring to was:

I. Do not wrong thy neighbor.

II. Observing this, do as thou pleasest. [3]

Already this has the feel of the Rede, but it had not yet been articulated in the form popular today.

The Gardnerian Craft Laws, which were introduced around 1957 although finalized around 1961, make further reference to the idea of the Rede, although again only in context: "And for long we have obeyed this law, 'Harm none'" [4].

When associating the Rede with Gardner, most scholars suggest the Rede is actually based on the older Law of Thelema created by Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) in his work *Liber AL vel Legis* (1904), more commonly known as *The Book of the Law*:

Who calls us Thelemites will do now wrong, if he looke but close into the word. For there are therein Three Grades, the Hermit, and the Lover, and the man of Earth. Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. [5]

Even among the O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis), an outer Thelemic order, there is some debate on the interpretation of this phrase, but those who connect it with the Rede tend to feel that "harm none" is implied from the context of the be-

As I mentioned earlier, despite all the research, I consider this a work in progress and invite you to contact me at ajcoughlin@waningmoon.com if you feel you have any reference material or firsthand experience to add. I know, for instance, that Hanz Holzer had published an article on Witchcraft prior to 1969 that was published in over 150 newspapers throughout the US. I do not know if the Rede or ethics was mentioned in that article. Likewise, there were many small newsletters and journals that came and went in both the US and UK during the 1960's and 1970's which may have disseminated the Rede, not to mention articles by early prominent authors and teachers that may have appeared in local newspapers.

I have added a section to include related commentary so that you may view both feedback/criticism of this site as well as further insights from visitors. I have also created a link page to list other related sites as well as online source material.

John J. Coughlin is editor of the *NYC Pagan Resource Guide* as well as creator/webmaster of the many other free services on waningmoon.com. He is also author of the new book *Out of the Shadows: An Exploration of Dark Paganism and Magick* which seeks to regain a balance in Paganism, which often shuns anything related to "darkness" in fear of being associated with "evil".

More information about the author can be found on his webpage, *The Realm of the Dark Wyccan*.

You can contact the author at ajcoughlin@waningmoon.com

Egg, that does not discount the possibility that it was in private circulation much earlier and that such a copy had inspired Valiente's 1964 speech.

Sadly, Gardner, Valiente, Porter and Thomson have all passed on leaving these questions largely unanswered. Despite the fuzzy history of the Wiccan Rede, one thing is certain; as Wicca became more readily available, the Rede took a prominent and needed place in Wiccan literature. As more and more solitary and non-traditionalists began to practice the Craft without formal initiations, the Rede ensured that the essence of Wiccan ethics was fostered and a core belief in a very open and flexible religion was established.

Today much emphasis is placed on the Rede, Karma and the Three-fold law, sometimes to the point of fundamentalism. Perhaps coming from predominantly Christian backgrounds we needed the comforting structure of the moral rules we were used to, or perhaps our constant battle with the public or the term "witch" from its negative stereotype forced us to begin to overemphasize our morality in hopes of placating those who would subdue us. Going back to the King Pausanias reference in *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, Gardner stated that witches were inclined to a morality of harm none, not that they were bound to it. Today the Rede is often elevated to the status of law.

I am not going to attempt to analyze the meaning of the Rede itself in this paper. I have always considered it to be a personal matter, not one to be tainted with a social, political or religious agenda. This is why I like the use of the word "rede"; it infers a guideline, not a strict law, thus allowing each of us to seek our own meaning based on our own experiences, and learned by our own mistakes.

lieved source of Crowley's inspiration; Francois Rabelais' novel *Gargantua* published in 1534:

DO AS THOU WILT because men that are free, of gentle birth, well bred and at home in civilized company, a natural instinct that inclines them to virtue and saves them from vice. This instinct they name their honor. [6]

To be more precise, the text that would later become the Book of the Law was said to have been dictated to Crowley from a being called Aiwass, an angel of the highest order. However, in 1920 when Crowley set up his establishment in Sicily, he called it the Abbey of Thelema, which is also taken from Rabelais, and in his book *Magick in Theory and Practice*, the works of Francois Rabelais were recommended for its invaluable wisdom. So Crowley was indeed familiar with the work of Rabelais.

Although the extent of influence on the Rede is debatable, Crowley's influence cannot be easily dismissed. Gardner was initiated into the O.T.O. by Crowley in 1946 and was rumored to have met with Crowley as far back as 1936. After Crowley's death in 1947, many regarded Gerald as an obvious successor as leader of the order, especially since he had been granted (purchased) a charter by Crowley empowering Gardner to start a local encampment of the order. Therefore, Gardner was more than just slightly involved with the O.T.O. and its teachings. Being that other writings of Gardner, such as the *Charge of the Goddess*, were worked by Doreen Valiente since, as she put it, "people are just not going to accept this and take it seriously so long as they think you're an offshoot of Crowley's O.T.O." [7], it is quite possible that she also encouraged Gardner to keep the Rede away from sounding like a work of Crowley. Valiente, a nearly initiate and High Priestess of Gardner considered by many to be the

"mother of Wicca" for her significant influence in Gardner's work, was entrusted with editing Gardner's notes into a more formal book of shadows.

As will be discussed in the next section, Doreen Valiente was no stranger to the writings of Crowley. In relating Crowley's work with Wiccan ethics, Valiente reminds us that the concept of following one's will is nothing new:

The teachings of Crowley's, embodied in the dictum quoted above, 'Dowhatthou wilt', is by no means new, and was not invented by him. Long ago, Saint Augustine said, 'Love and do what you will'. The of an ancient Egypt declared: 'There is no part of me is not of the gods'. The pagan Greeks originated the saying: 'To the pure all things are pure'. The implication is that when one has reached a high state of spiritual development and evolution one has passed beyond the comparatively petty rules of religion and society at some particular time and place, and may indeed do what one wills, because one's true will is then knowable, and must of its own nature be right. The Upanishads and sacred scriptures of ancient India tell us the knower of Brahman is beyond both good and evil. [8]

Part Three: Eight Words :: :: ::

The first recorded mention of the Wiccan Rede in the eight-word form popular today, at least that I have been able to discover thus far, was in a speech by Doreen Valiente on October 3, 1964 at what may have been the first witches' dinner organized in modern history. The event was sponsored by Pentagram, a quarterly newsletter and "witchcraft review" started and published by Gerard Noe in 1964:

Part Five: Conclusion

I must admit I had hoped to find a simple and clean historical path for the Rede when I first began my research. Chances are Doreen Valiente, who had edited much of Gardner's work, came up with the Rede using Gardner's material. I am doubtful, however, that Gardner actually wrote the Rede himself. Although "harm none" is mentioned several times in the Craft Laws released by Gardner around 1961, the only reason given is that any harm could be blamed on witches and thus encourage further witch hunts. [1]

But when one of our oppressors die, or even besick is the cry, "This be Witches Malice," and the hunt again. And though they slay ten of their people to ours, still they care not; they have many thousands, while we are few indeed. So it is a Red that none shall Art in any way do ill to any, however much they injured us. And for long we have obeyed this law, "none" and now times many believe we exist not. So it is a Red that this law shall still continue to help us in our plight. No one, however great an injury or injustice receive, may use the Art in any way to do ill or harm. [2]

Not once do the laws say to harm no one because it is wrong! Likewise if there had been a standard ethical stance in the Craft why were there no specifics in the public contents of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows? I doubt it was withheld due to secrecy given that an entire section is dedicated to the importance of work and sky-clad, a much more risqué topic to make public than a simple ethical statement.

However, the version of the Rede by Adriana Porter Thomson's claim is true - would have had to have been written before Porter's death in 1946. Although I could find no mention of it prior to its 1975 debut in Gardner's

Circa 1970/71	Alex Sander's lecture on the Book of Shadows	"the motto of Wicca: 'Anit harm none-dowhat ye will.'" (This could have influenced early Alexandrians and possibly others)
1971	Stewart Farrar's <i>What Witches Do</i>	The last chapter of the book (excluding the appendices) ends as follows: "So lend as the Book of Shadows begins: Eight words the Wiccan redefulfil: Anitharm none, dowhat you will."
1973	Doreen Valiente's <i>An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present</i>	"[Witches'] morality can be summed up in one sentence, 'Dowhat you will, so long as it harms none.'"
1973	Dr. Leo Louis Martello, <i>Witchcraft: The Old Religion</i>	"Witch credo 'And ye harm none-dowhat thou wilt'" (Mention the "credo" was published in a student newspaper, <i>The Villanovan</i> , in 1972)
1975	Lady Gwen Thompson, <i>Green Egg</i> magazine, Vol. III. No. 69 (Ostara 1975)	Last line of her Rede of the Wicca: "26. Eight words ye Wiccan Redefulfil-An'itharm none, Dowhat ye will." (This was the most visible appearance of the Rede to date.)
1978	Doreen Valiente's <i>Witchcraft for Tomorrow</i>	"Eight Words the Wiccan Redefulfil: Anitharm none, dowhat ye will. This can be expressed in more modern English as follows: Eight words the Witches' Creed fulfil: If it harms none, do what you will." Longer poem, the Witches' Creed also introduced. (First book by a well established Witch to print the Rede?)

Demanding tolerance between covens as well as to war outside world, Doreen spoke the Anglo-Saxon witch formula called the Wiccan Rede or wise teaching: 'Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil, An'itharm none, do what ye will.' [1]

The above quote is from Hanz Holzer's book *The Truth About Witchcraft* first published in 1969 and again in 1971. This was one of the first books to present witchcraft from an outsider's view looking in, observing some of the practices of the various forms of witchcraft in both the U.S. and U.K. around that time.

Valiente's "Eight Words" quote was also published in *Volume One* (1964) of the *Pentagram*, the UK newsletter that hosted the event and as will be discussed later was subsequently published between circa 1965 and 1966 in the United States in *The Waxing Moon* newsletter. In 1965 the Rede was again quoted without references in *Jus Glass*' book *Witchcraft, The Sixth Sense*:

The other, only slightly less important belief of the witches is in hurtlessness; an article of faith also of the ancient Hun religion, which is thought to have originated in Africa and traveled across the world, by way of Egypt and India to Hawaii. The kahuna taught that the only sin was to hurt—either oneself or someone else. The Wiccan Rede (i.e. Counselor advice of the Wise Ones) is: 'Any harm none, do what ye will.' [2]

Sadly no reference is given but since *Glass* had quoted from *Pentagram* earlier in that chapter it is quite possible that the above mention of the Rede derived from something inspired by Valiente's speech in 1964. The wording is a bit different from that speech, but this may have been due to the usual changes that occur when information is passed via word of mouth or as the author recalled the quote from memory. Since *Glass* had an advertisement

calling for help in her research which was printed in the same issue of Pentagram (and on the very same page) as Valiente's "Eight Words" quote, this is a likely source.

Glass' book also goes on to discuss how one of the coven's duties is to keep its members in check when emotions are strong. This ethical support mentality was also mentioned by Gardner in *The Meaning of Witchcraft* as well as other authors in the 1970's. As I will discuss in my paper on the Three-Fold Law, a traditional covens gave way to solitary practice (for the majority), something was needed to fill in for the coven's ground in element to provide "moral restraint". This replacement was the emphasis on the Wiccan Rede and the Three-Fold Law. As Glass insinuated, ethics was not a significant focus in the Craft at the time (around 1965), although the idea of harming none was generally accepted.

Another interesting variation is mentioned by Dr. Leo Louis Martello in his book *Witchcraft: The Old Religion* (first published in 1973): "Witch credo 'And ye harm none, do what thou wilt'" [3]. According to Dr. Martello, the quote was part of an article dated March 15, 1972 in *The Villanovan*, the newspaper of the Students Union of the Catholic Villanova University in Pennsylvania, USA. Again no sources were given.

Circa 1970/1971, Alex Sanders composed a series of lectures written by himself and others which were privately distributed as a course for novices in Alexandria, Virginia, a tradition Sanders founded. In the essay entitled *The Book of Shadows*, it is mentioned that during first degree initiation:

1964	(various sources)	Gerald Gardner dies.
1964	Doreen Valiente Speech	"Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil, An'itharm none, do what ye will." (First time Rede as we know it today mentioned publicly?)
1964	<i>Pentagram</i> newsletter published by Gerard Noel in UK	"Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil, An'itharm none, do what ye will."
1965	Justine Glass' <i>Witchcraft, The Sixth Sense</i>	"The Wiccan Rede (i.e. Counselor or advice of the Wise Ones) is: 'Any harm none, do what ye will.'" Note wording is different. (First book I have found to mention the Rede)
circa 1965-66	<i>The Waxing Moon</i> newsletter published by Joseph B. Wilson in USA	Joseph Wilson clearly remembers reprinting Valiente's words in <i>The Waxing Moon</i> but he could not give an exact date as sadly his archive had been lost several years ago.
1969 and 1971	Hanz Holzer's <i>The Truth About Witchcraft</i>	Mentioned Doreen Valiente's 1964 Speech and quotes the Rede. "Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil, An'itharm none, do what ye will." (Although this book is now out of print and lost popularity as Wicca became more publicly known, this was the first book to give insight into the various types of modern witches at a time when this information was not widely available, and peaked much interest in the public.)

Date	Source	Quote/Notes
1534	Francois Rabelais' novel <i>Gargantua</i>	"DOASTHOU WILT because men that are free, of gentle birth, well bred and at home in civilized company possess a natural instinct that inclines them to virtue and saves them from vice. This instinct they name their honor." (Crowley's Inspiration)
1901	Pierre Louÿs's <i>The Adventures of King Pausole</i> (English version in 1919)	I. Don't wrong thy neighbor. II. Observing this, do as thou pleasest. (Gardner's Inspiration)
1904	Crowley's <i>The Book of the Law</i>	"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." (Possible influence on Gardner and others familiar with O.T.O. or Crowley)
1946	(various sources)	Adriana Porter, who is said to have written the version of the Rede printed in 1975 in <i>Green Egg</i> , dies.
1952-1953	Doreen Valiente's <i>The Rebirth of Witchcraft</i>	Doreen Valiente meets (1952) and is initiated (1953) by Gardner. (If Valiente did not write the Rede, any sources could possibly predate this time.)
1956	Gerald Gardner's <i>The Meaning of Witchcraft</i>	"[Witches] are inclined to the morality of the legendary Good King Pausol, 'Do what you like so long as you harm no one'. (This is the first book on 'modern' witchcraft to site the ethic of witchcraft.)
1957-1961	The Old Laws, Gerald Gardner's Gardnerian (public) Book of Shadows: (Section D.1)	And for long we have obeyed this law, 'Harm none' (Reflect general consensus that Witches did not tend to have a desire to cause harm.)

The Book [of Shadows] is closed in front of him [the being initiated] and he shows the cover, on which he has written the motto of Wicca: "An it harm none - what ye will." [4]

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These lectures were republished in the book *The Alex Sanders Lectures* in 1984 but were in private circulation since the 1970's. This is the only reference to the wording of the Rede in Sander's published material, though he had made reference to Crowley's "Do what thou wilt" phrase in Stewart Farrar's *What Witches Do* (1971).

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Now when it comes to the origin of the Alexandrian tradition of Wicca, there is much controversy. Alex claimed to have been initiated into the Craft by his grandmother at the age of seven, which was later determined to be a hoax. There is also much debate as to how he was able to obtain a copy of the Gardnerian *Book of Shadows* which he had passed off as his own while incorporating additional elements of ritual magic into it. The point to be made here is simply that Sander's teachings were heavily influenced by Gardner's work among others and that this reference to witches' motto may have derived from Valiente's Rede assuming the wording in the lecture was not altered at a later date prior to its compilation and publishing in 1984 - long after the Rede's widespread dissemination.

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There is, however, another important source for the Wiccan Rede, which is often attributed as the source of its origins. In the *Ostara* 1975 (Vol. III. No. 69) issue of *Green Egg* magazine, in an article called "Wiccan-Pagan Potpourri", was a long (but most will find very familiar) poem called the Rede of the Wicca:

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Rede Of The Wicca

Being known as the counsel of the Wise Ones:

1. Bid the Wiccan Laws you must In Perfect Love and Perfect Trust.
2. Live an' let live - Fairly take an' fairly give.
3. Cast the Circle thrice about To keep all evil spirits out.
4. To bind the spell every time - Let the spell be spoken in rhyme.
5. Soft of eye an' light of touch - Speak little, I listen much.
6. Deo sil go by the waxing Moon - Sing and dance the Wiccan rune.
7. Widdershins go when the Moon doth wane, An' the Werewolf howls by the dread Wolfsbane.
8. When the Lady's Moon is new, Kiss thy hand to Her in the first two.
9. When the Moon rides at Her peak Then your heart's desire seek.
10. Heed the Northwind's mighty gale - Lock the door and drop the sail.
11. When the wind comes from the South, Love will kiss thee on the mouth.
12. When the wind blows from the East, Expect then and set the feast.
13. When the Westwind blows o'er thee, Departed spirits

**An Do What You Will be the challenge,
So be it in Love that harms none,
For this is the only commandment,
By Magick of old, be it done.**

By the 1980's most books made reference to the Rede, sometimes modernizing it and other times making it more archaic sounding. By the 1990's many were clueless of the Rede's history and several new variations of the Rede, often anonymous or lacking references, were scattered throughout newsletters and of course over the Internet. More variants seem to use the Porter/Thompson version of the Rede, including catch phrases such as "imperfect love and perfect trust" [14] and "merry ye meet, and merry ye part" which are speculative. It should be noted however that the phrase "imperfect love and perfect trust" is also found in the (publicly known) first-degree Gardnerian initiation rituals. [

Part Four: Rede Timeline

Below is a quick timeline for various sources, inspirations, or appearances of the Rede or related events. Although I have a rather extensive library, I am sure I am missing some early books and newsletters that may help fill in the gaps. I consider this paper a "work in progress" and encourage you to contact me at jan@waningmoon.com if you have any information to share. Please keep in mind, however, that I need to be able to confirm the sources to ensure accuracy although I also welcome first-hand experiences, if only to lead me to new material. Note: First Publication date given for all books unless otherwise noted.

orpointofreference,butnotacompleteethicalssystem
initself.

IftheRede(or atleastaversionofit)waswritt enby
ValientethentheCrowleyinfluenceneedstobeac-
ceptedaspossibility.WhileGardnerdoesnotassoc iate
CrowleywithWiccanethicsdespitedrawingfrom
Crowley'sworkinothareas,DoreenValiente,ap oet
atheart,wouldhavebeenmuchmoreopentousing
Crowley'sLaw.

Andmindyou,AleisterCrowley,inmyopinion,was a
marvelouspoetandhehasalwaysbeenundervalued
inEnglishliteraturesimplybecauseofthenotorie ty
whichhemadeforhimselfandreveledin.Heloved be-
ingcalledthewickedestmanintheworldandallt hat
sortofnonsense.Thethingis---ashislatestbi ogra-
pher,JohnSymonds,says---hecouldn'thaveitbo th
ways.Ifhewantedtogethimselfthatluridreputa tion,
whichheworkedveryhardatformanyyears,thenh e
wasn't,atthesametime,goingtogetagoodreputa tion
inEnglishliterature,inspiteofthefactthata coupleof
hispoemsareinTheOxfordBookofEnglishMystical
Verse.Ithinkit'sapitythathe'snothadthere cognition
thathe deserves, really, and perhaps later yearsw ill
remedythat.[13]

ManyofDoreen'sbooksmentionedCrowleyandrec-
ognizedhisindirectinfluenceinWiccanbeliefsan d
practices.EveninthelongtextofValiente'sCree d
listedabove,thereisalinethatisveryreminisc entof
Crowley'sdictum"LoveistheLaw,LoveunderWill"
thattraditionallyfollowedthegreeting"Dowhatt hou
wiltshallbethewholeoftheLaw".Eventhespell ingof
"magick"withaKinthelastlineofValiente'sCr eedis
alsoverycharacteristicofThelema.

restlessbe.

**14.NinewoodsintheCauldrongo-Burnthemquick an'
burnthemslo.**

15.Elderbeyelady'stree-Burnitnotorcursed ye'llbe.

**16.WhentheWheelbeginstoturn-LettheBeltane fires
burn.**

**17.WhentheWheelhasturnedaYule,LighttheLog an'
letPanrule.**

18.Heedyeflowerbushan'tree-BytheLadyBles sèdBe.

**19.WheretheripplingwatersgoCastastonean't ruth
ye'llknow.**

20.Whenyehaveneed,Hearkennottoothersgreed.

**21.WiththefoolnoseasonspendOrbecountedas his
friend.**

**22.Merrymeetan'merry part-Brightthecheeksa n'
warmtheheart.**

**23.MindtheThreefoldLawyeshould-Threetimes bad
an'threetimesgood.**

**24.Whenmisfortuneisenow,WeartheBlueStaron thy
brow.**

25.TrueinloveeverbeUnlessthylover'sfalset othee.

**26.EightwordsyeWiccanRedefulfill-An'ithar mnone,
Dowhatyewill.[5]**

LadyGwenThomson[6](1928-1986),ahereditary witchfromNewHaven,Connecticut(USA),attributed this text to Adriana Porter, her paternal grandmother, who, as she stated "was well into her 90's when she crossed over into the Summerlands in 1946." [7] Thomson was the primary teacher of The New England Coven of the Traditionalist Witches (N.E.C.T.W.), which she founded in 1972, although her teachings were brought to the public in the late 1960's. This tradition was a combination of her family's tradition blended with popular occultism. This was the first time the Rede was publicly referred to as a "rede" (guideline) since Valiente's 1964 speech and subsequent mention in the Pentagram and The Waxing Moon, and although the line numbers never quite took hold, the text itself did, especially the last line. This is also the first time the Rede was introduced in such a visible and easily distributed manner and at a time when the Craft was blossoming in creativity and public interest.

Joseph B. Wilson [8], publisher of the first witchcraft newsletter in the US (The Waxing Moon) and who for many years acted as a central networking hub for correspondence, contacts, etc., shared with me that Lady Gwen was one of his early correspondents. Although Wilson could not remember much about her, he recalled that she shared a good bit of his own information from his mentors with her--which by some accounts has since ended up as part of her adapted hereditary lineage. Mr. Wilson was also able to confirm two of her important links to Valiente's Rede influence on the Porter/Thomson Rede:

1) *Wilson clearly remembers reprinting Valiente's words in The Waxing Moon. Since his archive was lost several years ago, he could not give an exact date, but it would have been circa 1965-1966.*

fer to the Crede and is not part of the long version of the Creed itself, since that already includes a similar couplet:

**An Do What You Will be the challenge,
So be it in Love that harms none**

This is a minor point, and the long Creed can of course be used either way, but for the sake of accuracy I wanted to make the clarification.

Valiente's earlier book, *An ABC of Witchcraft Past & Present*, which was first published in 1973, had no specific entry for the Rede, despite introducing it in her 1964 speech. Chances are it had not yet "taken hold" in the early Wiccan "community" that was still largely segregated and coven-centric by 1973, and thus was not yet something established enough to be included in an encyclopedia of witchcraft. However in the entry on *Basic Beliefs of Witches*, the a variation of the Rede was mentioned as part of the discourse on the Witches' ethics:

Witches do not believe that true morality consists of ob-serv-ing a list of thou-shalt-nots. Their morality can be summed up in one sentence, "Do what you will, so long as it harms none." This does not mean, however, that witches are pacifists. They say that to allow wrong to flourish unchecked is not 'harming none'. On the contrary, it is harming everybody. [12]

This is a perfect example of the perception of Wiccan ethics prior to the 1980's. Witches were not the type of "light and love" but rather real people who deal with reality when necessary. Witches had a respect for life that was balanced with both its nurturing aspects and the harsh reality of the fight for survival. The Rede was a summary

The dweller in green forest glades.

**She is youthful or old as she pleases,
She sails the torn clouds in her barque,
The bright silver lady of midnight,
The crown who weaves spells in the dark.**

**The master and mistress of magic,
They dwell in the deep of the mind,
Immortal and ever-renewing,
With power to free or to bind.**

**So drink the good wine to the Old Gods,
And dance and make love in their praise,
Till Elphame's fair land shall receive us,
In peace at the end of four days.**

**And do what you will be the challenge,
So be it in love that harms none,
For this is the only commandment,
By Magick of old, be it done. [10]**

Often the "eight words" couplet is stacked onto the s when quoted by others, but in *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, where the Witches' Creed was introduced as part of the Sabbat Rite, only the above text was read after forming the circle. The "eight words" couplet was used separately in the same ritual, following the reading of the longer Creed text.

Then take up the pentacle, and pass deosil with it round the circle, holding it up at the four quarters, east, south, west and north, and repeating it each time:

**Eight words the Witches' Creed fulfill:
If it harms none, do what you will. [11]**

So technically the "Eight words" couplet poetically re-

2) Gwen Thompson was a subscriber to *The Waxing Moon*.

Although this offers some links to a possible influence of Valiente's Rede in the development of Lady Gwen's rede, it is not conclusive and so we are left with three likely scenarios:

1) Lady Gwen's stated history of her version of the Rede is accurate and was written by her grandmother. This will raise the question: If the passing of Adriana Porter came before the publishing of Gardner's first book containing elements of witchcraft ritual (*High Magic's Aid*, 1949) and after Gardner is said to have been initiated by "Old Dorothy Clutterbuck" in 1939, then could they share a common source? Or could one have perhaps inspired the Rede from the other? I could find no evidence to support or deny this.

2) Lady Gwen adapted a poem written by her grandmother, adding more Wiccan-like elements. Since the tradition Lady Gwen taught is freely described as an adaptation of her hereditary tradition, it is quite possible that Valiente's Rede influenced some of the wording of Adriana Porter's poem, perhaps even unconsciously doing so.

3) The entire history of Lady Gwen's Rede was made up to add a sense of lineage and credibility to her established tradition. The questionable claims of family-based initiations pre-dating Gardner were not uncommon and readily abused, so the accuracy of Thompson's claim will always remain somewhat debatable without documentation.

By 1978 in her book *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, Doreen Valiente had also mentioned the Wiccan Rede.

This idea has been put into a rhymed couplet called the Wiccan Rede:

**Eight Words the Wiccan Rede fulfil:
Anitharm none, dowhatyewill.**

This can be expressed in more modern English as follows:

**Eight words the Witches' Creed fulfil:
Ifitharms none, dowhatyouwill.[9]**

Later in the same book, a longer poetic version of Redethat Valiente called the Witches' Creed was introduced.

The Witches' Creed

**Hear now the words of the witches,
These secrets we hid in the night,
When dark was our destiny's pathway,
That now we bring forth into light.**

**Mysterious water and fire,
The earth and the wide-ranging air,
By hidden quintessence we know them,
And will and keeps silent and dare.**

**The birth and rebirth of all nature,
The passing of winter and spring,
We share with the life universal,
Rejoice in the magical ring.**

**Four times in the year the Great Sabbat
Returns, and witches are seen
At Lammas, and Candlemas dancing,
On May Eve and old Hallowe'en.**

led

the
tro-

**When day-time and night-time are equal,
When the sun is at greatest and least,
The four Lesser Sabbats are summoned,
Again witches gather in feast.**

**Thirteen silver moons in a year are,
Thirteen is the coven's sarray.
Thirteen times as Esbat makemerry,
For each golden year and a day.**

**The power was passed down the ages,
Each time between woman and man,
Each century unto the other,
Ere time and the ages began.**

**When drawn is the magical circle,
By sword or athame or power,
Its compass between the two worlds lie,
In Land of the Shades for that hour.**

**This world has no right then to know it,
And world beyond will tell naught,
The oldest of Gods are invoked there,
The Great Work of magic is wrought.**

**Four are the mystical pillars,
That stand to at the gate of the shrine,
And two are the powers of nature,
The forms and the forces divine.**

**The dark and the light in succession,
The opposites each unto each,
Shown forth as a God and a Goddess,
Of this did our ancestor teach.**

**By night the 'sthe wild wind's rider,
The Horn'd One, the Lord of the shades,
By day he's the King of the Woodlands,**