

So, you mean Wiccans DON'T sacrifice animals or babies?

Right you are! Wiccans DON'T sacrifice animals or babies.

Like followers of other religions, Wiccans DO make offerings to deity. These include a portion of Cakes and Ale in most Circles, as well as songs, dances, poems, stories, garlands, art, and other personal efforts.

The only "violence" most Wiccans have done is along the lines of pulling weeds from a garden or ripping the seam out of a badly-sewn robe. Yet the image of witches holding blood knives over terrified victims persists. There are stories of such sacrifices in other religions' legends, too, and they're not true of modern-day practice either. But witchcraft's lore and history does tell of violence – done to witches by their accusers!

The B-movie images many people have to witchcraft include abduction, rape, torture, pillage, and murder. To repeat: *B-movie images*. "Rosemary's Baby" and other such movies are *fiction*, not fact. Those scripts have been replayed in recovered memories, too, which upon investigation proved to be uncorroborated, most of them implanted by unscrupulous or incompetent therapists.

So what part does violence really play in modern witchcraft, and in its best-known form, Wicca?

There are two ways violence figures into Wicca. First, Wiccans suffer violence when they are attacked for their faith – and even in the 21st century, this can happen. Second, Wiccans sometimes get together to magic (and mundane work) to *heal* the effects of that and other violence.

Wiccans and other witches – indeed, Neo-Pagans of all faiths – work to heal everything from the rape of the land to the rape of our neighbors, though Wiccans don't do even healing magic on individuals without their consent.

No one is coerced to practice any form of witchcraft. The Craft is reverent of life and respectful of the Earth. Wiccans follow Nature's example of cooperation, and we find strength, not alarm, in diversity. Wiccans don't proselytize, and our theology offers no threat of eternal damnation to those to who walk other religious paths.

That famous witch's "weapon," the blade or athame (say it uh-*thah*-me or *atha*-may), is rarely used to cut anything material. Its primary uses are to project a priest/ess' energy to cast the sacred Circle, and to bless a chalice of wine. Some Traditions (denominations) won't even use the ritual blade to cut the Cakes shared in Circle, or the thread used in magical sewing. Wiccans don't use their tools to inflict pain or fear or harm.

Violence is rejected by most Wiccans for several reasons. Wicca's theology does not support a separation of matter and spirit, and does not set the material world in opposition to the spiritual realm. Wiccans are not expected to condemn or deny physical sensations or mundane experience, so we have no divine motivation to censure other people. Our Goddess and God are partners, not opponents;

their examples are complement and cooperation, not competition or conflict.

The Goddess tells us in her Charge (part of Wicca's liturgical material) that "all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals," and that she requires "naught of sacrifice." Wiccans follow the Threefold Law, which holds that what we put into the world comes back to us "threefold," an idea not limited by a literal interpretation of "three." The spectacular curses sometimes thrown in those B movies are not cast by Wiccans in the real world. They don't honor our faith or our Gods, and they do bounce back on us.

The Wiccan Rede guides followers: "An ye harm none, do as ye will," and most Wiccans understand that it's possible for everyone's will to be realized without harm to any other. (We also realize that one's true will is deeper and more complex than what we "want to" or what we "feel like.")

Most Wiccans also believe in reincarnation. "All that dies shall be reborn," one of our most often-used chants tells us. Expecting to come back and preferring to learn from mistakes rather than repeat them and carry their consequences to future lives, Wiccans are generally careful not to add more violence to the world. In fact, many Wiccans work, individually and together, to diminish violence in our culture.

We do this work in many ways. We recycle, so fewer trees are cut and resources are not so quickly depleted. Some of us are vegetarian, in response to the brutal treatment of many meat animals. Considering the Earth our Mother, and seeing her in danger, many Wiccans work for a wide variety of environmental causes. We support various social causes, too.

This brochure was written for Mother Earth Ministries-ATC by Ashleen O'Gaea (pronounce it *oh-jee-uh*), a Third-Degree Wiccan priestess and author, and MEM's senior writing priestess.

We're health-care workers, to heal directly. We work in the legal professions to further justice. We're emergency personnel to keep the streets safe and help people in immediate need. We're members of the armed forces to help keep peace in the world; we're protestors against the violence done in our names. Wiccans with different social and political attitudes generally make an effort to get along, and to find common ground.

Wiccans do personal work, too, "inner work" to change even the small and subtle habits of violence we can still find in our language and our attitudes. We strive to eliminate racism, sexism, and other prejudices from our lives. Many Neo-Pagan groups work ecumenically, through education, and publicly, to eliminate the prejudice we still suffer in other people's ignorance and fear.



Violence plays a part in witchcraft when Wiccans and other Neo-Pagans (and their children, and even their pets) are threatened and attacked, and when a solitary's or a coven's energies are needed to heal the effects of violence ranging from domestic to environmental.

It's true that few Wiccans would fail to defend themselves or their families from assault. But it has never been Wicca's way to convert people at sword-point, to designate non-Pagans as infidels, or to threaten eternal punishment for disbelief. Most Wiccans' limit is a sharply worded letter to the editor, a quick rebuke, or an offer to provide correct information.

A British Traditional priest in Tucson has a snappy answer to the question of whether Wiccans make blood sacrifices. "Does donating blood to the Red Cross count?" he asks. "Because that's as much blood sacrifice as we do."

Mother Earth Ministries-ATC

Mother Earth Ministries is a Neo-Pagan prison ministry founded in the year 2000 and based in Tucson, Arizona. Our mission is to provide accurate information about Wicca and other Pagan faiths to interested inmates, staff, and members of the public. We are affiliated with the internationally known and respected Aquarian Tabernacle Church.



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Mother Earth Ministries-ATC answers questions about

Witchcraft and Violence

For a long time, people got most of their "education" about witchcraft – a category of beliefs and practices that includes the religion of Wicca – from the silver screen and offerings on the same theme as "Rosemary's Baby." So back in the 1960s, the show "Bewitched" seemed like an improvement. But even the charming Samantha turned, in direst need, to a master indentified as "the man downstairs."

All that has made it difficult, in the last couple of decades, to convince people that no, witches don't do that, don't believe that way. The fact that some sociopaths and psychopaths who call themselves "witches" doesn't help either. It's frustrating that the ones who claim that the Christian God inspires their cruelty are not mistaken for true representatives of that religion, while any "weirdos" calling themselves Wiccan are taken for typical!

Really, all those references to sacrificing cats and babies, they're Hollywood. They are the Inquisition's images, scripted and sold. Maybe you've enjoyed some of those movies yourself – and that's okay, as long as you remember they're not about *real* witches!

To learn a little about how violence really fits into modern witchcraft, read on!