

FATHER GOD AND MOTHER EARTH: NATURE-MYSTICISM IN THE ANGLO- SAXON WORLD

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FIELD CEREMONIES

Here is the remedy by which you can improve your fields, if they will not grow properly, or if any harm has been done to them by sorcery or witchcraft.

Take then at night before daybreak four sods from four sides of the land and mark how they stood before.

Then take oil and honey and yeast and milk of all the cattle that are on the land, and part of every kind of tree growing on the land, except hard trees, and part of every well-known herb, except burdock only, and pour holy water on them, and then let it drip three times on the bottom of the sods.

And then say these words:

Crescite, grow, et multiplicamini, and multiply, et replete, and fill, terram, the earth. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti sitis benedicti.

And Our Father as often as the other.

And afterwards carry the sods to church and have a priest sing four Masses over the sods, and turn the green sides to the altar. And afterwards take the sods back to where they stood before, before the setting of the sun.

And he must have four crosses made of 'quickbeam' [aspenswood] and let him write on the end of each: Mattheus and Marcus, Lucas and Johannes. Lay the cross at the bottom of the pit (made by cutting away the sods).

Say then:

Crux Mattheus. Crux Marcus. Crux Lucas. Crux Sanctus Johannes.

Then take the sods and lay them on the crosses. And say then nine times these words: *Crescite* and as often the Our Father.

And then turn to the east and bow humbly nine times, and say then these words:

Eastwards I stand, for favors I pray.
 I pray the great Lord, I pray the mighty prince,
 I pray the holy Guardian of the heavenly kingdom.
 Earth I pray and sky,
 and the true holy Mary,
 and heaven's might and high hall,
 that by the grace of the Lord
 I may pronounce this charm, by my firm will,
 raise up these crops to our worldly benefit,
 fill this earth by firm faith,
 make beautiful these grasslands; as the prophet said
 that he would have favors on earth
 who dealt out alms judicially,
 according to the will of the Lord.

Then turn three times with the course of the sun, then stretch yourself along the ground and say the litany there. And say then *Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus* to the end. Sing then *Benedicite* with arms outstretched and *Magnificat* and Our Father three times. And commend it (the land) to Christ and Holy Mary, and to the Holy Rood in praise and worship, and to the benefit of the owner of the land and all those who are subject to him.

When all this is done, then take unknown seed from beggars and give them twice as much as you take from them. And collect all the plowing implements together, bore a hole in the plow-tail and put incense and fennel and hallowed soap and hallowed salt in it.

Then take the seed and place it on the body of the plow. Say then:

Erce, Erce, Erce, mother of earth,
 may the omnipotent eternal Lord grant you
 fields growing and thriving,

flourishing and bountiful,
bright shafts of millet-crops,
and of broad barley-crops,
and of white wheat-crops,
and of all the crops of the earth.
May the eternal Lord grant him,
and his saints who are in heaven,
that his produce may be safe against every foe,
and secure against every harm
from witchcraft sown throughout the land.
Now I pray the Sovereign Who created this world
that no woman may be so eloquent, and no man so powerful,
that they can upset the words thus spoken.

When you drive forth the plow and cut the first furrow, say then:

Hail to thee, earth, mother of men,
may you be fruitful under God's protection,
filled with food for the benefit of men.

Then take flour of every kind and have a loaf baked as big as the palm of your hand, and knead it with milk and with holy water, and lay it under the first furrow.

Say then:

Field full of food for the race of man
brightly blooming, be thou blessed
in the holy name of Him Who created heaven
and the earth on which we live.
The God Who made this earth
grant us the gift of fertility
that each grain may be profitable to us.

Then say three times: *Crescite. In nomine patris sitis benedicti, Amen.* And Our Father three times.

MS Cotton Caligula A vii, fol.171a (twelfth century)¹

This ceremony for healing the land calls on both God the Father and Mother Earth, and expresses a mystical view of nature produced by the early medieval synthesis between Germanic and Christian culture