THE ANCIENT AND SACRED TREE ALPHABET CALENDAR

Chief Source: The White Goddess, Robert Graves. Herein extracted and glossed by Frederick Adams. * 1968. This is an ancient Irish version reported by Roderick O'Flaherty in his book, Ogygia, of what was once a very widespread system for celebration, divination and inner inspiration.

Here follows the BETH LUIS NION, in reference to the Thirteen Consonant Months of the year. You will find the month, the letter (such as beth, or luis, or nion), the sacred tree for that period, and many associated meanings and bits of lore which go with it. These are useful in doing ritual to ground you in the ancient system of Celtic thought. You may feel called to do further research on this. For a recent well researched book on the subject, try Ogam: Weaving Word Wisdom, by Erynn Rowan Laurie, 2007.

Month I. B Beth Birch Tree

PERIOD: Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (Each tree month has 28 days).

MEANING: INCEPTION.

LORE: The Birch is self-propagating (as is the year). It is the earliest Tree to put out leaves (with the exception of the Elder). Its bark is "snow white". Birch rods drive out "evil", and The Old Year. Birch was used for cradle wood.

MUDRA PART OF THE HAND: Tip of the Thumb.

SACRED BIRD: Pheasant.

SACRED GEM: Red Sard.

SACRED NUMBER: 2. Extension.

CONSTELLATION BY SUN TENANCY FOR THIS PERIOD DURING THE PRESENT ERA: Sagittarius.

POETIC CHARM OF THE MONTH:

From the 'Song of Amergin', by a Milesian Irish Bard of 1268 B.C. "I am a stag of seven times." They are seen as referring to the seven months from Winter Solstice to Summer Solstice.

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Month 2. L Luis Rowan Tree (Quicken, Quickbeam, Mountain Ash).

PERIOD: Jan. 21 - Feb. 17.

MEANING: QUICKENING.

LORE: The Rowan has a good reputation generally for over-coming unruly and negative forces, such as Jack Frost. Rowan was called in The Book of Ballymote, LUISU, "flame", "Delight of the Eye". It is prophylactic against destructive bewitchments. Rowan berries are supposed to be very healing, the very food of the Gods. It is also an oracular tree.

Feb. 1 or 2, First Cross Quarter Day. Feraferia Feast 9: OIMELC.

HAND: Tip of the Forefinger.

BIRD: Duck. Ducks swim over the meadows on the grey rainy waters.

GEM: Yellow Chrysolite.

NUMBER: 3. The number of three-torched Hecate or Brigit.

Torch-lit regeneration.

CONSTELLATION: Capricorn and Aquarius.

CHARM: "I am a wide flood on a plain."

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Month 3. N Nion Ash Tree

PERIOD: Feb. 18 - March 17.

MEANING: URGING (as the whipping of horses), or even the whipping of the human body in a steam bath before plunging it into snow).

LORE: The Ash is sacred to Poseidon, a God associated earlier with horses, later with the Sea. The Ash represents Sea Powers and floods. The Ash also means harshness. (Its shade is harmful to grass, and corn.)

Nordic runes were derived from Ash twig signs. Justice was dispensed by the Norns from under an Ash Tree. The Cosmic Tree of Nordic Myth, YGSDRASIL, was an Ash. Oars and coracle slats were made for Ash. The power to ride out the bursting placental waters of the thawing Sacred Year.

HAND: Tip of the Ear of Little Finger.

BIRD: Snipe. Its color is clear. The mad March wind whirls like a snipe. And the color of wind is clear.

GEM: Sea-green Beryl.

NUMBER: 4. "Fountain of God". The Sacred Name of God, Tetragrammaton of the ancient Hebrews.

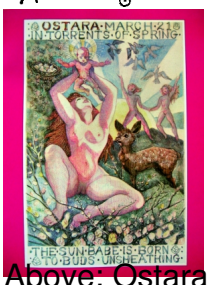
CONSTELLATION: Aquarius - Pisces.

CHARM: "I am a wind on the deep waters."

The wind "comes like a Lion" and dries the waters.

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Above: Ostara, March 21 image from "The Nine Royal Passions"

Month 4. F Fearn Alder Tree

PERIOD: March 18 - April 14.

MEANING: THE POWER OF FIRE TO FREE EARTH OF WATER: RESURRECTION.

LORE: In this period, the Alder first blooms. According to the ancient Welsh myth, CAD GODDEU, "The Battle of the Trees", Alder is "hottest in the fight". This tree is sacred to the primal, Paradisal God Cronos, or Bran (British), who, as "antediluvian" Crow and Sun is coupled with Rhea-Io, "White Moon Cow". Alder wood is good for charcoal, but is poor as wood fuel. Alders gummy leaves are rain-proof. Alder timber was used for pilings in water and water conduits.

In California too, Alder is Riparian - it grows along river beds and helps to keep rivers and streams well shored up. The green branches of Alders are good for making whistles - to evoke the North Wind. Alder thickets screened Calypso's mysterious Island of Ogygia. The three principle Trees of Resurrection are: White Poplar, Cypress and Alder, (from The Odyssey). The Spring Sun dries the Winter floods. Alder buds are in spirals.

March 22, Vernal Equinox. Feraferia Feast I: OSTARA.

HAND: The tip of the Fool's, or Middle Finger.

BIRD: Gull. Crimson gulls on ploughed fields. The new Sun is red as the Glain (Druidic "Easter Egg"). Alder dye is red also.

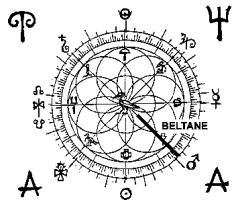
GEM: Fire Garnet.

NUMBER: 6. Fire and Life.

CONSTELLATION: Pisces.

CHARM: "I am a shining tear of the sun." The Heavenly Heracles Year God lands in His Lotus Barque. The true beginning of the Ecological Year. Deer and wild Cows drop their young. In April, migrant birds are returning North. Spring dances North at the rate of about 17 miles per day, and rises in altitude at about a 100 feet per day.

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Above, image for Beltane, May 1st, from "The Nine Royal Passions"

Month 5. S Saille Willow Tree (Ossier)

PERIOD: April 15 - May 12.

MEANING: ENCHANTMENT.

LORE: The Tree of Hecate, Persephone, Circe, and Nimue. Enchantresses of Nature Presences and Processes. Willow negotiates all Death transitions and transformations. Willow is worshiped by Witches. "The moon owns it." (Culpepper's Complete Herbal). For river and stream erosion control, by all means plant Willows. Several California varieties, under the Sway of the Kore of All Wild. Usually an Ossier or Willow wand will grow if stuck point up in wet soil.

Helicon was the abode of the Nine Muses of Poetic Art and Magic, originally orgiastic Priestesses of the Moon. Willow loves water most. Thus its magical affinity with all moisture, mist and dew. (Nimue, the White Serpent Maiden).

In the European sphere, the Goddess's principle orgiastic bird is the Wry Neck (Snake Bird or Cuckoo's Mate). It is a Spring Migrant. The Wry Neck hisses, and bears V-markings like the oracular Snake. It nests in Willows. The Greek Liknos, the basket sieve for winnowing, used symbolically in the Eleusinian Mysteries, was woven from Ossiers. Orpheus received the gift of mystic eloquence from touching Willows, in the Grove of Persephone. "Burn not the Willow."

Willow is the Tree of Poets. "V" is sacred to Minerva, Roman Goddess of Wisdom. Flying Cranes, from whom the Sacred Alphabet may have been inspirationally derived, make wedge-shaped formations.

May 1, May Day. Cross Quarter Day. Feraferia Feast 2: BELTANE. Spring revels. Rolling in the Magic Morning Dew of Youth.

HAND: Tip of the Physic Finger. The Wand of Hermes.

BIRD: Hawk. Fine-colored. The meadows are fine-colored. Also

Thrush. Bright colored. The Thrush sings most sweetly in this month. And the leaves are bright colored, especially Willow leaves.

GEM: Blood-Red Carbuncle.

NUMBER: 7. Female Enchantment. Athene in the Pythagorean

System.

CONSTELLATION: Aries.

CHARM: "I am a hawk on a cliff." Birds nest.

SS Straif Blackthorn Tree Doubles with Willow in this Month.

LORE: Blackthorn is called "La Mère du Bois", The Mother of the

Woods in France. The Blackthorn Staff is used for avertive, prophylactic and catabolic sorceries. (e.g. stopping any excesses, plagues, exploitation of natural resources). It blossoms when the North Wind blows (England). Harsh, rugged weather is called "Blackthorn Weather".

This Tree is also called the Sloe after its fruit. Good Friday falls in this month (The Crown of Thorns).

HAND: The second joint of the Physic Finger.

NUMBER: 8. Solar increase (2 times 2 times 2). Urgent, lusty passion.

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Month 6. H Huath Hawthorn Tree (Whitethorn)

PERIOD: May 13 - June 9.

MEANING: PURIFICATION. (Also, teasing foreplay before Summer Solstice embrace).

LORE: In Hawthorn Month, no marriages were made. Also, sexual abstinence was practiced. Temples, shrines and all sacred precincts were swept clean, and statues washed for the Midsummer Festival (Summer Solstice). New clothes and body embellishments may be acquired or created.

This month is sometimes ascribed to Maia, a harsh and dark-tempered Beldame. Her son, Hermes, is the Conductor of Souls to Hades. Offerings are made to Saturn. In the preceding month, the Hawthorn usually comes into flower around May 1st.

This is the occasion for orgiastic pre-dawn and sunrise flower plucking for the May Pole Dance. May Baskets. Actually, the Hawthorn is beautiful tree, and in many Celtic regions, sacred to Faeries. This may be because its thorns make its boughs a little Faerie land or Paradise for small birds and mammals, who are thus made safe against predators. Daughter of the "Giant Hawthorn": Olwen, "She of the White Track". Her cheeks are like roses, and from Her footsteps, the Trefoil springs up.

HAND: First joint of the Thumb.

BIRD: Night Crow. Terrifying. Deference in awe of the pubescent eruption of sexuality.

GEM: Lapus Lazuli.

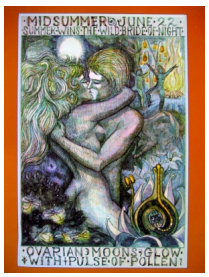
NUMBER: 9. Deepest Death Mysteries of the Dark Moon.

CONSTELLATION: Taurus.

CHARM: "I am fair among flowers." The season of full flowering.

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Above, Midsummer, June 22, image from "The Nine Royal Passions"

Month 7. D Duir Oak Tree

PERIOD: June 10 - July 7.

MEANING: ENDURANCE, TRIUMPH, ROYALTY.

LORE: The Oak is the tree of all Thunderers and Weather Gods: Jupiter. Dagda, Jehovah as "El". The fuel of the Midsummer Fires is always Oak. Oak timber is used for doors. Hence sacred to Janus-Jana, Diana-Dianus. The tree of Midsummer flowering.

The Oak is thought to court the lightning flash as is the Ash. It is often oracular as at the Shrine of Dodona in Greece. Oak was the timber of the oracular ship Argo. Dead heroes often become oracles. St. John's Day is midway thru the year. The Celts considered the Sacred Year to have two halves. Seven day "wake" in July after the Oak Kings "Marriage-Death". Oak is the celestial hinge of the Year at the back of the North Wind, and the Hub of the Starry Sky is an Oak Post.

June 22: Summer Solstice. Feraferia Feast 3: MIDSUMMER or HYMANAEA.

HAND: First joint of the Forefinger.

BIRD: Wren. The Oak King is the King of Trees and the Tree of the Druids. The Wren (Drui-en) is the King of Birds and the Soul of the Oak. Hence Oak and Wren share the Central Place of the Year. Black the Oak when the lightning strikes it, and black the faces of those who dance between the smokey Midsummer fires.

GEM: White Carnelian.

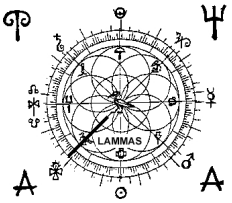
NUMBER: 11. Demons, Lillith. Union of Venus (5) and Mars (6).

CONSTELLATION: Taurus - Gemini.

CHARM: "I am a God who sets the head afire with smoke."

Painful smoke of Green Oak gives inspiration to those who dance between the twin sacrificial fires of Midsummer Eve.

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Month 8. T Tinne Holly Tree

PERIOD: July 8 - Aug. 4.

MEANING: INCREASE.

LORE: The Holly (or Holy) Tree flowers in July. This represents the second leader in the Company of Twelve (the Thirteenth being Maid Marion, the Goddess, which makes a Witch Coven), the younger brother of the Heavenly Twins of the Gemini, or Dioscuri. (Recall the Twin Fires of the preceding month, which light up Midsummer Eve).

In California, several kinds of Buckthorn (Ceanothus) resemble in leafage Oaks enough to represent the Splendid Twins of High Summer. Holly was the club of the Green Knight who battled Sir Gawain of the Round Table (Oak Knight). Holly is to Oak, mythically, as Little John is to Robin Hood.

Kerm or Holly Oak may be considered the twin of the ordinary Oak. Holly is the tree of the Tanist, or Serpent Ruler of the Second half of the Sacred Year. This bifurcation is like that of the Rio Grande Pueblos, whereby the tribes are divided into two sections, or moieties, one of which sacramentally administers "Summer", and the other "Winter".

The 3rd Cross Quarter Day. Aug. 1st or 2nd - Feraferia Feast 4: LAMMAS or LUGHNASAD.

HAND: First joint of the Fool's, or Middle Finger.

BIRD: Starling. Dark Grey. Because this was the Warrior's Month. The Starling's "Well Trained Army", wheels in air without command. Perhaps we may now associate the dance and song disciplined companies of the Arval Borthers. Or Good Grovers who joyfully begin the harvesting of the Sacred Orchards of Paradise. The original, "Pre-Ice-Age" attributions and associations have, of course, been lost or twisted. See H.B. Stevens, The Recovery of Culture, Harper (now distributed by Wellington) 1955.

GEM: Yellow Cairngorm.

NUMBER: 12. The twin leaders of the Company of Twelve. Twelve COMPLETE Lunar Cycles per Year.

CONSTELLATION: Gemini - Cancer.

CHARM: "I am a battle-waging spear." Of course, all allusions to war must be removed from this ancient system, perhaps the oldest in the world. It has undergone many revisions and alterations in the past. Perhaps this line might be something like this: "I am a dance-leading staff".

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Month 9. C Coll Hazel Tree

PERIOD: Aug. 5 - Sept. 1.

MEANING: CONCENTRATED WISDOM.

LORE: This is the month of the "Nutting Season". It coincides (or laps) into the Apple Season. Connla's Well, in Tipperary, Ireland, is said by legend to have been shaded by Nine Hazels of Poetic Art. Nuts fell into the well, and were eaten by the sagacious and divinatory Salmon. This diet was thought to have speckled the skins of these fish, who, because they hide so well in pools, make good symbols of "philosophical retirement".

Hazel wood is considered best for making the famous forked Divining Rod for the location of underground water and ores.

HAND: First joint of the Physic Finger.

BIRD: Crane. Brown. The Beth Luis Nion associated with the Crane as in many very ancient Mysteries (e.g. Eleusis). Brown are Hazel Nuts. The Hen and Mouse are brown as the warm, yielding earth. After harvest, Hen and Mouse into the fields to feast.

GEM: Banded Red Agate.

NUMBER: 13. The Sacred Number of the eternal love play between Moon and Sun. The ever-new issues of LEELA.

CONSTELLATION: Leo.

CHARM: "I am a salmon in the pool." Cunning, associated with nuts. The wisdom of Manannan Mac Lir.

CC (Q) Quirt Apple Tree (doubles with Hazel in this month)

LORE: Apple and Nut harvests overlap. Apple is the tree of the Sacred Roebuck in the thicket. As Hazel is the Poet's Wisdom, the Apple is the Poet's Salvation. Amergin's "Secrets of the unhewn Dolmen" are revealed by the Apple. (A Dolmen is an ancient megalithic structure consisting of post and lintel arrangements of giant stones. These dolmens were usually grave shelters, entrances to the Other World.)

The Pentagramatic Star appears in each half of a sliced Apple: the five seeds. The Apple was the fruit of the Island Paradise, Avalon (Golden Apples of Hesperides). The pentagramatic seeds represent Birth, Initiation, Consummation (Love), Repose, Death.

HAND: First joint of the Ear, or Little Finger.

NUMBER: 14. The Moon's waxing and waning. Set divided the body

of Osiris into 14 parts.

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Month 10. M Muin Vine Tree

PERIOD: Sept. 2 - Sept. 29.

MEANING: JOY, EXHILARATION.

LORE: This month is vintage season. And also of the Blackberry or Bramble in England. The Grape is sacred to Thracian Dionysos, and to Egyptian Osiris. M stands for Roman Minerva, and Mnemosyne (Memory), Mother of the Muses.

The Greek Moirae, or Fates are credited by some mythographers with the invention of the Alphabet. The juice of the Vine is the drink of Poetic Inspiration. Wine is the Poet's proper drink, and payment.

HAND: Second joint of the Thumb.

BIRD: Titmouse. Variegated color. This is the month of the Poet, least easily abashed of men, as the Titmouse is of birds. Both band together in companies in this month, and go in search of a liberal hand. The Titmouse climbs spirally up the Cosmic Tree to Paradise (M. Eliade). Variegated is the color of the Titmouse and of the Master Poet's dress.

Sept. 23: Autumnal Equinox. Feraferia Feast 5: HARVEST HOME or POMONA.

GEM: Amethyst. Sacred to Artemis and to Dionysos.

NUMBER: 16. There are 16 Court Cards in the Tarot Deck. Felicity. The Square.

CONSTELLATION: Leo - Virgo.

CHARM: "I am a hill of poetry."

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Month 11. G Gort Ivy Tree

PERIOD: Sept. 30 - Oct. 27.

MEANING: WILDNESS, ECSTACY.

LORE: The flowering season of Ivy is in October, the time of the Dionysian revels and Wildwood Races. Intoxicated Bassarids race thru the mountains wildly. These ecstatic Nymphs and Satyrs bear Fir Branches in honour of Queen Artemis (Ariadne) spirally wreathed with Ivy (the famous Thyrsos).

Each Celebrant in these falling leaf orgies bore the Roebuck imprinted or tattooed on the right arm above the elbow. Some colleges of Moon Priestesses chewed Ivy to gain inspiration.

HAND: Second joint of the Forefinger.

BIRD: Mute Swan (Geis). The color Blue (Gorm). The Mute Swan prepares to follow his

companion the Whistling Swan. The Eleusinian Mysteries were celebrated in this season. The High Priest of the Mysteries was called Eumolpus, the Beautiful Singer - the Swan. Blue is the color of the Fall haze gathering on the hills; blue the smoke of burning weed: blue are the skies before the November rains.

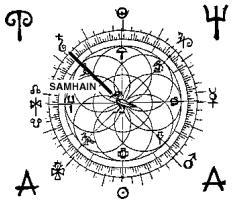
GEM: Yellow Serpentine.

NUMBER: 17. The Full Moon. The Demise of Osiris.

CONSTELLATION: Virgo.

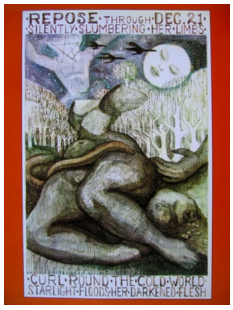
CHARM: "I am a ruthless boar." Perhaps this may be more appropriate as, "I am a stampeding boar." Ivy month is also Boar month. "Fall" of the Year.

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Above, Samhain, November 1, image from "The Nine Royal Passions"



Above, Repose, for the time from November 1 through December 21, from "The Nine Royal Passions"

Month 12. P Peith (or Ng Ngetal) Dwarf Elder Tree or Reed Tree

PERIOD: Oct. 28 - Nov. 24.

MEANING: ESTABLISHED POWER.

LORE: Many Reeds are ready for cutting in November. The lush, teemingly fertile marshlands, low and windy. The Canna Reed represented Royalty in ancient Egypt. The Pharaoh's sceptre was Reed. Reed were the shafts of the arrows of his power, which he shot to the four quarters. (Nov. 1 and 2: 4th. Cross Quarter Day:

October 31, Feraferia Feast 6: SAMHAIN.

Also, the Feraferia Feast 7: REPOSE (Thanksgiving) may begin at the end of this month, and culminate on the Eve of the Winter Solstice).

HAND: Second joint of the Fool's Finger.

BIRD: Goose (Ngeigh) - Glass Green (Nglas). The Wild Goose mourns in the misty meadows. The glassy green wave thuds against the cliff, warning of the year's end.

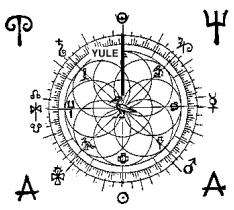
GEM: Clear Green Jasper.

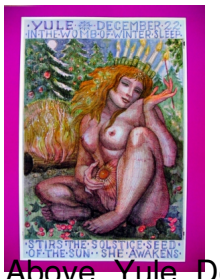
NUMBER: 18. In ancient Israel, at 18 a girl went to the Nuptial Canopy. Protection against loss.

CONSTELLATION: (Virgo) - Libra - (Scorpio).

CHARM: "I am a threatening (ominous ? - F.C.A.) reed noise of the sea." The roar of breakers, the snarling noise of pebbles in the surf on the Atlantic Seaboard fill the heart with terror. Wind whistles dismally thru the Reed beds of rivers. In Ireland, the roaring of the sea is prophetic of the King's death. Warning also is the harsh cry from the Screech Owl. Owls are most vocal on Moonlit nights in November. Then they are silent until February. (Return of the Goddess from out of the Hill-Entrance to the Underworld). This habit of the Owls, their silent flight, the carrion smell of their nests, the way their eyes shine in the dark, make them messengers of Hecate-Persephone, supreme source of Prophecy, Wisdom, and Death-Initiation.

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Above, Yule, December 22, image from "The Nine Royal Passions"

Month 13. R Ruis True Elder Tree

PERIOD: Nov. 25 - Dec. 22.

MEANING: DEATH.

THE DARK PASSAGE INTO THE CHASM OF ROOTS AND STARS.

LORE: The Elder is a water side tree associated with Witches. It keeps its fruit well into December. The flowers and inner bark are therapeutic. The scent of the tree is supposed to express disease and Death, perhaps the Passage into the Other World. The Elders is funeral as is the Cypress (Spencer). It is sacred to the White Goddess, like the Rowan, on the anabolic side of the Year.

December 21, Midwinter Solstice, Feraferia Feast 8: MIDWINTER.

HAND: Second joint of the Ear Finger.

BIRD: Rook (Rocnat). Blood-red (Ruadh). The Rook wears

mourning for the year that dies in this month. Blood red are the ragged leaves on the Elder Trees.

GEM: Dark Green Malachite.

NUMBER: 19. Famous as the number of years it takes the Moon to return to Her farthest Winter - North Full Phase Rising and Setting declination. The Metonic Cycle.

CONSTELLATION: Scorpio. The Scorpion Men of Ancient Babylon were the Guardians of the Land of the Dead.

CHARM: "I am a wave of the sea." The wave returns to the sea as the year to its watery beginning. A wave is a "Sea Stag", the Irish and Welsh years begin and end with the White Roebuck of Wild Mystery (ARTEMIS).

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14. Dec. 23. The extra intercalary day.

"Time outside time". The orgiastic license of primeval chaos (v.m. Eliade).

CHARM: "Who but I knows the secrets of the unhewn dolmen?" Here ends the 'Song of Amergin', ancient charm of the Sacred Year.

Feraferia is refining this system into a schema, a sacred scenario, that is sufficiently flexible and coherent to be filled in with poetic signs of the seasons for continual religious communion with Great Nature in any and all regions.