

Newfre, Gwyar and Calas

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In the spirit of re-creation and basing ideas on The Barddas of Iolo Morganwg it is interesting to talk of 'three aspects' of creation.

If you come from a Wiccan and Western Magickal background then the idea of the (Platonic) elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water will be very familiar to you.

These same elements entered into discussions of Alchemy, which came from the Islamic Magical tradition, and was popularised in the Middle Ages when translations of Islamic texts into Latin formed part of the revival in magical traditions.

Druid Revival lore contains a system of its own, a set of three elements that first appears in Iolo Morganwg's writings. Whether it's an invention of Iolo's or a surviving scrap of some older teaching is anyone's guess, but the three elements have been part of Druid Revival teaching ever since his time.

Their names are nwyfre, gwyar, and calas.

Nwyfre (pronounced "NOOiv-ruh") is said to be an old Welsh term meaning "sky" or "heaven." As an element, nwyfre is the source of life and consciousness, and modern Druids often refer to it simply as the life force. Its image in nature is blue sky.

Gwyar (pronounced "GOO-yar") literally means "blood" in old Welsh, but it's more general meaning is "flow" or "fluidity." As an element, gwyar is the source of change, motion, growth, and decay. Its image in nature is running water.

Calas (pronounced "CAH-lass") comes from the same root as caled, Welsh for "hard," and means "solidity." As an element, calas is the source of form, differentiation, manifestation, and stability. Its image in nature is stone.

According to Druid philosophy, everything in the universe is made up of these three elements in some combination, with one element dominant.

All are forms of primal substance, which is called manred.

Manred has no characteristics of its own, except for the power to condense into calas, flow into gwyar or expand into nwyfre.

The Barddas Iolo's book, which introduces the three elements also discusses the more common system of five elements:

- nwyfre becomes spirit,
- gwylar becomes water,
- calas becomes earth, with air and fire added to the set to round it out.

Many modern Druid orders use this set of five preferentially, and in some areas (such as the healing arts) it has important advantages.

We have also looked at this five element system in the first part of our training.

You can access The Bardass on line here:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/bim.htm>