



Spring-Summer Quarterday (Beltaine)

Festival of Unification

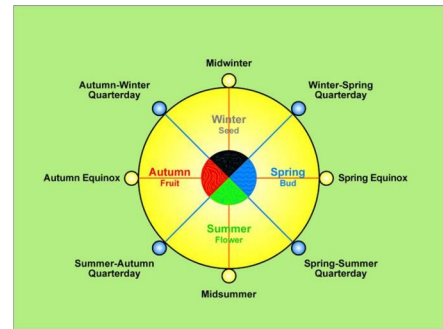
Beginning of May

The spring-summer quarterday marks the cusp of spring and summer, when spring ends and summer begins. In north-western Europe this is notably marked by a sudden abundant leafing and flowering of nature.

In Celtic countries this festival is known as Beltaine or Bealtaine, the Feast of Bé-Al, and is usually celebrated on 1 May (May Day). Bé-Al is an ancient name for God, meaning 'Universal Being' (i.e. *Al* = 'Universal', *Bé* = 'Being'), and was generally used to signify God as Creator (i.e. the Logos or Word—the Word that creates Light).

The feast is a fertility festival in the sense that May Day was originally the traditional the day for marriage. The marriage ceremony was preceded by a ritual bath or purification in water, after which the lovers passed between two fires and made their vows in the sacred circle. Maypole dancing and a marriage feast followed. The festival also commemorates the exit of Hu, the Celtic Noah, from the Ark. (*Hu* = 'Light'.) In the Christian story this festival is associated with the baptism of Jesus (in which Jesus is drawn out of the water, the voice of God is heard and the 'dove' of light appears) followed by the marriage in Cana.

In terms of the gateway that this festival represents (i.e. the gateway from spring to summer), its gatekeeper during the last Age was the bull-faced Cherub, associated with the zodiacal sign of Taurus. Now, in the new Age that the world has just entered, it is the Cherub of Aries who stands in this position. (See Festival of Dedication.)



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