

A CLASSIC OF ÁSATRÚ
REAPPEARS

The text of *A Book of Troth* was the first founding document of the organization called the Ring of Troth. The book consist of three parts: The first concerns certain philosophical and religious ideas and precepts. The second is a complete liturgy of ceremonies for the entire Ásatrú calendar. These ceremonies are based on those used for many years by the Austin Kindred of the AFA, and which are now the basic true rites of the *hidden* Woodharrow Kindred. The third part of the book deals with affiliation with various Ásatrú organizations and the curriculum of qualification for eldership or *goðorð* in the religion.

This new version of the book contains many sections and passages that were edited out by the original commercial publishers due to the supposedly "controversial" nature of these passages. It also contains many entirely new sections which did not appear in the original edition.

A Book of Troth is a strong statement of the *truth* which is the traditional faith of the Germanic peoples as expressed in a contemporary cultural setting. The philosophical parts were written in chapters penned in one sitting each during the first two months of 1988. The book was commercially published in 1989, but has been out of print for the last five years.

This edition is limited to 500 numbered and signed copies.

A
BOOK OF TROTH



EDRED

RÖNA-RAVEN YRMIN-EDITION 2003

Edred

A Book of Troth

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Limited Yrmin-Edition

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by Michael Rigby

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Pjóðinni

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Preface to the Special Yrmin-Edition
2003

It has been said that some books have destinies. *A Book of Troth* is certainly one of these. When the book was first published in 1989 it was to be the official text basic for an organization called the Ring of Troth. After a few years it had been ousted from that position. Nevertheless it was the *first* commercially published, publicly available outline of the troth, or religion, of our ancestors. For this reason, if for no other, it incurred a certain destiny. The book is now reappearing in a second, revised, and limited edition after having been out of print and unavailable for several years.

The core of what is *A Book of Troth* has a pre-history. It was generated from documents used for the liturgy of the Austin Kindred of the AFA (Ásatrú Free Assembly) led by the author. It is, therefore, in a real sense, not a book that was written for the general public, but one created for a kindred. The text was not put into manuscript form until the early part of 1988— after the (temporary) withdrawal of Stephen McNallen from active involvement in Ásatrú. It was ultimately published in book form by Llewellyn Publications. The book appeared on my doorstep on November 22, 1989. Ironically later that very day I heard of the death of Edwin Wade, who had been so instrumental in the development of the Austin Kindred. The book received no support from the publisher. The production quality was extremely poor. The book was printed with the grain of paper running the wrong way (a cost saving device) which caused the book to fall apart— sometimes before the buyer got them out of the store!

Of course, the Kabbalistico-Wiccan occultizoid establishment has a vested interest in seeing Germanic spirituality fail. This is because the Germanic path *was* the established path of antiquity for English-speaking people, and it has the best potential for re-establishing itself. Therefore, it cannot be allowed to be given too wide a public forum. After a few years of non-support commercially, the book went out of print with Llewellyn in March of 1997.

In the meantime *A Book of Troth* had been replaced as the “official” guidebook in the Ring of Troth by Kveldulf Gundarson’s *Our Troth*. I myself suggested the project of *Our Troth*, and even gave it its name. This was done because the Ring of Troth was increasingly drifting toward the “politically correct” side of things. It was thought a book contributed to by several authors would be more to the liking of those who like to build “consensus” rather than follow a vision. From that point forward the contents of *A Book of Troth* have to

be considered to have returned to their roots as the manual of a kindred led by Edred Thorsson. Yet the book remained the leading exponent of Germanic spirituality generally available to the public. But eventually all printed copies of the book ran out. It is hoped that with republication a new generation of true folk will be inspired, as were a generation of trothers in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

A few words should perhaps also be offered to explain the history of the relationship between myself and the Ring of Troth. From 1978 to 1983 I led the Austin Kindred of the AFA. After that time I devoted myself more fully to the Rune-Gild and other pursuits, though I had no serious quarrel with the AFA. When the AFA unexpectedly folded in November of 1987 the Rune-Gild took it upon itself to found a special project to once more take up the Raven Banner. It was assumed at that time that the major exponent of the Germanic movement in America had fallen with no successor. The Ásatrú Alliance had not yet come into existence. In a meeting with James Chisholm held in my office in Waggener Hall on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin, the administrative groundwork was laid. A total of seventy-two dollars was transferred to the Chisholm for the initial set up of what we at the time simply called "the Troth." On Mother Night (December 20) of that same year a Working was held to found the Troth in a formal way. The Ring of Troth is therefore a creation of the Rune-Gild.

I never thought I would be involved in the administration of the Ring of Troth. Early members were of two minds about my role in the organization. Some wanted me to disappear other wanted me to be the public face of the organization. Ultimately I took the title Drihten (a sort of elder statesman or spiritual advisor role, as I saw it) and even later undertook to try to set up the educational curriculum of the Ring of Troth. Controversy continued over my involvement in matters which some members found "unsavory." What many always failed to understand was that I had no significant administrative role in the Ring of Troth at any time. In a sense I was not even a member of it. I was its spiritual father but I only gave it a sword with which it had to win its own fame—or infamy.

By March of 1992 it had been arranged for Prudence Priest to become the new Steerer off the Ring of Troth, taking over from James Chisholm. This decision was largely made on the advice of an individual, who would later lead a coup against Prudence and in favor of Kveldulf Gundarson. These matters should have concerned me but little, as I was not part of the RoT. But in 1994, as the pointless and unprincipled feud between Prudence and Kveldulf flared, each side began to contact me for support. Why? I found the whole affair annoying because it was not based on anything but petty personal differences. I gave the RoT an

ultimatum: Recognize me as your Drihten, as the spiritual leader of the RoT, by unanimous vote of the High Rede or reject me and let me be severed from the RoT once and for all. This was, of course, a trick of sorts. I had no interest in being involved in the affairs of this group, and I knew I could expect no unanimous vote from the Rede. Therefore my involvement with the Ring of Troth came to a more conclusive and final end on March 20, 1995. In subsequent years my ties became stronger with the Ásatrú Alliance and the Ásatrú Folk Assembly, which reemerged under the leadership of Stephen McNallen in the Fall of 1992.

A Book of Troth stands on its own as a document of the basic true teachings of the hidden Woodharrow Kindred. It is not the official book of anything beyond this. It can and will, however, continue to reach out to all true men and women who will take the time to read and understand its words and experience its workings. Its destiny has only partially been unfulfilled, its fate is now in the hands of the reader.

Edred
Woodharrow
March 2, 2003

Preface to the First Edition
1989
[Revised]

This is a book ten years in the making. When I first joined the Ásatrú Free Assembly in the late 1970s, I trusted that it would carry forth the efforts in the revival of our old and timeless folk-ways. But circumstances conspired to bring the AFA to an untimely end. It was at the point of the demise of this organization that it became clear to me that the thousands of pages of notes, rituals, articles, and so on, that I had produced while running a local kindred for several years finally had to find expression in *A Book of Troth*. Only in this way could that storehouse of information be preserved in the actual practice of good folk and true.

A Book of Troth is not a "holy book" or "bible" in the usual sense. This concept is totally foreign to our true ways. But it is certainly the most traditionally based and well-informed general guide to the practice of the elder Germanic folk way ever to be produced. As an outline of the troth it is as complete a guide as anyone would need to use to practice his or her ancestral faith in private.

The troth is a way of doing, a way of action, and not so much a way of believing or a way of doctrine. Although the system is capable of philosophical sophistication far beyond that of superstitious Middle Eastern cults such as Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, it is first and foremost a code of behavior and a set of actions to be carried out faithfully.

In this way, the troth has sometimes been compared to the Shinto religion of Japan. When we look to Japan these days, we may remark on many things that set it apart from our own society. But one thing remains valid about the Japanese: they have mastered the 20th century without ever having to leave their ancestral past. That is, they have hit upon a certain secret of how to adapt to radically new situations without having to sell their souls to exotic and foreign gods. The secret is in the way their ancestral gods and goddesses—the timeless inner heart of the folk that, when built on authentic principles, lends an undying strength to all endeavors. This is a way of doing, much more than a "faith" in certain dogmas. Ásatrú, or the troth, seeks the same for our folk.

The method used to write this volume is very similar to that which I used in writing my first three rune books. It is a synthesis of the most recent and sophisticated academic scholarship into which I was "initiated" through graduate studies programs in Germanic philology from 1976 to 1984, and the practical

ritual work and teaching cycles carried out within the Austin Kindred of the AFA from about 1978 to 1983. The science was quickened by the work and the work was informed by the science. Through this delicate methodology a result is gained which, I hope, will speak to the heart as well as to the mind; and it will bring a result that both the strict scientist and the folkish mystic can embrace. For the troth there has always been room for all— so it was, so it is, and so shall it be!

Introduction

A Book of Troth consists of three parts: one of basic theories and lore, another of basic practices and ritual workings, and a third which contains information on working with others to help reawaken Germanic culture. What is essential to keep in mind when reading and studying the contents of this book is that it is a basic text. It does not purport to be complete, but rather is supposed to be fundamental. From information and practices imparted through this book anyone can begin to be true and to act in a true way.

All those who are truly serious about the troth will probably want to become involved in one or another of the many organizational branches of the Ásatrú/Troth. However, even if you do not choose to do this, all those who adhere to the basic tenets of this book, and who in some way observe the Great Blessings of the Year, are still considered to be true to the olden way.

The first part of this book consists of 22 short chapters on important topics within the troth. Any one of them could be the subject for one or more whole books. What I have tried to convey is a basic approach, with a minimum of speculation to each of these topics. Fortunately, within our wide-ranging, pluralistic theology there is room for many divergent views. However, one difficulty arising from this generally happy situation is that many times no single definitive answer may be given to fundamental questions, for many things may be true. Where well-founded variants in a viewpoint are known, they will be mentioned.

The heart of this work is to be found in its second part. Troth is a way of doing and being before it is one of believing. Therefore the deeds of a man or woman are much more important to whether or not they are held to be true than is some doctrine or article of faith that they might believe or defend. Much of this "true work" is done in one's everyday life, to be sure. But what is most essential, and minimal, form a religious point of view is that the true man or woman take part in the four Greatest Blessings of the Year— Winter Nights, Yule, Easter and Midsummer.

All in all, it is a mainstay of troth that doing should come before believing. Only "work" (that is, actions) will make one's word true. Therefore, work in troth and become that which you already are. The instructions given in this book will enable the reader to begin tonight to practice his or her ancestral troth. The true man or woman will usually begin to practice privately and alone. As troth grows

within, however, most will want to associate and have fellowship with other true folk of like mind. For this purpose there are a variety of organizations around the world.

In the last part of this book there is a discussion of the various types of true organizations which have sprung up over the past decades. Also in this third part there is a fairly detailed outline of the training program which should be undergone by anyone who would hold themselves out to be "religious leaders" in troth.

A Book of Troth is dedicated to the folk (*Pjóðinni*) that it may kindle in each heart a flame, so that when it comes together with other flames to be hallowed on some Mother Night the whole folk may be taken up in a great enlightenment and a new awakening. In that night we will see the beginning of a new world. In this night that which was will be again. Then the old ones will return, not just to rule in quiet corners unseen, but to reign supreme again over all the lands of all their children. Once the world was true— make it so again!

The first part of this book is a discussion of the various types of...

...the various types of...

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Part One BEING TRUE

The first part of this book is a discussion of the various types of...

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Chapter 1 TROTH

What is troth? It does seem to be a curious word nowadays— rather archaic sounding, perhaps a bit legalistic. But it is in the essence of this word that the true path is to be found for those who seek to follow the old way of the north. This is a partial answer to the question, and it is hoped that this will crystallize the idea for those who might find themselves within its parameters, as well as show the true essence of this— the troth of our forebears.

It is mainly as a result of the lack of information about the true nature of the timeless ways of the folk that has led us to the conditions which we now find ourselves— in a Christian-inspired cult of guilt, hypocrisy, and alienation. This foreign cult from the east, in all its various shapes and forms, consumes a large number of people, and the rationalist/materialist cult grabs up most of the leftovers. This latter group tends to abhor the outer trappings of the Christian cult, while eagerly pursuing its methodology and many of its aims. This is largely due to the tendency to swallow dogmatic, authoritarian approaches left over from the nineteenth century. It is astounding to consider that even some schools of thought trying to revive our ways still believe in the interpretation of our mythology formulated by “scientists” who consider (their!) ancestors silly savages who merely “worshipped” trees and rocks!

The word “troth” may now only be known from the formula of some ancient marriage vows— “I plight my troth to thee.” Which simply means: “I place my trust, loyalty, or faith in you.” Another form of the same root word is found in the adjective “true,” as in one who is true (loyal) to a cause or to a principle. The troth is a religious path derived directly from our ancestors. There is no need to resort to exotic terminologies— from Hebrew, Greek, Latin or Sanskrit— or even from Old Norse for that matter. We can therefore happily use English, and not exotic tongues when speaking of our religious concepts. To be forced to use foreign tongues — even those to which we are greatly indebted, such as Icelandic — would give a lie to all for which we stand: the fundamental faith of our forebears. When we say *the troth*, we are simply saying the religion of the people speaking the language in which the term is expressed. In this instance it is the Germanic English tongue. When we say that a man or a woman is “true” we mean to say that he or she is *loyal* (to the ways of his or her ancestors). That it may also seem to imply that those who are not “true” in this way are somehow not as real or authentic as those who are called in this way may also tell you something!

In order to gain a deeper understanding of what "troth" means we can take a look at the Icelandic term Ásatrú. The word is a compound of *Ása-*, "of the gods (*Æsir*)" and *-trú*, usually translated "faith." But this can be misleading. *Trú* is derived from the same root (**deru-*) that gave rise to "troth," "truth," "trust," and "true" in English. The root word **deru-* really has to do with something firm, solid, and steadfast. The fact that the word "tree" also comes from this word should be telling as well. Therefore it is clear that originally the term had more of the connotations of "faith," or "belief." Belief is the acceptance of an external authority that a given thing is true, and perhaps that some form of "salvation" is dependent on this belief. Troth is based on experience. One trusts that the sun will come up tomorrow because this recurring phenomenon has been experienced in the past. The things that one is commanded to believe in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Marxism, etc. are precisely those things that one cannot experience, or those things known only to pastors, popes, rabbis, imams, commissars, etc. "To trust" therefore is to gain *personal experience* of the truth of a thing. The term Ásatrú therefore most literally means "gaining experience of the ancestral sovereign gods." To see the new dawn one must look toward Etin-home in the morning—to see the gods one must look to them in times of great blessing.

The ways of true men and women are many. The troth, or Ásatrú, promotes a multiplicity of approaches to the gods and goddesses, for the realities of these beings are many and have many levels—all true.

The essence of the troth, however, remains the seeking of this personal experience (leading to troth) in and of the gods—in a way similar to the way one can experience the sunrise. The sun and the phenomenon of her rising are physical manifestations, the gods are more complex. To know the gods and goddesses one must seek them out in all the worlds. It is the task of all who would follow the old way of the north to seek the truth of personal experience at its source. This is always a positive power, welling up from within, and growing in freedom. Once attained, these internal powers render impotent any oppression from external sources. An invincible holy fortress is built which may undergo infinite evolution without ever being "destroyed." This, the rune of Ragnarök, lying within the last stave, has until now escaped many who would follow the troth.

Chapter 2 THE WAY

Troth is something based on what one does, or what one experiences. It is not based on external authority from any source. The troth grows from within the folk, and from within the individual. This does not mean, however, that it is totally subjective or without authentic standards—far from it. But the way we use to arrive at what is true is somewhat more complicated than just believing what a TV preacher says, or what little meaning can be derived from the historicized mythology of some vanished race.

The way followers of the troth arrive at what is true is through a three-fold method of inquiry and observation. The method stands on three factors:

- 1) the historical tradition
- 2) observation of the world
- 3) personal experience

All three are taken into account on all questions.

The historical tradition includes all the mythological and historical material we have concerning the ancient Germanic and Indo-European peoples.

No "Germanic Bible" exists. The *Poetic* and *Prose Eddas* are the most complete guide books to the shape of elder mythology, and are our best primary evidence in this realm, but they are by no means considered "the word of the gods" in any doctrinal way.

When looking at the historical tradition another three-fold process is used:

- I. rational/scientific
- II. transpersonal psychological
- III. personal/subjective

These three approaches are hierarchized in order of primacy, with the rational laying the foundations, the transpersonal psychological expanding on what is known from the rational, and the subjective deepening and personalizing the other two.

It is also imperative to realize that there are levels of importance to the historical evidence. Maximum weight is to be given to the oldest and most direct sources of the Germanic tradition itself. Less important are the indirect sources, i.e. accounts of the ancestors written by outsiders (Romans, Greeks, etc.). Later

interpretative concoctions that do not ring true to these ancient sources should be taken with a block of salt.

The interpretation and employment of these sources is indeed a complicated matter. It is in this area, and in that of the technical aspects of the carrying out of the Great Blessings of the troth, that the priesthood is most necessary.

Once a traditional basis has been established on a question, environmental observation becomes very important. This is something that goes beyond what might be considered "observation of nature" today. We would look in an objective way at how the world revolves around a given question. We would ask: "What does the natural environment have to say?"

The objective environment can have the effect of altering or evolving the tenets of tradition. But in order for it to do so it must be well founded and beneficial.

Finally, personal and subjective factors are to be considered. These are of a very tricky sort. If you have determined, through the application of the first two factors that the answer to a given question is one thing, but based on your own subjective feelings and reflections you lean in an opposite direction. Then you should by all means follow your heart. But you should keep such things to yourself, and not then try to force this subjective conclusion off on other true folk. After all, it is you who are out of step with the tradition, and the burden of proof is on you. Also, it makes a large difference as to the nature and power of the self being observed. Elders may have to do a great deal of soul-searching on certain matters, but because of their training, the souls they are searching through are mighty indeed, and so their conclusions may be more valid than those of untrained or unschooled souls.

Of course, in practical terms, these all represent matters of refinement rather than the essentials of the troth, which remain firmly rooted in the simplicity of the Great Blessings.

For the sake of demonstration, let us ask a question, which might seem outrageous to some: "Should the troth practice human sacrifice?" Factor 1): The ancient tradition is clear on this. It was extensively practiced, but only criminals, prisoners of war and on occasion, kings who had failed in their sacred duties, were the victims of human sacrifice. Normally priests or kings were the officiating sacrificers. Factor 2): Today no religious human sacrifice is carried out in a formal way. Instead the state (the king or sovereign power) profanely puts criminals to death— and this is now seen by most "enlightened" folk to be outmoded. At present in the U.S.A. the personal security of millions of people is being held hostage to a virtual criminal culture, while known murderers are let go free to kill again. Factor 3): This factor would consist of your personal feelings on

the subject after having reflected deeply on the matter taking into account the tradition and the prevailing thought. A conclusion might be reached that indeed human sacrifice ought to be reinstated in the society under a sacred law. The profane (and admittedly therefore meaningless) and highly sporadic execution of criminals by the state should be replaced by a sacred form of human sacrifice wherein the death of the criminal is put in the spiritual service of the folk. For those already in favor of capital punishment (still the majority of modern Americans) this would simply be a hallowing of a profane act, while it is something else to consider for those who are against such forms of punishment.

Many times it will be found that we, as a culture, have not abandoned the actions of the past— they have just been sapped of their spiritual vitality to those actions which have unfortunately become meaningless.

Chapter 3 THE ELDER HISTORY

It is clear that in the troth, or Ásatrú, we are not merely reduced to reviving dead forms. The actual troth never died within us, but we only became, for a time, unaware of its timeless presence. Therefore, we never get ourselves in the pointlessly anachronistic position of saying: "In days of yore the ancestors did things in this way or that, and therefore we must imitate their actions in order to be "true." It is the timeless spirit and quality of their deeds that is worth imitating not necessarily the outer forms. It is for this reason that meticulous historical reconstructions and historical studies in general, although avidly pursued by many elders, are not necessarily of primary importance to the true man or true woman of today. Their troth is proven in their deeds and doings and by the ways in which they live and work, not in the amount of lore and eldritch wisdom they have gathered in their heads.

However, as one of the central problems confronting the modern troth is the level of ignorance and misinformation— sometimes even disinformation— surrounding its origins and heritage among its own folk, a historical digression is needed to place in some context what is set down here.

The troth is the timeless and manifold religious path of the Germanic, or Teutonic, peoples. Why and how it is timeless and manifold will be made clear in later chapters. But just what is meant by Germanic? This word sometimes carries with it some negative connotations today— this is more reflective of the growing negative self-image of the Germanic peoples than anything in the objective world.

First let us start with the fact that most of the people now reading these words are primarily of Germanic ethnic stock—descended from persons of English (Anglo-Saxon) German, (as well as Austrian and Swiss), Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Dutch, or Icelandic nationality. Most of the others will probably have significant amounts of Germanic blood in their veins, whether of Irish, Scots, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, or Czech background. Each of these national groups has been at one time or another, in one way or another, heavily Germanicized either ethnically or ethically. That is, their cultural ideals and values have been transformed into essentially Germanic ones. And with the advent of the English language—an essentially Germanic tongue— as the leading language of the world and the rise of Germanic ideals— perverted as they might have become over time—of political governance by the will of the governed, we have seen the virtual Germanization of the whole world in the last two centuries.

Beginning about 1000 BCE (Before the Common Era) a group of Indo-European folk living in the area of what is now southern Scandinavia and northern Germany began to set themselves apart from the surrounding Indo-European and non-Indo-European peoples in linguistic, cultural, and religious ways. The founding cultural and ethnic stock from which the Germanic peoples developed had probably come from somewhere in the east—from the regions around the Caspian Sea, or from the southern Russian steppe area. This migration began about 4000 BCE and lasted to perhaps 1000 BCE. These were part of the great Indo-European migrations, which eventually colonized Asia Minor, Iran, India, Greece, Italy, and all of Europe. These Indo-European peoples share a common linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage, but as they became more and more distant from one another in time and space they developed ever more unique characteristics in their languages, cultures and religions. However, each continues to share a common primeval bond. When the process of differentiation had reached a certain stage in northern Europe, the Germanic peoples can be said to have come into being.

It is always the religion of a people that preserves the most ancient ways of that folk. So in the greater troth of the Germanic peoples we see most clearly the traces of the ancient Indo-European heritage. The essence of the troth was, and is, the maintenance of the bond of loyalty between the gods and goddesses, who provide the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, valor, strength, plenty, and pleasure and humankind, who provide for the continuance of the gods and goddesses. All are dedicated to the common goal of maintaining, and where possible widening, the sphere of godly consciousness throughout the worlds. This troth was for centuries a continuously and naturally evolving thing, at once defining and being defined by the culture of which it was an organic part. Had there not been outside interference, this process would have continued and we would probably still worship the great gods and goddesses of our ancestors— much as the Hindus of India still honor their ancestral divinities.

This interference in our national self-determination came in the form of a bizarre "cult from the east"— which was called Christianity. It is today highly amusing to hear the servants of the White-Christ wail in horror as "our culture" is invaded by "eastern cults"— as they are one of these cults themselves. That they know this on some level is probably responsible for the intensity of their hysteria. To compound the irony, many of the "cults" imported from India may indeed be more "western," that is they may be more closely tied to our own indigenous religious heritage than is Christianity. After all, the Vedas and Eddas share a common origin— the Torah and its heretical appendices (the so-called New Testament, the Koran, etc.) might as well come from another planet.

But by various methods—heretical camouflage, military force, cabal, or socio-economic coercion—the cultural aggression of the pallid armies of the White-Christ marched on like zombies—not only over the kindred Greek, Roman, Gaulish, Gaelic, and Brithonic peoples— but eventually also into the Germanic homeland. The great hof at Uppsala was the last to fall in 1100. Germania was the last to fall, and the first to throw off the domination of the foreign controlled church of Rome.

It should be briefly recounted how our folk fell victim to this insidious force. First, it must generally be realized that one of our basic strengths is also our chief “soft spot,” that is the innate sense of toleration of others and an inherent interest in things foreign and exotic. Let it suffice to say that no other folk has so enthusiastically traveled over the whole world— as explorers, conquerors, colonizers— and now as tourists. This is without doubt a great source of strength on many levels— but its existence and nature must be realized in order for it to be a cultural asset and not a liability. It only becomes a liability when those who are tolerant and who are fascinated by the exotic meet with forces of rabid intolerance and xenophobia. When the ancient German met a Christian he was probably interested in what the Christian had to say— never thinking that the quaint fool would try to turn the true man into a Christian. The Christian easily took advantage of this situation— because it was always his plan to subvert the true man’s life and culture. It is in the very nature and essence of Christianity to do so.

If it were only this question of the tolerant— and sometimes naive— running up against the forces of intolerant cunning, the forces of the elder troth would have probably been able to withstand the cultural invasion of the sordid soldiers of the White-Christ. But things were actually more complex.

In order to illustrate four types of these complexities, we will recount the conversions of four groups of Germanic folk. The Goths, who fell through an attractive Christian heresy, the Franks, who cunningly made an alliance with a foreign power, the Saxons, who were militarily conquered by the Franks and converted by sword, and the Icelanders, who quietly and ever so slowly succumbed to the socio-economic pressures of the establishment on the European continent.

The Goths were evangelized in the fourth century by a man known as Bishop Wulfila (or Ulfilas)— who had been taken captive in the Roman empire and converted to Christianity. However, the form of Christianity to which he was converted was not Roman Catholicism, but the so-called Arian heresy. This theological variation was in fact more logical, straightforward, and humane than that of orthodoxy. It held that the “father”, “son,” and “holy ghost” were in truth three entities, that Jesus was an ordinary man who had attained a god-like status

by means of his will, and that all men were not tainted by the “sin” of Adam and Eve. This, by the way, is in total contrast with orthodox notions— all still officially adhered to by all western Christian sects, Protestant and Catholic. Orthodoxy holds that the “father,” “son,” and “holy ghost” are three and one simultaneously (!), that all people are born with original sin (separated from “God”), that only the gift (grace) of God (not the will of the individual) can “save” that individual. So the Gothic or Arian Church started out in theory as a more logical and humane institution. It was to this form of Christianity that various Germanic folk originally came— the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Burgundians, Vandals, etc. What is most important to realize about this faith, however, is the fact that it was a thoroughly Germanic church. The Bible was at once translated into Gothic. There is good evidence to show that what “Gothic Christianity” really was, was more the old Gothic troth with an overlay of Christian symbols and mythology than anything else. However, it was a giant step toward the ruin of the elder troth, nevertheless. The White-Christ had entered the cultural arena in a place of honor.

The Gothic Church was, however, an anathema to the Roman Church and had to be destroyed. The Goths dominated the entire western Roman Empire from 410 (when the Visigoths sacked Rome) to the end of the Gothic wars in 553. Against their rule the Pope plotted constantly. His natural allies were the Franks who were the military and cultural rivals of the Goths. The king of the Franks converted to Christianity in 496 under the influence of his Roman Catholic wife. Thus, a financial-military alliance was formed between the Catholics and the Franks. From that time forward the Franks became the soldiers of the Pope, conquering their Germanic neighbors and forcing them not only to convert to Roman Catholicism, but also to live in a political state which had no respect for their tribal differences. This politico-religious alliance worked out to the mutual benefit of the church of the White-Christ and the forces of the Frankish kings. This situation is not unlike the way that petty war-lords and tinhorn dictators were able to increase their power in the 20th century by making ideological alliances with either Washington or Moscow – alliances which then lead to military and financial aid.

Over the next few centuries the Franks employed a combination of military tactics and subversive “missionary” activity to weaken and destroy the ancient traditions of their Germanic neighbors. One of the most telling episodes in this period occurred when a mission reached the region of present-day Holland. Around the year 696 the Christian missionary Willibrord tried to convert the king of the Frisians, Radbod. Just before being baptized, Radbod asked the priest if when he died he would be with his ancestors, the great kings of the Frisians. The

priest answered that the ancestors would be in Hell, for they had not come to know Christ, while he, on the contrary, would find himself in Heaven on the right hand of God. Radbod replied that he would rather be in Hell with his great and noble ancestors than in heaven with a bunch of beggars!

In the reign of Karl "the Great" — or Charlemagne — the most direct forms of military conquest as a way of converting the folk to Christianity was adopted. From 772 to 804 Karl waged war on the true Saxons. In 782 at Werden the Franks committed an act of genocide on the Saxon nobility — the true athelings — in which 4,500 of their number were executed because they refused to bow down to the law of the White-Christ. Whenever subversion failed the forces of the White-Christ would always bring more persuasive tools to bear.

When some of the Saxons were formally converted to Christianity, they were coerced into making baptismal vows which read in part:

Forsakest thou the devils?

(he responds): I forsake the devils!

And all devilish sacrifices?

(he responds): and I forsake all devilish sacrifices!

And all devilish works?

(he responds): and I forsake all the works and words of the devil, and

Thunar and Woden and Saxnote and all those who are their companions.

The troth can use a ceremony designed to reverse this coerced oath. The cause of our noble ancestors is not lost or forgotten — why this is so is made clear in chapter 28.

Once the economic power centers on the European continent were secured, Scandinavia was converted by a similar array of means — conquests and subversion. It was not at all uncommon for the Christian "missions" to be preceded by gangs of assassins who would set out to kill men and women of knowledge in the land so that when the forces of the White-Christ arrived they would meet with less organized intellectual resistance.

In the so-called "Viking Age" the Christians of Europe were sometimes forbidden to trade with the heathen Northmen until they were "prime-signed." This meant that although they had not yet been baptized, they were preparing for this act. The final outcome of this kind of policy was the economic strangulation of the Northland. This was sharply felt in Iceland, a land very much dependent on trade. It was therefore economic factors more than anything else that led to the legislative adoption of Christianity by the Icelanders in the year 1000. Lest anyone

think this was done sincerely, it must be pointed out that even after the "conversion" the practice of the troth continued to be allowed "in private."

To learn many details of how Christianity was as much (or more) "paganized" as the Germanic pagans were "Christianized," the reader should explore the important book: *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity* by James C. Russell.

For us today, what is essential to know, and what is essential to remember, is that our ancestors were forced in one way or another — against their wills — to convert to a foreign eastern cult. Christianity is not the true faith of our lands or our folk. In this present age of acute spiritual crisis, it seems the true seeker has but two legitimate choices — to cling to the sinking wreckage of Christianity, the faith which was foisted on us several centuries ago, or to return to our ancestral faith. In returning to the troth we reawaken something that has already worked, to something proven for many centuries. In rejecting the path of the White-Christ we throw off something that never really fully worked in the first place. The very fact that you are reading these words proves the truth of them.

Chapter 4 NEWER HISTORY

It may come as a shock to many, but in northern Europe Christianity never really took hold. The conversion of the northlands was characterized by the most hypocritical and double-dealing methods of which Christianity was capable, and the whole process was undertaken with some of the lowest quality, least vital of the Christian forces. After the north had been nominally converted, it was left more to itself than any part of the Christian empire. The result was a rather anemic form of Christianity—and so the seeds of Christianity's downfall were laid in this time. Now, if one were to be objective, it is plain that the northern European countries and their colonies (America, Australia, South Africa, etc.) are Christian in name and sentiment only. We only await the conscious realization of this and the return of our heritage.

The period between the "conversion" of a people and the return of that people to its spiritual roots is called the period of mixed faith, or of blended truth. This is a general principle, not one peculiar to the Germanic peoples. What makes it particularly obvious in our case is that we were the last to convert (and converted in the worst ways) and among the first to begin to throw off the yoke of the cross.

In the Latin world the first resurgence of the old religion is characterized by the name Renaissance—"rebirth." This was a great, but in many ways immature, revolutionary return to the values of the Classical, pre-Christian world of philosophy and science. What was being reborn in this "rebirth" was the essence of the pagan world. The religious revival, although in certain instances present, was weak. The seeds of blended truth also remained in the Celtic countries of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Throughout the Germanic world the history of the period of mixed faith took different, yet remarkably similar paths. In England, Germany, and Scandinavia the cultural life of the courts of the athelings and aristocrats remained bastions of the true values and in the countryside the folk maintained their customs inherited from the days of yore.

In Scandinavia, and especially in the remote parts of Norway and Sweden as well as all over Iceland, fairly open displays of Paganism were tolerated. Babies that the parents could not afford to feed, or that were in some way deformed, were exposed (often times in churchyards!), and private heathen sacrifices were held. As for the "forces" of the church, they were quite often the very agents most

avidly preserving the heathen traditions— if sometimes in covert ways. In Iceland the priests enthusiastically collected heathen lore and in some instances wrote it down for the first time— thus preserving it for our use today. The Icelandic scribes would usually faithfully record the heathen lore, and then perhaps comment on it by saying: "We don't believe this anymore." But what was important is that they faithfully recorded it, without editing it or destroying it.

The ways in which a religion is mixed are very important to observe. If we are to "unmix" them then similar paths might be followed by some groups of individuals. In religion itself the evidence of faith mixing is rampant. Whole armies of Catholic saints are really nothing more than pagan gods and goddesses in Christian garb. This, coupled with the Catholic "cult of the saints," allowed paganism to continue under the aegis of the church. Examples of this are St. Martin and St. Michael (both understood as Thunar in the north), or St. Oswald, who apparently was Woden canonized. Not only were true legends "Christianized," but so too were rituals and temples. When Augustine was having trouble converting the English in the seventh century, he wrote to Pope Gregory asking what to do. The people continued going to the site of their pagan temples, even though they had been burned to the ground by the forces of the god of love. The pope's advice represents a classic statement of Christian methods. He told Augustine to build a church on the site of the old pagan temple— and then he would have the folk "where he wanted them." This is a spatial example of what was also done with festivals and religious holy-days.

The name of the holiday Easter is directly derived from the Germanic goddess of the Spring, Eostre, also known as Ostara in Germany. The name of her festival was so strong and so deeply ingrained in the souls of the folk that the forces of Christianity could not remove it— and so it remains today. In Germany the Christmas season is known as *Weihnachten*, which literally means "the holy (*weih*) nights." This name is full of true connotations. First, the old word *weih* expresses a special form of "the holy"— one which contains notations of the terrifying and awesome power of the divinity. Another thing is that the form of the word is plural, referring to the twelve nights of Yule-tide. And finally, the fact that nights, and not "days" are used in this expression shows that it is a very old term indeed. (See Chapter 9.)

One does not have to listen to many Bible thumpers for long to find out that the lovely "Christmas tree" is really a pagan-heathen custom. Its origins are in the true practice of setting out gifts under a holy evergreen tree in the forest for the ancestral dises and alfs who were nearby during the Yule-tide. The tree itself would be typically draped with holy signs (perhaps made of pastry or bread) and brightly illuminated to attract the attention of the wights. When ecclesiastical

authorities gained enough power they tried to coerce the folk to stop this practice. This only forced the people to bring the tree in out of the forest and continue with the practice indoors. Of course, as time went on, the folk began to forget why they did this. But with the pure wisdom of childhood many youngsters know that it is right and true to leave out some gifts (milk and cookies perhaps) for the jolly ol' alf who comes down their chimney—for aye does a gift always look for gain! (Yes, it's true: "Santa Clause" is no Christian!)

Historically, one area in which heathenry was most purely maintained was in the area of magic and witchcraft. This is because such things were generally condemned outright by the church, so the lore was relatively free to be as heathen as it wanted to be. Also, because the church condemned such practices as being "of the devil" much of the old pagan lore began to be considered "diabolical" as well.

But it was not only in the realm of "religion" that the effects of the period of mixed faith could be felt. Because in the days of yore the ancestors did not make the strict and artificial (but unfortunately still necessary) distinction between religion and "politics," and because the troth was really a matter of everyday life and custom (and not just a "Sunday-go-t'-meetin'" affair), features of the political, customary, "literary" and material culture also have much to tell us on the nature of the period.

In the realm of what we would generally call "politics" today, certain concepts of the sacred responsibilities of the king and of the rights of aristocracy were directly inherited from the ancient Germanic system. The Germanic king, although many times seen to be the descendent of a god, and to have sacral functions, was not an all-powerful despot. He ruled at the will, and by the election of, the aristocracy—the athelings of the tribe. When he was no longer able to fulfill his responsibilities, he was deposed. This is a far cry from, but in some superficial ways related to, the Christian idea of the "divine right" of kings.

Our very law is today based on Germanic cosmic principles. So-called English "Common Law" is that which was inherited from Anglo-Saxon tribal law. This was law based on what had gone before, that is, based on precedent. What has happened before shall happen again—so it is right. This can be said for more than law! (See Chapter 19 to see how this links up with Germanic concepts of cosmic law.)

If we look back to the political realities of the ancient Germanic world we will see that they had much more in common with our "modern" conceptions than will be found, for example, in Middle Eastern notions, or in later Christianized ideas of political order—all based on superstitious coercion.

During the period of mixed faith, some of the everyday aspects of life came under attack by the forces of Christianity. At some time in the heathen past, the Germanic peoples had called at least some of their week-days by the names of some of their most important gods and goddesses. The English best preserved these names—Tues-day (Day of Tiw), Wednes-day (Day of Woden), Thurs-day (Day of Thunar), Fri-day (Day of Frige). The Christians, of course, tried to stamp these names out, but because of the deep strength of these customary names, they held on. In Germany, for example, one can see how the Christians were partially successful—what should be Wodesdag is called Mittwoch ("Mid-week"). This is because the name of Woden, the highest of the gods and All-Father, god of magic, skaldcraft, and death, was totally "tabooed." The people were forbidden to utter his name!

Many other essentially heathen customs held on through time—just as the weekday names did. The countryside in most Germanic territories is still alive with the old ways. They are, however, misunderstood today, or have been reinterpreted to make things more palatable. Everything from the shapes and the names of pastries and breads to the forms of decoration painted on houses and household items shine with heathenry! There is nothing unique in this, the same can be said for Celtic, Italic, or Slavic regions. But thankfully we have very archaic material in the Germanic world which we can compare what is going on in the living folk customs with the older strains of the high religion. The seeds have remained, just waiting for the right amount of water to revivify them.

Many of the so-called "fairy tales" or folk tales we often read to children contain the seed forms of ancient folk wisdom. These were preserved by being driven "underground." That is, they were historically largely ignored by the forces of Christianity because they were considered lowly and of little importance. This is the stream of action that runs parallel to the one in which high heathen ideals were secretly imbedded in supposedly Christian tales and customs. Between these two tendencies the soul essence of the lore of our ancestors survived—just barely and quite mangled. But this coupled with the preservation of actual mythic texts and the fact that the ancestors left their culture buried in the soil of their lands, later to be dug up by their decedents eager to learn of their ancient past, has made the revival of what did not survive a very viable possibility. The web of wyrd has worked to our boon!

With all this to work with, it did not take long, in historical terms, for the Germanic spirit to make an overt comeback. But since the time of the first efforts to reawaken the Germanic spirit the road has been a difficult, if necessary one.

The first overt effort to begin a Germanic Renaissance, logically, if a bit ironically, was mounted in Sweden in the middle of the 1500's. At that time the

seat of Swedish power was Uppsala— where the last great heathen temple had been destroyed in the year 1100. So, some three and a half centuries after the destruction of the last temple a new one — if only a spiritual one — was raised on the same spot. The movement responsible for this revival was known by the Swedish term *storgoticism*, or Great-Gothicism. The man most responsible for its formal foundation was, again quite ironically, the last Catholic archbishop of Uppsala, Johannes Magnus. He was followed by Johannes Bureus, who was the tutor of the great Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus. Bureus became the virtual high priest of a revived Germanic religion centered in Uppsala. That this revived nationalist religion came as a part of Sweden's breaking away from Catholic Europe and becoming part of the growing Protestant movement, with its kings as head of state as well as heads of the churches, is also significant to the redevelopment of the old ways. But for all its good intentions, Great-Gothicism was a rather confused mixture of old Germanic ideas coupled with notions adopted from Judaism and Christianity. What is most significant about Great-Gothicism is that it had as its major premise the idea that the right path for a Swede was a Swedish (in their terms Gothic) path— and not a universal, or international one.

Johannes Bureus was a scholar as well as a mystic. The fact that one of the fathers of the self-conscious rebirth of the elder path was a scholar, and a nationalist, is important. For it is in the academic cradle of German romantic nationalism that the firmer foundations of the Germanic Renaissance were to be laid. In the late 1700's and early 1800's there was an international movement called "romanticism," which involved a sense of inwardness, or turning into one's own self for a deeper sense of reality and truth. This subjectively was in part a reaction to the objectivist approach of so-called "classicism." When applied to nations rather than people, this inward turning results in a keen interest in national traditions and folk ways — in the roots of the folk.

Again among the Swedes this new spirit broke forth with a special vigor. In the early 1800s there were two serious organizations founded, the *Götiska Förbundet* and the *Manhemsförbundet*, both of which were dedicated to the regeneration of the national spirit based on ancient Germanic values.

This new spirit was taken up with a deep intellectual enthusiasm by the Germans. They began to see that they too, not just the Greeks and the Romans, had great national traditions. Scholars and artists began to turn their attention to their own national heritage. But because so much of the elder tradition had been destroyed over the approximately one thousand years since the "Christianization" had taken place in that part of the world, very refined and sophisticated techniques of investigation had to be developed. The resistance provided the whetstone upon which the sword of Tiw could be sharpened.

The most important exponents of the new romantic spirit as far as the future of the Germanic Rebirth was concerned were the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. Jacob Grimm was the pioneering father of the academic sciences of comparative linguistics (he formulated the basic linguistic law that demonstrates the organic relationship between Germanic and the other Indo-European languages), comparative religion and mythology, and the science of folklore. The Brothers Grimm went out into the field and collected their *Märchen* ("fairy tales") as an exercise in investigating the long ignored traditions of the common folk. In all of their work they hoped to be able to raise the national spirit of the Germans, and to restore it to its rightful place within its own land.

This brings us back to an important point. The old ways did not really die. It is clear that they, like Sleeping Beauty, were only put under a spell of sleep—awaiting their noble awakening. In remote regions of all the Germanic lands the old ways continued to be preserved in folk ways and folk tales. These old ways then became the material for study and clarification by the academics. In this we see how, in the larger scheme of things, the scholar and the old wives of the country have worked together to forge a pillar of the Germanic Renaissance.

It was not only among scholars that the new interest in national traditions was aroused. Artists too turned their attention inward and produced works reflective of the new "Germanicism." (The term Germanicism seems here more appropriate than Romanicism.) Chief among these artists, at least in the influence that he was to have, was Richard Wagner. In the late 1800's Wagner's personalized vision of the Germanic past, both ancient (in the ring cycle) and medieval (in the Grail Cycle), were to be the mythic foundation for many a Germanicist. These must, however, be taken as essentially the personal artistic creations of Wagner himself and not as re-tellings of the ancient myth-forms.

By the beginning of the 20th century the ground work had been laid in the academic field, in the artistic field, and in the field of popular culture for a serious level Germanic Renaissance. Especially in Germany, but also in England and Scandinavia, groups with Germanic roots were springing up. The movement was truly one of the grass roots coming from all sectors of the political spectrum. The appeal of the timeless values of the ancestors was almost universal among the folk.

Centered in Germany there was a mass movement, loosely understood under the term *Deutschbewegung* ("Germanic Movement"). The members of this movement eventually numbered in the millions. At the same time in Austria and Germany there were the *Armanen*—a runo-mystical movement springing from the teachings of Viennese mystic Guido von List. There was a list, published in 1914, of books and magazines intended to be a guide through the maze of these ideas. It takes up thirty-three pages.

In England youth movements and social reform movements of all kinds were being based on Germanic principles. It is a little known fact that the "Boy Scouts" were originally founded as part of a general movement for the regeneration of ancient Anglo-Saxon values and traditions—and that these aims were eventually subverted by the established church and state in England. Even then it was typical for those who would subvert the true tendencies in these movements to turn the attention to "Native American" traditions. Because this was exotic and really had nothing to do with the boys in reality, it could be used as a tool to infuse all sorts of nonsense. When one is focused on the traditions of one's own ancestors, all sorts of powerful (and for the church and state very dangerous) results can arise. A few years ago, Danish Boy Scouts began to experiment with "Viking traditions," building Viking ships and the like. This was shut down by the international body governing the Scouts because such practices would foster a sense of national rather than the desired international sensibilities of the organization!

It was, however, in Germany where the strongest voices for a true Germanic revival were based. In the list of books and magazines published in 1914 mentioned above, it is important to note the date—before the First World War. Later revisionists of the period insists that the longing for a heroic Germanic past was somehow a result of Germany's "defeat" in the Great War. But clearly the facts show that the *Deutschwegung* was already strong and multifaceted even before the war began. To be sure, defeat spurred these feelings, as the Germans looked for radical solutions to their problems.

It is essentially true that the rise of the National Socialist political movement was closely intertwined with the rise of the "Germanic Movement." There were attempts on both sides to "use" the other to their benefit. Members of the Nazi leadership, especially Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler, as well as masses of their rank and file supporters, were generational products of a time in which the notion of ancient Germanic values and virtues (usually misunderstood) were held up as ideals. To some extent it might be said that the Nazis used the symbolism of the ancient Germanic past—the runes and the *Hakenkreuz* (swastika)—as tools of manipulation, but it can be said with equal validity that they were manipulated by these symbols. In any event, once the National Socialists gained and began to consolidate their power, they systematically suppressed the entire *Deutschwegung*. But because the Nazis had made so much use of Germanic symbolism and rhetoric for purposes of propaganda, the distinctions between the long standing, centuries old, Germanic Rebirth and the National Socialist German Workers Party were blurred to say the least. Unfortunately this fact is often lost even on the current proponents of the Renaissance.

Without doubt, the Nazi episode set the course of the Germanic Rebirth back at least a hundred years. Those who want to see a true rebirth in the ways of the ancestors would be wise to see the Nazi episode for what it was—an essentially Christian-inspired running amok of the militaristic second function which lead to a senseless destruction of our progress. In other words, the Nazis were the best friends the forces of the White-Christ has had in this century!

The whole study of, and interest in, things Germanic became virtually taboo in the years following the Second World War. (The results of this can be felt at all levels of society today—in academia as well as in the "neo-pagan" culture.) It wasn't until some two and a half decades after the war that the Germanic Rebirth began to make its first slow steps back into the realm of consciousness. What had been an awakened giant had been dealt something close to a knockout blow. Now it was coming to, and beginning to shake the cobwebs out of its head.

In North America, England, Iceland, and in Germany the renewal of the rebirth process caught new fire in the early 1970's. In Iceland the *Ásatrúarmenn* under their *allsþerjargoði* the poet Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson revived the old religion and gained official recognition for it. In Germany the old organizations were receiving new life as well. In North America, the Ásatrú Free Assembly (AFA) was founded by Stephen A. McNallen. It strove for a full spectrum of northern religious expression. Other groups in North America also sought to give an outlet to various forms of the Northern Way. England saw the restoration of the Odinic Rite under the initial able leadership of John Yeowell. In the 1970s and 1980s the Odinic Rite at one time exemplified the best and brightest among the organizations striving for Germanic Rebirth.

In North America, the banner of the true way was for a long time perceived to be held by the AFA. It seemed to hold out the best hope for an eventual evolution of a multifaceted confederation of interest groups true to the elder ways. However, as the organization grew in size and complexity, its leadership grew weary of internal problems, and in late 1987 it was dissolved. It is in this event that the roots of the Ring of Troth, as an organization, were originally to be found. When the banner falls, even for a moment, it must be taken up again. That was what the founders and early leaders of the Ring of Troth attempted to do. At about the same time the Ásatrú Alliance was also formed in the wake of the demise of the AFA. For a period there was friction between the AA and the RoT. The RoT, as originally conceived, was to act as a body for the training and licensing of a "priesthood"—to be called Elders. It also at first steadfastly refused to make any overt statements concerning matters of race, sexual orientation, etc. As time went on the author of this book was increasingly marginalized by the leadership of the Ring of Troth, and eventually disowned almost entirely. It seems

that once the door to “tolerance” was opened a crack the prevailing popular culture took a hand and the RoT was transformed into a “politically correct” version of the troth. As things turned out, the AA continued to develop and become increasingly sophisticated, and eventually in the early 1990s Stephen McNallen even returned to form the AFA— which was now the Ásatrú Folk Assembly.

Further discussion of the various *types* of groups one is likely to encounter in the reawakening movement is contained in chapter 30 of this book.

Although the Ring of Troth project for which this text was originally published was, on the surface, a failure of sorts, in the bigger picture it was a success. Before this book was published there were very few who even knew about the reawakening of the Northern ancestral ways— by the early 1990s individuals and groups began to develop like wildfire across a full spectrum of philosophical understanding. As many groups seem to come and go, reform and reemerge elsewhere, it would be futile to try to catalog them all. But it is our hope that among the critical mass of individuals and groups now working along their ancestral path that this book and the ideas it contains will once more to act as a catalyst toward the development of the next level of success the reawakening of Germanic culture is bound to have in the coming decade and century.

Chapter 5 THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

Nine worlds I know, the nine abodes
of the great world tree the ground beneath.

(Völuspá stanza 2)

Every religion has a view of the world: how it came into being, what its true shape and nature are, and so forth. These matters are not just the concern of idle mystics. If you doubt it, look at how the questions of cosmology shape the political debate of a modern western democracy such as the United States. Questions surrounding education, questions such as “creationism” versus evolution, women’s rights, Judeo-Christian cosmological lore— of how the world and its inhabitants came into being and what their proper configuration is all often plague modern society. If we shift our world view, our cosmology, we can shift the whole field of our debate, and thereby alter the world. We will return to some of these points later, but right now the largest question looms before us, as Gangleri puts it in the *Prose Edda*: “What was the beginning of all things?”

The true man or woman can read the lore of the surviving accounts of the ancient Germanic ideas of how the worlds came into being in the Poetic and Prose Eddas, and can get other hints at the grand scheme in a variety of other sources. All true folk are encouraged to read and mediate on these tales, as each person will win some new piece of personal wisdom from them each time he or she does so. But in order to go to these wells of wisdom to draw the quickening waters, one must have a basic understanding of what the grand scheme is.

What is clear in all accounts of the Germanic cosmology, is that there was a great space filled with undifferentiated and unordered force and form— the Old Norse word for this is *Ginnunga-gap*. The space (gap) filled with the numinous power (*ginnung*). The *ginn-* part of the word is the same as we have in English be-ginning. This is far from a “void” as usually understood. It is vital essence, waiting for the process of change and shaping to occur.

Within this beginning there arose a polarization. Parts of the substance of the chaotic state divided into two extremes, fire and ice, or fire and water which became ice. Between these two extremes a magnetic force of attraction was set up, and the two extremes were attracted to one another. As they came closer and closer to one another, they did not lessen in their differences, but rather their differences intensified, so that when they did meet in the middle, there was a great

release of force. Poets can tell of this process in one language, mystics in another, and modern scientists in yet another. But what is essentially being described here is an impersonal process of the formation of the cosmic order out of the polarize mass of energy. The language this, that or the other person uses to describe it may differ, but it is a timeless and eternally valid way of looking at the origins of the cosmos.

Once the first stage of the crystallization had been completed, various entities, or specialized functions within the cosmos began to take shape. Again these were essentially of two kinds, the proto-zoomorphs (exemplified by Aðumbla the cosmic bovine) and Bestla (descended from Ymir). This was the birth of the possibility of true consciousness in the cosmos. Again, the lore and myth may seem complex and sometimes bewildering, but what is essential is the understanding that the gods arose out of a synthesis of the polarized streams on an organic level, just as the basic material of the cosmos had arisen as a synthesis of the polarized streams on a mechanical level. What we see over and over again is the portrayal of latent patterns being made manifest through a process of polarization between two extremes and their synthesis in the middle ground between them. This pattern of thought and of action is the most essential factor of Germanic thinking.

The gods—the Æsir—who are the forces of consciousness, complete, or at least continue the process of shaping the cosmos. (It will be noted that we avoid the use of the word “creation” as it implies the creation of something out of nothing, which is foreign to the Germanic way of thinking, or perhaps foreign to thinking period. *Ex nihilo* creation is, of course, the cosmology of the Christians. These gods perform the first act of sacrifice when they slay the giant Ymir and, from the parts of his cosmic body, reshape the universe in a more ordered fashion. The gods of consciousness shape the nine worlds patterned along the framework of the cosmic tree, Yggdrasill. There then come into being nine worlds, or dimensions of being, and infinite multiplicities between and among them. In these dimensions dwell the gods, goddesses, and all the wights and beings of all the worlds. The cosmos is an unfinished thing. The gods continue to work on it and, in this work, their chief partners are the true men and women of Midgard. Here it is clear that along with the idea of the give and take between the two extremes there is a more complex pattern of being ordered by the cycle of the number nine. This is an infinite cycle of transformation governed by an eternal return to the essential truth of its own self. Again this might seem to be the stuff of mysticism, and it can be, but it is also a form of down to earth common sense. How else again to explain the weird fact that you are reading these words.

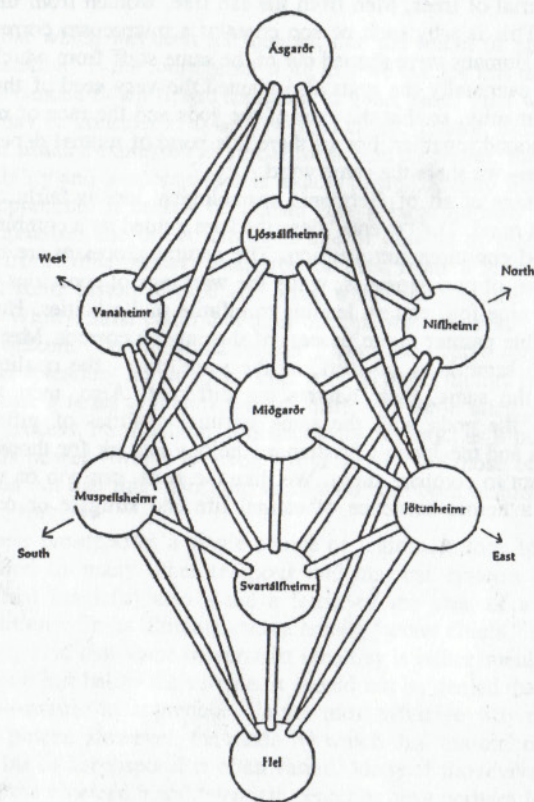


Figure 5.1: The Nine Worlds of Yggdrasill

What of mankind's role in all of this? What is mankind essentially? These are among the most important questions that can be asked, we being men and women, after all. Human beings were shaped by the gods Woden, Willi and We from the organic material of trees. Men from the ash tree, women from the elm, but both from trees. This is why each person contains a microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm. Humans were shaped out of the same stuff from which the gods were shaped, and eventually the gods also planted the very seed of their being in the womb of humanity, so that the race of the gods and the race of men has become inexorably bound together. For us there is a bond of mutual dependence between gods and men— we share the same wyrd.

The message of all of Germanic cosmological lore is fairly clear when read with an open mind. The "events" described are guided by a combination of natural processes and conscious intervention. The natural processes are characterized by the interaction of two extremes, while the workings of conscious intervention are guided by a nine-fold pattern leading to infinite multiplicities. Humanity is a full and responsible partner in the process of shaping the cosmos. Men and women are made of the same kind of stuff, at the same time— the quality of the of the material is the same, their natures are different. Also, men and women are endowed by the gods with the same spiritual qualities of gifts. The contrasts between this and the Judeo-Christian mythology is stark for those who those who would attempt to compare them. We, like the gods, can win or we can lose. We can choose a heroic existence of eternal life and struggle or one of death and desolation.

Chapter 6 LORE

Lore is that which has been left behind, like the tracks of an animal we are hunting. "Tradition" is the more usual word that we use for this now. Tradition is that which is handed down from generation to generation. That which is actually transmitted may be considered to be a twofold entity, 1) lore, that is, information of some kind usually expressed in verbal form, and 2) power, that is, the energy or spiritual ability and wisdom which is usually passed directly from a lore-master to his/her apprentice. It cannot be denied that a large number of well known traditions emphasizes the direct unbroken line of descent of their teachings and their power from some primary master(s) or even from a god. This is usually pinpointed at some historical time and place where the tradition began. The old forces of the White-Christ claim that their bishops were the result of a direct line of initiatory descent ("apostolic succession") from the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus to begin spreading his dogmas. This way of doing things is really not that enviable because it tends to maintain rigid forms in a futile attempt to combat the evolutionary process. Furthermore, it is decidedly dualistic, as it posits an external source for this power—which is given "from above" to "those below." It might also be pointed out that this "apostolic succession" has been historically proven to be an absolute forgery.

This process presupposes a single source of legitimate lore and power. This pattern is found in many other religious and magical systems as well. Many schools of ritual magic(k) also make a fetish of the idea of a direct line of initiatory tradition with its ultimate source among "secret chiefs." In cases of this kind we usually find that some universalist ideology is either openly advocated or lurks somewhere just below the surface. It should not be denied that direct face to face teaching—master to apprentice—is the most effective way of transmitting both lore and power. However, the mode by which the "master" obtains the lore and power at his or her disposal is often varied. Many of the revivalist neo-pagan movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have perhaps found it in their best interests to fabricate "apostolic successions" for themselves. As we look at this from several perspectives, this may be more for superficial psychological effect than anything else.

The elder lore of the troth was not a steady-state tradition. It did not seek to preserve a codified, petrified set of dogmatic forms throughout all eternity— such as Christians would seem to attempt with their concept of the unchanging "Word

of God." It is therefore ironic that at the very core the troth of the Icelander of the Viking Age was unchanged from the troth of his most distant ancestors who came roaring out of the steppes five thousand years earlier. This is due to an unbound flow of lore rather than to a codified set of dogmas or even a consciously agreed upon tradition.

Many Indo-European traditions developed along lines which emphasized a codified lore taught in schools of this science, for example the Druids of the Celts, and the Brahmans of the Indians. But the tradition of the troth remained for the most part in the realm of "natural tradition," and was constantly in a state of flux. Various tribes probably had various traditions regarding a priesthood, which would account for the varying reports we get about such traditions from Roman historians. Some probably had a true priest class, while others had none. In all cases they were certainly responding to prevailing conditions in the most effective ways at the disposal of the tradition.

The transmission of runelore would be a case in point. When we look at the runic tradition, we see that all evidence points to an ancient network through which rune-wisdom was quickly and uniformly passed. Therefore there must have been a specialized subculture throughout all Germanic tribal territories which carried this tradition. This was most likely the Wodenic priesthood and/or skalds. But even this tradition was probably not one with a set of complex ritual forms and dogmas. The technical aspects of the runic system formed the core of this tradition, but its individual characteristics were most certainly formulated within various tribal frameworks.

The runic tradition was one which gave a particular shape and "quality" to the natural, genetically-inherited, tribal force, which, through this shape and quality could then more easily be communicated to others. In other words, the runic tradition would, by today's decadent standards, probably baffle most people with its simplicity. A single key provided to a simple stock of symbols housed in a naturally integrated psyche will open the door of a true tradition. In the words of someone who was an initiate in this tradition:

Then I began to grow and gain in insight,
to wax also in wisdom:
one word led on to another word,
one work led on to another work.

(Hávamál stanza 141)

The natural mode of access to this inner tradition has been suppressed by an unnatural universalist dogma of guilt and alienation. The shape of the true lore

was in many cases radically altered. The living masters who held the spiritual keys to this hoard of lore were either killed or eventually prevented from transmitting their teachings. Society was altered so as to be inhospitable to the holy gods, and to be more pleasing to the White-Christ. But what do we have left of this inner tradition to draw from today? Again let us break this down in the twofold way introduced above.

1) Lore (Form of Tradition)

The hard evidence available to us about the old Germanic religion is quite extensive, and with the work of ingenious modern scholars in the fields of archeology, linguistics, and comparative religion we may begin to re-build, on a firm and intellectually sound foundation, that which has been lost of the outward form of troth and its traditions. We actually have more than enough of the core symbols available to us to re-form the old ways. The primary responsibility of present-day lore-masters is to focus on the true and basic sources before flying off for exotically inspired solutions.

2) Power (Content of the Tradition)

In the ancient form of the troth, the passing of power from master to apprentice formed an important part of the cult—unfortunately this direct line has been cut. But this is not as serious as it would appear to be from the viewpoint of one who believes in a single transcendent source of spiritual power, for each individual has the ability to gain access to at least a portion of that natural indwelling power. This power has come down to him or her by virtue of the fact that he or she is literally descended from the gods—without any "transgression" against these gods. Now, if these individuals pool their spiritual powers and mold them into a transmittable form, and succeed in passing them from one generation to the next, the troth will truly be reborn. The real power structure we are talking about has always lived within us, and has been handed down, constantly being re-formed, from parent to child all the way from the beginning of our folk. This is the "natural succession," which has been in part suppressed by the alien creed—but it is still there—and it is still responsive to its symbols if one will only venture forth! The power belongs to those who dare.

There is another interesting aspect of this "problem," an examination of which may result in demonstrating that this "problem" is not at all a negative factor. The birth-life-death-rebirth cycle is one central to the troth. Between every death and rebirth there is a period of gestation—this is valid for plants, animals, humans, gods, and ideas. In order to survive Ragnarök, Woden planted his seed to be reborn in Víðarr so that he might avenge his own death and be born back into the

world—or to survive in the renewed world on the shining plain. This process may also describe what is transpiring with regard to the tradition of troth. The past eight hundred to a thousand years have been a gestation period in which the power of the tradition has been increasing for its full rebirth in an even greater Germanic world view of the sacredness of flux and the birth-life-death-rebirth cycle over the steady-state linear conceptions of other traditions.

The true must take that lore which has been dealt us, dig deep into our souls with the tools given by the gifts of the gods, work together in the true spirit of the troth and shape this into a tradition founded on the old way and the reborn power. But most importantly we must hand it down to our children, to the next generation, for then, and only then, will the tradition truly be reborn—for they will be able to know fully that it never really died.

We do have enough lore upon which to base a true Germanic Reawakening. But we do bear a responsibility to focus on the Germanic tradition first and foremost before flying around looking for meaning in exotic, if perhaps (unfortunately) more familiar doctrines. The essential power-source is one which is forever with us—indwelling and indestructible. We have the tradition, for we are the tradition. If we again dare to take up the plough, the sword and the wand, the power will surge up from our souls and flow along the elder patterns in our minds.

Chapter 7 THE WAY OF DOING

More than a way of thought or belief, the troth is a way of doing or being. In most religions or even philosophies bordering on religions we can speak of the ideology of the system, that is, the teachings concerning its ideas. With the troth we should perhaps more rightly speak of its practicology, that is, teachings concerning its practices or things a true man or woman does. The true essence of a religious or philosophical system is seen in what its practitioners do, not in what they say, or in the rationale of their actions. Action is the surest and highest measurement of truth and right.

From this, do not jump to the conclusion that thought cannot be action. It can. However, not all thought is action. To be a true action, a thought must be an act of conscious will. These acts are not readily observable by all, and are open to various interpretations, and are therefore considered of secondary rank among the true.

There are three kinds of doing. The two kinds that are of the first rank are day to day actions, and participation in the Great Blessings of the Year. The other kind is willed mental action.

Day to day actions and their disciplined guidance are treated more fully in chapter 22. The exact standards of what makes action right is determined by the individual in interaction with the bonds of fellowship he or she has made, but what is essential here is that the standard of measurement is to be found in what one does rather than in what one thinks or believes. It is not enough to say about a man: "He has his heart in the right place." He must have his hand and arm in the right place as well.

Beyond the day to day acts of the true, it is their holy responsibility to participate in the Great Blessings of the Year. This is a higher form of action. In this kind of action the true man or woman is able to act in a realm of being common to all the gods and ancestors. From a purely "religious" standpoint, these acts of participation in the Great Blessings are the central acts of troth.

As we see in most living, vital religions around the world today, most of the followers simply act out of a sense of tradition and spend little time brooding over the whys and wherefores of the religion. This is quite natural. There are, however, a number of people who out of personal interest or passion wish to delve deeper into the lore. Of course, this is the mandatory responsibility of the priesthood in any religion, but it should not be limited to such a body. In actual fact, mental

cult objects and the folk with the vivifying hallowing power of the blood of a sacrificial animal. The same terminology is also used for making similar blessings with water or other liquid offerings.

Animal sacrifice, according to the ancient way, is not normally practiced today in the troth. But it is important to understand what the nature of this animal sacrifice was, so that its principles can be known and used.

An animal sacrifice was, to our way of thinking now, more akin to a "sacralized barbecue" than to the useless slaughter of livestock. In days of yore, the meat of the animal killed would serve as the sanctified essence of the god or goddess — which was then consumed by the gathered folk. This was an act of ritual "communion" in the literal sense. The animal shared an essential link with the god or goddess to which it was dedicated, the horse to Woden, the goat to Thunar, the boar to Frey and the sow to Freya. (This really explains why the eating of horse-meat was so strongly forbidden by the Christians!) By eating the hallowed meat, the true folk became more closely linked with their gods. Certain parts of the animals, those parts which the folk found little to their use or liking, such as the heads or lower legs, might then be given or returned to the gods. Only these parts would typically be "sacrificed" in the sense most people might think of it. These parts might be burned, or deposited in holy wells.

It is also noteworthy that it was important to the priests that the sacrificial animal not suffer in the process of the blessing. They were killed quickly and humanely, and even techniques of slowly and painlessly suffocating the animals were developed. This is reflected in old technical terms such as Old English *swebban* and Old Norse *sóa*, which literally mean "to put to sleep." The reason for this is obvious: the animal is a manifestation of the god, and is therefore approached with reverence and love.

A very different attitude is reflected in the old Germanic practices of human sacrifice. But this too is important to understand. The ancient Germans never sacrificed their "best and brightest" or their first-born or anything of the sort. Human sacrifices were most usually made of criminals and of prisoners of war — those who the society had to rid itself of in any event. Simply put, human sacrifice was a form of sacralized "capital punishment." The victim of human sacrifice was someone who had put the realm of the gods out of balance in some profound way by their own acts. To correct this imbalance their lives had to be forfeited.

Although we may find many of these concepts of no use today, it is imperative that we understand our tradition for what it was, and not let some superstitious representative of the White-Christ try to tell us what cruel barbarians our ancestors were. This is especially so since the spiritual roots of Christianity do go back to

middle eastern cults that practiced wholesale ritual slaughter not only of animals but also occasionally of the people's children.

The ritual norms of the troth today mainly involve the use of hallowed liquids, mead (Kvasir's Blood), ale, or beer. These substances were also used in ancient times. Essentially, the ritual techniques and the wisdom surrounding their right use are the same in all cases.

During the blessing the gods and mankind touch each other. The blessings are a way of intermingling the essences of the divinity and humanity. Why this is done should be obvious. First, it is done simply because it is the right thing to do. Here the word "right" is used in a special religious sense. What is right is what maintains the right and natural order of the cosmos that ensures a hospitable place where gods and men can exist. The blessings — which mankind is responsible to carry out — help maintain the cosmic order first instituted by the Ases at the dawn of time. Without this order we cannot exist, the gods cannot exist. With more blessings the quality of human existence will improve, with fewer blessings it will degenerate. Thus the wisdom of offerings.

Another reason blessings are performed is to exchange specific gifts with the gods and goddesses. We offer a certain kind of gift and we will get some gift in return. This return gift will correspond to the character of the god or goddess. Because these kinds of gifts always require a response of some kind from the divine realm, it is wise not to do this unless it is absolutely necessary, or at special seasonal times when it is right to do so. One should be moderate in sacrifice, because such gifts always look for gain. As one might wear out the soil in a field by over cultivating it, one can also wear out one's welcome among the gods with too many gifts.

A third reason for participating in or performing blessings is to simply and deeply be with the gods and goddesses. To be among them, to communicate with them directly and in an essential way. This is most profoundly experienced in the part of the blessing which involves the consumption of the hallowed drink or meal. The more this is done the more like the gods one can become, and the more power the gods will have in Midgard.

The wisdom of giving is threefold. It ensures right order that we have a place to live and work, it provides for a channel, a way for us to receive gifts from the gods, and it gives us a way to raise our beings to new heights.

Chapter 9 THE HOLY YEAR

From the south the sun, by the side of the moon,
heaved her right hand over heaven's rim;
the sun knew not what seat she had,
the stars knew not what stead they held,
the moon knew not what might he had.

Then gathered together the gods to rede
the holy hosts, and held speech;
to night and new moon their names they gave,
the morning named, and midday also,
forenoon and evening to order the year.

(Völuspá 5-6)

Every culture orders time. The way time is ordered gives us insight into the inner world of the folk. Today we mainly order our time on a daily and weekly basis — ordered according to corporate work schedules: nine to five, five days a week, with two day weekends — week in, week out. For the ancient Germanic folk the year and the month were far more important than the day or the week. Furthermore, these divisions of time were ruled by holy principles, which were symbols in time of happenings going on both within the soul and within nature.

What we call "time" is only really discernible through the movement of bodies — the sun, the moon, the earth, and the stars above. Happenings come about in nature, such as the appearance of the first violet or the first robin in spring, and this comes together with some movement in the heavens — the sun rises over a certain holy stead — and about that time a young man's fancy turns to love (or war). This threefold happening — on earth, in the heavens, and in the soul is seen as meaningful and holy. Here we have the basis of the holy year, and why it is so important in the troth.

In the days and nights of yore the many tribes of the Germanic folk had various traditions concerning time and its ordering. Some used sophisticated observations of the heavens to determine when their holy events were to take place, while others relied more on earth-bound happenings. For example, one

formula for determining the tide for the Easter-blessing might be: the first full moon after the spring equinox, while another tribe might use the formula: the first full moon after the appearance of the first blossom of spring in some holy grove or field. The first formula shows some astronomical sophistication, but in some latitudes may not give a date that actually corresponds to the natural events with which the Easter-blessing is supposed concur. The other formula shows little astronomical sophistication, but ensures that the organic events of the Easter-tide are actually present. Both formulas will probably result in the same date for the actual workings of the spring time blessings. In both cases the full moon is important — for the name of the moon means the "measurer," the one who meets out time with his phases and movements. The *month* really means "a measurement of the moon."

Just as our ancient forebears came to terms with their year and lunar phases in accordance with the socio-economic realities of their world, making them holy and meaningful, so are we challenged to do the same in our world. It may, on occasion, be desirable to take the modern workday/weekend schedule into account when setting dates for holy events. It may be better, and more true, to have a leisurely and convivial time with other good folk and true, than to rush about on a workday night with little time or energy to appreciate the holiness of the tide and fellowship. At the same time, we must remember that in the ancient orderings of the holy year there is a timeless meaning that even in our modern world continues to shine through. Why do we have our most important festivals in the fall (Thanksgiving) and winter (Yule), why have Hallowe'en and St. Valentine's Day assumed increasing importance in recent years? These are but pale reflections of the elder orderings of the holy year.

In the Germanic mind there are really only two "seasons" or tides of the year: winter and summer. These are marked by two of the greatest blessings; the Yule-tide, at midwinter (beginning on or about December 21 and lasting twelve nights) and Midsummer (on or about June 21):

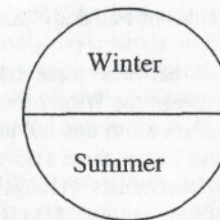


Fig. 9.1: Twofold Division of the Year

At the periods of transition from one time of the year to another, from summer to winter and from winter to summer there are also two great blessings. These are not really seasons unto themselves, but are rather shorter tides in which the event of transition is the most important happening. This is reflected in the language. We see that "spring" is really only that tide when nature again begins to "spring forth" to come again into bloom. Once this tide is past, summer is present. "Fall" is only that time when the leaves begin to fall, once they have fallen, winter is upon us. The fact that these events take place at different times in different places strengthens the tradition of having these festivals somewhat mobile, and not fixed to a regular "mechanical event" in the heavens. The tide of the spring festival, Easter, is reckoned as mentioned above—the first full moon after the spring equinox, or Summer Finding. But some might want to celebrate Easter on the equinox itself. The fall festival of Harvest would likewise be reckoned to come on the full moon after the Winter Finding, or Fall Equinox.

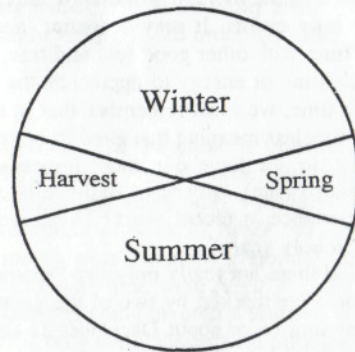


Fig. 9.2: The Tides of Fall and Spring in the Year

Other festivals roughly fall between these tides. One of the three Great Blessings of the troth comes between the Winter Finding and the Yule-tide, and is called Winter Nights. In the ancient north this fell on or about the present October 14th. Between the Yule-tide and Easter there falls a holy day known as Disting, during which time local legal assemblies (Things) gathered and markets were held. Between Easter and Midsummer was May Eve and May Day. Later the Great Things or national assemblies were held at a time between Midsummer and Winter Finding. All of the holy tides mentioned here, except Yule and

Midsummer, were held during the full phase of the moon and lasted for three nights. The holy calendar of the troth therefore appears:

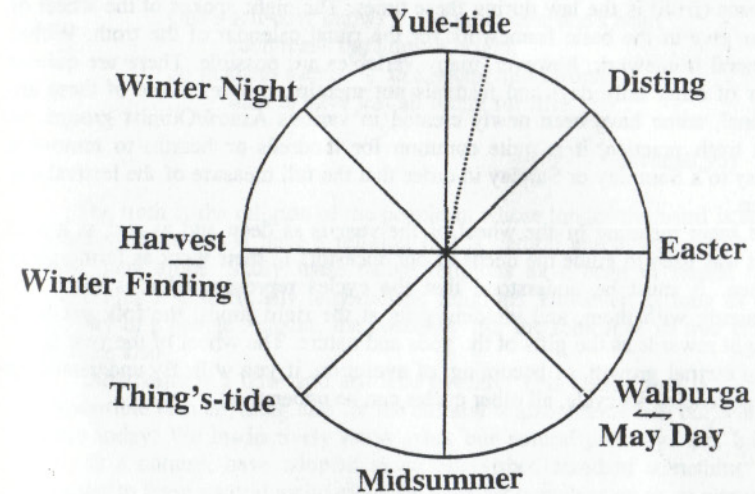


Fig. 9.3: The Eightfold Division of the Year

The Germanic peoples divide the heavens into eight parts or directions. The year is thus divided by the holy days, and is further subdivided by the months, to moons. In ancient times every tribe seems to have had a slightly different way of doing this and to have had various names for the months as well. The ritual timing for the working of the blessings and festivals of the troth are further outlined in Part Two of this book.

What is essential to realize here is that the year represents a cycle, an ever turning wheel of time. In this wheel all great things return. But it takes the right deeds of mankind working together with the holy works of the gods and goddesses all in harmony with nature to ensure the continuance of the right order of the

world. Again we see the need for the harmonious workings of men, gods and nature.

As we go around the wheel of the year we make holy space in time for communion with the gods. Each stead in time has its special task. When in these holy spaces in time, the true man or woman is in a holy state of being. This is why peace (frith) is the law during these times. The eight spokes of the wheel of the year give us the basic framework for the ritual calendar of the troth. Within the general framework, however, many variables are possible. There are quite a number of other holy days and festivals not mentioned here. Some of these are traditional, some have been newly created in various Ásatrú/Odinist groups. In current troth practice, it is quite common for kindreds or hearths to remove a holy-day to a Saturday or Sunday in order that the full measure of the festival can be taken.

The inner meaning of the wheel of the year is as deep and as real as it was when it was used to guide the deeds of our ancestors in their work as farmers and herdsmen. It must be understood that the cycles represent what is right. By harmonizing with them, and yielding gifts at the right times, the folk get back their right rewards as the gifts of the gods and nature. The wheel of the year is the cycle of eternal growth, of becoming, of evolution, if you will. By understanding and experiencing its cycle, all other cycles can be understood.

Chapter 10 THE FOLK

One's self only knows what is near one's heart
each reads but himself aright;
no sickness seems to a sound mind worse
than to have lost all liking for life.

(Hávamál 95)

The troth is the religion of the people in whose tongue the word is spoken. All peoples of the world have a religion that is natural and at home with them and with them alone. Sadly these native religions have been in retreat before the monolithic and spiritually imperialistic religions. However, as long as the ethnic identity of a people remains, the possibility for the rebirth of its true ethical ways remains also.

Christianity is a false and artificial overlay. This central fact is perhaps more responsible than anything else for the cultural schizophrenia that our world suffers from today. We instinctively know what our natural pathways are, but because we, as a culture, have adopted as an established standard something that runs counter to these natural inclinations we have set ourselves up in an eternal conflict with ourselves.

The troth simply says: "Come back to the troth of thy forebears." In the troth the true man or woman is simply going back to a way that worked for his or her folk for thousands of years before the advent of the artificial overlay of Christianity. The troth does not ask someone to get into something that has not already been proven over eons. It is not some exotic and foreign cult (such as Christianity is/was) that has never been practiced in this culture. In many ways the return to the troth is a return to one's own heart. The essence of this return is the rejection of exotic forms of thinking, and the re-establishment of our own true ways.

The troth is our folk-religion. This means that it is the religion that is particular to this folk, to this ethnic group. We seek first and foremost to delve deeply into the long neglected pathways of our ancestors, to learn their lore, and to follow their examples. Again doing that which has been done before is a deep level truth to our folk — it is the very root of our code of laws even today. That

which is right is that which has been done before. In returning to its principles on a religious basis a person would only be doing what is truly right and lawful.

The great psychologist Carl Jung, in an essay entitled "Wotan," crafted an effective metaphor in reference to the mysterious way in which the old gods of our people remain, and can again become active in our world:

Archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which it can find again at any time. An archetype is like an old water-course along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flowed in this channel the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its own bed.

This truly says what needs to be said about how the gods and goddesses of our ancestors have always been with us, and how easily they can return if we will but quicken them. They are like a sort of secret code in the very fiber of our being—other folk carry other codes which are right for them. Our code, simply and for no other reason than it is *ours*, is right for us. In some ways following the troth can be said to be taking the "path of least resistance" in religion because in the troth true folk are following along already established internal patterns, whereas in following unnatural, unprepared pathways, the follower has to dig his own way with little to guide him but the dogma of external sources.

In the simplest terms, the troth teaches those who would be true to hold dear that which is near— to seek the holy in that which is close at hand. We must be wise enough to see that that which we have been told is "our heritage" is often nothing but a middle eastern death cult which has insinuated itself within our culture. First these blinders must be removed. Then, and only then, will that which is truly near and therefore dear to your heart be shown.

One's home is best though a hut it be:
there a man is master and lord;
his heart doth bleed who has to beg
the meat for his meal.

(Hávamál 37)

Chapter 11 THE GODS AND GODDESSES

Then Gangleri asked: "Who are the gods men ought to trust in?"

High-One replied: "The divine gods are twelve in number."

Just-as-High added: "The goddesses are no less holy and no less mighty."

(*Gylfaginning* Chapter. 20)

The subject of the gods and goddesses is difficult, actually impossible, to address in a purely "logical" manner. This is because the divinities, as personal manifestations, invite deep personal relationships with true men and women. Each of these relationships is unique, and no general, universally correct statements can be made on the gods and goddesses at this living level. What can be said is that the gods and goddesses are REAL, there are many of them, they are ordered in a sort of divine society, and that they are as dependent on us for their continuing existence as we are for our being.

What are the gods and goddesses? To this question there can be many answers. Much depends on the level of understanding any one true man or woman has at any one time. REAL gods, like REAL people, are not one-dimensional easily defined, pigeonholed entities. Some understand the gods as pure mental or psychological constructs, some as true living beings, and others as forces of nature. The troth does not put limits on types of understandings that true folk come to on this. To *be true* one must only trust in the gods and goddesses and be sure that they are honored in an evenhanded way— each according to his or her dignity in the ordering of the divinities. Individuals will have their favorite gods and goddesses who are often worshipped together.

The idea of having many gods and goddesses may seem "primitive" to some. But really it is "post-modern" (and actually timeless). Today, in our post-Christian world, we are already and quite naturally falling back on our old system of many gods. In a so-called pluralistic society we allow for many life-styles, value systems, and so forth. For each of these there is very often and quite naturally an icon or symbol of some kind which serves as a focus for that value system. In real terms that is a sign of the god or goddess behind that value system. The various gods and goddesses are to some extent living centers of deep seated values— within individuals and within the whole culture. Only one example of this will

suffice to show what is meant here. It is not by accident that we call our iconic female sex symbols "goddesses"—for through them is manifested the power of the Lady Freya. Her living form is used to sell everything from automobiles (another divine icon = the horse) to toothpaste. If you need proof of the true existence of the gods and goddesses, look around with open eyes and they will overwhelm you with their presence.

In the elder wisdom, it was known that that which made men and women human was a set of divine gifts given by the gods at the birth of humanity ("Völuspá" 17-18). Through and within these gifts we know the gods directly—for it is that which we share with them. The gods and goddesses are therefore seen as divine ancestors. We are, in one way or another, descended from them body and soul. This is also the real reason why, no matter what we do, we cannot really "break with the gods." Ours is not a "contractual" relationship—it is one of blood. So long as we exist, the gods and goddesses exist.

The names and characters of the many gods and goddesses are manifold. At a certain level different tribal groups had different gods and goddesses, or gave the ones they had in common differing levels of honor. Each true man and woman was charged with the personal exploration of the gods and goddesses—their lore must be learned and they must again be honored by those who would be true to them. Each individual true man and woman must find, for him- or herself, the god or goddess (or combination of them in some number) who is right for that individual. It is not necessarily customary for sons and daughters to follow the religious orientation of their fathers and mothers. This is because within the realm of the troth itself the varieties of religious experience are infinite.

There are two main classes or families of the gods: the Ases and the Wanés. Their powers intermingle on many levels, since although they are distinct from one another on one level, on another level the Ases have taken in the Wanés to form one vast realm of the gods with two poles of power. In the Ases are centered the powers of consciousness and force under the control of consciousness, while in the Wanés are centered the organic powers of nature. The intermingling of these two poles defines the character of the human experience; and how they effectively and rightly intermingle and relate to the human experience is the essence of the troth.

Of all the gods of the Germanic peoples it must be said that Woden is the highest and most mighty. His might and main is that of the soul and mind. He is the giver of the spiritual gifts that allow us to know and understand ourselves and the world—and this is the root of his supremacy. It is mainly for this reason that he is called the All-Father. He is the god of the runes (mysteries), ecstasy, poetry, magic, death, and a hundred other things besides. His names number in the

hundreds also, for all that we can name has something of Woden in it. To approach Woden it takes a brave—and perhaps foolhardy—soul. This is because he is as fickle and as mysterious as the workings of our own minds. Woden is the ultimate god of the sovereign power of kings and priests—that which is the power to bring all things, no matter how diverse they seem, together in a meaningful way. But in ancient times, although his primacy was acknowledged, he was not a popular god. Only those who were chosen followed him—usually to apparent disaster.

Also high and mighty is the god Tiw. He is the god of the rational mind, and rules over our abilities to reason and to come to good judgments. It is his power that is behind the ordering of the rational laws of the cosmos and of human society. Tiw is the god of true law and order. This is also a quality much valued among the sovereign powers. Tiw can only judge that which is right and give his favor to that, but our innate trust in our rightness leads us to call on him for victory. In doing so we make as much a statement of trust in our own selves as we do in Tiw himself. Tiw is also the spirit of giving of the individual self to serve the interest of the whole. This also set Tiw apart from the masses. His path is a demanding, and sometimes thankless, one.

Among the goddesses the greatest is said to be Frigga. She is the queen of the goddesses and seems to hold them all together in an orderly fashion. She is no simple goddess of fertility, as some might try to make her. Her power holds the social fabric together and she sees to domestic order—within the realms of the gods as well as in Midgard.

Thunar is the ancient war-god, although he is not necessarily the main god among all warriors themselves. He eternally holds this position among the gods themselves. It is he who is their chief defender—with his mighty hammer Mjólnir he defends the order of Asgard and Midgard. He is steadfast and true and can be relied on above all other gods. His chief power is that of physical strength. He embodies all the raw physical power in the world—in the service of the gods and humanity.

Among the Wanés (Vanir) the goddess Freya is foremost. Her name means simply "the Lady." She is said to be equal in power with Frigga, but they are very different in character. In Freya are embodied the powers of magic, sexual love, cyclical development, and war. She knows the form of magic called seið—which she is said to have taught to Woden. Freya is the mistress of eroticism, which goes beyond "fertility," and into the realm of the power of sexuality itself. Her power in the area of fertility comes from the fact that she rules over the process of things coming into being, growing, and passing away to a new arising. This is the turn of the year that leads to wealth and well being. In this she works in tandem with her

twin brother, Frey. As half of the warriors slain in battle go to Valhalla to be in Woden's army, the other half go to Freya, to be with her in Folkwang. Among the Wanæs, Freya brings all things together in a sort of hidden realm, much as Woden does among the Ases.

Freya has a twin brother, Frey, whose name means "the Lord." As Freya is involved with hidden workings among the Wanæs, Frey, along with his father/mother Njord, rules over the outer forms. He embodies the manifest powers of wealth, well-being, peace, and pleasure. He is the chief ruler of these things in the world itself. Therefore he is called the God, or Lord, of This-World, so it is easy to see why he and his sister Freya were probably the most popular divinities in the north for the bulk of the people. Among the Wanæs, Frey is a reflection of the kingly power embodied in Tiw and Woden among the Ases.

It is most typical for individual true men and women to explore the tales and myths of the gods and goddesses, to meditate on them, and to begin to develop deep inner connections with one or several of the divinities. In nights of yore, of course, this was probably something done in childhood, as the tales of the gods and goddesses would have been well known to all. In our present world, however, this learning must be an act of will.

From these brief descriptions it can be seen that the gods and goddesses of the troth form a profound "community of power" that is quite intricately interwoven. There are threads running through and among the god and goddesses that show how they are related to one another and how they work together.

There are two main classes or families of the gods. The Ases and the Wanæs. Their power intermingles on many levels, since although they are distinct from one another on one level, on another level the Ases have taken in the Wanæs, and they form one vast realm of the gods with two poles of power. In the Ases are centered the powers of consciousness and forces under the control of consciousness, while in the Wanæs are centered the organic powers of nature. The intermingling of these two poles defines the nature of the human experience, how they effectively and rightly intermingle and relate to the human experience is the essence of the troth.

The gods and goddesses of our ancestors, whatever they were, still dwell within us. They live as long as we live. They can be put to sleep, they can be silenced, but they cannot be killed unless the thread or organic being stretching from generation to generation that they set into motion—the life of the folk itself—is ended. The work of the troth is the reawakening of the slumbering of the gods and goddesses. That they have been stirred already has already been shown by some unfortunate events during the 20th century. As unpleasant and ineffective as those events proved to be, they are still signs of a fully living divine

power. No other "revivalist" movement can claim anything close to these signs of vitality.

We in the troth must now nurture the already manifest vitality. This is done through the working of blessings, the giving of gifts on a regular basis, and most importantly the development of our own minds and hearts to be able to hear and understand rightly the words and ways of the gods and goddesses as they begin to become real within us. The horn of the self must be made strong so that when the power of the gods flows into it, it will not burst asunder. With each blessing rightly done, with each gift rightly given, we grow ever stronger.

Chapter 12 THE LADDER OF BEING

That we have many gods and goddesses is shown by the fact that we have many kinds of men and women. But are they all the same or are they in some ways different one from the other? Of course the answer is that they are different. So there are indeed several kinds of gods and several kinds of men, one corresponding to the other. Each of these kinds, being different in some essential way, has its own special interest to pursue. In order that they all might work together toward the common good, and in order that they all might ensure that their own special purposes be achieved, the gods work in a harmonious relationship that is essential to their very being and survival. The relationship is simply based on the ancient concept of arranging the differing kinds (or qualities) of the gods in a threefold hierarchy. This system of classification is as old as our language. It is the high-higher-highest, the good-better-best of all things.

The gods are arranged in this way and so is the folk. If knowledge is to be gained, if victories are to be won, if grains are to be sown, grown and harvested, a vast— even cosmic level— teamwork must be brought into play. The various levels and special workings of the gods and goddesses is fairly plain for all to see, and as we hold that the world of men is a shining reflection of the world of the gods and goddesses, it is part of the work of the troth again to awaken this deep level sense of the special and differing tasks of men and women in this world. Today our world suffers under the curse of same-ness: everything is everything, so nothing is anything. Everybody is somebody, so nobody is anybody.

The divinities of the troth are essentially divided into three groups derived from three great root qualities: sovereignty, force, and generation. Sovereignty is the power of knowing what is right and true and being able to effectively set these things into motion to achieve these aims. Force is the physical power to enforce these aims, and to defend the whole from destruction by forces hostile to its aims. Generation is the power to provide for the essential sustenance of the whole— its continuing existence and its pleasure in existing. These qualities must be arranged in just this way: sovereignty must rule over force, and generation must serve the interests of the whole again under the direction of sovereignty. The king commands the warrior, and the farmer, or worker, provides for all. If this is put out of balance in any way, disaster will strike. If the warrior-spirit leads (as it did in Nazi Germany) it will lead to nothing but war and destruction. If the worker-spirit leads (as it did in the former Soviet Union) stagnation and rigidity will

follow. These are not “natural laws” as such; they are the laws of the divine orders, the laws of the gods ruling in the consciousness of humanity. These laws were imparted to humanity with the threefold gift of Woden-Wili-We (see *Prose Edda* Chapter 9) and with the generation of the kinds of humanity by Woden, or Rig (see “Rigsthula” in the *Poetic Edda*).

In the troth the gods Tiw and Woden are the gods of the sovereign powers of consciousness, Thunar is the god of physical force, while the Wanæs, and especially Freya and Frey, are the divinities of generation.

Within society these forces must be developed, enhanced, and recognized for their true values and for how they relate to one another in a healthy world. But these same forces and how they are arrayed are also to be recognized within each individual man and woman. Each of us is to contain some of the sovereign-magician, some of the warrior, and some of the earthy farmer in us. Each is balanced in a way that places him or her in one or the other of these camps. Here is where the guidance of the gods and goddesses is vital.

In getting back in touch with these traditional and timeless values the true man or woman will not only be bringing him or herself back to a healthy and complete way of being, but will, in their own vital ways, be helping to bring the whole world back into balance with its own framework. This framework has been badly damaged by the centuries of Christianization which has sought to rob humanity of its sense of spiritual sovereignty, physical power, and lust for living. These are the things which Christianity demanded that we forswear. In retaking them in a systematic way we most thoroughly defeat the White-Christ on the battlefield of the human heart.

Chapter 13 THE TRUTH OF THE GODS

The gods and goddesses are real and their tales are true. The gods exist in a realm beyond individual human beings or groups of them. Our deeds can awaken them or send them to sleep, but they exist as long as we exist. The gods and their tales, or myths, are eternally true. They are just as true today as they were a thousand or two thousand years ago. As living beings the gods and goddesses too undergo some change, some growth, although it is very slow by our measurements. More commonly it is our understanding of them that changes, and so we need a steady kind of thought to hold onto their truths.

When a people begin to lose trust in their gods it is quite typical for them to shift their understanding of them to a lower plain of existence. This was done in the ancient Greek and Roman religions when certain thinkers began to spread the doctrine that the gods had really been extraordinary men of the dim past who had either by their greatness or by their trickery convinced the people that they were gods, or that in time the historical understanding of them caused them to be promoted to celestial stations. This may seem somewhat convincing to some at this time. This is because it perhaps seems more "rational," or it may be more attractive because the religion now passing away, Christianity, puts so much emphasis on the existence of their god, Jesus, in human form. In any event, the belief that, for example, Woden was chieftain-shaman of the dim past who led his tribe of Ases out of Asia and conquered the north, establishing himself as king and eventually was promoted to godhood is very destructive to the living essence of the truth.

First it must be known that such myths were originally generated in the Classical world as faith in their own gods was waning—a bad sign to begin with. Then it must be realized that Christian monks took up this theme as a form of anti-pagan propaganda. The propagandistic line went something like: the old gods were evil human tricksters working against the people, and the White-Christ came to save them from this trickery. In one fell swoop the true gods were demonized, reduced in rank (to human), and made to be isolated historical figures that could be written off as dead and gone. Of course, their plot only partially worked.

Some would like to claim that the gods and goddesses were both divinities *and* individual historical humans. There are two problems with this, first the gods *were* not, they *are*. To relegate the gods simply to the past is to put them in a half-dead condition in our minds. The second problem is the uniqueness. If Woden was this

prehistoric king then he, or some essential aspect of him, becomes isolated, trapped in a historical snare. Once a god has become a man, and that man dies, the relevance of that god eventually recedes into obscurity. The god becomes a prisoner of its unique manifestation. Witness the history of what happened in the case of the White-Christ.

As a matter of fact, the gods and goddesses can often, if temporarily, become human. They can manifest in individual humans who are especially devoted to them, or who have certain techniques to become whole with the god for a specific purpose. But these are only partial phenomena, and the continuance of this is also dependent on realizing the timeless living nature of the gods and goddesses. For if the god is dead, how can it manifest in a follower?

What could possibly be gained by believing that the gods were once human? Nothing: for they would be dead. "Of what gain is a good man dead?" asks the *Edda* (Hávamál 71). It is most wise to know that the gods and goddesses are timeless living beings—as alive today as they were yesterday.

Chapter 14 THE EARTH AND THE WORLD

The most virulent and vicious propaganda that has been spread about the true character of our old heathenry is that it was a simple form of "nature worship." One look with an open eye at the mythology and the tales of our gods and goddesses will show that nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact it is Christianity which is nothing but a *disguised* form of simple nature worship. Their charge of "nature worship" is merely their own fears concerning their actual natures being projected on us. Unfortunately, the doctrines of materialistic scientism which followed those of Christianity in the recent past continued in this direction. Many early scholars of mythology, following an evolutionary model, held that early man worshipped nature, then came "religion" (that is Christianity), and finally science has come to save humanity from its various superstitions. But really the materialistic rationalists were deluding themselves in the same way that Christians had earlier. These are the actual "nature worshippers!" Nature has but one law, the Christian god has but one law, "science" seeks to have but one law. The true spirit has manifold laws and ways in the troth, both in nights of yore and now.

Nature is greatly revered and loved by those in the troth, but it is loved for what it is and what it gives us, not for something that it is not. There was nature before there were gods and goddesses, there was nature before there were men and women. The gods of primeval consciousness, Woden, Willi, and We rebelled against the natural order, killed Ymir, and fashioned a new order of the cosmos based on their apprehension of a higher order of being. Forces of nature— etins, rises, and thurses— hostile to this consciousness based order are trying, like the unthinking forces of nature that they are, to erode the divinely wrought strongholds of the spirit forged in Asgard and Midgard.

In Midgard itself, the *organic* vehicle of human life (symbolically shown to be *trees* in the mythology) existed before the gods of consciousness imparted their gifts making humanity a spiritual center akin to the gods themselves. In all of this we see the point repeated that there is an organic, natural existence that is separate from the spiritual existence of the gods. The gods and goddesses need nature to fulfill their aims of expanding the empire of consciousness as widely and as deeply as possible— but the relationship of the gods, and hence of mankind, to nature is somewhat ambivalent. On one hand nature is a useful partner in attaining some aims, it is also the source of endless pleasure and is in many ways the

proving-ground for the gods— Midgard is the mirror of Asgard. The ultimate human pleasure is the holy harmony of body and soul, and this is only possible in the realm of Midgard. Through Midgard, and only through Midgard, can the gods truly fulfill themselves. But forms of nature unallied with the gods pose the greatest threat to the noble aims of the divinities. All humans can directly feel this ambivalence toward nature in their own lives and experience.

The good and beneficial aspects of nature are reflected in the troth in the form of the good earth, Midgard, and the wise and good etins, who have made alliances with the Ases and Wanes. But regardless of our alliance, the distinction remains between the Earth and the World. The Earth can be worshipped (as can many of the etins) as a beneficial manifestation of Nature— this is a legitimate expression within the troth as well. But the contrast between the Earth and the World is a stark one. The word "world" is really a combination of the words "wer(e)," which means "man" (as in "were-wolf"), and "old," which is an ancient noun for "age," or "aeon." So the "were-old," the age of man, is really a term for the spiritual existence and experience of humanity, when contrasted with the physical or natural existence of the Earth. It is in the world that the gods exist, it is in the world that humanity truly exists also— at least that part of humanity that differentiates it from the animals and allies it with the gods. The Earth, as such, is seen as the most beautiful expression of Midgard, and this Earth is seen as almost purely good— the vast amount of ill that is in it is the result of intrusions from Outgard.

So it can be seen that the work of the troth is the work of the growth of the ways of the gods and goddesses, which are something quite different and apart from the "natural laws." If anything is worshipped in the troth it is the ways of the gods and goddesses. These usually work in harmony and in tandem with the laws of nature, especially in the realm of the Wanes, but among the Ases, and especially with the god Woden, these ways may often seem very strange and non-natural indeed. The troth teaches the true rightness of the full spectrum of possibilities— and in doing continues the work of the divine rebellion.

Chapter 15 IN THE NIGHTS OF YORE

Time is not what most of us have been taught that it is supposed to be. The Judeo-Christian religious notion of the linear, historical nature of time — that a god created a world out of nothing, that is undergoing a linear progression (according to his “plan”), and will eventually end — has intruded on our own mythic senses from one side. At the same time the present capitalistic, some might call it “Protestant,” work ethic has led us to a similar perception of our own lives, and our day-in, day-out existence. The model of time that a people has, or the model of time hoisted on them by others, has a “magical” effect. If you change the way that you perceive time, both big and small, you change the way you see the world— or “wer-old.” The Christians hit upon this— perhaps unthinkingly— for it was their mission to cut off the folk from its past, and to hurl the folk into a “future” of their making.

Time is not really a straight line. In fact, it cannot be reduced to any one way of thinking about it. Time can be, and is constantly, subject to the moldings and reshapings of our minds. We experience this every day; as things bore us, time seems to drag; when we are enjoying ourselves time flies.

In the troth time is molded in many ways. In Chapter 9 we saw how the year is shaped according to the cycles of nature. Cyclical time is important to the workings of the powers of generation and regeneration. Time eternally returns to itself. What is done in those holy points of return is a matter in the hands of the true. If right blessings are done, if the right gifts are given, the cycles of eternal return hold or seek the best level of being, and well-being.

The timeless ring of tides is not the only way of working with time. Our very tongue shows us the ancient Germanic time conception was one that admitted only to the independent reality of only two “times”— the Past and the Present (or non-past)— the “then” and “now.” This is shown by the fact that we only have a real present tense “I am” and a past tense “I was.” If we want to form the future we have to bring in a “helping” verb (also in the present)— “I will be.” This is not theoretical claptrap, but clear and everyday reality. It, just like the fact that we constantly invoke the gods and goddesses of our folk in the weekday names, is just hidden by the very FAMILIARITY of the thing.

In this understanding of time there is a Past, which is known and REAL. In it are the eternally true myths and old saws of the folk— as well as the precedents of law, and other matters of eternally true lore. The great Then is a vast field of

meaning and being, complex and deep. The now is the thin edge of a sword blade— always now and unendingly narrow— the force and weight behind it is the great Then as it cuts through the even sea of the unknown stretching out before us. This is really a more *realistic* view of time and human experience. It is also one that gives us hope and meaning based on our eternally true past into which we enter at the tides of blessing and there feed on the truth of the nights of yore. The workings of the blessings and the symbles, of the hearing and the telling of the tales of our gods and heroes, all work to ensure the right kind of “future”— to make it less fluid. If we always link ourselves to the greatest deeds and doings of our gods and goddesses, of our heroic ancestors, we will become more and more like them, and thereby be able to meet whatever is coming in the best possible way.

Now we could ask ourselves, what is the nature of this “Then” in the past/non-past model? Clearly, it is not the “past” as understood by the Judeo-Christian (or Marxist) linear scheme. In that scheme the past is seen as an objective string of isolated events, lives, and actions, which only find their reality as they are directed from the outside by a monotheistic plan, historical dialectic, and so on. That is, there is thought to be *real history* which is seen as an unfolding (not a true evolution) of a preconceived pattern moving from one static point in time to another.

Time is always subject to our manipulations. This is true of the present; it is twice as true of the past. We all do both of these in an unthinking manner— we remember what we *want* to remember. So the Then is not really a collection of random isolated actions, but rather it is an inner mental pattern which has been shaped by the soul. Individuals remember past events only in accordance with their preexisting mental patterns, and so it is with whole cultures. Only recently has the academic discipline of history come to the realization that its picture is a result of a complex of refinements, reductions, interpretations, willful distortions, and reshaping of any meager “facts” which might have been at the historians’ disposal. Thus, knowledge about what *really happened*— even for the most “recent” past— is hardly obtainable.

So what are we left with?— only everything that is important, relevant, and absolutely necessary. We see that with the true pattern of time, the great Then takes on a special higher shaping function which serves to ensure a continuing dynamic evolution— an unending growth through the cycles of existence. Stasis, or standing still, is not its aim, but rather dynamism— fluctuating movement. Flux, movement, is the surest sign of life— flux is life, stability is death.

“Pastness” is the stuff of our myths and legends. It is that which is always worth remembering, because it is always true. The words of the Edda are no less

meaningful today then they were a thousand years ago. The myths are really not quaint anecdotes from the past, but rather eternally true IDEALS— which we are striving to impose (by force of will) upon the “future.” This is done in the working of the blessings and symbles. In the symbel, for example, the participants gather, arrange themselves in a certain order symbolic of their orderings within the society present, and drink an intoxicating brew while reciting oaths, boasts— and most especially mythic deeds of the gods and ancestors. When the gathered folk enter into this rite, they symbolically enter into the great Then (inhabited by the gods and heroes). They harmonize with, and then begin to assimilate, the very being of the great Then. At the conclusion of the symbel, the gathered folk return to the ordinary world of the Now— but they are changed, somehow strengthened by their contact with the holy world of the gods. Armed with what they have brought back from the great Then they are ready to sail forth across the great sea of the unknown.

Chapter 16 THE EDGE OF THE SWORD

To the outsider what is done in the troth may very often seem like a sort of “worshipping of the past.” This is accurate only in so far as the true meaning of the previous chapter has been understood. Peoples who are in close contact with what is *essentially* and *eternally* true about themselves are actually those who are more able not only to cope with the ever-changing, ever-challenging, onrush of the great unknown sea of the future— but are those most likely to be able to *master* it. Again we could invoke the modern example of the Japanese, who have in the past hundred years or so gone from a feudal state to an ultramodern/high-tech society— without giving up their eternal folk-values. In fact, it is those values which has enabled them to do so.

The traditional USE of the great idealized Then is in the maximally effective “conquest” of the great hypothetical sea of the future. The sword’s edge is always turned forward. So, paradoxically perhaps, in ritually focusing periodically on the Then, we are actually enabling ourselves to most powerfully focus on our being in the ever present Now— and thus we are able to shape that which is to come. Some segments of the neo-Germanic movement seem sometimes to be running from the present, and trying to take some sort of refuge in the past. This is an essential betrayal of the spirit of the forebears— the great Then is there to strengthen our hands and sharpen our blades to be here in the Now and to enable us to go forward with good speed. Those who fear the present, those who quake before the sea of the great unknown, those who seek to flee into the past to find comfort there, do so because they are out of touch with the truths bound up in the nights of yore. Those whose hearts have been strengthened by the truth of the elder lore will be known by their deeds. They, like the forebears, will not fear that which is coming, but will have the inner weapons to win the day— and sail on into the night.

Chapter 17 THE SOUL

Athem they had not, being nor bearing, athem gave Woden, being, Loðurr,	wode they had not, nor blooming hue; Hænrir gave wode and blooming hue.
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(Völuspá 18)

In the middle of everything is the human soul. It is that by which we gauge the world and the earth and see them for ourselves. No other area of knowledge has been so wracked by the ravages of the forces of the White-Christ than has been our own native “psychology”— or simply put—“teachings about the soul.” If a people knows something well, and in intimate detail, its language will usually have many words for that thing in all its nuances and variations. It is sometimes said that the Eskimos have so many words for snow, and for the color white because they know these things so well and are used to making fine distinctions among and between the various kinds of these things. In ancient times the Germanic peoples had a bewildering number of names for the “soul,” “spirit,” “mind,” and so forth. This is telling in two ways. First, that they had many shows an intimate knowledge of the thing— and second they used these terms in a finely “technical” way without referring to a dogma or psychological school of any kind. It was a deep understanding implicit in the very language.

To recover the lost understandings of the Germanic soul and its workings would be the single greatest key to once and for all requickening the withered roots of the troth. It is probably no accident that serious work in the investigation of the nature of the human soul— divorced from the superstitious dogmas of the Christians— and the revival of the knowledge of the god of the soul, Woden, began at the same time. Despite the many wrong turns and dead-ends the often misguided investigators have made— there has been progress. Perhaps no other school of modern psychological teaching has been more beneficial than that found by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung.

But what we present here is an attempt to recover the old traditional lore of the soul as it was understood by our ancestors. Here we will also reconstruct, for modern use, a practical native terminology for talking about the “souls.” The first step in doing so is the realization that there is not one “soul,” but many, and that

there is no one word— other than perhaps “self” that encompasses all aspects of the many “souls.” The self stands at the center of the souls and can be the stead where all are held together. This is not, however, a natural phenomena, but rather something for which a man or a woman must work. Also, it must be realized that the strong body-soul split so heavily emphasized in Christianity is missing in true soul-lore. We would rather talk of a body-soul-mind complex for a more complete understanding not only of what the parts are, but also how they relate to one another.

This figure 17.1 sums up much of the image of the human soul in the traditional sense, although it is not exhaustive. In explaining this diagram, we will start with the center, with the most familiar, and work our way out.

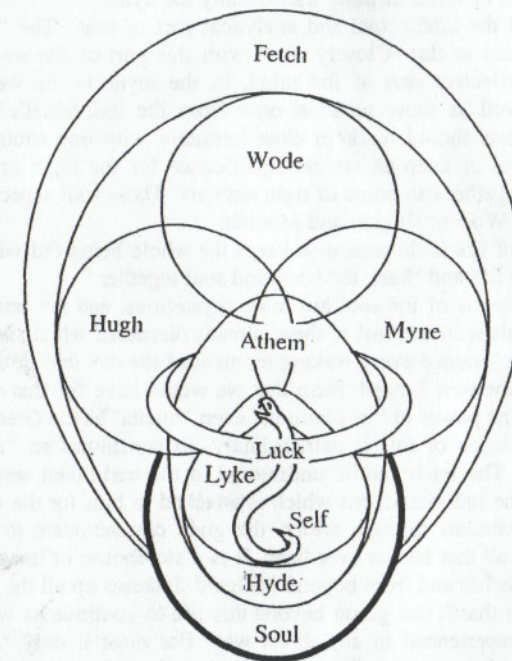


Figure 17.1: The Diagram of the Soul

In the very middle we see the self. It is, in its own way, among the most mysterious aspects, and the least familiar to the everyday experience of many because it is deep within— behind the eye of our soul, as it were. It grows and becomes strong as it is fed by true deeds and profound inner experience.

The lyke (or lich) is the "body." This is the physical vehicle with which most parts of the soul are fused. It is the doorway through which experience is gained and that which allows our wills to have effect. It is not, as others would have you think, an enemy of the spirit, but is indeed its best friend in the whole scheme. For it allows man to exist in Midgard— his true home and the stead where he is best suited to do his work. Behind the body is a sort of mysterious plasmic quasi-material usually having the rough shape of the body itself. This can be called simply the shape or form, or more traditionally the hyde.

The hugh is the intellectual and analytical part of man. The "mind" and the will are embodied in this. Closely allied with this part of the soul is the myne, which is the reflective part of the mind. In the myne is the well of ancestral memories, as well as those personal ones from the individual's own life-time. These two aspects should work in close harmony with one another. The myne provides material of deep eternal significance for the hugh to work on, and both working together can come to right answers. These soul-aspects are reflected in the ravens of Woden: Huginn and Muninn.

The breath of life is the athem. It keeps the whole being fed with the energies that sustain it in life and "keep the body and soul together."

The other aspects of the soul are more mysterious, and are not often directly experienced. This is in contrast to those already discussed which, at least on some low level, we experience every waking moment of the day and through dreams of sleep. Wode is the new English form that we would have for that essential aspect of Wo(o)d-en- the power of "inspiration," even "mania" as the Greeks would have called it. Experience of this is extraordinary—it constitutes an "altered state of consciousness." The fetch can be understood in the traditional sense as an entity separate from the individual, but which is attached to him for the duration of his life. It is the conduit through which the gods communicate to him, and the embodiment of all that he has ever been. It is a storehouse of images and powers from beyond this life and from beyond Midgard. It stores up all the experiences of this life in order that it can go on beyond this life to continue its work. The fetch is very rarely experienced in any direct way. For most it only "appears" when death is near— when a man is "fay." The fetch is that which is responsible for the common phenomena of one's life "passing before one's eyes" just before death, or the appearances of spectral female figures at that time. The fetch seen in the image of an entity possessing the gender opposite that of the person in question. This can

also have a guardian aspect, in which case it can be called the warden. Closely associated with the fetch is the luck of the person. In this is housed all of the echoes of all of the deeds ever done by the bodies to which the fetch has ever been bound. This will be discussed further in the next two chapters. The soul is, in the technical sense, the psychic body, or "shade," which embodies the self after the death of the lyke.

This knowledge about the traditional nature of the human being in all essential aspects coupled with an understanding of the teaching of rebirth and of wyrd bound up with it, can result in many of the transformative effects most true men and women desire in their lives. However, those who wish to delve deeper into these realms will have to take up the lore of the runes.

Chapter 18 REBIRTH

"Hinder her not helward to fare,
whence back never she be born again!"

(Short Lay of Sigurth 45)

Many modern commentators upon the ancient troth would have us believe that our forebears held extremely confused ideas concerning the destiny of the human soul after death. This was never the case! Although our true forefathers were never bound by a rigid dogma, they formulated a lore based on direct experience, astute observation of nature, and intuitive wisdom. The form of the lore which they developed was rather complex, but no more complex than the manifold world and the human soul reflected in it. This elegant complexity baffled the simple-minded monks, and even most nineteenth century scholars. It seemed to them that our heathen ancestors possessed a confused mass of mutually contradictory conceptions— it never occurred to them that all these ideas could have been held at the same time by minds firmly rooted in self knowledge and standing upright in Midgard.

The "soul" is made up of several entities, each with its own special work to do. (See Chapter 17.) Some may find it more convenient at this time to consider these aspects as "levels of consciousness," or as "states of being." Although aspects such as the hugh and the hyde are important for some matters having to do with the fate of the human soul after death, it is more the fetch which is important to the process of rebirth, or "reincarnation." The fetch can be passed from one person to another after death, just as luck can be passed in part or as a whole from one living person to another. It is the travels of this fetch-being that really outlines what we mean by traditional and true "reincarnation" or rebirth.

The various soul aspects are thought to have a variety of destinations after death. The hugh may go to Valhalla or to Hel or to some other godly abode. The hyde will remain with the lyke in the burial mound—or if the body is burned both will be destroyed, thus leaving the hugh and other aspects unbound. In ancient times it was thought that the hyde still connected to the lyke was responsible such phenomena as the "walking dead."

The fetch and luck, bound together, would, if nature were allowed to take her course, be reborn within the clan or tribe from generation to generation. The recently dead ancestors were thought to be actually reborn in the newly born

descendants. These diverse beliefs did not come into conflict with one another due to the special way in which the human soul and the world were understood. The multiplicity of souls and the variety of functions and destinations of all of these entities after death were concepts which were vigorously attacked by the forces of the White-Christ, and are therefore concepts which must be vigorously pursued and renewed by the true folk.

At this point it must be stressed that in ancient times it was not believed that the consciousness, with memories intact, was reincarnated, but only certain innate transpersonal powers and characteristics— and also certain obligations and weaknesses. Also, this is not the free-form, willy-nilly parlor-room version of "reincarnation" where souls go flying off to distant parts of the globe to be reborn as Chinese or Polynesians. Rebirth only comes about naturally through a direct contact between the one losing the fetch and the one gaining her. This contact maybe genetic, or it may be physical. A powerful act of will can also cause such a transference.

In the normal course of events the fetch departs the dying man and remains in Hel (the abode of the dead) until someone in the clan (that is, someone of close genetic relationship to the dead man) gives birth. The fetch then returns and begins to reattach itself to this newborn baby over the first nine nights of the baby's life. The naming rite in which the child is taken into the stream of life and into the family tradition is the final phase of this reintegration. This may, if you will, be understood as a mythic or ritualized explanation of "genetics" but in the lore of the ancestors it was much more.

The name rightly given to a child is that of a recently dead (or long dead) ancestor. This name is chosen either because the ancestor appears to the mother, father, or elder in a dream during the time of pregnancy, or it is simply "known" what name should be given to the child. The child will then be held to BE the ancestor reborn into the family— that is the namesake is the bearer of the innate powers, abilities, and obligations of the forebear. But the newborn possesses a unique and original hugh and athem, thus there is an interweaving of the transpersonal blood-line and the singular individual, a perfect blend of the powers and obligations of the past and the hopes and responsibilities of what is to come, to go forth, and by deeds of honor add to the forces of luck and power in the family clan. Thus the whole of the clan and of the folk is seen to be made up of both the living and the dead. It may be viewed as a family tree, with the ancestral roots providing the continuing nourishment from the realm of the dead, and the branches giving unending energy from the realm of the living.

This whole body of lore probably goes back into Indo-European times. Actually, similar beliefs are known to be held by the Greeks, Celts, and Thracians.

The Vedic Indian form of "reincarnation" was also originally identical to the one outlined here. Only later did it degenerate into a "moral system."

The true man and woman desires rebirth in Midgard above all things. Because this is the realm most right for us, this is the true realm where our work is to be wrought. For many, who cannot go on, and who become weary of the soul, the eternal rest of Hel will come, while for others who are called to a higher duty, the halls of Woden beckon. But for many of the noble and true souls of Midgard rebirth in human flesh in this our world is the highest good. The Eddic quote at the beginning of the chapter is a curse formula spoken over Brynhild by Högni, who is wishing her ill by wishing that she not be reborn in this world.

It should be fairly clear that this form of belief is far and away better than the "otherworldliness" of Christianity— which is certainly based on a manipulative propaganda ploy. This is the metaphysic that makes what was said in chapter 10 complete and whole. It is practical and rather "hardheaded" as such religious doctrines go— but it has the intuitive ring of authenticity that is spellbinding. This process goes on whether we believe in it or not. It can be traced and investigated through history and folklore. But as a practical system for the understanding and transformation of the individual and the world, it will work much better once its principles are again grasped and use is made of them.

In everyday practical religious work it can be seen why it is so important to name children in traditional ways and following the ritual given by our lore. By cutting off the child from its spiritual heritage, parents could be cutting it off from a whole set of powers and abilities as well.

Chapter 19 WYRD

It is many times said of the Germanic peoples that they were a "fatalistic" lot. Much is generally made of "fatalism" in religion— especially when it comes to the leading of a heroic life. Since we now stand in an age in which we need more heroes than ever, this becomes a very important point for the full understanding of the troth as it is to be lived today. There is, however, a great deal of misconception surrounding what is truly meant by the notion of "fate."

Usually when we hear the word "fate," which is of Latin not Germanic origin, we think of ideas such as predestination. That is, it is usually loaded with the idea that "fate" is something that a *transcendental* force (or god) has already predetermined will happen to a person or group of persons. But this is not the usual concept in the troth. Two words that indicate what "fate" really is to the Germanic mind are "wyrd" (usual modern spelling "weird") and "ordeal."

An or-deal was originally the result of action "dealt out" at some primeval stage. The "or-" prefix means essentially the "primordial, oldest or outermost" of the concept indicated by the stem-word to which it is prefixed. Thus "fate" is the result of actions which the person— or his fetch! — performed at some previous time. This is virtually identical to the Indian concept of karma— which also literally just means "action" (with the implication of reciprocal "re-action"). An Old Norse word containing the same concept is *ørlög*, which literally means "primal-layers or laws." This indicates that the actions "laid down" in the past will continue to affect phenomena in the days and nights to come. This whole concept explains the metaphysic behind the old Germanic practice of trial by ordeal— it was a magical manifestation of justice based on past action.

The word "wyrd" contains a similar quality. It is a noun developed from the Old English verb *weorþan*, "to become, or to turn." Thus wyrd is really that which has become (those "deals" already dealt out) which affect the present and that which is to come. The Old Norse form of this is *urðr*, which also gives us the name of the first Norn. When something happens that has the eerie quality of having its roots in the eldritch past— we properly call it "weird." (The word is, however, now misused to such an extent that it has lost most of its holy connotations.)

All of this really explains the metaphysic behind the whole Germanic system of law, best exemplified by English Common Law, based upon precedent (past

layers of action) which determine what actions should be taken in the present and future. This is in sharp contrast to the Judeo-Roman form of law based on the decree of a transcendental force— a god or a king. This latter situation is one in which we find ourselves more and more today.

So far it is obvious that the Germanic concept of "fate" (wyrd) is closely connected with the concepts of time and causality. That which has become (the past) conditions the present and thus, that which is to come. This, as so much else in the troth, is really a common sense approach to the matter. The mystery of the Three Norms (or "wyrd sisters") gives us further keys to the understanding of wyrd. The first two *condition*, but do not *determine* the third. These conditions are produced by the deeds of the person who receives the fruits of those deeds. The Norms are not casual agents, but rather the numinous organisms through which the energies of actions are received, transformed, and re-directed back to their source.

Within the body-mind complex of the individual (see chapter 17) this works through the fetch. This aspect of the soul is attached to an individual and receives the energies of the actions of the individual and of those performed in the environment of the individual— it formulates these actions into a form which can be recalculated back into the life of the individual. There they will eventually have their effect. This is a totally amoral process, and purely organic in structure. This fetch is (or can be) passed from one life to the next along family lines, or sometimes it is magically transferred free from clanic restrictions. In either case the accumulative past action (ordeal/wyrd) is passed from one life to another. It is clear that the old Germanic concept of "fate" is in no way similar to the Christian/Calvinist concept of predestination. The true men and women of the days of yore were at least able to know that they shaped their destinies as a result of their own past actions. It is, however, easy to see how the phenomena are misinterpreted as "fated" — and thus beyond our control — when the events conditioning these phenomena are lost in the dim past (personal or transpersonal).

The true man or woman may want to investigate his or her wyrd— and this can be done in three realms of past action, 1) personal, 2) clanic, and 3) transpersonal. The first is past action contained within the parameters of the present life-time, while the latter two may be roughly considered as "past lives," one genealogically determined and the other from outside the clan. The first can be investigated through a personal retrospective of past deeds and events in one's life. The clanic realm is investigated through genealogical history, which in older times was considered an important source of spiritual knowledge. The knowledge of the transpersonal is drawn from the great storehouse of cosmic memories housed in the myne (or as the Jungians would call it, the "collective

unconscious"). Contacts gained through connection with this aspect of the soul should not be understood as a "reincarnation" of the individuality. Knowledge from this realm may be gained through reflective techniques. This reflection is best undertaken under self-guidance, or with the help of trusted and true friends, as variations on this technique are rampant among storefront occultists, and is often dressed up in the most shoddy, trite, and madcap cosmologies.

The concepts of wyrd and ordeal play a central role in the religious world-view within the troth. One of the greatest messages of the troth to the individual is that he or she should "find destiny and follow it." There is a personal task and ordeal for all who would be true. The work of finding it is the work of finding the personal wyrd. This must, however, be approached in the old way of the north, free from Judeo-Christian notions of predestination and transcendental fatalism. The true man or woman is not manipulated by "fate," but is rather responsible for his or her own ordeal!

Chapter 20 HOLY TOKENS

Like in all religions, the troth is rich in holy signs and symbols. In fact, many of the sacred symbols of Christianity were in some measure taken from the older traditions of the troth and our kindred faiths in the Indo-European stream. In the second part of this book you will see described many tokens (signs) of holy meaning, some as gestures (such as the "hammer-sign"), others as natural objects (such as the horn, harrow, and so forth). They will be described each in their place.

What we want to turn our minds to here are the holy signs that may seem mysterious, such as the knot of the slain, or carry historical misconceptions, such as the sun-wheel or Thunar's hammer. These should be explained so that the individual true man or woman will be able to use and interpret the various signs and symbols held to be holy by the troth.

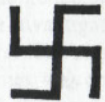


The knot of the slain (Old Norse: *valknútr*) has several variant forms. Generally it appears to be three triangles linked together ($3 \times 3 = 9$), or three interlocked drinking horns. The knot of the slain is the official sign of the Rune-Gild and the way of Woden. It symbolizes the power of Woden to bind and unbind the soul.



The hammer of Thunar has many shapes and variations. At the time when Christianity was making strong headway in the north, it became the fashion for those true to their own gods to take the Hammers of Thunar, which many carried as concealed amulets, out of hiding to wear proudly as a sign of their troth.

The reappearance of the hammer in these times is a sign of the re-emergence of the troth. Therefore, all who are true should have and wear a hammer. The hammer of Thunar is that weapon with which he wards the realm of the gods and goddesses, and with which he pushes back the realm of the Thurses—making way for the light of the Ases and Wanæs.



The sun-wheel was, of course, used by the National Socialist movement in Germany, and has thus become attached to them in most people's minds. We cannot, however, allow historical events to determine what holy signs we can or cannot use. The sun-wheel was holy before the Nazis used it, and it continues to

be as holy today. Its symbolism is shared with the hammer of Thunar (which it is also sometimes called), but it goes beyond its meaning into the realm of general cosmic dynamism and eternal return. It is the sign of the eternal cycle, wielded for the good of the true.



The Irminsul is the sign of the axis of the world. It is a symbol of the northward orientation of our attention, as it is a symbol of the cosmic order, as defined by the god Tiw, of whose rune the Irminsul is also a sign.



Freya's heart is the sign of the blessings of the goddess Freya, and is the symbol of those given to her mysteries. This was only later "reinterpreted" as a "heart," as it is truly an iconic sign of the female mons and buttocks. This "reinterpretation" saved it from the same fate as much of the rest of the mysteries of Freya, so hated by the church.

These are only a few of the many tokens and signs held to be holy in the troth. All gods and goddesses have signs sacred to them. But above and beyond them all at this time is the Hammer of Thunar. It is the token most sacred at this point because it expresses our dynamic and energetic growth, as well as our determination to defend and expand our heritage.

Chapter 21 THE RIGHT WAYS

The troth teaches the Nine Noble Virtues and the Sixfold Goal as being the right ways to form the everyday deeds and doings of true men and women in Midgard. Our highest duties remain to the trust and togetherness with the gods and goddesses of the folk in which they live. These high tasks may seem somewhat vague and indefinite— but they are quickened and given shape by the Nine Noble Virtues and the Sixfold Goal.

In chapter two we saw how the troth may be approached from within the self, and how one can find the right roads to travel in seeking and finding the troth and what is true. The inner road is one every true man and woman must travel, and travel alone, to come to the truth of his or her own heart. The troth does, however, also have a general set of *ethical* guidelines to help steer the ship of the self on its right and true course. These guidelines are especially needful when looking at the possibilities of a true land in the years to come.

To have a true set of ethics, a clear set of goals or aims must be laid out. If someone is asked or even ordered to do something, he or she will want to know that that request is given to some greater end to which he or she also aspires. We can all see how demoralizing it is when, for example, soldiers are told to put their lives on the line for reasons not fully understood by those who order them to the front. When the aim of the mission is lost, the ship will soon lose its course, and the very fiber of the ship and its crew will become rotten. The first task of a set of ethics is to give a set of goals. The details of true ethics can then, for the most part, be derived from these aims. The day-in, day-out dedication to the principles of the Sixfold Goal is the greatest power available to true men and women in the restoration of our holy way. In the years to come, if we are to gain and grow, and be able to hold and harness that which we have built, a true set of ethics drawn from a set of high goals must be established.

The Sixfold Goal is something hidden deep within the folk. It was there in the days and nights of yore, and it remains in us today. With some parts of it we can only catch glimpses of it here and there, but with other parts we can see it shining constantly through everything we do as a culture. The burden is that the overlay of the foreign eastern cult of Christianity has obscured much, usurped and twisted some, and repressed the soul of the Goals. The piecemeal approach that has lain open to us for some centuries has been a slow one. Here we re-win part of our system of laws, there we re-win the freedom to buy and sell as we will, and over there we re-win some of our freedom to love as we will, while here we awaken to

a sense of the joy of conquest— but somehow the freedoms we are striving toward seem not to have the rewards we expected. The reason for this is that the soul of what we are striving after is missing. For that which holds it all together, a true set of goals, and a truly reborn world, has been missing. The missing key is that all of these deep-level urges are really parts of the greater whole, and that all parts of the whole must be seen and developed in order for any parts of it to be truly successful.

The Sixfold Goal is a deep level gift of the gods and goddesses. That is, it is a reflection of their qualities in us and in our world, or society. These are the true goals of true men and women living together in harmony and peace, protected and expanded by the might of arms, ruled over by wisdom and justice. In a traditional pattern, the Sixfold Goal may be shown:

1. RIGHT
2. WISDOM
3. MIGHT
4. HARVEST
5. FRITH
6. LOVE

These six goals are the worthy things of the world, the things worth dying for, the things we must hold dear, and now not only defend what remains of them, but expand them forever into constant fulfillment. On the most practical level, if someone asks the true man or woman “what they stand for,” it is the holding and hoisting of the Sixfold Goal that should be his or her answer.

RIGHT is ruled over by Tiw. It is the justice of law shaped by the lore of our folk and meted out with good judgment and true by those who can see the truth. This is a goal rationally sought and rationally administered— the rule of rationality and enlightenment in the world. From this comes our desire to see a world ruled rationality.

WISDOM is watched over by Woden. This is the hidden lore and powers welling up from the darkest depths of our souls and hovering high over our heads shining beyond the clouds, all leading us on into the unknown. This is the mysterious force that has the ability to hold all things together, ruled by those who can see and understand the whole. Above all Wisdom must be preserved, for in it are the wells of all memory. If it and only it survives, all other parts of the whole can be regenerated. From this remains our sense of adventure, our curiosity about the unknown, our seeking and questing character.

MIGHT is wielded by Thunar. In Might is embodied the twofold goal of victory and defense, which both depend on pure power or Might for their ultimate right. Without this pivotal goal, all others will fall into decay and be overcome by

things outside the truth—as indeed they have done. But Might must be ruled over by Right and Wisdom, and must serve the purposes of Harvest and Frith. There is worth in Might in and of itself, however. In the bodily expression of power is found the joy of victory which acts as a balm on the soul of the warrior. The goal of conquest and exercise of Might can be turned without or within the true man or woman—but it must find expression. From this remains our hunger for conquests, big and small, and our great will to power.

HARVEST is holy to the Wanes. This is the reaping of things of good cycles of nature—ensuring that the folk continues to flourish in the world, that the livestock abound in good health, that the seed is rightly planted, cut, and threshed. Harvest is the overriding need for organic continuance—for the continuance of organic life. Harvest here includes all of the fruits of economic cycles. It is the goodness of plenty, of wealth, and physical well-being. Today our society is dominated by this value system—our desire for abundance and wealth.

FRITH is ruled by Frey and Freya. Frith is our own word for “peace.” Frith is the true state of “peace” wherein all parts of the Sixfold Goal are successfully pursued and attained by society. In Frith is true freedom, for Frith is the essence of freedom—the state in which self-directed, self-willed growth and development can take place. Frith usually implies an absence of war—but not of struggle or conflict which must always be present on some level when true growth is taking place. In Frith we do not stand still; in Frith we learn how to take our fights to ever higher fields. Right-Might-Frith form a powerful axis—Might provides the protection Frith needs to promote freedom, but Might must be ruled by Right to in turn to protect Frith from ungoverned Might. From Frith comes our almost universal desire for “peace,” but in misunderstanding what this means, actual death could ensue.

LOVE is the law of life and is embodied in the Lord and Lady. This is the pure powerful Love, or “lust” of eroticism. In it is our sense of play and pure pleasure. The stem word from which “Love” is derived really has to do with the enjoyment of (physical) pleasure. That we all seek this as a goal in itself is natural and good, but it is not without its non-natural, or “spiritual” sides, to be sure. In seeking pleasure we show and, more importantly, *experience* an unbridled lust for life itself—this deep well of desire acts much like Wisdom does above—in fact there is a secret bond between them. Wisdom and Love hold the Six Goals together. Among the Six Goals, this is the one most hated by the forces of the White-Christ. Its revenge shall be sweet.

Thinking about these Six Goals as the things worth striving for, as far as the whole of the troth and its folk are concerned, as well as for true men and women in their own lives, will act as a guidepost for holding true values. These goals

were sometimes unspoken, but always implicit in all that was done in nights of yore.

Beyond these goals, which will form the direction of one’s ethical actions, there are Nine Noble Virtues. These have been a part of the whole revival movement in the Anglo-American world, and they act as handy reminders of the day-in, day-out values of our folk. But even they are in the end somewhat pointless without knowledge of the Six Goals. The Nine Noble Virtues are:

1. Courage (heartiness)
2. Truth
3. Honor (worthiness)
4. Fidelity (troth)
5. Discipline (hardiness)
6. Hospitality (friendliness)
7. Industriousness (hard-work)
8. Self-reliance (freedom)
9. Perseverance (steadfastness)

Courage is the bravery to do what is right at all times. Truth is the willingness to be honest and say what one knows to be true and right. Honor is the feeling of inner value and worth from which one knows that one is noble of being, and the desire to show respect for this quality when it is found in the world. Fidelity is the will to be loyal to one’s gods and goddesses, to one’s folk, and to one’s self. Discipline is the willingness to be hard with one’s self first, and then if need be with others in order that greater purposes can be achieved. Hospitality is the willingness to share what one has with one’s fellows, especially when they are far from home. Industriousness is the willingness to work hard, always striving for efficiency, as a joyous activity in itself. Self-reliance is the spirit of independence which is striven toward not only for the individual but also for the family, clan, tribe, and nation. Perseverance is that spirit of stick-to-it-iveness that can always bring one back from defeat or failure—each time we fail we recognize it for what it is, and, if the purpose is true and good, we persevere until success is won.

All true men and women should keep holy the Nine Noble Virtues. How each of these are to be understood is largely a matter of personal thought and family values. In a more traditional world, these Nine Noble Virtues might be spoken to us by our kindly elders as: “Be hearty, forthright, worthy, true, hard, friendly, hard-working, free, and steadfast in all that you undertake.” If these values are taught and held by ourselves, for ourselves and our offspring, a solid ground-work will be laid for the rebirth of the troth. All of these values, not just some of them,

must be practiced and taught as the Nine Noble Virtues. Too often these values have been passed on under false guises, such as the so-called "Protestant work-ethic," and other such nonsense. These are *our* values made for us, by us, and have nothing whatever to do with the foreign cult.

Chapter 22 INTO THE UNKNOWN

From our own lives and from what has been said of the lore of time and how it works, we know that the "future" is unknown and unknowable with any certainty. To be sure that the *wyrd* of the folk has been laid, our ordeal stands before us— but what the outcome will be, only time will tell. Have we kept enough of our own lore and wisdom to be able to overcome the centuries of destruction and self-misunderstanding? Will our gods return to rule the tide now dawning? The answers to these questions are set, and are being set. They were set in years past. They are being set and re-set as you read these words.

The Edda tells us that the gods return, that whatever the nature of their downfall they always return in some form. But they must fight for their return, and we must fight alongside them. In every fight there is the risk of defeat. Yet we see that the gods and goddesses are living beings and on some level, as growing, changing beings they were/are always being destroyed and reborn— so we await a new level of their being. But this will not happen without our help. Because, in a real sense, we and the gods are one, our doings are the surest signs of the workings of the gods themselves.

So what do the runestaves of Hœnir say about how the way of these gods is to be re-cast across the great unknown sea of being? These staves tell of great dreams. In these dreams the sons and daughters of Midgard rekindle the flame of the gods first within their hearts, and the flame within each individual is brought together with those of kindred souls, which are gathered 'round hearths, and within garths and hofs. The flame from each true man and woman feeds the flame of all the fellows— and into this warm hall the gods return out of the cold. The troth will be satisfied with nothing less than the *re-establishment* of the troth as the natural religion within this culture. We will not be satisfied with being a merely tolerated group of eccentrics getting together in suburban living rooms and congratulating ourselves on being born to this folk, and badmouthing everyone else.

In the troth to come the runestaves are read to mean that there will be a hof, or temple, in every major city in America and Canada— each hof with its own hof-elder or elders whose work it is to teach the folk and to give the blessings through which the gods and goddesses are further strengthened. On the blood-tines the runes are read to mean that great garths will be set up in the country-side, wherein good and true men and women will gather themselves to live and work for the

betterment of the folk and the whole world. Come what may, it is from these garths that our good will and true will be sent forth, and within these garths that our work will bear its most shining fruit. Upon the stave the runes can be read to mean that there will arise a great and learned troop of wise and true folk, who will go forth into the world to rebuild that which has been lost. These will be known as the elders of the troth, they will work as theals in the great blessings, and they will be the teachers of the lore among the folk. The runes are read to mean that throughout the depth and breadth of the land families will return to the troth of their forebears. Many will see the truth within themselves and will return to it in their own homes, and with time these flames around the hearth will gather with the kindred and a new world will be brought forth.

These "dreams," these runic visions, have a practical set of guidelines by which they will be made reality. Some of them are printed in the third part of this book, but what is clear is that the individual and small groups within the troth movement will be the ones that make these dreams a reality. So it is extremely important right now to realize that you may hold the most important tools for making these visions become reality— a key to the lore of the folk, and a heart with the will to work the blessings of the gods and goddesses. If you do not yet think of yourself as true, it is now time that you think deeply on what is in this book; if you already think of yourself as true, keep working with a renewed heart and mind.

Part Two WORKING TRUE

Chapter 23 TRUE WORK

As has already been said in several ways—the troth is a way of *doing*. It is in the actual workings that one does, in both everyday and in holy settings, that really determine whether a man or woman is true. To *be* true one must *work* true.

In this second part of the book we will outline the things one needs to know in order to begin this true working. The watchword here will be simplicity. We will only be going into the basic things one needs to know to begin on the road to the troth. Too many people get caught up in the technical details in a way that hinders their beginning and making progress. We will talk about the tools one needs to begin and the timing to be thought about when undertaking the blessings. But most importantly we will outline the basic procedures and formulas used in building traditional workings, so that you can begin at once to improvise workings based on a traditional framework.

Here we will also present a complete set of rituals that the lone true man or woman can use to begin working true. The texts for kindred workings are also included so that persons already working in groups can effectively begin to quicken and reawaken the spirit of the troth in a highly traditional manner. Of course, the most important texts included here are those for the eight blessings of the year. Remember, to call one's self true, one should at least take part in the blessings of Winter Nights, Yule, and Easter. Traditionally three such blessings are seen as essential. However, some may emphasize more Yule, Easter or Midsummer.

But above all it is the holy work of each true man and woman to be true in all that they do. Although the first emphasis is laid on what is done in the outer world, this is really only a framework upon which inner events, inner truths are hung. The true work is done in the heart of each true man and woman, but without outer work there is no sign of it, and no bringing of its results and fruits into the realm of Midgard. It is, after all, the unique work of mankind to bring the truth into the realm of Midgard and to spread it here. The work within and the work without go hand in hand.

In much that will be read in this part of the book, the emphasis will be on *tradition*. However, I would like to take this opportunity to point out that part of the tradition of the troth lies in individual innovation. Do not be shy about varying elements of the rituals presented here, or about eventually shaping your own rites. What are presented here are really only examples of what can be done.

The formulaic outlines in chapter 25 are the real mainstays of the tradition. These basic formulas are *known* to have been the traditional ones used in the "Viking Age." All are encouraged to practice for some time with standard workings, and only after that to begin to "innovate." Even after such innovation has begun, major deviation from the formulaic elements presented in chapter 25 is discouraged as far as the great blessings are concerned.

Another vital part of working true is the work of spreading the word about the existence and nature of the troth, or Ásatrú. In this, all true folk can help in the great work of the Hammer of Thunar as it swings out in ever wider rings to spread the truth of the gods and goddesses of the north.

We generally do not recommend "proselytizing" in the sense Christians do it. It is not our job or intention to "convert" anyone to our way. We are trying to awaken the ancestral and innate way of our fellow European folk. In this it is, however, our work to make information about the existence of the troth available to all who might be interested in it.

The troth is a *folk religion*. As such it is the birthright of all people who belong to the folk. It follows then that it is not some kind of "secret order" to be kept hidden and obscure within closed "cell-structures." There is an open door to the gard (enclosure) of the troth—and all those of northern descent, or those who have a Germanic language as their mother-tongue, or those who are married to such folk, or who have undergone blood-brotherhood or adoption to such a man or woman, can be considered to belong naturally to the troth. Ideally, troth describes a whole cultural experience, not merely something commonly described in modern terms as "religion."

Chapter 24 TOOLS AND SETTING

In the performance of the rites and rituals of the troth, the true individual will have to have a minimum of tools with which to work. Ideally these should be items that are *only* used for holy purposes. But traditionally ordinary domestic objects can be substituted, especially in the beginning. Remember the important thing is to begin working and keep working. The fact that a blessing is performed is the important thing— that it was performed with the holiest of tools and weapons only increases its *quality*. If faced with the choice between working with special tools and not working at all, the answer is, as always, *work!*

Special tools become more necessary when working in groups (kindreds). This is because the symbolic and transpersonal quality of the tools themselves will help to make the blessing more meaningful for all. This is the same reason why “domestic” tools are acceptable for individual or domestic workings.

In this chapter we will consider the actual tools used in true workings, as well as the overall setting of such workings, and the times when workings are best undertaken. For this final point, the reader is also referred to chapter 9: THE HOLY YEAR for a complete discussion of the holy calendar.

True Tools

Most workings will make use of the tools discussed below. Certain special rites may involve others, but they will be discussed in those places. Here are the basic tools a true man or woman would need to begin working within a kindred today.

A hammer-token should be worn when doing any true work. Many true-folk wear hammer-tokens, or Hammers of Thunar/Thor, on an everyday basis. The daily donning of the hammer can be a powerful ritual in and of itself. As the hammer is put on, thoughts are turned to protection, health, well-being, and good-luck to come to one throughout the day. You can create a verbal formula to support this thought—a formula which can change as your life develops and your daily goals evolve.

A harrow should be set up upon which all holy work is undertaken. This harrow (“altar”) may be indoors or outside. Indoor harrows (also called “stalls”) are usually made of wode (tables are most often used), and are ideally at least two feet by two feet, but any dimension will do. It is much better that this object is used for holy work *only*. If the harrow is outside, it is usually made of stone.

However, the indoor harrow can also be moved outdoors for rites that are best performed in that environment.

On the harrow there will usually be four items: 1) the horn (or cup), 2) the blessing bowl, 3) the evergreen tine (twig), and 4) the vessel or liquid (usually mead, ale, beer— or apple juice) arranged as shown in Figure 24.1.



Figure 24.1: The Harrow Arrangement
(The Stall in the Hall at Woodharrow)

The horn is a very traditional vessel from which to drink the holy draught during the working of the blessing. Ceremonial cups or chalices can also be used, however.

The blessing bowl should be made of wood, and should be large enough that it will hold approximately half of the contents of the horn or cup being used. For indoor rites there is also an auxiliary bowl which is placed on the floor to the (western) side of the harrow. This auxiliary bowl will receive the outpouring of the liquid, which in outdoor ceremonies would be poured out onto the ground. The contents of this other bowl are then solemnly poured out onto the ground outside after the conclusion of the working.

The tine or evergreen twig is to be freshly cut from some conifer tree or bush for every blessing. It is normally placed on the ground (or in the auxiliary bowl) and marks the spot where the final outpouring of the sanctified liquid is to take

place. It is, of course, primarily used as a tool with which to sprinkle the harrow and kindred with the holy liquid—to do the blessing itself.

The vessel containing the liquid to be used in the blessing should be a special one. It will be used to pour the mead, ale, or beer in the horn before it is circulated and hallowed. This vessel is usually an earthenware bottle or jar.

These then are the basic tools for conducting the rites and blessings of the troth.

Settings for Work

True ceremonies may be conducted indoors or outdoors. As will be noted with each of the blessings and other workings outlined in the following chapters, it is often more traditional to do certain rites indoors, while for others it is more traditional to conduct them outdoors. It is a general rule, and quite natural, that the ceremonies in the winter half of the year are done inside, while those of the summer half of the year are worked outside.

The indoor rites are best conducted on a special harrow used only for that purpose and set up in a special part of the house or apartment. It is really best if you can have the harrow set up in a permanent way as a shrine to the gods and goddesses of the folk. But it is quite acceptable to store the holy tools of the troth in a way showing them respect, and to bring them out only at times when holy work is to be undertaken.

The outdoor rites can, of course, be held in one's own yard—which is perhaps the best of all places for such workings from the standpoint of sacred significance. But other outdoor settings are also quite acceptable. Many true rites are held in parks, woods, and fields in the countryside. The advantage to setting up a harrow on one's own property is obvious. The stones upon which the blessings are given take on greater holiness every time the blessings are held on them. In time they become holy themselves. But when working in open land, any natural object, or even a portable wooden harrow can be used for conducting the rites.

Timing

In chapter 9 the traditional timing of the greater and lesser blessings of the year were given. There it was also noted how these dates were in many cases approximate, and often governed by local conditions and traditions. In the troth today there is just as much reason for having flexible and locally determined times for the working of the rites as there were in nights of yore. They are perhaps different reasons—often determined by socio-economic factors rather than factors having to do with the cycles of nature. But the socio-economic forces are no less real in our lives today than the natural circumstances were to our ancestors. In fact, they work in the same ways in our lives. They are the cycles of production—

the cycles of how the means by which we live are produced. These should be taken into consideration when setting the time for a blessing or other event of the troth.

In determining a time for the holding of a holy event, such factors as time needed and time available should be considered. If the blessing and symbol and all the other events planned are going to take several hours to prepare and conduct, it would be unwise to hold it on a week night when most of the fellows in the kindred will have to work the next day. This factor is, of course, less important when working alone.

In absolute terms there are three ways to determine the best time for holding a blessing or other get-together, 1) traditional/mechanical time (that is, determined by the events in the heavens—the solstice, equinox, and so forth), 2) traditional/organic (that is, local custom of having, for example, the Easter blessing on the first Friday or Saturday night/morning after the appearance of a robin redbreast, or violet), and 3) taking into account the general timing determined by the heavenly events to set a time most convenient for most of the folks involved.

Chapter 25 WAYS OF WORKING

Common Procedures in True Work

In the texts of the rites presented in the following chapters there are, as in all rites involving deep traditions, many elements that will be repeated. These are elements that give a timeless and traditional orientation to much of what is done. We will speak about these elements here in some detail, so that we will not have to repeat them over and over, and so that they can be presented in a clear and understandable manner. It is in the right and true understanding and doing of some of these traditional elements that great power can be poured into the work.

Besides this, we will present the basic structural formulas of the blessing and the symbol, form which the individual true folk can construct their own rites in an authentic and traditional manner. This kind of formulaic outline is the true essence of the Germanic tradition— basic continuity with the ever-present possibility of creative innovation. Again, all true men and women are encouraged to experiment and to share their experiments in true work with other true folk; but all should remain with the basic formulas shown here to ensure the revitalization and continuance of our timeless traditions.

The basic formula of the blessing (or *blót*) follows a ninefold plan:

Name	Function
1) Hallowing	sets ritual space/time apart from the ordinary
2) Reading	puts rite into mythic context
3) Rede	links myth and the purpose of the rite
4) Call	invokes deities or classes of beings
5) Loading	charges drink with godly power
6) Drinking	circulates godly power within
7) Blessing	circulates godly power without
8) Giving	returns rightful part of power to divinity
9) Leaving	declares work rightly done/return to the ordinary

All workings outlined in this book can be performed with a single celebrant, who is always designated with the term "speaker" in the texts. However, in kindred settings it is usually best if several persons take an active part in the working of the rite. The roles can be divided as the kindred leader sees fit. The

most traditional type of division of work would be into three roles called 1) theal, 2) shope, and 3) goodman. The theal is responsible for all speaking parts that involve calling on the divine powers and distributing their blessings. The shope is responsible for all speaking parts involving the setting of mythic and social context. The goodman is responsible for all of the non-speaking ritual actions having to do with the actual distribution of the holy liquid. A modification of this use is for the goodman to take the speaking roles allowing the theal to undertake the ritual actions of distributing the holy liquid. These are, however, only suggestions. Any permutation of these roles can be practiced.

In the beginning of most workings the speaker is instructed to strike the holy posture indicated by the rune [Ƿ]. To do this one simply stands straight with the arms straight out and up at an approximately forty-five degree angle, simulating the runestave shape. This is an ancient pose used by the Germanic peoples when coming into communication with the gods and goddesses; it was even noted by the romans. When the sign Ƿ occurs in the ritual texts, the speaker should strike this pose.

The Hammer-Working

The normal way to hallow a stead, or sanctify a place, for holy work is by means of the hammer-working. This sets the place apart from the outside, everyday, profane world, making it special and outside ordinary time/space. In this especially prepared space/time, holy work can be rightly done. It should be noted that if you have a permanent holy stead, which is never used for any thing other than holy activities, then such a place is called permanently holy, or sacrosanct. In such a case the hammer-working is unnecessary.

To perform the hammer-working one faces north and makes the sign of the hammer [] by tracing it in the air, imagining it to be drawn in space, hovering in the air to the north of the holy site. (See figure 25.1.) While doing this the speaker says: "Hammer in the north! Hold and hallow this stead!" This process is repeated in the east, south, and west. Then the speaker returns to the north and looks upward, tracing the hammer sign high above the ritual site, and says: "Hammer above me [or us]! Hold and hallow this stead!" Then the speaker looks below and again makes the sign, visualizing it deep below the ritual site, and says: "Hammer below me [or us]! Hold and hallow this stead!" Thus the site is surrounded by six hammer signs. These will guard the stead from disturbing forces, but will also make it attractive and hospitable to the gods, goddesses, and all other friendly wights.

Common Procedures

In the fifth part of the blessing formula, when the holy drink is loaded with the invoked force, the speaker first takes up the horn or cup in his or her left hand and then with the right hand pours the liquid from the vessel into the horn or cup.

When anyone drinks from a horn or cup, they usually make the sign of the hammer or some other holy sign over the rim of the drinking vessel. This is done with either the whole hand or the index finger or the index and middle finger together. When doing this, the person should actually see the sign of the hammer, or other sign, appear over the drink and shine its light into the liquid. The hammer-sign is made in the way shown in figure 25.1.

• Starting points

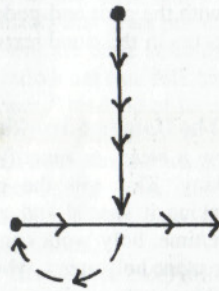


Figure 25.1: The Hammer-Sign

The hammer-sign is also used for general blessings of food, drink, and individuals.

During the sixth part of the blessing, when the gathered folk are drinking of the loaded ale, mead, or other sacred drink, it is most usual for each individual to take a moderate mouthful of the liquid and to swallow it slowly in three swallows, each time feeling the power of the loaded liquid coursing through the entire body. If a large number of folk are gathered, it may be necessary to empty the horn or cup into the blessing bowl before all have drunk. (The horn should be emptied into the blessing bowl on the harrow once its contents are about one-half to two-thirds gone.) In such instances the speaker merely refills the horn from the vessel, makes the hammer-sign over its rim, and continues the distribution of the liquid, again pouring out the contents when it becomes low into the blessing bowl. An

alternative way of distributing the liquid is to have each participant drink half of the contents of the horn, and have the speaker empty the other half into the blessing bowl. This process is repeated for each person present. When all have drunk of the liquid, the contents of the horn or cup are poured into the blessing bowl slowly and with great care.

Part seven of the blessing, the actual sprinkling (or blessing itself), is usually carried out by the speaker by dipping the evergreen tine into the liquid in the blessing bowl, and slowly going around the harrow three times, sprinkling the harrow on all four sides while repeating the words which are appropriate for that blessing. At the conclusion of each turn around the harrow the tine is again dipped into the liquid. The harrow is a symbol for all of Midgard, and as such is the first focus of the blessing. Here the powers of the gods and goddesses are given into the world. If the speaker is working with an indoor stall, and it is not possible to go around it on all four sides, the stall is simply sprinkled on three sides as the speaker stands before it. However, it is still customary for the time to be dipped three times.

In the eighth part of the blessing, the liquid is poured from the blessing bowl standing on the harrow out onto the ground, if the rite is done outdoors, or into the auxiliary bowl to the right or left of the stall, if the rite is conducted indoors. After the rite is concluded, the contents of the auxiliary bowl are taken outdoors and poured out onto the bare ground in a solemn manner.

The Symbol

The symbol, or ritual feast, usually follows the Great Blessings of the year, or it can be celebrated by itself. The symbol is a special holy working in its own right, and deserves a good deal of attention from those who wish to work truly. (The word symbol is derived from the Icelandic *sumbl* and the Old English *symbol*, meaning a solemn religious drinking ritual or ritual feast.) It is a coming together of the folk for partaking in the godly drink. It is most often the case that after the blessing the participants retire to another location (ideally a banquet hall) for the performance of the symbol. It should also be remembered that symbols can also be performed alone, independent of a blessing.

The symbol is an imitation of the ritual feasts held by the gods and goddesses in Asgard. Once the symbol has begun, the participants enter into a realm of divine time/space. They enter into the stream of timeless continuity, where events of the past are ritually bound to the events to come, thus reshaping the "future" in the image of the idealized, mythic "past." There is obviously a powerful magic at work here. This is one of the ways in which the Germanic metaphysics of time/space and of wyrd (see chapter 19) can be used in a practical way.

As the Great Blessings are a way to "bring the divine into the world," the symbol is a way to "maintain the stream of continuity from gods to men through the generations of time." The symbol keeps the gods and heroes, including our own ancestors, alive and living among us. It is also that time for ritual boasts or oaths. These boasts are not only "bragging" about past accomplishments but also oaths concerning what one is to do in the time to come. They are a way of ritually and objectively putting before one's kith and kin (those whose respect you wish to have) what one intends to do. In the whole context of the symbol, one swears before the gods and goddesses, before one's kith and kin. Oaths sworn in this setting have great power, a power derived from many levels and sources.

In the symbol can be seen the origins of many of our profane drinking customs, such as "toasts." We can also see why we talk about drinking alcohol in "rounds."

The formula of the symbol follows a sixfold plan, but it is more open to innovation than the formula for the blessings.

Name	Function
1) Seating	puts folk in right/holy order
2) Bringing of Horn	brings holy liquid into the hall
3) Beginning	invokes the purpose of the symbol
4) First Boasts	honors the gods and heroes
5) Other Boasts	works for individuals or groups
6) Leaving	closes rounds

As the symbol is not discussed elsewhere in this book, we must now describe it in some detail.

In a symbol, the gathered folk seat themselves in some significant manner or order. In nights of yore the head of the clan or chieftain would sit at the head of the table or on a high-seat, with those of highest authority immediately below him. Those of less authority, or the younger members of the hall, would be seated further away from the head. Each kindred will probably have its own system, but it is ritually important to have some tradition in this regard as it increases the level of significance in the arrangement or context in which the actions will take place. After all have taken their seats, a designated person, the leading woman of the kindred or some special assistant to the kindred leader will ceremonially bring in the first horn or cup of holy liquid (mead, ale, beer or fruit juice) and set it down before the leader. The leader/speaker then stands up and speaks a formal opening to the symbol, such as: "We are rightly gathered. Now we wend our way into the timeless realm unseen, and share together in elder pathways to might and main."

After this there is a series of formalized "boasts" (actually drinks to honor the gods and ancestors). Of these we have some remnants directly from Old Norse sources, but they are piecemeal and unsystematic. Such boasts should be drunk at least to Woden, Tiw, Thunar, Frey and Freya, followed by a general round honoring the forebears. Such a series of formalized boasts could be:

- 1) "To Woden for good speed and wisdom!"
- 2) "To Tiw for wit and good troth!"
- 3) "To Thunar for ward and thew!" (= strength)
- 4) "To Frey for feast and frith!"
- 5) "To Freya for freedom and frolic!"
- 6) "To our kinsmen whom we ken not, and to those beloved who are buried and burned [here repeat the names of dead relatives, etc.]"

After the formalized boasts have been completed, there begins an unlimited series of individualized boasts. Each individual may use his or her own horn in drinking the rounds, or a large ceremonial horn may actually be passed around the table for all to drink from. The nature of these individualized boasts varies from person to person. Some will recount great mythic events, or offer historical events with heroic dimensions of work in skaldic form; while still others will make personal boasts (oaths) concerning things which they intend to bring about in the days to come.

When all have finished the rounds they have planned, and all wode (inspiration) is spent, the rounds are called to a halt by the leader/speaker with a formal declaration, such as: "I call the rounds ended. Let us wend our way back to our stead, back to our time, and go forth from here with mighty moods."

Blessings of the Gods and Goddesses

Here you have two major formulas, that of the blessing and that of the symbol, which are needed to develop further rituals tailored to the needs of individuals and individual kindreds.

In this book you will not find a whole liturgy specific to a particular god or goddess. Cults dedicated to individual divinities are certainly practiced; however, it is not the place of the general troth to dictate what forms these cults should take. It is also part of the "Mandate of Woden" that the Great Blessings be promoted over the individualized cults (which if overemphasized could lead to disintegration in the folk.) This "disintegration" is something Woden was trying to guard against in ancient times. Now it has happened, and so it is his mandate to try to repair and renew the integral aspects of our culture.

In order to make the formula of the blessing absolutely clear, we will include a "Blessing of Thunar" here just to show how the formula can be implemented. If the individual true man or woman feels a special link to a certain god or goddess (which is quite normal), that individual is really the best person to formulate a special blessing from dedicated to that deity.

A Blessing of Thunar

1. Hallowing

Perform the hammer-working, if necessary. Here you can perhaps substitute the words "Hammer of Thunar, hold and hallow this stead!" for the usual words. Then say:

"I hallow this harrow to the honor of Thunar. Through the might and main of Mjólnir this stead is warded, as Thunar wards the halls of Asgard against the wrath of Etins. Mjólnir hold out all unholy wights and sendings!"

2. Reading

Read the "Lay of Hymir" from the *Poetic Edda*.

3. Rede

"Let us think for a while upon the meaning of the lay which we have just heard, and upon the growing might of Thunar in our midst!"

(After a few moments, the speaker may venture an interpretation of the deeper importance of the "Lay of Hymir.")

4. Call

"Mighty Asa-Thunar, we hear thee roar in the hall of stars, we feel thy force in the thunder, we witness thy life in the lightning, we smell thy being in the time before the rain. In the storm we know that thou ridest eastward to do battle with the Etin Horde. We wish thee good speed in the fray! Hear us as we again call forth in thy names:

Eldest son of Woden!
Thunderer!
Son of Erda!
Redbeard!
Father of Magni and Moði!
God of Goats!

[After each name the gathered
Folk can say: "WE GIVE THEE
WELCOME!"]

5. Loading

(The speaker pours ale into the horn, holds it aloft with the words):

"We give thee great gifts! Not of blood, but of our mighty deeds, our strivings, and our troth housed in this ale. May it help us, gods and folk together, in our fight against those who would war against Asgard, or who would seek to bring slavery to Midgard. Thunar take well with our gifts, but not as from thralls, for we have no master, but as from thanes, as a sign of our kinship and fellowship."

6. Drinking

(The speaker makes the sign of the hammer over the rim of the horn and drinks from it. The horn is passed around to each sworn member of the kindred.)

7. Blessing

(Ale is finally poured into the blessing bowl on the harrow. The harrow and the sworn members of the kindred are blessed with the words):

"The blessings of Thunar be upon you!"

8. Giving

(Ale is poured out on the ground to the east of the harrow with the words):

"To Thunar, Warder of the World and trustworthy one in Asgard, and to Earth, Mother of Thunar, and of us all!"

9. Leaving

(Speaker returns to the harrow and faces north in the [Y] posture and says):

"Let us think deeply about what has happened here and what it all means in our lives. . . [Pause several minutes for reflection.]

Now the work is wrought and the gifts have been given, each to the other, as it must always be. May it strengthen our kindred, and renew in our hearts our will to live as worthy sons (and daughters) of Thunar. We swear to always hold good our oaths to our gods and kindred. So shall it be!"

Chapter 26 Nightly Workings

Although not really essential to the true practice of the troth, some folks like to orient themselves more regularly to the holy gods and goddesses than is done at the occasional times of the blessings. For these good folk and true, there are workings that are to be performed every day (and night) during the course of the day: upon rising, when donning the Hammer of Thunar, at noon, and upon going to sleep.

Greeting of Sunna

Each morning upon rising, true folk can perform the "Greeting of Sunna," to greet the morning sun and put themselves into the holy stream of power flowing from the goddess Sunna (the Sun). Rise, face east in the [Y] position and say:

"Hail Sunna, light of Har newly risen!
Hail to thee who shed light and life on all our forebears,
Who shine son us now, and who shall shine on all our
Offspring yet unborn!
Share with me some of thy light and might this day, that
I may better fight in the fray and gain my goals!"

Hammer-Signing

Another holy work that can be done at any time, but which should follow right after the "Greeting of Sunna," is the hammer-signing. In this work, true folk can reach up into the holy light and might of the gods and make it a part of themselves. To begin, the person should visualize a bright shining ball of golden light two or three feet above the head. Then with the right hand reach up into that light and make a fist, grasping the light-substance in the hand, which should then be drawn down to the forehead. Touch your forehead and say: "Tiw!" then continue to pull the light down through the head and touch the mouth and say: "Woden!" Next draw the light down in a column through the body and touch the solar plexus and say: "Thunar!" Then move the fist, and the light contained in it, from the solar plexus to the left shoulder; touch the shoulder and say: "Frey!" Now, drawing light across the body in a horizontal direction, touch the light to the right shoulder and say: "Frey!"

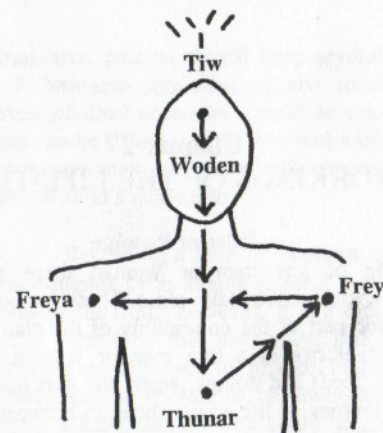


Figure 26.1: The Hammer-Sign in the Body

Other Workings

A further daily working relating to the hammer is the hammer-donning ceremony. This is really just a simple affirmation of will and troth that is repeated when the true men or women put their hammer-tokens on each day. It is, of course, quite common for true folk to habitually wear the hammer-token, either in a way that all can see or under their clothing. In either case, when it is put on, it is good to repeat a simple spell, such as: "This day shall bring new wonders, great doings, boundless luck and happiness unending— by the might of the hammer!" It is perhaps most effective if this is said while holding the hammer token out in front of you at about eye-level; when you place the hammer around your neck, you can then feel the power that is loaded into it spread throughout your being.

The food that one eats at any time during the day can always be blessed with the sign of the hammer. In each case the might and main of the hammer—its vitality and strength—are projected into the actual food.

At the noon-tide, true folk may greet and honor the Sun, as she has reached her highest point in the heavens. Her victory is saluted with the simple spell: "Hail Sunna, in the highest dwelling of heaven!" When doing this it is best to be outdoors, standing in the [Y] posture.

Finally, when the true man or woman is going to sleep, he or she should perhaps repeat a word-spell of special personal importance in an attempt to call upon the realm of sleep to bestow dreams of might and main.

Chapter 27 WORKINGS OF THE LIFE-TIDES

Rites of Passage

Through the life of any man or woman there are tides—moments in time—when great transformations take place. These happen when one comes into the world and is made part of the community of the clan of Midgard, when one reaches the age of maturity as a true man or woman and can be held fully responsible for one's deeds and doings, when one gets married, and finally when one makes the final journey of life across the span between Midgard to the realms beyond upon death. These tides are seen as significant points in life, and ones that are best undertaken with the help of holy workings. Beyond these, there may also be two other moments of similar importance. One comes when a family (or individual) moves from one house to another. When this happens, a rite of 'land-taking' should be performed to make the land one's own. Also, if a true man or woman wants to confirm themselves in their troth, and are not able to be a part of a kindred or hearth, or hof, he or she can perform a lone working of becoming true.

Naming

When a child is born to a true man and woman the couple should wait nine days before ceremonially naming the child. This will give wyrd a chance to determine whether the child is indeed a healthy part of the organic stream of humanity. On the evening of the ninth night, the mother will give the child over to the father for blessing and naming. The father seats himself on a chair (before the family stall or harrow) and the mother brings the child to him and hands it to the seated father. He takes it and lays it on his lap cradling its head in the crook of his left arm. He takes pure spring water and sprinkles it on the head of the child and gives it its name saying: "I sprinkle this child with water and give him/her the name _____, after his/her _____ [here mention the person's relation to the child after whom it is named]." An example of this would be "I sprinkle this child with water and give her the name Helga after her grandmother." In this way the trust we have in rebirth is practically confirmed, and in this way the father gives birth to the soul of the child, just as surely as the mother gave birth to its lyke. Some gift is usually bestowed on the child as a way to bind the name to it.

In naming children, true parents should keep several things in mind. They should give names of Germanic derivation (or give middle names of this sort). Also, of course, names of dead ancestors should be continued. Here all of the names of the ancestors can be considered. If they had a middle name of Germanic origin, which may have been their *real* name in the sense it carried their soul, that one should be used in the child's name also.

Becoming a Man or Woman

This rite can be as complex or as simple as local custom and family tradition dictate. Within the lore of the troth, however, it is a time that should be marked by some working. The timing of this may vary. But it will come sometime between the ages of twelve and eighteen. In the most elaborate forms of such rites, there are protected and dramatic ordeals to be undergone in secrecy. These are again determined within a local context, and could not be printed in a book for public consumption anyway due to their secret and mysterious natures. However, what is important in such rites is that the father of a son or the mother of a daughter give a gift symbolic of the transition of the offspring to the state of manhood or womanhood. In the case of a boy it is usually a symbolic weapon of some sort. A sword would perhaps be the most powerful symbol. These swords or other objects can also be handed down as heirlooms— most powerful when they mark the continuity of the name-soul. It is then seen how the fetch actually "rides" into the lives of the offspring through these symbolic objects. In the case of a girl, the object is usually a belt ('girdle') or necklace from which are hung tokens (usually of precious metals and stones) of the past generations. These are, of course, also handed down from generation to generation and confirm the continuity of the clan.

Wedding

Goðar of various Ásatrú groups are often empowered by the laws of the land to conduct the rites of marriage legally. There are various ritual formulas by which this can be done. However, in the absence of such an official ceremony, the true man and woman may also conduct a private rite between themselves which is both simple and powerful.

In the private rite a ring is drawn on the ground around a harrow or before an indoor stall. On the harrow are two cups or horns and two finger rings. The man enters the ring from the west, the woman from the east, and they both step before the harrow facing one another. She gives him the horn on the right, swearing her love for the man and asking him if he will take well with this love. He responds that he will. Then he repeats this offering of the horn, swearing of love and request for acceptance. Then the rings are exchanged. Here the man puts the ring

on the woman's finger, swearing his loyalty to her— "I plight my troth in thee." The wife then repeats the action with the man with similar oaths. Once these exchanges are complete, the man and wife embrace and kiss.

When an official elder or *goði* presides over a wedding, the ceremony is of a different nature. The couple stands before the elder with their witnesses standing to their sides. The elder asks who will speak for the bride, whereupon her witness speaks good words in her behalf (concerning her qualities), then the elder asks the witness of the groom to do the same. Both are then asked to swear their will to marry and to plight their troth in one another. The couple are then blessed with the sign of the hammer, after which general blessings of all the gods and goddesses are called down onto the couple by the elder. After the rite is concluded there follows a great celebratory feast.

In traditional literature we see a reflection of the official ceremony in the "Lay of Thrym" in the *Poetic Edda*. For the rite conducted in private between a man and woman this is reflected in the *Völsunga Saga* and in the "Lay of Sigdrifa" (also in the *Poetic Edda*).

Land-Taking

In our highly mobile society we find ourselves moving and taking up new abodes quite regularly. This is in many ways similar to the semi-nomadic periods in the history of the folk in the past. We often feel the negative effects of this life-style in the form of alienation. Our ancestors had a ritual way of alleviating this. It was the rite of "land-taking" (Old Norse: *landnám*). This rite can be used for houses on lots, as well as for apartments. However, it should be done without fail for pieces of property which true folk have actually bought and own.

In the first part of the work the land is marked off and warded by taking fire around the edges of the land or building. Then the wights of the stead are called on to be friendly and to help in keeping the house in frith and well-being.

The speaker, holding a torch, fire-pot, or lantern, stands before the front door of the house or at the edge of the property and says: "I am come to take up this land and all dwellings on it in the name (s) of (here the names of those owning or living on the property are to be recited) and in the names of the gods and goddesses of our folk." Then the speaker makes the sign of the hammer [L], and says: "the hammer of Thunar shall hallow this land and ward it well."

Then the speaker begins to walk around the property in a clockwise direction carrying the fire. If more than one person is actually taking the land, a relay can be set up in which the fire is handed to the other person(s) stationed at intervals around the land. While walking the edge of the land, the words "By troth the land is taken. Well it is warded!"

The speaker, again standing in the stead where he or she began, sets the fire down before the front door or at the gate of the property and says: "Glad greetings and hail to all you wights who dwell in this stead! we give you honor as in the days and nights of yore. Let there be among us frith and grith, and naught of strife!" Here the speaker drinks a sip from a horn of ale and pours the rest onto the ground before the dwelling (or into an auxiliary bowl in the case of an apartment), and says: "Come ye wights to get the gifts due to you! bring ye wealth and weal, merry wit and mirth to this home!" The work is ended with the words: "Now the work is wrought, may this home and all who dwell herein know naught but good as long as the troth has abode within!"

Those taking possession of the land should now enter it and live in frith and grith with helpful wights of the dwelling.

Death

Rites for the dead can be conducted by any *goði* or true elder, or they can be simply conducted by the family of the dead man or woman. There are two major variations for the way in which the lyke is treated after death, burial and burning. It was more usual for those who were dedicated to the Wanæs to be buried and those dedicated to the Ases to be cremated. In either case the usual final resting place of the remains are in a burial site, accompanied by grave goods. Grave goods can be actual objects that the person cherished in life, or symbols of these. Traditional symbolic items would include food and drink (preferably grains, and mead, ale, or beer). Other items would be particular to the needs of the person in remanifestations of the fetch and/or myne-hugh to come— weapons, magical tools, jewels, gold, and so forth. Each of these items, just like the body being interred, has a subtle essence as well as an outer physical form. It is in the subtle, symbolic qualities that the true importance of the grave goods are to be found.

Elders in the troth are empowered to conduct the rites for the dead in consultation with the family and clan of the dead man or woman. For some a grave or memorial stone bearing runes and carved by a true runemaster may be felt to be appropriate. To commission the latter the reader should contact the Rune-Gild (POB 7622, Austin, Texas 78713).

The ritual formula for the funeral rites consists of five parts; 1) a hallowing (in which the grave site is made holy), 2) a call to the gods and goddesses to whom the dead person was dedicated, 3) the sending of the dead on his or her way and the bidding of a fond farewell, 4) the drinking of the first myne-cup [a toast to their memory such as would be drunk in a symbel], and 5) the leaving in which all bid a farewell to the departed. In the drinking of the myne-cup or horn, the worthy deeds and other words of honor are spoken by one or more speakers.

This is most often to be done by a man's eldest son, or a woman's eldest daughter.

The raising of a runestone in memory of the person is always accompanied by many rites and ceremonies. These usually are conducted nine months to a year after the date of the person's death.

Chapter 28 KINDRED WORKINGS

A true kindred can be started by any group of people who want to work true to the gods and goddesses of the north. The rites and workings contained in this book are more than enough to start and maintain a kindred.

In this chapter you will learn of ceremonies used to found a kindred, how to open and close kindred meetings in an effective manner, and how to conduct a rite inducting a new member into the kindred. Every kindred — every hearth and garth — will develop rites and rituals particular to itself. This is to be expected and encouraged. What appears here are a minimal set of workings to get a kindred started.

Every kindred ought to have a special holy object, a ring is most usual if the kindred is headed by a goði or gyðja, but it could also be a stone, or other symbolic object, which embodies the whole of the kindred — its members in all their depth and being. This object should be situated on the harrow or stall each time the kindred meets or holds a working. It is upon this object that members of the kindred will most effectively swear their oaths. It is also most effective if the kindred has a name of some kind. This can be an imaginative name, or one merely describing the geographical location.

Founding a Kindred

To found a kindred, a general blessing to honor all the gods and goddesses of the troth together should be held. During the Rede part of the working, the speaker should announce that, as a part of the purpose of the rite, a kindred is to come into being, and whatever else he or she thinks it right to say about the kindred and its members. At the time of this Blessing, the speaker adds the words: "and upon this harrow (or stall) and upon this [name the most holy token] is quickened and made fast the [here name the kindred]."

Opening a Kindred Meeting

The kindred will, of course, get together on many occasions during which no formal blessing, symbol, or any other kind of working will be done. However, to keep the holy significance of the gatherings firmly in mind, a short blessing is to be done. All the gathered folk make the sign of the hammer and a designated speaker faces north in the [: ǚ :] and says something such as:

While doing this he or she should say:

"To all the dead dises and to all the awesome ides!"

Then, in a very pointed manner, the speaker should directly sprinkle first the members of the kindred, then all the known good folk and true. If any gathered are known to be uncommitted to the troth, sprinkling them should be avoided.

8. Giving

The speaker now removes the blessing bowl from the harrow, takes it to a point just north of the harrow, and pours its contents out upon the bare ground with the words:

"Holy mothers of men, Holy mothers of women,
Weird daughters of Woden,
To you we give this ale!"

9. Leaving

Again the speaker returns to his or her original place before the harrow, faces northward with arms aloft and says:

"From these nights to the Twelfth Night of Yule, the walls between the worlds of the dises all-dead, and of us all-living here, grow ever thinner— may the wisdom of these weird women, all-loving, become known to all here tonight! Let us now go forth and make merry, for the year is young!"

The Blessing of the Elves

In addition to the Blessings of the Dises, a Blessing of the Elves can also be performed on the Winter Nights. The procedure is identical to that of the Blessing of the Dises; however, the speeches in points 3), 4), 5), 8), and 9) should read:

3) "Hail the holy Elves, shining of the harrow,
whole ye hold the kindred,
mighty elders of old turn our minds toward you!"

4) "Tonight we name the Winter Night and call forth the elder elves of the kindred. Ye have been known by many names, ye great elders of our folk who ever lead us to greater lore, and fare us to more fruitful fields.

O, ye Light-elves above and ye Dark-elves down under— we call you! Fare ye forth from the realm of light upon the ray of the elves— stream to us from on

high! Fare ye forth from the realm of darkness upon the ray of elves— stream to us from down under!"

5) "We give this ale, blended with awe, to you, wondrous wights of the land and airs, to you awesome elves all-old!"

7) "This ale is hallowed to the elves of the kindred!"

"To all the awesome elves, to those who dwell in darkness,
and to those who live in light!"

8) "All ye elves of the elven realms, awesome elders all,
weird land-wights,
to you we give this ale!"

9) "From these nights to the Twelfth Night of Yule, the walls between the worlds of those dark-elves and the light, and our world here, grow ever thinner— the lore of light and the dreams of darkness are becoming ever more known to us throughout this tide! Let us now go forth and make merry, for the year is yet but young!"

The Greatest Blessing of the Yule-Tide

(December 20-31)

The Yule-Tide is a complex blessing. Ideally it should be celebrated over the twelve nights between the Mother Night and the Twelfth Night (Yule proper). During this time there should be general celebration among family and close friends. However, our modern world usually makes much of this impossible. Since twelve nights of the Yule-Tide represent the whole year, certain workings of galdor, seið, and divination can also be effectively undertaken during this time. It is fitting to read through the entire *Poetic Edda*, preferably out loud before the gathered folk in the evenings, during the twelve nights of the Yule-Tide.

Mother-Night: Beginning of the Yule-Tide

(December 20)

On the Mother-Night an all-around blessing is to be held, which will ritually be answered by the all-around blessing held at Midsummer. After the blessing the gathered folk will partake of the most important symbol of the year— the symbol

of the Yule-Tide, at which time the ancestors are naturally closest to us, the living.

The All-Around Blessing of the Mother-Night

The Harrow is set up in the standard fashion.

1. Hallowing

The hammer-working is performed, at the conclusion of which the speaker says:

"This stead is hallowed for our work here tonight. As the god Heimdall wards the Bifrost Bridge, so this stead is warded against all unholy wights and ways."

2. Reading (Lay)

The "Völuspá" and/or the "Lay of Helgi Hjörvarðsson" and the other "Helgi lays" are to be read or recited to the gathered folk.

3. Rede

The speaker says:

"This mid-night upon the Mother-Night we gather as in nights of yore, to greet the sun at her lowest stead, and to honor all the gods and goddesses who swell in Asgard, and all our own forebears who dwell in the halls of Hárr and Hel. We call upon them to make ripe their might and main in our lives. We call upon them all — the holy gathering — living as a whole as is Woden's Law."

4. Call

The speaker makes the following calls. After each call, the gathered folk give welcome to the god or goddess being called with their name, and the words: "We Give Thee Welcome!"

"Woden, we are awed by thy craft,
Tiw, we stay true to thee forever,
Balder, thy brightness and boldness guide us,
Frigga, thy fruit and wisdom keep us all,
Idunna, thine apples strengthen our souls,
Thunar, thy thunder wards our stead,
Freya, we get freedom from thy frolic,
Frey, from thee we get a harvest of frith."

Then a litany of divine attributes of the gods and goddesses just called is recited by the speaker. After each the gathered folk shout: "We give thee welcome!"

"Rune-Lord,
One-Handed God,
Holder of the Hringhorn,
Lady of the gods and goddesses,
Keeper of the apples,
Guardian of Asgard,
Holder of the Brisingamen,
God of the Wane."

"Again we all to you in all your names, be among us here this mid-night as the year reaches its depth and Sunna stands sunken to her lowest stead:

Hail all the gods, hail all the goddesses,
Hail all the holy ones
Who dwell together."

5. Loading

The speaker pours mead into the horn and says:

"We give you the gifts of our works woven and blended with the might and main of this mead. It lends us — gods and folk together — help in our striving toward the shining plain where the worlds and wights dwell in wholeness. The year has come into its depth of darkness— the serpent slithers among the deepest roots of the World-Tree— may his sight find us not wanting in wisdom."

6. Drinking

The speaker then drinks from the horn and pours the remainder into the blessing bowl on the harrow. The horn is then refilled and passed to each of the gathered folk. Each makes the sign of the hammer over the rim of the horn before drinking. Each time, the remainder of the mead is poured into the blessing bowl by the speaker.

7. Blessing

The speaker now sprinkles the harrow and the gathered folk with the words:

"The blessings of all the gods and goddesses of our folk be upon us!"

8 Giving

After the blessing is completed, the speaker pours the contents of the blessing bowl out upon the bare ground to the east of the harrow with the words:

"To Woden, Tiw, Balder, Frigga, Idunna, Thunar, Freya, Frey and to all the gods and goddesses of our folk: for good growth among folk and upon the land!"

9. Leaving

The speaker returns to the harrow and says:

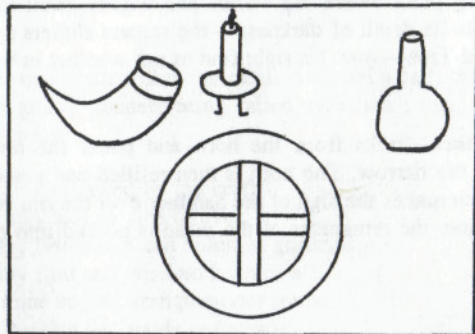
"Thus the work is once again wrought, it renews our hearts to do worthy deeds, and to strive toward our goals with mighty moods, wise words, and trust in our own might and main— ever holding to our oaths to ourselves and to our folk!"

Twelfth Night: The Festival of Yule

(December 31)

This is the culmination of the Yule-Tide, and religiously the most important of the twelve nights of Yule. The rebirth of the Sun is completed on this night. In the deep tradition of the Yule-oath the origins of our "New Year's resolutions" are to be found.

The harrow is furnished out with the horn, a vessel of beer or ale, a single (red) candle, and the Yule-wreath in its center. The harrow should be made of stone and set up outside, or alternatively in an indoor room with a chimney or smoke hole.



The Harrow

1. Hallowing

The stead is hallowed with the hammer working, at the conclusion of which a ring is drawn on the ground around the gathered folk.

2. Call

The officiating speaker stands before the harrow, facing the north [Y], and says:

"By the bristles of the boar!
Jólnir (Woden) lord of the Yule-Tide
We call upon thee to witness
These our oaths of Yule
Jólaheit skaltu heyra ok heit skullum vér strengja!"
(Thou shalt hear the oaths of Yule and we shall bind the oaths.)

3. Oath Taking

Each of the gathered true men and women, in order of rank and/or age, then steps up to the harrow and with the right hand grasps the center of the Yule-wreath. With the left hand this individual lifts the horn aloft and speaks his or her own personal oath or boast. After the speech is through, he or she drinks half of the contents of the horn and pours the rest out as a gift with the words:

"To Jólnir and to the oaths of Yule!"

As each person finishes, the officiating speaker refills the horn for the next one. This is repeated until all oaths are taken.

4. Lighting the Yule-wreath

The speaker then takes up position before the harrow and pours out the holy fuel upon the Yule-wreath. This may be any hallowed flammable substance; rarified butter ("ghee") is perhaps the most traditional. The pattern for pouring the fuel is:



As the speaker pours the fuel, he or she says:

“Jólnir, ruling the Yule-Tide,
We yearn for thy might,
Yare the year in the yard to make!”

Then from the flame of the red candle, signifying the old year passing away, the Yule-wreath is ignited, with the words:

“In the year of this Yule
Are we tried and true:
We plight our troth
And truly pledge
To hold these holy oaths
In the year of the Yule!”

As the wreath is burning, the speaker says:

“Jólnir, ruling the Yule-Tide,
We yearn for thy might—
That when the yarn of the year is yielded
yare the year in the yard was made!”

The gathered folk then watch the flames as they burn the wreath, carrying their oaths aloft. While gazing at the embers of the wreath glowing in the darkness on the harrow, individuals may be moved to make prophesies for the coming year.

5. Leaving

No formal closing is used here, as the purpose of the rite is the opening of the whole year to the holy power throughout the coming year. Each individual retreats in his or her own time back to the main gathering area.

The Great Blessing of Disting (Around February 14)

Disting is a festival of importance to the home region. It is given to the dises (from whom it gets its name), and thus it is strongly linked to the Winter Nights festival. But it is really given more for gatherings of a social and/or clanic nature, and traditionally at a time when local Things are held. At this time, the Earth is prepared to have the seeds sown so that growth will take place in the land.

If a formal Thing is held, the rites particular to opening and closing a thingstead should be performed. (These are described in detail in the section concerning the Tide of the Great Thing.) Also, gifts may be given to the dises and elves at this time. But the tide is really most holy to the goddess Freya and to the god Váli. Freya is very pronounced in her erotic aspect at this time, and blessings designed to bring out this quality are right to do during this tide. Also, it is the right time to do the Blessing of Váli, the god of vengeance, and thus of rebirth.

Blessing of Váli

For this working a piece of string or twine at least a foot long is needed.

1. Hallowing

Perform the hammer-working.

2. Reading

Read or recite the “Short Seeress’ Prophecy” from the *Poetic Edda*.

3. Rede

“On this day/night we remember the ties of kin, and understand our bonds with them. We remember as well our kindred oaths of troth and trust to the siblings gathered around the harrow.”

4. Call

“Váli, son of Rind, the Etin-wife now among the Ases— and Sigtyr, son of Borr, born of Buri, spawn of the wind-cold corn!”

5. Loading

Mead, ale, or beer is poured into the horn. An assistant to the speaker stands with the twine held in a loose knot over the rim of the horn as the speaker says:

“Dweller in the homesteads of the forebears— thou art the god who frees long-bound force! Unbind now the bond of narrow blindness— free us from the fetters in which we have long abode, apart from kith and kindred! Unbind the bonds and free the fetters— as the knot is un-knit. . . (here the knot over the rim of the horn is unknotted). . . boundless are the bonds, free the fetters!”

Váli-Áli-Váli-Áli-Váli— god of vengeance— heave up the holy might of the old ones, who rest unquietly deep down below! Rebind us in their troth, again we hear their holy Rede, and with this knot we again know their mighty myne.”

(Here the assistant ties the twine onto the horn.)

“Váli to thee vows and valued oaths
are gladly given all great gifts:
lift the elders’ lives in love bind the kin
 in homes ’round holy hearths.”

(Speaker hallows the horn with the hammer-sign.)

6. Drinking

The horn is passed around for each to hallow and drink from, and is returned to the speaker, who pours the remainder into the blessing bowl with the formula:

“Váli-Áli-Váli-Áli-Váli!”

7. Blessing

The holy liquid is sprinkled on the harrow and on the gathered folk with the words:

“May the blessings of Váli be upon this harrow and upon the gathered folk.”

8. Giving

The holy liquid is poured out onto the ground to the west of the harrow with the words:

“To Váli, and to Freya, is this gift given!”

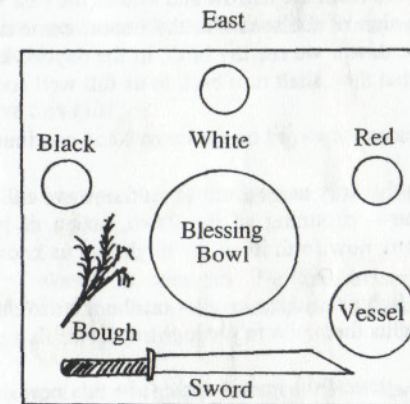
9. Leaving

“By the wonder of Woden, by the troth of Tiw, and by the thunder of Thunar— so shall it be!”

The Greatest Blessing of Easter (Ostara) Spring Equinox (Around March 21)

This festival is traditionally celebrated with an all-night vigil, in which the gathered folk stay up throughout the night while remaining indoors. In the hour before sunrise they make a procession to the area in which the blessing is to take place. This should ideally be where the sunrise can be clearly seen. As the first light of the spring is seen, the working begins.

The harrow is fitted out with a sword, horn, mead-vessel, blessing bowl, bough of evergreen, and three candles (black, red, and white), arranged in the following manner:



1. Hallowing

The hammer-working is performed.

The speaker faces the sunrise in the east in the [Ÿ] posture and says:

“This stead is hallowed to our work here this morning. As the god Heimdall wards the Bifrost Bridge, so the stead is warded against all unholy wights and ways.”

After a pause the speaker continues:

“Hail holy Easter! Hail the daughter born at Delling’s Door, at the Gate of Day who bears the light! Hail Easter, lady of the dawn!”

2. Reading

Here the "Sigrdrífumál" from the *Poetic Edda* is read or recited.

3. Rede

Still facing east, the speaker says:

"This morning we are gathered to call forth the mighty lady of the new-born light. Warded by the steeds of heaven, she rises and gives us light, love, and lust, and she bears also an awesome side, middling and mighty. This our foes shall doom, yet we too must know it well and love it well for to wax great in wisdom."

4. Call

Speaker raises sword from the harrow and salutes the east with the words:

"Easter, we raise the sign of the sword in thy honor, come and dwell among the folk of the sax! In the dawn, we see thy birth, in the day we know thy power, and in the dusk we trust that thou shalt turn back to us full well soon."

Speaker then replaces the sword on the harrow and continues:

"No mask has hidden thy holy name from us, and now we call thee forth by deeds right and holy: Easter— drotning of the dawn, queen of heaven— clothed in white and gold — break now forth in all thy might, let us know thy main!"

The speaker now lights the three candles on the altar in the order: white, red, black. As he or she lights them, the following is spoken:

"We now kindle thee, three-fold fire of spring. In this new dawn of the year we start the fire of its birth (white candle is lit), we light the flame of its life (red candle is lit), and we kindle the lamp of its death (black candle is lit)— as signs of the timeless, ever-becoming power of our souls.

5. Loading

Speaker pours mead into the horn and holds it aloft with the words:

"To thee, awesome Easter, who knows the ways of Woden, we give to thee the gifts of our works all woven and blended with the might of this mead. As we lend you this mead, so lend us thy might— haunt our hearts, abide in our breaths, make whole our minds and mighty our moods and memories!
Hail Easter! Hail the awesome Ostara! Ostara! Ostara!"

6. Drinking

The horn is then passed among the gathered folk and the remainder is poured into the blessing bowl on the harrow by the speaker.

7. Blessing

The speaker then goes on to sprinkle first the harrow (turning around it three times with the sun), and then all the good folk and true. While doing this the speaker repeats at will:

"The blessings of Easter upon us!"

8. Giving

The speaker then pours out the contents of the blessing bowl to the east of the harrow with the words:

"To Easter we give this gift!"

9. Leaving

The blessing bowl is returned to the harrow, the speaker faces the new dawn and says:

"Thus the work of wonder is wrought! The fires of spring burn, the power of Easter burns forth, she blooms in our minds, and we move with her might. We know her blessings all the year through!"

At the conclusion of the working it is traditional to leap up in the air as high as you can three times. Also, there is the tradition of tossing an Easter-egg high into the air and catching it. If this operation is successful, it is a good omen for things to come in the year. Such eggs, or their shells, are powerful charms.

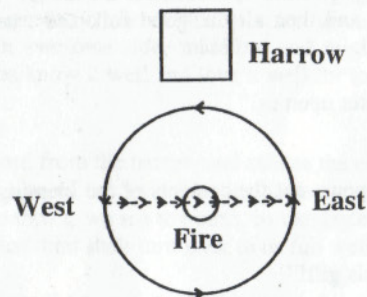
The Great Blessings of Walburga and May-Day The Festival of Walburga's Night (April 30) and May-Day (May 1)

Walburga's Night

Walburga's Night is the most mysterious of the rites normally performed by an all-around kindred or hearth. It contains many runic (secret) elements (most find it very beneficial to delve into the depths of the self on this occasion). The

working formula is slightly different from the other blessings. It is sharply contrasted with the bright, life-bearing festivities of the following day.

The harrow is set up in the following fashion, with a fire pit to the south of it. The diagram also indicates the directions for the dance around the fire described in the Yielding section below.



1. Hallowing

All stand in a half circle in the south, facing north around the harrow, and the speaker says:

"The hof is about to be raised on high— let all within this hof and about this harrow be here of their own free wills and in full frith and grith."

The speaker then places the point of the knife in a vessel containing a mixture of salt and yeast, and says:

"Salt and yeast are the seeds of life. Now are this salt and this yeast hallowed, and they shall make holy our lives, as we wield them in these works of craft given to Woden and Freya."

Water is now poured into the salt-yeast mixture, and the speaker stirs them together with the point of the knife saying:

"The holy salt drives out any ill in this water and the yeast quickens it— together they may be wielded in the worship of Woden and Freya, throughout these workings."

The solution of water, yeast and salt is then poured in a ring around the harrow, as the speaker says:

"Woden and Freya, god and goddess, father and mother of all might and main, here do we call upon you to come together with us in our workings. Ward us well and steer us within this ring and without it. So shall it be!"

To which all respond:

"So shall it be!"

2. Reading (optional)

Read or recite the "Lokasenna" from the *Poetic Edda*.

3. Loading

The speaker faces north in the [Y] and says:

"Upon this night we see the ending of the dark tide— our lord Galdor-Father has gone through to bring us once more to the light of lady Freya, the fair. Here we stand at midnight with the might of the moon on the wane and that of Sunna waxing— in the twixt and twain shall we see the inner light of day!"

The center fire pit is now ignited, while the speaker says:

"Now we light the beacon of Walburga to quicken the might of life and of our inner sight on its long road-wending!"

Welcome Woden! [all repeat]

Welcome Walburga! [all repeat]

The speaker, still facing north, says:

"Out of the horns of heaven all-eight we call upon you, ever-living ones— come ye elder queens, ye ides from out of the airts— drive out of the airts, O drighthen of dread, to us to work thy wonders— fare now forth, Walburga, wish-wife of a hundred wonders— ward our way down below and steer us on the nether roads to inner sight!"

The ides are among us! [all repeat]

Woden is with us! [all repeat]

5. Yielding

The speaker turns to the gathered folk and says:

"Now the loke and play along thy road begins O mighty one, within the ring of the staff."

The gathered folk begin to dance around the central fire pit in a widdershins (counterclockwise) direction. Those who wish to may break through the ring in a west-to-east direction to jump over the central fire pit. This is done to gain inner vision and quickening of life.

During the dance, the officiating speaker performs the Blessing of Walburga. The speaker pours ale into the horn and says:

"To thee, O Walburga—in memory of the gore of the goat! Take well with this our gift to thee!"

The speaker then pours ale down the "gift hole" that has been drilled into the ground to the north of the harrow.

The dance continues until all have been touched by Walburga, whereupon they sit in a half-circle to the north of the harrow, facing the fire. When all are in a meditative state, the speaker says:

"We all have wended our ways to Walburga— let us see her wonders!"

All meditate on the fire and the horn is passed around once in total silence. The remainder of the ale is poured into the gift-hole.

6. Closing

The speaker goes to the harrow and says:

"Now the work has been wrought— let us now go to sýmbel to share our gifts with Walburga, with the ides, and with their queen, Freya!"

7. Sýmbel

The horn is passed around once with a full given by each of the gathered folk who wishes to do so. Then the horn is retired to the harrow to be used at will throughout the sýmbel.

May-Day

On the following day, May first, general festivities are held celebrating the Spring-tide and the playful aspects of life. There need be no formal blessings or other workings. However, it is sometimes the practice to set up the "May-Pole" at this time. The other, more usual, option is to set up the May-Pole at the Midsummer-Tide.

The Greatest Blessing of Midsummer

(June 21)

This is one of the three Greatest Blessings of the troth, at which time gifts are given to all of the gods and goddesses of the troth in common. The celebration of these three blessings, the other two being Yule and harvest, are the essential acts of good and true men and women.

The harrow is set up in the standard fashion.

1. Hallowing

The hammer-working is performed, at the conclusion of which the speaker says:

"This stead is hallowed for our work here today. As the god Heimdall wards the Bifrost Bridge, so this stead is warded against all unholy wights and ways."

2. Reading

The lay of "Baldr's Dreams" is read or recited to the gathered folk.

3. Rede

The speaker says:

"This noon-tide of the Midsummer we gather together as in days of yore, to greet the Sun at her highest stead, and to honor all the gods and goddesses who dwell in Asgard. We call upon them to make ripe their might and main in our lives. We call upon them all — the holy many — living as a whole, as is Woden's Law."

4. Call

The speaker makes the following calls. After each call, the gathered folk give welcome to the god or goddess being called with their name, and the words: "We Give Thee Welcome!"

“Woden, we are awed by thy craft,
Tiw, we stay true to thee forever,
Balder, thy brightness and boldness guide us,
Frigga, thy fruit and wisdom keep us all,
Idunna, thine apples strengthen our souls,
Thunar, thy thunder wards our stead,
Freya, we get freedom from thy frolic,
Frey, from thee we get a harvest of frith.”

Then a litany of divine attributes of the gods and goddesses just called is recited by the speaker. After each the gathered folk shout: “We give thee welcome!”

“Rune-Lord,
One-Handed God,
Holder of the Hringhorn,
Lady of the gods and goddesses,
Keeper of the apples,
Guardian of Asgard,
Holder of the Brisingamen,
God of the Wane.”

“Again we all to you in all your names, be among us here this noon-tide as the year reaches its height and Sunna stands at her strongest stead:

Hail all the gods, hail all the goddesses,
Hail all the holy ones
Who dwell together.”

5. Loading

The speaker pours mead into the horn and says:

“We give you the gifts of our works woven and blended with the might and main of this mead. It lends us — gods and folk together — help in our striving toward the shining plain where the worlds and wights dwell in wholeness. The year has come to its peak of power— the eagle gazes from the topmost branch of the World-Tree— may his sight find us not wanting in wisdom.”

6. Drinking

The speaker then drinks from the horn and pours the remainder into the blessing bowl on the harrow. The horn is then refilled and passed to each of the gathered folk. Each makes the sign of the hammer over the rim of the horn before drinking. Each time the remainder of the mead is poured into the blessing bowl by the speaker.

7. Blessing

The speaker now sprinkles the harrow and the gathered folk with the words:

“The blessings of all the gods and goddesses of our folk be upon us!”

8 Giving

After the blessing is completed, the speaker pours the contents of the blessing bowl out upon the bare ground to the east of the harrow with the words:

“To Woden, Tiw, Balder, Frigga, Idunna, Thunar, Freya, Frey and to all the gods and goddesses of our folk: for good harvest and frith!”

9. Leaving

The speaker returns to the harrow and says:

“Thus the work is once again wrought, it renews our hearts to do worthy deeds and to strive toward our goals with mighty moods, wise words, and trust in our own might and main— ever holding to our oaths to ourselves and to our folk!”

The Great Blessing of the Thing's Tide

(Around August 23)

The Thing is a very complex institution. It is a political convention, a session of government, a court of law, a religious festival, a fair or market, and a party, all wrapped into one. Its timing is also interesting. It comes in late summer (for northern climes) and should be called to begin in the three to four days leading up to a full moon.

Religiously, the high point of the Thing's Tide should be the performance of an all-around blessing to all the gods and goddesses, like the ones performed at Yule or Midsummer. The Thing's Tide is called to order with a Blessing of Tiw on the evening of the first day of the Thing, and is called to an end with another Blessing of Tiw on the morning of the last day.

A Blessing of Tiw

1. Hallowing

The hammer-working is done and then the speaker says:

"This Thing-stead is hallowed for our work here all these days and nights. By the hammer of Thunar is it warded against all that would work ill against us. May we meet in frith and take our leave in grith."

2. Reading

The section of the *Prose Edda* dealing with the loss of Tiw's hand to the Fenris-Wolf is read or recited.

3. Rede

"Under the might and main of the great god Tiw, we are gathered together here, gods and folk together, to hold a holy Thing. May he make our moods all-mighty and our words all-wise."

4. Call

"From thy stead deep within the Irminsul we call to thee O mighty lord of laws and leavings of the wolf! Thou who, by the ordeal of battle, metes out good speed and bad, in the highest of laws all-whole. Fare now forth, O mighty one-handed god, from thy high-seat deep within the most hidden halls of Asgard! Come shine thy light of law and right over our deeds and doings upon this Thing-stead!"

5. Loading

The speaker pours mead into the horn, lifts it aloft and says:

"We give you this horn blended with the might and main of all our deeds and doings, that thou shalt mete out that law as we all have it coming to us! Tiw! Tiw!"

6. Drinking

The speaker makes the sign of the hammer over the rim of the horn, drinks from it, and passes it around to the gathered folk; all make the sign of the hammer or that of the T-rune before drinking. The remainder of the mead in the horn is poured into the blessing bowl on the harrow.

7. Blessing

The speaker turns twice around the harrow, sprinkling it with the mead, while saying:

"The great blessing of Tiw be upon this Thing-stead!"

Then the speaker sprinkles the gathered folk, saying:

"And may his blessing be upon all the gathered folk!"

8. Giving

The blessing bowl is poured out to the north of the harrow with the words:

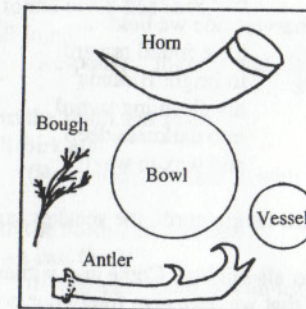
"To Tiw, high-god of the heavens, and to Earth, mother of us all!"

9. Leaving

"Thus our work is wrought. Let us now go forth and speak with wise words, make law with mighty moods, hold hard to our oaths of troth and fellowship, and make merry in frith and grith!"

The Harvest Festival The Greater Blessing of the Wanes (Autumnal Equinox: around September 23)

The harrow is set up in the usual way, with the addition of an antler, as shown in the diagram below.



1. Hallowing

The hammer-working is performed, at the conclusion of which the speaker says:

"Wise Wanes and mighty, who ever wend your ways through the world and shower blessings upon your kindred here on the Earth— mother of us all!"

2. Reading

The "Skírnismál" from the *Poetic Edda* is read or recited.

3. Rede

"Now is come the tide of the harvest of our deeds— all that we have wrought is come again to us as our right reward. Let us now give thanks to the gods and goddesses among the Wanes in whose bounties we abide."

4. Call

The speaker faces north with the antler horn held aloft and says:

"We hear you in the rustling leaves of fall— in the harvest ham we smell you— taste you on our lovers' lips— in the crops newly cut we see you— we feel you in the winds of the coming winter.

Hail thee day!	Hail the sons of day!
Hail night and her daughters!	
Again are ye all even!	
Sunna wends her way	Hela to meet.
The fruits of Frey	and of Freya his sister,
	at this harvest tide we hold:
Our works and words	have found reward!
Ingvi gives his being	to bright Birkana
Frey gives to Gerð	his gleaming sword
all wend their way	into darkness deep
there to grow great	and wax in weal!"

After a pause, while still facing north, the speaker says:

"We call upon you Wanes all-mighty! Come and witness our work and ward our ways! Be now among us, that we may give freely our holy gifts!"

The speaker now turns to the east, holds out the antler, and says:

"From the east we call Freya!"

(Response: "Freya is with us!")

Speaker then turns to the south-east and says:

"From the inner-south we call Vaningi!"

(Response: "Vaningi is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the south and says:

"From the south we call Birkana!"

(Response: "Birkana is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the southwest and says:

"From the outer-south we call Vanadis!"

(Response: "Vanadis is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the west and says:

"From the west we call Frey!"

(Response: "Frey is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the northwest and says:

"From the outer north we call Skírnir!"

(Response: "Skírnir is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the north and says:

"From the north we call Ingvi!"

(Response: "Ingvi is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the south and says:

"From the south we call Birkana!"

(Response: "Birkana is with us!")

Speaker now turns to the north-east and says:

"From the inner-north we call Gerð!"

(Response: "Gerð is with us!")

5. Loading

The speaker then returns to a position in front of the harrow, pours the mead into the drinking horn, and holds it aloft, saying:

"We give the gifts of our deeds and doings, betokened by this mead— all blended with might and main. May this gift be given back to us anew, that we may work with our kindred wights and realms all-round— toward ever greater growth and weal!"

6. Drinking

After making the sign of the hammer over the rim of the horn, the speaker drinks some of the mead and pours what remains in the horn into the blessing bowl. The horn is then passed around to the gathered folk and what remains is then poured into the blessing bowl.

7. Blessing

The speaker now takes up the evergreen bough and sprinkles the harrow, turning around it three times with the sun, while saying:

"I hallow the harrow with the blood of Kvasir!"

Then the speaker turns outward and blesses the eight corners of heaven (the eight directions). The whole time the speaker is doing this, he or she repeats:

"I hallow all the horns of heaven with Kvasir's blood!"

Finally each of the true men and women present is blessed. All the while the speaker is doing this, he or she repeats:

"The blessings of the whole of the Wanes be upon you all!"

8. Giving

The speaker then returns to the harrow and takes up the blessing bowl, carrying it to a point just west of the harrow. There the mead is poured out with the words:

"Take well with this our gift to you O mighty Wanes in the west!"

9. Leaving

Facing the harrow the speaker says:

"The gifts of harvest have been given, and we have gotten our right rewards this year. Now let us again go forward, gathering new and great deeds and doings, that next year's harvest shall be greater still! Now, we wend our way, to sit at ale with holy gods and goddesses gathered with us tonight. Thus the work by the harrow is wrought!"

Part III
Working in Troth

Chapter 30
On Affiliating with a True Organization
and Working with Others in Troth

In ancient times it was often part of a curse formula by means of which death was ordained for an individual that he be cast out from the tribal community. As an outcast he would find a miserable death. The Germanic peoples are famous in the world for their heroic individuality, but this is, in fact, an exception to the normal situation which recognizes the overriding condition that humans need other humans to depend on for certain things. Those on whom they depend, however, should not be the king or "government," but rather their own kith and kin—no one else is really worthy of our trust. Yet in the world in which we find ourselves this trust in our fellow travelers is missing. The only solution to this problem is *retribalization* and the renewal of the old system of sworn gilds and retinues. Those organizations in the Ásatrú movement which seek to effect this form of social reconfiguration are worthy of our attention and support. The troth is not something that can be practiced alone. This is fundamentally because the bonds of troth that are found between Gods and Men must also be found among men for the bonds of troth to be reawakened in truth.

This chapter is intended as a general guide to the kinds of groups and organizations that are to be found in the world which are in one way or another dedicated to the revitalization of the old Germanic religion. We will stay away from discussing in detail specific organizations as much as possible. I will only mention that the hidden Woodharrow Kindred is most closely associated with the Ásatrú Folk Assembly (POB 445 Nevada City, California 95959).

If one makes a careful study of James C. Russell's *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity* (Oxford, 1994) one will see that it was the tribal organization and identity which was of paramount importance to the ancient Germanic peoples. Even in the face of the Christian onslaught, it was this principle which held our forefathers together. This principle can be called "tribalism"—the focus of life and values on the organic whole of a group of people to whom any individual owes his allegiance and context for meaningful being. It is the reawakening of these principles of tribalism, as much or more than the reawakening of the worship of the ancient Germanic gods and goddesses, which is at the heart of being true. In order to reawaken the old spirit of the troth in the world, tribalism *must* be renewed. One makes no real sense without the other. In this chapter we will review the types of groups that are currently active in the general movement to reawaken the Germanic spirit. This chapter is not

intended as an exhaustive treatment of all the groups. Some of them come and go rather quickly. Rather we will focus on the two main *kinds* of groups or organizations which exist, and only discuss by name those groups which seem to have established some permanence.

The question may arise in some people's minds: "Why should I work with others? — Why can't I be a 'solitary' practitioner?" The answer to that is you can, but it is better to work with others because in so doing you are taking the meaning of the reawakening of the old Germanic spirit to a higher level. The old Germanic tradition was as concerned with social organization and the maintenance of tribal solidarity as much as it was in the worship of gods and goddesses. In fact retribalization is more essential than rituals because only with retribalization can the gods be assured of permanent honor. Therefore, taking steps to return our culture to a tribal one is as important as anything one can do in the reawakening of the old way. In a practical sense the advantages of a tribal society are that one can trust one's kith and kin in the tribe in ways almost entirely foreign to modern life today. The spiritual benefits of this are also tremendous. Cooperation with others who may know more than yourself in order to learn from them, to teach others, to share what you know and what you can do with your fellow kindred members is a boon in itself. Our society is at present in the throws of alienation. The origin of this alienation is the de-tribalization of culture. Churches for a while filled the gap they had created. But because the church is not really interested in organic social cohesion, and in many ways has thrived on social chaos through the centuries, it has no vested interest in tribal solidarity. The tribal Germanic religion depends on the continuance of the blood of the whole people, whereas the Christian church has always concentrated on the salvation of isolated individuals. Christianity was never a true *family* religion. In many ways the modern world is just a secularized, materialistic manifestation of the same patterns found in medieval Christianity. In fact the most effective form of rebellion against the modern world, and against the remnants of the medieval world from which the modern world sprang, is to develop alternative communities and networks based on traditional principles—clans, tribes, and sworn gilds or retinues.

In chapter 3 we reviewed some of the history of the current reawakening of Germanic traditions. This analysis is intended as a further guide to possible interaction with these groups. We cannot cover all groups by name, but a search of the internet with words such as "Ásatrú" will yield many contacts. What I propose here is a simple analysis of the kinds of groups that exist. In essence there are only two types of organizations: those that are "universalist" and those that are "folkish." These can also be referred to as the left and right wings of the movement respectively.

The universalist wing of the Germanic reawakening is perhaps best represented by the Ring of Troth, as it has evolved over time. The general principle of the universalist view of the troth is that it is a freewill choice to affiliate with the Germanic gods and goddesses. The practitioner is free to choose the Germanic gods, and remains free to pick and choose from a variety of other pantheons in the future, should his or her affiliation with the troth not "work out." The strength of this approach is that it is one that is very much supported by the host culture, i.e. mainstream American consumer society. Most Americans like to think of themselves as agents of freewill, able to pick and choose whatever suits them on a day to day basis. In the religious sphere this is what drives the "New Age" market in books and other products. "New Age" marketers have a vested interest in their customers being interested in as many different kinds of things as possible, and generally discourage over-dedication to any one path. The weakness of this branch or wing of the troth is that it is not organic in nature. It can be denied at any time in the future, when the troth no longer feeds the practitioner's "needs." For the universalist, all gods are pretty much equal; it is more a matter of temporary aesthetics as to which pantheon is chosen by the individual. Again, this has the advantage of being a popular approach in our world today, and is perhaps a necessary component in the overall movement.

The folkish wing of the Germanic reawakening is, on the other hand, perhaps best represented by the Ásatrú Folk Assembly and the Ásatrú Alliance. The general principle of the folkish view of the troth is that it is an innate, blood-line relationship with the Germanic divinities. The affiliation with the Germanic gods and goddesses is based on a genetic and deep-cultural link with them. The practitioner is bound by nature to the Germanic gods, and therefore cannot really consider himself free to pick and choose from other pantheons, regardless of how he might feel in the future. This is one of the most powerful strengths of the folkish branch. Once this principle of organic, or natural, linkage between one's heritage and one's spiritual path is *realized* and understood for its profound meaning, the apparent "choice" is in actuality understood as an irrevocable realization. After this principle is absorbed, it becomes an undeniable part of the practitioner's essence and can never be completely reversed. The weakness of the folkish branch of the troth lies in its public relations problems. As an approach to spirituality and culture, it is not supported by the host culture of modern America. Opponents of it may refer to its tenets as being "racist." Those who follow it may, as creatures of modern society themselves, begin to feel "restricted" in their freedom to explore other avenues of spirituality.

In the final analysis there should be room for groups on both ends of this spectrum, and everything in between. The movement for the reawakening of the

Germanic spirit has never been a monolithic thing, and such cannot ever be expected of it. True folk should never fall into the trap of judging this or that person or group as being "true Ásatrú" or not. One can and should judge for one's self if one wishes to affiliate with this or that group and support its aims, but in the mysterious way of Odin's workings, we can never know for sure what is going to have positive repercussions in the movement as a whole. The universalist may think the folkish man is a "racist" and is giving the movement a "bad name." But does the universalist not see that the folkish practitioner is reenacting the tribal myth of the ancient Germanic peoples, and must be seen as a heroic warrior against the decadence of the modern world? By the same token the folkish one may hold the universalist to be a "New Age" kook or agent for the degradation of the folk. But can he not see that the universalist is acting as an envoy to the modern world, making the possibilities for future success and growth of the troth ever greater in the future? All have their roles to play in the ecosystem of ideas in action.

As for myself in all this, I see myself as well right of center on these questions. However, the Rune-Gild requires no litmus test on these issues. In any event, kindred links are best made on the basis of personal relationships, and not so much on ideological grounds. Ultimately it will be the living experience of the true man or woman in their own lives which teaches the truth underlying these pathways that lead between us and the world of the gods and goddesses.

So the most important question now is: "What am I to do?" First research all the groups you can find. Then, based on your best analysis of which one is best for you, pick one and affiliate with it, at least on a provisional basis. If there is a local branch of the group— a kindred, hearth, or whatever, make links with it. Get involved locally. The primary good is *local* action. If the organization you find best to your liking has no local group in your area, then take it upon yourself to start one and try to make contact with other local people who might be interested in the troth or Ásatrú. Distant action, affiliations only by mail or the internet, is an extremely poor substitute for real interaction with real folk. The retribalization and continuation of the spirit of the ancient North can hardly be expected to be carried out by mail or over the internet! These tools are merely methods of making connections and for conveying information more rapidly and over long distances, that is all. They are not *substitutes* for reality. The Traditional rebellion against the modern world cannot advance while being mired in the trappings of that world.

After you have been affiliated one way or the other with some true group for a period of not less than one year, you should be able to make your decision about what should be in your heart of hearts a complete commitment. Whether you are

joining something already established locally, or whether you have worked locally for that time in long-distance affiliation with one of the major groups, after a year of work it should be apparent if the partnership is working. Once a commitment is made to a group it will have a lasting effect on your life, so be careful about this. (Note that these group affiliations are only indirectly linked to your personal relationship with the gods— that link will be made permanent as soon as you realize it was never broken, nor can it be broken until your blood-line is destroyed.) The essential thing for you to concentrate on in the beginning is to get together with other true folk *at least* three times a year in order to conduct the Greatest Blessings of the Year. From this seed will grow what is Needed.

As a final note here: The Rune-Gild is not a religious organization. The hidden Woodharrow Kindred fulfills our religious obligations, and is a purely local operation. Our work in the Gild is done in part as a service to the greater movement for the reawakening of Germanic spirituality, even though the primary focus of the Gild is the Odian transformation of the individual and dedication to the Odian quest of Seeking the Runes. The Gild also encourages all its members to explore true religious organizations and to support them wherever and however possible.

Chapter 31

On Becoming an Elder in the Lore

Can it be doubted that the movement toward the reawakening of Germanic culture is in need of experts formally trained in the lore of our folk? There is so much to learn in order to be a *teacher* of the folk. It is this role which is to be emphasized by the elder or *goði/gyðja*. He or she must first know something before he or she can teach it. This knowledge must be deep and seasoned, not just superficial and recently obtained. In the first edition of this book, this chapter referred to the existing qualifications for those seeking to become elders in the Ring of Troth organization. These criteria proved to be of great controversy both inside and outside that organization. This controversy stemmed mainly from the modern distaste for objective standards, and the desire of many to name themselves as authorities, despite the fact that they had not done the work necessary to teach authoritatively.

Traditionally in some time periods and among many tribes of the Germanic peoples, priestly authority was simply assumed by the king, tribal chieftain or by the "father of the family." These tribes are among those from whom we derive the Anglo-Saxon and West-Scandinavian traditions which most inform North American deep-culture. Therefore this "grassroots" approach to spiritual authority is much admired by us, and is a model which we seek to re-establish ultimately. However, we must also be realistic and remember that in ancient times these individuals had grown up entirely within the context of their Germanic culture and world-view. A situation far different from the one we find ourselves in today. What they absorbed naturally and unconsciously, we must seek to regain spiritually and with awareness. This later process necessarily involves systematic learning and subsequent teaching of what has been learned.

At this juncture the present chapter is a description of the process required of those who would become an elder in the hidden Woodharrow Kindred, and the criteria are offered here as a model for those who might wish to adopt them for their own kindreds or organizations, or even as a measure of personal individual accomplishment leading toward self-designation as a *goði*. The criteria listed below act as an ideal curriculum for training as an elder.

It should perhaps be noted that in some forms of the Ásatrú/Odinist movement the "priesthood" is referred to by the Old Norse terms *goði* (for men) and *gyðja* (for women). We do not often use Old Norse terms in the troth simply because we do not feel the need to resort to exotic forms to express our own folk-troth.

When people are called a elders or *goðar*, it should mean certain things. It should mean that they have undergone a rigorous training in the heart and soul of

the lore of the folk and that they have met a set of other pre-established criteria which qualify them to represent the Germanic culture in an official capacity. When newcomers ask such a person a question on the lore or on the culture of our Germanic ancestors, a true elder should be able to answer authoritatively. Such authority is hard to obtain through unsystematic and haphazard forms of "self-education."

Here we would like to outline just what it means to become an elder, and what the basic qualifications are. This will serve two purposes: first, those interested in becoming elders will be able to see what kind of work they have cut out for themselves. Also, those who may in the future come into contact with those who call themselves elders will know what kind of training these elders have undergone, and what qualifications they have which enable them to be known as elders.

The presence of such objective criteria are in place as a bulwark against the pervasive threat of occultizoid thinking in our movement.

The Qualifications to Become an Elder

1. The candidate must be at least twenty-five years of age.
2. The candidate must have had an official affiliation with the kindred and with a recognized Ásatrú/troth organization for at least five years prior to the date of his or her prospective naming as an elder.
3. The candidate must be maintaining an independent lifestyle, that is, he or she must be financially self-supporting.
4. The candidate must have a record of at least two years leading kindred meetings and/or leading the workings of the Great Blessings of the Year.
5. The candidate must have a degree from an accredited institution of higher learning in a field related to his or her work in the troth. (A degree in Germanic Studies is the ideal— unfitting would be things such as chemistry, engineering, etc.), or have completed the full course of study at the Woodharrow Institute for Germanic and Runic Studies.
6. The candidate must submit a written work on some specialized topic within the Germanic tradition. This topic must have prior approval by the of the candidate's teacher and the final work must meet the standards of quality established by the teacher.
7. The candidate must complete a written exam on matters of basic lore and history relevant to the Germanic tradition.
8. The candidate must pass on the basis of an oral interview before the candidate's teacher.
9. The candidate must be ceremonially installed and named as an elder in a working officiated by the candidate's teacher.

Once these nine criteria are met, one can be called an elder or *goði* good and true.

The first two criteria are in place to ensure that the candidate is mature both as a person and as an active and dedicated participant in the movement to restore full awareness of our Germanic culture. The third criterion extends this to ensure that the individuals are self-reliant and have mastered at least the first level of becoming a success in life. If they are going to have the respect of their kindred members, and be a model for them in life, they must have attained to a certain level of basic mastery themselves. Training in the mechanics of running the blessings and leading group meetings with success is at the crux of the fourth criterion. This must be tested over a long period of time so that the candidate can mature in this position *before* being named a full elder.

Of all the qualifications shown above, the fifth one, requiring a university degree, will perhaps be seen by some to be out of place. So perhaps a further word of explanation is in order. In many major universities around the western world, great storehouses of learning and lore concerning our folk and troth are to be found. This has been "secularized" to be sure, but that is how it has been protected and continued. The latest developments along the lines of inquiry begun by the Romantics of the late 1700s and early 1800s are now to be found there. With this requirement we incorporate and co-opt the institutions of higher learning to our own purposes. Christian clergymen must undergo training in a seminary in order to be ordained in their religion, the tenets and lore of which are well-known. If this is true, then should it not be just as true that anyone who would be called the equivalent of a clergyman in the troth or Ásatrú should be at least similarly qualified. The Christian/modernist establishment has for centuries fought with a trained and credentialed force, while we seem to try to challenge it with a cadre of amateurs.

Criteria six through eight are the final screening mechanisms and objective proofs of competence. An elder is primarily a *teacher*, and as such should be able to articulate his or her ideas both in speech and writing. The final criterion provides the finishing moment of transformation into a publicly recognized state of being an elder.

The *goði* when officiating in a blessing (*blót*) is enacting a technology for the conducting of divine force and form to the gathered folk. In this sense he or she is performing a sacerdotal function. One does not have to be an elder in the lore to perform this aspect of the troth. Any true man or woman can do this. Little to no "training" is required for this beyond some basic practice and experience. But to have deep knowledge of the history, lore, languages, and philosophies connected to Germanic culture, a more systematic approach is needed. The elder in the lore

is not like a Catholic priest; he or she is more like a rabbi— a teacher of culture and a repository of wisdom connected to that culture. It is my conviction that such elders in lore are *necessary* to the reawakening of authentic Germanic deep-culture. They will not be the entirety of the movement, but they will be an essential *part* of it. Such elders in lore can and will be extremely effective fighters in the re-establishment of Germanic spirituality, and ultimately should be a resource available to all branches of the movement, not the exclusive expression of a single branch.

Glossary

This glossary of technical words used throughout the text of this book indicates the exact definitions of words that might be used in unfamiliar contexts. Here Old English (OE) or Old Norse (ON) terms from which some of these technical terms are ultimately derived are also provided.

- Allsherjargoði: Icelandic term meaning "general" or "high-priest," or "high-chieftain." Used by the Icelanders and early leaders of American Ásatrú.
- Ase, pl. Ases [pron. "ace"]: The gods and goddesses of consciousness in the Germanic pantheon, governing the powers of sovereignty and physical force. (ON *Áss*; pl. *Æsir*)
- Asgard: The enclosure of the gods, the realm where the gods and goddesses exist. (ON *Ásgarðr*)
- athem: The "breath of life," the vital force of life borne in the breath. (OE *æthm.*)
- blessing: The act of sacrificing and distributing the powers of the gods and goddesses in Midgard. (OE *blōtan* and *bletsian*, to sacrifice.)
- boast: A ritual drinking to the honor of a god, goddess, or ancestor, or drinking to seal an oath for actions to be done. Also, a "toast." (OE *bēot.*)
- call: The part of a ritual in which the divine forces to take part in the blessing are invoked.
- dis, p. dises: Feminine collective, ancestral goddesses who rule over fertility, prosperity and the well-being of humans. (ON *dís*, pl. *dísir*)
- drinking: The part of a ritual in which the liquid loaded with the divine forces is ingested by the gathered folk.
- earth: 1) The natural, physical aspects of the universe, 2) The planet Earth, 3) soil.
- Elder: A recognized "priest," or "priestess" in the troth. (OE *ealdor.*)
- etin: A "giant," often distinguished by the entity's great age. the etins could be objects of worship in ancient times. (ON *jötunn*, pl. *jötnar*)
- folk: The Germanic nation (all people of Germanic heritage), 2) The people gathered for a holy event.
- frith: Peace born of security. (ON *friðr*, OE *frið*) Compare this to its companion term "grith."
- full: A "toast" given at a sýmbel.
- garth: A community of true folks made up of two or more families, or hearths. (Derived from the ON term *garðr*, an enclosure or farmstead.)

- giving: the part of a ritual in which the remainder of the loaded liquid not consumed by the gathered folk is returned to the divine realm. also called the "yielding."
- goodman: In a ritual in which active roles are divided, this is the one most responsible for the ritual actions and manipulations of the sacred objects. (OE **godmann*)
- grith: Peace born of a lack of conflict, truce (especially for a set period of time). (ON *gríð* borrowed into OE as *gríð*) Compare this to its companion term "frith."
- hallowing: the part of a ritual in which the space in which the ritual is to be performed is marked off from the profane world, made holy, and protected.
- harrow: 1) An outdoor altar usually made of stone, 2) A general term for the altar in a true working. (OE *hearg*, ON *hörg*).
- hearth: A home, or family-based group of true folks.
- hof: A "court," or "temple" for the gods and goddesses.
- holy: There are two aspects to this term: 1) That which is filled with divine power, and 2) That which is marked off and separate from the profane.
- hugh: The cognitive part of the soul and the seat of and volition; the intellect or "mind." Also called "hidge." (OE *hyge*, ON *hugr.*)
- hyde: the subtle shape or form to which the physical body (lyke) conforms. (Compare to ON *hamr*)
- leaving: The formal closing of a ritual.
- loading: The part of a ritual in which the sacred power that has been called upon is channeled into the holy drink.
- lore: The tradition in all its aspects.
- lyke: The physical part of the soul-body (psychophysical) complex. Also called "lich." (OE *lic.*)
- Midgard: The dwelling place of humanity, the physical plane of existence. Also, Mid-Yard, the enclosure in the midst of all. (OE *Middangeard.*) Meddlert.
- myne: The reflective part of the soul, the memory: personal and transpersonal. (OE *mynd*, ON *minni.*)
- nightly: Sometimes used instead of "daily."
- reading: The part of a ritual in which a mythic-poetic text is recited in order to place the gathering into a mythic time/space, to engage in the mythic flow of timelessness.
- rede: The part of a ritual in which the purpose for the working is clearly stated. The word literally means "counsel" or "advice."

shope: In a ritual in which the active roles are divided, this is the one most responsible for the speaking of the words designed to set the mythic and social context. (OE *scôp*.)

soul: 1) A general term for the psychic parts of the psycho-physical complex, 2) The postmortem shade. (OE *sawl*.)

stall: An indoor altar, especially one that is backed up against an interior wall. (ON *stalli*.)

symbol: The sacred ritual feast at which boasts are drunk. (OE *symbol* ON *sumbl*.)

theal: In a ritual in which the active roles are divided, this is the one most responsible for the speaking of the words designed to engage the mythic and divine powers. (OE *pyle*.)

tide: A time, occasion, a span of time with a definite beginning and end. The most prominent example of the survival of this term is in the expression "Yule-tide."

troth: Religion, being loyal to one's own gods and goddesses, and to one's own ancestors, and cultural values of those ancestors. (ON *trú*, OE *treowþ*.)

true: Adjective form of "troth" can mean "loyal." A "true man" is a man loyal to the gods and goddesses of his own ancestors.

Wane: p. Wanes: The gods and goddesses of organic existence in the Germanic pantheon, governing the realms of organic production, eroticism, wealth, and physical well-being. (ON *Van*; pl. *Vanir*.)

wight: A being or entity of any kind. (ON *vætr*, OE *wiht*)

world: The psycho-chronic human aspects of the manifested universe. (OE *weoruld*, "the age of a man." The cosmos.)

wyrd: The process of the unseen web-work of synchronicity and cause and effect operating on a grand scale throughout the cosmos. Same as weird.

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Announcing
The Woodharrow Institute
 for Germanic and Runic Studies

Goals

The present cultural environment has proven itself rather unsupportive of traditional knowledge and as each day goes by this lack of support seems to increase. Those who have an interest in the preservation, promotion and growth of education in the traditional cultural knowledge relating to the Germanic and Indo-European peoples now have a means to help remedy this kind of progressive cultural decay. It is the goal of the Woodharrow Institute to promote traditional fields of academic study relating to Germanic and Indo-European studies. It is our belief that the preservation of these studies where we find them, and their restoration where they have disappeared, will be of great benefit to society at large as we become increasingly aware of the deep cultural values from which we sprang. It is our ever increasing lack of awareness of our "culture of origin" that has led us to boredom within and conflict without. It is the goal of the Woodharrow Institute to provide access to academic and scientific research and methods to its general membership.

Projects

Educational Curriculum

Woodharrow implements its goals with a variety of effective means: First among these is the establishment of an educational curriculum in a full spectrum of traditional cultural studies, e.g. languages, literature, history, religious and mythic studies, and scientific runology. Woodharrow Institute courses are taught by individuals objectively qualified to teach at the college or university level. The Woodharrow Lore-House, or school, will specifically provide organized classes in the following fields: **Language** (German, modern Scandinavian dialects, [Old] Icelandic and Old English), **Cultural Studies** (Indo-European culture, history of religious ideas, Germanic culture in the Roman Age, Migration Age and Viking Age, Germanic myth and religion), **Literature** (history of Germanic literature before 1500, Old Norse poetry and prose, Old English poetry and prose, the Eddas, Romanticism and Neo-Romanticism), and **Runology** (older, younger and medieval, Anglo-Frisian and modern). Entry into the Lore-House is possible by application and the payment of a set yearly fee, which gives the student unlimited access to courses and resources.

Today universities usually cost the student several thousand dollars per semester. It is the goal of Woodharrow to offer university-level instruction for a mere fraction of this cost. This is a historic opportunity.

Library / Archive

One of the main projects of Woodharrow is the development of a well-organized and sizable library collection of books, journals, off-prints, and other archival material relating to Germanic, Indo-European and runological studies. Libraries around the world have begun to neglect the collection of materials in these fields and so it becomes increasingly necessary for us to do it. It is hoped that a library facility can soon be erected and the collection moved to a location where it can be made available to the membership at large.

It has often been noted that the academic libraries around the world hold tremendous amounts of information that often proves extremely difficult to access for many who are interested in the material and who would greatly benefit from access to it. It is the goal of Woodharrow to collect such material and make it available to those who will be able to use it. The educational curriculum is, however, the essential key to being able to use this material, as much of it will be in languages other than English.

The library is the laboratory of our school. Here we can learn of the ideas of scholars who have gone before us, and carry out a dialog with them. This library will become a permanent collection and will be passed on to future generations of members of the Woodharrow Institute. They will depend to a great extent on what we are able to collect and organize for them now. If we neglect this task, even more information will be lost in the future. Woodharrow accepts tax-deductible donations of books and other material for the library.

Lectures and Classes

The Institute also offers lectures and classes to the public at large on a wide variety of topics of general interest. Among these are: Our Mysterious Original Way of Writing: an Introduction to Runology, Our Ancient Tongue: the Beauty of Old English, Our Ancient Heritage and Destiny, Our Ancient Heritage and its Importance for Today. Members of the Woodharrow speakers' bureau can present these and other topics to the general public, clubs and associations, or to public and private schools.

In the future Woodharrow intends to support young people in their educational endeavors with scholarships either to the Lore-House, or to regular colleges and universities where they can undertake studies relevant to Germanic studies.

Runestone Project

Under the aegis of Woodharrow the "Runestone Project" seeks to re-establish the concrete expression of deep cultural values by erecting authentic major runestones in North America. These stones will be created according to traditional methods and techniques and will have as their underlying purpose the same motives that caused our ancestors to raise such stones in antiquity: memory of the dead and continuity of the deep values of our unique culture— as well as the everlasting fame of the carvers. These stones can be carved by rune-masters on a commission basis, or simply erected by the qualified masters.

Symbol

The official journal of the Woodharrow Institute is called *Symbol*. It acts as a forum for the presentation of the results of research in the fields of Germanic and runic studies, as well as other academic fields relating to Indo-European studies which might have played a part in the development of the Germanic cultural tradition. Articles which appear in *Symbol* will concentrate on themes of relating to mythology, religion, and the history of ideas. A major feature of the journal will be translations of older scholarly articles from German and the Scandinavian dialects as well as reprints of older articles in English. *Symbol* will be available exclusively to members of Woodharrow.

Membership

What is needed at this time is for each and every person who feels it to be of vital personal importance to preserve and promote traditional knowledge and education in the ancient cultural values of the Germanic and Indo-European peoples to support the Woodharrow Institute. By becoming a member of Woodharrow you will be lending your tangible support to this worthy cause. Membership to the Woodharrow Institute is open to any and all individuals and families with an interest in the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural knowledge and values.

To become a member of the Woodharrow Institute fill out a membership form and send it into our offices, or write for a membership form to:

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