

Assembly of the Elder Troth Kindred



A Primer of Lore and Ritual

List of Contents

A Short History of the Revival of the Troth*	page v - xii.
Hearth, Garths and Hofsa^	page 1 - 10.
The Gods and Goddesses of the Elder Troth	page 11 - 25.
Seasonal Festivals#	page 27 - 30.
The Hammer Rite	page 31.
The Blot	page 32 - 34.
The Symbol^	page 35 -38.
Ancestry and Heritage in the Germanic Tradition^	page 39 -45.
Kindred Acceptance Rite*	page 46 -47.
Book-Hoard	page 48.
The Nine Noble Virtues of the Elder Troth	page 50.

Contributors:

The Ring of Troth, U.S.A.

The Raven Kindred, U.S.A.

Special Acknowledgements:

*Edred Thorsson

^Kveldulf Hagan Gundarsson

#Lewis Stead.

Compiled and Edited by:

Ruarik Grimnison, Shope and Steersman of the Assembly of the Elder Troth Inc. 1996.
As a Reference for A.E.T members/subscribers. Not for public sale or distribution.

THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ELDER TROTH

The Assembly of the Elder Troth (A.E.T) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the Northern European Folk-Religion known to the Anglo-Saxon peoples simply as the "Elder Troth." The Elder Troth is more than a mere religion in the modern sense of the word. In days long past our ancestors could not even begin to understand the concept of religion as it is practiced today. They were a pure people: They had no separation between the sacred/spiritual and the profane/secular. Their faith was intricately tied into everything they did, from working in the fields to the naming of their children. It was a life where the Gods and Goddesses were never any further away than one's own shadow.

The word "Troth" is an old English/ Anglo-Saxon word, which has a variety of implications. According to the Webster's International Dictionary, "Troth" is defined as follows:

TROTH n, pl. troths [ME *trouth*, fr OE *treowth* - more at TRUTH] 1: loyal or pledged faithfulness: FIDELITY; 2 a: one's pledged word, b: one's faith as pledged in solemn undertaking and especially in an agreement to marry; also: the act of making a pledge.

So, from this definition we can see that the "Elder Troth" is a link to an ancient truth or loyalty within the context of one's own self. In other words, you must be true/loyal/honest in regard to your own spirituality. But how do we judge what our own spirituality is? This is a very subjective question; one must maintain an open mind toward all paths, to allow one's soul to speak to one and one must study. No person should be confined to simply following a dogma preached to him/her over a period of time. That is not Troth, that is brainwashing! (Many people cling to a religion out of familiarity rather than out of spiritual resonance or feeling "at home" deep inside.) It is this experience of resonance which is the core of the Elder Troth.

The world is in spiritual turmoil and people are once again looking for that which will give them inner peace. For some, that may be found in the Troth; but this is not for all.

The time has come once again to gather together those Folk who are called to the land and the sky, who are awed by the majesty of the mountains and by the beauty of a forest. The time has come to sink deep the roots of those Folk noble and true that our branches may again deck the heavens. This is the time of the Elder Troth, time to rise again from the hearts of all men and women good and true in and of the Folk. This is a time which must be seized that the spirit of the Gods might be tempered anew and the tide of spiritual slavery turned from our doors. Come together now, all good Folk and true, to forge again the Hammer of the North, that Hammer which is our own Troth!

The Troth is a spiritual path derived from the ancestors of the Northern European people, who originally spoke similar dialects and now speak different, though related languages. There is no need to exclusively resort to exotic terminologies, as the Elder Troth is the ancient faith of the English speaking peoples. (But non-English descriptive terminology is used whenever applicable, especially when ancestral/historical sources indicate their use is most appropriate or relevant.)

When we say **The Elder Troth** we intend to say the religion of the people speaking that language in the present time. In our case, the Germanic English tongue.

Officially founded on January 27, 1996, during the Pagan Summer Gathering, the Assembly of the Elder Troth has risen in response to the failure of the Ring of Troth, in North America to establish and sustain a viable spiritual movement based on the traditions of the Germanic (English, German, Dutch, Scandinavian, etc.) peoples, that allowed freedom of expression and self rule to the Australian branch of the Ring of Troth. Part of the reason why no organisation could successfully wield the enormous power of the Elder Troth is that no "one" institution can ever fully contain an organic force. Organic bodies simply cannot be organised - they already are organised. They merely require guidance in the establishment of the fundamental lore and ritual of the ancestral traditions, and most importantly, some greater purpose toward which to strive - some heroic struggle in which to engage.

The Assembly of the Elder Troth honours the Ring of Troth as its parent, but like all off-spring, claims as it's right, the choice of self-determination. While having many similarities with North America, Australian culture is unique, and so the attitudes and responses to the challenge of Asatru in our society, are different from our cousins elsewhere. The flexibility to adapt is one of the great traits of our heritage. So we, as the Assembly of the Elder Troth have adapted (and will continue to do so) to the needs of our kindred in this Great Southern Land, while remaining ever true to the way of our ancestors.

Within the Elder Troth there lies many paths. There is the way of Woden - or whom Wednesday is named - his is a shadowy, runic and mysterious way, and is full of challenge, growth and ecstasies. There is the path of Tiw - after whom our Tuesday is called - it is full of thoughtfulness, good judgement, and reason. The Path of Thunar - for whom Thursday is named - is one of the honest believing farmer and the doughty warrior. The Vanic path of Freyr and his sister Freyja is full of well being, peace (frith), "Earthly Spirituality" and fertility. The path of Frigg - for whom our Friday is called - is all-wise and nurturing of all that is. This by no means exhausts the great pantheon of Gods and Goddesses worshipped and emulated by those Folk who are so called. Folk who are in touch with their higher selves will know that all the Gods and Goddesses, balanced as they are in Light and Darkness, must be held inviolate; that is the true way of the Gods. Individuals can and do give themselves over to a certain God or Goddess in their own might and main; all who would be called true, however, will hold that the ancestral divinities must be preserved as living realities among the folk.

The Elder Troth is not so much a religion of Faith or belief - although this is quite present - as it is a way or path of **action or doing**. We live the day-in, day-out reality of the Gods. Our main religious obligations have to do with the correct wording of certain rituals and ceremonies which for us are the living manifestations of the hidden life of the gods present within each of

us. These are no mere empty forms, but are living **experiences**. Rather than words, dictums, and dogmas they teach by experience. By working we become wise, by doing we destroy doubt.

We make it very clear, that we stand alone from many of the "New Age" religions, in particular the Neo-paganism called Wicca. The A.E.T has a certain set of values and beliefs. Establishing and discussing what values are appropriate for "Trothers" is a common practice. This is not to say that there are rules to the practice of the "Elder Troth". Quite to the contrary, the Troth, like Wicca, believes in total human freedom.

However, the Troth feels that freedom must be checked from within by a strong sense of values* and personal honour. Wicca espouses a lack of beliefs and reliance on personal conscience. In practice Wiccans tend to mirror the values of the hippie counterculture. However, these values are social rather than theological. The Troth goes back to the Sagas, the Eddas and Folk-lore to seek its values. The Troth posits strong men and women with a hard and fast code of honour who are free to affect the world around them without outside restrictions. Theologically there are extreme differences between the Troth and Wicca. Most importantly the Troth is a form of classical age Indo-European votive religion, where Wicca is a private religion based on the shamanic and ecstatic practices of the pre-Indo-European peoples such as the Picts.

One of the central texts of the Assembly of the Elder Troth is entitled *A Book of Troth*, by Edred Thorsson. This is not a "holy book" or some sort of bible, but rather it is a source book to the Elder Troth and is the product of one of the world's leading scholars on Germanic Folk-Religion. *A Book of Troth*, published by Llewellyn in 1989, is a guidebook to some of our founding principles and to the right working of traditional forms of our religious rituals. While not every member is expected to accept or agree with everything in *A Book of Troth* it does provide a starting point from which a personal understanding and interpretation of our faith might be reached. The A.E.T also recommends the study of the *Poetic Edda* (or *Elder Edda*) and *The Prose Edda* (or the *Younger Edda*), as these serve as excellent starting points for the study of the Elder Troth. Also important is the study of native folk lore and the heroic sagas. Many of our best loved fairy tales were derived from these sources. Beyond these, almost all bodies of elder Germanic lore **can** be understood within a sacred framework by individual members of the A.E.T.

In elder days and nights every free person was - or could be - his or her own "priest" or "priestess", or have some kind of religious authority in the family, clan, or tribal life where that person earned the respect of his or her fellows. But indeed there was a more official **priesthood** in ancient times. This was made up of those men and women who had in one way or another been initiated into special branches of the religious lore of the whole Germanic nation. Many of these were magicians, seeresses, and those learned in the law and lore of the folk. Among the Germanic peoples these sorts had much less general authority than did the Druids among the Celts, but nevertheless there was an inter-tribal network of those learned in various facets of the Elder Troth. This arrangement seems to be very much suited to our national temperament. We like to have experts around to consult now and again; we give them our respect, and then go off and do whatever we feel is right! In this process, the lore of

the specialist is absorbed and put into practice, but not necessarily followed as dictum. In the A.E.T the whole range of this tendency is encouraged.

In the A.E.T the priesthood has no more authority than the Folk are willing to grant it at any one time. However, what will remain constant, or what we will try to keep as a constant, is the standards of training required of one who can call him or herself a member of the priesthood in the A.E.T. These are exacting standards to which no exceptions are made, only one with such qualifications should have the right to speak for the Assembly of the Elder Troth as a whole. All, however, have the birth-right to speak for themselves and for their own kith and kin. Therefore, it can be seen that the structure of the A.E.T is one in which the great mass is free to pursue a hearth-based troth within the ancestral traditions. Works such as A Book of Troth and the traditional writings of the Folk form a firm foundation upon which those of the hearth and garth level may effectively practice the Elder Troth within a traditional context. However, in the A.E.T there are also Hofs - or Temples - in which regular and greater religious observances are undertaken. Attendance at such festivals is not mandatory in order that one might be called "true", but great blessings are to be gained from them. Maintaining the festivals privately is also one way to ensure one's own personal or familiar Troth. The Hofs are headed and maintained by one or more priests, or elders. The Hofs are centres of research and development for the A.E.T as well as sacral centres. From them inspiration and guidance flows forth.

*see The Nine Noble Virtues of The Elder Troth , page 50 of this publication.

A Short History of the Revival of the Troth

by Edred Thorsson, Drighten.

It is important for all true folk of today to know that the revival happening now is not a fluke or a bizarre outcropping of a bunch of kooks. Some of our critics might claim as much. But we must be armed with the plain facts. We must go out into the world and make it known that the struggle we are involved with is an age-old one. To know this fully one must learn the lore of the struggle to reawaken to the Gods and Goddesses of our ancestors.

In about a year's time* the manuscript for a book-length discussion of this whole historical movement will be available. Until then, we will have to make do with what we have available.

Because the Gods and Goddesses of the Elder Troth are not separate or alienated from our flesh and blood, as long as that flesh endures, so shall They endure. They may sleep or slumber – or perhaps better said we can loose consciousness of Them – but they can not die. For this reason it is somewhat false to speak of a revival – it is really more of a reawakening. Also, as we know, when we awaken from a deep sleep it takes some time to wake up completely. We may stumble around for a while and not be able to think very clearly. Many early attempts at reviving a meaningful Germanic tradition have been failures because we, as a people - were not awake enough yet.

Here I would like to put the whole current interest in Teutonic spirituality or magic into some historical perspective. At the same time I am interested in clearing up as many of the major misconceptions as I can in this short space. Probably the greatest single misconception about the Germanic tradition is that it somehow led to Nazism and that it remains a "fascist" form of spirituality today. The best way to set the factual record straight in a way so that you can make up your own mind, is to present a historical sketch of the Nordic Renaissance from around 1100 to the present day.

"History" itself gives us many problems. In reality history is a poetic fiction of sorts. All you have to do is look at fairly factual aspects of contemporary history: Did Lee Harvey Oswald kill John F. Kennedy? The Kennedy assassination is perhaps the most investigated, documented and analysed events in history. Yet certainty escapes us. What are the facts? What then is the "truth" about the assassination of Julius Caesar? What are the "facts" of the life of Jesus of Nazareth? Even the external facts elude us and if they are known for certain a significant question to ask remains: "So what?" What do the facts mean?

For **meaning** we must go to **myth**. Myth is not something which is not true, it is something that (for better or worse) is eternally true. External facts may be unknowable, or if known they may be meaningless or irrelevant. Myth is intelligible (with effort), meaningful by definition (often on many levels), and eternally relevant (to the present and future). This is not to say that history is useless. It is a key tool to be employed in unravelling the mysteries we seek - but it is

a thankless end in itself. Knowledge of the facts is the most nutritious food with which to feed a highly developed intuitive intelligence.

Intuition fed on subjective junk will yield only junk – but feed that same intelligence with hard data and pure gold will emerge.

vi

The last great temple of the elder Gods was destroyed by Christian missionaries at Uppsala, Sweden in the year 1100. It is from this date that we can begin to measure the revival of the traditions of those Gods. Of course, the process of Christianisation had begun long before that date and there was really no final “victory” for Christianity even in 1100. The true religion continued for centuries.

It is ironic, yet fitting, that the place where Northern paganism made its “last stand”, Uppsala - was also the site of its first great reawakening. The intervening five and a half centuries (1100-1550) were a time when the ideas and texts of the ancient pre-Christian Northern world were preserved - but in slumbering forms. The Icelanders vigorously and enthusiastically collected and maintained their rich national cultural heritage. The poetry of the scalds was kept alive. This poetry preserved the tales and myths of the elder Gods. Snorri Sturluson wrote his *Prose Edda* in 1222 in an effort to shore up the knowledge the Icelandic poets had of their own true traditions. (Note that this was over 200 years after the official conversion of Iceland to Christianity – and that it was only then **beginning** to decline is a tribute to its tenacity.)

Throughout this medieval period vast amounts of data were being stored and preserved - much of it in monasteries where it was collected by monks with an interest in their own natural tradition - not just those promulgated from headquarters in Rome. As example of this kind of material is the *Germania* by the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus, who wrote the book in 97' CE. This book was carefully preserved – being copied and recopied, by hand, hundreds of times by monks throughout the Middle Ages. Only later (after 1500) would it be fully appreciated for the invaluable document it is. It gives us insights into the values and characters of the Germanic folk in the Roman Age. Medieval humanists and magicians preserved the materials which would become grist for a more powerful mill in the Renaissance.

It is a clear historical fact that in those areas of Europe where Christianity came late (Scandinavia, England, Northern Germany) it took hold less effectively than it did elsewhere and that it is precisely in these areas where the international Church was eventually overthrown in favour of national Churches. This is what happened during the Reformation. One of the places that accepted Protestantism quickly was Sweden.

The Northern Renaissance 1550-1650

Uppsala remained the true spiritual capital of Sweden even after the end of official paganism. It is very likely that a “secret order” of high level officials around the king remained true to the old ways. This “order” was disguised within the royal and even church institutions of the

Middle Ages. It is also possible (if not likely) that this "order" was one which existed on a virtually unconscious level by the time the Protestant liberation came about in the North. We can clearly see how ingrained and supreme these old ideas were when we see that it was not from the fringe of society or "underground movements" that the impetus for the revival came - but rather from the highest levels of established society. This shows that the old ideas never died - they were only awaiting the opportunity to spring up again.

Johannes Magnus was the first "high priest" of Gothicism - he was also the last Roman Catholic bishop of Uppsala. He was succeeded in his role as chief proponent of Gothicism by Johannes Bureus (1568-1652) who was the tutor and adviser of king Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden.

Vii

Bureus was a remarkable man. He was one of the fathers of modern scientific runology (with his contemporary, Ole Worm of Denmark). He was also a magician in the school of Paracelsus and Agrippa. Bureus was familiar not only with Cabalism and Rosicrucianism, but also with the magic and traditions of the more remote regions of his own country. So we see that right from the beginning of the runic revival there was a cooperation between scientific or academic runology and operative or magical runelore.

In the scientific field Bureus made drawings of many of the known Swedish runestones and began to interpret them correctly as ancient Norse texts. Before this "scholars" had often been baffled by the meaning of these mysterious stones. Hundreds of stones were recorded and interpreted by Bureus in the early 1600s. Some of these monuments in the meantime disappeared and the records of Bureus are all we have left. (These "lost" stones periodically turn up in farmers' fences or in church walls in which they were used as building materials in the 1700s!)

As a magician Bureus worked with a system which was a combination of the runes and runelore (as he understood it) and Christian Cabalism and the western magical traditions of Paracelsus and Agrippa. The main reason he did not use much of the detailed and profound theological and mythological lore of Germanic origin is that in his day very little of it had been recovered. Even in our time it is a major problem that the very basic lore and mythology is largely unknown to most aspiring magicians. The tendency then as now was to fall back on the familiar rather than forging ahead into the unknown.

The "Gothic Movement" of the 1600s was as much or more an expression of the national and political will of the Swedish leaders as it was a true spiritual or magical revival. Although Bureus was, as we look back on his work now, largely "Christian" in his practice; he was an absolute "heretic" as well. Orthodox Christian authorities, whether Catholic or Protestant, were set against him - but he was protected by his close association with the king. Gustavus Adolphus established the office of Antiquary Royal headed by Bureus to be his Gothic "think tank." It was in this period that Sweden became a true world power.

Over the following century the myth and lore of the ancient Teutons only slowly made its way back into the levies of their descendants. From the mid-1600s to the mid 1700s there was

interest in the past - but it was largely of a purely antiquarian nature. Humanistic scholars were interested in filling their curiosity cabinets of ideas with quaint and ancient data so they zealously collected manuscripts and artefacts with no deep level understanding of what they were collecting.

Enlightenment Humanism

Around 1750 a new impetus began on the European continent and in England. The underlying motive for this interest in Germanic heritage was a cultural desire for self determined authenticity. In the area of the arts the Teuton - be they English, German or Scandinavian were tired of the imposition of cultural and artistic values from the Mediterranean world. In the world of art and culture this impetus gave rise to Romanticism, while in the world of politics it led to a renewal of republican (democratic) values. The English parliamentarians of the time looked to the ancient Goths as the true model of government to limit the Christian model of the "divine right" of kings. By this Christian theory kings ruled in an absolute and totalitarian way.

viii

In the cultural sphere, this time (1750-1800) was a period when the concept of pan-Germanic cultural unity began to be understood by a few visionaries. England, Germany and Scandinavia formed an ancient cultural bond. In pre-Christian times these cultures had shared the same language, the same pantheon of Gods and Goddesses, had similar political and cultural values. This ancient bond still held the heart strings of these nations – but now in an almost or secret way.

The Romantic Rebirth (1800-1850)

Following 1800 Romanticism comes into full swing in the Germanic areas. Romanticism is essentially the desire to **turn inward** to find what is valuable and great in life. It is a turn toward feelings and intuition. In individuals this is reflected by interest in the interior life - even in the night side of nature. In nations it is often reflected by an interest in the past heritage of the folk. It was again in Sweden where this movement was most strongly influenced by the Nordic ideals. But this time instead of coming from the royal house it came from philosophers and artists. This up welling of the movement from more popular levels is typical of the Romantic urge.

In 1811 the author Jacob Adlerbeth founded the Gotiska Forbund (Gothic League) in Stockholm among a group of artists, poets and philosophers. Among its members were the poets and social reformers Erik Gustave Geijer and Per Henrik Ling. The aims of this league included the revival of an ancient Germanic spirit of freedom and promotion of **national** independence. It was also interested in researching ancient Norse literature and cultural traditions. This research would, of course, help refine and inform the movement in its more revolutionary aims.

Not long after this, in 1815, the Manhemsforbund (League of Manhem) was founded in Stockholm. *Manhem*, or the "World of Man" is a Romanic name for the North based on the old

Norse *Mannaheimr*. The author C. J. L. Almqvist began the *Manhemsforbund* as a true initiatory secret society or lodge. The aim of the *Manhemsforbund* was more the transformation of the individual than that of society. Almqvist was greatly influenced by the mysticism of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

These societies and orders were not yet able to cause a large scale breakthrough in the Germanic Renaissance largely because the basic data necessary to inform the Renaissance was still lacking. It was left to the German "academic Romantics" - chiefly the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm to put the future of the Germanic Rebirth on a firm foundation. The Grimms researched Germanic antiquities and set up formal studies of every aspect of ancient Germanic culture - religion, mythology, language, law and folklore. The Grimms were Romantics or "Germanics" - who wanted to show that the Germanic culture and intellectual world was every bit the equal of the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian. It was just that the old Germanic ways had been suppressed by Mediterranean cultural imperialism. The time had come to let the old suppressed material rise up and throw off the foreign overlay so that the people could again be true to themselves.

Jacob Grimm first published his *Deutsche Mythologie* (*Teutonic Mythology*) in 1844 and the two brothers together collected and published their *Kinder - und - Hausmarchen* ("Fairy Tales") from 1816 to 1818. These, and a host of other less celebrated works, put the future of the Germanic Renaissance on a foundation more firm than had ever been the case before.

ix

This phase of the Germanic Rebirth (1800- 1850) was characterised by a romantic longing for the lost values of the past. It was largely an "ivory tower" movement active among artists, thinkers and academics. It was a movement of the soul and emotions, but it was also a time for the laying of firm intellectual foundations. But even if it has its origins in the sphere of artists and academics, its inspiration came directly from the folk and the fruits of the academics' labours were intended to find rest again in the hearts of the people. In Europe during the middle of the 19th century the cause of nationalism was identified with liberalism - the urge to freedom. The force of conservatism attempted to preserve conserve - the way things were. At that time the *status quo* was a Europe ruled by absolute monarchs (based on the Christian divine right of kings) and split up into political states which did not conform to **national** realities. The Germans, for example, were divided up into dozens of kingdoms, duchies and principalities there was no unified German state in harmony with the culturally unified German *nation* - that is the German-speaking people of central Europe.

Utopias of the North (1850-1900)

The second phase of the modern Germanic Rebirth might be called the liberal and utopian phase. By this time at least some of the real values and ideas of the ancient Teutons had begun to filter down to a more popular level. The Nordic or Germanic ideals became more and more appealing on a broad popular level. The ultimate Germanic mythic hero - Sigurd or Siegfried - became a new pattern of human development.

Artists and thinkers such as the Early English socialist and author William Morris used Germanic mythology and cultural history as a model for utopian solutions to the problems brought on by the Industrial Revolution. Even the German Friedrich Engels, who co-wrote the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) with Karl Marx, wrote a Siegfried Drama entitled *Der gehornete Siegfried* (*the Horned Siegfried*). The Teutonic past was being seen more and more as a model of social and religious order which *had worked in the past*, and which could work again if the right combination of keys was found to unlock the deep-level secrets of the past.

In Germany the dominant figure in the Germanic Renaissance during the last part of the 19th century was Richard Wagner (1813-1883). His interest went beyond merely using Germanic themes for entertainment purposes in his operas as “total works of art” as he called them. Wagner was essentially a social and cultural revolutionary who used the medium of art as a catalyst for change. Essentially Wagner was a progressive revolutionary who attempted to “redeem” the world from materialism through his symbolic “total works of art” The enlightened, some say “mad” King Ludwig II of Bavaria tried to help him in his aims. But Wagner’s program was deeply flawed due precisely to the trait that makes his accomplishments great art – it was all too original. His own genius often got in the way of just letting the ancients speak *through* him. Also, of course, he was used by the National Socialists and their ilk to ends he never intended. It is little known but true that the idea of “Scouting” has its origins in the later 19th century English longing for the vitality and spirit of their Anglo-Saxon past. There was an enormous “youth movement” in England as well as in Germany which pointed in the direction of creating rural utopian communities based on vital and natural ideas of the national past. These communities would then become the bulwark of a new culture - one “civilisation” had failed. These ideas continued to be strong in England until the time of World War II.

x

For the late 19th and early 20th century phase of the Germanic Renaissance the ideas of returning to nature, social reform, peace on the national and international levels, in the context of ancient and traditional national values were really the dominant ones. These were, unfortunately, perverted in the early 20th century - which set back the true cause of the Rebirth by a century, I would estimate.

The Failed Renaissance (1900-1945)

During the early 20th century the Germanic Rebirth began to take an ugly turn. As can be seen from what has gone before, the movement was hardly mature. This childlike movement was, however, faced with some enormous cultural and political problems. Europe was plunged into World War I, the Communist revolution in Russia and widespread economic chaos. The immature response of the movement was to abandon its long held ideals of National liberalism and progressivism for an authoritarian racism. Racism is an immature understanding of nationalism. One does not have to hate others as a sign of loving one’s self. In fact, if hatred of others is a hall mark of a movement, it is probably because the members of

that movement really hate themselves. True “nationalism” involves the respect for and assumed freedom and independence of, other national folk groups.

Germany and Austria saw the rise of dozens of neo-Germanic groups, orders, societies and churches, and hundreds of books and periodicals dedicated to the cause in the time before the First World War. But these dramatically multiplied after that war. It was on this virtual tidal wave of popularity that the Nazis rode into power in 1933.

In the early 20th century there was the Guido von List Society (and its inner *Armanen Orden*), and the runic circle around Friedrich Bernhard Marby. The old liberal and utopian tendencies were being led off into “reactionary” and conservative directions by pressures from the right and left. A powerful and popular movement which has swelled up from the grass roots was at a loss for guidance. In 1933, when the National Socialists took power the movement as a growing cultural phenomenon began to die. What the Party could not absorb it destroyed. But because, for propagandist purposes, they marched under the banner of “Germanism,” and because in the years subsequent to their defeat, all that they touched has come to be identified as absolute evil. The whole subject of “Teutonic spirituality” once so broad and deep that millions sought it and millions found it meaningful, was tarred with the brush stroke of “Nazism.” This is unfortunate and very false. The Nazi interlude was in actuality 12 years in which the “Germanic Renaissance” was wrested from the hands of the people and put in the hands of the state. As yet the people have not been able to win back the banner of the movement from this misconception. The only way it can be re-won is if people understand the great historical process that has been going on for at least 1000 years. The Nazis did not invent neo-Germanicism – they subverted something that was already strong for their own political purposes. Unfortunately, many would-be revivalists of Germanic culture, religion and magic are all too enamoured of the Nazi mythos and mystique. The National Socialists did not advance the cause of Germanicism - they set it back: at least 100 years.

After the Second World War serious interest in Germanic spirituality was slow to re-emerge mainly due to the “bad press” the subject received at the time of the war and following. But great ideas with a history of centuries of struggle against the odds could not and can not be kept down by these “image problems.” In the 1950s an obscure Australian Odinist, A. Rud Mills produced a series of books attempting to revive Odinism. While in Germany the runes and rune magic were being revived by Karl Spiesberger.

xii

Nevertheless it would really take a full quarter of a century from the end of World War II before serious attempts to renew the Germanic Renaissance. In the early 1970s a variety of groups were founded in Germany, England, Iceland and the USA. By 1980 the Rune-Gild was founded as an effort to renew traditional runic methods of initiation. As I see it the Ring of Troth stands at the forefront of the great stream of history set forth here. I see it as the organic outgrowth of all that has gone before it. Even in our weak and sometimes misguided attempts to reawaken to the Gods there has been a nobility of will that should not be lost.

From this short sketch of the long history of Germanic revivalism I hope it has been made a bit clearer that this idea is not a fad of any kind or a flash in the pan - it is a long-standing, deeply

seated urge of our folk to return to its spiritual and cultural roots. It has welled up time and again - but each time the emotional or passionate energy has been strong the authentic knowledge base needed to channel those passions in a positive way has been lacking or deficient. Now for the first time in history there is the possibility of linking an authentic knowledge base with the passion for renewal. But this work remains one of the most difficult cultural tasks of all time. It will take heroic efforts to win the day.

* This paper was first published in the *Idunna, A journal of Northern Tradition*, Vol.2 # 4, July, 1990. The official magazine of the Ring of Troth, U.S.A.

1. Alexander Rud Mills (1885-1964) was Australia's first Odinist of prominence. He published *Hael! Odin!* in 1933, using the pseudonym "Tasman Forth". He also published a critique of Christian ethics entitled *And Fear Shall be in the Way*, followed by *The Call of our Ancient Nordic Religion*. In 1936 he was calling for the establishment of the "Anglecyn Church of Odin". During WW 2, the Australian Govt. deemed the revival as "pro-German". Mills was incarcerated without trial and held in Loveday Concentration Camp, in South Australia, for three months, during which he was starved and beaten, in 1942. Other Odinists, not so "fortunate", were held from 1942 to 1944! This foot-note was added to correct E. Thorssons "obscure" listing and to set the proper time period. Mills was a school class-mate of "Pig Iron" Bob Menzies, [later Sir Robert] the Australian Liberal Prime Minister during the early years of WW 2. Mills was a prominent member of the "Upper Class". His association with the founders of the "Australia First" movement, who advocated non-involvement in the "European War" was probably the real reason for his and the Odinist Movements' persecution. R. Grimnison. Source: *Renewal Magazine* (Aust.), Vol 2 #2, Sept. 1995.

2. Since the establishment of The Assembly of the Elder Troth, Edred Thorsson has given his full backing and support for our independence, structure and aims. He was the founder and Drighten (Leader) of the Ring of Troth in the U.S.A. He no longer has any official connection with the R.o.T, but still remains Irmin-Drighten of the Rune Gild. The Ring of Troth was founded in 1989, after the dissolution of the Asatru Free Assembly (founded in 1972 by Stephen A. MacNallen, who has since formed the Asatru Folk Assembly).

Hearths, Garths and Hofs.

The Troth Hearth

The Hearth is the Troth's Kindred-unit - a small group of folk who gather to worship, study, and keep heathen fellowship together. Whether the Hearth folk are kin in blood or only in spirit and love, the title shows their relationship: they are gathered around the hearth, the heart of the home, together.

Step 1: Birth

A Troth Hearth must have at least two adult members of the Assembly of the Elder Troth. It is not necessary for any of the Hearth members to hold a title within either the Troth or the Hearth itself. Most Hearths, however, choose to have a leader. Some possible titles for such a position, which do not infringe on recognised Troth offices, are: Fro/Frowe (implying a peaceful land-ruler); Drighten/Drightine (a band with a specific goal, linked to a single leader by bonds of loyalty or Kin-Leader. The choice of leadership and the level of authority which the Hearth's leader can exercise is something which only the Hearth can determine for itself. The A.E.T does not appoint local leaders at this level, nor will it support one person's claim over another's. If two people are incapable of working together, the Troth recommends that they found separate Hearths, which will be considered equally legitimate so long as neither engages in unsuitable behaviour such as public attacks on the other. This principle applies all the way up to the level of the Troth Hof. *Troth recognition of any group does not constitute a designation of exclusive legitimacy in its area.*

Large and highly organised Hearths may wish to create offices along the lines of Shope (secretary) and Steward (treasurer). These appointments, again, are strictly local choices. Unless the Hearth is highly active and dealing with large amounts of money, or has incorporated itself independently as a tax-free religious organisation, they are probably unnecessary at this level.

Step 2: Naming

Any group with two or more adult members of the Troth may apply for Hearth status by sending its chosen name, list of members, a brief description of its organisation and activities, and the address of a P.O. box to be recorded in the Troth rolls; the Hearth name, address, and the name of your group's "contact person" (who must be a Troth member, and should be the leader of the group) will then be listed in *Irminsul*, and the Rede will vote on chartering the group after 30 days following publication. Chartered groups will receive certificates and have their group name and contact addresses listed in *Irminsul*.

The possession of a P.O. box is mandatory: for the safety of all Troth folk, our publications will not print home addresses. Remember, there are always a few strange people on the edges of every path, and some of them, unfortunately, can be dangerous.

Many true folk choose to take new names when beginning their work with the god/esses of the North - either for spiritual reasons (wishing a name which springs from our ancestral culture) or for the practical reason of concealing their identities. The Troth neither encourages nor discourages this practise.

Page 2

Step 3: Deeds

The chief duty of a Troth Hearth is to perform the blessings of the year and to hallow the passages of life (birth, coming-of-age, death) for its members. At the very least, a Hearth must keep the feasts of Yule, Ostara, and Winternights. The full schedule of holy days will be provided in a publication, on request. *A Book of Troth* by E. Thorsson (Llewellyn Pub. 1989) provides a good primer for the major seasonal rituals. The following calender lists the most important turnings of the year, adapted to the southern hemisphere :

Fallfest (Haustblot) - **21st to 22nd of March** (Autumn Equinox).

Disfest (Disablot and Alfblot - the blessing of the Female and Male ancestral guardian spirits) also marks the beginning of **Winter Nights - 13th to 15th of April.**

Yule (Jol) - **20th to 31st of June** (includes Mother Night - 20th, and Twelfth Night - 31st, which is the seasonal New Year's Eve).

Ostara - 21st to 23rd of September (Spring Equinox).

Valpurgis - 31st of October (feast of the Volva).

Some heathens of the modern era have also introduced the custom of gathering for rites on the full moon and/or for special feasts to honour heroic wo/men of the earlier days, held upon the ninth day of each month.

Prior to each feast, it is best to have at least a full day when the Hearth gathers together to discuss the meaning of the feast and, if the rite requires everyone's participation, to rehearse it. A good means for bringing the group together is to prepare for feasts with communal crafts - painting eggs for Ostara, making tomtegubbers (corn doll at the autumnal equinox and Winternights, tree ornaments for Yule, and so forth.

Since no official qualification is required for Hearth leadership, there is no specific teaching requirement. However the legal classification of the Hearth is that of a church Study Group, and therefore it is strongly suggested that the group meet at least once a week for study of some sort - Depending on the group, this may range from simply reading and discussing the basic myths to discussions of the most esoteric matters. Members who have special skills or special lore should be strongly encouraged to share their capabilities with the rest of the group. Especially those who brew mead. All groups from the level of Hearth upward should have at least a few basic texts.

Step 4: Growth

Hearths usually begin as gatherings of a few family members or friends. For the reasons discussed above, the Troth does not suggest that you advertise directly for members when you feel that the time has come to expand. A better method is to begin a study group or set of classes for interested folk on neutral ground, such as your local library, metaphysical bookstore. Should you have access to some sort of neutral ground on a regular basis, you can also put out flyers inviting interested folk to come to open rituals and/or to contact you via your P.O. box. Once you have gotten to know new people well, you can think about inviting them home.

Page 3

The A.E.T does not require any screening procedures or time of trial, so the novice can join the Troth itself right away. However, most groups wait for a period of three to six months between a candidate's request for admittance and full recognition of that person as a Hearth/Garth member.

An individual Hearth, Garth, or Hof may choose to shut a person out of its own fellowship if *they feel that person to be incompatible with the majority of the congregation, for any reason, but you must be aware that the Troth does not sanction personal prejudice based on ethnic background, gender or sexual preference, as legitimate reasons for rejection.* Groups accused of excluding candidates for any of these reasons will have the opportunity of stating the case for rejection in a letter to the High Rede, signed by all members. While the A.E.T does not wish to interfere in the autonomy of each Hearth, Garth or Hof, Troth bylaws must be adhered to. Remember, there are State and Federal laws covering discrimination.

When new members are accepted into a Hearth, it is usual to perform a ritual of adoption by which that person state her/his will to take up the ways of his/her forebears and ties the bond of fellowship with the other kin of that Hearth. Such a rite may be found in Kveldulf Gundarsson's Teutonic Religion and Edred Thorsson's *A Book of Troth*.

5. Miscellaneous

Although Troth writings frequently use Anglo-Saxon or West Germanic god/ess names (Anglo-Saxon Woden or old High German Wodan rather than old Norse Othinn/ Anglicised Odin, for example), this is only a trend, not a mandate and will not always be consistent, owing to the multiple contributors to these information sheets. So do not be confused by the variations. The individual Person, Hearth or Garth is free to emphasise any area or period of the Germanic world, or no specific focus. For aesthetic and ritual purposes, consistency in name-forms is nice (you might, for instance, want call on "Woden and Thunar" rather than "Woden and Thor"), though, where recorded forms do not exist in your chosen time/place, non-philologists may simply adopt a name or simplified form from elsewhere without offence (thus a toast might be made to 'Woden and Freya').

Often a Hearth or Garth chooses a particular symbol to bind the awareness of its members together and to represent that group to the outside world. The battle-flag was known to all branches of the Germanic people, and often individual flags such as the Jarl Sigurth's Raven banner were thought to be especially magical or holy; Tacitus also reports how the Germanic tribes took certain totems and emblems from their hallowed groves to bear into battle. The easiest ways to make a banner are to sew cloth cut-outs onto a background piece or simply to paint the emblem onto cloth with acrylic; more dedicated folk may undertake the time-consuming process of embroidering a banner. When choosing fabrics, keep in mind that such an item, as well as being rolled up and hauled from place to place on occasion, is likely to be splattered with ale and mead once in a while, and try to pick something washable and durable.

Some kindreds also like to have uniformly coloured tunics or some sort of insignia of rank within the group. The Troth as a whole does not recognise any emblems of rank, nor is there any evidence that (outside of certain tokens of rulership such as the Sutton Hoo sceptre) the Germanic people used any such thing. However, the Troth does not discourage the use of specific clothing or insignia by individual groups, and some have found that these things help structure a kindred and bind it together.

The easiest way to handle feasts is to hold them as potlucks, BYOG. The co-ordinating host/ess should make sure that appetisers, main dish, bread, and dessert are all provided for, and that no member comes in with empty hands. Alternatively, the cost of food can be calculated beforehand and a set entrance fee paid; this works best with larger groups (over 12-15). In the old days, the local leader was responsible for supplying the feast out of his own stores. This even works today, if you have a rich local leader who doesn't mind feeding everyone else. Do not let one person supply all the food in hopes that s/he will be paid back by donations after the feast. It seldom happens thus.

The Troth Garth

Step 1: Birth

The Troth Garth must have at least three adult members of the Assembly of the Elder Troth, and be led by an Elder, Elder-in-Training, or fully certified Godwo/man (Gothi/Gythja). For Troth purposes, this title is the one that should be registered. If there is more than one person qualified in your Garth, you must decide among yourselves which should be register as the leader (or whether you wish to maintain multiple leadership). In this respect, the same principles of Troth non-interference apply as in the case of Hearth leadership.

As Garths are usually larger and more highly organised, as well as more active, than Hearths, you are likely to require the basic Shope and Steward offices, though specific titles are up to the individual group.

Note: Recognition of a group as a Garth or Hof does not give it any control or authority over independent Hearths in its area. A Troth group which wishes to remain separate from other Troth groups, be they Hearths, Garths, or Hofs, has the full right to do so.

Step 2: Naming

The Garth's leader must send its chosen name, list of members, general description of organisation and activities, P.O. Box, and a personal statement of her/his own leadership role and goals in to be recorded in the Troth rolls; as with a Hearth, the name and contact address will be listed in *Irmisul*, the Rede will vote on the group's status 30 days following publication, and a chartered Garth will receive an official certificate. If the Garth is led by an Elder-in-training, s/he should send a copy to the Warder of the Lore or the Elder supervising his/her training program as well.

Step 3: Deeds

In addition to keeping the feasts in the same general manner as a Hearth, a Garth is responsible for holding classes for the members on a regular (at least monthly, preferably weekly) basis. These classes must include basic teachings about the religion and culture of the Germanic peoples; other aspects, such as runes, archaic languages, and crafts are optional, but recommended if possible. A Garth leader should also be in the process of accumulating a good

book-ward and keep an annotated bibliography. For the purpose of inspiring other groups, Garths are encouraged to make regular, though brief, reports on their activities to be printed in *Irmisul*.

Particularly large and active Garths should begin to consider the building or purchase of a permanent structure given solely to Troth religious activities.

page 5

Under a Hearth leader, Godwo/man, or Elder-in-Training, such a structure is called a Holy Stead; when supervised by a fully certified Elder, the title of Hof may be applied for. If you do not have the facilities for a Holy Stead, the best way to create a ritual atmosphere in your living room (where-ever you practise) is to have decorations which can be hung up or placed about at feast-times. The use of banners as a specific group-symbol has already been mentioned; a fine ritual atmosphere can also be created by the use of larger banners as "tapestries" covering the walls. Godhautgafn Publishers (Dunhagi 18, P O Box 631,12 l-Reykjavik, Iceland, ph. # 621083) also produces beautiful, if rather smallish (15" x 20"), posters of some of god/esses (Othinn, Thor, Freyja, Idunn, Loki, and Aegir), which make first-rate ritual decorations. If the blot-drink is sprinkled freely, these posters should be laminated to protect them. Posters of holy animals such as horses, wolves, eagles, swine, and so forth can also be used. Planks of plywood can also be carved or painted to provide temporary panelling. God-images are excellent to have; these may be as simple as a post with a head roughly carved at the top or a large branch with mild trimming made to give it a generally human shape, or they may be full-scale works of sculpture, if you can manage it. Although much of the ornamental carving of our forebears was highly elaborate and detailed, their figure-carving was ordinarily very stylised and sometimes quite crude - even an unpractised woodcarver should be able to produce a reasonable effect with an Stanley knife. Statues of holy animals may also be used to represent the god/esses. Wisely used, recordings of natural sounds can enhance a ritual or even a study gathering. These can be purchased at most Music or New Age stores.

The library of a Garth should, in the course of time, include a few basic primary texts in the original languages, plus necessary supplementary works such as dictionaries.

Step 4: Growth

Garths are encouraged to keep a higher profile than Hearths, though obviously the same cautions about inviting strangers to your home and so forth apply. It is highly recommended that Garths open relations with groups from other traditions. If at all possible, you should find a location where you can hold rites which are open to the public. Parks and rentable halls are often a good choice, although you must be careful to find out about all local regulations concerning consumption of alcohol and/or carrying of weapons if you intend to perform rites anywhere outside your own home.

If you are able to contact your area's Society for Creative Anachronism officers (SCA), they will probably know the best places to hold events where you will be allowed to drink and carry medieval weapons. Do remember that the SCA - although they sometimes dress and act very much as we do and overlap with us in many ways (such as the practise of traditional

crafts, the study of history, and early-period fighting), and their events are often good places to buy weapon' and various types of ritual gear - has no official religious affiliations, and SCA folk who are Heathen while in Viking Age persona may well be Baptists at home. This also goes for people who work at or attend Renaissance Faires: many are pagans of various sorts, but not all by any means, and there is no guarantee that a Thorr's Hammer at such an event shows the wearer to be a heathen in "real life".

In many areas, seeking out either police or security protection for rituals in public places is a very good idea. Not only does this protect you from harassment by locals, but it also prevents official investigation from breaking up a rite in the middle (it's happened before, folks!) and ensures that your group stays firmly on the right side of the law, as the Troth requires.

page 6

Being on good terms with the "Cult Crimes" people in your area is also a fine idea on general principles and may save you much trouble later.

When paying official visits to any group associated with The Establishment, it is highly recommended that you dress in a neat and quiet manner. A small Hammer, Sun-Wheel, or Valknutr, as pendant or collar-pin, is sufficient to establish your religious orientation. If you look like a Reverend, you are more likely to be treated like one. The main problems you are likely to run into with The Establishment are (1) being mistaken for a Satanist and (2) being mistaken for a Nazi. Neither of these will come as any surprise to anyone who has attempted to educate non-heathens about heathenry, but they do get old after a while. The important thing to remember is to keep calm assuming that the person in question is not trying to insult you (even if s/he manifestly is!), and patiently and reasonably correct the errors, with as many legitimate historical references as you can bring in. No matter how tempting it is, do not overtly criticise christianity to non-heathens to whom you are attempting to explain our way. Stick to basic clarifications of what we are and are not.

Our purpose is to reconstruct the traditional religion of Northern Europe as part of the recovery of our cultural heritage. The Thorr's Hammer is not a reversed cross, but sign of the good god who protects us against all things evil and destructive. Although the swastika was a holy sign among the Northern folk - as among many other peoples, including the Indians and orientals - for thousands of years before the Nazis took it as their emblem, and we still consider it to be such, we refrain from using it in public as a sign of respect to all those people who are unfamiliar with its original history and would be distressed to see it, and also because we do not want to attract neo-Nazis or other types of racists and fascists to our religion. Pentagrams reversed or otherwise, are not a part of our tradition. We do not normally go about wearing black; when we have special ritual clothing, it is generally reconstructed traditional garb (usually from the Viking Age), and is usually either white or brightly coloured. We do not practise black magic. We believe in respect and love for the natural world, our ancestors, and all human beings who are brave, loyal, and true. We support and honour all peoples who wish to revive or maintain their cultural heritage.

We do not accept the Judeo-Christian Bible as absolute truth, though we do not criticise those who have chosen to accept it as an expression of their own spiritual ideals. However, we

consider christianity to be inappropriate for the Northern European cultural context; we worship neither its god nor its devil. In turn, we do not try to force our religion or our ways on anyone else. We do not permit any sort of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, or sexual preference, nor do we condone any group which does. We have no political agenda and never become involved in political issues as a group, except when the general issue of freedom of religion is called into question. We do not practise animal sacrifice for its own sake, although Troth members who own rural properties with their own meat animals bless the pigs and cows which they slaughter for their own food or to provide for large feasts.

These statements, presented calmly and clearly, should disarm anyone with a shred of reason. The most important thing, however, is to come across as knowledgeable, sanely, and respectably as you can. Eventually (within the next year or two) the Troth will also have informational leaflets, which you will be able to give out to help you in educating the doubtful and explaining who we are and what we are about.

page 7

Of course, there will always be those who think that simply stating their belief that the Bible is Absolute Truth, and supporting this belief with quotes from same, is sufficient to prove the

truth of what they say. The most sensible response is that you do not share that belief, nor do you consider the Bible to be intrinsically more true than any other spiritual pathway promoting itself as the Ultimate Truth, and nothing will be gained by two people simply repeating beliefs at each other. Arguing with someone who thinks that repetition of a work's self-definition as true equals proof of its truth is essentially no different from arguing with a drunk, and will be no more fruitful.

The Troth Hof

In the speech of the new-born Elder Troth, a Troth Hof is a building given solely to Troth worship and teachings overseen by a full-fledged Troth Elder. The Troth Hof is owned either by the Troth directly or by a chartered group of the Troth. The donation of such a building or the money to build one calls for work with the Dept. of Taxation, as well as the Troth itself. A personal dwelling which has simply been given over to religious work is not sufficient: a Hof must be a free structure (like a christian church), ideally able to hold at least 50 folk at one time, hopefully with overnight facilities as well. Recognition of a Hof hangs on the completion of all the necessary paperwork to assign the title to the Troth or its charter group, the Rede requests photos of the outside and inside of the building and a declaration of intent by the responsible Elder. When the High Rede has approved the project and the title has been assigned, the Hof-Elder shall hold a rite hallowing the property as a Troth Hof; this rite shall be shared by as many Troth folk as are able to.

A Hof must have the officers legally required of a tax-exempt religious organisation, and keep financial records and records of activities accordingly. Specific titles, as always, are a matter of individual choice.

Hofs are responsible for their own support, which will probably hang on (tax-deductible) donations from the members.

One of the chief works of the Hof is teaching the ways of the Troth; thus a Hof must be led by a qualified Elder with a full grounding in the sundry sources of lore our forebears have left us and the works of the modern scholars who have struggled (with various degrees of inspiration) to make clear and reconstruct the culture and religion of our folk. The Hof's Elder is responsible not only for teaching the lore, but for setting it into practice in ways which are both true to the workings and knowledge of our forebears and workable in our own age.

Not suffering from the vulnerability of a personal dwelling, and being responsible for the teaching and guidance of folk within its area, a Hof should advertise its presence, location, times of classes and rituals, and so forth, as clear as possible. Especially in the first years, this advertisement should cover a great deal of territory, as Hofs are likely to be sparsely scattered for some time yet and most true folk are willing to travel a good distance to get to a rite (in addition to the obvious caution about drinking and driving, the probable length of travel time for some is another reason why a Hof should have overnight facilities). Wisdom, of course, recommends the installation of security systems, fire alarms, and whatever other protection against vandalism or destruction the officers of the Hof deem fitting. While the days of the Crusades are over, there are always a few menaces to society who will seize on any excuse to burn or bash something.

page 8

The use of the term "Hof" for a building which functions in much the same way as a temple in most major religions is slightly anachronistic. Although the word is widespread, it first takes on the meaning of "holy stead" in old Icelandic. Here the holy character was probably secondary to the original meaning of "farmstead"; "hof" came to mean "a large farmstead, where folk gathered to feast on the holy days" - a practise which, of course, strengthened the authority the large farm holder in question and the centralisation of the region. Most accurately, then, the term "hof" would be used for the gathering place in the most common of Troth practises: the gathering of the folk in the house of their local leader on feast- days.

Instead, the Troth has chosen to continue the development of meaning of the Icelandic term "hof". This choice is grounded on the path of growth of the Troth itself. If we are to take our fit place as a great religion, it is needful for us to grow beyond the backyard gatherings. We must have properly authorised central places where we can gather from which we can distribute information, and which can stand as signs of the Troth's being and might in the community as a whole. This is not to put down the home-gatherings, which were the basic unit of Troth in the elder days and are likely to remain so among us for a long time. However, there is also strong precedent for the official "church" in the Elder Troth. The great temple at old Uppsala is the best-known religious structure of our forebears. Another building found in England is

also thought to have been a large-scale temple of the Anglo-Saxons. Since no specific term for such buildings has survived, we have chosen to raise "hof" to the large-scale dignity. The term "harrow" is kept for smaller gatherings: it refers literally to the holy stock or stone where the blessings are poured, which may be kept in a backyard, a garage, or, as was done in earlier times, set up in the woods or fields.

There is, of course, no compelling reason not to rent or purchase pre-built spaces for Troth worship. The best hof, after all, is the hof that you have available. In times to come, however, most hofs shall, hopefully, be built by Troth members and associated groups.

The main uses of the hof must be kept firmly in mind when planning its building. Firstly, of course, it is a place of worship, where every detail must work to bring the true folk within closer to the god/esses of our folk. To that end tradition and aesthetics must be yoked together to produce a structure which, even when it is not an actual reconstruction of an earlier building (or rather, of a theory about an earlier building), nevertheless gives the clear sense of a hof in which any of our ancestors would feel themselves at home - as indeed they must, for it is they upon whom we often call in our rites, and they who live again in our souls. It is to be awaited that the Elder who means to lead the hof shall have familiarised him/herself thoroughly with the principles of Germanic art and such principles of Germanic architecture as remain to us. Except in as much as we know about Germanic architecture in general, we know relatively little about the architecture of Germanic holy places, for two main reasons. Firstly, our ancestors built in wood, except in Iceland, where they used loose stones chinked with turf. The best archaeology can do with this is to reconstruct the floor-plan: if some of the later stave-churches, for instance, had not been preserved intact, the unique beauty of the stave-church roofs would have been lost forever. The second reason for the loss is due to the christian practise of building churches where Heathen holy places have been. Many of these churches are still in use and thus unavailable for excavation. The christian church at old Uppsala, for instance, is thought by some to have been built on the site of the previous temple; restoration in 1927 did show signs of a long rectangular building beneath the present foundations, but the excavation was not thorough enough to establish whether the site was that of a Heathen temple.

page 9

Given our lack of knowledge about specifically religious Heathen architecture, the next tendency has been to look at the early christian churches in the north for evidence of native tradition. All stone-built churches can be safely ignored in this respect. We know that the practise of building in stone spread with the Romans and later with christianity: the Anglo-Saxon kings who had forsaken their ancestor's troth brought stonemasons over from the Continent. In Scandinavia, although the land is by no means lacking in stone, the tradition of woodcrafting was firmly established, and wooden places of worship continued to be the norm for a long time after the Scandinavians had been forced into christianity, even though the more efficient elements of southern architecture were gradually incorporated into their building. As Christian Norberg-Schulz points out in his Foreword to *Norwegian Wood*, in the North, "wood is not just one material among others, but a kind of environmental fact. Norway belongs to a Nordic, "wood culture", in contrast to the 'stone cultures' of Mediterranean

countries. In the North we have since time immemorial grown up surrounded by wooden walls, we have as children played on wooden floors, and we have known the exciting mystery of the forest." (p. 7) The enduring strength of this tradition is shown in *Laxdaela saga* ch. 74, where Thorkell Eyjolfsson, who has abundant stone available to him in Iceland, goes to the trouble of importing a huge shipload of timber (and offending St. Olafr in the process, as he refuses to cut it any smaller than the timber of the king's own church) from Norway for the purpose of building a church in his home country. Although the immediate context is christian, the traditional churches of the south, which Thorkell could more easily have taken for a model, were built of stone.

It can thus be seen that wood is the most fitting and traditional material for a Troth Hof. Wood is also best by simple virtue of its being: our forebears first hailed the gods and goddesses in the living groves, surrounded by the holy trees. A wood-built hof keeps this awareness alive, as the might of the trees from which it is shaped still lives within it. It must also not be forgotten that we ourselves are kin to the trees; as we were first filled with might and life by Wodan and his two brothers, so the breath of our words and the might of the god/esses ringing through the hof fills its wood with a life which is like our own. As spoken of further in the chapter on crafts, wood is also the chief craft-material of the Germanic folk.

Electric lighting should be kept to a minimum during rituals and meditational periods; if it must be used, such light should be diffused rather than direct. A certain degree of dimness strengthens the sight of the soul; it also strengthens the sense of oneness with our forebears. Clarity is found in the Sun's light, in the hallowed fields and groves; what we have indoors is what the architect Reima Pietila calls the dream of Nordic folk: a "cave of wood", and should therefore be neither bright as day nor dark as the forest at night: a sense of early dawn or late twilight ought to be sought, so that "the posts or staves rise like the trees of the forest towards the dark ceiling, and humans...are transported to a superior world." (Norwegian Wood, p. 8) The hof is too dark when a newspaper cannot be read inside; it is too bright when fine print can be read.

If possible, a Troth hof ought to have several facilities beyond its chief role as a place of worship. First among them is its function as a centre for teaching and the distribution of information. However, a Troth hof should not confine itself to teaching about the religion of our folk, but classes of various sorts (traditional crafts, music, dance, and other skills) should also be offered. The Troth hof shall, of course, need a fairly good library and access to Inter-Library Loan, as research is expected to take place under its blessing and with the guidance of its Elder.

page 10

Secondly, a hof ought, if possible, to have a sauna which can be used for meditation and purification prior to ritual, and whenever else it is needed or wished for.

As feasting takes place within the hof proper, large-scale cooking facilities are also important, not to mention the arrangement of legal permission concerning alcoholic beverages. Ideally, a hof should be able to brew its own mead and ale, which might require licensing of the facility.

If the brew is any good, “microbrewery” sales might even help to support the hof. It may be necessary for the hof to register as a private club in which the members pay a nominal yearly fee (along the lines of \$1.00, receipt redeemable for a complimentary drink...) for the privilege of drinking there. The Assembly of the Elder Troth does, of course, strongly encourage its members to investigate and obey all local laws.

Go forth and build!

The Gods and Goddesses of the Elder Troth

Since there are so many different forms of several of our deities' names, and since this is a simple introduction, for the ease of the newcomer we have chosen to use the Anglicised Norse forms which are best known to most people. The most familiar of our god/esses - Thor, Freya, Frey, Odin, Frigga, and Loki - are given first; the rest are listed in alphabetical order. Variant forms of the names, where they exist, are given at the end of each entry.

Thor: "Thunder", son of Odin and Earth. The most beloved god of the Viking Age, perhaps seen as the chief god at that time, and often known now as "god of the common man", Thor is best-known for his ceaseless battle against the giants. He is not a bloody-minded reaver, however, but a warder who protects the folk of Midgard and Asgard against the menacing beings who would destroy the world; unlike Odin, he never involves himself in the battles of men, but the gods often seem to rely wholly on his protection. He is the only god that Loki seems to respect.

Although Thor is sometimes shown as being slow-witted in comparison with Odin or Loki, he is a practical god whose solutions to problems are usually swift, effective, and show the common sense the other two sometimes lack. He is also called the "Deep-Thinker", and in one Eddic poem, outwits the clever dwarf Alvis ("All-Wise") by engaging him in a riddle contest until dawn turns the dwarf to stone.

Thor's weapon is the Hammer Mjollnir, images of which are worn by true folk today as a sign of troth, as was also done towards the end of the Viking Age when Red Thor was called on to battle the White Christ. As well as fighting giants, Thor also uses his Hammer for hallowing both brides and funeral pyres, and several runic inscriptions from late Viking Age Denmark call on him to hallow the runes.

Thor was worshipped most by the free farmers (who were also warriors at need) and by those who "trusted in their own might and main". Today, he is also seen as the warder of his mother Earth against those who would harm her for their own gain. He is able to raise great rages in himself, in which he summons up more strength than any being in the worlds can match.

Thor appears as a big, muscular man with red hair and beard and huge fiery eyes. He drives a wagon which is drawn by two goats, Tanngrisnir (Teeth-Barer or Teeth-Gnasher) and Tanngrjostr (Tooth-Gritter). When he travels to Jotunheim, Loki often goes with him; Thor is the only god that Loki really seems to respect. Thor is married to Sif, and had a daughter named Thrud (Strength) by her; he also has a giantess-concubine, who bore him his sons, Modi (Courage) and Magni (Main-strength). It is said, "Thor will help you if your prayer is sincere". Old Norse Thorrr; Anglo-Saxon Thunar (from which "Thursday"); old German Thonar; Modern German/Wagnerian Donner; Proto-Germanic *Thunraz.

Freya: Freya is probably the best-known and best-loved of the goddesses today. Her title simply means "Lady"; her original name is not known. Freya is the "wild woman" among the

deities of the North: free with her sexual favours (though furious when an attempt is made to marry her off against her will); mistress of Odin and several other gods and men; skilled at the form of ecstatic, consciousness-altering, and sometimes malicious magic called seidhr; and chooser of half the slain on the battlefield (Odin gets the other half).

Freya's chief attribute is the necklace called Brisingamen, which she bought from four dwarves at the price of four nights of her love. This necklace is sometimes seen today as embodying her power over the material world. The necklace has been the emblem of the earth-goddess since the earliest times.

This goddess drives a wagon drawn by two cats, perhaps large forest-cats such as Lynxes, and is seen today as the patron goddesses of cats and those who keep them. As a battle-goddess, she also rides on a boar called Hildisvini (Battle-Swine).

Like Odin, Freya is often a stirrer of strife. As Gullveig ("Gold-Drunkenness"), she came among the Aesir to cause trouble. She was stabbed and burnt three times, but arose from the flame each time; through this torment, she transformed herself into Heith ("the Glorious"), mistress of magic, in a typical shamanic initiation. This also seems to have started the war between the Aesir and the Vanir.

Freya is sometimes seen as a fertility goddess, but there are no sources suggesting that she was called on to bring fruitfulness to fields or wombs, and only one rather dubious reference to her as a birthing-goddess. Rather, she is a goddess of riches, whose tears are gold and whose "daughters", in the riddle-poetry of the skalds, are precious objects. However, the giants are always trying to take her away from the gods, and it is clear that this would be a great disaster: she was obviously known to be the embodiment of the holy life-force on some level. Perhaps because of this, Wagner gave her some of Idunna's attributes, making her the keeper of the golden apples without which the folk of Asgard would wither and die. Old Norse Freyja; old English Freo; Modern German Frau; Wagnerian Freia; Modern English Frowe.

Frey: Son of Njord, twin brother of Freya. "Frey" is a title simply meaning "Lord"; his original name was apparently some form of Yngvi/Ing. Together with Thor, Frey was one of the best-loved gods of the Viking Age.

Frey was the main god of kingship among the Swedes, whose royal family, the Ynglings, was descended from him. His holy animal was the boar, which appears several times on richly decorated English helmets from the sixth century through the eighth. In *Beowulf*; it is said that the boar-image was put on the helm to protect warriors in battle.

Frey was called on for protection in battle, for frith (fruitful peace) at home, and for good weather and gentle rains. He was, and is, often thought of as a giver of riches, whose blessing is called on for fruitfulness and growth in all fields of endeavour. His priests at Uppsala were said to ring bells and clap their hands with effeminate gestures, and it has been suggested that this cryptic reference hints at a tradition involving shamanic cross-dressing.

Frey is the lord of the elves (see below), and is especially connected with the blessings and worship given to the ancestral spirits and possibly land-spirits. His image was often shown with an enlarged phallus; like his twin sister, he is sometimes seen today as a deity of love and pleasure. Frey owns a gold boar called Gullinbursti (Gold-Bristled) on which he can ride over air and water. He once had a horse named Bloody-Hoofed (perhaps having to do with his role

as battle-god) and a sword, but these he gave to his manservant Skirnir (the Shining one) for winning the giant - maiden Gerd for him. At Ragnarok, he will fight Surt with a stag's antler. Old Norse Freyr or Yngvi-Freyr, Ingunar-Freyr; AngloSaxon Ing or Frea; old High German Fro; Modern German (Wagnerian) Froh; Proto-Germanic *Ingwaz, also called Fro Ing (Lord Ing).

page 13

Odin: Originally a god of death, whose range later came to encompass magic (especially runic magic and chanted charms), battle (giving victory by choosing who should die), poetry (closely tied to his magical skills), the fury of the berserk-warrior, and, at least in part, the authority of the ruler descended from the gods (he is the most frequent father of royal lines - including, according to Anglo-Saxon genealogies, the current royal house of England). In the Prose Edda (written two hundred years after the conversion of Iceland), he is shown as the chief of the gods, but historical accounts of Germanic religion do not necessarily support this; it is likelier that Snorri was modelling the Norse pantheon somewhat on the Classical. As patron of poets, he was one of the gods most often mentioned in holy tales and skaldic poetry; since his name was hailed so often by his word-skilled fosterlings, we know more about him today than about the other deities.

Odin won the runes by hanging on a tree for nine days and nights, wounded with his own spear. He gave up one of his eyes for a drink from the Well of Mimir ("Memory"). He won the mead of poetry by seducing the giant-maid Gunnlod who had been set to keep it, then asking for a drink and draining all three cauldrons. To his chosen ones, he gives victory, inspiration, magic, madness, and death when he sees fit. He is seen as especially a god of wisdom, a patron of poets, thinkers, and singers. Of all the gods, Odin is the one who seems to take the most active part in the affairs of humans, and the one who appears most often in the writings of the Germanic peoples. His German incarnation, Wotan, is the chief figure shaping the action of Wagner's Ring Cycle.

Odin usually appears as a gray-bearded man, tall and thin, with a blue-black cloak and an eyepatch or widebrimmed hat tilted to hide his missing eye. His weapon is the casting spear Gungnir, with which he dooms his chosen ones to die in battle. He has two wolves, Geri and Freki (both names mean "the Greedy"); two ravens, Huginn ("the Thoughtful" or "the Bold") and Muninn ("the Mindful" or "the Desirous"); and a gray, eight-legged horse called Sleipnir ("Slipper"). He is the husband of Frigga and the father of many gods and human heroes. As the leader of the Wild Hunt, he also brings fruitfulness to the fields.

Odin is assisted by the valkyries ("Choosers of the Slain") who work his will on the battlefield, bringing the bravest warriors to Valhall ("Hall of the Slain"), where they ready their strength against the coming of Ragnarok. It is said that "Odin will help you if he feels like it", and it is true that he is a stern tester of his children, and often seems rather capricious. However, even when he seems cruel, his purpose is always clear: to strengthen the hosts of the gods for the last battle so that life and knowledge can be preserved and the new world born after the old is destroyed. In the late Viking Age poem *Eiríksmál*, Bragi asks Odin, "Why did you take victory from him (Erik Bloodaxe), if he seemed the bravest to you?" and Odin answers, "Because of that which no one knows (that is, the time of Ragnarok): the Gray Wolf gapes ever at the

dwelling of the gods." Odin is a god of foresight, careful weaving of plots, and long-term agendas.

Old Norse Othinn; Anglo-Saxon Woden; old High German Wodan; Modern German Wotan; Proto-Germanic *Wothanaz. "The Furious (or Mad) one".

Frigga: Wife of Odin, Frigga is the patron goddess of the home and of the mysteries of the married woman. She is seen as Odin's match (and sometimes his better) in wisdom; she shares his high-seat, from which they look out over the worlds together. Frigga is especially concerned with keeping social order. She is called on for blessings when women are giving birth and for help in matters of traditional women's crafts (spinning, weaving, cooking, sewing) and the magics worked thereby.

page 14

Frigga can also be called on by mothers who want to protect their children. In olden days, this was especially the case with sons going out to battle, for whom their mothers would weave or sew special protective items. She is also called Hlin (protectress).

Frigga is the mother of Balder, and is often thought of as still mourning for him. She is a Seeress, who knows all fates, though she seldom speaks of them. Her hall is called Fensalir - "marsh-halls". She has a handmaiden called Fulla and a messenger named Gna.

Despite the likeness of names and the similar relationship to Odin, Frigga should not be confused with Freya, who shares none of her essential traits. Her only departure from strict social behaviour is that during one of Odin's journeys away from Asgard, she is said to have taken his brothers Vili and Ve as husbands; however, this probably shows the queen-goddess as the embodiment of sovereignty. Her name is also not directly related to the English slang-word, though the two derive from the same original root ("love, pleasure").

Old Norse Frigg; AngloSaxon Frige; old High German Frija; Wagnerian Fricka.

Loki: An Etni brought among the Aesir by Odin, who swore blood-brotherhood with him, Loki wavers between a wealbringing culture-hero/Trickster and a woe-bringing destroyer. He is responsible for getting the gods most of their good, but only after he has led them to the edge of destruction. He often travels with Thor, sometimes leading him into trouble and sometimes getting him out of it. Loki also brings a surprising amount of humour into the Norse tales (and into the practice of the Northern religion today). The need for this function of his appears explicitly in the tale of how the giantess Skadi was reconciled to accepting weregild from the gods instead of insisting on revenge: one of her conditions is that they must make her laugh, and it is only Loki who can accomplish this.

Loki may have appeared in cultic dramas as a ritual Lord of Misrule: inversion and reversal of all sorts are typical for him. As well as being the father of the Wolf Fenrir, the Midgard Serpent, and, allegedly, Hel, he is also the mother of Odin's eight-legged horse Sleipnir, and cross-dresses in the typically feminine falcon-hides of Frigga and Freyja when he needs to fly between the worlds.

Bad nineteenth-century etymology associated Loki with Logi (fire) and, helped along by Wagner, the image of Loki as a fire-being seems to be with us to stay. Modern thought also associates Loki especially with computers, for a number of reasons.

After the death of Balder, the gods bound Loki in an underground cave, and Skadi hung a venom dripping snake over his face. The venom is caught in a cup by his Aesir-wife Sigyn; supposedly, when she turns away to empty it, his writhings cause earthquakes. There is much debate among true folk as to whether Loki is really bound, or just how bound he is, however. Not surprisingly, views on Loki range from those who think of him as a merry friend to those who see him almost as a Nordic Satan. Although he plays a key role in many of our holy tales, it is fairly safe to guess that he was not worshipped in quite the same manner that the other gods and goddesses were - but whenever a drink is given to Odin, according to the terms of their oath, Loki also gets one; and though he can cause trouble in our lives, he can also be helpful when called on with due respect.

Other God/esses and Wights

Aegir: the giant who embodies the sea. Aegir brews ale for the gods and hosts some of their feasts. His wife is Ran, a less friendly personification of the sea; their daughters are the waves. Old Norse; AEgir.

Aesir: “the gods”, used specifically for the godly tribe including Odin, Thor, and Tyr (in contrast to the Vanir Njord, Frey, and Freya), but also used in general for all the deities. Generally more associated with air, fire, and the mechanical or artificial; whereas the Vanir are associated with earth, water, and the natural or organic - though these are by no means firmly set boundaries. The Aesir and the Vanir once held a war, which, since their battle-might was equal, ended in a draw. The truce was settled by the creation of the being Kvasir (see below) and the trading of hostages: Odin’s brother Hoenir and the giant Mimir went to the Vanir, and Njord and Frey were sent among the Aesir (Freya seems to have come along of her own choice), where, according to *Ynglinga saga*, they held the role of “priests”. Old Norse AEsir, singular Ass; Modern English Ase, plural Ases.

Angrboda: Loki’s giant-wife, mother of the Wolf Fenrir, the Midgard Serpent, and Hel.

Ask: “Ash-Tree”; the first human male, made out of an ash-log by Odin, Hoenir, and Lodurr. Husband of Embla, the first human female.

Audhumla: the primal cow, born at the same time as Ymir (see below), whose licking brought the first god, Odin’s grandfather Bor, out of the ice of Niflheim.

Austri, Sudri, Vestri, Nordri: the four dwarves who hold up the four corners of the sky (Ymir’s skull): East, South, West, and North. Sometimes also thought to be the four who forged Freya’s necklace Brisingamen. Old Norse Austri, Suthri, Vestri, Northri.

Balder: Son of Odin and Frigga, he is shown in the Prose Edda as a rather pallid Heathen imitation of Christ, but other sources, notably the Danish chronicler Saxo Grammaticus, portray him as a doughty and aggressive warrior. Today we often think of him as the shining young hero who embodies the hope of an age. After his death was foretold, Frigga got everything in the Nine Worlds to swear not to harm him, but neglected the mistletoe, which she thought was too small and weak to harm him. Making a game of his invulnerability, the gods cast weapons at him; meanwhile, Loki made an arrow of mistletoe and put it in the hand of Balder’s blind brother Hod, aiming it for him.

After Balder’s death, Frigga sent a messenger to Hel to ask for him back. Hel answered that if everything would weep for Balder, she would return him. Only one old hag, who some think was Loki and others identify as Hel herself, refused to shed atear; and so Balder stays in Hel’s realm yet. After Ragnarok, he and Hod will come back to inherit Odin’s seat. Balder is seldom called on, but is remembered as the hidden seed of the new world to come after the final battle. Old Norse Baldr, old English Bealdor.

Beyla: Servant of Frey, wife of Byggvir. Her name is thought to be related to a word for “cow”, and she the protectress of dairy work; the alternate suggestion is that “Beyla” is related to “bee”, so that Beyla and Byggvir might be the givers of mead and ale.

Page 16

Bragi: Husband of Idunna, sometimes identified as the best of poets or the god of poetry. Here his function overlaps with Odin’s, since Odin is the keeper and giver of the mead of poetry. Bragi is sometimes thought to be an historical poet of the early Viking Age who was taken up among the ranks of the gods.

Byggvir: “Barley”; servant of Frey, husband of Beyla. Perhaps related to the English “John Barleycorn” of the folk-song.

Disir: Ancestral female spirits whom look after their descendants; worshipped especially at the festival of Winternights. The word “dis” can also mean “goddess” or “kinswoman”; for instance, Freya is called “Vanadis” (dis of the Vanir). Old Norse disir (singular dis), Anglo-Saxon ides, Old High German idis (pl. idisi), Modern English idis (pl. idises). Probably the same as the Romano-Germanic Matronae, or Mothers, who were worshipped along the Rhine in the first part of the Common Era and appear in votive carvings as triads of women with beehive hairdresses and baskets of fruit.

Dwarves: The great smiths of the Germanic world, the dwarves were formed from the maggots crawling in the body of the proto-giant Ymir. They dwell beneath the earth; they forged, among other things, most of the great treasures of the gods. Many dwarf-names suggest that they were originally thought of as the dead or as demons of death. Though sometimes surly, if approached with fitting respect, they can be friendly to humankind, and several of our heroes (such as Sigurd/Siegfried and, according to *Thidreks saga*, Wayland) were fostered by dwarves. If offended or forced to work against their will, they take nasty revenge; Old Norse, Dvergar. Also called Swart-Alfs (Old Norse Svartalfar), Nibelungen (Wagner).

Earth: Identified as a giantess, mother of Thor by Odin, she is often referred to in poetry as “Odin’s bride”. The traces that have survived of the worship of the personified Earth herself show that she was honoured by the Germanic people, though not active in tales; Old Norse Jorth.

Easter: The English name of an continental Germanic Heathen goddess of spring, whose memory proved so enduring in Saxon England that the christian springtime feast was eventually called by her name. The hare may have been her holy beast; Anglo-Saxon Eostre; old High German Ostara.

Edda: See Prose Edda, Poetic Edda.

Eir: Goddess of healing, patroness of health-care workers, called on against sickness or injury. She is one of the goddesses on the mountain called Lyfia ("to heal through magic"), and gives both physical and psychic means of healing; shamanic healing, especially, falls into her realm.

Elves: Usually called "alfs" in the Troth to avoid confusion with the elves of Shakespeare or Tolkien. The Elves sometimes appear to be the ghosts of dead ancestors still dwelling in mounds or hills; sometimes they are more similar to land-wights (earth spirits). The Elves are worshipped together with the Disir (see above) and often with Frey. Sometimes they are kindly, as names like Alfred (Elf-Counsel) show; when offended, they shoot humans or animals with elf-shot, causing stroke and other forms of sickness. They are divided into Light Elves (often seen as wights of sun and air), Dark Elves (the dead in the mound), and Swart Elves (see "dwarves"). Old Norse *Alfar* (singular *alfr*); Anglo-Saxon *AElf*; Modern English *Elf*.

page 17

Embla: First human female. The name is often translated "elm", though it could also refer to a sort of vine. See "Askr".

Etins: Giants. "Etin-kin" is used as a general term for giants of various sorts and trolls. Usually seen as the foes of the gods, although many of them are quite helpful, and etins and gods often interbreed. In fact, at least two of the goddesses, Skadi and Gerd, are etins; and there are none of the gods who do not have quite a lot of giantish ancestry. Some true folk today see the etin-kin as the largest of the land-wights, who now need to be helped to restore the balance of being rather than battled against; others stick to the traditional view of the giants as, in general, the embodiment of destruction; Old Norse *Jotunn* (plural *jotnar*); Anglo-Saxon *Eoten*.

Fenrir: The great Wolf, son of Loki and his giant-wife Angrboda, who will swallow Odin at Ragnarok. The commonly seen form "Fenris" is a grammatical error based on a misunderstood old Norse poetic convention of identifying things by their type and a possessive: "the ash of Yggdrasill", *Askr Yggdrasils*; "the wolf of Fenrir", *Ulfr Fenris*.

Forseti: Patron god of the Frisians and giver of their laws. Silence had to be kept while drinking from the spring on his holy island, which he had brought forth from the rock with his axe, and beasts on the island could not be harmed. In the Old Norse sources, he appears as the son of Balder, whose hall Glitnir, "Glistening", is pillared with gold and thatched with silver; he is also a settler of lawsuits and quarrels. Frisian; Fosite, Foseti.

Gefjon: Her name means "giver". With a plough drawn by four sons whom she bore to a giant and changed into oxen for the purpose, she ploughed the island Zealand (the main island of Denmark) away from the Swedish mainland, later mothering the chief dynasty of Danish kings. She is clearly a goddess of fruitfulness in some aspects; however, she is also the protectress of maidens and their modesty, and unmarried women are said to go to her hall after death.

Gungnir: Odin's spear.

Harrow: An altar, in early times usually made of heaped stones; Old Norse *horgr*.

Heimdall: Watcher at the gates of Asgard, he can hear the grass growing on the ground and the wool on a sheep's back, and needs no sleep. He is the son of nine etin-maids, perhaps the nine waves. His hall is called Himinbjorg (Heaven-Mountain). He owns the Gjallarhorn (the Horn Resounding), which he shall blow at the beginning of Ragnarok to gather the hosts of the gods. Some see this horn as a cowhorn (Turville-Petre suggests, through linguistic association that it is a Rams' horn), others as one of the sousaphone-like lurhorns used in Bronze Age rituals. Under the name of Rig ("King"), he came to Midgard in order to father the three tribes of humans - thralls, freemen, and rulers - and to teach runes and lore to the last. Heimdall is described as very fair, with golden teeth. His horse is called Gulltoppr ("GoldenMane"). He is a great foe of Loki: according to one tale, when Loki had stolen Freya's necklace, Heimdall changed into a seal and fought with him in that shape, winning it back. Heimdall and Loki will slay each other at Ragnarok. Heimdall is sometimes seen as a rather aloof god and lacking in humour; however, he is a great teacher, and an especially good god to call on for those who work in subjects calling for cool intellect rather than the furious inspiration given by Odin.

page 18

Hel: Ruler of the kingdom of death, the Prose Edda describes her as half-black, half-white (she is sometimes seen as half-rotting, half alive) and of grim and unmistakable appearance. Her name may originally derive from the buried slab-rock grave-chambers of the Stone Age. The Hel-word is known to all branches of the Germanic speech, and clearly very old, but there is some question as to whether the goddess was recognised as an independent person before the Viking Age. The Prose Edda, probably suffering from semantic contamination (the use of the English word Hell for the frightful Christian after world), describes her hall as full of horrors, but older sources make it rather pleasant, and indeed a close reflection of the idealised god-house seen in descriptions of Valhall (Hel and Odin have much in common, in fact).

The specialisation of the Germanic afterlife into the glorious Valhall where the chosen battle-dead go and the hideous Hel where everyone else ends up is probably a product of Christian influence on the retelling of Norse god-lore; our earlier sources offer far more options (going to the hall of the deity to whom one is closest, dying into a hill or rock where the other ghosts of one's family dwell, remaining as the guardian of a stead, being reborn in a child who bears one's name and/or lineage), and the name Valhall does not become specialised for Odin's hall until the middle of the tenth century, when it is probably a description rather than a proper name. There is no evidence for the worship of the goddess Hel in elder times, but there are several folk who work with her today. Also called Hella.

Hod: Blind brother of Balder, who unknowingly (at Loki's direction) cast the mistletoe to slay him. Slain in turn by Vali. According to the rather different version of the story told by Saxo, Hod was not blind, nor related to Baldr; he was a doughty warrior, who fought with Baldr over the woman Nanna; Old Norse Hothr.

Hoenir: Brother of Odin, long-legged and handsome, but slow of speech. Sent to the Vanir as a hostage after the war between Aesir and Vanir. After Ragnarok, he will take the role of priest among the gods. Little more is known of him, although he appears travelling beside Odin and Lodurr (or Loki) in several tales.

Hof: Originally a large farmhouse, especially one at which the holy feasts were held for a whole settlement. Used in modern times for a hallowed temple.

Holda: A goddess known through German folklore, her name means “the Gracious one”. She has much in common with Frigga, being the patroness of spinners and the keeper of social order, especially enforcing taboos about working on holy days. She is also said to be the keeper of the souls of unbaptised (or sometimes simply young) children, and women who want to bear children ask for them at her well. Holda also appears at times as the leader of the Wild Hunt. According to one tale, it was she who taught humans how to plant and process flax. When it snows, Holda is supposed to be shaking out her feather-bed.

Idunna: The goddess who keeps the apples of youth, by which the gods stay ever-young. Loki arranged for the etin Thjazi to abduct her, but then was forced to get her back, a deed that ended in Thjazi’s death. Apples are one of the oldest and holiest symbols of life and rebirth among the Germanic folk, appearing as grave-gifts from the Bronze Age onward; Old Norse Ithunn.

Ing: See Frey.

page 19

Irmensul: “Great Pillar”; a pillar which was a major center of worship to the Continental Saxons, destroyed by Charlemagne at the beginning of his genocidal war against this people in 772. Possibly a ritual representation of the World-Tree.

Jormungandr: See “Midgard Serpent”.

Kvasir: After the war of the Aesir and Vanir, the two godly tribes sealed peace by spitting into a bowl and creating Kvasir from the mingled spittle. He was said to be the wisest of all creatures. He was slain by two dwarves, who brewed the mead of poetry (Odoroerir) from his blood. The name derives from *kvase* (Norwegian), *kvass* (Russian), a kind of fermented berry juice traditionally prepared by communal chewing of the berries and spitting into a bowl.

Land-wights: The beings who dwell in rocks, springs, and so forth. They are shy and easily driven away (especially by noise or strife); when they have fled, the land will not prosper. In Heathen Iceland, it was illegal to come within sight of the shore with a dragon-prow raised, as that frightened them. The land-wights are friendly towards humans who treat them well. Gifts of food and drink were often left by their dwelling places; in America, tobacco is often added, as they have grown used to it from the practices of the Native Americans; Old Norse landvaettir.

Lif: “Life”, the human woman who survives Ragnarok by hiding beneath the bark of the World-Tree (or one of its shoots) and, with her husband Lifthrasir (“the one striving after life”), reproduces humankind after the last battle; Old Norse Lif, Lifthrasir.

Lodurr: Possibly another name for the brightest aspects of Loki, though this is not certain. The third god of the Odin-Hoenir-Lodurr trio which shaped humankind; Old Norse Lothurr.

Lofn: One of Frigga's women, who gets permission for folk to marry when it had been forbidden before. Especially the patroness of those whose love is criticised by outsiders.

Midgard Serpent: Child of Loki and Angrboda, this great Wyrms circles Midgard, lying in the depths of the ocean. Some think that he holds the world together while the age lasts. Thor caught him once while fishing and struck him on the head, but Thor's companion, the giant Hymir, became afraid and cut the line. At Ragnarok, the Midgard Serpent and Thor will slay each other. The Wyrms is also called Jormungandr (the Great Wand or the Great Magic-Beast).

Mimir: A giant, perhaps the brother of Odin's etin-mother Bestla. Keeper of the Well of Mimir, in which all wisdom lies - the spring where Odin gave up his eye to drink. Mimir was sent to the Vanir as a hostage with Hoenir, but when Hoenir's slowness of speech was discovered, the Vanir became angry. Unwilling to harm Odin's brother, they lopped off Mimir's head instead and sent it back. Odin preserved it with herbs and spells, and gains much wisdom from talking with the head. According to the Eddic poem *Sigrdrifumal*, Odin learned the runes from Mimir's head; Old Norse Mimir.

Mjollnir: Thor's Hammer; see "Thor"; Old Norse Mjollnir.

Moon: The Moon is always masculine in Germanic language and culture, just as the Sun is always feminine. This is one of the most difficult things in Northern religion for those brought up on the Greco-Roman Diana and Apollo to get used to; but traces of our original way of thinking of these two survive even in English (cf. "the Man in the Moon").

page 20

The Moon is the brother of the Sun: he is seen as dressed in a gray sark (long shirt), driving a wagon drawn by a horse called Hrimfaxi (Ice-Mane) and chased by a troll in wolf-shape who will devour him at Ragnarok. Old Norse Mani (used only as a personal name or poetic term, not usually applied to the simple heavenly body).

Muspilli: The meaning of the name is not certain; it may be "destruction of the world through fire". The Muspilli are fire-giants, led by Surt, who will break through to fight against the gods at Ragnarok. The belief in the fiery destruction of the cosmos, and the association of it with the name "Muspilli", is probably very early. Other than this, we know little of them; they hardly appear in the Norse sources.

Nanna: Wife of Balder (of Hod in Saxo's version), mother of Forseti. Her name may mean "the daring one". According to the Prose Edda version of the story, she dies of grief and is burned on the pyre with Balder.

Nerthus: The "Mother Earth" worshipped by the North Sea Germans, according to the Roman historian Tacitus (writing in the first century of the Christian era). Her worship included the springtime procession of a wagon in which her image was kept, which ended on a holy island.

The name is an earlier form of the old Norse Njordr (Njord), who is, however, clearly masculine. Still, it is said that Njord fathered Frey and Freya on his sister, who is not named; it is possible that the feminine and masculine Nerthus/Njord could have been a similar pair of mixed twins.

Nine Worlds: The Nine Worlds of the Norse cosmos are Midgard (Mithgarthr, the Middle-Garth) where humans dwell; Asgard (Asgarthr, the Ases' Garth) or God-World (Gothheimr); Light Alfheim (Ljosalfheimr, Light Elf-World); Niflheim (Niflheimr, Nebel-Home), the "world of mists" and primal ice; Jotunheim (Jotunheimr, Etin-World), where the giants live; Muspellheim (Muspellheimr, Muspilli-World - perhaps "home of the destroyers of the world"), world of primal fire where the Muspilli dwell; Vanaheim (Vanaheimr, Wan-World), home of the Vanir, Swart Alfheim (Svartalfheimr), where the Swart-Alfs or dwarves dwell, and Helheim, land of the dead, ruled by the goddess Hel.

Njord: Father of Frey and Freya, he is not active in the Northern tales. However, he was seen as god of the sea and of ships, and also thought of as a giver of riches and good harvest. He was usually blessed together with his son.

Norns: The three Norns, Urd (Wyrd), Verdandi, and Skuld, are etin-maidens who guard the Well of Urd from which the World-Tree springs. They reach into the Well's waters (the past) and sprinkle the Tree to shape that which shall happen. They are also said to do their shaping by cutting runes and/or by spinning and weaving. They are possibly related to the three Continental Matronae (see "disir"); Snorri, and the Eddic poem *Fafnismal*, also describe clan-disir as "norns".

Odr: Said to be Freya's husband, but the name is either the same as the root-word on which Odin's name is based, "fury", or that from which Odroerir is derived, "inspiration". It is most often thought that Odr is the same god as Odin, perhaps in an earlier form.

Odroerir: "Stirrer of Poetry"; the mead of poetry (see "Kvasir").

page 21

Poetic Edda: A collection of poems about Norse god/esses and heroes. Also called "Saemundr's Edda", as the first version was thought (erroneously), to have been collected by

Iceland's beloved magician/priest, Saemundr the Wise. The manuscripts in which they are written down date from the late thirteenth century onward, but many of the poems themselves probably go back to the Heathen period (though dating them is notoriously difficult), and some of the material may be extremely archaic; The chief "holy text" of the Elder Troth.

Prose Edda: A text written by Snorri Sturluson in roughly 1220, some two hundred years after the conversion of Iceland. Also called "Snorri's Edda". Snorri's intention was to preserve the dying art of skaldic poetry, which was totally based on an intimate knowledge of Heathen

god-lore. Although he often over-systematized and sometimes got his materials wrong, his book is one of our most valuable sources in learning about the deities of our forebears.

Ragnarok: The last battle, at which the Muspilli will break through the walls of the world, and the wolves that follow the Sun and Moon will swallow them at last. Most of the gods will die fighting against the etin-kin: Fenrir will swallow Odin (and be ripped open in his turn by Vidar), Thor and the Midgard Serpent will slay each other, as will Heimdall and Loki, Tyr and Garm. Frey will fall before Surt. However, a new world will rise from the sea afterwards. Balder and Hod will come back from Hel's realm; Vidar and Vali will sit in their father's stead as well, and Modi and Magni will inherit Thor's Hammer. It is to bring the new world safely about that Odin gathers his hosts in Valhall, and works his many other subtle plots.

Ratatosk: The squirrel that runs up and down the WorldTree, bearing nasty messages between the dragon at its roots and the eagle at its crown. Old Norse Ratatoskr.

Runes: The word originally probably meant "secrets" or "whispered speech"; later it was transferred to the actual staves of the native Germanic writing, and this is the sense in which it is normally used today. The runic "alphabet" is called a Futhark because that is the order of the first few letters: F, U, Th, A, R, K. The original form was the 24 rune Elder Futhark; with time and changes in speech, this later mutated to the Anglo-Frisian Futhork (ranging from 28 to 31 or 32 letters) and, in Viking Age Scandinavia, the Younger Futhark (16 letters). Runes were often used for magical or memorial inscriptions, though they were also used for mundane phrases like "Katla owns this comb" and occasionally for rather foul graffiti. Each of the runes has a name, a numerical value, and a magical use. For more information on their magic, see Edred Thorsson's FUTHARK and *Runelore* (pub. by Samuel Weiser), Freya Aswynn's *Leaves of Yggdrasil* (Llewellyn), and Kveldulf Gundarsson's *Teutonic Magic* (Llewellyn). Avoid any book which claims the existence of a "blank rune", which makes exactly as much sense as a "blank letter" would in our everyday alphabet. The runes are a means of writing known wholly through inscriptions; a "blank rune" is thus an impossible concept.

Saga: An Icelandic prose work written in the period (roughly) between 1200 and 1400. The source of many of our stories of heroes, and most of our knowledge of Icelandic and Norwegian history.

Saga: Her name is related to the Norse word *saga*, though not the same. She is mentioned in the poem *Grimnismal* and, passingly, in the Prose Edda. According to the poem, her hall is called- Sokkvabekk, ("Sunken Benches") and she and Odin drink out of golden cups, there -

page 22

probably, if her name is any clue, retelling old stories while they drink. It is suggested that she may be Frigga, in her capacity as the "silent seeress" who "dips into Urd's Well" for knowledge of the patterns of Wyrd. She, together with Odin, cares for writers. It has also been suggested that she might also be seen as the patron goddess of Iceland - certainly she was the only one to bless that country for many years.

Saxnot: A patron god of the Saxons; since he was, apparently not known to the Norse - no tales of him have survived. However, we know that when Charlemagne was carrying out his war of cultural destruction against the Heathen Saxons, those forcibly converted were made to swear an oath forsaking Woden (Odin), Thunaer (Thor), and Saxnot. In the slightly variant form *Seaxnet*, he is also recorded as the father of the East Saxon dynasty in England. The first element of his name is probably related to the word sax (a type of knife).

Sif: Wife of Thor, mother of Ull (by an unknown father), best known for her long golden hair. She appears only in one tale: where Loki cuts her hair off in the night and, to save himself from Thor's wrath, gets the dwarves to forge hair of real gold for her, along with several of the other great treasures of the gods. It has often been suggested that she is a fertility goddess, whose rippling golden hair may be seen in the ripe grain. In the prologue to the Prose Edda, she is also called a Seeress. There are hints that she may be associated with the rowan tree as well.

Sigyn: Loki's godly wife, who bore him two sons, Narfi and Nari. She sits by the bound Loki with a cup, protecting him from the venom dripping onto his face (see Loki).

Sjofn: A goddess of marriage and love; Old Norse Sjofn.

Skadi: An etin-maid, daughter of the giant Thjazi, who came among the Aesir in full armour to take revenge for her father. As part of her weregild, she demanded a husband; she had wanted Balder, but, being forced to choose among the gods by their feet alone, ended up with Njord. His sea-home was as unpleasant to her as her mountain-home was to him, and so they parted. She later bore a son to Odin: this son fathered the line of the Jarls of Hladhir, who were some of the greatest protectors of Heathenism in Norway during the extremely bloody and brutal process of the conversion of that country. Placenames show that she was especially worshipped in eastern Sweden; in the Eddic poem *Lokasenna*, she speaks of her shrines and holy fields. Skadi is a goddess of skiing, hunting, revenge, protection of the clan, and those women who follow the path of the "Maiden Warrior"; Old Norse Skathi.

Skirnir: "The Shining one"; Frey's servant and messenger; Old Norse Skirnir.

Sleipnir: Odin's gray, eight-legged horse, borne by Loki (in mare-shape) to the giant-stallion Svadilfari.

Snotra: "The wise one", a goddess of wisdom and good behaviour, always ready to let folk know what is fitting at any given time. Often called on by the lady of the house when men are feasting too boisterously.

Sunna: The Sun. The Sun is always feminine in Germanic languages and culture, just as the Moon is masculine. There is fairly strong evidence showing that the Sun was actually worshipped by the Norse. She is seen as driving a fiery wagon across the sky, which is drawn by either one horse named Skinfaxi ("Shining Mane") or two, named Arvaki ("Early Awake")

and Alsvidr ("All-Swift"), and chased by a troll in wolf-shape who will devour her at Ragnarok; Old Norse Sol.

Surt: "The Black one", chief of the Muspilli, or fire-giants, who will lead the battle against the gods and slay Frey at Ragnarok. His name appears attached to several sources of Icelandic volcanic activities, from the Viking Age to the modern era (the volcanic island flung up off the coast of Iceland in 1963 is called "Surtsey", Surt's Island). The fire that burns the cosmos at Ragnarok is called "Surt's fire"; Old Norse Surtr.

Syn: "The denier": a goddess who guards gates and doorways against those who should not enter.

Swart Alfs: see "dwarves".

Thjalfi: Servant of Thor. When Thor stayed overnight at the house of a man (race unclear; sources hint variously at human, giant, or elf) named Egill, there was little to eat, so Thor slew his goats and served them up. He warned the family not to harm any of the bones, but Thjalfi cracked one and sucked the marrow. The next morning, Thor put the hides back over the bones and swung his Hammer over them; the goats jumped up alive and well, but one was lamed. To pay for the harm, Egill gave Thor his son Thjalfi and his daughter Roskva as servants. Thjalfi was best known as a remarkably swift runner. The name (old Norse Thjalfi) has been interpreted as "serving-elf", but also appears as a personal name. His sister's name (Old Norse Roskva) is related to the verb "to grow, to mature", and may hint at an original role as fertility goddess, fitting to both Thor's role as a god of fruitfulness and to the character of his wife Sif.

Thrud: "Strength"; Thor's daughter. Perhaps abducted by the giant Hrungrir, whom Thor slew; also desired by the dwarf Alviss, whom Thor outwitted. Her name is sometimes listed among the valkyries; it is a common element in women's names (such as Gertrude - "spear-Thrud" or "spear-strength"). Old Norse Truthr; English Trude.

Thurse: Another term for a giant, especially used for ill-willing giants.

Troll: Originally, perhaps, simply meaning "magic", though it has also been connected with "to roll". Today it is normally used for a being from Icelandic and Norwegian folklore, which seems to be a cross between a land-wight, a giant, and the Undead. Trolls of this sort are magical beings that kill (and perhaps eat) travellers in the mountains and are turned to stone by daylight.

Tyr: His name simply means "god"; at one time, he may have been the Germanic equivalent of Zeus or Jupiter, the "Sky-Father" of the Indo-Europeans. In old Norse, Tyr appears only in the myth in which he gives up his hand so that the gods can bind the Wolf Fenrir. However, there are hints associating him with the Thing (the judgement assembly of the Germanic peoples) and suggesting strongly that he may originally have been a god of justice. Tyr's justice, however, is not that of calm Solomonic legislation, but that of the often lively wrangling of the Germanic legal process, which was effectively a battle sublimated into a form where the process of working out the problem could help, rather than harm, the community. Tyr will

fight Garm, the hound of Hel, at Ragnarok. No images or descriptions of Tyr have survived, except that we know he is one-handed, and the Prose Edda portrays him as a warrior. It is said, "Tyr will help you if - and only if your cause is just".

page 24

A female deity named Cisa or Zisa (Upper German feminine form of the name Tyr) is also recorded near Augsburg, but we know even less of her, though it has been suggested in modern times that she may be paired with Tyr in some way, perhaps as either a twin with similar functions or as an Earth-Mother complementing the Sky-Father; Old Norse Tyr; Anglo-Saxon Tiw (from whence "Tuesday"); Old High German Ziu; Proto-Germanic *Tiwaz.

Ull: God of the bow and the snowshoe, patron of hunters and single combat, little is known of Ull from the tales of the North. His name means "Glory", and has sometimes been thought to refer to the Northern Lights. His home is called "Yew-Dales", fitting to the bow-god. Since his name often appears twinned with that of Njord or Frey in placenames, it is possible that he may have alternated with one or the other as the Winter-half of a Winter King/Summer King pair. Old Norse Ullr; Anglo-Saxon Wuldor; Primitive Norse Wultur.

Utgard: "The world outside the enclosure"; the world of giants, sometimes the evil dead, and other frightful beings. A clear distinction is made between Asgard/Midgard, which gods and humans share, and Utgard; normally the divider is seen as a river or ocean.

Vali: Fathered by Odin on the maiden Rind to avenge Balder's death.

Valkyries: "Choosers of the Slain", these maidens were originally seen as frightful battle-spirits accompanying Odin in his work of marking men for death in war. They appear in a more pleasant aspect in Valhall, where they carry out the traditional womanly duty of bearing drink. The idea of the valkyrie as the hero's supernatural lover is probably a product of romanticization by the thirteenth century scribes who recorded the earlier poems of the heroes Helgi and Wayland (Volundr) and filled in gaps with their own prose; the poems themselves do not recognise these spirit-wives as valkyries. The most famous of the valkyries, known chiefly through Wagner's Ring Cycle, is Brunnhilde, demoted from her position for defending a hero against Odin's will and punished by being forced to fall in love with Siegfried the Dragon-Slayer (Sigurd).

Vanir: A tribe of deities which we only know about through their relationship with the Aesir. After a war that ended in a truce between equally matched forces, the two tribes were reconciled, and the Vanic Njord and Frey came to live with the Aesir. Since Frey and Njord are often called on for peace and good harvest, the Vanir are often seen as peaceful fertility deities. They are contrasted to the warlike Aesir in this respect, but since Frey is one of the doughtiest warriors and called "leader of the hosts of the gods", and his twin Freya is well known as a patron goddess of warriors and stirrer of strife, this can hardly be the wholeness of their being. The Vanir are especially known for their wisdom and ability to see into the mists of what shall become; the ecstatic divinatory technique called *seidhr* is originally attributed to them. The rock carvings of the Bronze Age seem to show a great deal of Vanic symbolism, though Aesir

images (the god with the spear, the god with the double-headed Hammer or axe) are also often present; in modern speech, Wans or Waness.

Var: “Beloved” or “goddess of contracts”. One of Frigga’s women, a goddess of love and marriage, especially of marriage oaths; Old Norse Var.

Ve: “Holiness”. Probably an aspect of Odin. The “three brothers” Odin, Vili, and Ve slew the proto-giant Ymir and made the worlds out of his body. Old Norse Ve, modern “Wih”.

page 25

Vidar: Called “the Silent God”, Vidar was fathered by Odin on the giantess Grid. At Ragnarok, he will tear Fenrir’s jaws apart, avenging Odin and freeing him (or at least some important part of his spirit) from the Wolfs belly. His name may mean “the Wide-Ruling one”; Old Norse Vitharr.

Vili: “Will”. Probably an aspect of Odin. See Ve.

Vingolf: “The Friendly House”, which, according to Snorri, is the special holy hall of the goddesses in Asgard; Old Norse Vingolf.

Vor: “The Careful one”, one of Frigga’s women; Old Norse Vorr.

Walpurga: “Wald-burga” (Wood-Protection), a christian saint whose name was given to the holy night May Eve (“Walpurgisnacht”). No Heathen name for this feast survives. However, for the sake of custom in the Teutonic tradition, the Troth has taken to calling the festival “Waluburg’s Night”, after the second-century Heathen Germanic seeress, Waluburg.

Wayland: The greatest of smiths in Germanic legend. A human who was wedded to a swan-maiden; after she left him, he was captured by the king Nidhad, hamstrung, and forced to work at the forge, but he slew Nidhad’s sons, seduced his daughter and left her pregnant, and flew away on wings he had forged himself. There is a megalithic tomb in England called “Weyland’s Smithy”. Old Norse Volundr, also called Weyland.

Wild Hunt: The procession of the dead, which rides through the night skies, especially around Yuletime. Sometimes it is said to be led by Odin; sometimes by either heroes (such as Gudrun, wife of Sigurd from the Volsung/Nibelung legends, or Theoderik the Great) or local villains.

Yggdrasill: The World-Tree. The name Yggdrasill means “Ygg’s steed”; Ygg is one of Odin’s many names. The title probably refers to the nine nights Odin spent hanging from it to win the runes, as a gallows is often called “the steed of the hanged”. All the Nine Worlds lie within the span of the World-Tree. It is usually called an ash, but some think that it may be a yew, since it is also said to be evergreen. At its roots gnaw the dragon Nidhogg and many snakes; an eagle nests at its crown with a falcon between his eyes, and the squirrel Ratatosk runs up and down

between them. Four stags also gnaw on the World-Tree's bark; but the Norns' sprinkling of the waters from the Well of Wyrð heal it each day.

Ymir: The first giant, born from the meeting of primal ice and primal fire (according to the Prose Edda) or from the mists rising from the rivers that flow from Niflheim (according to the Eddic poem Vafthrudnismál). Slain by Odin and his brothers (or aspects) Vili and Ve. They made the sky from his skull, the earth from his body; his blood became the sea and the waters of the earth, his bones the rocks, and his hair trees and bushes.

Seasonal Festivals

Yule

Yule (20th - 31st June, s.h.) is the most important holiday of the year. Everyone is familiar with the shortness of the deep winter days, but in the Scandinavian countries this is of even greater importance. At the Yuletide there is almost no sunlight at all, and the climate would have people bound in their homes waiting for the return of Spring.

Yule is a long festival, traditionally held to be 12 days or more. After Yule the days began to get longer and the festival represented the breaking of the heart of winter and the beginning of the new year. Yule was the holiday of Odin, Thor or Frey, although there is no reason not to honour all three Gods in modern practice.

Odin is the Allfather, remembered today best (because of the Vikings) as a God of War, however he has other aspects that are just as strong or stronger. In the Eddas, he is the leader of the Gods, a position that other Germanic peoples attribute to Tyr. Being the Allfather his position is more familial than legislative. Most importantly he is the God of Magick, God of the Runes. He is also God of the Dead and Leader of the Wild Hunt: a band of wandering horse-mounted spectres who seek new members from those who perish in the fields and woods during darkest time (during the Twelve Nights of Yule) of the year, to join their awe-ful chase. Their death is seen as a sacrifice for the fertility of the earth. In England he is known as Woden, a grey cloaked wanderer, travelling alone. He is Warder of the Land and Protector of his People. His spiritual qualities are honoured when the earth is seemingly dead, awaiting re-birth.

Frey is the God of fertility and farming and was honoured at Yule in the hopes that his time would soon return. Frey is also an important God at this time as shown in the myth "The Wooing of Gerd." Gerd is Frey's wife, and she was once a frost giant. Frey had seen her while he was seated on Odin's High Seat, and was utterly taken by her, but she would not yield until Skirnir, Frey's messenger or perhaps Frey in disguise, threatened her with an eternity of cold. In this way, Frey brings back the summer times by wooing a daughter of cold and frost. His love for her brings warmth to her heart and to the land.

Thor's position at Yule is a bit more savage. He is the sworn enemy of the Frost Giants and Jotnar who rule the winter months, and as such is honoured as the God who's actions fight off these creatures and bring back the spring.

Our kindred also honours Sunna, the Sun Goddess, at Yule. However, we feel she is more important at Midsummer, when she is at her height.

The most important symbols of Yule are still with us today. Most of the supposedly secular customs of Christmas are actually Pagan in origin. Evergreen trees and holly which remained green throughout the long nights and cold were a promise that spring would once again

return to the land. These symbols may also have been a connection to the nature spirits who have sway over the return of the warm days. The modern conception of Santa Claus as an elf, for whom offerings of milk and cookies are left, is possibly a modern continuation of leaving offerings for the Alvar and other nature spirits. The idea of children staying up all night in the hopes of catching a glimpse of Santa Claus may be a remnant of people staying awake to mark the long night and remind the sun to return.

(In the latter case it's considered an adequate substitution to leave a candle going all night to light the way for the returning sun.)

Yule is a weeks long festival, not just a single holiday. The Yule season begins on the solstice, which is the Mother Night of Yule, and ends with Twelfth Night on June 31 st. As a point of interest, January 7 th (northern hemisphere) is St. Distaffs day, which Nigel Pennick has suggested may have been a day sacred to Frigg, whose symbol is the distaff. For the southern hemisphere, this would transpose to July 7 th.

While one might expect a rather dour theme to a holiday held in the darkness and cold, Yule is a time of feasting and gladness.

The most important custom at Yule for modern Heathens is the swearing of Yule oaths. Our kindred does this at Twelfth Night (aka New Years Eve) or when ever we hold the Yule feast (flexibility). We hold a sumbel (symbol) and we keep the Yule wreath handy for anyone who wishes to swear an oath for the coming year.

There are simply so many different Yule customs, both ancient and modern, that one has almost limitless possibilities even when staying within Scandinavian and Germanic customs. In modern practice one might honour Sunna on the Mother Night, then hold a blot a few days later to Thor, a feast for New Years day which is shared with the house and land spirits, and then finish on Twelfth Night with a ritual to Frey, whose time is then officially beginning.

Ostara

Ostara (21 st - 23 rd September, s.h.) also known to many groups as Summer Finding is the holiday sacred to the Goddess for whom the modern Easter is named. She is a fertility Goddess and her symbols are the hare and the egg. She was an important Goddess of spring to the ancient Saxons, but we know little else of her other than this. Some have suggested that Ostara is merely an alternate name for Frigg or Freya, but neither of these Goddesses seem to have quite the same fertility function as Ostara does. Frigg seems too "high class" to be associated with such an earthy festival and Freya's form of fertility is more based on eroticism than reproduction.

The obvious folk tradition at this time of year involves eggs. These were coloured as they are today, but then they were buried, or more appropriately, planted in the earth. Some have suggested that the act was purely magical, the fertility of the eggs would then be transferred from the animal realm to the plant realm and would increase the prosperity of the harvest. It's also possible that they were left as an offering to the alvar and the spirits of the plants. In any case a blot should be prepared to the Goddess of Spring, however one wishes to honour her, and also to the spirits of the land.

Midsummer Day

The summer solstice (21 st - 22 nd December, s.h.) was second only to Yule in importance to the ancient Northmen. Some groups mark this day as sacred to Balder, but we disagree with this. While Balder can be seen as a dying and resurrected Sun God, in the mythology we are most familiar with, he does not return to life until Ragnarok and it seems like an act of "schild" (debt) to symbolically kill the sun when you know Balder doesn't come back until the end of the world. Instead, we mark this day as sacred to the Goddess Sunna, who is literally the sun.

page 28

One idea for midsummer is to remain awake all night and mark the shortest night of the year, then at sunrise to perform a "Greeting of Sunna" and a blot to her.

Another midsummer custom is the rolling of a flaming wagon wheel down a hill to mark the turning of the wheel of the year. If fire would otherwise be a hazard, one could parade a wheel covered with candles for similar effect. It is also a time for general merriment and in the Scandinavian countries many of what we know as the traditional May Day rituals such as May Poles and Morris Dances were celebrated at Midsummer rather than in May.

Another idea is the construction of a "sun ship" which with sails of copper reflecting the light from small torches, represents Sunna, will be brought forth at dawning and dusk.

Fallfest

Also known as Haustblott (House Blessing) and Winter Finding. There is not a great deal of distinctive traditional lore about the Autumn Equinox (21 st - 23 rd March) that would distinguish it from the Harvest festivals found worldwide. It seems to have been overshadowed to some extent by the Winter Nights.

Winter Finding should be treated as a general harvest festival. Whichever Gods (Vanir /Wanes) you invoke for fertility of the land would be most appropriate to invoke again at this time. We have honoured Frey & Freya and Nerthus & Njord for this purpose. You can take your pick. Even more so than other holidays, a large feast is appropriate at this time, perhaps concentrating on local vegetables and grains more than meat.

Disfest

Also known as Winter Nights (13 th - 15 th April) is the traditional festival honouring the Disir or family spirits (which includes the Alvr/Elfs). It is a time to remember your family, the dead, and your ancestors.

A Freyablot may be performed at this time as Freya is known as the Vanadis (i.e. the Dis of the Vanir) or the Great Dis, and she seems to be the Goddess of the Disir themselves. This is probably connected to Freya's position as recipient of half the battle-slain or her ability with seidhr (sorcery akin to witchcraft and shamanism). One might also simply want to honour the Disir as a whole or attempt to summon and pour offering to your own family's Dis. A sumbel which toasts ones ancestors and passed on friends would also be in order. If a feast is held, it

should be quiet and respectful of the character of the season. Another idea is a silent “mum feast,” a custom which is found the world over.

The various Halloween customs such as dressing in costume or celebrating this time as a time where the worlds of the living and the dead connect are more Celtic in origin than Germanic and probably should not be part of an Asatru celebration.

Valpurgis

Also known as Waluburg's Night (31 st October - co-incidentally it falls on Halloween, n.h.). It is the festival of May eve (April 30 th) in the northern hemisphere . Waluburg was a 2nd century seeress, a "Volva" of the northern Germanic tribes. Her prophesies and advice kept our ancestors free from Roman domination. This feast was taken over by the christians, even claiming her as a "saint", until it became known as Walpurgisnacht - the night of the witches, the great sabbath of the year. This version had nothing to do with our culture or religion and was another example of turning our hero/ines into "the evil enemy".

Waluburg was a seidhr and rune mistress, so the celebration is one of discovering the powers within yourself. It is a night of mystery, to seek strength in the darkness and light. Fire jumping for ritual cleansing and fire-gazing (scrying) are traditional. So is the casting of runes for the kindred, for guidance. Odin and Freya should also be honoured, along with Waluburg, as the deities of Rune and Seidhr Magick, respectively. A sumble (symble) with mead, lasting as long as the gathered folk desire is a way of unlocking inspiration.

The Hammer Rite

The Hammer Rite was first worked out by Edred Thorsson (in *FUTHARK*). There are a few different versions of it floating around, including those in *A Book of Troth* and Kveldulf Gundarsson's *Teutonic Religion*, but the basic goal - to ward and hallow a stead - and the basic method - signing the Hammer to the four or eight directions, above and below - is the same. The version given here is not especially better than the others - not to be thought of an "official Troth Hammer-Rite", it is a variation.

This rite does not create a magical circle; folk may pass freely in and out after it is done. However, the person doing it should see it as ringing the whole stead where the rite or feast is being held, as all of it should be holy ground.

The Hammer Rite may be done with an actual full-size hallowing Hammer, a Hammer pendant, or, at need, the Godwo/man's fist. The signing of the Hammer should be a large, sweeping gesture full of might - as Thonar would do it.

I. The Godwo/man faces North and makes the sign of the Hammer, saying,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, ward us in North-Ways! All ill must wend away.

S/he turns to either the Northeast (if s/he likes to hallow the full aett) or the East (if s/he prefers to use the quarters and makes the sign of the Hammer, saying,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, ward in the North-East (or "in East-Ways"). All ill must wend away.

S/he continues in this manner around all eight or four directions, ending by facing North again. S/he traces the sign of the Hammer or swastika above (depending on personal choice, whether the rite is being done for a lot of strangers to whom the ur-old holiness of the swastika and the fact that we are not Nazis has not been explained, and such things) and says,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, hallow from heavens!

S/he traces the same sign below and says,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, hallow from earth's womb!

S/he stands in full elhaz stance and says,

From Ases' Garth awesome, from Hella's home deep, from the worlds ringed around - all might in the Middle-Garth meet! Hallowed is this stead: no wights may work ill here, and holy are all within.

II. Another method is for the Godwo/man to stand with their back to the north, facing the gathered folk, visualising the area to be hallowed, raising the hammer above their head with both hands, turning 360 degrees sunwise, and saying:

Thorr Vydja thisi Garthr ! (phonetically: Thor Vid-yar theesee Garth-ar)
[Old Norse for - Thor Hallow this enclosure!]

page 32

The Blot

The Blot is the most common ritual within Asatru. In its simplest form a blot is making a sacrifice to the Gods. In the old days this was done by feasting on an animal consecrated to the Gods and then slaughtered. (The word blot itself is related to the Norse words for "blood" and "sacrifice.") As we are no longer farmers and our needs are simpler today, the most common blot is an offering of mead or other alcoholic beverage to the deities.

Many modern folk will be suspicious of a ritual such as this. Rituals such as the blot have been falsely interpreted by post-Pagan sources in order to denigrate the ritual or trivialise it. The most common myth about ritual sacrifice is that one is buying off a deity e.g. one throws a virgin into the Volcano so it won't erupt. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In Asatru it is believed that we are not only the worshippers of the Gods but that we are physically related to them. The Eddas tell of a God, Ríg, who went to various farmsteads and fathered the human race so we are physically kin to the Gods. On a more esoteric level, humankind is gifted with "ond" or the gift of ecstasy. Ond is a force that is of the Gods. It is everything that makes humans different from the other creatures of the world. As creatures with this gift, we are immediately connected to the Gods, we are part of their tribe, their kin. Thus we are not simply buying off the Gods by offering them something that they want, but we are sharing with the Gods something that we all take joy in. Sharing and gift giving was an incredibly important part of Norse/Germanic culture (and of most ancient cultures) and had magical significance. Giving a gift was a sign of friendship, kinship, and connection. By sharing a blot with the Gods we reaffirm our connection to them and thus reawaken their powers within us and their watchfulness over our world.

A blot can be a simple affair where a horn of mead is consecrated to the Gods and then poured as a libation, or it can be a part of a larger ritual. A good comparison is the Catholic Mass which may be part of a regular service or special event such as a wedding or funeral, or it may be done as a purely magical-religious practice without any sermon, hymns, or other trappings.

The blot consists of three parts, the hallowing or consecrating of the offering, the sharing of the offering, and the libation. Each of these is equally important. The only tools required are mead, beer or juice, a horn or chalice, a sprig of evergreen used to sprinkle the mead, and a ceremonial bowl known as a "Hlautbowl" into which the initial libation will be made.

The blot begins with the consecration of the offering. The Gothi (Priest) or Gythja (Priestess) officiating at the blot invokes the God or Goddess being honoured. This is usually accomplished by a spoken declaration with ones arms being held above ones head in a Y shape, in imitation of the rune *elhaz*. This posture is used for most invocations and prayers

throughout Asatru. After the spoken invocation an appropriate rune or other symbol of the God or Goddess may be drawn in the air with the finger or with the staff.

Once the God/ess is invoked, the Gothi takes up the horn. His assistant pours mead from the bottle into the horn. The Gothi then traces the hammer sign (an upside down T) over the horn as a blessing and holds it above his head offering it to the Gods. He then speaks a request that the God or Goddess bless the offering and accept it as a sacrifice. At the least one will feel the presence of the deity; at best one will be able to feel in some inner way the God taking of the mead and drinking it. The mead is now not only blessed with divine power but has passed the lips of the God or Goddess.

page 33

The Gothi then takes a drink of the horn and it is passed around the gathered folk. Although it sounds like a very simple thing, it can be a very powerful experience. At this point the mead is no longer simply a drink but is imbued with the blessing and power of the God or Goddess being honoured. When one drinks, one is taking that power into oneself.

After the horn has made the rounds once, the Gothi again drinks from the horn and then empties the remainder into the hlautbowl.

The Gothi then takes up the evergreen sprig and his assistant the hlautbowl and the Gothi sprinkles the mead around the circle or temple or onto the altar. If there are a great number of the folk gathered, one may wish to drop the drinking and merely sprinkle the various folk with the mead as a way of sharing it. In a small group one might merely drink as the blessing.

When this is done the Hlautbowl is taken by the Gothi and poured out onto the ground. This is done as an offering not only to the God invoked at the blot, but it is also traditional to remember the Earth Mother at this time, since it is being poured onto her ground. Many invocations mention the God, Goddess, or spirit being sacrificed to, and then Mother Earth, as in the Sigdrifa Prayer "Hail to the Gods and to the Goddesses as well; Hail Earth that gives to all men." (Sigdrifumal 3) With this action, the blot is ended.

Obviously this is a very sparse ritual and if performed alone could be completed in only a few minutes. This is as it should be, for blots are often poured not because it is a time of gathering or festivity for the frolic, but because the blot must be poured in honour or petition of a God or Goddess on their holiday or some other important occasion. For example, a father tending his sick child might pour a blot to Eir the Goddess of healing. Obviously he doesn't have time to waste on the "trappings" of ritual. The intent is to make an offering to the Goddess as quickly as possible. At some times a full celebration might not be made of a holiday because of a persons hectic schedule, but at the least a blot should be made to mark the occasion. However, in most cases a blot will at least be accompanied by a statement of intent at the beginning and some sort of conclusion at the end. It might also be interspersed with or done at the conclusion of ritual theatre or magic.

For example, the gathered kindred can begin the ritual with a chant of "Odin, Vili, Ve" which connects us to the Gods of creation. Between the invocation of the God or Goddess and the

actual Blot you can add a meditation or something else, which acts as a focus of the ritual. Once, for example, we made mead in the middle of a ritual to Aegir.

As part of a blot (depending on the number of people), the gothi can pass the horn three times. The first time around is a taking in of the power of the charged mead and all offer a toast to the God(s) of the occasion. The second and third rounds are open to toasts to other Gods, toasts to the kindred, the hosts, to pledges, boasting and anything else one wishes to say. It is essentially a “mini sumble” in the middle of our blot. Always of course, we remember the purpose of our ritual. We would never toast one of the Jotnar during a ritual to Thor for example. We have also added a few steps at the end, which are a private affirmation of our groups kinship with each other and with the Gods.

page 34

The basic format of a Blot is:

1. Sanctify space with the Hammer rite.
2. Invocation of the Deity.
3. Secondary Activities: meditation etc.
4. Load mead by offering it to the God/ess or Holy Wight.
5. Pass mead for blessing or sprinkle on folk.
6. Other activities, prayers, etc.
7. Thank the deity/wight.
8. Pour the libation to the Earth.

Symbel

The symbel (also called *sumbel*) is a rite practiced by all followers of the Elder Troth, probably going back to Common Germanic time. It is one of the holiest of rites, for the symbel-horn or cup is the embodiment of Wyrd's Well within the Middle-Garth: the symbel-hall thus becomes, for the space of the rite, that holy stead at the Well, where the Ases ride to their Thing, where the dead and the living are gathered in a single moment of might. It was also the most enduring of the Heathen rituals, for the making of toasts at feasts never ceased, nor was it even driven into heaths and hinterlands as were so many of our other folk-ways: the drinking of *minne*, in one form or another, is still practised in the highest society today.

At root, the symbel is the practice of sitting (often ordered by rank; today it is also usual to sit in a ring, but in old days folk were probably lined up on their benches), passing a drinking horn, and making toasts, boasts, and oaths. Speeches were made and gifts given during this rite; alliances formed and agreements made solemn. A full interpretation of the history and spiritual background of the symbel, especially in terms of its relationship to Wyrd, given in Paul Bauschatz's *The Well and the Tree*; nearly all true folk who have written or spoken on the meaning of the symbel in latter years have drawn their understanding of the rite from this text.

Fitting behaviour at symbel is as follows: if possible, folk should sit rather than stand, though the person making the toast should choose to do either. The holder of the horn is the only person who should be allowed to speak, and s/he has the right to keep it and talk as long as

s/he likes - though good manners ask that no one drone on too long. Tolerance is absolutely necessary for symbel to work well: if a toast is boring, a song badly sung, or a poem clumsily recited, or if you do not agree with the feeling that has been expressed - keep your feelings to yourself; others may not share your opinion, or may feel that the heart and soul which gave rise to the toast mean more than its presentation. There is no breach of symbel-custom worse than breaking into another person's toast; in the days of our forebears, apparently, that possibility could not even be considered.

If, however, you feel that the message of a toast is truly obnoxious, you can then make a counter-toast when the horn reaches you. For instance, there was one symbel when a guest made a distinctly racist speech; the next couple of toasts were odes to tolerance. Toasts given to Loki are also, (quite often) followed by toasts to Thonar or Heimdallr. So long as such counter-toasts do not range over into attacks upon the original toaster him/herself, they are quite acceptable - one could even argue that they are needful, in view of the way in which all words spoken at symbel are set into the Well of Wyrð.

When a toast has particularly stirred you, it is acceptable to cry "Haill" or "Heilsa!" when it is over, but longer expressions of approval are also disruptive.

If you must leave a symbel or come into one after it has started, do it as quietly as possible. Do not walk across the ring where everyone can see you; sneak in or out behind people's backs. The symble-ring is not a hermetically sealed space in the sense of a magical circle, but it is a holy stead, and distractions must be kept to the lowest level possible.

Especially in larger groups, many folk choose to keep their own drinks with them and drink while other folk are toasting. This is quite all right: the symbel is a merry time as well as a mighty one. It was thought uncouth to get really drunk at a symbel, but drinking well and enjoying oneself were very much a part of the rite. Eating at symbel however, is and was not done. Among the Franks, the tables were carried out after dinner when the serious drink began; Bauschatz suggests that food was “purposefully excluded from the ritual” (*The Well and the Tree*, p. 74). *Havamal* 33, it is told that one should have a little bit to eat before coming to a feast; the same is often true of symbel. In fact, it is probably better to schedule the symbel so that it falls after the main feasting.

While the symbel is basically a social rite, strengthening the bonds that tie true folk together within a holy setting, can be done with as few as two or three people - in fact, some of the mightiest symbols take place in very small groups of lore-wise folk.

Either a horn or a large cup can be used, but the horn is better: Even after the conversion, the horn was still the holiest vessel, the link with the elder forebears. *Orkneyinga Saga* ch. 66 tells how the men had been drinking from cups all evening, but changed to horns for the minne-toasts.

When the horn is emptied, it should be refilled by a chosen hall-idis. This frowe may also carry the horn between folk, rather than simply letting it be passed from hand to hand. It is important not to think of this as a servile role; it was the highest of atheling-frowes who bore the drink in the old days, as the walkurjas bear it to Wodan and his *einherjar*, and Wealthew bore it to the heroes within Hrothgar's hall. The woman's might here is not only as the source of life but, even as the horn embodies the Well of Wyrð, so she herself is the Norn hearing and ruling over the words that are spoken into it. In a shorter symbel, the hall-idis should make sure before the rite starts that there will be enough drink within the circle to refill the horn at least thrice; in a longer one, she may pass freely out to get more drink when needed.

The symbel has several forms, fitting to different times and occasions and to different sizes of gathering; it has been found in modern times that it is needful to carefully consider the group gathered before deciding which form will be best.

Shopes' Symbel

Up to now, the “shopes' symbel” has not been formally marked as different from others; it has just happened at random times when enough word-skilled folk chanced to be at the same symbel. The shopes' symbel is that sort of symbel at which everyone makes long and mighty toasts, often in the form of poems, tales, or songs. This seems to have been common among our forebears, as most folk were expected to have at least a little word-craft or musical skill; for instance, Bede's account of the poet Caedmon begins with a description of how Caedmon, then lacking all such skill, sat in a beer-hall when the harp was being passed and songs sung, and had to get up and slink out before the harp came to him. A shopes' symbel can go on literally all night - and has! In a small group of folk who know the lore and have some speech-skill, this form takes the symbel-rite to its greatest heights.

For reasons of time and interest, however, a very elaborate symbol does not work as well in a large group, especially if not everyone there is used to it and prepared for it. We have seen more than a few luckless Caedmon-types take the horn after a song, awesomely spoken toast, or a recitation from the Eddas, only to shuffle, blush, mumble "Uh...gee...Hail Odin!" and

page 37

pass the horn as fast as they could, hoping the next toast would get everyone's mind off them.

Such embarrassment makes it difficult for the embarrasee to be aware of the spiritual workings of the rite. Other folk are just not ready to sit and listen to two hours of mixed performance, and would much rather be in the next room talking with their friends or something. Boredom and distraction, too, do not help a ritual mood. If a large group is gathered at a feast, it is therefore good to mark out a time for a separate "shopes' symbol" along the lines of a ritual "bardic circle", in which taking part is a matter of choice. Some would prefer to listen without having to do anything themselves, some would prefer to listen to some performances and not others; these folk might perhaps sit in an outer ring, where they can come and go without disturbing those performing in the symbol.

Minne-symbol

The minne-symbol is the most common form, used at nearly all Troth feasts. This is the basic three-round symbol. The first round is drunk to the god/esses, each person hailing the deity of their choice; the second one is drunk to forebears or hero/ines; the third to whatever folk will. The third round is the one at which oaths are usually made and so forth. The word minne means "memory", and it is one of the greatest parts of symbol-drinking - for one of the chief goals of the symbol is to put us in mind of our forebears and the god/esses, to call forth the great deeds that lie within the Well (thus, within the cup or horn itself) and to bring their might forth into the round of our own becoming.

In a larger group (fifteen to thirty people), especially if it is not made up of folk who have been in the kindred of the true for a while, toasts at such a symbol ought generally to be shorter than those at a shopes' symbol: occasional performances are good, but everyone feeling that they must tell their whole life-story quickly causes the attention to start wandering. Usually a few lines of honour or, at most, a short poem or tale are enough. However, it may also be suggested that if the ritual coordinator knows there is someone there with an act that is particularly well-done and/or fitting to the feast, that s/he hint to that person beforehand that the performance would be appreciated.

Feast-symbol

For a large group (more than thirty people), passing the horn around the room three times and having everyone make a toast - even a short toast - begins to become less workable. In *Heimskringla* (*Hakonar saga ins gotha*) we see how our forebears dealt with a large group. Snorri tells us that the basic custom was that "The cup had to be borne around the fire, and thus, when the banquet was readied and the chieftain was there, then he had to sign the cup and all

the blessing-food. First was Othinn's cup - that had to be drunk to victory and the might of the king - and after that Njordr's cup and Freyr's cup for harvest and peace. Then it was customary for many men next to drink the bragarfull ("best cup" or "Bragi-cup" - this was the draught of oath-swearing, as mentioned in the prose of *Helgakvída Hjorvarðssonar*). Men also drank a cup to their kinsmen, to those who had been howe-buried, and that was called *minni*" (ch. 14). At this particular feast, Hakon, who is a christian, takes the Othinn's-draught from Sigurdr Jarl and makes the sign of the cross over it. When Karr at Grytingi asks, "'Why is the king doing so? Does he not want to make blessing?'" Sigurdr, who has been working hard to re-integrate Hakon into society (and eventually succeeded, the poem *Hakonamarl* written by the very dedicated Heathen skald Eyvindr Skaldaspillr, tells of this king's coming to Valholl), answers, "'The king does as all those do who trust in their own

page 38

might and main, and signs his cup to Thor. He made the Hammer-mark over it, before he drank"' (ch. 17).

The scene Snorri was describing was probably one in which each man had his own cup or horn, but the chieftain stood in the holiest part of the hall - by the fire where the meat from the blessing was being seethed - and spoke and signed the first toasts while everyone else drank with him (and those who did not want to drink to Othinn signed their own horns with the Hammer). After the leader had made the communal toasts and blessed the food, then it seems though the focus of attention broke up, with each man making his own toasts to heroes and kin by himself (or among a small group of friends?). This format can be used either as set forth in *Heimskringla*, or adapted to the basic Troth formula in which the first round goes to the gods, the second to heroes, and the third at the rite-leader's choice (something widely fitting, such as forebears, the thews and the folk who show them forth, or the kinship of the true perhaps). Individuals can then continue making their own toasts informally until they run out of either inspiration or ale.

Symbel Rite

I. Once the folk are seated, by rank or however the leader has chosen to arrange them, the leader takes up his/her place. The hall-idis, if there is one, fills the horn. The leader speaks:

"At Wyrd's Well we sit in stead of all might,
sitting at symbel this eve.
All holy wights hold seats in this stead,
ringed 'round the World-Tree's roots,
blithe at the hallowed burne.
Elder ways from elder times,
rise from Well to ring in toasts.
Here Ases deem, all awe is wrought,
words we speak Wyrd sets as law.
Forth froths the ale forth gleams bright mead,
the holiness brewed from heavens and earth,

from Heidrun's horns, from Hvergelmir deep
We drink and speak the draught of might.

II. a (*for a shopen' or minne-symbe*)

In first round shines our speech to the gods
we hail the highest of holy folk!
In second our howe-kin or heroes great,
the third round's toasts are ruled by our wills.

page 38

II. b (*for a large feast-symbol*). *The leader raises the horn high; the folk raise their drinks as well while s/he speaks*

I drink to Wodan wise drighten on high,
sig to the sibs all true!
Good to the land as leader fares well,
wisdom to wielder of might,
that deeming be done well aye,
and fair go all things with folk.

Those who do not wish to drink to Wodan may Hammer-sign their own draughts, saying something like, "Hail to Thonar - I trust might and main", or bless them quietly in whatever other way seems fitting. All drink deeply; the hall-idis tops the leader's horn off and s/he raises it again, saying,

Hail to Njordr (or Nerthus, as you choose) , nytt we thy blessings,
fruitfulness give thou to folk.
Well do we hail the Wans all mighty,
that ships fare all shining-laden,
wains fare heaped up with weal,
harvests all rich and high.

A ship-crescent may be traced over the horn; all drink deeply; the hall-idis tops the leader's horn off and s/he raises it again, saying,

Hail to Fro Ing, frith-god, beloved! weal-full world's god!
Boar-tusks ward us from woe ever, with stag-horn shining with dew
with brightness of bells ringing high,

our Fro, bless us with frith!

All drink deeply. The leader then says,

Now hail we kin and heroes of old,
now drink we minne's might.
Bragi's cup all boasts and oaths, speak each as seemly 'tis,
and words fair speak at will,
till feasting fares to an end.

III. To close a symbel, the leader takes the horn (in which only a little drink should be left) for the last time, and lifts it, saying,

Holy deeming is done this night,
our words set in the well.
Now we fare forth, and folk holy all,
from Ases' awesome seat,
from the mighty Well of Wyrð,
wend all to the worlds of home.

S/he drains the horn and knocks three times upon it. The rite is over.

Ancestry and Heritage in the Germanic Tradition

The Assembly of the Elder Troth's official policy is that we require that our folk affiliate for cultural and religious, not racial and political reasons. Because the Elder Troth as a whole is an ethnic tradition, largely stemming today from the interest in recovering a forgotten heritage, and because our forebears set so much weight on matters of kin and clan, the question often comes up of what role an awareness of personal ethnic background - not to mince words, race! - should play in our practise of our troth. Only by returning to the sources of our troth and the culture of our forebears can we hope to discover the beliefs of those who first kept the troth of the Aesir and Vanir.

The first, and simplest, problem is the question of whether our forebears had an over-arching "racial" consciousness - whether "race" meant anything to them or not. The Anglo-Saxons had laws, which separated the "Welsh" from the "English" insofar as weregild and rights were concerned. However, the distinction here seems to have been one of language and culture, not of race as such: intermarriage was not only common, but highly respected. According to our legends, the Saxon woman Rowena was given in marriage to the Romano-Celtic king Vortigern; the Saxon heroes Cerdic and his brother Cynric bear British names, implying that their mother may have been British; and similar alliances - treated with full honour - are recorded through the history of the Saxon folk. Marriage alliances were likewise made between Germanic and Roman persons of high rank. The historical Attila the Hun is thought to have maintained a court of mixed Hunnish and Gothic composition, and his last marriage was to an atheling-maiden of Germanic stock. Further, the Germans who sang tales of the great hero-king Theodoric the Ostrogoth counted it no disgrace for Theodoric to have served in Attila's warband. Although the latter cycle of legends may be historically inaccurate, it clearly shows the beliefs of its tellers. The Norse who settled Iceland brought along Irish thralls to their new land, with whom they interbred so freely that blood-type groupings show the average Icelander of today to be 25% to 75% Irish.

For those who argue that the Celts are so close to the Germanic folks ethnically and culturally that it makes no difference, it should also be pointed out that the Scandinavians have gone out of their way to breed with, and absorb elements of the culture of, the Finns, who are not only non-Germanic, but not even Indo-European - their language and, as far as we know, ethnic origin have no more in common with ours than do those of any other non-Indo-European group (such as orientals, Africans, or Amerindians), but we have been interbreeding so long and so thoroughly that now it is hardly possible to tell a Swede from a Finn on the basis of looks. Further, the relations of the Scandinavians with the Saami (Lapps), a Finno-Ugric people who bear a much closer physical, and generally closer cultural, resemblance to the Siberians and Inuit than to any Indo-European folk, were so successful that Saami tradition is now thought to be one of the greater sources for understanding Germanic religion - both in regards to the shamanic practices we learned from them in the elder days and the god/esses and traditions which they learned about from us and held holy through even the last couple of centuries. Although there was little recorded intermingling between the Norse and Inuit inhabitants of Greenland, that is likely to be due to the fact that the Norse settlers were christians for the vast majority of their stay in that land, and, being extremely concerned to

maintain their European identity (cf. the malnourished skeletons of the Herjolfsness settlers dressed in the height of European fashion, and the condition of the country in 1406 as “entirely Norse and resolutely Christian” - Jones, p. 310), were unwilling to learn the things that could have kept them alive from their native Heathen neighbours.

page 40

The evidence of the Norse relationship with the Finns and, even more, with the Saami, tells us that the “Skraelings” were probably not shunned by the Scandinavians in Greenland on racial grounds; rather, the Norse Greenlanders’ xenophobia was a part of their situation as “the farthest medieval outpost of what had been the Viking *and was now the European world*” (Jones, p. 311 - italics ours).

This seeming indifference to the concept of “race” is mirrored in the deeds of our gods. Odin himself is a “halfbreed” - the son of the god Borr and the giantess Bestla; Frey marries the giantess Gerd; his father Njord marries the giantess Skadi. Even Thor, who is best known for battling against the giants, has the giantess Jarnsaxa as concubine (which is not an illicit relationship in the elder days, but a legally recognised condition with responsibilities on both sides), and his sons by her, Modi and Magni, shall inherit his hall and hammer after Ragnarok. The god/esses’ hostility towards giants is not based on the race of these latter, but on the deeds of individuals among them. This is shown in the tale of Hrungrnir (told in the *Prose Edda*) where Odin makes a friendly wager with the giant and the Aesir invite him in for a drink: not until Hrungrnir becomes drunk and begins to make threatening boasts do the dwellers in Asgard show any signs of enmity towards him. In short, it can be safely stated that the Germanic folk did not think in terms of “race”; nor does our tradition give us any grounds for considering the idea meaningful; and the suggestion that “racial purity” might have meant anything to a Norseman, Saxon, or Goth is absolutely laughable.

The Norse did have a concept of physical beauty which was closely tied to light skin and fair hair: Those folk described as beautiful are almost always blond - especially women, for whom long blond hair was the ideal - while those described as ugly are almost always black-haired (Jochens, Jenny. “Before the Male Gaze”, p. 248). The two strains show up particularly in the family of Egill Skalla-Grimsson, the *Myramannakyn*, which was said to produce the most beautiful and the ugliest people in Iceland. The beautiful ones included the blond Thorolf (Egill’s brother), Kjartan Olafsson (who was a typical “light hero”, a “noble Heathen” in the period before his conversion and an exemplary christian afterwards), and Helga in fagra; the ugly ones included the black-haired Kveld-Ulfr, Skalla-Grim, and Egill himself (that is, the wise Odinists of the line). Since Egill Skalla-Grimsson is thought to be one of the worthiest folk of the Viking Age, and is one of the most honoured by all the true in modern times, while his handsome, fair-haired brother is mentioned only in passing, and only thought significant due to his relationship with Egill, this gives us some idea of the actual importance of blond beauty in our Northern forebears’ culture.

Another example which shows the Norse view of the same matter is found in *Landnamabok* (*Hauksbok* ch. 86): Ljufvina, the wife of king Hjorr, gives birth to two sons with remarkably dark skins, while her handmaid bears a very fair son. The queen thus changes the sons; but

when her husband comes home, he is unhappy with the fair child, and says that he will hardly be manly. When the children are three winters old, the queen asks the skald Bragi to look at them; he does, and it is clear to him that the fair child is the son of a thrall and by far the worst of the three, while the dark-skinned children are the sons of the king. Ljufvina then confesses, and shows Hjorr his own sons. He says that he has never seen such "Hel-skins", but accepts them as his own. Thereafter the brothers bear the by-name their father has given them, "heljarskinn", and become battle-kings and Vikings.

page 41

To our forebears, beauty was a fine thing, but many others were far more important: strength, skill, and bravery, for instance. We have only to look at the many great saga-heroes who were ugly as trolls to see that!

A more difficult question is that of the meaning of one's own ancestry: are only those descended from folk who worshipped the Aesir and Vanir really suited for the Elder Troth of the Germanic folk? Must every person follow his/her own genetic heritage, or is the simple act of choice enough to make one a legitimate heir to whichever spiritual path one chooses? While this question may seem on the surface to merely recast the issue of "race" in a more palatable guise, the distinction is of considerable significance. Our forebears did not think about "race"; however, they were very strongly aware of individual kinship and ancestry, and to say that these issues were not important to them would be to falsify the evidence of our sources.

If we accept that anyone with any forebears who followed our troth has the full right to follow their own ancestors' ways, we include the entire continent of Europe, North Africa (where the Vandals settled) and the Middle East (where the Crusaders spread their seed), and Russia, which, takes its very name from the Swedish Rus who settled there. Still, we are left with the problem of whether those who have no Germanic forebears in their clan-lines should take part in our troth and rites. As a faith which is, in large part, based on an ethnic culture and heritage, it is our duty to support all ethnic religions - Saami, Siberian African, Jewish, Oriental, Native American, and the rest as shield-fellows in our fight to preserve the diversity of this world's individual folks with all their unique heritages.

Most of us came to the Troth because we wished to learn about the ways of our own ancestors and the roots of our own culture - a culture, which christianity and Mediterranean thought worked to suppress in much the same way as they have worked to suppress the native cultures of the Americas, Africa, u.s.w. in more recent centuries. It follows, then, that those folk whose clans do not include any Germanic ancestors, however distant, should be encouraged at least to learn about and appreciate the beauty of their own personal heritage before seeking out a stranger's faith. On the other hand, the English language is still Germanic; although the Germanic origins of many of our ideals and customs have been forgotten by Western society at large, anyone of any bloodline who has been raised in an English-speaking country has a claim to the cultural heritage of the Elder Troth, if not the physical ancestry

stemming from our god/esses. The meaning which our forebears would have placed on this distinction must then be looked at.

To the Germanic folk, the soul was, at least in some of its aspects, something that was inherited. The importance of ancestry to the soul also appears in the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon genealogies where Freyr (in the case of the Ynglings) or Woden/Odin (in the case of historical dynasties such as those of the Saxon kings and legendary dynasties such as the Volsungs) is named as the founder of a royal line: the descendants of the god bear the might of the god. Spiritual characteristics such as berserkergang are hereditary, as is shown in *Egils saga*; so are many aspects of *wyrd*. In this respect, bloodline can be seen as important to *troth*: the god/esses and godly ancestors of one's personal forebears are the shapers of one's soul. This appears most clearly in *Volsunga saga*, where Odin fathers the Volsung line, acts as needful to further its life, gives Sigmundr the sword which embodies the Volsungs' clan-soul, and shapes the lives of the clan's members from beginning to end. The tendency, indeed, was for a kindred to favour the god/dess who was its own ancestor, as the Saxon kings followed Woden, and the Ynglings worshipped Freyr - though this cannot be taken too far:

page 42

Thor was the most beloved of the Norse gods, and there are no tales which even hint at his fathering human clans, though certain families (such as that of Thorolf Mosturskeggi) held him to be their particular friend.

The process of individual rebirth was thought to take place within the family line, but was also tied up with the rite of name-giving. It was the custom to give a new-born the name of the most newly dead family member of the same sex, and the child sometimes bore signs which showed it to be the rebirth of that person: H.R Ellis cites the *Upphaf sogu* description of the birth of Thordr, in which the newborn is named after his recently dead father, and has a scar on his left arm where his father had been wounded, and is at once given the nickname which his father had borne (*Road to Hel*, p.141). The family connection is important, but the name seems to be even more important, as the Helgi lays of the Elder Edda show. In the first of these, Helgi is given his name and his soul with it; the second Helgi is not descended from him, but is called after him and thus inherits his *wyrd* and his reborn valkyrie. Though only a summary of the third Helgi's tale survives, it seems to repeat this process of naming = rebirth = *wyrd*. Here, it seems to be the ritual action, rather than the actual bloodline, which transmits the soul, memory, and might.

The importance of ancestry stands out most clearly in the worship we give to our fore-gone kin whose ghosts still ward and help us, the *disir* and *alfar*; and in our awareness that the god/esses are our own eldest kin. In the homelands of the Germanic folk, particularly Scandinavia, this belief was bound up with the understanding that those dead who were buried in family lands still looked after their land and kin. This understanding was the source of the legal term "*udal*" or "*inherited*" lands - the same word as that of the rune-name *othala*. *Udal* lands could not be taken from the line, nor sold so long as there was a clan-member to inherit them: the soul of the line was bound up with the soul of the land. When the Norse fared to Iceland, they began hallowing the land with their dead at once. This is shown in *Egils saga*: when Egill's grandfather Kveld-Ulfr dies on the way to Iceland, he tells his son Skalla-Grim to

toss his coffin overboard and to settle where it comes to land: the living and the dead members of the clan continued to be bound in a single weave of holiness and legal right.

This presents one of the thornier problems in dealing with the ancestral question in the modern Troth: is it good for someone whose background is wholly non-European to use Germanic names and forms in calling upon their own ancestors? The problem is made more difficult by the fact that some non-European cultures, among those being branches of African and Oriental religions, have very strong traditions of ancestor worship of their own. If one believes in the ghosts of one's ancestors, one might tend to think that they would prefer to be called upon by the names and in the ways that they know, just as they once called upon their own forebears - perhaps even that they might be confused and/or angered to be hailed in alien terms. It can, however, be argued that the terms and rites are less important than the bonds of blood and the act of remembering: few of us, after all, would cast all our kin who have died within the christian church from our line, and those beliefs are farther from our own than the beliefs of (for instance) many African tribes. In this matter, individual intuition is the only possible guide: we can say no more than that each person must honour her/his own ancestors in the way that he/she finds personally most fitting.

At this point, it appears that a person's own bloodline must be thought of as a meaningful guide to the path of her/his soul. However, although our forebears set much store by the inherited might of the clan, they also had several rituals by which that might could be passed to those who were not related by blood.

page 43

The first of these was the ritual of name-giving, by which a newborn child was taken into the family line and had its human soul bestowed upon it. Without this naming and ritual acceptance, no matter what its bloodline was, the child had no soul: it was like a troll or an outlaw. In Scandinavian folklore, cast-out babies made particularly horrible ghosts, who would haunt until someone gave them a name, thereby allowing the child the chance of later rebirth in that person's family line. An unrelated child could also be accepted into the family line and thereby given full rights and might, as in the case of Sigurd the Volsung who, born after the death of his father, is given his name and clan-right by the king Hjalprek, who is not related to him in any way.

The ritual of blood-brotherhood also binds those who carry it out into each other's clan, giving each full access to the might and rights of the other: an oath-sibling becomes a sibling in truth. The close relationship between Odin and Loki (entirely a giant by birth) is one example of this; another appears in *Volsunga saga*, where Grishild says to Sigurd, "King Gjuki shall be your father, and I your mother, your brothers Gunnar and Hogni and all who swear the oaths."

Lastly is the rite of claiming ancestry, which appears in the Eddic poem *Hyndluljod*. In this poem, the young hero Ottar, Freyja's love, has been challenged to prove his nobility of descent against another hero. Freyja transforms him into a boar and rides with him to the cave of the giantess Hyndla, whom Freyja then forces to recite a list of ancestors for him. This genealogy is not particularly consistent with other heroic genealogies, but begins with a list of historical Scandinavian persons, moving back to figures of semi-historical legend (Gunnar) and pure

legend (Sigurd), and finally bringing in the god/esses and giants back to Ymir (in the section which is excerpted separately in Hollander's translation as *Voluspá hin skamma*). At the end of the recitation, Freyja has Hyndla bring Ottar a cup of "memory-ale" so that he will be able to remember all the names he has learned. The rite shown here is one by which the subject ritually ties himself into the might of the heroes of history and legend, and ultimately claims his kinship with the god/esses: the issue is not one of bodily descent, but of a unification of the individual's soul with the current of holy might which is the life-blood of the Germanic heritage. This rite may be carried out by anyone, regardless of his/her actual clan-lineage; and the one who carries it out must then be recognised as partaking in the might of the holy clans of the North.

Having shown that an earthly blood-line reaching back to those who first worshipped the god/esses of our folk is not needful for the practise of the Elder Troth today, the question then arises: is ancestry alone enough to make one true of soul? The evidence of *Volsunga saga* and *Hervarar saga* suggests that it is not. In the latter, Angantyr's daughter Hervor is raised by her mother's kin after her father's death, but to gain the might of his line and the sword Tyrting which embodies the soul of the clan, she must go to the grave where Angantyr and his brothers rest and confront the frightful figure of the dead man with her claim, forcing him to acknowledge her. Signy's children by Siggeir, although they carry as much of the Volsung genetic material as does Sigurd, fail the tests of hardiness and bravery which Signy and Sigmund put them through: despite their ancestry, they are not true Volsungs. His father being dead, Sigurd must initiate himself into his Volsung heritage: first by gaining the shards of his father's sword from his mother and having it reforged, then by avenging his father, with the final test of his might coming when he slays the dragon Fafnir.

It is, further, needful to note that all of us have had the soul-line, which reached back to our first true forebears broken at some point. The sagas show clearly that the christian rite of baptism was thought to cut its subject not only off from the god/esses, but from the ancestral kin fetch and the personal fetch as well.

page 44

The function of the baptismal rite was, and is, to bring the person undergoing it into the spiritual line of Christ and the family of the christian church. Whether we ourselves have suffered this ritual or not, it is certain that our ancestors did, and therefore that the oneness of soul of our clans has been broken.

Therefore, it is needful even for those who can trace their ancestry back to the time when our Heathen troth still flourished to ritually take up the might of those early kin and lay claim to the worship of our forebears' god/esses just as those who do not share in the bloodline of their clans must. For new-born children, this rite takes place with the name-giving and sprinkling of water; for adults newly come to the Troth, it is whatever rite of welcome a Kindred, Hearth, Garth, or Hof uses, or, for one who has no Troth-kin close enough, something similar to the rites of Troth-claiming given in *A Book of Troth, or Teutonic Religion*.

Lastly, we learn of the meaning of inheritance from a deed wrought by Egill Skalla -Grimsson, one of the wisest runesters of the Viking Age. When Egill felt himself about to die, he took the English silver he had saved and went to a secret place. He was unwilling to pass it on to his children, whom he thought unworthy; instead he hid it in the water, a mighty inheritance

waiting for whoever was strong, lucky, or wise enough to find it. Just so, the inheritance of our god/esses and our true ways has lain hidden in the waters of Wyrð's well for many years - waiting not for those who were simply born to it, but whoever is able and willing to find and take it!

Lastly, for those who think fair coloration to be a great thew of the folk, there is an old and lasting Icelandic proverb: "Oft er flagth undir fogru skinni, og dyggth undir dokkum harum" - often a troll-woman is under fair skin, and virtue under dark hair (Magnus Einarsson, *Icelandic Canadian Memory Lore*, p. 283).

page 45

Book-Hoard: Reference for above chapter.

(note: since traditional Germanic and modern Icelandic names are patronymics, they are listed alphabetically according to first name).

Byock, ksse (tr.). *Saga of the Volsungs* (University of California Press, 1990).

Edred Thorsson. *A Book of Troth* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1989).

Ellis, H.R. *Road to Hel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1943).

Fell, Christine (ed., tr.). *Egils saga* (London: I.M. Dent & Sons, 1975).

Gamlinginn. "Race and Religion". *Mountain Thunder* 8, 1993, pp. 9-10.

KveldulfR Hagan Gundarsson (ed.). *Our Troth* (Seattle: Ring of Troth, 1994).

KveldulfR Hagan Gundarsson. "Race, Inheritance, and Asatru Today". *Mountain Thunder* 5, pp. 7-11 (original publication of the bulk of this work).

Kveldulf Gundarsson. *Teutonic Religion* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1993).

Hollander, Lee (ed., tr.). *The Poetic Edda* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

Jakob Benediktsson (ed). *Islandingabok/Landnamabok. Islenszk fornrit* vol. I (Reykjavik: Hith islenzka Fornritafelag, 1986).

Jochens, Jenny. "Before the Male Gaze: The Absence of the Female Body in old Norse". *Eighth International Saga Conference: The Audience of the Sagas*. Pre-prints, vol. I (A-K), 1991, pp. 247-256.

Jones, Gwynn. *A History of the Vikings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1984).

Magnus Einarsson. *Icelandic-Canadian Memory Lore* (Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1992).

Slauson, Irv (ed.). *The Religion of Odin*, (Red Wing: Asatru Free Church Committee, 1978)

Snorri Sturluson; Anthony Faulkes (tr.). *Edda* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1987).

Turville-Petre, G. (ed.) *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks*, 2nd ed. (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1976). In translation by Christopher Tolkien as *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*.

page 46

Kindred Acceptance Rite

Work of Coming into a Kindred
 (reproduced from *A Book of Troth*, by E.Thorsson.1989.)

The work of coming into a kindred is the most special rite of a kindred, because it is very much like bringing a new member into the clan. It is the final retaking of the soul of the true man or woman back into the stream of life from which his ancestors were torn. The "oath of the gods"

is a reversal of the oaths the European Saxons were forced to swear in forsaking their own gods. Here the true reclaim their birthrights!

The harrow is set up in the usual fashion, with a bowl of spring water and the most holy token of the kindred, and a chair or stool situated to the south of the harrow or stall.

1. The Hammer-Working is done.

2. Oath of the Gods and Goddesses.

The speaker (kindred leader) stands facing the prospective kindred member, who stands facing north, on the south side of the harrow. (If done with a free-standing harrow, the speaker is to stand on the north side of the harrow with the prospective member on the south side of it, facing the speaker across the harrow on the north.)

Speaker: *"Forsakest thou the angels of alienation?"*

Candidate: *"I forsake the angels of alienation!"*

Speaker: *"And all the services of the White-Christ?"*

Candidate: *"I forsake all the services of the White Christ!"*

Speaker: *"And all the Christian works?"*

Candidate: *"And I forsake all the works and words of the so called father, and his son named Jesus, and their unholy spirit!"*

(This first part of the rite can be omitted if it is felt to be unnecessary.)

Speaker: *"Trustest thou in the mighty All-father?"*

Candidate: *"I trust in Woden, the mighty All-father!"*

Speaker: *"Trustest thou in Thunar, warder of the world?"*

Candidate: *I trust in Thunar, warder of the world!"*

Speaker: *"Trust thou in Freya and Frey, the lady and lord of our folk?"*

Candidate: *"I trust in the Lord and Lady of our folk!"*

(In this second part of the oath, the gods and goddesses can be rewritten to reflect the particular allegiances of the candidate.)

3. Naming.

The speaker sits on the chair facing east, and the candidate sits on his or her lap or on another chair before this speaker facing the north. The speaker takes up the bowl of water and sprinkles some on the head of the candidate, with the words:

"I throw water upon this sib newly born, and give him/her the name (here the person's name[s] are recited) after [. . .]."

[If the sibling is being named after a certain ancestor or hero, this should be added to the formula.]

4. Oath of the Kindred.

[This oath should best be specially formulated for each individual kindred. It should be sworn on the most holy token of the kindred. If the kindred is headed by one who is considered a godhi or gythja, it should be sworn on his or her (arm) ring. Here is an example of an oath taken from the Austin Kindred of the Asatru Free Assembly from around 1980.]

"Upon this ring of the kindred I swear by all the holy gods and goddesses to hold ever high the banner of the raven and always to help the growth and well-being of the kindred and of all the subs within it. By Woden and Tiw I swear this oath!"

5. Rede of the Speaker.

[This is a specially written charge to the new sibling, a personalised speech which expresses the hopes of the speaker for the sibling, and his or her destiny within the kindred.]

6. Self-oath.

[This is to be composed by the new sibling and to be read aloud at this time, as an expression of his or her will within the kindred, of the way he or she has chosen, and of the things they will bring to the kindred.]

Book-Hoard

Recommended Reading and Reference

- *The Poetic Edda*, by Snorri Sturluson, trans. by Lee M.Hollander. Uni. of Texas Press.
- Heimskringla*, by S. Sturlusson, as above.
- *The Prose Edda*, by S. Sturluson, trans. by A. Faulkey. Everyman Press.
- *The Norse Myths, Gods of the Vikings*, by Kevin Crossley- Holland. Penguin Books.
- Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, by H.E. Davidson. Penguin.
- The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*, by H.E. Davidson. Routledge Press.
- Myths and Symbols of Pagan Europe*, by H.E Davidson. Penguin.
- Road to Hel*, by H.E. Davidson. Penguin.
- Myth and Religion of the North*, by E.O.G. Turville-Petre. (hard to get)
- Lost Gods of England*, by ?. Branston. ?. (hard to get)
- Anglo-Saxon England*, by P.H. Blair. Cambridge Uni. Press.
- Oxford Illustrated Pre-History of Europe*, by B. Cunliffe. Oxford Uni. Press.
- *Teutonic Religion*, by K. Gundarsson. Llewellyn Press.
- Teutonic Magic*, by K. Gundarsson. Llewellyn.
- *A Book of Troth*, by Edred Thorsson, Llewellyn.
- *Runelore*, by Edred Thorsson. Samuel Weiser.
- At the Well of Wyrd, A Handbook of Runic Divination*, by E. Thorsson. Samuel Weiser.
- Futhark, A Handbook of Runic Magic*, by E. Thorsson. Samuel Weiser.
- The Nine Doors of Midgard, A Complete Curriculum of Rune Magic*, by E.Thorsson. Llewellyn.
- Northern Magic, Mysteries of the Norse, Germans & English*, by E. Thorsson. Llewellyn.
- Practical Magic in the Northern Tradition*, by N. Pennick. Aquarian Press.
- *Earth Harmony*, ditto.
- A History of Pagan Europe*, by N. Pennick and P. Jones, Routledge Press.
- Leaves of Yggdrasil*, by Freya Aswynn. Llewellyn.
- Beowulf, A Modern Verse Translation*, by E. Morgan. Officina Pluralo (Uni. of Sydney).
- The Way of Wyrd*, by Brian Bates. Arrow books (a novel).
- *The Wisdom of the Wyrd*, by Brian Bates, Rider, 1996.
- Rhinegold*, by S. Grundy. Michael Joseph (a novel).

Song of the Dwarves, by Thorarinn Gunnarsson. Ace Books (a novel).

**All the Norse/Icelandic Sagas* which are usually found in the "Penguin Classics" series.

^ *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, by Edmond Paris. Chick Publications.

page 49

*essential reading

^ for those who wish to know the truth about the Catholic Church's never-ending quest for world domination; particularly their active role in the founding, and continual support, of Nazism. Includes full documentation proving guilt of Jesuit priests as active leaders in "fifth-column" sabotage on behalf of the Axis powers during WW 2, and as Military Officers in the infamous S.S. "Death's Head" Battalions.

NINE NOBLE VIRTUES OF THE ELDER TROTH

COURAGE

By facing life's struggles with courage, we constantly extend our capabilities.
Without courage, nothing else can be done!

TRUTH

Blind faith has no place in the Elder Troth. No pie-in-the-sky; we must act in this world as we see it and as it really is rather than calmly wait for the next.

HONOR

We must be true to what we are, and we insist on acting with nobility rather than baseness. Our standards must be banners held high in our hearts.

FIDELITY

We stand True to our faith and our values. Loyalty is the basis for all enduring human activity, and we hold it in the highest esteem.

HOSPITALITY

The isolation and loneliness of modern life is not necessary. The willingness to share what one has with ones' fellows, especially travelers, is a vital part of our way of life.

DISCIPLINE

We hold to the discipline necessary to fulfill our purpose. We stand willing to exercise the self-control and steadfastness necessary in these difficult times.

INDUSTRIOUSNESS

Let us dare to be all that we can be! Let us take risks and taste the richness of life.
Passivity is for sheep. We refuse to be mere spectators in life.

SELF-RELIANCE

We depend on our own strength and character to achieve our goals. We seek only the freedom necessary to our quest, whatever it may be.

PERSEVERANCE

We hold to our path until its completion and are not ashamed to be strong. The cult of the anti-hero will find no support in us, and the gods we follow are not for the weak.

**Cattle die, kinsmen die,
one day you yourself must die.**

**I know one thing that never dies:
the dead man's reputation**

Havamal - Sayings of the High One



Published by
The Assembly of the Elder Troth
Australia
(2nd Printing 1997)

PO Box 5345
Rockingham Beach
WA 6168
Australia