

FALL 1992

NUMBER 1



**THE RUNESTONE** is a journal of the ancient Northern European religion known as Asatru. It is dedicated to our Gods and Goddesses, to the People of the North, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality within the context of kinship.

**THE RUNESTONE** is published four times a year, at the equinoxes and solstices. Subscriptions are \$10 per year in the U.S. and \$15 per year overseas airmail, payable to Stephen A. McNallen. Our address is P.O. Box 445, Nevada City, CA 95959.

The opinions in this publication, unless otherwise noted, are those of the editor. We read all correspondence carefully, but the press of other commitments may prevent replies.

## CALENDAR

**SEPTEMBER 21** - This is the Fall Equinox, or Winter Finding, when day and night are of equal length. Today is a harvest festival, and you can celebrate it with a meal at which you express thanks to the Gods for the bounty of the soil. Raise a toast of your favorite drink to the Goddess Freya, and to her brother Frey.

**OCTOBER 8** - Today is a Day of Remembrance for Erik the Red, father of Leif Erikson. Erik was a stalwart fan of Thor, strongest (and, luckily, friendliest) of the Gods. Honor Leif's father with a toast, by praising Thor for such robust vikings. Do something good for a friend, in imitation of Thor.

**OCTOBER 17** - Winter Nights is in honor of the disir. These are female fertility spirits, ruled over by Freya. The female ancestors are sometimes counted among them, so recall some outstanding women in your family line. Do you have photos of them you can look at? The mood is one of conservation of resources in preparation for the scarcities of winter. A libation of ale, milk, or mead is traditionally poured onto the earth as an offering to the disir.

**NOVEMBER 11** - The Einherjar are the chosen heroes who sit in Odin's hall, and this day, the Feast of the Einherjar, is for them. On it we honor those dead kin who gave their lives for family and Folk. Celebrate Veteran's Day. If you have friends or relatives who died in battle, visit their graves. If that is not possible, offer a toast in their memory.



UP FRONT

Here it is... the RUNESTONE... leading off with a personal and upward evolution... combines philosophy with... change-your-life approach... that, for a little lightening... tell you what we've been doing... the last five years. It hasn't... been exciting, but as a whole... well, you'll see. Welcome... a little mental exercise... to make you glad you are... followed by thoughts... that might challenge some... common perceptions. If it's... controversial enough, we promise... to do better next time!

There are two other... this magazine you shouldn't... look. One of them is the... inside the front cover. It... you can do to practice Asatru... without elaborate rituals or large... numbers of people - in fact, our... work fine even if you are a... Asa-person. By the time you... these words, we'll be nearly... compiling a booklet with... ideas on living our religion... daily basis. See our next... full details.

"Questions and Answers" is... last item, way in back. We included... this because some of our readers... will be new to Asatru, and need the





## UP FRONT

Here it is - the first RUNESTONE since 1987! We're leading off with a piece on Odin and upward evolution that combines philosophy with a how-to-change-your-life approach. After that, for a little light relief (?), we'll tell you what we've been doing for the last five years. It hasn't ALL been exciting, but on the whole...well, you'll see. Next comes a little mental exercise guaranteed to make you glad you are alive, followed by thoughts on the vikings that might challenge some of the common perceptions. If it's not controversial enough, we promise to do better next time!

There are two other features of this magazine you shouldn't overlook. One of them is the calendar inside the front cover. It tells what you can do to practice Asatru without elaborate rituals or large numbers of people - in fact, our hints work fine even if you are a solitary Asa-person. By the time you read these words, we'll be nearly through compiling a booklet with lots more ideas on living our religion on a daily basis. See our next issue for full details.

"Questions and Answers" is the last item, way in back. We included this because some of our readers will be new to Asatru, and need the

background information. Look for more in each issue. This is adapted from something we published in the AFA a long time ago, but it is as relevant as ever.

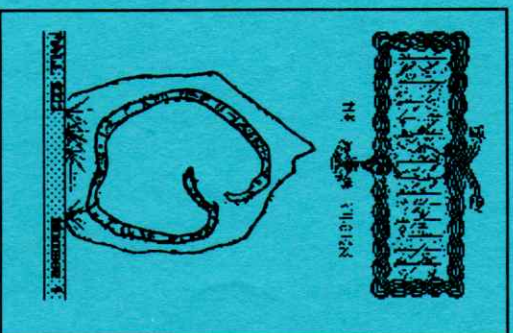
Enough chatter. We hope your harvest - whether literally of crops, or of wealth in other forms - is plentiful, and that Freya and all the disir give you good blessings!

-- Steve McNallen and  
Maddy Hutter

## CONTENTS

<b>Odin, Evolution and Us</b>	2
An invitation to Godhood	
<b>Rebirth</b>	5
Where we went, and why we're back	
<b>Thinking about Dying</b>	6
Control your fears with daily meditation	
<b>Thanks</b>	7
Too little, very late, but we do remember	
<b>Bits and Pieces</b>	8
Miscellaneous news and comments	
<b>What about the Vikings?</b>	9
How do our old friends fit in a 1992 religion?	
<b>Questions and Answers</b>	12
A revised version of the basic questions about Asatru	





# RUNESTONE REBORN!

America's  
Premier Journal  
of Nordic Religion is Back!

*If the Gods and Goddesses of the ancient Northlands are YOUR ancestral heritage, you'll want to see what five years of productive dormancy have done to the magazine that helped to establish the religion of our Folk in America.*

*"Asatru"... "kindreds"... "metagenetics"... these and other terms now familiar to Asafolk around the country first appeared in the pages of THE RUNESTONE. For fifteen years we helped shape the course of Teutonic religion in America, as the voice of the Asatru Free Assembly. We championed our Gods, our culture, and our tribe. Then we took a break.*

*But now we've returned. And we've got a lot to say. We're leaner, more tightly focused, but as innovative and intelligent as ever. Sign on with us, and we'll give you Asatru stimulation with an emphasis on knowing the Gods and Goddesses, living our religion, and personal change and evolution. You'll get this four times a year for a mere ten dollars.*

*Here's the coupon. Don't miss a single issue of the new RUNESTONE!*

**ODIN LIVES!**



# ODIN, EVOLUTION AND US

## Steps on the road to Asgard

Our Gods and Goddesses are important to us in many ways. In the simplest sense they are our cosmic friends and family. The myths describe them this way, and they have comforted our Folk for countless generations in this role. In the modern age, they also help remind us of our heritage when we become bemused by the overly-pluralistic society around us. More deeply, they are guides to understanding the unseen realms of our minds; this is the idea of the Holy Powers as archetypes in the "collective unconscious", as described by Dr. Carl Jung.

But none of these are what I want to emphasize right now. I am going to write about the Aesir and Vanir as models for sweeping change and evolution - personally, collectively, and societally.

Just what does this mean? It is not uncommon to think of Odin, Thor, and the others as examples to be emulated, and that is right and good as far as it goes. Certainly it is wonderful to aim at the strength of Thor, the selflessness of Tyr, and the wisdom of Frigga. Most of us do this, even if unconsciously and sporadically, as part of living our religion on a day-to-day basis. This is a beginning, because even this limited effort causes us to grow, to change, to improve on what we are. But it is ONLY a beginning!

Consider, especially, the figure of Odin. In the myths he quaffs the mead of inspiration, plucks out his eye to drink from the well of wisdom, and wins the secret of the runes by his ordeal on the World Tree. He is the perfect example of the Overcomer, the Transcender, the one who goes beyond the known in the restless search for spiritual transformation. Odin

shows the way for the student. We are not satisfied with limitations. We are not we have to be willing to take the path to imitate the Allfather, to become like the level of the Gods both in the extent we are able.

Every school of mysticism has Godhood as its ultimate goal. Various German occult societies have been rising above the human condition to need. Odin, our Father, has called his sons and daughters to follow.

"I TEACH YOU THE  
SUPERMAN. MAN IS  
SOMETHING THAT IS  
TO BE SURPASSED.  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE  
TO SURPASS MAN?"

- Nietzsche

This work of conscious evolution in three realms:

Personally, it means a being functioning at a high degree of awareness into a mighty force. Heightened powers give the best of both worlds: the solving ability of the logical mind and the "hunch". Spiritual development is a conscious process, granting direction to the Nine Worlds as well as power to the myths.



shows the way for the shaman, the berserker, and anyone not satisfied with limitations. *We can follow in his footsteps...but we have to be willing to take big strides! Our challenge is to imitate the Allfather, to become like him, to raise ourselves to the level of the Gods both individually and as a group, to the extent we are able.*

Every school of mystical philosophy has this climb to Godhood as its ultimate goal - from the Theosophists to the various German occult societies of the early twentieth century. Rising above the human condition is obviously a deeply-seated need. Odin, our Father, has marked the path. Surely he wants his sons and daughters to follow him!

**"I TEACH YOU THE  
SUPERMAN. MAN IS  
SOMETHING THAT IS  
TO BE SURPASSED.  
WHAT HAVE YE DONE  
TO SURPASS MAN?"  
— Nietzsche**

Such a mighty transformation is the work of a lifetime - or many lifetimes, for those inclined to reincarnation. Some will meet with greater success than others. However, we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by trying!

This work of conscious evolution will manifest itself in three realms:

*Personally*, it means a body that is strong, supple, and functioning at a high degree of efficiency. Willpower is built into a mighty force. Heightened analytical as well as intuitive powers give the best of both worlds - exceptional problem-solving ability of the logical kind, plus the knack of the accurate "hunch". Spiritual development will include new modes of consciousness, granting direct experience of the Gods and the Nine Worlds as well as powers hinted at in the sagas and myths.



*Collectively*, all the members of the Folk cannot help but benefit. Related organisms resonate to each other in ways we are only beginning to understand. Our very kinship links us, and what one of us does or thinks affects the rest as well. When we improve ourselves, we improve all who are connected to us. Or, as a Hindu sage put it, "Change yourself and you will change thousands".

*Societally*, the cause of our civilization's current decline will be reversed. Big government and big business can push us around because we have, in the mass, become irresponsible, lazy, and passive. Higher beings - the sort we can be - will not allow these megasystems to interfere with their Will. The next age bears the promise of unprecedented freedom balanced by personal responsibility, modeled on the traditional forms of our Folk.

The task before us is enough for any of the saga heroes. Some will say it cannot be done, but that would not have stopped our noble ancestors, would it? Now is the time to be visionary, to seek the highest that is in us - a "highest" that includes the Gods and Goddesses themselves, who inhabit our hearts and brains and genes. Let us, in the words of Nietzsche, prepare the way for the Superman.

### Will YOU accept the challenge of Odin?

NEXT ISSUE: Using the Gods for personal transformation--changing yourself on a day-to-day basis.



Five years ago Maddy and I loaded the remains of the Asatru Free Assembly onto the shoulders of stalwarts like Valgard Wormo, packed our bags, and went to live in a semi-ghost town high in the mountains of California. THE RUNESTONE, which had played such a vital role in bringing Asatru to America, died after fifteen years - and we went on to new lives.

The years that followed saw a lot of changes. I shaved my beard and joined the National Guard. We lived in a tiny cabin above the snowline, chopping our firewood and fluming water into the house directly from a mountain spring. Since we needed a profession, we went to night school and earned teaching credentials. Armed with our new certificates, we got teaching jobs and settled into the routine task of earning a living. For excitement, I wrote articles for military magazines based on visits to Tibetan resistance fighters in India and guerillas in Burmese jungles.

All this time, we never forgot the Gods or the movement we had helped pioneer. Word reached us in our mountain fastness that the Cause was doing well. Valgard, by heroic effort, welded together the Asatru Alliance, and all over the country Asatru groups and publications emerged from the ruins of the AFA. We came to feel that our dissolving of the old structure had



---

# REBIRTH

---

Five years ago Maddy and I unloaded the remains of the Asatru Free Assembly onto the shoulders of stalwarts like Valgard Murray, packed our bags, and went to live in a semi-ghost town high in the mountains of California. THE RUNESTONE, which had played such a vital role in bringing Asatru to America, died after fifteen years - and we went on to new lives.

The years that followed saw a lot of changes. I shaved my beard and joined the National Guard. We lived in a tiny cabin above the snowline, chopping our firewood and fluming water into the house directly from a mountain spring. Since we needed a profession, we went to night school and earned teaching credentials. Armed with our new certificates, we got teaching jobs and settled into the routine task of earning a living. For excitement, I wrote articles for military magazines based on visits to Tibetan resistance fighters in India and guerillas in Burmese jungles.

All this time, we never forgot the Gods or the movement we had helped pioneer. Word reached us in our mountain fastness that the Cause was doing well. Valgard, by heroic effort, welded together the Asatru Alliance, and all over the country Asatru groups and publications emerged from the ruins of the AFA. We came to feel that our dissolving of the old structure had

been a good thing, because it allowed others to take the initiative without being overshadowed by the edifice we had all erected. True, the new standard bearers didn't always do things the way we would have - but that was okay. Asatru was alive and thriving, and that's what we had wanted.

To a large extent, we still feel that way. It was time for something new to happen. We have no intention of rebuilding the elaborate structure that characterized the AFA. You won't get guilds, membership, gatherings, or kindreds from us. What we DO offer is a dynamic, evolutionary view of Asatru based on almost a quarter century of experience and practice.

I will never forget the joy of producing the first issue of THE RUNESTONE, in an apartment in Wichita Falls, Texas in 1972. It had, as I recall, all of eleven readers. This humble publication grew to become, in my own admittedly biased opinion, the backbone of Asatru in America. It is now reborn. Like all reincarnations, it is not identical with its former self; this new being has its own fate to fulfill. It will be leaner, more focused, and no longer the voice of something like the AFA, but we think you'll see a continuity. Phase Two of the adventure is about to begin.

ODIN LIVES!



# Thinking About DYING

The GMC began to fishtail, and I tried hard not to oversteer, hoping it would settle down and resume its path on the icy road. I almost made it. One final swerve and my wheels plowed across the island that separated me from two lanes of oncoming traffic. I had the sickening awareness of being completely out of control, of knowing that nothing I could do would contribute to my survival. At this point, I was just along for the ride.

Just like a blinded and wounded beast, the vehicle slid across the course of oncoming cars and slammed, rocking, into the berm on the far side. Frozen dirt flew from the tires' impact, and only my seatbelt kept me from rolling around the interior like a BB in a can. I was gratefully aware that I had missed involving any more automobiles in my winter morning's adventure. Shaken, I crawled out the door and began assessing the damage.

An hour later I was at work, teaching science and math to classroom after classroom of more or less indifferent students. They were as pesky as ever (This was my first year of teaching; I was still at the

"rant and threaten" level of discipline). Funny, though...the chatter, stupidity, and junior high pranks didn't bother me. In fact, I went through the whole day quite unruffled, even calm. *I was alive.*

This incident crossed my mind another day, when I read in an article that the samurai "should contemplate his death every day". This short sentence, originally somewhat obscure, suddenly needed no elaboration. Life is precious, more wonderful than we know. The warrior should be cheerful in adversity - for the gift of life outweighs all suffering, frustration, or depression. As Odin tells us in the Elder Edda,

*The lame can manage a horse, the handless a flock,  
The deaf can be a doughty fighter,  
To be blind is better than to burn on a pyre:  
There is nothing the dead can do.*

*It is always better to be alive,  
The living can keep a cow.  
Fire, I saw, warming a living man,  
But not the corpse at his door.*

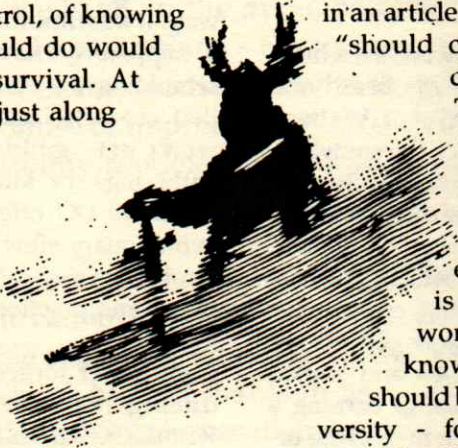
- *Words of the High One*

Sometimes, of course, duty may require death. But while we're

alive, let's LIVE, and take delight in living!

For some time now I have used these reflections as part of my morning affirmations. You can, too.

The technique is simple. I begin by looking at the trees and the sky, telling myself that I am alive - that of all the billions of years in the life of the universe, and of all the huge expanses of space, this instant belongs to me. But, I tell myself, I could die today...the fragile bubble might burst...and I could sink into the Well of Wyrd. This day, though, I will be cheerful in adversity and happy even in hardship, for life with all its ordeals and triumphs is mine!



Our heartfelt, if belated, thanks to  
and Kelly Stine, Mark Johnson,  
Andersson, Carleen and  
Cheryl James, Ariel Sorenson,  
Rhoades, Bob and Karen  
P.Q. Wall, Dick Johnson, and  
made the AFA alive and growing  
a wonderful thing which  
now it is manifesting in all  
was not in vain, and things  
not been forgotten by us.

## BITS AND PIECES

• We hope you like this first issue  
designed to fill a vacant niche in the world  
want to do that task well. We will be



alive, let's LIVE, and take delight in living!

For some time now I have used these reflections as part of my morning affirmations. You can, too.

The technique is simple. I begin by looking at the trees and the sky, telling myself that I am alive - that of all the billions of years in the life of the universe, and of all the huge expanses of space, this instant belongs to me. But, I tell myself, I could die today...the fragile bubble might burst...and I could sink into the Well of Wyrd. This day, though, I will be cheerful in adversity and happy even in hardship, for life with all its ordeals and triumphs is mine!

The above is only a bare outline; you can and should flesh it out to make it truly yours. Put in the details, the imagery, and the wording that make it mean something to you. My full exercise takes probably between one and two minutes - and well worth the time! Not only does it make me realize how precious life is, it helps me remember we live our lives in the midst of death. Any day can be our last, and the burden is on us to live appropriately. Surely these attitudes are in the best tradition of Asatru.

Perhaps it's ironic, but thinking about dying can make life itself richer!

### **Thanks**

*Our heartfelt, if belated, thanks to Valgard Murray, Bob and Kelly Stine, Mark Rippetoe, Marie Funai, C. Dean Andersson, Carleen and Ornulf Volden, David and Cheryl James, Ariel Bentley, John Parmenter, Alice Rhoades, Bob and Karen Taylor, Jace Crouch, Ellen and P.Q. Wall, Dick Johnson, and all the other people who made the AFA alive and prosperous years ago. You built a wonderful thing which changed but never died, and now it is manifesting in still another form. Your service was not in vain, and though time has passed, you have not been forgotten by us.*

## **BITS AND PIECES...**

• We hope you like this first issue of "Son of RUNESTONE". It's designed to fill a vacant niche in the Asatru/Odinist community, and we want to do that task well. We will be examining Asatru from an evolution-



ary, Nietzschean perspective, in addition to the more traditional approach. All of us have a part to play.

- Mini-review: Have you seen The Field, starring Richard Harris? A humble Irish tenant farmer has worked a piece of land for years, making it verdant and lush by his labor. A rich American wants to buy the field so he can "develop" it. The conflict between these two forceful personalities and opposing value systems makes a powerful tale for all of us who have folkish tendencies. It's all here - love of the soil, family conflict, the seductions of the rootless life. You can find it on video.

- Another mini-review: The Vermont Papers by Frank Bryan and John McClaughry (Chelsea Green Publishing Company) presents a plan to change the organization of government in one small New England state. So what, you say? Well, they urge the reshaping of today's counties into similar units called shires, which would take on many of the support functions - and decision-making powers - now belonging to the state. The result would be less bureaucracy, a stronger sense of community, more participation, and greater freedom. I can't describe their ideas in this amount of space, but I am enthusiastic about any concepts of social organization that take their inspiration from early Europe. You may not agree with everything they say, but this volume is a valuable aid to thinking about organic modes of government for our Folk.

- Your editor, who leads a double (Triple? Quadruple?) life as an infantryman in the California Army National Guard, spent a couple of weeks in Los Angeles during last spring's riots. Our unit was billeted in the Hollywood Bowl. A block or two away we had...Odin Street. To a guy carrying an M-16 and a magazine of live rounds, the name seemed utterly appropriate.

---

## What about

### The Vikings?

The flamboyant, larger-than-life image of the vikings was part of THE RUNESTONE from the very first issue, back in 1972. This was only natural. It was Edison Marshall's novel The Viking, and the Hollywood epic made from it, that introduced me to Odin and to the Norse religion in general. THE RUNESTONE was originally put

out by the Viking Brotherhood; we changed the name several years later when the far-reaching scope of our beliefs became more obvious.

But is this connection necessarily valid? Are we specifically reviving *viking* religion, or a broader version of ancient Teutonic

THE RUNESTONE

8

beliefs? Are the vikings the best role models we can find, or should we approach them with caution and reservations? These are some of the questions we need to explore in the pages of the reborn RUNESTONE.

Let's start with a familiar theme - the vikings as "our guys".

### Vikings as Inspiration

"Wholly in love with life and half in love with death" is how one modern writer describes the vikings. This characterization superbly summarizes the viking image as bold, colorful pirates overflowing with vigor and zest for living. To those of us who lead ordinary lives, and who want to BE more and DO more, this is immensely appealing. It is a vision of the people we, too, can be if we summon the guts and energy to go beyond our situations and limitations. Aren't these transcendent urges the essence of any religion worth knowing about? Doesn't this tie in with the evolutionary ideal mentioned elsewhere in this issue? (Editor: Yes, it does!)

Vikings are vivid! Even when totally inaccurate, historically, the pictures conjured by names like Erik the Red and Ragnar Lodbrok stand out dramatically in contrast to lesser beings. The Norse image is, for the most part, good propaganda - notwithstanding the negative parts of the stereotype, picturing vikings as crude and cruel. Scholarship has been chipping away at that aspect of the legend for tenor

THE RUNESTONE



beliefs? Are the vikings the best role models we can find, or should we approach them with caution and reservations? These are some of the questions we need to explore in the pages of the reborn RUNESTONE.

Let's start with a familiar theme - the vikings as "our guys".

### *Vikings as Inspiration*

"Wholly in love with life and half in love with death" is how one modern writer describes the vikings. This characterization superbly summarizes the viking image as bold, colorful pirates overflowing with vigor and zest for living. To those of us who lead ordinary lives, and who want to BE more and DO more, this is immensely appealing. It is a vision of the people we, too, can be if we summon the guts and energy to go beyond our situations and limitations. Aren't these transcendent urges the essence of any religion worth knowing about? Doesn't this tie in with the evolutionary ideal mentioned elsewhere in this issue? (Editor: Yes, it does!)

Vikings are **vivid!** Even when totally inaccurate, historically, the pictures conjured by names like Erik the Red and Ragnar Lodbrok stand out dramatically in contrast to lesser beings. The Norse image is, for the most part, good propaganda - notwithstanding the negative parts of the stereotype, picturing vikings as crude and cruel. Scholarship has been chipping away at that aspect of the legend for ten or

**For good or  
bad, the vikings  
are our door  
to Asatru.**

fifteen years, and the results have begun to trickle down to the masses.

For good or bad, the vikings are our door to Asatru. We don't know enough about heathen practices among the continental Germans or among the Anglo-Saxons, but we have a wealth of material from Scandinavia shedding light on how our religion was practiced in that place and time. The Gods and Goddesses of the vikings ARE Asatru, for most people. They are the historical peg on which people can hang their knowledge and awareness, and as such are indispensable when it comes down to explaining our ways to folks who don't know much about us.

The fierce freedom of the Norsemen has a particular relevance to our lives today because our liberties are so threatened by big government and big business. Both operate through an even bigger bureaucracy that would love to stamp out the fire of defiance in the viking heart. That fire - or in our day, those glowing embers - might start a conflagration enveloping and consuming the mountains of paperwork that keep the systems of



control and alienation working. The role of the viking as freedom fighter has been wonderfully described by Peter Brent with these words of passionate wisdom:

...It is here, perhaps, that the Viking saga may yet have its main importance. Romanticized, made sanitary, deodorized and certified hygienic, it remains nevertheless a story based on savagery, on restlessness, on a vigorous dissatisfaction with conditions as they were, on a search for self-assertion...

...It is perhaps necessary that beyond conformity there should be a mental area given over to anarchy, to a strutting assertion of individual importance...Such an area of the mind becomes a repository of alternative values, not all of them admirable, but most of them essential if we are not to be rendered nameless, impotent and dull by the watchful ordinances of governments which know by instinct that blandness is all, that a people lulled is more easily managed than a people coerced.

— from *The Viking Saga* by Peter Brent, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1975

Now, having said all that, let's consider a different view!

### *Vikings as Degenerates*

The idea of vikings as degenerates, as decayed forms of something that had been stronger and finer, is likely to catch many of us by surprise. How could a people so resplendent in the virtues we admire - courage, strength, honor, and panache - be anything less than ideal?

The answer, of course, is that these things are not the whole picture. In many ways, the vikings sit on a pinnacle of achievement far beyond what all but a few of our contemporaries have attained. There is a darker side, though, and to see it in the gloom we must go back beyond the Viking Age itself, to when our ancestors were wandering tribesmen in the European forests.

The softening of the North was evident even when the Germanic tribes were in contact with the Romans. True, Teutonic virtue was held up by Tacitus as an example to his fellow Romans, whom he felt had become weak and degenerate. But rather than being elevated by the tribes across the Rhine, Mediterraneans contaminated the Germans with their vices. Within a few generations, Roman wine had softened the mortar holding German to German and tribe to tribe, and we find Teutons fighting Teutons in the service of foreign masters. Folk consciousness -

awareness of, and loyalty to, one's own group - toppled before Roman cosmopolitanism.

The Norsemen were infected with the same malady. Their very mobility, their willingness to borrow without discrimination from other cultures, their loosened attachment to the soil, ate away their folk consciousness as well. People of their own blood and bone were sold as slaves to the Arabs. Viking mercenaries slaughtered their own kind at the behest of outlanders. The eternal laws of kinship, of in-group loyalty and out-group enmity, were forgotten in the scramble for loot and power.

The surrender of folk consciousness to the seductions of the outside world led to the greatest disaster to befall the European peoples - their conversion to Christianity. Yes, I am familiar with all the accounts of heathen martyrs, and I know the rivers of blood needed to float the alien creed to the position of eminence it attained in the end. But still there's the question: How were the disciples of the pale Christ able to do it? After all the talk of trickery and stratagems, the fact remains that if we had stayed loyal to our families, clans, and tribes, if we had adhered to the ways of our ancestors, if our instincts for the good and true had been strong enough, we would have chased the priests and their puppets out of the



awareness of, and loyalty to, one's own group - toppled before Roman cosmopolitanism.

The Norsemen were infected with the same malady. Their very mobility, their willingness to borrow without discrimination from other cultures, their loosened attachment to the soil, ate away their folk consciousness as well. People of their own blood and bone were sold as slaves to the Arabs. Viking mercenaries slaughtered their own kind at the behest of outlanders. The eternal laws of kinship, of in-group loyalty and out-group enmity, were forgotten in the scramble for loot and power.

The surrender of folk consciousness to the seductions of the outside world led to the greatest disaster to befall the European peoples - their conversion to Christianity. Yes, I am familiar with all the accounts of heathen martyrs, and I know the rivers of blood needed to float the alien creed to the position of eminence it attained in the end. But still there's the question: How were the disciples of the pale Christ able to do it? After all the talk of trickery and stratagems, the fact remains that if we had stayed loyal to our families, clans, and tribes, if we had adhered to the ways of our ancestors, if our instincts for the good and true had been strong enough, we would have chased the priests and their puppets out of the

Northlands and back to their balmy, soft existence on the Mediterranean. The vikings failed. We mustn't.

### *So What Now?*

The vikings were not perfect, but we can accept them, flaws and all, if we keep a few things clear.

In using the vikings as models, we must draw a distinction between the freebooting adventurers who sometimes lost their sense of folk loyalty on the one hand, and the hardy warrior-yeomen who kept their roots in the soil and their focus on family and clan, on the other. In a way, we have the advantage. The vikings can be excused for not seeing the nature of the threat, whereas we have witnessed for ourselves the tragedies that await those peoples who lose their identity and cohesion. We must not make the mistake they did!

Asafolk today are not vikings. Asatru is not centered around re-creating an earlier epoch. We must live our religion in this time and place. The viking image can inspire us, and it provides a frame of reference to outsiders who seek to understand Asatru, but it can also prove a distraction from the essentials of our troth. The Gods, and we, are bigger and more important than the Viking Age.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

---

## What is Asatru?

Long before Christianity came to Northern Europe, the people there - our ancestors - had their own religions. One of these was Asatru. It was practiced in the lands that are today Scandinavia, England, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and other countries as well. Asatru is the original or native religious belief for the peoples who lived in these regions.

## What does the word "Asatru" mean?

It means, roughly, "belief in the Gods" in Old Norse, the language of ancient Scandinavia in which so much of our source material was written.

## When did Asatru start?

Asatru is thousands of years old. Its beginnings are lost in prehistory, but as an organized system, it is older than Christianity. The spiritual impulses it expresses, though, are as ancient as the Northern European peoples themselves - at least 40,000 years old, and perhaps much older.

## Why do we need Asatru? Aren't most people who want religion satisfied with Christianity or one of the other "established" religions?

People are attracted to the better-known religions because they have genuine spiritual needs which must be filled. People are looking for community and for answers to the "big questions": What life is all about, how we should live. Asatru has not been an alternative to them because they haven't known about it. Once they realize that there is another way - a better, more natural way - they will not be satisfied with anything less than a return to the religion of their ancestors.

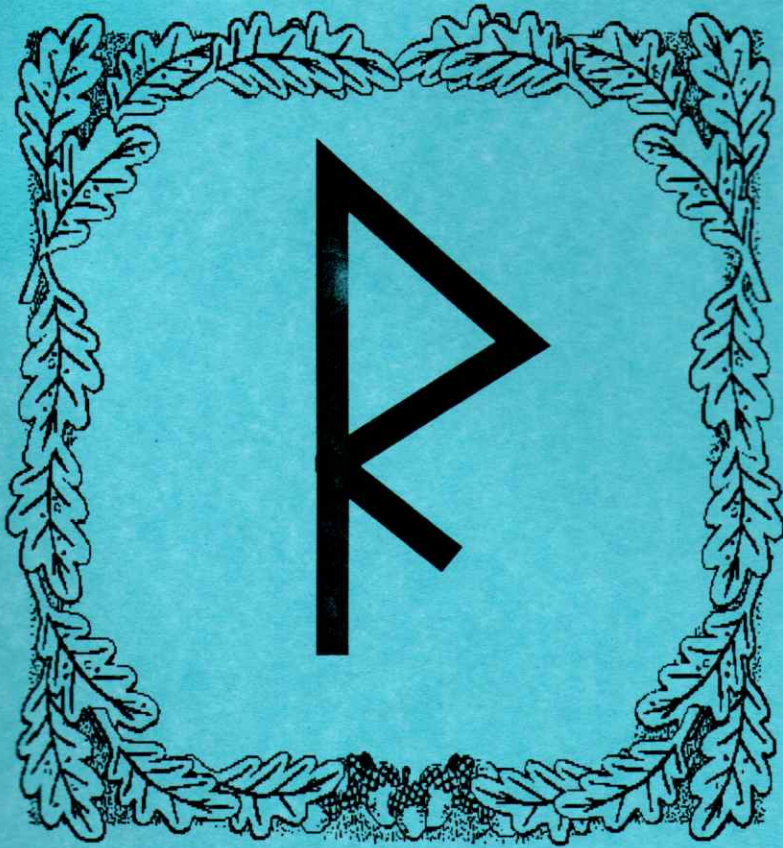
## Why is the religion of our ancestors the best one for us?

Because we are more like our ancestors than we are like anyone else. We inherited not only their general physical appearance, but also their predominant mental, emotional, and spiritual traits. We think and feel more like they did; our basic religious needs are most like theirs. The faith which best expressed their innermost nature - Asatru - is better suited to us than is some other creed which started on the other side of the world among people who are not our ancestors.

- adapted from *What is Asatru?*

(Available from Worldtree Publications)





If you like what you read in THE RUNESTONE, and wonder what the Asatru Free Assembly was all about, you can order many of our original productions from:

*Worldtree Publications, P.O. Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547.*