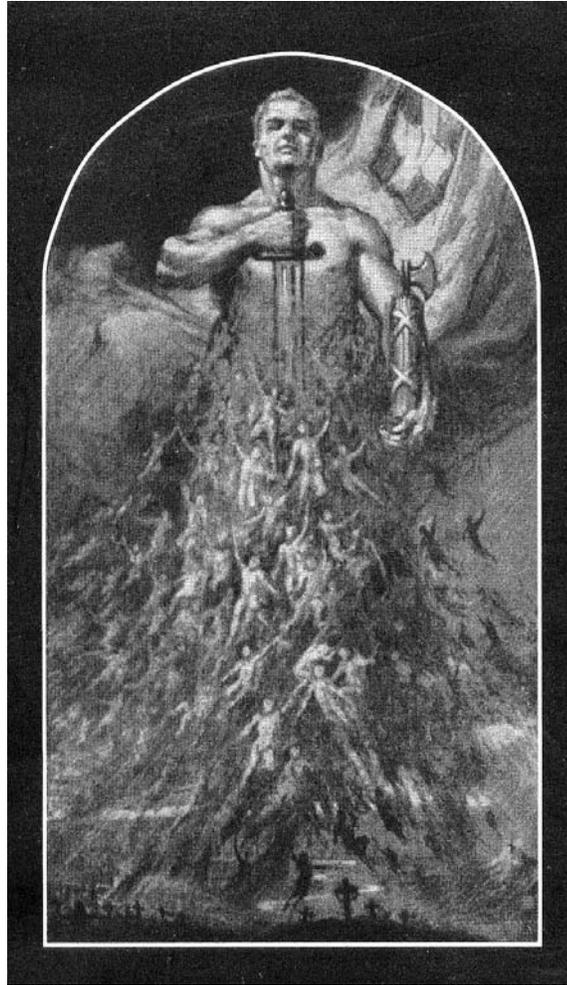


Think Again!



Thinking Like a Heathen in the Modern Era

By: Michael J. Smith

booklets by the author:

Ways of the Ásatrú: *Beliefs of the Northern, Modern Heathens*

Think Again!: *Thinking like a Heathen in the Modern Era*

Amma: *Wisdom from the Sagas*

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Harvest - Moon Publishing



*Pioneering in Traditional, Revolutionary, &
Radical Heathenry*

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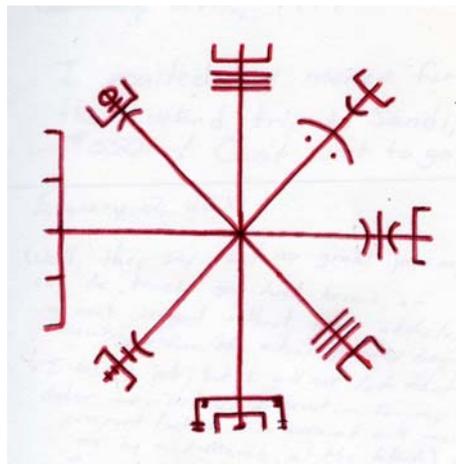
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By:

MICHAEL J. SMITH

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***The Vegvisir (picture above)– is a galdrastafr carried so that one will never lose one's way, even when the way is not known.

Introduction

As one word led to another word and one deed led to another deed... so has one book led to another book. When I wrote, *Ways of the Ásatrú*, I desired nothing more than to be able to give back something to the gods, folk, and community which had helped shape my life so much in the last decade. Thus, why it was offered free for download, automatic permission was given to copy it unaltered (as long as the copier made no profit from doing so), and why I offer hardcopies for cost.

But, now my dilemma is that I cannot stop writing! I only hope that others see this as a good thing, and that my wonderful wife, Catheryn, can stand my constant theorizing, debating, and all the eccentric, neurotic impulses which occur during my “writing times”.

So, here I am writing this second book, *Think Again! Thinking Like A Heathen in the Modern Era*. My intentions in this book is not to force a dogmatic way of thinking upon the reader, but to show that there are some organic, traditional, and valid ways of thinking which would be either prevalent in our ancestors’ times or very compatible with that paradigm. Not to say that a total retro-movement is needed, but planting some seeds of an older breed into the garden of our “Reawakening” would definitely bring forth a better harvest in years to come for not only the Ásatrú folk, but for greater heathenry as a whole.

I can gather quite confidently that the contents of this book will undoubtedly be much more controversial than *Ways of the Ásatrú*, but just give it a chance and try to think deeply upon these concepts. There are many more years of marketing, institutionalized teaching, and social peer-pressure for the current thought-patterns championed by the greater current society we live in today. Changing the way that you’ve been taught to think, is one of the most difficult things to do, even when you intellectually and consciously agree with something! I’ve always referred to the adherents of our religion as a people because I sincerely believe us to not only be a “folk coming home” but also as a newly forming folk at the same time. Already, we are starting to form our own cultures as well as re-gain portions of our collective culture once lost.

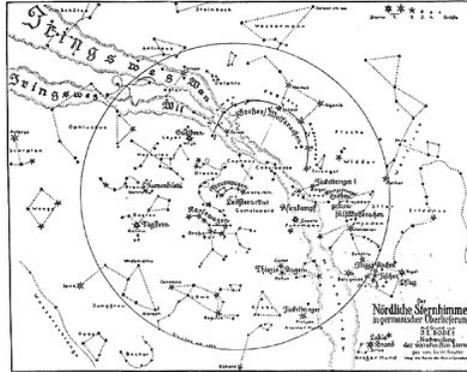
In *Think Again!* I will bring forth this idea of the re-integration of our emerging culture by utilizing some of the complex theories and philosophical concepts of our ancestors through ideas such as ethics, luck, *wyrd*, and *frith*. I will then tie them together with philosophies like the concept of the Folk-Soul, re-emergence with nature, the values of law and custom, reputation and oaths, and a curious philosophical expression which is result of the Industrial and Modern Age called, Post-Modernism.

Of course, as the *Hávamál* warns us against excessiveness and champions moderation, these concepts and philosophical theories should also be taken within a moderate, healthy context. But also remember that these are all parts of an inter-exchanging, **organic** whole. So please, dear reader, try to reserve your overall opinion until the end of the book. This is the only way that the **holistic**, encompassing element of the overall world-view expressed in these pages can be realized. There are some concepts which will be mentioned earlier, but explained fully in later chapters with more detail.

I’d like to again thank all of the Ásatrú folk on the East Coast, as well as friends towards the West and even out across the Atlantic for their support and encouragement. Of course to my supportive wife, Catheryn, the inspiration of my children, Freyjadís and Tiarnan, and to one of my greatest friends, Paul Sahlin, whom I can always have a great conversation with that always somehow ties in mutual interests.

With Honor,
—Mike “VinterúlfR” Smith
Úlfar aff Jera Þjóð

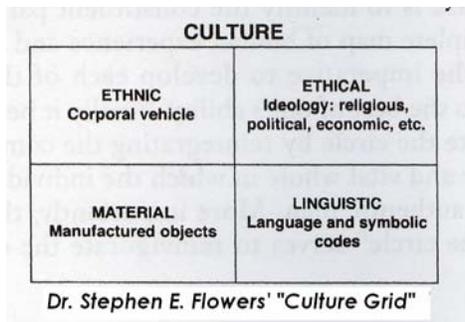
Chapter 1: Re-integrating Our Culture



Cul-ture (kul'chər), n. 1. the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group: *the youth culture; the drug culture*. 2. *Anthropol.* the sum total ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.
(—Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary)

True culture, is a difficult thing for the Ásatrú in the United States to be comfortable with. This is mainly due to the fact that, what we've been usually led to believe is culture has basically gone over our skins like rough graded sandpaper. We are constantly bombarded with commercialization, marketing, and advertising at a deafening rate. Not to mention the never-ending plague of “pop culture” induced into our every-day environment. Instead of what could be a true culture, we've been socially cattle-prodded, or narcotically lead, into a meaningless, universal conformity in order to sell more soda and chips. We can change this aspect of our lives to bring it more in tune with a closer wholeness in which heathenry encompasses.

First, we need to try to understand what culture is, and how some of its different components interact with each other. One of the best models of explanation, in which I have seen, was created by Dr. Stephen E. Flowers (aka Edred Thorsson) for his essay, “The Idea of Integral Culture”. (*TYR Vol. 1*, Atlanta 2002) Dr. Flowers proposes that there are four essential, identifiable categories that encompass culture. They are Ethnic, Ethical, Linguistic, and Material.



Ethnic Culture is the embodiment of a physical manifestation of a folk. It is the production of reproductive sexual union and the creation of families, clans, and tribes. One can easily see the influencing correspondence with the theory of Dumézil's tripartitional Third Function within this category of culture.

The very DNA which has passed from generation to generation since the dawn of time is an embodiment of Ethnic Culture. It is the common, physical characteristics of a people along with some aspects of behavior and temperament to some degree. One of the biggest debates among sociologists and psychologists is the classic “Nature vs. Nurture” concept. Each side acknowledges the existence of both elements, but merely the degree of influence is the main issue of debate. Also, within the sagas, there are descriptions, time and time again, depicting how within family bloodlines there were dispositions to both

physical and personality characteristics or temperaments, whether it was in a single family or within a whole lineage of a clan. Something else that comes to mind is that the aspect of ancestry is not only a symbolic link, but also a physical one, concepts of the Folk-Soul also go hand in hand with the overall description of culture. (See Chapter 8 for a descriptive, detailed theory on the concept of the Folk-Soul.)

Ethical Culture is the made up of the ideology, values, religious beliefs, and sometimes even political dispositions of a group or people. This is a highly developing aspect of the very thinking of a folk. Our myths, folklore, and even personal gnosis, or UPG (Unsubstantiated Personal Gnosis), are manifestations of symbolic interpretation of an Ethical Culture's metaphysical narratives, histories, realities, and world-view both on subjective and objective levels. This is how divine influence, order, and inspiration are manifested within a folk at its most basic, primal level. This is embodied within the concepts of the runes, Ansuz and Othala.

Linguistic Culture is a means by which a culture is able to communicate and understand the manifestation of Ethical Culture through symbolic design. Concepts and ideas are spread by this category. Without elements of Linguistic Culture, both written and oral language, our consciousness and desires could not be expressed. This would be catastrophic, causing negative stagnation which is understood as being embodied in the negative conceptual aspects of the rune, Isa.

Material Culture is what we see around ourselves every day. It is the art, tools, and physical creations made by the hands of that culture or folk. Within the shape, design, and decoration/ornamentation of objects one can discern the values, world-views, and even some beliefs from the culture which left it behind. This is the prime observational work of archeologists! The symbolic interpretations of Ethnic, Ethical, and Linguistic Culture get embedded within these artificial creations of man because they are also physical manifestations expressing concepts within that culture's psyche.

The top two of the grid are primal, or primary, manifestations, while the bottom two are resulting, or secondary manifestations of culture. The left side of Dr. Flowers' Culture Grid implicates physical manifestations, while the right side implicates symbolic, or conceptual manifestations.

The greatest portion of this overall concept is to realize that none of these categories are stagnant, independent functions. They are merely elements of manifestations which are all parts of the greater whole. Ethnic, Ethical, Linguistic, and Material Culture, after their initial manifestations continue to influence and interweave with one another in an all-encompassing way. Just as strengthening one of these categories will enact to spread to the others, weaknesses do the same. The most important journey is for us to undo what this present anti-culture has done. It has separated the categories, giving them no connection or pathways in which they can share, influence, and strengthen each other. To quote Dr. Flowers in the TYR journal article, "One of the most effective ways in which to revolt against the modern world is to undertake the (re)integration of culture, to realize a personal and cultural *synthesis*—or "bringing together"—of the various categories of culture."

Most other theorists on culture tend to adhere to the idea of the physical, ethnicity of the people being of no factor to overall culture. They insist that all elements of culture are completely learned. These would include anthropologists like John H. Bodley and partially in the works of Clifford Geertz. Raymond Williams, in 1958, did write an essay called, "Culture is Ordinary" which may have illuminated some parts, but not others in the realms of holistic thought.

I, personally, find this a gross oversight in that their own co-academics and theorists in the fields of psychology and sociology accept the aforementioned aspect of "nature" in the reference of nature vs. nurture to exist. Once again the debate is over **how much** of nature and **how much** of nurture each make up the whole. If no element of these aspects exists, then why is there even something to debate about?

There is another range of theory from the beginnings of the century in which a cross-generational aspect of culture led some anthropologists like Kroeber (1917) and Leslie White (1949) to theorize that culture goes well beyond the individuals it encompasses, almost like it is a superorganic entity. This is almost close to the theories of the Folk-Soul but overdone in another extreme.

By these theories, individuals are born into and are shaped by the pre-existing culture that continues to exist after they die. So, thus, the influence that an individual may have is, of itself, determined by the culture they were born into. This was one of the principal arguments of both Kroeber and White. Interestingly enough, it is Bodley who expresses a point in an interesting thought of this theory in his own textbook on cultural anthropology saying, "Some researchers believe that such an extreme superorganic interpretation of culture is a dehumanizing denial of "free will," the human ability to create and change culture. They would argue that culture is merely an abstraction, not a real entity. This is a serious issue because treating culture as an abstraction may lead one to deny the basic human rights of small-scale

societies and ethnic minorities to maintain their cultural heritage in the face of threats from dominant societies. I treat culture as an objective reality. I depart from the superorganic approach in that I insist that culture includes its human carriers. At the same time anthropologists would agree that culture is an observable phenomenon, and a people's unique possession."

Now that we have an idea about culture, what it is and how it works on a basic most level, we arrive at how to re-integrate our culture within ourselves and how to re-integrate it within our Ásatrú community. To help achieve this, I offer nine points of advice. They are in no particular order;

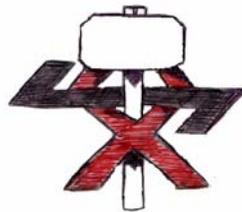
1. The acceptance and teaching of ancestry and lineage.
2. The re-creation, and modern creation, of Heathen/Germanic traditions and folkways.
3. The rejection of "Pop-Culture" and its elements.
4. The patronization and encouragement of Heathen/Germanic influenced art and literature.
5. The rejection of commercialism and "throw-away" ideologies.
6. The conscious implementation of reasonable Heathen concepts (both religious and mundane) within daily life.
7. High selectiveness/ Low acceptance in the conscious allowance of "foreign" influences.
8. Acting in preference of fellow heathens above others.
9. Teaching our children ourselves, instead of letting "others" teach them.

Of course, I will explain each in more detail to prevent misunderstanding and unnecessary (and unhealthy!) extremism. You will find that these points of advice have to do with the strengthening of an element of culture or to weaken the current anti-culture's harmful dis-integration of the encompassing whole.

The first is the acceptance and teaching of ancestry and lineage. Ancestry matters! You will learn more about yourself through researching and learning about your ancestors and your own personal lineage than anyone can **ever** teach you in a book or lecture! There is a reason why, in our sagas, you learn about the lineage of the main character in which the saga is about. There are characteristics, temperaments, and presence that follow along lineage within a clan or family that we watch unfold for the character. This is showing us, in literature, the observational basis of *ørlog*, which means, "primal layer". (More about *ørlog* in Chapter 6.) This is where you start from and where you find the base of your given choices.

Another reason is that knowing your ancestry and lineage gives you "place" in history, identity, and belonging. This is something that is sorely, and catastrophically, missing in our current mainstream society. This can be done through speaking to your family, searching government records and censuses, and visiting the areas your ancestors lived. This is a true quest of self-discovery! Learn who they are/were, what they did, why they did this or that, and where they lived life.

Find out the history of the surnames, heraldry, and tartans (if your ancestors came from Northern England, Wales, Ireland, or Scotland.). Create family banners and personal banners in honor of your ancestors. Not only does it help you, but if you ever plan on having children... the benefits they will receive in the forms of self-confidence, identity, and belonging will be astronomical compared to their "peers" outside of the Ásatrú/Heathen community.



Using an example of my own personal banner (above), I will show how various elements can be used. In my personal banner, the white hammer symbolizes my Swedish ancestor who was a blacksmith. The hammer is interweaved with the runes Eihwaz and Othala symbolizing the supportive axis (the wolf-hook) and the power of the sacred stronghold and ancestral spirit. Also, the doubled significance of the hammer and runes being intertwined adds another element of my going back to an ancestral-based religion of my distant ancestors, being a tribal form of heathenism.

The second point of advice is the re-creation, and modern creation, of Heathen/Germanic traditions and folkways. This is the basis of traditions. From learning how to Morris dance, to baking bread during grain harvest times, to decorating your home to the seasons and holidays, we need to infuse these types of things into our lives and the lives of our children. Various oral traditions and poetry should be encouraged. Lore and riddle games should be tried upon youngsters. Even playing a compact disk (CD) of Seamus Healey reading *Beowulf* during Yule Tide is an improvement over everyone sitting around the idiot-box. Even better, have someone read it to everyone else, or do a sock puppet show of *Skirnismal* for the kids during the Spring seasons. This could also go as far as groups learning a traditional/elder language together to use for communication.

Traditions bind us together. Whether it's as simple as baking a special type of cookies during a holiday season, to something as complicated as a tribal dance performed at a Miðsummer Blót, these things give us memories and camaraderie that help to build strong bonds between families, clans, tribes, kindreds, fellowships, and communities.

The third point of advice is the rejection of "Pop-Culture" and its elements. Pop Culture is a marketing and advertising tool made by corporate conglomerates. It does not express the culture of a people or of a place. It leads sheepish consumerists to buy what they're producing at an alarming rate until they can think of something else to teach you to "need". Pop Culture has no traditions within it. That's the point. Because if one were to have traditions that were truly traditional, then how can they add the newest flavor of Coca-Cola© to the scene of everyone baking bread for Freyfaxi? It's hard to include a bag of Lays Potato Chips© in your altar decorations for Óstara Blót! Or to have a tribal dance expressing the creation of their tribe while all the warriors wave a Dunkin' Donuts Coffee Coolata© in the air.

But also, Pop Culture is constantly in re-creation. It is not made to endure or last. It is not made to hold hands with traditions and family. Pop Culture likes having Mom, Dad, Sister, and Brother all sitting in separate rooms, by themselves, and watching all separate T.V. shows using their own individual televisions. Because they will consume more that way and there is less likely of a chance of them influencing each other OUT of "the newest pet rock" craze.

Fourth, the patronization and encouragement of Heathen/Germanic influenced art and literature. We need to support our own artists and writers because they will create and channel the material culture that is developed through all of us. They have the talent to enliven us with expression of our values, morals, ethics, beauty, dreams, fantasies, and general lust-for-life. They, through their work will help to inspire all of us, just as we have, by our deeds, inspired them! Also, shared art subject, style, and forms help bind us together. It will also leave our mark upon history, share our ideas with others, and between ourselves. This helps self-perpetuate our own evolution.

The rejection of commercialism and "throw-away" ideologies is the fifth point of advice I give. They don't endure. They waste resources. They destroy our earth, and goddess, Jörð. Which, in turn, destroys us because we are also a part of the earth. For far too long, we have replaced quantity and "a great deal" for quality and usefulness. This goes beyond just simple environmentalism. It is an ideology which has infected itself within even simple thoughts and ideas of the modern age. It makes us care less about things because, "It's only supposed to last X years anyway. Plus, I could just go out and get another one later. I don't want to think about it now, it's the quick fix." When one learns that they don't need to care for material possessions, soon enough they start infusing that philosophy of "not caring for" other things and people.

The conscious implementation of reasonable Heathen concepts (both religious and mundane) within daily life is the sixth point of advice I give for the re-integration of our culture. We must study, understand, and implement these concepts back into our lives. They are more natural for us. Unfortunately, we have been pre-wired to believe other things that are alien to our own minds. It is no small wonder why people have the hardest time connecting one portion of their ideology to another. It is because it is a mix made "for the flavor of the day".

We, the first converts of Ásatrú will have the most difficult time with this point of advice. We must think deeply, consciously, and willfully in order to do it long enough to re-wire ourselves back to our original, natural thought processes. Only through this, will our off-spring, the "born heathen" generations, be able to grow up unhindered and uncorrupted by the anti-culture of the masses of the society we unfortunately live amongst. These will be the tools to bring back the greatest portions of our ancestors that still lay sleeping within us all.

The seventh point of advice to foster and preserve our emerging, re-integrating culture is High selectiveness/ Low acceptance in the conscious allowance of "foreign" influences. This is not a

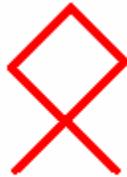
xenophobic idea. It is merely recognizing, in a purely respecting, pro-culture way, that people are different and that's okay. Not everything works for all peoples, ethnicities, groups, etc. Just like just one religion is not good for everyone on the earth... neither is one mass-culture. This does not mean necessarily that one should reject rice because it's an Asiatic food, or Mancala because it is a West African board game. This does include things like most television shows that influence us to think, speak, or think in an unnatural way. Or some tilted magazines or journals that pretend to service one idea, but is really promoting another. Your manner of dress, speaking, and socializing should not be the way it is just because that's what they do on the television shows, "Friends" and "Alley McBeal". This would include things that are produced to be severely skewed in order to lead you to change your mind, vote, or consumer power towards their wants or needs, instead of giving true information exchange to make informed decisions.

Also, sometimes what seems to be exotic and new may seem to be "the best" but that is not always the case. There's something to be said about "coming back home to Mom's cooking". We need to carefully select what we let influence us to make sure that it falls into the same pattern or thought process that we are of instead of contrary. Conflicting ideas meshed within a culture or people, or group, only ends up destroying or weakening it. One should ask oneself, "Does this ideal fit within our paradigm? Does it fit into our overall theological thinking? Of being part of a world-accepting religion or folkway?" These are just **some** of the questions we should ask ourselves.

The eighth point of advice is acting in preference of fellow heathens above others. This is a very important community-supporting measure. When one of us prospers, all of us prospers. It improves our collective hamingja, luck, and Folk-Soul. Every heathen should try their hardest to get what they need from a fellow heathen. One should not mind paying a little more for a chair they're buying from a heathen, just as the heathen shouldn't mind trying to sell it for a little less to a fellow heathen. Got a business? Try hiring a heathen first. Selling land? Do the same. This is how other cultures, peoples, immigrants, and groups have prospered against sometimes unbelievable odds and prejudice here in the United States. Examples would be the Irish sticking together in Boston and New York, and the Polish in the little town I live. From large cities to small towns. Think of the Amish. They support one another like a true community in a way that any heathen must admire about them. We can do this too. We need to rely on less from others, and more on ourselves to truly build a strong community. Plus, once again... it encourages all of the elements of culture like we've discussed and it also creates bonds!

The ninth, and final point of advice to re-integrate our culture is teaching our children ourselves, instead of letting "others" teach them. This has a wide range of acceptable boundaries. This can healthily consist of ideas from home-schooling to not letting the television, video games, and the like to baby-sit our children. We need to be involved with them as not only as fathers, mothers, siblings, and other blood relations but also as a community or greater tribe. Plus, if we do not pass this Reawakening onto our children... it dies. It all dies with us. All of our work, all of our toils and sacrifices will be for nothing enduring. We need to teach them by word and deed. The words, "Do as I say, not as I do." should never leave the mouth of a good heathen parent or elder. As I said before, none of us should ever speak the ever-so-common sports athlete motto, "I ain't no role model." or "I never said I was a role model." instead we should say, "I am proud and honored to be considered such, I try hard to be the best one I can be."

I believe, that the Ásatrú folk can and will emerge as it's own people and culture which will be more organic and holistic than the presently advertised unhealthy, mass-culture which has done nothing but ruin our greater society. Through our own evolution, some willed, and some not, we can show others the way to a healthy society and a healthy community. But more importantly, WE can make a healthier and netter community for OURSELVES. Hopefully, in the next chapters, we will be able to study, understand, and see some of the different concepts, ideals, the world-view and thoughts of which our ancestors took pride in and be able to understand how they all fit together as a holy cycle for the benefit of ourselves.



Chapter 2: World Accepting vs. World Rejecting



One of the most important roots of any religion is the world-views in which it believes in. Ásatrú, along with the other branches of heathenry, is essentially folk-centered and “world-accepting”. This would be in contrast to most major Eastern religions which are universalist, soteriological, eschatological, and “world-rejecting”. But let’s not allow these fancy theological terms confuse our understanding of our religion.

A folk-centered religion, or religiosity, is defined as one in which the primary sacred focus is on the folk community itself. This sacredness of the community is manifested through its rituals in honor of their relationship with their own gods and that promote a strong sense of loyalty and identity within the group.

A universalist religion is defined as one in which the primary sacred focus is on the salvation of the individual by means of transcending normal biological existence to exist in an otherworldly, eternal life. Most universalist religions believe that through initiation, strong belief, and adherence to a divine law that the otherworldly, eternal life can be attained by all of mankind.

The vast majority of universalist religions are both soteriological and eschatological by proxy of being universalist, “world-rejecting” religions. A soteriological religion just means that it is salvationalist. A eschatological religion merely means that a primary focus is on the afterlife, future states, and death.

Now, the main basis belief of a “world-accepting” religion, religiosity, or world-view is one in which both the divine and natural all have their place within the existence experienced itself. The current living existence is not seen as an illusion or a veil of uncertainty, pain, and torment, but instead is seen as a natural, wanted, and joyful existence in which one is tested and strengthened (i.e. Life on Miðgarð is good and desired.). Less concern is placed upon the afterlife and the experience “after” death.

In the main basis of a “world-rejecting” religion or world-view, is an overriding desire for personal salvation from the existing biological world which is seen as false, uncertain, painful, dissatisfactory, and delusional. The other overriding element to a world-rejecting religion, or world-view, is the want to dissolve old communal bonds in favor of “emergence with the divine”.

Another great distinction between the paradigms of “world-accepting” and “world-rejecting” religions and world-views is the ultimate destination or action of an adherent’s soul, essence, or spirit. Also, how afterlife is perceived.

In a world-accepting religion, generally *non-union* with the divine and continuing evolution is assumed. Basically, the soul or spirit exists **with** the god or gods of that religion, meaning that there is an ego survival. In Ásatrú, for example, the three destinations after death are commonly Hel, Miðgard, or Valhöll according to literary sources. In Hel, the person continues to exist, if even in a static state, consciously. In Miðgarð, one can either “go in to the mound” or “mountain” to continue to exist with one’s ancestors in a conscious state, or be reborn through family bloodlines. In Valhöll, again, the ego or consciousness of the spirit survives. Another great defining factor is the character of each destination having conscious activity, pleasurable existence, and purpose. But again, it must be re-iterated that the afterlife still is not the main concern in relation to the choices of life’s actions.

In a “world-rejecting” religion, or world-view, generally *complete union* with the divine is desired. Their essence or spirit will be absorbed by the divine causing non-consciousness or ego destruction. This is completed by the characteristics of complete inaction, non-consciousness, stoicism, and having no purpose or function. In Buddhism, for example, the ultimate goal is transcendence and union with the

divine essence (Nirvana) losing conscious thought and connection with “existence” or life on earth through enlightenment, thus ending all cycles of continuing existence and rebirth. In orthodox Christianity, or according to Christian doctrine, emergence or union with “God” (Jehova/Yahweh) in heaven. One should note that the prevailing semi-belief of existence and ego retention elements in modern Christian afterlife did not occur until after the conversions of the majority of “world-accepting” religions and thus are an absorption of some of those beliefs for (then) originally a temporary time.

Another major difference afterlife in “world-accepting” vs. “world-rejecting” religions is how that destination or *union/non-union* is perceived within the world-view. For the “world-accepting” religious theology/philosophy it is merely a continuance. While within the world-view of most “world-rejecting” religious theology/philosophy the afterlife is seen as either a punishment or reward.

One may be asking, at this point, “Okay, but how does this matter or effect anything?” The answer is that it matters completely. When one looks at actions, laws, customs, and sacred functions it determines the spirit or motive of which the action, deed, etc. is done.

For example, in a folk-centered and “world-accepting” religious worldview, foremost... murder is generally discouraged by custom and law because it is destructive to the cohesion and sacredness of the community. The effect on the **present** existence is what is discouraged.

In a universalist, “world-rejecting”, and doctrined religious world-view, foremost... murder is generally discouraged by custom and law because it goes against a “divine-imposed law” (for example, in Christianity and Judaism, the “Ten Commandments”) which effects the **afterlife** existence.

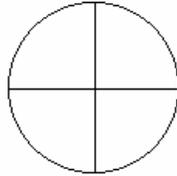
Now, of course we are not saying here that adherents to those religions do not care about people getting murdered in the present life. It of course, it effects them. But the theological and root-thought implications, are in reference to the afterlife effects, **not** the present life effects of the action or deed.

Another example can be made utilizing a very core, very deep root. In a “world-accepting” religious world-view, the overriding belief is that the biological life is desired. This theological philosophy would give logical conclusion to the ideology of preservation or “stewardship” of the earth and its resources. This is because, theologically, at the deep root of the belief, the adherent desires to possibly return to life on the earth, thus they still want the resources of the earth to exist for the future in case they, or their ancestors, return.

The “world-rejecting” religious world-view at its root, believes that the biological life is bad or undesirable. They do not want to return. This theological philosophy gives rise to the logical conclusion to the ideology of “maximization of resources” of the earth. Their concern is not to preserve resources for the future, but instead to utilize as much of the resources to “ease the pain of living” in this life as best they can until escape from biological life is possible or granted.

In conclusion, we find that the ideologies and philosophies behind “world-accepting” and “world-rejecting” religions and religiosities to be very different indeed. These are the deep rooted basis of most ideological thought. One of the most important things we, the Ásatrú need to do is to set ourselves straight in understanding that everything we do needs to correlate within a “world-accepting” root-base. Only then, do all of the ethics, morals, and heathen thinking of our ancestors start to make sense. Only within the correct world-views can we see the flowing continuum of thought. We must pass things through these basic filters in order to keep our religion and folkways cohesive, organic, and *holy*.

Chapter 3: The Holy & The Unholy



In modern usage, Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1996) gives the definition of holy as:

Holy (hō'lē), —adj. 1. specially recognized as or declared sacred by religious use or authority; consecrated: *holy ground*. 2. dedicated or devoted to the service of God, the church, or religion: *a holy man*. 3. saintly; godly; pious; devout: *a holy life*. 4. having a spiritually pure quality: *a holy love*. 5. entitled to worship or veneration as or as if sacred: *a holy relic*. 6. religious: *holy rites*. 7. inspiring fear, awe, or grave distress: *The director, when angry, is a holy terror*. —n. 8. a place of worship; sacred space; sanctuary. [bef. 900; Middle English *holi*, Old English *hālig*, var. of *hāleg*, equiv. to *hāl* WHOLE + *eg* German *heilig*, Old Norse *heilagr*]

As we can see, from even this simple entry, the word holy has come to mean something blessed or sacred in a divine or religious sense. Although this definition is partially correct in the Germanic or heathen world-view, the root cause of this becoming its meaning is lost. And to lose that, is to lose the whole.

There are basically two main words in our elder tongues which encompass the heathen (and Ásatrú) visions of holy. They were *heilagr* and *vê* in Old Norse. *Heilagr*, is from which the modern word holy is derived. Edred Thorsson defined holy in an essay in the book, *Green Runa*, (and of which we can associate with its predecessor, *heilagr*) as, “that which takes part in numinous quality which is blessed and whole, and which evokes the feeling of ‘wholeness’ or ‘oneness’ in the religious subject.” The word *vê* (an ascendant of the proto-Germanic word, *wihaz*), as described by Eric Wóðening in *We Are Our Deeds*, is “that which is set apart from the everyday world in numinous power.”

Both of these definitions by Thorsson and Wóðening are created through the influence of a Protestant writer named Rudolf Otto who wrote the book, *The Idea of the Holy*. Although a Protestant Christian, Otto's book is a clear, philosophical look at the human conceptions of the holy and the sacred.

Rudolf Otto wrote *The Idea of the Holy* to analyze the unique character of the holy, or numinous, by separating it from any particular religious definition. For the holy, Otto called the main column of its base a “*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*” which can be translated to, “mystery, dread, and powerful attraction or fascination”.

The mystery of the numinous is, according to Otto, “The wholly other, that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which ... fills the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.”

The *tremendum*, or awe, that Otto describes in regards to the numinous or holy, is the emotional feelings someone gets when in the face of overwhelming, chaotic (or uncontrollable), and powerful force. It is dread. An unbelievable, unapproachable power, recognizably superior and beyond ourselves.

Otto's *fascinans* of the holy, or numinous, is described by him as giving a person the feeling of, “... a something which captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often to the pitch of dizzying intoxication; it is the Dyionsiac element in the numen.” This is the fascination, the inability to look away. That which draws us back in wonder to “see/feel it again”.

Together, these are the basis of Rudolf Otto's work in explaining and analyzing the concept of the holy.

As mentioned previously, the word, “holy” can be derived from several ancestral languages. But, taking another look at other words that derive themselves from those offer us a deeper understanding. The words *hál/háelu*, *heill*, *heilag*, and *hél* were Old English, Old Norse, Old High German, and Old Gothic respectively. And all of them meant, “with luck”, “health(y)”, or “whole(ness)”.

Vilhelm Gronbech wrote in his book, *The Culture of the Teutons*;

“In the high seat, in the grove, and on the mountain, we stand face to face with a power which seems never before to have forced itself upon us: that of holiness; but in reality, we have traced its influence at every step. It is luck in its mightiest shape. The connection lies in the name, for *heilagr* — holy — and *heill* — good luck or good fortune — are radically akin. From the point of view of form, the one is a derivative of the other: *heilagr* is that in which *heill* resides; but the formal relation does not show that the idea of the adjective should be later than that of the substantive. We can get nearest to the spiritual kinship by viewing both as linguistic expressions of the fundamental idea wherein Germanic culture once gathered the innermost secret of life in one sum; *heill* is humanity, and *heilagr* is human, in the widest sense of the words.”

Basically, to the Ásatru (or heathen) world-view, the concept of the holy, health, luck, and wholeness are all one and the same. They are all inexplicitly linked to evoke the power and restoration of each other. To be holy, one had to be healthy, filled with luck (or megin), and part of an encompassing wholeness of the concepts together. This is the background to the modern/ancient greeting “*Heil/Heilsa*” used by modern heathens today. You are not just saying, “Hi.” or “How are you?” You are saying, “Be healthy.” or “Be whole.”

The concept of the unholy is directly counterpart to the concept of the holy. The Old Norse word for unholy was *óheilagr* and the Old English word was *unhālig*.

Again, in modern usage, Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1996) gives the definition of unholy as:

Un·Ho·ly (un hō’lē), —adj. 1. not holy; not sacred or hallowed. 2. impious; sinful; wicked. 3. *Informal* dreadful; ungodly: *They got us out of bed at the unholy hour of three in the morning.* [bef. 1000; Old English *unhālig* (c. D *onheilig*. Old Norse *óheilagr*)] —unholiness, n.

We can easily deduce that just as the word holy meant, “with luck”, “health(y)”, or “whole(ness)” that the opposite being unholy meant, “without luck”, “unhealth(y)”, or “lack of whole(ness)”. So that which is unholy is unhealthy, sick, without luck (or megin), and not whole or holistic. A major supporter of this existed within Icelandic law were as a person who was declared an outlaw, then violated the terms of their outlawry was referred to as being *óheilagr*. By becoming that last step beyond the harsh outlaw, you became the opposite to that which Gronbech said in that to be *heilagr* was to be human. So, to be *óheilagr* was to not even be human. They were considered far away from the sacredness of the inner enclosure of society. They were the true outlanders.

Chapter 4: Innangarðs & Útgarðs

In this chapter, before going onto some of the higher concepts of heathenry and Ásatrú, we will examine the concept of the Innangarð and the Útgarð. This is a prime concept to understand, because it is the holy enclosure in which all these concepts spoken about within this text take place. And it also solidifies that which is considered outside of that holy enclosure of our folk. An excellent book to find this concept is, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* by Kirsten Hastrup.

The social construct of a tribal/heathen society at its most generalized frame is that which is inside and that which is outside the bounds of their own society. In Old Norse, those would be the innangarðs and the útgarðs of our society. To be more specific, there are four elements of this concept and theory. They are;

1. Vé
2. Innangarð
3. Griðgarð
4. Útgarð

See diagram below

We will first start off in the outer-most, the útgarð. The útgarð is the outer-most reaches. It is where the lawless, the wilds, and the dangerous dwell. This is where those who are not US dwell. This is, symbolically, the elements of Non-Ásatrú/Non-Heathen belief and practice. It is outside the enclosure of our folk. In our mythology, it is the lands of the Jötunar, or other hostile beings. (i.e. Jötanheim, Muspelheim, Niflheim, etc.)

Now, the Griðgarð is my own created terminology. It is based on the Old Norse word, “grið”. Grið basically means, “temporary truce”, “sanctuary”, or “a limited peace”. In our diagram, these are represented by the dark spots within the útgarð. These are those small, areas where one may find sanctuary or a safe place within the wilds. An example within the mythology of our folk would be a place like Ægir’s hall, or Thrymheim (the abode of Skaði). Although within Jötanheim, these are safe havens for the gods within the hostile lands.

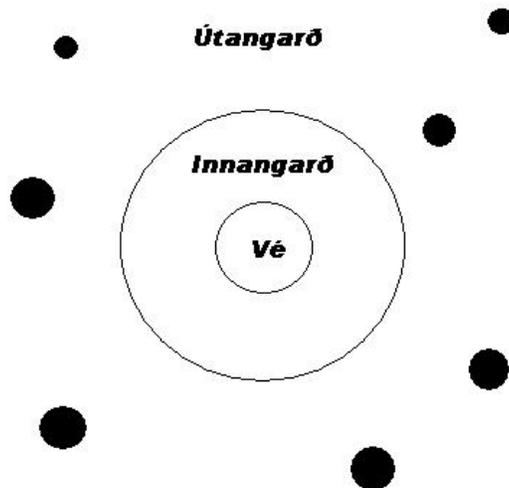


Diagram by Mike Smith

The innangarð is the enclosure of our folk. Mythologically, it is Miðgarð. It is where law and custom are upheld within our society and folk. It is within the guard or enclosure. In medieval Iceland, this was within the fence of the farmstead of your chieftain, where as outside of the fence was the útgarð. The farmsteads of friends would be the griðgarð, using the terminology presented here.

The vé is the inner-most enclosure. It is even within the innangarðs. This is where the most holy spots are. It is the hof, the vébönd, or any other sacred place within the innangarð. It is where we hold our

rituals, blóts, fórn, and sumbles. In our mythology, a parallel can be had with that of Ásgarð which means, “the enclosure of the gods”. To re-iterate from a previous chapter, Ásgarð would be set apart from Miðgarð because of its further numinous power.

As I have said since the beginning, all of these concepts are interconnected. Looking into concepts of the holy and unholy, we can see the pattern of containment of numinous power as discussed in chapter 3. The útangarð has little or no numinous power (that is beneficial to us, at least), the innangarð holds more healthy, or whole, numinous power for our folk, while the vé holds the most power that we are able to experience. This will, of course, tie in even further once other chapters are explained.

To bring this forth in modern heathen thought-patterns, we can see this as still a type of social scale for our folk. Those outside of our folk, or outside of Ásatrú/Heathenry are of the útangarð. They encompass a culture, way of living, and system of ethical and moral behavior outside of our own. In the least, it is seen as being unhealthy (un-whole) to us.

The innangarð is our folk, fellow Ásatru, and other heathens. We have an emerging culture, system of ethics and morals, and way of living and worship that is our own. It is also healthy, whole, and heilagr for us.

The griðgarðs would be the safe-havens for us. They are those places that are not necessarily heathen, but at least heathen-friendly. One may go as far as to say that for mainstream society and culture, their “útangarðs” of the wilds of nature would actually, for us, be griðgarðs given the connection we have or encourage with nature, landspirits, and the like that they suppress or discourage.

Although the elder heathen generally considered that within the innangarð to be “good” and that which is from the útangarð to be “evil” or “not beneficial”, this should not be confused with xenophobia. Moderation is key, as spoken before. Our ancestors traded with a large variety of cultures and allowed different folks to come within their innangarðs... *so long as they followed the rules*. This is not a concept that resides in a xenophobic culture or peoples. The words for “foreigner” was not associated with the root words for “evil” or the like. A xenophobic society would have those connotations, would not have traded with others outside their own folk, and would not have traveled the world.

Here are some examples in modern terms:

A fellow heathen’s home = innangarð
The home of your still Christian mother = griðgarð
The bible-study group at your college = útangarð
An Ásatrú hof = vé
Your own home = innangarð
Your work = útangarð
Your friend’s home (non-heathen) = griðgarð
An intentional heathen community = innangarðs
A Hindu Madir (temple) = útangarð
The county fair = útangarð
The mall = útangarð

Let me warn further. That útangarð does not necessarily mean, “Don’t go there.” It merely means, “This is a place outside of my culture, religious, and moral & ethical beliefs. They are different than mine.” It is a place to be careful and sometimes weary of.

Chapter 5: Frið



"Frith is not Disney, but frith can be the foundation for happiness and a must for a healthy working community, including our relationship with our Gods. A working, healthy community." -- Ron Branga, Othala Acres

Frið is usually anglicized into, "Frith". But, it is often misinterpreted as being "peace" in the spirit of not causing any waves, to not cause any stress upon a situation, or to not voice or express any objection. This is incorrect. Although frið DOES indicate the lack of any physical violence or physical aggression, it does not prohibit the aforementioned situations.

Frið was a type of inviolable, sacred, or joyful peace. Whether it was the time of Jarl Fróðhi in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (or as described in Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danes*), Tacitus mentioning the procession of Nerþus in *Germania*, or even in the *Poetic Edda's* poem called, *Gróttasöngur*, describing giantesses grinding out frið, it is of a sacred quality. It is linked with the concepts of joy within the rune, Wunjo.

Another very important thing to understand is that frið is within the concept of the innangarðs. What causes frið is the respect, admiration, and natural instinct to follow the culture, ethics, morals, and customs of the community. The breaking of custom also breaks frið. Because when one breaks custom, law, or morals in a community, it puts the minds of the community into an alert mode. For example, murdering someone breaks frið. This is not only because of the aspect that killing someone in the community hurts the community by lessening its assets and benefits of that individual... but it also causes others to, at least in the back of their mind, to start questioning their trust of EVERYONE ELSE in the community. It makes others within the community to start second guessing their trust in their fellow people within their community. This only causes the community to breakdown. And that will weaken the community as a whole. Think about this concept within our greater society, right now. People don't get to know their neighbors for FEAR of them being a freak, weirdo, or generally dangerous individual.

Since frið is a community building concept, it is also the tools which, when used with wisdom and moderation, help to continue to strengthen the community. Bringing up a sore subject, in the spirit of trying to resolve conflict, even when it causes some tension... is to the benefit of the community. Once things are ironed out, it helps strengthen the frið through understanding. Even if it is to police someone in bad behavior.

As we can plainly see, frið is an overall concept. It is not just one easy definition. We must keep this in mind.

Another aspect of frið is in terms of kinship. By kinship, I mean literal blood relation. As shown to us in many of the sagas, frið also meant that one should never work against one's own family, unless under the most extreme of dire situations. But this was not merely a non-active concept. Not only was one to not act against a family member, but to also act in defense of a family member to one's uttermost ability. Many sagas tell the tales of frið in conflict.

An example would be in the *Saga of the Volsungs*. Guðrun is bound by frið to not act against her brothers, Hogni and Gunnar, even though they plotted the death of her beloved husband, Sigurð. Frið is in conflict with these acts. Then, she is forced to re-marry to King Atli (Attila the Hun). Guðrun continues her kinship with them in an attempt to repair and honor frið. But, not only that, she actively tries again and again to warn them of King Atli's deceit and treachery towards them and his (Atli's) plans to kill them. Further once Atli has killed her brothers, she extracts revenge (and thus causing frið to be in conflict again) by killing her own children by Atli and further kills Atli in his sleep with the help of her nephew, Niflung. Of course, these myths and legends teach us a lot about the necessities and the warnings of many concepts **using extremes** to illustrate their more than needed points. In the *Saga of the Volsungs* we can see, again

and again, the breakdown of frið and the damages it continues to perpetuate when initially broken in regards to kinship and family ties.

Chapter 6: Ørlög & Urð



In this chapter, I will be explaining the concepts of Ørlög, Urð (Old English, “Wyrd”), and other heathen concepts concerning time. But first, I will explain a few concepts and make some distinctions for background and clarification purposes. I will first explain some of the concepts behind the Norns and then the concepts in consideration of Yggdrasil and the various wells associated within our cosmology.

As we know, there are three major Norns. They are named Urð, Verðandi, and Skuld. Often times, they are mistakenly associated as being “Past, Present, and Future” much like the Greek Fates. But this is a grave error which will completely misconstrue the Old Norse concepts.

Urð represents what has become (past), and Verðandi what is becoming (present), but Skuld is related to a concept which is comprised of necessity, debit, and obligation all woven into one. This stands a vast contrast to the idea of “future”.

In, *The Well and the Tree*, Paul C. Bauschatz says it best;

“If we divide the influence of the Norns among the three, their names suggest that they define what we normally think of as the total range of verbal action: Urth reflects actions made manifest, brought to a full, clear, observable, fruition; they have ‘become’; they are accomplished. Verthandi clearly reflects the actually occurring process of all that Urth eventually expresses. The two Norns are closely linked, with the influence of Verthandi to Urth, they move from ‘becoming’ to ‘become’. As Skuld is involved with necessary or obligatory action, she stands slightly apart from the other two Norns. She seems to make reference to actions felt as somehow obliged or known to occur; that is, the necessity of their ‘becoming’ is so strongly felt or clearly known that they present themselves as available to be incorporated into the realms of Verthandi and Urth.”

As I said before, quite a different spin. It is this misnomer of “Future” as a definition for Skuld, along with the constant mistranslation of orlög being, “Fate” that causes all kinds of misunderstanding to occur. That misunderstanding snowballs into other concepts, effectively making the whole reconstructed Germanic thought process faulty. It is kind of like when you cook a great dinner. All of the individual dishes and sides are excellent. Yet, if you pour a disgusting-tasting gravy over everything... you’ve just ruined the whole meal.

In the Nordic/Germanic concepts of Past, it is seem as including all of the experiences, actions, accomplishments, defeats, failures, and triumphs of men, gods, and all of the other beings within the multiverse. And all these things make it forever growing and increasing. In this, those actions that have become are the nurturing and sustenance that effects the worlds themselves. Much like the layering of the white mud and water upon Yggdrasil, our actions and what has become (our “past” if you will) is the substances symbolized by the mud and water the Norns use upon that great tree that supports all. So, in truth, the Germanic concept of time is really binary.

Another aspect of the mythology of the old Norse is the descriptions regarding the wells. Within the mythology, there are three major wells from which spring waters of power. As described in the *Völuspá*, the *Grimnismál*, and other texts they are called Hvergelmir, Mímisbrunnir, and Urðarbrunnir.

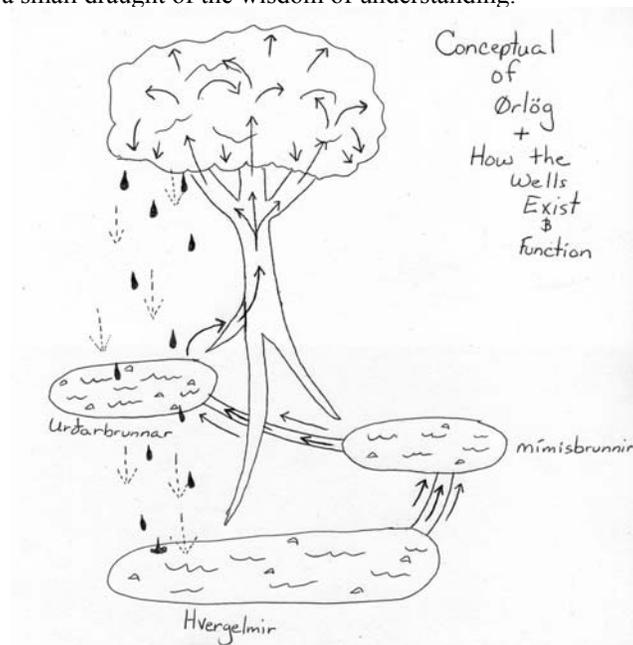
Hvergelmir is the eldest of the wells, springing from the depths of Niflheim. Its name means, “roaring kettle” and it is described as having been a source of all the waters and rivers from that primal realm, Niflheim. This indicates to us that Hvergelmir is a source of not only the primordial waters (essences of power or ginn) but also of that first start of momentum, forward movement, and force. From this symbolic essence came forth the most powerful force, potential (the waters are conceptualized within the rune, Laguz).

The next spring is Mímisbrunnir, or the “Well of Mímir” within Jötanheim. From this well is stored the all-essences of memory, the past, and the consciousness. Because of these placements of essences it is the a well of knowledge and wisdom. These patterns, placements, layers, and essences help to influence the possibilities of outcome which are the primordial, basic building blocks of Ørlög.

Upward in momentum, these essences and forces flow into Urðarbrunnir, which some believe is located in Asgarð. Through the combinations of the raw, primordial essences and forces inherited from the previous well-springs, this well contains the building blocks of true potential and possibilities. Urðarbrunnir helps to shape what is becoming through its inherent activity and surging. With these powerful, holy waters the norms water the roots of Yggdrasil. From this megin-enriched essence, the roots of Yggdrasil drink and from these waters is created the white clay-mud to help nourish the world tree.

In this, the norms are truly “layering laws” or layering the “primordial laws or layers” into the roots of Yggdrasil to travel into the trunk and into the branches of the nine worlds that it supports. Ør-lög means, “Original/Primordial” – “Layers/Laws”. This is how in an active, dynamic way the norms perform this concept. Eventually, as the deeds, actions, megin, and luck of the beings within the cosmic complex of the nine worlds mix with the potentials, pasts, debits, and essences of action/reaction they are purified into the dew from the branches of Yggdrasil. These, in turn, fall back into the rime waters of Hvergelmir. The holy cycle then continues onward again, in not quite the same way, but in the same function and mechanisms.

Now, taking a step back and bringing it all to an epic state of mind, we can see how the complex-yet-simplicity of the all of conscious actions. Perhaps not the solution to the formula, because there is no solution. But, perhaps, a small draught of the wisdom of understanding.



The **overall** concept of Ørlög is that of the primal layers or laws that help to formulate the possibilities available to a being or entity, be it human, god, or what-have-you. It is the accumulation, actions/reactions, “debits” and cosmic mechanics that will allow the options available for one to base/take their actions upon. One affects those options inherited, by **consciously** participating and **consciously**

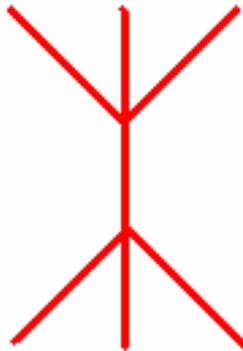
making decisions (actions) that will affect the next “mini-cycle” to bring about favorable selections or options to work within. (i.e. Your “Will” and “Ambition”.)

So, to make a simpler association, you are embodied within the Ørlög that is made up of the actions, deeds, luck, and megin of your ancestors which shaped the options available to your immediate parents. Along with these options and strengths (or weaknesses) they added their own deeds, decisions, actions, and luck, etc. to produce your direct Ørlög. You, in turn my dear reader, have absorbed these and along with your own additions up until this very moment is what has shaped your Ørlög, right now.

Urð, as an overall concept, is somewhat more of a philosophical complexity. Here, is where the written word will be problematic. Try to bring the aforementioned concepts into one. As mentioned above, Urð means past, to simplify. What one has to remember is that the past always comes before and after the present moment.



This is because after the present moment has occurred, it becomes the past. The idea of the future does not exist in this thought-pattern. It is not a tangible “thing”. As a famous quote goes, “Tomorrow never comes.” One can only try to influence the coming present moment as it is in a current state of flux. Being the case, there is no such thing as a linear sense of time within the Nordic/Germanic world-view. But, the present moment is never stagnant, nor exactly duplicated, because of the cycle explained in relation to the concept of the Wells and Ørlög.



Chapter 7: Megin & Hamingja



In this chapter, we will discuss the metaphysical realms of the concepts of megin and hamingja. Both of these concepts are types of storehouses of numinous power and holiness within an individual. Both can be increased or decreased in accordance to the actions and virtue of the individual they empower. The more holy, or whole, an individual is, the greater their strength in both megin and hamingja.

In the popular, old phrase, "...of might and main...", megin is what is referred to as the main. Megin is a storehouse of inner spiritual, metaphysical power and strength. Though at times it was referred to in a literal physical strength definition, the examples of pertaining to a metaphysical, internal strength or power are much more numerous. All creatures in the multiverse contain some amount of megin. One familiar example, is within the *Gylfaginning* of Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*. Þórr's belt of power, megingjörd, is described along with the two other possessions of the god along with his god-power:

"One of them is the hammer Mjöllnir, familiar to frost-giants and the mountain-giants when it is raised aloft, and little wonder: it has smashed many of their fathers' and kinsmen's skulls. He has another possession that is most precious, a megingjörd (belt of strength/power), that doubles his Ás-strength (ásmegin = god's strength/power) when he buckles it on. He has a third and most crucial possession: a pair of iron gloves, with which he has to hold the hammer."

Hamingja is a concept of another type of holy essence in which we call, luck. This force could be of a personal, family, or tribal nature. This is sometimes personified in the form of an animal (similar but different from one's fylgja) or a giant woman, like in *Víga-Grúms Saga*. In *Vatnsdæla Saga*, the idea is expressed in the following passage:

"... The boy shall be called Ingimundr after his mother's father, and I hope for luck (hamingja) for him on account of the name."

Also in *Finnboga Saga* a dying man begs his son to name his child after him:

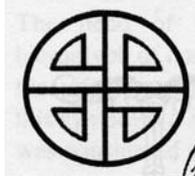
"... he said he was sure that hamingja would follow."

The accounts of hamingja being a numinous essence and quality of luck are extensive throughout the sagas. Vilhelm Grönbeck wrote extensively on luck in his work, *The Culture of the Teutons*.

Hamingja, as stated before, could be innately part of a person, lent, borrowed, proven, inherited, gained, and even lost. Many a king in ancient days lost his life as a sacrifice because of his hamingja, or luck, failing the kingdom. Carl Larsson's painting, *Midvinterblot*, is such an example of that concept.

Both megin and hamingja are linked, along with many other concepts such as holiness, virtue, and power. Remember that the whole of the book's concepts must be intertwined and interwoven. None stand alone. One should be careful of their essences and spirits. One should nurture and strengthen them through "good ol' fashioned clean livin'" and through exchange with the gods: which is what happens in the course of förn, blót, sumbla, and veizla. Other ways of strengthening them is through physical exercise (health-consciousness) and through metaphysical exercise (meditation, galdor/rune-work, and seiðr).

Chapter 8:
Reputation, Honor,
& sacred oaths



Rep-u-ta-tion (rep'yə ta' shən), n. 1. The estimation in which a person or thing is held, esp. by the community or the public generally; repute: *a man of good reputation*. 2. Favorable repute; good name: *to ruin one's reputation by misconduct*. 3. A favorable and publicly recognized name or standing merit, achievement, reliability, etc.: *to build up a reputation*. -- *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*

Today, in the modern world, many people have a very limited and skewed vision of reputation. Much like the concept of honor, they are under the impression that reputation is something in which other singular individuals have jurisdiction, or influence, over it. Nothing is more false. Although an individual may plan and scheme to try to temporarily create a negative impact upon someone else's reputation, this is never a permanent situation. Light always sheds upon such forgeries when three basic heathen ideologies are kept:

1. When the community is truly a community in which people are active.
2. When heathen communities, as individuals, keep in line with codes of honor.
3. When people seek "the source" and make no assumptions.

There are several easy ways to ensure one will have good reputation. They are all based upon the most commonplace ideals. They are to treat others fairly, work with the people in your community, always give others the "benefit of the doubt", and to be a positive, active hand within the community. But, the most important part of reputation is the fact that, ***a person cannot have a reputation without actively being a part of the community!***

In order to properly understand reputation one needs to also understand the prerequisite (and conjoined twin), which is the concept of honor. For this, I will start with a quote from my previous book, *Ways of the Asatru*:

"There are some folks amongst the community which will give one a list, of one sort or another, to "checklist" your actions to scale their honorability. As the *Cliff's Notes* never got you an "A+" in High School or College, nor will they help you in something as important as your religion and spirituality. Actually, the phrase should be, "...nor will they help you in something as important as your LIFE." Always think strongly upon your actions and their repercussions before you do them. This will lead you to honor and good reputation.

Honor, unfortunately, is often a very misinterpreted concept. Many times, the newcomer will have a strange concept of honor made up of a combination of romanticized medieval chivalry, bad samurai films, and an over-inflated ego. This is somewhat expected when someone is new to any religion or concept of correct conduct. The definition of honor given by *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* is:

Hon-or (on'ər) n. 1. honesty, fairness, or integrity in one's beliefs and actions: "a man of honor." 2. a source of credit or distinction: "to be an honor to one's family." 3. high respect, as for worth, merit or rank: "to be held in honor."

The combination of living a good life, respect for others, thinking and being responsible for your own actions, ... will definitely help you on your way to gaining and keeping honor and respect amongst your peers."

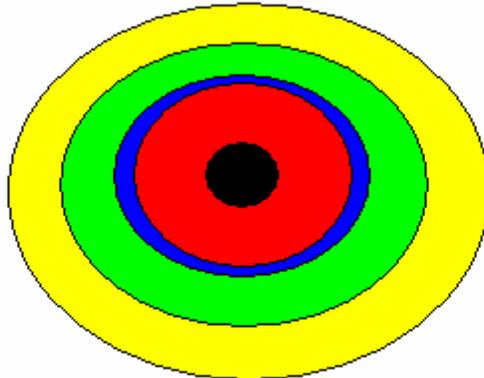
An increasingly important aspect about both reputation and honor is to remember that **your actions within the community will dictate** your measure of reputation and honor. Think about the action(s) you are about to do. One way is to ask oneself, "If EVERYONE in my community would instantaneously know I did X, would I be proud of that?" And secondly, to an only slightly lesser extent, "Would others think well of me for doing X?"

Bill Dwinells, a member of a Massachusetts kindred called Raven Kindred North, once paraphrased Mark Twain when he said, "If you don't want anybody to know about it, don't do it."

One of the other essential components of both honor and reputation is the holding and keeping of sacred oaths. This is not to say that one needs to make sacred oaths in order to have honor and/or reputation. In fact, it may be easier to keep honor and good reputation if one has as few oaths tied into their *ørlög* as possible.

Many sagas show the downfall of making poorly thought-out or too many oaths. The *Saga of the Jomsvikings*, *Njal's Saga*, and others illustrate to us how many times oaths can cause the downfall of an individual, family/clan, or tribe very easily. Many folks, from ancient times to modern, have made the error of trying to prove their worth by making an oath. What one must understand is that the REASON for the oath should not be to prove worth. I know this may sound to be a simplistic piece of advice, but it is often not heavily thought upon why one uses the medium of sacred oaths in order to bring forth dedication to someone or something. I cannot reiterate, or emphasize, enough the heavy thought which must be done before making any type of oath. It certainly should not be done on the spur of the moment.

A main reason for the caution in oathing is because of the profound effect the oath-taker puts upon their community. Literally, that oath WILL affect the luck (*hamingja*), *megin*, and soul of the community. Although the degree of effect may be argued by some to be more of a "lessening ripple" in waves throughout the community, affecting some more than others, it is still an act that may cause possible injury to the community. This must be prevented at all costs. See the figure for an example of a theory of effect. Here, the center is the person themselves and the direct people who are part of that oath. Next, are those who witnessed the sacred oath. Just outside of that, are those who may have witnessed, but disapprove (as some folks say, they "did not hail the oath"). Following is that oath-taker's regional community. And finally, we have the whole of the heathen community. As the old saying goes, "Keep few oaths."



Although some may like to think that they may bar themselves from being affected by an oath made in their presence, this is not so. Being that the concept is, time and time again, consistently linked with the over-riding and overlord concepts of *ørlög*, *urð*, and the folksoul; one cannot just take what they like and negate what they don't within a truly organic and holistic system weave of spiritual beliefs. These are systems of a metaphysical nature that is well beyond the wills of human beings and even the gods.

Chapter 9: The Folk-Soul

The Folk-Soul is a concept which is not only one of the most esoteric, but also one of the most misunderstood within the Ásatrú community. This is understandable because of three primary reasons. One, is that for as often that the word, “Folk-Soul” is used in most circles, it is rarely if ever fully explained (or no one has really come up with a public, cognitive theory for it); Two, is because of the unbalanced perception many folks have, emphasizing some characteristics while practically ignoring others (mainly because of the problem inherited in # 1); And three, is the fact that it is a metaphysical concept theory which is just simply hard to explain in a reasonable manner.

More often than not, one needs to utilize a variety of slightly faulty metaphors where a composite of them all would give a rough idea of the meaning of the concept. Even then, after subtracting some elements in our faulty metaphors, this gives one only the general concept trying to be explained as the Folk-Soul. But, never-the-less, I will endeavor to do the best I can. I will merely remind the reader not to bring any of these concepts to an extreme, because the extreme cannot exist within either a composite or within something which derives itself from the organic whole.

On the cover of this booklet is a graphic, anthropomorphic representation of a Folk-Soul created by an unknown artist in 1920's Italy. As one can see from the picture, masses of “souls” are all morphing into the composite greater representational/symbolic soul-being. This is just one of our imperfect metaphors for the Folk-Soul. It is the unmanifested, metaphysical archtypical soul-essence of a folk, nation, or other grouping of people in which those persons identify with. It is also the collective meta-consciousness of the all (ginn) of the collective. The Folk-Soul is the primordial essence of the folk from the beginning: a spiritual spark of our divine heritage with our gods along with a meta-memory from the depths of the Wells. It is also the reservoir for the continuing önd, óð, hamingja, and megin for the collective folk.

Some of the philosophical ideas which must be conveyed to keep in mind while trying to process the composite of the whole is that the Folk-Soul is never in stasis, yet it cannot be “changed” (in the usual sense we normally think of) because it is always exactly what it is. There is always a constant exchange between the Folk-Soul and the folk. This is a reciprocal exchange, though both are dependant upon the elements and essences of the other. The individual has some effect upon the whole of the Folk-Soul, but the Folk-Soul itself affects and influences the individual in a far larger and quicker capacity in all ways.

A theological concept which must also be kept in the back of one's mind is that the Folk-Soul, like the gods and human beings, is also under the jurisdiction of the cosmic laws which govern the mechanics of the Nordic-Germanic metaphysical cosmology. Just as the örlög and urð of an individual has the meta-mechanical complexities inherent in the cosmic order of Yggdrasil and the Wells, it is also those same complexities which must turn for the Folk-Soul. Thus, this is how something can never be in stasis, always be in constant exchange, and still only “be” what it “is”.

One of the first questions to ask would be, “So, which came first? The folk or the Folk-Soul?” This is an important question, indeed. The answer is, “They were a simultaneous creation of existence.” When the creator gods Óðinn, Hænir, and Lódur manifested our folk, they imparted us with breath of life, óð, and features. But, by consequence, they also created the Folk-Soul. Originally, it comprised of only Ask and Embla. But as the numbers of our folk increased, so did the Folk-Soul. Once the conversions of other religions came, that would have had a negative affect on the Folk-Soul in that it was depleted of those converts who adopted other ways and customs. Like-wise, when tribes of our folk adopted others into their numbers on those rare occasions (being that those adopted had to be absorbed by the religion, culture, and ways of our folk) the Folk-Soul increased. The Folk-Soul is now in an increase, although a cautious one, as members of our folk in blood, culture, and spirit rejoin the Folk-Soul.

The exchange between the Folk-Soul and the folk is a difficult explanation to theorize. First, I will explain the influence of the Folk-Soul upon the individual coming into the collective of the folk. Then I will follow with a theory on what the individual exchanges with the Folk-Soul. Finally, what will ensue is a theory on the direct affect of the Folk-Soul upon the individual and the individual's effects upon the Folk-Soul as a whole.

Foremost, an individual must have some type of draw to the grouping connected to the Folk-Soul. This can be of any of the natures (combined or singular) inherent of blood, culture, or spirit. Although

some will argue that the three are part of a seamless whole, the author does not disagree with this idea, but where the *first internal urging* develops from is the angle and point in which this explanation is being given for the sake of clarity. Once that stirring occurs and the individual begins private practice, that is when the Folk-Soul starts to impart influence. (Please note that this is separate from any divine experience laid subject to the individual at this point.) The influence begins by strengthening those urges and patterns the individual into the realms of the other natures. Once the individual merges with the community or grouping expressed by the related Folk-Soul, then a different exchange (a more reciprocal one) ensues.

There are three basic aspects of an individual's being which is exchanged with the Folk-Soul. I will call them Deed, Heritage, and Health. Each one of them have sub-categories in which I will explain.

The first aspect of an individual's being in which I will describe is the exchange of Deed with the Folk-Soul. Deed is primarily a realm of action in which we will generally divide up into three sub-categories in order to explain them coherently. These are morals, ethics, and reputation/honor.

Morals, in this explanation, is that which pertains to, or in concern of the principles of action in regards to right or wrong. More distinctly, as to what is beneficial to one's society and what is detrimental to one's society. This is the essence in which is attempted to be preserved with ethical behavior. It is the ultimate "gut-feeling" which may cause one to feel guilty or shameful when they ignore the morals of our community.

Ethics is a system based on moral principles and rules of conduct recognized in respect to one's class of actions or to a specific group or culture. These are the elements of law and custom within a given society, peoples, or community. Specifics will be further discussed in chapter 11.

In regards to reputation and honor, this subject has already been explained in chapter 8. Please refer to that chapter.

These are the elements in which thought, will, and action mesh into one. That one concept is what I am calling, "Deed". These affect the Folk-Soul in that the good derived from them increases the luck, might, and main of the Folk-Soul. These affects work like those same essences affect the family or personal fylgja/hamingja. The Folk-Soul is similar to the idea of being the kinfylgja or hamingja writ large. Deed is what I can best describe as the energy-supplying core of the Folk-Soul.

The next aspect of an individual's being in which I will describe is the exchange of Heritage with the Folk-Soul. Heritage is further divided to explain clearly into genetic (or literal heritage), cultural, and thought.

Genetic heritage is the blood of the self. One's lineage back into the abyss of time immortal. It dictated the color of your hair, eyes, physical stature, dispositions in physical health, and (as some would argue) some personality traits along with many other things. It has also, as we've read previously, dictated one's beginning *ørlog* and hamingja. Again, as said before, within the sagas there are descriptions, time and time again, depicting how within family bloodlines there were dispositions to both physical and personality characteristics or temperaments, whether it was in a single family or within a whole lineage of a clan. There is no element of superiority here. It is one aspect in many parts of understanding exactly who you are. Remember, bringing any of these concepts to the extreme destroys any *holistic* completeness of understanding.

Cultural heritage is exactly what is described in chapter 1 as a whole. Refer back to that chapter, if needed, for understanding. To vastly summarize, this is ultimately that which a people or group does to express themselves, and their beliefs, in an infinite variety of ways which has become ingrained within themselves.

Thought heritage, is that which this very book is trying to convey and understand in itself. These are the most basic, primal, root thoughts behind everything. Chapters 1 through 11 are all attempts of describing these inter-dependent, self-supporting, portions of the whole of the heathen thought process. At times, they seem to be contradictions, but in reality they are not. They are repeated in different composites and formulations to express the various concepts and ideas. Some may argue this is circular logic, but it isn't. This is holistic logic. A rather imperfect way of describing would be to draw upon at least a superficial understanding of chemistry: That each of these elements in different amounts and combinations produce, slightly to completely, different things, but they are all ultimately related.

The overall concept I am calling, "Heritage", and its components, is what one may refer to as a root within the Folk-Soul just as Deed was the energy-supplier. Again, a reminder, no concept is superior to another! They all work in harmony with each other. It is also an exchange.

The final aspect of an individual's being in which there is exchange with the Folk-Soul that I will describe is Health. Health is made up of the three portions separated into physical, spiritual, and emotional.

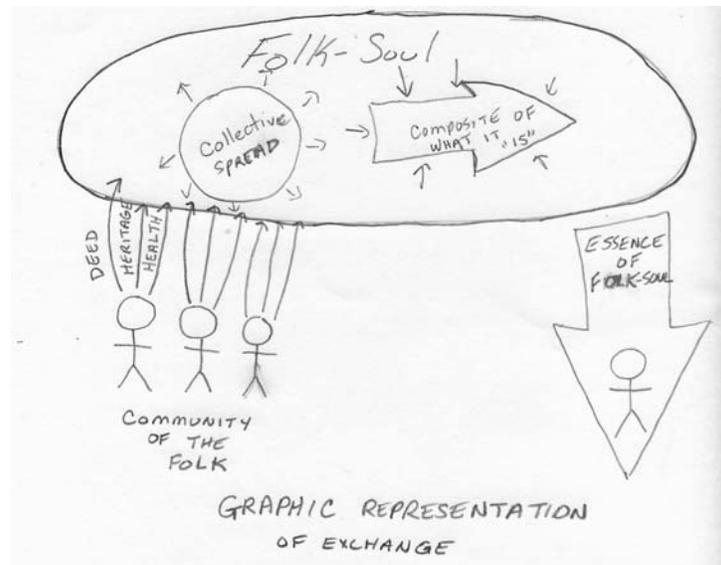
Physical health sustains our bodies. Through physical health, we can lead productive and happy lives. Our physical vessels are our vehicles to experience the wonders of the natural world. Through fresh air, exercise/activity, and nutrition/diet (all three of which, the modern society has thrown to the wind) we can keep within the laws of nature and attain balance in our physical lives. Our bodies have an effect on our mental stability just as our bodily health has an effect on our mental capabilities. These are the most interlocking portions explained. The *Hávamál* speaks more stanzas about moderation than of anything else.

Spiritual health is just as important and has as much effect on the others. Blót, veizla (holy feast), sumble, meditation, prayer, and connection with the powers of our gods have a profound effect on one's physical and emotional health. Studies have already been done on the effect of prayer, etc. on the recovery rates of individuals. Exchange of megin and hamingja with our gods invigorates not only our souls, but the very bodily forms they helped to create for us through Ask and Embla.

Emotional health is another factor within the exchange with the Folk-Soul. Emotional health through self-reflection, community support/supporting one's community, and the expression of one's feelings in moderate, balanced, and healthy ways are also vital to the overall health of the individual and the Folk-Soul itself. Again, this is a factor with either can inhibit or accelerate the positive changes/upkeep of health.

The overall concept I'm referring to as, "Health" is what one may illustrate as the amplifier and a type of reflective vessels of the Folk-Soul.

All of this together is what is exchanged between the larger Folk-Soul and the smaller individual. The individual gives building blocks of their being for the Folk-Soul to repair and build itself upon. A Folk-Soul cannot be destroyed, it can only "be what it is" and exist.



In turn the Folk-Soul, to a greater capacity, because of its inherent nature of being greater than (or to also say the composite of the all of the folk) the individual imparts its influence and strengths upon the individual. This is somewhat similar to the exchange of the hamingja and megin of the gods with ourselves that occurs during ritual and gifting/sacrifice.

A decent metaphor would be if everyone of the folk community gave a drop of water from their essence of being into a magic bucket. Once it is filled the first time, it never goes empty. The only way it empties is if a person who gave that drop left the community. Their magic drop would then disappear. From this magically filled bucket, whenever someone "new" comes back or sincerely joins the folk, the bucket magically dumps its contents into the "new" person. (Remember, our magic bucket will still be full when we look into it right after.) That "new" person now adds their drop (along with the influences he/she picked up from the Folk-Soul dumping onto them) back into the still full Folk-Soul magic bucket.



I hope this has helped with the understanding of the concept of the Folk-Soul. As I said before, it is not an exact concept but a composite of imperfect metaphors and theories. Again, extremes do not work with the cosmic mechanics of how it works. No one part is any more important than the other, because all are needed for it to work.

Chapter 10: Blood, sweat, & soil

“Though it be little, better to live
in a house you hold as your own;
with just two goats, thin thatch for your roof,
you’re better off than begging.

Though it be little, better to live
in a house you hold your own;
a man’s heart breaks if he has to beg
for everything he eats.”

—*Hávamál* (Terry transl.)

To our ancestors, land was one of the prime indicators of wealth and independence. Across all cultures this was so, and it continues today. Respect for the land rolls in from not only its materialistic or cultivatable aspects but also within the greater thought process embodied in the world-accepting view of our ways which are a basic element of religious belief and world-view for all of greater heathenry. And in keeping with the world-view paradigm of our elder forebears, a healthy dose of environmentalism, a spiritual connection to the land, and a sense-of-place are important.

As stewards of the bodily representation of Jörð, we owe it to the earth to try our best in honoring it. Of course, each does their best as they are capable. The job of the city-dweller, in voting for conservations of parks and attempts to beautify their homes with flora and plant-life is important. So is every windowsill herb garden and every roof-top planter. Recycling as best they can is important. The job of the land-owner whether they choose to use their “green thumb” with a garden or landscape, or to just be the protector of the woodlands, swamp, or grass field which they let run course as nature intends is just as important. Again, recycling and conserving.

Although the author is confident that the reader, at this point, is able to make a more detailed and complex connection in consideration of the previous chapters, the more simplified pattern will be expressed for both clarification and a starting point for the reader’s contemplation.

As we stated before, in the world-accepting view, this existence here in Miðgarð is good. It is not a veil of illusion or deceit. It is good. We are the care-takers or stewards of the earth. We want its resources, beauty, and existence to be secure for not only ourselves but also for our ascendants until time immortal. Also, within many aspects of the afterlife, whether the dead become álfar or dísir, landvættir, or reside in a mound or mountain, there is still the need for this world to exist with nature intact.

As we also reviewed in previous chapters, the concept of future as a preset phenomenon is alien to the Germanic world-view. Prophecy does exist, but not as an absolute. So thus, it should be noted that the mythic prophecy of Ragnarök is in no way similar to the world-rejecting, Judeo-Christian/Muslim concept of Rapture or Armageddon. Even in the prophecy of Ragnarök, the earth is reborn anew but, some of the older essences of this existence live onward. In the world-rejecting, orthodox Armageddon mythology, this existence is completely destroyed and not renewed. It will happen irregardless. Afterwards, all is remerged with their godhead. All ego, or individuality, is destroyed or dissipated. The logical thought-pattern would ensue that there is no need for conservation, because first, since the world is bad, that one should maximize all resources to give oneself as much comfort as possible. Secondly, the conservation of resources for ascendants is futile in that even if those resources are not used up, they will be destroyed with everything else anyway. This concept and its precursors are alien to our beliefs.

Having brought this forward, we are also led to the idea that we are part of this existence. Mankind is another part of the ecosystem in which the gods have created. There is also the elder belief that there is a connection to the land on a spiritual basis. Within the *Poetic Edda*, the *Sigdrifamál* tells us that “the earth heals”. It is in this that we must realize that it heals both the mind, and the body.

For the mind, our mother Jörð gives us serenity, peacefulness, and relaxation. Several studies have been done concerning the stress-relief properties of open nature upon the human psyche. They all come to the conclusion that the benefits are extensive. Just try to sit in the grass on a nice summer day in a field or forest and not feel good. Just try not to smile. You’ll have a difficult time.

Our bodies and general physical health is affected by our connection to the earth and nature. The earth provides not only the fresh air and clean water (in the places where mankind does not interfere) but also from the very earth grows our forms of sustenance whether directly through the vegetables and fruits we eat or if processed into the meat and products of the animals we consume. Whole, organic, and nutritionally dense foods are the healthiest because they follow closer to the natural order and for what our bodies were built for. There have been interesting studies done on the nutritional value of foods today as compared to as recent as 1975 (before the excessive wide-spread use of chemical fertilizers, etc.) which show that the methods of chemical use in farming have significantly altered their nutritional density (USDA...*Mother Earth News*, June/July 2004). Proper nutrition is a major health issue, especially in the United States. An excellent book (although the author disagrees with the writers' vegetarian and pacifist views) is *The Good Life* by Scott and Helen Nearing. There is much to learn from simple living. Please note the author says SIMPLE living and not EASY living, the latter being non-existent.

"What does this have to do with Heathenism or Ásatrú?" the gentle reader may ask. The main point is our connection, or the fact that we too are a part of nature. Throughout our mythology, there is an organic element. From the theology of the wells and the tree to the very symbolic creation of mankind, there is an organic symbolism to the matrix of our metaphysical and spiritual beings. Yggdrasil itself is nourished by the clear waters of the wells and white mud (even the cosmic supporter of the worlds is healed by the "earth"). Mankind has always both poetically and symbolically been aligned with trees. Trees are part of nature. Like trees we were made from something organic and like trees, we draw nourishment from the earth and sky. I'm sure the reader can also think of many metaphysical, mythological, spiritual, and symbolic examples taken from our lore to further support this with only a little more thought and contemplation.

Heathens owning land is important. The first reason is purely from an economical standpoint. Land almost never depreciates in value for any long period of time. It is an indicator of true wealth. True wealth in that one can use the land to its full advantage by tapping into the nurturing powers of the earth. Through small-scale farming, or even just one's own personal vegetable gardening, the owner can benefit themselves and also help to become unattached themselves from the rolling monster or unhealthy, unethical corporate productions to some degree. In the least, it helps to foster self-motivation, an outlet for exercise, and a sense of pride in self-production. A second reason is the sense of well-being and accomplishment retained from obtaining such land. The decrease of stress through use for relaxation has already been mentioned.

There are several magazines like *Mother Earth News* and *Countryside & Small Stock Journal* which can help inform many people on various levels self-sufficient living. Other good resources are *Five Acres and Independence* by M.G. Kains, *Backyard Livestock* by Steven Thomas & George P. Looby, DVM, *Successful Small-Scale Farming* by Karl Schwenke, and *The Vegetable Gardener's Bible* by Edward C. Smith. Resources in which also any city-dweller can benefit from include works as *Superbia!* by Dan Chiras & Dave Wann, *Better Basics for the Home* by Annie Berthold-Bond, *The Eco-Economy* by Lester R. Brown, and *Plan B* also by Lester R. Brown.

The ownership of land also encourages a sense of place. Only when roots are laid within one's community can someone continue to grow after a certain period. A majority of the worship of our gods was done within the context and place of outside in nature. The creation of sacred groves, hofs, and/or even a simple vé or outdoor altar adds a spiritual aspect, helping to bring the power of the ginn-holy innangarðs to the home. Of course, this also encourages the collection of holiness, luck, and might in a given area. This benefits all of us within the direct community and the greater community. By pouring into the soil one's blood (spirit and soul) and sweat (hard work), the land becomes more personally sacred.

There is much to be said about the concept of community or tribal acquisition of land. Whether this is in the aspect of intentional communities or the gaining of facilities for religious use, it will require an astronomical amount of dedication, hard work, personal sacrifices, and finances by the whole of a regional heathen community to make them a workable reality. As a community we need to ask ourselves, "Are we dedicated enough to completely uproot our lives for something even greater?"

There are several projects being developed by various heathen groups, both national-level and individual projects, for the acquisition of land for community religious use. All of the known hofs by the author are technically privately owned. There is currently a project of the Ásatrú Alliance to build a hof on acquired land, but that is still in the fund-raising stage. Also there was a similar project being administered by the Ásatrú Free Assembly, but no further news has occurred concerning its development in quite some time in the year 2004.

There are no known projects in the area of intentional communities that have gone past the paper or daydream consideration stages within the heathen community that the author is aware of. There have been some successful Eco-villages and Intentional Communities of a non-heathen type. The author does know of one Wiccan group who has created their own intentional community successfully to this day. But he is unaware of any others. One book which may provide persons with this dream a resource is *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities* by Diana Leafe Christian. It is a viable project that may be simplified in ways such as groupings of heathens attempting to move into a similar area or district of a state in order to make mutual visitations or community/tribal living an easier prospect.

These aspects are where we, the heathen community, need to decide if we are willing or ready to put our blood and sweat into the soils we take root in.

Chapter 11: Leadership & Organization

Leadership within a community can be either the backbone of growth or the tsunami of destruction for any community. Unfortunately, once again, I must comment that the modern world has shown us fewer instances of true leadership than in any other time period in history. We are all too often given some sort of propaganda driven, Machiavellian type of politician as the only example of leadership.

In this chapter, we will discuss leadership, types and forms of leadership, and organization. Once again, I must caution the reader that none of these concepts should be taken into an extreme and that they should also be referenced and cross-referenced with the concepts and mechanics expressed within the previous chapters. Remember again, all is connected and weaved into an organic, holistic whole.

Leadership, according to *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* is defined as: 1. the position or function of a leader. 2. the ability to lead. 3. an act or instance of leading; guidance; direction.

This, of course, is a very dry, bland, and lifeless description of leadership as is to be expected in the modern era. True leadership is more than just a main facilitator or the person who knows what their doing. It is that, but much, much more. A leader exhibits qualities that border on an almost semi-divine, metaphysical level. A person of true leadership quality does not just give instructions, they radiate leadership. They are an example, or a representation, of a manifestation of the spiritual embodiment of the heathen community as a whole. In the book, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, this radiance is referred to, by the Italian philosopher Julius Evola, as a type of glory or innate victory essence. He wrote;

“In the world of Tradition the most important foundation of the authority and of the rightness of kings and chiefs, and the reason why they were obeyed, feared, and venerated, was essentially their transcendent and non-human quality.”

And also;

“Victory is explained in two aspects which were proposed to be complimentary, one in a mystical reality and another in the material.”

Although the author cannot condone or encourage the complete philosophical beliefs and politics of Evola, he does capture an important element in the concepts of leadership and kingship in his writings.

Basically, in the world there are two main types of leaders. There are the natural leaders and the elected leaders. These are further divided into the reluctant leader, the sincere leader, and the self-serving leader.

The natural leaders generally consist of the reluctant and the sincere types of leaders. These folks only want to do what is right and seek to only help to guide the masses into an evolution of themselves. The elected leaders generally consist of the reluctant and the self-serving types of leaders. The reluctant leader is the most venerated in the modern day as they are generally believed to be less corruptible since they do not desire to be in the position but rather do so out of a Kantian, or internal, sense of duty. To say the least, it is difficult for a community or people to decide upon their leadership and how to place their trust in it. Unfortunately, this is something our community really needs to learn to begin to understand and trust again. Although it has been a strength in the past, it will be a hindrance in the future growth of the forms of heathenry.

There are several types of leadership models in existence today in the heathen communities. The two major historically-based models are what we will call the Sacral Leadership and the Representative models. Although many groups sometimes express a particular blending of one with the addition of other recent organizational models at times, the author will explain the purer forms giving the precursor for the reader to contemplate deeply upon traditional thinking and grasping all of the concepts in a non-extremism form before creating an opinion on each. The order in which these will be explained are in their mass historic appearance.

Sacral Leadership is the oldest, traditional forms of leadership. Also called Sacral Kingship, one of the backbones of this thought-pattern would be the belief that the gods have had a hand in the start of the royal/noble, or soon to be ruling, bloodlines. There are two basic ways in which the gods do, or did, this. They were either by directly taking part in the genetic makeup of the future leader or king by way of lineage (i.e. mating with a mortal woman, or bearing the child of a mortal man), or by imparting the individual with an amount of what could be called god-megin in the form of a special gift (i.e. the granting of a sword, or other relic through divine gift.). Both ways have been heavily illustrated in literary and mythic sources.

Another supporting base is the belief that a good dose of megin, hamingja, and wisdom can be inherited in family or clannic bloodlines. This is supported by the extensive use of the telling of a main character's family history before the saga truly begins, which is a basic-most element of saga writing/telling.

The function of the sacral leadership was not just as a glorified organizer, facilitator, or representative who has a god in their bloodlines, but also this person was the holder of the luck of the people or tribe. They were likened to what one may refer to today as a great receiver of god-luck, who could easily transmit it to the tribe. As one anonymous heathen once said to the author, "You've seen them before... they're those people who just seem to have a little more luck and Ása-juju than the rest of us folks. And at that, they seem to kind of amplify it." The other function the Sacred Leader employed, being a good receiver/transmitter component, was as a type of high priest of the tribe or people, usually leading the largest communal rituals in the lands.

The now commonly heard phrase, thanks to the Lord of the Rings trilogy illustrating it, the "once and future king" is not to be confused with the literal man himself, but as a metaphysical lineage of selection and the institution itself.

One must remember that the concept of the Sacral Kingship is much different than that of the "Divine Right of Kings" as reported by the Christians (which was dictated by Jehova's pope on earth). A Sacral King or Leader was generally chosen by the masses of the tribe or nation from a selected grouping of various noble houses or families within their community of which the people believed these non-human, transcendent, metaphysical forces dwelled strongly within. Just as a Sacral Leader could be chosen, they could be vanquished or disposed of under a variety of circumstances. Again, as Evola wrote in the aforementioned book;

"Glory or victory in reference to kingship was not reduced to mere symbolism, but a metaphysical reality. A non-human operating force which the leader or king does not necessarily possess in and by himself. It is a supernatural might that can be granted by divine entities which allows the king to partake of a limited amount of immortal luck that gives him witness through victory."

There are several historical references to the concept of the Sacral Kingship/Leadership. In Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, there are many. As a matter of fact, being a history of the kingships of Sweden and primarily Norway, it is over-run with it until the induction or conversion of the royal families into Christianity. Once that occurs, we see the steady decline from the concept of the Sacral Kingship (along with its powers, weaknesses, and even-handedness) into the rise of the "Divine Right of Kings" concept. One can easily see that there were checks and balances to the power of the royalty during the times of the heathen kings. It was still residual within the first successions of the first Christian kings also.

In heathen times, the institution of Sacral Leadership/Kingship was essentially weak by the standards of today. The primary "powers" were that of the stand-by military and religious leadership which warranted protection both in physical and metaphysical ways. It was also a means of wealth distribution. Most actual decisions, customs, and laws were set by the Thing led by the Lawspeaker (who was elected by the people) and the assembly itself which was controlled by the people themselves who consisted of the freemen and land owners.

This can be seen in the near-miss conflict between King Hákon the Good and the people of the Trondheim District (*Heimskringla* ch 15). King Hákon tries to declare Christianity for the people. Ásbjorn of Methalhús in Gaular Dale, acting as lawspeaker, answers the king for the people, saying essentially, "No, and if you try to force us, we'll kill you and elect another king." Also another conflict in *Ólafs saga Helga* (ch 80), almost occurs when King Ólaf of Norway and King Ólaf of Sweden are deciding whether or not to make peace. Thorgny, acting as representative of the farmers, basically tells the Swedish king (to paraphrase), "We decided that you're going to make peace with King Ólaf the Stout and give him your daughter to marry. Quit acting so arrogant, especially towards the people, or we're going to kill you and toss you in a well like we've already done to five other kings in the past. Decide now." Obviously, in Sweden, kings hostile to their people were dealt with harshly. The peace was settled.

This leads us to the concept of what happens when a king's luck or even-handedness fades in Sacral Leadership. On the Scandinavian Peninsula they were either disposed of or sacrificed, depending upon the severity, and a new king was elected by the noblemen and freemen.

Again, *Heimskringla* gives multiple accounts of the sacrifice of the king due to either bad harvests, loss of luck, or both. Just two of many examples are of the sacrifice of King Dómaldi in chapter 15 of *Ynglinga saga*, for better seasons after the sacrifices of oxen one year and people (presumed criminals) in the next failed to help improve the harvests. A noted Swedish artist, Carl Larsson, painted a magnificent

piece called, “*Midvinterblot*” which depicts the sacrifice of King Dómaldi to improve the peoples’ luck. In chapter 43, in *Ynglinga saga*, we are told of the sacrifice of King Ólaf Ingjaldsson (also called Ólaf Woodcutter) when crops failed miserably. Disposing of a king because of displeasurable rule was also an occurrence. A noted example of this occurred in 1080 when the Christian, King Inge the Elder refused to perform heathen rites in Uppsala. They disposed of him and placed his still heathen half-brother, Blot-Svein as king. Unfortunately, after fleeing to Västergötland, Inge masses a foreign army with the help of some Christian kings and overthrows Blot-Sven a year later.

Unfortunately, as the concept of Sacral Kingship faded and was displaced with the Christian concept of “Divine Right of Kings”, because of the conversions of the royal and noble families. Soon the people were forced by military tactics, economics, and trickery to convert to Christianity.

In modern day, the Þeódish have championed this method of organization.. A selected few Ásatrú groups pattern after it, although there seems to be a very immensely slow increase in the Sacral Leadership/Kingship model of organization among them.

What we will call the Representative model is based largely upon the traditional model of government created by the inhabitants of the country of Iceland during the Viking Age. One excellent resource for this model is expressed in the book, *Viking Age Iceland* by Jesse Byock.

The political arraignments of Iceland is generally considered to be a “Free State” variety. Although their system did have some proto-democratic tendencies, it certainly was not a democracy. Even though there was some proto-republic tendencies, it was certainly not a republic form of government either. The governmental functions were primarily non-centralized. It contained elements of what is called a headless (or stateless) society while still adhering to some elements of statehood, like a formal national legislative (the Lögretta) and a judicial system which spanned the entire country.

There were distinct social classes between the landowners and the landless, as well as distinct differences between freemen and slaves. Primarily there was an emphasis on landowners’ rights, then came the “free farmers”, and finally protection to the slaves. Due to the lack of kings or distinct warlords, social stratification was restrained but similarly because of the lack of distinct executive powers climbing from one class to the next was a difficult and extremely slow process.

The positions under the Icelandic Thing Representative model were chiefly the Allsherjargóði, Lawspeaker, and the Góðarð (Góði, singular) who were followed by the Thingmen.

The Allsherjargóði was mainly a ceremonial position of honor granted to descendents of the first heathen-priest settlers. It holds no power with the exception of prestige and the duty of performing the opening ritual ceremony, of which no record of how it was done exists.

The Lawspeaker was a 3 year termed, elected official who’s job was to recite 1/3 of the laws before the assembly each year after the Allsherjargóði’s opening ritual. The Lawspeaker’s power was to remind the assembly of the laws and to be a deciding vote in the case of a tie.

The Góðarð, or Góði, position also had little official or executive power. Although slightly like a representative, it was not based upon a geographical, or territorial location. To compare in modern terms, the Góði was much like a leader of a special interest group. The strength of the Góði lay in the number of followers, or Thingmen, he held as supporters of his will and his wealth. The main wielded power was the fact that they could name judges in local, legal disputes and only the Góðarð could vote at the Althing, or National Assembly. There was also a law limiting the number of Góðarð offices to 39 (although more than one person could share one Góðarð office, causing there to be more than 39 persons with the title of “Góði”). A Góðarð position could be bought and sold at will, or even inherited.

The Thingmen were the main supporters of the Góðarð. They basically supplied money and muscle to back up the individual Góði’s position. Iceland was divided into four sections. Within each individual section, every freeman had to pick a goði to support who resided within their district (with some few exceptions) in the spring. Loyalty was based (unofficially) mainly upon kinship bonds, what the Góði had done for them in local affairs, what arbitration or advocacy was done, and simple monetary payment. Although the Góði-Thingman relationship bond was described by law, what each owed the other was shortly defined and consisted of very little in actuality. It resulted in mostly a political realm of pressure and public opinion. Any form of required action was not defined at all.

Overall, the main concern and form of income from the Góðarðship was in the form of arbitration and advocacy. These services were usually done for a fee, or sometimes not if it was in the Góði’s best interest whereby they gained prestige or averted unneeded trouble in their district. The main function was to settle local legal disputes so that they would not cause and large-scale feuds or civil war. This was for a more practical reason than usually thought of. Open “wars” or “feuds” would cause the need for supports

and would be overly costly for inhabitants who had not geographical natural resources that could acquire them wealth (i.e. fighting was too expensive).

In modern times, this Representative model is utilized by most Ásatrú groups and organizations, but with some modifications. The emphasis of one titled as Góði is in a form of religious priesthood, where in Iceland originally, it was a third, or minor, function only upheld by relatively few of the Góðarð. Or sometimes it is used to mean merely “Representative” or “Coordinator” of a group. One organization which emphasizes the Góðarð as a priesthood is *The Troth*.

There are two cases in which the model is being used in a relatively more historic form. These are the organizations known as the *Ásatrú Alliance* and the *Vinland Lögrétta*, of which there are connections and affiliations unofficially between the two, to the author’s knowledge. The usage of arbitration and advocacy within these organizations are strictly within the realms of the member groups.

Chapter 12: Law, & Custom

The concepts of law, and custom become paramount in working to build a community in a cohesive and stable manner.

In modern times, law has become a non-sacred monstrosity consisting of a jungle of selective language and formulas in which it is impossible for a common person to even comprehend, let alone follow “to the letter”. More often than not, they are created to “protect the people from themselves” rather than set a common ground of belief and custom. Yet custom, has not been altered to some strung-out diluted form. It has just plainly been wiped out at all costs, whenever possible to be replaced with some form of sneaky consumerism. But all is not lost.

In this chapter we will take a short, condensed look at the concept of law in Germanic thought, propose a set of heathen laws, discuss the concept of custom, and display a set of possible tribal (and/or kindred, fellowship, group, etc.) customs.

In the elder Germanic world-view, law (Old Norse, lög) was considered conjoined and twinned with the society or tribe it held containment with as an innangarð. Each was the same as the other in a sense. In a metaphysical sense, neither the chicken nor the egg came first. They are forever conjoined. Tribal, or group, law would be considered the orlög of the society it represents. It is layered, much like the modern concept of “common law” today, but kept much more simple and less watered down. Instead of the dictation of moral (and extremely abstract) implication like the modern goals of statute law, the Germanic concepts of law set the *acceptable parameters* for behavior, deed, and action within the context of guardianship of a tribe’s collective hamingja, megin, orlög, and/or reputation.

Many tribal, Germanic laws would seem very commonsense or obvious to most people. This is because these laws are for the most part, self-regulating. The society itself would not knowingly let these actions happen without intervention. They are the types of laws that;

- A.) Are easily understood.
- B.) Are not so numerous that an average person could not memorize them all.
- C.) No cognitive person would want to suffer the repercussions or “skuld” of those laws not being abided by.
- D.) They preserve the luck, cohesiveness, and strength of the group, or tribe.

Depending upon the severity of the laws broken would lead the tribe to dictate the repercussions of that breaking. Generally, it would involve one or more of three possible outcomes consisting of a capital punishment; a declaration of the guilty party(-ies) being “out of law” (Old Icelandic, yr lögum) and suffering the penalty of outlawry (Old Norse, útlagr); and/or a demand for the payment (monetary or otherwise) of wergild to counter-balance (or re-balance) the effect of the action or deed.

Any other situations of injustice, fairness, and or retribution for any misdeeds would be directed to arbitration and settlement by the tribe itself on a case by case basis of personal loss (of material or possible non-material).

The following are a proposed basis and backbone for law among our folk, for law gives a context of the folk. These are extremely basic and follow an elder feel. Although these are contrived for among our own, expansion is always possible.

The Common Heathen Law

1. No heathen will set harmful violence against another, save for self-defense and mutually agreed upon ritual combat.
2. No heathen will consciously and knowingly harm or damage the person or property of another.
3. No heathen will commit unconsensual, intimate acts upon another.
4. No heathen will take the property of another without consent, with force, with trickery, or in secret.

5. No heathen will consciously and knowingly cause unjust harm or ill to the reputation of another.

6. Heathens are responsible for their own actions, the actions of their tribe/group, and the actions of their kith and kin.

As said before, these are very basic and commonsense laws. They are simple and obvious, as they should be. They are not too numerous and they are easy for a single person to memorize. All other things would fall under tribal/group arbitration and tribal/group custom. It is also easy to see that they were created to help benefit a community, group, or tribe.

Another benefit is that the proposed **Common Heathen Law** are not arbitrary. A person will be judged by their peers and in accordance to their reputation. Every case needs to be individually made and judged accordingly.

As long as such things are done with *Right Action* (similar to the Peódish concept of *Right Good Will*), results of such deeds which run counter to the **Common Heathen Law** will be just and have acceptable consequences to the hamingja, megin, and reputation of all involved.

The first thing that should be said about custom within Germanic thought is that it was highly connected with both law and religion to a point of which it is almost regarded as all one and the same. This is especially the case in the connection with religion and custom (Icelandic, *siðr*). But there are some specifics concerned in a general sense. For example, serious offenses were law and had serious physical world consequences. While some other offenses, like failing to celebrate a major *hátið* (holiday), would result in little (like a shunning, or avoidance by your community for fear of ill hamingja) or no punishment at all in the physical world. But do not make the mistake of thinking the same applies to the metaphysical world, for that may not be the case, as consciously committing a taboo or negating custom usually ends up hurting one's luck and megin.

One of the best explanations of these similarities and differences comes from the book, *We Are Our Deeds*, by Eric Wóðening. This explained how in modern sociology there are differences described as mores and folkways. Mores being the most important norms of the society (laws) and folkways as being the lesser important norms (customs). He further wrote;

“From an elder heathen point of view, both *mores* and *folkways* would be *custom*, but only *mores* could be law.”

These concepts of customs are generally the etiquette of both religious ritual and social interaction. The understanding and development of these can be derived from Eddic and cultural study, theological and sociological meditation, symbolic representations of an ideal, and just plain hospitality towards one another.

In other articles and writings I have given some ideas on some cultural customs which could be adopted by a wide range of heathendom. Here are some of those ideas in no particular order. Academic and theological justifications for many of these are being drafted by the author for later articles and works.

Some Possible Heathen Customs:

1. Every heathen carries a knife or dagger as a symbol of our folks' inner strength.
2. Upon the birth of children and/or ownership of land, a heathen male grows a beard and/or mustache.
3. Every heathen carries a symbol of our heathen belief, to show solidarity and unity.
4. When heathen guests are seated for feast, they are given a hot washcloth to wash their hands by their heathen hosts as a sign of hospitality.
5. An informal toast is given to our gods or ancestors at every meal in gratitude.
6. During the Greater *Hátiðir* (Yule and *Miðsummer*) each heathen wears an arm-ring from the 1st day of celebration until the last as a dedication to loyalty and honor.
7. Spiritual drink is passed through the hands of a woman, for they are holy to us and so their blessings are sacred.
8. Regardless of *hátiðir* (holiday), an offering is always left out for the house spirits and the ancestors.
9. A heathen always pauses a moment before crossing or entering a holy site (*vé*, *hóf*, etc.), out of respect for the sacred, holy gods and ancestors.

The development and following of customs helps to unify a movement, peoples, or religion in subtle, but powerful ways. Such movements, undertakings, and the like give a conscious element for quick contemplation and remembrance to the holiness that is life on Miðgarð.

Through basic laws and customs, we can further help ourselves to grow and prosper as a movement and folk. Conscious effort is one of the most recognized elements of religious consciousness and spiritual evolution.

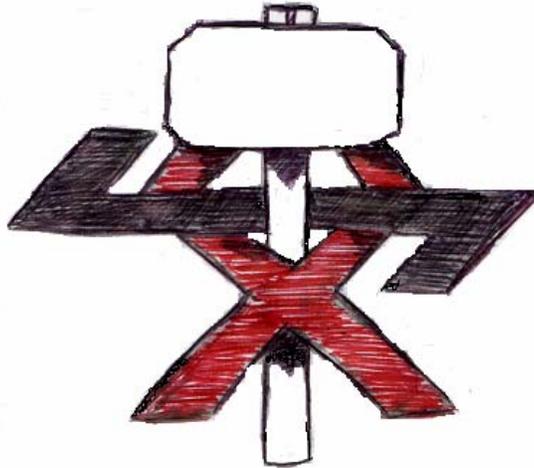
Conclusion.

Once again, I hope this small booklet will help some of my fellow heathens to understand the concepts within our theological beliefs. But, more importantly, is to know and understand them as a continuous, cycle of concepts which are so intertwined that one cannot be separated from the others without grave damage or ignoring important parts of the collective thought and world-view.

Also again, as in *Ways of the Ásatrú*, I will say, “Go out, do, and be!” The community is an inexhaustible resource of knowledge, pride, and strength for all of us. Only through community can one truly understand the principles within this booklet. Only through being an active part of the community can you spiritually grow. Collecting accredited coursework from this organization or that one is no where near enough. **Even just reading this booklet isn’t enough.** Only through the community can you tap into that collective power, that folk-soul, in which you can gain more strength and knowledge through the folk itself.

Support Ásatrú and Heathenry!

With Honor,
—Mike Smith



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Mike Smith has been a member of the Ásatrú and heathen community since 1989. He was the founder of Athelingúlf Fellowship which evolved into the Úlfar aff Jera Þjóð, of which he serves as Jarl. Many of Mike's articles have been found consistently in Ásatrú publications such as *Marklander*, *Lina*, *Vor Trú*, *Idunna*, *Modern Ásatrú*, and *The Runestone*. He has been a guest speaker/lecturer at many large Ásatrú and pan-pagan events. In 2002, he was a special guest speaker on Norse Mythology at Leicester High School in Massachusetts. In 2003, he released a free basic, beginner book on Ásatrú called, *Ways of the Ásatrú: Beliefs of the Modern, Northern Heathens*. Then in 2004 he released the booklet, *Think Again! Thinking Like A Heathen in the Modern Era*. In 2005, he released, *Amma: Wisdom from the Sagas*.

Currently, the avid mead-brewer, martial artist, husband, and father of two, is in the process of writing numerous books on Heathenism, Runes, and he is also studying German longsword swordplay.

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