



*Longship carved on an 8th century picture-stone from Gotland.*

THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the pagan Norse religion and is dedicated to the revival of that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the revival of the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

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Please make checks payable to "Viking Brotherhood" as we are still involved in the paperwork which will officially change our name to Ásatrú Free Assembly.

## NORSE NOTES

The weeks to come will be busy ones for us who follow the deities of the North! Several important dates will be upon us, in rapid sequence. We urge all our readers to celebrate these holy days to the fullest degree possible.

October 8 will be declared Erik the Red Day in a proclamation to be read at our usual Blót on that date. Appropriate news releases will be issued so as to obtain maximum awareness of this event. We're not trying to detract from Leif Erikson's accomplishment in any way, but we feel that his father deserves some recognition, too. After all, without the Greenland colony, founded by Erik, the Vinland expedition would have been most unlikely. Furthermore, Erik was a devout pagan who clung to his religion despite intense pressure from his converted wife, who refused to live with him because of his tenacity in supporting the old gods. Drink a toast to Erik on this date.

October 15 is the vetrasdag, or the first day of winter by Norse reckoning. All followers of Ásatrú should observe this major festival, and we have included a short article in this issue which is designed to help you do just that. Anyone close enough to us in Turlock can contact us about attending our festival if they wish to do so, or groups are encouraged to have their own celebration.

November 11 is Heroes' Day, or the Feast of the Einherjar. This day is dedicated to those heroes of our religion and culture who fell in battle, and more generally to the departed of our individual clans. A period of reflection and meditation is in order on this day as we consider our debt to these brave ones who have gone before us, and the continuation of the clan.

We will have the next issue out before Júl, to help you celebrate that very important festival.

In other news, a series of experiments concerning the nature of the runes has been launched here which may have great ramifications. However, several months will be required before any substantial and verifiable results will be available.

I've deliberately avoided asking for money in The Runestone, but the fact remains that we need contributions. One way or another we will get this periodical out, even if I have to finance it totally out of my pocket. To grow, though, we need help. Advertisements cost money. Printing leaflets or other literature costs money. Incorporating under the laws of California costs money. Given the resources we can reach people, and many will respond. If you like what we're doing, please support us financially. Every cent that comes our way will be well used!

Editor's Note: This article will appear soon in a handbook of Norse rituals. Because of the upcoming festival, though, we have printed it early, hoping that our readers will take advantage of the opportunity thus offered.

## WINTER NIGHTS

The festival of Winter Nights was one of the greatest seasonal festivals of Ásatrú in ancient times. It was conducted during the first days of winter, which began on Vetrasdag, the Saturday in the week of October 11-17th. It was a holiday in thanksgiving for the harvest, and thus is concerned with the deities of fertility. Winter Nights honors the god Frey and those female supernatural beings known collectively as the disir. Of Frey more has been said elsewhere. The disir were female spirits having responsibility over the forces of fertility and natural increase, and were headed by the great dis, the love goddess Freya herself. They were also considered to be the guardian spirits attached to a particular family or clan. Although the disir were generally benevolent spirits whose visits brought good luck to a household and blessings on new-born children, it still paid to court their friendship.

Celebration of Winter Nights was more a private clan observation than a public festival, except in Sweden and parts of Norway, where both aspects were celebrated.

Since the first day of winter in the Norse calendar always falls on Saturday, the observance of Winter Nights on the appropriate days is not difficult. The festivities should start on Friday evening with preparatory celebrations, as this lengthens the time which can be given to this festival--and because Friday is named after Freya, the great dis. Winter Night activities should continue through Saturday and Sunday, and, if it can be arranged, through Monday as well.

Winter Nights, like the other seasonal events in the Norse calendar, is obviously not a quickle "sacrifice-feast-go home" sort of affair which can be done without much planning. The general scheme for a Winter Nights festival should include a Freya-Blót (probably on Friday evening), a Disa-Blót (probably on Saturday evening), and a Frey-Blót (probably on Sunday evening, or earlier in the day if it will facilitate travel arrangements for those in attendance). A blót, complete with the feasting which follows the sacrifice, will easily occupy the evenings--so what do we do during the daytime? There will be a lot of late risers after a long night of revelry, but by noon most people will be looking for something to do. There will be games to play and competition of various kinds, both of a modern variety such as baseball, football, and frisbee as well as several straight out of the Viking Age. These latter are included as an appendix to this series of essays, and should provide many hours of enjoyment. People who are experienced in the use of sword or axe and shield can unlimber those arts for demonstrations or holmgangar (hopefully, good natured ones!) Of course, participation in any of this is purely voluntary; many people would probably prefer to sit around and talk or read and they should be allowed to do so.

A weekend of heavy participation of this sort will require considerable logistical planning, especially in an urban environment where enough open area to hold games and other festivities will take some real searching. In a pinch, parks or camping grounds can be rented. An ideal situation would be for the entire event to occur on the same site, with people either camping there for the weekend or staying in an adjacent building.

The relevant blóts needed for Winter Nights celebrations can be found elsewhere in this series of rituals.

Editor's Note: While we are not in complete agreement with Dr. Seligman's article, and particularly his resignation to the cultural unification of mankind, we think it is certainly worth printing. This article was originally printed for an organization called T.N.U.L., which perhaps stands for The Northern Unity League, now defunct.

#### WHY WE SHOULD GO BACK TO OUR OLD GODS

by Dr. Ernest Seligman

For the racial nationalist the question of one's religious affiliation must inevitably arise. Not because of any inherent religiousity or anti-religiousity in the Cultural Nationalist movement but rather because of the position of central importance which religious training precepts play in shaping of an individual and of a society.

Many peoples have, in a futile attempt at premature universalization of loyalty accepted various monotheistic religions claiming a "true" nature and the loyalty of all men, not only the loyalty of those of the culture which spawned the religion.

While we cannot help but applaud desires for human unification and while we understand that the unification of all men (both politically and culturally) shall certainly eventually take place, we deplore none the less the spread of mediterranean monotheism into areas of non-mediterranean culture.

We deplore the spread not due to a hatred of monotheism but rather out of hatred of the demon of imperialism at its most dangerous and difficult to stop level, the level of cultural imperialism.

As has already been said, religion is, and (for some period of time to come at least) will be a powerful and important part of men's lives a part which conditions their response to their cultural brothers in particular and all men in general.

It is important therefore that this facet of mass culture be free of imperialism, for if a man cannot, due to a culturally deviate religious instruction, relate to his cultural brothers, he should certainly not, as a marginal man relate to the culture of the foreign people from whom the religion stems. Take for example the hatred felt by the Arab (originator) to the Turk (adoptive) of the monotheistic Islamic faith. Look at the passionate hatred felt by Judea-Christianized north and eastern Europeans (adopters) toward the people who originated their version of mediterranean monotheism--the Jews.

On top of this development of marginality and destruction thensely of inter-cultural understanding and love, there is the more crucial point of the destructive nature of foreign religions on the cultures which adopt them. A good case to look at is the affect of Christianousness on the Germanic people of northwest Europe. To begin with these ancient Germans worshipped gods developed by their own cultural forefathers. They worshipped gods who meshed in all ways with their culture and who were instinctively understood and appreciated by even the children raised in this northern cultural milieu. While many northern Europeans (especially the nobles) adopted Christianity willingly, the vast majority suffered forces Christianization such as that forced on the Saxons in Germany (20,000 martyred to their old gods in one day by soldiers of the mediterranean worshipping Charlemagne).

After the forced conversions of the Saxons, the Norwegians, the Freisians, Icelanders, to name but a few, the old religion had no choice but to go underground. There over the centuries it was transformed into the avenging anti-Christian weapon of witchcraft. (To see the relationship of the old faith to witchcraft one must simply look at the sign of the hammer--symbol of Germanic heathenism, and the inverted cross--symbol of north European witchcraft. The one is clearly a degenerate form of the other!) Thousands of witches were killed during the Middle Ages and millions upon millions of lives were confused and robbed of their meaning by this confusion. Both the deaths and the confusion were due to the inability of Christianity to mesh into the lives of these north Europeans in the way which the old religion and witchcraft could.

Finally after centuries of clashes and hatred the inability for latin Christianity to become meaningful to the Teutons became apparent. Martin Luther and other Germanic christians reformed Christianity in an attempt to end this cultural confusion. To an extent this attempt worked. The Christian church became Teutonized to the point where it could without becoming less christian and witchcraft consequently faded away.

Today in northern Europe however, the old religion is on the revival. Protestantism itself is no longer Teutonic enough. A new faith is sought after actively by the young of all Germanic lands and christianity's days are numbered.

Was it necessary for this people to go through a thousand years of hell, to prove that a foreign faith cannot fulfill spiritual needs as well as a native faith? Is it necessary for other peoples to undergo the same experience? We feel that instead it is the time for the blacks to return to the thundering shanger, for the American Indian to return to the "great manitor" and for the Teutons to return to "Thunor and Woden and Saxnot" and all the others they renounced under pressure so long ago. Only by a return to what is theirs can these peoples escape at least in the area of religion the cultural imperialism which has oppressed them for greater of lesser periods of time, and in this escape become free and important parts of an international brotherhood of men, accepting one another's differences and glowing in humanity's miraculous diversity.

#### PEACE - AT WHAT PRICE?

A twelve year computer study on the subject of world peace was recently conducted at the Institute of Research on International Problems at the University of Hawaii. Millions of statistics were incorporated into the study, dealing with such diverse matters as trade, U.N. votes, treaties, ideology, religion, various national characteristics, and almost anything else you care to name.

The result was plain, according to Dr. R. J. Rummel, the director of the Institute. "Peace is purchased by making yourself stronger than your adversity... or by dismantling power and submitting to one's enemies." It was demonstrated mathematically that all the widely publicized features of detante--trade, cultural exchanges, and the like, were statistically irrelevant.

Strength or surrender--which will it be? The appeasers among us call for the latter, and pale at the thought of preserving national might. Some will always fail to heed the cry of history, regardless of the source. We who are sons and daughters of Odin will recall the charge of the Valkyrie Brunnhild to the hero Sigurd, and will not be "burned in our houses!"

## SCANDINAVIA'S RUNES

Let your mind's eye picture a scene for you, one of fantasy molded from the basic archetypes of your mind's depths. See it now--preternatural lightning, the discharge of cosmic forces of terrible magnitude, flash about the gaunt figure of the Allfather as he hangs outside of Time and Space, suspended on the World Tree. Nine days he has been there, without food or drink or the familiar surroundings of men and gods. Nine days of pain, nine days of the quest. And now...

Now there appears below him, glowing with a life of their own, the powerful mantic symbols he has sought here, outside the Worlds. They form one after another out of the eternal night, and await him who in turn has awaited them. So he reaches out his hand and bends down his pain-wracked body, focusing his one remaining eye on his prey. Somewhere he summons the horrible shamanic power needed and grasps them, makes them his. A cry escapes his lips, born of triumph and of the ultimate agony of his effort, and Odin falls back into the world of matter, grasping the mysterious runes.

Thus, according to the *Edda*, did Odin win the runes. The origin of these mighty symbols which the early Scandinavians and Germans used in writing and in magic is lost in prehistory, but whether one believes the Eddic account or a more mundane explanation of the runes does not alter their great significance or the interest in them which persists to this day. The runes are a common element in the heritage of the Dane and Swede, Norwegian and Iclander, German and Anglo-Saxon. No other facet of Northern prehistory has stirred greater interest among people of this century, and perhaps no other symbols relate so directly to the collective unconscious of the peoples of Northern Europe wherever they may be living today.

No one knows exactly where the runes were developed, though several theories have been put forward by scholars determined to wrest the secret from the past. One school of thought says that they are derived from the Greek alphabet; another, that they are of Roman origin. Yet another theory, and one which is winning more and more support among runologists, is that the runes were first developed in the Alps of northern Italy by a Germanic tribe known simply and conveniently as the *Alpengermanen*. We know little about these people, other than that they often hired out as mercenaries to the Romans or the Celts. The time hypothesized for the creation of the runic alphabet is placed between 250 and 150 years Before Common Era, and, interestingly enough in the light of the old myths, its creation is considered to be the work of one brilliant individual rather than a gradual evolution of several centuries. Some of the individual symbols are probably adaptations from the Roman, while others are of genuine Germanic origin and bear strong resemblance to symbols found in rock carvings of great antiquity. This collection of symbols was perhaps picked up by the tribe known to history as the *Cimbri* in the second century B.C.E. on their passage through Noricum. At any rate, the runes began their long trek northward to the part of the world where they would eventually win their greatest fame--Scandinavia. Scholars think that the runes traveled so well partly because of a rather unusual (to us) use to which they were put, a use which gives us a clue as to how the Germanic peoples thought of the runes and their significance!

It was not the use of runes as a written script which made them popular and spread their usage, it was their use in the occult science of divination--that is, fortune telling. Whereas the Babylonians studied animal entrails and the youth of

today read Tarot cards, the Germans cast runes to determine the will of the gods and the proper course of action in a given situation. Julius Caesar and Plutarch both mention this procedure, but the best description is from Tacitus, who writes that:

Their method of casting lots is a simple one; they cut a bough from a fruit-bearing tree and divide it into small pieces; these they mark with certain distinguishing signs and scatter at random and without order over a white cloth. Then, after invoking the gods and with eyes lifted up to the heaven, the priest of the community, if the lots are consulted publicly, or if privately, the father of the family, takes up three pieces one at a time and interprets them according to the signs previously marked on them.

We see here that the runes, beyond and above any decorative or narrowly utilitarian uses, were intimately linked to the old pagan religion and to magic in its various forms. From the *Eddas*, we know that the runes were associated with the high god Odin and the heroic suffering by which he won them, and other Eddic verses describe in considerable detail the many uses to which the runes could be put. The very word "rune" reveals the depth of its religious and mystical connotation, for it is related to the modern German word *raunen*, with its overtones of secrecy and whisperings and mystery.

To understand how the runes were used in magic and in charms, in prayers and amulets, we must understand that each runic character stood both for a particular phonetic sound and also for a certain word which began with that sound. The rune *B*, for instance, represented the sound of the modern letter "b" but it also meant the word "berkana", or birch-twig, in the Germanic tongue. This was not a matter of randomly matching words which happened to have a certain initial sound with the corresponding runes, for the words chosen to be represented by runic symbols are all words of profound religious meaning. The birch twigs in our example, for instance, were intimately tied to the concepts of fertility and fecundity. Though space prohibits a study of the meaning of each rune name here, a table listing these names has been included as part of this article to allow the reader to study for himself what must have been the primeval significance of these mystic signs.

It is, of course, the Viking Age with which runes have most commonly been associated in the public mind, and the sagas give us numerous instances of runes used for healing, to bring misfortune to an enemy, to set the dead to rest, or to ease childbirth. The saga of Egill Skallagrimsson relates an episode in which the hero foils an attempt to poison him by scratching certain runes on the suspect horn of mead, dyeing the runes with his blood, and uttering certain charms--the result being that the horn containing the mead burst into fragments and the offending liquid splashed to the floor. But the Viking Age was not only an age for drinking mead, it was also a warrior's age, and the warriors knew well and practiced the art of rune-making. Archaeologists and historians alike are familiar with the Norse custom of gravng runes on a sword blade or on the head of a favorite spear, to grant victory to him who bore it into battle. Probably the most popular rune for this purpose was *↑*, the rune of the old war god Tyr. The ever-original Vikings, however, were not the sort to fall into a rut; one ninth century sword recovered from the river Thames has the entire futhark, or runic alphabet, engraved on its blade. Other runic inscriptions tell the name of the weapon's owner, or the name of the weapon itself. The custom of giving a name to a prized possession, of course, is still with us today, and was not new in the days of the Vikings. A third century spearhead, hundreds of years earlier, bore the runic name "tester", and other examples abound to illustrate this persistent custom of the fighting man of all eras.

But the runes were also put to more ordinary uses. Throughout their long history runes retained their dual character, religious and mundane, but the latter gradually became more and more prominent to the point that runes were frequently used for messages during the adventures of the Viking Age. In the excavation of the Viking town which stands where modern Dublin now rises, archaeologists have unearthed messages in runes that date from the long Norse occupation of the Emerald Isle. Scratched into wooden staves, they speak to us of the drama of daily life in a now-gone era--an admonition to a tardy Viking lingering over a horn of mead to hurry on home, or the brag of a young lover that he had won the favor of a certain maiden.

The most famous runic inscriptions are not those scratched into wood, for wood may rot or be burned or be consumed by an acidic soil, but those marked more permanently in rock. Anyone who has ever tried the laborious process of rune-making in either medium knows why runes are composed of straight lines rather than curves, for the latter would be more difficult to form against the resistance of the material. Is it any wonder that those men who carved the runes boasted of their names and set them down for posterity? Several thousands of runestones have been unearthed (sometimes literally) in Scandinavia, with Sweden leading her sister countries with between two and three thousand stones compared to only three or four hundred each in Denmark and Norway. Some of these inscriptions are of a religious nature but the larger portion are memorial stones set up to honor the memory of one's beloved kin, or that of a comrade fallen in battle on one of the many far-flung battle grounds of the tempestuous Viking Age. These stones trace the life of the period, giving us powerful, yet poignant, insight into the minds of those who inscribed them. We can see the love of a man for his dead wife--"King Gorm erected this memorial in honor of his wife, Thyri, restorer of Denmark"--or a comrade honoring his fallen companions--"Askil raised this stone in memory of Toki Gormsson, his true lord, who fled not at Uppsala. In memory of their comrade, the champions set up this stone, standing firm with runes."

From Istanbul to Greenland, the runes accompanied restless men of Scandinavia as they traded and colonized, raided and explored. To dismiss them as romanticism better left behind in the infancy of mankind, or as an anachronism fit only for scholarly tomes or dusty museum exhibits, is to ignore the reality of the human psyche and the depths of what, for lack of a more precise term, we can only call the soul of a people. Scientific rationalism, in the Victorian sense of the term, has given way to a renewed realization of the reality of the intangible. Carl Jung has shown us the vitality of ancient archetypes that once were dismissed as superstition. The study of the mind of man, of myth and of magic, is still in its infancy, but it has at least achieved respectability. In an age when the peoples of mankind are each rediscovering their ancient roots and revivifying their ancestral traditions, in a day when the I Ching is the subject of scholarly discussion and dissection, the runes are as relevant to us today as they were to our forefathers so long ago. Runology is no simple science, despite the elementary presentation given of it here, but those who wish to comprehend their roots, who wish to come a little closer to the mystery that is below the threshold in each of us, will be rewarded in their study.

RUNES	ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS	RUNE NAME
ƒ	f	cattle
u	u	aurochs
th	th	giant
g	g	god
r	r	riding
k	k	torch
h	h	hail
n	n	need
i	i	ice
a	a	year
s	s	sun
t	t	Tyr
b	b	birch-twigg
m	m	man
l	l	water
R	R	protection

A runic alphabet of the Viking Age, complete with English equivalents of the letters and the names of the runes. The old Germanic forms of the rune names have been retained where this differs from those the runes acquired later in history, so as to better convey their original religious meaning.

## THE LONGINIUS FABRICATION

Some while back a most convincing book appeared, titled The Spear of Destiny. This volume, by one Trevor Ravenscroft, deals at great length with the legendary spear said to have pierced the side of Christ as he hung on the cross and which became a powerful talisman of power in the hands of whoever gained possession of it. It is the contention of Ravenscroft that Adolf Hitler was an adept of the black arts and that he became enamoured of the spirit of the spear, and used it to further his own evil ends. Ravenscroft's hero is a Christian mystic with strong theosophical leanings, named Rudolf Steiner.

Ravenscroft's writing seems sincere enough, but there are reasons to doubt the factual basis for much of the material he presents. Some of these are:

1. The legend states that Longinus, the Roman soldier who owned the spear and with it pierced Christ, was blind and that he regained his sight after the event by miraculous means. What was a blind man doing in the Roman army?
2. There have been so many counterfeit relics floating around Europe since the early Middle Ages, so many fragments of the "True Cross", so many saints' bones, etc., that the chance is slim indeed that the Longinus spear now on display in Vienna, the very spear around which Ravenscroft builds his story, is at all authentic.
3. Most damning of all, the motif which is at the basis of the Longinus story is a transplant from our own Norse religion! It was the blind god Höder who cast the shaft--some accounts say a spear--of mistletoe at the shining god Balder and killed him. Balder came to be identified with Christ during the period when Christianity was first being introduced in Northern Europe. Longinus and Höder have obviously become identified; Brian Branston devotes page 169 in his Lost Gods of England to this matter.

Much of the book cannot be easily dismissed as gullibility, however, for it carries a potent message. A great portion of the book is devoted to promoting the Christian and mystical doctrine, and even more to denouncing any sort of Nietzschean philosophy. The Spear of Destiny, then, serves as one more assault on our beliefs, one more platoon in the army trying to force us out of existence. What is so ironic is that they are using an adaptation of our own myths with which to do their dirty work!

## NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE RUNESTONE

<u>The Prose Edda</u> translated by Jean I. Young	\$3.00 each (paper)
<u>The Elder Edda</u> translated by Taylor & Auden	2.00 each
Text of Odin-Blót	.20 each
Leaflet "What is the Norse Religion?"	.05 (single copies free)
Leaflet "The Ásatrú Free Assembly"	.50 each
Leaflet "Gods & Worlds: Another Look at Reality"	.50 each

## DONAR VERSUS ST. MICHAEL IN GERMANY

While attending the huge wine festival in Bad Dürkheim, Germany, I received an insight into the history of the region in the form of a short information sheet provided us before the beginning of the tour. It is highly relevant to those of the heathen Norse religion. The deity spoken of as Donar is nothing less than the Germanic equivalent of our own god Thor. I quote from the leaflet:

"Nestled in the Rhine River area, it (Bad Dürkheim) celebrates its good fortune each September with a wine festival and Wurstmarkt... As long ago as 2,000 years, Celtic tribes gathered on the same mountain, to pay homage to Donar, their god of strength and bravery. The statue of Donar built on the mountain's top was very impressive and awe-inspiring.

"Around the year 600, Christianity came to the wine street. The Benedictine monks (made) little headway with the heathens. Donar was too much for them. The Benedictine who lived in Speyer decided to build a Christian warrior with as much strength and bravery and cunningness (sic) as Donar. They chose St. Michael in combat with a deadly dragon, one of the most feared monsters of the time. They placed the statue beside that of Donar. The comparison was startling to the heathens. The monks were here to explain the statue and tell them of St. Michael. In the next ten years St. Michael began to win favor over Donar. When the monks felt the time was right, they pulled down the statue of Donar and destroyed all evidence of his existence. In the years that followed, the monks built a simple chapel to house St. Michael and over the years many miracles were attributed to him."

The chapel was destroyed during the Thirty Years' War and was never rebuilt.

We must remember that the Christians are masters at psychological warfare and manipulation, as this instance shows. Our ancestors were sold a bill of goods via deceit and misrepresentation which they would never have accepted otherwise. It is time we stopped this decline and returned our people to their ancestral gods, so that we may once again be free of the alien religious domination under which we are slowly dying.

