

# Renewal

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"Odinism – the spiritual adventure of the new millennium"  
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## Evolution – an Odinist belief

**R**enewal has frequently pointed out that the cosmology and cosmogony of the Old Norse poems dealing with our Odinist beliefs are fully in tune with the latest insights of modern science. Indeed, the overlap is as perfect as it could possibly be between a poetic and a prosaic exposition. We believe, in fact, that if our ancestors had never been forcibly half-converted to the crude Biblical conception of the cosmos, the state of our contemporary scientific knowledge would be several centuries ahead of where it is currently.

The same can be said for the theory of evolution – as it applies to humans.

Christian creationist theory, which prevailed during the period of dual faith, insisted that Yahweh created the first couple, Adam and Eve, ex nihilo; and that once Eve had eaten her apple these first people were every bit as human as we are.

It wasn't until the nineteenth century, which witnessed the towering intellects of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, that this superstition began to be queried.

Today, of course, most of us accept that modern humans have evolved – physically, intellectually and culturally – from earlier and more primitive versions of our species. But few, even among enlightened Odinists or the scientific community, are aware that this was precisely what our ancestors believed before they were led astray by Christian superstition.

The poem *Völuspá* mentions three "powerful and loving" (*ölfgir oc ástgir*) gods who found two primitive beings, Ask and Embla, who were "feeble", "weak" and "fateless". Each god then gave this couple life-enhancing blessings. These were: the breath of spirit; mind and feeling; the warmth of life; and a desirable appearance.

It should be noted that this paradigmatic proto-human pair was placed on the path to human status by an act of pure favour on the part of the "powerful and loving" gods.

(Snorri Sturluson's Christianised prose version of this event states that Ask and Embla were mere lumps of wood before our gods animated them with qualities that could only be bestowed by divine beings. We needn't take this reference to timber too seriously. Old Norse poetical traditions frequently compared humans to trees. For instance, in Egill Skallagrímson's

masterpiece, *Sonatorrek*, the poet describes his son as a warrior by using a phrase that literally means "shield-tree", and his own wife by a phrase that translates as "kin-timber". One of the by-names for Odin is *svinnr sigrunnr*, "wise victory-tree". Snorri himself notes that "... poets have called man 'ash' or 'maple', 'grove' or other masculine tree-names" – and that the same applies to kennings for women. These comparisons would have been as transparent to Snorri's contemporaries as any modern reference to young women as "chicks".)

Western science has long since accepted



*Ask and Embla, according to a 1978 drawing by Giovanni Castelli.*

**Forget the romanticism: they may have been more like *Australopithecus*!**

our ancestral understanding that we humans have evolved from vastly more primitive predecessors. But there are still recalcitrant individuals here and there who simply can't understand how far we have evolved since the first modern humans with whom we could physically interbreed began to walk the earth. These people should read another Old Norse poem, *Rígsþula*.

According to *Rígsþula*, a god who goes by the name of Rígr visits three human-like couples and impregnates in turn each of the three females. His children are, respectively, thralls, farmers, and aristocrats. The thralls are unattractive, swarthy-skinned, dark-haired, dull-eyed. The farmers are ruddy faced with sparkling eyes. The aristocrats are fair-haired and attractive – in appearance and accomplishment everything that you might expect of the descendants of a god.

Some scholars, basically following Georges Dumézil, have insisted that this

myth is intended to account for the tripartite class system that existed in most early Indo-European societies. To some extent their views have merit. But myths can function on many different levels, just as poetic or artistic imagery can, and to restrict the meaning of *Rígsþula* to some sort of apologia for social class is plainly silly. A much more striking way in which *Rígsþula* functions is as a poetic account of human evolution.

We have seen how the gods elevated the primitive Ask and Embla to something approaching human status. Snorri tells us that this happened by the sea-shore. *Rígsþula* starts in the same fashion, with Rígr travelling along the sea-shore until he comes to a "house". The descendants of Ask and Embla have clearly progressed somewhat by this time. At least they can construct shelters for themselves. But the fire is set directly on the floor, suggesting that the floor was little more than rammed earth, and all they can offer their divine visitor is the most coarse and simple food. Given the ugliness of the child who was later born to the woman, she must have been downright hideous – just like some of the species that preceded *Homo sapiens*. Still, that child's own children (with names such as Howler, Stumpy, Swarthy and Stinker) were able to put dung on fields, herd goats and pigs, and grub up peat.

Some time later Rígr again intervenes in human evolution. The emblematic couple that he visits this time are well-dressed, the man whittling some wood and the woman spinning yarn. Rígr impregnates the female, and the boy that is born is a pretty baby with sparkling eyes. He becomes a proper farmer, plowing the land, erecting tall buildings, taming oxen, crafting carts. His children in turn have names like Man, Yeoman, Master, Franklin – and Woman, Wife, Maiden and Lady. By this stage the species is truly human, yet Rígr's tasks are still not complete.

He visits a third couple, known as Father and Mother. They are a loving couple, and well-off, with silver platters, fine clothes, and delightful food. Significantly, Rígr sits drinking and chatting with them all day long. The son that is born of this union is the beautiful blond boy "Jarl", who becomes a horseman, a hunter and a warrior. Rígr returns to visit him, teaches him runes, and acknowledges him as his own son and heir.

(Continued on page 2)

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Now if *Rígsþula* were primarily intended to justify class divisions, it obviously does a very poor job of it. All the children are Rígr's own, and if they are meant to be representative of different classes or castes *coexisting at the same time* each one of them could claim divine origin. As an exercise in politics the poem would therefore be inept at best, and at worst counter-productive to the point of being revolutionary.

On the other hand, as a poetic and religious account of evolution *Rígsþula*, especially taken as a sort of sequel to the gifts of the gods to humanity in *Völuspá*, makes perfect sense.

Ask and Embla can be viewed as a very early form of human ancestor, perhaps somewhat like the sloping-browed *Australopithecus* with his brain volume of about 500 cubic centimetres (by comparison the brain volume of modern humans is about 1400 cc).

Their descendants progressed culturally as far as they could, but were still living at a very primitive level, and by modern standards they were hideous to behold. They needed a physical evolutionary boost, and Rígr provided it.

This next stage in the human species as depicted in the poem represents a level of development somewhere between that of the Acheulian Period, about three hundred thousand years ago, and early historical times.

The third visit by Rígr ushers in a thoroughly modern type of person, participating in aristocratic sports of the Viking period like swimming for pleasure, and playing "tables".

Unfortunately, *Rígsþula* is incomplete. The ending is missing. If we had the lost lines today they would perhaps shed more light on the moral and spiritual aspects of the poem – such as the symbolism of the doors of the three dwellings, the first of which is shut, the second half-shut and the third open.

We can speculate on these and other issues, but the purpose of the present article is to show that our heathen ancestors had at least a general and workable concept of human evolution.

Of course, this ancestral account differs in some ways from modern neo-Darwinism. In particular, it posits the existence of a god who "breeds up" our ancestors with his own divine genes, just as modern farmers and stock-breeders have improved their sheep and cattle by crossing them with superior animals. But Rígr is definitely not a creator in the way that Bible-thumpers claim Yahweh to be. He is more like those Nobel Prize-winners who have donated their semen to sperm banks in order, they hope, that the next generation of humanity will be more intelligent than it would be without their generosity.

It could be argued *Rígsþula* is therefore not fully consistent with Darwinism. Yet the

poem is only claiming for Rígr a supervisory role in the direction that evolution has taken in one single species – humans. And as one of the most prominent neo-Darwinians of our era has written: "If there are versions of the evolutionary theory that deny slow gradualism, and deny the central role of natural selection [through random mutation], they may be true in particular cases" (Richard Dawkins, in *The Blind Watchmaker*). *Rígsþula* applies only to one such "particular case".

What is truly marvellous about our ancestral concept of evolution is that it existed at all. As far as we know there was no understanding at that time of the fossil record. So how might our ancestors have known that humanity had undergone a very lengthy period of physical development before it could reach its then-present level of culture? There seem to be only two possibilities: either they made a series of incredibly lucky guesses, or they were informed by the gods.

The implications of each of these two possibilities are awe-inspiring. If our ancestors arrived at something extremely similar to the views of Darwin and Russell by brilliant guesswork, we would do well to trust their other "guesses" – such as the existence of the gods and goddesses and the "nine worlds" (dimensions?). On the other hand, if the gods revealed the truth to our ancestors in this particular matter, then we would equally do well to accept that their other beliefs may have been divinely inspired.

Either way, it seems that *Rígsþula* should be taken seriously. And that leads to the massive question of what Rígr's purpose may have been. Why would he, and the other three gods, have intervened to give our somewhat sorry species such a series of massive boosts?

Ultimately, we cannot answer that question. All that we can observe is that the consistent purpose of the gods has been to improve us as a species. Furthermore, we have now reached the point where we can take our destiny into our own hands. We have enough understanding of genetics to transform ourselves within a few generations to the extent that our descendants may look back on us the way we ourselves look back on *Australopithecus*.

Whether we choose the upward evolutionary path depends on the moral values we hold dear, and these in turn depend on our religious or spiritual outlook. What is certain is that we humans cannot stand still as a species. Far more people like Howler, Stumpy, Swarthy and Stinker are being born today than people like Jarl. We can go forward, or we can continue to regress. Those are our only choices.

- Osred



In the last issue of *Renewal* we mentioned that eagle-eyed readers had spotted two celebrities wearing Thor's hammers – Viggo Mortensen, one of the stars of the *Lord of the Rings* films, and Jana Pittman, the world-champion Australian hurdler.

The man with the fine physique shown above is also sporting a hammer, although the loss of detail in our printing process may make it hard to see. We assure you that it's quite unmistakable in the magazine advertisement that one of our readers generously sent in. So who is this man?

His name is Erik ("The Viking") Fromm. He is both a bodybuilder and a commercial artist. Apparently he took up bodybuilding at the age of 14 after borrowing an Arnie book from his local library.

For readers who may happen to follow bodybuilding (and others may skip the rest of this paragraph), Erik's career highlights include: 1991 NPC Mr. Wyoming Teen and Open Men's Overall Champion 1996 NPC Mr. Colorado HW Open & Overall Champion 1997 Ironman Heavyweight Open & Overall Champion 1999 NPC USAs Super heavyweight Runner Up 2000 NPC USAs Super Heavyweight 5th 2001 NPC USAs Super Heavyweight 5th 2003 NPC USAs Super Heavyweight 3rd.

Erik "The Viking" is obviously keen on his ancestral heritage, although we have no idea whether or not he is an Odinist. Some of his views sound rather Odinist. For instance, he told one interviewer: "Bodybuilding is an art, not a sport. A part of me inside is just so passionate about this that it pushes me past what I was able to do the last time and makes me want to do better than anyone else." Sadly, he confesses to listening to rap "music". We can hope that his musical tastes will mature as he becomes older and wiser.

As we said in the last issue:

*"Even if Viggo and Jana turn out not to be committed Odinists, the fact that they have been photographed wearing our sacred amulet will still help to make it familiar to thousands, perhaps millions, of people who might otherwise have thought it is some sort of upside-down Christian emblem."*

*"If any readers can offer further information on this subject, please let us know."*

The same comments apply to Erik Fromm.

# The Celtic Cross revisited



It is a stereotyped motif in certain kinds of science fiction. A formerly advanced people, cut off from their parent culture, degenerate culturally to the point where the memory of the true nature of certain tools or terms is lost. The neo-savages then superstitiously venerate these tools or terms as if they were in some way holy. Thus the degenerate people in one of the *Planet of the Apes* films worshipped a nuclear weapon without understanding it. One of *Doctor Who's* assistants venerated her ancestors, the great warrior tribe of the Sevateem, without comprehending that this name was a corruption of "Survey Team". Could the Celtic Cross, a sacred symbol seen in so many graveyards and churches, fit this pattern?

Crichton E M Miller thinks so. As a qualified navigator, he wondered how ancient maritime peoples were able to establish latitude and longitude. After much research he concluded that they used a simple but brilliant instrument of which the Celtic Cross in Christian tradition is merely a dim and misunderstood memory.

Look at the three pictures above. The first is a graveyard cross. We've all seen something like it. The second is a hand-held Crichton Miller version. The circle is a wheel fixed to a central hub. It is marked with degrees around the edge. The four spokes have viewing holes so that the angles can be read. The bottom of the wheel is weighted so that it performs like a plumb line, pointing to the centre of the earth. The third picture shows the instrument being used to measure the angle of the rising sun.

According to Crichton Miller, this apparently simple device, used in conjunction with sites such as Stonehenge, would have allowed our ancestors to find their position anywhere on the Earth to within 3 nautical miles, using a hand-held device. It is far superior to the quadrant, because in Miller's words: "This instrument can tell the time, find latitude and longitude, measure the angles of the stars, predict the solstices and equinoxes



and measure the precession of the equinoxes. The instrument can also find the ecliptic pole as well as the north and south poles."

Mr Miller has been successful in taking out a patent on his instrument. He has also written a book on the technical aspects of how it works, which can be ordered through his website at:

<http://www.crichtonmiller.com/index.htm>

There are three possible problems with Mr Miller's supposed rediscovery. The first is that we are not qualified to comment on whether it can in fact perform the functions that he claims for it. Readers who are familiar with navigation will have to make up their own minds. The second problem is that in some other respects Mr Miller comes across as something of a crank, dragging into his theories all sorts of dubious claims regarding the Knights Templar, Solomon's (probably non-existent) temple, and a rather amazing con-job allegedly perpetrated by Christopher Columbus. Still, it is only fair to stress that his instrument stands or falls on its own merits, and whether he is wrong in any other matters is irrelevant. The third problem is that even if the device does everything he says it can, that is no guarantee that our ancestors used it.

And yet, and yet ...

According to the sagas, a party of Icelanders visited north America and built some huts there. A second expedition a few years later found and used those very same huts. Yet the sailing directions in the sagas are so vague that scholars are divided as to whether these directions would lead anyone following them to Newfoundland, Hudson Bay, or even Florida!

Conventional history says that our



ancestors could not establish longitude with any real accuracy until the first Pacific expedition of Captain Cook, with his famous "two chronometers", in the mid-18th century. Prior to that, we are told, even the great Portuguese navigators of the 16th century had so little idea of longitude (through the twin problems of loxodromes and erration) that their highly detailed maps have to be mathematically corrected to make much sense.

And then we are asked to believe that an opportunistic group of Icelanders could find, almost by chance, a few huts somewhere on the western side of the Atlantic in open boats a thousand years ago.

We are very tempted to accept the theoretical instrument with which Mr Miller credits our ancestors. The Christian church would no doubt have suppressed it, given that marine navigation depends on a genuine understanding of the movements of the earth, the sun and the stars, whereas Biblical cosmography is hopelessly wrong-headed on these matters. Finally, we know from the sagas that at least some of the Icelanders who visited America were crusty old Odinists like Thorhall the Hunter. After all, why would an expedition led by a fanatical Christian have taken Thorhall on board, unless the heathen had some particular skill that Christians were not permitted to use?

It is also well-known that Christians historically took over heathen sacred sites so as to use them for their own purposes. It would have been perfectly consistent for them to "ban" our ancestors' scientific instrument, then re-use its outward form as an essentially meaningless symbol.



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## Books

### The Mind in the Cave

by David Lewis-Williams

Thames & Hudson, 2003

RRP: £UK 18.95

The traditional explanation of western European Upper Paleolithic art is that it was produced for magical reasons connected with success in hunting. Thus a bison might be painted on a cave wall to somehow gain control over a real bison, making it easier to track down and kill.

Not so, says David Lewis-Williams in this fascinating new study. The author is a former Director of the Rock Art Research Institute at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. As such he is an expert on the traditional rock paintings of the Bushmen, which luckily were extensively studied and recorded in the 19th century.

The Bushmen's art was painted by people whom Lewis-Williams calls shamans. This over-used word comes from a minor Siberian language, but Lewis-Williams believes it to be appropriate in this case because it "usefully points to a human universal – the need to make sense of shifting consciousness ... especially, but not always, among hunter-gatherers".

Drawing on the insights of modern neuropsychology, the author explains several different states of mind in this "shifting consciousness" – including waking, problem-solving, hallucinations, visions, dreams and autism. It is these types of consciousness, he insists, that are depicted in Bushman art. And precisely the same motives lay behind European Paleolithic cave paintings.

The European artists, he says, had the higher order consciousness of modern humans that allows us to conceive of a spirit

world inhabited by the souls of the departed. (He says Neanderthals, by contrast, could not think like this – because of the different neurological structure of their brains.)

These European artists conceived two-dimensional visions of *spirit* bison or *spirit* horses, then transferred these images directly to the cave walls, just like projecting a slide. That is why their paintings show no natural settings such as ground or trees or rivers, and it explains why the animals depicted seem so compellingly animated in a space-time of their own.

Given Lewis-Williams' expertise and reputation, it is likely that his book will have a huge influence on the study of Upper Paleolithic art. We doubt whether this is an unmitigated blessing.

Clearly the hunting-magic hypothesis of European cave art left a great deal to be explained. In particular, given that our ancestors of thirty thousand years ago were at least as intelligent as we are, they were unlikely to have persisted with a practice that experience would quickly have shown to be useless. Even the far more primitive Bushmen had no such delusions: Lewis-Williams' case for the shamanic origins of Bushman art seems to be unassailable.

On the other hand, Lewis-Williams' shamanic theory, while it respects the dignity and intelligence of our ancestors, raises new problems of its own. To start with, nearly all the images in European cave art are depictions of animals. But surely the artists would have been more concerned to portray the spirits of humans rather than the spirits of bison or horses? They are supposed to have been depicting images from their own "shifting consciousness", and we all know that dreams or visions of humans are more common than dreams of animals, no matter how important the latter may be to us. Human forms are as common as we would therefore expect in Bushman art, but are extremely rare in European cave art. Perhaps a direct extrapolation of motive from one tradition to

the other is misleading.

A second problem arises from the fact that European cave art sites were often chosen for their acoustic properties. This suggests that our remote ancestors were painting with the idea of a hearing audience in mind – effectively requiring a social division similar to that between a modern priest and congregation. Yet if that is the case, why would specialist "shamans" have been so concerned to draw their own personal altered-state or dream visions, which would not have been shared by the rest of the community? Furthermore, why would individual shamans separated from one another by many generations have continued to paint mainly bison and horses?

A third problem is that our own ancestors often used the natural contours of cave walls to impart a three-dimensional aspect to their paintings. This seems to directly contradict Lewis-Williams' theory.

Finally, we note that historical shamanic practices have almost always involved the use of mind-altering drugs. Yet there is no evidence that anything of the sort existed in western Europe during Upper Paleolithic times. We don't know whether some sort of "magic mushrooms" existed in Europe in those days, and we are unlikely ever to find out. We do know that they existed in the right areas in comparatively recent times. The surviving records indicate that few, if any, European people availed themselves of them. This would be surprising if they had ever played such a major role in earlier European cultures.

Finally, we are very sceptical of any attempt to interpret the motives of our own sacred ancestors, at a time of great cultural vigour, by the light of decaying 19th century African practices. We applaud Lewis-Williams' pioneering work, but hope for more subtle theories in future.

## Modern American numerology

Numerology is defined in one dictionary as "the study of the occult significance of numbers". That is an admirably fair-minded description. On a sublime level it could apply to those ancient Greek speculations that led to such discoveries as the "golden mean" (1.618 – see *Renewal*, Vol 8 No 2, "Pagans at the Round Table"). On a ridiculous level it could equally apply to the pseudo-science that attributes individual personality, character, fortune and its lack, to the day of the month on which a person was born.

As Christianity withers slowly away, it is to be expected that many of those who have not yet found a valid alternative faith will resort to various substitutions. Humanity seems to need a sense of right and wrong,

and as George Orwell wrote, that is difficult to sustain "... when the belief that it used to rest on – that is, personal immortality [in the Christian sense] – has been destroyed". Into this moral vacuum stride the enemies of both faith and reason; and if the designs for the replacement New York World Trade Centre are anything to go on, the results are a counterfeit spirituality based on numerology.

The height of the new tower is to be 1776 feet, because 1776 is the year of the American Declaration of Independence. The triangular piazza is to be defined by the angles of the sun at the precise times of (a) the first attack and (b) the collapse of the second tower. Finally, for some reason or other, there is to be a "Garden of Exile" decorated with 48 columns in memory of

1948, the year of the founding of Israel.

These numbers are, of course, purely arbitrary. The height could just as easily have been 1607 feet, commemorating the first successful European settlement in America, – or, from an African-American perspective, 1833 feet, celebrating the year in which slavery was abolished in the British Empire. The same applies to the other numbers involved. Although we admit to having no idea why Israel is to be celebrated at all, the year of the Balfour Declaration would do just as well as 1948.

We are confident that Americans will eventually adopt a religion that provides a meaningful framework for responding to all that lies beyond the power of the human will.

Meanwhile, though, they have adopted an arbitrary set of "revealed" numbers to replace the moral arbitrariness of a "revealed" religion.



## Strange quote from a subsidised scholar

Margaret Clunies-Ross is an eminent professor at the University of Sydney. So eminent indeed that she was chosen to edit a 2003 collection of essays, most of which were first presented at the Eleventh International Saga Conference. The book is called *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*. It is published by the University Press of Southern Denmark, and is financially subsidised by the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra.

This is the second paragraph of Clunies-Ross' introduction:

At a time when the pre-Christian religion and mythology of Scandinavia are having a strong, though often not fully recognized, influence upon the lives and beliefs of large numbers of people in the contemporary world, the scholarly study of the medieval evidence for that religion and those beliefs has not had the influence it might have upon the popular imagination. In many cases, of course, stubborn ideological agenda shut the door to what scholars can tell people about past beliefs and ideologies, and scholars tend to be cautious in what they say, quantifying certainty with ifs and buts. Those who make use of Norse myth and

cult for reasons of national, political or ethnic identity, or see in it the basis for alternative religions (asatru and the like) usually find what they are looking for in the sources, or distort them until they fit their perceptions. In a different though perhaps more acceptable fashion, the creators of fantasy literature and film also mine the medieval sources, directly or indirectly, and produce works of undoubted popular impact, like *The Lord of the Rings* in both its print and film versions.

In the space of three sentences, Clunies-Ross has lamented that scholars such as herself have had little impact on the popular imagination, then shown us just how ill-informed she is about "alternative religions". In fact, she knows so little about "asatru" she forgets that the word is a proper noun and therefore invariably begins with a capital letter – just like Islam or Judaism ... or Margaret.

As to her claim about "alternative religions" distorting the "sources" (by which she presumably only means written texts in Old Norse), we can speculate either that she has read very little of modern heathen

literature or that she is distorting publications like *OR Briefing*, *Vor Trú*, *Pagan Times* and *Renewal* to fit her own perceptions. Neither of these possibilities reflects the degree of research that we are entitled to expect in a conscientious and scrupulous scholar. If Clunies-Ross has indeed read deeply in modern heathen literature she must know that her statement is wrong; and if she has not made a proper study of the modern "sources" she should not impute wrong-headedness, perhaps even outright dishonesty, to their authors.

Maybe this is one reason why scholars such as Clunies-Ross have had so little influence on the popular imagination. The ordinary reader would certainly defer to the professor's undoubted expertise in her own chosen field, but her false statement about "alternative religions" can only undermine her authority in other matters *outside* her own linguistic patch.

Odinists, and heathens in general, can learn much from the specialist insights of scholars like Clunies-Ross. Those scholars, in turn, should recognise that "alternative" religious beliefs are often sincerely held by people as highly educated as themselves.

## Biblical Bloopers

*The second article in a new series by PAUL*

Contrary to the popular image of the Nazarene as "Prince of Peace" and Universal Saviour, the more probably alternative (and one convincingly espoused by Jewish writer and scholar Hyam Maccoby in his well researched book *Revolution in Judea*) is a Yohanan Bar Yosef (to give him his Jewish names) who was part religious reformer, part anti-Roman agitator. Several references in the New Testament suggest links to Jewish terrorists, or "zealots" as these murderous fanatics preferred to be called. Indeed Judas Iscariot, the famous betrayer of the Nazarene, himself bears an unofficial surname (or nickname) derived from "sicarii" or "dagger men" – infamous murderers whose specialty was hit and run assassinations of any Jews deemed to be Roman sympathisers.

One of my favourite bloopers is the following – which slipped through the Christian censors as they were preparing their fanciful mythology around the time of the Nicene Council (circa 325 CE). It is from Luke 22, vs. 36-37, and occurs just prior to Jesus' arrest – maybe this revealed an

understandable case of nerves, or a bad conscience!

"If you have a purse, take it; if you have a haversack, do the same; if you have **no sword, sell your cloak and buy one.**" (Emphasis mine.)

So here we have something like the truth emerging through the fog of superstition and supposition. Namely a renegade on the run from Roman authority and at odds with those cooler Jewish heads that saw both safety and profit in co-operating with Rome against the fanatics and terrorists. (How little Palestine has changed!) For in the verse just quoted this "Prince of Peace" in company with a very mixed bag of men including at least one whose nickname proclaims the Terrorist, advises his supporters to sell their garments and purchase weapons. For here is the historical Jesus – no miracle worker, no godling, no Gandhi – a renegade against Jewish and Roman justice urging his followers to take up arms.

Until next time ...

### Renewal

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*Renewal* exists to share the views of modern Odinists, both within Australia and world-wide. In Australian and British law Odinism is described as "the continuation of ... the organic spiritual beliefs and religion of the indigenous peoples of northern Europe as embodied in the Edda and as they have found expression in the wisdom and in the historical experience of these peoples".

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● *Baden-Powell's junior Einherjar* ● *Odal lands awakening* ● *How many generations ago was Woden your original racial ancestor?*

# What's new

## Odinist boy scouts

by *Hraesvelg*

At the September business meeting last year, the Members of The Eagle's Kindred of Utah got together and outlined the goals we would like to achieve in the coming year. One of the top priority items was to "develop an education program for our Folk."

After discussing the possibilities with the parents of our children, it was decided that we would actively seek a charter with the Boy Scouts of America. This decision was reached after a close examination of the positive benefits of the scouting program.

The next step was to contact the Great Salt Lake Council of the Boy Scouts and set up a meeting with them. A week later our committee was sitting across the room from two representatives of the Great Salt Lake Council. We told them that we were Asatru, explained our religion in detail, and answered the questions they had. Also we provided them with many of our brochures and a handbook outlining what the living religion of Asatru is.

They left us with the necessary paperwork an institution has to complete to be granted a charter.

Generally it takes about a week to be granted a charter and given a troop number but as we were the first Asatru group to apply for a charter, our paperwork had to be sent to their national headquarters in Texas for a determination. In the interim, we were in contact with the Senior District Executive of the Scouts on a daily basis. I will have to add at this point that our District Executive was extremely helpful and supportive of us and used his influence to help us get our charter.

On December the 14th, our new Scout Master, Assistant Scout Master, and Committee Chairman attended their first Round Table Meeting in West Valley, Utah. The district Executive introduced us as the Eagle's Kindred of Utah, an Asatru religious group and part of The Asatru Alliance of Independent Kindreds.

After the meeting there were a few other troop leaders that came and introduced themselves, shook hands, and welcomed us into the program. A week later our District Executive called and gave us our troop number. We are now troop number 1239 of The Great Salt Lake Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

## Progress in Denmark

by JAN M. OLSEN  
Associated Press Writer  
November 5, 2003, 10:41 AM EST  
COPENHAGEN, Denmark

Home to the Vikings of yore, Denmark said Wednesday it will let a group that

worships Thor, Odin and other Norse gods conduct legally-recognised marriages.

"To me, it would be wrong if the indigenous religion of this country wasn't recognised," Tove Fergo, the minister for Ecclesiastic Affairs and a Lutheran priest, told The Associated Press.

Under Danish law, the state Evangelical Lutheran Church has sole authority to recognise other religious communities.

The 240-member *Forn Sidr*, which worships Odin, Thor, Freya and the other members of the Norse pantheon, sought recognition in 1999, said Tissel Jacobsen, the group's president.

Last year, an Ecclesiastic Affairs panel of scholars recommended that *Forn Sidr*, whose name means "Old Custom" in old Norse, be approved, but only if their rituals were clearly detailed in its bylaws.

"At a general assembly, we added and described our four annual heathen rituals – spring and fall equinoxes, and the summer and winter solstices, and our marriage ceremony," Jacobsen told the AP. "We then returned our application and the panel approved it."

Fergo said she would give her final approval "in a few days."

About 1,000 people worship the ancient gods in Denmark, Jacobsen said. Since 1998, the panel of theology, law and history scholars have advised the government on which groups seeking to become religious communities, should be recognised.

"It was not up to me to evaluate whether they are telling the truth or the quality of their religion," Fergo said. "Based on the commission's evaluation and what I have read, I consider it a good religion."

Officially recognised religious communities can marry people and exempt their members from the 1 percent income tax that is imposed on members of the state church.

People born in Denmark are automatically made members of the state church, but can choose to leave it if they want. Members of other recognised religious communities, such Catholics, Muslims and Jews, are also exempt from the tax.

On the net:

Forn Sidr [http://www.fornsidr.dk/index\\_uk.html](http://www.fornsidr.dk/index_uk.html)

## Sons and daughters of the All-Father

"Our father, which art in heaven ..." were the opening words of a famous Christian prayer.

In what way did ordinary church-goers once consider the desert god to be their "father"? Obviously not in any genetic sense, given that they shared neither racially distinctive genes nor any unifying genealogy

with the ancient Hebrews.

Molecular biology disproves any claim by "British Israelites" to a link between the Anglo-Celtic peoples and a bunch of genocidal thieves who once plundered the desert cultures of the Middle East. In fact, biology can now state quite precisely the genetic differences between different peoples.

Thus the modern English are most closely related to the modern Danes – exactly as you would expect, given that England was a 5th century Danish colony that was further topped up with Danish genes during the Viking era. On this basis the genetic distance between the English and the Danes is calculated at 1. The English:Italian difference on the same scale is 2.5. For the English:Japanese it is 59, and for the English:Bantu it is 109.

Given all this, the Christian vision of their god as "our father" must be taken as a spiritual rather than literal statement. We have no problem with that. People have a right to claim anyone they like, real or imaginary, as their spiritual "father".

But from time immemorial Odinists have referred to our own god as "The All-Father". We mean this in a spiritual sense, of course; but also in at least a semi-literal sense. A proof of that last point is that we use the phrase "The Nation of Odin" to include those peoples who are very close to us genetically and whose forebears were once devoted to our ancestrally-shared gods and goddesses.

Could there be any "secular", scientific sense in which this is a valid statement?

Well, if you went back in a time machine to the year 1,000 CE, when much of Scandinavia was still Odinist and when laws proscribing Odinism were still being passed in England, you would theoretically have a trillion living ancestors. Obviously there was nowhere near that number of people on earth at the time, so every human being alive today is a product of extensive inbreeding.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. You see, all the major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that coalesced into modern England believed that their ruling dynasties were founded by our god Woden. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Harold I (who fell at Hastings) was approximately 23 generations removed from his first ancestor, Woden. And divine genes, no matter how diluted, are presumably worthier than mere human genes.

Therefore if you accept our ancestors' belief that Woden was the founder of all the Anglo-Saxon royal families, a large percentage of your genes are obviously derived from the All-Father. You could probably even work out that percentage.



## Ota's Talking Point

**T**is the season for Handel's magnificent oratorio, the *Messiah*. All over the English-speaking world this great work will be heard, as it has been since the composer himself began conducting annual charity performances back in 1750.

Handel himself couldn't possibly have imagined just how popular the *Messiah* would eventually become. In 1750 Australia and New Zealand had never even been sighted by Europeans. Yet this Yule season the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic choir and orchestra will perform Handel's great work for the 150th year in a row, a world record. The public demands still more. In the same single Australian city, population 3 million, the Essendon Choral Society has just performed its own *Messiah*, and more versions are to come from the Melbourne Symphony and Melbourne Chorale, not to mention the Australian Baroque Ensemble.

Something of the same frenzy for the *Messiah* is gripping most other large Australian cities, not one of which had even been founded until 29 years after Handel's own death. No doubt the same thing is happening in New Zealand, South Africa, the U.S., Canada.

So why is this work more popular than ever? And why has just about every educated person in the western world at some time or other either sung or croaked at least a few bars of this masterpiece?

One factor is that it is an oratorio, and therefore cheaper to produce than an opera. This may have played a role in its becoming familiar – and music has to be familiar to be loved. But that doesn't account for the great demand for it today.

Another is the sheer genius of Handel. Yet he wrote other oratorios that few people listen to, even on CD. Hands up anyone who has ever paid much attention to his *Joshua*, *Theodora* or *Jephtha*. (No fibbing, please!)

Never the humble one, I will give you Ota's explanation. But first I want you to promise that if you agree with my profound and daring insights you will badger the editor to shout me a packet of Tim Tams.

I think the main reasons for the popularity of *Messiah* are these:

People have always thirsted for spirituality in art and music. Until recently, this has had to be expressed in Christian terms, (although in the last few years there

have been successful compositions that are entirely heathen, such as Meale's *Symphony No. 3 Mater Magna*.)

But Christianity has never really penetrated the Western, and specifically the Anglo-Saxon, soul – in the sense of being a valid answer to spiritual yearning. Sure, we've had our periodic bouts of Christian nastiness, with Catholics burning Protestants and Protestants burning Catholics. The same goes for bouts of zealous nuttiness, as self-parodied by the Puritans, who gave their children names like my great favourite, Mr Praise-God Barebones. (Yes, he really existed – a

**What line, outside the Hallelujah Chorus, does everyone remember? Answer: "I know that my redeemer liveth". Any ancient Germanic warrior could have warmed to that line if the word "redeemer" were skewed to mean "sacral**

parliament was named after him!) But killing people and banning dancing don't really do it for sane folk who yearn for something higher and more spiritual in their lives. Music can.

Now one thing that separates Handel's style from the many others who have written great oratorios is that, although Handel's works are definitely Christian, they're narrative rather than devotional. The difference between them and, say, Bach's contemporary *Passions*, can be felt immediately. Handel, although born in Germany, worked in a far more English mode – more like *Beowulf*, or the ballads, or Chaucer, than like a treatise, however inspired, on Christian devotion. In the simplest sense, he tells a good dramatic story, and the Anglo-Saxons have always loved good stories.

But what sort of story does he tell? True, it's Christian. Yet non-Christians can enjoy this story without any uncomfortable feeling of alienation. Why?

Percy Scholes said that the religion of the *Messiah* is "... essentially English – the natural religious recreation of a Bible-loving and chorus-singing nation." One clue here is that it is "religious recreation", as distinct, I suppose, from religious zeal. Another is that the audience is "Bible-loving", by which I take Scholes to have meant that they knew the story – just as it may have helped that the oratorio was written in the English language.

Yes, Ota, I hear someone saying, but that's still not enough. The music is still Christian, and Christianity is still alien to our soul.

To which Ota replies with her trump quote. Sir Thomas Beecham, whose career confirms that he had the measure of the Anglo-Saxon mind, both in Britain itself and the diaspora, said: "Handel's *Messiah* represents what an Englishman can feel about God in public."

What a gift, to be able to cut to the bone like that! Forget, for the moment, Anglo-Saxons who have been almost totally de-

racinated, like American Bible-belt fundies. Think of the normal, fundamentally decent, intelligent, Anglo couple you know down the road. Maybe they have their weaknesses, like all human beings. But they retain a sense of what is mature – and what is dysfunctional. Even if she happens to be secretly addicted to prescription drugs she's not likely to gobble them down in public. Even if he happens to have a thing about chicks' undies it's more likely than not to stay secret.

Beecham's comment on the *Messiah* can be read in much the same way. I think he means that while none of us would try to prevent an individual from being a Christian, we all know that that form of belief is dysfunctional, somewhat ridiculous, and, like chundering, really shouldn't be encouraged in public.

If I'm right so far (and I think I am, and I think you should therefore pester the editor to give me a second packet of Tim Tams), the clear implication is that the majority of us are embarrassed or ashamed of the part of our heritage that is Christian. Sure, we'll tolerate, even love, a brilliant oratorio that happens to be overtly Christian – but only if it engages us as a story rather than seeking our devotion; only if it doesn't insist on squeezing its skanky Christian pimples in public; only, in short, if it restricts its alien spirituality to those aspects of Christianity that our Odinst ancestors wouldn't have found too offensive.

And that is precisely what the *Messiah* manages to achieve. Question: what line, outside the Hallelujah Chorus, does everyone remember? Answer: "I know that my redeemer liveth". Any ancient Germanic warrior could have warmed to that line if the word "redeemer" were skewed to mean "sacral king".

To put this another way, the *Messiah* is successful precisely to the degree that it reflects the heathenisation of Christianity by our Odinst Anglo-Saxon ancestors. The bits of the alien faith that our forebears couldn't stand are largely left out; while the bits they could stomach are allowed to stand.

There have been other, later, English oratorios that were composed from a specifically British viewpoint by gifted people like Elgar, Parry and Mackenzie. As Scholes says, "They were felt by most British musicians to constitute a national monument." But they are largely forgotten.

The reason is simple: they were intensely Christian and mystical. That is simply not the Anglo-Saxon way. We are the pragmatic people who sent humans to the moon.

So sing me a good story, after the manner of *Beowulf*, and pass the Tim Tams!

□

## Dear Ed ...

☐ Heilsa everyone,

I just wanted to say that my boyfriend Mark, who is currently incarcerated in Alabama, has FINALLY gotten the paperwork that Odinism is recognised as a religion in the AL DOC.

It was recognised this summer, but then the chaplain and a bunch of other morons brought appeals up so it all had to go back to court again. So that recognition was on hold until the judge made his decision in the appeal. Six months later the appeal was thrown out, and Mark has the paperwork in his hands that he needs to get books, Thor's hammer, candles, etc. He is one happy man, well, as happy as he can be in his circumstance of course.

This is also really good news to us because he is up for parole in Horning sometime. His counsellor told him the only reason she thought he might not get paroled is because he is an Odinist (he has a spotless record inside). Now hopefully with this judgement it will up his chances of being released.

He's been actively involved in lawsuits for 5 years now trying to get this so it just goes to show that any work in this effort is certainly not in vain. It's so important for inmates to not let their minds rot in there, and that can happen really easily without any type of motivation. So this is definitely good news.

Katia AOR  
by email

☑ Tell Ota to keep up the good work. I nearly always have a good laugh with her article. I especially liked the one where she got the slipper into that silly old bat Germaine Greer. Excellent!

Geoff  
NSW

☐ Ota has been flippant for ten years now. It's time for her to get serious about the reawakening. By the way, her photo probably needs an update.

Tania, by e-mail

☐ Ota says it's her face that needs an update, so she won't be sending in a new photo.

☐ I have been following My Favourite Zine ("MFZ") for quite a while, and I was wondering whether I could make a suggestion?

It seems to me that you guys and gals are great on bringing us up to date on new developments in the fascinating story of our people. This is essential. In the last issue I was floored by the info about the fact that some of us are genetically immune to HIV-AIDS. That's the sort of thing we need to know.

I also like the continuing positive emphasis on our spirituality. Mark's article on Akhenaton was a real eye-opener in that respect.

But I would like to see more info on the earlier trailblazers in resurrecting our faith. Not just Rud Mills in Oz in the 1930s, but also people like Guido "von" List, Friedrich Marby, Jorg von Liebenfels ... Hel, how about William Morris and the other English proto-Odinist literary figures like him?

Stephen, by e-mail

## Ripples in Time



### The Anglo-Saxon Runes

Our original 21-part series has now been combined in a self-contained A4 size saddle-stitched booklet of 20 pages, with a 120 gsm clay cover (as illustrated).

This really is the complete guide to runes from an Anglo-Saxon perspective.

Fully up-to-date in terms of research, *Ripples in Time* reveals, for instance, that Germanic runes probably relate to pre-Classical Greek letter shapes. That is much earlier than most current New Age and even scholarly accounts suggest. The booklet also establishes that our Anglo-Saxon ancestors used runes for a variety of purposes, including divination, magic, and the control of occult powers.

*Ripples in Time* is available for \$Aus10.00 within Australia. (This price includes postage and handling). Overseas residents can obtain *Ripples in Time* for \$US15.00 (US cash), which covers airmail anywhere plus handling.

There is no way around it: you need this booklet if you are serious about our ancestral runic heritage.

## Notice Board

For updates on the *Australian Viking Ships Museum*, see:

[www.australianvikingshipsmuseum.surf.to](http://www.australianvikingshipsmuseum.surf.to)

The AVSM aims to build a replica of the Gokstad ship, and also to collect other replica ships that have been built in Australia. In addition there will be a land-based interpretation centre, through which thousands of people will be exposed to our heritage.

*The National Prison Kindred Alliance* aims to help Odinists who are incarcerated in US prisons. Contact: NPKA, PO Box 6493. Napa, CA 94581, USA;

email: [Himmingbjorg@aol.com](mailto:Himmingbjorg@aol.com)

*The Odinist* is back! The world's longest-running Odinist journal has returned after a necessary break. For details write to: PO Box 1973, Parkesville, BC, V9P 1R8, Canada.

*The Scorpion* is an independent magazine dealing in depth with matters relating to the survival of European culture. Its address is: *The Scorpion*, BCM 5766, London, WC1, England or [stormloader.com/thescorpion](http://stormloader.com/thescorpion). A sample issue costs £5.00 sterling.

*éléments: pour la civilisation européenne* is a stylish and intelligent magazine sympathetic to the heathen world-view. Published in French, a year's subscription costs 180 F or 240 F by air. Address: 41 rue Barrault, Paris, France. This is an often brilliant publication!

*Odinic Rite Briefing* is a quarterly publication of the (British) Odinic Rite. Enquiries to: BCM Runic, London, WC1N 3XX

*The Runestone* is a quarterly journal of Asatru, "dedicated to our Gods and Goddesses, to the people of the North, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality within the context of kinship". Cheques for \$US15.00 airmail should be payable to S. A. McNallen, PO Box 445, Nevada City, Ca, 95959, USA.

The *Asatru Alliance* believes in "standards of behaviour which are consistent with the spiritual truths of the Norse gods and goddesses and harmonious with our deepest being". The Asatru Alliance, PO Box 961, Payson, Az 85547, USA.

*Theod* has suspended regular publication, but plans to put out occasional special issues from time to time. All back issues will be kept available, and a free brochure is available for the asking at any time, from PO Box 8062, Watertown, NY 13601, USA.

*Pagan Times* Australia's oldest continuing pagan publication, published quarterly, 4 issues: A\$22 (within Australia), A\$30 (within Oceania), (A\$40 (rest of the world). Sample copy A\$6. Payment by cheque, MO, Bankcard, Visa or Mastercard within Australia, elsewhere Visa or Mastercard only. Subscription form available from:

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