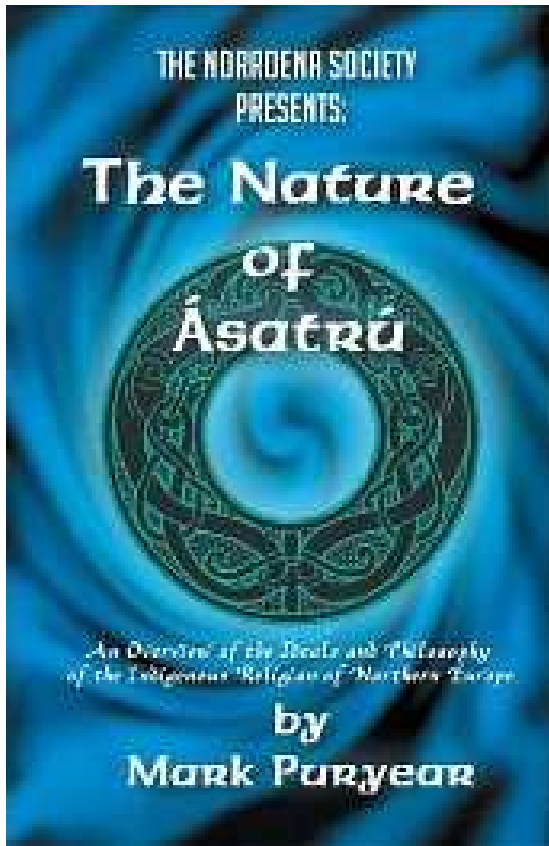


INTRODUCTION

What is Asatru? It is commonly defined as the indigenous religion of the Northern European peoples, namely the Teutonic branch of the Indo-European family. The word "Asatru" is translated "Faith in the Aesir", the Aesir being the highest clan or tribe of our deities. This faith was once celebrated as the primary religion by people as far east as Russia, as far west as America and as far north as Iceland. Relics of its existence have dated as far back as pre-historic times, making it the heritage of anyone of Nordic descent. It is a religion that reveres nature and ancestry, and values honor and nobility. We worship many gods and goddesses, each a representative of natural forces as well as the ideals we aspire to. All across the world Asatru has re-awakened after centuries of slumber. Its profound philosophy challenges us to live life to its fullest and to continue to better ourselves. This is combined with a straightforward system of ethics and morals, all of which has appealed to people of all walks of life, many of whom seek to reclaim their sacred birthright.



I have been an "Asatruar" (practitioner of Asatru) for almost 20 years now, so I have seen just about all of the biases and misconceptions surrounding it. Although many of these are primarily derived from religious bigotry, much of the prejudice against the faith is due to a lack of understanding the true ideals behind it. A particular picture has been painted for the history of the ancient Teutons, especially after Scandinavians, so we are here to challenge this false imagery. I hope that, in the creation of this book I will be able to clear up many of the problems surrounding what is to us a sacred way of life, while, at the same time, teaching the general philosophic ideology that it is built upon.

I will briefly explain now what will be presented in more detail throughout this book concerning what Asatru is not. It is not "devil worship". We fully understand and accept the concept of good and evil and

choose to work for what is good and right. There are no cults of Loki or Aurboda (our male and female representatives of corruption and evil); those who will try to include them into our pantheon have clearly not read our records carefully. We do not partake in human sacrifices and we do not believe in the harming of innocents. Animal sacrifice may be practiced by some groups, which is perfectly acceptable, since it is well understood that sacrifice was merely a means of sanctifying one's good before it was

slaughtered. This is similar to the Jewish method of koshering animals. Of course, some religious groups will always see us as "devil worshippers" because we do not worship their god, but we cannot concern ourselves with such religious intolerance.

Asatru is not a religion of violence, strife and war. It is true that there is a warrior aspect to our faith, but certainly, as all people, we prefer peace to war, love over hate and harmony over discord, as did our ancestors. We are simply not hypocrites when it comes to the use of force. Some of the most warlike nations in the world are ruled by followers of religions that claim to be peaceful and pacifist. Physical confrontation is sometimes inevitable, but always must be a last resort. What few realize is that the ideals of honorable combat of chivalry, where rules are imposed to maintain our humanity when we are at our least humane, have their foundation in the tenets and social mandates that Asatru is built upon:

Asatru is not a "Viking" religion. Even though the most famous practitioners of the faith were the Vikings, their era represents a short timespan in the long existence of our religion, which has lasted for thousands of years. Because of false representations of the Vikings created by the church, it has been reported by some that Asatruar support rape and pillaging. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it is irresponsible of so-called 'educated' people to base their conclusions on what they see on television or in the movies. In many ancient Asatru societies rape was considered as bad or worse than murder and it was often punishable by death. Ancient laws tell us specifically that rape was never considered acceptable by our ancestors, nor was thievery for that matter. We cannot deny that the Vikings attacked and robbed churches in their time. This is historical fact. In their defense the so-called "Viking Age" must be looked at, for the most part, as a sort of war between the natives of Northern Europe and its Christian invaders, since it coincides with the violent introduction of Christianity into this region. Under Roman decrees the church was heavily taxing areas it controlled while non-Christian "heathens" were brutally attacked, tortured and murdered for practicing their ancestral ways. In response, the Vikings raided monasteries and the Christian villages near them, taking back what belonged to the natives there in the first place! Even so, there isn't any reason why Asatruar today would consider pillaging of any sort, just as a Christian today, in most cases, wouldn't stone someone to death for committing adultery.

Asatru is not a "racist" religion. It is an ethnic religion, and there is an emphasis on heritage and ancestry, but this must not be misconstrued as racism. There are some hate groups out there who have perverted the ideals of our faith to meet their political agenda, but few religions are exempt from this. The Ku Klux Klan claims to be based on Christian teachings and Muslims all over the world try to separate themselves from the terrorists that threaten our safety. In considering the folkish values of Asatru the best comparisons would be those of Native Americans, the Hindus and the Oriental Shinto religion. All of these faiths represent an entire culture embodied by the ethnicity and nationality of their adherents. This does not imply any sort of hatred or disrespect towards other peoples or cultures. In fact, I have often found that respect for others and their cultures is much greater when one first learns to love themselves and their own.

Asatru is not an exercise in anachronism. There are some out there who like to play "dress up" when attending ceremonies or festivals, which is fine, as long as it is not seen as the primary purpose in our observances. I believe that our ancestors were very progressive, with a sense of fashion and technology that continued to evolve throughout the ages. They did not wear clothes that befit a bygone era, and there aren't any records describing such a tendency. Of course, pageantry was known, as was mummery, so we wouldn't reject the idea of dressing up, it's the purpose behind it that is important. We must be progressive and creative, not simply relying on the past for our practices. There is even evidence that the priesthood of ancient times had changing styles in their mode of dress for ceremonial purposes. The point is that our religion is an evolving ideal that advances with the ages and continues to move forward in our modern era. To focus mainly on the past is missing the point, since it is clear that our people have always forged ahead with the latest advancements in our civilizations. Although honoring our past is important, it should not keep us from looking towards the future. Our motto should be: "Hearts in the past, minds on the present, eyes on the future".

Asatru is not dogmatic. Although certain methods of reconstruction are being developed which may help to bring this faith to a state similar to that which it had before its corruption by Christianity, it can never be stated that there is only "one true path to the gods". How people interpret our traditions is up to them. I think that most Asatruar appreciate this independence, this ability to live one's spiritual lives free from the mandates of a dictatorial hierarchy. No one can claim to be an "authority" on our path, since we have the freedom to accept or reject any ideal or tradition, so long as we remain within the boundaries of the overall principles. No two Asatruar will think alike, as it should be. Many of the ideas presented in this book may be subject to scrutiny, for my views may not be the same as others'. But my aim here is solely to help people understand the basic concepts of Asatru, in hopes of re-kindling the ancient fire in the hearts of our folk as we shine new light on this ancestral faith.

Now that we have thoroughly examined what Asatru is not, I'll continue explaining what it is. To me, it is a connection to life, to the living universe, which in itself is a truly empowering concept. Our gods and goddesses are our earliest ancestors, representing a continually evolving network of existence that spans throughout all of nature, with all of us taking part. I am the son of my fathers and the father of my sons, a part of a line, a bloodline that is metaphysically and significant and will continue to be for all time. The deities of our pantheon are an ancient source of inspiration who have always been there driving our people forward. Their stories give us something to aspire to, their wisdom guides us in all that we do. Even if we ignore them they are still there, and their blood still pumps in our veins. Even if we look at foreign cults for spiritual fulfillment, they are still there, watching over us as parents to their children. They give us our honor and our courage, our talents and our strengths, for we will always be one with them, as long as we exist.

There are various interpretations of our myths regarding the existence of our gods and goddesses. Some see them as personifications of natural forces; others view them as paradigms, or models to live our lives by. Still others consider them to be actual beings

living on another world or plane of existence. The latter are divided into two categories: the spiritualists and the materialists. The spiritualists maintain that the gods and goddesses are ethereal beings living on another plan or dimension of reality. The materialists claim that these deities, products of evolution, are actual living beings who reside on another world somewhere in our universe. Most people use logic and science to validate their respective beliefs, since many choose to accept a worldview they consider to be based on intelligence and a true desire for understanding. Anyone new to the faith must first seek out and find the interpretation that makes the most sense to them, so they may see the gods and goddesses in a way that inspires them and helps them to find the spiritual path that suits them.

People today grow so sick of "religion", and with good reason. Religion without spirituality quickly stagnates so all that remains is an addiction to the mob. Religious groups try to feed this addiction by building huge places of worship and filling them with thousands of people, most of whom merely pay lip service to the faith out of fear of "eternal damnation". Then you have thousands of sects to choose from and each sect think all the other sects are doomed to this "eternal damnation", so, at the very least, there is constant bickering among them. Who needs that?

The fact is that spiritual decay comes from a lack of a cultural identity for the faith itself. Why is this? Because indigenous religions were formed from the very core of our ancestral soul. They developed as we evolved through countless eons and are ingrained into the very fiber of our being. In ancient times the very word 'religion' did not exist, nor were there any distinctions between different faiths, other than the cultural identity. A person's religion was reflected by their very existence, by the way they looked and where they came from, for religion was culture! The faith was expressed in their laws, in their diet, in their modes of transportation, in all that they did and in every aspect of their lives. Ancient, organic religions encompass every facet of the human experience, and Asatru does this with a bold and direct approach. The god or goddess of love exists because love is a part of the human experience, as is war, agriculture, wealth, etc. Without such strong connection to the lives of our people and our ancestry a religion must have powerful tenets of subjugation to keep its followers humbled and silent.

Christianity was forced upon Northern Europe with centuries of warfare, inquisitions and political manipulations. Even with the immense power to the Roman Empire behind them it still took over 500 years to convert all of the northern nations, and they never realized their goal of wiping out the ancient religions entirely. This book is living proof of that, as is the entire Asatru nation as it stands today. We mustn't hate Christians for this, for most do not even know about it and just want to live their lives as good people under the standards they were raised by. You may read essays and books from the Asatru community and think that many of us are vehemently anti-Christian. For the most part, when we are discussing the past atrocities committed by the church our words are not intended to blanket statements against all Christians, but are instead aimed at helping people to better understand the truth of what happened. In our search for the truth and our desire to uncover it we hope to show our folk, those who will listen, that we can be religious without all of the negative emotions usually associated with this. We will not

proselytize, for our aim is to teach, not preach.

Because of the attempt to completely destroy the ancient faiths many of our traditions have been left in shattered pieces collected by monks in the Middle Ages. Their reason for collecting the fragments was partly due to nationalism and partly to a propaganda method used by the church to explain why Europe had been heathen for thousands of years, contradicting the biblical idea that the Christian god had always ruled over our world. The concept of propaganda was that our gods and goddesses were ancient kings and queens who had tricked the ancients into worshipping them, for they were powerful magicians who became demons after their deaths.

We are fortunate that such collections were made at all, for we could have lost all records of our faith forever. However, these records are greatly mutilated and tainted by Christian and Classical influence, so we have much work to do in reconstructing the religion. It is our duty to do this - to rebuild and re-establish the ancient customs in the best way imaginable. In doing so we are effectively re-creating an entire culture from the ground up. Because Asatru is an organic religion, grown from the social strata of Northern Europe, all aspects of the ancient culture must be rebuilt in order to fully embrace the Teutonic religious way of life. The separation of religion from culture has even caused Asatruar today to overlook many facets of our faith. Focusing on rituals and runes shows that the sacred way of life has been contained within temple walls for far too long. Now we must begin to see the sacred in all that we do, for we are a part of the world around us!

Our method of reconstruction must involve every single fundamental of living culture. Such a basis, built upon "The Twelve Fundamentals", will allow us to turn over every stone and find all of the information we need for our revival, our Asatru Renaissance! These fundamentals are Lore/Theology, Pantheon, Nature, Diet, Law, Music, Dance, Combat, Ritual and Prayer, Folk and Ancestry, Arts and Crafts, and Magic. Every ancient civilization has manifested these fundamentals in one way or another. I have found them to be a potent tool in developing a foundation for our research so that we may reach our goal of a renewed faith. In order for us to have a religious revival we must have a cultural revival, for to the practitioner of an indigenous religion, they are one and the same!

I have no doubt that Asatru can bring many answers for our people in their search for spiritual fulfillment. All that can be found elsewhere is no farther than your front door, so to speak. As we build communities and develop projects to serve our folk more people will realize the power of collective consciousness, and will find significance in their individual life. You are significant, you are valid, you are important. No matter what or who you are you belong to a family, a genetic line that is the lifeblood of your folk, celebrated through your cultural heritage. Once you recognize this perhaps you may consider taking your place among those proud men and women who honor their gods and goddesses, their ancestors, and their lands. Thank you.