



## WHAT IS HEATHENISM?

The Pagan Revival began in the 1960s. It saw the resurgence of the pre-Christian religions of Europe and the Middle East. Modern Paganism includes the revived Mystery Schools of the Hellenic world, the Celtic religions of ancient Europe, Ireland and Scotland, and the European religion known as Wicca.

On the edges of Paganism came the recovery of Norse, German and Anglo-Saxon beliefs. Modern Pagans tried to fit them within their own format. Others decided to take the Germanic beliefs on their own merits, exclusive of precedents set by modern Pagans. The result is a distinct religion which is very different in purpose, flavor and structure from the ways of the modern Pagan community. To distinguish itself from conventional Paganism, the term “Heathenism” was adopted. Though Heathenism is indeed a Pagan religion, it is distinct as a unique entity under the larger Pagan umbrella.

There have been several names coined for various Heathen groups: Hedenskap, Asatru, Odinism, Thorism, Theod, Troth, Der Urglaawe, etc. Most of these terms relate to specific branches of Heathenism. The term, that covers all of them is Heathenism. Though each branch is itself distinct, all have much in common than.

When discussing religion, most folks anticipate questions such as “What do you believe?” People are ill-prepared for the question: “What will your belief do for me?” Seeing a bunch of people worshipping old Norse Gods might look more like a

medieval re-enactment or an occult ceremony to others. It is more important that people know what Heathenism does for us. In actual practice, the rites and ceremonies are a minor thing compared to living our beliefs every day.

Keep in mind that Heathenism is indeed a powerful way of life. The ancient Saxons and Norsemen would rather be executed than convert! Obviously Heathenism offered them something for which it was worth living and dying.

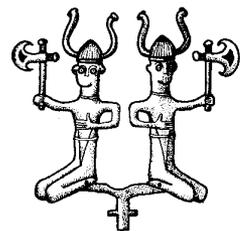
The basic premise of the Heathen is that everything spiritual is also practical. The goal of life is progress of the individual, the family and mankind. In this quest, there can be no cross purposes pitting spiritual requirements against real world necessity. Both work together for the betterment of all.

Those familiar with the other religions of these times will find Heathenism very different. Concepts common to conventional religions find no counterpart in Heathen belief. We are unbound by many of the strictures which are part and parcel of the major religions of this time.

We are bound by principles which guide us. These include honest, responsibility, fairness and generosity. Our principles encourage us to deal fairly with all, to do our best and to live a life that makes a difference. There are no rules behind which to hide, so as to excuse doing the minimum. We are urged to do our best and be our best.

## WHY HEATHENISM?

Heathenism is not just another religion. For most people, a change in religion means swapping one set of rules, deities and doctrines for another. That sort of change can appear significant, but it is actually superficial. The Heathen difference is the degree of change. It is just not a matter of choosing a new format for one's spiritual life. It is a commitment to a better life through initiative and understanding. Heathenism supports the individual's confidence to do and to act appropriately. For many, it is a drastic



change from the self-deprecating attitudes of conventional religion to the strong, secure individuality of Heathenism.

The goal of Heathenism is for men and women to make a positive difference in their lives. The key word here is dynamic. Positive difference comes through dynamic thinking and action. It is fueled by faith in oneself, trust in Life and the rewards of living rightly. These are not the pie-in-the-sky dreams of conventional religion, which promises rewards in an afterlife in exchange for suffering in this one. For Heathens, the rewards we earn in this life are evidence that there will be more available in the next. We prefer to take care of this life now, knowing that our future is the product of our present actions.

While Heathenism stresses personal responsibility, it is a religion free of spiritual guilt. We deal directly with matters of right and wrong in a practical manner. We do not accept such concepts as sin, penance and the need for atonement. These are the self-humiliating trappings of someone else's religion. Likewise, we have no "original sin" or other doctrine stressing an inherent flaw in humankind. The Heathen view sees humanity as good from the start. Wrong behavior brings its own consequences. No deity keeps count of "sins," and no "sin" stains the soul. The soul is not a tally marker subject to blemishes. We leave spiritual guilt to other religions.

Heathenism promotes the idea of the person as an individual who has the faculties to think, choose and act for himself. We are not sheep, waiting for a shepherd to show us the next thing we must do. We are men and women who can make our own decisions. Likewise, we do not accept the self-deprecating "humility" that makes people behave like worms. Heathens stand tall before the Gods. We enjoy pride in ourselves, our assets and our accomplishments. We accept that we are worthy of all good. There is nothing in us that makes us anything less than human beings worthy of well-being and dignity.

That brings us to another benefit of Heathen belief: a life of dignity. It is the nature of the Heathen to set a higher standard for himself and live accordingly. Rather than hide behind a set of "thou shalt nots", we aspire to principles which encourage us to act. The way of conventional religion is "No! No! No!" Our way is to accede to better by saying Yes. We say Yes to honesty, justice,

generosity and integrity. We say less to living to a higher standard and enjoying dignity, respect and satisfaction. The adherent of conventional religions apologizes for his work and says, "It is because God wills it." The Heathen feels satisfaction in his work and says, "It is because I did it."

Of course, such a belief means that we cannot blame the Gods for our shortcomings. We cannot hide behind a doctrine or take refuge in dogma. This is our life and it is up to use to live it. The downside for lesser individuals is that there is no place to hide.

There it is: what Heathenism offers you. There are no idle promises. The focus is on you, and the payoff is that you get a life worth living. Heathenism frees you from the spiritual and emotional baggage of conventional religion. It is not for everyone, but it just might be the spirituality that you have been seeking.

We are not into this religion to worship a bunch of comic book gods or live out some fantasy. We are into it because it inspires the Best in us.

## WHY THE GODS?

At first, it may seem odd that we worship Gods whose myths make them look like little more than oversized magickal people. Myth is allegory. Just as Christians and Jews do not believe the world was actually created in seven days, so we do not believe Thor is some great big man who swats monsters with his hammer. However, it is much easier for us to believe in a God who would be symbolized as a hammer-wielding champion than one who encourages us to be meek, poor and servile.



Let us take an incident that happened many years ago. Several men were talking about the ancients. Talk went to the old Gods, and the subject of Thor came up. You could see that the men liked it. They spoke with admiration for a God who exhibited such might. Then, one of the fellows said, " That may be so, but

JESUS is the only.....” Immediately, the men looked deflated. They agreed with him, but one could see that it was not because they felt it. It was as if they felt they had to agree about Jesus. Actions speak louder than words, and it was obvious that they were inspired by Thor and deflated by Jesus.

Thor so inspired the Norsemen that most refused to convert when Christianity came. It took several wars, deceit and much bloodshed to force Christianity on the Norse. Why refuse a religion if it were better? Once again, Thor inspired the people far more than Jesus. It is much easier to have faith in a God of Action than one of passivity.

The Norsemen were not ignorant barbarians. Most could write at a time when Christian Europe was rife with illiteracy. They were capable people at a time when the rest of the world was in its dark ages. They ruled a vast area, from Scandinavia to large parts of Britain, Ireland, France and what are now the Ukraine and Russia. So it is that their faith in the Gods was not born of ignorance, but of experience. The Norsemen of old were realists. Their experience showed that faith in the Gods had practical results.

Our Gods inspire us,. Though they are symbolized in an anthropomorphic way, we know that they are spiritual entities. Belief in their exact nature varies among Heathens. Some see them as individual deities, others as facets of a greater divinity. There are those who view them as part of a divine hierarchy, and others who think they are little more than archetypes. Heathenism has no single doctrine, and embraces all of these. Each person has to come to his or her own terms with the nature of the Gods. Heathenism is not a dogmatic religion, but a way of life that allows alternatives.

Most of us believe that the Gods interact with us and work with us. They are friends who desire the best for us. Whether we see them as aspects of one thing, distinct individuals, or as part of a holy hierarchy, the consensus is that they are favorable to us.

Traditionally, people gravitate to the Gods with which they feel the greatest affinity. This is based on the attributes of each deity, each of which has his own specialties. Tyr, the ancient God of War, is favored by soldiers and policemen. Freyja, a nature Goddess, is chosen by gardeners and cat lovers. Thor, the God of

the individual, is a favorite of many people. By choosing favorite Gods, we do not alienate the others. Beings of that magnitude are not offended by our choices. They do not feel slighted in the least! Gods are too vast and wise to be subject to such petty things as bickering, spite and jealousy.

For those raised in religions where the God is demanding and prone to retribution, this may seem strange. To Heathens, it is perfectly logical. Why would Gods who love us want to hurt us? If the Gods are our friends and they are so overwhelmingly wise and understanding, why would they want to punish us for petty things? Things like sin and salvation and 'Judgment Day' are alien to Heathenism. If you think about it, such concepts stand in direct opposition to the concept of a loving God.

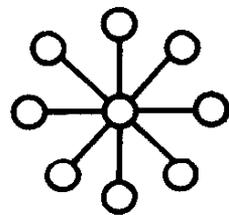
Again, we separate the myths and folktales from the reality. Though the Gods in myths may seem capricious and petty, we know those stories are allegories. In myths, the Gods are used as actors in a play rather than as their real nature. What we contact are the spiritual Gods rather than mythic characters.

To compare our Gods with the conventional monotheistic deity would be misleading. The deity believed by Christians, Jews and Muslims is thought to be an entirely different nature. It is transcendent: a distant deity that lives separate from its creation. It is jealous, capricious and vindictive. Our Gods are not only transcendent, but close at hand. They are not separate from this world. In fact, this world is as spiritual as any other because of the presence of the Gods.. We believe that our Gods are friendly to us and seek out betterment.

## WYRD

In the old myths and sagas, we hear of men who deal with "fate" or "destiny." They may "strive against fate" or some such thing. Fate? Destiny? Does that mean our lives are pre-ordained?

By Fate and Destiny, they mean Wyrd or Urd. Wyrd is the mechanism by



which Life proceeds forward. It is an inexorable force and eternal principle. It is often translated as Fate. However, Wyrd does not pre-destine our lives. Our fate is not forced on us. Through Wyrd, we have the means to make our own fate.

Destiny is not something that happens to us. Destiny is something we help create. Our actions today determine our destiny in the future. However, this is not Karma that repays us in kind. Wyrd has been likened to a loom. There is the forward motion and there is also the cross-weave.

Wyrd is a river that carries us in a general direction, but we steer the boat. By changing course, we change where the river takes us. Our actions and deeds set in motion the general destination. If we change what we do, we might change our destination.

It is through Wyrd that we are connected with our higher purpose. Because of Wyrd, our life is not aimless. We each have a destiny to create. Wyrd is the vehicle by which we do it. Each of us is his own helmsman on the river of Wyrd. We can choose to coast passively or steer our course. Our Fate is in our hands.

## HEATHEN ATTITUDES

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Being a "good Heathen" is far different from being a good Christian. Admired attributes include honesty, integrity, an even temperament, good judgment and courage. Heathen ethics are not a set of rules to follow, but time-honored principles to be lived. The Heathen cannot hide behind the excuse that he "did what the laws required". Right means doing the best thing, not just the correct thing. Life is too vast to be confined to a rigid set of rules. Something greater is needed.



Heathen ethics look at results, not an arbitrary adherence to some man-made code. A person's actions and accomplishments speak the loudest. While it is nice to draw from eldritch lore, it is

just as wise to look at modern examples.

A Christian couple worked very hard to gain their degrees in college. Both were in the scientific and engineering fields. In a flash of piety, both decided to become missionaries. They were sent to Guatemala, a hostile region of horrid jungle, civil war, disease and poverty. These two had the assignment of translating the Bible into an obscure dialect spoken by a small tribe of Guatemalan Indians. They spent some twenty years there, and had five children. All their reports were of continuing hardships. Though they tried to help the people, everything was routinely overturned by a variety of problems. Disease, tropical storms, military incursions and more made their lives hellish.

A Christian might consider the sacrifices of this couple to be a sign of devotion and piety. They would think it all very good.

A Heathen would regard them as irresponsible fools. First of all, the couple denied their own offspring a healthy and decent place to live. They subjected their children to unnecessary danger, even though there was ample opportunity to live in a much better environment. This also negated future opportunities for the children. To a Heathen, such lack of concern for offspring merely for an odd ideal is irresponsible.

After all, how can a person be of use to others if he neglects his own family?

The Christians would also be considered foolish for pursuing a meager task at great risk. The ridiculousness of translating a book at the expense of living fully just does not make sense. Sacrifice? For what? The very lack of appreciable results alone would condemn the expedition as a fool's errand.

Heathens put home and family first. It is only reasonable that a person give his own kin and hearth the best. The fellow who does good deeds for the entire community is less respected than the fellow who does best for his own household. What is the point of earning good, if it is not to be used for those held nearest and dearest?

Heathens also believe that a person's value is in what he does. Rich or poor, the one who does right is esteemed more than the one who has much. Christianity teaches that poverty is a virtue. Heathenism believes that virtue cannot be measured by the

quantity or lack of possessions, but lies elsewhere. A wise rich man is regarded better than a foolish poor man. It is not in wealth, but wisdom or folly, that good is determined.

The Havamal, a book of the Poetic Eddas, provides much information on practical ethics and common sense. To the Heathen, a code of ethics must partake of practical reality. Unrealistic ideals are folly. Only those things which work can be considered right.

Of course, there's more to being right than just satisfying the whims of the moment. Our ancestors forged their ethics through shrewd observation of human nature with a view to the principle of cause and effect. Those who indulged such shortcomings as lying, deceit and unfairness always seemed to place themselves in an unhappy position. Whether ostracized by the community or trapped in their own wiles, deceivers inevitably came to unhappy conclusions. This was also true of violent souls whose only way of dealing was by causing pain. Violent men eventually found every hand against them. Causers of strife never had a moment's peace.

This is not to say that Heathens were pacifists. A good man or woman was more than able to take a stand. Violent men could only be overthrown by violence. Heathens recognized that there were times when force was necessary. They also had the requisite discretion to know just when force was required. At all other times, there were more peaceful alternatives.

Contrary to popular myth, the ancient Heathens were not a pack of bloodthirsty savages. They enjoyed an organized and lawful society. Within society, violence was disdained. Against outside opponents, the ancient Heathens proved ferocious warriors. It is true that there were Viking raids against monasteries and settlements in the British Isles and the coasts of Europe. To this day, Heathens do not care that monasteries and churches were raided. After all, the Christians were foolish in having such places in the first place.

While Christendom was in its Dark Ages, the Heathens were on the move. It was only by forcing Christianity on the Heathens that they were held in check. The superior culture of the North could only be impeded by religious pollution and

ecclesiastical enslavement.

Heathen ethics place heavy emphasis on common sense. Wisdom is expressed in terms of results. Self-control, the willingness to tend one's needs, and a feeling of concern for the well-being of one's fellows is central to Heathenism. Perhaps the best word for it is "caring". Heathens care that things are done right. They care enough to make things easier for others, too. Heathens won't leave obstacles or unnecessary work for others. A Heathen cares enough to be neat, sociable and courteous. He will carry his trash to the next wastebasket, rather than litter the streets. He will move a fallen limb out of the roadway so that others won't drive into it.

An example of the hard side of Heathen ethics happened in Norway. In a small bygd, the locals enjoyed feeding the eider-ducks. A hunter, knowing this, lay in wait and shot a few of the half-tame fowl. The people were incensed. Had the hunter sought his prey elsewhere, there would have been no problem. In using the bygd, he broke the common rule of decency. The people decided to duck the hunter into a pool. After a few dunkings, he was released and warned not to return.

Heathens have nothing against hunting - to the contrary. Yet even though hunting is done solely for the food, there are still rules. Animals that are like pets are regarded by all as "off limits".

Heathens like to hunt and fish. Their one rule is that anything hunted must be useful. Deer, elk and reindeer provide food, fur, and workable bone. To this day, farmers in Norway make use of every part of the deer. Waste is regarded as wrong. What a contrast to the anti-hunters of America and Britain!

Most anti-hunters regard animals as cute, fuzzy creatures. Cute? Animals are rarely so genteel! Anyone who understands animals knows that even the smallest creatures can be ferocious. Those cute bears can kill a man with one swipe of the paw; the "harmless" squirrel can bite a finger in two. Heathens know animals as they are, not as others would make of them.

Heathens also like to make things pleasant. In early times, all wooden and bone objects were carved and painted. The spare hours of long winter nights provided plenty of time to make art out of common objects. This has persisted right until modern times.

Beauty is one motivation of Heathenism. Ugliness is deplored. Ugliness is seen as the result of uncaring and sloppy acts. A half-hearted approach to life and endeavors results in ugliness. Shoddy workmanship is but one example. Trash and blight are among the others. Heathens work to bring more of Life's beauty into their own homes and steads.

Christianity preaches that poverty is "virtue" and that material things are considered base. Heathens believe that wealth is fine, so long as the person uses it wisely. Wealth is an excellent servant, but a horrid master. Owning nice things is one of the prerogatives of life. Well-being can indulge niceties.

Luxury is not a way of life, but an occasional benefit of living rightly. Those who live for luxury have missed the point, and are no better than those who worship their wealth. Those who appreciate luxury as an occasional benefit gain the most from it. Heathens own things. The preference is for things which will provide good service. If they also be ornamental, that is all the better.

Poverty serves nobody. To adopt poverty when abundance is available helps nothing. It will not help the poor! One doesn't abet the impoverished by climbing into the gutter. Things are available to those who can get them. Those who can should take no shame in doing so. The Christian tendency to be ashamed of affluence is folly. A person should make no excuse for wealth. If he has it, he should take pride in his success.

What of sex? Judeo-Christian civilization has a difficult time with sex. Centuries of a policy of prudery have made a mess.

This mess is particularly bad in America and English-speaking countries. The Northern lands are generally free of the sexual quagmire. Heathens are neither prudes nor libertines. Sex is as much part of life as eating and sleeping. It has its place and time. There should be no shame in sex. It is good when pursued wisely. Those just breaking from the Christian sex-trap often find themselves going to the other extreme. Licentiousness and excess are as bad as celibacy. Heathenism applauds discretion and common sense. Enjoy it, but don't be foolish about it.

Marriage is part and parcel of Heathen lore. Marriages are based on mutual trust and faithfulness. Without the ban on

premarital sex as enforced by Christianity, Heathens marry for more than just the privilege of a roll in the hay. In fact, Heathen loyalty to one's spouse is far stronger than that of the monotheists.

Marriage is essential in a family religion. The family is the integral unit of Heathen life. While families have become distanced in America, family ties still remain strong in Scandinavia. Blood has meaning. Relatives have an obligation to each other. In Norway, this extends to distant cousins. It is quite a contrast to the erosion of the family seen in America and some parts of Europe.

Being a family religion, Heathenism has a strong fertility component. This also bears out from its origin as a farmer's religion. The Heathen still recognizes his relationship with the land. He sees himself as part of the Earth. The recognition of the balance between male and female is that of reciprocal parts working together. This goes from the family to the society. Though men and women have certain essential differences, they are innately equal. In earlier times, each had certain roles. By the nature of things, it was expedient that the wife tended the home and children while men worked the fields or took to fishing, trading, etc. Each ruled his or her place. A king had to have a queen, and vice versa. Heathens then as now recognized certain differences in biology and temperament as essential. The trend toward equality in modern times has also been rife with the attempt to deny any factors of gender. In this mess, people lose some of their identity.

In ancient times, women worked some trades which were later considered "male only". They helped in the fields, participated in fishing, and worked other trades alongside the men. This is not unusual in rural areas. Christianity's work to diminish the role of the female never quite took hold in the North. While other nations struggle with equal rights, the Northern lands just shrug their shoulders. Northerners cannot understand why others have such a problem adjusting.

As for war: Heathens realize that such things do happen. A person should be ready to come to the defense of his community. There are also times when wrongdoers can only be restrained by might of arms. While violence and hostility are thought foolish,

times of danger may require force.

The Heathen takes each person on his or her own merits. It is not who a person is, but what he does, which counts. Whatever the person's ancestry or background, it is his own actions which determine his worth as an individual. Heathenism is ever fair, rewarding good with good and requiting evil with justice. Modern theories of racism are alien to Heathenism. What matters a person's ethnicity, if he conducts himself in an honorable manner? Integrity is the real judge of character.

Heathen ethics are fair, reasonable and practical. In their way, they are firmer than the arbitrary rules of monotheistic religion. The Heathen has greater freedom, yet embodies a greater personal sense of responsibility. Doing good is not enough. Doing better is essential. Others may be wrong, and the situation may be wrong, but the true Heathen will not let anything keep him from doing what he knows to be right.

## MAGICK AND DIVINATION

Magick is the use of spiritual forces to create change. It is not a mumbo-jumbo thing. Magick operates on principles. Does it seem strange? People do not question when conventional modern religions do the same thing. Is blessing religious medals, handkerchiefs and "holy oil" any different that charging an amulet? Is having a religious service to pray for a specific intention all that different from casting a spell for the same thing? If you look at it with cold objectivity, you can see how conventional ideas of "blessing" and "praying" are essentially the same as magick.



Heathenism has many tools for magickal work. Among them are many old spoken spells and invocations for various purposes. These are similar to prayers. We also have the Runes. The powerful spiritual forces have been categorized and symbolized in the old Runic alphabet. It serves as a system to

organize and to allow us to understand and use these various forces. The Runes are also an excellent tool for understanding ourselves and our world. They are very important to us.

Another thing we do with Runes is divination. This is the use of magickal means to forecast the future and to uncover things which may be unknown to us at the moment. You may be familiar with the Tarot, which is used to foretell the future. We do this with Runes. The result is like a weather forecast. We can use that information to our advantage. Does that seem odd? Many people have their own omens and portents, be it dreams of uncanny events or some such thing. Have you ever had a dream that came true? Have you ever had a hunch or gut feeling that proved correct, even when everything else said it would never happen? That same thing that warned you is what we use in divination.

The use of magick and divination varies throughout Heathenism. There are people who are ardent practitioners of both arts, and people who want nothing to do with either of them. Most Heathens are somewhere in between. Whatever way they believe, we are practical about it. For example, though there are many healing spells within magick, a Heathen would never refuse medical help. "Cast your spells on the way to the hospital." Magick is always backed with practical action. We believe that magick is a help, not a substitute for direct action.

Magick and divination are there for those who want them. They are not required. In fact, we do not even require that people believe in them. In Heathenism, much is up to individual preferences rather than a hard and fast dogma. Belief or disbelief in magick and divination does not affect the sincerity of one's Heathenism.

## **THE WARRIOR**

Most folk associate the old Norse Gods with Viking warriors. The reason is simple: the best of the existing old lore hails from the late Viking Age. Add the fact that every Norwegian, Dane and Swede likes to think that deep down inside, he is a Viking. Suddenly we go from religion to Vikings.

There is a warrior aspect within Heathenism. We appreciate the place of soldiers, naval sailors and policemen in our society. Their work is as sacred as any other. Heathenism has always had a place for the warrior, and this goes back to the times when any man could be called upon to defend the community in battle.

Of course, we are realists. Most of us are not warriors. Back in the old days, people were farmers, hunters, fishermen, traders, and blacksmiths. Today we can add thousands of other occupations from computer geeks to typesetters to crane operators. Most of our professions are civilian in nature.



This is not to say that we ignore the warrior aspects in ourselves. Many of us have prior military experience. Many of us are capable of defending ourselves and our families. This is another aspect of self-reliance. On the other hand, we are not bullies. We do not seek or encourage violent encounters. Violent attacks on others are reprehensible to us. We feel that if people have strong violent urges, they ought limit them to combative sports or take up a career in the military.

We respect soldiers, sailors and airmen for putting their safety on the line to protect our country. We also respect the sacrifice of such civil servants as policemen, fireman and medical rescue personnel for the risks they take. Heathens have great respect for all veterans. We acknowledge that their sacrifice has made it possible to live as we do today.

There are a few Heathens who find sport in trying to re-enact the battle skills of the Viking Age. We see it much as any other hobby. They are not trying to recreate the Viking Age, but we do respect it as part of the Heathen heritage. Those who choose to re-enact are allowed to do so. Those of us who do not re-enact are content to let them have their fun. It is another form of self-expression.



## THE GODS

Here is a partial list of the Gods and their attributes:

**Odin:** Chief deity, Odin generally appears as an old man in a blue cloak wearing a wide-brimmed hat or a long hood. He is usually accompanied by two ravens and two wolves. Invoke Odin for matters of wisdom, learning, magick, solving problems, deciphering difficult things, and creating opportunity. Odin is Lord of the Crossroads. He can also be invoked to help the dead reach Asgard.

**Frigga:** Odin's wife, she appears as a middle-aged woman who is either spinning yarn, weaving, knitting, or tending children. Frigga is regal in bearing. Invoke her in matters of motherhood, children, homes, safety, and assuaging grief. Frigga is very subtle.

**Thor / Thorr/ Asa-Thorr:** God of Thunder, he is pictured as a red-bearded fellow brandishing a hammer and riding a goat-cart through the skies. Thorr rules weather, storms, lightning, electricity, overcoming obstacles, individual initiative, personal ethics and expanding order. A nail driven into the crossbeam with three strokes is "Thorr's nail": it dissolves discord and instills calmness and order. Invoke him in matters of personal integrity, initiative, individual ventures, protection, weather and travel by automobile or aircraft.

**Sif:** Goddess of the Farm and Home. Sif has bright blonde hair, and often wears light blue. She is often seen spinning yarn. Invoke Sif for matters of binding and joining, the farm, crops, safety, calm, and attraction. Sif ensures a good harvest. She is Asa-Thorr's wife.

**Tyr:** God of Battle and Justice. Tyr appears as a soldier in a red tunic with polished steel armor. He usually carries a sword or spear. One hand is missing. Tyr is a bringer of justice and of victory over opposition. Invoke him in matters of restoring justice, getting to the truth, defense, competition, opposition, victory and success. Be careful! Tyr is just, but is not one to keep the peace!

**Njord:** God of Harbors, Coasts and Ships. Njord is a rough-visaged, huge fellow with simple manners and astute insight. He likes to be called Onkel (Norse for Uncle). Njord can be invoked for matters of sea travel, ships, navigation, fishing, and prosperity. He can stop storms, rough seas and fires.

**Frey:** God of Nature, Horses and Boars. Frey appears as a strong, young man riding a horse or golden boar. He is the Male God of Love, as well as of nature. Frey brings protection, luck and peace to the home. Invoke him for matters of fertility, planting, horses, livestock, the Sun, luck, protection of the home, and warmth.

**Freya:** Goddess of Nature, the Sun and Love. Freya appears as a sensuous woman with red or blonde hair. Normally she wears a green dress and rides a chariot pulled by cats. Freya can be invoked for matters of Love and marriage. Invoke her for love, joy, protection, good fortune, and magickal needs.

**Idun:** Goddess of Spring and Wells. Idun is a dark-haired, light woman who carries a basket of golden apples. She is a restorer of youth and vitality. Idun can be invoked for matters of healing, renewal, pregnancy, insight and good fortune.

**Heimdall:** The Guardian. Heimdall is a dazzling, bright individual who is called the "White God". He is silent and vigilant. Heimdall

guards the mythic Bifrost Bridge to Asgard. Invoke him for matters of observation, vigilance, guardianship, and safe crossing over bridges, fords and ferries. Heimdall is also the Lord of Sentries.

**Ull:** The Ski God. Ull is a master skier and archer. He moves across the land swiftly, and his arrow never misses its mark. Invoke him in matters of hunting, accuracy, and winter travel. He is a master at getting people through difficult terrain with ease.  
**Hermod:** Odin's Messenger. Hermod can ride anywhere at amazing speed. Invoke him in matters of haste, speedy delivery, sending messages, and travel in haste.

**Loki:** The Trickster. Loki is a mischievous God who is full of pranks, cunning, and wiles. Loki is also a master thief, shape-changer and sneak. Some invoke him in matters which require trickery or stealth...but be careful. Loki might just play his tricks on you!



## ETHNICITY

The Heathen religions are the ancient beliefs of the various Germanic people. These are the ancestors of the Scandinavian, German, Austrian, Dutch and English people. In fact, all of the old lore is translated from the ancient languages. Most of it comes from Nordic, German and Anglo-Saxon sources. It stands to reason that many Heathens feel an ethnic connection as well as a spiritual one.

Of course, one does not have to be German, Scandinavian, Dutch or English to be Heathen. To the contrary! Heathenism is open to all who want it. Any who feel that this is their path may partake of it.

For a few, Heathenism is as much a religious choice as it is an ethnic expression. There are groups who prefer to focus on the ethnic aspect. These groups are referred to as “Folkish.” They represent a small fraction of Heathen organizations. Most of the Folkish groups have limited membership to those connected to a specific Germanic ethnic group. This is not racism, but exclusivity.

Most Heathen groups are open to all who come. However, we respect the rights of the Folkish groups to pursue their beliefs in their own way. The point is that whether you seek an ethnic aspect to Heathenism or prefer open membership, you can find it. Heathens pride themselves on their individuality and their respect for the choices of others.

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## **For further information:**

**Uncle Thor’s Heathen resources** – information on Heathenism, the Gods, etc.: <http://www.thortrains.com/UncleThors>

**Uncle Thor’s Magazine:** Online periodical with articles for the Heathen and Pagan communities: <http://www.thortrains.com/utm>

The following books may be of use:

**Old Norse Mysteries, Deities and Worship:** an introduction to the beliefs of Heathenism, written in an easy-to-understand, concise format.

**The Twisting Trail to Bifrost’s Way:** a more complete study of the Heathen belief, ethics and way of life.

**Hedenskap: The Folk Religion of Ancient Scandinavia:**  
describes the beliefs and practice of classic Heathenism.

**Old Norse Runecraft and Spellcraft:** a very basic introduction to  
the Runes and Norse / German magick and lore.

Find these books at <http://www.thortrains.com/bifrost/>

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