

Why Ásatrú ?



For thousands of years our ancestors surged across land and sea in a wave of conquest, trade and exploration that has come down in story and in legend to stir our imaginations even today. The Vikings took part in this drama, as did the related Germanic tribes on the European continent. We, their descendents - whether Scandinavian, English, German, Dutch, Frankish, or related peoples - can draw upon these mighty forefathers for our inspiration today.

Courage, vitality, and love of freedom are our spiritual birthright. Let us examine that inheritance, as exemplified in our ancestral religion known as Odinism, or Asatrú.

Asatru places an exceptionally high value on human freedom and on individuality. This applies both in worldly and in spiritual matters, and is so strong that we honor our deities, but do not grovel before them. To us, the gods and goddesses are models, inspirations, self-aware personifications of the forces of nature, and even friends, but never are they our masters or we their slaves. We do not bow before them when we call on them, nor do we surrender our human sovereignty to them. We do not beg from them, sacrificing freedom for a handout. It is true that Odin, our high god, is called "All Father", but this does not imply inferiority or submissiveness on our part. Among the Norse peoples and in Germanic society generally, defiance and strength of will were considered favorable traits in children, for they indicated a capacity for self-responsibility and independence. So it is between us and our gods.

The family is one of the pillars of Asatru. By tradition our people have always been devoted to their family, clan or extended family, and tribe. These organic social forms are as important as ever. This is not mere sentiment, it is a guarantee of liberty. Where the family and its natural extensions are functioning properly, the power of competing entities, such as the State, will be limited. Where they are nonexistent or crippled, all power gravitates to the State by default and freedom dies.

We believe in the efficacy of human action. By heroic action you can take your life in your hands and be the master of your soul. You are not the pawn of historical forces, condemned to whine about being born into "a world you never made." Fate, the momentum of past events, is something YOU help shape.

Courage is one of the more conspicuous Northern virtues. We of Asatru are taught to train ourselves in courage -- the courage to face an enemy in battle, to risk all to do what is right, to defend our beliefs, and to be uncompromising with ourselves. Freedom, family, and tribe would not long exist without courage. It is a part of a stringent code of conduct, of honor, permitting no shirking of one's duties, no oathbreaking, and no ignoble acts.

Needless to say, all these values are under assault today. The economic slave masters, the behaviorists, the genetic engineers who would remove our aggressiveness, the followers of slave gods, all who preach the grey global monoculture - these cannot tolerate the existence of the free man and woman, the unchained ones, because the comparison shows their weakness. There is a concerted effort underway to pull down the free ways of our ancestors and replace them with a combination of the sheep flock and the anthill. Now more than ever, we need a return to our natural faith, the religion of our ancestors.

So much for the social implications of Asatru. What do Odinists believe about the supernatural, an afterlife, and other usual religious concerns? We are supported by modern physics and by parapsychology when we state that there are other worlds of being than our own, and our gods live, as surely as you, or I.

Our deities are several, each concerned with a different aspect of the universe. Odin is Father of the Gods, god of wisdom and poetry and magic. Thor is the stalwart friend of the farmer, the freeholder, the warrior and toiler. Frey governs growth, joy, and prosperity. Balder epitomizes courage tempered with goodness.

But a religion without a goddess is halfway to atheism. Frigga is the wife of Odin and mother of the gods. Freya is the beautiful life-giver, the eternal feminine. Nerthus is our beloved Mother Earth, whom we seek to heal of her wounds.

The Germanic concept of an afterlife is fully consistent with our other beliefs. Those who live worthy lives go to the realm of the gods, Asgard, after death. Evildoers and oathbreakers are sent to a place of eternal gloom, cold, and fog. There is also a persistent tradition of reincarnation within the family line in Asatru.

Tragically, the forced conversion of the Germanic peoples to Christianity resulted in the loss of much of the ancient religious beliefs and practices. What survived, however, was sufficient to ensure that the spiritual essence of Odinism would be available to modern man. For those who possess the necessary courage, devotion, and will, the possibility of achieving direct contact with the spiritual forces inherent in Asatru remains viable. For others, a genuine but lesser degree of contact with these wellsprings of wisdom and power is possible.

Our faith is practiced in numerous ways. We celebrate the solstices and equinoxes as part of the endless cycle of the year, and we observe as well the phases of the moon. There are other special days in which we honor the gods and goddesses or remember great personages now gone on to the Other World. Some of us must practice alone, but where possible we organize to carry out our ceremonies and to promote fellowship among our brothers and sisters now restored to their rightful tribe. Our organizational structure consists of a loose hierarchy, with each congregation or "kindred" largely autonomous. The entire system is designed to maximize those values of freedom and self-reliance that we hold so dear.

Basically, though, our religion is a matter of everyday life. We try to incorporate it into everything we do. Every time we display courage, speak out against tyranny and bureaucracy, are hospitable to guests, or help preserve the environment, we are performing a religious act. Our group activities emphasize exploration and adventure, individual expression, and communion with nature and spiritual forces. Loyalty and brotherhood among members is recognized as a supreme virtue. We strive always to mold our characters so as to be worthy of our kinsmen and our gods.

The preservation of our freedoms, and the continuance of our kind, demands a return to our native religion. We cannot offer you a life of security and ease. We do offer you a chance to grow in courage, self-reliance, and freedom. We do offer an opportunity to grow closer to nature in the practice of the age-old rituals of our ancestors, to celebrate the progress of the seasons, to partake of the essence of our people. We offer you a chance to fight in the eternal struggle between the free and the slave, between those who would preserve life on this planet and those who would destroy it. If this strikes a responsive chord in your soul, if this is more important than having a secure religion as a crutch -- join us in the freedom and adventure of Asatru!

Want to learn more? Subscribe to The Runestone, a quarterly journal of Odinism. Write to

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