Who are the gods and goddesses of the Heathen way?

Perhaps the best-known Heathen god is Odin. He is the god of many things: inspiration, ecstasy, poetry, healing, and death; it was he who won knowledge of the mysteries of the universe which we call the runes. Thor is the god whose great might we feel in thunderstorms. The lightning is his Hammer, the weapon with which he defends Midgard, the world of humans; the rain that he brings makes the fields fruitful. Tyr is the upholder of right order and justice, both among humans and in the entire universe. Frey is invoked for peace and plenty; he and Odin were also the founders and protectors of many dynasties of Heathen kings. His father Njordh watches over the sea, ships, sailors, wealth, and trade.

Our goddesses are no less holy and mighty than our gods. Frigga, whom we see as Odin's wife, protects homes and families. Freya rules over magic, sexuality, and riches; she also takes half of those slain in battle. Idunna tends the golden apples that keep the gods young; she inspires new strength and joy to spring up in our hearts. Skadhi's might is seen in the winter; Ostara is the bringer of spring. Earth herself is a mighty goddess, who gives food to all.

These deities were known by different names in different Germanic cultures—in Anglo-Saxon England, for example, Odin was Woden and Thor was Thunor. There are many other deities who were and are worshipped. Often, a Heathen will choose one of the gods or goddesses as a special patron and friend—or perhaps be chosen by a patron deity. However, Heathens honor all the gods and goddesses of the North. Heathens believe in and honor spirits of the home and the land, who can be helpful in many ways if treated well, or disruptive if ignored. Heathens honor their own worthy ancestors as well. Check out the Troth resources, listed on the back of this pamphlet, to find out more about our gods and ways.

What is The Troth?

The Troth is one of several international organizations that promote the ancient religion of the Northlands, known as Ásatrú, Heathenry, and by other names. We are incorporated as a non-profit religious corporation in the state of Texas, and are recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt religious organization.

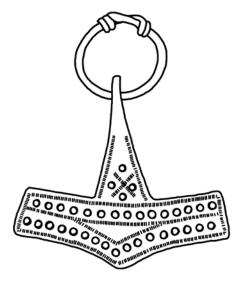
The Troth publishes a quarterly magazine, *Idunna*, along with other writings on Heathen belief and practice. We serve as a networking organization for individuals and kindreds, and we try to assist our members to form local groups to practice our religion and make it more widely available. Once a year, the Troth sponsors a major gathering at which members and interested folks conduct workshops and ceremonies, and discuss and demonstrate their many skills and practices. The Troth also conducts a certification program for clergy, incorporating training in lore, theology, ritual, and counseling.

The Troth believes that the Gods call whom they will—regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, or sexual orientation. To hear their call is a joy, an honor, and also a duty. If you hear that call, and you are willing to live by our values and honor our Gods, then we invite you to take your place among friends and kin, and bring new honor and strength to our ancient Heathen faith.

How can I find out more?

- Visit the main website of The Troth at http://www.thetroth.org/
- E-mail the Troth at troth-contact @thetroth.org
- The Troth has a network of local coordinators, or "Stewards", who are happy to answer questions and provide contacts. To find your nearest Steward, go to http://www.thetroth.org/memsvc/stewards/
- Write to the Troth at the address on the front of this flyer.

Heathens and Heathen Faith



Some Frequently Asked Questions



©2003, The Troth PO Box 1369 Oldsmar, FL 34677

This material may be reproduced freely but may not be altered

What is Heathenry? What is Ásatrú?

The Germanic peoples of Northern Europe, who include the English, Norse, Icelanders, Swedes and Germans among others, once followed their traditional religion, with roots thousands of years old. Their ways were based on worshipping their Gods, honoring their kin and ancestors, and respecting the Earth and the land spirits. Their beliefs were nearly wiped out during the conversion of the European nations to Christianity. Yet they did not die: in writings, traditions, and folklore, the old faith has survived to the present day.

Today, a growing number of people are working for a rebirth and a regrowth of these ways. We are not trying to "turn back the clock": we live in the modern world, not the world of the Vikings or the Goths or the Anglo-Saxons. Yet our faith's deep roots in history give us strength and courage, while its wisdom is deeply relevant to modern life.

In the old days, our religion had no name; it was just "the ways we've always had." Today, different varieties of this religion are known by various names, including Ásatrú (pronounced AHsa-tru, meaning "trust in the Gods" in Icelandic), the Elder Troth, Theodism, the Northern Way, and others. "Heathenry" or "Heathenism" is the most general term for our religion. Although there are a great many variations in beliefs and practices within this faith, we all share a personal loyalty to the gods and goddesses of the Northlands, including Odin, Thor, Tyr, Frigga, Frey, Freya, and many others.

What are the ethical standards of the Heathen religion?

We strive to practice the moral principles followed by our forebears, as described in the epic poems and sagas. Oftentimes we sum these up as the Nine Noble Virtues: Courage, Truth, Honor, Loyalty, Discipline, Hospitality, Industriousness, Self-reliance, and Steadfastness. Heathens actively seek to apply these to every aspect of their lives.

How is Heathenry different from Wicca and other pagan ways?

There are "Norse Wiccans" who practice Wicca in a Heathen context, perhaps calling on the Heathen gods Frey and Freya as the "Lord and Lady". Most Heathens, however, do not identify as Wiccans or as neopagans. Many Wiccans see all gods as manifestations of just two deities, the God and the Goddess. Heathens, on the other hand, view their own gods as interrelated and working together, but not as aspects of a Godhead. We are generally polytheistic, not pantheistic or duotheistic.

Heathens generally don't see their gods as identical with the gods of other peoples, such as the Greeks, Romans, Celts or Native Americans. The traditional paths of these peoples are valid for those who are called to follow them, but they're not the same thing as Heathenry, and we don't blend our religion with others.

Are Heathens anti-Christian?

Some Heathens have had bad experiences with Christianity, encountering intolerance, hypocrisy, and worse abuses. Others remember the forced conversion of northern Europe to Christianity, when many Heathens were persecuted or put to death by Christian kings such as Charlemagne and Olaf Tryggvason.

Most Heathens aren't especially opposed to Christianity, as long as Christians respect our freedom of worship in return. Heathens don't necessarily disbelieve in the existence of the Christian God. What we reject is the claim that he is the only valid god for all humanity to bow to. Heathens don't "worship Satan" or "worship demons" either. Satan, "demons" and "devils" belong to the Christian mythos and have no place in Heathen ways. Nor do we accept the doctrine of "original sin"; we may choose to do wrong, but wrongfulness isn't built into our natures. We freely choose to follow our own path, and we ask that members of other faiths respect our choice.

Doesn't Germanic Heathenism support racism, homophobia, and Nazism?

No. Unfortunately, the Nazis used some Heathen symbols, such as the swastika and the runes, and appealed to the heroic past of the Germanic folk in their propaganda. A small number of outspoken racists and bigots continue to use Heathen beliefs and symbols as a cover for their political agendas. This is an ignorant and tragic misuse of our ancient birthright. (In much the same way, the Nazis misused some aspects of Christianity for their own purposes, and a few extremist groups such as the "Christian Identity" movement continue to do so.) There is no support in our myths and lore for racism or for Nazi or other fascist ideology.

Heathens support the rights of all individuals to follow whichever religion and customs they choose, without interference or intimidation. We do not associate with known racists or would-be Nazis. We do not endorse their misuse of our symbols, such as Thor's Hammer or the runes. And perhaps most importantly, we believe in taking honest responsibility for our own lives and our own societies. We don't believe that it's honorable to try to dump the blame for what we don't like about ourselves onto Jews, Africans, gays, or anyone else.

What are those emblems on the cover?

The large picture is the Hammer of Thor. Thor's Hammer pendants were worn by many Heathens in the Viking era as a sign of their trust in their gods. The Hammer shown here was found at Rømersdal, Denmark, and dates from about the year 1000. Many Heathens today wear Thor's Hammers as outward signs of their faith, whether they are drawn most to Thor or to another of the gods or goddesses.

The Thor's Hammer in a wreath is the emblem of the Troth, one of the largest Heathen organizations today.