

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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Contact email: info@runestone.com

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THE AFA'S RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

It's been ten weeks since we announced that the AFA was now a membership organization. What have we done since then?

We've started an online Yahoo group for members...published the first issue of our member's newsletter...begun work on a standardized "Asatru 101" course which will eventually be available to the public...sent out a news release in response to the Supreme Court's decision on religious rights...helped, along with other Asatruar, get a correction out of the New York Times...started an aggressive campaign on behalf of Norway's endangered wolf population...organized a pool of blood donors for our members...and gotten the AFA authorized to accept donations on Ebay.

Not bad, considering that while doing all this we've continued publishing AFA Updates (up to 953 subscribers as of this morning!) and holding regular gatherings in northern California!

Isn't it time you joined the AFA and got in on all the action?

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Last Monday, the Supreme Court issued decisions in two cases involving the public display of the Ten Commandments. Both decrees were ambiguous enough to please no one, and we can expect to hear much more about this issue in the years to come.

The "America-is-a-Christian-nation" crowd tells us that the Ten Commandments are the basis for governance in the United States, and indeed, for all of Western Civilization. You and I know better than that; my previous essays have touched on the pagan Anglo-

Saxon roots of our law, roots acknowledged by no less a luminary than Thomas Jefferson.

There are two questions, however, that we need to ask regarding the Ten Commandments:

(1) To what extent are they consistent with religious and political freedom? In other words, what would be the effect on our freedoms if the Ten Commandments were the literal law of the land?

(2) What unique contributions to ethics or morals do the Ten Commandments make?

Commandments one and two tell us that religious freedom is only for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The first one states, approximately, "I am the Lord thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Obviously, Asatruar would be in deep trouble on that one! The second commandment forbids the use of "graven images" in worship (Many Jews and Muslims take it farther and consider any artistic representations of the human form to be sinful). Germanic religious customs, on the other hand, have traditionally included anthropomorphic images ranging from crude petroglyphs to sculpture in wood, stone and bone. If the Commandments were law today, our religious freedoms would once more be curtailed.

How can anyone who believes in religious freedom think that these two commandments should be held up as the foundation of American government? Theoretically, you and I would be fined or imprisoned...or stoned, or burned...if these dictates were taken seriously. Most of the Christians I know, being basically decent people, would not go so far. Yet, if they truly believe this to be the heart and soul of America's laws, how could they not? Do they believe in the tribal laws of the Hebrews, or don't they?

The third commandment forbids us from swearing a false oath in the name of Yahweh. Fair enough; I don't intend to swear ANY oath to Yahweh, false or otherwise, so this one doesn't concern me.

Commandment number four, on the other hand, constitutes another infringement on individual rights and on religious rights specifically. It decrees that we are to refrain from work on the Sabbath. The restrictions on human freedom are obvious: Many of us are old enough to remember the "blue laws" that determined what we could or could not buy on Sundays. Entire store aisles were roped off on the day of Christian worship, and making "religiously incorrect" purchases was a crime!

However, the issues raised by the fourth commandment go far beyond the legality of buying toothpaste on the Sunday. Forcing others to comply with Christian religious teaching is a grievous violation of rights and conscience and, in effect, amounts to coerced subservience to the Judeo-Christian God.

In civilized countries, commandments one through four are no longer matters of civil law so, fortunately, we won't be going to prison for violating them. The point, however, is not imminent prison sentences but simply that it is an insult to Western law and government to take such primitive, totalitarian dictates as "the foundation of our society."

The remaining six commandments do not require much attention, because they are all laudable, commonsense rules for human behavior. We are not to steal, or murder, or commit adultery, or tell lies to incriminate our neighbor. These are fine precepts...but they are unexceptional. They are the staple of human custom and law, duplicated among many peoples - not the least our own ancestors! They are as much a part of the Germanic heritage as they are the Semitic, and why we should import them from strangers remains a mystery.

In a tribal Semitic society, the Ten Commandments perhaps made sense. Their authority flows from the top downward. No questioning is permitted. Rights flow from God, not from votes in the assembly of freemen. God is "totally other" from his human creations, rather than being kin with mutual obligations bound by them and subject to the power of Wyrd. But for the men and women of Germania, the Commandments as a whole are not appropriate. By establishing law that springs from divine fiat, the Commandments make freedom, in the sense our ancestors knew it, impossible.

We are left with two conclusions. First, the specific commandments that make the Decalogue unique - the ones dealing with the relationship of God and man - would result in a theocratic dictatorship if they were applied as the law of the land. Second, the much more commonsense commandments forbidding false oaths, theft and the like are not unique and are found in other legal systems, including the law codes of our ancestors.

The Ten Commandments comprise an interesting legal document. They are relevant to American history because so many Americans have been trained to them. But, paradoxically, they are not in accord with a free society nor are they "the foundation of America's legal system."

America deserves better than that.

SIGN OUR PETITION TO SAVE NORWAY'S WOLVES!

There is good news and bad news concerning the endangered Norwegian wolves.

Bad news first: Another wolf has died since our last AFA Update. This means that there is now ONE intact wolf family known to exist in Norway.

But there is good news, too.

Our project is now represented online by a Yahoo group, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/norwegian_wolf/. Here you'll find updates on the wolf project as well as photos, various files, and other resources.

We have a petition online, as well! Better than that - we have two different ones:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/399085910> and <http://www.gopetition.com/online/6693.html>.

Please take a moment and sign them! And pass them on to as many people as you can. They represent one of the AFA's first activism efforts as a membership organization - let's make this a resounding success!

Kimberley, our Norwegian representative, wrote early this morning that we have had 371 signatures in the three days our petitions have been online. Furthermore, we have had the first offer of help from a Scandinavian Asatru organization! We are off to a good start...but it is only a start, and we need your help! Please sign our petitions...and drop a line to Kimberley@troi.ws to find out what else you can do to help. She's doing a magnificent job but she can't do it alone.

We can make a difference!

RUNE AND LORE CLASSES

The AFA sponsors twice-monthly classes on the runes and on Eddic lore in the Sacramento area. Anyone interested in attending can contact us at afa@lanset.com.

AFA MEMBERSHIP

Do you believe in what the AFA stands for? Do you like what we're doing?

If so - we need you to stand with us!

The mission of the AFA is "to practice, promote, and further evolve the religion of Asatru, thus forging it into a powerful and effective tool for building a better world." This is a big order. We can't do it alone. We need you - an involved, motivated, idealistic man or woman who wants to make a difference!

How can you sign up? One way is to read the relevant documents on the AFA website (<http://runestone.org>), download an application form, and send in your dues. Or if that doesn't work for you, write us and we will happily send you a membership packet by regular mail.

DONATIONS!

The Asatru Folk Assembly is a 501 c (3) religious organization, and donations to it are tax-deductible. We're trying to change the world on a shoestring, and your help would be appreciated

ODIN LIVES!

The groundbreaking radio program Odin Lives! is broadcast every Thursday night at 8 PM Eastern Time on a frequency of 7.415 MHz. This broadcast is repeated the next Tuesday morning at 12:15 AM on the same frequency. You can learn more by going to their web site at <http://www.odinlives.org>.

IMPORTANT DATES

July 9 - Day of Remembrance for Unn the Deep Minded. Unn was a strong-willed matriarch who established dynasties in the Orkneys, Faroes, and Iceland. Do something to make your own family line stronger and more permanent. Recall the deep-minded women of your clan today.

August 9 - Day of Remembrance for King Radbod. This Frisian king ejected Christian missionaries and upheld our ancestral faith in his land, against great pressure. Pour a libation to the ancient Frisian Goddess Friagabi, "Giver of Freedom" and declare yourself free from alien creeds.

Hail the AFA!

Stephen A. McNallen
Asatru Folk Assembly

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND WHO SHOULD BE GETTING THESE UPDATES?

Please refer him or her to AFA_Bearclaw-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

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