Spellstow: Tidings of the Winland Rice

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Cover: Wéobas of Wóden and Ár (ON: Eir) at Whittenge Heall in Richmond, Virginia. With the sickness that was going through the land, Þórbeorht Ealdorblótere began bidding the gods, eldren, and good wights for the health and healing of those within the Wínland Ríce.

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Thoughts and Questions?

The Ealdrîce Théodish Fellowship can be contacted at Ealdrîce@Ealdrîce.org. We would be happy to hear from you.

Háliggyld Books
of The Ealdrîce Théodish Fellowship
PO Box 13961
Richmond, VA 23225
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First Word

Welcome to the fifth issue of Spellstów, its second Þrimilce issue. Solmónaþ, Hréþmónaþ, and Êastremónaþ were months in which the sundry halls of the Winland Ríce each went about seeing to its own projects in the hope that, once completed, they might have something of worth to share with the rest of the Ríce. In Gering Théod, Gárman completed the manuscript for his forthcoming book, What Does Heathenry Mean?, the long-awaited follow-up to The Way of the Heathen. In the Ealdríce Háliggyld, I published In Hallowed Groves: Observations on the Ancient Anglo-Saxon Heathen Priesthood with Thoughts on Its Renewal Within Théodish Belief. In Hræfnscír Heall, Ælfric has been working on his forthcoming Hræfnscír Rune Calendar. Likewise, in Æppeldor Friðstow, Friðoric has begun writing articles on Théodish Belief for the Tasmanian Pagan Alliance’s newsletter, The Raven’s Call. Lastly, Háliggyld Books has lined up a number of titles that will be released over the summer to include the republication of the lauded Wassail! Gárman Here! series.

As hap would have it, there is a theme which, entirely unintended, runs through this issue. Unbeknownst to each other, both Ælfric and Friðoric submitted articles which spoke to their own experiences of adapting Anglo-Saxon thew to such far flung places as British Columbia and Tasmania where the climate, landscape, flora, and fauna are not as near to that of England as New York and Virginia where Gering Théod and the Ealdríce Háliggyld are found. What does it mean to be an Anglo-Saxon Théodsman in a land which may not entirely or (even remotely) resemble England? This is a theme that I look forward to seeing us explore further in future issues.

Godspeed,

Þórbeorht, Ealdorblótere Ealdrices
Whitthenge Heall, 7 Þrimilce 2020
Abannings

Solmónaþ

Be it known unto all that, nigh the new moon of Solmónaþ, the Ealdríce held a guildmoot and, at that time, Eþelwynn Hlǽfdige was chosen as the guild’s bordere (treasurer).

Be it known unto all that, nigh the full moon of Solmónaþ, an ere-dawn faining of the Ealdríce was held at Whitthenge Heall to give worship to Geofon, goddess of the plough, Scéaf, god of the sheaf, Fréa, lord of the fields, and Geard, his earthen bride. At this time, the Æcerbót was held.

Furthermore, at this time Hræfnscír Heall gathered in British Columbia to fain the gods and to hold a sun-cake húsel.
Be it known unto all that, nigh the full moon of Hréþmónaþ, a faining of the Ealdrícæ was held at Whitthenge Heall to worship the goddess Hréþe who is also called Hlýda and that the folc did bid her to drive away the winter éoten.

In this month, the harrying ended and a leechdom was found for the healing of wounds. Yet, though the battle was won, the weakhearted turned to warlockry, fled victory, and led the unlearned astray. It was at this time that a loathsome sickness went about the land. Against this, Þórbeorht set up a wéofod to Wóden and Ár (ON: Eir) and began bidding the gods, eldren, and good wights for the health and healing of those within the Winland Rícæ. In the Ealdrícæ, a guildmoot was held and, at that time, Ælfgår Þegn Húscarl was chosen to be the Ealdrícæ’s stigweard (steward).

Overheard in the Hall

_ Péas oféreode, bisses swa mag. “That over-fared (passed by), so may this.”_

- The Anglo-Saxon poem, Déor
Be it known unto all that, nigh the full moon of Ėastremónaþ, a dawn faining of the Ėaldrice was held at Whittenge Heall to give worship to the goddess Ėastre. Thereafter the young maiden Æðelind, who had been chosen by lots, was crowned the *Sumer Ćwén* (Summer Queen) as the folc welcomed summer’s coming in with garland dancing and games.
Furthermore, at this time Hraefnsçir Heall gathered in British Columbia to hold the holytide of Êastre.

Furthermore, Æppeldor Friðstów gathered in Tasmania, Australia to fain Ing Fréa and to mark their Winterfylleþ.

In this month, Æsceam Þýgen did bid these words to be abanned throughout the Winland Rice:

Even though I’ve been in retirement for a long while, I have been aware of and have watched developments around the edges of Théodish Belief when there were no folk in the Rice.

Besides Æthelwine Þegn, King’s Best Thane and headmaster of Gering King’s School, and myself remain from Gering Théod.

I have watched as Lord Þórbeorht has grown, developed the Ealdrice and gave hold-oath to you! I have read that Ælfric is High Wita and Lord of Hraefnsçir Heall, a Gering outer hall. I am pleased to see these developments and deeds from these fine Theodsmen!

I must say that I’m much impressed with the concise way in which ‘Spellstów, the official newsletter of the Winland Rice’, tells the history and current events, in such an excellent presentation. I’m most impressed on seeing, in print, the events that happened just before and after I retired, as that was a most distressing time for all, and it presents those times in a concise and understandable manner.

It is most rewarding to see, that after 30+ years, when you, Lord Garman, founded Gering Théod, when we founded Theod Magazine, (1994 to 2002) and you were crowned Cyning in 1995, and then when events led to a fallowing in Théodism...to see the sprout emerge again!

I’m most pleased!

Wassail all the Elder Ones of our Faith! May they continue to see us all!

We are our deeds!

Æsceam Þýgen
Significance, the Allfather gave me to understand, is something beyond a mere value judgment. It’s actually a substance, and the tribal pantheons which spontaneously form up out of it when the right forces come together are real. The only thing is, it’s like dark matter and energy, a kind of substance that doesn’t interact with us physically, that we don’t have any senses to detect, other than the way it may make us feel when we encounter it. Scientific method is too parsimonious by necessity to have any way to be aware of it, or vocabulary to talk about it. There are in fact many substances and forces in reality that are likewise unknown and currently unknowable to us. Reality is a far more complex place than we know, including more stuff in its inventory than we are all even willing to agree exists.

Based upon things that Allfather has told me, I have over time come to formulate a philosophy of my own devising. To me, one of the ways we know a culture or an age is dying is by its loss of significance, which is slipping away from our own culture even faster than our erstwhile Christianity. One big problem is our consumerism. Consumerism, like Capitalism, is only good up to its point of diminishing returns, beyond which it turns on you and begins to devour its own children. In capitalism, it’s the point at which mom and pop are no longer co-workers in the enterprise, but mere fulltime bosses drawing much higher pay for telling others what to do.

We have said that significance is the something between the lines that makes poetry poignant. But, looking around us, we see that poetry has disappeared from our culture, and with it significance. Been to a poetry slam lately? If so, have you heard anything more significant there than mere mis-enjambed paltry prose? The same is true for all our art forms. Significance, after all, is that certain je ne sais quoi that makes art art. One only has to look at what passes for art on museum walls. Likewise music, even, of all things, pop music! Why? Because significance, as a quality of art, is too
unmanageable a thing. You can’t measure or mass produce it, you can’t reliably monetize it, and thus our culture, rightly imagining that something has to pass for an aesthetic in any culture that pretends to the name, has to find a way. Our way has been to offer up anti-art, i.e. the quest for ugliness, and pay our pundits to gaslight the public into thinking it’s art, so we can monetize it. And once you’ve gone that way, the scuppers are open, and significance, devalued, must drain away for good and all, leaving an empty husk where a culture once stood.

Significance, influencing our reality more as a quality than as a substance, takes many forms, as accordingly does insignificance, so if truth be a form of significance, then lying is a form of insignificance, bound to diminish our human worth. One of the ways that the ambiguities of significance can become almost palpable in our reality is when significance takes the form of luck. Luck is something that we, as humans, deal with in at least two forms. There is the luck that we are born with, or often as not without, in the form of the laws that the Wyrd Sisters laid down for us in the well when we were conceived. Such a bequest may often be other than what we might have wished for ourselves, of course, but the good news is that it is often mutable. If we were born with a cleft palate, for instance, disfiguring our speech, that is a form of bad luck, or insignificance, if you like, that can be surgically corrected to become good luck.

Meanwhile, there is that aforementioned pile of raw ore that we amount to when we come into the world. In using life’s trials as a hammer and anvil on which to forge worth into ourselves, we are forging our luck. Such is not without attendant difficulties. Life is full of uncertainties. It is so easy for us to go all wrongheaded, thinking that we are right at times when we are mistakenly smithing ourselves all wrong. But then, there is one other big factor; the influence upon our affairs of the gods.

We know how our luck, or the lack thereof can make our life easy or turn it into a mighty struggle, and how difficult that struggle can be. By contrast, the gods are able to do superhuman feats effortlessly. If Allfather is to be believed, the gods are not all-powerful, but certainly on our terms would seem powerful enough for all practical divine purposes. So how, then, do they work their wonders?

We have reflected, above, on incidents of how mortals who run themselves afoul of the gods in some way can come to personal catastrophe for it. How and why does that happen? Pause for a moment’s reflection, gentle reader, and perhaps by now you will see it for yourself. What are the gods made of? Significance. What is luck made of? Significance. Significance is that impalpable substance, to our worldly selves, that to the gods is the very stuff of their existence. As such, while the management of our luck is, for us, one of the most problematical of life’s undertakings, for gods,
unhampered as they are by physical bodies, manipulating the very stuff they are made of, for good or ill, is easy as falling off a log. If you foolishly sully their luck, they can easily retaliate by yanking yours out from under you like a throw rug. Which, in our terms, is bound to mean that the gods are extremely powerful beings and bound to be the best friends or worst enemies that any mortal could boast.

What, then, constitutes the best luck, for gods and men? Pure, uncorrupted, unsullied significance. What constitutes the worst luck? Two things: either significance that is missing, or significance that is sullied or corrupted. We have seen how tradition teaches that our bloting and our worship of our gods somehow transfers some moiety of our own luck to them as a gift, and if it’s a pure clean gift it is gladly accepted and likely to be rewarded. In heathenry, after all, it is said that the gift looks ever for gain. One of the easiest ways for the gods to pay us back happens to be in terms of what we may desire most, namely good luck, good crops, favorable weather. These insubstantial elements seem readily manageable through the gods’ manipulations of luck... literally, a deal made in heaven. On the other hand, the gods’ rejection of an unlucky blot, whether because ill-executed, causing suffering to the blot animal, or because of unworthiness of, or ill or deceitful intent on the part of, the giver, can indeed mar a gift in the giving, perhaps even bringing down ill fortune upon the giver.

In days of old, luck was a thing that passed around in families, and ran up and down family lines. If someone harmed you or your kin, the harm was equally to your luck, and the harmer owed you recompense, normally payable as a wergild. It was all right there in ancient common law. If the harmer could not or would not pay the wergild, you were entitled to exact revenge, restoring your own luck, in some esoteric way, by doing an equal measure of harm to his. Why did that work? Who knows? All we know of such things today is that it apparently did; thus the ancient custom of feud. In any event, the issue here is missing or sullied luck.

Luck, in other words, is a highly transactional currency among gods and men. It is very much bound up in sacrality, as is oath-swearing, a matter deeply involving luck and personal honor among men. Sacrality is significant; mundanity is not. As such, oaths are normally sworn over the horn, in the mead hall, where the gods are presumed to be present. When an oath is sworn, the gods present are presumed to bear witness to it. If you swear an oath in hall, and then break it, you have sullied the luck of all present, including the gods. It is hard to imagine a worse insult to the very substance of a god, or a more dangerous being to insult than a god. Should you do such a thing, you should probably not be too surprised if he exacts the revenge you owe him by turning your life upside down and dumping it out on the garbage heap of history.
Yeartidely Lope
Wyrms and Wells by Þórbeorht Ealdorblótere

This article was first published as a blog on the Ealdríc’s old Wordpress blog on the 13th of June 2018 and will appear in Þórbeorht’s forthcoming book, To Fain the Year, later this year. It is our hope that the readers of Spellstów will find something in it to further their own worship.

Amid the leaves of Robert Plot’s The Natural History of Oxford–Shire (1686 CE), there is found an odd betelling of a yeartidely rite held at Midsummer. In his delving into the lore of that land, Plot learned that the town of Burford had “within memory” kept “the custom...of making a dragon yearly and carrying it up and down the town in great jollity on Midsummer Eve.” As to the wellspring of such a rite, Plot offered his own guess. Near the town was a battlefield upon which Cuþræd of Wessex had fought Æðelbald of Mercia in 750 CE. Plot put forward the thought that the dragon-likeness borne about Burford on Midsummer’s eve was a remembrance of Cuþræd’s mighty win over Æðelbald and of his taking of the Mercian king’s gold wyrm-banner. Yet Plot himself acknowledged as much to be guesswork, adding that he did not know why the likeness of a giant was also borne about the town at this time.¹

¹“The Town of Burford, in Saxon Beorford, seems also to have been a place of good antiquity, but most remarkable for a battle fought near if; about the Year 750, perhaps on the place still called Battle-edge, west of the town betwixt it and Upton; between Cuthred or Cuthbert, a tributary king of the West Saxons, and Ethelbald the Mercian, whose unsupportable exactions the former king not being able to endure, he came into the field against him, met and over threw him here about Burford, winning his banner wherein there was depicted a golden dragon; in memory of which victory, perhaps the custom - yet within memory - of making a dragon yearly, and carrying it up and down the town in great jollity on Midsummer Eve, to which - I know not for what reason - they added a giant, might likely enough be first instituted.” Page 356
Yet Plot’s writing is not the only reckoning of an English Midsummer rite wherein *wyrms* are to be found. As *betold* by John Mirk of Lilleshall, Shropshire in his work *Festival*, also known as *A Book of Festivals* (14–15th *hundredtide*):

But yet, in the worship of Saint John, men waken at evening, and make three manner of fires: one is clean bones and no wood, and is called a bonfire [bone fire]; another is of clean wood and no bones and is called a wake-fire, for men sit and wake by it, the third is made of bones and wood and is called Saint John’s Fire...The first fire was made of bones, as Jon Bellet [Jean Belleth 1162 CE] says, for in that country is great heat. It is the heat which excites dragons that they gather together, and fly in the air, and then falls down into water the froth of their kind, and so venemeth (poison) the waters, that much people take their death thereby and many others [are with] great sickness.... The wise clerics knew well that dragons hate nothing so much as burnt bones. Wherefore they taught the people how to gather all the bones that they might find, and set them on fire; and so with the stench of them they drive away the dragon...2

Mirk, when he wrote that *wyrms* frothed into wells, was kind to his gentle English readership. Belleth, who Mirk drew upon, was less seemly in his *betelling*. As *wended* from Latin:

This, I say, that these *wights* fly in the wind, swim in the water, and walk on the land. However, in the sky they are lusty, as oft happens, spilling their seed (sperm) into wells or into river waters which, in the next year grows deadly. To this, such a remedy may be found, that is to say a balefire of bones was set up, the smoke of which drives these *wights* away.3

2 *But ȝet, yn þe worschip of Saynt Ion, men wa ken at evyn, and maken þre maner of fyry s: on ys clen bonys and no wod, and ys callyd a bonnefyre; anoþer ys of clene wod and no bonys, and ys callyd a wakefyre, for men syttyth and wakyth by hyt; the thryd ys made of bonys and of wode, and ys callyd Saynt Ionys fyre. The fyrst fyre was made of bonys, as Ion Bellet sayth, for yn þat contray ys gret hete þe whech hete encawsut dragons þat þay gedryn ynfe, and fleyn yn þe ayr, and fullyn dawnne ynto watyrþ þe froþ e of hur kynde, and soo venemyth þe watyrþ, þat mobb peypill takyn ber deþ þerby and oþer mony gret sekene...Thes wyse clerkys kneuyn wele þat þay dragons batytþ noþuyng so meche as brent bonys. Wherþor þay tacht þe peypill forto gedyr al þe bonys þat þay myght fynde, and set þom on fyre; and soo wyth þe stench of bom þay drysen away the dragon...Wended to Nowtidely English by Þórbeorht.*

3 *Haec, inquam, animalia in aere volant: in aquis natant, in terra ambulant. Sed quando in aere ad libidinem concitantur (quod fere fit), saepe ipsum sperma vel in putoes, vel in aquas fluviiales eiuitur ex quo lethalis sequitur annus. Adversus haece ergo buiasmodi inventum est remedium, ut videlicet rogos ex osibus construcretur, et ita fiumus buiasmodi animalia fugaret. Wended from Latin to English by Þórbeorht.* Though, for having read Mirk, the Ealdrice has been faining Þunor at Midsummer for the warding of water from wyrms for some years before this writing, due must be given to the
Writing of a thew then found in Germany, Johann Boemus in his *Omnium Gentium Mores, Leges et Ritus* (1520 CE) offered another insight into the bond between flying wyrms and the Midsummer fire. As betold by Boemus,

They cause a great fire to be made before the tower, which standeth upon a hill above the city, of Herbipolis (Würzburg), and throw into the fire many wooden hoops bored full of holes which, when they be all them on a red fire [once the all hoops are on the red fire], they put crooked sticks into the holes of the hoops, and cunningly and forcibly heave them up into the air [to] a great height, so as they, flying from the top of the hill over the river Moganus, which runneth under the hill, seem to be fire dragons to those which never saw the like before.4

Here, it would seem, that Boemus has taken two Midsummer thews and twined them into one: the belief that dragons flew about on Midsummer’s Eve and the lighting of a fire or the rolling of fire-wheels, which was believed to be a remedy against such wyrms. Yet that the heavens were at Midsummer haunted by ill-wights was a belief known to the Irish as well. As late as the 18th hundreitide, Irishmen were beheld to bear burning brands about the land on Midsummer’s Eve to drive away unseen sickness-bearers. As bewritten by a thantidely witness,

On the vigil of St. John the Baptist’s Nativity, they make bonfires, and run along the streets and fields with wips of straw blazing on long poles to purify the air, which

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4Early Modern English wending taken from a London printing by George Eld in 1611. Spelling arighted to a more nowtidely Modern English by Þórbeorht.

https://ia801406.us.archive.org/24/items/mannerslawescust00boem/mannerslawescust00boem.pdf

Truefastness blog for first finding the original Latin text for Belleth’s work. The Truefastness blog from which the Latin text was taken may be found here:

http://truefastness.blogspot.com/2017/06/midsummer.html?m=1
they think infectious, by believing all the devils, spirits, ghosts, and hobgoblins fly abroad this night to hurt mankind.  

Here we see the dragons betold by Belleth and Mirk made smaller, being but hobgoblins some hundredtide later. Yet this belief that the heavens might become haunted by sickening-wights is one well witnessed in Anglo-Saxon times. Though fire is nowhere spoken of in the “Nine Worts Gealdor” of the Old English Lacnunga (10th hundredtide), the spell does speak of the “venom” (OE: attre), “that which flies” (OE: onflyge), and the “loathsome that yond the land fareth” spreading sickness. These “flying venoms” are found in other Anglo-Saxon writings, such as in Bald’s Leechbook (9th hundredtide), wherein a white stone is said to have “might against stitch (pain) and against flying venom (OE: fleogendum attre) and against all uncouth (unknown) illnesses.”  

Whilst it may well be thought that these flying-venoms were but diseases, it is worth noting that the “Nine Worts Gealdor” also speaks of a wyrm which is battled by the healing worts (herbs) before it is slain by the god Wóden. Whilst it is not spelled-out in the spell, that the wyrm is the wellspring of the “flying venoms” which fare about the land, such is heavily hinted. Moreover, the gealdor ends with the leech recalling nine adders who are seemingly driven from a river and from the sea, with the waters parting as their venom is blown away. As found in the Lacnunga,

I alone wot (know) of a river running  
There the nine adders near it beholdeth; (keep watch)  
May all weeds now from worts (herbs) spring,  
Seas to slip away (part), all salt water,  
When I, this venom from thee blow.  

That wyrms should befoul water is a yore-old belief, witnessed throughout Indo-European godlore. The frothing or seeding (sperming) of the waters by wyrms betold by Mirk and Belleth may well be recalled in the English folklore of the Lambton Worm (Roud #2337, 1867 CE). In said story, a wyrm fetched from a stream, when young, was tossed into a well. In time the ill-wight waxed long

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1From Comical Pilgrim’s Pilgrimage into Ireland (1732) as quoted by John Brand in his Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain (1777) p305  
2Se hwita san meg wip stice 7 wip fleogendum attre 7 wip eallum uncuþum brocum. Wended from Old English by Þórbeorht.  
3Ic ána wat éa rinnende  
þær þá nygon ñæðrán néan behealdæð;  
motan ealle wéoda ní wyrum áspringan,  
sæs tóhláþan, eal sealt wæter,  
ðonne ic þís áttor of þé geblawe.  
Wended from Old English by Þórbeorht.
and broad in its shape so as to harrow the whole land and feed upon both cow and child alike before it was felled by a bold knight. Such is not so far removed from the Old Norse tale of Þórr who, in the *Hymiskviða*, sought to slay the great *wyrm* *formungandr* who haunted the fishing grounds of his host. Likewise Indra, the thunder-god’s Vedic likeness found in the *Rigveda* (1500 and 1200 BCE), slew the *wyrm* Vritra, who begirded the sky and held back the rains of heaven. In *eft-shaped* Slavic godlore, the thunder god Perun is believed to fight the god-*wyrm* Veles. Like the Lambtom worm, Veles slithers out from the underworldly waters to swallow Perun’s wife, child, and cows. And, as with the Vedic Vritra, Perun’s slaying of Veles frees the rains that were withheld by the *wyrm*. In each story, a god – most often though not always the thunder god – or a *mickle* man is said to slay a *wyrm* that has fouled wells, harmed fishing grounds, or brought about drought by withholding the rains of heaven. As such, it may well be that the Midsummer fire betokened the fiery weapon wielded by the Indo-European thunder god who, in his slaying of the sickening-*wyrm*, both warded the waters and cleansed the wind (air).

As to the withholding of rain or the haunting of fishing grounds, to delve so deep as to fully fathom those waters would be well beyond the breadth of this writing. I may wend once more to such Indo-European godlore in another Midsummer work, but for now I must fetter my fathoming to Anglo-Saxon *thew* and the role that wells played in English Heathen belief.8

The worship of wells and springs, known in Old English as *willweorþung*, is mentioned in sundry Anglo-Saxon writ, such as The *Penitential* of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury (late 7th *hundredtide*), the *De Auguriis* of Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham (10th *hundredtide*), the *Canons* of Archbishop Wulfstan of York (early 11th *hundredtide*), and the Laws of King Cnut the Great (11th *hundredtide*). Yet well-worship was known in Britain well before the Anglo-Saxon Heathen came to that land and made it their own. The Celts, who dwelt there before our coming, were known to worship wells and springs as well. Yet, though forbidden by church and Christian king, *willweorþung* did not die out. Indeed, in time, *willweorþung* was welcomed by the Church. Wells which were once held holy to the Heathen belief were christened to sundry saints. Indeed, to this day still, “well dressing” rites are found in England wherein Saints’ Wells are bedecked with blossoms during the months of May and June.9

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8Holy wells are found not only throughout England but in Norse godlore as well. There the *Urðarbrunnr* of the *Nornir*, known to the Anglo-Saxons as the Well of the *Wyrdæ* (the Well of Wyrd). And there is, as well, that Well of Memory haunted by the head of Mímir and into which Wóden gave an eye to gaze by drinking its water.

9If well-worship or well-dressing is of an older Indo-European *thew*, we may well find a kinship in the Slavic rites of *Kupala*, the Slavic name for Midsummer, wherein women still lay blossomed wreathes into waters (rivers).
As to why the Celts and Anglo-Saxons worshipped wells, first as Heathens and then as Christians, we know from yore-old offerings which have been unearthed and from Church tradition alike that the waters of such holy wells were held to heal the sick. For some wells, it was believed that such healing was brought about by sipping from the sacred spring. At others, healing was gained by washing oneself with water drawn from the well. Yet always an offering was (and still is) given to thank the god or saint to whom the well is holy — be it but a penny tossed into the waters, as with wishing-wells, or a ribbon tied to a nearby tree as a bidding (prayer).¹⁰

That the Anglo-Saxons worshipped holy wells that they believed to bestow healing, yet so too warded wells against wyrms which would sicken the waters, may well speak to a shared Heathen thew from whence they both spring. This thew, as eft-shapen and understood in the Ealдрice may be betold thus:

Our Anglo-Saxon Heathen forebears worshipped wells and springs, holy to the gods, into which they made offerings that they might be healed of sickness. Yet at Midsummer, the winds of heaven were haunted by wyrms, fiends often fought by the gods, which sought to befoul the wells and wend them into sickening-springs. To ward against this, great fires were lit to drive the dragons away from the healing wells and to cleanse the wind of their unhale sway. In a manygodded belief such as ours, it is likely that the help of more than one god would have been sought through worship at this time. That wort-blossoms are woven at Midsummer into wreaths to be hung about a well, set into a river, or heaped upon the Midsummer fire itself, may well hint at Wóden’s worship.¹¹ Yet, it may also be

¹⁰Here I only touch upon a Heathen thew discussed more deeply by Thomas Rowsell in his Survive the Jive Video on Sacred Water Places for Pagans, which is well worth watching: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85qlcrVZMwU&ct=4s
¹¹Johann Boemus in his Omnium Gentium Mores, Leges et Ritus (1520 CE) Early Modern English wending taken from a London printing by George Eld in 1611. Spelling arightened to a more nowtidely Modern English by Þórbeorht. https://ia801406.us.archive.org/24/items/mannerslawescust00boem/mannerslawescust00boem.pdf

Upon Saint John Baptist’s day at night, in every village and street in Germany be common fires, (or as we call them here in England bone-fires) about which all the people gather together, both men, women and children, dancing and singing and having many other superstitions, as wearing upon their heads garlands made of Mugwort and Vervain, and flowers in their hands wreathed and pleated in the fashion of a spur, (which wreaths they call military spurs) and they dare not
that Midsummer fires hurled into the heavens and rolled down hills be
tokened Þunor’s (ON: Þórr) fiery axe-hammer with which he is known to fell such fiends. Indeed, we find it fitting to worship both gods at this holytide even as we find it fitting then to worship Sunne, goddess of the sun, and sundry other gods and goddesses. Yet, in our fellowship, the greatest worship that is given at Midsummer is given to Þunor, as there is no god we trust more to make war with wyrms and ward our waters.

Anglish Wordhoard

Betelling – Description
Betold – Described
Betoken – Symbolize
Betokenship – Symbolism
Bewritten – Described
Bidding – Prayers
Eft-Shape – Reconstruct
Eft-shapen – Reconstructed
Gealdor – Old English for “charm, magical spell”
Godlore – Mythology
Housel – A holy feast. An old word for the Eucharist, itself sprung from the Old English húsel, “sacrificial feast”
Hundredtide – Century
Laycraft – Poetry
Leafs – Pages
Leech – A healer
Manygodded – Polytheistic
Mickle – Great
Nowtinely – Contemporary
Sunstead – Solstice
Thentidely – Contemporary to that time
Thew – Tradition
Trothwending – Conversion
Unhale – Unholy or unwholesome
Wellspring – Point of origin
Wend – Turn, translate
Wight – A spirit or being
Wort – Herb
Wyrm/Worm – A dragon or serpent. Early Germanic dragons were believed to be large snakes.
Yeartidely – Seasonal
Yore-old – Ancient

look upon the fire, unless they look through those spurs, firmly believing that by that means their eyes be preserved all the year after from all pain and disease, and everyone as he goeth away, throweth the garl and he wore about his head into the fire, saying this conjuration, “Go thee thy way and burn, and all my ill luck perish and burn with thee.”
Here I sit at Hrafnscír, near Hræðmónaþ’s end. It’s been a hard winter here this year; very cold with a great deal of snow. Even though it is the end of March, we still have over a foot of snow on the ground in most places, and we just got another dump of snow a couple days ago. Winter is coming to an end, but only begrudgingly. This is the time of year when we get low on firewood, our only source of heat, and we go out into the forest and cut just a bit more to get us through the end of winter and the cold of early spring.

While the charming of the plow in Anglo-Saxon heathenry is associated with Solmónaþ, here, almost two months past that time, we are not even thinking about tilling the earth yet; the only thing we are thinking about plowing around here right now is snow. The reason the charming of the plow, and plowing begins in February in Anglo-Saxon heathenry is because England, both in the Anglo-Saxon period and today, has a milder climate and a much shorter winter than we have here at Hrafnscír. What the English call a harsh winter day, we call a blustery day in spring. With grain crops, it is important to plow and plant as soon as the ground can be worked so the seeds have as much time as possible to grow and later, to ripen. In England, it is possible to plant as early as Solmónaþ. But that doesn’t work around here. If we were to follow the Anglo-Saxon heathen customs of Solmónaþ, we would be making use of a system that was originally designed to flow naturally with the agricultural year in an artificial way that is at odds with our own actual agricultural year. In my humble opinion, to do that would be very un-heathen.

Our situation here at Hrafnscír, with our specific agricultural season and the climate which determines it, illustrates an important point. While it is important for Théodsmen to follow the practices of our heathen ancestors as authentically as possible, we cannot slavishly follow a thew from a location other than our own that is not in harmony with our own. Even if such thews are
authentically heathen and were authentically for our heathen ancestors in their time and place, if we were to follow them when they are out of time and place for us, we would be inauthentic ourselves in doing so. Rather, we must adapt the old heathen customs to our current circumstances. This doesn’t mean throwing the practices of real, ancient heathenry out the window in favor of some form of watered-down neo-paganism or neo-heathenry. Rather, it means real, ancient heathen practice done in a way that is in tune with the natural cycles of wherever we happen to live. This is one main reason why thes tends to differ between one Théodish ætt and another. For us here at Hrafnscír our colder northern climate with its longer winters is more like that of Scandinavia than of England, and as such, we have found that Norse heathen thews surrounding the agricultural cycle and it associated holy tides are often more in line with our climate and environment, and therefore can end up being more practically useful to us. As such, our heathenry here ends up being somewhat "Anglo-Norse," (a term coined by my friend and fellow British Columbian heathen Jamey Martin) rather than purely Anglo-Saxon.

That being said, we nevertheless very much appreciate the research and insight of Thorbeorht Ealdorblótere which revealed that the Solmónaþ cakes mentioned by Bede as being offered by the heathens in this month, have survived through the centuries to the present day as the Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner of the Anglican church. While there also appears to be a connection between the Solmónaþ cakes and the charming of the plow, we have adopted the former for our Solmónaþ faining even if we are not reasonably able to include the latter. We made pancakes, offered them the gods, and then enjoyed a good old-fashioned English pancake dinner.

Our climate also effects the date of our Æostre faining. In the old days of Théodism as well as in other quarters of modern heathenry, it was often thought that Hreðmónaþ, in which the vernal equinox falls, was the real time Æostre. We too believed this and held our Æostre faining in Hreðmónaþ for many years. However, one thing that cannot be denied is that there is no ancient evidence for this whatsoever. On the contrary, both Bede’s Anglo-Saxon géarméil and the traditional Old High German month names preserved by Charlemagne claim Éostremónaþ/Ōstar-mānod to be in April. Some have argued that this reflects a Christian reckoning of Easter, but both of these sources from different locations independently place Æostre in April. Further, Bede wrote specifically of the worship of the heathen goddess Hreðe from whom Hreðmónaþ (March) takes its name. If our heathen ancestors celebrated Æostre in Hreðmónaþ, where would that leave the worship of Hreðe which Bede describes as taking place in this month? Therefore, Bede’s claim that the worship of Æostre takes place in Éostremenoþ (April), can hardly be a result of Christian influence. Like the Æaldrice, we at Hrafnscír now hold our Æostre faining Éostremenoþ, the time when Bede said it was.
As a side note, Éostremónaþ was known to the ancient Norse heathen as Góa. The Anglo-Saxon heathens observed Éostre on the full moon of this month, which was also the time of the Norse Sigrblót, the blót for victory, which marked the first day of the summer season. Like the Norse, the Anglo-Saxons also originally divided the year into two seasons, summer and winter. As such, one could speculate that among the ancient heathen Anglo-Saxons, the Éostre full moon and blót may have marked the beginning of the summer season.

Aside from the fact that a good case can be made that the heathen celebration of Éostre was in Éostremenôþ, celebrating Éostre in Éostremónaþ rather than Hreðmónaþ is appealing for us at Hræfnscír because the later date is more in line with our climate. Here in Hreðmónaþ it is still too cold and snowy for us to be able to fain outdoors, but to do so would only be appropriate for an Óststre faining. Something about ushering spring in one’s snow-boots just doesn’t feel right. In Hreðmónaþ, it simply isn’t spring here yet. Further, this year, winter has lasted about a month longer than usual.

Unfortunately, that means it will be a short season for birch tapping this year. The sap doesn’t flow until the ground is above freezing often enough, but you can only tap until the birch leaves start coming out, otherwise the sap runs bitter. With a late winter, what will happen is within days of it being above freezing, it will get very warm and all the green things will start growing, effectively cutting birch tapping season at least in half, or possibly down to a quarter of the usual time. In order to get the same amount of sap as last year, we would have to tap a good number more trees. But it is worth it; there is something very rewarding about making your own 100% natural syrup, and the fermented birch drinks that our ancestors made since time immemorial are amazing and have become a special feature of Hræfnscír.
Despite the long winter, there is hope. While it has still been snowy and cold, it has finally started to warm up a bit. I also take it as a good sign that the chickens have started to try to find hiding places to lay their eggs; this was no doubt the origin of the “Easter-egg hunt,” and a sure sign that spring is on the way.

Anyway, at this point all we can do is watch and wait and look forward to when the ground can be worked so we can begin our year’s planting. This year, to do so will likely be even more important than we previously thought it would, and we now intend on planting much more of everything than we had planned. We now have swine to root out the fallow soil, and a goat; we will soon be making cheese and yogurt.

In the meantime, I have been using the waiting time to try to get a few more indoor activities accomplished, such as finishing the Hræfnscír Rune Calendar and its accompanying book, as well as researching and writing on various topics. I have also enjoyed walking in the forest to scout out trees for carving weohhas, lumber, and next year’s firewood. I like to do this before the leaves on the birch and poplar come out, as it is much easier to spot the dead-standing trees I want for wood when the branches are bare on the deciduous trees. We are so grateful for the blessings the gods have bestowed upon us, and we wish the protection and blessings of the gods for you all as well!

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Coming this summer from haliggylęd Books

Wassail! Gárman Here! Questions and Answers About Théodish Belief and Other Topics Excerpted from the Personal and Official correspondence of Gárman Lord

VOLUMES I & II
Edited by Geitr Anceam McQueen
Foreword by Þórhórir Ealdirhlóðir

VOLUMES III & IV
Edited by Geitr Anceam McQueen
Foreword by Þórhórir Ealdirhlóðir
I have been thinking about trees. Trees and hubris. For the Greeks, hubris was a type of overweening human pride, the kind that invites nemesis. The last time I wrote in this space I was full of confidence in my declared mission: to make of my little corner of Tasmania a new England, a land hallowed to the old ways of our folk. I knew even then that weaving the ways of Old England with the Australian landscape might unleash some pretty interesting threads. And so it has proven. The overall weave might not assume a pattern we can understand for a long time yet – perhaps that will take centuries – but for now let us try to untangle at least a few strands.

Let us begin with sycamores. *Acer pseudoplatanus*, not to be confused with American sycamore, is a vigorous European deciduous tree (re)introduced to the British Isles around 1500. I say re-introduced, because whereas it is commonly thought of as a weed in England, pollen analysis has definitively proven that sycamore was present in the British Isles prior to the last Ice Age.

My sycamore trees, sourced at Mount Franklin some years ago on a magical day of snow, have finally outgrown me. I am not a very tall man, granted, but I take this to be some kind of milestone. Truly they are a prolific tree and now that they are taller than me at last they will be much harder to kill. The depredations of possum (curse them!), wallaby, drought, even the axe.....none of these really threaten our little Godwood, planted near the proposed site of the burial mound. But Great Burnam Wood may yet come to High Dunsinane, for fire and the eucalypt always dance together and, in the end, can our little patch of deep green stand against *that*? Without human stewardship, would a little sycamore patch replicate itself and expand down the centuries? This question is endlessly fascinating to me. I suppose it is true that only self-willed woods become ancient.
And so I may come to see our own little piece of Place-Making, a kingly mound in the Anglo-Saxon Heathen tradition, in a different way. Not, as it currently stands in my minds eye, as a deep green mound starred with yellow daisies and sprouting vigorous birch trees, but as overcome by the great lapping ocean of gumtree, silver wattle, bracken and manfern. Charred, blackened stumps and scorched earth too form a necessary, inevitable part of this picture, as do the radiant green native shoots, sprouting against a stark black background: an image so evocative of, and somehow peculiar to, Australia. In my dreaming, this last vision emerges in the not-too-distant future, though in a time after my wife and I have been laid in the earth, in some satellite burial, inconspicuous and low, around the central mound.

Only self-willed woods become ancient. A low hill, wrought by man, anomalous in its landscape. An earth-fast standing stone, dragged from who-knows-where, piercing earth, piercing air. And through it all an eruption of monster-eucalypts, giants thrusting skyward. Taken as a whole, it will cause folk of the far future to ponder, as we who come after now ponder at Avebury or Sutton Hoo. Here then is an answering image to the Godwood, Sherwood-green against the native vegetation, with which we begun.

No use for hubris, then. In the end we will all fall out of time and be swallowed by gumtrees.
The Scópæft of Benjamin Bagby
By Ehelwynn Hlæðigce

Much shall he abide of both love and hate, he that long here, in these difficult days, would brook (enjoy) the world.

- Beowulf lines 1060b-1062. Wended by Þórbeorht

Within the Anglo-Saxon mead hall, was found a highly cherished and esteemed performer skilled in the ancient art of storytelling, known as the scóp (pronounced shope). The term scóp is derived from the Old English word scieppan (create, form, or shape). In keeping with the name, the scóp delighted those in the hall by the crafting or retelling of poetic tales of heroism, morality, and triumph over hardship. Stories could be used to honor the lord of the hall or generally influence laymen’s views on events. His performance could rile men to battle or praise them for recent or past victories. Through poetry and song, the scóp wove his community together through a shared history that was passed down through an oral tradition.

A reconstruction of such a performance can be seen today, carried out by the very talented Benjamin Bagby. Bagby is perhaps best known for his retelling of the epic poem, Beowulf, which is a heroic tale of a warrior overcoming an undefeated foe. The tale is also interwoven with myriad insights into the Anglo-Saxon worldview and thew (custom) of the people at the time. Bagby performs Beowulf a handful of times a year, and this past January several members of the Ealdrice were fortunate enough to attend one such performance in New York City.
To describe witnessing such a performance in the flesh as awe-inspiring would be an understatement. The confluence of poetry sung in Old English with music from the Anglo-Saxon lyre (harp) was quite breathtaking to behold. Bagby brilliantly held the audience captive as together we journeyed to the halls of Heorot and beheld Beowulf’s legendary bravery. One could very well see why the skill of scópcraeft would have been so highly prized; it is entertainment in its finest form. During Bagby’s performance, a modern English translation of Beowulf was displayed on a screen behind him. This allows the audience to easily follow along with the story, while enjoying it aurally in its original, Old English form.

For those interested in experiencing Bagby’s scópcraeft, a DVD with one of his performances is available for sale through his website: bagbybeowulf.com. If you are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to catch a live performance of his, you won’t regret it.
Théodish Belief: Are You in or Are You Out?
By Ælfgár Þegn Húscarl

Anglo-Saxon Théodish Belief, also known as Théodism, is a rekindling of the manygodded troth that was held by our Anglo-Saxon heathen forebears before the coming of Christianity. As a man trying to worth himself, I learned a great many things about the ways of the gods, goddesses and our ancestral forefathers during my journey to become a Théodsman. I rediscovered everything you are taught is false, but everything that you learn is true. You are taught at a young age that fire is hot and will hurt, and no matter how many people have told you, it literally takes you testing that fact before you learn it - forever.

Théodish Belief is no different, if you give yourself over to truly learning the ways of Théodism and not acting like you know it all, you will question or reevaluate what you were taught on many occasions. That is how you know you are learning the ways of Théodish Belief. At some point you will learn about the Three Wynns: Wísdom (Wise-doorm or wisdom), Wéladélf (Wealth-deal or generosity) and Wórðmynd (Worth-mind or honor). They are named the Three Wynns as each begins with the wynn rune and each brings wynn, joy, with it. Together they guide the Right Good Will of Théodsman.

So, what is a Right Good Will and what does it mean to a Théodsman? I am glad you asked, because here is one Ealdrícesman’s awareness and how I would explain it. A Right Good Will is the pure intention that fellow gyld members have towards one another. For the gyld to prosper, it is essential that its members’ deeds and actions towards one another are free of ulterior motives and selfish interest. Each gyld member is given Fréoribht, or Free Right, referring to what is often called “freedom conscience.” Free Right is essentially the affirmation that no one may be compelled to do or take part in anything that they believe to be wrongful or unseemly. If you are wanting to be a
true Théodsman then you must be able to not only learn these words, but to live their meanings. It is common to want to just look out for yourself and to serve your own agenda, but that is not the calling of a Théodsman. A Théodsman will serve his fellowship best by honoring his word and by worthing himself and the others around him. By building each other up, we build a strong community and that itself becomes the reward.

Wóden knew there was more knowledge to be gained and he was even willing to sacrifice his eye to drink from Mímir’s well to win more wisdom. Your own wisdom may be sufficient enough to know that someone else has more knowledge or skill than you. Will you embrace learning from another, or will you be too conceited in your own self-worth to expand your own wisdom? You may not be required to sacrifice an eye but, if you are willing to sacrifice your pride and your ego, you’ll be amazed at the wealth of knowledge you could gain.

Wealth-deal and generosity isn’t always monetary either, but you must be willing to pay the fair price whether it’s coin, time, or labor. You may have a wealth of knowledge, money, or a certain skill and donating or giving of it generously will yield more than you could ever imagine. Being generous with your gift(s) and sharing within your Théodish community will increase the “wealth” of all of those you care about. Most of our ancestor’s wealth-deal (generosity) was not that of coin, but rather skills they learned and time they took to hone a craft and then to teach that craft to someone else. The stronger the thew (tradition) the stronger the tribe’s wealth-deal.

Worth-mind (honor) is just that. Do you worth yourself with your thoughts and bring honor to yourself? Do you place the highest value on the words that you speak being stronger than the bindings of Fenrir? Do you stand your ground and defend what is yours, what you love, what you stand for not only when things are easy, but in the face of personal despair? In today’s society there isn’t much call for a man to pick up a sword and shield and go into battle, but make no mistake there are battlegrounds in modern society, social media, the twitter-verse or even a nosy neighbor across the street? Will you defend your honor and withstand your battle scars, or will you simply drop your shield? Mean what you say, say what you mean and defend your words with honor and integrity.

By not simply learning these Three Wynns but to also live by them with a Free Right can you begin to apply a Right Good Will to your fellow man. Mid Ribtum Gódum Willan, With a Right Good Will it’s not just a phrase – it’s the path of all true Théodsmen. If you apply the mindset that our forefathers had thousands of years ago and not the attitudes and impulsive thoughts of many of today’s generations, you will begin to connect with the gods, the goddesses, and your ancestors. Do you walk around thinking you know it all? Don’t. Accept some wisdom instead. Do you spend most
of your time and resources on activities that don’t benefit others and simply “kill time?” Stop. Demonstrate some wealth-deal by contributing to your fellow Théodsmen. Do you break promises or go out of your way to avoid confrontation? Get over it. Experience some worth-mind and honor. If you approach life and everyone in it with a Right Good Will it will change you. The next time someone approaches you with an opposing thought or argument, be truly openminded, try hearing them out and seeing what it is that they are seeing – there really may be more than one way to skin a cat. Next time that you have some extra time on your hands, take a moment to ask someone to teach you something to enhance your skills or wisdom. Approaching life from a neutral position and not always being on defense or offense will open your mind, free your spirit, and mostly just lower your blood pressure. Ask me how I know!

To be a true Théodsman takes work (hard work), as it should...if it was easy anyone could be a Théodsman. But to honestly believe in the gods, to try and understand the life of our ancestors, and to worth oneself everyday just because it’s the right thing to do – that is a journey worth living. Our religion is not about one’s race but rather the troth and thew that is shared by our religious community (Théodism). Are you in, or are you out?

Wisdom • Wealthdeal • Worthmind – The Three Wynns
How long have you been working as the Saxon Storyteller?

I started in January 2019. So just over a year now.

How did you decide on that name?

Before I had started my Instagram page I would upload to the Asatru UK (AUK) Facebook group for feedback. Facebook then captioned me as a 'visual storyteller' and as I love all things AS it seemed a fitting title.

When did you start drawing in general and what did you start with?

Started drawing American traditional tattoo designs in college over 10 years ago. Still enjoy drawing it from time to time. Started drawing in this style more seriously over a year and a half ago.

What sparked your interest in ancient Germanic and Celtic art? Are there any other art styles that interest you?

Reading *Horrible Histories* as a kid, especially those on the Romans and Roman Britain. As I got older, I continued to read about Britain and its history which included post Romano-Britons and the migration of the Saxons, Jutes and Angles and was fascinated. Local folklore also had a major influence. As did reading Tolkien. Other art styles I enjoy are American traditional tattoo (which I
used to draw a lot of), illuminated manuscripts and the old occult/witchcraft woodcuts of the 15/16th centuries.

Is there a particular theme that you enjoy exploring more than others?

Not really. I've kind of covered all subjects. I would like to be able to do more Anglo-Saxon or Celtic based artwork, but at the moment it's mostly Norse. Still as fun to draw though.

What works of ancient art have inspired you most?

All Anglo-Saxon art from the Migration Era to Trewhiddle style, the Lewis Chessmen, the Book of Kells and of course Norse/Viking artwork of all periods.

What is your artistic process like? How do you get ideas for new works and how does that go from an idea to a finished product?

The upside to a boring day job is that I have a lot of time to think and let my imagine go wild. I've based a lot of it on folklore and the older stories. I draw it all on an iPad now where it goes through several sketches until I get it to look right for hardlining.

In your life as an artist has your approach to your art changed? Is there anything you do differently now from when you started?

I think I take a lot more risks in what I draw and its subject matter and having the confidence to just draw.

In a perfect world, if your art is seen by everyone in the world, what would you hope it would accomplish?

I'd hope that it would make people look into the ancient history of their own countries, revive folk traditions/crafts and art that are threatened or have become extinct. Don't allow all that you see to be some homogeneous mess.

Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?

Thanks for having taken the time to read this and also for taking an interest in the old faith of our Anglo-Saxon forebears! Also put down your phone and get into the wilderness. The wilderness is our temple!
New Books, Music, and Videos

**Book**

*What Does Heathenry Mean?* by **Gárman Lord**

*What Does Heathenry Mean?,* Gárman Lord’s long-awaited follow-up to *The Way of the Heathen*, delves into Théodish history and comparative religious studies to answer “the Théodish Existential Dilemma” and explore what sets Théodism apart from other Millennial Religious movements.

COMING SOON TO AMAZON

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**Book**

*In Hallowed Groves: Observations on the Ancient Anglo-Saxon Heathen Priesthood with Thoughts on Its Renewal Within Théodish Belief* by **Þórbeorht Ealdorblótere**

Written by the Ealdorblótere of the Ealdríce holy-guild of the Winland Rice, *In Hallowed Groves* is a collection of ten articles which explore primary source accounts of the Germanic heathen priesthood with the aim of furthering its reconstruction in Théodism today.

Now available from Háliggyld Books at [Haliggyld.org](http://Haliggyld.org).
**Book**


*Eald Englisç Gealdrabóc: Old English Gealdors of the Ealдрíc* Háliggyld compiles many of Old English biddings and gealdors used by the Ealдрíc to fain the gods and goddesses throughout the year.

Now available from Háliggyld Books at [Háliggyld.org](http://Háliggyld.org).

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Available at: [Ælfric.bandcamp.com](http://Ælfric.bandcamp.com)
Théodish Websites

Théodish Fellowships

Æppeldor – Théodish Belief in Australia (Tasmania)
aeppeldor.home.blog

Whitthenge Heall – Théodish Belief in the Mid-Atlantic (Virginia, USA)
whitthenge.home.blog

Théodish Works and Wares

Ælfric’s Germanic Hearp Music – Théodish music
aelfric.bandcamp.com

Háliggyld Books – Théodish books and booklets
haliggyld.org

Heathen Greetings – Théodish Yule cards
www.etsy.com/shop/HeathenGreetings

Spellstów – Théodish news, abannings, and articles
https://spellstow.org/

Woodharrow Bund Press – Théodish and Heathen books by Ælfric
www.lulu.com/spotlight/aelfricavery