

# Odin's Toga

## *A Religious History of Early Northern Europe*



*Engraved stone from Gotland, Sweden.  
Which is believed to depict Odin on his horse, Sleipnir.*

*by John D. Nelson*



*formerly:*  
*“The Religious History of Northern Europe: 30 AD – 1030 AD”*

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## Reasonable History

*..worse than anything is old knowledge, which has become holy, unquestioned,  
so well known to everybody that no one thinks about it anymore.*

Harry Harrison

author of "The Hammer and the Cross"

If those who hate America had ever gotten together and co-written "A History of North America," such a tome would have little chance of ever becoming required reading across the country in American schools. As the adage goes, history (accurate or otherwise) has always been written by the conquerors.

Few North Americans would allow their cultural heritage to be hijacked and defined by enemies to their way of life. Yet, surprisingly, descendants of peoples from northern Europe have done just that regarding their heritage. They have allowed the ancient enemies of that culture to define it for them.

Could the history of religion in northern Europe be something quite different from the propaganda that has been handed down by Roman officers? Were our forefathers really the ignorant, brutish, pagan barbarians that clerics claimed them to be? What would their history say of them if it was written by someone other than their enemies?

Often-overlooked sources of British, Germanic, and Nordic history suggest a picture of northern beliefs much different from what Roman rulers and clerics have passed down.

These sources trace the origin of northern paganism to Rome itself, specifically identify the Roman officials involved, discuss the mastermind behind the northern runic alphabet, and unmask the historical identity of the legendary Odin.

Of greater interest, these sources peel back layers to reveal a glimpse of northern beliefs before Roman tampering; beliefs which once threatened the ambitions and very foundations of the Roman Empire.

This book offers a backstage pass to Roman politics and northern faith, and unveils from source documents the eyebrow-raising belief in northern Europe that has been swept under the carpet for centuries.

## The Day All Hell Broke Loose

*A legend may not be a record of facts,  
but the existence of a legend is itself a fact,  
and requires an explanation.*

G. Ashe

They struck from out of the blue.

Buildings were left burning. Private citizens and government officials lay dead. And an entire nation was in shock.

Attacked by a hostile culture that was both distant and elusive, the initial mourning was prolonged. Afterwards, the core issues were: how to strike back; and how to defend the homeland from additional violent attacks.

The victims were not Americans. The attacks began on the English coast in the late 700's AD.

The attackers were not Muslim. It was the beginning of the Viking Age that would last for over two hundred years.

For centuries, much has been speculated about Viking culture and religion, about how it originated, and what it really believed and practiced. But little of that conjecture offers viable explanations for why a foreign culture would venture hundreds of miles across open sea to lash out at another nation, or how and why that cultural hostility would be sustained for over two centuries.

Although this book has been prepared by and for descendants of Northern Europe, its contents will interest readers from any background. It answers several questions about the faith of northern Europe, such as who the Viking god "Odin" really was, and when/how that religion originated. TO answer such questions, this account journeys through twenty centuries of history, and pierces through cultural bias to separate supposition from historical fact. In the process, readers will become better acquainted with Angles, Saxons, Goths and other northern tribes that toppled several thrones, and conquered many nations, including Rome itself.

Peeling back the layers to discover how Odin worship originated will eventually bring us to the more interesting question: what did our forefathers

believe before that?

Throughout that sobering (and edifying) journey, readers will discover a surprising common thread between the ancient faith of our fathers and modern traditions.

## Ancient Bias

*Imagine the culture and history of the American Indians  
from the perceptions of nineteenth century white American settlers  
being accepted without question [as somehow being the truth].  
What a curious, prejudiced view we would have of the Native Americans.*

Peter Berresford Ellis

The Druids

Northern Europe made its first big impression on history about a century before Christ when the Cimbri and Teuton tribes descended upon northern Italy and crushed a Roman army. For over a decade, these tribes spread fear throughout Italy, as they conquered outlying areas of the Roman Republic.

Finally, in 102 BC, they boldly descended upon Italy again. But this time, they were defeated. After years of concern, Rome let out a tremendous sigh of relief.

The first ancient historian to describe our forefathers in detail was Julius Caesar. (He would later supplant the Republican government, to become the first emperor of Rome.) By way of historical context, his nephew Augustus was mentioned in the New Testament in the context of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup>

But back when Caesar wrote his history, he was still just a successful general in the army of the Roman Republic, who had waged several campaigns in northern Europe. Yet Caesar was a strategist through and through – both on the battlefield, and in the political arena. He wrote and published his campaign memoirs specifically to forward his ambitions for wider popularity and political gain. For reasons such as this, historian Malcolm Todd explains that “Caesar's passages on his adversaries must be treated with care.”<sup>2</sup>

As Todd explained, Caesar consciously played upon the fears and prejudices of the Roman people, who well remembered the Rome's version of Pearl Harbor, or their version of 9/11, when these tribes marched to the heart of the Republic, and threatened the very survival of the Republic. The irony is that with this fear of a foreign enemy as a pretense, Julius Caesar himself

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 2

<sup>2</sup>Todd, *The Northern Barbarians*, p. 11

would conquer and overthrow the Republican government.

But history, typically, is written by the conquerors. So despite Caesar's schemes, and due in large part to his propaganda, the Roman Empire would be enshrined as the civilized hero of western society. Whereas the free northern tribes would be pigeon-holed as ignorant, marauding barbarians.

But the truth is much more interesting.



## The Origins of Northern Literacy

It's exciting for children (and us) when they learn how to write. There was reportedly a time when none of the northern tribes knew how to write. It is curious, then, that historians have no precise explanation for when and how the northern tribes first picked up writing utensils to use an alphabet. And they claim history itself is silent about its precise origins. Or is it?

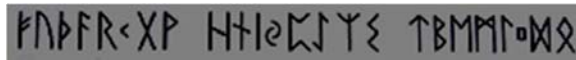
By combining several threads of evidence, we can actually triangulate in on the precise origins of Germanic writing, and come up with the likely historical individual(s) responsible for this considerable cultural shift.

### Ancient Historians

According to early Roman history, during the first few decades of the Christian era, northern Europeans had no written alphabet. As a preliterate society, it was said that the northern tribes only had songs as a record of their past.

### Archeology

Archaeological discoveries in Europe demonstrate that by 200 AD, a mature written alphabet was clearly in use among the northern tribes.



*The early Germanic alphabet – known as runes or “futhork.”*

### Christian History

In the 300's AD, when a Christian bishop decided to translate the New Testament for a northern tribe, he incorporated several characters of the runic alphabet into that Bible's unique alphabet. (A medieval copy of this Bible is on display in Sweden at Uppsala University.) Although this event and artifact do not do much for dating the origins of the runic alphabet, they do demonstrate how well entrenched that alphabet was by 300's AD.

### Linguistics

Linguists postulate that the runic form of writing was mature enough by 200 AD that it must have been in use for a century or more.

Furthermore, linguists have also noted the close similarities between runic

characters and the characters of older Latin, Greek, and Etruscan<sup>3</sup> alphabets.<sup>4</sup> Based on these close similarities, they suggest the runic alphabet was adapted from one or all of these systems. Many linguists emphasize the especially close correlation between runes and the Etruscan alphabet. That detail is crucial, since the spread of the Latin language in the wake of Rome's early expansion led to the extinction of Etruscan by 100 AD. So some linguists conclude that runic writing must have originated before the end of the first century AD.

### **Tentative Summary**

If we chose to accept all of this evidence as valid, it suggests that the Germanic tribes adopted writing somewhere towards the latter half of the first century AD.

Now that we have a narrow window of history to work from, the next interesting question is, who was responsible for this cultural shift, and how did it happen?

This is where academic history and Germanic religious history meet and illuminate one another. For the northern tribes had something to say about the origins of northern writing. Their legends claimed that the war chieftain Odin learned the art of writing while in vision – and passed it on to his people.

Understandably, many academic histories overlook, discount, and outright dismiss this cultural testimony. However, if there is any semblance of truth to this cultural claim, it could help us further pinpoint when and how Germanic writing originated. In essence, if we distill the legend down to concrete secular realities, we have the simple cultural claim that a Germanic chieftain introduced the art of writing. If this is accurate, then we have a bonus find – for we can then not only date Germanic writing to the first century AD, but can also date the origins of the legendary chieftain later known as Odin. And if we can more clearly date the alphabet, we can then more accurately identify the historical identity behind the legend.

We will explore the legendary chieftain later. But for now, let's meet the most likely sponsor/creator of the northern alphabet.

### **The Purpose of Writing**

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<sup>3</sup>A language that was native to northern Italy, but that has been extinct for centuries.

<sup>4</sup>There are also considerable similarities to proto-Semitic and Phoenician.

The first question is, as difficult as it is for a young, pliable child to learn a written language, it is typically much more difficult for adults. The inertia of introducing a new writing system to an illiterate society is considerable – even more than the effort needed to overcome the inertia to replace an existing writing system – for example the earlier failed attempt to replace American measurements with the metric system. So to help us identify who was responsible for sponsoring Germanic literacy, the initial question is, why would participants in such a democratic society agree to shoulder such a grueling undertaking?

The simple answer may be found in modern society. When we consider why adults – young and old alike – will commit a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money to earn a college degree, that parallel suggests what the Germanic societal tugs may have been like. Today, society simply demands a degree as a prerequisite for financial and career advancement. This suggests that in a largely democratic society as that found among the northern tribes, the most likely thing that could leverage such a societal change would be the accepted notion that literacy was a fast track and/or prerequisite for career promotions and financial opportunities. But such a reality requires some powerful individual or institution to instigate and follow through on those promised rewards.

Writing has only a few core societal uses: business, government (diplomacy, law), history, religion, and interpersonal communication. The categories that revolve around a central government suggests a motive for introducing such a writing system, and a general profile for a sponsor. In order to read or write, an apprentice would have to study someone's version of business, politics, history, and/or religion. Those reading primers would obviously be writings that favored the sponsor(s) of the written language.

This sponsor needed to have been wealthy and/or influential enough to jumpstart and maintain such an enormous change. They also needed some personal, institutional, or altruistic motive to justify the expense of meddling with Germanic culture.

So, since writing is what was introduced, and writing simply influences how we feel or think about politics, business, and religion, his motives were likely connected to the epicenter of those social spheres.

This sponsor also needed an understanding of linguistics, including Germanic, Latin, Greek, and especially Etruscan.

Political realities and northern legend itself suggest this someone was identical with or closely associated with a Germanic chieftain in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

And so we begin our search.

Of course our first candidates are Germanic chieftains. It makes sense, and is also historically documented, that Germanic warriors who served in the Roman Army, especially those who served as officers, gained some understanding of spoken and written Latin (and, depending on where they served, perhaps even some Greek). But the dying Etruscan script would have been so obscure and irrelevant to northern chieftains that there must be some other means to explain the apparent correlation between Etruscan characters and the oldest futhark.

In the first century, who would have had the means, motive, and opportunity to entice the northern tribes to become literate and adopt such an alphabet?

### **And Now a Word from Futhark's Sponsor**

In 9 AD, the northern tribes destroyed a Roman army of 20,000 men in a single battle. It was an earthshaking depletion of Rome's fighting force and reputation, and is today considered one of the 15 most important battles in world history. It shook the confidence of a brand new empire, and stirred the self-identity of an emerging people.

A few years later, a young Roman general, following in his father's footsteps, descended upon the northern tribes with a vengeance, vowing to recapture some semblance of Roman dignity. He had several short-term victories. However the tenaciousness of the Germanic people would not be quelled, as they had an abiding cultural hatred for Roman government, Roman culture, and Roman religion.

Back at home, however, when the returning general died prematurely, he was adored and mourned by the entire Roman populace. He was even more dearly missed by the Roman soldiers who had served honorably under his command. So in 41 AD, when the emperor died, Roman officers insisted that the beloved general's brother Claudius be raised to the imperial throne.



*Claudius is greeted as the new Emperor*  
*A Roman Emperor 41AD, by Lawrence Alma-Tadema.*  
*Oil on canvas, c. 1871*

In the years leading up to this moment, Claudius had a varied and extremely interesting background – especially in our search for the origins of the northern alphabet. As a young man, Claudius had physical defects and nervous ticks that led his family to keep him out of the public. They encouraged him to immerse himself in private learning. So although he openly aspired to make a difference in the world, for years he was forced to take a back seat to ponder dusty books and manuscripts.

### **A Religious Match**

Likely due to his scholarly background, long before Claudius became Emperor, he was ordained one of the first high priests in the brand new religion devoted to Emperor worship. This religion was established with the specific intent of enshrining and promoting the imperial family to be revered as gods. In such a role, Claudius was clearly quickly versed in religio-political propaganda. Since writing was one of the chief tools of religion and politics, this qualifies Claudius as a viable candidate for the originator of futhark writing.

Furthermore, Claudius' documented role as an author/tactician in introducing ruler worship at Rome certainly suggest a possible connection of

the legendary Germanic chieftain Odin, who, as legend would have it, both originated runic writing and became a god.

### **A Political Match**

In the past, northern tribes had invaded Italy more than once. They continually threatened to do so again. Claudius was about 19 years old when 20,000 Roman troops were cut down in a single battle. Earlier, his father lost his life campaigning in the north. And his brother spent the most eventful years of his life trying to subjugate the tribes. Now, as the most powerful leader in the western world, the scholarly Emperor Claudius had the choice of continuing open combat, or to experiment with less costly diplomatic and political means. He had to decide which of these methods would best further the interests and security of the Empire. Roman histories specifically state that Claudius chose to give diplomacy a try.

So a willingness to dabble in northern culture matches what we know of the scholarly Claudius, who attempted to succeed through “brains” where his brother and father had failed at “brawn.”

### **A Linguistic Match**

As mentioned earlier, several modern experts say the futhork was directly adapted from Latin, Greek, and Etruscan alphabets.

As a Roman native and official, Claudius of course spoke and wrote Latin, the official language of Rome.

But he also had linguistic interests, resources, and abilities that eclipsed his 1<sup>st</sup> century contemporaries. More specifically, he had a deep, bookish interest in the origin of languages. And the tremendous wealth of his family, and the subsequent wealth of the Roman Empire allowed him to fund all the research he desired.

Just to study Egyptian hieroglyphic writing more closely, Claudius spent a small fortune to transport a hefty stone monument from Egypt to Rome.

Claudius also studied Phoenician, and published a history of Phoenician culture.<sup>5</sup> It is of note that Phoenician script is considered a precursor to Greek, Latin, and Etruscan writing.

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<sup>5</sup>To clarify, this history is frequently referred to as a history of Carthage, which some may not know was the Phoenician capital.

In addition to Latin, Egyptian, and Phoenician studies, Claudius was fluent in Greek speaking and writing. He even constructed a careful study of the ancient origins of the Greek alphabet.

Furthermore, Claudius had close Etruscan relatives, openly appealed to the Senate to preserve Etruscan culture and religion, and wrote a 20-book work on Etruscan culture.

Again, Latin, Greek, and Etruscan are said to be the key ingredients of the futhark, and Claudius had command of all three of these language.<sup>6</sup>

Although the study and command of these languages begins to build a solid case, it would be incomplete without access to the spoken Germanic tongue. And that is precisely what Claudius had. Claudius sponsored the upbringing and bi-cultural training of at least one young German prince who was raised at Rome. And his bodyguard included Germanic troops. So through them and the tutors he sponsored, he had as much access as he wanted to the spoken Germanic language.

Although these linguistic connections strongly implicate Claudius as a viable suspect for the inventor of the futhark, the most convincing connection between Claudius and the creation of the Germanic alphabet is the history of *the Latin* alphabet itself. Centuries earlier, Claudius' forefather had made modifications to the makeup of the Roman alphabet. The linguist and Emperor Claudius felt it appropriate to follow in his ancestor's footsteps. So in 47 AD, Claudius added three letters of his own creation to the existing Latin alphabet.<sup>7</sup>

Claudius was the leading linguist of his day, an expert in the very writing systems the futhark is believed to have derived from, and a research in the birth of new alphabets. And, as we have just seen, Claudius was even a documented inventor of new alphabetic characters. By way of confirmation, the runic alphabet, known as the futhark, begins with two of the characters Claudius had invented for Latin.

Considering his vast wealth and influence, his scholarly drive for innovation

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<sup>6</sup>For those who claim the futhark derives through Phoenician, it has been demonstrated the Claudius likewise had the requisite background and means to draw form that culture as well.

<sup>7</sup>Although these new characters are described by ancient historians and appear in ancient texts contemporary with Claudius, their use, along with the Etruscan language, died out shortly after Claudius was laid to rest.

and improvement, his 13 years at the helm of the empire, and his incentive to civilize and tame Germanic society, it is difficult to believe his language innovations stopped after creating three little Latin characters, the f/v, the u, and one other.

#### Means, Motive and Opportunity

Claudius is thus the prime candidate for inventing the futhark. But this chapter merely established his means and motive. The final question then remains: how did Claudius do it? Despite his powers within the borders of the Empire, precisely how could a ruler who was despised by much of Germanic society get the northern tribes to undertake such a societal change?

A direct appeal would likely have backfired just out of spite. He needed an inside front man, one who would keep the true source of the alphabet from being disclosed. But when did Claudius have the opportunity to promote literacy among the tribes through a middle man?

To answer that question, we first need to unmask the Odin myth.



## Odin's First Toga

The Nordic god Odin (Woden) is one of the most bizarre remnants of ancient western culture. As the supposed “father” of the gods, he was assigned a day of the week, Wednesday (Woden's day) – just as Thor had his own day on Thursday.<sup>8</sup> And regardless of the day assigned to him, unraveling Odin's identity holds the key to understanding the faith of our fathers.

Although Odin's legend was well known throughout northern Europe, surprisingly few people actually considered themselves his worshipers. Historians puzzle over the fact that Odin worship appears to have been largely restricted to nobility and the royal court (bards, skalds, etc.).

For example, in Iceland, which became a democratic society with no king or nobility, Odin worship was almost nonexistent. In contrast, long after Anglo-Saxon kings had been converted to Christianity, they still claimed direct descent from Odin. The cult of Odin was therefore almost exclusive to the ruling class.

This class division is not Odin worship's only aberration. The mechanics and source of this religion become even more puzzling and intriguing the more closely we examine it.

### Violent Worshipers

The cult of Odin was shockingly violent. Human victims were sacrificed to Odin by being hung from a tree. This reality is attested in northern histories and sagas, depicted in northern inscriptions, and affirmed by foreign visitors. Even archeology attests to this reality. Bogs throughout northern Europe have preserved ancient victims with nooses around their necks still intact. This suggests they could have been victims of Odin worship.

However, the growing puzzle amidst this brutality, is that based on the context of early Germanic culture, hanging seems out of place in a religious setting, since it had previously been reserved for civic wrongs only. For example, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote the following about the sense of justice among the northern tribes:

*The mode of execution varies according to the offense.*

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<sup>8</sup>Likewise, Tuesday and Friday were named after other Nordic gods.

*Traitors and deserters are hanged on trees....this distinction in the punishments is based on the idea that offenders against the state should be made a public example of, whereas deeds of shame should be buried out of men's sights.<sup>9</sup>*

So it is peculiar that a form of execution clearly reserved for traitors, which was an intentional symbol of shame, would be adopted as a religious aspect of Odin worship in Germanic culture.

### **Odin's Own Punishment**

But Odin worship gets even more puzzling. The religious legends surrounding Odin claim that he himself had once been hung on a tree. In other words, if the stigma of hanging is associated with treason, the implications are far reaching. Here is the Nordic account of Odin's hanging:

*I hung on a windy tree  
for nine long nights;  
I had a spear wound  
...they brought me no bread,  
no horn to drink from  
I gazed aloud,  
I caught up the runes;  
finally I fell.<sup>10</sup>*

If it weren't for the social stigma attached to hanging, we might also chalk this detail up to just one more quirk. Yet the claim stands out in such glaring contrast to Germanic law and society that it begs the question of where this Odin religion came from, and how his cult could so quickly shift the moral center of Germanic society. Why would a religion openly claim that its god had submitted to such a shameful punishment?

Other beliefs suggest initial explanations. For example, Christianity teaches that the Roman crucifixion of Jesus was allowed so that mankind could benefit from his sacrifice. Odin worship apparently patterned itself after that premise.

The legends which surround Odin claim that by hanging on the tree, he thereby acquired of writing for his people. Speaking of his sacrifice on the tree, Odin supposedly said:

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<sup>9</sup>Tacitus Germania, 12.

<sup>10</sup>“Sayings of the High One” (medieval Nordic record)

*Thus I learned the secret lore,  
prospered and grew in wisdom.<sup>11</sup>*

This connection between Odin and the alphabet offers a way for us to pinpoint who he was, how his legends originated, and how they became so widespread.

Since the linguistic evidence points to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD for the invention of the runes, and since Emperor Claudius is the most likely sponsor for their creation, we then have a narrow window of opportunity to search for a character later immortalized as Odin. To help identify him, we'll need to compare several clues about Odin in mythology against known history to triangulate in on his identity.

**Clue #1 – Odin was associated with the invention runes**

(Addressed above and in the previous chapter.)

**Clue #2 – Odin was the reputed founder of northern dynasties**

A medieval Christian chronicler named Aethelweard revealed that Odin (Woden) was the direct forefather of the Anglo-Saxon rulers who crossed the North Sea and conquered Britain. To this day, the British monarchy still traces their lineage back to him. Monarchies in Denmark and other northern countries likewise still claim descent from Odin.

**Clue #3 – Odin was a leader among his people**

According to the chronicler Aethelweard, Odin had also been:

*...a king of the barbarians.<sup>12</sup>*

**Clue #4 – Odin was a cavalry commander**

In sagas and inscriptions, Odin is remembered as a champion in battle. He was considered the lord of the spear, and supposedly rode a swift, eight-legged horse (apparently twice the speed of a typical horse). Combining these descriptions with clue #3, Odin was apparently a successful commander of a mounted force.

**Clue #5 – Odin had a large retinue of followers**

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<sup>11</sup>“Sayings of the High One”

<sup>12</sup>The Northern World, p. 37

A medieval Icelandic writer named Snorri Sturluson said that Odin came to northern Europe with “a great host” of followers and that they brought “many valuables.” Although this detail may seem unimportant, it would have had deep significance for early northern society. During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Tacitus had recorded:

*...there is great rivalry among chiefs for the honor of having the biggest and most valiant retinue. Both prestige and power depend on being continually attended by a large train of picked young warriors, which is a distinction in peace and a protection in war. And it is not only in a chief's own nation that the superior number and quality of his retainers brings him glory and renown. Neighboring states honor them also, courting them with embassies and complimenting them with presents. Very often the mere reputation of such men will virtually decide the issue of war.<sup>13</sup>*

If Snorri's claim of Odin having a great host of followers is based on truth, then whoever sponsored this large retinue to establish itself in northern Europe knew the culture, knew exactly how such a retinue would be perceived, and therefore knew exactly what they were doing.

#### **Clue #6 – Odin was chagrined by his wife**

The legends of Odin claim that he spent a great deal of time away from home. While away, his wife married his brother. Later, she lived in a house separate from Odin.

#### **Clue #7 – Odin lost an eye**

The northern myths repeatedly affirm that Odin lost or sacrificed an eye to gain something of value. As such, he is repeatedly referred to as the one-eyed god.

Comparing these clues with northern history, a process of elimination brings us to the doorstep of a single northern tribe – the Cherusci. Here we find the likely source of the Odin myth.

Although the Cherusci are obscure to most 21st-century readers, during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, they were the most dangerous threat to the Roman Empire. Arminius, one of the Cherusci leaders, was a cavalry commander who had trained in the Roman Army. However, in 9 AD, Arminius turned against the Romans.

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<sup>13</sup>Tacitus, Germania, 13.

In a brilliant military strategy that to this day is considered among the 15 most important battles in the history of the world, Arminius led the Cherusci to rout and decimate three Roman legions, and thereby ended Rome's ambitions of conquering the northern tribes.

But Arminius is not our quarry...although another notable member of his tribe is.

Arminius had a brother named Flavius who is largely overlooked by modern historians. In a few ways, he resembled his brother. Like Arminius, Flavius was the son of a powerful Cherusci chieftain. Like Arminius, Flavius also served with distinction in the Roman army as a cavalry officer. However, this is where the similarities end, and the striking contrasts begin.

Whereas Arminius was the George Washington of the northern tribes, who helped defend their independence, Flavius was the Benedict Arnold, the traitor of his people who sided with Rome. Even Flavius' own mother considered him a traitor against their people.<sup>14</sup>

By comparing the seven previous clues for Odin's myth with Flavius' known history, the reader can decide for themselves whether it is justified to claim we have a reliable match.

### **Match #1 – Associated with the invention of runic writing**

In 4-9 AD, Flavius served in the Roman army with distinction under the command of the general (and soon to be emperor) Tiberius. Then, in 14 AD, Tiberius became emperor, and ordered a new Roman army to descend upon the northern tribes. Tacitus says this campaign “was designed less to extend the empire's frontiers, or achieve any lucrative purpose, than to avenge the disgrace of the army lost” to Arminius and the Cherusci in 9 AD.<sup>15</sup> During this punitive campaign, Flavius the Cherusci fought against his own people, under the Roman legionary commander named Germanicus. Germanicus was a nephew of Emperor Tiberius, under whom Flavius had previously received military honors.

Flavius' close connections to Germanicus and Tiberius tie him directly to the center of Roman politics and runic writing. For after Emperor Tiberius died, Germanicus' son Gaius (Caligula) ascended briefly to the imperial throne.

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<sup>14</sup>Tacitus, Annals, II, 9-10

<sup>15</sup>Tacitus, Annals, I, 2-3

And four years afterward, Germanicus' brother Claudius became emperor. There is thus clear evidence that through Tiberius and Germanicus, Flavius was connected with the man, Claudius, who appears to have invented runic writing.

### **Match #2 – Founder of northern dynasties**

Roman history does affirm that Flavius' family continued to play a central role in northern politics. We'll address this more specifically in the next chapter. For generalities, however, the Angles and the Saxons, who left northern Germany in the 400's AD to conquer Britain, claimed direct descent from Odin. Furthermore, the region of northern Germany from which they departed was the same territory previously occupied by the people previously known as the Cherusci – Flavius' own tribe.

### **Match #3 – A Leader Among His People**

Although Flavius' own mother reportedly considered him a traitor, there were many influential people among the northern tribes, including his uncle and Arminius' father-in-law, who sided with wanting an alliance with Rome. Due to Flavius' close imperial connections, he was considered a leader among that pro-Roman faction.

### **Match #4 – Cavalry Commander**

As mentioned above, Flavius served with distinction in the Roman army as a cavalry commander, and while serving with Tiberius, received one of the highest awards for valor available to a Roman soldier.

### **Match #5 – Had a large retinue of followers**

Based on the above four realities, and based upon documented history itself, Flavius attracted a substantial retinue of followers.

### **Match #6 – Chagrined by his own wife**

This match is circumstantial. Although the tidbits of available history don't confirm a match, they do strongly suggest one.

Flavius was closely allied with Segestes, the leader of a powerful priestly family within the Cherusci tribe. Like Flavius, Segestes was strongly pro-Roman: so much so that Segestes' own son was ordained as a Roman priest, and officiated in the cult of Roman emperor worship which Claudius had helped invent. Segestes had a daughter, named Thusnelda, who was engaged. (We might safely assume that Thusnelda's fiancé, whoever he was, was pro-Roman like her father.) However, Arminius stepped in and “stole” Thusnelda's hand in marriage. Her father was furious. Pregnant with

Arminius' child, Thusnelda was later captured by Roman soldiers in 15 AD.

It is here where additional clues emerge. The year after Thusnelda's capture, during a brief lull in the Roman campaign, that Arminius requested a momentary truce, and asked his brother to emerge from the Roman army to approach the opposite side of a river bank where they could talk. When Flavus stepped forward, Arminius attempted to convince his brother to change sides and help defend his people. The discussion turned to Arminius' wife and child, which then quickly deteriorated into a heated discussion. Tacitus said the discussion rapidly “became abusive: blows would have followed – in spite of the river barrier – if [a Roman soldier] had not hastened up and restrained Flavus, who was angrily calling for his horse and weapons. Across the river, Arminius was seen, shouting threats and challenges to fight...”<sup>16</sup>

To repeat the situation for clarity:

- 1) Thusnelda's father, Segestes, was strongly pro-Roman.
- 2) Thusnelda was engaged to someone. Based on her father's authority, and on his reaction to subsequent events, the fiancé was likely as pro-Roman as her father was.
- 3) Flavus spent a large portion of every year away from home, campaigning with the Roman army, and was as pro-Roman as a Cherusci could be.
- 4) When Arminius, an anti-Roman member of the tribe stepped in and “stole” Thusnelda, her father was furious.
- 5) A discussion between Flavus and Arminius, likewise deteriorated into heated insults shortly after discussing Arminius' wife.
- 6) Thusnelda spent the rest of her life under house arrest in Italy.

These connections suggest that Flavus himself may have been Thusnelda's original fiancé. And that he was thereby the jilted party. If so, Arminius stole Thusnelda from his own brother, and every element of that love triangle would match the bizarre legend of Odin's wife. (One might ask why this embarrassing legend about Odin would even survive if there were no truth to it.)

### **Match #7 – Lost an eye**

In the encounter at the river described in #6 above, Tacitus does us the courtesy of explaining precisely how Flavus earned some of his military honors: he had “lost an eye some years earlier fighting under Tiberius.”

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<sup>16</sup>Tacitus, Annals, II, 9-10

When Arminius confronted his brother in the river encounter, the first thing he reportedly did was ask his brother to explain that obvious wound. “The place and the battle were told him. Then he asked what reward Flavius had received. Flavius mentioned his higher pay, chain, and wreath of honor and other military decorations. “The wages of slavery are low,” chided Arminius.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, there were many mounted cavalry commanders among the northern tribes who matched various elements of Odin's legend. However, the physical description of a one-eyed cavalry chieftain narrows the field drastically – suggesting Flavius as the most viable match for the Odin legend. At this crossroad, history not only provides a northern commander with one eye, but notably one who tries to justify (to himself and others) that the reward for his loss was worth the pain and sacrifice. In this, we have yet another parallel between Flavius and the dynastic legend of Odin.

But all we've demonstrated here is that a Germanic associate of the Roman imperial family had striking parallels to the Odin legends. This circumstantial evidence does not answer the key question: how could the Emperor Claudius impose a new alphabet, and a new religion, among the already-resentful northern tribes?

### **Cloak and Dagger**

To prepare for the next chapter, which addresses that question, Roman history mentions that after the punitive Roman campaign against the Cherusci in 14-16 AD, the Emperor Tiberius called an end to the open conflict, saying:

“There have been enough successes, and enough misfortunes. I was sent into Germany nine times by...Augustus, and I achieved less by force than by diplomacy....The Cherusci and other rebellious tribes, now that we have duly punished them, can be left to their own internal disturbances.”<sup>18</sup>

The bystander status claimed by Rome in the first phrase can best be understood as tongue-in-cheek. The tribes were not at all “left” to their own internal disturbances. Rather, like a puppet master, Rome repeatedly stirred the pot, and played northern factions against one another.

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<sup>17</sup>Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 9-10

<sup>18</sup>Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 26-27



For example, two years after Germanicus was recalled from the German punitive campaign, Drusus “distinguished himself by inducing the Germans to fight among themselves.”<sup>19</sup> There were thus four powerful relatives meddling with Germanic politics:

- 1) the Emperor Tiberius (14-37 AD)
- 2) the Emperor Gaius (Caligula) (37-41 AD)
- 3) his father Germanicus (Tiberius' nephew)
- 4) and Germanicus' brother, the Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD)

Their combined attempts to weaken the northern tribes, specifically the Cherusci, were eventually overwhelmingly successful. By the time of Claudius reign, civil wars among the Cherusci had left that tribe without any surviving nobility. The scant record of this internal strife simply tells us that Arminius was killed by relatives (likely Flavus and/or Segestes). However, Roman history is silent about Flavus' specific fate.

But since Flavus was Cheruscan nobility, he was likely among the nobility which Tacitus said was extinguished during three decades of civil war. Which addresses a central point.

If Flavus had been captured by the anti-Roman faction of his tribe during those years of civil strife, the manner of his punishment would have been that of a traitor. As Tacitus had said, among the northern tribes, “traitors and deserters are hanged on trees.” So the Odin legend suggests this is exactly what became of the one-eyed Flavus.

History itself thereby also suggests why his memory was immortalized as “Odin,” rather than “Flavus.” Names were apparently changed to protect the not-so-innocent.

But how this Cherusci traitor later became the hub of northern worship is an issue for another chapter.

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<sup>19</sup>Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 57-58

## **From Tribal Shame to Godly Glory** **Roman spin-doctors invent the Odin dynastic myth**

Means. Motive. Opportunity. We've established both the means and the motive that trace Odin worship to Rome. For example, the previous chapter suggests a clear Roman motive for meddling in northern affairs, and demonstrates numerous ties to the individual known as Flavus. And, Claudius clearly had the religio-political, financial, and linguistic means/prowess to design and introduce a religion based on Flavus into northern Europe. Simply put, after the loss of three legions in 9 AD, Rome's most volatile enemies were most easily neutralized through back-door politics, rather than through open warfare.

Two chapters back, we explored a key means of accomplishing that neutralization: civilizing/taming the tribes with a “native” writing system. Writing allowed for laws, business, history, religion, and treaties to be enacted and recorded. So all we lack to solidify Rome's complicity is the opportunity. Therefore this chapter addresses religion itself as an additional means of subduing the tribes. It also suggests the specific historic opportunity Rome had to implant its writing and religious innovations into northern Europe.

The reader is by now well aware of Roman Emperor worship. Although this practice was introduced to Rome with the first Emperor Augustus (31 BC – 14 AD), enforced ruler worship is a religio-political ploy that dates back to Egyptian and Babylonian politics/religion. As mentioned elsewhere, it was a shrewd means of stabilizing a dynasty's power base.

The hypocrisy behind such a system was reportedly obvious and repugnant to the northern tribes. Rallying his troops, Arminius was cited by Tacitus as saying “Let Segestes live on the conquered bank,<sup>20</sup> and make his son a Roman priest again – with a human being to worship! But Germany will never tolerate Roman rods, axes, and robes between Rhine and Elbe.”<sup>21</sup>

That the democratic and freedom-loving Germanic peoples could ever be led to exalt their kings as gods is a tough pill for some historians to swallow. Of course Arminius would never have stood for it. Some will claim that his people would never have allowed such a practice to seep in.

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<sup>20</sup>In other words, the West bank of the Rhine River, the river which severed as the boundary of the Roman frontier.

<sup>21</sup>Tacitus, Annals, I, 59-61

History, however, testifies that the opposite is what eventually happened. Within decades after Arminius' death, these Roman practices infiltrated and began to supplant the faith of the Cherusci.

To ensure that this claim does not rest on the word of a single person or group, we will draw upon the testimonies that span several centuries and different belief systems. Like geologists who use three different readings to triangulate on an epicenter, these samples also help provide a reliable reading.

To measure how deeply a form of emperor deification penetrated the Germanic tribes, and to substantiate the claim that Odin worship was created to solidify Flavius' new dynasty, we will examine and compare three accounts, in the order they were written.

First we will examine the eyewitness account of how Romans deified their emperors. Although it had been happening for centuries prior to the account we'll review, that most detailed account dates to 211 AD.

Next, we will explore a passage from Beowulf, which is one of the oldest surviving books of the Anglo-Saxon people. Beowulf describes events of the early 500's AD, about two generations after the Anglo-Saxons migrated to England. Like the songs of the early Germanic peoples, their descendants had preserved the story of Beowulf through song until it was finally committed to writing.

Finally, we will examine the eyewitness account of a Viking event in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. The eyewitness is Ibn Fadlan, a Muslim diplomat.

The reader should note that the three accounts span seven centuries and draw from an early Roman writer, a medieval English writer, and a Muslim writer. By comparing royal burial accounts from three different periods, we should thus be able to arrive at a relatively unbiased and objective idea of what happened in northern Europe.

### **Emperor Worship in Rome**

The Emperor Septimus Severus died in Britain. While explaining the emperor's burial, the historian Herodian makes a very telling statement: "It is the Roman custom to give divine status to those who die with heirs to succeed them." Please read that again carefully. Its implications are considerable.

That this customary rite was merely intended for those with heirs who would succeed them reveals the clear political motive behind the religious facade. Deification was a ritual myth with the sole purpose of stabilizing a ruling dynasty – to preserve power for that ruling family. Of course several emperors were flatteringly declared divine while still alive. But the political purpose behind burial deification rite was the same – to solidify power, through false religion, for the ruler's heirs.

Herodian said that, as part of the deification rite, the emperor's effigy is put on a bed, “strewn with gold-threaded coverings.” A public mourning process lasted for several days. Then his death is finally announced. The bed his effigy rests upon is raised on the shoulders of members of the Senate and the Equestrian Order (the equivalent of mounted knights/nobles), and his effigy is carried out to where women sing mournful and solemn songs in his honor.

Then, the bed containing the effigy is placed in or on a multi-storied structure that Herodian compares to a lighthouse that is filled with herbs, flowers, and fruit juices by people from all walks of life that participate in the ritual.

Then, “a mounted display is held around the structure. The whole Equestrian Order rides round, wheeling in well-disciplined circles in the Pyrrhic style.”

When the horsemanship display ends, the heir to the throne takes a burning brand and sets the structure ablaze. All the other mourners then cast their brands into the structure. At the pinnacle of the structure, an eagle is released, which is believed to bear the soul of the emperor to heaven. “Thereafter the dead emperor is worshiped with the rest of the gods.”

At the risk of being overly redundant, it should be noted that this public deification ritual was performed for those deceased rulers who had heirs.

### **An Anglo-Saxon Equivalent**

The Sutton Hoo burial mound in England, which dates roughly to the same time period as Beowulf, confirms that the burial rites described in the book are accurate.

Here is a description of Beowulf's funeral procession. The parallels to Emperor deification should be obvious:

*“Let the pyre be ready and high....Then Wiglaf commanded the wealthiest*

*Geats, brave warriors and owners of land, leaders of his people, to bring wood for Beowulf's funeral. And Wextan's wise son took seven of the noblest Geats, led them together...deep into the Tower; the one in front had a torch...Then silver and gold and precious jewels were put on a wagon, with Beowulf's body, and brought down...where the pyre waited. A huge heap of wood was ready, hung around with helmets, and battle shields, and shining mail shirts, all as Beowulf had asked.*

*The bearers brought their beloved lord, their glorious king, and weeping laid him high on the wood. Then the warriors began to kindle that greatest of funeral fires: smoke rose above the flames, black and thick, and while the wind blew and the fire roared they wept, and Beowulf's body crumbled and was gone. The Geats stayed, moaning their sorrow, lamenting their lord:*

*A gnarled old woman, hair wound tight and gray on her head, groaned a song of misery, of infinite sadness and days of mourning..and Heaven swallowed the billowing smoke.*

*Then the Geats built the tower, as Beowulf had asked, strong and tall, so sailors could find it from far and wide...*

*And then twelve of the bravest Geats rode their horses around the tower, telling their sorrow, telling stories of their dead king and his greatness, his glory, praising him for heroic deeds for a life as noble as his name. So should all men raise up words for their lords, warm with love, when their shield and protector leaves his body behind, sends his soul on high.”*

This Anglo-Saxon account matches in precise detail (and symbolism) the deification process that occurred centuries earlier at Rome. Furthermore, it openly reveals its intended morale for the reader that “all men” should do likewise for their kings.

As stated elsewhere, the Angles and Saxons who recorded this account, came from the same region that Arminius' and Flavus' tribe had occupied a few centuries earlier. In addition to this fact, their additional claim that their Anglo-Saxon dynasty descends from Odin is further evidence that the Angles and Saxons were literal descendants of the Cherusci. As such, this Anglo-Saxon account is suggestive proof that emperor worship not only survived the Roman version practiced by the priestly-robed Segestes family while Arminius was alive, but was later adapted for Germanic dynastic purposes, and was passed on for dynastic reasons to the heirs of the traitor Flavus.

## Remnants of Roman Deification among the Vikings

The following Viking account should demonstrate how deeply the Roman emperor deification ritual had infiltrated the northern tribes. It takes place approximately four centuries after the events described in the Beowulf account, although the two accounts may have been written at about the same time.

In the early 900's AD, a Muslim named Ibn Fadlan was sent as ambassador by the Caliph of Baghdad to visit a kingdom in Eastern Europe, likely to encourage or enforce an alliance. As part of his adventure, this ambassador came in contact with a group of Vikings, just as they were making preparations to bury their chieftain.

Here is a summary of Ibn Fadlan's account, minus a few gruesome details:<sup>22</sup>

*"I was told that the least of what they do for their chiefs when they die is to consume them with fire. When I was finally informed of the death of one of their magnates, I sought to witness what befell."*

Ibn Fadlan further explains that the people made a clear distinction between how a chief and a poor man are treated. A poor man is simply burned in a boat. But with a magnate (king), there is a distinct ritual.

The dead ruler is dressed in clothing made of gold cloth. Then they put him on a couch with pillows of the same material, and carried him into a tent atop his ship. Then they placed strong drinks, fruits, and herb basil beside him.

Next, they ran horses until they were dripping with sweat, and added them to the offerings.

A servant then declared she could see her ruler sitting in Paradise. (In other words, the confirmation that the ruler was enthroned as a God.)

But Ibn Fadlan's last statement reveals the clear purpose of this rite among the Vikings:

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<sup>22</sup>Any reader who researches the matter further will quickly understand why some have been spared those details. They are a gruesome tangent that has no direct bearing on the matter at hand.

“The next of kin [the male heir] to the dead man now drew near, and taking a piece of wood, lighted it, and walked backwards toward the ship...until the wood which had been piled under the ship was ignited. Then the others came up with staves and firewood, each one carrying a stick already lighted at the upper end, and threw it all on the pyre. The pile was soon aflame, then the ship, finally the tent, the man..and everything else in the ship. A terrible storm began to blow up, and this intensified the flames, and gave wings to the blaze.”

### **Connecting the Dots**

The reader has probably noted the obvious parallels between the three accounts here. First, Ibn Fadlan was specifically told by the Vikings that the special rite he witnessed was only done for their rulers. Secondly, the Beowulf account specifically says that all men should thus honor their deceased rulers. In these two accounts about Germanic burial rites, we have an apparent match for the Roman purpose behind ruler deification.

Furthermore, between the two descriptions of Beowulf and Ibn Fadlan, we have each of the key elements for Roman Emperor deification. For example, the gold, fruits (and/or fruit drinks), and herbs are found in the Viking account and in the Roman account centuries earlier.

Likewise, carrying the ruler on a couch or wagon, dressed or covered in gold, to a lighthouse or funeral pyre is consistent in all three accounts. (As is the central and mournful participation of women, an element which, however, could be descriptive of many funerals.)

More crucial is the fact, clearly distinguished in the 10th-century account, that just before the rest of the mourners cast their brands into the pyre, it was the heir who had the honor of initiating his sire's ascension to heaven. This reveals the whole purpose and significance of the ritual – the perpetuation of a dynasty – or the establishment of the heir's supposed divine right (and rite) to rule.

When comparing the Roman account to these two Germanic accounts, only one significant element got lost in the translation: the eagle. The explanation for that portion of the ritual being discarded in northern Europe is simple. The eagle was the despised symbol of the Roman Empire.

Thus it is clear that Woden or Odin, who sired the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, is none other than a deified version of Flavius. Based on the emperor rites that were adapted to deify the memory of Odin, his title “Alfadr” meaning

“Father of All” was clearly a self-serving (and self-fulfilling) prophecy. Through enforced ruler worship, Flavius' heirs were ensured the rite to inherit the throne.

### **Final Clue – Deified after his Death.**

The English Chronicler we referred to in the previous chapter provides a final piece of information about Odin that solidifies his connection with Flavius and Roman priests. Of the chieftain Odin, the chronicler said:

*“...after his death, the pagans, honoring him as a god with respect not fit to be mentioned, offered him sacrifice...”<sup>23</sup>*

Here is our smoking gun. Like Roman Emperors, Odin/Flavius was not initially considered a god. Instead, he was deified after his death.

### **The Golden Opportunity**

History clearly supports the assertion that Rome succeeded in its attempt to tame or “civilize” the northern tribes through a written alphabet and a stabilizing adaptation of ruler worship. The question is: how did they do it? Where was their window of opportunity to meddle with northern culture?

The short answer is 47 AD, during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD).

The reader will recall from earlier chapters that Claudius was a scholar who was among the first priests ordained and consecrated to define and promote worship of the first Roman emperor, Augustus. And one of Claudius' first official deeds when he subsequently became emperor was to deify his grandmother as a god, to enhance his own reputation. Claudius was an expert in the deification facade.

We've also discussed the three decades of civil war that decimated the Cheruscan nobility. The clear need for Cheruscan rebuilding after that Roman-orchestrated desolation is precisely what allowed Rome's long-awaited opportunity to impose itself upon northern society.

In 47 AD, the Cherusci, having lost all of their nobility to their bloody civil war, sent a petition to Rome, requesting that Rome send noble Cheruscan descendants to be their king. Of course Arminius' widow and son lived out their lives under house arrest in Italy. If Arminius' son was still alive in 47

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<sup>23</sup>The Northern World, 37



AD, Claudius would have had the option of sending him. However, Claudius sent his cousin, who had been tutored and raised in Rome itself. According to Claudius, this young man was the first Roman citizen to rule among the Cherusci. This new Cheruscan king was none other than Italicus, son of the traitor Flavius.

This chain of events was no mere coincidence. Claudius had raised and educated Italicus at Rome for this very purpose. In 47 AD, Italicus was sent north into Germania with a large retinue of followers to solidify his power base.

If there are remaining doubts of the connections between Claudius, Flavius, Odin, and the Germanic runes, it might be worthwhile to note that Claudius made his changes to the Latin alphabet in 47 AD, *the same year he sent his protégé Italicus north to assume his place as a Cheruscan king.*

### **Pliny the Elder**

Furthermore, in that same year, Pliny the Elder was dispatched to the German frontier. Two details suggest that Pliny was either part of Italicus' retinue, or was an agent in close contact with Italicus.

First, after the completion of his mission on the German frontier, Pliny wrote a detailed history of the German wars (a work that is lost today). This work was the source for Tacitus' concise details of the Cheruscan conflicts included in his "Annals," and for the cultural and religious information in his shorter "Germania." If Tacitus' writings are a fair indication of Pliny's expertise, Pliny was *somehow* privy to more information on the Cherusci than any other northern tribe. Based on the timing of his assignment to the German frontier, close cooperation with Italicus is the most plausible explanation for his inside knowledge.

Secondly, and perhaps more intriguing, is the fact that one of Pliny's other known works was a military treatise on the effective use of the spear among the cavalry. It is therefore perhaps more than coincidence that Italicus' father Flavius would soon be immortalized as "Odin, lord of the spear."

It is historically documented that Italicus came to power in Germania in 47 AD with backing and sponsorship of the Roman Empire. In fact, at that time, Italicus was a Roman citizen. Based on archaeological findings, it is likewise asserted by linguists that the origin of runic writing points to the same general period.

Based on this evidence, and the circumstantial evidence presented

throughout the last few chapters, this author asserts that among Italicus' retinue were priests who helped accomplish three cultural shifts as part of Rome's agenda.

Those changes consisted of:

- 1) Implementing a new system of writing
- 2) Transforming Flavus' reputation from an executed traitor to a heroic warrior, and
- 3) Imposing a dynastic religion that would keep the heirs of Flavus (Italicus) in power

The next chapter suggests how the religious facade was enforced in northern Europe as Italicus and his heirs solidified their power base.

## The Forgotten Victims of Northern Ruler Worship

Enforced ruler worship may seem like an antiquated system so remote in space in time that it has no relevance to the modern reader. The reality, however, is that thousands of individual lives were sacrificed to a corrupt political system. Each of those northern victims was a father, a mother, a son, or a daughter.<sup>24</sup> Families were ripped apart for the sake of a false religion founded to preserve dynastic power. Any modern reader with a sense of morality should sense the tragedy of such a situation. And upon closer investigation, the core issue becomes even more troubling, especially for modern societies built upon Judeo-Christian principles.

Roman history documents the tragic fact that enforced ruler worship was accepted, at the very least with a wink and a nod, by almost all members of Roman society. Most Romans had no issue with humoring an emperor's delusions of grandeur by praying or sacrificing to his statue (and the statues of his ancestors) a few times a year as a token of loyalty. It was the Roman equivalent of ass-kissing. Even though this worship was enforced, few had any real moral issues against it, since their cultures (Greek, Roman, and Egyptian) already believed in a multitude of gods. Therefore, one more god, true or false, wasn't that big of an issue for them – especially when weighed against the execution awaiting any who failed to render worship to the Emperor and his family. Surprisingly, this issue has direct relevance to the victims of Nordic ruler worship.

Despite the general allowance within the Empire for the Emperor's ego, Roman history reveals that there were two key pockets within Roman society, Jews and Christians, which simply refused to bow to the image of another god.<sup>25</sup> Both modern versions of those faiths are built upon monotheism – the belief that there is only one true God. And central to monotheism is the belief that their one true God jealously guards his sole right to receive worship.<sup>26</sup> It is precisely this belief, that one should have no

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<sup>24</sup>The tragedies of emperor worship are also as recent as World War II, when the Japanese belief in their “divine” Emperor led to Pearl Harbor, Kamikaze pilots, and years of bloody conflict.

<sup>25</sup>Most early Romans failed to comprehend any key difference between the two groups, since, as far as they were concerned, Christianity was simply a form of Judaism.

<sup>26</sup>Islam, the third world religion based upon monotheism, did not play a role here, since it was not founded until the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, long after Germanic tribes

other gods beside God, which generates the friction between monotheism and ruler worship.

Many have heard the accounts of Jewish and Christian martyrs being fed to lions while Roman audiences cheered. Historians are likewise familiar with the stories of hundreds of Jews and Christians publicly crucified as enemies of the Roman state. Such examples being to offer a sobering glimpse of the unrecorded drama unleashed through ruler worship among the northern tribes.

Known as bog people, scores of executed victims have been uncovered throughout northern Europe: in the British Isles, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden. In many cases, the victims have been so well preserved for two thousand years that their facial expressions are clear and striking. The majority of these findings date to the first centuries of the Christian era. Furthermore, of those whose remains were sufficiently preserved, a large number of them still have a noose or leather strap around their neck, with broken vertebrae, to confirm that hanging was their method of execution reserved for dynastic Odin worship.

Modern historians and archaeologists suggests that these bog people were sacrificial victims or criminals who had been executed for various crimes. While these allegations are all likely true, the pattern of history itself suggests a comprehensive conclusion much more simple and disturbing. These victims could simply be the northern counterparts to Roman Jews and Christians who were slain on the cross or in the Coliseum. The historical record offers support for this premise.

For example, in the 300's AD, cultural differences flared up between pagans and Christians among the Goths (a Germanic tribe) that erupted into full-fledged persecutions of Christian Goths. Those persecutions offer a glimpse of the broader drama played out among the other tribes. The persecution proceeded as follows:

The Gothic chieftain feared the destruction of the “faith of the fathers.” For clarification, he was not referring just to the faith held *by* his forefathers, but rather ancestral worship – the public acceptance *of* his forefathers as divine. Here we clearly have the Germanic parallel to emperor deification. The erosion of the chieftain's divine ancestral myth would erode his power base, his supposed “divine right” to rule.

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converted to Christianity and conquered Rome.

Before exploring how this chieftain leveraged ancestral worship to weed out Christians, we'll explore a passage from Pliny the Younger,<sup>27</sup> which dates to ca. 111 AD. In this passage, the Roman statesman Pliny is writing to the Emperor to confirm whether his treatment of Christians was deemed appropriate by imperial policy. At this point in history, Christianity was still considered a threat and enemy of the state. Pliny wrote:

*For the moment, this is the approach I have taken with all persons brought before me on the charge of being Christians. I have asked them in person if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution.*

With troubling coolness, Pliny continued:

*“..Now that I have begun to deal with this problem, as so often happens, the charges are becoming more widespread and increasing in variety. An anonymous pamphlet has been circulated which contains the names of a number of accused persons. Amongst these I considered that I should dismiss any who denied that they were or ever had been Christians when they had repeated after me a formula of invocation to the gods and had made offerings of wine and incense to your statue (which I had ordered to be brought into court for this purpose along with the images of the gods), and furthermore had reviled the name of Christ: none of which things, I understand, any genuine Christian can be induced to do.”*

Pliny's callous conclusion is that bringing in the images central to the cult of the Emperor successfully sifted out the “infected” members of society. He concluded:

*“...people have begun to throng the temples which had been almost entirely deserted for a long time: the sacred rites which had been allowed to lapse are being performed again, and flesh of sacrificial victims is on sale everywhere, though up till recently scarcely anyone could be found to buy it. It is easy to infer from this that a great many people could be*

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<sup>27</sup>Pliny the Younger was raised by his uncle, Pliny the Elder, who was discussed in the previous chapter.

*reformed if they were given an opportunity to repent.*"<sup>28</sup>

The Emperor's reply offers a general congratulations to Pliny, confirming the Emperor's desire that "anyone who denies that he is a Christian and makes it clear that he is not by offering prayers to our gods, he is to be pardoned as a result of his repentance however suspect his past conduct may be."<sup>29</sup>

Compare that Roman tactic of enforcing ruler worship with the Gothic tactic 250 years later. As Herwig Wolfram noted:

"Not unlike the way in which the pagan emperors reacted to this problem, the Gothic judge...ordered his people to carry 'something like an image of god' through the countryside...and to offer sacrifices to it. Whoever refused to do so was burned along with his dwelling."<sup>30</sup> This extermination order is directly reminiscent of the book of Daniel, where, as a test of loyalty, the Babylonian king ordered all who would not pay homage to his golden image to be cast into a blazing furnace.<sup>31</sup>

Those who descend from northern Europe might therefore want to take a moment to reconsider the identity of those who were brutally hung in the name of Odin.

#### **Summation:**

- 1) Ancestral Odin worship was imply a Germanic adaptation of Roman ruler worship
- 2) As such, northern chieftains claimed descent from a "divine" ancestor they called Odin, and they enforced his worship.
- 3) Odin worship was clearly associated with the hanging of human victims.
- 4) Germanic leaders not only adopted te idea of ruler worship from Rome, but also the means of enforcing it, by killing those who refused to worship their ancestors.
- 5) Early historians testify that Christianity existed among the northern tribes as early as 50 AD. As history elsewhere suggests, this presented conflict with ruler worship.
- 6) Other than monotheists (such as Jews and Christians), when

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<sup>28</sup>Pliny the Younger, X, 96

<sup>29</sup>Pliny, X, 97

<sup>30</sup>Wolfram, History of the Goths, 69

<sup>31</sup>Daniel 3

threatened with death, few rational people would refuse to bow to images or false gods.<sup>32</sup>

- 7) Many of the hanged victims whose remains have been found throughout northern Europe may be victims of this ongoing political/religious cleansing.
- 8) As such, some of these bog people may be remnants of Judeo-Christian monotheists among the Germanic peoples.

Those who claim most bog people were petty criminals are entitled to that conclusion. History, however, suggests something much more troubling – forcing people to choose between death or showing honor to a god they knew to be false. So the next time you see a magazine article or a museum exhibit of an ancient bog victim, you may simply be peering into the face of someone who unflinchingly died for their faith.

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<sup>32</sup>The Emperor Caligula (Gaius) considered the Jewish refusal to honor his divinity more lunatic than criminal. As a loyal Roman, Pliny believed such stubbornness among Christians was, in and of itself, worthy of death.

## Christianity and Northern Europe

When Jesus of Nazareth was a child, the mighty Roman Empire launched a campaign to encompass and conquer our northern forefathers. From that struggle, Rome's facade as a bastion of civilization begins to crumble, and we get to see the Empire for what it at times was – a hungry bureaucracy that literally attempted to enslave our forefathers. From this ancient struggle, we also get to see our forefathers for what they at times were – noble, courageous, and resilient defenders of freedom.

But there is more to the puzzle than that. What has been almost completely obliterated from history is what our forefathers actually believed. Appropriately, it is back in the early Roman period where we get our first glimpses of Christianity in northern Europe.

For example, the chronicler Gildas<sup>33</sup> recorded that Christians were in England during the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius. His record raises several fascinating questions about the first decade of Christianity in Europe.

### Christians When?

To better define the narrow window of opportunity allowed by Gildas' mention of Tiberius, it might help to realize that Christ's short ministry (which began when he was about 30 years old) began<sup>34</sup> and ended during the last half of Tiberius' reign.

What is of additional relevance is that early in Emperor Tiberius' reign, he had outlawed the Jewish faith from Rome. Then, not long after Christ's crucifixion at the hands of Roman soldiers, Tiberius decreed the death penalty upon all Christians as enemies of the Empire. What then of Gildas' claim?

Were outlawed Christians located in England at such an early date? Tiberius' reign extended only seven or eight years beyond Christ's crucifixion, and less than three years beyond Stephen's martyrdom. This window of

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<sup>33</sup>Fifth-century Christian author of *The Ruin and Conquest of Britain*, which recounts British history up to his day, including how the Angles and Saxons had recently conquered the island. As the Oxford Classical Dictionary explains, Gildas' account is “the only ancient account of its kind” (p. 637).

<sup>34</sup>Luke 3



opportunity, as well as the death penalty surrounding it, leaves little time or opportunity for believers to establish themselves in the Roman province of Britain.

To tie this timing closer to what we know of New Testament characters, Gildas is basically saying that Christians existed in Britain before Caiaphas stepped down as High Priest in Jerusalem. As a reminder, Caiaphas was the one who had tried Jesus after his arrest, who handed him over to Pilate, and who, after Christ's resurrection, bribed the guards at the tomb to claim that Christ's body had been stolen.

So in essence, Gildas is claiming Christians inhabited England within a decade of when Christ began to preach, within about seven years of his crucifixion and resurrection, and within three years of the scattering of Christians that followed the death of Stephen. A very narrow window indeed.

To complicate the difficulties here, there is additional testimony of the extent of Christianity in Britain, from Tertullian,<sup>35</sup> who wrote centuries before the French kings embraced Catholicism. Tertullian recorded that Christians were established in the British Isles, not only in the Roman-controlled regions of the southeastern isle, but also in regions “unapproachable to the Romans.”

The Imperial death decree against Christians since the days of Tiberius suggests why many would have chosen to locate in regions thus “unapproachable” to the Roman Empire.

But what of the origin of these early Christians in Britain? And at such an early date? We are left to consider how the faith could spread so rapidly throughout (and beyond) the Roman Empire long before the days of air travel and the Internet.

The activities of early Christian missionaries certainly offer one viable explanation. The claim, circulating in the mid-300's AD, that apostles themselves had walked the British Isles further expands upon that possibility. However, according to the Book of Acts, the most active and notable of the apostles were still centered in Jerusalem until after Stephen's martyrdom, which was only about three years before the end of Tiberius' reign. So if we accept Gildas' claim as reliable, Christians would have to

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<sup>35</sup>Tertullian also noted Tacitus' strong bias against Christianity.

have arrived almost immediately after Stephen's death. And Acts 8 recounts that immediately after Stephen's death, Christians were persecuted so viciously that they “were scattered abroad” and “went everywhere.” To spread their message.

Part of our difficulty is that Gildas didn't indicate whether the early Christians in Britain were native to the island or not. If they were foreigners, Britain may simply have been one of those places of refuge to which the Christians in Jerusalem had fled. But, on the other hand, if these Christians were native to the island, how do we account for their early existence?

The following chapter addresses parallel testimony from northern German – testimony which suggests Christianity lay just beyond the Roman frontier. Such testimony suggests a glimpse of the conflict between imported ruler worship and Christianity itself.

## Tacitus and the Faith of Our Fathers

One of the difficulties in uncovering the past is that our forefathers in northern Europe apparently did not preserve their beliefs in writing. Instead, when it came to preserving their own history, their method was through songs. According to the historian Tacitus, songs were their “only record of the past.”<sup>36</sup> In fact, almost a century after Arminius died, Tacitus recorded that the tribes of the North were still singing of him. Which leads us to one of the most interesting aspects of that heritage.

Just like Native Americans, our forefathers sang a number of songs to honor and preserve the past. But since there obviously are no tape recordings from back then, we have to rely on the brief descriptions passed down by Roman historians, who filtered and interpreted, through Roman paradigms, what they had heard.

The Roman historian Tacitus fortunately preserved some of the significance of their songs. Somewhat akin to how modern radio stations offer a “Top Hits” playback, Tacitus briefly described the favorite song among our forefathers. And its theme offers an unexpected explanation for Gildas' description of early British Christians.

According to Tacitus, the favorite song among our forefathers described a visitor to the North – whose memory was still honored and revered.<sup>37</sup> This tidbit gets even more interesting when we examine the nature of Tacitus, the timing and source of his writings, and what his statements might actually imply.

### **Tacitus**

Before exploring the song further, let's begin with an examination of Tacitus himself. As to his character, Tacitus is considered by several modern historians as the most reliable of all Roman historians. In fact, he is so open in his writings that even his own foibles and biases are there for all to see.

Tacitus recorded his account of our northern ancestors in 98 AD. At the time Tacitus was writing, Christianity was still an outlawed religious movement that was denounced as a dangerous branch of the Jewish faith. And due to the relatively recent bloody revolt in Judah during 66-70 AD, Jewish beliefs

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<sup>36</sup>Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 2, para 2

<sup>37</sup>Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 3, para.1

(and Christian beliefs by association) continued to be viewed as seditious and dangerous anti-Roman ideas. So most loyal Romans wouldn't risk their reputations, their time, or their lives to fully research and publicly support the core teachings of this despised sect.

Tacitus was quite clear about his view of Christianity. And he clearly wanted 'respectable' Romans like himself to see things his way. He said:

*“The author of the denomination was Christus who had been executed in Tiberius' time by the procurator Pontius Pilate. The pestilent superstition, checked for a while, burst out again, not only throughout Judea...but throughout the city of Rome also...”<sup>38</sup>*

It might be worthwhile to note that Tacitus was not just a historian. As a trusted civic leader in the Roman hierarchy, Tacitus had also been selected as a High Priest in the nation Roman faith, which, as discussed earlier, was clearly pagan in nature, and slanted towards emperor worship. As such, Tacitus portrayed rival belief systems, including Christianity, as an illness or plague that must be quickly stamped out before it could spread.

Romans in high government office, like Tacitus, were prejudiced against what Christians actually believed. As mentioned previously, Tacitus' friend, Pliny the Younger, in keeping with Roman law, punished and even killed Christians for their faith. With that grim backdrop of religious rivalry in mind, we can return to Tacitus' account of a visitor among our forefathers.

Tacitus framed his explanation for Germanic beliefs within the cultural context that was understandable and acceptable to him and his Roman audience. Tacitus claimed that the visitor among our forefathers was Hercules. But he then offered a revealing caveat or confession:

*“It may be that Hercules did go there; or perhaps it is only that we by common consent ascribe any remarkable achievement in any place to his famous name.”<sup>39</sup>*

In other words, despite his bias and duties as a pagan high priest, Tacitus was willing to admit that it was Roman observers, steeped in Roman/Greek

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<sup>38</sup>Tacitus, Annals, XV, 44 – Some historians question whether these were Tacitus' actual words, or whether they are a gloss added by later clerks. I see no reason why Christian clerks would fabricate the record in order to depict Christianity as something to be detested.

<sup>39</sup>Tacitus, Germania, ch. 34

culture, who may have merely assumed the visitor was Hercules. But he is noticeably silent as to what our forefathers may have called this visitor.

Almost as a tease, Tacitus asserts that distance makes it difficult to continue “further research” into the actual identity of the obscure visitor. And he summarizes that “no one has attempted” to research the topic further among his peers because “it has been judged more pious and reverent to believe in the alleged exploits of gods than to establish the true facts.”<sup>40</sup>

In other words, Roman indifference, and perhaps even Roman religious censorship, would keep the true facts from seeing the light of day. As a member of the High Priesthood in the pagan Roman faith, Tacitus is basically telling his Roman audience that in this matter, ignorance is bliss. As in, move along folks, nothing to see here. Nothing in this closet – promise.

This then raises the important question of why Rome shed so much blood, over so many decades, trying to conquer our forefathers. And it begs the question: why, during the exact same decades, was Rome engaging similar warfare in Judea and in the British Isles, two areas which harbored Christians?<sup>41</sup>

Were these three drawn-out campaigns simply a bland political expansion of the Empire? Or was it more akin to how some corporations deal with rivals – in this case with religious competition. They either stomp out or incorporate them. Before dismissing this as a possibility, it should be noted that this role of destroying, consuming, or modifying other faiths was one of the key responsibilities of the High Priest's office in the Roman religion – Tacitus' office.

### **The Welcome Guest**

SO let's return to the visitor our fathers sang of for years. Who was he? What was his name? Unfortunately, since the truth was muzzled by religious bias, we'll have to attempt to read between the lines.

Fortunately, however, Tacitus appears to have revealed more than he perhaps intended. Despite the Roman spin he put on northern beliefs, there is sufficient evidence in what he does say to allow a modern reader to

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<sup>40</sup>Tacitus, *Germania*, ch. 34

<sup>41</sup>George F. Jowett provided a very interesting British corollary to this suggesting in the book “The Drama of the Lost Disciples.”

extrapolate the rest.

The key question is, why would the beloved visitor among our forefathers be described by Romans as a fitting match for Hercules?

Tacitus himself explained that it was strictly because of the “remarkable achievement” of the unnamed visitor to northern Europe that led Romans to assume our forefathers were singing about Hercules.

This then begs the important question: What were the achievements that were being recounted? Tacitus is silent on this issue. But since it is well known among classical scholars that “...barbarian concepts and institutions were equated with or actually integrated into their Roman counterparts,”<sup>42</sup> we need to dig a bit deeper to peel back the Roman veneer that hides the song's apparently true meaning.

### **The Hercules of Tacitus**

Since the only things we're told are that the visitor's achievements were remarkable, and that Romans suspected he was Hercules, a familiarity with the achievements surrounding the mythical Hercules could help us unravel the northern visitor's identity. The ancient myths about Hercules were all common knowledge to Tacitus and his Roman audience:

- 1) Hercules was the son of a mortal woman. But his father was the father of the Gods.
- 2) As a child, an attempt was made on Hercules' life.
- 3) As a young man, he had a vision that offered him a choice between an easy life of pleasure and vice, or a more difficult life filled with danger, hardship, and virtue. He chose the latter.
- 4) He restored a dead woman to life.
- 5) He took upon his shoulders the weight of the world.
- 6) His last deeds involved overcoming/escaping the world of the dead, by which he achieved immortality.
- 7) Afterwards, he ascended to heaven, where he joined his father.

The obvious parallels between key deeds ascribed to Hercules and Christianity are patently obvious. These parallels were thus either lost to Tacitus, or, in his role as pagan High Priest, may have been intentionally subverted.

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<sup>42</sup>Herwig Wolfram, History of the Goths, p. 4

Based on these parallels, the visitor among our forefathers was called Hercules either due to an honest cultural misunderstanding, or perhaps even as a public relations spin by a pagan High Priest to keep the true extent of Christianity under careful wraps. (If the populace believed the belief was more widespread, they might have more cause to give it the benefit of the doubt.)

### **Roman Whitewash**

Tacitus openly admits that Christianity, or as he refers to it, the “pestilent superstition,” had spread from Judea to the city of Rome. But he declines to comment about any additional spread of the faith.

What is curious is that Gildas and Tertullian both testified that Christianity had taken early root in Britain. That Tacitus is silent about the spread of a rival faith is noteworthy, especially since Tacitus penned a detailed history of early Britain. So we have three alternatives to explain his silence:

- 1) Gildas and Tertullian could have misunderstood or exaggerated Christianity's early spread to Britain. Its nonexistence would then explain Tacitus' silence on the subject.
- 2) The spread of Christianity in Britain was not of interest to the Roman High Priest.
- 3) Rome's inability to hinder the spread of that “pestilent superstition” was something he preferred not to pass on to his readers.

Based on Tacitus' other statements about Christianity, the third alternative is arguably the most plausible and consistent explanation for Tacitus' silence about Christianity in early Britain. If valid, this suggests a precedent for his dealing with that faith in northern Germania.

Most of us don't have to face a political climate that Tacitus lived and breathed. There are many, however, who are employed in situations that create a similar conflict of interest. What are you and I going to do with his account of a divine visitor in the first century AD?

Some will revert to Julius Caesar's propaganda that the region was simply filled with backwards barbarians who harbored silly superstitions. In that vein, they may insist that Christ's life was restricted to a tiny area surrounding Galilee.

Others may be open-minded to the possibility that in the first decade of Christianity, the faith could have been more pervasive, and Christ's ministry

more extensive than the small area surrounding Jerusalem. For Christ did say to the Jews that he had other sheep there were not of that fold who would hear his voice. But of course there are differing interpretations as to what that promise actually means.

Some may admit that it is a genuine possibility that, one way or another, some of our ancient forefathers may have become Christian. Exactly how such a conversion would have taken place is hard to say. It is possible that early missionaries like Barnabus or Timothy reached them, and taught them the things they later sang about.<sup>43</sup> Also, it is well documented that Germanic tribes served in the Roman legions, and it is therefore quite possible that some, having served in Rome or Palestine simply returned with first-hand knowledge of what occurred there.<sup>44</sup>

But as to an actual visit to other peoples, the New Testament has surprisingly very little to say about where Jesus was during much of his ministry. Some readers might thus conclude that he was simply expanding his ministry to the scattered tribes of Israel and/or to the Gentiles. Such a scenario would mean that Tacitus actually was telling the truth, but not the whole truth.

### **Timing**

Just as the chronology for Gildas' statements of British Christianity raise worthwhile issues, an exploration of the timing of Tacitus' statement does much the same. Tacitus wrote his account of northern Europe in 98 AD. To better understand how his account of Germanic beliefs synchronizes with the development of early Christianity within the Empire, the Christian exile John is believed to have penned the Book of Revelation on the Isle of Patmos during the same decade.

So this belief in northern Europe was contemporary with an aging Apostle John. But the timeline gets even more interesting when we consider that Tacitus drew most of his information from an earlier source.

We know that Tacitus' main historical source for Germanic history and beliefs was the writings of Pliny the Elder (who had raised Tacitus' close friend, Pliny the Younger). Although the elder Pliny's writings about

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<sup>43</sup>Early British histories claim that Joseph of Arimathea and other early Christians lived out their lives in the British Isles.

<sup>44</sup>Some early Christian writings even claim that Germanic soldiers in the Roman army carried out the crucifixion.



northern Europe have not survived, we know that the 20 chapters he wrote on that topic were based on his experiences as a cavalry commander in campaigns among the northern tribes, when he had served alongside the future emperor Titus.<sup>45</sup>

To gain a better understanding of the type of person Pliny was, and the dating of his writings, he was about four years old when Christ began his ministry. So his descriptions of Germanic culture and belief were written at about the same time, or slightly before, the earliest books of the New Testament. This elder Pliny died nine years after the destruction of Jerusalem, while heroically attempting to rescue the inhabitants of Pompeii during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Pliny only took his account of Germania up to the end of the reign of Claudius, ca. 54 AD. If we are justified in assuming that Pliny was the source for the song Tacitus described, this dates that song to a window of within a mere decade or two after Christ's crucifixion. It is unknown what further implications Pliny's original uncensored and unsanitized description of this song would reveal, but its very uncensored nature, and the support it may have later unintentionally offered to the rival Christian faith, could very well be one reason his writings did not survive pagan Rome.

In closing, consider the implications gathered from Tacitus. “The Germans, like many other people, are said to have been visited...and they sing of him as the foremost of all the heroes when they are about to engage in battle.”<sup>46</sup>

Tacitus' account clarifies that our forefathers weren't the only ones to claim divine visitation. For according to Tacitus, “many other people” claimed the same thing. And perhaps they also sang a similar song.

It is perhaps significant in this context to reveal that Tacitus' friend, Pliny the Younger, reported to the Roman Emperor that Christians within the Roman Empire had a tradition of singing “a hymn to Christ as to a god.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>None other than the later destroyer of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. This connection further strengthens the suggestion that what was happening in Rome's campaigns against Britain, northern Germany, and Judea was as much of a religious/ideological conflict as anything else. Compare Revelation 12-13.

<sup>46</sup>Tacitus, Germania, ch. 3

<sup>47</sup>Pliny, Epistle, 97

## Religious Backlash

Some readers will respond to this book saying, “Hogwash! Except for a childhood stay in Egypt, Christ never stepped foot outside of Palestine. Any talk of Jesus visiting other regions of the world is pure nonsense.”

There are those who will jump to the statement in Matthew 24 of false christs. In that passage, Jesus specifically warns us that when claims that Christ is in the wilderness or in the secret chambers, we are to “believe it not.” The context is crucial here, because Christ specifically continues his warning to explain why we shouldn't believe a claim that he is in any single location. For he goes on to explain that as lightning goes from east to west, so would his appearance be. Seen by all.

Which appears to be exactly what Tacitus unwittingly records, a comprehensive ministry: “The Germans, like many other people, are said to have been visited...”

The apostle John recorded that Jesus told the Jews about other sheep which were not of that fold. And that those sheep would also hear his voice.

The New Testament simply does not provide a full account of what Christ did during the entire 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension to heaven.

The apostle John also suggested that if all of the things that Christ did were to be writing down, “even the world itself could not contain<sup>48</sup> the books that should be written.”<sup>49</sup> Just as there was no room at the inn.

Which suggests the same meaning that Christ said elsewhere: “All men cannot receive<sup>50</sup> this saying, save they to whom it is given.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>The same Greek word as the “receive” of the following verse.

<sup>49</sup>John 21:25

<sup>50</sup>The same Greek word as the “contain” of the previous verse.

<sup>51</sup>Matthew 19:11