

Temple of Demeter at Naxos, Greece (artist's conception)

“It is I, Demeter, full of glory, who lightens and gladdens the hearts of gods and men. Hasten ye, my people, to raise, hard by the citadel, below the ramparts, a fane, and on the eminence of the hill, an altar, above the wall of Callichorum. I will instruct you in the rites which shall be observed and which are pleasing to me.” –The Eleusinian Mysteries and Rites, by Dudley Wright, 1919

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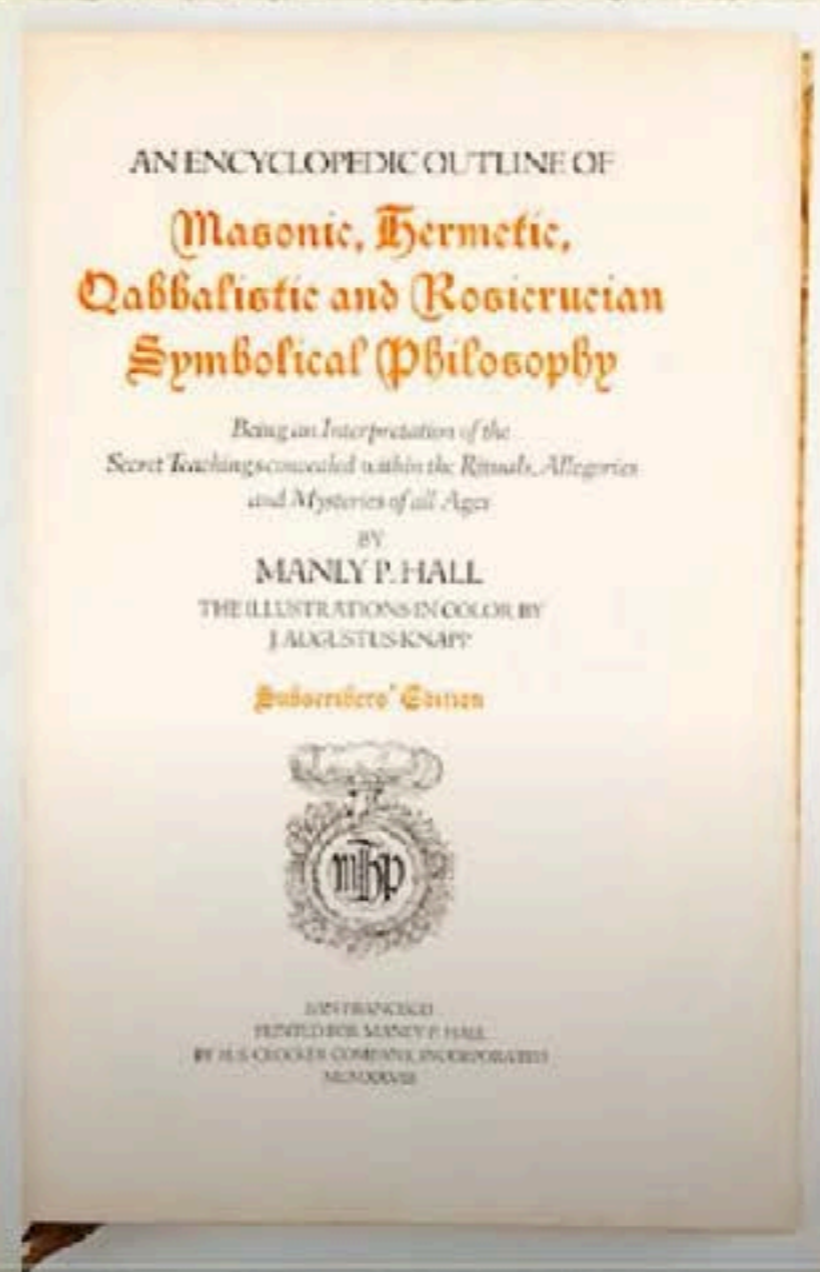
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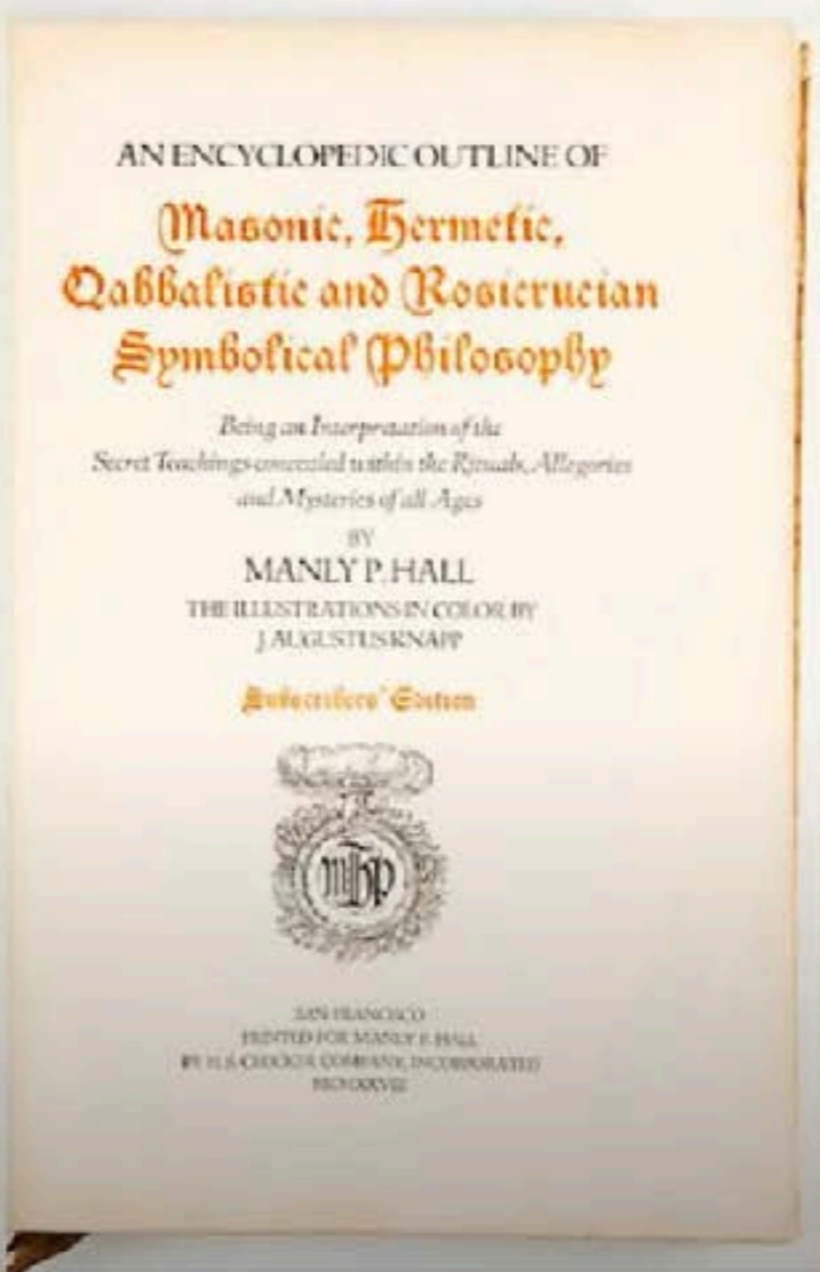
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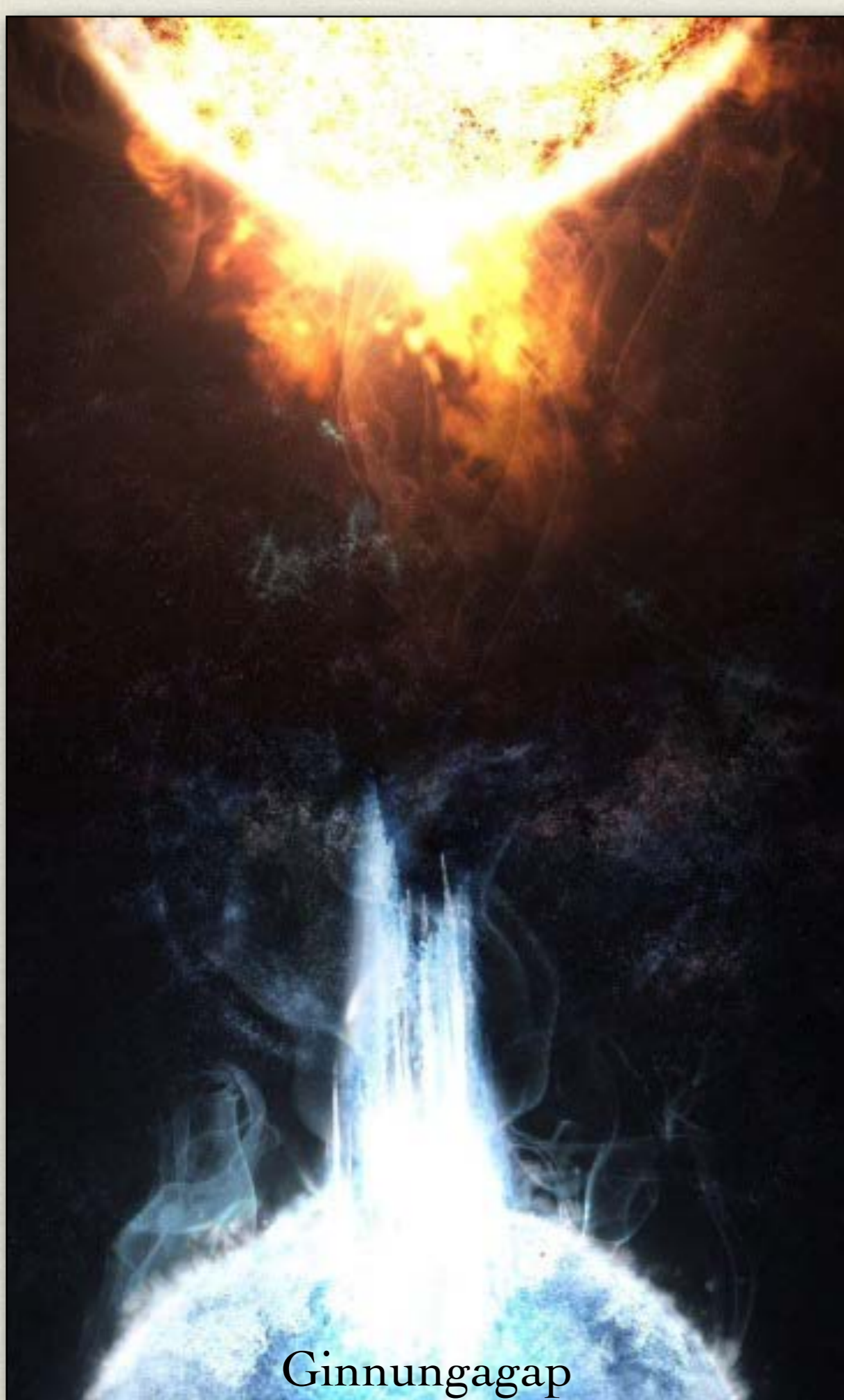
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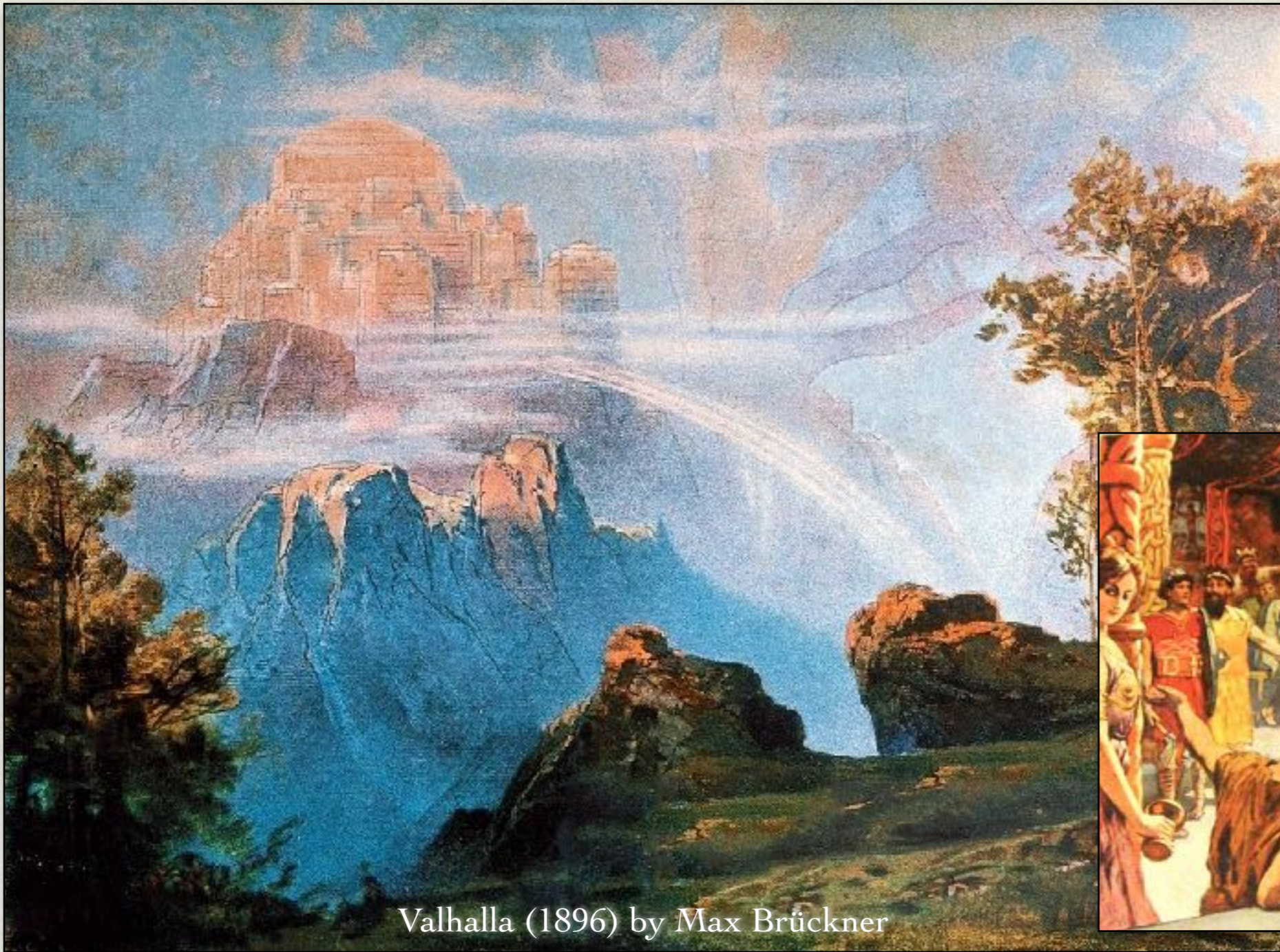
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Valhalla (1896) by Max Brückner

“Walhall” by Emil Doepler (c. 1905)



Valhalla is the hall where the god Odin houses the dead whom he deems worthy of dwelling with him. According to the Old Norse poem *Grímnismál* (“The Song of the Hooded One”), the roof of the “gold-bright” Valhalla is made of shields, and has spears for its rafters. Seats made of breastplates surround the many feasting tables of the vast hall. Its gates are guarded by wolves, and eagles fly above it.

The dead who reside in Valhalla, the *einherjar*, live a life that would have been the envy of any Viking warrior. All day long, they fight one another, doing countless valorous deeds along the way. But every evening, all their wounds are healed, and they are restored to full health. Their meat comes from the boar *Saehrimnir*, who comes back to life every time he is slaughtered and butchered. For their drink they have mead that comes from the udder of the goat *Heidrun*. They thereby enjoy an endless supply of their exceptionally fine food and drink. They are waited on by the beautiful Valkyries. –from a [norse-mythology.org](http://norse-mythology.org) article by Daniel Taylor



WALKYRIES CONDUCTING THE FALLEN HEROES TO WALHALLA.



BRAGI AND HEIMDAL RECEIVING THE WARRIORS IN WALHALLA.





A valkyrie (“choosers of the fallen”) is a female helping spirit of the god Odin. The modern image of the valkyries as elegant, noble maidens bearing dead heroes to Valhalla is largely accurate for what it is, but a highly selective portrayal that exaggerates their pleasant qualities. To some extent, this tendency toward sanitization is present even in the later Old Norse sources, which focus on their love affairs with human men and their assisting Odin in transporting his favorites among those slain in battle to Valhalla, where they will fight by his side during Ragnarok.

As far as we today can tell, the valkyries have always had such characteristics, but in heathen times they were far more sinister. The meaning of their name, “choosers of the slain,” refers not only to their choosing who gains admittance to Valhalla, but also to their choosing who dies in battle and using malicious magic to ensure that their preferences in this regard are brought to fruition. Examples of valkyries deciding who lives and who dies abound in the Eddas and sagas. The valkyries’ gruesome side is illustrated most vividly in the *Darraðarljóð*, a poem contained within *Njal’s Saga*. Here, twelve valkyries are seen prior to the Battle of *Clontarf*, sitting at a loom and weaving the tragic fate of the warriors (an activity highly reminiscent of the *Norns*). They use intestines for their thread, severed heads for weights, and swords and arrows for beaters, all the while chanting their intentions with ominous delight. The *Saga of the Volsungs* compares beholding a valkyrie to “staring into a flame.” –from an article by Daniel Taylor

## THE ODINIC MYSTERIES

Balder the Beautiful— the Scandinavian Christ— was the beloved son of Odin. Balder was not warlike; his kindly and beautiful spirit brought peace and joy to the hearts of the gods, and they all loved him save one. As Jesus had a Judas among His twelve disciples, so one of the twelve gods was false— Loki, the personification of evil. Loki caused Höth, the blind god of fate, to shoot Balder with a mistletoe arrow. With the death of Balder, light and joy vanished from the lives of the other deities. Heartbroken, the gods gathered to find a method whereby they could resurrect this spirit of eternal life and youth. The result was the establishment of the Mysteries.

The Odinic Mysteries were given in underground crypts or caves, the chambers, nine in number, representing the Nine Worlds of the Mysteries. The candidate seeking admission was assigned the task of raising Balder from the dead. Although he did not realize it, he himself played the part of Balder. He called himself a wanderer; the caverns through which he passed were symbolic of the worlds and spheres of Nature. The priests who initiated him were emblematic of the sun, the moon, and the stars. The three supreme initiators--the Sublime, the Equal to the Sublime, and the Highest--were analogous to the Worshipful Master and the junior and Senior Wardens of a Masonic lodge.

After wandering for hours through the intricate passageways, the candidate was ushered into the presence of a statue of Balder the Beautiful, the prototype of all initiates into the Mysteries. This figure stood in the center of a great apartment roofed with shields. In the midst of the chamber stood a plant with seven blossoms, emblematic of the planets. In this room, which symbolized the house of the Æsir, or Wisdom, the neophyte took his oath of secrecy and piety upon the naked blade of a sword. He drank the sanctified mead from a bowl made of a human skull and, having passed successfully through all the tortures and trials designed to divert him from the course of wisdom, he was finally permitted to unveil the mystery of Odin--the personification of wisdom. He was presented, in the name of Balder, with the sacred ring of the order; he was hailed as a man reborn; and it was said of him that he had died and had been raised again without passing through the gates of death.

Richard Wagner's immortal composition, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, is based upon the Mystery rituals of the Odinic cult. While the great composer took many liberties with the original story, the Ring Operas, declared to be the grandest tetralogy of music dramas the world possesses, have caught and preserved in a remarkable manner the majesty and power of the original sagas. Beginning with *Das Rheingold*, the action proceeds through *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried* to an awe-inspiring climax in *Götterdämmerung*, "The Twilight of the Gods." —STOAA:28



The Death of Balder, by Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, 1817

36. I saw of Baldr,  
the blood-stained god  
Odin's son,  
the hidden fate.  
There stood grown up,  
High on the plain,  
slender and passing fair,  
the mistletoe.

37. From that shrub was made,  
as to me it seemed,  
a deadly, noxious dart.  
Hodr shot it forth;  
But Frigg bewailed,  
in Fensalir,  
Valhall's calamity.

—Poetic Edda:10

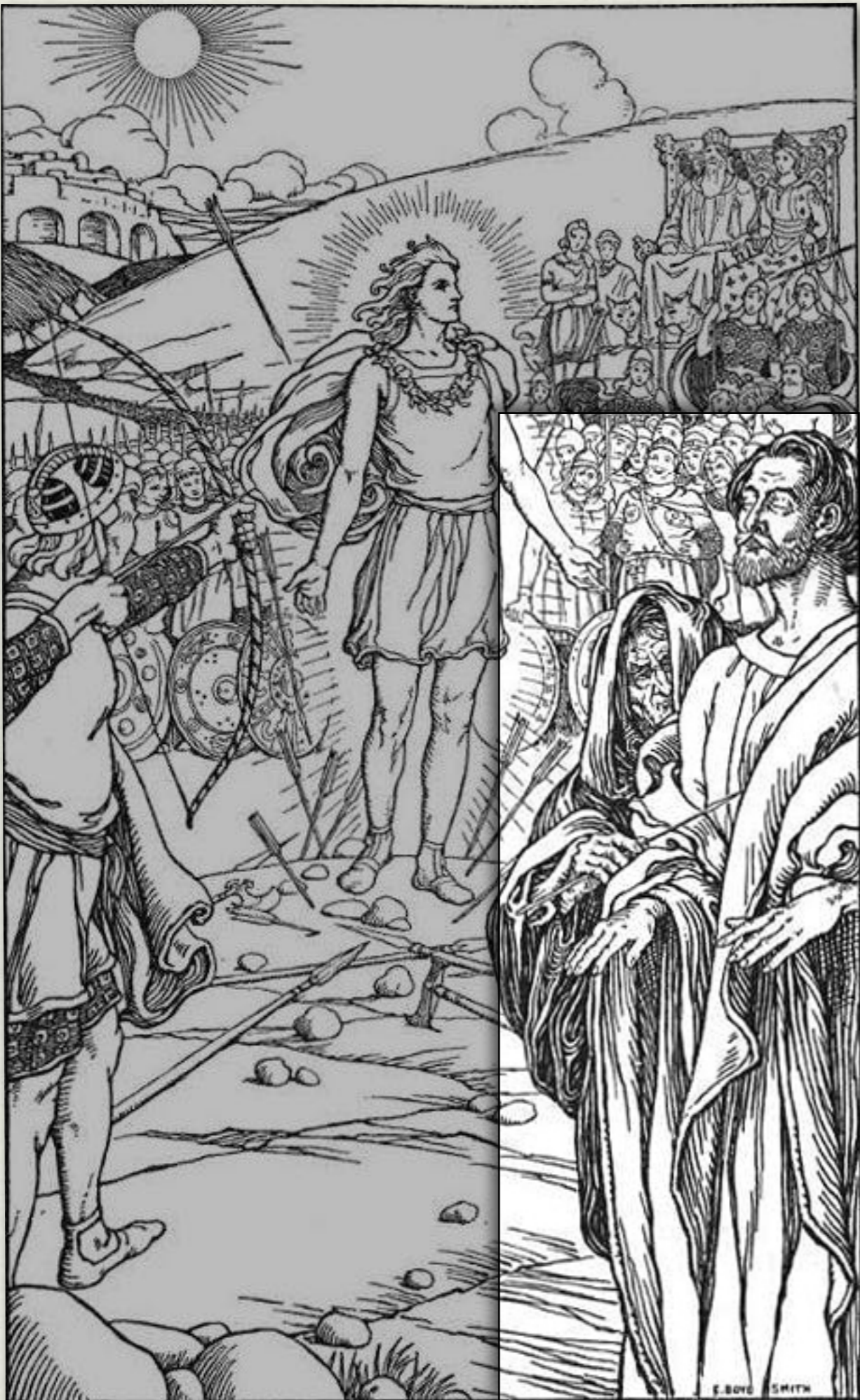


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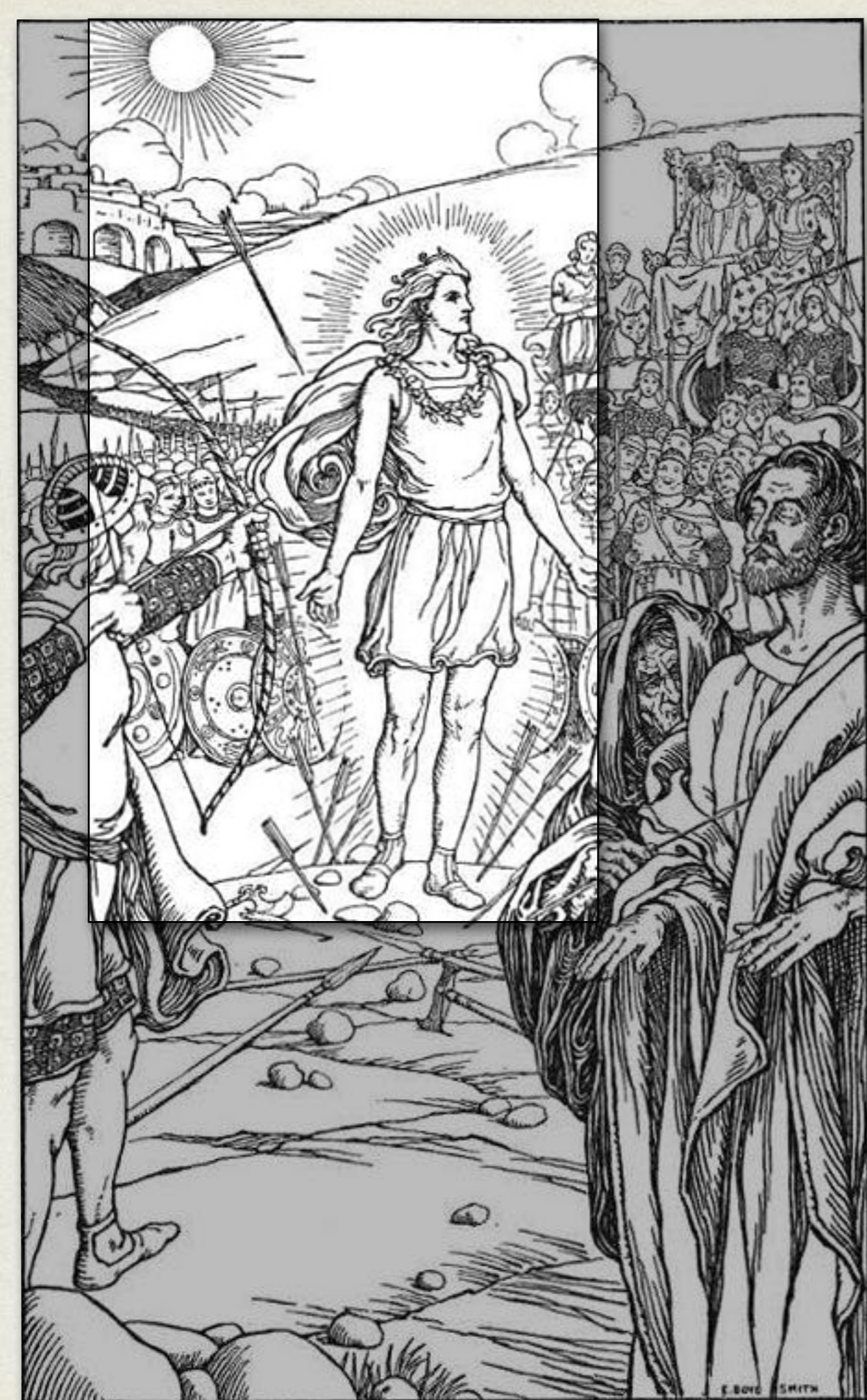
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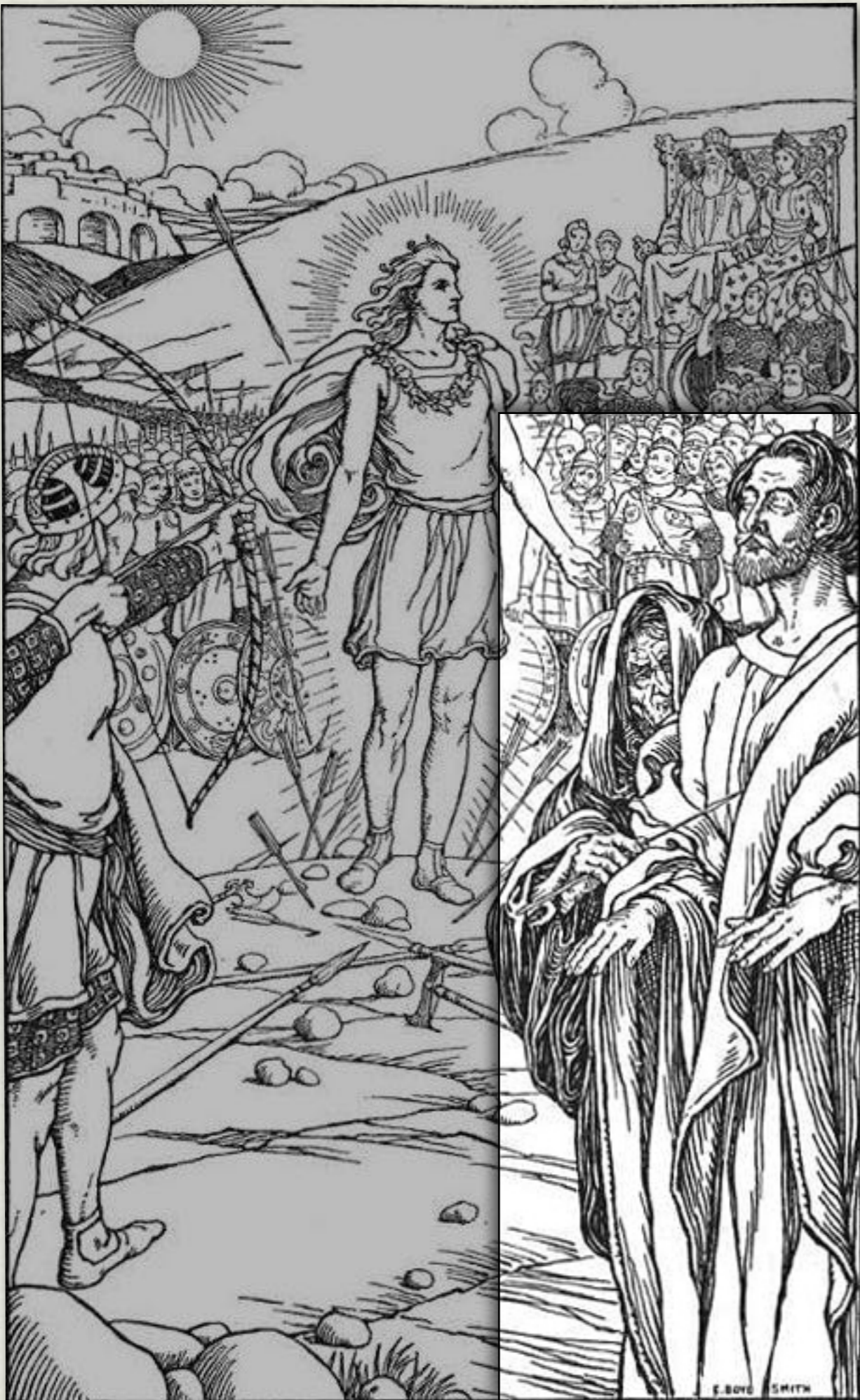
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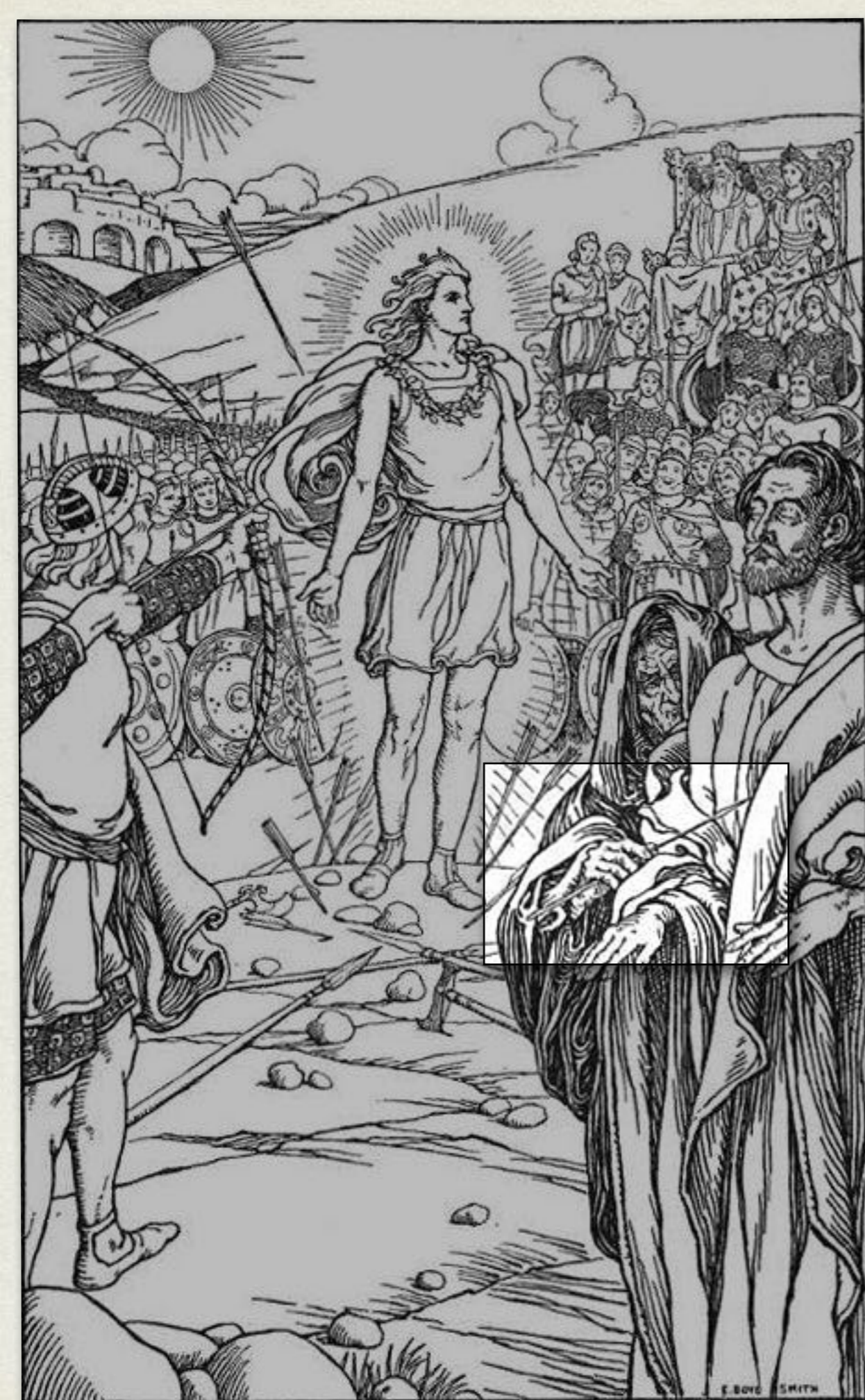


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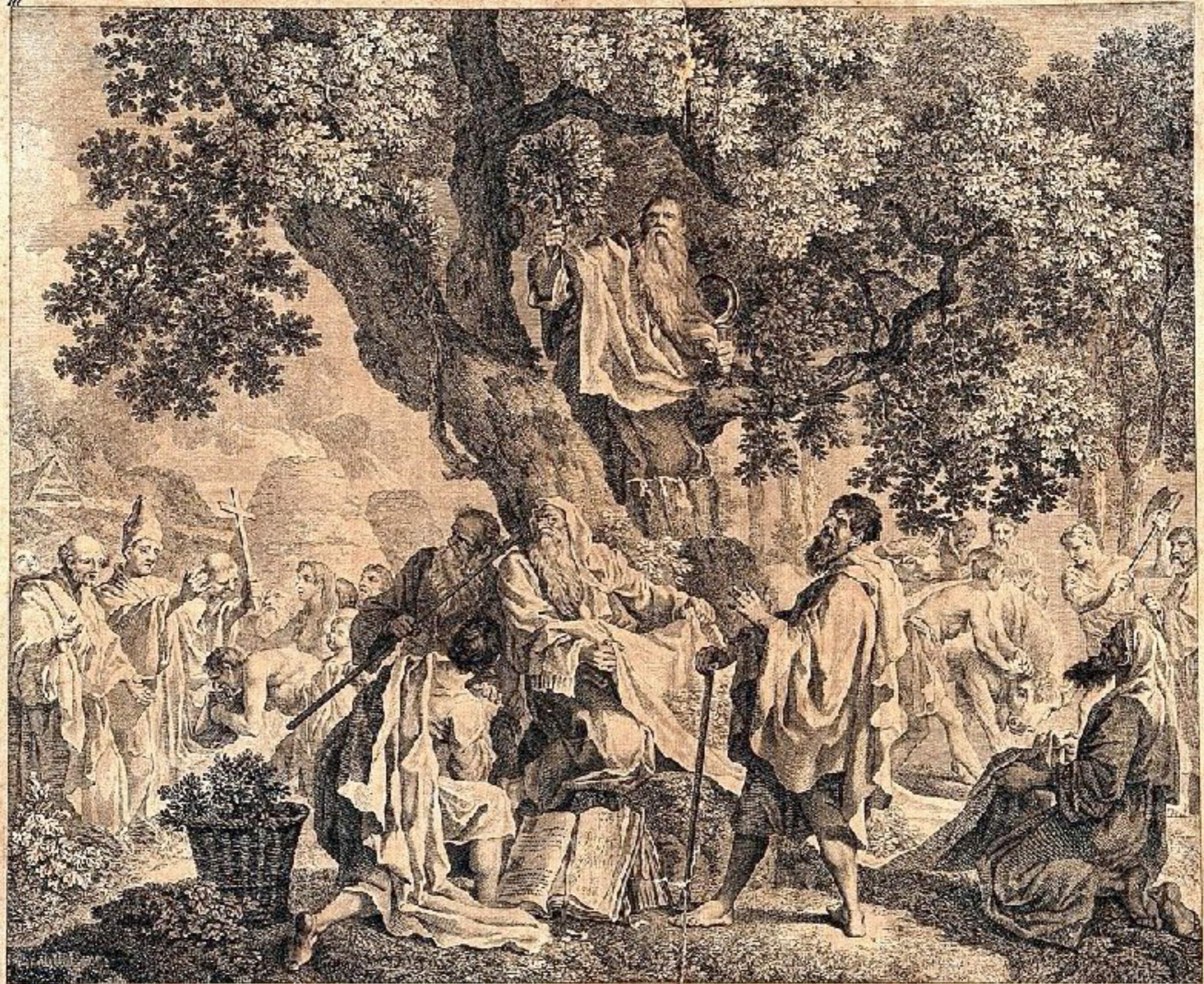


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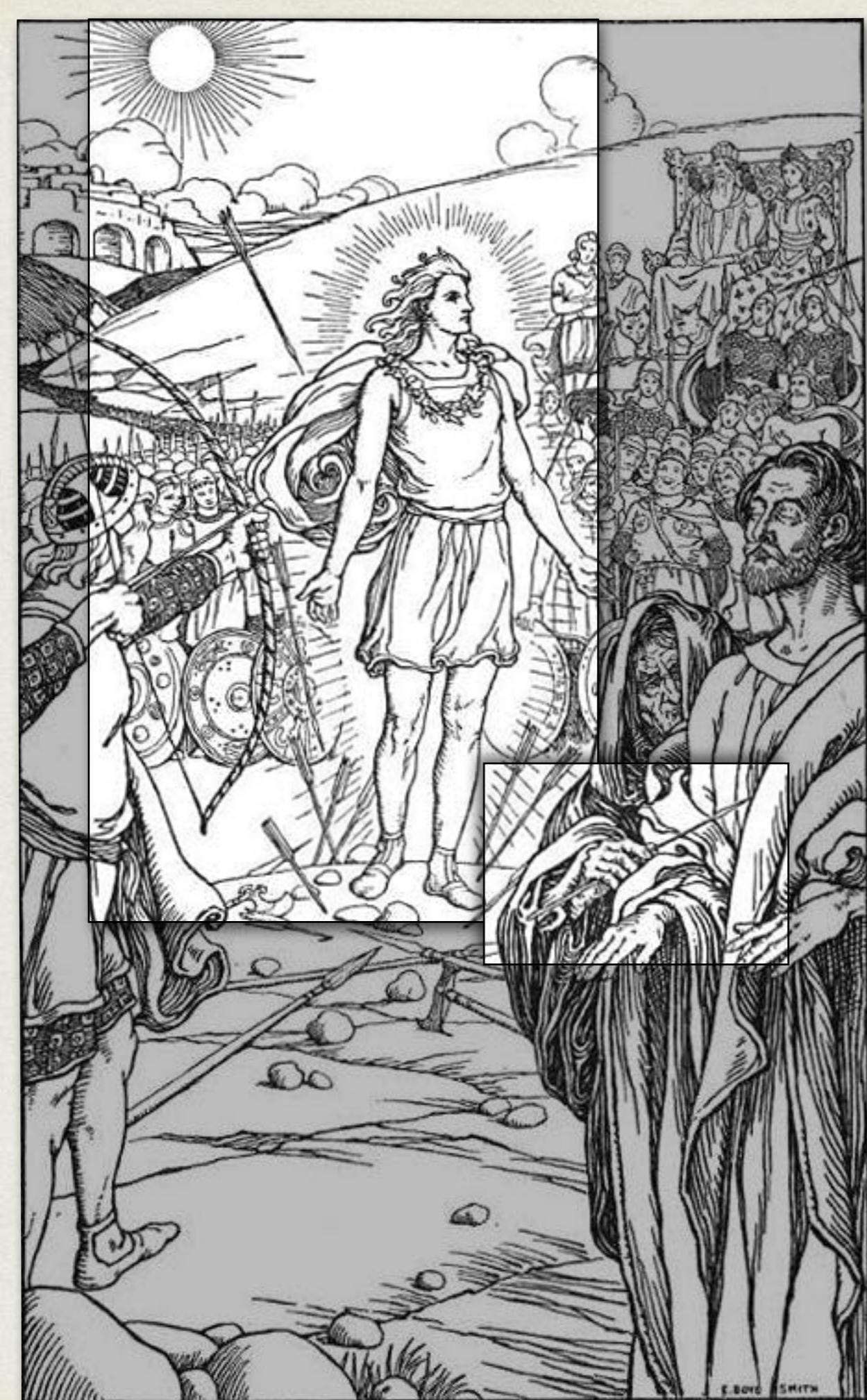
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The Druids, or the Conversion of the Britons to Christianity.

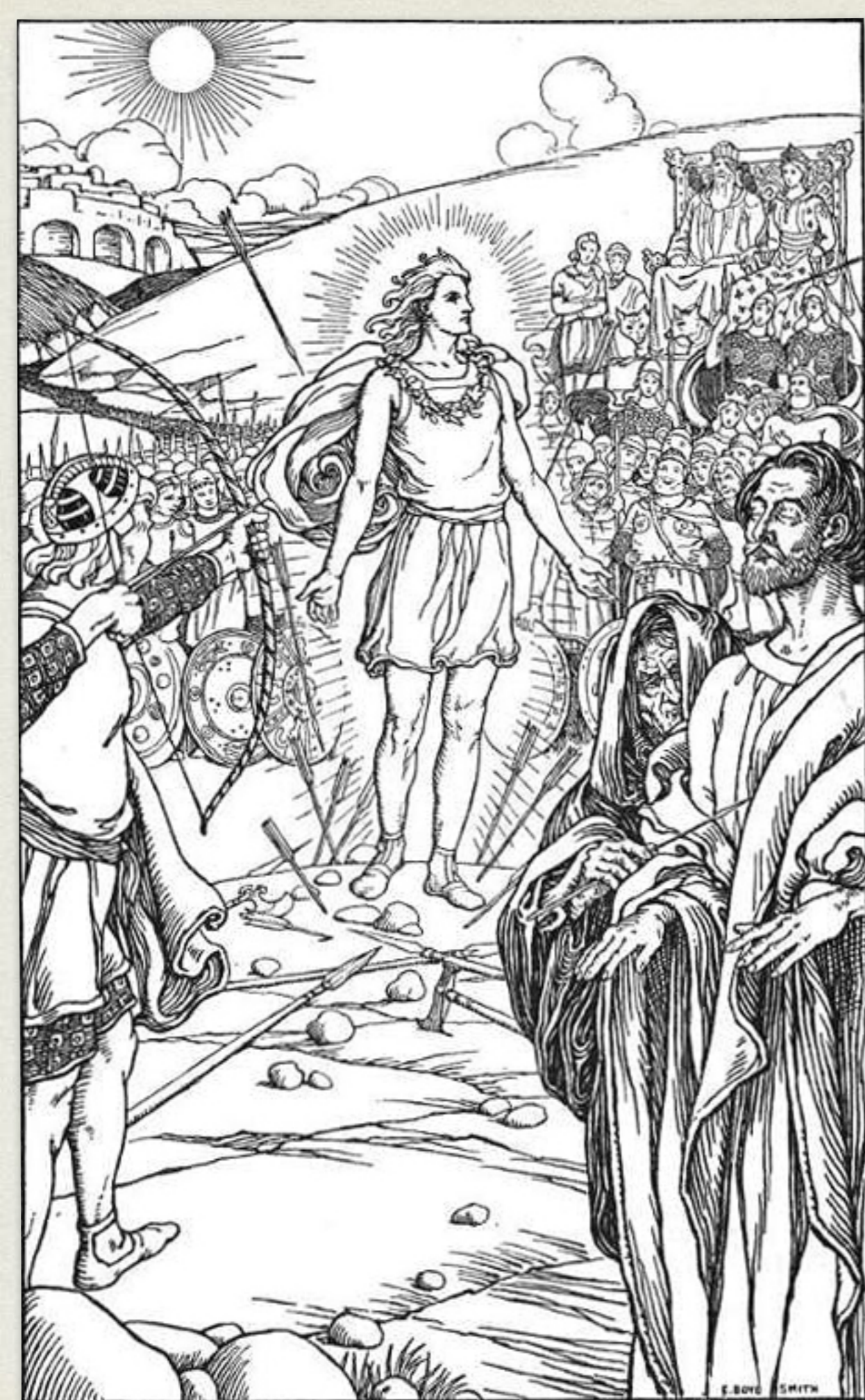
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The allegory is subject to many interpretations. The sun god dies with every nightfall, to rise again the following morning; with every winter solstice, to return and bring a new year of light and life; and with every planetary cycle, as well as each solar lifetime. The tale also symbolizes the passing of the golden age of innocence which had to be superseded by more conscious and purposive evolution of the human race: Loki, who represents the fire of mind — human, imperfect, clever, but unevolved, which in time must become perfected spiritual intelligence. —OTG

Loki finds Gullveigs Heart, by John Bauer



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THE WORDS  
THAT  
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## THE ODINIC MYSTERIES

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The general features of the initiations among the Goths were the same as in all the Mysteries. A long probation, of fasting and mortification, circular processions, representing the march of the celestial bodies, many fearful tests and trials, a descent into the infernal regions, the killing of the God Balder by the Evil Principle, Loki, the placing of his body in a boat and sending it abroad upon the waters; and, in short, the Eastern Legend, under different names, and with some variations.

The candidate was immured in the representation of a tomb; and when released, goes in search of the body of Balder, and finds him, at length, restored to life, and seated upon a throne. He was obligated upon a naked sword (as is still the custom in the *Rit Moderne*), and sealed his obligation by drinking mead out of a human skull.

Then all the ancient primitive truths were made known to him, so far as they had survived the assaults of time: and he was informed as to the generation of the Gods, the creation of the world, the deluge, and the resurrection, of which that of Balder was a type.



He was marked with the sign of the cross, and a ring was given to him as a symbol of the Divine Protection; and also as an emblem of Perfection; from which comes the custom of giving a ring to the Aspirant in the 14th Degree.

The point within a Circle, and the Cube, emblem of Odin, were explained to him; and lastly, the nature of the Supreme God, "the author of everything that existeth, the Eternal, the Ancient, the Living and Awful Being, the Searcher into concealed things, the Being that never changeth;" with whom Odin the Conqueror was by the vulgar confounded: and the Triune God of the Indians was reproduced, as ODIN, the Almighty FATHER, FREA, (Rhea or Phre), his wife (emblem of universal matter), and Thor his son (the Mediator). Here we recognize Osiris, Isis, and Hor or Horus. Around the head of Thor, as if to show his eastern origin, twelve stars were arranged in a circle. He was also taught the ultimate destruction of the world, and the rising of a new one, in which the brave and virtuous shall enjoy everlasting happiness and delight: as the means of securing which happy fortune, he was taught to practise the strictest morality and virtue. -Morals and Dogma:454-5

The Tangelgaerda stone



Ancient Norse Ring  
Modern Masonic 14th Degree



Norse Solar Eclipse 400-549 AD



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Thor, son of Odin, Woodcut, 1834, London

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Richard Wagner: Götterdämmerung - Finale  
Maazel · Berliner Philharmoniker





### Synopsis of the Final Scene of Götterdämmerung

Brünnhilde makes her entrance and issues orders for a huge funeral pyre to be assembled by the river (the start of the Immolation Scene). She takes the ring and tells the Rhine-maidens to claim it from her ashes, once fire has cleansed it of its curse. Lighting the pyre with a firebrand, she sends Wotan's ravens home with "anxiously longed-for tidings", and to fly by the magic fire for Loge [Loki] to fulfill his task. After an apostrophe to the dead hero, Brünnhilde mounts her horse Grane and rides into the flames.

Brunhilde's Ride Into the Flames  
by Arthur Rackman



A sequence of leitmotifs portray the fire flaring up, and the hall of the Gibichungs catching fire and collapsing. The Rhine overflows its banks, quenching the fire, and the Rhine-maidens swim in to claim the ring. Hagen tries to stop them but they drag him into the depths and drown him. As they celebrate the return of the ring and its gold to the river, a red glow is seen in the sky. As the Gibichungs watch, the interior of Valhalla is finally seen, with gods and heroes visible. Flames flare up in the Hall of the Gods, hiding it and them from sight completely. As the gods are consumed in the flames, the curtain falls to the sound of the *Erlösungsmotif*—the redemption leitmotif. –Wikipedia



Johannes Gehrts

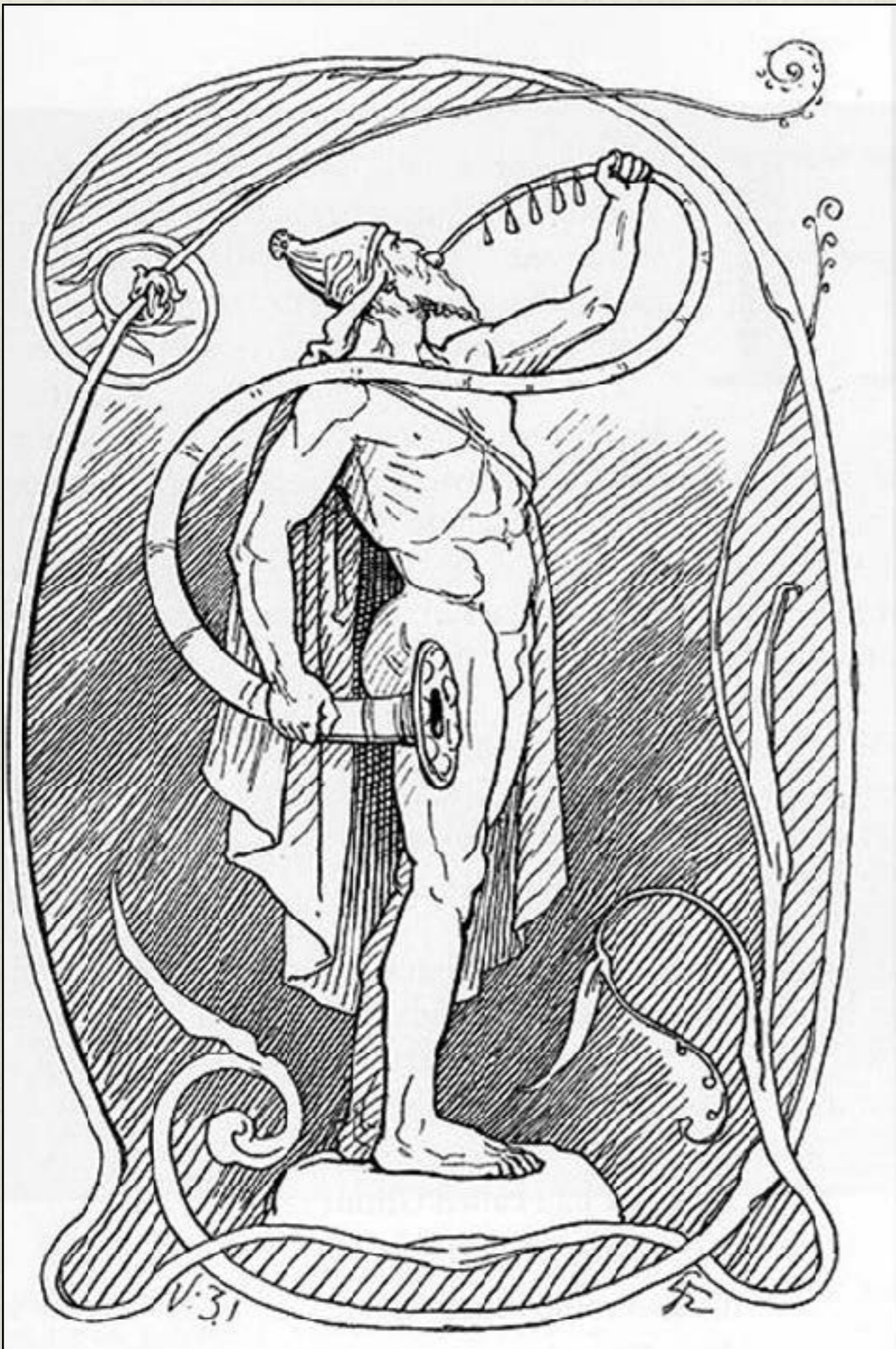


Ragnarok (Franz Stassen, 1920)

*Ragnarok* is the cataclysmic destruction of the cosmos and everything in it – even the gods. For the Vikings, the myth of *Ragnarok* was a prophecy of what was to come at some unspecified and unknown time in the future, but it had profound ramifications for how the Vikings understood the world in their own time. Here’s the story:

Someday – whenever the *Norns*, those inscrutable spinners of fate, decree it– *Yggdrasil*, the great tree that holds the cosmos together, will tremble, and all the trees and even the mountains will fall to the ground. The chain that has been holding back the monstrous wolf *Fenrir* will snap, and the beast will run free. *Jormungand*, the mighty serpent who dwells at the bottom of the ocean and encircles the land, will rise from the depths, spilling the seas over all the earth as he makes landfall.

These convulsions will shake the ship *Naglfar* free from its moorings. This ship, which is made from the fingernails and toenails of dead men and women, will sail easily over the flooded earth. Its crew will be an army of giants, the forces of chaos and destruction. And its captain will be none other than *Loki*, the traitor to the gods, who will have broken free of the chains in which the gods have bound him.



*Fenrir*, with fire blazing from his eyes and nostrils, will run across the earth, with his lower jaw on the ground and his upper jaw against the top of the sky, devouring everything in his path. *Jormungand* will spit his venom over all the world, poisoning land, water, and air alike.

The dome of the sky will be split, and from the crack shall emerge the fire-giants from *Muspelheim*. Their leader shall be *Surt*, with a flaming sword brighter than the sun in his hand. As they march across *Bifrost*, the rainbow bridge to *Asgard*, the home of the gods, the bridge will break and fall behind them. An ominous horn blast will ring out; this will be *Heimdall*, the divine sentry, blowing the *Gjallarhorn* to announce the arrival of the moment the gods have feared. *Odin* will anxiously consult the head of *Mimir*, the wisest of all beings, for counsel.

The gods will decide to go to battle, even though they know what the prophecies have foretold concerning the outcome of this clash. They will arm themselves and meet their enemies on a battlefield called *Vigrid*, “Plain Where Battle Surges”.

“Heimdall” by Lorenz Frølich



Emil Doepler: Odin and Fenrir (1905)

*Odin* will fight *Fenrir*, and by his side will be the *einherjar*, the host of his chosen human warriors whom he has kept in *Valhalla* for just this moment. *Odin* and the champions of men will fight more valiantly than anyone has ever fought before. But it will not be enough. *Fenrir* will swallow *Odin* and his men. Then one of *Odin's* sons, *Vidar*, burning with rage, will charge the beast to avenge his father. On one of his feet will be the shoe that has been crafted for this very purpose; it has been made from all the scraps of leather that human shoemakers have ever discarded, and with it *Vidar* will hold open the monster's mouth. Then he will stab his sword through the wolf's throat, killing him.



Emil Doepler: "Thor and the Midgard Serpent" (1905)

*Thor* and *Jormungand*, those age-old foes, will both finally have their chance to kill the other. *Thor* will succeed in felling the great snake with the blows of his hammer. But the serpent will have covered him in so much venom that he will not be able to stand for much longer; he will take nine paces before falling dead himself and adding his blood to the already-saturated soil of *Vigrid*.

Then the remains of the world will sink into the sea, and there will be nothing left but the void. Creation and all that has occurred since will be completely undone, as if it had never happened.





Ginnungagap



Mithras



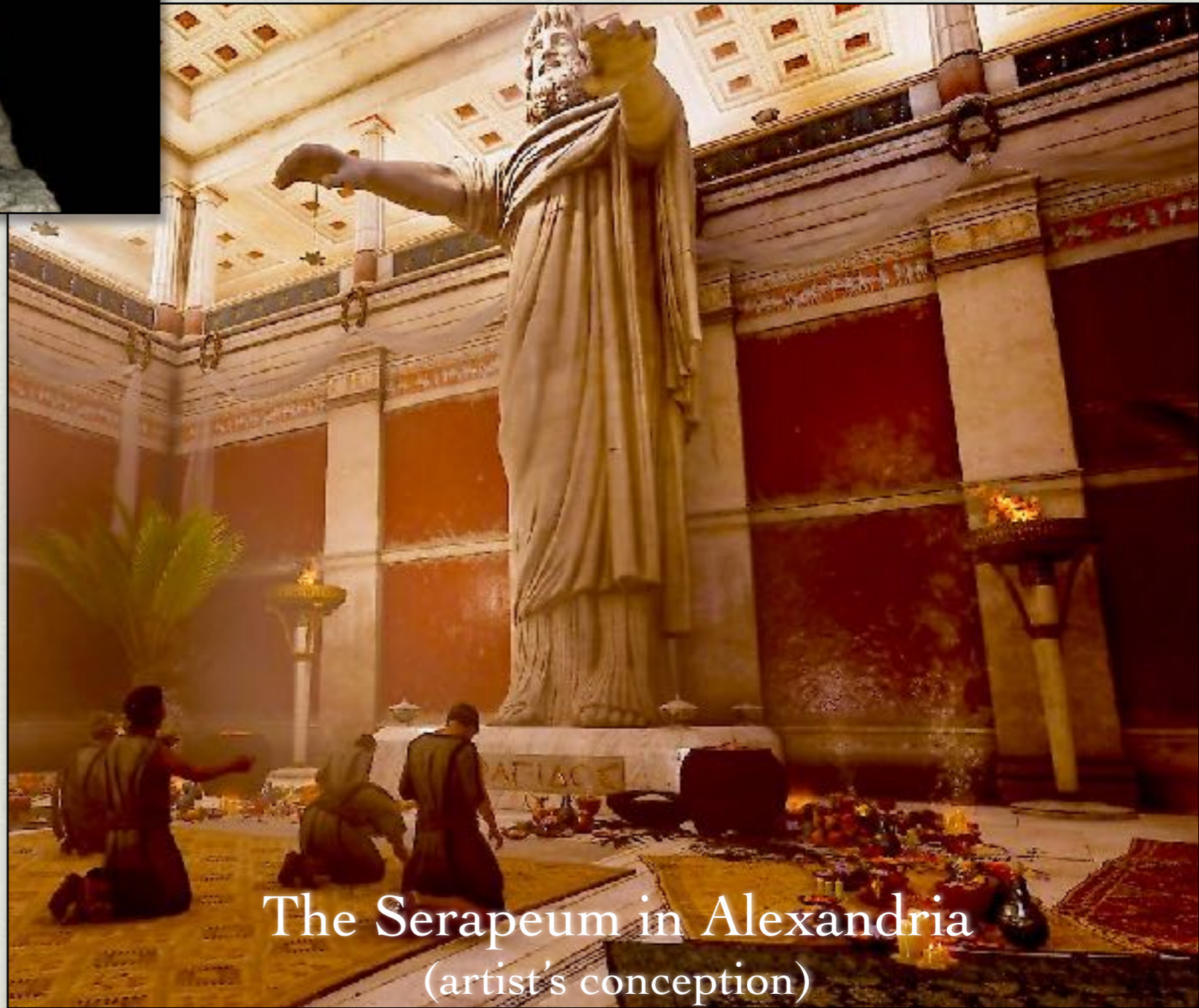
Mithras



Belanus

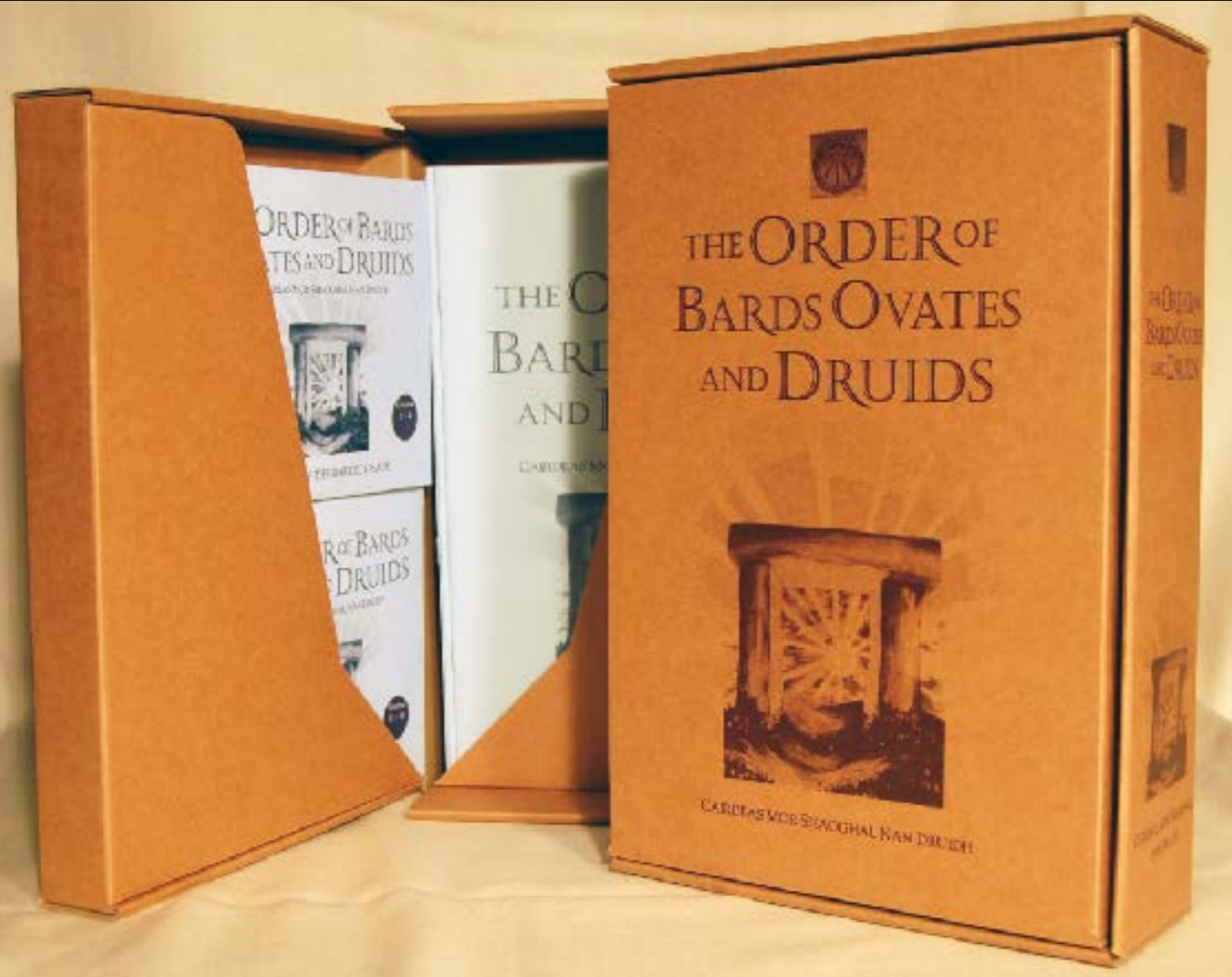


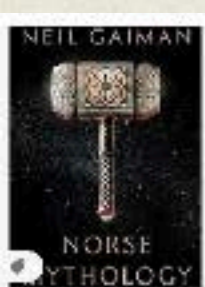
Serapis



The Serapeum in Alexandria  
(artist's conception)

# Gnostic Codices

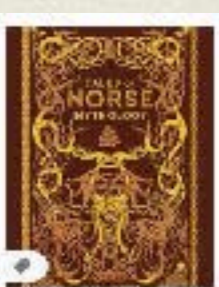




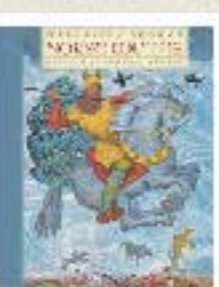
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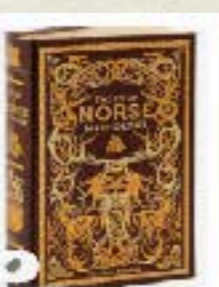
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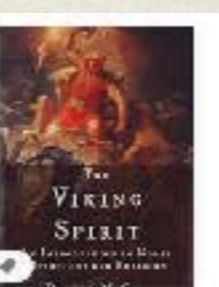
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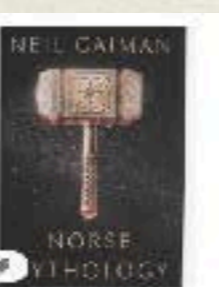
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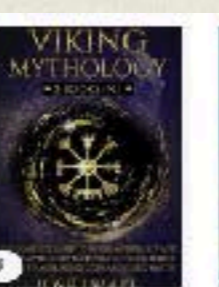
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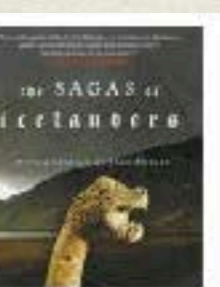
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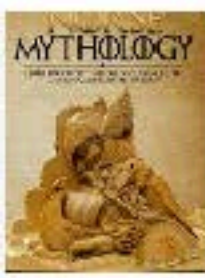
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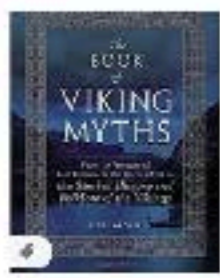
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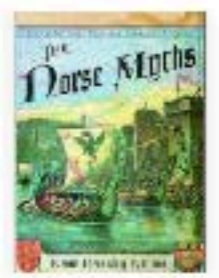
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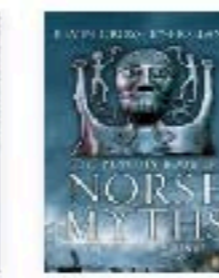
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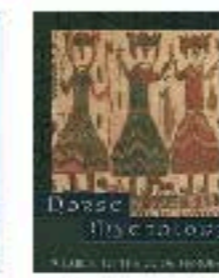
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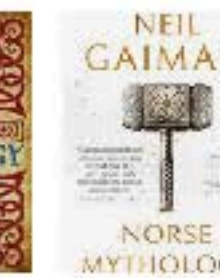
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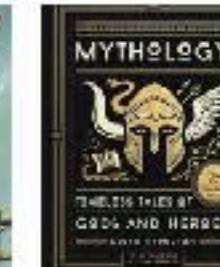
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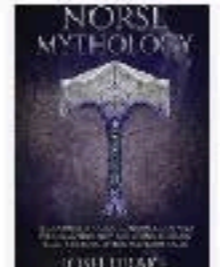
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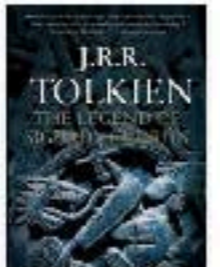
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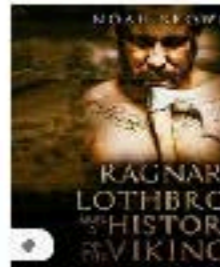
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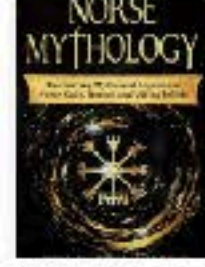
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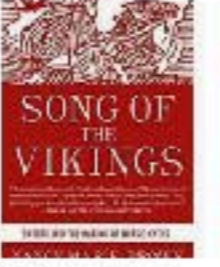
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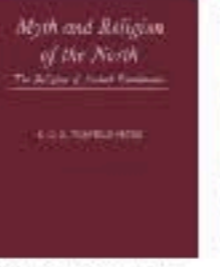
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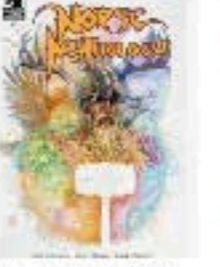
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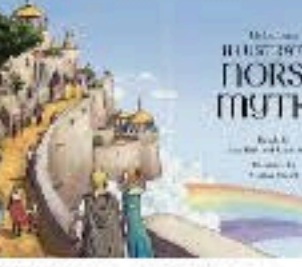
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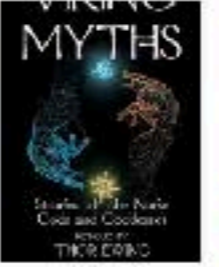
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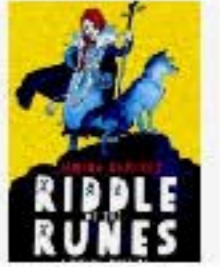
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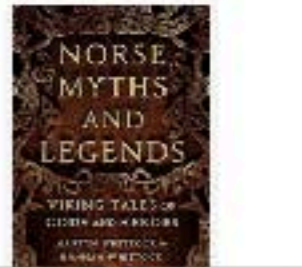


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## ODIN

Ocin (pronounced "OH-din"; [LJLk Nome](#) *Owain*, Old English and Old Saxon *Woden*, Old High German *Wotan*, *Wōtan*, or *Wodan*, Proto-Germanic \**Wodanaz*, "Master of Ecstasy") is one of the most complex and enigmatic characters in Norse mythology, and perhaps in all of world literature. He's the [ruler](#) of the [Aesir](#) tribe of deities, yet he often ventures far from their kingdom, [Asgard](#), on long, solitary wanderings throughout the [cosmos](#) on purely [self-interested](#) quests. He's a relentless seeker after and giver of wisdom, but he has little regard for communal values such as justice, fairness, or respect for law and convention. He's the divine patron of [rulers](#), and also of [outlaws](#). He's a war-god, but also a poetry-god, and he has prominent "effeminate" qualities that would have brought unspeakable shame to any historical Viking warrior. He's worshiped by those in search of prestige, honor, and nobility, yet he's often cursed for being a fiendish trickster. What kind of literary figure – let alone a god whose historical worship spanned much of a continent and several centuries – could possibly embody all of these qualities at once, with their apparently glaring contradictions?



*"Odin der Wahnsinn" by Christen von Rosen (1886)*

What's in a Name?

# ANCIENT ORIGINS

RECONSTRUCTING THE STORY OF HUMANITY'S PAST

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## The Twelve Most Important Gods in Norse Mythology

23 OCTOBER, 2017 · DISSENTMENT-ORIGINS

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## Norse Mythology

In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri Sturluson enumerates the twelve gods and the thirteen goddesses who, together with Óðin and his wife Frigg, make up the Norse pantheon. Stories survive for some of the gods, preserved in the *Poetic Edda*, the *Prose Edda*, and other Icelandic manuscripts.

But no stories have survived for many of the gods and for most of the goddesses. We know that many more stories once existed, because quotes from those stories are mentioned in other literature from the period.

The articles linked below provide a brief introduction to some of the Norse gods and goddesses, as well as a summary of a few of the stories. I strongly encourage interested readers to avoid my dull summaries. Instead, read the originals, or read H. L. Page's witty parody summaries, or Crowley-Hollander's retellings of the myths. These books are readily available and are listed in the [bibliography](#) section of this document.

- [Óðin \(Odin\)](#)
- [Loki](#) (The) and the story of Angr
- [Loki](#)
- [Tyr](#)
- [Eggr and the story of God](#)
- [Freyja and the story of the necklace of the Brangís](#)
- [Huginn](#)
- [Surtur and the story of the theft of the apples](#)
- [Sjald and the story of Skuld](#)
- [Sif](#)
- [The Norns](#)
- [The Creation of the World](#)
- [The War Between the Aesir and the Vanir](#)
- [The Treasures of the Gods](#)
- [The War of Fimbul](#)
- [The Mead of Poetry](#)
- [Óðin and Grendel](#) (the king)
- [Óðin's Journey to Helheim](#)
- [Óðin and Huginn](#)
- [Óðin and Jörmungandr](#)
- [Óðin and Garmr](#) (the giant)
- [The Death of Óðin](#)
- [Loki's Trickery and Loki's Rindar](#)
- [Ragnarök: the Doom of the Gods](#)




That these myths were preserved at all is a surprise. The Icelanders who committed these stories to [writing](#) were, without exception (yet), Christians. Why would Christians preserve stories about heathen gods who were thought to be the personification of Satan?

At least a part of the answer is that without an intimate knowledge of these stories, it would not be possible to create or to understand [public poetry](#), thought to be one of the greatest forms of art, not only in the Viking age but in the centuries that followed.


# NORDIC CULTURE

COSMOLOGY 8 GODS AND CREATURES 3


FILTER BY TOPIC



WHAT DID THE VIKING HOUSES LOOK LIKE?



THE RAVEN BANNER



WHO WERE THE VIKINGS?

## THE NINE WORLDS IN NORSE MYTHOLOGY

In Cosmology by Skalden / June 1, 2011

There are nine worlds in Norse Mythology, they are called Nifheim, Muspelheim, Asgard, Midgard, Jotunheim, Vanahelm, Alfheim, Svartalfheim, Helheim. The nine worlds in Norse mythology are held in the branches ...

## RAGNAROK - THE END OF THE WORLD

In Cosmology by Skalden / June 1, 2011

What is Ragnarok? The Vikings believed that one day the world as we know it would come to an end, they called this day for Ragnarok, [old Norse Ragnarök]. Ragnarok ...

# NORSE mythology

## THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

0:05 / 1:46:02


ANCIENT NORSE MYTHOLOGY

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0:25 / 17:10

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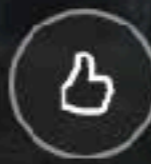


**N** SERIES  
**RAGNAROK**

1 of 42m

*They are ruining the world.*

**Resume**



2020 **TV-MA** 1 Season

**It's Official: Another Season Is Coming**

**S1:E4 "Ginnungagap"**

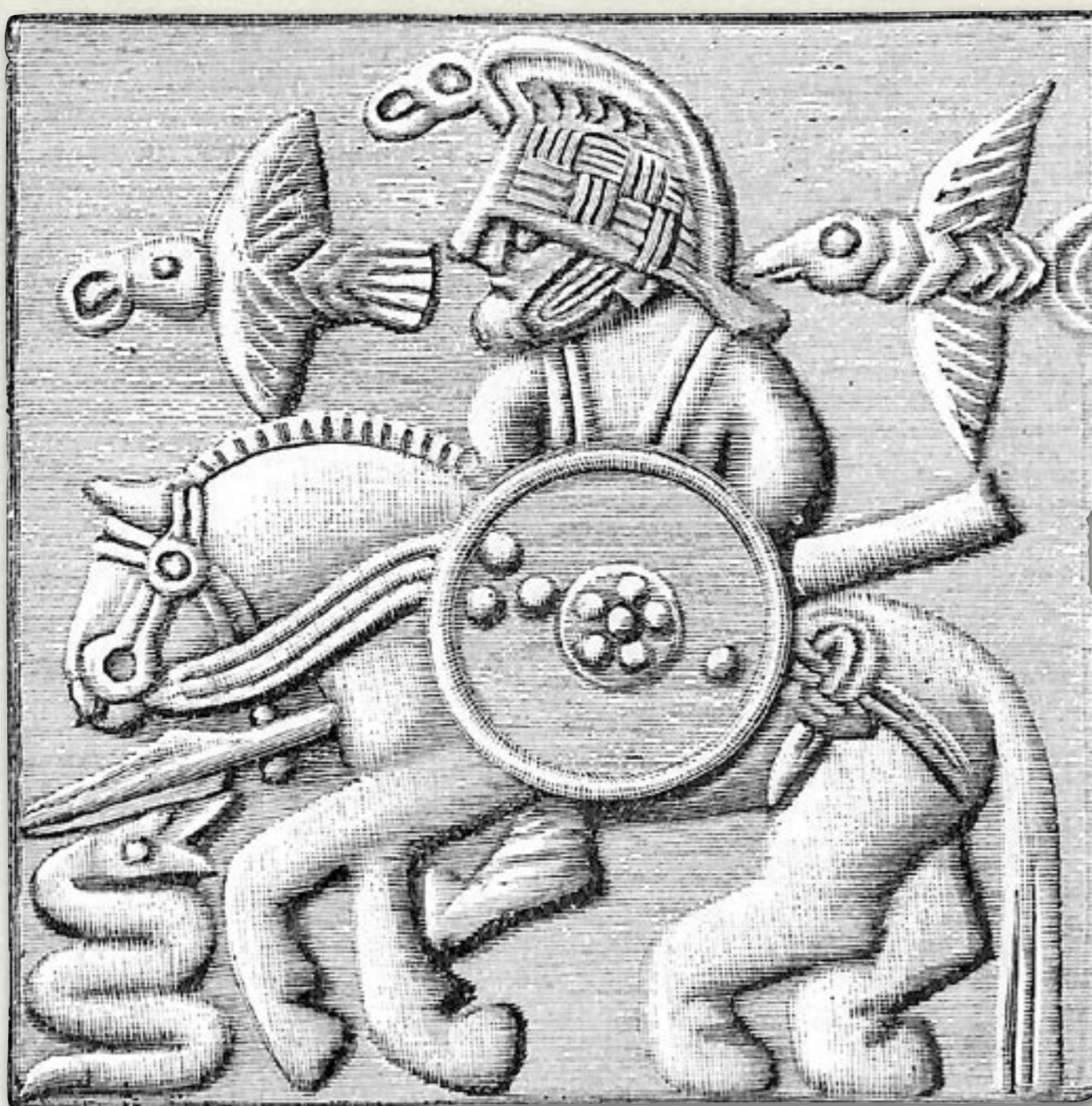
Cast: David Stakstor, Herman Tømmerås, Theresa Frostad Eggesbø, *more*

Genres: Scandinavian TV Shows, TV Mysteries, TV Dramas

This show is: Exciting







Odin on Sleipnir with Ravens and Serpent

DARKNESS is always associated with this first symbol and surrounds it,—as shown in the Hindu, the Egyptian, the Chaldeo-Hebrew and even the Scandinavian systems—hence black ravens, black doves, black waters and even black flames; the *seventh* tongue of Agni, the *fire-god* being called "*Kali*," "the black," as it was a black flickering flame. Two *black* doves flew from Egypt and settling on the oaks of Dodona, gave their names to the Grecian gods. Noah lets out a *black* raven after the deluge, which is a symbol for the Cosmic pralaya, after which began the real creation or evolution of our earth and humanity. Odin's black ravens fluttered around the Goddess Saga and "whispered to her of the past and of the future." What is the real meaning of all those black birds? They are all connected with the primeval wisdom, which flows out of the pre-cosmic Source of all, symbolised by the Head, the Circle, the Egg; and they all have an identical meaning and relate to the primordial Archetypal man (Adam Kadmon) the creative origin of all things, which is composed of the Host of Cosmic Powers—the Creative Dhyan-Chohans, beyond which all is darkness. —SD1:443

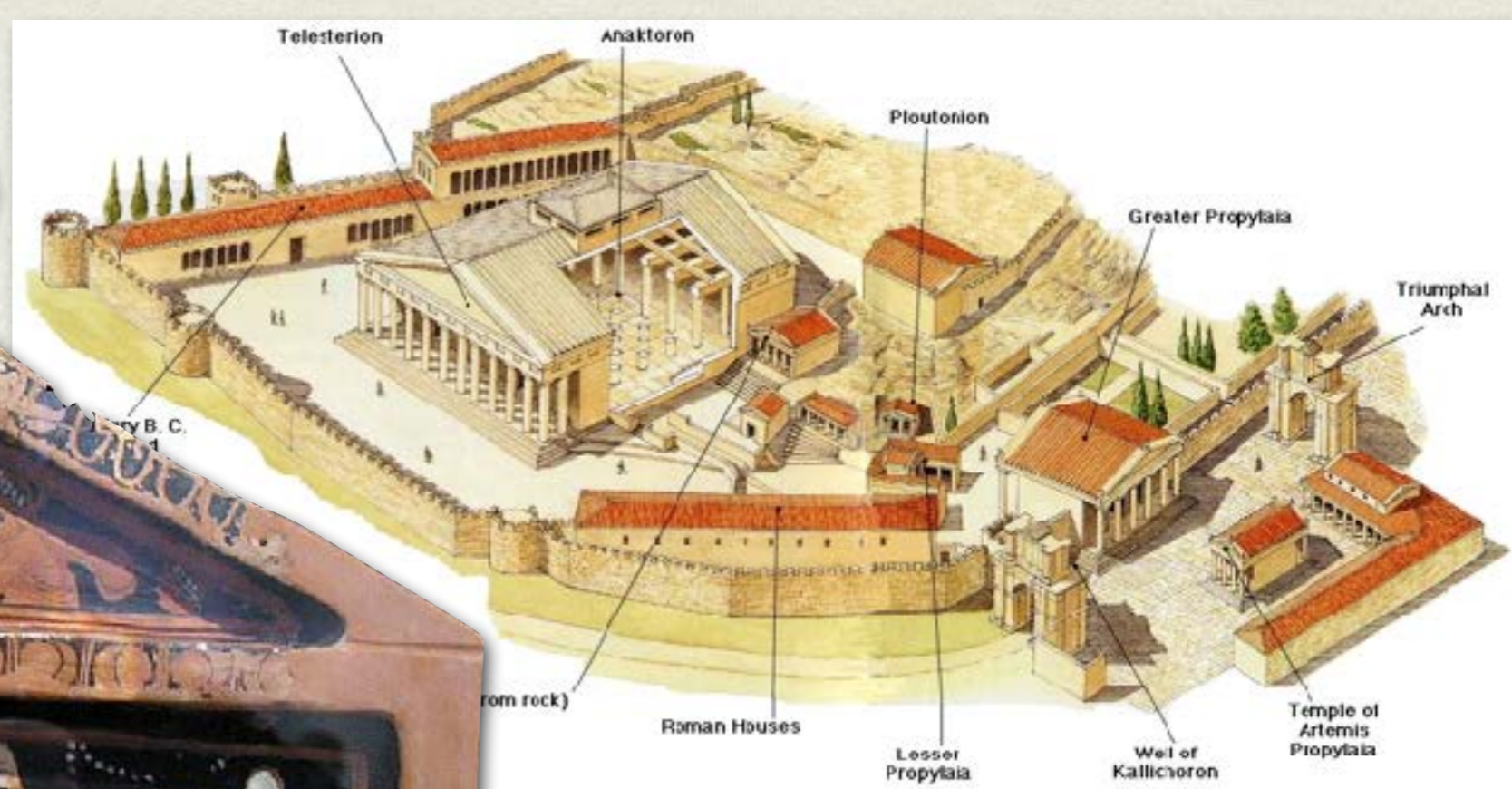


Odin and the Wild Hunt









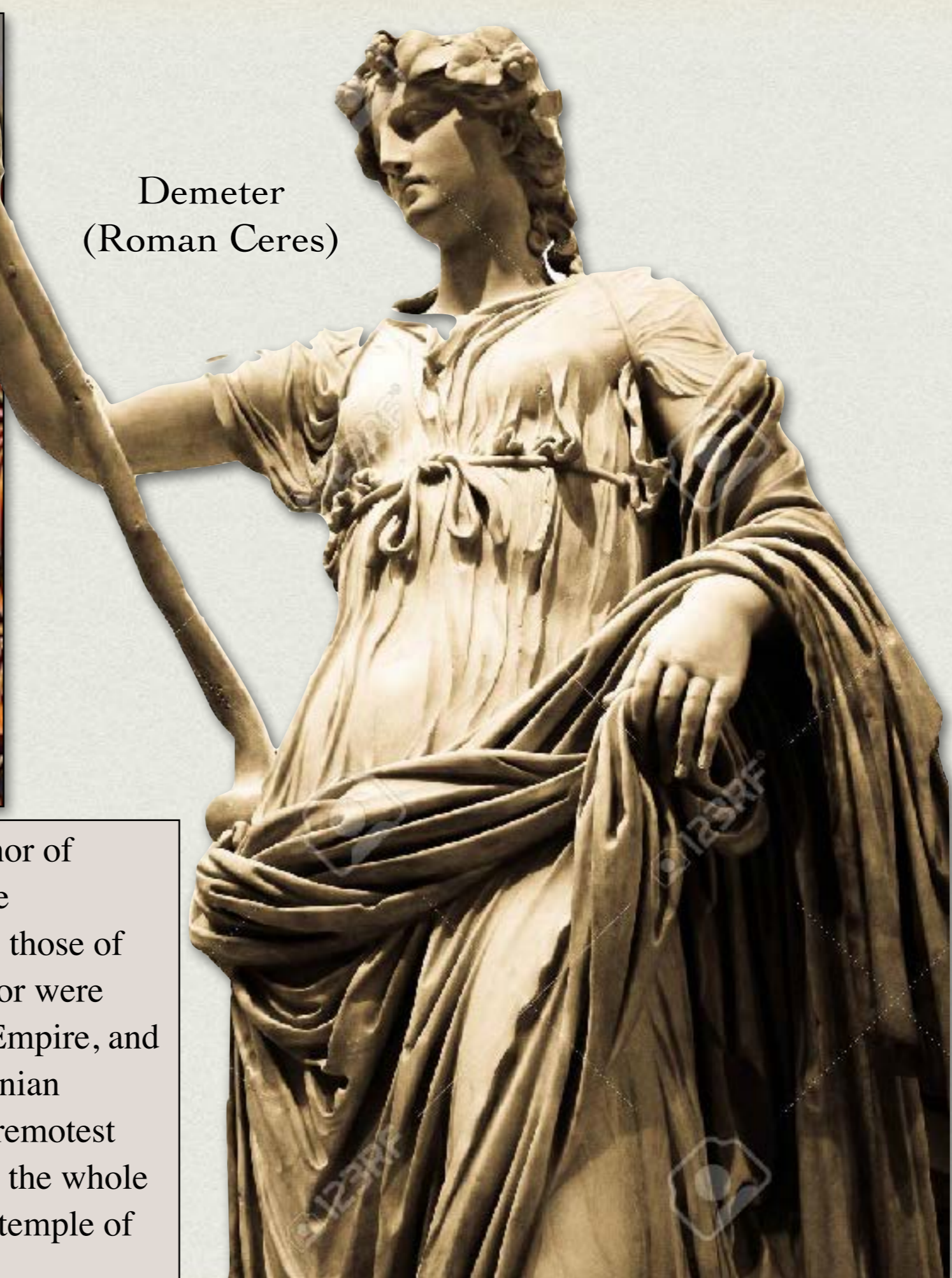
Sanctuary of Eleusis

A votive plaque known as the Ninnion Tablet depicting elements of the Eleusinian Mysteries, discovered in the sanctuary at Eleusis (mid-4th century BC)





Demeter  
(Roman Ceres)



The Mysteries of Eleusis, celebrated at Athens in honor of Ceres, swallowed up, as it were, all the others. All the neighboring nations neglected their own, to celebrate those of Eleusis; and in a little while all Greece and Asia Minor were filled with its Initiates. They spread into the Roman Empire, and even beyond its limits, “those holy and august Eleusinian Mysteries,” said Cicero, “in which the people of the remotest lands are initiated.” *Zosimus* says that they embraced the whole human race; and *Aristides* termed them the common temple of the whole world. –Morals and Dogma:372

## The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three



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Part Three



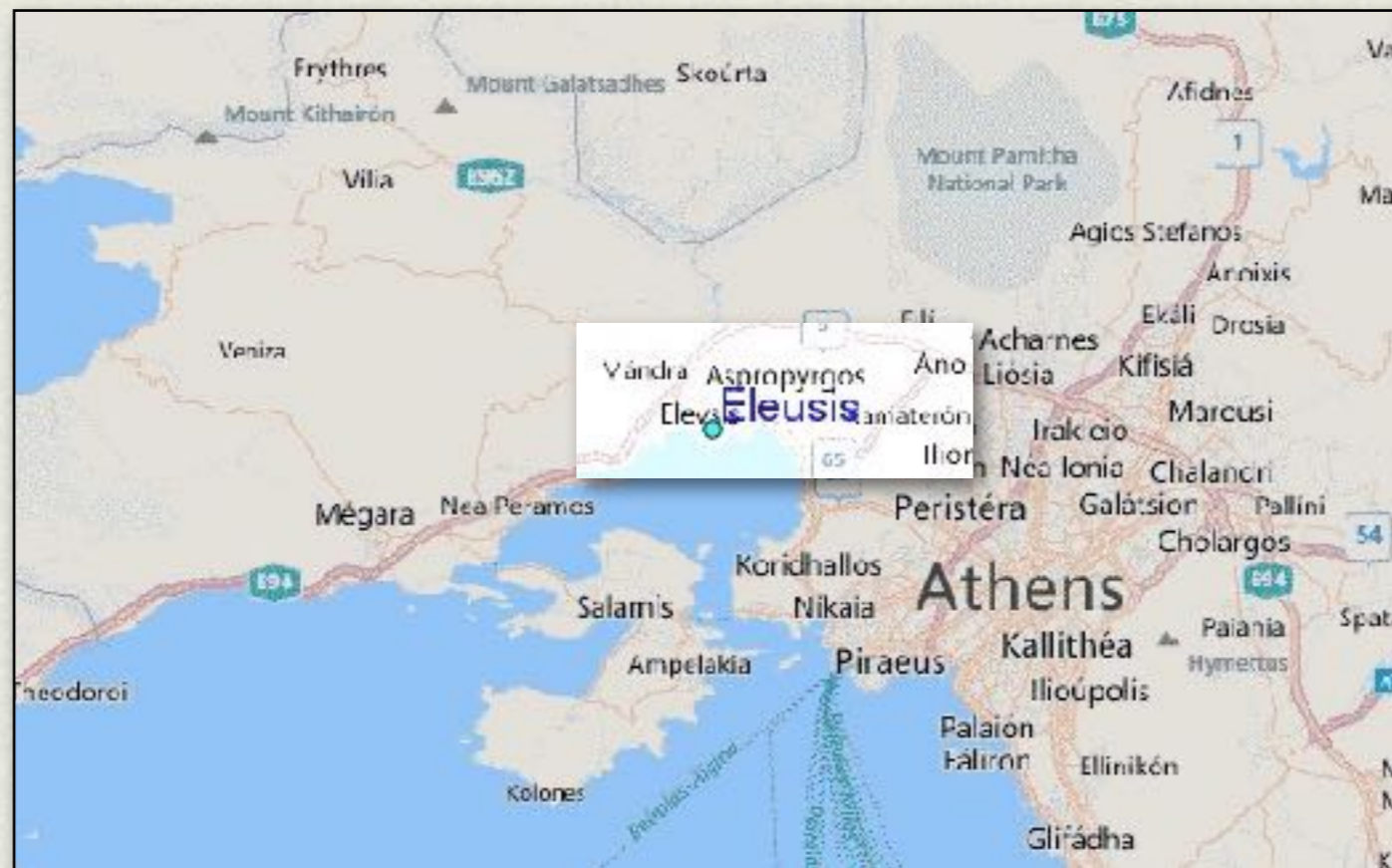
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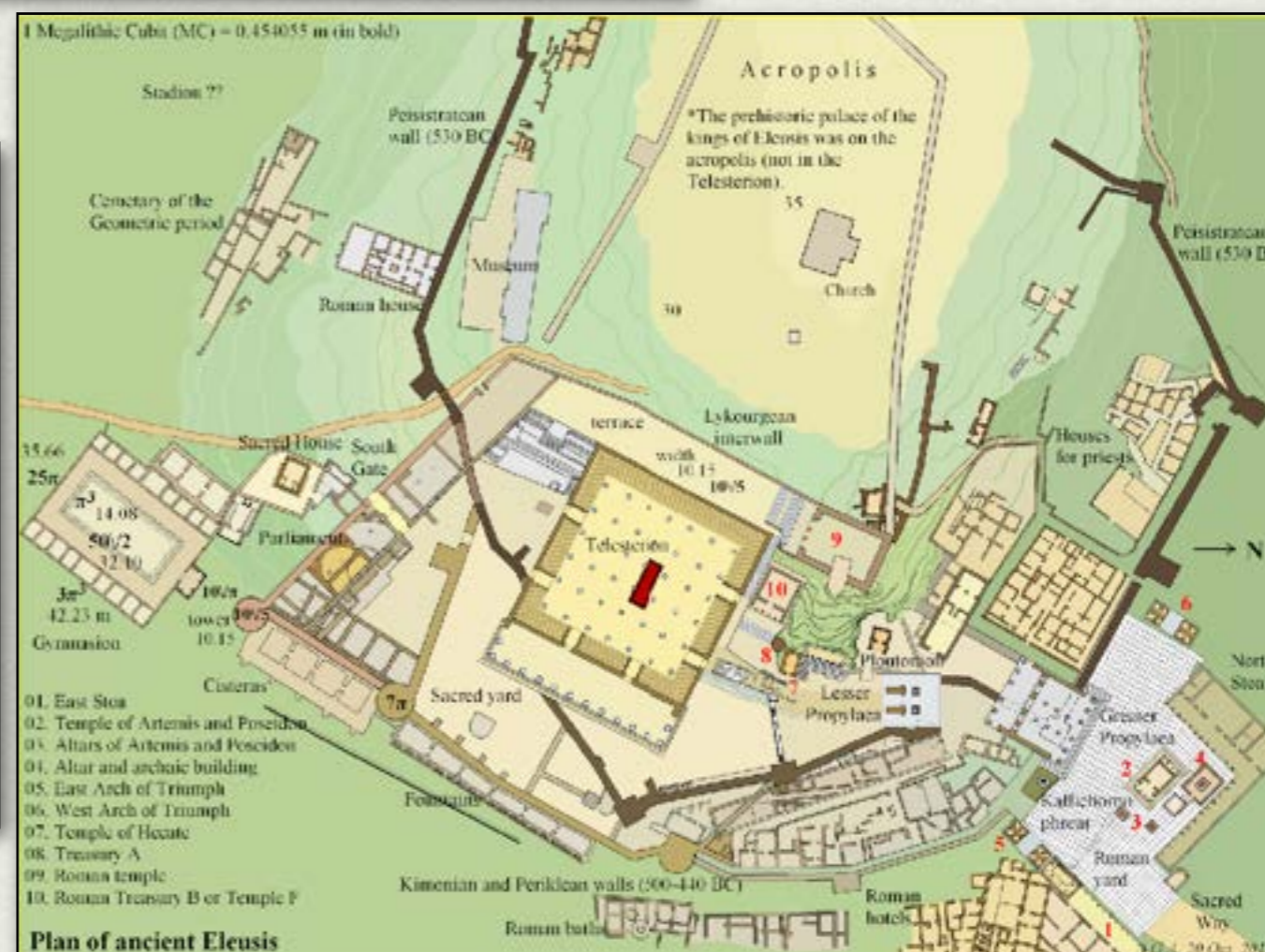
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Sanctuary at Eleusis (artist's conception)



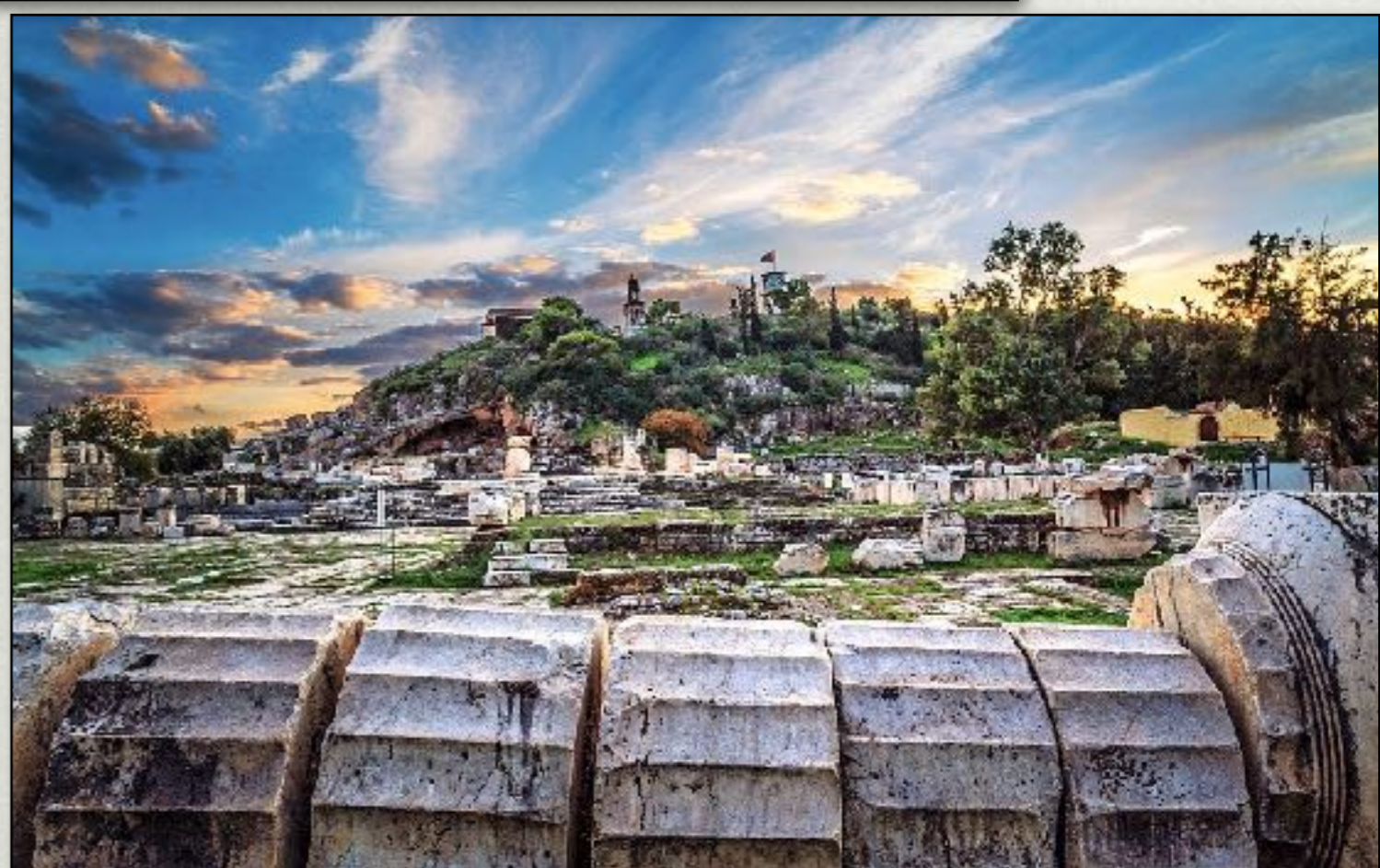
Plan of Ancient Eleusis



Eleusis







Eleusis



The Sanctuary of Pluto/Hades at Eleusis was a peribolos wall enclosing a cave through which Pluto brought Kore back from the underworld. The small temple was built c. 328 BCE but was remodeled on many occasions from the 4th century BCE down to Roman times.

The name Eleusis means the "Advent" or the "Coming," and the Eleusinia, "things that are to come" — at Eleusis the more theological and mystical doctrines were taught, more particularly that which will happen to man after death. Hence the name of the place, Eleusis, where they were celebrated, and the name of the Mysteries themselves, the *Eleusinia*, i.e., the things which shall be or shall come. —Fundamentals of Esoteric Philosophy (de Purucker)



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Roman Denarius picturing Quirinus on the obverse, and Ceres enthroned on the reverse

Strabo speaks of an island near Britannia where Ceres and Persephone were worshipped with the same rites as in Samothrace, and this was the sacred *Ierne*, where a perpetual fire was lit. –HPB Collected Writings, XIV:258

Then Dionysius Periegetes says that the rites of Dionysus were duly celebrated in the British Islands. And we are told by Strabo that “In an island close to Britain, Ceres and Proserpina are venerated with rites similar to the orgies of Samothrace”. The Testimony of Julius Cæsar, who obtained his information first hand, ought to be strictly veracious and reliable. He declares that the Druids “deemed it unlawful to commit their statutes to writing; though in other matters, whether public or private, they make use of Greek characters.” –The Canon (William Stirling):228-9

In Britain, a soldier's inscription of the 2nd century AD attests to Ceres' role in the popular syncretism of the times. She is "the bearer of ears of corn", the "Syrian Goddess", identical with the universal heavenly Mother, the Magna Mater and Virgo, virgin mother of the gods. She is peace and virtue, and inventor of justice: she weighs "Life and Right" in her scale. –The Virgin Goddess (Stephen Benko):112-4

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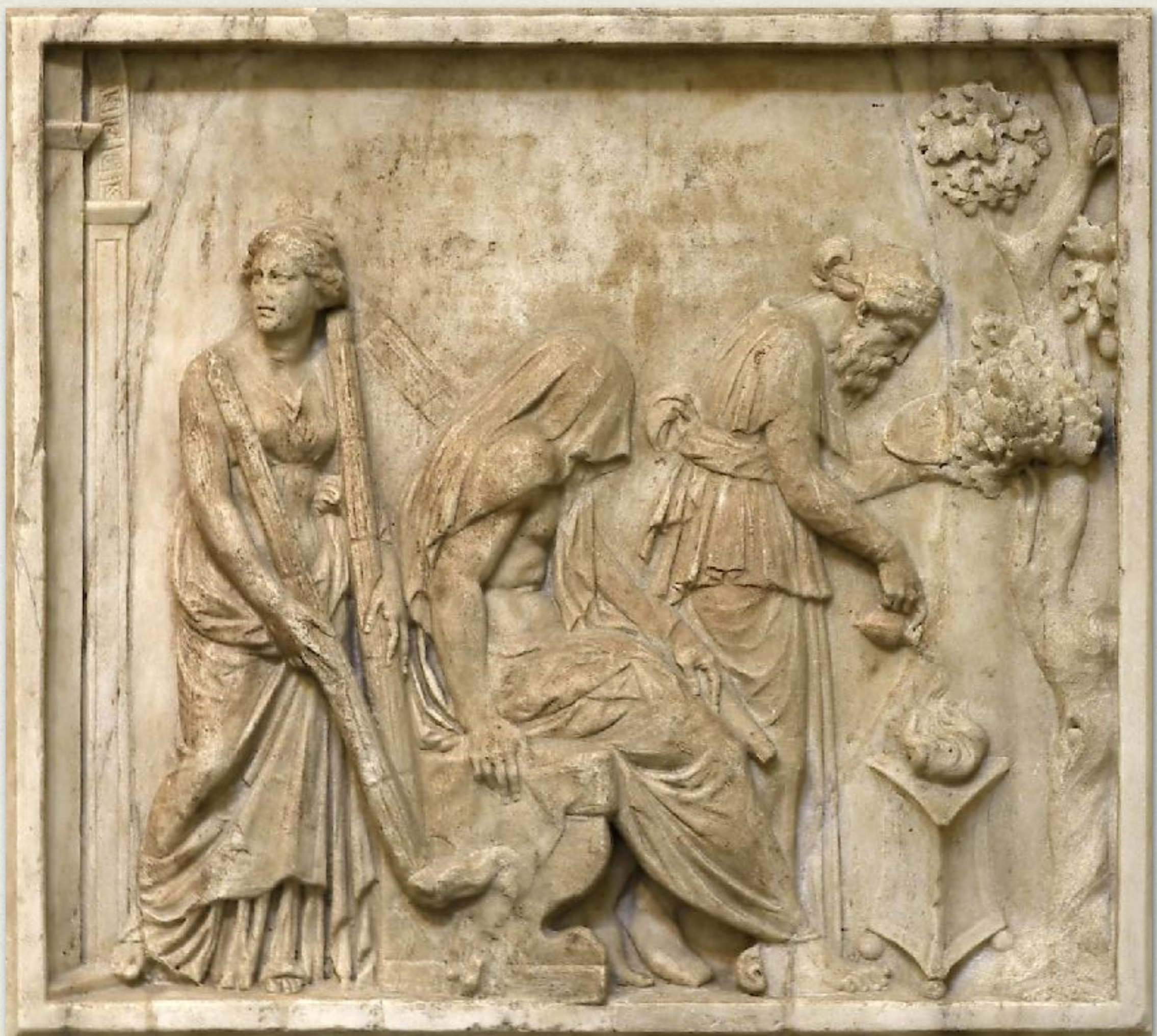
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Eumolpus







ΕΥΜΟΛΠΗΣ



Heracles



Eumolpus



Heracles



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## The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three



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The Phrygians also say, however, that he is a “green ear of corn reaped”; and following the Phrygians, the Athenians when initiating anyone into the Eleusinian Mysteries also show to those who have been made *epopts* [eye-witness] of the mighty and wonderful and most perfect mystery, for an *epopt* is himself a green ear of corn reaped in silence.\* And this ear of corn is also for the Athenians the great and perfect spark of light from the Unportrayable One.

\*This is the first real information we have as to the final secret of the Eleusinian Mysteries. –Philosophumena:138



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BY

CHARLES WILLIAM HECKETHORN

IN TWO VOLUMES

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73. Doors of Horn and Ivory. 74. Suppression of Eleusinian  
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Demeter  
(Roman Ceres)

The mysteries of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, seem to have been the model of all other ceremonies of initiation subsequently established among the different peoples of the world. Those of Atys and Cybele, celebrated in Phrygia; those of Ceres and Proserpine, at Eleusis and many other places in Greece, were but copies of them. This we learn from Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Lactantius, and other writers; and in the absence of direct testimony should necessarily infer it from the similarity of the adventures of these Deities; for the ancients held that the Ceres of the Greeks was the same as the Isis of the Egyptians; and Dionusos or Bacchus as Osiris.

—Morals and Dogma:398



Isis

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But besides this vulgar religion, or popular mythology, there existed, in the more civilised countries of Greece, Asia, and Egypt, a secret or mystic system, preserved, generally, by an hereditary priesthood, in temples of long-established sanctity; and only revealed, under the most solemn vows of secrecy, to persons who had previously proved themselves to be worthy of the important trust. Such were the Mysteries of Eleusis in Attica which, being so near to the most polished, powerful, and learned city of Greece, became more celebrated and more known than any others; and are, therefore, the most proper for a particular investigation, which may lead to a general knowledge of all. These mysteries were under the guardianship of Ceres and Proserpina, and were called *teletai*, *endings*, or *finishes*, because no person could be perfect that had not been initiated either into them or some others. They were divided into two stages or degrees, the first or lesser of which was a kind of holy purification, to prepare the mind for the divine truths which were to be revealed to it in the second or greater. From one to five years of probation were required between them; and at the end of it, the initiate, on being found worthy, was admitted into the inmost recesses of the temple, and made acquainted with the first principles of religion; the knowledge of the God of nature; the first, the supreme..." by which men had been reclaimed from rudeness and barbarism to elegance and refinement, and been taught not only to live with more comfort, but to die with better hopes. –Symbolical



Rhea. Ceres.

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It is doubtful whether many of the initiates themselves understood the mystic meaning of this allegory, for most of them apparently believed that it referred solely to the succession of the seasons. It is difficult to obtain satisfactory information concerning the Mysteries, for the candidates were bound by inviolable oaths never to reveal their inner secrets to the profane. At the beginning of the ceremony of initiation, the candidate stood upon the skins of animals sacrificed for the purpose, and vowed that death should seal his lips before he would divulge the sacred truths which were about to be communicated to him. Through indirect channels, however, some of their secrets have been preserved. The teachings given to the neophytes were substantially as follows:

The soul of man—often called *Psyche*, and in the Eleusinian Mysteries symbolized by Persephone—is essentially a spiritual thing. Its true home is in the higher worlds, where, free from the bondage of material form and material concepts, it is said to be truly alive and self-expressive. The human, or physical, nature of man, according to this doctrine, is a tomb, a quagmire, a false and impermanent thing, the source of all sorrow and suffering. Plato describes the body as the sepulcher of the soul; and by this he means not only the human form but also the human nature.

The gloom and depression of the Lesser Mysteries represented the agony of the spiritual soul, unable to express itself because it has accepted the limitations and illusions of the human environment. The crux of the Eleusinian argument was that man is neither better nor wiser after death than during life. If he does not rise above ignorance during his sojourn here, man goes at death into eternity to wander about forever, making the same mistakes which he made here. If he does not outgrow the desire for material possessions here, he will carry it with him into the invisible world, where, because he can never gratify the desire, he will continue in endless agony. Dante's *Inferno* is symbolically descriptive of the sufferings of those who never freed their spiritual natures from the cravings, habits, viewpoints, and limitations of their Platonic personalities. Those who made no endeavor to improve themselves (whose souls have slept) during their physical lives, passed at death into Hades, where, lying in rows, they sleep through all eternity as they had slept through life.

To the Eleusinian philosophers, birth into the physical world was death in the fullest sense of the word, and the only true birth was that of the spiritual soul of man rising out of the womb of his own fleshly nature. "The soul is dead that slumbers," says Longfellow, and in this he strikes the keynote of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Just as Narcissus, gazing at himself in the water (the ancients used this mobile element to symbolize the transitory, illusionary, material universe) lost his life trying to embrace a reflection, so man, gazing into the mirror of Nature and accepting as his real self the senseless clay that he sees reflected, loses the opportunity afforded by physical life to unfold his immortal, invisible Self.

An ancient initiate once said that the living are ruled by the dead. Only those conversant with the Eleusinian concept of life could understand that statement. It means that the majority of people are not ruled by their living spirits but by their senseless (hence dead) animal personalities. Transmigration and reincarnation were taught in these Mysteries, but in a somewhat unusual manner. It was believed that at midnight the invisible worlds were closest to the terrestrial sphere and that souls coming into material existence slipped in during the midnight hour. For this reason many of the Eleusinian



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Eleusinian Mysteries.

The Lesser Mysteries were designed by the ancient theologians, their founders, to signify occultly the condition of the unpurified soul invested with an earthly body, and enveloped in a material and physical nature. –Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries:34-5



ETRUSCAN Eleusinian Ceremonies.

THE  
ELEUSINIAN  
AND  
BACCHIC MYSTERIES.

A DISSERTATION.

BY  
THOMAS TAYLOR,

TRANSLATOR OF "PLATO," "PLOTINUS," "PORPHYRY," "IAMBLICUS," "PROCLUS,"  
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## The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three



HE most famous of the ancient religious Mysteries were the Eleusinian, whose rites were celebrated every five years in the city of Eleusis to honor Ceres (Demeter, Rhea, or Isis) and her daughter, Persephone. The initiates of the Eleusinian School were famous throughout Greece for the beauty of their philosophic concepts and the high standards of morality which they demonstrated in their daily lives. Because of their excellence, these Mysteries spread to Rome and Britain, and later the initiations were given in both these countries. The Eleusinian Mysteries, named for the community in Attica where the sacred dramas were first presented, are generally believed to have been founded by *Eumolpos* about fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, and through the Platonic system of philosophy their principles have been preserved to modern times.

The rites of Eleusis, with their Mystic interpretations of Nature's most precious secrets, overshadowed the civilizations of their time and gradually absorbed many smaller schools, incorporating into their own system whatever valuable information these lesser institutions possessed. Heckethorn sees in the Mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus a metamorphosis of the rites of Isis and Osiris, and there is every reason to believe that all so-called secret schools of the ancient world were branches from one philosophic tree which, with its root in heaven and its branches on the earth, is--like the spirit of man--an invisible but ever-present cause of the objectified vehicles that give it expression. The Mysteries were the channels through which this one philosophic light was disseminated, and their initiates, resplendent with intellectual and spiritual understanding, were the perfect fruitage of the divine tree, bearing witness before the material world of the recondite source of all Light and Truth.

The rites of Eleusis were divided into what were called the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries. According to James Gardner, the Lesser Mysteries were celebrated in the spring (probably at the time of the vernal equinox) in the town of Agræ, and the Greater, in the fall (the time of the autumnal equinox) at Eleusis or Athens. It is supposed that the former were given annually and the latter every five years. The rituals of the Eleusinians were highly involved, and to understand them required a deep study of Greek mythology, which they interpreted in its esoteric light with the aid of their secret keys.

The Lesser Mysteries were dedicated to Persephone. In his *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, **Thomas Taylor** sums up their purpose as follows: "The Lesser Mysteries were designed by the ancient theologians, their founders, to signify occultly the condition of the unpurified soul invested with an earthy body, and enveloped in a material and physical nature."

The legend used in the Lesser rites is that of the abduction of the goddess Persephone, the daughter of Ceres, by Pluto, the lord of the underworld, or Hades. While Persephone is picking flowers in a beautiful meadow, the earth suddenly opens and the gloomy lord of death, riding in a magnificent chariot, emerges from its somber depths and, grasping her in his arms, carries the screaming and struggling goddess to his subterranean palace, where he forces her to become his queen. --STOAA:29

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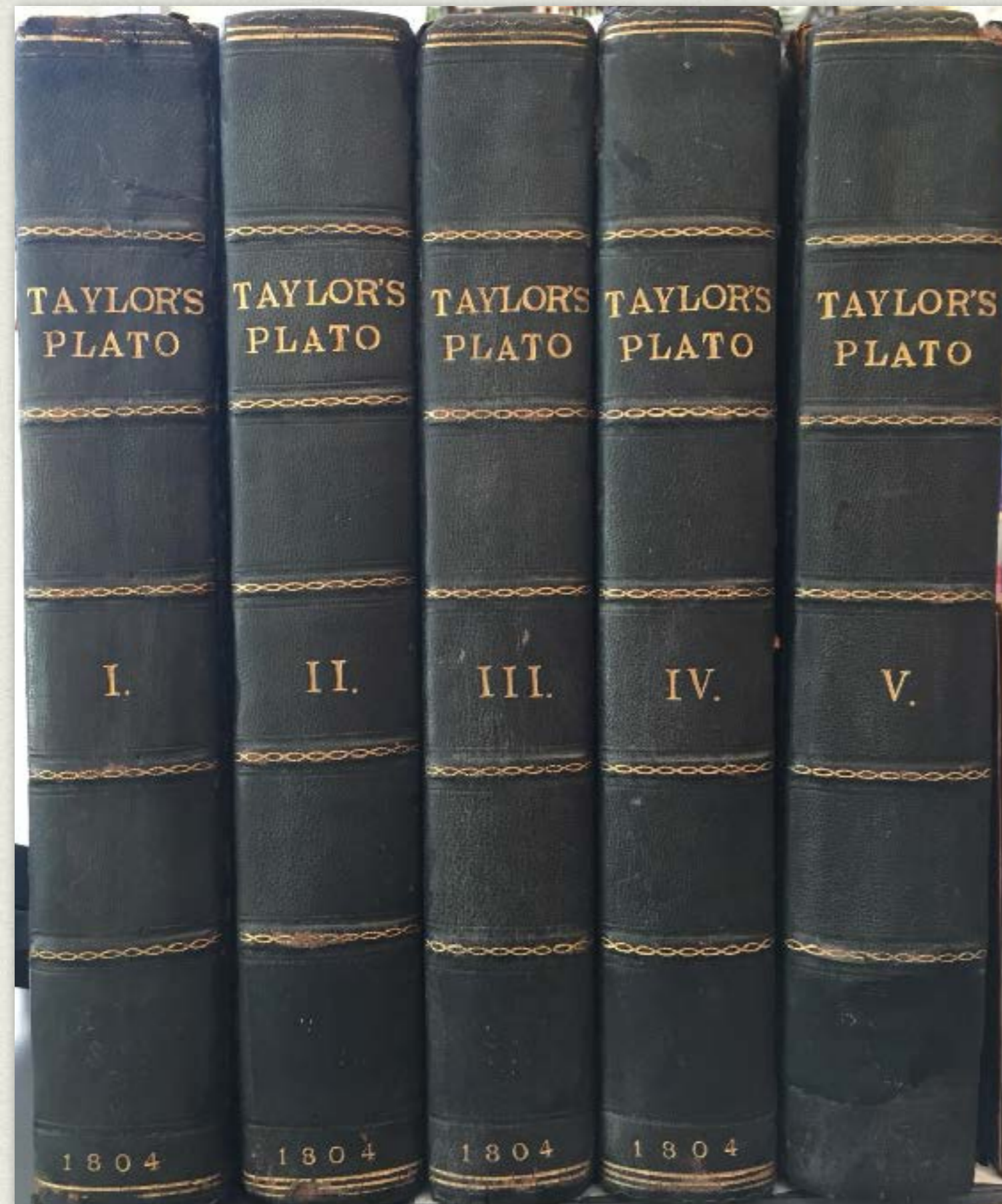
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"As Thomas Taylor, the most intuitional of all the translators of Greek Fragments shows, no nation has ever conceived the One principle as the immediate creator of the visible Universe."

–SD1:425

"Thomas Taylor may have had less knowledge of the Greek than his critics have, but he understood Plato far better than they do." –SD1:453