The Place of the Earth-Goddess Cult in English Pagan Religion

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction
A) Purposes and Objectives

In general this book also makes possible a much clearer and more accurate understanding of English Paganism and early medieval English culture in general during the years of about 450 CE to 1100 CE.

This book shows that English Paganism was a religion including at least two and possibly more incompatible theologies, and that one of the most important — maybe the most important — of these theologies had its Earth Goddess as the main deity of the English pantheon. Moreover, native Anglo-Saxon polytheism emphasized wisdom and personal, mystical relationships to deities; and it de-emphasized formal organization, architecture, anthropomorphic theology, and professional staff.

The present author's main reason for undertaking this project is to clarify the cultural source of the Old English Rune Poem. The interpretation of that poem given in *Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem* shows a sophisticated and broadly-aware view of life which is more understandable and believable if one is aware of the Pagan culture from which the poem was derived. Therefore the analysis is focused on that purpose and occasionally discussion is pulled back from a path that is not directly helpful for that underlying purpose.

But a thorough study of a piece of dissident literature can help us learn many things about how people lived in the society that constitutes that literature's context of origination.

The present work is useful in regard to broader interests in early medieval England principally because it corrects three errors in prior literature on English Paganism. One is the fallacy of oversimplification by assuming (implicitly) that non-Christian Anglo-Saxon religion had only one theology. Another error is to underestimate the importance of the English Earth goddess. The third error is an overemphasis on the ritual and community solidarity aspects of English polytheism to the neglect of progressive mysticism.

Progressive mysticism is the use of mystical means, not to escape to a fantasy world, but to enhance personal growth. Stanfield discussed progressive mysticism at length in *The Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem* (2012: 8-10, Appendix F), because that poem lends itself quite readily to use in progressive mysticism.

B) Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling

Before launching into methodological and substantive introductions, we might as well take care of some relatively administrative matters. For convenience, the discussion in this section slips temporarily into the first-person voice that is usually reserved (in this book) for footnote asides.

B.1.a) Vocabulary

I use "Earth deity" or "Earth goddess" to denote a deity who is identified with the planet, although sometimes I might seem to slip into using the term for a deity identified with soil. This is because certain deities who are identified with our planet are also identified with soil.

Some readers will note that I carefully distinguish between the categories of "god" and "deity". This should not be taken to imply that I always regard emic views of the gods and goddesses in question as masculine or feminine in the senses that we usually understand those concepts. One must seriously consider the possibility that ancient peoples sometimes allowed that a deity cannot meaningfully have gender in the sense that animals and plants have gender. Some of the gods or goddesses are conceived by the faithful anthropomorphically or theriomorphically or as having mental constitutions similar to those of men or women. But in some instances, they seem to simply avoid discomfort with referring to a deity as "it". I try to avoid making any unnecessary judgment about any deity's gender identity in this book, because it can be a distraction not related to my present purposes.

In this book "theology" is a set of assertions about who and what deities are (or a deity is) that is intended to be explanatory. A more succinct expression is "theory of deity". No religion I know of is fully defined by a single theology, partly because even the allegedly monotheistic religions have ideas about jinn, angels, land spirits or other unrelated spirit wights and notions about liturgy, costume, sexual relations, and other topics which are also unrelated to their theories of deity.

When using Old Norse words, I do not explicitly distinguish between West Old Norse and East Old Norse, but the Old Norse words in this book are all West Old Norse, which is also called Old Icelandic.

B.1.b) Grammar

I omit the inflectional endings from Old Norse and Old English proper names when using them as names in modern English passages, but in literal quotations of Old Norse or Old English the original

grammar is preserved. In Modern English passages, adding nominative or genitive endings imported from foreign languages just causes confusion. A similar policy was followed by the editors of The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders, (Hreinsson et al, 1997a: xvii-xviii). Thus, for example I write "Óðinn" (and not "Óðin") or "Þór" (and not "Þórr").

B.1.c) Spelling

Both the letters thorn (þ) and eth (ð) appear in this book, although they are not in the standard English alphabet. Hence, the reader should be aware that the letters eth and thorn each represent the sounds that in Modern English are represented by the diphthong "th"; coincidentally, both of those sounds occur in this very sentence.

I use the letters thorn and eth in the name of the English goddess Earþ to help the reader distinguish between my use of the name of our host planet (Earth) and my use of the English goddess' name (Earþ or Earð). In speaking, the names of the goddess and of the planet are not properly pronounced exactly the same, but that is not apparent in print.

I do not render eths that occur in Old Norse as d's, as is commonly done, for replacing a "th" sound with a "d" can cause unnecessary confusion and in any case looks illiterate. The substitution "d" for eth originates in the ignorance of long-previous authors who thought that "ð" was the same as "d". Thus, "Odin" is not a word found in this book. The exception is that in verbatim quotes of modern authors, I leave the original spelling unedited.

C) The Concept of Theological Diversity

As mentioned above, a fallacy of previous works is that they have implicitly assumed theological unity in Anglo-Saxon religion, and the job of the radical scholar is to make this assumption explicit and question its validity.

C.1) Labels for the Two Types of Model

The use of labels will facilitate a clear statement of the case for theological diversity of English Pagan religion. The labels used in this book for the two models are "unified theology" and "contrasting theologies".

C.1.a) Definitions of the Two Models

A model of unified theology posits that practically everyone in some social unit or system agrees on basic principles and descriptions of the pantheon and the characters in it. This is not to say that consensus

exists on every detail of ethics, liturgy, deity names, and so on, but that within the social unit or system in question, there is no difference of opinion on such basics as the number of deities or which if any of them is in charge.

A model of contrasting theologies requires disagreement on the basics. That is, the religion, cult or other social unit or system includes contradictory theories of deity. The concept of contrasting theologies within one religion allows people claiming to be in the same religion and using the same deity names, but having completely different ideas about those deities, to be categorized as in the same religion.

Of course, one could argue that persons with fundamentally different theories of deity are not in the same religion, but going in that direction will get the present analysis into a tangle that is not really helpful.

C.1.b) Hypothetical Example

The definitions are made clearer by applying them to a hypothetical example.

Suppose that two thousand years from the publication of this book, social scientists explore what is now Canada in search of clues to the lifeways of the ancient Canadians (those of the present day). And suppose that the social scientists find rusty railway tracks, ruins, cemeteries, buried collections of jewelry and equipment, and old books. Not all of the evidence comes readily to hand, but documentary evidence that has been conscientiously preserved is the easiest to get ahold of. At a certain stage of discovery, scholars studying the long-ago Canadian culture have found mostly Lutheran homilies and atheist denunciations of religion plus some scattered archeological finds in a few major archeological digs.

Some social scientists decide that all nearly all the ancient Canadians were Protestant Christians who were especially attracted to the Old Testament and tried to strictly base their lives on it more than on the New Testament, and that the Christians all believed the Bible was true word for word without consideration of translation and other issues, and they were all Unitarians. A dissident and very vocal, but otherwise insignificant minority (atheists) left some of the evidence for this.

Other social scientists also infer that the ancient Canadians were mostly Christian, but they reconstruct a different model. These investigators decide that the non-Unitarian and atheist material indicates not errors in the data but the actual facts of ancient life. They also infer that implications of Trinitarianism and saint-worship are found in the archeological and documentary evidence, and that temple

structures implied by the ruins and evidence of liturgical and of funerary practices show only vague relations to known mythical lore. Moreover, these social scientists infer that the Canadians of two thousand years before probably had multiple cults or "denominations" associated with the contrasting theories of deity implied by a few documents, and associated with the contrasting practices implied by the archeological data.

So some students reconstruct ancient Canadian religion showing a model of only one religion, having only one theology, and that theology dominated by mythic lore. This would be a unified-theology model that also places major emphasis on myth.

But the other students reconstruct ancient Canadian religion revealing a model that is highly diverse, for that model includes incompatible theories of deity within nominally one religion, and allows that adherents of that religion were not feeling restricted to the ideologies implied by their myths. This would be a contrasting-theologies model, and also a model that de-emphasizes the ideological importance of myth.

Obviously, one of these models is more consistent than is the other with what we readily observe around us in Canada or in very similar current-day societies. We do indeed readily observe people with nominally the same religion but obviously quite different pantheons and incompatible explanations of their pantheons.

C.2) Irrelevance of Extremism

In modern industrialized and predominately Christian or Islamic societies, people are accustomed to long histories of religious disputes between extremists — which means violent people — over the sort of diversity that defines the contrasting-theologies model, and even over less fundamental issues. Consequently, people in these societies are also accustomed to religious and governmental leaders preaching the virtues of "tolerance" and the values of "diversity" in regard to religion.

Hence for an understanding of the contrasting theologies model, it is useful to shake off that obsession with religious extremism. The reader should realize that in a society dominated by a religion that encompasses incompatible theologies, it is quite possible that the violent people fight about other matters, and that coexistence of contrasting theologies is considered normal and not in need of comment.

D) The Unified Theology Model in Previous Studies

The unified-theology fallacy dominates all prior studies of English Pagan religion, but three examples are cited here.

D.1) Branston, 1974

Brian Branston's extensive (1974) study, *The Lost Gods of England* is an impressive attempt to reconstruct the entire polytheistic religion of the Anglo-Saxons, with theology as the main focus of the entire book. His view is of a single theology with Wóden as the chieftain of the pantheon and the most important deity in both the religious philosophy and the religious practice of the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons. There is no account taken of the possibility of division of that religion into cults or denominations, despite several chapters that focus on individual deities or on one pair of deities. There is no importance attached to an Earth goddess in Branston's work.

By the way, Branston's book (1974: 52-55) might seem to imply that pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon religion was oriented toward agriculture, based on what he knows of the early medieval English lifestyle. But this is not an assertion he was trying to make. Of course the holiday schedule would reflect agricultural practices if the economy and the population are 85% agricultural, regardless of whether the holidays themselves were primarily agricultural. Branston means to say that a level of technology that is much less powerful that the technology of the Twentieth Century would tend to tend to produce an awe of, respect toward, and gladness for nature well above levels common among modern people. This does not contradict the possibilities that the liturgy, myth, and other aspects of the religion were probably oriented toward personal growth and human social development, and that the poetry probably consisted mainly of action-adventure stories providing escape from the humdrum of daily life. This is, after all, what we see in other peasant societies.

However, an implication Branston does not see in that passage — the emotional meaning of the realization that we are the children of the Earth — is dealt with in away that will be more understandable much later in the present work.

D.2) Herbert, 1994

Another important study of Anglo-Saxon pre-Christian religion is Kathleen Herbert's much shorter *Looking for the Lost Gods of England*.

Her model also has a single theology with Wóden as the main deity. Herbert did not mention the possibility of division of the religion into cults. She concluded that the worship of Wóden lasted longer than did worship any of the others, ignoring evidence of Earth-goddess worship shown later in this book. She did list among the "great gods" Tiw, Wóden, Thunor, Mother Earth, and Her son Frea. She is vague about the relative importance of these deities, though, and in one passage she implies that Ing (who she calls Frea) had a similar importance to that of Christ in the Catholic pantheon, but she gives no reason for this (Herbert, 1994: 11-12, 22-32). Neither the body of evidence on English nor that on Scandinavian Pagan religion posits any special relationship between Mother Earth and Ing.

D.3) Bates, 2002

A later book by Brian Bates, *The Real Middle Earth*, presents an interesting variation of the unified-theology view. If the Pagan English "lived in accordance with the wishes of Mother Earth...they were destined to thrive." But if not, then Mother Earth would bring upon them "the judgment of Wyrd". Near the end of the final paragraph of his book on Middle Earth, Bates advises that "We are most disconnected, fragmented, exposed, frail when we are separated from ...the story of the earth's mind, the rhythm of its beating heart. It is the landscape of our deep imagination" (Bates, 2002: 76-79, 97, 255). The other deities were not important according to Bates' model.

D.4) General Observations

As the reader examines the works cited in this section, he or she will notice that the unified theology model is never stated outright and that the possibility of a diversified set of cults is never considered. As we consciously analyze the unified and diversified theology models, one of them will seem much more plausible than will the other.

E) Lack of Importance of an Earth Goddess in Prior Studies

Except for Bates' (2002) book and that of Richard North, the role of an Earth goddess in Anglo-Saxon religion does not get much mention. And in Bates' book Mother Earth is only mentioned in passing and infrequently. Given that in Bates' model She's the equivalent of the Christian version of Yahweh, one might think this astonishing, but the main point of Bates' model is that what we think of as religion was not

as important to the Anglo-Saxons as were what we think of as animism and superstition. In other words, no god nor goddess is important in daily life in his model.

In North's model Ing and Wóden get much more attention than does any Earth goddess. North does speculate that Wóden, Thunor, and Fríg were "relatively minor elements" in an English nature religion of the 500's and 600's, and that the native Anglo-Saxon deities represented natural phenomena in non-anthropomorphic form as part of an animistic theology. After the Germanic tribes repopulated what is now England, this animistic theology was being transformed into one with anthropomorphic deities like those of later Scandinavian Paganism, but this process was stopped by Christianization. But North contradicts this in his speculation that the Germanic idea of deity is based on the idea of "ghost", which is not the same as weather or other natural phenomena. North gives little or no reason for all this speculation, but it is clear that a goddess identified with the planet might be neglected if a community were mainly concerned with rain spirits, soil spirits, river or flood spirits, or pestilential bug deities (North, 1997: 1-11, 210, 212). North does make a very brief case for some Earth goddess worship on 4 pages of his book (1997: 247, 250-252), but he fails to make a cogent case for the un-named natural-force deities. *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* is a brilliant work but not very cogent as radical scholarship.

Gale Owens' excellent (1985) survey of early medieval English religions also implicitly describes a unified Pagan theology in which there is not a prominent Earth goddess. The English Earth goddess is only one of several discussed together briefly in a 5-page passage (on pages 33-37), with much more emphasis placed on the usual selection: Wóden, Thunor, Fríge, Tiw, and Ing.

The bias against English Earth-goddess worship in previous studies seems to result from the ways evidence is used or not used, and these methodological errors are corrected in the present study. A major methodological bias is excessive reliance on Norse myths and Icelandic sagas. This reliance is quite heavy in the studies cited in this section and in the section on the unified-theology model (and in other works not cited here). In addition, there are no English place-names nor English-language weekday names honoring an Earth goddess, and scholars typically also rely on such evidence. Later in this book we will see that mythic evidence can be misleading if relied upon too much, and that the absences of place-name evidence and weekday names are not critical items. On the other hand, some other evidence is being overlooked or regarded too lightly. Moreover, several scholars seem to misunderstand the Norse mythic evidence.

F) Advice On How Works are Cited

The primary sources cited in the present book include a much wider variety than is common in studies of English or any other Germanic Paganism. Therefore, this section is an explanation of how certain works are cited and why they are cited in ways that may seem unusual to many of the readers.

Most readers are accustomed to citations of books and periodicals by page number, but such citations are often impractical in citing primary-source material originating prior to the industrial age. This matter is prominent in the chapters on Neoplatonism and Roman religion, but it also is related to the chapter on Norse theology.

F.1) Citations without Pagination

Historians and philologists working with Greek and Roman primary sources — these scholars are often called classicists because they work on "the classics" — customarily cite numbered subdivisions in the source editions of ancient manuscripts (or in the ancient manuscripts) instead of the print-page numbers in an edition or translation. This makes it easier to check a reference if one scholar does not use the same edition or translation as another — or if a scholar goes directly to an ancient manuscript. People quoting the Bible often follow a similar custom, that of citing chapter and verse instead of page numbers.

For example the Roman Dionysius of Halicarnassus has a description of the Roman cult of an Earth goddess in his history of Rome, *Roman Antiquities*. This description is in his book 2, chapter 19. In the classicists' custom this source would commonly be cited with an abbreviation for the name of the history followed by "2.19"[1].

For example, a citation like this refers to that passage by Dionysius of Halicarnassus: "Cary, 1937: 2.19". Sometimes I cite as in "Dods, 1871: 8.23-24 -- print pages 319-322" — where the main text tells you that this is Dods' translation of *City of God* by Saint Augustine. Often, I use both the print-page location and a subdivisional location in the original, such as "Cary, 1937: 362-367; *Roman Antiquities*: 2.19". Sometimes I save space by citing a source like that by without the classicists' conventional subdivisions, as in "Cary, 1937: 362-367". These variations in citation depend on what the main text says.

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[1] Ancient writers often divided long works into short volumes that modern scholars call "books", but when modern authors similarly divide their own longer works they call the major subdivisions "volumes".

I never abuse the reader by making her or him memorize abbreviations for titles of primary source materials or professional journals, although that is also a custom among historians and philologists working with this material and writing books.

F.2) Background on Subdivisions of Ancient Books

F.2.a) Why Books Are Divided into "Books"

Will Dumont (1939: 205-207) has an excellent background on the subdivisions in which we find ancient books, and Bart Ehrman (2000: Lecture 24) also has an interesting discussion of ancient, handwritten books. The terminology used by speakers of Modern English is based mostly on ancient Greek, although other languages have contributed.

Nowadays, hardcopy books consist of sheets of paper glued together on one end and partially encased in a relatively hard covering. Ancient books of this sort are labeled "codex".

But the earlier technology was to write on long sheets of papyrus (ancestor word of "paper") rolled up on a stick or dowel. The roll was called a "biblios", which is related to the modern "book".

Of course, when writing had gone far enough to make a roll big enough to stop, a biblios/book was completed and a new one started. The point at which these divisions occurred would depend not merely on subject matter, layout, decorative drawings, or number of words, but also on the size of the copyist's handwriting.

Thus, the division of ancient books into "books" was commonly not made by the original authors but by copyists. In turn, this means that modern scholars' labeling these subdivisions "books" is a misleading practice resulting from use of out-of-date terminology, for the copyists creating scrolls were dividing books into parts for logistical reasons and not copying separate works.

The use of codexes alleviated the logistical problem, because the manuscript maker could write on both sides of each sheet of paper. If a sheet is written on both sides, it is called a "folio", although for modern books we do not need a special word for such an object, because we take it for granted that books have printing on both sides of practically every page. Ancient makers of codexes did not always do this.

However, ancient codexes often used very small page sizes, so the parts, volumes, or sections of a book would sometimes be placed in different "books" just as would be the case with scrolls.

And that is why scholars of ancient texts refer to editions made after mass printing became common among Europeanized nations. An editor if the Industrial Age would have a few or many ancient

manuscripts available and would combine them into a single edition with a single system of subdivisions. For example, in the chapter on Neoplatonism mention is made of a scholar named Stephanus having created a standard subdivision of Platon's works, which is followed by more recent editors and translators, so that we will all be, figuratively speaking, on the same page. (Stephanus notations are discussed in more detail in the chapter where Platon's works are cited.)

F.2.b) And By the Way, "Verse" is Misleading

In ancient Greek, a line of writing was called a "stichos", meaning "row". In Latin, a line of writing was called a "versus", the ancestor word of the Modern English "verse".

When people cite the Bible by chapter and verse, this might give an impression that whatever passage they cite was originally poetry. Well, sometimes the cited passage was and sometimes it was not originally poetry.

Editors of works other than the Bible usually refer to edited manuscript lines as "lines" instead of "verses" unless the source document was organized into one-line strophes of poetry[2].

The reader of the Bible will also notice that the verses are of greatly varying lengths. That is not because ancient pages were so irregularly cut. It is because wide variation can occur in the number of letters and spaces required to say a given thing in one language as opposed to another because of differences in vocabulary and grammar. Also, ancient Greek writing was in all capital letters with no spaces between words, no spaces for paragraphing, and no punctuation; while the translations into European languages have mixed case, punctuation, and spaces.

It was in about 600 BCE that Greeks began to write major literature in prose, and before that practically all their literature was in verse, if the reader will excuse a pun (Dumont, 1939: 139-140). After 600 BCE, in the Greek and Roman cultures prose gradually became more common and poetry gradually became a specialized form of literature. Probably the last work of science or philosophy written originally in poetry was Lucretius' *The Nature of Things*, which was produced between 1 CE and 100 CE and consists of about 7,000 lines of Latin poetry (Stallings and Jenkyns, 2007: "Introduction").

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[2] Making the terminological tangle even worse for people new to philology, students of traditional Germanic poetry often refer to a half line of that poetry as a "verse". I apologize for going along with that custom in the past and will try to avoid it from now on.

G) Preview of the Substantive Chapters

To show that previous analyses have oversimplified pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon religion and greatly understated the importance of the Earþ cult requires a radical departure, and this has to be justified.

To begin the case, let us stipulate that much of what others have written is true. Let us allow that in early medieval times and slowly fading out under Christian domination of the governments, the Germanic peoples who colonized Britain had popular and influential cults of a few deities other than Earð, but for present purposes we will not offer a definitive list of the pantheon. Let us also stipulate that for some native polytheists, Wóden was the primary deity, and that some of the polytheist English related to Thunder (Þúnor), Fríge, Tiw or some local spirit wight as their patron and were not personally much concerned with the rest other than on social occasions.

This makes arguing about the cults of these deities unnecessary.

However, to show that Earþ was among the most important deities and that Her cult featured a theology contradicting any theology positing Wóden or Thunder as the main creator or most important divine intervener requires some radical work to convince any reader who is as skeptical as the present author tends to be.

To open for the reader a broader horizon on the social science of religion than is customary in medieval studies, the first step is to contradict the customary but unstated notion that (A) every religion is first and foremost a religion of formal lore, and its corollary that (B) myth defines the theology of every Pagan and Abrahamic religion. So that is the subject of a chapter.

In addition, the evidence shown implies that Earþ was an all-mother at least in Her cult, and for many students of early medieval religion this idea looks like Christian influence. To make vivid the fact that the primal-deity idea is not necessarily imported from an Abrahamic religion nor even necessarily a notion of Indo-European religion, two case studies are brought in from Black African and Greek cultures. These cases also reinforce a study published early in the 1900's which surveyed many religions.

Another major part of the case presented here is the contrasting-theologies model, and this also may seem implausible or mildly incomprehensible to the reader accustomed to certain modern cultures, for simply stating a principle outright does not always produce understanding. Three case studies are used to show that the more sophisticated model is quite plausible. These cases are another Black African religion (that of the Tallensi), Roman religion, and Norse religion. The Roman case study, which focuses mostly on soil-goddess

and Earth-goddess religion, is also interesting because it helps explain evidence presented in a later chapter on Proto-Germanic religion. The Norse example is especially appropriate because it is derived from crucial sources of the myths used to make models of English Paganism.

Following the preparatory work to establish a broadly based perspective, the main evidence is presented. A brief chapter on Earth-goddess cults of Proto-Germanic times shows the situation prior to the migration age, a "before picture" of Germanic polytheism prior to the migration age. Then the important documentation of Earth-goddess worship during the later phase of Christian supremacy shows an "after picture" which clearly implies that there was a powerful, but probably usually quiet, Earþ cult long after conversion of all the English kings. Following that is an examination of circumstantial evidence, which looks much more helpful when considered along with various bodies of such evidence, the documentation of Earþ worship, and analogous case studies. In general, the circumstantial evidence reinforces the impression of a powerful and slowly expiring cult of the goddess Earþ which emphasized personal relationship to that deity.

Then the body of evidence is tied together and the case clarified by some inferences and speculations on Earþ cult theology, conduct, and structure.

Finally, the entire case is closed with a final summation, which ties together all the prior chapters.

At the end of the book, it is quite clear that a very influential Earþ cult was a strong part of Anglo-Saxon non-Christian religion between the migration age and the official conversion of all English governments. Moreover, the nature of non-Christian English religion, and especially the nature of its Earth-goddess cult, is quite consistent with an interpretation of the rune poem from late in the early medieval period as Pagan and progressive-mystic.

This book also includes a few appendices. Appendix A is a description of the study methods, according to a custom adopted from the "hard" sciences into sociology and continued here. Appendix B supplements the description of methods with a statement of the author's biases insofar as they might have shaped the inferences drawn and evidence found. Appendix C presents the raw data used in the analysis of Pagan religious venues in England along with some statistical and substantive analyses. Appendix D analyzes in detail the

Latin-language prayers that are used as some of the evidence in the present study.

Chapter 2: Cultic Practice and Formal Lore

Scholars commonly investigate native English religion by looking for myths, temple buildings, priestly bureaucracy, idols, sacrificial remains, accounts of miracles or religious services, odd taboos, and other evidence of socially and economically heavy structure as evidence of the nature of the unitary theology they are looking for. All of these sources of information are valuable but over-reliance on them can bias investigation, especially if no one crosses disciplinary boundaries and compares all the evidence.

But beyond the bias in data sources is a theory-building bias. It is supposed that of course any deity with popular support and any deity considered among the most powerful in a pantheon will have strong priestly support, many temple buildings, and heroic presence in myths. And furthermore, since of course every religion has a unitary-model theology, practically every member of whatever society is being studied agrees on which (anthropomorphic male) deity is the boss of bosses, just as all the Greeks agreed that Zeus was the pinnacle of their pantheon.

This chapter shows extensive evidence of religions with contrasting theologies and of religions that are not influenced by one or the other Abrahamic religion, but that nevertheless have a supreme deity. We will see that contrasting theologies are sometimes based in part on coexistence of a socially and economically light and heavy version, for folk and elite branches of the dominant religion can be found in peasant societies. We will see that mythic support for a deity might — or might not — be correlated with support for that deity in cultic activity or human emotion. Some reasons other than socioeconomic subculture variation will be suggested to explain this, although explanation is not necessary to prove the existence of the phenomenon, and a few examples will be cited.

Therefore, the study of Earþ as a deity in early medieval English religion is best advanced if we are open to the possibility of a lightweight social structure for at least one cult and a supreme deity with little or no formal mythic support but a very strong presence in the lives of the people.

A) Folk Religion

Evidence discussed in this section shows that folk religion can be quite different from official religion, particularly in peasant societies — and early medieval England was a peasant society.

The general principle is supported here by means of citing anthropologists' reviews of large amounts of evidence. Robert Redfield (in 1956) reviewed a large collection of ethnographies, and he showed a distinction in peasant societies between the official religion, supported by intellectuals and governmental officials, and the religion of peasant villagers. Andrew Lang (1907) also reviewed a large collection of ethnographies and found that myths in particular are not necessarily consistent with religious belief nor popular practice.

A.1) The Socioeconomic Limitation of Germanic Mythic Evidence

It is customary among students of English pre-Christian religion to make extensive use of documented Scandinavian lore.

However, it is obvious that Icelandic and Norwegian myths and sagas emphasize the ruling class of warriors, and this fact can be taken as prima facie evidence that the version of Icelandic and Norwegian religion we see is limited. A society with the level of agricultural technology that predominated in Europe in 1600 CE and before would starve unless a large majority of the population lived in farm families or fishing villages.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to the evidence to see if the mythic evidence reveals important aspects of a society's religion but not the whole picture.

Because the socioeconomic conditions of England and Scandinavia during the early medieval times were similar to those in prevailing elsewhere in much more recent times where most of a society's economy is subsistence agriculture, data gathered from observation of more recent societies can be helpful.

A.2) Peasant and Elite Traditions

Robert Redfield reviewed a large number of ethnologies in his (1956) book, *Peasant Society and Culture*, and he showed that the evidence supports a distinction between an elite and a peasant

subculture, and he placed a strong emphasis on religious distinctions between the two cultures[3].

The pairs of terms Redfield used in anthropological theory to describe this distinction are "great tradition" versus "little tradition", or "learnéd tradition" versus "popular tradition" (Redfield, 1956: "The Social Organization of Tradition").

On the one hand, there is a tradition consciously cultivated by a learnéd few and centered in schools and temples. In the Catholicism of the early middle ages this tradition would be presented to the population by poets, priests, monks, nuns, bishops, and aristocrats.

On the other hand, there is the "popular tradition", which is not-so-consciously cultivated but mainly taken for granted, not subject to as much "refinement and improvement" as the more prestigious tradition, and not as likely to be written. This is the aspect of religion that is deeply integrated in the habits and customs of the non-elite, and both the elite and the peasants regard the "little tradition" as less sophisticated, proper, and generally prestigious as the "great tradition".

In general, the entire population is aware of both the "great" and "little" traditions, and Redfield gives examples of mutual influence between peasant and elite religious traditions.

Given the prevalence of this subcultural bifurcation in peasant societies and its existence in early medieval English Christian society (which is one of Redfield's detailed examples), this cultural bifurcation surely applies to English society from a time before Christian supremacy until well into the Industrial Revolution, which began hundreds of years later[4].

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[3] Redfield's work is useful for us here, although his main purpose in that book was to describe a method of theorizing about peasant societies that would allow the application of professional anthropology to peasant societies (in addition to its prior application to more isolated, much-less-agricultural societies).

[4] Hutton (2011: 236-239) reviews a debate on the issue of whether the medieval English ruling classes were a thin veneer of Christians atop a mass of Pagan people, and his description of the shifting scholarly fashions and debates over evidence is quite interesting. In later pages, he has a different concern, pursued interestingly but not as well. He does not actually produce nor cite any evidence to support his implicit contention that the medieval English were all in the same version of Catholicism, and he does not consistently stick with his idea that all the English abandoned "the problem" (native polytheism) for saint-worship Catholicism by 740.

A.3) Domestic Religion

Just as elite religion is supported mainly by professional intellectuals and aristocrats, folk religion is mainly supported by domestic life. Moreover, although intellectuals' roles look especially important to historians, it is in domestic life where people typically are exposed to religion, or lack thereof, in early formative experiences. Childhood socialization is more powerful than is poetry experienced by adults.

Those early emotional attachments often endure adolescent rebellion and even advanced aging, for experiences of ritual, lore, and warm emotion can become vivid and cherished memories that help cement deeply ingrained preferences in one's psyche.

Even if a person changes religious membership, he or she tends to want to preserve and if possible re-enact those experiences, and passing them on seems like giving a precious gift or extending the lives of loved ones and one's self.

Barbara Myerhoff gives a vivid illustration of the importance of non-mythic and otherwise minimally intellectualized aspect of religion in her ethnography of a group of elderly Jews (Myerhoff, 1978). Members of this community described a formal, literary body of religious lore that the men and boys learned and argued about and could even doubt, and with liturgy conducted partly in a foreign language (not all these people knew Hebrew). But in the events Ms. Meyerhoff witnessed and which her informants described in detail, a "Domestic Religion" (her capitalization) was practiced. This is a religion wherein an old lady motivates a grandchild by comparing the child to an Old Testament heroine. This is a religion in which people gain self-esteem, network with old friends, and reinforce ethnic identity by singing a song, chanting, or lighting candles in a religious service. It is a religion in which fond memories are made of nuclear family Sabbath meals. For various reasons, most people in the community Ms. Meyerhoff studied were not able to participate "fully and consistently" in the more prestigious version of Jewish religion. But they were very deeply into that aspect of Jewish religion which had been planted in their psyches when they were new persons.

B) Cult and Myth

Because the distinction between myth and widely accepted theology is a major part of the case made in this book, we will examine the matter in more depth.

B.1) Story-Structure Requirements of Myth

Adventure stories have two common requirements: physical travel and conflicts. Therefore, the nature of myth requires that it contradict certain theological notions.

Most mythic lore consists of action-adventure stories or travel-and-talk stories, and such tales require talking characters who are anthropomorphic or theriomorphic. Thus, an abstract notion of a prey species spirit or of human quality like courage does not fit easily into myth as a character.

In addition, consistently well-behaved and shrewd deities do not fit easily into myths as protagonists, as victims, nor as villainous characters. Most mythic lore has a plot structure, and the conflicts required to move the story along the plot line require emotional conflicts, fears, betrayals, and so forth; and thus the story requires human emotional, intellectual, or moral defects and some serious misbehavior. Consider, for example, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Sandars, 1960).

Of course, by definition a wight who is irresistible cannot get into interesting conflicts.

Maria Kvilhaug (2012: 3-4) discusses this in the introduction to her study of *Voluspa*, where she explains why some beings of no importance in Norse Pagan cultic practice are major characters in the surviving myths. Those characters are needed to make the irresponsible or foolish behavior that creates conflicts, mishaps, betrayals, and other types of events that move the stories along.

A distinction is drawn here between divine beings and deities. It is possible that inclusion in myths might reduce the importance of a deity, for once a deity is adapted to mythical representation, specialization of function and therefore a relatively narrow appeal to followers may result. In addition, the principal characters in action-adventure stories more or less must err and/or misbehave, and they must have the possibility of catastrophic failure.

Although the point will not be emphasized, this raises the possibility that a deity not well suited to be a major character in myth — such as a certain Earth goddess — would gradually be promoted to the rank of highest, least specialized, and most popular deity in Her pantheon simply because mythic characters such as Wóden or Fríg more fit to be heroes and heroines in stories.

In short: being popular with the epic poets and the story-making singer-songwriters is not necessarily a good thing for a deity.

B.2) Observed Functions of Cultic and Mythic Lore

Cultic and mythic lore tend to be contradictory. In an extensive study of documented religions, Andrew Lang (1907) begins with the observation that the behavior of "divinities" in myths is often – at least in parts of the stories – not divine. Thus, myths can seem blasphemous. On the one hand there is the attitude of awe and moral obedience that is part of the concept of a divine being. On the other hand there is the "fabrication of fanciful, humorous, and wildly irrational fables about that being..."

B.2.a) Entertainment Versus Worship

Lang (1907) infers that mythical theology is separate in origin from ideas about primal or other divine wights, and this helps explain the observation that mythical depictions do not have to coincide perfectly with common ideas about divine beings.

Mythic lore tends to be poetic story telling which is sometimes intended to entertain or teach in a non-worship context. Thus, myth and cult serve persons when they are in different moods, for "...the religious conception uprises from the human intellect in one mood, that of earnest contemplation and submission: while the mythical ideas uprise from another mood, that of playful and erratic fancy. These two moods are conspicuous even in Christianity. The former (mood), that of earnest and submissive contemplation, declares itself in prayers, hymns, and 'the dim religious light' of cathedrals. The second mood, that of playful and erratic fancy, is conspicuous in the buffoonery of Miracle Plays, in Marchen,...and in the hideous and grotesque sculptures on sacred edifices. The two moods are present, and in conflict, through the whole religious history of the human race. They stand as near each other, and as far apart, as Love and Lust."

Consider two examples where the behavior of deities in myth is not as divine as that of deities in cult. For example, When a Titan became pregnant by Zeus, Zeus ate the child because He was jealous that the child would be wiser and more powerful than He (Maitland, 1997c)[5]. Closer to English polytheism, the Prose Edda says that the goddess Earth (Jörð) is Óðin's wife and daughter (Young, 1954: 37). Eating your children and marrying your daughter are not tolerable behaviors in any human society.

But despite the lore in stories, in religious practice deities are regarded with awe, with respect so extreme we call it reverence, and

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[5] The offspring, Athena, was born anyway, emerging from Zeus' forehead.

often with love (Lang, 1907). This is the way people prefer to relate to deities.

B.2.b) Myths Informing Serious Contemplation

We must also admit that poetic stories can be part of serious, thoughtful cultic doctrine and practice. Not all myths can be fairly characterized as "fanciful, humorous, and wildly irrational", for some are stories with serious moral messages. And these stories can be used in ways that are reverent, serious, and enlightening. They can also be of use in meditative exercises and serve as material for formal ritual. Ms. Kvilhaug (2004) makes a case that several stories in the Poetic Edda are very likely to have been involved in mystical initiations.

However, the significance of the characters in myths is mostly a function of how well they fit into story construction, not how significant they are in religious doctrine or practice.

B.3) Illustrative Parallels

It is interesting to consider examples from well-documented religions that illustrate the major point made in this chapter: that a deity who is a minor or absent character in the official body of myth in a religion may be among the most important — or the most important — deity in the pantheon in religious practice.

B.3.a) The Hopis

Consider, for example Hopi cosmogenic myths. The Creator (Taiowa) and His first assistant (Sótuknang) and Sótuknang's assistant (Spider Woman) are major divine actors. Mother Earth is not a significant actor in myths nor legends, for She is not mentioned at all.

But in discursive theology and common ritual practice, Mother Earth is a very important deity. For example, each person has two sets of parents, a pair of humans and a divine pair: Mother Earth and Father Sun. Also, the kivas (temples) have only their roofs rising above ground, and are otherwise considered symbolic of "a womb of Mother Earth". And each kiva features a small pit representing the path from the navel of Mother Earth or an umbilical cord from that goddess. (Waters, 1963: 3-22, 31-112, 129).

B.3.b) The Nuer

An interesting example not of a high deity without adventure-story support comes from the non-Abrahamic religion of the Nuer (Evans-

Pritchard, 1956). An entire chapter of the present book is devoted to their pre-Christian religion, but for now one aspect is to be highlighted.

The Nuer are an iron-age people of eastern Africa whose religion is little influenced by Abrahamic religions, and who have no alphabet of their own — rather like the early Germanic peoples. Their principle deity is Kwoth (a name that can be roughly translated as Spirit).

Kwoth is in some ways quite similar to Earþ. He has no anthropomorphic nor theriomorphic representation, minimal mythic support, and no idols; moreover no temples are named after Him. There are no artifacts to evince His importance. If there were no professional anthropological work in modern times, and Islamists, Christians, or Communists had ruthlessly suppressed the Nuer religion, then no trace of Kwoth would remain. Any myths documented after the conversion would have us seeing only lesser deities as important.

B.3.c) Sub-Saharan West Africa

In western sub-Saharan West Africa, ancestor worship is the most common non-Abrahamic religion, but ancestor worship among African peoples throughout the region has little or no mythic support (Fortes, 1965).

Later in the present book, an entire chapter describes the cultic structure of one of the peoples of this region.

B.3.d) Christian Religions

Yahweh (I-Am) is a familiar example of a deity who is not a major actor in adventure stories but who is nonetheless a very high-ranking being in a religion. In many places in the Bible, the Judeo-Christian mono-deity seems anthro-psychic, for He manifests anger and love, and He experiences disappointment.

But one thing He does not ever do in the Old Testament is travel on adventures. This is logical, because Yahweh has no body to do the traveling. Moreover, I-Am is also omnipresent, and this makes travel impossible. Yes, He is sometimes spoken of as having a residence in Heaven, but this assertion is often made by the same people who also assert that He does not have a localized presence. In this regard, He is similar to an Earth god or goddess who would be present everywhere people go on this planet.

He also does not engage in dangerous-to-him struggle against enemies. As an all-powerful and omniscient wight, He cannot be challenged nor endangered, so exciting struggles that would engage and entertain a listener or reader are not possible for Him. In a later chapter, we will see that irresistible power is also a characteristic of the goddess Earþ.

So, for example, we see that Abraham is a major character in the Old Testament, but at the same time Abraham has no cult following in any branch of Christianity, while Yahweh is a supporting character in Biblical stories but a major focus of all branches of Christianity.

B.4) Contrasting Examples

Poseidon is an example who sharply contrasts with Yahweh, for Poseidon was significant in cultic practice and a starring character in action-adventure stories. He was anthropomorphic, and could be in one place but not another. Poseidon could try and fail, so He could be challenged and experience the excitement of being endangered. He even had normal human emotions (Butler, 1942; Sandars, 1960). For many Greeks, Poseidon was not overshadowed by a more significant deity of the type not well suited to a major role in an epic story. On the other hand, we will see in a later chapter that for many Greek-speaking persons, Poseidon was overshadowed by a deity too great to be a hero or major villain in an action-adventure story.

B.5) Lack of Adventure-Story Support ≠ Low Rank

It is quite plain that deities with weak or no mythic support may be the highest as well as the lowest deities in a pantheon.

One reason for this seems to be childhood experiences of domestic support for poorly documented folk religion, for in later adult life folks tend to find that those early religious experiences seem natural and very comfortable — and very desirable to pass to another generation.

Also, in myths some culticly important deities may be no more than supporting characters, or they might not be mentioned in myths because they insufficiently anthro-psychic or anthropomorphic or theriomorphic, for deities need a physical description and some mental flaws to figure as major protagonists and antagonists in stories.

This chapter has briefly mentioned the possibility that becoming a major figure in popular stories could amount to a significant demotion for a god or goddess.

A corollary of all this is that although no evidence of English non-Christian myth survives, at least in regard to studying Earth-deity worship, we are very probably not missing much.

C) Conclusion

Historical and anthropological data show the contrasting theologies model to be descriptive of many societies' religions, and data also

support the contention that excessive reliance on formal myth can be quite misleading as to which deities are the most important in a pantheon. Later chapters will make the point more vividly by means of examinations of several case studies.

This begins a foundation for testing against evidence a view of Earþ as a deity in a religion which has a lightweight social structure for all cults plus — at least in the Earþ cult — a supreme deity with little or no formal mythic support but a very strong presence in the lives of the people. The next chapter in the present book will show a detailed example of a polytheistic religion without temple buildings and with an omnipresent, supreme deity, and the example comes, not form scraps of vellum and scattered archeological digs, but from modern direct-observation and interview data gathered by a professional anthropologist.

Chapter 3: Kwoth — Holy Spirit and a Supreme Deity

The Nuer religion was mentioned in the previous chapter as an example of a polytheistic pantheon with a supreme deity who is not heavily supported by myth. In this chapter two other aspects of Nuer religions are highlighted — the existence of a supreme deity and the holy-spirit theology that defines that supreme deity.

Nuer religion illustrates the possibility that a living polytheistic religion of an iron-age people can have a theory of deity in which very dissimilar spiritual wights are children or derivatives of a primal deity of unlimited power and jurisdiction, and this family tree constitutes the entire pantheon. In turn, this will help us see how Earþ worship fits into English Pagan and syncretic religion of the early medieval period.

The data on which this chapter is based were mostly gathered in the early 1930's through the 1950's. Most of the information on economics and politics is in Evan-Pritchard's (1940) work, and his classic *Nuer Religion* was published in 1956. The information has been updated with later ethnographic and journalistic work (Gatkuoth, 2010; Holzman, 2007; Hutchinson, 2000; Wal, 2004). Although the religion spoken of here was still a living tradition in the 2010's, by then the Nuer homeland had been affected by war and politics in South Sudan and by ever-expanding industrial-age culture. But there is enough continuing integrity of the Nuer way of life to justify writing in the present tense.

A) The Nuer as a People

The Nuer were a people with an iron-age culture as of 1930-1950, having been affected by industrial-age culture but not transformed. They are divided into many tribes and for a long time they had much contact with other peoples from far away, and so their circumstance was in some ways similar to that of the Proto-Germanic tribes during the migration age and early middle age.

They lived in open plains country in what is now South Sudan. Their economy in the 1930's was mainly subsistence agriculture, with a major emphasis on cattle. They used cattle for money, and their word *kraal* not only resembles the Modern English "corral", but also refers to a pen or small fenced pasture for cattle — and it is in the kraals that many religious rites take place. Even in the early 2000's, cattle were

the "gold standard" for cash transactions in Nuer-land. The people live in extended-family farming households and families are organized into patrilineal lineage groups. Most of each farm's production was for domestic consumption, not for sale. The economy is usually so close to the edge of failure that there is lots of sharing between households in every Nuer village and hamlet.

Nuer government prior to colonial administration was stateless but a legal system similar to that of the things (assemblies) of Scandinavian society during the viking era, except for the involvement of priests as mediators instead of litigants. Matters that would be settled in secular courts or by negotiations between private parties' lawyers in the USA or the modern UK are settled by priests, customary wergild, and/or negotiations between groups of relatives. Nuer priests are supported by gifts in return for ritual services such as weddings as well as by their own subsistence farming. (The known English Pagan priests were supported by kings, but it is probable that most of their priests were semi-professional, and made their living farming.)

The Nuer know of Christianity and Islam, but Abrahamic religion has had little influence on Nuer culture.

B) Holy Spirit in Nuer Religion

The core concept of Nuer theology is the concept of holy spirit.

B.1) Kwoth as Conscious Energy

In this study, I use "spirit" or "holy spirit" to refer a quality, spiritual substance, or force of holiness, divinity, or ultimate consciousness. The Nuer call this "kwoth" (also spelled "kuoth"). I sometimes use that term untranslated.

The early medieval English had a word for this concept, and it is discussed in a later chapter that directly speculates on the Earþ cult. For now, it is legitimate to examine kwoth to see what hints we can gather about holy spirit as the early medieval English might have understood it, and how this understanding might have worked out in practice.

For the Nuer, holy spirit is omnipresent. Like gravity or magnetism (which are also omnipresent), it exists in different degrees of strength in different places and people and at different times. It can also be more or less apparent when it is present.

B.2) Kwoth Theology

The ultimate manifestation of kwoth is the supreme deity at the pinnacle of the pantheon, and His name is Kwoth. He is the ultimate creator and supreme deity.

Nuer do not claim to physically see Kwoth nor to find him in any particular physical image or object. The say He is invisible "like the air", not meaning that he is the air. The say that He is as grand as the wide-span horns of a great bull, but not that He is the bull. They say He is as great as the universe he created, but not that He is the universe.

Likewise, when the early medieval English spoke of soil or used it in a magic spell, they surely did not mean that soil or even the planet we call Earth *is* the goddess. Like the great god Kwoth, She is a spirit wight and can only be perceived in meditation. A later chapter will show how this worked out in ritual practice.

B.3) Invocations of Kwoth

The supreme deity is not so sacred that His name or his nicknames or the names of his spirit offspring are to be avoided. On the contrary, Kwoth and lesser deities are invoked quite frequently.

Whenever Nuer refer to a spiritual wight as "Spirit" without an adjective as part of the name, they are speaking of Kwoth directly. Sometimes when they do qualify the noun "Spirit" they are uttering a nickname for their supreme deity, and when they refer to a more limited spirit wight, they also regard that as in indirect invocation of Kwoth. When, for example a priest refers to "Spirit of Gee", he is referring to the legendary or mythical first leopard-skin priest (Gee) and invoking that patron deity of priests. But the priest would be consciously referring to Kwoth through that lesser deity.

Holy spirit is a major topic. Nuer people speak of, for example *kwoth cuekni*, the spirit of twins. They also speak of the kwoth of a cohort of men who undertook manhood initiation at the same time. In contrast, a Wiccan in America might similarly speak of the magic of twins or the magic of an initiation class, referring to a sort of emotional electricity or very pleasant and exciting special-ness. But the Nuer reference to kwoth is not the same, for a practitioner of Nuer religion would be referring to their great god Kwoth in relation to twins or an initiation cohort, for a nameless aspect of Him is tutelary to twins or to an initiatory age-set.

B.4) Hierarchy of Deities

Among disincarnate wights, holy spirit exists in various degrees. As mentioned before, the highest deity is named Kwoth, and He has the most of this holy-spirit quality of all. This is partly because the lesser spiritual beings are partial reflections, derivatives, or divisions of Kwoth.

The more kwoth a wight has, the more powerful, aware, and prevalent it is. The high god Kwoth is omnipresent as well as all-powerful. The lower-ranking spirit beings are more localized and less efficacious the further down the rankings they occur.

Therefore, the more widespread and effective a phenomenon is, the more likely it is to be attributed to Kwoth as opposed to a deity further down the hierarchy. For example, severe drought throughout the Nuer homeland would be attributed to Kwoth, but one person's minor illness might be attributed to a low-ranking spirit (or not to a spirit being at all).

Morality is also hierarchical among holy-spiritual beings. The Great God (Kwoth) is very moral, and lesser spirits are of declining morality as you descend the ladder. To put it another way, the lower a spirit being is, the less mindful and more manifest he or she is.

Even though the character of the lower-ranking spiritual beings is quite different than that of Kwoth, the worship or propitiation of any of the lesser spiritual beings is indirectly worship or propitiation of Kwoth. This includes totem spirits, other minor-league characters in the pantheon, and even (unpopular) demonic beings who inhabit fetishes (and are imports from a neighboring Pagan culture).

The different beings of holy spirit also have different temporal priorities. The highest spirit-wight, Kwoth was always in existence. He is the Creator. Then the next level, the spirits of the air, were created. Totemic spirits came later yet, then nature sprites, and so on down the pyramid.

B.5) Summary of the Theology

So to very briefly summarize: the pantheon is analogous to a pyramid of holiness. At the apex is a single, maximum spiritual wight. Below that in gradations, the spirit-beings at other levels of kwoth are more numerous, not as powerful, not as knowing, and not as well behaved. In correlation with holiness, at the top is the most beloved god and at the bottom are fetish spirits who are often resented. In between are spirits of air, spirits of ground, totem spirits, and even some spirit wights owned by individuals and forgotten soon after those individuals die.

The great Kwoth presents the mystery that He is one and He is many, for the lesser spirit wights are derivative of Him.

C) Example of the Refraction Principle

An example of a social event in which Kwoth and some lesser spirit beings are invoked may shows this theology in practice. This example is taken from *Nuer Religion* (Evans-Pritchard, 1956: 107-114) and occurred in the 1930's. The case is an accidental killing, which is handled in a mixture of religious ceremony, jury trial, out-of-court negotiation, and application of traditional oral law. Some readers may notice a general resemblance between this proceeding and saga accounts of legal disputes.

C.1) Background

Prior to colonial administration, the Nuer nation had no state, and after the United Kingdom took over Sudan, the colonial administration tried to avoid upsetting traditional ways any more than necessary. Hence, in the 1930's there was no court system such as the reader is familiar with in industrialized cultures. Instead, groups representing each side in a case meet with a priest officiating. The priest is called a leopard-skin priest, because he has to wear a leopard skin garment. The priest's job in a homicide or manslaughter case is to perform rites to terminate or forestall a blood feud and to morally cleanse the killer – and to referee the dispute[6].

The custom is that at such meetings no one should secretly hold back something he holds against others, so inflammatory remarks are made, not to start further trouble, but to get everything out into the open so that no simmering disputes would later boil up.

Another background datum: Nuer men are typically well armed. In the 1930's they would carry spears around at all times (one for fishing and one for war), and they shave with their spears; they do not commonly carry knives. (In the early 2000's, some Nuer men began to carry AK-47 rifles instead.)

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[6] William Kelly (2002a) suggests that Evans-Pritchard understated the authority of the leopard-skin priests, who might have been chiefs, to protect them from the British colonial regime. However, in the case presented here, the wergild had been negotiated in advance -- this was the ratification of an out-of-court settlement under traditional rules for compensation. Moreover, as Kelly notes, Evans-Pritchard was a colonial government agent, sent to gather intelligence on the local-national culture to strengthen colonial rule.

C.2) The Liturgical and Legal Procedure

C.2.a) The Nature of the Case

In this particular case, one man accidentally injured another with a fishing spear a few years before, and the injured man finally died from complications of the wound. The two men directly involved were from different kinship groups.

C.2.b) The Setting

A meeting of parties representing both sides (including the accused) came together with a priest and a numerous audience. The meeting place was like a lot of spots in Kansas in the summer – no shade and lots of heat. During the proceedings, someone interrupted his own speech to ask their god Kwoth for a cooling rain, and when it fell at the end of the session, the rain was taken as a response to prayer.

The meeting began with beer drinking — a sure sign that a settlement would be reached. Then the formal ceremony began with castration of a sacrificial young male bovine. Then many of the men present tossed ashes onto the ox's back and prayed as part of the dedication of the animal.

C.2.c) Speeches, Including Divine Invocations

Then persons from each party to the proceeding and the priest spoke at length (altogether the speeches took three hours). These speeches were addressed mainly to the audience that had gathered. Members of the audience got into lengthy arguments with the speakers, in addition to having conversations among themselves about the matter at hand. The speakers frequently inserted background material and explanations relevant to the dispute.

The aggrieved party had the first turn. Their spokesman invoked Spirit-Who-Is-In-The-Sky, Spirit-Of-Our-Cattle-Camp, and Spirit-of-Our-Fig-Tree. These wights are Kwoth, an un-named village tutelary spirit being, and the speaker's lineage totem spirit. The speaker also included his version of the past behavior of the accused and of disputes between that man's lineage and his own. He made a threat that his lineage would annihilate the other if war broke out between them again. A verbally violent argument broke out among the audience regarding mutual allegations of magic having been used by one lineage to kill members of the other.

Then a representative of the defense delivered his own rambling harangue. He often mentioned spirit, but w/o specifying any particular title. He also recapitulated the past disputes between the accused's

lineage and that of the deceased, and of course he gave his side's version of the whole history of the events in any way related to the death in question. His main point was that the lineage of the accused offered cattle in compensation, and that it would be to the disadvantage of the aggrieved lineage to re-open the issue later.

Then the priest spoke. He frequently invoked Spirit-in-the-Sky, Spirit, and Spirit-of-Our-Flesh. The first two are names of the supreme deity, and the third name refers to the spiritual source of the priest's sacerdotal power. The leopard priest told the accused that he could go around without fear of vengeance because some of the cattle had been paid and the rest soon would be. He told the plaintiffs that they must not resort to violence because their spears would miss, and they would be better off to let the cattle payments settle the matter permanently. He warned the party of the defense not to hide their cattle and claim they too poor to make payments. He then reviewed the entire history of the dispute, stating his version as an impartial mediator.

C.2.d) Blood Sacrifices

The priest then speared the ox (which died immediately from the skillful, strong move). The gift to Kwoth was the life of the beast, not material substance. People rushed in to carve out pieces of the meat for themselves.

When the confusion and tumult ended, the priest cut some hair off the scalp of the accused, saying that the blood which contaminated his body was gone, other hairs would grow in, and "the blood is finished". This cutting did not actually shed blood; it was symbolic and intended to help avoid further human blood shedding.

C.2.e) Summary of Relevant Highlights

The story of the wrongful-death suit per se is interesting, but notice within the meeting a picture of theological unity in diversity. It is typical in Nuer religious ceremonies that holy spirit is addressed with many titles. In addition to those in the suit described here, other titles could be used. For example, Nuer would also commonly refer to Grandfather or Spirit-of-Our-Fathers. In this trial, the speakers addressed Kwoth in terms of special relationships to their own groups, but the participants do not believe that these are completely distinct deities. Moreover, note that invocations were spoken over one sacrificial animal, whose life (not his flesh) was offered by all present (in their common humanity) to one deity.

D) Kwoth and Doctrinal Flexibility

A major intellectual and emotional consequence of this concept of kwoth is the ability of Nuer to not just tolerate other peoples' religions but to accept some deities or other spirit beings from neighboring peoples into the Nuer pantheon as imperfect manifestations of kwoth. There is no limit to the number of minor spirits that can be included in the religion: various holy-spirit wights are patrons of particular villages, attached to particular prophets, to families, etc.

Also, the Nuer can explain Christianity or Islam as oriented toward the same high deity as their religion, but with a less acute understanding than that which is customary in Nuer-land.

E) Application to English Polytheism

The centralized view that the Nuer have of their pantheon is instructive, because it existed before Christian and Islamic missionaries appeared. This supports the contention that an English theology with a pinnacle or ultimate deity is not necessarily a reflection of Abrahamic influence.

One can also see certain possibilities regarding English polytheism in the days before and during Christian supremacy. It is possible that English polytheists would have conceived of a basic energy, force, or spiritual substance that is primarily manifested in one deity but is also present throughout a pantheon showing ever less holiness as rank decreases. This might involve a maximum deity, a few lesser high deities, then elves and possibly dwarves, then giants, and finally at the bottom monsters.

In a later chapter, linguistic evidence will be presented to show that such a concept probably was part of English polytheism.

The Nuer also provide an example of how their theology of kwoth leads to a flexible system, well able to tolerate great diversity in the pantheon while achieving human solidarity.

A major difference between Nuer and English polytheism is to be observed as an aside. The main emphasis of Nuer prayer and of their banquet rituals is not to achieve blessings, although blessings are sometimes requested. The main emphasis is to get Kwoth or some lesser deity to not interfere with people. It would be this way in Northern European polytheistic religions if the main focus of practice were on lower-ranking and not dependably friendly beings such as trolls, giants, or elves. But the English (and Norse) deities are not usually being bought off or flattered into laying off of the people;

instead they are usually asked for blessings, inspiration, or protection, and there is much more emphasis on deities in Northern European religions than on the more demonic wights.

Chapter 4: Neoplatonic Theology

A) Summary of the Case to This Point

In the last two chapters, evidence was presented to break down the assumption that Pagan religions are defined by their myths and that the notion of a supreme being is inherently derived from influences of Abrahamic missionaries. Although both points have been made in Andrew Lang's 1907 book, more recent theoretical developments and case studies have been used to make these matters more vivid and to make the evidence more up-to-date.

In addition, evidence from Nuer religion shows how a polytheistic theology that posits a supreme deity can be very compatible with complexity and variety, and that a wide variety of spirit beings can be accounted for in one theology.

So now we have a good start in making a case that non-Christian English religion included contradictory theologies and had as one of its most important cult or as its dominant cult one that posited an Earth goddess as the pinnacle deity.

B) Objectives of This Chapter

The major objective of this chapter is to describe yet another theology with a primal deity but without Christian influence, but other points are also made.

In this chapter a few important ideas commonly thought to show Christian influence on European Pagans will be shown to be older than Christianity.

In addition, the theology shown here is among the important philosophical foundations of an example of Earth-goddess worship in a later chapter on Roman religion.

Some of the information here is also useful in understanding Norse religion, which is the subject of later chapter.

Moreover the religious philosophy described in this chapter has been extremely influential in European philosophy in general from the time it was written into the present day. Hence the material in this chapter is important to anyone who wishes to understand the philosophical bases of the most important theological movements of the Middle East, Europe, and North America, and not merely English Earth-goddess religion.

In short, this is one of the more fundamental chapters of the present book.

C) Introductory Remarks

C.1) Foundations of Neoplatonism

The two most basic sources of Neoplatonic theology are the dialogs customarily called in Modern English *The Republic* and *Timaeus*, although their author wrote many other works. These books are called dialogs because they are written like plays, showing spoken lines by characters, instead of presenting the reader with a straight-forward exposition of philosophy by the author. Consequently, the present book refers to the theological positions of the speakers in those books instead of the author's theology (Kraut, 2013: chapter 6).

Usually, when scholars speak or write of "Neoplatonism", they are referring to later writers, such as Plotinus, Iamblichus, or Julian. Most of those authors are beyond the scope of the present study, although Julian is quoted in the chapter on Roman Earth-goddess worship. A full review of Neoplatonic theology is not necessary in the present study, so in this chapter we will concentrate on the theology expressed in just those two works. For now it is sufficient to note that some ideas we find in Neoplatonism predate these works by hundreds of years, and that there are later developments in Neoplatonism which have also been quite influential in the theologies of European-type cultures (Boer, 1976: 7-14; Durant, 1939: 134-151, 164-168, 339-340, 349-373; Fairbanks, 1898; Hicks, 1925; MacKenna and Page, 1930; Rappe, 2000; Siorvanes, 1998; Taylor and Meade, 1895; Turner, 1911; Vlach, 2010).

The present author refers to the religious aspect of the works in question as Neoplatonic rather than Platonic because of misgivings regarding the original author's intent: perhaps that wise Greek meant to stimulate thought rather than to announce doctrine.

C.2) Directions of Influence

The Neoplatonic writings discussed here were made several hundred years before Christ began preaching (in about 30 CE). Sources disagree about the exact dates of the author's life, but the range is 428 BCE to 347 BCE (Boer, 1976; European Graduate School, 2013a; Kraut, 2013; Mark, 2009; Wikipedia, 2013i). The two works used here, conventionally called *The Republic* and *Timaeus*, were written in the middle to late ranges of that time span.

Jaeger (1961) has documented how the Pagan theology shown in this chapter and theological notions from later Neoplatonic works influenced the earliest Christian theologians.

These writings not only predate Christianity; they also occur prior to the earliest of Tacitus' sources of information on Proto-Germanic religions, and Tacitus' *Germania* is usually considered the most important primary source on Proto-Germanic religions. We do not know if there was any influence between the Proto-Germanic cultures and Greece in those days nor what direction the influence would have shown.

C.3) Classicists' Customs

From the point of view of sociologists and some other social scientists, classicists have an unusual custom regarding making citations of the works written by ancient thinkers. They cite the title of one of Platon's books along with the page numbers and zones on those pages in an edition of all of Platon's works by Henricus Stephanus in the year 1578. These reference numbers are called Stephanus numbers and are never explained in any of the editions nor translations the present author has examined.

Therefore the system is explained here for the convenience of readers not acquainted with customs of the classicists. In the present work where reference is made to specific Platonic passages, Stephanus numbers are often included along with conventional citations or are given alone. Thus, a citation like the following is a dual citation of a page location in a certain edition of *Timaios* and then to a location in the much older edition by Stephanus: "Archer-Hind, 1888: 118-123; *Timaios* 37c-38c".

In citations of works not edited by Stephanus, classicists use a slightly different system, but that will be described in the chapter on Roman religion.

C.4) Vocabulary

C.4.a) Plato versus Platon

The reader might wonder: how is it that English-speaking people get "platonic" (as in "platonic love" or "Neoplatonic philosophy") from the name of Plato? Scholars do not get "platonic" from "Plato", for that word is the Latinization of his name. In his native language, the name is Platon[7]. Moreover all the German-language sources the present

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[7] In the Greek alphabet of Platon's time (which had only capital letters), he wrote:ΠΓΑΤΟΝ. Assuming that Jones' (1998) instruction

author examined use "Platon". It seems droll to translate from one foreign language to another.

Eventually someone has to say that the emperor has no clothes (Hersholt, 1949) and act accordingly. The present author is not attracted to behaving foolishly merely because every one else is (knowingly) doing so.

In short, "Plato" seems to be a traditional aberration in Modern English, and the present author decided not to go along with it.

C.4.b) The Republic *Versus* Governance

The Modern English titles customarily used for the two main Platonic sources used here are wrong. One customary title is wrong because it can mislead people into not seeing the main thrust of the book in question. The other title is wrong simply because it is a silly translation.

The title Platon gave one of these works is *Politeia* — in the Greek alphabet of his time that was written, ΠΟΛΙΤΙΕΑ. Ralph Bloom gives an extensive discussion of how this came to be customarily translated into Modern English as "The Republic", although the work does not have much to say about a specific form of state constitution, except where it advocates monarchy. You can see the error also in the definition of "politeia" in the Liddell et al dictionary (Bloom, 1991: 438-439; Liddell et al, 1940; Shorey, 1935: 2).

But more importantly, anyone who reads the whole book can see that the main topics are individual and societal governance, with the state coming into view only because it is a major aspect of societal governance. And the speakers in the book in question more than once endorse rule by a king backed up by a hereditary aristocratic class, which is an outright rejection of republican government.

The main topics of *Politeia* are self-government of the individual person and (ethical) governance of a society based on individuals of various personal inclinations, and this is not only evident throughout but also made explicit in certain passages (Bloom, 1991: 120-121, 176; *Governance* 440b-441b, 496a-497b).

In other words, to render the title as *The Republic* is misleading.

Hence, in the present book this source is cited as *Governance*.

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regarding pronunciation of ancient Greek is correct, the name of this author should be pronounced PLATT-own. Platon (Broad-Shouldered) was not what his parents his parents named him; it was an athletic nickname he got as a wrestler, but he was better known by his nickname than by his "real" name — Aristocle (European Graduate School, 2013a; Mark, 2009).

C.4.c) Latinization of Timaios

The Modern English customary title for the other book used here is a Latinization of the original title in Greek, *Timaios* (ΤΙΜΑΙΟΣ). There is nothing to be gained by translating that name into the Latin *Timaeus*.

Hence, in the present book this source is cited as *Timaios*.

C.4.d) Kosmos

The "world" spoken of in translations of the ancient sources is usually the cosmos, which in ancient Greek is kosmos. An example of this is Ruse's (2013) translation of the Greek word in Chapter 3 of his book on *The Gaia Hypothesis*. Archer-Hind (1888) sometimes renders this as "All", but that interpretation includes the purely psychic realm, which is an important part of all Neoplatonic systems, and which is in some passages not included in "kosmos".

At first it might seem that a better translation is "universe" (which in Modern English usually denotes the empirically observable universe), but a brief passage in one of Platon's dialogs asks if there could be more than one kosmos to observe empirically, and in Modern English by definition there can be only one universe.

The present author decided to render "kosmos" as "physical universe" and "universe" as appropriate, given the context.

C.4.e) Psycha and Logismos

The ancient Greek language did not have a specialized word for "soul". Many words in Modern English are derived from ancient Greek, although in some cases they are derived from Latinization of ancient Greek words. But the Modern English "soul" is derived from the Old English "sawol", which has no Latin nor Greek ancestor word.

Nonetheless, you will frequently see "soul" used in translations of *Governance* and of *Timaios* without any explanation, as if "soul" were the obvious choice, and in some instances it is a good choice. But sometimes Platon's speakers refer to the human mind, sometimes to a component of the human mind, and sometimes to a disincarnate spirit being.

Editions of the original documents usually show the word translated to be the ancestor-word to our Modern English "psyche", but the context often implies that Platon did not mean exactly the same by his "psycha" (ΨΥΧΗ) as modern speakers understand by "psyche"[8].

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[8] The "y" in "psycha" — like the "y" in the Old English "wyrd" — is pronounced like the Modern German umlaut-u; it is not pronounced "aye" (like the "y" in Modern English "psyche") nor "ee" (like the vowel in Modern English "weird"). And the ancient Greek speakers pronounced the initial "p" in "psycha" instead of leaving it silent as do

In general, Platon's speakers used the Greek "psycha" and "logismos" in specific senses, which are indicated in the context, not in the ambiguous way that modern English-speaking persons use "soul".

In one of Platon's dialogues, his speakers specify a name for the "immortal soul" — logismos — and give a precise technical definition that amounts to "rational mental executive". But Platon does not stick with that term, preferring "psycha". The present author is also not sure that Platon consistently intended "rational mental executive" every time other authors render "psycha" as "soul", although Platon surely used "logismos" precisely in every instance. It is possible that he let his speakers loose track of their terminology.

The solution is that the present author decided to use expressions other than "soul" to convey what Platon's readers would have seen in his "psycha". The Greek-speakers who read Platon's dialogs would have seen "mind", "mental component", "rational mental executive", or some other expression for a mind or part of a mind, depending on the context.

A notable implication of this vocabulary issue is that the notion of "soul" was not a Christian import to England.

D) Polytheism with a Supreme Deity

In Neoplatonic theology, there is a primal deity who is the ultimate creator. The primal deity creates, among other things, lower-ranking deities who create lower-ranking objects. The more strictly mental or spiritual things are, the purer and holier they are. This is not quite the same as the holy-spirit theology of Nuer religion, in that Neoplatonism places a high value on intellectual study, so that mental activity is what constitutes the force or substance in Neoplatonism instead of holy spirit.

D.1) The Ultimate Deity

Ultimately, one perfect, conscious, rational, eternal mind controls all and is the prime cause of every event and object. That mind has no beginning and will never transpire. Secondary, mindless causes exist but only the ultimate creator deity sets all purposes according to intentions and is the ultimate cause. The wise person investigates secondary causes only to better appreciate the primal cause (Archer-Hind, 1888: 160-163, 180-185, 253-261; Jowett, 1892c: 480-482, 486; *Governance* 46a-47e, 51c-52d, 69a-70d).

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speakers of Modern English when pronouncing "psyche".

The prime cause does not do everything directly. Speakers in the Platonic dialogs used here refer to a hierarchy of objects, with lower-level objects being less perfect manifestations of higher-level objects. The ultimate object is The Good, more commonly referred to as Theos (usually translated as God) or Damiourgos (usually translated as "God" or "Craftsman" but sometimes as "Demiurge").

The name Damiourgos (ΔΑΜΙΟΥΡΛΟΣ) is interesting because it implies a humanistic emphasis which is not made explicit by any of Platon's speakers. The name is derived from two words, "people's" (damios) and "worker" (ourgos). This would be a skilled crafts person who makes things for the public (Archer-Hind, 1888: 336-337; Bloom, 1991: 209, 466; G & C Merriam and Company, 1979: 299)[9]. The implication is that the point of all this is not for the ultimate creator to amuse itself/himself.

In short: the ultimate point of all that Neoplatonic theology says and implies is to uplift and spiritually nourish mankind, not to serve the ultimate deity. This belief was not fully carried over into Abrahamic religions, but we do encounter it.

D.2) Creation of the Cosmos

The ultimate deity, although perfect and complete, overflowed with goodness and therefore created a psychic executive object and a physical cosmos for that object to govern. Both the physical universe and its governing psyche were created in the image of the Damiourgos, but with a lesser degree of perfection. The cosmos and its mind have a beginning but will never come to an end, they are not subject to disease nor injury, and they have no need to take in food nor air. The physical creation was made of earth, air, fire, and water — using all of each of them so that the physical cosmos became universal (Archer-Hind, 1888: 96-97, 100-121; Jowett, 1892c: 476; Taylor and Mead, 1895: 253; *Timaios* 27d-32a, 33c-38b).

The mental executives are always made prior to their bodies so that in each case the mental executive will be senior and therefore have authority over the body; this is how things are kept tidily organized.

Since cosmic bodies move in a rational, harmonious pattern, Damiourgos also created time to go with movement and change. Damiourgos, being perfect, need never to change and therefore had

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[9] Bloom's endnote #18 to his passage regarding *Governance* 530a makes it seem that a people's worker was a busker, but the dictionaries reveal that such was not the case (Bloom, 1991: 209, 466).

no need for time for himself. (Archer-Hind, 1888: 119-131; *Timaios* 37c-39e).

D.3) Creation of Lesser Deities

D.3.a) Generations of Deities

After creating the physical universe and its governing mind, Damiourgos made two kinds of deities. Deities of one kind are attached to glowing sidereal objects and deities of the other kind are free to reveal themselves visibly or not at their own will (Archer-Hind, 1888: 121-137; *Timaios* 38b-40d).

The first children of God were Earth and Heaven. The first children of Earth and Heaven were Oceanus and Tethys. From Oceanus and Tethys came a few other deities, and after that generation came Zeus, Hera, and their siblings (Archer-Hind, 1888: 130-139; Jowett, 1892c: 478; *Timaios* 38b-, 39e-40b).

Despite Zeus' appearance well down the divine ancestral chain, His importance to Platon and his readers is indicated by the speakers in *Governance* frequently swearing "by Zeus".

D.3.b) Misrepresentation by Myths

Platon's speakers give us yet another warning against assuming that religions are defined by their myths.

Platon's speakers agree that some of the ancient poetic myths are valuable lore but in general they are entertainment at best and not morally uplifting. On the contrary, they are morally dangerous.

The Damiourgos and the lesser deities are good only. Poetic myths which imply childlike, irresponsible, or unethical behavior are false lore and can be harmful if taken seriously. For the ultimate creator deity is not only the ultimate mind but also an object of ultimate good, and anything directly created by that wight is all good. Indeed, one of the functions of the lesser deities is to create non-divine objects at the will of the Damiourgos, for they are good, but not too good to create non-divine objects directly (Bloom, 1991: 57-61; *Timaios* 379b-382c).

Nonetheless, Platon's speakers agree that we must give credence to myths handed down from distant ancestors, for the most distant of our ancestors must have personally known the deities of the Olympic pantheon (Archer-Hind, 1888: 136-137; Jowett, 1892c: 478-479; Jowett, 1871; *Timaios*, 40e-41a).

E) Immortal Mental Executives

A part of the human mind, but not all of it, is immortal. This notion is important because it relates to the doctrines of reincarnation and eternal salvation, which are critical aspects of Neoplatonic theology.

This immortal psychic object has certain challenges it must overcome due to mixing with other mental components in an impure combination, installation in a material body, a corrupting environment, and the problem of achieving a desirable afterlife. Readers familiar with any Abrahamic religion will recognize the moral-challenge theme as theodicy.

E.1) Components of the Human Psyche

As noted above, the ancient Greek language did not have a word corresponding exactly to the Modern English "soul", but instead had something more ambiguous (psycha) and a much more precise word to be introduced in the next passage (logos). Hence, Platon's speakers would have to struggle to consistently convey the same sort of vague notion of the immortal soul that is commonly spoken of in Modern English by members of various religions[10].

The resemblance of Platon's speakers' psychological model to that of psychoanalytic theory is too strong to pass over as if it were not noticed, although it is not related to an understanding of Earþ worship.

E.1.a) The Logismos

In some passages, Platon's speakers are quite specific about what the immortal mental object is. It is one of three components of the whole human psyche, and that component does correspond fairly closely to the Freudian ego. In the course of the dialogs, the existence of these mental components is inferred from observations of human and animal behavior, and we are offered an accounting of how these components came to exist.

The immortal psychic object is the logismos (calculating or rational thing). This object applies logical, conscious thought to attend to external phenomena, control internally-generated desires, and generally act as a rational executive. The logismos' function is labeled logistikon. A vast number of logismoses were made by the Damiourgos. He made them from material left over from the making of

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[10] The ancient Greek "psycha" denoted life, ghost, immortal soul, the conscious self, personality, source of life and consciousness, and the immaterial principle of movement and life. In addition, it denoted butterfly/moth, and the goddess Psyche (Liddell et al, 1940).

the divine mental executive of the cosmos plus some impurities (emotions) added to bring moral challenges to the newly created objects. Like subordinate deities, the logismoses are less divine than is Damiourgos.

These new objects were initially installed in sidereal objects, later to be installed in mortal bodies by subordinate deities. Because logismoses are immortal, the number of them is fixed permanently. (Archer-Hind, 1888: 137-145; 253-261, 334-339; Bloom, 1991: 33-34, 52, 118-120, 292-295; Jowett, 1892c: 479; Shorey, 1930: 397-400; *Governance* 353c-354c, 375b, 439a-441c, 608d-611b; *Timaios* 41d-42e, 89d-90d).

Platon does not consistently use this word to denote an immortal aspect of the human mind, but contexts imply that his speakers sometimes mean "logismos" when they say "psycha".

E.1.b) The Alogiston and Thumos

The other two components of mind are alogiston and thumos[11]. Although they are not directly important to our study of English Earþ religion, brief description of them is necessary to understand the context of the immortal logismos. The alogiston includes primitive greeds and fears, and it does not calculate the consequences of acts. The thumos produces indignation at unfairness, including unethical behavior of the host person (guilt). It is sometimes furiously angry but also is unable to calculate consequences. The thumos also is the "high-spirited" component that loves victory by violence and that envies. (Bloom, 118-120; Shorey, 1930: 397-400; Shorey, 1935: 392-393; *Governance* 439a-441c, 586d).

E.1.c) Analogy to Societal Governance

The three components of the human mind correspond to three classes of human society (Bloom, 1991: 120-121; *Governance* 440b-441b), but while class structure and the state are of interest to most students of Platon's writings, the subject is not helpful for current purposes.

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[11] In the alphabet of Platon's time: Logismos (ΛΟΓΙΣΜΟΣ), alogismos (ΑΛΓΟΙΜΟΣ), and tumos (ΘΥΜΟΣ). Although the logismos is logical and the alogismos is a type of illogical mental object, thumos is a word of multi-faceted meaning in ancient Greek that cannot be so simply characterized (Liddell et al, 1940).

E.2) Incarnations

After creating immortal psychic objects for people and installing them in permanent stellar objects, the ultimate creator directed his subordinate deities to create mortal bodies of many kinds -- all animals, no plants -- and to install the new psychic objects into them. Incarnation confronts the mental executive component object with love, sensual pleasure, pain, fear, wrath, and other emotions that are often difficult to master. So what we observe as human personalities are minds that have been damaged "by community with the body and other evils", including the bodies' human social contexts. (Archer-Hind, 1888: 140-145; Bloom, 1991: 176, 294-295; *Governance* 496a-497b, 611b-612a; *Timaios* 41d-42e).

In other words, people are incarnated so that they will have moral challenges.

E.3) Afterlives

In *Governance* and *Timaios*, Platon's speakers give two mutually-incompatible versions of what happens to the immortal mental object after death.

E.3.a) Afterlife in Governance

In this version, the immortal psychic executives[12] are gathered after death in a place of judgment and routed from there to one of two journeys. Either they go to hellish treatment under the surface of the Earth or to heavenly treatment in the sky. They spend thousand-year journeys on these routes — except for those who deserve much longer torture underground — and then return to the plain of judgment.

Afterward there they make another short trip to the goddesses called Moirai (MOIPAI), where each psychic executive chooses another life-course and the Moirai finalize each of those choices. Choices are made partly based on what the mental-executive wight learned in its

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[12] In the passages cited, Platon's speaker does not refer to these logismoses as such, which means that he does not refer to them as "mental executive beings", and he has no word that etymologically resembles the "souls" that Shorey uses to translate. In the text, the objects in question are psychas (ΨΥΧΑΣ), and the Greek-speaking reader would have seen "minds", "mental components", or "spirits" and perhaps interpreted that as the same thing as the Modern English "soul" — or maybe not. Burkert (1985: 195-199, 300-303, 319-320) indirectly discusses what the psyche is in ancient Greek in his discussion of non-Platonic afterlife beliefs.

most recent incarnation and trip through heaven or hell, but the choices made are often quite foolish.

The reincarnation cycle starts over again when the psychic executives forget everything that happened to them in their afterlives, and they are reborn into new mortal bodies.

Therefore part of the motivation to live and learn well in one's current life is to have a desirable thousand-year trip and make a wise choice for one's next life-course (Bloom, 1991: 297-303; Shorey, 1935: 490-521; *Governance* 614b-621d).

E.3.b) Role of Moirai in Mono- and Poly-Centric Theology

Details on the powers and functioning of the Moirai seem like a side issue at this point, but this topic is worth examining because the lore of the Moirai is repeated (without acknowledging the source) by scholars who are trying to understand certain deities in Norse religion.

The idea of the Moirai is a theological interpretation of mankind's universal recognition that somehow there are limits within which each of us can decide and act, and added to this is the notion that among the limits is a predetermined end of the thread (or channel, path, or rut) of one's life. These two notions are basic to both Neoplatonic theology and the Greek theology or theologies outside that system.

In the version of reincarnation in *Governance*, the fate you have now was your choice before birth and is to your fault or credit alone.

But in Greek religion outside this system, it was the Moirai who did the choosing. Using the Liddell et al (1940) dictionary, the name of the group, Moirai, is related to the singular noun moira (MOIPA), denoting a part, share, portion, or lot, among other things — and most notably one's lot in life, pre-determined death, or that which is meet, fitting, or right. Allan (1997b: 107) interprets Moirai in Modern English as Alloters, not as "portions", for they are active agents who make decisions and carry them out (Aldington, 1930; Allan, 1997b: 106; Frazer, 1921a: 64-65,90-93; Graves, 1960).

This is most likely the idea the ancient Greeks would have perceived in contexts that were not Neoplatonic.

This implies a theology that is not centered on a single deity. Burkert (1985: 129-130) explains Zeus' failure to override fate as voluntary, but the existence of an unvarying limitation is the same whether it is voluntary or not.

As we proceed though examinations of analogies to English polytheism, we will see some theologies that are more explicitly polycentric, building to the inference that the non-Christian English could well support a variety of theologies reflecting a variety of views

of life, and that the variety might well have included a cult that was polycentric.

E.3.c) Nomenclature and Function of Each Moira

First, let us consider a non-Platonic theology to make a comparison.

The nomenclature of the Moirai, as Platon's contemporaneous audience would have read them would not have appeared as mere names, but as meaningful words, and those words were metaphorically related to the functions indicated by Platon's text.

It is possible to see the individual deities as Destiny, Spinner, and Unchangeable Future. The names of the individual Moirai in ancient Greek were as follows, according to Liddell et al (1940). Lachesis (ΛΑΧΕΣΙΣ) is the disposer of lots or goddess of distribution, and her name means lot or destiny. It is akin to the verb lachismos, the casting of lots. Clotho (Klotho, or ΚΛΟΘΟ) is related to a verb meaning to twist, spin, or turn, and it implies spinning a thread of fate. Atropos (Atropon, ΑΤΡΟΠΟΝ) denotes "not to be turned, unchangeable, eternal".

In short, this is a group without a strict division of labor.

Now let us return to Neoplatonism.

Platon's speakers give a different meaning to the Moirai, for they present us with an image of "...Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos...Lachesis singing of the things that were, Clotho things that are, and Atropos the things that are to be" (Shorey, 1935: 504-505; *Governance*, 617c-617d). So after each psycha or logismos has chosen a lot for its next incarnation, that wight goes to Lachesis, and she assigns a tutelary spirit (daimona) appropriate to the lot chosen. Then the daimona takes the wight to Clotho, who spins a thread of life that conforms to the lot chosen. Finally, the personal deity takes its wight to Atropos, who makes the "web of destiny" immutable (Shorey, 1935: 516-517: *Governance*, 620d-621a).

It is this Neoplatonist view of the Moirai that has been influential over many students of Norse religion, so part of the chapter on Norse theologies will refer back to this passage.

E.3.d) Afterlife in **Timaios**

In the other afterlife story, psychic executive objects are assigned ranks of animal or human incarnation depending the quality of their prior lives. The default, or starting, level is not completely clear, but it is human. The psychic executives are then promoted or demoted depending on how well their persons lived according to rules which

require things like minding one's own business, worshipping the deities, and behaving courageously. The final step up from an enlightened human life is return to blissful existence in the stellar body in which the psychic executive was initially installed. There are many steps down, ranging from reincarnation as a woman to reincarnation as a fish (Jowett, 1892c: 479, 493; Archer-Hind, 1888: 137-145, 338-345, *Timaios* 90e-92c).

Yes, all these immortal executive psychic objects are male. The present author did not believe it upon first reading this in Reed's 2006 analysis, partly because Platon's modern interpreters generally try to convince us that he would have been politically correct in regard to gender in our time. Ironically, the Greek deity of mind was a goddess, (She is called Psyche in Modern English) and the Greek language, like Modern English, defaults almost every noun to neuter and requires a gendered pronoun to indicate that the logismos or psycha is male[13]. Analysis of this matter does not help us understand the English Earp cult, but it is too remarkable to ignore.

The Moirai are of no importance in this doctrine of reincarnation.

E.4) The Challenges to the Executive Mental Object

There is a certain ambiguity in Platon's dialogs about the healthy functioning of these components in the human mind, but the general thrust of the discussion is that the primary mental orientation should be to master carnal impurity (Archer-Hind, 1888: 140-145; *Timaios* 41d-42e).

On the one hand, the challenge to the mental executive object is to manage a balance among all three components. Good balance includes both physical and mental health and symmetry, so mental and physical exercise and discipline are important. The motivations to achieve this balance are to achieve a happy life, a proper relationship to the ultimate good object (the Damiourgos), and desirable prospects for an afterlife. (Archer-Hind, 1888: 323-335; Jowett, 1892c: 491-492; *Timaios* 86b-89d).

On the other hand, the highest ethical commitment is to the learning and wisdom that come from studying one's relation to the ultimate deity. Although all three psychic components — logismos,

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[13] On the other hand, the Catholic mystic Underhill (1930) repeatedly refers to the soul as "she". Apparently some theologists are uncomfortable speaking of a soul as "it" or are overly hassled by attributing to each soul the gender identity of its person or most recent person.

alogismos, and thumos — should be kept strong and healthy, the logismos must rule, and mental growth is more satisfying than is sensual gratification (Bloom, 1991: 274; Archer-Hind, 1888: 140-145, 327-335, 340-341; Jowett, 1892c 493; Shorey, 1935: 386-391; *Governance* 585c-591c *Timaios* 41d-42e, 87c-89c, 91a-91d).

Basically, the challenge to the psychic executive is to make his person act like a professional philosopher who is also an accomplished athlete and a leader major academy (Platon).

F) Evaluations Not Friendly to Earth Religion

The evaluative language of Platon's speakers' theology is not friendly to Earþ worship and might even have been incompatible with the Gaia cult of Platon's time. In both of the books used as primary sources here, the following adjectives and nouns are in the positive-evaluation category: up, clean, light, mental, sky. The following are in the negative-evaluation category: unholy, down, dirty, dark, physical, earth.

Likewise, "purity" is good, and "purity" in this view of life is freedom from matter (Archer-Hind, 1888: 130-139, 140-145, 338-345; Bloom, 1991: 197-198, 253, 267, 290-292).

One of Platon's speakers enunciates a chakra theory, placing the bodily locus of the logismos at the part of the erect human body that is farthest from the surface of the Earth and that is skyward, while the less-valued psychic components are at levels in the body which are usually closer to the ground (Archer-Hind, 1888: 253-261; *Timaios* 69e-70d).

In the latter part of the chapter on Roman Earth-goddess religion, we will see that the Neoplatonist philosopher Julian dealt with this issue the same as Platon's speakers. A result is that Julian's concept of an Earth goddess is not very earthy, and his Neoplatonic Earth goddess is easily distinguished from earthier Earth deities.

G) Epistemology

Throughout both *Governance* and *Timaios*, the theological propositions are based on observations of human, animal, and astronomic behaviors. One of Platon's speakers repeatedly asserts that what is said is the most likely theory based on evidence, not absolutely certain knowledge. The speaker explains that the only way to know theology for certain is to get the word from a deity, and such a

message is unavailable (Archer-Hind, 1888: 152-153, 168-169, 180-185, 268-269; *Timaios* 44b-44d, 51c-52d, 68e-69a, 72d).

This empiricist statement appears to contradict the more strongly stressed Neoplatonist theological principle that knowledge of the divine, ultimate causes of things is more certain than is empirical knowledge. In these books, Platon's speakers claim that the invisible realm of causation is being while the visible is "becoming" (temporary, with things always coming into existence and passing away), and therefore that the ideal is more real than is the observed.

However, throughout the dialogs of *Governance* and *Timaios*, Platon's speakers simply take for granted that the valid basis for knowing of, and theorizing about, deities is to start with empirical observation. For example, there is an interesting passage in *Governance* where one of Platon's speakers infers the existence of an immortal logismos from observations of human and animal behavior. (Bloom 1991: 292-295; *Governance* 608d-611b).

The empiricist epistemology that underlies the whole discussion in *Governance* and *Timaios* classifies the theology as "natural" as opposed to "revealed". A "natural" theology bases its theory of deity or deities on empirical observation and analysis of data. A "revealed" theology is accepted based on just the sort of message (one from a deity) that Platon's speakers deny having. The earliest known "natural" theologies were written by Greek philosophers (Brent, 2008; Jaeger, 1947: chapter 1).

We return to this topic in the chapter on Norse theologies.

Perhaps the reader should be warned that later Neoplatonic philosophers claimed that a person could have direct information from a deity, and that the evidence of this was magic or miracle working. But that is beyond the scope of the present book.

H) Critique

The appealing ideas of Neoplatonic polytheist philosophy were and still are important as very serious doctrine accepted as fundamental by many very intelligent thinkers. However, it is possible that at least some of the ideas in *Governance*, *Timaios*, and other of Platon's works not examined here were intended as starting points for consideration.

H.1) Importance of Neoplatonic Philosophy

It is important to note that the notions presented here and many others in these two Platonic dialogs have had great influence on many philosophers of various religions, including polytheists, from Platon's

lifetime into the present. Platon's writing, at least *Timaios*, was known in medieval Europe and Platon's writings were even more extensively known in the Islamic-ruled Near East and in the Roman Empire prior to its collapse. The thinking of Platon and the later Neoplatonic writers had significant influences on Abrahamic religions (Bigg, 1895; Inge, 1900: 334-344; Moore, 2005; Rapp, 2000; Turner, 1911; Vlach 2010).

For example, it is clear that here in Platon's writings there is, if not quite the same notion as Christian salvation of the soul, ideas that are similar. Many readers of this book no doubt will have come to it with the notion that the Christian emphasis on saving souls from afterlife horrors is an inherent part of the Judeo-Christian heritage going back to the earliest times of Jewish religion.

However, people translating the Old Testament into Modern English have long been finding "soul" in locations in the text where the original Hebrew said "life breath" or where the original Hebrew spoke of salvation from physical danger. The notion of an eternally living (human) spirit entity, which can live separated from the body, which is presented in *Timaios* and *Governance*, was imported into Judaism by Hellenized Jews (Alter, 2007: 32; Jaeger, 1961).

The reader should be aware that Platon taught philosophy, but his earliest successors who are prominent today had not studied under him personally. However, an academy was established in Athens after Platon's death, and a chain of scholars and wise persons (some of them Christians) who studied there produced major philosophical / theological works until a Christian Byzantine ruler decided the academy was too much of a threat to be tolerated in 529 CE (Bigg, 1895: 1; Kraut, 2013; Moore, 2005; Shorey, 1935: xxxvii-xxxviii; Turner, 1911).

H.2) Was It Supposed To Be Doctrine?

But critics of Platon's works often say that his intention was to get people to think independently and analytically (for example, see Reed, 2006). Sometimes a critic of Platon's works expresses doubt that Platon would be a Neoplatonist were he alive today. It is easy to take this as the same sort of criticism as the assertion that Christ might not be a Christian, based on alleged deviations of modern Christianity from Christ's teachings of doctrine. And perhaps that is how the "not a Neoplatonist" criticism is usually meant; the commentators never explain it.

To the present author, it seems that the contents of *Governance* and *Timaios* were not all intended to be taken as doctrine, but instead that they were intended as collections of starting points for the reader or listener to make up his or her own mind based on rational analysis. Thus, Platon seems to have a great talent of preaching without being "preachy".

For example, there is an oft-quoted passage in *Governance* to the effect that philosophers should be kings. The passage certainly has a powerful intuitive appeal. However, it follows immediately upon a passage in which Platon's speakers go through a long set of logical steps ending with the conclusion that dogs are philosophers. What was Platon trying to tell the reader?

There are several such sequences, and often Platon's Modern-English translators struggle to make sense out of passages that Platon seems to have included as fun hints to be skeptical of some very appealing and obscure notions. It is possible that the psychological effect of the audiobook version is very different from the impression made by black-and-white text (Waterfield, 1993a), for the present author found it easier to appreciate Platon's humor in an auditory experience than in writing.

Another apparent hint might be Platon's use of "good". It is never directly spoken of as an object; it is always a category of evaluation. But the discussion is easily misunderstood if one does not pay close attention. Hence, it is possible that the use of this term, while not humorous, was intended to steer the listener or reader to careful thinking.

Chapter 5: An Earth-Goddess Cult in a Bifurcated Religion

A) Summary of the Case to This Point

Up to now we have established a few matters that will provide a basis for examining data which bear directly on the Anglo-Saxon Earþ cult.

Data from many cultures show that religious customs are not fully dominated nor defined by myth, and that myths can be misleading. Indeed, this point was made explicit by an ancient source quoted in the previous chapter. We have also seen that a polytheistic religion can have a cult with a supreme deity and ultimate creator, and at the same time tolerate a remarkable diversity.

Evidence regarding Greek religion in the previous chapter, and other evidence scattered elsewhere in this book, hints that Neoplatonism was part of a religion that encompassed incompatible theologies and highly divergent cults.

So now we are ready to look beyond Europe again and examine a religion that is organized into two well-integrated, highly diverse cults — one of them an Earth-goddess cult.

We will our attention to the Tallensi of Northern Ghana. The Tallensi were certainly not Angles, but their economy and their ethnic environment were in some ways similar to that of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. The Tallensi Earth cult exists in a segmented religion, consisting of two complementary and yet quite contrasting cults. The Tallensi also give examples of details of conduct and organization of an Earth cult and some hints of how the English thought of their Earth goddess.

B) Sources of Data

In the early twenty-first century, most of the Tallensi still followed the religion shown here. Most of the documentation of Tallensi culture was produced by anthropologist Meyer Fortes and archeologist Timothy Insoll. Fortes' data are based on direct observations and interviews beginning in the middle 1930's and ending in the early 1970's. Timothy Insoll's observations are based on interviews and on artifacts dug up since 2004. However, some of the scholars quoted in

this chapter did their work in the first two decades of the twenty-first century and reside in Northern Ghana.

C) Cultural Context of Tallensi Religion

The Tallensi live in Northern Ghana and share with other peoples a language called Gur and some other cultural similarities. One of these similarities is that several peoples in the general area of northern Ghana have a religious Earth cult. These include among others the Kasena, Nunu, Dagar, Bulsa, Kusasi, Moba, Batammaliba, and the Mossi. For example, F. T. Smith (1989) wrote of the Gurensi that they regard Earth as "a mystical force distinct from its physical manifestation as soil" — which is very similar to the notion we will see in Old English literature.

Until the onset of the colonial era, ethnicity in this region, like that in pre-migration age Germania, was fluid, and even today various peoples in the region know of and influence each other (Insoll, 2010).

Tallensi people are mostly subsistence farmers, and their economics are based mainly on a technological level implied by this list: adze, hand-hoe, bow-and-arrow. Their most important crop is sorghum, or guinea corn. Ill-timed or insufficient rainfall is a frequent agricultural hazard, and locust plagues are also a serious hazard. Murrain and drought threaten livestock production. Consequently, famine sometimes occurs (Fortes, 1973: 196; Fortes, 1975: 36). The Angles probably did not have frequent problems with locusts and drought, but a likely pre-migration population-support problem is evident when we compare the tiny area they occupied on the continent with the expanse they took over in areas that are now called central, eastern, northern England, and southern Scotland.

Tallensi culture is that of a practical, utilitarian, down-to-earth people. Their main concerns are long lives, children, good crops, and productive livestock. They are not prudish about sex, nudity, nor bodily excretions. They accept that in everyday life each adult must accept responsibility to cultivate crops, tend livestock, treat illnesses, avoid injury, care for children, etc. Of course, to succeed one needs some good luck, and it certainly helps to get blessings from, or at least avoid angering, the deities (Fortes, 1973: 196, 202).

Descent and inheritance are strictly patrilineal. Women have the jural status of minors, and none is present during ancestor worship except to receive healing magic (Fortes, 1966: 13; 1979).

The most common unit of consumption and production is a household including a very extended patrilineal family residing in a walled compound. Families are commonly polygenous, and even a

monogamous family will commonly have two to four generations together under a senior male head of household. In a typical joint family, some of the "sons" are sons or grandsons of a brother of the surviving head of household. By tradition, the head of the family in the residence has legal and economic authority over all members. He personally owns the family farm, although selling all or part of it is not a simple matter for him under traditional law, because he holds the property on behalf of the family, living and dead (Fortes, 1973: 206; Fortes, 1975: 36; 1972).

The circumstances of the Tallensi have some similarities and dissimilarities with that of the Angles and other Germanic tribes in their pre-Christian era. Dissimilarities include: marriage customs, "unprudishness", unilineal descent, extended-family ownership of real estate, and extended-family residential compounds. Similarities include: subsistence agriculture, lack of mechanization, ethnic migration, rise and fall of tribes, common language among many tribes, down-to-earth daily concerns.

D) Overview of the Cult Structure

The Tallensi have two cults, which are coordinated in a system of holiday festivals. The main religion is worship of ancestor gods (former fathers). But alongside the ancestor cult is a distinct Earth-goddess cult that is more oriented toward nature. The two cults are theologically unrelated.

The Tallensi have only two significant cults. Fortes and Insoll say that the Tallensi practice animism and Totemism, but if so, these religious tendencies are not significant among the Tallensi. Those scholars' extensive descriptions of Tallensi religion gives only very brief mention of genuinely animistic or totemic religion (Fortes, 1940; Fortes, 1965: 113-115; Fortes, 1971: 282; Insoll, 2007a). Fortes seems unclear about what Totemism is. For example, in an essay which includes a correct definition of Totemism, he also remarked that "snakes are totemic creatures of the earth (sic) which may not be killed" (Fortes, 1972: 225).

E) The Ancestor-God Cult

E.1) Ancestor-God Pantheons

Ancestor gods are made, not born. A man with at least one surviving son dies, gets a normal funeral, and then is ritually installed

as a god. Without the installation, he[14] is just another dead ancestor. After the installation, he only has a divine relationship with his male-line descendants and their close relatives. He gets no worship from anyone else and has no effect on their lives. His eldest surviving son is his priest and is the priest for the members of the son's household.

Thus the Tallensi ancestor-god religion has the unusual feature of having one unique pantheon per adult male or group of brothers.

Each pantheon operates in a chain of command based on seniority. The new god's father, grandfather, and so on up the line have their effects only through the concatenation of ancestor gods, and appeals to a relatively distant ancestor god always start with asking the most recent to contact the one before and so forth on up the line until you reach the one you want to appease or get a blessing from.

Despite the spiritual chain of command, worshipers do not relate to a pinnacle deity: there is no boss, king, All-Father, nor All-Mother.

The Tallensi observe both family and clan ancestor gods.

An exemplary human being might not get installed as a god, while an irresponsible loafer might get installed. No matter how persecutory or severe the ancestor gods are, they are regarded as enforcing moral codes judiciously and fairly. Ancestor gods are also considered wise and just regardless of the actual personality and behavior of the deceased person of the same name while he was still alive (Fortes, 1965; 1966:12; 1973; 1975; 1979).

Females are not significant as ancestor goddesses, perhaps because female ancestors are not important in this strictly patrilineal society (Fortes, 1971: 283-285).

E.2) Venues for Rituals

The altar of the family's household gods is in the homestead, often in a room set aside for that purpose, although shrines of clan ancestor gods are in sacred groves, and sometimes a household shrine is out in the yard of the family compound. Prayer practically always involves sacrifice in the form of slaughtering at least one animal, usually a chicken.

Tallensi are vague about where ancestors reside, but they are not in Heaven nor their graves, and they can be addressed only in specific physical loci. Sites for prayer are places where an altar, tree, or simple

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[14] I usually capitalize pronouns referring to any deity, refer to deities by their proper names in preference to a generic name, and never capitalized "god", which is not anyone's name. The exception is that I do not know any ancestor god's name and never capitalize the pronoun referring to an ancestor god or goddess.

relic is dedicated to a specific ancestor god (Fortes, 1965; 1966: 12-13; 1972; 1973; 1974; 1975; Insoll, 2007a).

E.3) Enforcement of Moral Rules

Unlike early medieval English deities, ancestor gods are not so much generous with aid as they are a collective conscience, punishing their offspring for moral violations, including neglect of ancestor worship. Fortes, who was impressed by psychoanalytic theories of social phenomena, describes the ancestor gods as a collective superego.

A man who commits certain sins faces severe sanction. For example, an eldest son who commits adultery with his father's wife and does not atone with proper sacrifices may be denied sons, which means he is not welcome in the pantheon. Being denied sons would also mean that the gods have given up on a lineage in disgust. Another very severe punishment is to be killed by smallpox, and thereby denied full funeral rites. Fortunately, most sins are not nearly so awful, and there are many lesser consequences, such as a requirement to perform an expiatory ritual. Fortes reports in several places that the Tallensi take all ancestor-cult moral rules very seriously, and they are very rarely knowingly violated, even by nominal Christians.

When bad things happen to individuals or families, the persons directly affected are not in a position to exactly figure out the spiritual cause. Therefore, a diviner is needed to diagnose reasons for ancestor-god anger and to indicate the atonement the ancestor requires, and in turn this means that enforcement always requires at least one formal ritual (Fortes, 1965; 1966: 12-13; 1972, 1973; 1974; 1975; Insoll, 2007a).

F) The Earth Goddess Cult

The Earth goddess is called Teng (Fortes, 1975: 22-23). The shrines, or "tengbana" are where the priests, or Custodians of the Earth ("tengdaana") do their ritual work. Soil, sacred place, human settlement, and the mystical aspect of earth per se are all denoted by "teng" (Fortes, 1940: 254-255; Insoll, 2007a; Insoll, et al 2009).

F.1) Conceptualization of the Earth Goddess

F.1.a) A Strictly Spiritual or Mental Wight

Fortes says that the Tallensi "stand in awe of the Earth", and regard it has having "qualities of livingness". Teng is analogous to a person

psychologically but unlike the ancestor gods, She is not, and never was, a person. Teng is not represented by an idol or fetish (Fortes, 1945: 176; Fortes, 1971: 254, 256-258.)

The lack of idolatry suggests some limitations on the extent to which Teng's psyche is similar to human minds, and it is similar to a precept that was common Proto-Germanic religions, a rule against pictorial or sculptural representations of that which can only be perceived in reverent meditation.

F.1.b) Range of Functions

The Earth goddess has a very broad range of functions. Insoll (2006) opines that Teng is a mainly a fertility deity for these people, but this greatly understates Her range of functions as they are shown in the data that he and Fortes report in various publications. Actually, Teng is an all-purpose deity. We encounter the same bias in studies of the Earþ cult.

F.1.c) Identification with Mineral Substances

The Tallensi Earth goddess is identified with, among other things, arable soil and clay.

The Tallensi goddess is also identified with stone (Insoll et al, 2009: 62-63). It is notable that the absence of rock art near the Tallensi Earth-goddess chapels seems to imply an effort to avoid marking a sacred substance in the same way that a totem-worshiper would try to avoid harming an animal or plant identified with his or her totem spirit. In Tallensi-land, petroglyphs occur only at some distance from sacred venues.

Although none of the anthropologists quoted here said explicitly that their Tallensi informants identified their Earth goddess with the planet, it is quite clear from the social scientists' discourse that the Tallensi do identify Her with the planet as a whole.

Unlike the early medieval English, the folks of northern Ghana in modern times are able to switch from ceramic pots to plastic and steel, but ceramic pots are still used in religious rituals, partly because the traditionalists regard ceramic material as symbolic of the life-giving force of the Earth and of mankind's dependence on the planet. Even though steel comes from stones in the earth, the Tallensi seem to simply have a tradition that ceramic material is holier than metal or that hand-made objects have more psychic energy in them than do machine-made objects.

Most Tallensi ritual pottery is made by women, but not necessarily for a theological reason, since pottery-making in general is considered women's work. Insoll points out that in Tallensi theology the Earth

spiritual being is feminine (Insoll, 2006; Insoll, 2010). But what does this mean in a society without priestesses? (The present author does not have an answer to that question.)

F.2) Shrines and Chapels

F.2.a) Chapels without Buildings

The Earth goddess is worshipped without temple buildings; instead rites are conducted at specially dedicated outdoor locations. As we will see in a later chapter, outdoor venues were also typical of English Pagan religion.

Certain types of locations are favored. Although none of the sites is in a building, some are in caves or rock shelters (overhanging rocks that let a person escape rain or wind). Rocks large and small are important, so that large standing stones or simply accidental collections of boulders are often the sites dedicated for cult activities. Some shrines are small, some quite large.

Groves are commonly maintained as sites for one or more chapels. Maintenance can be overlooked, and outdoor shrines are sometimes considered by scholars to be "natural", especially those which are without buildings or free-standing altars. But the Earth-shrine groves are well maintained — and clearly artificial. A telltale sign appears clearly when the surrounding land has been stripped of trees for timber and fuel, and only a sacred park land remains wooded.

Shrines can include other shrines, and one site may function for both of the Tallensi complementary cults, for Earth-goddess and clan ancestor chapels are all located outside residences (Fortes, 1975: 22-23; Insoll, 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Insoll et al, 2009: 63-65).

Insoll et al (2009:57-58) note that "archeological" sites are sometimes enshrined, meaning that the Tallensi revere their society's past, and may make a site holy because it has historical value. This may also reflect finding an emotional energy in the area that marks it as holy. Archeologists have noted the same tendency in Britain, where English Pagans and later English Christians located religious sites on land that had been religious sites for hundreds or thousands of years before. But I have to add that in a landscape that does not change for several hundred years, a location with a spectacular natural view or that offers peace and seclusion will tend to be re-used by successive cultures as a favored place of prayer or meditation. Nonetheless Neolithic standing stones in an early medieval churchyard are a clear indication of an ancient location still in use, possibly because the past itself is valued (Semple, 2010: 33-39).

F.2.b) Naming of Venues

The sites are not named for Teng, but instead for their locations. For example, three of the many outdoor temples in the Tongo Hills are called Tona'ab, Bonaab, and Nyoo (Insoll et al, 2009: 44-45). It is as if instead of a Christian venue being named Church of Saint Paul or Cathedral of Our Lady, it would be named Lee's Ridge or Pleasant Valley.

The Pagan English also followed this practice regarding the cult of Earþ. So to give an example relevant to the present purpose, an Anglo-Saxon site might be named Tuffelege (Tuffa's Woodland Clearing — a settlement listed in the Doomsday book) instead of Earðlege (Earð's Woodland Clearing — not an observed place name).

There are theological and linguistic reasons for members of an Earth-goddess cult to name ritual venues without reference to the deity in question, but this will be discussed in a passage on English place-name evidence.

F.2.c) Altars

Altars seem to be optional. Some of the "shrines" in the photographs and verbal descriptions of these facilities sometimes do not show the workspace tables we call altars, while in other cases the "shrine" consists only of a portable altar, and in still other cases we see an outdoor temple complex containing several worship areas, some containing altars and some not. (See the photos in Insoll's 2006 paper or the narrative example of a ritual to drive away a bad-luck wight in Fortes' 1971 paper.)

Altars for routine Earth religion or ancestor worship are typically low, so that the officiants have to squat or bend over, although altars for (ancestral-cult) diviners tend to be about four feet high (Fortes, 1975: 26).

F.2.d) Resident Shrine Spirits

Tallensi shrines or altars are prayed to as one would pray to a local deity. The names of the chapels, shrines, or stand-alone altars are the names of these deities. This means that the shrine spirits are named for locations of the shrines.

The shrines or chapels also have distinctive taboos and emphases of power, implying specialization of the resident spirit beings. For example, one shrine is especially valued for counteracting hostility and for healing. Another example is considered to have especially "benevolent", curative, and protective tendencies. Another is a dancing ground for a major annual festival and is also considered especially

curative of human infertility, hostile to evil, and helpful in identifying witches.

The significance or specialization of any given shrine and its resident spirit might change over time, and a given chapel can change back and forth between being mainly an Earth shrine and mainly a clan or lineage ancestor shrine (Fortes, 1940; Fortes, 1974: 56-57; Insoll, 2006, 2011b: 146: Insoll et al, 2009).

Fortes and Insoll do not go into the theology of shrine and stand-alone-altar wights, but some speculation might be helpful for an understanding of English Earþ religion. The "animistic" theology that one can use to explain shrine spirits is that the sites have been invested with energies or aspects of spirit-force, just as some objects can be charged with static electricity by rubbing them on another object that has an electrical charge. Whether this charging occurs only by conscious human dedication and repeated use of the locations or by divine magic plus human use is not relevant at this time. Either way, the spiritual charge and resultant wight would be homologous with the lesser deities of Nuer religion. That is, the shrine spirits would consist of the same spirit-substance as the Earth goddess but with weaker concentrations.

The reader deserves a caveat: Fortes implies that the Tallensi do not intellectualize their religion this much (Fortes 1971; 266, 268, 270, 285, 253). However, this speculation is consistent with the Tallensi practice of shrine franchising, which is explained in the next passage.

F.2.e) Chapel Franchising

In chapel franchising, a location is made into a place that holds special meaning and sacred power by conscious human dedication, although a place may be selected for such use because of an emotional sensation, something like a charge of electricity or a feeling of wonder and awe in that place, in other words a feeling of a thin boundary between the mystical and profane at that spot (Eliade, 1959; Insoll, 2004c: 19-23; Insoll, 2006: 226-228; Insoll, 2011b: 145).

Apparently only one Tallensi shrine has been franchised, the regionally famous Tonna'ab shrine to Teng. The purpose of this has been to empower other shrines hundreds of miles away, so that distant people would have access to its miraculous powers to defeat evil and cure physical ailments.

The method involves a dedication ceremony to clone the spiritual wight of the mother chapel, and the ceremony was elaborate, sober, and serious. At the parent chapel or shrine, a priest from afar is trained on procedures and theology. The trainee — who might already

be a full-fledged priest in the distant community — offers a cow as sacrifice. A horn or the tail of the animal plus a "medicine" substance is bound in leather. Then both priests go to the child shrine and make more sacrifices to get the cloned spiritual being to accept the new location. The two priests then return to the parent shrine and obtain a rock of the type used to awaken that shrine. (The awakening is performed by knocking three times on a larger rock with the smaller one.) Then the awakening instrument is ceremonially presented to the priest for the child shrine, and he takes it to the child shrine. In addition, medicinal clay from the mother site is supplied to practitioners at the child site (Insoll, 2006: 229-230; Insoll, 2011a: 198).

Insoll's 2006 paper was written to speculate that the shrine franchising he observed among the Tallensi could have occurred in Northern Europe in Neolithic times, and surely if it could happen in the Neolithic it could happen in the migration age or early medieval Europe.

F.2.f) Medicine

In F.2.e, on chapel franchising, mention was made of medicinal clays, so this is the place for an aside on use of shrines for healing.

Medicine and healing magic are practiced at the Earth-goddess shrines, as they were practiced at medieval European monasteries. At African chapels noted for healing powers, a healer would administer pharmacological substances and prayer, and at the same time he would lure an offending spirit being into an object such as a clay pot. Then the materials might be destroyed or simply discarded at the site as a means of promoting physical healing by spiritually disinfecting the patient. Normal procedure was to dispose of spiritually or physically infected material in a stream or gutter.

We will see analogous magic in association with an English medieval prayer to Earþ.

Clays occurring naturally at the chapels were often used as drugs although they seem to have no pharmacological value. (Insoll, 2011a; Insoll, 2011b; Insoll et al, 2009; Kankpeyeng et al, 2011a).

F.3) Ritual Conduct

F.3.a) Rituals are Public Only

Generally speaking, holy rituals are also elaborate prayers, and among the Tallensi this formal ritual is the only form of prayer, for the Tallensi do not informally practice prayer by just anyone at just any

time or place as do American Christians. Instead, prayer is offered by a priest only and only at holy locations (Fortes, 1975: 26-28).

It is because all of these rituals resemble magic ritual, that they are all done in public. The Tallensi ethic on this is that good religion is done with witnesses, and shameful black magic is done in secret (Fortes, 1966; Fortes, 1975: 28, 31).

Ritual is occasioned mainly by holy days on the annual calendar or by some misfortune. If a misfortune has a spiritual cause, it requires a divination and a piacular sacrifice as prescribed by the diviner.

F.3.b) Customary Features of Holy Rituals

The rituals have a traditional outline, which is not necessarily followed in strict order or in strict form. Even Earth rituals begin with invocations of ancestor gods, although any Earth priest's ancestor gods would be deceased Earth priests, since the occupation is hereditary. Thus when an Earth priest performs a ritual, he may invoke a chain of his own ancestors by name, all of the spirits of the outdoor shrines and sacred groves by name, and — but not by name — all the other ancestors of all the Tallensi people. After that come verbose and redundant invocations and urgings, animal sacrifices, and milling around with some discussion of what comes next and how to do it. Eating, and on festival days music and dance, conclude the occasion. (Fortes, 1974: 56-57; Fortes, 1975: 22-24, 28-29).

The language used is colloquial. Neither Fortes nor Insoll mentions poetry, but very long-winded speeches are common. Hymns are only used in certain ancestor rites. The speeches commonly include the repetitions of ideas phrased in different symbolic verbal expressions or physical gestures, and whole speeches tend to be redundant with each other. Expressions used commonly include praise and recitations of past events as well as statements of what is wished for. Also included in ancestor worship may be threats to withhold future sacrifices, but such threats did not occur in Earth-goddess rituals (Fortes, 1975; Fortes, 1979).

Sacrifice is the most common characteristic of Tallensi religious ceremony. Practically all prayers are accompanied by sacrifice(s) (Fortes, 1966; Fortes, 1975).

F.3.c) Offerings

Offerings are left at the Earth-chapel sites, and it should be understood by the reader that these offerings are not necessarily all offered directly to the Earth goddess, for the Earth-goddess shrine spirits also receive prayers (Fortes, 1974: 56-57).

Offerings include axes, hoes, bronze or iron bracelets, hair combs, plastic buttons, and stone pestles and grinders. Broken pottery is quite common (Insoll, 2009). The pottery, tools, and jewelry all seem to intended as symbols of personal dedication or as carriers of a personal energy charge. Some of the pottery and the iron legs used to support pottery are divinatory equipment that was offered, possibly after one-time use. Insoll's informants explained the jewelry as representing deceased persons, although a problem with interpreting dug-up evidence is that current practice is not that of several centuries ago (Insoll, 2007a; Insoll et al, 2009). We do not know if in past times the pottery and tools were buried on behalf of dead persons or were left by worshippers on their own behalf. Such gestures seem to express a sentimental attachment to both the deceased relative and to the Earth goddess or the shrine spirit.

Animal remains are also found in current-day shrines; Tallensi prayer is practically always accompanied by libation or animal sacrifice. Chickens and goats are the most common sacrifices, but cattle may also be offered.

Sometimes the offering is an enticement or a test to see if the spirit being in question is receptive; sometimes it is a penance. For example, the penalty for getting into a fistfight during one of the major festivals involves sacrificing a cow to Teng. In the ceremony, blood is splattered or dripped onto the altar, but afterward the meat is eaten by persons in attendance (Fortes 1966; Fortes, 1975, Insoll, 2006).

The reader should be aware that "offering" and "sacrifice" of a meat animal in a polytheistic context does not usually mean that the food is completely destroyed or given away, although this may be the case with items such as pottery, bread, or beer.

F.3.d) Serpents as Cult Symbols

In a previous section of this chapter (Section D), noting that Totemism and animism are but minor aspects of Tallensi religion, there is the following quotation: "snakes are totemic creatures of the earth (sic) which may not be killed" (Fortes, 1972: 225).

Note that these creatures, which normally keep their bodies in extensive contact with the ground, are sacred to the Tallensi Earth goddess.

In turn, this suggests that we examine early medieval culture for use of snakes or snake-like chimera as symbols of religious significance. Such graphics or words might be clues to a non-Christian though, for everyone familiar with Abrahamic religious lore is aware that snakes and snake-like beings are aversive symbols in Abrahamic religions.

However, snakes are not used in Tallensi rituals.

G) Teng Cult Organization

Among the Tallensi, Earth religion is not on the same level as ancestor religion. The goddess Earth is the most powerful regulator by means of guilt, for She is universal and can punish anyone anywhere for moral infractions with illness, poverty, or other bad luck (Fortes, 1940). But She cannot kill; only the ancestor gods have the supreme power (Fortes, 1973; 194). Also, in the conduct of a major Earth-goddess ceremony, the priest will typically begin by invoking his ancestor gods (Fortes, 1974: 55-57).

But a more interesting aspect of the two-cult religion is the remarkable difference in clergy, for in Teng cult has a fundamentally different system than does the ancestor cult.

G.1) Custodians of the Earth

Specialist priests are key personnel in the Earth cult, although the Tallensi ancestral cult does not include specialist priests. There are some similarities.

Earth priests were formerly forbidden to wear cloth; they dressed in antelope skins only. But nowadays they sometimes wear shorts and an antelope cloak in the warm Ghanaian climate (Fortes, 1940: 260-261; Insoll, 2006: 229-230).

The shrines, or "tengbana" are where the priests, or Custodians of the Earth ("tengdaana") do their ritual work.

The priesthood is tightly organized but lacks hierarchy. A clan with several Custodians of Earth will have one who is considered senior to the others, but any of them can speak or act for the clan's priests; no one is boss. Each priest has duties in taking care of the shrine to which he is attached, but they are very cooperative with each other and often share duties or substitute for each other.

A contributing factor to this cooperation might be that the occupation is part-time. Prior to installation as an Earth priest, a man typically runs a family farm, and after installation he continues to earn a living in that role (Fortes, 1940; Fortes, 1962).

For reasons that will be given in a later chapter, it is likely that the non-Christian Anglo-Saxon priests were also all part-time, except for a very few employed as chaplains at the major royal headquarters, and that their organization was also non-hierarchical.

There are some similarities between the two principal Tallensi cults. Like ancestor-cult priesthood, the Tallensi Earth-priest job is hereditary, passed down from father to eldest son. Also, Earth-

goddess clergy are all men; women do not officiate at Tallensi religious, legal, or major business proceedings. Basically, women rule the home — except for the room containing the ancestor altar — and men rule outside (Fortes, 1979: 146-173).

G.2) Differentiation and Teamwork

Teamwork and ceremonial integration between two sets of clans are striking features of Tallensi religion.

The people of one set of clans are Namoos, and the Namoo clans have the chieftains and specialize in ancestor religion. The other set of clans comprises the Tali people, and they have the Earth priests[15].

Each group of clans —Namoo and Tali — has a specific set of roles to perform, and the chiefs and priests cooperate to officiate. They schedule religious ceremonies requiring that some communities perform rites on behalf of others and that people from one community attend festival performances in other communities. Rites in different localities and on different occasions tend to be distinctive, and different communities' performances during the cycle of festivals tend to show different styles expressed in a similar format. Some Earth shrines are located in Namoo communities and a few are adjacent to Namoo family homes (Fortes, 1974: 43-47, 50-54).

H) Some Conclusions

In Tallensi religion we see two (intellectually) incompatible theologies, two types of liturgy, and two types of clergy organization in two separate cults combined. It is as if the Tallensi divided themselves into a highly artificial dualistic society designed primarily for the purpose of frequently preaching to themselves about harmony and cooperation.

The two halves of Tallensi religion are theologically dissimilar in that one half is organized around a single goddess while the other half is oriented toward a great multiplicity of deities who are not dominated by a single authority figure.

On the other hand, the moral precepts of the two religions are practically the same (Fortes, 1974), so that they are partially redundant despite their differences. Also, the two sides of the society share the same holidays and ceremonies.

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[15] Traditional rules of exogamy require that these groups of clans intermarry, so the members of one group of clans are all related to people in the other set of clans (Fortes, 1974: 43-47).

In Tallensi religion, the ancestor "half" is dominant. Not much religion is done, including Earth liturgy, without invoking ancestors. Although theoretically Earth can act anywhere and ancestors only harm their direct descendants, in practice the ancestors get the credit or blame practically every time a misfortune occurs. Deaths in particular are always characterized as punishment by an ancestor, regardless of proximate empirical cause (Fortes, 1965; Fortes, 1966: 12; Fortes, 1973: 194; Fortes, 1974: 55-57; Fortes 1975: 22-23).

This culture also shows that a people can have one religion and yet have many pantheons because the ancestor-god segment has about one pantheon per household.

We can also see some ideas about how Pagan English rites for their Earþ goddess might have been conducted, and how the English understood their Earþ goddess.

Chapter 6: Norse Theologies

　　Previous chapters, using studies of analogous cultures, demonstrated that it is quite possible that English Earth religion existed alongside incompatible theologies as a major component of a single, highly diverse religion, because this sort of thing occurs in other polytheistic religions.

　　The analogous cultures examined in previous chapters were not Germanic, and the Pagan Germanic religion known most extensively by modern scholarship, and the Germanic religion commonly considered most strongly analogous to that of the pre-Christian English is Norse. Therefore, the argument of the present book will be made even more plausible by showing that Norse religion natively incorporated multiple, ideologically incompatible theories of deity as revealed in cosmological myths.

　　The present chapter shows that documented evidence of Norse myths supports at least four theologies based on contradictory ideas about the deity at the top of the pantheon or the main pantheon, and in addition this chapter introduces the concept of polycentric theology. The major theologies are based on the main deity being an Earth goddess, a Damiourgos-like deity, a partnership of three gods, or Óðin. Two of these theologies are explicitly polycentric, for in addition to, and independent of, the main pantheon there are other spirit beings, categories of spirit wights, or whole communities of spirit beings with functions that to some degree overlap those of the main pantheon.

　　This chapter begins with advice on the methodology before moving on to analyses of data on Norse theologies.

A) Major Documentary Sources

　　Some of the most important documentary sources of Norse polytheist theology — and certainly the most extensive — are the creation stories in the Eddas. These documents were collected or written by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson in 1200's CE. In *The Prose Edda*, the creation stories are in the *Prologue* and in *The Deluding of Gylfi* (*Gylfaginning*), Gylfi being a king of Sweden who goes on an adventure and interrogates people he finds at his destination. In *The Poetic Edda*, the cosmologies are mostly in the first several strophes of *The Divination of the Witch* (*Voluspa*), although there is additional (and mostly repetitious) cosmological discussion in other poems.

The creation stories are similar in the Prose and Poetic Eddas, but they do represent slightly different creation narratives.

In addition, some brief uses of other resources will be made, namely Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danes* and Icelandic sagas.

Of course, more sources could be used. However, this analysis is not intended as a comprehensive overview of Norse Paganism, and the evidence used is largely restricted to the creation stories in the Eddas.

The reader may find the focus on mythological sources ironic, given an emphasis in previous chapters on the importance of nonmythic lore. But the objective in this chapter is merely to show that Norse religion was highly diverse, and the limited evidence exploited here is sufficient for that purpose. Occasional references to folk religion in this chapter imply that with more evidence in use, you could expect even more theological variety than is shown here.

A.1) Biases of Snorri Sturluson

The biases of Snorri Sturluson are important, because he is the source of most of our data regarding Norse myths, so it is worthwhile to examine his point of view.

The prologue to the Prose Edda has more than one function, for it includes Snorri Sturluson's conscientious statement of his biases, although most critics seem to only view the content as including disavowals of Pagan belief for his own protection. Be that as it may, the Prologue is also honest, full-disclosure scholarship. Hence, most of the background for this section comes from that Prologue.

One of Sturluson's biases was probably influence from Greek philosophy. Two partially contradictory assertions of his give evidence of this: the claim that polytheism results from natural theology, and the claim that it results from magicians scamming people.

Another major source was his esteem for Icelandic culture and especially the Icelandic poetic heritage.

A.1.a) Greek Theology

It is possible, but not likely, that this author was deeply and directly biased by influence from Greek natural theologians.

Natural theology is the inference of one's theory of deity from observations of nature. The contrasting type is received theology, which is accepted simply because it is asserted by someone who is considered an authority. It is unwise to expect anyone's theology to be purely natural or received, but medieval Christianity is definitely in the (predominately) received category, and the theology displayed in

chapter 6 of the present book, on Neoplatonic thought, is an excellent example of predominately natural theology (Brent, 2008).

It is Sturluson's assertion that Pagan religion all results from natural theology, an idea he certainly could have gotten from Greek and Roman documents. Snorri Sturluson says that people figured that the regularity and complexity of nature implied that someone had to be governing weather, astronomical phenomena, etc. He says that when Jewish traditions were lost by the non-Jewish peoples, they figured out their own ways back to the divine using natural theology.

We know that he was familiar with Greek and Latin literature. For example, in *Skaldskaparmal*, there is a passage where Snorri Sturluson flaunts his familiarity with *Iliad* (Faulkes, 1987: 65). More to the point, the earliest documented use of the expression "natural theology" is in *City of God* by Saint Augustine, and it seems quite likely that Snorri would have been aware of the Augustine's writing on the subject of natural theology, because Augustine was a major Catholic saint (Dods, 1971).

However, Sturluson's geographical remarks reflect the loss of knowledge of Greek science and philosophy that occurred in Europe during the migration age, so his Greek influence was probably indirect and incomplete. For example Snorri Sturluson thought the Earth was flat, and that the center was somewhere in Asia (Brodeur, 1916: "Prologue"), but the Greeks and Romans knew the planet and the entire cosmos much better centuries before Snorri's lifetime. Greek scientists had established long before the early middle age that we live on one of many cosmic bodies, that planets and stars are different sorts of objects, and that the cosmic body on which we live is spherical (Shuttleworth, 2010a; Stamp, 2011; Wikipedia, 2013b, 2013d). In Virgil's *Georgics*, written before the Common Era, he says that the planet we live on has five zones: a tropic zone "burned by flames" in the middle, icy ones at the ends, and two temperate zones between the center and the icy extremes (Kline, 2002: 16). (See also Wikipedia, 2013b, 2013d) [16].

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[16] Not everyone in early medieval northern Europe would have been quite so ignorant of geography, even without the books of earlier ages. Dickinson (2005) shows us in her Figure 4 a specimen of Anglo-Saxon art from the 600's, which presents an excellent image of a mostly crocodilian figure in swimming pose. Beckett (2003) discusses at great length the knowledge of the Islamic countries in early medieval England. It appears that some of the early medieval English were familiar with lands far away on the basis of personal experience or second-hand information during the early middle ages.

Hence, it is possible that Sturluson's ideas regarding Norse polytheistic theology came entirely from native sources. Snorri Sturluson probably did have interviews with Norse polytheists and practitioners of mixed religion who were explaining or justifying their traditions and theology. It is even more likely that a large number of Icelandic and Norwegian professional poets living in the 1100's and 1200's (respectfully) memorized ancient religious lore as a background for their compositions.

A.1.b) Euhemerism

The Prologue to the Prose Edda expresses a contention that Teutonic polytheism resulted in part from naive people being hoodwinked by thaumaturgists into believing that the miracle-workers were deities.

Euhemerism was not invented by Christians to refute Pagan religions, for this is another idea that originated with Greek philosophy, specifically with Euhemeros in the late 300's BCE (Kochan, 1968: 477; Spyridakis, 1968). In his day, there was an informal movement in Hellenistic culture to explain traditional religious beliefs in natural-scientific or social-scientific terms and to make rational explanations of religions. His best-known accomplishment was a "utopian" story in which he traveled to an island in the Indian Ocean and found a history tablet which said that Zeus and other Greek deities were people who came to be worshipped for their great accomplishments or remarkable personal merits.

It is not clear how euhemerism related to Snorri Sturluson's understanding of Jesus Christ, but apparently there were some limitations in his application of the idea.

A.1.c) Esteem for Icelandic Culture and Heritage

In addition, Sturluson admitted that he intended to contribute to the esteem for and preservation of Icelandic poetry and historical heritage. That means that he would have lacked motivation to publish grossly unenlightened, inhumane, or nonsensical lore. Also, lore not referenced in poetry with a paying audience might be reported but not at any length and is subject to being merely hinted at or completely ignored.

Hence, it is likely that the theological variety seen in Norse religion is understated.

A.1.d) Not a Bias in Favor of Orthodoxy

In the introduction to his edition of part *The Deluding of Gylfi* (*Gylfaginning*), Faulkes says that Snorri Sturluson distorted our

knowledge of Norse religion by depicting it as having an orthodoxy that any Christian would think of as natural in a religion. Faulkes went on to assert without proof that Norse religions must surely "have consisted rather of a disorganized body of conflicting traditions that was probably never reduced…to a consistent orthodoxy as Snorri attempts to present" (Faulkes, 2005: xxvi).

Just the opposite is the case!

The present chapter proves indubitably that the two Eddas left for us by Snorri Sturluson, and especially *The Deluding of Gylfi*, reveal "a disorganized body of conflicting traditions".

Actually, Snorri was pretty impartial and honest in this regard, for he neither condemned the Heathens for their heterodoxy, as Augustine would have, nor attempted to explain away or deny the diversity, as Varro would have. (The theology of Varro and writings of Augustine are quoted in the next chapter, on Roman religion.)

A.2) Biases of Saxo Grammaticus

Another source of information regarding Norse religion is the *Gesta Danorum* (*The History of the Danes*), written a Danish monk known by the name Saxo Grammaticus. Saxo does not openly acknowledge his biases, but he clearly was educated in and deeply impressed by Greek and Roman theology, especially as revealed in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* (Butler, 1942; Elton, 1905; Evelyn-White, 1914; Fagles, 2007; Rees, 1991).

Saxo was probably also well acquainted with at least one of Platon's books, *Timaios*, and he was certainly well acquainted with the Roman myth of *Æneid*, by Virgil. *Timaios* was known to Latin scholars in Europe during the middle ages (Stiefel, 1985), and some passages or expressions in *The History of the Danes* seem to be quoted from *Aeneid* (Fagles, 2007).

However, an outstanding characteristic of Saxo's version of Norse theology definitely not shared with the Greek theologies of Homer and Hesiod is that the pinnacle deity in the Norse system appears in human form and directly gives assistance and advice to favored individuals. Although in Greek myths the messenger god (Hermes) and other deities of second rank often appear in human-form disguise and usually cannot be recognized, in the Greek system the pinnacle deity (Zeus) never does any such thing. In *Gesta Danorum*, not only does Óðin frequently appear to human characters in the story, but He is typically easily recognized (Butler, 1942; Elton, 1905; Rees, 1991).

B) Earth Religion

Evidence of Norse Earth-goddess religion occurs in a succinct, discursive part of the Prose Edda and briefly in the Poetic Edda. Both of these presentations show a deity whose theology contradicts other theologies which are manifested in Norse sources.

B.1) The Earth Goddess in the Prose Edda

B.1.a) Theology of the Norse Earth Goddess

In the "Prologue" of *The Prose Edda*, Sturluson recounts the wonders of nature and specifically of life on the planet Earth, and amidst this list of wonders mentions Earth-goddess religion. Men noticed that the planet had life of its own, that it was "wondrous old" and mighty, that "she nourished all that lived, and that She took to Herself all that died." So they gave the Earth a name and traced their ancestry to the Earth goddess (Brodeur, 1916: 3-5).

After that brief mention, the subject of Earth religion is not brought up again, although the goddess Jörð appears later in the book as a minor, anthropomorphic character of myth.

But, as mentioned earlier in this book, a deity who is identified with the planet or who is conceived as the soul in the soil is not a likely candidate to be a major character in an adventure story. Although such a deity could be a major beneficiary of hymns or other poetic support, we have no liturgical poetry from Norse culture.

Hence, the brevity of mention of Earth-based religion might greatly understate the actual importance of an Earth goddess in Norwegian or Icelandic practice. Although, there is no sign of a major Earth deity in sagas, and Scandinavian archeological evidence is ambiguous, the very succinct case made for Earth-based religion is quite cogent.

B.1.b) A Relatively Friendly Presentation

It is interesting that Snorri Sturluson makes this very strong case for Earth religion without the slightest attempt to prove that it is devil worship, a euhemeristic fallacy, or the result of thaumaturgists' duplicity. However, he does imply that Earth religion is a result of using natural theology to make up for lost Jewish traditions. In any case, he drops all mention of what is wrong about polytheistic religion after the Prologue.

B.2) Victory-Driver's Prayer

This liturgical fragment reinforces the impression that Earþ was a major goddess and had a wide range of functions or jurisdictions.

Although there are prayers to other Pagan deities in the Eddas and the Gesta Danorum, there is only one prayer to any deity in the Poetic Edda.

Also, because experts on Germanic polytheism often use Norse myths to help construct a model of English polytheism, it is interesting to see that what we find in the Poetic Edda is consistent with evidence showing Earþ worship in England during the era of Christian supremacy.

Hollander (1964: 233) estimates that the poem from which this prayer is quoted was composed in about the year 1000 CE, which would have been on the cusp of Christianization of Scandinavia or shortly after.

B.2.a) Theological Background

Let us begin with a brief review of some of the mythical lore of Norse religion. An Earth goddess is included in the Old Norse pantheon, under the name Jörð (meaning Earth). The Prose Edda (Young, 1954: 61) says that Jörþ is "counted among the goddesses" and that She is the daughter of Night (who is identified as a giantess) and fathered by Other, who is not identified as giant nor deity (Young, 1954: 37). Being offspring of one or both parents who are giants does not make one a giant in the Norse system, where deities commonly have giant parents.

In the Norse system, Jörð has no role in any myth, except for brief mentions here and there. That was very probably something She had in common with the English goddess Earþ.

B.2.b) Background of the Story

The context is that a male hero has just awakened a valkyrie named Victory-Driver (Sigr-Drífa)[17], who committed some offense and was condemned by Óðin to a coma that would last many years. The sentence would terminate when a special warrior-adventurer awakened her. Her hero comes, removes the armor from the sleeping beauty, and she awakes. After Victory-Driver has her hero to tell her who he is, she briefly explains her circumstance, and then she launches into the prayer.

What we find is a fine prayer of thanksgiving for just being alive and awake.

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[17] This valkyrie's name is usually translated as Victory-Giver for reasons that are not made clear by the translators. This seems to be another instance where someone has to say that the emperor is not wearing clothes.

B.2.c) The Words of the Prayer

This is the whole prayer, translated from strophes 3 and 4 in the Neckel's 1936 (Neckel, 1936a; 1936b) edition, with some help from Bellows (1936), Larrington (1996), and Hollander (1962).

Hail you, Day! Hail Day's sons!
Hail to Night and Her Daughter!
With unangered eyes look at us two,
and give success as we sit here.

Hail the gods! Hail the goddesses!
Hail this generous Earth!
Eloquence and human understanding
grant we glorious two
and healing hands while we live!

The rest of the poem is wisdom poetry, but it is not of interest for present purposes.

B.2.d) Theological Implications

So this prayer presents three implications, and they are consistent with liturgical information from England.

(1) First, there is the notion that She is much more important than Her lack of presence in the Norse myths implies. It is quite clear from this prayer that to at least some of the Norse Heathens, their Earth goddess was something quite special. For although many deities are mentioned in this passage one gets more attention than any other.

The Norse Earth goddess is mentioned twice in this thanksgiving prayer, first with "Hail to Night and Her Daughter"[18] and then with "Hail this generous Earth". Notice that in the second of these strophes, Jörð is mentioned separately alongside all gods and goddesses as if belonging on a level with each of these whole categories or the entire pantheon taken together.

(2) There is also the hint that She is primarily of interest as a wight of many, and perhaps of unlimited, jurisdictions or functions.

One of the most striking things is what the valkyrie is praying for. Many translators render "sigr" in the last line of the prayer as "victory". But the two of them — the valkyrie and the hero — are

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[18] The original says "nipt" — female relative — instead of daughter. However, in the myth to which this passage refers, Night only has one female relative, as mentioned in a previous chapter.

merely sitting, as the prayer emphasizes, and they are not fighting a mighty foe. The couple is not even contemplating combat at this point. Indeed, the battlefield chooser of the slain (valkyrie) is making a definitely non-military wish.

This is a prayer for success, good speaking, practical understanding of humans, and a healing effect throughout life. And this prayer is also non-agricultural. Such a prayerful request could be said in Norse country by any new parents at birth, or by any newly-married couple, or any two persons about to embark on a major project or journey, or by any couple newly arrived in some country. With some editing, this prayer could be said over any person newly arrived in life or newly arrived at adulthood.

So we see that in the Norse system Jörð was not primarily, and certainly not exclusively, a goddess of nature nor of agricultural fertility.

(3) There is also a third notion, not so readily apparent from the translation. The word for earth in the second stanza of this prayer ("this generous Earth") is "fold", which literally means soil or dirt. This usage reinforces an implication seen elsewhere, that She is identified most closely with the mineral substance from which things grow. And so we find corroboration for the inference that the English Earþ was identified closely with soil.

C) Cosmic Super-Deity Theology

Another deity unlikely to be a major character in myth is a cosmic creator and governor. Such a deity, like an Earth god or goddess, has no prospect of meaningful conflict and nowhere to go. Only a creation myth (like that of the Neoplatonic lore in chapter 4 of the present book) would feature a cosmic super-deity as the main character.

However, Sturluson makes about as strong a case for a cosmic super-deity in the Prologue as he makes for Earth-goddess religion, and he gives much more detail in support of the concept in the main body of the text in the Prose Edda.

C.1) All-Father

The notion of an ultimate cosmic super-deity who directly or indirectly created the physical universe is presented in several Old Norse sources. The concept is supported by passages in the Prose Edda, by saga references, and by a very brief hint in the Poetic Edda. In the data, we see references to an implicitly unitary cosmic god of

unlimited power and function, which is a familiar conception from previous chapters.

To simplify the discussion here, we will stick with the name All-Father, but the god in question is also called by another name and spoken of as if without a name. The variations in naming probably reflect variations in cult practice, minor discrepancies in theology between different places and times, and a simple desire to have some nicknames for a deity.

C.1.a) In The Deluding of Gylfi

An ultimate cosmic creator appears in *Gylfaginning*, chapter 1 (Brodeur, 1916), where Sturluson says people felt that someone must have created and surely continues to govern the events and objects in nature, such as astronomical bodies, weather, and living beings, for the regularity and complexity of nature could not be accidental.

The cosmic super-deity is given a name — All-Father (Alföðr) — in *Gylfaginning's* chapter 3, which Anderson entitles "The Highest God" (Anderson, 1879; Brodeur, 1916; Jónsson, 1907, 1931; Rask, 1818; Young, 1954). This is where the three partner-kings who speak to the protagonist state that the foremost god is All-Father. This All-Father is eternal and is not only the creator of all things great and small, but He also governs them, and He gave mankind eternal souls.

Although this chapter gives All-Father as the god's main name, many others are listed also. Although these are names used among gods and goddesses, the list implies a wide variety of functions and a very active cult following.

C.1.b) In Sagas

The cosmic super-deity is mentioned twice in *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal*, in chapters 23 and 46. In chapter 46 it is made clear that the nameless deity who made the sun and moon, who rules all things and intervenes to achieve justice in this life is not the same as the Catholic Yahweh. The principle differences according to this saga are that the Catholic version is tripartite as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — which implies that the Norse Pagan pinnacle deity is a unity — and that there are no other deities in the Christian ideology (Wawn, 1997a: 30, 64; chapters 23 and 46 in the saga).

The notion of a cosmic super-deity also appears in a passage in *The Tale of Thorstein Bull's Leg*. That passage says that in Pagan times in Iceland the law code specified for certain purposes an oath taken to three deities: "Njorð, Frey, and the all-powerful god" (Clark, 1997b: 340).

C.1.c) *In* Voluspa

The creation story in *The Divination of the Witch* starts off with a very brief hint of a cosmic super-deity. The first stanza begins with the speaker demanding attention from all the sacred families, that is from all the greater and lesser children of Heimdal (Bellows, 1936; Dronke, 1997: 30-31;Kvilhaug, 2012). This implies that Heimdal is the name of an ultimate creator, or at least the creator of deities and mankind.

Heimdal does not figure anywhere in Norse myth as an Earth god or goddess and is not important in the rest of the creation story. But here He is the father of all, and this contradicts the story the witch is about to tell[19].

C.2) Afterlife

A passage in *Gylfaginning* (in chapter 3) says that All-Father gave persons eternal spirits, and that when people die the spirits of those who have conducted their mortal lives justly go to live with All-Father in Gimle (Lee-of-Fire) or Vingolf (Friendly-Floor), while those who have been evil to Niflhel (Foggy Hel) (Faulkes, 2005: 8-9; Young, 1954: 31).

While this looks like medieval Christianity, we have seen that the basic idea is also documented as Pagan in a source which predates Christianity by centuries.

Readers familiar with even a naively simplified version of Norse theology will recognize how different this is from the theology stating that all the good dead people, or that all the male heroes who die in combat, go to Valhalla to live with Óðin.

C.3) Not the Same as Óðin

This is not to say that this father of all is Óðin, which is a common misunderstanding. It seems likely the misunderstanding results largely from people having difficulty recognizing multiple theologies in Norse religion.

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[19] Kvilhaug (2012) translates this god's name as "Great World". We discussed this in personal correspondence in 2013, and she failed to convince me that her translation is more strongly plausible than is "Home Valley", which is derived from dictionaries. Fortunately she did discourage me from translating the name as "Awesome Universe". For the present study, I decided we do not need to translate "Heimdal", but it is possible that for some early medieval Scandinavians, there was a spirit or mind of the universe named Heimdal.

The third chapter of *Gylfaginning* says that the Norse people call this deity All-Father, but that in the realm of the deities He is known by 12 other names — and none of them is Óðin. Moreover, this theology is monocentric, for it has a single, all-powerful, ultimate-creator deity. Later, this chapter will show an Óðin theology that differs radically from this one.

C.4) Regulation of Time

Even within a given theology, religions are quite capable of producing contradictory myths, and the cosmic super-deity theology includes two myths explaining how All-Father regulates the diurnal cycle. These myths also indicate how the Norse Earth goddess does or does not fit into the theology, but they give different versions.

C.4.a) Earth and Night

Chapter 10 of the *Gylfaginning* tells us a story of the genesis of Earth as well as the diurnal cycle. In this version a female giant named Night (Nótt) and someone named Other (Annar) are the mother and father of Earth.

Night subsequently married a god named Shining One (Delling), and their son was Day (Dag). All-Father gave Night and Day each a horse-drawn vehicle and set them up to rotate around Earth every twenty-four hours (Faulkes, 1987: 13-14; Faulkes, 2005: 13).

The text mentions All-Father (Alfoðr), and the deity in question is most likely the cosmic super-god All-Father. The story follows immediately upon introduction of the All-Father who is clearly not everyone's father (Óðin) in chapter 9, but this myth contradicts lore which clearly belongs to a theology of Óðin as an independent deity. (The nature of Óðin as an honorary All-Father is discussed again later, in section E of the present book.)

C.4.b) Elevation of Two Giant Children

The story of Earth and Night in *Gylfaginning* is followed directly by chapter 11, in which we are told another story about how All-Father regulates nighttime and daytime as well as the movements of the sun and moon and the phases of the moon. In that story, the giant Night and the god Day are not mentioned; nor is Earth (Young, 1954: 38; Faulkes, 2005: 13-14).

An abbreviated version of the story is as follows. A giant named Mundilfari (possibly Time-Wanderer) [20] gave birth to two children, a

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[20] The same story is also referenced in *Grimnismal* strophe 37 and Vafþrúðnismál strophe 23 (Bellows, 1936). In his note to the stanza in

boy named Moon (Mana) and a girl named Sun (Sól). The All-Father was offended, perhaps by the children's names, so He put the children in the sky. Moon and Sun were made to drive chariots and to govern the celestial objects that correspond to their names.

The expression I render here as "All-Father" (guðin) is commonly transliterated as "the gods" (for example in Young, 1954: 38), but the transliteration is misleading. In Pagan Scandinavia, "goð" was grammatically neuter and usually used on the plural. In other words, a "goð" was not specifically a male for a female deity, but more important, the plural did not usually refer to all the gods and goddesses. Instead the word seems to have denoted "the majesty and mystery of the Godhead" (Cleasby and Vigfusson, 1874). In their definition of "goð", Cleasby and Vigfusson argue that *Voluspa* distinguishes between a ruling or most-holy divine power "with no special names or attributes" on the one hand, and on the other hand lesser deities who lived in tribes and had specialized functions[21]. In fact, the present chapter has plenty of other evidence of just that distinction. Thus there is justification for interpreting the expression in the original ("guðin") as indicating one deity in a practice similar to the "royal 'we'" of Modern English.

C.5) Contradictions So Far

We already have one contradiction, for it is not logical that life as we know it could have been created solely by a planetary goddess and solely by a cosmic god. If we wanted to make excuses, then this contradiction could be explained by the Platonic device of having the Earth deity as a subordinate to and child of the cosmic super-deity, so that the Earth goddess creates life at the behest of the All-Father. However, that would be adding considerably to what the documentary evidence shows.

Given what we have already seen in other cultures, it is reasonable to suppose that most Norse people did not believe in, nor feel a need for, a reconciliation of these contradictory theologies.

Vafþrúðnismál, Bellows suggests a definition of "Turner". The Zoega (1910) and Cleasby-Vigfusson dictionaries do not translate the name; nor do they translate all of its components. "Mund" can denote hand or time, and "fari" probably refers to movement or time. Given the context, a name referring to disorder and time seems quite likely.

[21] Cleasby and Vigfusson seem to have difficulty seeing that the theology of "ginn-heilög goð" is an alternative, not a coherent aspect of another theology. The difficulty is a reason why the next section of the present book starts with an appeal for an open mind.

Anyway, there are even stronger contradictions to come in this account.

D) Polycentric Theology: The Borrson Brothers Partnership

The reader is cautioned to keep an open mind, because polycentric theology is a radical departure from the theories of deity to which most readers of this book are probably accustomed.

In this version of Creation, first there were various wights and objects, including the speaker in *Voluspa*, who tells the creation story as an eyewitness from the time before there were deities. Then, after the creation story ends, new characters and realms enter the narrative without intervention by the creator gods, and the new characters act independently of, and sometimes in conflict with, the wishes of the partnership.

No wight other than deities intentionally builds, invents, nor organizes anything in this story, but both of the Eddas allow that in two of the Norse theologies important things happen with and without conscious intent.

D.1) The Partnership at the Pinnacle

In the two Eddaic books taken together, the creation story that has the most support in terms of verbiage posits a partnership of three brothers as the pinnacle deity. This creation story is in chapters 4-8 of *Gylfaginning* and strophe 1-20 of *Voluspa* (Anderson, 1879; Bellows, 1936; Kvilhaug, 2012). The two sources for the creation story have slightly different versions.

The pinnacle of the pantheon in this theology is strongly analogous to a human business partnership formed by three brothers who run a company together. The analogy is that three brothers in a human business partnership would be redundant wights with slightly different personalities.

Thus, this partnership is not presented as the kind of mystery we see in Christian Trinitarianism, where there are said to be three spirit wights of quite different character that are actually markedly different aspects or segments of one deity, while the Trinitarian pantheon is said to be monotheistic.

D.2) Lack of an Ultimate Authority Figure

"Lack of an ultimate authority figure" refers to the partnership per se not being ultimate, primal, nor all-powerful. The expression "lack of an ultimate authority figure" does not refer to the pinnacle of the pantheon being a partnership of three gods.

Rather, this theology is polycentric in that there are significant actors who are independent of the partnership's corporate authority. The partnership does not create everything from nothing, nor does it create the material realm from spiritual forces or substances. The partnership does not even act at its own initiative all the time. These conditions provide a more human-like creation story, but the catch is that the partnership is never mentioned again after the major creation work is done.

Therefore, the partnership is not a type of cosmic super-deity who created and now governs all things great and small.

Interestingly, it seems only natural to many scholars that one would inquire of a Pagan pantheon, "Who is the highest and oldest of the gods?" Likewise, modern persons studying ancient pantheons typically take it for granted that a single authority figure is in charge. But this is not necessarily the case with the Norse, as it is not the case with the Tallensi.

The author of *The Deluding of Gylfi* has an indirect way of telling us to take our blinders off. Snorri Sturluson has the protagonist in *The Deluding of Gylfi* present this question during the story and get a refutation of the question per se. This happens when King Gylfi is dialoging with a partnership of three other kings: High, Just-as-High, and Third. Their names per se make a joke of the question, "who is the highest and oldest?" But when they are explicitly asked to name the highest and oldest deity, they give an explicit answer anyway, naming one deity (Brodeur, 1916: 15-16; *Deluding of Gylfi*, chapter 3).

But let us now turn to the reckoning of creation that gets the most verbiage in the Eddas.

D.3) Creation Begins without Deities

Prior to the existence of any deity, "chaos yawned" (Brodeur, 1916: 17ff; Bellows, 1936: 4; *Gylfaginning* 3, 4; *Voluspa* 3). The theory is implicitly that things existed and events happened, but conscious planning and execution were insufficient without at least one deity to organize and manage.

Nonetheless, things did happen. The first frost giant, Ymir, emerged in humanoid form by means of a meeting of heat and ice — mindless substances — without intervention by a deity nor any other conscious being. Without achieving consciousness, Ymir begat three ice giants. Then a magic cow enters the story without explanation, and she creates a beautiful wight — probably a giant — named Búri.

In turn, Búri becomes the grandfather of the first gods. Without benefit of sex nor marriage, Búri begat Borr, who found a giantess for his wife, and the couple produced the first three deities. We are not told whether the parents of the first gods had intended to reproduce themselves or breed a new type of being, but it is most likely that they had no intent, for up to this time consciousness was not a strength of giants (Brodeur, 1916: 17-19; *Gylfaginning* 3-6).

D.4) The Cosmic Partnership That Rules Heaven and Earth

In chapter 6 of *Gylfaginning*, it turns out that the three sons of Bórr, are rulers of heaven and earth" (Brodeur, 1916; Faulkes, 1987; Young, 1954; Faulkes, 2005: *Gylfaginning* 6.15-6.16). Therefore, if the partnership has a name, it is Rulers of Heaven and Earth, but "Borrson Brothers" and "Borrson Brothers Partnership" are more distinctive and descriptive.

However, as we have already seen, they did not create everything from scratch. This is not a theory of deity that has a tripartite ultimate-creator deity, for the Borrson Brothers do not create all the objects, realms, and beings, for some exist prior to them. For example, we have already seen that they have giants as their parents. And later, we will see theologically important things coming into existence without any mention of divine creation.

So the three sons of Bórr took charge of part of existing reality. No motivation for this is given, although partway into the creation story it is implied that they became motivated by female associates when the partners stop before their work is completed. Apparently it is to a limited extent simply in their nature to be constructive and active, although they need external motivation to fully be themselves[22].

D.5) The Borrsons Begin to Create

The first deities are the brothers Óðin, Vili, and Vé, or Óðin, Honir, and Loður, depending on which version one reads. The creation stories are very similar in the Prose and Poetic Eddas, but they do represent slightly different versions of the partnership-deity, and there

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[22] Don't we all?

are some other minor differences in the creation narratives (Bellows, 1936: *Voluspa* strophes 1-20; Faulkes, 1987: 10-19).

The brothers all act together and only together. This remarkable fact is in common between the Prose and Poetic Eddas.

D.5.a) Cosmic Objects & A Great Flood

The Borrsons created dry land, organized the sun, moon, and stars, and started the astronomic and seasonal events people use to measure time. Of course, they did not start time, for there were events occurring prior to their existence.

A lot of the brothers' construction involved destroying Ymir to re-use his body parts. They also killed all other giants, including their own parents, except for one couple that escaped to reproduce giantkind.

In this phase of creation, the Borrsons also created Middle Realm (Miðgarð), where people eventually live. But during this phase, no resides in Middle Realm. The gods also created Deity Compound (Asgarð) as a residence for themselves. During this phase, there were only three deities.

In the version shown in the Prose Edda, some of the brothers' construction involves a catastrophic flood which only affects frost giants, and which kills all of them but one male-female couple. The surviving couple is able restore the species, possibly by sexual reproduction.

But quite clear is a distinction between this flood and that of the Bible, in which Yahweh kills off almost all of mankind with a flood that also destroys all life not protected by floating in a boat. The moral implications of the two stories are completely distinct.

After the initial gods have everything set up to their satisfaction, they had plenty of joy and wealth and time to play games. There was still creation work to be done, but the brothers stopped until something motivational happened (Brodeur, 1916: *Gylfaginning* chapters 7-9; Bellows, 1936: *Voluspa* 3-7).

D.5.b) An Aside on Translations of "Garð"

An aside on translations is useful there, because translations are also interpretations.

According to the Zoega and Cleasby-Vigfusson dictionaries, the Old Norse "garð" denotes an enclosed space. It could be a stronghold, a fenced yard, or a house in a village. It can also be an enclosure. None of those definitions fits this context. Kvilhaug (2012: 10, 32) renders Miðgarð as "Middle World". I like Kvilhaug's definition, for "world" in the sense of the-reality-we-live-in fits this context as a

rendering of "garð". But I use "realm" here because this is a book about Earth religion, and in common usage (at least in America) our world is the planet Earth.

But to denote the walled residential compound of the Asa deities, I render Asgarð as Deity Compound, because that garð is a collection of residences only.

D.6) The Borrsons Marry Women and Go Back to Work

D.6.a) Three Wives for Three Brothers

But then they were joined by three mighty maidens, who moved in from giant-land. These ladies apparently become wives or otherwise wife-like close associates to the brothers with a typical effect of marriage partners on young men.

Most of the scholars whose works I studied in this regard have difficulty with the passage in *Voluspa* on the arrival of the three maidens (in the last two lines of strophe 8). Most interpreters infer that the "thursa meyjar" (giant maidens) who were "amatkar miök" (very mighty) were the Norns, goddesses of fate (Bellows, 1936; Bray, 1908: 279; Dronke, 1997; Hollander, 1962: 3; Kvilhaug 2012: 13; Larrington, 1996: 5, 264).

There three reasons why the maidens in question are not the three Norns.

(1) This is partly a problem of linguistic misunderstanding, because some translators render "amatkar miök" as "almighty" (which is an exaggeration), and many students of Norse religion view the Norns as mightier than the deities.

(2) But this is also a matter of how we understand myths. Students of myths should recognize that religious myth can arise from mundane human experience as well as from folk religion. Is not it typical of wives that they make husbands grow up more and work more than would otherwise be the case? And would the wives not have to be quite powerful to influence the brother gods — masters of the universe — to act more seriously and work harder? Yes, the maidens are from Giant-Land, but the Borrson Brothers are also of giant descent.

(3) Moreover, the goddesses called Norns arrive later in the story, and they come from inside Deity-Compound, the walled residential community of the Asa deities.

D.6.b) Creation of Dwarves

Dwarves are a major category of wight in Norse religion, at least in this theology, and dwarf-creation takes up substantial space in both of

the Eddas. After creation and anthropomorphizing dwarves, deities no longer build walls, jewelry, tools, nor other physical items. Also dwarves play active roles in other myths.

The coming of the maidens to the Borrson Brothers and dwarf creation are together in chapter 14 of *Gylfaginning* and dwarf creation alone is in strophes 9-16 of *Voluspa* (Bellows: 1936; Brodeur, 1916).

D.6.c) Creation of Mankind

The Borrsons find two logs or trees on a beach and make them into a man and a woman. Creation of mankind is described in *Gylfaginning*, chapter 9. Creation of mankind is also described in strophes 17-18 of *Voluspa*. Here too, the partners find trees on a seashore and make a man and a woman out of them without reference to an Earth goddess (Bray, 1908).

The gifts the Borrson Brothers give to mankind include clothing, color, power of movement, understanding, sight, and many other things, although different lists are given in the Prose and Poetic Eddas (Brodeur, 1916: 21; Kvilhaug, 2012: 16-17). It is interesting that the gifts of the deities include some things that are uniquely human and some that are not, and that not among the gifts are social organization and written language.

Voluspa strophe 17 says that the trees lacked fate (orlog), but Borrson Brothers do not make this among their gifts to the first man and woman. Instead, fate is given by other deities who come along later.

D.6.d) The Gift of Ond (Soul)

Soul is part of a collection of mental behaviors, traits, or objects given by the Borrson brothers. In both the Poetic and Prose Eddas, the brother Óðin gives "ond", which denotes breathing in bursts in and out, as many animals do — unlike the breathing of plants. But that word is also used to denote a spiritual component or being, similar to our modern "ghost" or "soul" (in Cleasby et al, 1957 look under "önd", in the Neckel 1936b glossary see page 209)[23]. This is the same word

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[23] The Norse poet was in step with speakers of other languages in his/her use of breath to also denote soul. The Old Norse word is similar in meaning to the Old English gást, which refers both to burst breathing (as well as natural bursts of wind) and to a psychic component of human personality. In Modern English, to permanently stop breathing is to give up the ghost.

Anixia (2008) and several commentators on her blog entry remarked that several languages have words denoting both breath and a spiritual or psychic object. For example, the Latin "spiritus" means

used in chapter 3 of *Gylfaginning* to say that All-Father gave mankind an eternal soul.

So this gift of "ond" could be an eternal psychic object or a mortal one. Either way, here we have a theology in which Óðin instead of All-Father gives mankind something like the Old English sawol or ghost — and Modern English soul or ghost.

Some scholars would deny that the Norse had a word for "soul" or that the concept was part of their culture, but "ond" in both accounts is very probably a psychic object, not physical breath. In each account, Óðin and one of his brothers give mental gifts and the other brother gives physical gifts. This is despite the different names given to two of the brothers — Vili and Vé in one story, Honir and Loður in the other — and the different lists of specific gifts. The physical gifts are listed last and the mental gifts first in both stories (Polomé, 1969).

Consider this in light of content in a previous chapter, which described the Neoplatonic belief in an immortal component of the human psyche — documented centuries prior to the existence of Christianity.

D.6.e) The Two Eddas Differ on the Order of Events

A theologically significant difference between the creation stories in the Prose and Poetic Eddas is that in the Prose Edda the creation of mankind is recounted before the story tells of the coming of the maidens to the Borrson Brothers. This means that the maidens have different levels of importance in the two versions.

D.6.f) Borrson Brothers Theology Lacks an Earth Goddess

Lack of mention of an Earth goddess is a notable feature in both the Prose and Poetic Edda accounts of the creation of Mankind by the Borrson Brothers. Either Earth is simply not a deity in Borrson Brothers theology, or She is part of a polycentric theory of deities, on which many wights exist and act independently. The latter is most likely the case, for the myths mentioning an Earth goddess do not fit in with creation myths of the Borrson Brothers Partnership.

There is more detail on polycentric theology in Section F of the present chapter.

D.6.g) The Borrson Brothers Vanish

The first half of *Gylfaginning's* chapter 9 is the last installment in the creation story featuring the Borrson Brothers Partnership. In the first half of the chapter, the Borrson Brothers create mankind and

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breath as well as spirit, and the Latin "anima" also denotes both soul and breath (Traupman, 1966).

Deity-Compound, but in the second half a single deity who acts alone enters the narrative. Brodeur's (1916) translation calls this deity "Allfather", but this interpretation is misleading, for more correct editions have "Óðin", and it is evident from a reading of all the creation stories in *Gylfaginning* that Óðin, the Damiourgos-like All-Father, and the Borrson Brothers partnership are three distinct entities[24].

One might be tempted to interpret the passage as saying that only one of the Borrsons has certain powers, but as one reads the rest of the chapter and beyond in the Prose Edda, one can clearly see that the Borrson Brothers Partnership simply drops out of the story when the independent Óðin comes in.

E) Óðin as Pinnacle Deity of Deity-Compound (Ásgarð)

This section shows that the theology of Óðin as the pinnacle deity is another polycentric theology.

He is clearly not depicted in any story as analogous to the Damiourgos of the Greek sources we examined. For example, although He is called All-Father, He is the All-Father who is obviously not the father of all, but only the father of some of the deities residing in one community of gods and goddesses. He is also not the king of all the deities, and He does not even administer the community where He resides.

E.1) This is not the Óðin in the Partnership

As mentioned above (in D.6.e), Chapter 9 of *Gylfaginning* has a break in the discussion about halfway through, when it shifts from the Borrson Brothers partnership to Óðin as an active creator acting alone. Editors and translators do not always put a paragraph break at this transition, but one is needed because of the shift between theological viewpoints.

The passage is not clear about what happens to the brothers. Do two of them die or retire? Do they all three merge into one wight?

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[24] Brodeur used Jónsson's 1907 edition (Brodeur, 1916: xx-xxi). In the 1907 edition, Óðin is not mentioned in chapter 9 of *Gylfaginning*, and Jónsson has Alfoðr using Gateway-Seat and begetting deities. Jónsson's 1931 edition agrees with Rask's (1818) and Faulkes' (2005) editions. Apparently Jónsons's later edition corrected errors in his earlier work.

Does one brother buy the other two out and then the two leave to start or take over a new realm elsewhere?

The most likely belief held by early medieval Norse Pagans was that this Óðin is not one of the Borrson Brothers partners. We have two decisive signs that these are very distinct notions of deity. One is that the Borrson Brothers Partnership disappears from the myths where the independent Óðin appears. The other is that while there is no indication of a Borrson Brothers Partnership cult, there is plenty of evidence of Óðin's importance in folk religion throughout Scandinavia (Turville-Petre, 1964; Davidson, 1967: chapters 4-6; see also passage E.3.b below).

However, for purposes of studying English Earth-goddess religion, we do not have to resolve this issue.

E.2) The Gateway Seat

The second half of *Gylfaginning's* chapter 9 starts by saying that in Deity-Compound (Ásgarð) there is a place called Gateway-Seat (Hliðskjálf), and that Óðin seats himself there. The word for the place is "stað", which usually denotes an abode, but it could be a small building or an outdoor shrine simply including a holy chair, since other passages in the Prose Edda list other abodes for Óðin in Deity-Compound. From there Óðin is able to observe all that exists and all that happens in all realms.

Apparently the Borrson Brothers created the spot with the chair as they created Deity-Compound, which was their last corporate act.

E.3) Óðin As Honorary All-Father

Here I will show that in the theology with Óðin as the top deity in the Asa-pantheon, "All-Father" is an honorific title of reverence, not a claim of creation. *The Divination of the Witch* does not support Óðin as a begetter of deities, and *Gylfaginning* does support the idea, but with significant limitations.

Let us examine the details.

E.3.a) Óðin Begets Some Other Deities But Not All

Óðin does create some deities, but the assertion that Óðin has sole parentage or parentage with a wife, of all deities and mankind is an oversimplification. He is neither the ultimate creator nor even a patriarchal extended family head.

Chapters 9 and 20 of *Gylfaginning* repeatedly assert that Óðin is the father of all the gods. The last half of chapter 9 of *Gylfaginning*

says that Óðin is called All-Father because He is the father of all deities and people, "and of all that was filled with His might", and it explicitly claims that He is the father of all mankind (Young, 1954: 37; Faulkes, 2005: 13). Chapter 20 twice states that He is the All-Father and that He has authority over all the deities as the eldest as well as the father (Faulkes 1987: 21-22; Faulkes, 2005: 21-22).

These assertions ignore the creation of mankind in the first half of chapter 9 and the accounting for night, day, and Earth in the following chapter and the completely independent emergence of various other wights and realms later in *Gylfaginning* and in *Voluspa* (discussed below in Section F).

The ninth chapter claims that with Frigg, Óðin is father of all the deities called Ases, but then it says that that Frigg is someone else's daughter, not Óðin's (Brodeur: 1916, pp 22-23; Faulkes, 1987: 13; Jónsson, 1931: 16-17).

Also, in *Hymir's Poem* (*Hymiskviða*, strophes 4-11) it turns out that a very different wight is the mother of the god Týr, and that His father and grandmother are giants (Bellows, 1936: 141-142; Neckel, 1936a: 85-87) [25]. There are other places in the surviving body of Norse myth in which deities have mothers other than Frigg and fathers other than Óðin, but we need not detail them for this study of the English Earth-goddess cult.

We might infer that among the missing myths are some in which Óðin functions as a family head as Zeus does in the Iliad and the Odyssey. However, there is no instance of such myths explicit nor hinted at in the surviving body of documentary evidence. We must use the evidence we have and assume that it was left in good faith.

E.3.b) Frigg and Jörð Are Not the Same Goddess
Some scholars interpret the last half of chapter 9 as indirectly saying that Frigg is another name for Earth, but that idea cannot be supported. The chapter depicts Óðin as father of Earth (Jörð). But if Óðin were Frigg's father, then there would be no point in the Prose Edda saying that her father is named Fjörgvin, since this is not among any list of Óðin's nicknames, and the alliteration is not required in prose[26]. Chapter 9 also says Earth is the mother of Óðin's first son,

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[25] Hollander's interpretation of these stanzas is that Óðin is Týr's father through the non-Frigg female, but this contradicts "minn faðir" in strophe 5, where Týr explicitly claims the giant Hymir as His father (Hollander, 1962: 84, footnote 7; Neckel, 1936a: 85).

[26] God-Thunder is said to be the son of the similarly-named Fjörgyn in *Voluspa's* Stanza 56 (in Neckel's ediţion — 55 or 53 in others). But that name refers to Earth, not to Óðin (Cleasby and

God-Thunder (Asa-Þór), which clearly implies that Earth is not also the mother of his other sons.

The remarks about Frigg and Earth suggest that lost mythic poems stated contradictory theologies that are only hinted at in the passage in question. One possibility is a theology in which Óðin and Frigg were parents of all the Asa-Deities but were themselves offspring of giants. Another possibility is a theology in which Óðin sires some Asa-Deities and creates some without a partner, and some Asa-Deities are parented by giants or perhaps not parented at all.

Of course, both of those possibilities leave "All-Father" as applied to Óðin merely an honorific title.

E.3.c) Not an Administrative Ruler

The myths of the Eddas contain reports of conferences among the deities, but these are not chaired by Óðin; nor does he make any decrees or rulings among the deities. For example, compare the mythic stories of *The Iliad* (Butler, 1942), which show Zeus as ruler of the Greek deities, with those of the Eddas.

E.3.d) Polycentrism: Limits to Óðin as Ruler

Instead of Óðin as absolute ruler of heaven and earth, it turns out that this god is the pinnacle of one of many groups of various types in a polycentric theology. Polycentrism is discussed more at length later, in Section F, but for now there are to be noted some remarkable limits to Óðin as All-Father and as ruler of the deities.

Not all the deities reside where Óðin might be considered king. In the overall body of myths, Night, Day, and Earth do not reside in Deity-Compound, the walled residential community of the Ases. You can see this in one place at the beginning of *Skaldskaparmal* (Language of Poetry), where there is a list of twelve gods of Deity-Compound who are to be judges and their accompanying goddesses: Earth, Night, and Day are not on the list (Faulkes, 1987: 59). They are also never on the guest list of any party or business meeting in any of the myths, and they do go on adventures.

Given that no myths depict Him doing chieftainly work, such as giving arm rings or directing troops in war, He is not analogous to a feudal lord or king.

And there are individual beings, communities of spirit wights, and spiritual species that reside outside His control. When chapter 9 of *Gylfaginning* states that Óðin must be called All-Father, the "all"

Vigfusson, 1874; Hollander, 1962: 11, footnote 84).

obviously does not include an existing independent community of deities (the Vanir — mentioned again below), the trolls of Ironwood, elves, and others mentioned in the Prose and Poetic Eddas, whose existence and behavior are beyond Óðin's or the Borrson Brothers' authority[27].

E.4) Principal as Well as Pinnacle Deity

E.4.a) Messenger to Mankind

It is possible that among the Norse, or at least among the Norse in what is now Denmark, there was a cult of Óðin in which He was not merely the top of the pantheon, but the only deity of importance in religious practice. This is implied by His role as messenger to mankind.

Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danish People* (*Gesta Danorum*), written in the late 1200's, includes several stories of Óðin appearing anthropomorphically in disguise to give information or magical help to a person. The god is often in rather thin disguise as a tall, one-eyed wise man (Elton, 1905).

Óðin's disguise is particularly transparent in chapter 64 of the *Saga of Óláf Tryggvason* (Hollander, 1964). One evening a man came to visit the Christian King Óláf. The man wore a hood partially covering his face and had only one eye. He knew many things of history and geography and was a fascinating conversationalist. After a long conversation with King Óláf the, the stranger went to the cooks of the place and gave them two thick, prime sides of beef to prepare for the king. But the king decided that all that added up to a visit from Óðin and discarded the meat. However, the story does not say he forgot the information he got.

No other Germanic deity has this relationship with mankind, and this has two possible implications. (1) It is possible that in a theology with Óðin as pinnacle deity, He is the one deity with whom a personal, intimate relationship commonly exists, at least with mystics, and possibly with a large percentage of the population. (2) The other implication to be considered is that in a cult with a different pinnacle deity, such as a cosmic super-deity, Óðin performs functions similar to those of Hermes in the Olympic pantheon or Mercury in the Roman

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[27] Alaric Hall has a discussion of the in-realm versus out-realm concept in Old Norse Pagan literature in his study of English elves (Hall, 2004: 31-46, 50-52), but he failed to take into account English venue evidence, which shows the fondness of English Pagans for temples without buildings and located in remote places. Hall also failed to take into account the existence in Old Norse myth of desirable wights and realms outside the Asa realm.

pantheon (Allan, 1997b; Atsma, 2000-2011c; Lindsay, 1921: 114; Hollander, 1962 and 1964; Kuhn, 1939; Nova Roma, 2009a; Shaw, 2002: 81-82, 106-111, 121-123, 134; 150-160, 227-229; Thorpe, 1844: 451; Wikipedia, 2012b; Young, 1954).

Of these two possibilities, the only likely one is that one theology and cult has Óðin as pinnacle deity also has Him as the deity with the most intimate, personal relationship with individual humans. The reason for this is that the multiple references identifying Óðin / Wodan / Wóden with the Roman god Mercurius also identify Him as chief deity, not just a go-between (Lindsay, 1921: 114; Kuhn, 1939; Shaw, 2002).

In turn, this would imply a polytheism in which the lesser deities are not needed as go-betweens. We have already seen an analogous polytheistic religion, because the spirit wights below Óðin in such a cult would have about the same importance as the spirit wights in Nuer religion below Kwoth.

E.4.b) The God of Many Roles in Folk Religion

The importance of this god in the religion as practiced in folk religion is very probably not adequately revealed by myths, but this inadequacy is hinted at in the body of mythic evidence, at least in the list of aliases of Óðin, and in the Poetic Edda, in *Havamal* (The High One's Poem).

Chapter 20 of *Gylfaginning* lists many aliases of Óðin, and the names imply a great multitude of functions. In general, the very long list of His aliases and other indications of various specific functions imply significantly different versions of a theology in which Óðin is the pinnacle deity of the Asa-deities.

At least four of the names also imply alternate conceptualizations of the god, for the list includes not only All-Father but also the names of the three informants who are at the time speaking to the Swedish King Gylfi. The three-name version should not be interpreted as an implication that Óðin is necessarily identical with the Borrson Brothers Partnership; the reasons for this are given above, in passage D.6.e.

Chapter 20 of *Gylfaginning* also says that the champions who die in combat are assigned to afterlives in both Slain-Hall (Valhalla) and Friendly-Floor (Vingolf). This suggests an alternative to well-known statements elsewhere regarding His relation to warriors who die in combat.

In addition, *Sayings of the High One* (*Havamal*) implies functions not implied by adventure stories.

F) Polycentrism: More Wights and Other Objects Emerge

Norse mythic evidence indicates yet more contradictory ideas about divinity (and yet more diverse cults).

At the end of the creation stories, more objects emerge without intervention by the Borrson Brothers or Óðin, either directly or through subordinate agents of causation. Apparently the same polycentric emergence myths apply to each of those two theologies or to the possibility of a single theology that somehow welds the two together at the point where Deity-Compound has been established.

There is a graphical representation of polycentrism in Norse religion in Larrington's "Main Genealogies of Gods, Giants, and Heroes", which lists some specific deities, giants, and others not mentioned here who emerged without intervention by the Borrson Brothers, nor by Óðin (Larrington, 1996: following page xxi).

Certainly, the unexplained emergence and independent operation of spiritual species and communities is not compatible with the notion of a Damiourgos-like All-Father nor with the notion of an all-mother Earth goddess. Therefore, the stories described in this section apply only to the two Borrson-Brothers and independent-Óðin theologies.

F.1) Day, Night, and Earth

F.1.a) The Emergence of Night, Earth, and Day

Chapter 10 of *Gylfaginning* depicts the emergence of Day, Night, and Earth. This contradicts *Voluspa* (strophes 4-6), where the Borrson Brothers organize day and night, and where they raise land above sea level, and it also contradicts the passages where land and sea are created from Ymir's corpse.

Briefly, the story is this. The giant Night (Nott) was sired by a giant named Narfi. In turn, Night bore children by various males, and one of the males was named Other (Annar). Her child by Annar was Earth (Jörð) — in another myth said to be a child of Frigg and Óðin. Then Night mated with Shining One (Delling) and gave birth to Day (Dag). All-Father put Night and Day into wheeled vehicles pulled by horses and put them in the sky to each circle the Earth (Jörð) every twenty-four hours (Brodeur, 1916: 22; Jónsson, 1931: 17; Young, 1954: 37-38).

If one were to argue that Other is Óðin disguised as a giant, one would have to deny the myth in the previous chapter of *Gylfaginning*, which implies that Earth is the daughter of Frigg and Óðin. Also, one

would have to deal with the emergence of the god Shining One without the slightest sign of action by Óðin or by the Borrson Brothers.

F.1.b) An Aside on Conversion

The reason for these contradictions is surely that poets had created alternative myths reflecting alternative theologies.

This is the place to insert an aside on conversion to Christianity. The Christians came to Scandinavia with a sacred book and with a bureaucracy that supported a standardized body of authorized lore. In other words, the Christians had a body of lore that was treated as if it were sacred.

This is a strong contrast with a body of lore which is without a body of officials to support an authorized version and which is subject to apparently random variations by just any talented performer who felt like editing a myth while high on ale.

The importance of this aside is that most people who write about the conversion to Christianity in Northern Europe obviously fail to consider the possibility of heterogeneity and variability of the Pagan religions as having existed, much less as a factor in conversion.

F.2) The Tree and Two Wells

Three interesting objects appear to have significance, although we cannot be sure what the full nature of that significance is. In *Voluspa*, strophe 19 introduces the ash tree called Yggdrasil, the Well of Mimir, and the Well of Urð; and these objects also appear in chapter 15 of *Gylfaginning* (Bray, 1908; Brodeur, 1916; Underhill, 1930: 119-120, 133-150).

Perhaps the Borrson Brothers constructed the initial wall of Deity-Compound so as to include the already-existing tree called Yggdrasil and the two wells, or perhaps these objects appeared on their own.

F.2.a) The Tree

The tree called Yggdrasil appears to have mystical or other meditational value, given the obscure symbolism in its description in the Prose Edda. However, documented myths do not firmly connect it as a symbol with any deity, and the implication is that the tree refers to a process, activity, or set of relationships quite apart from anything implied in any creation myth. It is possible that some Scandinavians were in an atheistic tree-mystery cult that they practiced alongside, but separately from, deity worship.

F.2.b) The Wells

Two sources of groundwater also appear without a genesis story to explain them: Mimir's and Urð's.

The "wells" in the source documents refer to an invisible source of water (hence metaphorically to some important resource), but the reference is not clearly to an artificial or a naturally-occurring source — it could be either. The Old Norse word in this context that is commonly translated as "well" is the masculine noun "brunn", which denotes a natural spring, a human-dug well, or a fountain (Cleasby et al, 1957).

The idea represented by the original word is therefore a source of surface water from the ground, not necessarily an artificial well dug by someone named Urð or Mimir and lined with bricks. The word is used in Old Norse proverbs to indicate origin, as in the saying cited by Cleasby et al, that "all turn to the same well/spring", implying that the people in question all get their ideas or habits from the same source[28].

But the definition of "brunn" also raises the possibility that both Mimir's source of water from the ground and Urð's represent ideas or information sourced from the realm of the dead or from the Norse Earth goddess[29].

Mimir's Well or Spring is where ancient lore, wisdom, and understanding are stored or where they originate. The Well or Spring of Urð does not appear in myths other than the divine creation, but like Yggdrasil, it seems to have some meaning in liturgical or private mystical work, and it is a source of three goddesses.

In *Skaldskaparmal*, we are told that ancient poets referred to Christ as having his throne at "Weird's Well", which in the original is Urþarbrun, Urð's Source of Ground Water (Faulkes, 1987: 126-127; Jónsson, 1931: 158).

Since one of these sources of water from underground belongs to one of the goddesses called Norns, this brings us to the next subtopic.

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[28] This calls into question Kvilhaug's (2012: 17) translation of "Urðar Brunni" as "Well of Origin", which would be a redundant expression, for all wells are origins. Cleasby and Vigfusson (1874) define urð as fate, which they call "weird", so that their translation would be "Fate's Well".

[29] Kvilhaug (2004) has an extensive discussion of spiritual or ceremonial travel to realms of the dead with the purpose of coming back with wisdom and psychic growth.

F.3) Norns

The Norse goddesses of fate —nornic wights — are independent of other deities and functionally overlap them. Moreover, they provide further polycentrism by existing in distinct sets.

F.3.a) Two Disjunct Sets of Norns

We do not see a single system of nornic wights, but instead two sets of nornic wights appear on their own initiative and without help. On one hand, there are three residing in Deity Compound, and I shall call them High Norns or just Norns (capitalized). On the other hand there is a multitude of other norns doing the same job as the High Norns.

For convenience in the present discussion, let us refer to the more numerous set as "lesser norns or just norns (no capitalization).

Voluspa introduces in strophe 20 the three wights who make fate for all of mankind; they appear in chapter 15 of the Prose Edda. These are not the same maidens who came from giant-land to join the Borrson Brothers, for they come from a location at the base of Yggdrasil, a beautiful house of their own.

No explanation is offered for the entry of the three High Norns into the narrative, for this is a polycentric theology.

In the Poetic Edda, there are only the three High Norns decreeing collectively the fate (orlog) of each person by scratching marks into pieces of wood.

In the Prose Edda, there are in addition to these three goddesses a limitless multitude of nameless lesser norns, one or a few for each person who is born.

There is no relationship between the two types of nornic wights. The High Norns do not need a staff to administer the fates they decree, nor are they invoked by lesser norns. Instead, the two sets of beings behave without regard to each other.

The two sets also include different types of spirit beings. The lesser norns are not necessarily goddesses, for they include some originating from deities, some from elves, and some from dwarves. Moreover, although the High Norns seem to be ethically neutral, the many lesser norns vary in honor and goodwill (Brodeur, 1916: 28-29; Jónsson, 1931; Neckel, 1936a).

It is possible each person gets a collective tutelary being, a partnership of two, three, or even a small crowd. Although the Prose Edda does not specify a quota of norns per person, if there were only one for each living human the lesser norns would resemble the tutelary spirits of fate assigned to each person just before birth in the

reincarnation myth in *Governance*. It is also possible that the notion of tutelary spirits in Norse Religion is an adaptation of the genius (personal deity) of pre-imperial Roman theology. Or perhaps the Norse did not have a consensus on this matter.

F.3.b) Theological Relevance of Norns

Both sets of nornic wights are of particular interest because they are a fundamental feature of the polycentrism in this Norse theology.

People take an interest in deities — among other reasons — because they expect deities to have an inspirational or magical effect on the course of their own conduct or on phenomena in their environments. But in the Norse theologies that take up most of the space in myths, lesser norns and High Norns have this effect on their own initiative and without interference from any other causal agent. The other spiritual causal agents are subject to interference (from various sources) and supplication.

However, there is a theological similarity between the goddesses of fate in *Timaios* and those in the Eddas, in that the goddesses insulate other deities from blame or praise. In *Timaios*, the passage that deals with the Morai emphasizes that the fate given to each person is his or her own choice, not to be blamed on the Damiourgos. And the Norns and lesser norns act without regard to the will of other spirit wights, although they also act without regard to the decisions of people. (An exception might be occasional magical invocations of tutelary spirits in child naming rituals.) Therefore the High Norns or lesser norns absolve the denizens of Deity-Compound of responsibility for unpleasant lives[30].

Quite clearly, the data imply two possibilities. One possibility is that there were two separate cults, one of lesser norns and one of High Norns. The other possibility is that there was a cult of lesser norns in folk religion with High Norns existing only in myth.

F.3.c) Cultic Activity Regarding Norns

It is very likely that there was cultic activity regarding High Norns or the personal norns in domestic religion. There is a passage in chapter 3 of *Jokul Buason's Tale* where it is asserted as highly credible among Pagans that High Norns or lesser norns would help people in divination. The passage says that "the norns had prophesized" (Porter,

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[30] Conceiving of deities as limited by other deities is only one way of escaping the dilemma posed by perfect-deity theologies. The other way to avoid this issue is to conceive of deities as limited at least in knowledge and possibly also in capacity. Viney (2014) has a discussion of this matter from an Abrahamic-religion point of view.

1997d: 333). It is not clear at this point whether this refers to the High Norns or the lesser norns, but it definitely indicates cult activity that involved consulting at least one version of these beings. The passage in which "Fates" are consulted in the *Gesta Danorum* is clearly a mention of the lesser norns (Elton, 1905: 135)[31].

In turn, this has fundamental implications regarding the practice of Norse religion.

First, the theology that has a great multitude of norns implies a religious practice oriented largely if not primarily toward personal tutelary spirits. This would be a practice even more decentralized than the Tallensi ancestor cult that we have already seen. And, like the Tallensi ancestor cult, a norn-oriented religion could exist alongside and largely independently of an actual ancestor cult, an All-Father cult, an Earth-goddess cult, and others.

But the existence of personal norns or teams of norns is contrary to the notion of one team of three Norns for everyone, which would be an instance of high-deity worship. Hence, the cults of the two types of Norns would tend to be mutually exclusive alternatives. But both cults could easily coexist in a given community or district.

Second, the theology that has either a major-deity Nornic cult or an extensive personal-norn cult could only exist within a religious structure that is highly decentralized theologically and probably also liturgically. In other words, it would be difficult to explicitly worship Norns and at the same time other denizens of Deity-Compound at the same time, unless the procedure was to be very vague or to address the same prayer to different deities in turn, because the different deities' functions overlap.

F.4) An Aside on Interpretations of the High Norns

The topic of the High Norns is also of interest as a case study in the importance of Platon's works in the modern world and as a case study of pitfalls in philology. This aside is as important methodologically as for its contribution to understanding English Earth religion.

F.4.a) Influence of Neoplatonism

The names translators commonly show for the Norns of Deity-Compound definitely show of the influence of *Governance* on the translators of the Poetic Edda.

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[31] The other passages in Saxo's work involving triads of magic-working maidens probably do not involve nornic wights. Instead, the wights in question are more like valkyries.

The system of High Norns in the Eddas has not got much in common with the lore of the Allotters (Morai) in neoPlatonic theology. Nonetheless, well-educated translators often cannot prevent their interpretations of norn-related evidence from being influenced by Neoplatonism, especially by *Governance* (see chapter 4, passages E.3.b and E.3.c of the present book).

There is not significant disagreement on the (untranslated) names showing in Old Norse manuscripts. Jónsson (1931: 23) shows as the names of the three principal Norns as Urðr, Verþandi, and Skulld. Rask (1818: 20) and Faulkes (2005: 18) show similar spellings in the Prose Edda, as does Neckel in his edition of the Poetic Edda (1936: 5).

Translators tend to confuse High Norns with Morai. Bellows (1936) and Young (1954) translate the High Norns' names as Past, Present, and Future. Kvilhaug (2012) renders Origin, About to Happen, and Debt, but she adds that the Norns represent "past, present, and future". Dronke (1997: 12) writes Had to Be, Coming to Be, and Has to Be. Larrington (1996) gives Fated, Becoming, and Must Be as the Norns' names. Hollander (1962) gives us Fate (which means Past), Present, and Future.

Wisely, Anderson (1879) simply calques the names: Urd, Verdande, and Skuld. Faulkes (1985: 18) translates only one name, rendering the names as "Weird, Verdandi, and Skuld", a choice which is almost as good as Anderson's.

The reader will recall from a previous chapter that in *Governance* the Moirai each sang a song appropriate to Her role, one each representing past, present, or future. It seems plausible that if the Norns were adapted from Greek religion (or vice versa) that the names of the Norns would be Old Norse equivalents of Allotter, Thread-Maker, and Finalizer.

Did so many scholarly translators decide that Norns that resembles Morai simply based on the direct evidence, or did they inadvertently rely on clues in Greek lore (with which they had become previously familiar) without being aware of the source?

F.4.b) Removing the Morai from Norn Lore

But if we consider the primary sources directly, what do the Norns' names tell us of the gang of three?

Urð has no meaning in Old Norse other than as the name of a goddess. The Cleasby-Vigfusson (1874) dictionary defines "Urðr" as "a weird, fate" and as "one of the three norns", and that dictionary adds that the word is cognate with the Anglo-Saxon wyrd and with the Modern English weird (but the goddess' name is surely not Weird). Other possibilities found in dictionaries can be eliminated. The

Cleasby-Vigfusson dictionary also informs us that urð in compounds as urðar- denotes a feral nature (as in urðar-kottr, a wild cat), but it seems quite unlikely that the goddess' name is "Wild" or "Feral" and that Her source of ground water is "Wild Well". Zoega (1910) defines "urða" as a heap of stones, but that is surely also not a clue to the goddess' name. The one remaining possible substantive meaning would be if the name "Urð" were a calque of the Old English wyrd, implying that a personification of wyrd was added to an already-existing pair of fate-making goddesses.

Likewise, Cleasby-Vigfusson defines Verðandi merely as a Norn's name, although the name appears related to the neuter noun verð, which denotes price or value. It also seems related to the verb verða, denoting "to happen or occur, to happen to someone, or to blunder".

Cleasby-Vigfusson defines "skuld" as a debt or something owed and due. In some compounds and in ancient laws, "skuld" refers to personal bondage or other strong financial or personal obligation.

Consider also that what is structured about the present is that it reflects past events. Or to put it another way, do the names of Urð and Verðandi imply that one is the past as it affects the present while the other Norn is the result of the past? Thus, based on examining dictionary entries, it is possible to justify some conclusions regarding what the High Norns represent. (1) If one of the names is an adaptation of the Old English "wyrd" and represents a personification of wyrd, this raises the possibility that one Norn does indeed refer to circumstances based on past events (Stanfield, 2012: Appendix E). (2) Then based on etymology, we could infer that Verðandi is a personification of valuation, preferences, or priorities based on preferences. (3) And the name of Skuld definitely refers to social obligations.

But personal priorities or preferences and social obligations are not the same as present and future.

So there is no reason in the direct evidence to support a past-present-future internal structure for the high Norns as a partnership or three-aspect deity.

Fortunately, there is no need to work out the individual personalities of the High Norns in this study, for they only work together. We will get by just fine discussing High Norns only as a single, collective deity.

F.5) Elves

Elves (also known as light-elves) are another type of wight that appears in both Eddas without an accounting for their origination.

Elves are first mentioned in *Voluspa*, strophe 48, after the creation story. In *Gylfaginning*, elves are first mentioned in chapter 15 (Anderson, 1897; Kvilhaug, 2012a).

This is also an independent community, for elves have a homeland of their own in a separate region of "heaven" (Young, 1954: 46-47). Although they reside outside the region of Deity-Compound, one of the high deities is said to be lord of the elves. However, that god did not create them and has no further relationship to them elsewhere in formal lore (Larrington, 1996: *Grimnismal*, strophe 5).

F.6) An Entirely Independent Community of Deities

Strophe 21 of *Voluspa* starts a story involving an entirely separate community of deities — the Vanir — which appears in the poem without explanation and promptly enters into conflict with the residents of Deity-Compound. This clearly implies that more than one set of deities emerged independently and without intervention by a higher god or goddess. And it is not only the other deities, but also their place of residence — Van-Home (Vanaheim) — that appeared independently (Bellows, 1936).

Eventually, some of the Vanir migrate to Deity-Compound and other deities migrate from Deity-Compound to Van-Home. This residential integration took place to achieve peace, but the change highlights the independence between the communities and their equal rank.

G) Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has shown quite clearly that a theologically diverse religion prevailed comfortably among the pre-Christian Norse, reflecting not merely differences in terminology but in basic views of nature and human life. Four theologies have been described, based primarily on mythic evidence: two that are monocentric and two that are polycentric. Also described are hints of other theologies existing in folk religion and barely mentioned in the myths.

G.1) Complexity in the Source Data

This passage asserts that contradictions in Snorri Sturluson's writings imply complexity in his source data, a complexity which in turn implies the existence of incompatible theologies and cultic variety in Norse Pagan religion.

But in general, it looks rather as if Sturluson (and perhaps some of his informants) simply got tangled in a jumble of conflicting theologies and incomplete accounts.

It is difficult enough to compose a long work that reads smoothly and consistently while working with keyboards, electronic files, and computer programs and able to occasionally make throwaway printed drafts. Working on (expensive) vellum with ink in poorly lit offices or dictating to a clerk without looking directly at all the copy would make leaving in some errors practically inevitable.

And the difficulties become even worse when the data — descriptions of a religion with multiple, conflicting theologies — resemble a tangle of serpents or a can of worms.

Fortunately, for present purposes it is not necessary to sort out the entire Norse ideological and cultic structures, for the present task is only to indicate evidence of multiple, contradictory theologies.

G.2) Theologies Expressing Monocentric Views of Life

This chapter has shown two theologies based on monocentric views of life and similar to theories of deity observed in other polytheistic cultures. As Snorri Sturluson explains, people opined that there must be some explanation for the orderliness of astronomical and earth-occurring events, and therefore they inferred a central authority regulating everything. In this view of life, all natural and supernatural phenomena are lawful, and if we do not see the lesser patterns and the overall pattern, the reason for that is merely our ignorance or lack of perfect wisdom.

Monocentrism should not be confused with monotheism, for both the theology centered on an All-Father and the theology centered on an Earth goddess (who is similar to the Earth goddess we will see in English evidence) have room for other deities.

G.3) Theologies Expressing Polycentric Views of Life

This chapter has also presented evidence of two polycentric theologies: one with a non-personal creator, and one with Óðin as the pinnacle deity of its pantheon. Along with this we found a theological basis for a cult of High Norns and a theological basis for a cult of lesser norns.

The polycentric view of life implicitly allows separation of powers, and therefore checks and balances, built into an overall system of natural and supernatural phenomena. And if we add in cults of norns, household spirits, family goddesses, or elves, there appears a model resembling federal or feudal governance.

Therefore in this polycentric view of life, if we sometimes see disorganization, moral unfairness, or apparently random disasters and inconveniences, our perceptions simply are correct. If the culture which produced this theology had writing materials sufficient to give us discursive philosophical treatises, it would not have needed to explain how an all-powerful and morally perfect cosmic super-deity allowed planets to collide with each other or plagues to kill thousands of persons at a time. The pleasure planet would not have to be perfect (Ellison, 2008: "Strange Wine").

G.4) A Creator with No Cult

The Borrson Brothers deviate from conventional views of Norse theology in three major ways. Two of these deviations have already been mentioned. One is that the entity at the top of the pantheon is a partnership. More important is the matter of polycentrism, which is discussed above. But another is the lack of cult support.

The mythic, place-name, and saga evidence taken together clearly imply that the partnership is the sort of ultimate creator deity that sets up all or most of the universe and then disappears. There is no place-name nor other evidence of worship of the Borrson Brothers as a partnership, so the most reasonable inference for now is that the Borrson Brothers were not the object of cult activity, neither as a collective nor as individuals.

This in turn suggests two possibilities. One is that the Borrson Brothers theology existed only in poetic stories. The other possibility is that the pre-Christian Norse posited a religion in which the creator or organizer of life as we know destroyed its origin, then destroyed itself or was destroyed by one of its products. This would allow a coherent concatenation of most of polycentric creation stores into one theology that could support at least three cults. But the concatenation would require adding an inferred myth to reconcile the two theologies

G.5) Loose Integration into One Religion

The main point of this chapter is that Norse religion was certainly not less complex and contradictory than shown here. Norse religion might be even more complex than shown here, but the present investigation is limited in purpose. Nonetheless, the Norse people attended religious community-wide ceremonies with no indication of conflict among Pagans in the historical record.

At least the same degree of confusion and contrast that we have seen in the evidence so far was probably taken for granted by Snorri Sturluson's informers. Other scholars have also inferred from a much

broader range of evidence than is presented in this chapter that Old Norse religion was "a multitude of traditions without a common origin" (Faulkes, 2005: xxvi; Jennbert, 2011, especially chapter 7; O. Sundqvist, 2012).

And by the way, one of the theologies shown here is one that features an Earth goddess at the pinnacle of the pantheon. We will see such a deity again, and more clearly imaged, in the evidence from early medieval England.

Contradictory bodies of myth and cult practice can be documented with regard to other religions also, and the reader can find examples in Graves' (1960) compilation of Greek mythic stories and O'Flaherty's (1975) compilation of Hindu myths. And the next chapter, on Roman religion, will also show cults based on contradictory myths and ideas about folk religion, and the Roman polytheists seem to have gotten along just fine.

Chapter 7: Two Roman Earth Goddesses

A) Introduction

This chapter satisfies two important objectives. It presents yet another example of a polytheistic religion that encompasses cults with contradictory theologies, and it also helps to clarify primary-source data on Proto-Germanic religion.

A.1) Contradictory Theologies

The topic of Roman religion in general is too large for this chapter, but enough of it is examined here to show a religion that incorporates logically incompatible theologies without schism and violence, and apparently with slightly less irritation than that which is commonly found in nuclear families that include adolescents. In short, Roman religion is an excellent example of a social institution that fits the contrasting theologies model of religion.

A.2) Identities of Two Germanic Goddesses

The other important objective of this chapter is to help define two Germanic Earth goddesses who are mentioned by a Roman author.

The Roman author Cornelius Tacitus left a social geography called *Germania*, which is widely used by modern scholars to present a model of cult structure of the Germanic tribes prior to the migration age. On one hand, Tacitus wrote that the progenitor of all the Germanic peoples was an "earth-born god", that the Aestii primarily worship "Mother of Deities", and on the other hand he wrote that the Angles and six other tribes were most notable for their worship of "Nerthus, or Mother Earth" (Mattingly and Hanford, 1970: 102, 134; *Germania*: 1, 40, 45).

It is quite clear that Tacitus expected his readers to understand the names Mother Earth and Mother of Deities to distinct spirit beings. This chapter will show what Tacitus' audience understood when he referred to one goddess as Mother Earth (Terra Mater) and to another as Mother of Deities (Mater Deum). This information will be used in the next chapter to show that Nerthus was a regional Earth goddess, but Mother of the Gods had a more widespread following and was understood as a universal and more powerful deity.

B) General Description of Roman Earth Goddess Religion

The Romans had a few Earth goddesses, and they overlap in functions as well as monikers, but they also have sufficiently distinct jurisdictions or functions to be identifiable. The theologies posited in support of these goddesses were not all compatible, but the Romans managed all this intellectual variety — it would be incorrect say the Roman intellectuals "blended" these theologies — without the violence and vigorous struggles that later came to characterize Abrahamic religions. Like the Tallensi and the Norse, by and large the Romans enjoyed their theological diversity.

B.1) Terra Mater and Mater Deorum

B.1.a) Mother Earth

During Rome's first centuries, the Romans had a goddess named Terra (Earth), and sometime early in that period they merged an Etruscan goddess named Tellus in with Terra. This consolidated goddess is the one Tacitus' Roman readers would have understood as Mother Earth, as opposed to Mother of Deities.

In the present analysis this deity will be generally indicated by the names "Mother Earth", "soil goddess", or "Terra" except in direct quotations from Roman sources.

The analysis here will show that Mother Earth was identified with soil as well as with the planet, but that She was not a deity of the first rank. She was not worshipped outside native Roman culture. She was relatively ineffectual in her functions and had a relatively limited range of functions.

B.1.b) Mother of Deities

This chapter will also show that Mother of Deities was officially inducted into the Roman pantheon in 204 CE, after several centuries of Mother Earth worship. Roman Pagan intellectuals used various names for this deity, including Magna Mater Deum Idea (Great Mother of Deities from Mount Ida), Magna Mater (Great Mother), Terra, and Tellus.

In the present analysis She will be consistently referred to as Mother of Deities except in direct quotations from Roman sources.

The new goddess was a high-ranking deity. In various versions, Mother of Deities was worshipped in a large proportion of the Roman Empire. She was not identified with soil but was identified with the

planet we live on; She was considered celestial as opposed to chthonic. This goddess was not consistently theorized to need a partner to produce deities nor to support life. She also had a much wider range of functions than did the soil goddess.

B.2) Other Earth Deities

Roman religion as a whole identified several deities — not only goddesses — with the planet earth, its surface, or its fertility. Some additional examples are shown in this subsection to briefly illustrate the theological complexity and contradictions of the religion as a whole.

Many Americans in the early twenty-first century think that in Roman religion, Venus was simply a goddess of human erotic love. But in the first 58 lines of the first book of his *De Rerum Naturae*, Lucretius prays to Venus as if She were not just a goddess of erotic love but a power over all nature and the will of persons. She has this power mostly through erotic desire, but She is also a giver of clear thought and intellectual energy (Stallings and Jenkyns, 2007).

Several deities are involved in overlapping Earth-deity functions. In book 7 of Augustine's *City of God* (Dods, 1871: 7.23-24), he quotes Pagans including the great Roman theologian Varro as stating or implying overlaps between (any) Earth goddess and the Neptune (god of the sea), Pluto, and Orcus (underground deities). Also mentioned as Earth deities are the goddesses Proserpine and Vesta.

However, the ancient Romans did not refer to each of these Earth goddesses indiscriminately as Earth Mother nor as Mother of Deities (Gardenstone, 2012; Dods, 1871: books 7 and 8).

B.3) Earth Mother and Mother of Deities in a Thanksgiving Prayer

The Roman myth *Aeneid* shows documentary evidence that Roman readers understood that Mother Earth and Mother of Deities were names of distinct goddesses, for they are listed separately as recipients of prayer.

The prayer comes from a myth which starts with Aeneas' flight from burning Troy and culminates in his founding of Rome. At this point in the story, the refugees have made it to their promised land and will survive there because of protection by Aeneas' mom (Venus) and Mother of Deities, who had to struggle against Juno's hatred. (Juno's hatred of the refugees is carried over into the Roman myth from

Hera's resentment of Trojans in the *Iliad*, but that, as the saying goes, is another story.)

Aeneas prays — in the following order — to "the spirit of the place", Earth (Tellus), nymphs, Night, the stars, "Jove of Ida", "the Phrygian Mother" (Mother of Deities), and both of his parents (Fagles, 2007: 216-218; Fairclough, 1934; Kline, 2002b) [32]. Evidence found in this myth and other documented Latin prayers is discussed in detail in Appendix D.

B.4) An Aside on Theological Diversity

Something Hindu Online said in 2013 about polytheistic Hindu religion can be said also of Roman Paganism: "It is more a League of religions than a single religion with a definite creed" (http://hinduonline.co/HinduReligion/AllAboutHinduism7.html).

It is useful to consider why Romans and other peasant-society peoples would have tolerated logically contradictory theological conglomerations, because to many persons in industrial societies dominated by European culture, the degree of religious toleration looks intolerable, and therefore unlikely, despite the fact that such toleration — although on a different basis — is an everyday experience for them.

The answer has two parts. (1)There is a theological justification, and (2) that justification is supported by an important, practical matter of mundane life in pre-industrial peasant societies.

B.4.a) Theological Rationale

The theological logic is that all these partially redundant deities are manifestations of deity-ness or holy energy or divine soul, and the overall complex divinity is divided up conceptually for human understanding. In other words, Roman theologians tell us that it is tolerable to have slightly different theories of deity that contradict each other, because all notions of deities address the one religious mystery, which is too complex and obscure to be understood in one piece.

For example, Virgil in *Georgics* uses a technical discussion of apiculture to give us a theological lesson (book 4, lines 221 and 222). He says that there is an element of divine intelligence in all things, including land, sea, sky, and all creatures; and this is because each living thing derives its life from that principle or spirit of divinity. After death each living being is dissolved into the broad ecosystem and

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[32]The line numbers for these prayers in Fairclough's edition differ from those in Fagle's translation, for Fairclough's line numbers are 107-147 and Fagle's are 118-167 (Fairclough, 1934; Kline, 2002b).

restored to unity with the ultimate spirit of principle of divine intelligence. Virgil is vague about whether restoration involves re-use of material or reincarnation of souls or both, but what matters for present purposes is that the "deum" is the spirit or soul in the broad ecosystem of the planet or in the entire universe, not exclusively the pinnacle of the Roman pantheon, Who is the god named Jupiter or Jove[33].

Varro expresses a similar view, that a divine spirit pervades all empirical reality, in his book on natural theology, which we know through Augustine's negative criticism (Dods, 1871: 8.23-24 -- print pages 319-322).

B.4.b) Practical Considerations of Daily Life

Consider also how non-theological matters can bias people to find a reason to tolerate contradictory theologies.

People of modern industrial cultures are accustomed to large amounts of scheduled nonwork time. In modern industrial societies (including China), almost every gainfully-employer person has two holidays per week for almost every week plus several other holidays scattered about the calendar, and some of those extra holidays are scheduled so as to make a 3- or 4-day sequence of festival or vacation days. A large proportion of the gainfully-employed population has in addition formally-scheduled vacation days as part of their employment. Moreover, for most employed persons workday hours are customarily scheduled for about two-thirds of the daylight duration on days for which work is scheduled.

In pre-industrial societies, work hours and days are not so restricted on a secular basis, so religious festivals are much more necessary.

Moreover, it is not possible in such societies to merely make a trip to a theme park to have a festive day. Instead festivity sponsorship by the state or wealthy celebrants is required. Also, an excuse for a magnate or a state to fund a large banquet with plenty of meat would be a welcome thing because in ancient societies most people — city or countryside — found it quite expensive if not physically impossible to

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[33] Dods' translation of this passage seems Christian ("for God pervadeth all things", as does Fairclough's translation ("for God, they say, pervades all things"). Kline's translation of the same phrase seems more polytheistic ("since there is a god in everything".) But the Latin says "deum namque ire per omnia". This expression specifies neither a specific deity nor the gender of a deity; it is closer to saying that there is deityness or divine enchantment in everything (Dods, 1871: especially 173-174; Fairclough, 1932: 210-211; Kline, 2002a).

slaughter livestock on a regular basis, and foods could not be refrigerated after slaughter.

In short, the practical conditions of daily life favored religious tolerance and enjoyment of multiple reasons for holy days, especially sacrifices, which were normally banquets.

Roller's and Augustine's descriptions of the proceedings of major Roman festivals support this contention. They show that most of what was done during a festival of several days would be unrelated to religion. The fun would include chariot races, parades, theatrical shows, juggling, and other events which would require some pretty convoluted reasoning to justify as deity worship (Dods, 1871: 73-74; Roller, 1999; 288-290)[34].

So on the one hand, the Roman theologians furnished a rationale to justify tolerating contradictory theories of deities, and on the other hand the whole population had practical pressures to take these justifications seriously.

These practical considerations would have also applied to the social and technical circumstances of northern Europe in early medieval times.

C) Earth Mother, the Soil Goddess

Primary sources refer to a goddess who was identified with the soil by three names: Terra Mater, Terra, and Tellus

One of these names was acquired in a merger with an Italic goddess. The Italic goddess named Tellus was adopted from the Etruscans and merged with Terra very early in Roman history. After the consolidation, Tellus' god partner (Tellemo) was rarely invoked, but the consolidated Earth goddess acquired other partners, as will be indicated in this section (Dods, 1871: 7.23; print page 319; Plauta, 2011b).

C.1) Mother Earth Was Identified with the Soil

Thus, the inference that there was a Roman earth goddess strongly identified with soil as a substance is based on theological treatises and folklore.

Consider the theologies of Pliny the Elder, Varro, and Ovid.

Pliny the Elder (who lived in 4-70 CE) explained lower productivity of farmland in his time as opposed to "ancient" times in terms of both lower labor efficiency and the earth's morale. In his *Natural History*,

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[34] Orlin gives more explanations of Roman holidays (2002: chapter 1).

The soil (Terra) "rejoiced" at being cultivated by honorable Roman soldier-farmers working small family farms. But "the earth, whom we call mother and whose cultivation is spoken of as worship, is not so dull that, when we obtain...farm work from slaves, we can believe that this is not done against her will and to her indignation". In other words, Terra was offended that in Pliny the Elder's time most Italian farm work was done by chain gangs of debtor-prisoners and face-branded slaves on plantations. Mary Beason indicates that Columella, a major authority on farming, who was contemporaneous with Pliny the Elder, also attributed the decline in farm productivity partly to slave labor being an insult to the soil goddess[35] (Ager, 2010: 293; Beagon, 1992: 162; Rackham, 1949: 170-175).

It is easy to get distracted by the theological assertion that slave labor is unholy; the point here is that it is the spirit in the soil — Mother Earth — who is offended by slave labor.

In two major publications, the Roman polytheist theologian Varro (who died in about 26 BCE) identifies Mother Earth with soil. In his book on the Latin language, Varro says that Sky (Caelum) and Earth (Terra) are the primal beings who, as a couple, created all living beings. Earth is cold, damp, and moist; Sky provides the heat that makes things happen (Kent, 1938a : 54-59; *De Lingua Latina* 2.5.57-2.5.74). Also, Varro identified Tellus with soil in his manual on farming (Storr-Best, 1912: 2-3; *Rerum Rusticarum* 1.5)[36].

In his book on the Roman liturgical calendar (*Fasti*, book 1, lines 673 ff), Ovid identifies Mother Earth with soil with his description of a fertility festival[37]. The goddess Terra gives seeds a place to develop

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[35] However, both authors also pointed out various inefficiencies in farming practice and economic-sector organization that had arisen since previous times.

[36] Maitland (1997a: 24) says that Roman parents "always" put their newborns on the ground for a moment to acknowledge the power of the soil goddess and draw strength from Her for the baby. However the present author was unable to confirm this with a primary source.

[37] The concept of fertility is sometimes greatly misunderstood by students of polytheistic religions. A prominent issue is the confusion of human recreational sexual intercourse with human fertility. Consider also this: if a society has reason to be concerned with agricultural and wildlife fertility, then having more human mouths to feed is not necessarily helpful. Consequently, any agricultural-fertility or any wildlife-fertility ritual, magic, hymn, or goddess would not necessarily be also positively concerned with human sexual recreation or reproduction.

(soil), and her partner goddess, Ceres, gives them the "vital force" to grow (Frazer, 1931: 51).

There is also etymological evidence. The names "Terra" and "Tellus" are related to the nouns "terra" and "tellus" which denote earth as a substance, dry land as opposed to bodies of water, ground as opposed to sky, and regions or districts on dry land (Traupman, 1966). The noun "terra" has become one of the names of our planet, for the inhabitants are called Terrestrials in addition to being labeled Earthlings, Earthwomen, and Earthmen. However, the reader should be cautioned that these same names — Terra and Tellus — are also used in the primary sources for Mother of Deities, who is identified with the planet but not with dirt.

C.2) Terra is Mother of All Living (Mortal) Wights

At least some Roman theologians clearly considered the soil goddess and sky god as spiritual or mythical parents of mankind and all other living beings.

For example, a passage from one of Varro's books says that Ground (Terra) and Sky (Caelum) are the first deities, a pair like life and body. In Varro's theology, these deities are also known among the Romans by other names. Earth is Mother because She produced all things in all lands. Sky and Earth are the powerful deities, for "United...Sky and Earth produced everything from themselves...."[38] In his book on farming, Varro explains that Jupiter is called "Father Jove" and Tellus "Mother Earth" because together they "maintain the various fruits of farming" (Kent, 1938a: 55-59, 61-65; Storr-Best, 1912: 2-4).

C.3) Mother Earth Was a Deity of the Second Rank

C.3.a) Tiers of Roman Deities

The Romans had three ranks of deities, although Roman theologians and their Christian critics are not explicit about the ranking, and the two Earth goddesses studied here are in different ranks.

Filling out the top rank would be deities who were appealed to for many functions and on frequent occasions, who had very strong support from the government and wealthy individual patrons, and who had strong support in myth and discursive theology. Examples include Mother of Deities and the grain goddess, Ceres. However, Ceres' stronger mythic support is borrowed from Greek myths of Demeter.

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[38] In the same passage, Varro also equates Caelum with Jupiter and Terra with Juno.

In the second rank are deities appealed to for more specialized functions and with less government sponsorship for their cult activities and less mythic support. All of these deities have some discursive-theological support also. Some of these deities have mythical support which is entirely borrowed from another culture, but they lack the support of the state and wealthy private patrons that would make them look important in religious practice.

Mother Earth fits in at the second level. The soil goddess is occasionally mentioned in passing in myth but has support in prose discussions of theories of deities. Below, data in passage C.3.b and evidence cited elsewhere in this chapter show that Mother Earth was a relatively weak character in Roman theology and was much less regarded than was Mother of Deities.

In the third rank are minor deities appealed to at most only for very specialized functions, and who were apparently without temples or major festivals dedicated to them. For example, in Augustine's *City of God*, he lists Forculus as deity of doors, Cardea as deity of hinges, and Limentinus as deity of thresholds (Dods, 1871: 4.8, print page 172). It is not clear that all of these very minor deities got significant attention from the population, although some of minor deities got a lot of attention at the individual and household level. The latter include the personal deities (genii), household-or-farm deities (lares), and ancestor deities (di manes)[39].

Augustine quotes Varro as listing Tellus among the twenty highest deities in the Roman pantheon, but the overall context reveals that Varro meant the celestial goddess Mother of Deities, not the soil goddess Mother Earth (Dods, 1871: 7.2).

C.3.b) Terra Mater Tends Not to Work on Her Own

Terra does not do anything important on her own. She usually functions with at least one other deity, and She is less important than her partners.

In Varro's theology, Earth is powerful paired with Sky, but on Her own She does not do anything so remarkable as create and sustain life without a partner. Moreover, Her role is passive, and it is Sky's heat that makes things happen (Kent, 1938a: 55-59, 61-65).

Ovid's theology in *Fasti* has the soil goddess paired with Ceres, the goddess of vegetative growth (among other things). Ovid says that Terra and Ceres both are the mothers of the cereal grains, but in his view it is Ceres who is the more important. Ceres invited mankind to give up acorns, grass, and treetops for better food. Ceres forced oxen

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[39] Some of these deities have occasional support from government officials for cult activities but they have no dedicated temples.

to power plows. Ceres brought mineral wealth out of the ground. In contrast, Terra did not do much (Frazer, 1931: 48-53, 218-219 -- *Fasti*, books 1 and 4).

Virgil also plays down the power of Mother Earth. Book 1 of Virgil's poetic farming manual, *Georgics*, includes the assertion that Ceres taught mankind how to farm (Burghclere, 1905: 23), and although Ceres is mentioned by name many times in *Georgics*, Mother Earth is not mentioned.

Mother Earth is mentioned in passing in *Aeneid*, book 4, line 209, in a passage where Juno causes a rainstorm (to force a young couple to take shelter in a cave together). But it is clearly Juno exerting the weather-magic in conspiracy with Venus, and Mother Earth is apparently mentioned just to fill out the metrical requirements of a line (Fagles, 2007: 131-133)[40].

In one famous instance, other deities act on behalf of the Earth goddess, who seems ineffectual. There is an episode in Livy's history of Rome, in book 8, in which several other deities reward a sacrifice to the Roman Earth goddess. Some time in the 340's through 320's BCE, a battle was to be fought between rebel Latin cities and Romans. A priest advised that victory depended on making a sacrifice of a Roman general officer and all enemy soldiers to the Manes and Earth Mother. But the prayer of dedication did not ask Earth Mother for victory — other deities would be the agents of victory. This is the prayer: "Janus, Jupiter, Father Mars, Quirinus, Bellona, Lares, ye Novensiles and Indigetes, deities to whom belongs the power over us and over our foes, and ye, too, Divine Manes[41], I pray to you...that you will bless the Roman People, the Quirites, with power and victory, and visit the enemies of the Roman People, the Quirites, with fear and dread and death. In like manner as I have uttered this prayer so do I now on behalf of the commonwealth of the Quirites, on behalf of the army, the legions, the auxiliaries of the Roman People...devote the legions and

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[40] In Fairclough's (1932) edition, this is in lines 166-167 of book 4. Incidentally, the word for "Earth" is in this passage is Tellus.

[41] Some readers might be puzzled at a few of the entries in this list of deities. Janus is the god of doorways and of beginnings-and-endings. Dii Manes were spirits of dead people. Little is known about Quirinus nowadays, except that He was identified with Romulus, founder of Rome. Bellona (related to Modern English "belligerent") was a goddess of war and the wife, sister, or daughter of Mars. A Lar was a protector of a private house. The Novensiles were the imported deities and Indigetes were the native deities (Carter, 1906: 14-15; Encyclopedia Mythica at "www.pantheon.org"; Traupman, 1966).

auxiliaries of the enemy, together with myself to the Divine Manes and to Earth"[42] (Bettenson, 1976: 9; Roberts, 1905-1921: 8.5-8.10).

C.3.c) Expert Witnesses Agree

In the late republican and the imperial stages of Rome's history, Terra was vanishingly insignificant. Many reviews of Roman Paganism do not mention Her, mention Her only in passing, or explicitly list Terra as a minor goddess. Some sources try to explain Terra by citing myths, but they are myths of the Greek goddess Gaia (Carter, 1906; Fox, 1986: especially chapter 3; Gardenstone, 2012a: 63-67; Maitland, 1997a; Momigliano, 1987).

One of the reasons for this may be that there is a lack of archeological evidence of Mother Earth worship, although it is clear that archeological evidence of Mother of Deities worship has been found, and this contrast implies that a lower level of folk religion was oriented toward Mother Earth as compared to Mother of Deities.

For at least one expert source, the agreement is unintentional. In 2013 the Nova Roma web site listed five alleged prayers to the Roman Earth goddess (http://www.novaroma.org/nr/Prayers_to_Tellus), but the items in the list were not all prayers to a Roman Earth goddess. Two of them did show Mother Earth worship, including the excerpt from *Aeneid* analyzed in B.3 above. But two others were worship of a Greek goddess, and one Latin document Nova Roma cites was written centuries after the fall of Rome (Dessau, 1902: 282-283; Duff and Duff, 1934: 340-341; Gardenstone, 2012a: 63-67; Horatius, 2004; Kline, 2013: 176-177; Statius' *Seven against Thebes*: 8.294-341; McEnerney, 1983: 184; Mozley, 1928a: xiv-xxvii, especially pages xxii and xxiv-xxv; Mozley, 1928b: 8.296-8.329; print pages 214-219; Plauta, 2011e; Sandys, 1913: 112; 759).

These prayers are examined at length in Appendix D and the post-Imperial document is also discussed in the chapter on Earþ cult structure and conduct.

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[42] A nearly identical story is in Livy's book 10, chapters 28-29. In that story, Romans battle Gauls, and the Romans ensure themselves victory by their general dedicating himself and the enemy army to Dii Manes and Tellus. To consummate the general's death in both stories, the general rides his horse into the place where the enemy is thickest and dies fighting (Roberts, 1905-1921).

C.4) Mother Earth's Holy Days

Terra was celebrated on two of the many annual Roman religious festivals, and in one of those festivals She was worshiped only in conjunction with Ceres.

The literature also implies that Romans expected a parentally-loving attitude on the part of Mother Earth, and that cattle, pregnant hogs, grain, or baked goods were likely offerings.

C.4.a) Types of Sacrifices to Mother Earth

In Varro's farming manual, he tells us that the Earth goddess had at least one temple with a Temple Guardian in charge. Sacrifices were offered at earth-religion temples. Pregnant cows, pregnant sows, spelt, and baked goods were favorite sacrifices to Mother Earth, and were generally offered as joint sacrifices to Ceres also (Storr-Best, 1912: 6-7; 119; 186).

C.4.b) Paganalia or Sementivae

Sometime in late January the holy festival called Paganalia (relating to rural) or Sementivae (relating to planting) occurred, and the ceremonies involved joint worship of Ceres and Mother Earth, but the emphasis seems to have been on Ceres. The date was set to follow completion of planting.

Ovid's description of this festival in *Fasti* includes his theology of the Ceres-Terra pairing quoted above, and his theological dissertation is the clue that this is a holy day for Mother Earth as opposed to Mother of Deities (Frazer, 1931: 49-53; Kline, 2004: 34-36; Storr-Best, 1912: 6-7).

Also interesting is the range of help asked for in the prayer Ovid provides. The two goddesses are asked to prevent late frost, sprinkle seeds with rain, make seeds sprout, keep out pests and weeds, help the crops grow plentifully, and to prevent scorching heat and mildew. Given the large number of minor deities in Roman religion, this is a lot of work for only two of them. However, this work is focused strictly on grain-farming matters.

Then there is the message to farmers at the end of the prayer. They were congratulated and urged to keep the peace, for "Ceres is the foster-child of peace". It is not that Ceres — nor Mother Earth — is a goddess bringing peace, but rather that "Thanks to the gods and your house, under your feet war has long been bound in chains" (Frazer, 1931: 53). In other words, the plebian soldier gets more credit for peace than does any Earth goddess.

C.4.c) Fordicia

This holiday was named for pregnancy; forda denotes a cow carrying a calf. The ceremony was held on 15 April and featured the slaughter of 30 pregnant cattle, although some of the animals were slaughtered "on Jupiter's citadel". Ceres was celebrated separately shortly after, on 19 April (Frazer, 1931: 209-235; Kline, 2004; Kamm, 1999: 90) [43].

Ovid (*Fasti*, book 4, entry for 15 April) tells us that these sacrifices to Mother Earth began while Rome was still a kingdom, confirming that Fordicia was a holy day for the soil goddess as opposed to Mother of Deities, who was not in the pantheon in when Rome as still a kingdom.

The theological justification for this festival is that during a time of severe agricultural failures and sacrifices to Faunus, Pan, and Sleep, the god Faunus appeared to the king of Rome in a dream and instructed him to sacrifice to Earth Mother and told him how to do it. Earth Mother did not appear to the king (Kline, 2004; Frazer, 1931: 209-219).

D) Mother of Deities

By comparison with Mother Earth, who had roots in the earliest Roman folk religion, Mother of Deities came to the pantheon hundreds of years later and with official government sponsorship and a formal, welcoming holiday.

In the late 200's BCE, the Romans defined a new goddess with various names, indicating that She was a version of deities from far away. Her names included Great Mount-Idaean Mother of Deities (Mater Deum Magna Idaea), Mother of Deities (Latin: Mater Deum), Mount-Ida Mother (Latin: Mater Idea), Great Mother (Mater Magnum), Tellus, Cybele (a name derived from that of the Greek goddess Kybele), and other names.

The significance of Mount Ida is that it is near the ancient site of Troy, and Roman myth has it that Trojan refugees founded Rome. Hence the goddess in question could be explained as an original but lost deity of the Roman people.

Evidence from the archeological record and Roman intellectuals shows what the Romans wanted. They did not want to fabricate a goddess out of their own imaginations but instead wanted a return to ancient roots. They wanted a state-sponsored but personally supportive goddess who would bring agricultural fertility, control weather, protect the state, and deal with personal and family

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[43] Ceres was also celebrated by herself annually on 13 September in at least a local ceremony (Walsh, 2006: 240).

concerns. They certainly wanted sites of worship located in an urban center, but they also wanted another Earth goddess. The Romans certainly also wanted a patron goddess of the Roman state. (The evidence is reviewed later in this section.)

So a determined, persistent, and skillful attempt was made to justify the new goddess as an ancestral deity of the Roman people. And although the new Roman cult of Mother of Deities did not correspond exactly to any eastern Mediterranean cult, She was recognizable as a version of other goddesses.

D.1) Acquiring The Mount-Ida Mother

According to Roman sources, in the year 204 BCE the Roman people suffered calamities, and it must have seemed that their existing deities were not sufficient to protect them. Or so we are told in the surviving documentary explanations.

Whatever the motivations, in the 200's BCE Rome had a powerful movement to add to the official pantheon. So somehow the Roman Senate found official justification in holy sources and made diplomatic arrangements to import a significant symbol of this goddess from a temple in Anatolia.

The whole affair seems to lack a clear rationale. The deity was identified with Rome's alleged roots in Troy, which is near the Mount Ida in northwestern Anatolia[44]. The newly-added Roman goddess had some traits of the Greek Meter (Mother) — including identification as an Earth deity. The new cult also had features of a native Anatolian cult of Matar (Mother in the Phrygian language), which in turn was the ancestor of the Greek cult of Meter. The newly-added Roman deity was considered Phrygian despite the fact that Phrygia did not include Mount Ida nor the former site of Troy, for both the Greek and Roman worshipers wanted to officially assert Phrygian roots of their Mother of Deities (Roller, 1999).

The details are not all helpful in studying English Earþ religion, but they are rather interesting per se.

D.1.a) Bad Times and New Religion

Let us briefly examine the official reasons for adding the new goddess. According to historical records and primary-source theological treatises, the need for a new goddess was discovered in response to severe calamities including natural disasters and war.

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[44]Another Mount Ida is on the island of Crete, and it is mentioned in Rome's founding myth also, but that is beyond the bounds of the present analysis.

There may have been other causes for adding the Mount-Ida Mother to the official pantheon, or the Senate might simply have been confused, for this happens with parliaments, but we will take this up in a later passage[45].

The natural disasters of that year included disease and storms. The disease or diseases that struck the field armies of Rome and Carthage in the Italian peninsula in 204 CE must have also affected the civilian population. In addition, Livy wrote that an unusual frequency of stone showers occurred in that year. And by 204, field armies of both Rome and Carthage had maneuvered over the Italian peninsula for several years (Roberts, 1905-1921).

The importance of a foreign military presence is difficult for many modern readers to realize, especially Americans. Unlike many modern armies, ancient field armies and their camp followers lived off the land as they passed through, whether locals had plenty of supplies and draft animals to spare or not. In addition to foraging by both sides, an enemy army would conduct economic and terror warfare, called "devastation", and that means they destroyed seed grain, draft animals, breeding livestock, orchards, buildings, workshop equipment, and people — all difficult to replace and all needed for production. Foreign wars were expected to pay for themselves; plunder was more important to soldiers than was their salaries. The Carthaginian army was mostly composed of mercenaries, but in those days even native armies were hoping for plunder. Public health was not what it is nowadays, and contagious diseases could be spread the more rapidly as armies passed through an area.

The economically depressing effects of plunder, laying waste, and spreading pestilence could last for decades or generations. According to one authority, between 219 BCE and 202 BCE the war in question brought destruction of 400 Italian towns, killed 300,000 persons, and destroyed about half the farms of Italy (White, 1912a: 503).

So in 204 CE, the existing Roman pantheon might have seemed in need of help. Perhaps the Romans felt they needed the mother of all deities.

D.1.b) The Senate Selects a Goddess

But people in general seem to look upon creating religion with distaste, preferring at least the appearance of deep roots. Consequently, ostensibly making up a new god or goddess is a rare event, and one that is usually denied. So people looked for an import.

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[45] Orlin's whole 2002 analysis is focused on figuring out the causes of temple erection in Rome, which is apparently not clear in official documents.

Hence, the Roman Senate commissioned diviners to consult a collection of prophecies which had been frequently used to help decide on responses to Roman public crises. The Sibylline Books, or Sacred Books, were a collection of prophetic pronouncements by Greek-speaking diviners; these books are discussed elsewhere in this chapter, in the section on specimens of prayers.

The diviners concluded that Rome needed to restore connection to the Mother Goddess.

Then another divination exercise commissioned by the Senate (consulting the sibyl at the Greek city of Delphi) prescribed that the Mother in question was the ancestral goddess of the Trojan refugees who had originally established a colony at Rome hundreds of years previously (Bryce and Campbell, 1871 for Arnobius: 7.49-51, pp 361-363; Dods, 1871 for Augustine: 3.18; Frazer, 1931 for Ovid: 4.263-264; Hamilton and Falconer, 1903 for Strabo: 12.5.3; Kent, 1938a for Varro: 6.15; Kline, 2004 for Ovid: pages 118-119; Roberts, 1905-1921 for Livy: 29.10, 29.11, 29.14; Wright, 1913a for Julian: 442-449; see also Roller, 1999: 264-273).

So the Senate called for a goddess sometimes called Mother of Mount Ida. However, this goddess was also considered by many Roman intellectuals to be the same as the Phrygian Great Mother and the Greeks' Kybele (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: 142-143, 361-364; Kline, 2002b: especially 9.77-122; Roberts, 1905-1921: 29.10, 29.11, 29.14; Roller, 1999).

D.1.c) The Official Importation Event

To formally induct the Mother of Deities from Mount Ida into Roman religion, an icon was imported from Phrygia. An official government delegation retrieved an unworked black sacred stone about the size of a softball, which had been charged with the holy presence of the Mother of Deities. A large holiday celebration was held to welcome the stone to the city of Rome, and the stone was then formally installed in a temple in the center of the city. A festival called the Megalesia[46] was established to commemorate the anniversary of original welcoming, which occurred on 4 April 204 CE (Alvar, 2008: 282; Kent, 1938a: 189; Kline, 2004: 118-119).

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[46] Two names for this holiday, Megalesia and Megalensia, are found in primary sources and accepted in reputable secondary sources. The distinction between these names is not important for the present study, so "Megalesia" has been arbitrarily selected as the standard used in this book.

D.2) *Speculation on the Politics of the Importation*

Despite what the primary sources say, it is quite possible that some of the reasons given in ancient sources for bringing the Idean Mother into official Roman religion were fabricated excuses. As noted above, two of the official reasons were to get divine military help and to get protection against astonishingly bad weather — showers of stones.

D.2.a) *The Great Mother's Military Help Was Not Needed*

Roller rightly expresses skepticism that a reason for bringing the Idean Mother into Roman religion was to expel the Carthaginian expeditionary army, which was in trouble in the year 204 (Roller, 1999: 264-267).

The Carthaginian war effort started with an ever-increasing level of successes. A Carthaginian field army, staffed mostly by mercenaries and by Gallic allies, arrived in the Italian peninsula in 219 BCE and achieved a series of remarkable triumphs ending in their great victory at Cannae in 216 BCE.

But the Carthaginians began to fail in 215 BCE. Their empire suffered the strategic loss of its territories in the Iberian Peninsula. Their Italian base at Capua was retaken by the Romans. The Carthaginian field army sent to reinforce Hannibal by an overland route was intercepted and destroyed by a Roman field army. A Carthaginian naval convoy bringing reinforcements and supplies to Hannibal was intercepted and destroyed by the Roman navy. Most of the states in the Italian peninsula remained hostile to Carthage. Hannibal's force was steadily worn down without another major battle. And meantime the mercenaries had not gone home with plunder after fourteen or fifteen years in the field and away from their children, wives, aged parents, favorite fishing spots, and any other beloved things or persons left behind. In 205 BCE, the Romans opened a front in the North African theater, and action was about to start taking place within infantry striking distance of Carthage.

All things considered, in 204 BCE it was past time for Hannibal's field army to leave the Italian peninsula (Durant, 1944: chapter 3; Preston et al, 1962: 36-39; White, 1912a: book 9.)

D.2.b) *Showers of Stones?*

It is also quite possible that the report of frequent showers of stones in the year 204 BCE is a pack of lies. Livy reports 22 stone showers in the central region of the Italian peninsula in his history of Rome, not counting the "unusual number" reported in one chapter and the "several" reported in another. He does not say what the usual

number of annual showers of stones was. Since ten volumes of his 45-volume work are completely missing and we have but fragments of books 41 and 43, it is possible that he wrote of even more stone showers occurring during the period he covered, 753 BCE to 9 BCE, a total of 749 years (Foster, 1919: Introduction; Roberts, 1905-1921)[47].

These weather reports are incredible. Has the reader ever experienced a shower of stones, met someone who has lived through a shower of stones, or seen a modern weather report of a shower of stones somewhere in the world? The present author has not.

Of course, it is possible that volcanoes actually vaulted stones and ash into the air in at least one of these alleged occurrences, since in one instance dense smoke was reported to have covered the sky for quite some time where the shower occurred, and in another instance the stones were "red-hot". But volcanic eruptions are unlikely to account for two or three dozen instances of such weather in the vicinity of Rome in the time-span covered by Livy's history.

It is unlikely that any of the alleged instances were meteoroid bursts, for the bright meteor and the terrific explosion would surely have been described along with the shower of stones. And surely, meteoroid bursts are not common enough to account for Livy's many stone showers.

One might suspect that some of the "showers of stones" refer to hailstorms (at least the showers that were not red-hot), but the typical response to a shower of stones was a divinatory consultation of the Sibylline Books followed by nine days of religious festival as prescribed by the priest-diviners. Such is not a response to hailstorms. Moreover, other strange and highly unlikely events are commonly reported as evil portents along with the stone showers (Roberts, 1905-1921) [48].

Livy gives scant consideration to the unbelievability of stone showers. He mentions in regard to the first shower of stones in his history that the report was considered questionable and was therefore investigated by an official committee (Roberts, 1905: 1.31). Also, he briefly mentions toward the end of his history that it was the general opinion of his time held that deities do not communicate with humans

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[47] Livy lived during 59 BCE to 17 BCE (Foster, 1919: Introduction).

[48] The easiest way to examine Livy's reports is to get a PDF copy of his book (cited in the list of references) and use the electronic search function. I searched for "stones". For those unable to do that kind of search, here is a list of places where I found the character string "shower of stones" (01.31, 07.28, 21.62, 22.01, 22.36, 23.31, 25.07, 26.23, 27.32, 29.10, 29.14, 30.38, 34.45, 35.09, 36.37, 42.02, 43.13, 44.18). The translator, Roberts, never uses the expression "stone showers", so searching for it will not be productive.

by means of such weird events, but then he immediately asserts that he does believe (Roberts, 1905-1921: 43.13).

D.2.c) Appeal to Sensual Meditators

Hard times do sometimes influence people to turn to ecstatically emotional and mystical religion, but, as Roller implies, it is also possible that influential people in the capital city of the republic had discovered something they liked in a religion not officially recognized by their government. That "something" would be a form of worship -- sensual meditation -- so appealing as to be an attraction itself.

There are several types of meditation that work for various practitioners, and the types that involve denying or avoiding the human body — the ultra quiet and still methods — are not the most effective for all persons, nor for some persons at every occasion. Active methods of meditation can be extremely powerful for those for whom these methods are appropriate (Guyon, 1685; LeShan, 1974; Roller, 1999: 149-157). The present study does not into detail on this topic because the details of loud and rowdy religious work are not essential to proving the case regarding the English polytheist cult structure. However, it is the present author's personal experience that for a minority of the human population, loud and rowdy meditation is a strong attraction for those who can do it well, and that some skills are involved for group work.

Without doubt, the Mother of Deities cult included an active and sensual liturgical style that would have been attractive method to some Romans. This style seems to have been Greek instead of Phrygian, and it was loud and rowdy.

For now, let us consider the possibility that some politically influential people did indeed have some conscious motivation, although not that they necessarily understood what they were doing, and that this motivation was covered up by state-sponsored propagandists. Ancient Roman culture did not practice separation of church and state, history and state, or news and state, and there was no moderately out-of-control mass medium of communication (other than rumoring) in the world until the 1600's or 1700's CE. So hiding things was relatively easy.

D.3) Organization of the Cult

Several cultural conflicts that seem to have motivated Romans to have a Mother of Deities with a different cult structure and a different theological profile than the Phrygian Mater (Mother). Let us consider

the contradictions between the Phrygian Mother cult and the Roman cult of Mother of Deities.

D.3.a) Iconography

The icon imported from Anatolia was very different from those of Roman tradition. By this time the traditional Roman icons were beautiful anthropomorphic representations of human-adult life size or larger. Indeed, most of the icons in Pergamon, Phrygia, and Greece (and earlier Hittite culture) were also anthropomorphic, although Phrygian sculptures commonly represented this goddess framed in a doorway, and the sculptures were often located in remote rural areas rather than in cities. But the Mother's imported icon from Pergamon was an unworked black stone, basically conical with a flat top, and it was no bigger than a modern softball. Although there might have been several icons of this sort in Phrygia in the early 200's BCE, the style would surely have offended the Romans who were accustomed to beautiful human figures as icons (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: 262, 361-363; Gordon, 2008: 240-241; Motz, 1997: 106-108, 110, 112; Roller, 1999: 46-62, 71-108).

So the Romans went forward with creating urban sculptures in their own tradition, beautiful human figures without the Phrygian doorframe custom.

One Roman statue implied a controversy, for the government eventually put the sacred rock into a Roman-traditional anthropomorphic sculpture that had the imported stone as the goddess's head or face (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: 7.49; Roller, 1999: 271-316). Making an otherwise anthropomorphically beautiful statue with an unworked rock for a face seems to have been an artistic compromise between Roman icon traditionalists and Pagans who opposed anthropomorphic representation as misleading (Ando, 2008: 27-39). It is the kind of artistic compromise one would expect to come out of a legislative committee where both sides would rather ruin the project than give in. It is also possible that a committee or individual artist got away with intentional ridicule of anthropomorphic iconography.

D.3.b) The Priesthood

The Roman government emphasized the Phrygian origins of the Mother from Mount Ida by hiring ethnic Phrygian priests, called galli (singular gallus), despite the fact that Mount Ida was located in Pergamon, at some distance from Phrygia (Roller, 1999: especially Map 1; Sisk, 2009: 4-5).

But adhering to the Eastern Mediterranean tradition meant that the priesthood and formal liturgy were foreign in Roman society. The galli cut off their testicles and/or penises in what Motz characterizes as a simulated sex-change operation[49]. They also dressed in women's clothing, wore their hair in women's styles, and basically crossed the gender threshold. And despite government support and proceeds from their begging, some of the priests also worked as prostitutes. Regular Roman priests did not beg, work as prostitutes, nor cross dress; and Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells us that Romans were forbidden to take jobs as galli (Cary, 1937: 2.19; Ellis, 1871: Cattlus' poem 63; Gasparro, 1985; Motz, 1997: 99-120; Roller, 1999: 71-108, 287-325).

One modern scholar surmised that the Senate, and later the emperors, were embarrassed at what they had imported, noting that priestly emasculation was eventually outlawed by the Roman government and that for a time the government forbade Roman citizens from participating in the official rites (Cumont, 1911: 51-53). The government should not have been surprised, however, because Meter (Mother) religion had spread to the Greek colonies in what are now southern France, Sicily, and the Italian peninsula beginning in the late 500's BCE or so, and castrated Meter priests were known to the Greeks (Roller, 1999: chapter 6).

To integrate the alien priesthood, the state added a layer of arch-priests (archgalli) over the Phrygian priests. The behavior and comportment of the archgalli must have been more in line with ordinary Roman standards than was that of the lower-ranking galli, for Roman citizens were allowed to be archgalli (Alvar, 2008).

D.3.c) Sites of Worship
Roman and traditional Anatolian customs regarding sites of worship were discrepant. Phrygian monuments implying sites of worship for their Matar (Mother) were in rural areas and at city gates. Much of the stone sculpture for Matar religion was cut into living rock outside towns as opposed to quarried rock hauled into settlements (Gasparro, 1985; Motz, 1997: 99-120; Roller, 1999: 71-108, 287-325; Sisk, 2009: 8). It is quite clear from all histories of the Roman state and

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[49] Alvar (2008: 246-251) reviews literature on the scholarly dispute over whether the Phrygian priests severed their testicles only, penises only, or both penises and testicles. He insists they only removed their testicles. For present purposes, all that really matters is that the galli did the best they could to achieve transexualism.

It is ironic that galli were expected to be healers although they were voluntarily permanently disfigured and partially disabled persons (Motz, 1997: chapter 7).

people that Romans generally disliked building worship sites in remote mountainous areas, and that they were not very interested in making sculptures in living rock.

So the Romans installed their imported Mother of Deities stone in a temple on the most central hill (Palatine) in Rome and put all their other Mother of Deities temples in urban areas (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: 7.49; Roller, 1999: 271-316).

D.4) Theology of Mother of Deities

The Romans made up their own version of Mother of Deities.

A goddess called Mother that was strictly on the central Anatolian model would not have been what the Romans wanted. The Phrygian Matar (Mother) goddess was not a motherly figure, nor was She concerned with agricultural productivity, human fertility, nor victory in war. She was closely associated with feral animals, especially predators, and with locations remote from human settlements. Matar was also the principal deity in Phrygian religion, or at least a co-principal deity along with a god (Motz, 1997: chapter 7; Roller, 1999: 64).

The Romans were also not satisfied with copying the Grecian theology of Kybele. In one fundamental way, the Grecian notion of their Mother (Meter) goddess was closer to that of the Romans than to that of the Phrygians, for in Phrygia Matar was the principal deity or co-principal deity of Phrygian of worship, while in Greece and in the western-coastal region of Anatolia (including Pergamon and Mount Ida), the related goddess was one among many. The Greek cult of Kybele was based on the Greek version of the Phrygian Matar, merged with Greek earth deities (Ge, Gaia, and Rhea). But the Greek cult was mostly a mystery cult that had little connection with government, whereas the Romans wanted a state cult (and the Phyrgian Matar cult was apparently sponsored by the state). Also, the Greeks' Kybele was said to be a mother of monsters (the Titans) as well as Olympian deities.

But from a Roman point of view it would have been good that Kybele was worshipped more as a married, or at least mated, mother among the deities than as a creatrix of deities or family matriarch (Oldfather, 1935: 264-277; Roller, 1999: 63-234).

So let us consider details of the Roman version.

D.4.a) Attis and the Question of Afterlife

Attis was the spiritual wight partnered in myths with Mother of Deities. His position in Mother of Deities theology is ambiguous, but He

does provide a link between Mother of Deities and the notion of an afterlife.

It is also important to realize that in this partnering, Mother of Deities is the big power, and Attis is less important. By contrast, where Mother Earth is partnered, the other deity is always the more important member of the pairing.

Basically, the Romans enhanced Attis worship as it existed among the Greeks, who in turn had greatly enhanced Attis as a spiritual figure beyond the Phrygian version (Alvar, 2008; Roller, 1999).

The Attis myths seem to have been created in Greece — not in Phrygia — during the 300's BCE, and this part of Greek lore was adopted by the Romans. The word "Attis" in the Phrygian tongue was a common male person's name and/or the title of a priest of Matar, the Great Mother. However, the modern scholar Roller is quite clear that Attis was not a deity to the Phrygians until after they accepted strong cultural influence from Greek ethnics (Roller, 1999: 70-71, 113-114, 177-182, 212-214).

It is not clear that the Romans worshipped Attis, for He is not in any myth a partner in the sense that Caelum is the active partner for Terra in making things happen. In one Roman version of the Attis myth, Attis is a subordinate deity associated with limited vegetative growth, somehow magically feeding and stimulating such growth by being mutilated and killed. In another version Attis sins by becoming a holy demiurge without permission, and He has to be reconciled with Mother of Deities by death or castration. In yet another version, Attis is castrated because he is a victim of his own insanity and other's irresponsibility (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: 227-241; Ellis, 1871: Cattlus' Poem 63; Frazer, 1931: 200-207; Gasparro, 1985; Gordon, 2008; Hamilton and Falconer, 1903: 10.3.8-7, 10.3.11, 12.5.3; Kline, 2000: 488-489 Oldfather, 1935: 264-277; Roller, 1999: chapter 8; Wright, 1913a: Oration 5).

Some scholars opine that Attis is a god of resurrection. Attis is "resurrected" is based on the Platonic idea that after his physical death, his soul goes to be reunited with Mother of Deities (Gasparro, 1985; Alvar, 2008: 138-139)[50]. This is based on a myth which implies that the liturgical role of Attis was that of a dead deity or of a person being mourned, and Diodorus of Sicily and Arnobius claimed that the loud-and-rowdy meditations were funereal (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: 5.16-5.17; Oldfather, 1935: 272-277). Loud-and-rowdy religious rites can be emotionally grieving (consider the New Orleans

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[50] This theology also contradicts another Attis theology positing that Attis began as a deity (Wright, 1913a: Oration #5), for deities in Roman religion are immortal.

jazz funerals). On the other hand, Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells us that the Romans did not practice the mournful Attis-rites imported from Greece, for this was left to the Phrygian priests (Cary, 1937: 2.19). However we look at the data, we may infer that mourning was intended as normal cult activity, even if only for foreign priests, because the Roman state eventually added the one-day Hilaria festival to lighten up public ceremonies of the Mother of Deities cult (Alvar, 2008: 282-293; Roller, 1999).

As mentioned in the next passage (in D.4.b), Attis reuniting with Mother of Deities after His physical death establishes Her superiority over Him and connects Mother of Deities with an afterlife myth, although it does not seem to explicitly promise an afterlife for persons.

D.4.b) A Great Power in Her Own Right

The evidence establishes a much greater breadth of powers for Mother of Deities than for Mother Earth. Mother of Deities appears in several places in *Aeneid* as the protagonist's patron and alternate mother, although Aeneas' "real" mother is Venus (Fagles, 2007; Roller, 1999: 299-300). Virgil's *Aeneid* (9.77-106) shows the goddess he calls Cybele getting Her son Jupiter to help her protect Aeneas. She then — using Her own powers — commands Trojan troops, musters a cloud, and transforms ships into sea goddesses. A similar miracle is described in Ovid's myths (Kline, 2000: 710-710; Kline, 2002a: 207-208).

Julian described Mother of Deities as a dominant being in his sermon, *Hymn to the Mother of Gods* (Taylor, 1793; Wright, 1913a), and you can see this in his version of the Attis myth. Mother of Deities loved the god Attis deeply, but then Attis polluted himself with matter by having sexual intercourse, and this deviance required correction in the form of self-mutilation. Attis' self-castration is the limitation that leads to His return to the Mother of Deities after His death.

The moral of the story is that is that creativity must become limited to be orderly, for indiscipline is chaos. (Julian's essay on Mother of Deities is examined in detail in Appendix D.)

The divine power referenced in Julian's version of the Attis myth is in regard to life after physical death. Julian was a Neoplatonist, and the reader will recognize this idea of afterlife reunion with one's deity from the previous chapter on a Greek polytheistic theology. Julian actually rejected castration, but he did posit that the true follower of Mother of Deities had to accept the discipline of faithfulness to Her.

The power of this goddess is also apparent in this quotation from the middle of the sermon. "She is indeed the fountain of the ...gods who govern the apparent series of things: or certainly a deity producing things, and at the same time subsisting with the mighty

Jupiter; a goddess mighty...and conjoined with the mighty demiurgus of the world. She is the mistress of all life, and the cause of all generation, who most easily confers perfection on her productions, and generates and fabricates things without passion, in conjunction with the father of the universe. She is also a virgin, without a mother...she...is also called Providence" (Taylor, 1793: 114-115).

D.4.c) Motherization of Mother of Deities

Tacitus' readers knew Mother of Deities as a healer of people and lower animals, a goddess of childcare, and a patron of music.

Certainly, to the Phrygians, the Mother of Deities was not necessarily a co-parent in charge of the family, producer of all deities, or even a producer of some deities. But Roman theologians and common cult practitioners interpreted "mother" more literally.

The ancient author Diodorus wrote in Greek and lived on the island of Sicily, but he wrote during 60-30 BCE (slightly predating Tacitus) and lived in the Roman Empire. Diodorus presents mythic support for Mother of Deities as caring for children and as a healer, especially of children. The myth he reports is offered as justification for the name "Mother of the Mountain". She is also said to have invented multi-reed pipes, cymbals, and drums, and to have taught mankind veterinary and pediatric medicine by means of magic spells (Oldfather, 1935: 3.58, print pages 268-271).

Archeological evidence backs up the characterization in the myths Diodorus reported. Roller (1999: 157-161) described evidence showing that people prayed and made offerings to Mother of Deities on behalf of the children and appealed to her as "gracious midwife" and to get Her blessings for childcare.

In motherizing Mother of Deities, the Romans were copying from the Greek religious traditions going back as far as the 500's BCE (Evelyn-White, 1914: Hymn #14; Roller, 1999: chapters 5-10; Shelmerdine, 1995: 149).

D.4.d) Mother of Deities is Defined As a Fertility Goddess

Theologically, new accountings of liturgy and iconography were produced to make an Earth goddess of a deity who was brought in long after Terra or Tellus had been added to the Roman pantheon.

Perhaps taking a cue from the Greeks, Varro explained how the liturgy associated with Mother of Deities was agriculturally oriented, and he claimed that both the Fordicia and Megalesia were for the Mother of Deities. Of course this was despite the fact that Megalesia was established as the anniversary of formal induction of a deity who

was not at the time of importation called "earth" in Her alleged home in Pergamon or Phrygia (Kent, 1938a: 189; Dods, 1871: 7:24).

Lucretius (Stallings and Jenkyns, 2007: 2.595-2.660) also gives a justification of the graphic symbols, liturgy, and theology of the Mother of Deities, showing how it is consistent with physics, morals, and patriotism. Although he also says that worship of Mother of Deities is superstition, Lucretius is surely trying to describe common belief and not some version he advocates.

Arnobius' seven books advocating Christianity as opposed to Paganism contain interesting information on Pagan theology in addition to his attempts to persuade. In Arnobius' book 2, chapter 32, he says that some Pagans say that Earth is the Great Mother because She provides all living things with food (Bryce and Campbell, 1871)[51].

D.4.e) An Aside on Overlapping Deities

At this point, we need to consider subtle distinctions between two fundamental concepts of poly-deity theology, which are reflected in Arnobius' arguments.

Arnobius reports that Pagans say that Earth is Vesta or Ceres, and then he complains that logically there is only one object "Earth" so using multiple names can mislead a person into thinking there really are all those separate fertility-related Earth goddesses (Bryce and Campbell, 1871). In addition to his propaganda, this Christian author is complaining that in at least one prominent Pagan theology all the Earth goddesses were considered to be hypostases of one while in at least one other Pagan theology the goddesses were distinct but overlapping fertility-oriented Earth goddesses.

In other words, Arnobius is actually complaining about two logically separate theologies: one with generally distinct but overlapping deities and another having a single deity with many hypostases.

This is an important matter regarding religious diversity, so an aside on multi-aspect deities might be useful. The concept of a set of overlapping deities, or complex of gods and goddesses (as in the Roman pantheon), seems to call for something like mathematical set theory and Venn diagramming. To save on labor and space — and to keep the focus on Mother Earth and Mother of Deities — the diagram here includes only two deities and a sample of the attributes and functions discussed in this chapter regarding these two goddesses. The

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[51] Arnobius was a Christian propagandist who lived in the Roman Empire (in North Africa) and wrote in the late 290's or early 300's CE. He seems to have been well acquainted with Pagan philosophers of the Empire and to have admired Varro (Bryce and Campbell, 1871: ix-xiv).

diagram illustrates the idea of distinct but overlapping objects as subsets of deity-ness.

Wild Predators

Mother of Deities

Soul in the Soil

Protector of State

Agricultural Fertility

Childcare

Human Fecundity

Anthropomorphic Figure

Identified with Planet Earth

Partner w/Ceres

Create w/o Partner

Use of Intermediaries

Cannot Act Alone

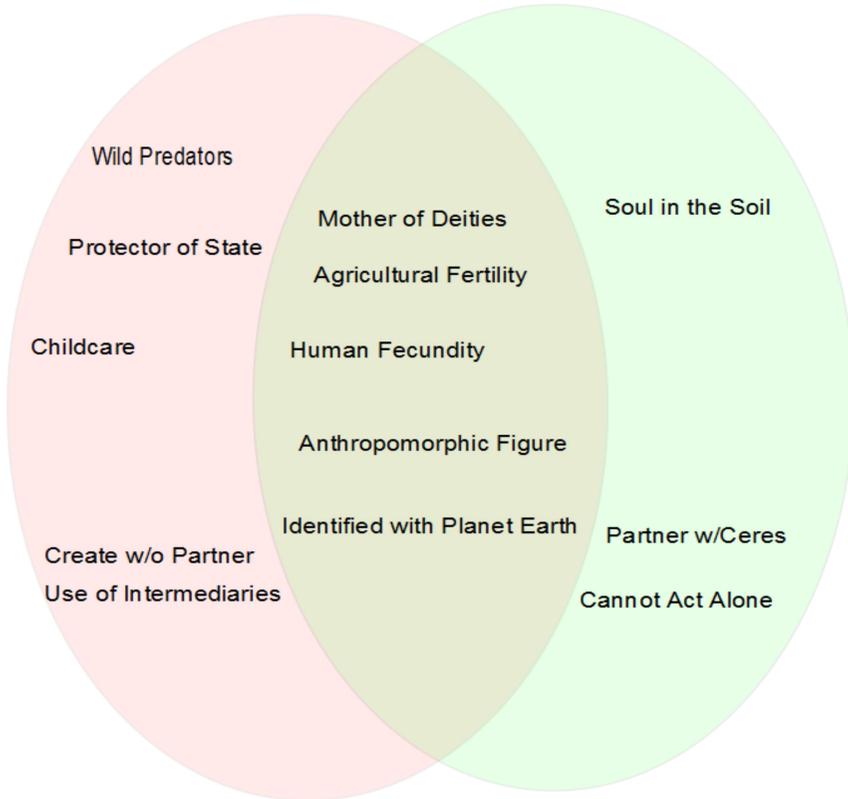Figure 1. Overlapping Attributes or Functions of Deities

Obviously, the theology of Roman deities is too complex to be fully represented by a Venn diagram[52].

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[52] However, one must wonder how Varro and Augustine would have phrased their arguments about the nature of deities had they lived at the same time and if they knew of modern mathematical set theory and computer programming with classes, inheritance, and

D.4.f) Folk Religion versus Myth

Folk worship of Mother of Deities was not perfectly correlated with mythic lore.

Archeological remains show us some of what the people were praying for when they supplicated Mother of Deities. Remains of sculptural votive deposits at the Palatine temple include images of baskets of fruit, primary sexual organs, women's breasts, and embracing heterosexual couples. This means the Roman worshipers were often seeking material abundance, satisfactory erotic love with partners, getting marriage partners or extra-marital lovers, and/or begetting children (Roller, 1999: 280).

What the archeologists are not showing is evidence of concern with marital fidelity or total abstinence. This is significant, because it contradicts myths of Attis that are concerned with his having sexual intercourse outside his relationship with Mother of Deities, a sin costing him grief and loss of one or all of his sexual organs.

Moreover, while the public sacrifices to the soil goddess were offered in prayer for agricultural prosperity, major public sacrifices to Mother of Deities were usually offered in prayer for protection of the state and other mostly non-agricultural benefits (Alvar, 2008: 172, 261-276).

D.4.g) Animal Sacrifices and Identification with Soil

The types of livestock butchered for sacred banquet ceremonies provide important clues to the distinctions between Mother of Deities and Mother Earth.

Although pregnant sows and cattle were sacrificed to the soil goddess, the goddess associated with Mount Ida and the Phrygian priests received instead male sheep and male bovines (Alvar, 2008: 172, 261-276). The Roman emperor-theologian Julian explicitly rejected sacrifices of porcine beasts in banquets to honor Mother of Deities because She was a celestial Earth goddess, not a soil goddess (Boer, 1976: 7-10; Durant, 1944: Chapter 1; Taylor, 1793; Wright, 1913a: vii-xii, 442-496).

D.5) Festivals of Mother of Deities

Mother of Deities was a clear presence on the festival calendar and She was worshipped, with or without Attis, for an extended period at least once per year before Tacitus wrote in 98 CE. There was at least

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virtual objects. Not that either would have necessarily changed his opinion, but they might have expressed themselves more clearly.

one festival related to the Mother of Deities, the Megalesia. The sources are contradictory about the occurrence of two festivals or one long festival in the springtime, or perhaps one in spring and one in fall, or maybe there was one combined Attis-and-Mother-of-Deities festival a few days prior to Megalesia. As Fowler observes, surviving Roman calendric data are fragmentary and ambivalent (Alvar, 2008: 286; Fowler, 1899: Introduction, 332-349; Roller, 1999: 283-289, 315-316; Wright, 1913a: 480-485).

In general there was an every-increasing tendency for major ceremonial occasions for this goddess — some on the calendar of state festivals and some not — from 204 BCE until forcible suppression under Christian rule. Archeological evidence implies that there was also much private worship of this goddess (Fox, 1986; Alvar, 2008; Roller 1999; Walsh, 2006: 240).

E) Conclusions

E.1) Theological Diversity

Roman religion shows an example of another polytheistic religion encompassing highly variegated theology. Although the full range of complexity and contradictions in Roman polytheistic religion is beyond the present study's scope, we have seen extensive evidence of two Earth goddesses whose functions and attributes overlap those of each other and various other deities, including deities identified by Romans as male.

Industrialized societies also present clear examples of people claiming to be in the same religion following the same deity (organized into different denominations) who are following logically incompatible theologies. Therefore it is quite plausible that polytheists would do this sort of thing also.

E.2) Distinctions between Mother Earth and Mother of Deities

Clearly, Roman authors could expect their readers to understand Mother of Deities and Mother Earth as distinct deities, although names of deities were used fairly loosely by ancient authors, and although both of the focal Earth goddesses were considered to be mothers of deities and in some sense mothers of all living things. The contrast is described by the following list.

• Mother of Deities is worshipped (with significant variations) over large areas of the Roman Empire; whereas Mother Earth is not

recognized outside of the Italian Peninsula, and perhaps not throughout the peninsula.

- Mother of Deities is a foreign import; Earth Mother is a consolidation of a native Roman goddess and a non-Roman Italic goddess and is centuries older as a member or the Roman pantheon than is Mother of Deities.
- Mother of Deities is not identified with the soil; Mother Earth is so identified.
- Mother of Deities takes only male-animal sacrifices at ceremonial banquets, Mother Earth takes only female animals.
- Mother of Deities is a goddess of victory in war and combat; Mother Earth has no effect on war nor combat.
- Mother of Deities is a top-ranking member of the Roman pantheon; Earth Mother is member of a lower tier of Roman deities.
- But Mother of Deities is powerful actor in various functions in Her own right; Earth Mother needs partners to be effective.
- Mother of Deities is appealed to for intervention in a wide range of human affairs, including childcare, erotic pleasure, and non-agricultural wealth; existing evidence does not support this wide a range of functioning for Mother Earth.
- Mother of Deities has a dedicated, formally-organized body of official priests; the Mother Earth cult seems to have not had its own priesthood.
- Mother of Deities has a possible afterlife function as the One to Whom mortals return, while neither souls nor bodies are spoken of as returning to Mother Earth.

Chapter 8: Earth Religion in Proto-Germanic Times

This chapter proves (1) that prior to the migration age, there was a primal-deity Earth goddess cult among the many cults in the many Germanic ethnicities, and (2) that that this cult had the potential to endure in England well into the era of Christian supremacy.

The work here begins with an examination of the primary sources, then proceeds to a consideration of the social-demographic conditions of the region and historic period those sources cover. After the background discussion, the chapter proceeds with a radical analysis of Proto-Germanic Earth goddess religion.

A) Ancient Geographies

A.1) Sources of Information

In ancient times, Romans and Greeks had contact with Proto-Germanic people, probably with many tribes, who would also have known of the Greeks and other Mediterranean peoples. We know there was some trade between those regions over a period of several hundred years (Singer, 2008), and commerce would have resulted from and stimulated other types of cultural contact, which in turn would have been the basis of ancient geographies of Germanic peoples written in Latin and Greek.

All of these sources suffer from information-source issues, writing mistakes, and from copyists' errors. Moreover, some of them do not give information on Germanic religions. But all these sources do give us information on tribal structures and the customs of different tribes.

A.2) Spans of Time and Space Covered

Although some students of Proto-Germanic culture complain of inconsistencies within the ancient documentary sources and between those sources, the large spans of time and space involved allow us to infer that the reports probably reflect variations in the facts on the ground.

Considering social geographies from Roman and Greek sources, the span of time from which we have data on Proto-Germanic religion is about 235-250 years, from 150-135 BCE to around 100 CE. The span of time represented by documentary information on Proto-Germanic

cultures in general is only slightly longer, with the maximum likely span being from about 150 BCE to 145 CE, approximately 300 years.

The space involved comprises practically all of northern Europe except for the British Isles and the most northerly parts of what are now Scandinavia and Russia.

This includes works indicated in the rest of this section.

A.3) Sources for Tacitus' Germania

The most important source of information on Proto-Germanic religion is Tacitus' *Germania*. This book was written in 98 CE based on several sources of data, as described in the following passages, so it should not be regarded as a snapshot of Germanic Europe as of about 100 CE, although Tacitus probably made an effort to update his information.

A.3.a) Personal Contacts

Tacitus left Rome on business in provincial areas between 88 and 93 CE, so he probably wrote *Germania* based in part on personal contacts personal experiences during those years abroad.

However, his friend Pliny the Elder had been stationed on the German frontier with the Roman army, so Pliny certainly had gathered fresh data of his own, and the two authors probably exchanged information in personal conversation.

A.3.b) Posidonius

Two previous geographies are important as sources for Tacitus' book. Of course, one of Tacitus' sources was the encyclopedia of Pliny the Elder (published 77-79 CE). But a Greek geographer informed the work of both of these Romans.

For some of his information on Proto-Germanic tribes, Pliny the Elder used an encyclopedia composed by Posidonius, a Greek scholar who wrote sometime during 150-135 BCE. Posidonius' book has been lost and is now known only from quotations by Romans — including Pliny the Elder — who openly cited it. Pliny the Elder also cited other Greek sources; he is notable for the sedulousness and accountability of his scholarship.

But we have clues that Tacitus had direct access to a copy of Posidonius' book. For example, Tacitus (but not Pliny) refers to tribes living close to "Oceano" -- a body of water named for the Greek god Okeanos, implying a Greek-language source document. In any case, it is quite reasonable to infer that Tacitus and Pliny the Elder shared knowledge of Posidonius' geography.

Also, several tribes mentioned by Tacitus and Pliny are denoted by names ending in the Greek suffix -on with a Latin plural ending added. Two examples are the Hermiones and Inguaeones. (See Atsma, 2000-2011d; Church et al, 1942; Bostock and Riley, 1855a: vii-viii, 343-348, 355; North, 1997: 27-30; Rackham, 1949).

A.4) Other Geographies

Several other ancient sources reported on Proto-Germanic cultures, and most of them survive as intact documents. One source is the corresponding chapter in Pliny the Elder's encyclopedia (Bostock and Riley, 1855; Rackham, 1949). Another source is the chapter on Greater Germania in Book 2 of Ptolemy's geography, which was composed around 145 CE (Francis, 1994: Commentary on Book 1, Section 1). Strabo, who lived during 63 BCE-24 CE also left us a social geography of Germania (Hamilton and Falconer, 1857 for Strabo: 7.2.1-7.3.1; Olteanu, n.d.). Caesar's *Gallic Wars* is also still available (McDevitte and Bohn, 1869: Book 1 Chapter 31, Book 4).

Pytheas' account from the 300's BCE survives only through quotations by other ancient authors, and the fragments indirectly shown by those authors give practically no information on the religious beliefs or practices of northern Europeans (Bunbury, 1902).

A.5) Cultural Contacts

Ancient Greeks and Proto-Germanic peoples had cultural contact. Any mutual influence on theologies is beyond the scope of the present study except to note in passing the possibility of exchanges of ideas related to fate, wyrd, and Neoplatonic theology.

B) Cultural Turbulence

The cultural turbulence of Germanic tribes known from the migration age began prior to that time and would have tended to make polytheist religion of the tribes generally less parochial, narrow, and isolated than might be supposed.

B.1) Tribal Lists

Comparing the ancient geographies, which give different lists of tribes and different areas where they lived, we can see that ethnic identity was very turbulent during the last few centuries of the proto-Germanic era. Several tribes vanished or appeared between Posidonius' writing and that of Ptolemy, and even allowing for some

bad intelligence this implies that people from the tribes often mingled, migrated, and changed tribal identities. Strabo specifically notes the migrations of Germanic tribes: "All these nations easily change their abode, on account of the scantiness of provisions, and because they neither cultivate the lands nor accumulate wealth, but dwell in miserable huts, and satisfy their wants from day to day, the most part of their food being supplied by the herd, as amongst the...[nomadic] races, and in imitation of them they transfer their households in wagons, wandering with their cattle to any place which may appear most advantageous." (Hamilton and Falconer, 1857: 445).

One notable example is that the tribe called Angles came into existence between 135 BCE and Tacitus' time, and possibly within a couple of decades of Tacitus' writing.

Tribal identities and other customs did not become stable until the tribes moved farther apart and the Proto-Germanic language had dissolved into ancestors of today's Germanic national languages.

B.2) Shuffling the Cultural Deck

In turn, the turbulence in tribal cultures or subcultures would have affected religious belief and practice. Many people would have become well acquainted with customs prevailing outside their home districts or villages, thereby realizing that the customs and beliefs of their home districts were not so inevitable and necessary as they might otherwise seem. Some would have lost faith in deities that failed to protect them and their friends. Some religions would have been drastically affected by loss of sacred ground and facilities. Opportunities for innovative prophets would arise from socioeconomic shocks. And it is quite plausible that many individuals and whole communities would be motivated to take more interest in the personal fundamentals of religion as opposed to the more ceremonial, magical, or social aspects (although these never lose appeal), as the less fundamental aspects began to see more arbitrary.

By "personal fundamentals of religion" in this context is meant progressive mysticism (Stanfield, 2012: 8-10).

B.3) Lingering Effects

Surely, marks of the cultural turbulence of Proto-Germanic times and the migration age would have remained on Germanic cultures for generations, and this would include the cultures of the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and any other peoples who comprised the Germanic colonizers of what would become England.

A deity who could persist in such times would be one with a very powerful emotional appeal.

But now let us turn to specific indications of Earth-goddess religion in Germania.

C) Earth Goddesses

Tacitus' *Germania* tells us that prior to the migration age, the Germanic tribes had two notable and distinct Earth goddesses. One was the principal Earth goddess of the Germanic tribes and the other was important regionally but did not have a widespread following.

C.1) The Principal Earth Goddess

Three aspects implying a principal deity are visible with regard to one of the Earth goddesses of the Proto-Germanic tribes: human-social prominence, great solitary power, and creation and/or parental dominance of important objects or categories. She was also understood to be an active intervener, not a distant and otiose being.

C.1.a) Mother of Deities

In Chapter 45 of *Germania*, Tacitus denotes by the name Mother of Deities the principal deity of one tribe, the Aestii. The Aestii live along the eastern shore of the Baltic and trade amber to foreigners (Mattingly and Handford, 1970; Stuart, 1916).

Members of this tribe wear "wild boar" images as emblems of their cult and as amulets for protection, rather like Christians wearing crosses in the middle ages. Evidence presented later in the present book suggests continuity of the practice until it was supplanted by cross emblems.

This presents a conundrum. Tacitus' use of the expression "Matrem Deum venerantur" seems to contradict the emblems associated with the cult, for Romans viewed Mother of Deities as a celestial goddess, whereas there is a Roman and international tendency to associate hogs with deities of the soil.

The solution to the conundrum is to realize that Tacitus means to tell his readers that this deity generally conforms to the concepts attached to the name Mother of Deities, but with the significant exception that She is identified with the boar-hog icon and therefore with soil. It is possible that She was both celestial and chthonic, or that the distinction was meaningless to Germanic Earth-goddess worshippers.

Although Mother of Deities in Roman religion was understood as having a male deity for partner in creation, Tacitus does not mention any partner for the Germanic Earth goddess, so it is clear that Tacitus intended that his audience would understand the principal deity of the Aestii as one who did not require a male or other partner to be effective.

Also, this Earth goddess performed a wide range of functions, from protecting the state to facilitating intimate personal matters. The chapter on Roman religion shows that wide range of functions was characteristic of the Roman Mother of Deities.

In sum, the Germanic Mother of Deities was an Earth goddess, was an unwed creatrix, was identified with soil, and had a wide range of functions.

C.1.b) A Goddess of Germanic Tribes in General

Evidence in Tacitus' *Germania* suggests that the cult of the principal Earth goddess was a very strong characteristic of the Aestii culture, but the cult was also quite prominent among other Proto-Germanic peoples.

It is reasonable to suspect that the Aestii's deities (or deity) would be recognized by and native to the general mix of cults of the Proto-Germanic-speaking tribes. This conclusion is supported by the Tacitus' remark that the Aestii have a Celtic-like language but otherwise are culturally Germanic.

However, direct evidence is in his Chapter 2, where Tacitus tells us that an "earth-born god" named Tuisto begot the god Mannus, who in turn produced all the Germanic peoples. Thus, a goddess identified with the planet is posited as the single creator of least one line of deities. Also, through Tuisto She is the source of all the Germanic peoples.

This coincides roughly with the way Romans understood Mother of Deities: a creatrix with assistants but not partners.

Also, being widely accepted was a characteristic of the Romans' Mother of Deities. Although the Mother of Deities familiar to Romans was not universally accepted in the same way by all people, She was worshipped and supplicated by a large proportion of the people of the Empire in a large proportion of the territorial extent of that area.

Hence, we can infer that Tacitus attempted to succinctly inform his readers that the pinnacle goddess of the Aestii pantheon, like the pinnacle goddess of the Phrygian pantheon, was worshipped in recognizable varieties among a wide variety of peoples. In other words, the principal Earth goddess of the Aestii was, although not

completely universal among the Germanic peoples, very widely accepted in various tribe's pantheons.

It is reasonable to infer that Tacitus does not intend to say that this goddess was conceptualized in Her cult as the origin of all life everywhere, since that would go well beyond the Romans' version of the Phrygian Matar. However, there is reason elsewhere to infer that this is indeed how She was conceived, at least by the tribes that later formed England.

C.1.c) Avoidance of Idols and Temple Buildings

There is no hint that the principal Earth goddess of the Germanic tribes was ever represented by an idol nor housed in a temple. Moreover, doing so would have violated a general theological principal of the Germanic tribes in Proto-Germanic times, a principal which held that anthropomorphic representations and treating deities as if housed in buildings was blasphemy. Tacitus: "Their holy places are woods and groves, and they apply the names of deities to that hidden presence which is seen only by the eye of reverence" (Mattingly and Handford, 1970: *Germania*, chapters 9 and 45; Church and Brodribb, 1889: 8).

The Proto-Germanic tribes seem not to have been completely consistent in this practice, and the descendant Germanic cultures also seem not to have been completely consistent about it. Perhaps Tacitus meant that the common tendency and dominant ideological influence among the tribes of Germania was a theological aversion to diety-housing and idol worship.

This theological aversion to idols and temple buildings was a tradition preserved more by the English than by the Norse, but in chapters specifically on those national cultures, we will see that it affected both of them.

C.2) Nerthus of Cimbria

C.2.a) Nerthus and the Seven Tribes

Tacitus' chapter 40 says that seven tribes, including the Angles, worshipped Mother Earth under the name Nerthus, apparently as their most important deity.

We know She was quite prominent in the seven tribes' religion by two indications. (1) Tacitus' sources indicated that her cult was the only outstanding characteristic of the whole seven tribes. (2) Her importance is also indicated by the impact of Her holiday season, for during that time a priest brought her to all the seven tribes' settlements, or at least to the significant ones, triggering at each stop

a holy festival of great significance and a time of joy and of mandatory, disarmed peace (Mattingly and Handford, 1970).

Apparently, violence was considered unholy, but this attitude was not likely restricted to the Nerthus cult, for prohibitions on weapons and violence in temples was a general rule in Pagan Iceland, Norway, and probably also England (Golden, 2011: 40-41; Sellar, 1917: 116-118, Bede's history 2.13).

C.2.b) Nerthus as a Deity of the Second Rank

Nerthus was a regional goddess. This very important goddess of the seven tribes is not mentioned in regard to other tribes, and after the Angles moved to the British Isles and the other six tribes vanished, there was no further mention of Nerthus[53]. This implies either that the Angles abandoned their principal goddess when they abandoned their Cimbrian homeland, or that they did so in a time of troubles preceding the evacuation.

In addition, the sanctuary where Nerthus resided between festival seasons was somewhere in the region inhabited by the seven tribes, and this is another implication that She was tied to place instead of being general to the Earth (Mattingly and Hanford, 1970: Germania chapter 40.

This is an important clue to Tacitus' meaning in regard to "Mother Earth". Like the goddess the Romans knew well as Mother Earth, Nerthus was only observed as a goddess in a peninsular region or part of a peninsula. She was probably identified with soil, although only with the soil in Her region, and was likely considered relevant only in Cimbria. Although the Roman goddess called Mother Earth was not conceived as applicable only to Rome and nearby districts, Roman

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[53] Some scholars suggest that Nerthus is not a Latinization of the Proto-Germanic name of this goddess but instead a copying error. Although Nerthus is the most frequent name for Her in the surviving copies of *Germania*, this might simply be a result of a relatively productive scriptorium reproducing one of its scribe's errors. The original could have been a Latinization of Herða, for one of the several surviving copies of Tacitus' essay shows "Herthum" (Gardenstone, 2012: 25-31). This "Herða" possibility might be why Albertsson uses the name "Hertha" in his 2009 book; he does not justify his inference. Moreover, Albertssons's further inference that this means that Earþ is the mysterious Hreða mentioned in Bede's history rests on the fallacy that in Tacitus' *Germania*, Mother of Deities and Mother Earth are the same goddess. And given the weight of evidence, it seems more reasonable to infer that "Herthum" is the typo and "Nerthum" the original.

readers did not expect complete and exact correspondence when a foreign deity was labeled in Latin (Ando, 2005; Jones, 2004).

One other thing we can easily infer is that Nerthus was either a goddess of peace, quite unlike the Roman's Mother Earth, or that peace was necessary for Her to function, as was the case with Ceres.

Nerthus might have been seen as an aspect of a greater Earth goddess or as an overlapping, independent wight; but it is most likely that some Nerthus adherents viewed Her as independent and some not, and they all went to the same festivals and performed the same personal and household devotions and supplications.

C.2.c) Sacrifices

Although one of Roman Earth goddesses mentioned by Tacitus took male-animal sacrifices and the other took female, it is not explicit that any such distinction applied to the two Germanic Earth goddesses mentioned in *Germania*. One may note that Nerthus' wagon was towed about during Her festival season by cows rather than by oxen (castrated males), which would be the more usual power source, so it is possible that She took only female sacrifices. If Nerthus were associated with female livestock, and especially with pregnant female livestock, this would make for a closer correspondence for her with the Roman Earth Mother and a stronger contrast with the Romans' Mother of Deities.

However, for present purposes animals sacrificed are not as important as range of functions and geographic spread of the cult.

C.2.d) Idol Use

Tacitus' statement that the goddess Nerthus was hauled in a wagon, washed in a lake, and stored between festival seasons implies that he meant "idol", not "goddess". In turn, this implies a departure from the usual custom of not using direct, physical representations of deities and not treating them as if confined.

D) Major Conclusions

- In Proto-Germanic times, the many Germanic tribes had a great religious variety, but a major common thread was a mother-of-deities Earth Goddess.
- The Nerthus cult was tied to the region of Cimbria and was abandoned by the Angles during the migration age or before, and therefore it was not the ideological ancestor of the Anglo-Saxon cult of Earþ.

- The Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and other Germanic immigrants to the British Isles came with a powerful adherence to many cults, among them a cult of sole-creator deity identified with Earth and the substance earth.
- One of Roman Earth goddesses mentioned by Tacitus took male-animal sacrifices and the other took female, it is not clear that any such distinction applied or did not apply to the two Germanic Earth goddesses mentioned in *Germania*.
- Given data presented in previous chapters, the cults of the major Earth goddess of the Germanic tribes must be understood to have existed alongside other cults with contradictory theologies in such a way that everyone in a community could happily participate in common religious rituals.
- The Earth goddess common to several Germanic tribes was not strictly a fertility deity, but one with a wide range functions and strong powers of Her own.
- The principal Germanic Earth goddess was identified with soil, among other things.
- The common Germanic Earth goddess was understood as mother to at least some deities and some humans, and possibly to all.
- Although Nerthus was directly represented by a physical symbol, probably an idol that was transported closed in a wagon, the principal Earth goddess seems not to have had direct physical representation and was probably mostly worshipped in the open air.

Chapter 9: Documented Earþ Belief and Practice after 650 CE

A) Introduction

A.1) A Summary of the Case to This Point

This book uses both direct and circumstantial evidence supported by analogous case studies to build the case that English polytheism was complex, tolerant of contradiction and ambiguity, and very strongly influenced by its Earth-goddess cult.

So far, we have seen vivid examples of just the sort of religion posited in this book for the polytheistic English. We have seen that alongside a practice strongly supported by myth there can be a different religious practice with little or no mythic support. We have seen examples of supreme deities in polytheistic religions with no influence from Christianity nor Islam. We have seen examples of complexity to the point of theological incompatibility in religions where that logical incompatibility is not a cause of significant conflict among the people, and we have seen an example where theologically incompatible halves are smoothly coordinated into one religious system.

We have also seen that there were at least two strong Earth-goddess cults among the Germanic peoples prior to the migration age, and that one of those cults (Mother of Deities) is the likely ancestor cult of English Earth-goddess worship, but the other cult (Nerthus) expired.

So by now the reader will not be shocked into disbelief to see direct evidence of a primal-deity Earþ cult persisting a few centuries into the era of Christian supremacy, and to see that the cult in question might have been the major aspect of the pre-Christian religion of the Anglo-Saxons.

A.2) What This Chapter Shows

This chapter will chronologically jump from the evidence regarding Proto-Germanic religion (in the previous chapter) to evidence regarding Anglo-Saxon religion a few centuries after the migration age. This will allow us to infer some of the major characteristics of

polytheistic English religion in the time between the Germanic colonization of England and 1100 CE.

It will be made clear that Earþ-cult activity persisted well into the era of Christian supremacy, and that that there was a very strong appeal of Earþ to the English people during the first few centuries of Christian supremacy in England. Astonishingly, some Anglo-Saxons brazenly recorded supplications to, and praise of, the goddess Earþ at least 250 years after the last conversion of an English state to Christianity, thereby putting themselves into risk of legal prosecution.

This documentary evidence also supports inferring some of the major theological features of Her cult. She was the mother of all mankind, not merely of redheaded speakers of one northern European language. She was not restricted to nature nor to agricultural functions, for She was an all-purpose deity and, at least within one cult, She was the pinnacle of the pantheon.

It would also be reasonable to wonder what the early medieval Christian leadership had to say about these matters. Apparently the sermonizers and law-writers decided to tone down their opposition to two of the pre-Christian English deities (Earþ and Easter), and it is a reasonable inference that the main reason the authorities were not so hateful about Earþ is that, as with Easter, they also liked Her.

All this argumentation supports the inference that in the time between Proto-Germanic culture and the official Christianization of all English governments, the people had a very strong Earth-goddess cult, and that She was not restricted to functions of nature or agriculture, and that She was, for at least some of the English polytheists, the highest deity in their pantheon as the mother of all deities, all people, and all other living things. And during Pagan supremacy the Earþ cult probably existed alongside others with incompatible theologies.

It is reasonable to infer that this is the same deity or a version of the same deity described in the previous chapter as the major Earth goddess of the Germanic tribes.

B) Documented Prayers and Magic

Any sign of openly-practiced Earþ religion in England after 850 CE would be interesting as an indication of a cult with too much momentum to stop quickly. This inference would apply to prayers and magic in a mixed-religion context, but it applies especially to blatantly Pagan practices which had been put into written evidence. Passage C.1 below shows that creating this documentation put persons at considerable risk of legal prosecution.

The Old English source documents used in this analysis are dated to the 900's and 1000's CE. The prayers are found in a few Old English "charms" (magic spells), and in the famous lyrics to *Cædmon's Hymn*.

We have very little of this documentary evidence in the mass of documented prayers and spells (Felix, 1909), but it is astonishing that there is any. By 650 CE, every English state had been officially converted to Christianity, and the governments had begun to harass, obstruct, and severely persecute the practice of polytheistic religion. Also a factor was the social pressure of a large proportion of the population, and especially prominent leaders, proclaiming themselves to be believing and practicing Christians (Attenborough, 1922; Lee, 2000; Stenton, 1971). So by the time this evidence was created, the English people had experienced at least 250 years of legal persecution and relatively subtle pressures to conform to official Christianity.

These sources unequivocally establish Earþ as a major goddess, and these English sources tell us that She was not limited to things some scholars normally associate with Earth worship nor was She restricted to nature worship. It appears that She was, in fact, not much limited at all.

B.1) Healing of Farmland

Earþ is prayed to repeatedly in the charm "For Unfruitful Land", also known as "Æcerbot" and as "Charming of the Plow" (Rodrigues, 1993: 29-33, 130-135). It is a script for an elaborate solo ritual performed by a specialist, and the purpose of the ritual is to achieve plentiful agricultural production, apparently on land that has been afflicted with misfortunes of uncertain causes.

What the script reveals for the present analysis is that Earþ was a high goddess in at least one version of mixed religion of early medieval England. Therefore She was surely also a high goddess in unmixed Heathen religion.

B.1.a) Overview

Earþ is the sole Pagan representation in this script. Indeed, it is not just where and how She is mentioned in the spoken words in this script but Her very appearance that testifies to Her high status among English Pagan deities and powerful emotional gravity for the people, for the prose and poetry are almost entirely Christian and magical-Christian.

We see here a mixture of mostly Abrahamic religion and very un-Abrahamic sorcery. Because the spell has no mention of Christ here or elsewhere, we see the suggestion that the sorcerer did not understand

or that he/she rejected the Christian idea of the salvation of the soul, which is the meaning of Jesus Christ's death by execution and of much of His ministry. This makes the author appear to be not influenced by this aspect of Christian Neoplatonism.

Most of the prose is omitted here. Although the script for the entire ritual includes as much prose as poetry, only the poetic spoken lines mention the goddess Earþ, for the prose is strictly Abrahamic — although Christ is not mentioned. But one prose passage does include a brief instruction that is of use later in this essay.

The translation has a modern meter roughly resembling the traditional meter but more pleasant to the modern ear than would be an exact adherence to customary early medieval poetic structure. (There is extensive discussion of translating Old English poetry in Stanfield, 2012a: Appendix B and Appendix H.) The translation is based on Rodrigues' (1993) edition of the Old English.

B.1.b) Initial Invocations

In the first passage, the performer invokes the most powerful divine forces that he or she can invoke for the purpose of focusing his or her own will.

> East-facing I stand,
> for mercies I pray.
> I ask Sublime Ruler,
> ask the great Lord,
> I pray to Holy Heaven's Ward.
> of Sky I ask and of Earth I ask,
> and of truly holy Mary;
> and I ask of heaven's might
> with its hall so high;
> that I might this song
> with the Lord's gift of sound
> express a strong resolve.

B.1.c) Persuasion to Grant Prosperity

A major transition in the speaker's mental focus occurs at this point. The transition occurs without written instructions in the manuscript to change bodily posture, tone of voice, or otherwise mark the change. I physically marked the transition by changing the layout of the lines so that most of them have almost twice as many syllables

as the previous translated lines, but Rodrigues' edition and his translation do not mark the transition.

These next lines express the main punch of the spell, followed by an attempt to persuade Yahweh that granting agricultural prosperity in this case would only be fair.

Awaken those plants for our worldly use!
Adorn that dirt with leaves densely packed!
As wise ones say,
let those have blessings in earthly realms
who alms give justly as God has willed.

In this passage, it is notable that a hope for afterlife salvation is not the reason for alms-giving. Instead alms-giving is analogous to certain forms of pre-Christian sacrifice — that is, it is a persuasion of a deity to give a this-worldly benefit.

B.1.d) The High Rank of Earþ

In the following passage, Earþ is invoked more strongly. This passage begins by asserting the high status of the Earthen Mother three times. But then the prayer goes on to imply the greater power of the Eternal Lord ("ece drihten"), who is probably Yahweh, given the Catholic saints mentioned in the prose instructions[54]. And by the way, the relationship between Earþ and Yahweh in this passage is similar to that implied in one aspect of verse 12 of the *Old English Rune Poem*, where people hope that "God" allows the soil to yield a beautiful bounty (Stanfield, 2012: Chapter 12).

Arch One, Arch One, Arch One — Earthen Mother —
may the almighty, Eternal Lord,
grant to you acres
of growing things,
of thriving things
of increasing things,
of strengthening things,
of creatures taller,
of shining abundances;
and ample barley, beautiful wheat crops,

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[54] However, by now the reader is aware of the possibility that some English polytheists included an un-named all-father in their religion, one similar to the Damiourgos encountered in a previous chapter.

and of all the grains that grow on the earth.

It is worthwhile to pause for a moment and consider the fine points of the first line. The original Old English of the first half line is "erce, erce, erce", and this is difficult for many scholars to translate poetically into Modern English.

The most straightforward translation of "erce", and one that preserves the alliteration with a very straightforward translation of "eorþan modor" (Earthen Mother) is "Arch One". As the Bosworth-Toller dictionary shows under "arce-", the Old English "erce" is based on a Greek word for "high", "high-ranking", or "principal". We see something akin to this in the Modern English "archangel" or "arch foe", for the Modern English "arch" is also derived from that same ancient Greek basis (see also Herbert, 1994: 23)[55].

Some interpret the first half of the first line as invoking a sky god (the High One), but if so, the line would say "and Earthen Mother". On the contrary, this is another of many instances in Old English poetry in which one half-line rephrases or explains the previous half-line. In fact, the pattern of one half of a line restating or explaining the contents of another half of a line is so common that we can be absolutely certain that the High One is the soul in the soil beneath the speaker.

So at this point Earþ is addressed as the principal deity or at least as one of the very highest deities, although she is partnered with the Eternal Lord to produce agricultural "shining abundances".

B.1.e) A Catholic Prayer to Yahweh

Next, the sorcerer prays that the land will be safe from sorcery, but this time the performer appeals to Yahweh as the true source of magic, in accordance with official Catholic doctrine. (In the more

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[55] The Greek words related to this Old English -- and to our Modern English "arch" are the verb archein (to be the first, to command) and the nouns arkos (leader) and arche (beginning). (See Barnes and Noble Books, 1996). Some would consider my use of "Arch One" here archaic — if you will excuse the pun — but we still say and understand "archbishop", "archduke", "archfiend", and the like. Wiktionary tells us that nowadays people often understand "arch" as "roguish", probably an inference based on the definition as "cleverly sly and alert" (see also G. & C. Merriam and Co., 1979). Nonetheless, the expression is still understood as indicating great importance or rank.

Pagan spell called "For a Swarm of Bees", we will see this sort of request made of Earþ alone.)

> Eternal Lord and His saints in Heaven,
> grant the agronomist,
> that his standing grain be safe and peaceful,
> protected against antagonists always,
> and the soil be shielded from all sorts of evil,
> from sorceries sown the land throughout.

B.1.f) Request for Protection Against Evil Sorcerers

But, having appealed to Yahweh to exorcise the land, then the performer reverts back to his or her role as sorcerer or priest(ess) invoking a spirit being and asking that Yahweh directly protect his or her spell from interference by another human sorcerer.

> Now I ask the Ruler, who created the world,
> that there be no woman so persuasive
> nor man enough strong
> to annul the words thus pronounced.

B.1.g) Earþ Said to Be Mother of All Mankind

The next passage of monologue (Rodrigues' lines 30-32) acknowledges Earþ as Mother of Mankind, and it again expresses the identification of that goddess with soil. The aspect of mankind spoken of in the original — and translated here as "folks" — is "fíra", which is the more lower-animal, or sinful, aspect of mankind (Stanfield, 2012: Chapter 1).

> Hale be you, mold, mankind's mother!
> May you grow in God's embrace
> with food much-filled for folks to use.

B.1.h) A Strictly Abrahamic Closing

The last of the spoken lines mention the earth as our home. These last lines are a wonderful thanksgiving which would fit into any Abrahamic religion, and they lack any hint of Pagan worship.

> Field full of food-source for humankind,
> brightly blooming, blessed thou art

in the Holy Name of He who made that heaven
and this earth on which we live.
The god who created the ground,
has granted us growing gifts,
that each grain may be of use for us.

B.2) For Water-Elf Disease

Earþ is also invoked in the purely Pagan charm called "For the
Water-Elf Disease" (Rodrigues, 1993:7, 41-42, 148-149). The disease
involves at least one very troubling lesion. The prescription is for
herbal medication on the skin lesion and some words to promote
psychological strength in the patient.

For this ritual the physician is instructed to sing two songs after
applying herbal medicine. The first song is sung to the patient in order
to use the patient's own psyche to promote healing. The healer sings
that whatever sore was involved with water-elf disease will be as
painless as ordinary contamination in one's ear. (And a subtle hint to
clean up appears.)

The second song is sung to the wound per se but is a strictly Pagan
invocation of an Earth goddess.

B.2.a) A Spoken Spell and A Prayer
A translation of the poetry, to be spoken or sung by the healer:

"I covered the wounds of the best war-bands
so the wounds did not burn nor burst
nor intensify
nor persevere
nor throb
nor become larger
nor deepen
but are contained by the health-cup.
Not will this sore hurt more than the dirt in your ear."

Then the word for earth is used as the name of a goddess in the
final (prose) instructions to the physician:

"Sing this many times: 'May Earþ diminish you with all Her might
and main.' These songs may be sung over a wound."

B.2.b) An Analysis

For present purposes, three observations are to be made.

First, the Old English word for "earth" is used in this prayer in two very different senses: (1) to indicate contamination and (2) to invoke a healing goddess to remove contamination.

Apparently the substance of soil was identified with both good and bad; but this does not necessarily mean that the goddess was half evil, for mankind has evolved to thrive on this planet, so the balance is heavy on one side. However, it does suggest that pleasure and inconvenience, abundance and discomfort, are among the aspects of the gift of life, hence somehow also aspects of a vast and complex deity.

A more important observation: we see evidence of how powerfully attractive She was to early medieval English folk, for even this late She could yet be openly invoked — in print — without any sort of reference to Abrahamic religion.

Another important observation: this ritual quite clearly reveals that Earþ is not limited to fertility, for She is also a goddess of healing.

B.3) For a Swarm of Bees

This is another strictly Pagan item. The combination of magical working and prayer has three lessons for us. (1) Earþ's functions include social protection against human hatefulness. (2) She is identified with at least the solid mineral substances of the planet. (3) She is identified with both magical will and prayer.

She is not explicitly identified here or elsewhere with the whole planet, which would include atmosphere. On the other hand, identification with the whole planet or with all of its non-living substances and objects is not ruled out.

B.3.a) Technical Background

First, understanding this "charm" requires some technical information about apiculture.

Bee colonies are considered a collective being, and they reproduce similarly to cell mitosis. Sometime in the spring, the queen and little more than half of the workers leave an extant community in a swarm, looking for a new place to build a home. The queen does not give orders nor coordinate colony activities; usually workers force her out of the nest or hive. But the queen is a key member of the colony, for she is the only bee to reproduce. Usually, a new queen does the breeding in the old place, and she is attended by the workers who remain behind or who hatch out later.

Emigrant bees then move and camp out in a single body, although a relatively few of the emigrants are sent to scout for new places to reside. The camp is a dense body of hundreds or thousands of animals clinging to each other, surrounding the queen.

Within a day or two, a new location is found and construction begins.

The (female) gender identity of the bees in the swarm is referred to directly in the "charm". Male bees only live to inseminate, so all the bees in the swarm — and all the workers left behind in the original colony — are female.

A hive is (A) a bee colony that is owned by an apiculturist, (B) a structure provided for a bee colony by an apiculturist, or (C) a swarm of bees.

This "charm" is from late in the early medieval period. In early medieval England, honey production was a major industry, but the earliest Anglo-Saxon honey harvesters did not keep hives. Instead, the harvesters raided wild colonies until late in the era (Hagan, 1995: Chapter 10; Rodrigues, 1993: 42-43; Tennessee Department of Agriculture, n. d.; Wikipedia, 2012c).

So here is the purpose of the "charm". For the apiculturist, it is an advantage to get the migrants to settle somewhere on his or her land and not too high in a tree to allow harvesting honey. The purpose of the "charm" is to obtain that advantage.

B.3.b) The Spell

Following is my translation of the full set of instructions for this working.

From nearby, take earth and throw it with your strong-side hand under your strong-side foot[56] and say:

Underfoot I seize that which I found!

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[56] It makes sense to infer that in this case, the Old English writer was instructing both right-side dominant and left-side dominant persons. In the first passage, the poet refers to "swiþe" hand and foot. Old-English dictionaries typically define this as "right" hand and foot. However, in modern times people giving instruction to both right-handed and left-hand people speak of the "strong" or "dominant" hand. Likewise, they speak of the "strong" or "dominant" leg or foot. They speak of the "dominant" eye. Moreover, in Old English "swiþe" also means "strong".

Lo! Earþ can against all wights prevail,
and against mischief,
and against malice,
and against mankind's mighty tongue.

With that, toss dry, loose grains of earth [57] over (them) when they swarm and say:

Settle, success-women[58]; descend now to earth!
Wild to woods do not now willfully fly.
Of my welfare be witting,
as everyone is of food and of homeland.

It is ironic that someone could create an alternate view of this specimen as non-religious magic, for Earþ is clearly invoked as a spirit being. Rodrigues (1993: 42-43) describes his view of this "charm" as a magical working exploiting the non-sentient elemental magic of earth as a type of substance to magically influence bees to recognize the apiculturist's land as their homeland. But the special power that prevails over human evil is a deity, not the magician's will alone.
So let us proceed to an analysis of this "charm" as Earþ worship.

B.3.c) Invocation of the Goddess Earþ
The opening gesture and words unite the magician-worshipper with a great goddess who is simultaneously an arch divinity and the spirit in the dirt beneath our feet. We have seen this irony before, and it seems to be a trope. Then the speaker describes in a praise prayer how powerful She is against harm, both social and magical.
As in the prayer and magic to achieve fertility of sown fields, the spoken words here indicate concern over the possibility of negative energy, willed or residual. But in this case it is Earþ whose protection is invoked, and without reference to Yahweh.

[57] Where the ancient author instructed the agronomist to toss dirt onto the swarm, he used a word that could mean dust, grit, sand, gravel, or dirt (gréot). Obviously, loose, dry, small or fine particles are required; it does not matter which type. A moist clod certainly would not do.

[58] Some translators, such as Rodrigues (1993) render the Old English "sigewif" as "victorious women" and then some interpreters further opine that this expression refers to valkyries instead of productive (successful) female workers. I disagree, for this is obviously not a reference to minor war goddesses, but to worker bees.

Next, the goddess' power is invoked in a gesture, by tossing over the bee swarm a substance whose name is synonymous with Her name, and this is followed immediately by a statement of the magician-worshipper's desire in this matter.

So we see a prayer of devotion and praise, a request that She protect against human hatefulness, and a co-act of will by the supplicant and this goddess.

The spell-worker involves Earþ by spoken words and by tossing grit. As in the prayer against water-elf disease, this implies that She is identified with the solid mineral substances of the planet. She might also be identified with other substances, for there is no telling from this if She is also identified with air or water.

However, we can definitely tell that She is identified with the non-living substances of the planet but not with the living things. Hence, Earþ is not Nature per se.

B.4) *Cædmon's Hymn*

This prayer implies that many Anglo-Saxon Christians had a pretty positive predilection regarding Earþ, and that many nominal Christians thought of people mainly as Earþ's children. For them, this would have been true in the same sense that modern Christians can say that all persons are children of God, as those who are looked after, nurtured, or created by the deity in question.

B.4.a) It's Popularity among Nominal Christians

The prayer's popularity is indicated in part by the number of copies that survived after many centuries. The hymn is preserved in 22 early medieval documents, in both Latin and Old English. For comparison: only one full and one partial copy of *The Dream of the Rood* survived and *Beowulf* survived in only one manuscript. The hymn's inclusion in Bede's *History of the English Church and People* not only indicates its acceptance by Catholics but also tells us it was composed in the year 680 CE, although it was preserved long afterward. The prayer was composed by a famous Christian named Cædmon, to be sung with musical accompaniment.

It is definitely mostly Abrahamic religion, and it therefore presents another important clue regarding how early medieval English folks thought of their relationship to Earþ. This hymn also implies that many early medieval English Christians did not know, or knew but did not entirely accept, the biblical creation myth.

B.4.b) The Lyrics

The original was certainly composed and performed in Old English, but there is no authoritative version recorded by Cædmon, who might have performed it with the three variations in wording which are significant for the present study. Slade (2005) lists all known versions of this hymn, which include at least one translation into Latin, the official language of the Catholic Church.

Instead of making a single edition out of the various manuscripts, let us examine one of the recorded versions, then consider how the versions vary. This is a version in Old English (taken from Slade, 2005: manuscript C).

Nu we sculon hergean heofonrices weard,
metodes mihte ond his modgeþanc,
weoroda wuldorfæder, swa he wundra gehwæs,
éce drihten, or onstealde.
He ærest scop eorðú bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scypend;
þa middangeard moncynnes weard,
éce drihten, æfter eode
fi[rum] foldan, frea ælmihtig

Following is the present author's translation. The part of the hymn that is most interesting for this study is presented here as the second strophe.

A hallelujah we give
to our lofty Lord
for the might of Metod
and his all-knowing mind.
Glory-Father of hosts!

When for every wonder
The Eternal Lord
began origins,
at first He created
for the children of Earth
the heavens as roof.
The holy Creator!

Then to Middle-Realm,
as mankind's protector,

the Eternal Lord later arrived;
on the ground with us sinners[59]
was the Lord Almighty.

B.4.c) Implications of the Lyrics

Most records of this hymn indicate at least an ambivalence regarding our status as Children of Yahweh or Children of Earth.

In each of the 22 medieval copies, line 5 of the prayer indicates that Yahweh created the sky as a roof for people, but this is done with three different wordings. The one Latin version says that heaven was made "filiis hominum" (for sons of humans) and 9 of the Old English versions say "for children of people". But 6 Old English versions say "earþan beornum". This expression could mean "for (His) earthly children" or it could mean "for Earth's children", because in Old English the dative case is sometimes used for the possessive[60]. And 6 Old English versions say outright that heaven was created as a roof "earþu/earþe bearnum" —using the possessive case, which clearly says "for Earth's children".

Brian Branston (1974: 180-183) points out that "Cædmon was born into a Pagan world and his first learning must have been Pagan." Branston goes on to point out that several of the expressions in the hymn are standard poetic stock and were very probably part of the Pagan culture in which Cædmon grew up. And Branston further points out that some of these stock expressions originating in the era of Heathen supremacy are applicable to English Pagan religion. One of these stock phrases Cædmon surely did not invent would have been "Earth's children".

Moreover, notice that Cædmon's version of Creation is not the same as that found in *Genesis*, regardless of which version of the hymn one examines. In the Bible, Yahweh creates heaven and earth (meaning sky and ground) at one stroke; here Yahweh creates heaven at a separate stroke, and Earth is not mentioned as anything He created.

B.4.d) Possible Pagan Evolution

Students of this liturgical fragment have raised an interesting possibility. In a footnote to his web page on Cædmon's Hymn, Slade

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[59] For the translation of "firum" as "with us sinners", as opposed to "with people", see Chapter 1 of *Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem* (Stanfield, 2012).

[60] It was not customary to capitalize proper nouns in Old English, so the interpreter has to use the context to discern whether the author intended to indicate a being or a substance.

(2005) observes that there is a controversy over whether the oldest and most original versions said "for children of humans". If the other phrasings are later, they hint at two trends in Anglo-Saxon theology. One trend is more in line with the Christian theology we know nowadays as normal, and that is implied by "for earthly children", an interpretation that is at least an ambivalent reference to the creation theme in the first two sentences of the prayer. The other trend is persistent, outright Earþ worship or mingling in of Earþ worship with mainly Abrahamic religion (with Earþ as a subordinate deity) without repression by the authorities. In addition, this would imply much more tolerance by the state and the official religion than scholars commonly think existed.

It is also interesting for the present analysis that the Pagan aspect of overall English religion might have changed while underground to put more emphasis on Earþ. In other words, if the "Earth's children" versions are later than the others, then perhaps in 1000 CE Earþ was more much emphasized than in 600 CE, in comparison with other polytheistic deities. This possibility seems the more likely in view of Hall's (2004) case that Pagan (and Christian) attitudes toward elves changed during the same period.

But Hall (2004) shows (Pagan) elves becoming less desirable in the popular view, so it seems likely that Earþ's reputation would have also deteriorated, not improved, as Christian supremacy increased.

Hence however you look at it, the evidence of this hymn implies that the English Earth goddess was one of the most important components in non-Christian English religion.

B.5) Victory-Driver's Prayer

Because experts on Germanic polytheism often use Norse myths to help construct a model of English polytheism, it is helpful to remind the reader of the prayer to Jörð that is discussed in a section of the chapter on Norse polytheism (chapter 6, section B). Evidence from Old Norse literature of the 1000's to 1200's is often included in studies of Anglo-Saxon Pagan and mixed religion, on the supposition that each of these bodies of evidence provides clues to the implications of the other. A case for using Norse evidence for clues to English practice and belief has been made at length by other scholars. In brief: it is well known that the Norse and English Christians influenced each other intentionally and we have reason to believe that the Heathens in each language community also intentionally accepted influence from each other. Also it is clear that the two Heathen religions had significant

deities and other traits in common (Branston, 1974: chapters 1 and 11; DuBois, 1999; Shaw, 2002).

Although the Scandinavian Earth-goddess cult was apparently not as popular among the Norse as the Earþ cult was among the English, the theological similarities are notable, for Jörð was identified with soil and was a deity of many and varied functions.

Scandinavian Earth-goddess worship was also part of a complex assembly of conflicting theologies, with Jörð being a major deity or the most important deity in one, not recognized in another, and a minor figure in others.

B.6) Conclusions Regarding Direct Evidence of Earþ Worship

A few hundred years after the official conversion of all English states, people created and preserved written evidence of Earþ religion. She was not strictly nor primarily and agricultural deity, nor was She specialized as Mother Nature. Her functions seem to have included whatever was of serious concern to English persons in their daily lives.

This surely reflects the state of English religion prior to Christian supremacy. Evidence shown in this chapter implies strongly that between the Proto-Germanic culture and the Christian domination of English culture, the people who combined into the English had a strong Earþ cult that was at least one of the major cults of their polytheistic religion.

It is not clear whether She was or was not a goddess of the state prior to the era of Christian supremacy.

But it is clear that before the conversion of their governments, the attachment of English persons to this deity must have been very strong. This implies further that Her cult was firmly embedded in folk or hearth religion.

C) Omissions in Other Evidence

So far we have seen definite evidence of English Earth-goddess religion, but this section will examine curious gaps in the evidence. Laws and sermons denouncing Heathen practices and beliefs are often taken as evincing persistence of Heathen religion well into the era of Christian supremacy, and yet Earþ is not mentioned in laws and sermons in which other deities are mentioned.

But we already know that Earþ was worshipped when these laws were passed and sermons were written.

One might wonder how it could be that if Earþ was a major deity in the English pantheon, She wasn't preached against and denounced as a demon. Did She did not have any credibility as a devil?

This section also presents a consideration of Her absence from royal genealogies with include other pre-Christian deities.

But by now the answer lies hidden in plain sight. Lawmakers and preachers did not bear down specifically on Earþ because many sincere Christians liked Earþ a lot, and this goddess would not fit into a royal genealogy, even if all the royal families did consider themselves and everyone else sons and daughters of Earþ.

C.1) Laws

C.1.a) Laws Evince Continuation of Pre-Christian Practices

As Jennings (2010) remarks, kings would not pass laws against things that they believed did not occur. Canute reigned during 1016-1035, when England (and the rest of his empire) was considered Catholic. Therefore, written laws imply that some Heathen activity continued in England throughout the early medieval period, but it is not clear what deities or other wights were involved.

C.1.b) Severe Persecution

More important for present purposes than further evidence of persistence of pre-Christian practices is the explanation of why so little documentary evidence of them remains.

In Kent, 20 years or so after King Eorcenberht (ruled 640-664) had ordered destruction of all idols, King Wihtred banned "offerings to devils" (Attenborough, 1922: 2, Stenton, 1971: 61, 113, 128). The penalty for making offerings to "devils" in Kentish law in the early 600's was forfeiture of all one's goods and paying a fine comparable to the man-price fine for murder, which would have made the criminals homeless and destitute (Attenborough, 1922: 27).

We have reason to believe Lee's (2000) claim that, hundreds of years later, King Alfred — who reigned in the late 800's and early 900's — banned Heathen magic and "sacrifices" on pain of death. The present author examined Alfred's laws and his treaty with Guthrum as shown in Attenborough's 1922 book and found no mention of non-Christian religion. However, in the decrees of Edward and Guthrum based on agreements between the Danes and Alfred, there are fines for offenses against Christianity or Heathen practices by word or deed ("wordes oððe weorces"). This would not only ban acts of ritual and meditation but also forbid behavior consistent with Earð-cult ethical requirements.

Some banned practices might have included Earþ liturgy in more specific terms than "word or deed". Canute's law code forbade as Heathen the performance of sacrifice to "devils", defined as Heathen gods. This code also forbade worship of "sun or moon, fire or flood, water wells or stones". It went on to forbid worship of "any kind of wood-tree", practice of witchcraft and murder "in any way" including "by blood or by fire". And finally it condemned as Heathen that one "by means of such things as phantoms do any thing" (Branston, 1974: 54; Liebermann, 1903: 312, II Cnut 5,1).

This evidence does not explicitly show legal persecution of Earþ religion. Canute's law code bans worship at stones, which could be a favorite location for communing with Earþ, but the connection is not spelled out plainly, and stones can be locations for worship of any spiritual wight or wights. After all, large stones with flat tops make handy permanent outdoor ceremonial furniture. However, other peoples with earth-goddess cults identify their earth goddess with stone objects, and we know that the English and Norse associated their Earth goddess with solid mineral substances. It is also possible that an Earth goddess would be identified with the entire planet, which includes its bodies of water and its atmosphere.

So, in view of what we have seen in previous chapters, it is possible that in the early 1000's, a king of England did (at long last) outlaw at least one form of Earþ worship, but without directly banning worship of that deity. The reader should also be advised that the early medieval English laws the present author has read do not mention any deity by name.

But most important for this study, it is quite clear that whoever wrote the prayers in question was taking serious risks.

C.2) Sermons

Stenton (1971: 128) says that "between 670 and 690 Archbishop Theodore found it necessary to appoint penances for those who sacrificed to devils, foretold the future with the aid of devils, ate food that had been offered in sacrifice, or burned grain after a man was dead for the well-being of the living and the house."

Ministers might explicitly denounce Wóden or Þúnor as a devil, but in the surviving corpus of written evidence, while they were being very negative about the "foul fiends" of the Pagan pantheon and were naming examples, Earð's name was never mentioned, just as Easter's name was not mentioned (Shaw, 2002: 134; Wikipedia, 2012d). And yet we know that both of these goddesses had large end dedicated followings, and in Easter's case the dedication involved naming the

principal holy day of salvation after Her instead of naming it for Christ's rising from the grave. For examples of "Easter" as the name of a Christian holy day, see Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Sellar, 1917: 2.4, 2.24, 3.25, 5.15, 5.21, 5.22), his *Reckoning of Time* (Wallis, 1999: chapters 14, 51, 59, 62-65), and his *Letter to Wicthed* (Wallis, 1999: pages 418-419, 422-424).

A possible argument against the inference drawn here would be a claim that a sermon by Wulfstan denounces Earth worship during his lifetime, in the late 900's and early 1000's CE (Swanton, 1993:178, 184-187). That argument would require us to agree that Wulfstan did not distinguish between Roman and Scandinavian pantheons, nor between native English theology and Greek theology. But when he complains that "some believed in the Earth because it nourished all things" the expression is in the past tense and probably refers to Roman or Greek practice. He passes over into the present tense to denounce the Pagan religion of Scandinavian immigrants but does not indicate that they worshipped the Scandinavian nor English Earth goddess.

However, even if it were the case that Wulfstan meant that the English reverenced and supplicated the Earth because it supported all life, that would be further evidence of a powerful Earth-goddess cult in pre-Christian English polytheism.

C.3) Genealogies

One could argue that She does not appear in royal genealogies, which mention Wóden and Ingui (Garmonsway, 1972; Sellar, 1917), and therefore She might not have seemed important enough in aristocratic circles for bishops (who were aristocrats) to denounce in their sermons.

In other words, one could argue that Earþ was a commoners' deity.

But if She were exclusively popular among commoners, the aristocrats would have been well aware of Her anyway — the classes did not live so far apart — and the bishops would have felt even safer in denouncing Her vigorously.

Moreover, it is quite clear that the aristocrats cared what the commoners did in their religion, and that in peasant societies, folk and official religion each influence the other (Redfield, 1956; Watkins, 2004).

No matter how important She was, the Mother of All could not appear in a royal genealogy for several reasons. In the first place, descent in English royal genealogies was traced thorough the male line only, so no female appears in any genealogical list. Perhaps a more

compelling theological reason is that She is the mother of all without actually engaging even metaphorically in sexual reproduction and without having a biological-organism presence, so people might laugh if you said she was literally your ancestor. Another reason is that She cannot be euhemerized because she is not anthropomorphic, and this makes it difficult to create protective ambiguity in one's line of descent.

C.4) What to Make of This Gap

It turns out that the ruling class could be pretty mean about some Pagan survivals, but they were reluctant to be mean about all of them. At first, it seems paradoxical that sermons and laws did not explicitly mention Earþ worship, but in view of the overall evidence, it seems that the authorities decided for some mixture of political considerations and their own emotional commitments to tone down the persecutions.

Hence, it is suggested here that the aristocrats liked Her also, for She (and Easter) had become dear to their hearts in early childhood and was no more to be put aside than were the aristocrats' own parents, aunts, and uncles.

D) Conclusions

D.1) Earth in English Paganism

D.1.a) Powerful Appeal

Very detailed analyses of the contents of several early medieval English manuscripts show direct evidence of Earþ worship occurring a few hundred years after the conversion of all English states to official Christian establishment. The persistence of Earþ worship, which is clearly — and potentially incriminatingly — recorded, must be taken very seriously as a clue.

It is rational to infer that in Pagan times Earþ was among the most important of deities, if not the most important member of the English pantheon. After all, people incriminated themselves in writing by making their Earþ-cult practices explicit.

D.1.b) All-Mother Theology

Moreover, detailed examinations of these spells, supplemented by a passage from a Norse myth, gives clues as to the nature of Earþ as an English goddess. She was identified with soil, and we cannot be sure if She was also identified with all the non-living substances of our planet. However, She was definitely not strictly a nature nor an agricultural-

fertility deity. Her range of functions includes social relations, physical health, and shrewd person-perception, among other things. Earþ was probably an all-purpose deity.

D.1.c) Continuity

Given the historically prior existence of major Earth goddesses among Proto-Germanic peoples and the programmatic harassment and persecution of polytheistic religion by English governments, it is unlikely that the documentary evidence reflects a Pagan cult that was created anew during Christian supremacy.

Instead, She was very likely the same goddess, or a version of the same goddess who has been identified as the principal Earth goddess of the Germanic tribes long before the migration age.

D.2) Paganism in English Mixed Religion

Liturgical and magic-spell fragments imply that many early medieval English Christians cheated on their Heavenly Father. This refutes the claim made by Meany (1966: 112) that no trace of non-Christian religion "persisted in the minds of the English once they had been Christian for more than two or three generations" Did he meant that after 40-60 years there was no Pagan practice in England? On pages 212 and 257 of *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, Richard North (1997) claims "the eradication of Anglo-Saxon gods (sic) in the seventh century", as Christianization dropped Paganism in its tracks. Apparently that was not the case.

Chapter 10: Circumstantial Evidence from after 650 CE

This chapter consists of three chapter topics combined into one chapter, for it is an examination of evidence from named religious venues, remains of sacrifices, and art. However, these three topics together provide circumstantial evidence that (A) corroborates the direct documentation of Earþ religion in the previous chapter and that (B) supports further interesting inferences.

When we view place-name, archeological, and (nonverbal) documentary remains from early medieval England in the light of the verbal documentary evidence shown in the previous chapter, we can see that the influence of Earth religion was very strong early in the period studied, that the population delighted in complexity and mystery, and that the religion was light on authoritarian social structure and heavy on direct, personal experience of the divine.

In turn, all this supports the argument that English polytheism prior to Christian rule was a league of contradictory theologies but with Earþ religion as a very important, and possibly the most important aspect, of the pre-Christian religion of the Anglo-Saxons.

A) Importance of Nonverbal Clues

Words left behind are evidence of what people were saying and writing about what they did, so recorded words are important evidence, although the bias of such evidence from peasant societies is in favor of official versions of religion.

In contrast, material remains show us what people did. For example, Insoll (2004a) reports that in regard to the Islamization of the West African city of Gao, archeological evidence implies a much more mixed religious picture than does the historical data. The city was founded in the 500's or 600's CE, conversion began in the 900's, and historical data from the 1000's implies complete conversion. But examination of trash and architectural remains reveals that dietary and artistic practices forbidden under Islamic religion persisted into at least the 1400's.

Therefore, both kinds of clues — words and artifacts — must be considered together, and in this chapter, venue evidence (which is both documentary and archeological), archeological finds of buried goods, and artistic remains are considered in view of what has been shown in previous chapters.

B) Venues

Venue evidence corroborates other evidence of Earþ cult activity and adds to our knowledge of how English pre-Christian religion fit into the socio-economic structure and how cult affairs were conducted.

But first let us consider that the data understate the prevalence of pre-Christian religion and the importance of the Earth-deity cult.

B.1) Available Data Understate Occurrence of Pagan Temples

The evidence regarding venues for Heathen religious rites comes from two sources: documents provide place names, and archeological digs provide physical remains.

Here it will be shown that the bias in this evidence understates the polytheists' (and earliest Christians') reliance on open-air venues for religious rites, and it probably especially understates occurrence of venues for Earþ cult activities. Many pre-Christian religious venues have probably been renamed, and temples for Earth-goddess religion probably tend to be named for their locations, not for the deity. Open-air temples cannot leave signs of former building foundations. Offerings simply buried in the earth may appear as isolated cases of hidden treasure or may seem to be garbage dumps. Wooden altars rot away and piled-stone altars or altar mounds erode into nondescript minor piles as if left by nature.

B.1.a) Weaknesses of Place-Name Evidence

lace-name evidence necessarily overlooks un-named sites and those which were re-named prior to deed writing or to the census ordered by William the Conqueror. And not to be overlooked is the fact that place names that have survived are mostly names of towns, not names of rural places far from settlements. Also, some of the names are ambiguous, so that we cannot be sure if they were named as dedicated religious venues.

Examples of ambiguity are the two Wessex towns called Godshill that the present author found on a map (Bartholomew, 1997). I was unable to trace the histories of the town's names. One or both of these towns might be named after real estate that once belonged to a man named "Good", for "good" and "god" are spelled the same in Old

English. It is also possible that one or both are venues for Christian outdoor worship. And it is possible that — "god" being a grammatically neuter noun in Old English — at least one of these towns is near a site formerly dedicated to (polytheistic) general deity worship in all or several Pagan cults, or to a Neoplatonic-type supreme deity.

Re-use is also an issue. In some cases, early medieval English churches were situated on sites previously used by English polytheists and before that used by earlier iron-age people and before that used by stone-age people. Some of these sites are ancient burial grounds, and some have standing stones or circles of stones that imply regular worship use of long standing. For example, at Harrow-on-the-Hill a Christian church has been built on the Pagan site known in ancient times as Hearge (Sanctuary) (Carver, 2010a: 12; Semple, 2010: 33-39; Sproston, 2011). Obviously a result of re-use is that prior uses are at least partially obscured.

[61]

B.1.b) Weaknesses of Archeological Evidence

Digs are biased in favor of finding relatively high-status, expensive, large-scale structures located in areas where modern traffic or building construction occurs. Findings also often start with amateur metal detectors finding a few odd items or with modern excavation for a road or building accidentally turning up unexpected artificial objects.

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[61] This may be a difficult realization for some modern people. Living in the USA in the 1900's and later, even the most isolated dedicated religious venue is customarily always named. But the name of the real estate is normally the name of the formal organization that owns it. And one thing that stands out in evidence regarding Germanic polytheistic temples is that all polytheistic temple real estate was owned by nobles, insofar as we have evidence of ownership, but very little of it seems to have been named for an owner (see Appendix C). Names we can most easily recognize are those indicating dedication to a deity who is familiar to modern persons because of surviving myths.

Temples without walls and roofs are particularly difficult to find. Stone or earthen walls created by Neolithic or iron-age worshippers would by now look the same as hill forts. Any fencing that might have marked off an outdoor site could have been easily destroyed in ritual decommissioning or rotted away in disuse, and remains of small postholes would be relatively difficult to find. An altar constructed of a small pile of stones, a wooden table, or a low earthen mound could erode completely as centuries passed.

Archeological methods also have a bias against finding sites that were kept clean. It is certainly possible that some temples dedicated for religious rites were cases where theology or personal fastidiousness dictated that excessive artificial deposits would spoil the temple. A strong cleanliness policy would mean that banquet trash was all hauled off-site or that votive deposits were required to be made elsewhere, such as in a nearby stream or bog. Some temples might have had two sites, one for ritual deposits in water or soil, and another a short walk away for other formal liturgy on dry, elevated, litter-free ground. Certainly, if weapons were not allowed in a temple (as was likely a common practice among the Pagan English), sacrificial livestock would have to be slaughtered and prepared elsewhere[62]. Such behaviors would make a religious venue difficult to find.

Likewise, a multi-purpose building mostly put to economic or other secular purposes might lack votive deposits, for evidence of religious use would likely have been cleared away between ceremonies at multi-purpose buildings. There are examples in other cultures. Archeologists now tend to agree that most Teutonic "temples", at least the buildings called "hof" in Old Norse, were multi-purpose buildings that were only temporarily and occasionally used for religious ceremonies (Carver, 2010a; Walker, 2010). The Nuer, whose religion is discussed at length in a previous chapter conduct large-scale ceremonies in cattle corrals, smaller ceremonies at shrines at family dwellings, and generally anywhere they find convenient for a religious ceremony (Evans-Pritchard, 1956: 206).

B.1.c) Nonetheless, Evidence Has Been Found

Given all this, it is surprising that there is plenty of archeological evidence of religious venues (Carver, 2010a; Davidson, 1950: 170-171; Drayton, 1992; Foster, 2007-2008; Hope-Taylor, 1977; Lund,

[62] Golden (2011: 40-41) shows that in Scandinavian Paganism, weapons were typically not allowed in temples, and that violence in them was also taboo. The story of Coifi's conversion also implies that in at least some English cults weapons were not allowed in temples and not allowed in the hands of priests (Sellar, 1917: 2.13).

2010a; Semple, 2010; Sproston, 2011; Stenton, 1971: 101-112; Walker 2010).

A few dozen sites are indicated by place names only.

But we are not restricted to named venues, for there are also things buried or deposited in bodies of water, and which we are sure were not discarded trash. Items include precious, artistically-rendered weapons or drinking vessels, which would make fine sacrificial gifts to a goddess or god. Lund (2010a) suggests the possibility that some or most such deposits were made to ground out a magically-charged object or bury a spirit being inhabiting the object; Lund cites the example of the famous Thames scramseax. But termination of magic is in addition to the possibility that these objects were sacrificed to a deity associated with soil, water, or both soil and water. And not all the objects are likely to have been magical, for they are mostly mundane items such as tableware, horse tack, and food (meat on the bone). Most telltale deposits were left on dry land, but some were buried in banks of rivers or lakes, or left in bodies of water.

Burying an object or ritually placing it into water, as opposed to burning it to ashes, would seem especially appropriate as a method of offering to a deity of the earth and water. Thus, it is quite possible that a large proportion of the many artifacts found in English soil or bodies of water were left as offerings to a local earth or water spirit, or to some great deity identified with the ground, with the local landscape, or with the mineral substances of the planet, and whose name is synonymous with "soil".

By now, other evidence has given us a pretty good idea which deity that might be.

B.2) Types of Venues Preferred

Current scientific consensus holds that the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons favored outdoor venues for religious rites. In this subsection, we examine some of the details. Evidence presented in the following passages shows that sacred places were not usually marked by buildings. The evidence consists of place names, locations of monuments (including sacred pillars), votive deposits, trash left behind, and literary evidence (Semple, 2010).

B.2.a) Prevalence of Outdoor Sites

Nearly all known sites of Pagan religious practice in England are open-air venues.

There is evidence of several dozen sites of pre-Christian or probably pre-Christian worship. Nearly all of them are definitely natural hills,

fields, artificial mounds, glades, valleys, fords, springs, or islands. Very few known sites are named in such a way as to allow the possibility of a roofed and walled housing.

This means that nearly all known pre-Christian dedicated religious venues were outdoors. Exact figures for the data used in this study are in Appendix C. The list of site names is also in Appendix C along with analytic remarks.

B.2.b) Landscape Situations

It was rare for polytheistic English to locate a temple or a graveyard in a settlement; on the contrary, locations tended to be remote from residences and places of business. Even at the major temple site of Yeavering, where the English erected buildings and an outdoor amphitheater, and where they conducted rites outdoors as well as indoors, the settlement that grew up there appeared quite some time after the holy center had begun to be used (Foster, 2007-2008; Walker, 2010a).

Locations were mostly hilltops, secluded valleys, and clearings in heavily wooded areas. Venue names ending in -hearg (sacred place, temple, idol) or -weoh (idol, temple) never show signs of buildings and are typically far from settlements. Some of the hills chosen have excellent views of expansive landscapes, but others are hidden by surrounding higher hills (Foster, 2007-2008; Semple 2010: 39-41).

Locations in or near bodies of water were also common, including lakes, rivers, natural springs, and streams in caves. The custom of water-related rituals was so deeply ingrained that "some local practices merely continued under new management" after the end of Pagan supremacy (Hope, 1893; Carver, 2010a; Lund, 2010a; Semple, 2010; Sproston, 2011).

B.2.c) Liminal Locations

Favored locations were often in some sense liminal, perhaps providing an analogy for the process of traveling across a barrier into the spiritual realm. Shorelines are where different types of ecosystems meet. Hilltops can help one get a sense of more intense contact with the sky while standing on a rock or soil surface. A field bounded by woods or a large clearing also is a meeting of two natural ecosystems, as is a patch of dry land in a marsh. Burial grounds could be used to help people mentally focus on the material cycle of life, tying together a chain of ancestors and children across a great expanse of generations, or communication between the souls of the living and those of the physically dead. Also, water crossings — fords and bridges

— seem to have been useful to early medieval English wanting to leave offerings (Semple, 2010: 30-33).

There are other indications that liminal action was important philosophically. The topic of crossing between realms is dealt with at length in the three layers of meanings in the stanza "Ior" in *The Old English Rune Poem* (Stanfield, 2012), and crossing between realms is the major theme of the first half of *Beowulf*. And later in this chapter we will see that imaging arts of the early medieval period tended to be surreal, as if symbolizing peering into another, dreamlike realm.

B.2.d) Worship Sites Afloat

Boats afloat, like hilltop locations, offer a point of contact between two of the striking aspects of the planet: atmosphere and bodies of water. Boats used for Earþ or sea-deity rites would tend to not leave evidence unless they were buried on land. But consider the famous monument at Sutton Hoo. The main mound at Sutton Hoo is not a grave, for no one was buried there, although burials occurred nearby (Carver, 1992; Davidson, 1950).

Why would a ship be sacrificed by burial in soil? Perhaps the ship had been used as a floating temple a few times and finally was sacrificed along with many other treasures to a deity identified both with sea and land. Certainly, a ship would be the largest single wealth-object that could be sacrificed by burial in soil, unless an entire large building and outbuildings were interred as a sacrifice to a soil deity.

B.2.e) Crossroads Were Not Dedicated as Sacred Venues

Shaw (2002: 134) quotes Ælfric as writing in the late 900's or early 1000's that "Mercurius" and Óðin were worshipped at crossroads ("way meetings") and tall hills (heagum beorgum). But not one of the place names the present author found in the archeological or place-name literature indicates an intersection as a specifically religious venue. Of course, some of these sites might have been near roadways or intersections anyway for ease of access. So while it might have been true that the Roman god Mercurius was worshipped at formal altars located at crossroads, it seems that Wóden was not typically worshipped at such sites. Most likely if any crossroads worship occurred, it was typically on a casual or improvisational basis so that the sites were not named to indicate dedication for a religious use.

B.2.f) Re-Use of Prior Sacred Ground

Burial grounds used since Bronze Age or Neolithic times continued in use not only as cemeteries but also as religious and secular meeting places, and in some cases these sites continued in use as locations for

Christian minsters and churches (Carver, 2010b; Davidson, 1968: chapter 4; Semple, 2010: 33-39).

Perhaps it was believed that those who had returned to the Earthen Mother could help one communicate with Her, for burial grounds were also used for necromancy, a form of divination involving contact with spirits of specific dead people or with spirits of dead humans in general (Davidson, 1968: chapter 6). Thus, it is possible that necromancy was considered a means of contacting those who had returned to spiritual company of an Earth deity, those whose bodies chose soil as their bed-partner, as in the *Old English Rune Poem* stanza "Ear" (Stanfield, 2012: chapter 29).

And by the way, cemeteries were also used as places to locate Christian minsters and churches in early medieval England (Davidson, 1968: chapters 4 and 6; Semple, 2010: 33-39). Apparently, the idea that burial grounds are spooky (in a negative sense) originated later.

B.2.g) Places Avoided

Dry holes, odd rock formations, and other objects that some cultures associated with their Earth goddess or god did not attract polytheistic English persons. Dry caves, fissures, and depressions were sometimes associated with evil, and — unlike religion in sub-Saharan Africa — English polytheism tended to not emphasize placating hostile spirit-wights (Drayton, 1992; Semple, 2010: 29-30).

Sometimes thorn bushes, springs, upright large stones and other unusual natural objects were associated with elves instead of deities (Semple, 2010: 24-25).

Some large ditches and dikes were constructed and probably named after Wóden, but they appear to have been constructed for military and political purposes, and not for worship nor for agricultural land management (Foster, 2007-2008).

B.2.h) There Were No Earþ-Related Place Names

It is interesting that no place name in the evidence cited implies dedication to an Earth goddess. Plenty of place names imply worship of other specific deities, but the apparently generic sites outnumber those dedicated to any specifically-named deity.

However, it not to name a location on the Earth for the planet, and we have seen that religious venues for Earth-goddess worship among the Tallensi are named for their geographic locations instead of being named with implication of any specific deity.

Another interesting consideration is that some of the Anglo-Saxon sites named for a deity are not exclusively for one cult and that all of the generically-named sites are for use by any and all cults, by

themselves or together in joint ceremonies. Modern cultures show examples of how site names can also be misleading, for analogous site naming occurs commonly in modern denominations of Christianity[63]. Consider some Anglican and Catholic examples. The Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp (Holland) has Saint Mary (Mother of Christ) as its patron saint, but its web site says that it is a generic Catholic church where all the saints can be venerated and all the angels honored and the Catholic tripartite deity can be worshiped (http://www.dekathedraal.be/en/). A church named Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, located in Kansas City, Missouri (USA) is not strictly devoted to veneration of Saint Paul, but emphasizes that church's tripartite deity and practices all the usual Episcopalian devotions (http://stpaulskcmo.org/). Saint Mary's Episcopal Church in the town called Saint Paul (Minnesota, USA) advertises that it is "Christ-centered", not that it is "Saint-Mary-centered" nor "Saint-Paul-centered" (http://saintmarysepiscopal.org/).

B.2.i) Continuity at the Beginning of Christian Rule

The earliest converts continued time-honored practices. In the late 700's, a significant proportion of English Christian services were held in open-air sites marked by crosses. In some cases when multi-purpose buildings were available, people went outside anyway and had their ceremonies in a yard. Some of the votive deposits buried near bodies of water or discarded into bodies of water were obviously Christian, such as Bibles. Christians have often liked to baptize in rivers, but perhaps outdoor locations for routine services were too Pagan-like for regular church services.

But Christian leadership seems to have thought there was something wrong with such venues, so that eventually a special dispensation was required for outdoor rites (Lund, 2010a; Stenton, 1971: 150-151).

B.3) Analysis of Siting Patterns

This sub-section uses venue evidence to show that in the pre-Christian way of life, religion was important but logistically and administratively a lightweight component of society.

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[63] There is a denomination called Church of God with churches in many cities in the world (www.churchofgod.org), and they use names like "Gregory Hills Church of God". Christian and Jews do not use "Yahweh" or the other names of their deity out of fear of ritual pollution due to long-standing custom. Obviously, this restriction did not apply to worshipers of Earþ.

Also, we will see that the pre-Christian society had a custom of placing a relatively high value on experiences out-of-doors, and that this value is the most important explanation of the change in venue practices as Christian supremacy progressed. It appears that abandoning outdoor worship as the predominant practice was a part of abandoning the Heathen view of life.

B.3.a) Siting Preferences and Cult Structure

Cult organization among the Heathens was much less formal and less expensive than cult structure became among the Christians. This inference is supported by a comparison of English Pagan and Christian siting practices.

A student of English Paganism might wonder if perhaps a stone building would not be a perfect housing for Earþ liturgy. Why not do as the Catholics did? While nature offers some almost breathtaking beauties, the architecture and iconography of a few early medieval Christian churches are artistically interesting and can be spiritually inspiring. And one cannot deny the practicality of having an all-weather ceremonial site at a short commute from one's home; indeed, this is a reason to convert.

But in addition to natural beauty, open-air facilities minimized social and economic costs. An open-air English temple was a pretty low-budget item, for it would have minimal construction and maintenance costs[64]. In addition the facility had no dwelling for resident staff nor was any nearby.

In contrast, consider funding and social division of labor necessary to support medieval Catholicism. It is well known that English Christians developed types of full-time, professional religious specialists: monks, nuns, abbots, priests, bishops, and archbishops, to mention the more prominent categories. They also developed much more expensive architecture.

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[64] There is no such thing as a free lunch (Friedman, 1975), and any religious venue would require some effort at preservation. A glade would have to be at least weeded and protected from cultivation or harvesting of the surrounding timber. It is also reasonable to infer that the English pre-Christian religion had some temple attendants, because Old English has at least one name for the occupation that appears to predate Latin influence: weofod-ðegn (Hall, 1960). The internet dictionary of Old English lists wígbed-þegen (Christ and Tichy, 2010), but that word is not in the hardcopy edition of Bosworth-Toller (1898, 1921), and I did not find it in my copy of the corpus of Old English obtained from the Dictionary of Old English Project at the University of Toronto.

The evolution of government tax and voluntary-contribution support for Christian churches as Christian domination progressed reinforces the impression that, by and large, English Heathens did not have formal customs for routine funding of staff, building construction and maintenance, nor for supplies for sacrificial banquets. The earliest English Christian priests had to farm for a living. Stenton remarks that "throughout the Old English period", nobles who set up Christian churches expected them to generate income for the family, much as we see Christian temples generating income for Icelandic lords in the early years after Iceland's formal conversion. Apparently English Heathen aristocrats and kings who set up temples or offered sacrifices expected to get all the prestige and self-respect they could eat possibly plus (minor) voluntary contributions from local farmers and artisans, for the Christians started a temple tax after government conversions (Stenton, 1971: 148-150; 152-157; Walker, 2010; for Icelandic evidence see Byock, 1988: 78, 91-95).

In addition to tax support, the medieval Catholic church became a major real estate owner, a significant part of the feudal government, and a very heavy economic presence, largely by means of grants of feudal estates. The cathedral church of Canterbury alone owned almost one-quarter of the accounted-for land in Kent plus substantial estates elsewhere by 1066, much of this vast wealth accumulated before 764 (Brooks, 2000: 103-106, 108). This would have been a substantial lifestyle — and probably ideological — conversion from the earliest days of the church at Canterbury, for Bede tells us that the missionaries in the 590's "regarded worldly things as of little importance and accepted only the necessities of life from those they taught" (Sherley-Price and Latham, 1968: 1.26).

One might suggest a mundane explanation for the large differences in venue preferences. That explanation is that the funding and formal administrative organization necessary to support stone countryside churches, massive medieval temples, and specialized monastic-community construction would have been impractical in most of the tiny hamlets which characterized England before the onset of Christian dominance (Welch, 1992; Dyer, 2000: Chapter 12). So maybe the Earþ cult practitioners were merely doing what they were just rich enough to do. Perhaps the Heathens would have created a powerful class of religious professionals and an impressive tradition of stone icons and temples if the economy grew as it did under the Christians, or if the polytheist English kings taxed to support religion.

But poverty and lack of government support do not fully explain the lack of temple buildings. Certainly, a sparse population and low technological levels did not stop Neolithic people of the British Isles

from building stone henges, things commonly called hill forts, and other features which have endured in the archipelago to this day. Scandinavian polytheists definitely created indoor facilities, and the architecture was distinct from the later Scandinavian stave churches (Ashliman, 1998a; Guhnfeldt, 2011; Short, 1999-2014; Walker, 2010). And the Pagan Scandinavians were not in general richer than the Anglo-Saxons until Danegeld payments became very heavy and raiding parties began to cause famine in large areas of England.

B.3.b) Ideological Reasons to Conduct Rites in Open Air

The inter-religious contrast in venues implies a basic difference in religious doctrine or attitude.

Worship of a goddess identified with our entire host planet or a non-theistic love of landscape beauty or a desire for a secluded place to meditate and pray can be powerful considerations. And it must be admitted that a desire for a secluded place to practice progressive mysticism or a simple love of landscape beauty are reasons to make up a theology quite favorable to such locations[65].

By analogy, it is interesting to consider that practitioners of Nuer religion claim that there is reason to set aside special places as sacred buildings or grounds (nor is there any point in having certain days as holy days) because Kwoth is everywhere all the time (Evans-Pritchard, 1956: 206). The (non-anthropomorphic, non-theriomorphic) Earth deity of the English was surely also understood as everywhere all the time.

Also, the probably-enduring non-theistic love of landscape beauty certainly did not so strongly influence Christian preferences. They made buildings in pre-existing settlements as their typical religious venues. Individual monks sometimes sought isolation and even some exposure to nature in temporary locations, but monasteries and nunneries were communities of humans living indoors except to farm or garden, rather more like villages than open-air temples. And monks in rural areas were considered to be enduring hardship.

An additional reason to use remote locations, whether the land is built upon or not, is the possible preference that a site dedicated to holy workings should be avoided other than for holy workings. This is a reason to put such facilities out of the way while making them taboo for secular purposes. But this consideration also would be of equal importance to the Christians.

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[65] Regarding progressive mysticism, see Stanfield, 2012a: Appendix F.

So we are left with theological conservatism as the most interesting explanatory factor for the evident prevalence of outdoor sites among English polytheists.

B.3.c) Theological Conservatism

This passage presents two theological implications.

In Proto-Germanic times, Germanic religion was biased against worshipping any deity indoors, and a conservatism that would retain a Mother of Deities would also retain the idea that using anthropomorphic icons and housing them indoors is blasphemy. The evidence is consistent with a hypothesis that this preference continued among the peoples who combined into the English nation.

It is also likely that the religion included as its dominant theme a devotion to a deity most easily experienced while in sensual contact with landscape, water, or ground. The early medieval English very probably loved the Earth and they wanted to look at it. Moreover, their Earth goddess is most massively experienced outdoors, if She is thought of as a deity who is identified with the non-living substances of the planet and is valued highly for supporting the rich and varied life to be seen and heard while the observer is unsheltered.

These possibilities — a bias against indoor worship and a desire to sensually experience some of the most delightfully inspiring things associated with an Earth goddess — are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are both quite likely to have guided choices of venues.

B.3.d) Ethnic Variation

Drayton and Stenton note that clearly Pagan place names occur in England most outside the Danelaw, which in turn coincides roughly with the areas Bede tells us were settled by Angles (Drayton, 1992; Sherley-Price and Latham, 1968: 56; Sproston, 2011; Stenton, 1971: 99-102).

This raises three possibilies, which are not mutually exclusive. One possibility is that the Angles were much less thickly populated into the regions they took, for they came as a whole tribe and would have been better organized than the other Germanic immigrants, so they could have taken more land per capita. The other possibility is that the Angles were much more strongly influenced by a cult that named its temples for their locations instead of naming them for a deity. In other words, it is possible the Angles were more into an all-deity cult — or the cult of the Earthen Mother. Of course, it is also possible that converted Scandinavians were more sensitive than were their English neighbors about having place names that indicated non-Christian

religion, since much of the conversion of Scandinavians occurred following defeats of vikings by force of arms.

In view of the analysis in chapter 8 of the present book the most important of these possibilities is that the Angles were generally more influenced by the Earþ cult than were the Saxons or Jutes.

B.4) Conclusions Based on Venue Evidence

B.4.a) A More Mystical and Less Formal Religion

The evidence implies a religious philosophy that emphasized direct, personal relationships with one or more deities. Theologically, the Pagan English seem to have conserved the Proto-Germanic general tendency to avoid housing deity worship and supplication in houses of worship, as if the deities per se were housed in such buildings. We can see that staffing and expenses were minimized, so that the individual was encouraged to directly contact and contemplate deities, religious mysteries, and themselves.

And beyond that, the polytheistic English preferred exposure to boundaries between ecosystems, probably for the implicit metaphor of mystical perception or travel.

Given the evidence of explicit Earþ cult practice which we have already seen, we may draw the conclusion that neither a priest nor a special building was needed for any herbal healer, farmer, or other competent adult to connect with that goddess.

B.4.b) A Deity Identified with Land, Water, and Sky

Because English religion prior to Christian dominance was commonly or perhaps usually practiced in with the Earth much more in view than would be possible indoors, we can infer something of the way the English peoples conceived Earþ. We see that the preference for outdoor sites is consistent with veneration of a deity identified with landscape, with uncovered ground, with the liquid covering most of the earth, and with the atmosphere that envelops the entire solid and liquid surface of the planet.

B.4.c) Influence of Earth Religion

Evidence implies that these venue preferences affected all major cults. It was as if the Mother of Deities possessed some family trait passed on to Her descendants.

In view of documents implying Earþ religion enduring well into the period of Christian supremacy, it is as if the most influential theological tendency was that the main deity was Earþ.

B.4.d) Polytheism and Christianity in Early Medieval England

It is easy to see broad differences between polytheist and English Christian religious tendencies without being judgmental. One emphasizes the beauty of nature and the power of the Earth, and relies mostly on a direct relation between the practitioner and whatever he or she finds in the realm beyond the empirical. The other emphasizes civilized convenience and offers professional leadership and teaching plus specialists to intervene with spirit wights. One has a very light impact on social and economic structures. The other creates a socially powerful class of religious specialists increasingly funded by taxes and closely allied with aristocrats, but a class that also uses its status to teach religion, to engage in charity, and to occasionally try to upgrade government morals.

B.4.e) Comparison with Scandinavia

In his study of the conversion of Scandinavia, Anders Winroth (2012: chapter 11) concludes that the Norse-speaking polytheists used open-air sites and private homes. Many of their altars were stone structures on high ground not enclosed by buildings. In general Norse Pagan rituals were "decentralized, nonhierarchical, and easily accessible by most." Winthrop contrasts this with medieval Catholic religion with involved a professional priesthood, an emphasis on dedicated buildings, and in general a heavy social structure that could be more easily controlled administratively by a king. Thus one of the reasons Scandinavian governments converted despite failures of missionaries to convert large numbers of civilians without state sponsorship is that Catholicism was more compatible with state-bulding that was Norse polytheism. But what is of more interest for present purposes is the implication of traditional Germanic values of personal involvement and a relatively lightweight religious institution in society.

C) Buried Objects as Offerings

Many items were ritually left in English soil and water, beginning in Neolithic times and continuing after 1100 CE. These deposits imply a variety of purposes, but in view of the previous evidence in this book, we must infer that Earð worship was among those purposes.

C.1) Sacrificial Offerings

The early medieval English left many objects buried in soil or discarded into bodies of water. The existence of buried artifacts is a clue to locations, and to some extent the nature, of pre-Christian

ceremonies, for it is clear that many of the deposits found buried in English soil or left in bodies of water were not discarded trash nor merely hidden from pirates, land-based robbers, and the government (Fern, 2010; Lund, 2010a; Pluskowski, 2010; Williams, 2010; Wright, 2010).

Buried treasures can be offerings, and offerings in the soil suggest cult practices related to a spirit in the soil. Certainly, burials of horse heads in or near foundations of English buildings reveal ceremonial intent (Fern, 2010), and quite possibly an intent to ritually indicate affection for an Earth deity or to ask that deity for a favor.

C.1.a) Analogies from Other Cultures

Other cultures provide examples of burial sacrifices.

Consider an analogy from Greek religion. In Statius' version of the Greek classic *Seven against Thebes*, there is a ceremony of Earth-goddess worship in which black sheep and dark cattle are buried in sacrifice to Gaia and to a recently-deceased man who is honored as a god (Mozley, 1928b: 8.294-8.341).

Bar-Oz et al (2013) discuss in detail one of many examples of ritual burial of an equid in the Levantine during the Bronze Age.

In addition, Jennbert (2003) reviews considerable evidence of burial of domestic animals in Scandinavia. Although some of this was surely to express sentiments regarding dogs and cats, prized breeding stock, draft animals, or milk-producers of long service, surely sentimentality alone accounts for only a very few such burials of livestock species. Moreover, no evidence of animal afterlife belief exists in Norse myth nor saga literature. Therefore, although no burial sacrifice to a soil deity exists in Norse literature, it is quite likely that some of those burials were sacrifices to a spirit of the soil that nurtured mankind and beast alike.

Morris discusses many animal burials in what are now southern England and Yorkshire by several peoples from Neolithic times through the medieval period, along with extensive discussions of issues in making theoretical inferences. Most of the burials were from Romano-British society, although partial and full-corpse burials are found from throughout the study period (Morris, 2011: especially part 3). The present author suggests that partial-corpse burials of livestock species are mostly evidence of ritual banquets in which most of the animal is eaten by people and one part, perhaps an inedible part, is buried alone as a sacrifice and the rest that is not eaten by folks is burned, fed to pigs, or deposited in a trash pit.

C.1.b) Items Deposited

Lund (2010) offers a survey of burials. Early medieval English persons buried in dry land or deposited into bodies of water a wide variety of serviceable equipment, beautiful objects of art, money, and food. The bodies of water included artificial wells, natural surface and cave springs, lakes, and rivers.

The famous findings in the main mound at Sutton Hoo constitute a massive instance of burial offering, for there is no sign that a human body was included with the material wealth (Carver, 1992b). While it is possible that the whole thing was a cenotaph, the lack of a person's identity and the possibility of human sacrifice found in other digs in the vicinity makes it look more like a holy offering (Carver, 1992b; Davidson, 1992).

A more modest example is the Coppergate find, which includes a helmet manufactured in 750-775 and inscribed with a Trinitarian Christian slogan in Latin words and runic letters, except for the last 3 letters, which are Greek. The helmet says "In the name of Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and with all we pray amen! Oshére, XPI" (Hall, 1985: 35, 37; Wikipedia, 2014b; York Archeology, n.d.).

The Coppergate find definitely implies mixed religion. The personal name (Oshére) is something like Divine-Spirit Dignity, using the Pagan-concept word for the divine aspect of mankind[66] (see chapter 12 of the present book), but the Greek letters at the end are an abbreviation of the Greek word for Christ. Per merriam-webster.com "amen" is an expression of agreement or "confirmation" which is taken from a Semitic word meaning "fixed or "sure". Often a good translation is "truly", which does not make sense in the context. Indeed the prayer is incoherent, but perhaps the purchaser did not read Latin.

C.2) Gifts Left in Graves to Transmit Emotions

Grave goods were sometimes deposited with intact and cremated human remains in early medieval England, both during and before Christian rule (Geake, 1992; Dickinson and Speake, 1992; Williams, 2010; Pluskowski, 2010; Riley, 2011). Although grave goods are frequently interpreted as provisions for life in the grave or for a trip to an afterlife abode, there is also another interpretation that cannot be

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[66] The meaning for "here" is an armed group, but "greatness", "majesty", or "dignity" is more likely what the person's parents intended. So the pronunciation would be better indicated by "Oshére" than by "Oshere", but early medieval writers did not indicate pronunciation with macrons or .

ruled out. This possibility is suggested by the idea of buried objects of art, tools, and food as offerings to a soil deity.

It is possible that in some instances the purpose of grave goods was that the dead person is to be presented in style and with gifts for the spirit of the earth in which that person is buried.

Theologically, this suggests the possibility of a making-sacred in offering to an Earth deity, not for the purpose of supporting an indefinite afterlife but for a ritual of reunion of both physical and spiritual substance with the source of life. Not the person, but all the physical components of the person and even some symbols of his or her favorite joys can be seen as gifts of thanks to the mother of mankind for allowing the survivors to have that individual's company, for "a cheerful person to comrades is dear" (Stanfield, 2012: from the twentieth stanza of the *Old English Rune Poem*)[67].

For example, a burial in the late 600's included, along with the human corpse, 130 objects that apparently constituted a complete smith's outfit (Hinton, 1998; Hinton and White, 1993; Riley, 2011; Smith, 2010: 132; Watson, 2000). This deposit further implies a symbolic gift of labor energy to the deity in the soil and/or a sentimental statement of esteem for the deceased's dedication to his work and of appreciation for what that work meant to the deceased.

D) Artistic Images

Previously in this chapter, we have seen evidence of siting choices and ritually buried objects, and that evidence by itself would be informative but is much more informative when analyzed in context with documentary evidence from previous chapters. Taken together, all this fits into the model of non-Christian English religion posited at the beginning of this book.

In this section more evidence will be examined, and although the artistic items themselves seem highly ambiguous, we will be going further in assembling the pieces of a picture puzzle.

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[67] In view of the variety of afterlife Norse beliefs documented by Davidson (1968), it is quite plausible that a great variety of afterlife beliefs occurred among the early English as among the Norse. However, the possibility suggested here is not among those Davidson was able to document as having existed among the early medieval Scandinavians.

D.1) Introduction

Certain symbols and styles were quite common in early medieval English imaging arts, and these tendencies surely reflect views of life, which were well known and influential in the culture. The decorations were probably not always made merely for their prettiness, because owners of long-lasting artwork often like to get or make up stories to with their objects, and because religion is commonly a part of a religious practitioner's sense of personal and group identity, and therefore symbols of practice and membership are likely to be shown to self and others. Therefore these are important clues.

Evidence of early medieval English art is consistent with the theory that English polytheistic religion included a complex pattern of contradictory theologies and that the goddess Earþ was a powerful influence on the thoughts and emotions of English people from about 450 CE until at least a hundred years into the era of Christian domination of the English states.

In addition, surviving artistic evidence is consistent with a profile of a religion that (A) has icons representing cult loyalty and ideals but not idols of a deity, and that (B) places an emphasis on direct experience in addition to formal instruction and doctrine.

D.2) A Little Theory

The general model of English-polytheist society is of a culture that is non-authoritarian, that does not insist that religious myth and symbolic representations have to be literally true, and that is compatible with mysticism. And archeological evidence supports the notion that this English culture gradually faded or morphed during Christian rule in the early medieval period.

Art from the early medieval period throughout northern Europe shows certain characteristics in common with those described here, and may reflect not mere mindless art fashions but common intellectual tendencies in the cultures. A general overview of northern European or Germanic art from the focal period is beyond the scope of this book (for reasons of space) and may be found in other sources. Salin's (1904) massive study is a classic. Brief comparisons of early medieval art from what are now England and other countries is in Brown's book (1995). Brundle's (2013) discussion of the rare human-figure art of early medieval England is accompanied by a thorough overview of Germanic art from the period and critical analysis of theoretical methods, and her list of references is a golden lode. On pages 201-203 of her article, Brundle justifies studying the meaning of

art objects in their historical context. Books cited below as sources of evidence for this chapter also contain broad overviews.

D.2.a) Representations but Not Idols

Recall that the Proto-Germanic peoples tended to look upon religious idols as inherently counterproductive. This bias probably affected all English pre-Christian cults, but not all to the same degree.

In a culture that is generally biased against anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, or other figurative forms of deity representation, we would expect to see art that symbolized ideals, values, methods, and individual or group identity much more often than art that represented individual deities or scenes from myths. In other words, religious art would tend to be abstract.

The tendency for religious symbols to symbolize practice, ideology, and membership — but not the deity's image — would be especially strong in the cult of a deity who is omnipresent in the planet and omni-powerful. This is because She was either understood — according to long-standing Proto-Germanic tradition — as a strictly spiritual wight, or because She was understood as embodied by the planet Earth.

Hence, the English Earth goddess was not imaged directly, but images implying Earþ-oriented mysticism and cult adherence abounded. Hogs and serpents symbolize contact with the soil, although wild hogs might have also symbolized certain ethical values. (Passages in chapters on Tallensi and Roman Earth-goddess religion support this assertion; passages 5.F.3.d and 7.D.4.g).

Arguments in this section will show that serpent images, which are likely to have been associated with Earth religion, were quite common and persisted into the practices of Christians. In addition, people displayed feral boar hog images, and this practice also implies a tradition of an Earth-deity cult (with roots in the Proto-Germanic period) influencing art well into the period of Christian rule.

D.2.b) Complexity and Ambiguity

An additional argument in support of the thesis of this book is that the early medieval English did not merely tolerate but enjoyed complexity and ambiguity. This is shown by themes of abstraction, complexity, interrelationships, and surrealism. Most animal images are more or less surrealistic versions of empirical objects or chimerical beings. Backgrounds tend to be elaborate, abstract patterns, such as interleaving vine images or abstract knotwork.

A taste for complexity and ambiguity supports a positive attitude toward the existence of multiple cults and contradictory theologies, because the need for dogmatic doctrine is minimized.

D.2.c) Direct Learning as Opposed to Instruction

The complex and abstract art of early medieval England implies that a positive value was placed on understanding through interpretation as opposed to instruction. A worldview emphasizing that spiritual knowledge is subtle and complex and only comes through meditation would tend to cause certain artistic biases both of style and subject matter. Art influenced by such a worldview would tend to emphasize surreal figures and to be obscure, often containing component images only visible by means of close inspection and imaginative interpretation.

D.3) Sources of Evidence

D.3.a) Dating of Artifacts

Most of the artifacts in the photos shown in this section were created before 900 CE, and it is possible that artistic icons of Earþ-cult adherence were no longer created after about 800 or 900 CE. It is also possible — or rather, quite likely — that intellectual tendencies dominating English culture gradually changed under Christian rule, so that mysticism was eventually restricted almost entirely to monks and nuns. (For example, almost all the mystics mentioned in Underhill's 1930 classic on the subject are medieval European monks and nuns.)

D.3.b) External Sources

Most of the evidence used in this section is not presented directly. The evidence is mostly in five sources of archeological literature (Dickinson, 2002; Dickinson, 2005; Fern, 2010; Pluskowski, 2010; Wilson, 1984). Less analytical and data-rich sources of information include various internet sites, some of which are indicated in citations of photos.

The images shown in this book are all in the public domain or licensed under the Creative Commons Share-Alike 2 or 3 license shown in one of these locations: "http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en" or "http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en". Both licenses allow use with attribution. I cropped some photos shown in this book, and cropping is also allowed under both licenses.

D.4) Serpent-Like Images

D.4.a) Animals in Contact with Soil

Nearly all species of serpent spend their lives in close, extensive contact with soil, and therefore snakes are a logical choice for a metaphor of contact with an Earth deity who is also a soil deity. For example among the Tallensi, whose religion has been examined in detail in a previous chapter, snakes are considered "totemic creatures of the Earth which may not be killed" (Fortes, 1987: 225).

Serpent-like figures are unusually appropriate as metaphors for earth contact. Animals like ants, moles, and earthworms have less glamorous appearances and do not eat mice or rats (animals that are attracted to stored grain). Also, the woodbine-like, baroque patterns the Anglo-Saxons and other peoples of northern Europe liked are easier to make by drawing serpentine bodies than with images of other animal physiologies.

D.4.b) Serpent Images

Abstract images of serpents are among the most common images in Anglo-Saxon art of early medieval times (Pluskowski, 2010; Pollington et al, 2010). The very common woodbine-like interlace patterns, which are almost everywhere in the early medieval art of Northern Europe, are easily turned into serpent designs by adding one or more animal heads.

The following example shows three abstract images of snake-like figures from the first page of the Gospel of Matthew in a famous Latin book now called *Lindisfarne Gospels*, which was hand copied and illustrated in England during the 700's.

Consistent with the prayers quoted in a previous chapter, this image implies a remarkable persistence of pre-Christian attitudes. The symbolism of the big-eyed snake-like images is blatant on the page and obviously contrary to the attitude toward snakes manifested in the verbal content of the Bible, which generally regards serpents as implying evil.

Moreover, the large eyes seem to suggest a searching for knowledge or shrewdness, and this searching is done by animals known for close contact with earth. That the search was visual rather than done by tasting air was surely meaningful to the artist and audience, because the failure to taste the air with a forked tongue is very un-snake-like. However, we do not now know what that absence of prominent tongues meant.

That the three figures or letters are ligatured, as in a bind-rune symbol, might also have been intended to symbolize. At first glance, it

seems to the modern observer that the serpents are combined into a letter, but they are supposed to be the three letters (l-i-b) that start the Latin expression meaning "book": liber[68]. On the other hand, the figures do overlap, suggesting some social meaning associated with the search. Although we do not know what the ligaturing meant, it might have had something in common with runic ligatures as used in an Icelandic manual on magic (Flowers, 1999). Other letters on the page are ligatured also.

But we do know that the serpent-like images shown here are obviously not based on Abrahamic lore. A clever monk or nun could explain that the figures represent Yahweh, Christ, and the Blessed Virgin Mother or that the snakes are the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or that the heads pointing to the top of the page means seeking Heaven rather than Earþ. But he or she might be wise to be silent about this and hope no one objects formally. And that seems to have been the situation at the time the page was created: the art was accepted without significant objections.

In short, this art appears to signify mixed religion: seeking wisdom from Earð and from The Word of God as compatible sources.

The image is from Wikimedia Commons (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:LindisfarneFol27rIncipitMatt.jpg), and it is in the public domain. The photo is in the public domain because it is a faithful reproduction of a public-domain work of art. It is a prize-winning photo and much used, but no one takes credit for it.

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[68] In Modern English, the passage begins: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Catholic Church, 1987: Matthew I 1:1). In Latin, this is "Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David filii Abraham".

Figure 2. A Page from the *Lindisfarne Gospels*.

If the reader goes to the URL cited for this image & views the picture at full size, he or she can find that it contains many more animal figures and heads, generally embedded in complex knotwork and only evident on close inspection. Strikingly similar designs are shown in full-color photos of other biblical manuscript pages (Wilson, 1984: 19, 21).

    The next figure is a small section taken from the body of the middle serpent and enlarged. It shows a canid-like head on a serpent and just below it something like a bird-of-prey head emerging from knotwork and capping another serpent-like body. Although the heads resemble those of predators, their eyes are illustrations of the distortions mentioned above, distortions which imply metaphors for seeking. By the way, predator animals' eyes are front facing, and prey animals' eyes are more like those in the images shown and others displayed in sources cited.

Figure 3. Detail of a Page from the *Lindisfarne Gospels*.

D.4.c) Contra Considerations

In Fern's (2010) phraseology, "Abstraction and schematisation should be recognised as the cultural encoding of motifs, well understood to their intended contemporary audience". Tania Dickinson (2005) has stated that these symbols could be used for mere "ostentatious social display", apotropaic function, identification with a group, or some other function. And we do not know the code, she adds, so only the general ideas are apparent to the modern student.

But it is possible for the images in question simultaneously convey more than one meaning.

Hence this is the best interpretation of the evidence: the prevalence of stylish, chimerical, serpent-like figures implies emotional attachment to symbols of soil-deity religion and a willingness to display a symbol of that kind of religion. And this is regardless of any other social or psychological functions served by such art.

It could also be objected that, lacking English myth and discursive religious literature[69], we also cannot be sure that there was not another English deity who was identified with snakes. For example, Jennbert, in her review of archeological evidence of human-animal relationships in Norse religion (2011) remarks on her pages 338-339 that "the serpent is considered to be of great significance for Odin", and cites in support of this assertion the myth in which Óðin transforms into snake form to pass through a mountainside and get access to the magical mead of inspiration. So if Norse myth is taken as a model for missing English myth, the snake might represent Wóden worship. Also, English and Scandinavian art shows quite similar tendencies during the period 500-1100 CE with regard to serpent-like animal art.

But it is quite obvious that the vast majority of Nordic serpentine art, including the specimen Jennbert offers in support of her assertion, is not related to any known myth. For on the next page (340) following her assertion that serpentine art is Óðinic, she shows an "iconographic" specimen, which is obviously not a reflection of the myth cited. The object is a brooch showing two serpents intertwined and with their canid-like faces pointed in almost opposite directions. The brooch art implies close combination and division of labor, and probably symbolized a business partnership or both the civil union and sexual aspect of a marriage. The object is obviously not a symbol of boring through a mountainside to get magical mead. In fact, none of the serpent-like images the present author has observed in Norse or English data suggests Óðin's adventure to get the mead of inspiration.

One could object that many specimens of serpent-image art are in Christian literature, but it is certainly not possible to explain the prevalence of serpent-like images in early medieval English art by citing Biblical passages, for the Bible leaves snakes out of its stories except to symbolize evil, sin, and horror.

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[69] Wisdom poetry does provide clues to supplement mythic lore, but regarding English wisdom poetry, we are limited to the philosophy implied by metaphorical and derived levels of meaning of the Old English Rune Poem (Stanfield, 2012), for all the other Old English wisdom poetry is secular, mixed-religion, or Christian.

And against all objections to the argument presented here: the textual information that has survived the centuries implies that only Earþ and Wóden had anywhere nearly the following that would help explain the prevalence of serpentine art in early medieval England.

The only major contra consideration is secular. Northern Europeans of various ethnicities and religious preferences liked to fill space on objects with sinuous, complicated, intertwining lines, and adding animal heads simply makes such knotwork more interesting. But then again, symbolism makes artwork more interesting than does randomly adding incongruous animal heads.

D.5) Wild Male Hogs

Another animal that is known for earth contact is the pig. Porcine animals dig food out of the ground, wallow in dirt, and spend much of their time looking downward. And one form of pig is quite appealing as an icon: feral boars. In contrast, images of domestic hogs and feral sows are difficult to find and possibly never occurred in early medieval English art.

Feral male hogs were quite popular in Anglo-Saxon (and Norse) art. Unlike many other animals, which are commonly found in abstract images or merged into chimeras, biologically recognizable feral boar hog images are common. They are easily identified by tusks, long snouts, and sometimes also by crested backs or pointed ears. They are on helmets, swords, brooches, buckles, and harness mounts. They are on women's jewelry and men's. Boar-hog tusks are found in female's graves (Pluskowski, 2010; Pollington et al, 2010).

Whoever wrote a certain famous epic poem expected his audience to regard wild-boar-hog images as glamorous and warlike. In lines 303a-305 of *Beowulf* (Alexander, 1995), the author builds his manly, soldierly image of Beowulf's squad by saying that on their helmets "eorforlic scíonon ofer hléor-bergan, gehroden golde; fah and fýr-heard, ferh-wearde héold" (gold-inlaid boar-like [images] shone on face protectors; colorful and fire-hardened, [they] kept guard over lives").

But the images are not only glamorous and martial, for a silver-decorated boar-hog emblem atop a helmet could simultaneously identify the soldier as one who loves an Earth-goddess, is a claimant to divine protection, and is a rich person of refined artistic tastes.

And the image is a long-standing tradition. Recall Tacitus' remark that the Aestii wore such images for protection from evil and to show their adherence to the Mother of Deities (Mattingly and Handford, 1970: chapter 45).

D.5.a) Wild Hog Behavior and Appearance

Wild swine look very different from barnyard livestock, and their behavior is also quite different from that of domestic animals — and their behavior is related to the meaning of the icons.

Wild swine are omnivorous. They mostly eat vegetation and to a lesser extent carrion because these food sources are very poor at fleeing. They prey on lambs, kids, and fawns when they can, and they are happy to eat earthworms, lizards, eggs, and frogs. They also find acorns quite tasty, as do deer and domestic pigs.

Wild pigs adapt to a wide variety of habitats and climates, but they seem to do best in diverse areas with forest, meadows and ground cover for nesting.

In contrast to other animals often favored as symbols of ferocity, feral hogs are neither cowardly nor predatory. They mostly mind their own business but can show courage and ferocity in defense, counter-attacking and driving off fierce predators. Hunting feral pigs without a gun can be dangerous.

As an explanatory contrast, consider wolves or eagles as martial or ethical symbols. Fierce-looking predators might stimulate thoughts of intimidation, ferocity, overwhelming attack, or predation, and such qualities are commonly associated with masculinity. However, obligate predators are cowards, for they cannot afford to engage in combat with prey or anyone who might injure them fatally[70]. Usually, even combat between males for breeding access is confined to nonlethal outcomes, and sometimes the struggle consists entirely of bluffing. Also, predators generally need to deceive their prey to get close enough to pounce. But wild hogs are not obliged to be predators.

Feral hogs are also relatively intelligent and community-oriented animals, so they can also suggest non-martial virtues of that sort. However, a wild boar hog is typically a solitary animal unless he is the alpha male in a herd. A herd — called a "sounder" — will consist of an alpha female, other mothers, and juveniles.

They can breed anytime during the year, although in the Northern Hemisphere most breeding takes place November to January and July to August. Males compete to breed, but sometimes this is only for first turn, not exclusive intercourse.

The males fight with their tusks. As they fight, they scream, shove with their shoulders, and try to lacerate with the tusks. One lower tooth on each side plus often an upper tooth on each side grow to emerge from the mouth and point upward.

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[70] In the wild, a broken leg or sprained ankle is usually fatal to a predator, and a minor cut can become an infected mortal wound.

The tusks are often shown in Anglo-Saxon sculpture.

In addition, both males and females have shoulders armored with relatively large shoulder blades for slamming and for protection against tusks. There are plenty of photos at this URL showing how the Eurasian-type male's tusks look at maturity: "http://www.wildboaroutfitters.com/pictures.html".

The following is a photo of two Eurasian-type feral hogs taken in the USA by NASA, the US space-exploration agency, in one of its launch areas. Notice the one on the right has a ridge of bristles from the top of his head to his rump. These bristles become erect when he is angry and ready for a fight. Note also the pointed, erect ears; modern domestic hogs have rounded or floppy ears. The picture is in the public domain and available at Wikimedia Commons at "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wild_Pig_KSC02pd0873.jpg".

Figure 4. Two Eurasian Wild Pigs

In the following photo, the tusks are easily seen. This is cropped from a Wikimedia photo taken by Clinton and Charles Robertson in 2007. You see flies because the animal was roadkill (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Feral_Hog_ %28433090729%29.jpg).

Figure 5. Closeup of Wild Pig Tusks

Of the sources used to supply information for this passage, the article by Russell Fox is the most comprehensive, badly written though it is, and it is a good place to start if you are going to follow up on the sources cited. (R. Fox, 1999; Kovarova, 2011: 4.1-4.3; Mississippi State University, 2012; Morthland, 2011; Taylor, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2013a).

D.5.b) An Example of Feral Boar Ornamentation

Following is a feral male hog image from the remains of a military helmet uncovered at Benty Grange in the UK. The hog is not abstract in this instance and is quite plain to see. The sculpture shows tusks and the ridge of bristles erect, implying a mood for fighting. It was made with small silver studs decorating the face and torso.

According to the Sheffield Museum, the helmet dates from around 650 CE (http://collections.museums-sheffield.org.uk/view/objects/asitem/search@/0?t:state:flow=8fbeddfb-9102-4996-9595-14a7331c2b3d). The following photo was taken by nathandbeal — probably Nathan D. Beal — at a museum in 2010, ref "http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benty_grange_helm.jpg".)

Figure 5. The Benty Grange Helmet.

Images and substantive discussions of two other helmet finds, and some interesting reconstructions of the artifacts, can be found on the web sites called *Thegns of Mercia* (Thompson, 2012a, 2013a, 2013b), *Steel Master* (http://www.steel-mastery.com/en/plate-armour/helmets/the-wollaston-pioneer-helmet-of-the-7th-century), and *University of Sheffield Medieval Portal* (http://medievalportal.group.shef.ac.uk/public-history/benty-grange-helmet/). In addition, Hrafnsin (2004) shows photos from exhibits at the British Museum.

D.5.c) Use of the Symbol Ended by 800 CE
Kovarova (2011: 2.1.4) notes that all medieval boar-decorated helmets date from the period 600-800 CE, and this holds not only in England but in Scandinavia also (Pollington et al: 2010: 403). This

implies that they were considered Pagan, not merely that they went out of style. This inference is further supported by the known association between the cult of the Earth goddess called Mother of Deities and the male wild hog image. Stag (or moose) images also went out of style early in the period of Christian supremacy, and so the male red deer or moose image also was probably a symbol of a cult or Pagan ethical ideology (Pollington et al, 2010: 403, 414, 416, photos and drawings on various pages), but there is no reason to suspect that male red deer or moose images were associated specifically with the Earð cult.

D.5.d) An Icon of Ethical Commitment

Although we do not know what arbitrary meanings now-silent people attached to the boar emblem, it is quite plausible that they would have attached meanings related to the behavior of the species in question.

As a warrior's emblem the feral male hog stands for enlightened and ethical warrior values. If the boar-like image is not exclusively an amulet or statement of identity, the meaning of a feral hog image would be valuing bold ferocity, intimidation, and overwhelming attack in defense rather than in predation and victimization (Hagan, 1995; R. Fox, 1999a; Mississippi State University, 2012; Taylor, n.d.; Thompson, 2012a; Wikipedia, 2013a).

So when we consider the content of documented prayers to Earþ, feral boar-like images make sense as symbols of those who acknowledge themselves as Earþ's children and adherents to a strong ethical commitment. The images probably stand for responsible war and chivalrous individual combat policies, and such ethics might well be part of an Earþ cult.

D.5.e) Not a Fertility Symbol

Feral hogs would very definitely not be used as symbols of fertility. They are, indeed, highly productive, but fertility per se is not always desirable[71].

Domestic-hog production was directly helpful in the early medieval English economy, but feral-hog reproduction was not, for harvesting wild pigs was merely a sport in those days. Domestic hogs were allowed to roam the woods and feed themselves at least part of every

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[71] Human fertility is not necessarily a plus in peasant economies, where supporting the population can be an issue. It is very important to avoid the heartbreak of infanticide, which is a common method of population restriction in pre-industrial societies (Thomlinson, 1965: 195-206; Christiansen, 2002: 39-41).

year, and feral hogs eat the same food the farmers wanted their domestic hogs eating in the woods. Also, feral hogs might mate with domestic livestock, causing a reduction in business asset value (Hagan, 1995; R. Fox, 1999a; Mississippi State University, 2012; Taylor, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2013a).

Kovarova (2011) reached some similar conclusions regarding hogs in Norse religion. She concluded that among the Norse, domestic swine were not important religious symbols, although they were consumed at banquets and were economically important. The situation was quite different with wild pigs. Feral swine were referred to in personal names. Male wild hogs were not fertility symbols, but were used as symbols of courage and physical power. She suggests that fallacious suppositions that feral hogs were fertility symbols have been based on Greek sources, although the archeological finds related to feral boar hogs are mostly from areas now in Sweden and England (Kovarova, 2011: 2.1, p 27 in English translation).

The Greek sources of which Kovarova spoke were the Stoics, who interpreted the myths of Homer, Hesiod, and others as allegories for natural or agricultural concerns or phenomena in order to defend the traditional myths against charges of non-divine behavior on the part of the deities (Jaeger, 1961: 48-49, 127-128). Those issues in Greek philosophy are beyond the scope of the present study, but it is important that we note that English polytheism was not mainly a nature, agricultural, nor fertility religion. It seems to have been mostly oriented toward the timeless and universal religious concern of human character development.

D.5.f) Symbols of Seeking Spiritual Nourishment

On the other hand, feral (and domestic) hogs were considered chthonic animals in other cultures because of their feeding habits, and this was probably also the case among the Germanic nations (Stallybrass, 1880: 52; Stallybrass, 1883a: 666; Wright, 1913a: Oration #5). Dedication to digging in the dirt would have been enough to suggest seeking the spirit in the soil, hence going to the root of spiritual nourishment, going to the Mother of Deities.

This is very probably how an English Earþ worshiper in the 600's would have explained the symbolism. If the ultimate beauty of mankind is a spiritually and physically healthy lifestyle, the root of spiritual nourishment for that beauty is the divine aspect of each person (os), and the source (or soil) of that nourishment is a deity, a group of deities, or the awesomeness of all nature. That is vague, but perhaps the Anglo-Saxons would have not spoken on this matter with a single, simple dogma anyway.

D.5.g) Deities Identified with Feral Hogs

Although three of the more mythically-defined deities are identified with hogs and feral male hogs, the cult strongly associated with this symbol is that of an Earth goddess who is the Mother of Deities. As is the case with serpent-like images, is has been customary among scholars to falsely associate images of wild male porcine figures with the wrong deities.

Although the Eddas are not English, they probably express myths generally similar to those of the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons. Norse evidence definitely links Frey-Ing and His sister with feral male hogs, and it shows that Óðin has a link to swine also. Freya rides a boar hog with magical properties, and the hog's name is Battle-Swine (Larrington, 1996: *Song of Hyndla* strophe 7). One of Freya's aliases is Sow (Young, 1954: 59). Frey's car is pulled by the magical boar Gold-Bristle, also known as Fearful-Tusk (Brodeur: 1916: *Gylfaginning* chapter 49, *Poetic Diction* chapter 35). And Frey-Ing is quite plausible as a patron deity of boar-emblem-wearing warriors, for He is identified with armies as well as with single combat (Turville-Petre, 1964: 175). Also in mythic evidence, Óðin's association with male swine is that all of his champions in Valhalla feed on the meat of a boar hog every day and the same hog is available again the next day and again sufficient for every guest (Brodeur, 1916: *Gylfaginning*, chapter 38; Bellow, 1936: *Grimnismol*, strophe 18). This would be Óðin's function as a god of plenty, and his boar 's name, The Blackened One, refers to cooked meat. Pollington et al (2010: 403) think that Saxo Grammaticus associated wild male hogs with Oðin, but Saxo associates with Oðin a wedge-shaped military formation that his translator calls a boar's head (Elton, 1905: Introduction / War); nowhere does Saxo tell us that Oðin is associated with the wild male pig as a cult symbol.

It is not likely that the feral male hog would be considered a theriomorphic representation of any of these deities, but it could represent adherence to their cults.

Thus it appears that four deities can alternatively or simultaneously be somehow associated with feral male hog images (or abstract representations) on objects worn or used by men or women.

However, we can eliminate Óðin (and hence Wóden) from association with the images, because the images never refer to food.

Evidence of Freya cannot be found for the English pantheon, but the goddess Fríge probably combined at least some of the functions of the Norse Freya and Frigga. But Freya's nickname of Sow is not related to the male hog images, although her aspect as rider of Battle-Swine is appropriate to many of them. Incidentally, this is one of the reasons

the present author does not follow the foolish custom of referring to all wild hogs as boars: most feral swine are sows and juveniles, and it is best to say what we mean.

But this implies that Fríge would not be represented by a male hog, despite Battle-Swine, because She would have the nickname Sow.

Frey would correspond to the English god Ing (Stanfield, 2012: Appendix D). Although Gold-Bristle / Fearful-Tusk does not seem to have much of a relation to Ing in the surviving myths, it is possible that at least some of the feral boar-hog images are indications of His cult.

So this leaves us with two cult candidates for representation by porcine figures.

But we already know that one of these cults was much more important in non-Christian English religion than was the other. Also, we have seen that among pre-migration-era Germanic tribes, the feral boar hog image was associated strongly with just one deity, and we have seen evidence that the Anglo-Saxons were theologically conservative about their non-Christian religion. Recall from an earlier chapter that the Aestii, living along the eastern shore of the Baltic, worshipped the Mother of Deities, and that they wore feral male swine images, as Christians would eventually come to wear crosses (Mattingly and Handford, 1970).

It is possible that the images in question signify more than one cult. This could be the case if some cults were considered subsets or offspring of a mother cult, so that the child cults retain some features of the mother (or template) cult. It is also possible that in a single cult, one deity would be primal and the others derived, dependent, and similar — in something like a Neoplatonic theology — so that several or a few deities would be associated with a common set of symbols.

In other words, it is possible that use of wild-boar-hog images was like use of outdoor temples — a sign of influence of Earth-goddess worship on other cults.

But whether the symbol applies to one cult only or to more than one, we are left with the conclusion that the feral male hog was principally the symbol of a mother-of-deities, Earth-goddess cult.

D.6) Surrealism & Complexity

The data are consistent with theoretical expectations that artistic styles would imply an emphasis on a means of knowing that is subtle and requires mental concentration, and that they would imply a value on finding the obscure.

Complex and obscure designs were the dominant stylistic mode during the period 600-1100 in what is now England. Often the animal-figure art is so surreal that it is difficult to relate the image to a biological species (Pluskowski, 2010).

Surrealism and complexity are considered together here because both characteristics commonly occur in the same specimens.

D.6.a) Surrealism

The predominance of surrealism and complexity implies that the consumers of these art objects valued imagination, creativity, sophistication, and enjoyment of riddles or puzzles. They also imply enjoyment of things that are neither literal nor obvious. Thus, some of the images also appear to be icons of a search for enlightenment.

Often in early English medieval art, eyes are emphasized. Seeing far and accurately is a divinatory or meditational goal that is a universal topic of religious and secular philosophy, and distortedly prominent eyes can metaphorically represent such meditational behavior.

An example is shown below. Notice in the sculpture atop the weather vane, the disproportionately large eyes and the mixture of bird-claw feet, dog or feral-swine tail, and abstract swirling patterns to depict power and movement of the limb joints. There is at least one similar wapiti-like image inscribed on the surface of the vane, but it is too small to make out if you are looking at a less-than-full-size image.

The photograph below was obtained from Wikimedia Commons and was made by F. Lamoit in October 2008. It is available at "http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Girouette_metalMus%C3%A9eCluny.jpg".

Figure 6. An English vane dated 600's through 1100's.

    Among bird-like images, hooked beaks and very large (side-located) eyes are emphasized. For a bird to suggest our breathable atmosphere, the wings should be relatively prominent. And for a bird to represent a grasp of lore, the claws or claws-and-beak should be salient aspects of the figure. Although wings are de-emphasized in Anglo-Saxon art, and are usually depicted closed, the bird-like figures do tend to have large claws and beaks (Fern, 2010: 148). The example below is a shield decoration found at Sutton Hoo (Jonbod, 2010).

Figure 7. Bird-Like Image From Sutton Hoo

D.6.b) Styles

Art intended to carry philosophical freight can hint that metaphor is a possibility, hence surreal images are usefully suggestive. Thus, where figures are represented they are usually distorted to emphasize selected aspects and to avoid accurate representation of a biological species. For example, the vision aspect of a bird of prey would be emphasized in a profile image showing disproportionately large eyes located on the side of the bird's head instead of the biologically correct size and location, and the metaphor would be perception without predation, enlightened knowing.

Figure 7 above shows an example of a bird resembling a predator but with side-located eyes, and Figure 6 just before that shows an animal with enlarged, side-located eyes not typical of cervids.

But this tendency is not directly related to any particular cult or religion.

D.6.c) Complexity, Abstraction and Obscurity

The combined theme of complexity, abstraction, and puzzle-like obscurity and is manifested in two ways. It appears in baroque knotwork designs and in surreal multiple-image figures[72].

Surreal figures partially hidden in detailed knot-like designs are so common in artifacts from the period as to be difficult to avoid. In a very interesting example, Chris Fern shows how a close and clever observer can find a human face embedded in what seems to be an abstract image of a playfully-crouching, large-fanged animal with its tail waving in the air (Fern, 2010: 136).

The following picture clearly illustrates the style. The photo is of a bas-relief sculpture from the 1000's that was originally on a cross in Saint Oswald's Priory[73]. Obviously, this is not a Biblical scene, although it does seem related to a story of some type. The animals resemble a horse eating something over its back and a lynx-like beast charging upward.

The sculpture was originally unpainted and, except for the erosion of stone material, looked as you see the image on the left. The image on the right has been colored to help the viewer pick out animal figures from the complex knots that surround the figures and the breakup patterns that camouflage their skins. This abstract knotwork is extremely common in early medieval Anglo-Saxon Art.

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[72] I was tempted to describe this style by mentioning a modern artist, but many readers might not be familiar with his work. In modern times, the foremost artist producing art of complexity, abstraction, and obscurity is M. C. Escher (http://www.mcescher.com/). As the web site says, he is "most famous for his so-called impossible constructions", and this book will next show an "impossible construction" in animal art on a famous Anglo-Saxon artifact. Although he stopped producing in 1972, his work is more commonly available and less expensive than archeological objects shown here.

[73] It is not clear to what degree the irony of this saint's name was acceptable at the time because nearly everyone was in some degree of mixed religion or because the population had already begun to regard personal names merely as arbitrary labels.

The photo was taken in the Gloucester City Museum in the UK by someone named Fae, and at the time of this writing was available on Wikimedia Commons: "http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St_Oswald %27s_Priory_Anglo-Saxon_cross.jpg".

Figure 8. Animal-Like Images and Knotwork in Stone

The following photo of the Sutton Hoo helmet illustrates combined abstraction, complexity, and obscurity in a multiple-image design without knotwork. The helmet dates from the 600's CE. At first glance the helmet shows a man's face with heavy eyebrows and a neatly-trimmed mustache. But on closer examination, a serpent crawls over the top and meets (or kisses) a bird flying up from below. This specimen is in the British Museum. The photo was taken by Mike Markowski using lighting available — no flash. The photo is in the

Figure 9. The Sutton Hoo Helmet

The bird and serpent are clearer on this better-lit, heavily reconstructed model made by Ivor Lawton and photographed by Anne Koehler. What does not come out clearly in either photo is that the bird's wings are also snake bodies with the heads facing away from the bird's shoulders. This gives a total of four identically-shaped animal heads. The meaning of the four animals heads being shaped the same has been lost in time, but the helmet may imply different aspects of a soul or personality, and/or it might relate to some narrative used in vision-questing or advanced initiation. The knotwork designs are entirely Ivor Lawton's. The photo retrieved on 2013-September-12 from Wikimedia Commons: "http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sutton_Hoo_Helmet_Replica.jpg". The photo was made by Anne Koehler in 2005.

Figure 10. Reconstruction Model of Sutton Hoo helmet.

D.7) Contra Considerations

D.7.a) Other Reasons for the Style

It is possible that there were non-philosophical reasons for the pervasive complexity and surrealism of this art. It must be admitted that there is other evidence that the early medieval English were somewhat fonder of puzzles than are, say current-day Americans (Mackie, 1934). Also, there is humor in an image such as a snake trying to swallow something too big for it to swallow, or in an image of a very long snake getting lost and trying to swallow its own tail, or duck-like heads kissing.

But these possibilities do not exclude the very likely possibilities that, generally speaking, the meanings of these images are as inferred above.

D.7.b) Incompleteness of the Treatment

The analysis above makes no effort to contrast early medieval English art with art from any modern culture. Although the graphics differ greatly from the styles of art which are characteristic of modern cultures, certain absences are apparent to the reader in any modern culture: sexual suggestion, beautiful and fast vehicles, children, juvenile pets, realistic colors, sales pitches, and pictures of objects offered for sale[74]. These cultural differences are not accounted for in the theory and might somehow qualify the findings.

Thus, a significant consideration could be that the reader's frame of reference is a culture in which most art functions merely as entertainment and/or to sell things, while most early medieval art was personally-decorative, religious, and/or civic. Perhaps this difference in cultures should be taken into theoretical consideration. However, adding such theoretical sophistication would probably not sufficiently

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[74] The absence of horses in the specimens is due to selection of data, for their prominence does not seem related to the major purpose of this book. Fern (2010) has an extensive discussion of the importance of horses in early medieval England. Just as modern people tend to like images of fast aircraft and other vehicles, early modern Europeans seem to have liked images of horses and things related to horses. Among the several semiotic implications of horses would be a metaphor for mystical travel, either to another realm or in terms of personal progress to a level of maturity or enlightenment difficult to achieve by ordinary means. From the first use of horses for human transport until steam railroads appeared in the early 1800's, information, human bodies, and freight could go no faster over long distances than horses could go.

help us understand *The Old English Rune Poem* to make the effort worthwhile for inclusion in this book.

D.8) Conclusions Regarding Artistic Images

D.8.a) Not an Agricultural Religion

Pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon religion was not specialized into agricultural (nor natural) fertility. If there were an influential cult emphasizing agricultural fertility it might seem reasonable to expect images of pregnant female livestock as a common theme. Another reasonable hypothesis would be frequent occurrence of ripe crops or agricultural equipment or draft animals in harness, and these occur but are unusual[75].

Hence, if the holidays of peasant-society England coincided with agriculturally significant times of year, this fact is aside from whatever theologies characterized the pre-Christian and Christian religions of the times.

Like the notion of a religion with contradictory theologies, the notion of a peasant society with a religion that is not primarily oriented toward agriculture will come as a shock to some readers, despite the fact that Christianity, Judaism and Islam of the times were also not primarily oriented toward agriculture.

D.8.b) Conclusions Regarding the Nature of the Earþ Cult

The evidence examined here is consistent with the theory that English polytheistic religion included contradictory theologies and that the goddess Earþ was a powerful influence on the thoughts and emotions of English people from the beginnings of England about 450 CE until well into the era of Christian supremacy.

And the Anglo-Saxons' artistic tastes imply a culture in which a very mystical religion oriented toward personal adaptation and growth would have been comfortably at home.

Earþ was was not imaged directly, because She was neither anthropomorphic nor theriomorphic, but images implying Earþ-cult adherence abounded early in the period and decreased as time passed. The prevalence of snake-like and boar-hog images cannot be attributed to any other cult, and they persist well into the era of a nominally Christian society.

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[75] A notable instance of agricultural art is *The Julius Work Calendar*, which provides the outline for a book on early medieval English culture (Lacey and Danziger, 1999).

D.8.c) Importance of the Earð Cult

We would expect that icons associated with Wóden, Þúnor, or Fríge would be prominent in art if Earþ were a minor deity. This means that we would expect to commonly find images of weapons, (realistic) ravens, lightening bolts, household implements, keys, or human sexual organs in Salins Style 2 art (Salins, 1904) from the 400's though the 700's in what is now England. But we find almost none of those and instead we see many images of horses, feral pigs, and surreal animals, which are mostly snake-like or bird-like.

E) Conclusions from Circumstantial Evidence

Although the data brought out in this chapter, considered in isolation, seem to be not much evidence of anything, taking all of it into account along with documentary evidence from English sources and analogies from other cultures, strong conclusions can be arrived at.

E.1) Circumstantial Evidence Backs up Documentary Evidence

We have the circumstantial evidence to back up the impression we get from documentary sources that there was a very strong Earþ cult among the Anglo-Saxons prior to Christian domination of the Anglo-Saxon states. That cult was sufficiently appealing to the English to endure long after all the English states had become officially Catholic. It finally weakened and died out, but very slowly. For Earþ was long beloved, as was Easter, and Earð was even beloved by an unknown but significant percentage of the nominally Christian.

Also, it now seems even more likely that the polytheistic English religion included cults with contradictory theologies. We have seen that in early medieval times the Anglo-Saxons valued complexity subtlety, and unmediated religious experience, and this circumstance strengthens the impression that English polytheism was a baroque tapestry of theologies. Artistic styles and content, including bible decorations, imply a worldview compatible with theological contradictions and complexity and a preference for non-anthropomorphic concepts of deity.

Moreover, the cult of Mother of Deities and of Mother of Mankind was very probably the dominant influence in league of religions that constituted English polytheism.

E.2) Additional Implications Regarding English Heathenism

E.2.a) Theology

Heathen cults emphasized direct relation to the divine, experience outside buildings, services and prayers without icons to help concentrate attention, scant professional religious leadership and bureaucracy, and major venues far from settlements.

Deposits in soil and water imply worship of at least one divinity of land and water. That would likely have been their Earth deity, since we do not observe numerous local saints of soil nor water.

The people's preference for outdoor venues implies strong attraction to a deity identified with the entire planet, especially including the natural landscape, bodies of water, and the soil. And these preferences influenced all cults, although perhaps in varying degrees.

The Anglo-Saxons were for the most part theologically conservative. By and large, they adhered to the dogma (from Proto-Germanic times) that deities should not be worshiped as if confined or sheltered in buildings. Also, the art that survives from the 600's and early in Christian supremacy implies that the Pagan English avoided anthropomorphic representations of deities. We know the people were not completely consistent with the ancient dogma, but we know it was the predominant practice.

E.2.b) Social Structure

We also know that prior to Christian rule, the social institution of religion was not the economically heavyweight component that Catholicism was to become, and that the native religion emphasized personal relationships to one or more deities. Catholicism was to become much more distinct as a separate social institution than were the native cults.

Although rites in the old way appealed to English in the first several decades of Christian supremacy, it is quite possible that logistical inconveniences and lack of support from a professional cadre hurt the chances of English polytheism in competition against the new movement.

On the other hand, a lightweight cult structure using remote venues would have been much less vulnerable to persecution by Christian governments than a cult predicated on buildings, idols, venues in settlements, and an official, professional staff.

Chapter 11: The Earþ Cult Per Se

A) Overview of Previous Content

A.1) Overall Picture of Earð in the Anglo-Saxon Pagan System

Previous chapters have established that (1) English polytheistic religion was a much more complex institution than is commonly considered to be the case, (2) among the baroque tapestry of theologies there was a cult of an Earth goddess who was the Mother of Deities, and (3) the cult was very influential and possibly the dominant cult in English polytheism.

Therefore, this study has already supported the claim that there was a Pagan-culture source of *The Old English Rune Poem* that comparable to the poem in its sophistication, theological liberality, and concern with progressive mysticism, as opposed to concern with pageantry, nature magic, or agricultural practices.

But having come up to the internal details of the Earð cult, the temptation to look inside is quite strong. Moreover, systematic study of the cult will tend to make the model of non-Christian Anglo-Saxon religion more vivid and plausible.

Some core ideas about the Earthen Mother were probably common among the Pagan English, although evidence suggests the possibility that the culture in question did indeed harbor vague or conflicting concepts of its Earth Goddess.

A.2) Conduct and Structure of the Earþ Cult

Some features of the Earð cult are already clear.

It was hearth religion, which is to say that it was strongly represented in household practice, more than it was a religion of professional poetry or formal philosophy. Although documentation of native English mythology was probably greatly set back by the Reformation's trashing of monastic libraries (Gasquet, 1906: 417-418), we are probably not missing significant mythic support for the English Earth goddess, for strong mythic support is not necessary for a deity to have great importance in the lives of people, and She is not the kind of deity who easily serves as a hero/heroine or villain in an action-adventure story.

Socially and economically, there was a lightweight cult structure for a heavyweight deity, without a large number of full-time professional priests, poets, or imaging artists dedicated to the cult.

English Earth-goddess religion was theologically conservative, in that it was based in Germanic traditions existing at least several hundred years prior to major Germanic colonization of Britain. The cult of Earþ conserved the ancient tradition of aversion to temple buildings. The Anglo-Saxon Earth-goddess cult also conserved the traditional aversion to anthropomorphism and theriomorphism, so that non-Christian English art tended to represent cult identification and values rather than depicting deities.

The cult also conserved the tradition of worship of a Mother of Deities identified with the planet and benefiting from the emotional attraction humans have for their home planet.

Although the Earð cult (and most native English religion) was very mystical and made a light economic burden, it probably did have many part-time specialists prior to Christian supremacy. And it probably did have dedicated venues, mostly away from settled areas, and it probably included major communal celebrations, although it was probably more a matter of hearth religion than were the other cults.

The lightweight cult structure and heart-felt practice of Earþ-cult activity in homes with children must have affected the durability of Earþ-religion practices. Informality of both lore and social organization are strengths when government tries to suppress a religion. That is because recruiting priests, destroying idols, and taking over temple buildings or destroying them do not as severely cripple a cult that is not making much use of such things, as compared to cults that depend heavily on buildings, literature, myth-based oral traditions, or public performance. It would have been a people's cult, and much the stronger for that condition.

Now let us find out if more can be inferred regarding English Earth religion.

B) A People's Cult

It seems to have been a cult that did not lend itself well to practice mainly as a women's or men's mystery affair, nor to have been mainly a peasants' nor craftspersons' cult. Small children had their own patron goddess, Easter (Stanfield, 2001b), but this would not have precluded introducing them to Earð. It was not especially a warriors', rulers', nor a poets' cult.

It would have been for everyone.

C) Intellectual and Emotional Basis of Earþ-Cult Theology

In this part of the chapter, a case will be made that while English Earð theology was conditioned by tradition and the authority of formal leaders, and while it might have been as superstitious as the religions with which scholars are familiar in industrialized countries, it was very likely based to a large degree on a combination of intuition and emotion that is readily understandable in any human cultural context.

C.1.a) Revealed and Natural Theology

Some theologians tell us there are basically two varieties of theology: revealed and natural. A person would accept a revealed theology because someone with credibility declared it, and a person would accept a natural theology because of a convincing argument from empirical evidence. The contrast is described with references to important thinkers like Platon, Aristotle, and St Augustine, and is lucidly described by Brent (2008).

Brent's analysis is useful but an oversimplification, for it is the present author's personal experience that there is no such thing as a theory of deity that relies strictly on declarations by authority figures or a theory of deity that relies strictly on analysis of empirical evidence. For example, Christianity is usually considered a revealed religion, but C. S. Lewis makes a case for it based on observations of evidence in his book, *Mere Christianity* (1952). Likewise, although Snorri Sturluson described all non-Christian religion as based on "natural" theology, it is well known that polytheists commonly accept their religion because it is traditional in whatever community they were born into. Also, practically all people in any culture think it gullible to the point of incompetence to believe always on the basis of mere faith in some authority-person, and practically everyone finds it impossible to always know and fully analyze the facts related to every complex issue on their own. Instead, religious ideologies vary in the degree to which they balance duly constituted authority and natural observation.

Hence a reasonable inference is that the intellectual basis of Earþ cult theology was some mixture of evidence-based and authoritative-declaration-based.

Furthermore, we know that Earð theology was predominately inferred from observation and intuition, which was conditioned by customary lore. We infer this because we have good reason — as

noted in previous chapters — to believe that English polytheism gave little mythic or formal-theological support to its Earth-goddess cult.

Also, because the cult was a light social burden on the English economy and polity, we can reasonably infer that it was largely a matter of personal experience, and personal experience is by definition meditative, emotional, intuitive, and ritual-habitual. Moreover such personal revelation and practice does not require elaborate intellectualization nor agreement on all the details of what an experience means, so people can make up ideologies they like and not worry about being different.

C.1.b) Emotional-Intuitive Theology

In the case of an Earth-deity cult, an intuitive and emotional attraction to the idea of religion per se or to a particular religious exercise or deity is easily reinforced by the particularly common and strong emotional attraction people have to the planet Earth.

One argument in support of this claim is the widespread existence of religions with at least one god or goddess of soil or of the planet.

Another argument is the tug the planet has on people who aggressively deny having religion. Consider the reverence for and love of nature expressed by Richard Dawkins (2006) in the first chapter of *The God Delusion*. Another example is in Michael Ruse's (2013) book *The Gaia Hypothesis*, where he documents energetic opposition to the idea that our planet's temperature, acidity, and chemical composition are regulated by mindless biological beings so as to maintain the possibility of life. It is not that scientifically the stability of our planet as maintained by its life forms is deniable, but clearly that many of the opponents were denying something else, denying something they could easily perceive but were not confronting in actual propositions of the Gaia theory. They were afraid of Earth-goddess religion, apparently conjured up from within themselves.

This combination of intuition and emotion is difficult to describe explicitly, so the following poem is offered to describe that experience by means of the reader's own emotional experience. It is not a devotional exercise and does not actually refer to a deity, and moreover it depends on modern scientific knowledge for it to be fully appreciated. But it should evoke an emotional-intuitive experience similar to that of many of the early medieval English.

(You will understand the poem best if you get the full sensual experience, and that will usually come best if you read it aloud to hear it, and the rhythm is more pronounced if you read at a slightly faster pace than the pace most Midwestern Americans use to talk, and if you pause a beat before each fourth line.)

We Are the Children of the Earth

Every day and every hour,
we depend upon this body.
We enjoy it and we thrive here.
We are the children of the Earth!

We breathe the air about this planet.
We see the stars above at night.
We chill in cold and sweat in heat.
We are the children of the Earth!

Right for us the chemistry here.
Right for us the temperature.
Radiation's not too much here.
We are the children of the Earth!

Earth supports us and protects us,
We know this planet is our home.
That's why we call this Earth our mother.
We are the children of the Earth!

We stand upon the solid surface.
We drink and wash ourselves in water.
We taste and eat the living things here.
We are the children of the Earth!

We marvel at the magic,
at the myst'ry that is life.
We rest and work indoors but know Her.
We are the children of the Earth!

We know that life is only fleeting
and that people will succeed us.
We must leave a home for others
who will be children of the Earth.

Through all our joys and trials and triumphs,
through all adventures and through boredom,
no matter who nor where we all are,
we are the children of the Earth!

If the reader wants to try an actual prayer, go to the invocations of Earth deities in Appendix D. The most emotionally evocative of the specimens is the prayer to a Greek goddess in D.2.a. This is despite the content being a translation into English from a Latin story that is based on a Greek-language play. The prayer in Appendix D, E.4.a might also be helpful.

D) Alternatives Regarding Ultimate Creation

Many readers of this book have been propagandized since early childhood to conceive of an ultimate or pinnacle deity as also an ultimate creator. Although chapters on other religions should have weakened any such bias, is it useful to consider more vividly the range of possibilities that probably prevailed among members of the Earð cult.

This subsection presents some speculation on whether most English Pagans would have been understood their Earth goddess as an ultimate creator or as having arisen after the universe began. That issue will not be resolved, but along the way we will examine fundamental ideas of what a deity is, and it will become clearer how much variety might have existed in Anglo-Saxon polytheism.

D.1) An Ultimate Creator Concept of the Earthen Mother

In this understanding, Her "motherhood" of deities would likely have resembled that of the "fatherhood" of Platon's ultimate creator deity, as described in a previous chapter of this book. She would have created other deities to resemble Her and yet have made them as distinct entities. This would have Her as an All-Mother in the same sense as Damiourgos is an ultimate creator (see Chapter 4). If this were the case, She could have been identified with soil, and with our host planet as a whole, but also have been understood as able to project Her power throughout the collection of cosmic objects and empty spaces of the universe.

A creation myth supporting this understanding might have had Her creating Earth first (as a base of operations for Herself) and then in stages biological life, other deities, and the rest of the universe.

Also, like Damiourgos, She could have been said to have created lesser deities with the same spiritual substance as herself, but adulterated or diluted, and then to have used yet more adulterated or diluted amounts of the same substance to create a divine-like aspect

of the human mind. We will give this possibility more intense scrutiny later, under the heading "Deity and Mankind as Relatives".

D.2) Specialized Ultimate Creator Deity

One more category of deity should be mentioned, although it can quickly be ruled out as inapplicable to Earð. A deity understood as specialized as an ultimate creator may be one that is not identified with any substance, or "real" object, and is not conceived as a result of natural phenomena. This species of deity appears as if it were a biological or other non-spiritual thing, despite the theological contention that it is unlimited in its powers.

Examples already mentioned include Kwoth, Yahweh, and Damiourgos.

Because the specialized ultimate creator deity is not identified with any substance or "real" object, we can rule out the possibility that Earþ was understood as being of this type.

E) Natural Species of Deity

This section presents an examination of Deity as arising from nature, for an Earth deity could be understood as creating nature, coexisting with nature — or as natural.

E.1) A Spiritual Wight as a Product of Nature: Virtual Object

Here, the notion of spiritual wight is refined to help the reader see the possibility of a spiritual being that is not anthropomorphic, is not anthropsychic, and is lacking in physical integrity, but that nonetheless is to be dealt with in empirical reality.

At this point the discussion covers a conceptualization that can be challenging for persons whose understanding of deity has been strongly conditioned since childhood by Christians, Jews, Moslems, and European-culture atheists, so the idea described in this passage requires more than a brief mention.

E.1.a) The Problem of a Spiritual Being's Physical Existence

It is likely that among practitioners of native English religion, some persons understood deities as spiritual wights who were natural in a way similar to that in which seagulls or snakes are natural beings. And that other conceptualization will be discussed in the next passage (E.2).

But a spiritual wight has no physical integrity. This is one reason why many agnostic and atheist scholars are baffled by the idea of a spiritual wight, and it looks like simple nonsense to them. Surely many persons of pre-industrial cultures likewise would also have looked upon a conception of "deity" as a physical object as confused. And indeed, we have seen a hint of something like this earlier in Tacitus' description of traditional theology among Germanic peoples.

E.1.b) The "Virtual Object" Solution

Consider the common notion of a virtual object. A virtual object is a set of behaviors of physical objects that is — for pragmatic reasons — regarded, spoken of, and competently dealt with as if it had its own attributes, behaviors, and physical integrity. People commonly are not fully aware that they are dealing with virtual objects, for being explicitly and fully conscious of the physical objects and events underlying a virtual object is by definition highly impractical.

By definition, a virtual object is something thought of, spoken of, and dealt with successfully as if it were a "real" object even though it is not something to see, feel, weigh, or measure. People use virtual objects when the underlying physical things constitute something too complex to be dealt with directly, at least for some purposes or under some circumstances, and sometimes in every instance, for failure tends to occur otherwise. In other words, as a practical matter, one cannot adequately understand, cope with, or lucidly speak of a virtual object if one consistently avoids thinking of it as if it had its own structure, attributes, and behaviors. At least to some extent, the virtual object must be dealt with as such[76].

Consider some examples. Organizations such as the British government or Microsoft Corporation are behaviors of persons, but we speak of them as objects, legislate about them and sue them as objects, and think of them as objects. Love is commonly spoken of as an object ("love hurts", "love sucks", "love makes the world go around"). Love is a joyful thing, swimming is a joyful thing, war is an awful thing, etc. Any computer programmer who is familiar with object-oriented programming is aware that the objects in computer programs are actually behaviors of physical components in the computer and its peripheral equipment. Also there is the human mind, which is physically located in the brain, elsewhere in the central nervous system, in the autonomic nervous system, and in various

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[76] This is related to an issue that in the social sciences is called "level of analysis". Shall we analyze a group or an aggregate of individual persons? Shall we study human behavior or something more "abstract"?

glands secreting hormones that affect behavior and attitudes. All these organs operate by means of chemical and electro-magnetic activities at the microscopic level and below. Consequently, modern psychiatry sometimes treats the human mind with interventions at the microbiological level (as in drug therapy) or at the organ level (as in surgery), but psychiatry also sometimes treats the human mind as if it were an object (as in talk therapy). We are all aware that in layperson speech, the human mind is commonly taken for granted as an object — that is, a virtual object.

Virtual-object theology idea is clearer if we consider an example from modern fiction. In the science-fiction stories, *Earthfall* and *Earthborn*, Scott Orson Card (1995a and 1995b) presents a model of a universal deity (Keeper of Earth) consisting of electro-magnetic currents in the molten iron core of the planet Earth. These currents constitute a mind analogous to the mind that consists at least in part of electro-magnetic activity and structures in the human central and autonomic nervous systems. This molten-iron-based mind projects its will throughout the universe. It does not regulate everything in detail and is not quite all knowing, but it does interfere in natural phenomena occasionally to steer things in the direction it wants. It does not have the full range of human emotions (nor does it have gender), but it has definite preferences and a strong will. Its body is the molten iron of the planet's core, not something anthropomorphic to be put into a statue modeled by a beautiful man or woman. Of course, the physical basis of the human mind is more complex and biological than is the physical basis of Keeper of Earth (Card offered the story as fun fiction, not theology), and the idea of Keeper of Earth might or might not be psychologically plausible, but this description is merely a way of illuminating the general idea of a virtual-object deity.

E.1.c) Reification

Use of virtual objects is sometimes spoken of as "reification" as if it were a fallacy, but an implication of what has been said so far is that it is not necessarily a mistake to reify, for we simply cannot always deal directly with the details of physical reality. As noted above, the phenomenon of the virtual object is not something that arose in the late twentieth century and is only used by computer programmers: it is a practical necessity of everyday life in all cultures.

E.1.d) Consistency with Proto-Germanic Tradition

The reader can see now that the virtual-object concept of deity is an excellent fit into an ideology with identifies Mother of Deities with the material substances or non-living things of our host planet, and

which preserves ancient Proto-Germanic theological tradition. She could not be biologically male nor female, and She could not be theriomorphic nor anthropomorphic, for She is not analogous to a biological being. She could not be housed in a building, because She is identified with the entire planet and therefore too majestic.

This version of the All-Mother idea allows a polycentric theology in which the Mother of Deities would be an all-mother in the same sense as Óðin is an All-Father who is not the father of all, as seen in a previous chapter. But this concept is consistent with a polytheistic ideology in which a supreme deity creates all other deities and causes conscious minds to exist in non-virtual objects, such as human bodies. The virtual objects the virtual-object deity starts up could inherit some of their attributes and behaviors from the parent virtual object.

Therefore we have the possibility of some degree of mental commonality between deities and "real" objects, at least with human minds, for the human mind is also a virtual object. In later passages, this chapter will show approximately what constituted that commonality and what it was called in Old English.

E.1.e) Contra Consideration: Overly Clear Conception

It is rare that people are so precise about virtual objects as the discussion in this subsection implies. For example, in Lucretius' discussion of soul and mind, he initially indicates puzzlement, then suggests the soul and mind consist of "tiny seeds", and then asserts that soul and life of body only exist together, but he never does suggest anything resembling the precisely-defined understanding advanced here. Instead, he seems to try to define "mind and soul" as a gaseous object that can only exist while it is a colloidal, mixed-in, or dissolved substance in in an animal that is alive (Stallings and Jenkyns, 2007: Book 1.130-148, 1.950-951, book 3). This example is chosen because Lucretius is one of the philosophers who could reasonably be expected to explicitly and systematically posit or hypothesize that deities, minds, cities, and other things are behaviors of "real" objects that must be thought of and dealt with at least part of the time as if virtual objects.

Moreover, the absence of a verbal expression equivalent to "virtual object" means that people might have had awkward work to be systematic and clear when discussing the notion.

Yes, it is true that wherever we have philosophical discussions of deity-ness or of things that are certainly virtual objects, no ancient writer puts forth as precise a conceptualization as does this book. In fact, the explicit and precise formulation here is the first written expression of virtual-object theology the present writer has found.

Hence the response to this criticism must be to realize that the early medieval English person might or might not have stated an understanding of deity-ness as precisely as the idea is defined here, but this does not refute the principle that folks must deal with virtual objects and that it is quite possible for ordinary persons (as opposed to theoretical scientists, engineers, or philosophers) to sometimes be aware of the distinction between an object and a virtual object. For this fact stands, that virtual objects exist in the normal run of affairs in human culture, and not merely in object-oriented programming but as a necessity of everyday life.

Therefore this criticism must be accepted but it does not destroy the assertion that we do not know exactly how the polytheist English understood their Earth goddess or other deities, that variation beyond what most modern scholars image is quite possible, and that part of that variation is virtual-object theology.

E.2) Deity as a Thought Form

Another conceptualization of deity is the thought-form or archetype idea. The essence of this conceptualization is that any deity is the result of human psychic power becoming invested in a material object or abstract concept, causing a spiritual wight to exist, behave, and have material consequences. Adler (1979: 112) briefly mentioned this idea in passing in her massive tome on Wicca, and the present author has personally encountered Wiccans espousing this theory of deity-ness. It is not clear if a deity is supposed to be a virtual object descended from human minds that are acting together, an archetype such as those desribed by Carl Jung (Hull, 1969) or an illusion based on common belief.

This notion resembles the virtual object notion closely enough that we will not pursue it further than to note the enormous and subtle variety in concepts of deity-ness.

E.3) The Other Kind of Spiritual Wight as a Product of Nature

E.3.a) The General Idea

A more common understanding of "spiritual wight", although one that might seem to some persons as more fantastic, is the animal-like being that has no visual nor tactile aspect except on rare occasion and for its own temporary purposes. The present author does not have a name for this concept, but the general idea is of an active, mobile, complex object with a mind of its own and great magical powers. It is

said to be alive but in many theologies this kind of object is alive in a very special sense, for it is immortal[77].

Examples abound, although the idea is usually not discussed explicitly, for this seems to be what most people, especially most agnostics, atheists, and admirers of ancient polytheisms, think of as "deity". When scholars write of a deity as a personification of luck or of springtime, they are implying this sort of deity. This model of deity is what Platon's speakers had in mind for many of the deities in the Platonic system (mentioned in Chapter 4, D.3.a). Will Durant discusses this species of deity at length in his brief survey of Greek religion, emphasizing that "no other religion has ever been so anthropomorphic as the Greek" (Durant, 1939: 175-203, 207-211).

Like a virtual-object deity, this other species could be a product of nature or of other spiritual beings. Of course, it could also be understood as simply existing in and of itself.

This other concept is consistent with a view of an Earth deity embodied by the planet but distinct from it. This would be a spirit that could be in the earth or water, but that could also leave earth, water, or even the planet Earth.

E.3.b) Consistency with Proto-Germanic Tradition
But this other species of spiritual wight is not so fully consistent with the notion of a god or goddess who is simply not understood if thought of as housed in a temple or as represented by a statue or painting. That is because this kind of deity can be limited to a temple or idol if it so chooses. It also can appear in human, lower-animal, or plant form if it so chooses.

Think of the famous and artistically wonderful painting of *Creation of Adam* on the Sistine Chapel[78]. To many Christians, the painting is a

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[77] Normally, for something to be considered alive in the biological sense, it must at least have the potential to grow, die, and reproduce. Hence, when a deity is said to be "alive" the speaker usually means that the deity acts on its/his/her own initiative, not that it is biological. In the present study, it is not necessary to enter into an involved discussion of "alive" other than to point out in passing that the condition of immortality rules out biological life. The reason this is mentioned here is that this reinforces a contention made later, that deity parenthood is a figure of speech used mainly to express respect, love, and awe, not biological motherhood, although the analogy of humans being cared for may be implied by "parenthood" terminology.

[78] The painting is so famous that a citation might not be necessary. However, one discussion and presentation of the image is at the web site *Rome.info* (http://www.rome.info/michelangelo/sistine-

glorious and meaningful manifestation of their lore, while to some Christians, Jews, and Moslems the physical image of Yahweh as a beautiful white man is not related to their religion at all or is starkly contrary to their lore. Likewise, in native English polytheism one or more of the traditional theologies might have excluded this other kind of spiritual wight from the category of deity.

Nonetheless, it is quite plausible that many practitioners of native English religion understood at least some of their deities — including their Earth deity — as this kind of spiritual wight, simply because the idea seems to have great intuitive appeal to people in general. Indeed, the very widespread appeal of this usually not-articulated concept of deity is the reason a lengthy discussion is needed to explain the virtual-object notion.

And because this kind of spiritual wight is thought of as having a mind, we also have the possibility that such a deity can be kin of mankind in a psychological sense, as will be discussed under the heading "Deity and Mankind as Relatives".

F) Deity as Offspring of Spiritual Beings

We have already seen examples of a pinnacle deity (or partnership-partnership) becoming dominant after appearing in an already-existing universe. This is in the Norse lore, which is closely related to English polytheism, in Borrsson Brothers creation stories, and in Óðin-as-top-god theology. Likewise, in Greek polytheism, Zeus struggles to take over a universe that already exists and that did not intend that He should exist (Maitland, 1997a, 1997b). To cite another example, Gell (1995: 268-269) tells us that Polynesian native religious philosophies typically had their high god give structure to the universe by making distinct objects and attributes and organizing them, not by making the universe out of nothing.

It would be very unusual behavior for woman to take ultimate power in a fictional story, but Earþ is not a woman. Moreover, it is common knowledge that sometimes women or girls take over a household or a state just because they want to rule. So this alternative — Earð as a daughter who seizes dominance — is readily conceivable by the reader.

This notion of the source of a deity seems especially consistent with the "other" species, an animal-like wight with no tactile nor visual aspect except on rare occasion and for its own purposes. However, a virtual object partnership can also be a child of other virtual object wights.

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chapel/creation-of-adam/).

G) The Theological Meaning of "Mother" in the Earð Cult

Up to now the speculation on native-polytheist English theology has opened up more possibilities than it has closed off. It is possible that the English Earth goddess was thought of as an ultimate creator, offspring of other deities, a result of natural laws, a virtual object, or the "other kind of deity" in any combination creator and species possibilities. It is time to explore the possibility that some of these alternatives can be excluded, made to seem less plausible than others, or at least be classified as not-so-important in view of evidence.

Let us consider the implications of expressions we find in the literature: "Earth's children", "Earthen Mother", "Mother of Deities" and the like — expressions referring to the idea of motherhood.

In this section, the metaphor of mother as manager of the household is explored, and in the next section the idea of mother as a relative is explored.

G.1) "Mother Goddess" as an Expression of Respect and Awe

By this point in the present book we are sure that the native theology did not posit an anthropomorphic nor theriomorphic model of motherhood for its Earth goddess. Therefore the following passages examine what "mother" meant when used as part of an appellation for the English Earth goddess.

G.1.a) Not a Biologically Reproductive Parent

Lotte Motz has insightfully analyzed the meaning of "mother" in relation to polytheistic deities (1997: 44-50), and it is reasonable to apply her inferences to the study of Earþ. None of the reasonably likely theological meanings of "mother" as applied to a deity can be taken as identical with the meaning of human motherhood. As Motz points out, mother divinities rarely tend children, mostly because deities are typically born as adults, not as infants. Moreover, "mother" goddesses are not typically considered to have given birth to all the deities or people who are their children.

Instead, parent-like labels like "father" or "grandmother" indicate awe and respect analogous to that which human children have for such relatives and also a relationship of benign subordination. The reader should consider the familiar Christian expression "God the Father" as illustrating this principle.

Hence, although there might or might not have been some myth of Earð raising a deity or person from infancy, such stories would have been outside the main thrust of native English poly-theology. At most, such a story or such stories would furnish a convenient basis for some emotionally stirring songs or poetry. On the other hand, it seems likely that at least some English Pagans would have been offended by theological myths resembling accounts of plant or animal reproduction.

G.1.b) Relation to Creation Ideologies

All of the basic understandings of deity — virtual-object, other, ultimate creator, natural-evolution, and descendant of other spirit beings — are compatible with "Mother" as a title of respect, love, or awe. The virtual object notion of deity may seem at first less compatible with an awestruck, in-love attitude than is the other concept. But people speak of Mother Russia or The Fatherland, Americans fall in love with the USA, Australians are very patriotic, and so on. The patriots practically all know that the country they love is a virtual object, even if they do not usually apply the term "virtual object". So it does not require a prohibitive degree of sophistication for a person to be in love with a virtual-object deity.

And more directly, chapter 8 of the present book implies that the Germanic Earth goddess was an unwed mother, therefore a solitary creator, and therefore head of the family or pinnacle diety in a pantheon.

G.1.c) The Earthen Mother of Deities and Mankind

As a virtual-object deity, She is embodied by the non-biologic substances and objects of the planet. A spirit present throughout the solid, liquid, and gaseous substances of the planet cannot be feminine in the sense that women and girls are feminine. She cannot prepare meals nor teach children how to tie their shoes. You learn from persons how to get your own food, and you have persons to teach you how to tie your shoes.

Even as the other kind of deity, She is unlikely to take human form and perform these tasks, because She could only be perceived "through the eye of reverence", as Tacitus put it.

The poem earlier in this chapter directly and indirectly states that there are some understandings in which an Earth god or goddess would be understood as parental, and a full accounting of those understandings requires both words and intuitive emotion.

So we see a mother who created some or all of the universe, including some or all of the deities, and who is seen as steering,

harboring, nurturing, and protecting all life although not necessarily as regulating every detail at all times exactly according to Her will.

G.1.d) The Boss of Bosses

Therefore, the goddess Earð is a "mother" in the sense of being highly honored and the ultimate boss. She is the boss whether She is the all-creator, a creator of only some things, a late-arising product of natural laws who took over a completed universe, or whatever.

This notion is made the more plausible by examinations of data on various polytheistic religions and especially the Germanic religions prior to Germanic colonization of part of Britain. Previous chapters have shown that a theology with a primary (or primal) deity is not necessarily a result of Abrahamic influence, for such a feature can be quite plausibly a native polytheistic notion. Moreover, evidence also shows that a pantheon of many deities can include a supreme partnership and that polytheistic religions may well include cults with incompatible theologies inside a quite harmonious overall institutional structure[79].

G.2) Analogous Example: Herb-Gatherer's Prayers

In addition to the specimens of Earð religion in the surviving corpus of Old English literature, we have two Latin-language prayers that exemplify what has been inferred so far in this section about the theology of Anglo-Saxon Earth goddess religion.

Two of the Latin prayers in Appendix E, the Herb-Gatherer's Prayers, are clearly not a product of Roman religion and they resemble theology described in this book as Earþ theology.

One of the prayers begins: "Goddess revered, O Earth, of all nature Mother, engendering all things and re-engendering them from the same womb, because thou only dost supply each species with living force, thou divine controller of sky and sea and of all things, through thee is nature hushed and lays hold on sleep, and thou likewise renewest the day and dost banish night."

The Herb-Gatherer's Prayers are analyzed in section E of Appendix D in this book. The two prayers in question have not been included as direct evidence of Earþ-cult behavior because they are not definitely

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[79] This is not the place for making assertions regarding what is "general", "usual", or "normal" among polytheistic religions. Statistical data and representative samples were not provided, because the purpose of a broad sample of data in this book is to show what is plausibly the case in English culture in early medieval times, not to study religion in general.

linked with England. (The appendix in question also analyzes three other Latin prayers, but they are related to Roman Earth-goddess religion).

H) Deity and Mankind as Relatives

Now let us consider a special topic of native English theology: the question of whether people and at least some of the more desirable of their spiritual wights might have some spiritual attributes or behaviors in common. More specifically, of course, the question is whether there might be some kind of kinship between Mother of Deities on the one hand and Earth's children, human and godly, on the other.

Expressions such as "Earthen Mother" or "Earð's children" suggest, in addition to other matters, kinship. We are stimulated to wonder if Earthen-Mother theology might include an understanding that something held in common defines the nature of kinship among deities and even between mankind and deities.

In addition to native English nomenclature, the stimulus for this search comes from analogies. One analogy was presented in the chapter on NeoPlatonic religion, where this very principle was posited by Platon's speakers. Another analogy was exhibited in the chapter on Nuer religion and has already been alluded to in this section, although kwoth is shared only by spiritual wights, not by persons. A third analogy is Anglican: everyone is to some extent Christlike, but the intensity and extent of this varies greatly, from person to person and in one person over time, with the most outstanding human examples being saints (Olsen, 2011). The Anglican analogy has the interesting limitation that most ordinary Christians do not think of themselves as having anything in common with their supreme deity, even if they conceive of Christ as an aspect of a tripartite god and their own religion as a continuous attempt to be ever more Christlike (for example note the attitude in Otto's 1950 book).

The next chapter discusses in detail the evidence that such a concept existed and the nature of that concept, because the analysis is complex enought to provide a separate, major topic.

For the present, it is sufficient merely to note that the Anglo-Saxon Earth goddess and at least some of the other deities in the pantheon were in part viewed more as distant relatives of mankind than as fearsome and alien disciplinarians or arbitrary tyrants.

I) Rites

Ritual was probably the most important aspect of the cult and ritual traditions were probably the storage medium of the main body of cult

lore. Instead, the lore of the Earþ cult might have been stored almost entirely in brief discursive statements, meditative exercises, hymns, poems, instrumental music, and/or dances. Hence Earð-cult rites are an important topic, although not much is said about it here.

I.1) Conduct of Rites

Because of the popularity of Earþ, some data regarding Her liturgy has survived, although at most we have a hint on worship and supplication practices regarding one other English Pagan deity, Easter (Stanfield, 2001b).

The liturgy probably involved visual and tactile experiences, such as tossing or walking barefoot on soil, and movements such as throwing sacrificial objects into water or digging holes for burial. Dance is popular worldwide, so the English polytheists probably enjoyed it in their liturgy. Communal meals were probably a feature[80], but individual or nuclear-family meditations were probably also common. The spoken lines were probably mostly poetic and often accompanied by lyre playing, and less often by drumming. If the legend of Caedmon is a clue, it is quite possible that it was customary for at least some rituals to be sung, with no spoken lines, simply because the English enjoyed singing and playing music. But this could not always be required of everyone, for some persons cannot sing well or cannot play an instrument.

Loud and rowdy dance and instrumental music were prominent features of the Roman cult of their Mother of Deities, but we do not know if dance was any more characteristic of the Earþ cult than of other native Anglo-Saxon cults.

As noted in a previous chapter, a distinctive feature of the Earth goddess as opposed to other deities was her identification with soil, water, and atmosphere. Hence, to look at a landscape was surely considered more inspirational than to view inner walls of a building. Also, at a ceremonial banquet burying prepared food or parts of an animal not to be eaten by people would be a way to offer a sentimental gift in the form of a giving back material substance.

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[80] Daniel Bray (2002) has a discussion of sacrificial practices and ideology in Old Norse religion, and Norse practices were probably quite similar to those in English polytheism. The reader should be cautioned that Bray de-emphasizes the importance of having plenty of fun and good food.

I.2) Holy Days

Here it will be shown that the schedule of Earð's holy days and seasons was based more on astronomical than on arbitrary calendric conventions, and this will be followed by some speculation regarding the nature of Earþ and other Anglo-Saxon holiday worship.

I.2.a) The Schedule

The Pagan and Christian English liturgical calendars surely had some similarities, but they were based on different ways of accounting for time. The Christian schedule of holidays included both fixed and moveable feasts or fasts. The "moveable" holidays were not fixed on the Julian calendar but could occur on different days depending on calculations of events such as the first full moon after the Northern Hemisphere's vernal equinox. The calendar is called Julian because a Roman emperor named Julius decreed it. (Every country in the world is now on the Gregorian calendar, which is more accurately aligned with the solar year than was the Julian calendar. The Gregorian calendar is named for the Pope who proclaimed it.)

The Julian calendar was supposed to be solar, with the year originally defined by astronomical measurements based on the Earth's tilt as it orbits the Sun, and with the solar-orbit year divided into twelve arbitrary months. However, the calendar year was essentially defined by counting the number of days in each month and passing twelve of these arbitrarily defined months between one day arbitrarily chosen as the start of a year the next occurrence of that day[81]. If the number of days in the annual calendar was wrong, and this was a flaw of the Julian calendar, it would gradually fall out of synchronization with the solar year.

In contrast, all the polytheist holy days and seasons were based on a solunar calendar — a calendar based on both solar and lunar events. The native English year was solar, in the same sense that the Roman calendar year was solar; it was defined by the tilting of the Earth as it rotates around the Sun. But all the months were defined by the lunar cycle, starting on the first sighting of the new moon, or the day

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[81] The present discussion oversimplifies Catholic calendrics of the age, which were complicated by enormous disagreements on which day started each new year. Strictly speaking, Emperor Julius had each new year beginning on 1 January, but English Catholics did not all agree to do that. The mess is discussed in technical detail by Garmonsway (1972: xxiv-xxviii) and Ingram (Ingram and Giles, 1847: 11-12). However, the exact Catholic new year day is not relevant to understanding the English Pagan solunar calendar.

calculated as when that lunar phase would be visible if cloud cover allowed. Therefore, "solunar" refers to a combination of solar years and lunar months.

Surprisingly, the English Pagan calendar is globally aware. In the English polytheist lexicon, it is not necessary to say "winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere" or "winter solstice in the Southern Hemisphere", because these events are Geol (or Geola) and Liþa.

Unlike the Julian calendar, the native English calendar could never fall out of alignment with the seasons, because it did not require a set number of days per year. Each new year began on the first visible sliver of a new moon following the solstice called Geol. Hence, the solunar year customarily included twelve or thirteen new moons, depending on how many lunar cycles started between one Geol and the next, and this would vary from year to year. In leap years, when 13 new moons occurred between Geol astronomical events, an extra month was inserted among the summer months.

So all the Pagan liturgical events would have been based on lunar months, and the leap year summer month probably included a special holiday.

When scholars say that this or that month in the Pagan calendar corresponded to a certain month in the Roman calendar, they are making an oversimplification. Even in years when the native English calendar had twelve months, the lunar months and the Roman arbitrary months never perfectly coincide in length, and the start of the English Pagan year almost never occurs on 1 January[82].

Details on English polytheist calendrics and the anthropological and astronomical arguments in support of the assertions made here are in studies done by Stone (1997) and Stanfield (2001a). A study of how the traditional English polytheist liturgical events would be scheduled on a Gregorian calendar is in Stanfield's (2011b) essay.

I.2.b) The Nature of Earð Holidays

In contrast to the documented worship of Earþ after a few centuries of Christian rule, we have no evidence of a holy day or season specifically dedicated to Her. One would expect that if there were such a celebration it would have been banned and replaced with an analogous saint's day.

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[82] From the Roman calendar point of view, all the native holy days and seasons would have been "moveable". But in terms of the native calendar, almost all the Catholic holidays were "moveable" and the native holy days and seasons were fixed.

But given all the other evidence of Earth-goddess worship, it is possible that the pre-Christian English had a few holy feasts or days dedicated to Earþ, and it is unlikely that they had none.

It is even more likely that in the Earþ cult the principal goddess would have also been celebrated on every holy day through other spiritual beings, or that She would have been invoked directly during holy days named for the season or some economic event (such as wheat harvest, barley sowing, or cattle slaughter).

This notion is bolstered by an analogy with another religion and by the kinship between deities in native English theology.

First, at least one similar case is easily found. Early medieval English Catholics named their religious holidays after saints — and the goddess Easter — but did not name any holy feast, fasting-time, or other holy day for their principal deity. Instead, they worshipped Yahweh through the saints for whom holidays were named, and they supplicated and praised Him on these holidays directly, using his nickname, "God". Likewise we know that it was not considered necessary to approach Her through lesser deities, and so Earð was probably also supplicated and praised during holidays named for other deities or for events, both through lesser deities and directly.

Second, as we have already seen, it is very likely that Mother of Deities was viewed as connected to lesser deities and mankind by a family resemblance which consists principally of their most important common trait: possession of some degree of os. This would be analogous to the Nuer worshipping Kwoth every time they worship a lesser deity.

J) Conclusions

This chapter has added details to the image of the Earþ cult as it fit into the overall mosaic of non-Christian English religion. Most of this detail is theological, but some inferences have also been made regarding practice.

J.1) Conclusions Regarding Earþ-Cult Theology

Regarding creation and the ultimate nature of deity-ness, the picture is ambiguous. The chapter has pictured an Earthen Mother who created some or all of the universe, including some or all of the deities. She might have been understood as a product of other spirit beings, a natural phenomenon, or the other kind of deity. She might have been conceived variously by different English men and women.

We have already seen that it is not necessary for a supreme deity to have created everything and to have existed prior to all creation.

But however the earliest Anglo-Saxons thought of creation or the nature of deities per se, Earð was seen as steering, harboring, nurturing, and protecting all life even if She was not necessarily understood as regulating every detail at all times exactly according to Her will.

The theology was based mostly on emotional-intuitive attachment to the planetary ecosystem, observation of nature, and tradition-guided mystical experience. The cult's lore was embedded primarily in customs of liturgy, wisdom poetry, and prosaic common wisdom. To fully understand English Earth-goddess religion, one must go beyond intellectual and social aspects and look into one's own emotional attraction to our home planet.

The Earthen Mother was the head of the family (in at least one cult), a provider, a protector, the receiver of the affection of people for their planet and their sense of dependency on it, and a wight people could count on for help when events seemed not much under their control. As mentioned in previous chapters, She was not Mother Nature personified, nor was She specialized in agriculture. But as an ancient prayer said of some Earth goddess, She was "controller of sky and sea and of all things", and therefore She was "of all nature Mother" (Appendix D, passage E.2.a).

She was also a relative, for there was a notion of kinship tying together all people and deities, and this was a key part of non-Christian English theology.

All the human children of Earþ shared with Her some degree of os, which is defined as a deeply seated urge to inform and to learn, to be shrewd, and to make progress as an enlightened adult. The word "os" denotes the specifically English-Pagan concept describing that sense of psychological or spiritual kinship that links the highest deity to the lowest person. Although it is not clear to what extent the notion of os would have affected any given cult, it very likely was a part of the Earð cult, for the common expression "Earth's children" suggests that a notion of kinship of some kind was a major theme in that highly influential cult[83].

J.2) Cult Structure

It was a cult for all classes, both genders, and all ages.

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[83] Sanmark (2010) examined Norse soul lore and found an ideology quite unlike that shown here for the English. There was no sense of universal kinship with deities.

Notions of the English Earth goddess were probably based largely on mystical experiences, on lore that could be stored in brief discursive statements and liturgical elements, and on that powerful emotional attachment to our home planet (and for that matter, other aspects of nature) that is quite common among people.

J.3) Rites

The Mother of Deities was worshiped directly and through other deities. Her holy days and seasons, like all the holy days and seasons of non-Christian English culture, were scheduled on a solunar calendar, not strictly coinciding with the Julian calendar. She was probably worshiped both directly and through lesser deities. We do not have evidence of any specific holy days dedicated to the English Earth goddess. Singing and poetry were prominent features of Her worship and supplication.

Chapter 12: Os

The evidence in this chapter shows that there is a complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle which is a characteristic of deity-ness, which puts mankind into a different category from that of lower animals and of plants, which characterizes a kinship relation between deities and mankind, and which, as an idea, specifically differentiates English polytheism from English Christianity. Either (A) it was not equally in all persons, and probably was not equally present in all deities; or (B) it was equally present but not of the same level of benefit to all deities or persons, depending how the individual choose to act or think.

It is very likely that this concept was part of at least one cult, and much more likely that it was included in all of them.

The word for it is "os". The evidence shows that "os" indicated whatever mental tendency lies behind the separation between mankind and lower animals and denoted holy spirit, as native English polytheists understood it. Although the word only appears in the surviving corpus of Old English literature in personal names and *The Old English Rune Poem*, the evidence implies that it met the criteria indicated below, in the section entitled "Nature of Divine Kinship".

A) Clarification of Divine Kinship

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the common Old English expressions meaning "Earthen Mother" or "Earð's children" suggest, in addition to other matters, kinship. Additionally, there are analogies in other religions which are more thoroughly documented than is English polytheism, and the analogous cases imply that something psychological might link persons with each other and with deities.

Hence, there is reason to look for a notion holding that the lesser deities and human minds are all based at least partly on something like a holy spirit, which they share with the highest deities. It does not have to be equally present in all the beings to whom it gives kinship. This quality might be most clearly and powerfully manifested by a supreme deity, and less clearly or powerfully manifested at lower ranks. On the other hand, it might be equally present where it is present at all.

A.1) The Common Blood in Our Veins

The notion of kinship involved here is that a common behavioral tendency — a complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual

substance, factor, energy, force, or principle — defines a kin-like psychological resemblance among all people and deities.

The notion is similar to classification of deciduous trees according to whether they have compound or simple leaves, or putting animals into one category if they have endoskeletons and another if they have exoskeletons.

A.2) Specific Qualifications of the Trait

It is well known that least some of the early medieval English regarded the soul as potentially a disincarnate being, and this notion is independent of Christian soteriology. When disincarnate, this soul would have been analogous to other disincarnate beings, including deities and ghosts.

But we are not looking for an object capable of existing independently, for an independent thing would add yet another species to the potential kin relation without doing much to define or confirm it.

Instead, we are looking for a trait or a "black box" component (a psychological virtual object analogous to a body organ such as a spine or toothy mouth) that generally characterizes beings above the mental ranks of lower animals.

The best candidate to represent that concept is a word that has certain qualifications in addition to denoting a psychological trait. One qualification is that, standing alone, it strongly tends to have desirable connotations, for a concept that is holy would most likely be denoted by a word that does not need to be modified to indicate a high, positive valuation. Another qualification is that the word is not ambiguous enough to include an independently existing object among its meanings. The best candidate would only indicate some type of complex psychological attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle.

B) Linguistic Evidence of Bad Candidates

To draw a clearer distinction between that which works and that which does not work as the word-and-concept pairing sought here, a detailed examination is performed on three words: gást, sawol, and ferð. The main sources used are major dictionaries of Old English (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921; Clark Hall, 1960; Dictionary of Old English, 2008) and, where indicated, the present author's direct studies.

B.1) *Gást*

The Old English "sé gást" has a few meanings. Writers of Old English sometimes used "gást" to denote movements of air, or as a category of distinct objects, but also as a spiritual substance or force.

The general meaning of burst of air (gentle or violent) includes gusts of wind and animal breaths of air (which usually occur in gentle bursts). These are physical behaviors and not of much interest in the present study.

This Old English word can also refer to the thinking, conscious aspect of personality, and it is a synecdoche for "person". In these respects it is similar to the Modern English "soul".

The word sometimes denoted a noncorporeal object, for "gást" is the label for the general category of spirit wights, including souls, ghosts, demons, angels, and deities.

Sometimes "gást" refer to an aspect of personality, one which shows a general tendency to be animated beyond mere passive response to stimuli, and to be bold. This makes gást like Modern English "spirit".

An example of "gást" in that sense is in a sermon, *The Assumption of Saint John*. In a passage of this sermon, holy spirit (God's "gást") is a force or spiritual substance that can infuse a person's mind. "Iohannes þa bead ðreora daga fæsten gemænelice; and he æfter ðam fæsten wearð swa miclum mid Godes gaste afylled, þæt he ealle Godes englas and ealle gesceafta mid healicum mode oferstah...." (Thorpe, 1844: *The Assumption of St. John the Apostle*, pp 70-71). In modern English: "(The Apostle) John then proclaimed 3 days public fast; and after that fast he was so greatly filled with Yahweh's spirit that his exalted mind excelled over all Yahweh's angels and all created beings...".

Part of the importance of that passage is the implication that Yahweh has some spiritual substance to give you, and which makes you more or less saintly. That is, one could be imbued or blessed with holy spirit in varying amounts at different times, and different people could have markedly different tendencies to be blessed with holy spirit. In fact, this is the Anglican theory of sainthood (Olsen, 2011) with Old English "gást" fitted in place of the Modern English "spirit".

Were it not for the ambiguity of denoting physical phenomena and disincarnate objects, "Gást" would be an interesting candidate, but the word's ambiguity goes even farther.

The problem is that "gást" can be manifest as saintliness or demonic possession, as an angel or as a spiritual monster; it can make a friendly ghost or a hateful ghost. For example, no one is named

Gást-Gifu (Spirit Gift) as females were named Os-Gifu (Os Gift) or males were named Os-Berht (Os Brightness). Moreover, when using "gást" to speak of holy spirit, speakers of Old English always referred to "se halga gást" (the holy spirit or The Holy Spirit) to discriminate from infection "mid deofles gáste" (with the Devil's spirit).

So this word was not regarded consistently positively.

Let us see if we can find a noun that does not need a modifier to tell us if it is good, evil, or indifferent, for such a word would be a much better candidate.

B.2) *Sawol*

Sío sawol is a simpler word than is se gást, but the Old English "sawol" denotes several things also. It denotes (as a synecdoche) a living human, an immortal and separable intellectual component of a person (soul), or the animating element in a human body. In an almost contradictory meaning, sawol can indicate a person after death, but this is surely intended as a reference to the immortal soul.

It is interesting to note that "soul" was not a foreign idea to the English Pagans, because they had a native word for it, while writers in ancient Greek discussed immortal mental objects with the more precise psychological term "logismos" and the much less precise "psycha".

However, the dictionaries imply that "sawol" always denotes an object and never a complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle.

Hence, this word was a part of religious discourse, probably for Pagans and Christians alike, but it is not what we are looking for.

B.3) *Ferð*

Old English has another word for soul, ferþ, but it was used about the same way as the ancient Greeks used psycha and was very similar to the Old English "sawol".

C) "Os" Had Strongly Positive Connotations

We can tell that "os" might have been consistently associated with negative evaluation by the frequent use of it as an element of personal names and by the way it was used in personal names. In general, people do not name their beloved newborns "ugly", "stupid", or

"venal". Instead they tend to glorify their new offspring. Examples follow.

Translations of names in this section usually do not translate "Os", because it is untranslatable, but in a very few instances render "os" as "Divine-Spirit" to illustrate the connotations of a name.

"Os-" was used in women's names. King Alfred's mother was named Osburg (Os City or Os Fortress). Queen Osþryþ (Os Power) ruled in Mercia in late 600's. A queen of Northumbria in the 700's was named Osgifu (Divine-Spirit Gift). Saint Osyð's name (Os Flood or Os Sea) is analogous to Frígyð (Fríge Flood), and implies a wish that the baby girl would grow up to manifest plenty of os.

Following are some of the men's' names found by the present author in Old English literature: Oslác (Os Gift), Oswine (Os Friend), Oswy (Divine-Spirit Image)[84], Osgód (Os Good or Os Benefit), Oslác (Os Gift), or Osmund (Os-Power or Os-Hand). The following are also found: Osfrið (Os Peace), Osric (Os Power), Osræd (Os Counsel). Saint Oswald (Os Power or Os Protector) would seem to have been aptly named by his parents, but later passages in this chapter will show that the name was ironic.

The modern surname Osbald implies Os Confidence or Os-Bold. The modern surname Oswell implies that in early medieval times at least one mom and dad pairing named their baby something like Divine-Spirit Source. (See Barber, 1903; Bardsley, 1884; Bartholomew, 1997; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Branston, 1974: 38-45; Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942: 154; Garmonsway, 1972; Hanks and Hodges, 1988; Osborn and Longland, 1982: 30; Phillips, 1994; Sherley-Price and Latham, 1968.)

The catch is that nouns we know were of ambivalent nature were also used in personal names, although not very often. For example, Wulfric (Wolf-Power) is a name for men, and we know that wolves were not considered to always be a blessing to have around. Therefore, a word as used in personal names might always have desirable connotations, while as it was used in other contexts it could be quite negative.

The inference that can be justified here is that given the use of "os-" as part of combined-word personal names with a wide variety of second elements, it must have been pretty consistently positive, but we cannot justify inferring that it was always positive.

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[84] In the appendix on non-Christian religious venues in England, I speculate that "wíg" / "wéoh" is not an object but instead a phenomenon or quality. This issue is not resolved, but if the word indicates a phenomenon or quality, a better translation of this name might be Os-Holiness.

D) "Os" Did Not Denote a Physical Object

D.1) The Trait Was Not Of Landscape Objects

While doing the research behind Appendix C (Venues), the present author found that "Os-" appears in place names, but those places were all named after people. This implies that the positive connotations of the word did not apply to inanimate objects of the landscape.

The two place names that might be an exception to this are analyzed in the appendix on place names (Appendix C, the passage "Place Names Starting with "Os-"). The places are Osmotherley and Oswestry, but it turns out that both are probably named after persons. In any case, both towns were named after the early middle age.

D.2) The Word Did Not Indicate a Body Part

About half the published translators of *The Old English Rune Poem* opine that os means "god" or a specific god, and about half translate the word as if it were Latin for "mouth" (Stanfield, 2012: Chapter 4 and Addendum to Chapter 4). This appears to represent a scholarly dissension-consensus that the word means one kind of object or another, whatever it does mean. But is the consensus correct despite the confusion?

This section is organized to handle only the false definitions of os as a physical object (the "god" issue is handled in a separate section), so let us begin with the contention that "os" in *The Old English Rune Poem* was a Latin word meaning "mouth".

 "Mouth" is favored by Kemble (1840: 30)[85], Halsall (1981: 109-111), Osborn and Longland (1982: 7, 30-31), Shippey (1972: 80-81; 135) and Thorsson (1987: 94). Juszczyk (1998) contends that the mouth in question was originally the mouth of the sword-sheath but that monks deliberately created confusion by editing a poetic stanza to refer to a body part; Juszczyk's case assumes that we believe os = mouth.

Halsall's (1981: 110-111) case is the best developed of the "mouth" advocates. Halsall contends that the focal word is Latin for "mouth" because she believes the entire Old English Rune Poem to be Christian

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[85] But the very brief justification offered in footnote 39 in Kemble's book is by Bill Griffiths, for Kemble does not attempt to justify his translation.

literature written by a monk, and surely a Christian monk would not praise a Pagan deity, so the rune name must be Latin.

But the poem is not Christian.

If you read the poem closely, you will see that the poem mentions Yahweh now and then but is pretty light on praise for Him. At best, "Holy Heaven's King" will not obstruct the Earth from bringing forth bright fruits (twelfth stanza); at worst He wills delightful companions to die (twentieth stanza). In sharp contrast, Tír is highly moral (seventeenth stanza) and Ing is a hero well thought of by seasoned warriors (twenty-second stanza), and there is nothing wrong with either of those characters. It is true that in the twenty-fourth stanza day is said to be sent by The Lord but the next line says that daylight, which brings mirth and high hope, is actually Metod's gift to mankind (Stanfield, 2012).

Moreover, there is no reason to believe that "os" must be a body part. The one surviving use of the word in a statement says, among other things, that it is the ultimate source of speech, but the mouth is a means of speaking, as are lungs and other body parts.

In addition, a Latin word for "mouth" is not a plausible translation because that would require that one letter in the Old English alphabet to have a Latin name.

E) Did Os Denote "Wóden", "God", or "Deity"?

This section will clearly show that os was not a wight. The idea that os was a category (either male deity or deity) or a specific male deity (Wóden) in English polytheist philosophy is quite popular, and for that reason it deserves extensive treatment here. The arguments hinge mainly on interpretations of the context in which the word appears (or is thought to appear) in Old English poetry.

E.1) A Specific Male Deity or the Category of Male Deities

In his article on *The Old English Rune Poem*, Grienberger (1921: 207) opines that the word must indicate Óðin because He is the god of wisdom and of poetic art. This overlooks the Norse god Bragi, who "is renowned for wisdom and most of all for fluency of speech and skill with words" (Brodeur, 1916: *Beguiling of Gylfi*, chapter 26). If Óðin is an English god, why not Bragi?

It is unlikely that native English polytheism had a god named Os, because in *The Old English Rune Poem* other Pagan deities are invoked or praised only by veiled reference.

This brings us to another objection: The word surely does not denote a specific male deity nor the category of male deities, because it appears in women's names. If one is to use Norse lore as a clue, the flaw is that the only Scandinavian deities of wisdom and skilled speech (Óðin and Bragi) are male.

Note also that there was no attempt on the part of Christian intellectuals in the surviving corpus of Old English literature to co-opt the name nor denounce a wight named Os, although they co-opted "Metod" and other Pagan deities are clearly preached against, and there is not a law against worship of a deity named Os.

Moreover, it is not necessary that a specific deity would cause the behaviors in question, for a psychological characteristic could do as well.

E.2) Deity

Many students of early medieval England would falsely infer that a scholarly consensus is indicated when Page (1999: 68) says that "most scholars accept 'god' as the primary meaning" with Wóden or "the great god" as a possible alternate. But in the same paragraph, Page says that most translators of *The Old English Rune Poem* agree that the name of the fourth rune is a Latin word for mouth.

Actually, opinion is divided and several of the better scholarly works dealing with the subject are ambiguous. Moreover, it is never clear if those who prefer "god" as the translation mean "deity" or "male deity".

Some works are ambiguous about what os denotes. Although Page and Halsall cite Dickins as supporting the "mouth" interpretation, Dickins (1915: 14) rendered the word in Modern English with a question mark only. In a footnote on translating the word as "mouth" or "god", Dickins expressed his opinion that each rendition "would be equally appropriate". Grienberger (1921: 207) contends on etymological grounds that the word must mean "god" but in the same paragraph says it indicates Óðin — using the Norse god's name. Likewise Bray chooses both "god" and "Odin" (Plowright, 2002: 58). Jones (1967: 10, 89-90) translates the word into "mouth" but later argues instead in support of "god". Stanfield (2012: chapter 4) makes a case that os is a behavioral syndrome or "the principle of divinity" but also accepts that it refers to an otherwise un-named high deity[86].

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[86] This indicates a change from my treatment of Strophe #4 in the *Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem*. In two of the translations, I mistakenly render os as the name of a polytheist all-father, similar to the All-Father described in the present book's chapter on Norse

Only a few works contend unambiguously that "god" is the correct translation, (Cleasby et al, 1874: definition of Old Norse "Ass"; Page, 1999: 68; Pollington, 1995: 46; Thorsson, 1993: 19).

Some translators of *The Old English Rune Poem* simply do not translate the word. For example, S. Wódening (1995b) simply accepts the word as untranslatable, which is correct.

Moreover, some philologists who express an opinion on this matter do not offer a persuasive case nor cite an analysis by someone else; the reader merely sees a bare assertion. Sometimes when they cite an analysis by someone else, they appear not to have read it.

Therefore let us examine the evidence.

E.2.a) *"Ésa" in* For A Sudden Stitch

One argument that "os" denotes the category of deity depends on a genitive plural word in an Old English healing spell, *For a Sudden Stitch* (Grienberger, 1921: 207; Jones, 1967: 10, 89-90; Rodriguez, 1993: 36-38, 142-143; Slade, 2002). Specifically, scholars who view a certain passage in the healing spell *For a Sudden Stitch* as an instance of the word "os" are mistaken.

The word in that spell, "ésa", is the possessive of "deities", as in "this medicine will work if it be deities' shot of pain to be cured". The magic spell is administered along with medicines to alleviate or cure a sudden shot of pain (a "stitch"). The healer recites lines to the effect that the "little spear" is commanded to leave, and that the medicine will have effect regardless of the (undetermined) supernatural cause of the patient's discomfort.

Following is the passage in question (quoted from Slade, 2002).

Gif ðu wære on fell scoten   oððe wære on flæsc scoten
oððe wære on blod scoten,   oððe wære on ban scoten,
oððe wære on lið scoten,   næfre ne sy ðin lif atæsed;
gif hit wære esa gescot   oððe hit wære ylfa gescot
oððe hit wære hægtessan gescot,   nu ic wille ðin helpan.

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religion, and in my discussion of the translation I also allow that os could be a "personification". Unfortunately, the ambiguity affects my interpretation of the higher-level meanings of the stanza. Those errors will be corrected the third edition of *The Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem*. However, none of this should be understood to contradict the possibility of an un-named or All-Father-named ultimate deity, similar to the ultimate creator in one of the Norse theologies, in at least one native English cult.

or it were witches' shot,   now I will to help you.
Þis ðe to bote ésa gescotes,   ðis ðe to bote ylfa gescotes,

ðis ðe to bote hægtessan gescotes;   ic ðin wille helpan.

If you were shot in the skin   or were shot in the flesh
or were shot in the blood,   or were shot in the bone,
or you were shot in the limb,   may your life never be injured;
if it were gods' shot   or it were elves' shot
or it were witches' shot,   now I will to help you.
   This is to you the remedy for gods' shot,   this is to you the
remedy for elves' shot,
this is to you the remedy for witches' shot;   I will help you.

   As Bosworth and Toller (1898: 768) point out in their definition of
"os", the word "ésa" would be more reasonable as the genitive plural
of a singular "és" than of "os". They state that the genitive plural of
"os" would be "osa".
   Bosworth and Toller, and many other scholars, overlooked the
existence of "és" / "éas" / "ése" in place names. This is shown in
Appendix C of the present book, passage A.6.b, where the first three
place names include "ése", "és" or "éase": Ése-Walu (Deity-Ridge), És-
Ieg (Deity Island), and Éas-Wríð (Deity-Thicket).
   Therefore, the supernatural beings referred to in *For a Sudden
Stitch* are not denoted by "os", for the genitive plural in that spell is
derived from another noun.

E.2.b) The Cognate-Words Issue Involving Ése, Áss, & Ansuz
   Some scholars contend that os must surely denote "god" because it
is cognate with one or two Old Norse words, and that os and the one
or two Old Norse words are descended from the Proto-Germanic word
"ansuz".
   Jones dissertation (1967: 10, 89-90) is an example of this, although
he also uses the article from "ésa" in *For a Sudden Stitch*, a use which
is refuted in the previous passage (E.2.a), to refute his own translation
of "os" as "mouth". Slade (2002: footnote 21) gives three translations
(mouth, god, and Wóden) but suggests that "os" descended from the
Proto-Germanic word "ansuz" "which is usually translated as 'breath'
or 'spirit'. The argument can also be found elsewhere (Bosworth and
Toller, 1898: 768; Cleasby et al, 1874: definition of áss; Dickins,
1915: 13, footnote to line 10; Grienberger, 1921: 207).

Most philologists who opine that os = deity, like those who opine that it is a Latin word for "mouth", do not make a serious case, and some of the "deity" advocates also claim that os is etymologically related to Old Norse "óss", meaning estuary (for example, Jones, 1967: 89).

Halsall's (1981: 109-110) recitation of the argument is the best of the bunch, partly because she does not claim that os is cognate with an Old Norse word for estuary, which is certainly not the case (Cleasby et al, 1874; Zoega, 1910), and which would have us seriously consider as a possibility that "river mouth is the ultimate source of all human speech".

The argument Halsall presents is that os is cognate with several other Germanic works, including Old West Norse "áss" (god), and the inferred Proto-Germanic word "*ansuz". Being cognate with these words, it must surely mean whatever they mean.

The objection to this line of argument is that etymological conclusions regarding the meaning of a word are based on the assumption that structurally similar words have very similar or identical meanings. Also, etymological inference supposes that a word would faithfully reflect its ancestry.

But a word with cognates in other languages does not necessarily mean the same as those cognates, and at times a word may denote nothing in common with its relatives in other languages.

Following are a few examples where firmly known definitions of words contradict inferences that would be drawn from etymological analysis. Some of the examples come from Stanfield's (2001:2-3) study of the English goddess Easter, where he refutes the assertion that She was a goddess of the direction east and things associated with "east".

The Modern English adjective "virtual" derives from the Latin noun "veritas". However, "virtual" means "almost or very similar to" — in other words, not quite real or true — as in "virtual reality", which is fake. In sharp contrast, the Latin noun means "truth, truthfulness, real life, reality, honesty..." (Traupman, 1966; Glare, 1976; Houghton-Mifflin 1993).

"Hierarchy" is derived from an Old French word, derived from a Latin word, derived from a Greek word meaning rule of a high priest, and ultimately "hierarchy" is derived from the Greek words hieros (ΙΕΡΩΣ = holy) and arkho (ΑΡΧΩ = I rule). If that were all one knew about the Modern English word, one would opine that hierarchy = theocracy instead of hierarchy = set of administrative ranks.

The Modern English "technology" derives from ancient Greek words "skill" and "the study of". Therefore, the uses of this word closest to

such roots would refer to a body of knowledge or practice of inquiry. However, we never use "technology" to refer to knowledge or to the study of skill. The word practically always refers to equipment, to substances such as plastics or drugs, or to computer programs. On rare occasions "technology" may also refer to methods of working.

In Old English, "nerian" is a verb meaning to save, protect, liberate, or rescue. This word is etymologically related to the Modern German "nähren", which means to nourish. If you were to infer the meaning of one of these words from the meaning of the other, you would be deceived, for both words denote acts to provide help or support, but help or support in different ways.

There is yet another issue with inferring the meaning of "os" from a Proto-Germanic root word. The inferred word "ansuz" is defined based on observed words in observed languages, and the scholars who claim that os must mean "deity" or "god" because an ansuz denotes "deity" or "male deity" never explain why they accept the notion that ansuz means "deity" or "male deity". Might that be because someone thought that "os" meant "god"? If so, the argument may very well be circular with regard to "ansuz"[87].

E.2.c) *The Context in* The Old English Rune Poem
The context in the *Old English Rune Poem* implies that the word denotes an aspect of personality or a behavioral tendency, not an independent wight nor a category of wight. Strophes of *The Old English Rune Poem* have complex, layered meanings and were not intended as explanatory essays on the nouns each stanza starts with (Stanfield, 2012), but we get enough information about os to detect its functions and nature.

This is the fourth strophe of the *Old English Rune Poem* (Stanfield 2012: Chapter 4 and Addendum to Chapter 4), first in Old English and then in Modern English.

Os byþ ordfruma • ǽlcre sprǽce

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[87] This analysis suggests an additional possibility, which I have not investigated for this book. Perhaps makers of dictionaries of Old Norse or Old Icelandic have missed a nuance of meaning in the use of "áss", so that uses of the word in names like "Ása-Þór" and "Ásmund" indicate not God-Thunder (which is redundant) or God-Hand, but a kinship between deity and man, or between deities in general and mankind in general. Page (1998) shows that in copies of *The Old Icelandic Rune Poem* where names of runes are given, the fourth is "Os", which denotes Óðin, rather than "áss".

Wisdomes wraþu • and witena frofur
And eorla gehwam • eadnys and tohiht

Os is the source of all our speech,
and wisdom's pillar, and counselors' comfort,
and to all patricians -- contentment and hope.

If os were a category of beings or an independent wight, it would have attitudes, as do the categories of beasts úr (the moose is resolute and spirited) and íor (the beaver is happy), and as does the hero or deity Ing (who is heroic). The constellation or star called Tír has an attitude (it keeps faith well with noble ones), but that strophe is a very thinly veiled invocation of a Pagan god. Instead of an attitude, os merely has effects and consequences as, for example, does nyd (the condition of pressing need is depressing but can lead to a superior adaptation). Note also that while hail might seem quite active, it is actually being acted upon by wind and warmth (Stanfield, 2012).

Bosworth and Toller also agree that os refers to something mental in their definition of "eadnys", where they render "os" as "mind" in a paraphrase of the fourth strophe of the *Old English Rune Poem* (1898: 225): "mind is to every man prosperity".

Thus, we can conclude that the Old English "os" is a uniformly positively valued concept; and that it is not an alias for Wóden nor the label of a category of being, but rather an underlying complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle.

The evidence shows that os can be defined as a deeply seated urge to inform and to learn, to be shrewd, and to make progress as an enlightened wight.

F) Os in English Theology

Next, let us see how os fits into non-Christian English religion.

The inference that os is divine is based on three points, which are supported in passages below. The first point is that "divine" implies extremely and uniformly good, and we have seen that the focal word meets that criterion. The second point is that os approximates a certain notion from a Neoplatonic theology, which in turn suggests that it is divine. The third point is that it was commonly used prior to

Christian supremacy but avoided later, and hence that "os" is a specifically native English theological term.

Possible refutations of some of the inferences drawn are also considered.

F.1.a) Os as Spiritual or Psychological

As mentioned above, the fourth strophe of the *Old English Rune Poem* (Stanfield 2012: Chapter 4 and Addendum to Chapter 4) says at its lowest level of meaning that os is a fundamental cause of all speech (and hence of complex human languages), therefore it implicitly involves a deeply seated need to inform and to learn[88].

The strophe implies that os supports the existence of wisdom and the functioning of those who would make their shrewdness and knowledge available to others.

In the last line, the strophe tells us that os also brings to noble ones a certain psychological complacency. This means that while it may lie behind common human behaviors, it is enjoyed much more if one is aware of it and trying to make it more manifest in one's life.

In that poem, categories of aristocrats (such as earls and athelings) are used as metaphors for persons with the noble intent to be enlightened. A clue to this is that strophes such as this one do not make sense otherwise; it is not how rich or politically powerful one is that makes os "contentment and hope".

The reference to noble striving for enlightenment has some implications. The struggle for enlightenment by oneself is not very satisfying, regardless of one's rate of progress. The impulse to practice progressive mysticism is much more comfortable given an aptitude for that kind of work — and os is either the aptitude or something that produces the aptitude.

Thus, it seems quite plausible that among the polytheist English, os was similar to the spiritual substance that is fundamental to the logismos and to the divine beings that were created by Damiourgos. As the reader will recall from Chapter 4, subsection E.1, in the theology expressed by Platon's speakers there is a spiritual substance (not named) from which deities and the divine aspect of the human mind were made. That spiritual substance is the principal component of each person's logismos, which in turn is fundamental to rational consciousness per se.

Perhaps os was like kwoth of Nuer theology, which is present in varying degrees of strength and purity in spiritual wights, with a great spirit at the top of the pantheon and possessing the ultimate strength

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[88] Os might actually not be the cause of all speech; the irony provides a clue to higher-level meanings in the stanza.

and purity of kwoth. The spiritual substance of Neoplatonic souls and deities is also present in varying degrees of strength and purity, correlated with a being's place in the sacred hierarchy. However, the evidence is more supportive of the idea that whatever the strength and purity of os in a person (or deity?), it is what one tries to do that makes the differences in how useful and enjoyable it is.

Anyway, the data suggest that os is not merely an aspect of uniquely human psychology but instead an attribute that could be considered divine and a family trait uniting people and deities.

In turn, this suggests that Mother of Deities can be worshiped through worship of Her child deities. But the argument can be further strengthened.

F.1.b) Os as Specifically English-Pagan

The term "os" and the concept to which it refers were considered specifically English Pagan, and this inference is based in on two facts implied by the data. (1) Os was widely used in Old English and indicated a positively-value concept during polytheist supremacy, and (2) the English Christian intellectuals dropped the word like a red-hot stone. These points are supported below.

(1) The data reveal that "os" was commonly used prior to the era of Christian supremacy because common occurrence as the first element in personal names implies common use in discourse during the time when family naming traditions and cultural name stocks were built up in the language. Surely people would not give their children names involving obscure words during the era when those names were coined, although the culture gradually changed to having personal names that were non-descriptive labels of persons named after relatives or that were pulled from a common stock of fashionable names.

Instructive examples are readily found. The pattern is evident in Icelandic sagas, where so many Christian characters have roughly similar names beginning with "Thor-" that the reader can have difficulty keeping track of them. This same pattern occurs nowadays in America, where many Protestants who do not pay attention to saints and are not very literate in the Old Testament name their children after Old Testament or New Testament characters. In 1980, the US Social Security Administration reported it had given about 48,000 individual identity numbers to persons surnamed "Frey", which is the name of a Norse god (see also Stanfield, 2012: 520-521); the US certainly did not have that many Frey-worshipers.

In short, names are commonly inherited from prior times when an ancestor population was generally more enthusiastic about one religion or another than is the case now.

(2) Now let us turn to the implication of later non-use of "os".

For comparison, consider another English-Pagan word. English Christians used "wyrd" plentifully in early medieval times, for Christian writers re-defined wyrd to fit a theology that conflated Metod with Yahweh (Stanfield, 2012: Appendix E). But as time passed, wyrd was dropped from the Christian vocabulary in favor of "providence" (which Christian often capitalize nowadays). Christians also stopped using Metod's name as they turned away from wyrd. Nowadays, American Christians rarely mention "providence" or "Providence", for the idea represented by wyrd has become alien.

By contrast, os was promptly dropped, occurring only as an element in personal names inherited from a previous cultural era, and in a certain non-Christian poem. Christian intellectuals did not try to even temporarily fit this concept into their system.

What is different about the concepts represented by wyrd and os — did the mere mention of the idea mark the speaker as Pagan? Apparently, Christian writers dropped the subject because the holy spirit that makes one Christlike is not a family trait in their theology, for Yahweh is a different species altogether than are mortals. This is apparent in the Christian sources cited above, in the section "Linguistic Evidence of Bad Candidates", also in Otto's (1950) book on Christian theology, and in the Bible; and it is safe to say that this is common knowledge worldwide.

Thus, that aversion of Christian writers to os is indirect evidence that it was a part of traditional English theology. Thus, the conclusion that os was considered specifically Pagan is quite justified.

F.1.c) Os, Saintliness, and Magic

There is no indication of psychic power or magic in association with os, so that is another way in which it was unlike the saint-making holy spirit. But perhaps the appearance is merely because the *OERP* strophes do not present dissertations on the rune names but instead use the rune names to talk about other topics, so that just as "Thorn" does not tell us what plants thorns grow on or what forms they take, the strophe that starts with "os" probably omits information about the concept.

The present author prefers to infer that we are not missing anything we need to know; os is about enlightenment, and it had no relation to magical power nor divination. The reason is that enlightenment on the

one hand, and magic and divination on the other, are separate topics that at least nowadays seem to appeal to audiences that are partially disjunct subsets of humanity in general, and *The Old English Rune Poem* seems to be about progressive mysticism.

Nonetheless, it must be admitted that the present inferences very probably do not cover the full range of the concept.

F.1.d) Os and Virtual-Object Theology

So far the presentation has established that os was a religious concept, that among the early medieval English it separated non-Christian religion from Catholicism, and that os consisted of or cause to exist a certain set of behaviors.

Still, a certain ambiguity remains as a gap in our understanding of os in English Pagan theology.

There is a small likelihood that in pre-Christian English culture, this complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle amounted to a virtual object. A virtual-object concept would correspond to the notion of a "black box" concept mentioned in subtopic A.2 of this chapter, although a strictly spiritual object is also possible.

If it were the case the os required a physical basis, that is, a body from which the object is derived, then it could only be a component of a deity if that deity was embodied, as Earð was embodied by the Earth.

This in turn implies a family of deities who are embodied by physical phenomena. Thus, a god of thunder or a goddess of streams or a goddess of a lake could find a home in a cult featuring os as a virtual object characterizing mankind and deities. Likewise, a god or goddess understood as a derivative from the Earð goddess as a template (mother) could be understood as indirectly embodied by the planet, so the theology could include that a Tiw who was an Earth god but who belonged to the planet in the same way that an object in a computer program belongs to a computer that runs the program and is also related to a parent object that is also a program running on the same computer. It is possible also that an anthropomorphic or theriomorphic deity could have os.

However, all members of the class or family of deities would need os to belong. Therefore a strictly spiritual being would have to find a home in a cult devoid of os or not be a deity.

This would be consistent with the inference that non-holy beings such as ghosts or evil spirits would not belong to the family.

Hence the possibility exists that os was understood as a virtual object, and such an understanding would restrict the applicability of

the idea and therefore have a strong implication for pre-Christian cult structure. Cults with only disembodied deities would have been minor aspects of English culture prior to Christian supremacy.

But the possibility also exists that os was commonly conceptualized as a psychological phenomenon, roughly in the same way that modern personnel understand gravity, the strong force, or fear of heights, or the sex drive. That kind of thinking would make it applicable to the other kind of deity also.

And a concept of os as analogous to the sex drive or to gravity would make sense of its use in the Old English Rune Poem, which does not imply that everyone has an individual os as a mental component.

G) Some Contra Considerations

G.1) Contra Consideration: Is Os Secular?

One could contend that it is quite possible that the psychological aspect called os was not holy but secular. Just as we would not understand the Modern English "hierarchy" if we only based our understanding on the Greek expression from which it is derived, we cannot rely on a connection between os and Old Norse words denoting deity or god as an indication that os is something holy. Also, it is not necessary that psychological characteristics peculiar to humanity are divine. For example, we do not think that the ability to do complicated arithmetic is holy, although that ability is one of the differences between mankind and lower animals.

But the main argument against the possibility that os represented a secular psychological concept is to note that Christian writers avoided the word (except as an element in personal names) in all of their writing. If the word represented a secular concept, it would appear in wisdom poetry composed during the era of Christian supremacy.

Another point against that contra is a cultural consideration. Yes, the ability to do long division is among the qualities that distinguish mankind from lower animals. However, the ability to divide 56,826 by 483.7 and get 117.4891027 is not spoken of in most ancient theologies as a gift from the deities nor as a trait in common with deities because in almost all ancient cultures, the intellectuals could not do that operation — ancient peoples lacked an appropriate numerical and arithmetic notation system[89]. On the other hand,

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[89] Two notable exceptions existed. Some Greek-speaking intellectuals were able to use a very compact numerical notation system by the early 200's BCE (Durant, 1939: 627), and prior to the industrial revolution, mathematicians in Europe adopted the Indo-

wisdom, eloquence, and noble intentions tend to be associated with religious spirit beings, as in the Eddaic poem *Grimnir's Sayings* (Larrington, 1996: 50-60), and many other religious myths and discursive works of philosophy. This is the case despite moral ambiguities in the formal myths in many religions. For example, the unclever, immature, and irresponsible behavior of deities in certain Greek myths was a major objection that Platon raised against Hesiod and Homer as blasphemers (as mentioned in Chapter 4, D.3.b), but the charge of blasphemy was based upon a recognition that certain behaviors are not divine and upon a strong preference that we should believe that deities are divine.

Moreover, the documentary evidence that survives was composed by persons exceptionally talented at verbal skills, and sometimes such personnel are not so good at math. So some few did regard mathematics and arithmetic as excellent bases for developing moral skills, but most religious philosophers were silent on the subject, as if math and arithmetic were topics unrelated to morals and general shrewdness.

We may reasonably infer that ancient intellectuals would regard as divine any spiritual / psychological complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle that separated mankind from lower forms of life and that was consistently positively regarded. This would particularly include a deeply seated urge to inform and to learn, to be shrewd, and to make progress as an enlightened wight.

G.2) Contra Consideration: If Deities Have Os, They Change

Another criticism would be that the present analysis implies that at least some deities of the native English religion can have a deeply seated urge to inform and to learn, to be shrewd, and to make progress as an enlightened wight.

The answer is that deities do no have to be perfect and unchanging from the start, or to ever become perfect. Yes, it is true that many persons like to think of deities, liturgies, and religious doctrines as unchanging, but in a religion of contrasting theologies there can be cults or denominations to make such persons happy.

Arabic system of numerical notation. But it was not until sometime in the 1800's CE that the modern combination of numerical and mathematical notation existed (Wolfram, 2000).

G.3) Contra Consideration: Is the Analysis Complete?

A more telling negative criticism of the analysis here is its failure to show what was so Pagan about os and to give other details of the concept.

While it is true that "complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle" is rather vague, at this time nothing can be done about it.

Without knowing exactly how the Pagan English thought conceived os, we know we are talking about a deeply seated urge to inform and to learn, to be shrewd, and to make progress as an enlightened being.

Fortunately, for present purposes we do not need a more precise definition.

H) Summary

By examining the concept of os, this chapter elucidates the nature of kinship between mankind and at least some deities in at least one of the native English theologies, a kinship in the sense of having some basic trait in common. There probably were other senses in which the English polytheists spoke of one or more deities as some kind of mother, father, or grandparent, but the topic here is restricted to kinship in terms of os.

The chapter began by defining what would be sought if the investigation started with a theory and derived a hypothesis. The corpus of Old English was then searched for a word that denoted a complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle which is a characteristic of deity-ness, which puts mankind into a different category from that of lower animals and of plants, which characterizes a kinship relation between deities and mankind, and which, as an idea, specifically differentiates English polytheism from English Christianity. Moreover, the concept would have to be divine in the sense of "good". To further refine understanding by providing a set of contrasts, much of the discussion concerned words that did not fit the model because they were too ambiguous or because they denoted a class of object.

Then the analysis showed that the word "os" denoted a concept that fit the model other than in regard to being a key part of English polytheist theology. Part of the case was demonstrating that the evidence does not support opinions that the focal word denotes some kind of object. But the main support for the case was the use of os in personal names and The Old English Rune Poem.

Up to a certain point, the discussion only proved that os was a psychological concept, so the next step was to demonstrate that os could have characterized a kin-like relation between deities and mankind. This part of the argument rested mainly on English Christians' avoidance of "os" as a word although it had been common prior to Christian supremacy, and partly on an idea of os as causing a predilection for enlightened behavior.

Because of the Christians' aversion, both the concept and the word were lost to English culture as the native religion died out.

The principal weakness of the analysis is the notion that a great goddess and such of Her children as appeared in at least one cult were considered to try to grow in wisdom. But for those who preferred to think of deities as unchanging, the English probably had at least one cult that diverged from this belief.

The analysis left some matters unresolved, but it did clarify an important aspect of native English religion. The goddess Earþ was very probably not merely the mother of mankind in the sense of a host of living things, a nurturer of life, and the object of deep affection associated with the planet Earth, but also in the sense of being a relative, for we all have something important in common with Her.

This brings us to a final summary of the chapter. Os is a complex attribute, set of behavioral tendencies, spiritual substance, factor, energy, force, or principle. In at least part of native English religion os was mankind's tendency to communicate and to grow or become shrewder as persons. Those who wanted to manifest and cultivate it could enjoy it and have hope. But to the believers it was what all people have in common; it was what made the English deities mankind's deities; and it was what makes mankind belong with the native English deities. Specifically, it explains how people are in the same family as at least the Earthen Mother and other deities in Her cult.

Chapter 13: Summary and Conclusion

A) Initially-Announced Objectives

This book began several chapters ago with a promise to show that (A) the native English polytheism included at least two logically conflicting but socially integrated theologies, (B) it emphasized shrewdness and personal, mystical relationships to deities and (C) de-emphasized formal organization, architecture, anthropomorphic theology, and professional staff. The way these promises would be kept would be to study the place of an Earth-goddess cult in that religion.

Purposes announced as behind this work were to make more plausible the sophistication and progressive mysticism the present author describes in *The Old English Rune Poem*, to correct a tendency to oversimplify English polytheism, which occurs in previous scholarly work on the subject, and to correct a tendency to overlook the importance of Earð in the English polytheist system.

How have all these promises and purposes been kept?

B) Background Material

Because previous studies have based inferences on unexamined ideas, this book began with efforts to make the reader more aware of those unexamined biases and of alternative possibilities.

B.1) Observations from Many Ethnologies

The presentation opened by introducing the unified-theology and contrasting-theologies models of religion as an institution, and the discussion included a hypothetical example to illustrate how social scientists could mistakenly infer that an extinct society had a unified-theology religion even if evidence implied that the society's religion had contrasting theologies. Not coincidentally, the example turned out to resemble English Paganism.

This was followed by citations of reviews of anthropological studies and of specific ethnologies supporting the contention that formal lore and official theology do not completely define a society's religious institution, for not-officially-endorsed practices and ideologies may

exist alongside the official version, even in peasant societies of just one ethnic group.

The second chapter also demonstrated that it is not unreasonable to suspect that English polytheist theologies included at least one cult that posited a supreme deity in the absence of influence from Christian or Islamic missionaries or other foreign cultural influence.

B.2) A Series of Ethnological Case Studies

Later chapters presented ethnological evidence that the bodies of formal (and official) lore of Tallensi, Roman, and Norse religions support ideologically conflicting theologies and contrasting cult practices that have been socially integrated into normal culture in those societies. Other examples were briefly mentioned at various places in the text.

The chapter on Nuer religion suggested that it is not unreasonable to suspect a family resemblance defined by a common trait, at least among spirit beings. In the case of the Nuer, kwoth defined a relation between the deity of unlimited power and jurisdiction, Kwoth, and lesser spirit beings. The lesser spirit beings manifested kwoth, but in lesser degrees of purity and strength as their ranks decline. The discussion of kwoth foreshadowed later discussion of the Anglo-Saxon os. The god Kwoth was also discussed in detail as an example of a polytheist supreme deity.

The chapter on Neoplatonic theology reinforced the impression that supreme-deity polytheism predates Christian conversion, and even Jesus Christ, by hundreds of years. Neoplatonism also identified a family relationship among deities and extending to human minds, defined by a mental object that Platon's speakers sometimes called the logismos. Neoplatonism also has other ideas which were discussed.

The chapter on Neoplatonism also provided some interesting background on how influential Neoplatonism has been in philosophy and social science. Among other things, it turns out that certain ideas about the Norns of the Norse pantheon are actually based on Platon's writing about the Greek Moirai. That chapter also provided some general background which is fundamental to the study of most European and Near Eastern theology and secular philosophy that has been produced since the time Platon lived.

Chapter 5 gave a detailed account of traditional Tallensi religion, which is bifurcated into two formally-organized cults with contrasting theologies that are coordinated into a single schedule of holy days and seasons, and a set of customs observed by all.

In addition, the Tallensi Earth-goddess (Teng) cult is an example of how such a cult would be structured and what its customs and venues would be: the cult is consistent in many ways with indirect evidence of Earþ cult activity. The regard for serpents, including a taboo on killing them, shows a living example that hints at the meaning of serpents found on early medieval English art. The Tallensi do all their Teng-oriented religious services in outdoor temples, and this also foreshadowed what we found in English data. Offerings to Teng include burying tools, jewelry, and other items, as well as splattering an altar with blood from a sacrificed animal. Teng is never represented by an idol. We also saw that the outdoor temples were named for location rather than for dedication to Teng, and that they were considered holy and magical in themselves and sometimes received sacrifices. Teng is identified with mineral substances, but also with the Earth as a whole. Thus, the Tallensi Earth-goddess cult helped give a context into which we could put certain information from early medieval England.

In chapter 6, formal Norse lore got intensive attention. Norse religion provides another vivid example of contrasting-theologies religion, and it is generally considered a default model for English Paganism. Concentrating mostly on the cosmogenic stories in the Prose and Poetic Eddas, we found clear evidence of multiple, strongly contrasting theologies. The Norse had at least four versions of their pantheon with different pinnacle deities: Jörð, All-Father, the Borrson Brothers partnership, and Óðin. Also, using other data along with the Eddaic creation stories, we find that prominence in a creation story is not well correlated with cultic support; for example, there is no evidence of worship of the Borrson Brothers partnership despite its prominence in creation ideology.

Chapter 6 also introduced the concept of polycentric theology. At least one of the Norse theologies was complicated by the existence of independent communities of giants and high deities, plus the presence in of high Norns in Deity-Compound, for the high Norns were a trio of goddesses outside the regular pantheon. In addition, Norse domestic religion included a cult of lesser norns.

The chapter also showed that previous studies of Norse religion have been biased by the students' familiarity with Greek religion, particularly *Governance*.

The chapter on Roman polytheism, like some other chapters in this book, served two purposes. Although the chapter covered several subtopics just two are emphasized here.

Because a Roman geography referred to two deities from the Proto-Germanic era as Earth Mother and as Mother of Deities, an analysis of Roman religion helps us realize what the author of that geography was

trying to tell his audience. Therefore, chapter 7 went into considerable detail on how Pagan Romans viewed Terra Mater (Earth Mother) and Mater Deum (Mother of Deities). Basically, Earth Mother was a goddess of mid-range importance identified with a certain region, and Mother of Deities was a major power on Her own and of international significance. The comparison of these goddesses is later used to help explain how it came about that a goddess who was very important to the Angles at one time in their history did not make it into English polytheism, while the Proto-Germanic Mother of Deities became very important to the Anglo-Saxons.

The other purpose served by the chapter on Roman religion was to give yet another example of contrasting theologies within a society's religion.

B.3) Summary of Background Material

After all this preparation, a radical analysis of data on English polytheism would not seem improbable, shocking, outlandish, illogical, or egregiously biased to a reader previously acquainted only with studies which implicitly assume that all polytheist religions have one unified theology each, that idol worship is necessary for polytheism, and that the presence of a supreme deity in a Pagan pantheon is a sign of Christian influence.

C) Evidence of the Earð Cult

Chronologically speaking, evidence of the Earð cult in English polytheism falls into three groupings. We have a "before" image in geographies produced in highly literate cultures of the Mediterranean. We have "during" evidence from place names, archeological digs, and other artistic remains from early medieval times, both before and during the earliest centuries of Christian supremacy. And we have an "after" picture implied by documents produced at various times during Christian rule. While all the various pieces of evidence and contributions of different disciplines by themselves seem more curious than revealing, taken together and analyzed closely they allow us to go a long way.

C.1) Before Colonization of England

The chapter on Proto-Germanic-speaking tribes provided an interesting "before" image. Prior to the migration era, one of the major deities of the Germanic tribes was an Earth goddess who was Mother of Deities and also maternal in some sense to at least the Proto-

Germanic speaking peoples. Her cult was symbolized by images of wild boar hogs, but to have represented Her with an image or to have housed her cult in temple buildings would have violated widely-held theological principles of the Germanic tribes. Given the evidence we have to work with, it appears that She was an unwed mother and therefore the head of the household. And given the high degree of likelilhood of contrasting-theologies religion among the pre-migration era Germanic tribes, She surely was an alternative to "Mercurius" as the pinnacle deity in one or more cults.

Also prior to the migration era, a tribe called the Angles was part of a seven-tribe group identified with the cult of a regional goddess named Nerthus. This goddess was similar in some ways to the Roman Tellus, especially in having a following in part of a penninsula, and She was distinct from that Mother of Deities who was a pinnacle deity of significance to many Proto-Germanic tribes.

C.2) After Colonization of England

Evidence from after the massive Germanic colonization of parts of Britain shows that the Angles experienced a religious conversion. Between about 100 CE and the formation of the English identity, the Angles dropped the Nerthus cult as part of the cultural and demographic turbulence that characterized Proto-Germanic and migration age societies. They seem to have converted to a more universal deity as the foundation of their main cult, an irresistible supreme deity who was head of the great family of mankind and deities. (It is also possible that the consolidated English-Saxon identity emerged prior to migration across the sea.)

Evidence from the period after the migration was presented in chapters on direct documentation of Earð religion, circumstantial evidence, cult conduct, and the concept of os.

The evidence implies that the Anglo-Saxons conserved theological traditions from Proto-Germanic times. We see conservation of Proto-Germanic theological traditions of non-anthropomorphic deities, outdoor worship, and avoidance of idols. We also see that in the first few centuries of England, wild boar hog tusks and artistic representations of wild boar hogs were significant symbols.

Most of the data on England after the Germanic colonization date from after the conversion of all English states to Christian rule, a fact which is remarkable in itself.

The most cogent evidence of the importance of Earð in pre-Christian England is the explicit documentation of Earð religion after it had been made a serious crime. This is supplemented by artistic

evidence showing prominent use of chthonic-contact animals, surrealistic serpent-like creatures and realistic feral boar hog images. Documentary data are also supplemented by deposits in soil and streams (some of which are likely to have been offerings to Earþ), and by venue-choice preferences, which were surely to a large extent manifestations of love for the planet that reinforced Earth-goddess worship.

The baroque nature of English art, in view of data from better-documented polytheistic cultures, reinforces the impression that the Pagan English were a people who more than merely tolerated complexity and contradiction, and probably appreciated the contrasting theologies of their religion. The end of Sahlin style 2 art as a fashion seems to have corresponded with a stronger stage of Christian domination in England (as elsewhere).

C.3) Characteristics of the Earþ Cult

Major characteristics of the Earð cult have been detected. It depended on these factors:
- Reliance on direct, personal experience of the divine.
- Hearth religion (home practice)
- Lore stored in tradition, custom, and liturgy
- Affect of persons for the home planet
- Kinship among deities and mankind based on os

It also had other interesting features. The Earð cult was not specialized for a narrow occupational, age, or gender classification. It was one of the most important cults of English culture, if not the dominant cult. Within that cult's liturgy and belief, the Earth goddess was the supreme deity, although contrasting theologies surely also existed in Anglo-Saxon polytheism.

The cult avoided these features:
- Idols
- Temple buildings
- Extensive, full-time staff
- Lore stored in (epic poetry) adventure stories

C.4) Common Characteristics of the Religion

We have seen that certain characteristics were common, if not universal, prior to Christianization of English culture. The Earþ cult shared the emphasis on direct, personal experience of the divine with

most of the native English religion. Kinship based on os was also probably a major theme, but perhaps not as consensual as mysticism.

Although the emotional, and social effects of the Earð cult and English polytheism as a whole could have been quite powerful, English cults generally had very little economic effect. One might well describe native English religion as generally economically lightweight.

Native English religion in general was diverse, in that people with different theologies could practice together as one. It is easy to image how a contrasting theologies model would have appeared to early medieval English polytheists. The evidence does not support inferring tolerant separation but it seems quite possible that some members of the main Earð cult ignored Wóden and Fríge (but closely followed other deities) except at public feasts, and that some members of the Fríge cult politely did not quite take any other deities seriously. And perhaps many people used to praise and supplicate all the gods, goddesses, and minor spirits they could find, while others could only be bothered to pay attention to three or four, except at public feasts with lots of merriment and free food. This would not be a matter of sincerity or lack thereof, but rather a matter of easy-going specialization.

We also know that English polytheism did not drop dead suddenly in 650 CE, but lingered for a slow death under a combination of state persecution and the genuine appeals of Christianity.

D) Conclusion

Given the stipulation (announced in the first chapter) that cults of other deities existed, the present study has shown that the sophistication and progressive mysticism the present author describes in *The Old English Rune Poem* is quite plausible.

This study also corrected tendencies, which occur in previous scholarly work on the subject, to oversimplify English polytheism and overlook the importance of Earð in the English polytheist system. This study has shown that of logically conflicting but socially integrated theologies, one of the most important — or the most important — of those theologies being a theology with Earð as the supreme deity. Also, English polytheism emphasized shrewdness and personal, mystical relationships to deities, and it de-emphasized formal organization, architecture, anthropomorphic theology, and professional staff.

Appendix A: Methods

Overall, this is an interdisciplinary work, which does not adhere to any of the conventions of an underlying discipline and does not simply combine the methods of those disciplines. Such a procedure calls for some explanation.

The presentation style reflects the author's taste for decisiveness and focused writing, rather like a preference for vigorous offense over scattered defense. Thus, the overall organization resembles the structure of a complex legal case, and all the evidence that is even remotely applicable is concentrated on one objective, and the objective is a radical change in our understanding of early medieval England prior to the religious conversion of its kingdoms.

A) Presentation and Investigation

The method of presentation affects the method of analysis by means of the self-criticism and critical responses it stimulates. For that reason and not merely because the author was trained as a sociologist, this section on methods has some discussion of the structure of presentation.

Three features of the presentation seem to be related to the investigation. (1) The writing generally avoids explicit statements and derivations of hypotheses, although this formality is common in some social sciences. (2) The overall structure of the text is designed to resemble a lengthy and complex oral presentation. (3) The text was designed for citation without reference to pagination. The basic purpose was to adjust the presentation to modern book publishing conditions while retaining a high degree of integration.

A.1) Discursive versus Hypothesis-Derivation Styles

Although the present author took almost all of his professional training in sociology, and therefore the methods common in that discipline affect this work, those methods have not been allowed to dominate the present work because they are not always helpful.

In particular, one of the customs of sociology is to imitate "hard" sciences by using more or less elaborate theory to generate hypotheses, which are then tested against the evidence. Although some of the analysis for this book proceeded just that way, the flaw of writing produced by that custom has been avoided. Writing in the sociologists' customary way causes redundant, overly formal, and unnecessarily verbose essays. Customary sociological writing, especially presentations of statistics based on vast surveys, tends to

conceal the practice of trolling through the data to see what the authors could find. Moreover, the present author wishes to reveal that many of the hypotheses are derived from randomly exploring the data, and the theory has been made to fit them.

Sewell's (2005) discussion of interdisciplinary work goes farther in comparing expository and analytic methods of social sciences. He also discusses a relation between style of exposition and analysis. But the next topic is a style of exposition not commonly found in any social science.

A.2) Systematic Presentation of a Complex Case

Instead of the normal presentation structures of history, philology, archeology, or sociology, this book has been structured on the model of disputes at law involving complex cases and high stakes, and taking several days for the trial. However, only one point of view is presented, and for the most part the style selected is that of the prosecutor or plaintiff's attorney. The exception to this choice is part of the chapter on os, where a few pages resemble a defense against false charges.

The technique produces a more tightly written and understandable argument overall than would otherwise exist. This is because the task is organized as an attempt to persuade the audience that a certain condition existed, and as the details of the case unfold, the case is strengthened by showing how each part of the case is related to the alleged condition. Details follow.

Disputes at law commonly involve a single act or failure to act on the part of the defendant, although the prosecutor or plaintiff's lawyer may be supporting a list of redundant charges or violations of many features of a contract in regard to that single act or failure. Likewise, in this book the manifold aspects of early medieval native English religion are summarized in a relatively brief image supported by hundreds of pages of presentation.

On each day of a complex trial, the accusing attorney will present a brief summary of the case as he or she has developed it so far, so the chapters start with references to content in preceding chapters. This tends to gradually build a systematic case in the minds of the audience, and it is a much smoother technique than darting from one topic to another and losing focus on the case.

As the prosecutor or plaintiff attorney unfolds the case bit by bit, "evidence" and "facts" are frequently-heard words, for the case must be presented as strongly evidence based.

Refutations of "contra considerations" are part of the legal-trial model of exposition as the advocate explicitly anticipates arguments that will be offered by the defense and tries to destroy them in advance. Lawyers do not usually use the expression "contra considerations", but the alliteration seemed attractive.

On the last day, the accusing side presents an overall summary as a final argument, tying together everything that constitutes the whole case in a way that reminds the audience of the facts and of the inferences they justify without introducing any additional remarks beyond what is necessary to maintain attention and concentration. The principal exception is an attempt at final rebuttal of one or more arguments of the other side's case.

Normally a trial involves an active defense which provides arguments the prosecutor or plaintiff's attorney will not have addressed fully by the final day of argument. But frankly the present author became anxious to get the book written — and to have it concluded with a brief and decisive chapter — and therefore he avoided simulating a comprehensive opposing case to refute.

The key consequences of this method of presentation are that both the analysis and the final written document are more thorough, focused, and decisive than they would otherwise have been, and that the development of the case can be followed with less paging back and forth or searching an index or table of contents than might otherwise be necessary.

A.3) Use of Numbered and Lettered Subdivisions

Because this book will be used in print and various electronic-file formats, the text was designed to be cited without reference to pagination by indicating chapter, section, subtopic, and passage locations. This also facilitates internal cross-referencing.

The idea for this comes from several examples of works intended to be cited without reference to pagination, including Pearl's writing on statistics (for example Pearl, 2010) and classicists' customary citations of ancient books. At least when the present author was a very young man, military staff writing was commonly subdivided even further, into numbered paragraphs, but numbered paragraphs interfere with managing bullet lists and stanzas of poetry, and therefore it is hoped that such minutely labeled subdivision is not necessary.

The writing style probably has some subtle effect on the analysis in this book, because much of the analytic work took place while drafts of the present work were edited. Also, most of the author's notes on

various topics were also written with numbered and lettered subdivisions.

The present author is not sure what the psychological effect of writing with the outline structure visible has on analysis, but it might be to cause the discussion to be split into separate tiny essays.

If so, then structuring the writing as if making a lengthy oral presentation is a countermeasure to weave the whole into a single piece of cloth.

B) Scanty and Mostly Indirect Evidence

This study and many others concerned with early medieval cultures might be negatively criticized for use of scanty and indirect evidence, but students can do a lot with scanty and indirect evidence.

Consider astronomy. Astronomers give us plausible-sounding accounts of the structures, lives, and deaths of stars, solar systems, galaxies, and the entire universe. Astronomers tell us which direction stellar objects are moving and generally at what rate based on color shifts, even though they lack base data to show what colors the objects in question are shifting from. They estimate the age of our planet, other planetary and stellar objects, and the universe as a whole. When we see a movie of galaxies colliding, we surely realize that it is computer-generated art, for at the same the movie is shown, a narrator usually says how long the phenomenon in question lasts, and it turns out that the process of galaxy collision lasts longer than mankind has been watching astronomical events, not to mention taking movies. Indeed, no galaxy collision has been completed since humankind evolved, and the movies are mere computer simulations.

Obviously, astronomical knowledge cannot be based strictly on direct observation.

And yet, scientists and engineers are able to send vehicles into orbits of, and even into collisions with, very distant bodies in our solar system. They are also able to very accurately predict astronomical events.

Hence, it is quite apparent that astronomy is not presenting to us mountains of specious and verbose discourse which functions to distract, entertain, or persuade but not to inform.

Therefore, it is not so bad that in the study of early medieval England, we are piecing together fragments into a puzzle that is not quite complete, but which is complete enough to imply some of the parts that are missing.

For example, by itself the existence of many images of chimerical serpent-like images in England does not seem to mean much. It looks

like a jewelry fashion. Nice art it certainly is, but so what? And yet, when the serpent-like image piece is put into a profile along with self-incriminating evidence of Earth-goddess worship, use of realistic hog images which symbolize Earth-goddess cult adherence (and which went out of use after the 700's), with nature-loving venue choices, with hints from other cultures of the meaning of soil-contact animals, and with various other clues — the profile makes sense.

Of course, the study would be stronger with participant-observation and interview data from Saxon polytheists of England prior to Christian rule. But our intel is pretty good anyway.

That hypothetical story in chapter 1, C.1.b is relevant here also, for it shows how making a larger and more varied array of evidence and taking a more sophisticated perspective on it can produce results that a more restricted approach cannot.

C) Warnings and Disclaimers

It is hoped that bias is made explicit without being obnoxious. An extensive statement of likely biases based on the author's personal background has been included in the present book, partly because of Snorri Sturluson's example (in the Prose Edda), the influence of Marxist scholars the author met in graduate school, and historians like Henson (2006: 8) and Sewell (2005). However, the present author found the open bias of Cumont (1911) harmful to gaining an appreciation of his work on Roman religion. Therefore, an attempt has been made to be honest but to neither favor nor disfavor any particular religious, socio-political, or secular-philosophical tendencies.

D) On Being Different

The present work is radical scholarship. "Radical" derives from a French word, derived from the Latin "radicalis" (pertaining to the root, having roots), which is related to the Latin noun "radix", denoting root. This statement is not written on the supposition that words always mean what their ancestor words mean, but as clue to the present author's radicalism.

The method is to question as much as it is practical to question, and to look for hidden assumptions. In other words, the job is to go to the roots.

Some speakers appear to opine that "radical" = leftist. When the present author was in sociology graduate school, he learned from the Marxist students and a professor or two that you do not have to be a leftist to be a radical. A few of the students made a major point of

telling the present author that he can do critical theory and generally depart constructively radically, and yet not agree with them on anything substantive.

If one critically examines the bases of notions and theories, some of those notions and theories become not only more understandable but also begin to seem not fitting for the intended purpose.

Critical theory fosters critical philology. Thus the present author developed a habit, and he not only questions existing thought on early medieval English religion and moves beyond it, but he also rebels against Latinizing Greek names and the use of conventional, mistranslated titles for certain classic books.

It is hoped that this ancillary practice does not irritate the reader so as to obstruct productive use of the present book.

E) Effects of Experimental Practice

The present author practices a version of early medieval English polytheism as he has adapted it for use in a modern context. (No one else participates.) This adjunct to paperwork has both advantages and disadvantages.

This has the pronounced advantage of making accessible an approximation of participant observation, which means that some, of course not all, of the otherwise inaccessible "subjective" experiences can be had. The effect of this can be seen clearly in the chapter on Earþ cult conduct per se, where it is the basis of an attempt to get readers to share a "subjective" experience of attachment to the planet. However, it informs much of the other work, especially by enhancing the author's respect and understanding of polytheist religion.

The word "subjective" is in quotation marks because while on the one had people seem to agree meditative and emotional experiences are subjective, they also discuss and agree on such matters, which implies objectivity.

The disadvantage of this practice is that the simulation is not complete, and the nature of the experience tends to canalize the author's attention. Attention is drawn toward aspects that are, in the modern context, intellectually reasonable, emotionally satisfying, logistically practical, socially facile, and legal. For example the topic of banquets serving freshly-slaughtered and butchered meat and paid for by the government are probably given even less attention than that topic would get without the participation experience. Afterlife beliefs and funeral practices are, so to speak, thrust in the scholar's face by the body of archeological data and secondary-source analyses, but they are not part of the participation experience. On the other hand,

poetry, music, and dance get lavish attention. Also, meditative experience and the results of such work get lavish attention, and the relationships between lore and liturgy are also part of the experience. The student also has to examine how polytheist thought and ritual are influenced by and exert influence on Christian thought and ritual.

The experience is not totally immersive, for the author also practices another religion. Ethnologists commonly also do not fully participate in the cultures in which they immerse, but there is no doubt that practicing a reconstruction is not a full substitute for observation.

And yet, this experience does provide access to a level of understanding which could not otherwise be achieved, just as Evans-Pritchard's Catholicism helped him understand and respect Nuer religion (see chapter 3).

A related practice employed by some researchers is to re-create pre-industrial peasant-society village life, by immersing in the clothing, agriculture, food preparation, and other technical details of the lifestyle. The present author has not done that sort of experimentation, but has been satisfied with observing and discussing the experiences with re-enactors.

Appendix B: Author's Biases

This appendix is written in the first person for practical convenience, for in this essay the customary "present author" would occur too often.

I stick close to the evidence throughout this book, but the reader should be warned that some biases might have influenced my vision of the data despite efforts to the contrary.

A) Personal Religious Background

A.1) Childhood Background

My perception of religion, like that of the Earð worshippers who wrote certain prayers, is shaped in part by my own earliest religion-related experiences. What might be most interesting about this is the close resemblance between the basic theological profile described in this section and that which I describe for the Earþ cult, and which I imply for other cults in native English religion.

A.1.a) Hearth Religion

As mentioned in the introduction to *Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem* (Stanfield, 2012), my mom dominated the household in religious matters, probably because she matured faster than my dad and took a strong interest in religion long before he did. Her teaching was accompanied by that of Sunday school supervisors and youth ministers in the Disciples of Christ, and of course by my dad, but not much by the other kids. I decided, perhaps unfairly in some very few cases, that the other kids did not know what they were talking about.

These influences could teach me only what you can teach a child and someone in early adolescence, so the theology is crude and not reliant on advanced erudition.

A.1.b) It's Just the Basics

Anyway, my mom was very clear about fundamentals.

"Fundamentals" does not denote belief that every passage in the Bible is empirically or spiritually true. Even when I became a good enough reader to read that book, the genealogies and the King James Version's language drove me away (I now enjoy the poetry of the KJV). The Disciples of Christ were quite a tolerant and varied denomination of Christianity. But more than that, my mother's theology was not amenable to the movement we call "fundamentalism".

However, it was not until several decades later that I understood the tolerance and variety that is part of my parents' denomination. In fact, it was not until several decades later that I understood what I was taught about religion at all[90].

A.1.c) The Entire Content

The basic theology can be expressed quite briefly.

First of all, there is only one god and that being is a unity and has no competition. We might admire Jesus and honor His teachings, but we do not even consider praying to Him. Our little friends might pray to saints and honor them greatly, and we might love our friends and relatives, but they have their ways and we do not need to scorn nor adopt them. We do not even pay attention to saints. We expect no traffic with angels. People talk and write about The Devil or demons, but there is not really any evil spirit lurking beneath my bed, in a closet, or out in the woods somewhere.

We do not need a priest, parent, or other person to get between us as individuals and our only deity.

Our deity is spoken of as if masculine, but that is just a linguistic convenience for others, for that deity is not limited enough to have physical body, much less gender.

Our one deity is everywhere all the time, knows everything, and is not fully understood by anyone. But what we know of that being, we know for sure.

Mysteriously, anyone who accepts Jesus as savior is saved. (I did not understand this until I was an old man; children should not be expected to understand Christian salvation).

Getting the fundamentals right means getting your relationship to the one deity right, regardless of whether you believe every word in The Bible.

The basic lore was originally written in foreign languages, and translations can be tricky and fun, but these subtleties do not affect our understanding of the one deity.

All this is available to anyone who wants it; it is not a secret mystery nor an exclusive identity.

This theology is not dependent on The Bible and therefore not vulnerable to physical science nor philology. It is not going to be shaken by finding out that that there are unholy acts commanded to be carried out in the Old Testament. It cannot be shaken by finding

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[90] There is a more adult version available in Disciples of Christ churches and at this web site: "http://disciples.org/". In some ways it is quite similar to what I learned as a kid, but the adult version is not relevant here.

that different parts of the Bible describe different religions. It is not based on actually believing the magical stories in the Old or New Testaments. It is not the least affected by discovering that parts of The Good Book are badly written by modern standards or that translations of parts of it are controversial.

In addition, this theology does not require endorsement, enforcement, nor even participation by the state. In fact, we do not really care if anyone agrees with us or not — we can stick with this anyway.

It does not matter what peculiar ideas our friends and relatives might have or not have, for what is most important is people, not ideology.

I did not accept my parents' religion, and they let me stop going to church in mid-adolescence, but I did become familiar that version of their theology.

A.2) UU-ism

I am an American UU, and this might produce a bias in favor of perceiving welcome diversity and cosmopolitan awareness. UU does not have a coherent sacred tradition or body of lore of its own, and at least the (American) Unitarian-Universalist Association churches agree to take wisdom from many religions. Although some UU churches are Christian-themed, they all have considerable variety among their individual members, and although the movement derives from Christian unitarians and universalists, it would be incorrect to classify the movement as restricted to Christianity. Generally UU churches worldwide are eclectic (Harris, 2013; Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005).

In short, my routine experience in churches and other gatherings I have attended for many years is an exaggerated version of contrasting theologies religion. So that model seems more or less natural and comfortable to me.

B) Paradigms and Cults

Despite the common impression that sciences are each normally dominated by an overarching theoretical model, many scientists work in communities that are divided into theoretical models or subtopics, so that in terms of mutually enjoyable variety, those communities resemble a polytheism of contrasting theologies.

Sociology has not had a dominant theory in my lifetime. Instead of a consensus theory, it has several paradigms that are used to help

make up crude theories and hypotheses. Exchange theory, conflict theory, functionalism, and so on are not formal theories. Instead, one of the paradigms I learned is a method called formal theory construction. These paradigms are rarely used to create hypotheses that would provide a competitive test of the relative merits of each paradigm, because they are addressed to topics that do not overlap very much.

Anthropology and economics are likewise balkanized, with anthropology having paradigms similar to those of sociology.

Physics has string theory, quantum mechanics, and so on — theories that contrast strongly and are not unified into a single super-theory.

Biology also lacks a dominant theory uniting all work in the discipline. Several years ago, when teaching evolution was a controversy in Kansas government schools, I discovered that many biologists thought that whatever we see in animals and plants is the necessary result of an inevitable process of survival of the fittest, a process having no stochastic factor, no genetic drift, and no sexual selection. Whatever life forms we observe are perfectly adapted to their environments, because that is simply how "evolution" works[91]. In other words, they understood darwinian evolution as teleological. Obviously, the grand design of darwinian evolution is unrelated to much of the actual work of biology.

Many years ago, I opined, as many readers possibly still opine, that sciences normally had dominant theories that explained everything in the discipline, and when I was well into the study of Germanic polytheisms, I still opined that it was an advantage to come from an origin in sociology. But alas, such is not the case.

At least many of the readers of this book can see for themselves examples of behavior that makes all the more plausible one of the main contentions of this study.

C) Channeling by the Evidence

A source of bias is the skimpiness and vagueness of the overall body of evidence. Unlike classical Greek religion, instead of vast libraries and many stone and ceramic artifacts, the Germanic folks left mainly fragmentary evidence, and much of that created during advanced stages of Christian supremacy. This leaves us vague on interesting details and some fundamentals of belief and practice.

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[91] The controversy has calmed down, but an example is preserved in writing in Dawkins' (2006) book.

The bias this creates is an emphasis on satisfaction in the face of loose ends, and on correctly modeling the overall pattern without being distracted by details.

The condition of the data also encourages a bias in favor of studying cults not much affected by loss of mythic and discursive-philosophical documentary evidence.

Appendix C: English Non-Christian Dedicated Religious Venues

In the lists shown here, a modern name is shown if there is one, followed by a documented Old English name in parentheses. After that is a Modern English translation.

There are no English place names indicating worship of deities other than those listed here. The United Kingdom has several towns with "easter" in their names, but the name refers to a direction, and these towns are often matched with another town having a "wester" version of the town name.

A) Sites Named as Dedicated Venues

Most of these site names indicate a sort of location, but the type of location may not be a clue to the type of cult activity that predominated there. For example, Wóden's Field (Wednesfield in Staffordshire) is not necessarily so named because Wóden was specifically worshiped there as an agricultural deity without also being worshiped as a war god, nor was Wóden's Hill (Woodnesborough in Kent) necessarily so named because Wóden was worshiped there as a nature god but not as an agricultural or healing god.

A.1) "God" — Not Identifiable as to Religion

Sproston (2011) indicates several place names starting with "god". Some of them might have been possessions of persons named "Good", or might have been Christian, but most of them are probably religious sites used by one religion or another.

These eight names refer to 12 places.

1. Godstow — God's Place. Possibly an open-air venue.
2. Godsfield
3. Godswell Grove (Godeswell) — God's-Spring Grove
4. Godshill — four towns by this name, probably not all "Good's Hill".
5. Gadsey Brook — "Good's Island" or "Gods Island" Brook

6. Godney (Gydene Eg) —Goddess's Sea or Goddess's Water or Goddess's Island

7. Gadshill (2 towns with this name) — God's Hill or Good's Hill

8. Godley Hundred (God-Leah) -- God-Glade District

 Found on a recent map (Bartholomew, 1997).

9. Godstone — God's Stone.

10. Godford Cross — Could be "Good-Ford Cross", but probably not Pagan unless "cross" means crossing.

11. Godmanstone — "God-Man Stone" implies use by persons especially interested in holy work[92], but "Goodman's Stone" implies that either a man named Goodman was killed there or that the stone was locally famous for some other event connected with a person named Good-Man or Battle-Man (Guðman).

 Sproston (2011) rejected for a documented reason:
Godshill Farm — it was named after man named "Good". I agree.

Given that other evidence on religious sites implies that early medieval Christians considered outdoor worship something to be avoided (Chapter 10, subsection B.3), it is reasonable to infer that the first 9 names in the list indicate 10 formally dedicated non-Christian venues.

A.2) *Wóden*

Sproston (2011) shows both "1. Current place-names", then "2. Lost place-names", meaning names are documented but modern England does not have corresponding named place. Here, they are all put in one list.

1. Wansdyke (Wóden's dic) – Wóden's Dyke

2. Wednesbury (Wadnesberie) – Wóden's Fortified Town. Possibly a building in a town, or maybe an open-air venue inside the town walls.

3. Wednesfield (Wódnesfeld) — Wóden's Field

4. Woodnesborough (Wansberge) – Wóden's Hill

5. Othensberg — Óðin's Hill

6. Othensberg (another one) — Óðin's Hill

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[92] I have noticed that some students of religion have difficulty realizing that a person might pray to be a better human being without asking for money, personal safety, or more frequent sexual intercourse. It is the case, however, that people commonly pray or meditate for personal growth, among other things.

7. Wenslow (Wedenslawe) — Wóden's Hill or Wóden's Mound
8. Wenslow Hundred — Wóden's-Hill District. A district named for an open-air venue.
9. Wensley (Wodnesleie) — Wóden's Forest Clearing
10. Wodnes Beorg in 3 places — Wóden's Hill or Wóden's (Burial) Mound
11. Wodnes Denu — Wóden's Valley
12. Woddes Geat — Wóden's Gate (an opening in an ancient earthwork)
13. Wodenes Dene (in two places) — Wóden's Valley
14. Wodnes Dic (in two places) — Wóden's Dyke or Wóden's Ditch
15. Wodnesfeld — Wóden's Field
16. Wednysfeld — Wóden's Field
17. Wodneslawe — Wóden's Hill or Wóden's Mound
18. Grimes Dic — Wóden's Dyke or Wóden's Ditch
19. Grymes Dic — Wóden's Dyke or Wóden's Ditch

Counting redundancies, the 19 names refer to 23 places.

A.3) Þúnor

Sproston (2011) shows both "1. Current place-names", then "2. Lost place-names", meaning names are documented but modern England does not have a corresponding named place. Here, they are put in one list. The Bosworth-Toller dictionary shows that in Old English Þúr = Þúnor.

1. Thunderfield (Þunresfeld) — Thunder's Field
2. Thunderley Hall (Tunresleam) — Hall at Thunder's Glade
3. Thundersley (Thunreslea) — Thunder's Glade
4. Thundridge (obvious) — Thunder's Ridge
5. Thurstable (Thurstapell) — Thunder's Pillar
6. Thursley (no OE) —"Thunder's Glade"
7. Thunderlow Hundred (Þunor Hlæw) — District of Thunder's Hill or Thunder's Mound
8. Þunreslea (2 places) — Thunder's Glade
9. Þunorslege — Thunder's Glade
10. Þunreshleaw — Thunder's Hill or Thunder's Mound
11. Þunresfeld — Thunder's Field

These 11 names refer to 12 places.

A.4) Tiw

These are all listed by Sproston (2011), but I was unable to confirm his translation of "noad" as "woodland".

1. Tuesley (Tiwsle) — Tiw's Glade
2. Tuesnoad (no OE) — Tiw's Woodland
3. Tysoe (Tiheshoche, possibly v Tiges Hoh) — Tyr's Spur of Land

A.5) Pagan, Named without Mentioning "Deity" or a Deity

From Sproston (2011):

1. Easole (in 824 was in expression "æt Oesewalum", or Ése-Walu) — God-Ridge
2. Eisey (Eseg in 775-778; combines És and Ieg) — Deity-Island
3. Easewrithe Hundred (Éas+Wríð) — Deity-Thicket
4. Alkham (Ealhham) — Temple House or Enclosed Sanctuary (probably a building)
5. Harrowden (Herghetone) — Temple Hill
6. Peper Harrow (Pipereherge) — Piper (Flautist) Shrine (might include a building)
7. (Great) Harrowden (Hargedone) — Temple Hill
8. Wye (Wiæ, or Wig) — Holy Place
9. Willey (Weo Leage) — Shrine Glade
10. Wheely Down (probably Wig Dun) — Shrine Hill
11. Weyhill (probably Wig Hyll) — Shrine Hill
12. Weedon Beck (Wedone) — Shrine Hill
13. Weedon (Weodun) — Shrine Hill
14. Weoley (Welegh, from Weo-Leah) — Shrine Glade
15. Weeley (Willgelean, from Weo-Leah) — Shrine Glade
16. Weeford (probably from Wig-Ford) – Shrine at a Ford
17. Wyham (Widun) — Shrine Hill
18. Wysall (Wisoc, probably from Wig-Hoh) — Shrine Sanctuary
19. Wyfordby (no OE given) — Shrine-Ford Village
20. Hillborough (Hálig-Beorg) — Holy Mound or Holy Hill

Generic but definitely Pagan place names from Stenton (1971: 101-102) that are not also in Sproston (2011).

21. Ealhfleot — Shrine or Sanctuary at A Channel to the Sea

22. Harrowden (Hearh-Dene) — Sanctuary Valley {A harrow as an agricultural tool is not likely the "harrow" meant here. I agree w Stenton.}

23. Gumeninga Hearh (now called Harrow on the Hill) — Human or Ancestor's Sanctuary (might include a building)

24. Whiligh (Wig-Leah)

25. Whyly (Wig-Leah)

26. Wedone (Wig-Dun)

27. Weoland (Weoh-Land)

28. Welei (Weoh-Leah)

29. Wyville (Wig-Wiella -- Sacred-Spot-Spring)

Two more, found in both Stenton (1971: 101-102) and Sproston (2011).

30. Patchway (Pæccel's Weoh) — Pæccel's Idol or Pæccel's Sacred Place

31. Cusan Weoh — Cusa's Idol or Cusa's Sacred Place

Found in Drayton (1993) but not in other sources.

32. Wigston (Holy Stone). Now officially Wigston Parva (Holy Stone Small, but previously Wigston Magna (Holy Stone Large, previously also known as Wigston Two-Steeples because in medieval times it had two churches, but nowadays it is usually just called Wigston. The village is in Leicestershire.

None of the names in this list of generic chapels is redundant, so the list indicates 32 venues named to imply Pagan use but not to imply dedication to a specific deity. As noted in Chapter 10, the name of an Earth deity would probably not appear in the label of a temple dedicated to Him or Her.

A.6) Selected Place Names Not Used in the Tabulation

Here is a sample of several place names found in Bartholomew (1997) but not used in the tabulation because the places were not named in early medieval times or were named for persons, implying that the bases for the naming was ownership or some local historical event involving the person indicated.

(not used in statistical table). Alkmonton (Alhmund Settlement — Temple Protector Settlement or Sanctuary Guardian Settlement). Possibly a secular farm or community founded by a man named Temple-Guardian.

(not used in statistical table). Oscroft — Divine Small Enclosed Field. The name does not appear in the Domesday Book (Powell-Smith et al, n.d.). It is a common surname in English-speaking countries nowadays and is a modern village, but there was probably no settlement by that name in early medieval times. The surname might refer to an occupation.

(not used in statistical table). Osmotherley (Os Mother Clearing) was Asmundselac in the Domesday Book circa 1086 (Powell-Smith et al, n.d.). Asmund is Norse, possibly meaning "God-Hand", and was a personal name in Scandinavia (Stridmann, n.d.), so the name is a mixture of Old Norse and Old English. This case is dealt with in detail in a later passage.

Like two examples shown above, each of the many place names beginning with "os-" that the present author found was named for a person.

A.7) Miscellaneous Analytic Conclusions

A.7.a) Locations Preferred for Generic Use.

Sproston (2011) indicates that sites with names including variations of hearg (hill sanctuary) or weoh (idol) do not occur in combination with deity names.

It is possible that hill sanctuaries were customarily dedicated for generic use or for Earþ-cult use and were for that reason never named after a deity. This would imply that "hearg", as distinct from "hill", indicated a hilltop open-air temple dedicated to all-deity use or to the Earth goddess.

It is possible that that any temple site named as housing an idol (wéoh / wíg) was understood to house a complete collection, or that only one (relatively popular) cult used idols. Another possibility is that we are chronically mis-translating "wéoh", "wíg", and wíh, so that they refer to a quality of holiness or some lost theological concept, for a wíglere or wéohlere was a diviner or sorcerer, not sculptor of idols. Also, a wéohsteall was a place for an altar or a choir, not a place for a saint's icon or for a deity's idol. Perhaps, there are instances where wéoh refers to the holy quality invested in symbolic object but not directly to the object per se. In other words, there was no idol at Wyham. Notice that Sproston (2011) has implicitly taken that point of

view. However, a word-study of "wíg" / "wíh", "wéoh" must be left for a separate task.

A.7.b) Ése and Os in the Old English Language

The place-name lists imply that "os" does not denote any particular deity nor the category of deities in general.

The reader should note that the first three items in the list from Sproston (2011) are based on an Old English word spelled "és", "ése", or "éase", which is a rare word meaning "god". The Clark-Hall (1960) dictionary defines és as equivalent to "os", but it is not. The Dictionary of Old English project and Clark-Hall define éase as a lipped or handled vessel, but this does not fit the place name of Easewrið.

This book's main-text chapter on os shows that the singular nominative "os" — found in the *Old English Rune Poem* — is not, as commonly thought, an uninflected form of the "ésa" that occurs in the healing spell, *For a Sudden Stitch* (Rodrigues, 1993: 36-38, 142-143) and it is certainly not an alternative spelling of "ése".

So the meaning of "os" must be inferred from its context in *The Old English Rune Poem* and its use in personal names. In personal names, it surely does not refer to a deity, since otherwise deity's names are practically never used in personal names in Old English. In the *Old English Rune Poem*, the word does not denote an independent wight, for if a being were indicated, that being would have behaviors and attitudes of its own, as do the non-human beings in "Úr", "Éh", and "Íor".

In short, the Old English "os" was not a category of wight, as is commonly thought.

A.7.c) Place Names Starting with "Os-"

There are many place names beginning in Os-, but none of them refers to a specific deity or class of beings as having been worshipped there. The many towns and villages with names beginning in Os- were all named after persons.

An interesting case is the village of Osmotherley (Os Mother Clearing), which was renamed after the Doomsday Book was compiled. When the Doomsday Book was compiled, the town's name was Asmundeslac (Asmund's Gift or Asmund's Battle), which implies that it was a dedicated holy site, an award to a local farmer from a minor Scandinavian lord, or the location of a local historical event involving a man named Asmund.

It is remotely possible that the new name was intended to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, or that the town name was the last recorded breath of (veiled) Earthen Mother worship, or that it was a gesture of

fundamental conversion of Saint Mary worship to a hybrid Pagan system. But if so, we wonder why there was not an Os-Circ (Os Church) somewhere in England.

Given that early Medieval Christians avoided "os" in their writings on religion, the most likely explanation is that a pair of parents named their newborn daughter Os-Mother, just as parents named their daughters Os-Power, their sons Osmund (Os Hand or Os Guardian), and the like. Then the place would have been renamed for a specific woman owner, without the slightest acknowledgment of any irony or pun, for during the era of Christian supremacy personal names were merely labels, as they are in America now[93].

Another interesting case is Oswestry. However, expert opinion holds that the town name is a corruption of "Oswald's Cross", which is the town name in Welsh (Croesoswallt). The Welsh name is a good clue because the town is about half Welsh and half English. Legend has it that King Oswald of Northumbria was killed in a battle nearby and his corpse was dismembered and displayed on a tree. That same King Oswald became one of the saints named Oswald recognized by Catholic English in the early medieval period (Phillips, 1994: 53).

The place name of "Oswestry" probably did not exist before 1100 CE. The town was not in the Domesday Book (Powell-Smith et al, n.d.) and the earliest indication of a (temporary?) market there occurred in 1190. In addition to other sources cited here, Oswestry lore is available from the Oswestry Town Council web site (http://www.oswestry-tc.gov.uk/home.html), the *Welcome to Oswestry* web site (http://www.oswestry-tc.gov.uk/home.html), and a Wikipedia article.

B) Sites Not Named as Dedicated Venues

As noted in chapter 10 (subsection B.1), reliance on place names to indicate non-Christian places dedicated for ritual use tends to underestimate the total incidence of such places and such reliance probably also tends to distort the apparent distribution.

The reader acquainted with archeological lore of English Pagan religion will already have noticed the absence of Yeavering from the list of sites. That is because the name of the location in Old English does not imply dedication as a religious venue. The Old English name

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[93] This means I changed my mind about "Osmotherley" in the place-name list that I put in the appendix to Chapter 4 in the second edition of *Stanzas of the OERP* (Stanfield, 2012).

was Ad Gefrin, which in turn is a calque of a British word "Gefrin" meaning "Goat Hill" (Hinton, 2001; Walker, 2010).

Other known sites also have been omitted from the above list of place names. Walker (2010) mentions digs at Doon Hill, Cheddara, and Cowdrey's Down.

In the summary below, these sites have been added to the generic sites that have been named as dedicated, polytheist religious venues, because the lack of surviving names indicating dedication to a deity implies that the sites were named for locations and were Earð temples or generic temples.

C) Summary

C.1) Most Venues Were Not Dedicated to One Deity

This yields the following statistical table of English Pagan religious venues by type of name.

Simply named as chapels	32
Wóden	23
"God"	10
Þunor	12
Known only from excavation	04
Tiw	03
Total	84

Of these sites, 38 are named for a single deity who probably had substantial mythic support, and 50 sites are not.

C.2) Prevalence of Outdoors Locations

A large majority of the place names indicate a glade, hill, or other outdoor venue, with only a few implying an indoor location or having names that are ambiguous in this regard. Those venues are either buildings named for landscape features or — much more likely — open-air temples.

The following table indicates the frequency of names implying or allowing outdoor worship.

	Implying	Allowing
Simply named as chapels	29	02

Wóden		22	01
"God"		10	00
Þúnor		12	00
Tiw	03		00
Totals		76	03

The sites in the "Allowing" column are locations named as towns or villages and two simply called Holy Place (Wig, now named Wye) or God Place (Godstow).

Several sites are not included in the table. The 4 archeological-dig sites refer to archeological findings of buildings, and 1 of the sites simply listed as a generic chapel (Alkham) is named as a building or walled-off area, probably indicating a roofed structure.

Hence, 5 sites are definitely not open-air temples and 3 allow for open-air worship in a town, but are not definitely outdoor venues. And in total, about 90% of known sites are not in buildings.

Appendix D: Analyses of Surviving Latin Prayers

This is an examination of Latin prayers related to Earth-goddess religion. These specimens of religious activity have been separated into an appendix because they did not fit into substantive chapters for reasons of the length they would have added to because the detail would distract from the main points if left in the main flow of discussion.

The prayers analyzed here were all found on the Nova Roma web site, which lists five prayers alleged to have been offered to the Roman goddess known as Tellus (http://www.novaroma.org/nr/Prayers_to_Tellus). Practitioners of reconstructed religions sometimes provide good sources for overviews accompanied by details on many topics and sophisticated remarks on religious philosophy, and this is the case with Roman-religion websites. In contrast, encyclopedic or academic overviews intended for the general public are often poorly documented. Hence the present study has made use of Roman-religion reconstruction practitioners for background and for leads to primary sources.

Although the items examined here are not all prayers to a Roman Earth goddess, they are all helpful in developing a more sophisticated understanding of early medieval English Earth-goddess religion.

(1) The passage from the *Aeneid* is instructive regarding distinctions between Earth Mother and Mother of Deities.

(2) The entire document from which Nova Roma took a prayer to Mother of Deities gives a detailed Neoplatonic theology of that deity which, among other things, also emphasizes that the Romans distinguished between their soil goddess and Mother of Deities, and it gives us some information on the nature of that distinction.

(3) The passage from *Thebiad* is not directly related to Roman Earth-goddess worship but does help us see a difference between Roman Earth religion and that of the Greeks.

(4) The prayer associated with Greek-style games that took place during 17 BCE also helps us see in what ways Roman Earth-deity cults differed from at least one Greek Earth-goddess cult.

(5) And lastly, the herb gatherer's prayer implies that somewhere in Europe in the early middle ages, someone was praying to an Earth goddess who is not described in Roman nor Greek sources, and who is very much like the Earþ goddess of the Anglo-Saxons — a supreme deity.

A) A Prayer from *The Aeneid*

Two prayers from an epic poem called *The Aeneid* reinforce the allegation that Romans distinguished between the two deities Tacitus called Mother Earth and Mother of Deities.

Let us start with a synopsis of the story to the point where the prayers take place. Aeneas is the protagonist of a Roman religious myth telling how, after the final fall of Troy, he led a band of Trojan refugees through a series of dramatic adventures to found a new city that came to be called Rome. He is aided mainly by his mother (the goddess Venus) and her ally, Mother of Deities. He is harassed principally by the goddess Juno. (Juno's hatred of the refugees is carried over into the Roman myth from Hera's resentment of Trojans in the *Iliad*, but that is another story, if you will pardon the pun.) At this point in the tale, Aeneas' party has arrived in Italy near what would later be Rome after yet another exciting, narrow escape from disaster.

This myth was a big hit when it was published, and the author (Virgil) died in 19 BCE, so the content of The Aeneid would have been well known to Tacitus and his readers. And by the way, Virgil had a second edition in progress at the time; we will never know how good this classic would have been (Fagles, 2007: 11).

A.1) Two Passages of Thanksgiving

In a passage extending in Book 7 from line 118 to line 151 in Fagles' (2007) translation, Aeneas realizes that his party has arrived in their new homeland and gives a quick thanks to some of the divine forces that helped them. The divine forces he lists are: the spirit of his dead father, Fate, "the faithful household gods of Troy", and Jove — leaving out his mother (the goddess Venus) and Mother of Deities. Ceres is mentioned in passing.

But in the next passage (Fagles' lines 151-167), Aeneas performs a more formal thanksgiving prayer to "the spirit of the place", Tellus[94], nymphs, Night, the stars "Jove of Ida", "the Phrygian Mother", and both of his parents — in that order (Fagles, 2007: 216-218).

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[94]The word used for "Earth" is revealed in Fairclough's 1934 book, which gives an edition of the Latin along with the English translation. In Fairclough's edition (1934: 10- 13) the lines for this passage are 107-147 (see also Kline, 2002: 160-161.)

So the scene in the story supports the contention that practitioners of Roman religion distinguished between the two deities: Earth Mother and Mother of Deities.

That prayer definitely implies a differentiation between Earth Mother and Mother of Deities. Not only are they listed as separate recipients of thanksgiving prayers, but they are described distinctively.

Earth Mother is in the prayed-to list as "primamque deorum Tellurem". Kline (2002) translates this as "Earth the oldest of goddesses (sic)" and Fairclough and Fagles render this as "Earth, first of gods (sic)". Both translations should be taken to indicate the honor of age rather than rank in terms of power and actual importance. The Latin "prima" can denote temporally first, first in locational order, or first in rank, but it seems to most commonly indicate temporal priority and to have the other meanings as figurative or derivative uses (Traupman, 1966).

In contrast, Mother of Deities is listed as "Phrygiamque...Matrem" (Phrygian Mother, someone from outside). Also, while Earth Mother is prayed to right after the land wights, Mother of Deities is next to last, just before Aeneas' parents.

This is despite the fact that the refugees have made it to their promised land and will survive there because of protection by Aeneas' mom (Venus) and Mother of Deities, who had to struggle against Juno's hatred, while the refugees owe little or nothing to Mother Earth.

A.2) Conclusions Regarding Prayers in Aeneid

The Romans definitely recognized a distinction between Earth Mother and Mother of Deities. Tellus is the older of the two, but Mother of Deities is the more powerful. (Also, the gratitude of people is not always appropriate or predictable.)

B) Julian's Sermon on Mother of Deities

This prayer in question terminates the Roman Emperor Julian's Oration #5, often entitled in Modern English as *Hymn to the Mother of Deities*.

The evidence shown here reinforces the impression that Roman Pagans drew a distinction between Earth Mother, who was a chthonic deity, and Mother of Deities, who was a celestial deity.

Julian's theology is important to understanding the prayer in question, it is interesting by itself, so some background on it is called for. In addition to the discussion here, the prayer and its theological

background are presented in various other sources (Boer, 1976: 7-10; Taylor, 1793; Wright, 1913a: Introduction, 442-496).

B.1) General Background

Julian was Roman Emperor from 361-363 CE, the last of the polytheistic Roman Emperors, ruling after the empire starting having Christian emperors. Emperor Julian was a philosopher-king and an approximation of what later Europeans would regard as an enlightened monarch.

He tried to strengthen Roman polytheistic religion intellectually and by officially sponsoring Pagan worship, and he ended the persecutions of Pagans and dissident Christians begun by his predecessor. After he died from combat wounds on the eastern front, government in the eastern empire returned to its usual policy of persecuting everyone not in the currently official Christian sect (Boer, 1976: 118, 140-141; Durant, 1944: Chapter 1; Wright, 1913a: vii-xii).

The sermon in question is one of several lengthy lectures on theology that Julian wrote. Although Latin was still the official language of state, Julian wrote his philosophical works in Greek (his capitol city was Constantinople), because the Greek language was more popular among Mediterranean intellectuals than was Latin, even after a few centuries of Roman rule.

B.2) Julian's Neoplatonic Theology

This is a brief overview of the Neoplatonic background to the prayer in question and the present discussion supplements the chapters on Neoplatonic religion and Roman Earth-goddess religion.

Julian's Oration Number 5, also called *Hymn to the Mother of the Deities*, is part of a series of essays, or orations, which set forth his own Neoplatonic polytheism and contrasted it to Epicurean philosophy[95] and to Christianity. Julian's religious philosophy was derived from the ideas of Platon and the religious-philosophical system built up by subsequent followers of Platon, and much of the content in this subtopic is taken from his Oration Number 4, *Hymn to King Helios*

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[95] Examination of Epicurean philosophy is beyond the scope of the present study. There is a brief discussion of Epicureanism in Greenblatt's (2011) history of the manuscript copies of Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*. Julian's critique of Christianity is presented in other works (Wright, 1913a; 1913b; 1913c). Some of Julian's theory of deities is also based on incorrect physics, but physics is another topic beyond the scope of the present discussion.

Dedicated to Sallust (Bigg, 1985; Bloom, 1991; Boer, 1976: 7-13; Burkert, 1985: 321-337; Frede 2013; Guthrie, 1917; Rappe, 2000; Wikipedia, 2013i; Wright, 1913a: 353-442, 439-441)[96].

B.2.a) Hierarchy of Deities

The hierarchy of deities in this ideology differs from what we saw previously, in the chapter that focused on two of Platon's dialogues.

The version of Neoplatonism Julian accepted includes a multi-stage hierarchy of deities. The "intellectual" (or demiurge) deities translate thought into empirical reality, so they are partially polluted by dealing with matter. The higher-ranking "intelligible" deities do not mix directly with matter and hence are purer and more permanent. Both the "intellectual" and "intelligible" deities are below Mother of Deities and Her partner god.

The "intellectual" deities are subject to change. For example, Attis sins by giving into temptation to make unauthorized creation of material phenomena, and as a punishment He is changed by the removal of his genitals. In contrast Mother of Deities stays the same as always.

B.2.b) Higher Esteem for the Spiritual than for the Physical

NeoPlatonists tend to express a much higher evaluation of the spiritual than of the physical. Simplifying a bit, we can say there are two reasons for this: the spiritual is better and it is more real than the physical.

(1) That which is beautiful, purposeful, moral, and appropriate originates in the spiritual-idea realm. This is because the material phenomena are imperfect copies of the unseen ideas of which the material phenomena are manifestations, and it is also because the material world is less organized than the spiritual.

Hence the material realm is the source of all pain, sorrow, death, and other imperfection. The ultimate and purest goodness is in the spiritual realm.

(2) Neoplatonic philosophy stresses that material phenomena are less firmly knowable than are the spiritual templates behind them. In this system, the constantly changing world is guided by an unchanging but reasoning mind without which all empirical phenomena are unorganized. Therefore because the ultimate governing spiritual forms are unchanging and eternal, while material objects appear, change,

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[96] Neoplatonism is alive and well, and Alexander Sy maintains a web site which might be a better place for a person new to start studying the philosophy than is the list of citations to support my brief summary: "http://www.platonic-philosophy.org/".

and disintegrate, we can know the spiritual more clearly and certainly than we can know the empirical.

This leads to the notion that the spiritual reality is more important or real than is material reality.

This touches on a significant ambivalence in Romans' Mother of Deities religion. The attitude toward partnership between genders in this theology is very different from that in Terra theology. Like the soil goddess, She is the genetrix of all life, but unlike the soul in the soil, Mother of Deities is explicitly "without passion" and "a virgin". This version of Mother of Deities religion includes the idea that sexual intercourse and sexual reproduction are not holy, and that sexual abstinence is better spiritually than is sexual intercourse. This notion — which goes back much further than Julian's lifetime — contradicts the Roman's regard for Mother of Deities as goddess of human and agricultural fertility, and it further illustrates the complexity of Roman polytheism as well as the distinction between theology and cult.

B.2.c) Life after Death

When the body dies, the soul is unburdened by matter and is freed to rejoin the Logos and to be pure — uncontaminated by matter. In Julian's version, the soul is freed to rejoin the Mother of Deities. This is referred to in the specimen prayer, when Julian says that Mother of Deities leads Attis back after he "descended into the cave of the nymph" (got polluted with matter).

B.2.d) It's Not for Everyone

This theology urges us to accept the disciplines of piety and virtue. That is, it urges us to make limited that which would otherwise be chaotic.

Also, this theology is only for "those more highly endowed with wisdom", for they will be able to interpret the myths metaphorically and thereby discern the truths about deities. Julian believed that taking myths literally was for the less wise, and the brighter and shrewder persons would find the truth about the deities by realizing metaphorical interpretations of myths (Taylor, 1793: 123-134; Wright, 1913a: 475-476).

B.3) Julian's Use of an Attis Myth

Julian's theology of Mother of Deities is derived from his metaphorical interpretation of an Attis myth.

Mother of Deities loved Attis deeply. But then Attis mixed himself with matter, and this deviance required correction; that is it required

that creativity become orderly (limited). Therefore, Attis' castration is the limitation that leads to His return to the Mother of Deities. Thus Attis' "resurrection" is his recall to Mother of Deities after accepting limitation. He is not resurrected in the sense of getting up out of a grave and walking around.

Theologically, the moral of the story is that is that creativity must become limited to be orderly, for indiscipline is chaos.

Regarding the severing of male genital organs, it is worth noting that Julian reported that Mother of Deities instructed him that it would be a bad thing to sever any of his body parts. It would be much better to cut off mental and emotional defects than to mutilate oneself (Wright, 1913a: 487). (This is a reference to the custom wherein priests of Mother of Deities cut off their own penises, testicles, or both — see the chapter on Roman religion, passage D.3.b.)

B.4) Julian's Summary of His View of Mother of Deities

B.4.a) Julian's Own Summary

Julian summarizes his view of Mother of Deities in the middle of his essay. Following is Wright's translation (1913a: 462-463; *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*: 166A-166B):

> Who then is the Mother of the Gods? She is the source of the intellectual and creative gods, who in their turn guide the visible gods: she is both the mother and the spouse of mighty Zeus; she came into being next to and together with the great creator; she is in control of every form of life, and the cause of all generation; she easily brings to perfection all things that are made; without pain she brings to birth, and with the father's aid creates all things that are; she is the motherless maiden, enthroned at the side of Zeus, and in very truth is the Mother of all the Gods. For having received into herself the causes of all the gods both intelligible and supra-mundane, she became the source of the intellectual gods...For not only the forms embodied in matter, but to a still greater degree the causes of those forms, voluntarily serve her and obey her will.

The original Greek says "Dios" (ancient Greek for "male deity") where Wright gives us "Zeus", for the Greek Pagans used "God" as a nickname for Zeus. Taylor (1793) renders "Jupiter" instead, apparently

trying to Latinize the Greek vocabulary as he translated the text into English.

B.4.b) Two Types of Earth Deity
A more important distinction is the negative evaluation placed on the ground. It is appropriate to eat parts of vegetables that grow upward, but not downward -- roots are off limits. Fish are not appropriate as holy sacrifice because they dive down far below the surface of the water, hence they are like the roots that grow down into soil. "The pig is banned as food during sacred rites because...it belongs wholly to the earth...this animal does not look up at the sky because it is so made..." (Wright, 1913a: 484-496).

This implies that Mother Earth was a chthonic goddess while Earth Mother was a celestial goddess. So there are two types of Earth deity.

B.5) The Prayer

The emphasis of mind over matter is quite apparent in this prayer. This is Wright's (1913a: 500-503) translation of the prayer that concludes the sermon called the *Hymn to the Mother of Gods* (sic) in Wright's book.

> "O Mother of gods and men, thou that art the assessor of Zeus and sharest his throne, source of the intellectual gods, that pursuest thy course with the stainless substance of the intelligible gods; that dost receive from them all the common cause of things and dost thyself bestow it on the intellectual gods; O life-giving goddess that art the counsel and the providence and the creator of our souls; O thou that lovest great Dionysus, and didst save Attis when exposed at birth, and didst lead him back when he had descended into the cave of the nymph; O thou that givest all good things to the intellectual gods and fillest with all things this sensible world, and with all the rest givest us all things good! Do thou grant to all men happiness, and that highest happiness of all, the knowledge of the gods; and grant to the Roman people in general that they may cleanse themselves of the stain of impiety; grant them a blessed lot, and help them to guide their Empire for many thousands of years! And for myself, grant me as fruit of my worship of thee that I may have true

knowledge in the doctrines about the gods. Make me perfect in theurgy. And in all that I undertake, in the affairs of the state and the army, grant me virtue and good fortune, and that the close of my life may be painless and glorious, in the good hope that it is to you, the gods, that I journey!"

Dionysus is one of the demiurges in Julian's system. The reference to Attis descending into the cave of the nymph is a metaphor for Attis giving into the temptation of the material world and creating material things, thus polluting his spiritual nature. This episode is discussed above, in B.3, on Julian's use of the Attis myth.

B.6) Some Conclusions

Julian's *Hymn to the Mother of Deities* makes explicit some important features of the theology of Mother of Deities.

We see that Mother of Deities is a powerful deity although She acts in coordination with a god. She also sometimes acts as subordinate and sometimes as superior to other deities.

She is a celestial goddess, and Julian emphasizes that hogs are associated with chthonic deities and not with Mother of Deities. She is, if indirectly, the cause of all mortal life. She is prayed to for general quality-of-life or moral guidance and blessings. Sensual pleasures are considered inferior to mental pleasures and to conformity with his religion's moral code.

C) Prayer from Greek-Style Games of 17 BCE

This specimen is a prayer to Gaia, the well-known Greek goddess, and it helps clarify the often-difficult distinctions between Roman and Greek Earth-goddess cults.

Although the only surviving ancient Roman source is missing most of the original verbiage, we can make out enough of the content for the present study.

The evidence shown in this section relates to one of the prayers shown by Nova Roma as a prayer to a Roman Earth Goddess but Roman syncretic religion included outright worship of foreign deities, including Greek deities, sometimes using a Latin name of a native

Italic deity, sometimes using a Latinized version of the original Greek name, and sometimes using the original Greek name (Carter, 1906)[97].

C.1) The Context and Content of the Prayer

The context and the content of the prayer are borrowed from Greek culture. The prayer in question is part of a long inscription from the year 17 BCE, and the whole inscription is a commemoration describing sacred rituals that were part of the 100 Years' Games in that year.

The games were to resemble the Olympics and other Greek festivals, and the first prayer in the series is to the Morae (Latinization of "Morai") -- the Greek Fates (lines 92-99). The Latin name for the Roman fates was Parcae. The second prayer is addressed to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, but the third is to Illithia (Latinization of Eileithyia), the Greek goddess of childbirth. As you go down the series of prayers, there is one that starts "Terra Mater" (in lines 136 and 137), and that is the specimen most of interest here (Dessau, 1902: 282-283; Durant, 1939: 199-200, 200-217, 226-230; Horatius, 2004; Plauta, 2011e; Sandys, 1913: 112; 759).

The prayer is "Terra Mater, as it is prescribed for you in those books, and for good reason, may every good fortune attend the Roman people, the Quirites. Let sacrifice be made to you with a pregnant sow of your own, as a whole burnt offering, I beg and pray" (Horatius, 2004).

The expression "those books" refers to the Sibylline Books, a collection of oracular statements by sibyls, who were the female speakers of oracles at the Greek temple in Delphi. The books would have been written in Greek and would have referred to Greek — not Roman —deities. The Roman government referred to these books to get instructions on worshiping Greek deities until someone had them burned, long before the time of Christian supremacy in Rome (Carter, 1906: 65-67; Dessau, 1902; Dods, 1971: 143, and footnote 1146 on page 853; Falconer, 1923: 1.2, 1,18, 1.43, 2.54-55; Horatius, 2004).

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[97]I found this source cited on the Nova Roma website, and probably would not have found it without them: "Corpus Inscriptiones Latinae VI 32323, Acta Sacrorum Saecularium, Rome, Lines 136-37; ref. L. 92-99". In Dessau's (1902: 282) book, the inscription is labeled "ILS 5050". The online database of the Corpus of Inscriptions in Latin (CIL) did not contain the specimen prayer in Spring, 2013 (http://cil.bbaw.de/cil_en/dateien/datenbank_eng.php). I would not have even looked for Dessau's book without the stimulus of the Nova Roma website. I did find the inscription at the Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby EDCS.

C.2) *Analysis of the Specimen*

There are several clues that the prayer-giver meant to refer to Gaia, not to the Roman soil goddess. (1) The prayer includes references to the Sibylline Books, and consulting written copies of the statement of holy Greek oracles was not necessary for Terra worship. (2) The prayer is part of a series, and the opening prayer in the series is explicitly addressed to Greek goddesses. (3) The opening prayer in the same stone inscription is explicitly addressed to a Greek Goddess. (4) The prayer is part of the opening ceremony of Greek-style games, plays, and other festival contests common in Greece.

Note the offering of a hog, implying that porcine animals were associated with the worship of this Earth goddess. This is a clue that the Greek version of Mother of Deities is not involved.

Other differences include the degree of specialization and ability to act, which are revealed by what blessings other deities are asked for and the lack of a co-actor. This goddess' degree of power is between that of the Roman Earth Mother and Mother of Deities.

D) A Prayer from Statius' Thebiad

This specimen of Greek Earth goddess religion comes from a Greek novel that was translated into Latin, but it shows again a difference in terms of theological conception between the Earth goddess addressed in this prayer and the Roman goddesses described in the substantive chapter on Roman religion. Like the prayer that was performed at the Greek-like Roman games of 17 BCE, this shows a degree of power and range of function between that of the Roman Earth Mother and Mother of Deities.

Another reason to include this prayer is that its eloquence helps the reader understand the emotional attraction that the planet Earth exerts, and which surely is an important element of Earth deity religion. The present author wishes to emphasize that, although some medieval Europeans lost scientific knowledge of previous centuries, it was common knowledge long before the time this prayer was written that the cosmos did not consist of a flat disc or square covered by a moving dome[98].

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[98]Statius lived from about 40 CE to 95 or 96 CE, so his work would definitely have been known to educated Romans in Tacitus' day. In Mozley's book is a translation accompanied by an edition of the original Latin (1928b: 8.296-8.329; print pages 214-219).

D.1) Thebiad Is a Greek Story

One of the prayers Nova Roma lists is from a story of Greeks struggling against Greeks, which is entitled *Thebiad* or *Seven Against Thebes*. The original wording refers in one place to "Tellus", but that is because the story was written in Latin (by Statius), not because it refers to Romans practicing Roman religion. Indeed, the story is based on much older Greek stories and was perhaps most famously rendered in a work created by the Greek playwright Aischulos (Aeschylus in Latin) in the 400's BCE[99].

The scene this prayer comes from is definitely not Roman, and there is not a Roman person involved. The "Pelasgi" referred to in the next-to-last line of the prayer are the Argives, who are to battle against the Thebans. The person offering the prayer is the King of Argos and a person of Persian descent. Thebes was a major city in Greece. The battle mentioned in the prayer was to take place in Greece (Mozley, 1928: *Statius* 8.329-337; Traupman, 1966).

D.2) The Prayer

The prayer in question definitely implies a rather different deity than the Tellus described by the Roman theologians.

D.2.a) Content

This is Kline's translation (2013: 176-177), and the passage in question is in book 8, lines 294-341[100]:

"O eternal womb of divinities and men, you who
Yield rivers and forests, and all the seeds of life,
Prometheus' handiwork and Pyrrha's stones; you
Who first nurtured hungry men, and developed
Them; you who surround and bear the sea; to you
Belong the gentle herds of cattle, the aggression
Of wild beasts, the calm of birds: firm, enduring
Strength of a world that has no setting, round you
The swift substance of the sky, and the chariots
Of sun and moon circle as you hang in empty air.
O center of all things, undivided by the great gods!

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[99]See also Mozley's discussion of the poem (Mozley, 1928a: xiv-xxvii), especially pages xxii and xxiv-xxv.

[100] Mozley's translation is generally lyrical although laid out on the page as prose. I used the translation quoted here because Kline put even more effort into imparting a poetic feeling.

So your gifts alone suffice the many nations, races
And lofty cities on your surface; bearing Atlas
Who shoulders the sky, laboring to support those
Starry abodes on high without your help. We, alone
Goddess do you refuse to bear; are we too weighty?
What crime, I pray, do we expiate, unaware? Is it
That we come here from the lands of Inachus, we,
An alien folk? Every soil is man's home and it ill
Becomes you, noble one, to distinguish, by so harsh
And arbitrary a boundary, between peoples, who,
No matter where they are or hail from, are yours.
Be common ground to all, bear both sides' arms.
Grant us, I pray, to gasp away our spirits, fighting
In these battle ranks, and return them to the sky.
Do not drag living bodies into the grave so hastily,
Be not so sudden. We will come to you by the road
All take, the path approved. Only hear our prayer,
Make firm the wavering plain for the Pelasgi, let
The swift Fates be not forestalled."

D.2.b) Explanatory Details

The names Prometheus, Pyrrha, and Atlas refer to characters in Greek myth, and this would have been readily apparent to Statius' readers. Kline translated the names back into Greek, but in the edition in Mozely's book shows that in the original, the names are Latinized to fit into Latin grammar.

Mozley's explanation of the expression "undivided by the great gods" is that "the brethren Jove, Neptune, and Pluto (sic) took the air, sea, and underworld as their portions and left the earth common to all" (Mozley, 1928b: 216-217). The source for this, which Mozley does not cite, is Greek: *The Iliad*, book 15, lines 187-193.

Mozley's interpretation implies that this Earth goddess is a lower-ranking deity — weaker and more passive— than are the top three Olympic gods. Actually, the Earth goddess is not mentioned in the Greek source for the partition of the world. Therefore, in that theology, She was not allotted the surface of dry land; it was common property of all deities.

D.3) *Analysis of the Prayer from Thebiad*

However, here we see Gaia or Ge as an Earth deity, and She is very different from anything we have seen in Roman literature on Roman religion.

This Earth goddess is prayed to for universal peace and the siblinghood of all mankind, for a chance for souls to migrate to the heavens instead of the underworld — and for victory in the battle about to come. It is interesting that none of the Roman Earth goddesses is prayed to for universal peace and the "brotherhood" of mankind.

The method of offering sacrifice to this Earth goddess is also not Roman. This prayer and the one immediately following it (offered to an oracular daimon) are followed by burying alive sheep and goats as simultaneous sacrifices to the Earth goddess and the daimon. Burial is not a method of sacrifice found in Roman Earth goddess rites. The standard practice in all Roman cults, including rites addressed to Mother Earth and Mother of Deities would be that livestock are ritually slaughtered, and then the meat is cooked and eaten by people. The leftovers are burnt as offerings to an Earth goddess, or whatever deity (or deities) was (or were) the focus of the rite.

Note that the supplicator asks of the goddess that She allow the souls of dead combatants to "return to the sky". This implies that Gaia is a celestial rather than a chthonic deity, or perhaps that She is asked to avoid the spirits of the dead so they can escape from the soil.

Note also in passing that the Greeks also did not have a single, coherent polytheistic theology.

E) Herb-Gatherer's Prayer

This last specimen is evidence of worship of a supreme deity who is an Earth goddess in a polytheist system. Two versions of this prayer are presented in this section, but both versions lead to the same overall conclusions for present the present study.

The specimen is sometimes attributed to Antonius Musa (for example, the experts at Nova Roma so attribute the prayer). However on close examination it turns out that this is not a prayer to the Roman soil goddess nor to Mother of Deities.

E.1) *Two Components*

The specimen consists of two parts, which philologists commonly list under separate titles: *Precatio Terrae* and *Precatio Omnium*

Herbarum. The two components are: (1) a general invocation of a powerful goddess identified with the planet (including its atmosphere), and (2) a supplication addressed to an herb's spirit, but which also invokes an Earth goddess. The first component is Latin poetry and the rest is church-Latin prose (McEnerney, 1983).

The contents of the two components are consistent, in that the first part seems to have been composed to set up something like the content of the second part. In other words, the invocation is standard boilerplate, skillfully composed to be used as a poetic invocation in a variety of rituals and to be followed by a supplication, such as the second prayer, composed to address the specific concern of an occasion. The second part blends in themes from the invocation as it asks for blessings to make medicine of benefit to mankind.

However, the fact that part of the content is poetry and part is prose implies that the two parts were composed on separate occasions and by different authors.

For present purposes, the most important difference between the two versions of the prayer is in the composition of that first component: one version (deceptively) appears to refer to a Roman god by name and the other does not refer to any Roman god, but this content will be analyzed below.

E.2) Provenance and Dating

We can rule out the possibility that the prayers in question originated among Roman Pagans. Both components seem to have originated in a polytheistic cult in Europe during Catholic supremacy but before 500 CE. It is obvious that the cult had a supreme deity who was an Earth goddess, and that there was no Christian element that cult members felt was necessary. Further inferences regarding the culture in which this specimen originated cannot be justified at this time.

E.2.a) The Manuscripts Per Se Are Not Clues

The specimen comes down to us in five manuscripts, dating from the 500's to the 1200's CE. The manuscripts originated somewhere in western Europe, but a more precise location cannot be discerned. The manuscript now in the British Museum probably originated in what is now southern Netherlands in the late 1100's. For the others, which are now in Leiden, Breslau, and Florence, the present author could find no

indication of their places of origin (British Library Board, n.d.; McEnerney, 1983; Singer, 1920)[101].

A problem with figuring out the cultural origin more precisely is that Latin was an international language of intellectuals in Europe from shortly after the fall of the Roman empire (before that Greek was more popular among European intellectuals) until sometime long after the historical era under study in this book.

A mistake some students of early medieval England make (for example Halsall, 1981) is to assume that only Christian monks and nuns were literate at the time, so mere fact of a written manuscript proves Christian authorship and manufacturing. Singer (1920) theorizes that during and after Christianization of illiterate natives, initially literacy is totally monopolized by Christian missionaries or other religious specialists, but the monopoly gradually decreases, and both secular and Pagan documents are produced. Singer wanted to explain why there would be more polytheistic and non-Christian magical documents produced centuries after official conversion of governments than before, and why some of those documents were written in Latin. The present author would add that monks and nuns of medieval Europe would not necessarily all be willing to distort or ignore their cultural heritages.

E.2.b) Content of the First Component

The most compelling reason to infer that the first component is not Roman is that the powers of this Earth deity go well beyond those implied in any of the theological passages, myths, or prayers to Tellus or Mother of Deities in sources known to be Roman-Pagan. The theology implied in this specimen also goes well beyond what we have seen in prayers based on Greek theologies. As is shown in the next section, this goddess is the boss of bosses, a mother needing no partner, and an irresistible power.

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[101] The manuscript in the British Library is available for examination in a scanned-in form at this URL: "http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx? ref=Harley_MS_1585". The pages containing the two prayers analyzed here are at this URL: "http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx? ref=harley_ms_1585_f012v". The reader interested in the library's entire scanned-in collection should use this URL: "http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Default.aspx".

E.2.c) Vocabulary of the Second Component

A reason to infer that the second prayer is not Roman-Pagan is that the language of the second prayer is church Latin, making it appear to post-date forcible suppression of Roman polytheism.

Scholars who claim that these are both Pagan Roman prayers mistakenly attribute the two prayers together to Antonius Musa, who lived during the years 63 BCE through 14 CE. This is because the five surviving manuscripts that contain the combined prayer also include an essay on herbs written by Antonius Musa. Also, some scholars attribute the two components to Musa because in one of the four manuscripts, the herb-gatherer's prayer per se is explicitly ascribed to Musa by whoever made one of the medieval copies. But as Duff and Duff note, "the argument is weak", because of the vocabulary of the second prayer, which includes multiple instances of a word not used by pre-Catholic Romans, at least not in the way it is used in this specimen (Duff and Duff, 1934: 340-341; Gardenstone, 2012a: 63-67; McEnerney, 1983: 184).

E.2.d) Compatibility of the Components

Also, as noted in the introduction to this section, the two components of the combined prayer fit together like finely-worked stone masonry, although they give the appearance of having been composed by different people and at different times. The word overused for this kind of fit in the USA in the early 2000's is "seamless". Actually, the seam is obvious but the two components are quite compatible, and therefore they seem to have come from the same cult.

Both parts are polytheist, Earth-goddess supremacist, human-value oriented, and utterly non-Christian.

E.3) Invocation and Praise of an Earth Goddess

The first component is poetry, or a hymn, composed as an emotionally evocative invocation of a supreme goddess called Earth, and intended as the preface to some specific request. The wording explicitly places the goddess in question in the almighty or supreme class of deities. Among other things, notice the absence of a Logos, partner, or other helper for this Earth goddess.

E.3.a) Content

This translation is from Duff and Duff (1934: 342-346), who attempted to preserve very closely the sense of the original words without attempting to convey the emotional effect of the poetry,

although they based their edition on only four of the five manuscripts. I cut off the quotation where McEnerny (1983) has the prose section start instead of at the point where Duff and Duff draw the line between the two components of the overall prayer. This boundary coincides with McEnerny's decisions about what is and is not Latin poetry, but it is based on the change in subject matter between the two components, a change from invocation that sets up a supplication to supplication.

> Goddess revered, O Earth, of all nature Mother, engendering all things and re-engendering them from the same womb, because thou only dost supply each species with living force, thou divine controller of sky and sea and of all things, through thee is nature hushed and lays hold on sleep, and thou likewise renewest the day and dost banish night. Thou coverest Pluto's shades and chaos immeasurable: winds, rains and tempests thou dost detain, and, at thy will, let loose, and so convulse the sea, banishing sunshine, stirring gales to fury, and likewise, when thou wilt, thou speedest forth the joyous day. Thou dost bestow life's nourishment with never-failing faithfulness, and, when our breath has gone, in thee we find our refuge: so, whatsoe'er thou bestowest, all falls back to thee. Deservedly art thou called Mighty Mother of Gods, since in duteous service thou hast surpassed the divinities of heaven, and thou art that true parent of living species and of gods, without which nothing is ripened or can be born. Thou art the Mighty Being and thou art queen of divinities, O Goddess. Thee, divine one, I adore and thy godhead I invoke: graciously vouchsafe me this which I ask of thee: and with due fealty, Goddess, I will repay thee thanks. Give ear to me, I pray, and favour my undertakings: this which I seek of thee, Goddess, vouchsafe to me willingly.

E.3.b) Overpowering a Troublemaker as Opposed to Pluto

A hint that the Latin was a translation, and not an originally Latin prayer is in "Thou coverest Pluto's shades...". The expression is consistent with a Greek theology, but a much more likely alternative is that the expression was not in the original, but is a copyist's redaction. In other words, the occurrence of this reference to a Roman deity is intepretatio Romano — the writer did not have a Latin word for the

spirit wight in question (Ando, 2005; Ando, 2008: chapter 3; Jones, 2004).

First, let us consider a brief background on Pluto theology. The name in the edition that Duff and Duff use is "Dis", for the Roman god Pluto was more commonly called Dis Pater (Rich Father) or Dis than Pluto. Anyway, the emphasis in Roman religion seems to have been on this deity as a giver of wealth, not as an unpleasant giver of hassles, misery, or death. However, the expression that Duff and Duff show in their edition is "tu Ditis umbras tegis" (this is also in McEnerney's edition), hence the reference the Roman god is apparently used to indicate a reference to death or to the generally threatening and mysterious ("Pluto's shades"), which the Earth goddess overpowers.

For example, Cicero tells us that the name "Rich Father" (Dis Pater) derives from that god's possession of "the entire bulk and substance of the Earth", and from the fact that "all things fall back into the Earth and also arise from the Earth". He adds that this is related to the Greek name Plouton (Rackham, 1933: 1.17, 2.26).

To the extent that Pluto was borrowed into the Roman pantheon from Greek literature, He was part of a triad. In *The Iliad*, a mythic story that would have been familiar to Romans going back at least to Tacitus' time, there is a scene (book 15, lines 187-193) in which Poseidon tells a messenger sent by Zeus that the three sons of Rhea and Cronus (Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon) divided the cosmos into three equal realms and then cast lots to determine who would get each realm. Then "...it fell to me to have my dwelling in the sea forevermore. Hades took the darkness of realms under the earth, while air and sky and clouds were the portion that fell to Zeus; but earth and great Olympus are the common property of all" (Butler, 1942: 229; Graves, 1960: 59, 61; Mozley, 1928b: footnote on pages 216-217). In this passage "all" means all the deities.

Atsma's (2000-2011e) extensive article on the Greek god Haides, or Plouton (Giver of Wealth), states that Plouton was borrowed into Roman religion and conflated with Dis Pater, and this implies that the use of "Dis" in this invocation might not be a reference to a Roman or Greek deity, because of the strictly unpleasant implications of the reference in this prayer.

Surely, if the reference were to the Earth goddess "covering" Dis Pater's underground, then the author would have included reference to Her organizing and managing Jupiter's and Neptune's realms.

All these considerations suggest that the early medieval composer might have been translating "Dis" from a non-Latin word for a spiritual troublemaker who threatens, a chthonic spirit wight who appears a

religion other than Greek or Roman. The wight would perhaps be roughly similar to a Norse giant (Motz, 1987).

This means that the Latin poetry is probably a translation from a vernacular northern European language or an original composition in Latin by a non-Roman polytheist. In translations of religious terms from non-Roman cultures, sometimes the translator has to somehow cope with not having a Latin word for the concept or wight in question.

However, Dis Pater is not mentioned in all the manuscripts, and the invocation of the Earth goddess makes more sense without mention of Dis Pater. McEnerny (1983) and the Duff's (1934) used only four manuscripts for their editions, and the manuscript Singer (1920) used does not mention the Roman god Dis Pater by any name (British Library Board, n. d.). Singer's translation (shown below) has: "...through thy power all nature falls silent and then sinks in sleep. And again thou bringest back the light and chasest away night, and yet again thou coverest us most securely with thy shades. Thou doest contain chaos infinite...."

E.3.c) A Supreme Deity

A core theological principle is expressed in the notion that this Earth goddess organizes powerful natural forces and restrains the general tendency of chaos.

A very strong implication of top theological rank is in the passage that begins, "Deservedly art thou called Mighty Mother of Gods (sic)...." The edition that Duff and Duff show has "metio vocaris Magna tu Mater deum", and this could be interpreted "deservedly are you called great, Mother of Deities".

Either of those renditions is consistent with the following expression, which says "since...thou has surpassed the divinities of heaven..." in achievements of value to all living beings. Singer's version is "...without thee nothing can be brought to perfection or be born...." Clearly this implies an indispensable goddess of unlimited power.

E.3.d) Is This Goddess Gaia?

This is not Gaia-oriented henotheism in Latin wording, for Gaia has not "surpassed the divinities of heaven" in Greek lore.

Examples of the supporting evidence are found in Hymn #30 in the "Homeric" collection (Shelmerdine, 1995: 162) and Hymn #26 in the Orphic collection (Taylor and Kallimakhos, 2011). Both of these poems praise Gaia only as a goddess of human, natural, or agricultural fertility. She is not called upon to regulate the alternation of day and night nor to regulate sea storms, nor is She praised as exceeding all

the other deities in value to mankind. However, in the "Homeric" poem, She is said to be the oldest of deities, an idea which is reflected in Kline's translation of a prayer to the Roman Earth Mother (see the section above on the prayer from the *Aeneid*). But this distinction does not make Gaia all-powerful any more than it makes Terra Mater all-powerful. (See also *Theogeny* in Evelyn-White, 1914).

Notice that this prayer also differs from the Greek specimens and from evidence regarding Mother Earth worship in that this Earth goddess is said to accept the return of dead persons. The implication is not that dead bodies rot away in dirt, but that the persons return to the goddess in question, and this means both the physical and psychological/spiritual components return.

And by the way, if this goddess accepts the spirit and physical bodies of dead persons, there is not much left for a god of the underworld to do, except to provide springs and ores. But in this theology He cannot do that without Her assistance. Hence, this is another indication that the reference to Dis Pater / Pluto in some of the manuscripts is superfluous, or that the Latin name "Rich" is simply misinterpreted by modern scholars who fail to see a northern European frame of reference in which "Dis" makes sense, but who dislike discarding information.

E.3.e) Contra Consideration: Denial of Roman or Greek Myth

Consider the possibility that the invocation is a direct denial of Greek myth as adopted into Roman religion and an assertion of Mother of Deities supremacy.

Platon tells us in *Cratylus* that Pluton / Hades is giver of wealth "because wealth comes up from below out of the earth" and that he "also bestows such great blessings upon us who are on earth." And Platon also tells us that it is Pluton / Hades who accepts the souls of the dead (Fowler, 1921: 403a-403e).

He tells also that Hades / Pluton keeps the souls of the dead permanently because in His company they are freed from the impure and unpleasant conditions of incarnation, and they are allowed to associate with a god who knows all "noble things" (Fowler, 1921: 403d-404b).

So this invocation could derive from a Roman theology in which the Earth god Pluton is demoted to insignificance or nonexistence, with all of His nice functions in other theologies removed in this one. Instead, in this theology Pluton is grouped with natural disasters, which are restrained by this Earth goddess.

The answer to that argument is that it goes much farther than anything we can find stated or implied in sources that we know are

Roman Pagan with one exception. That one exception is Tacitus' description of the Germanic Earth goddess as Mater Deum.

Therefore, it is unlikely that the Earth goddess in this invocation is a part of any Roman or Greek Pagan cult, but if this specimen were a Roman-Pagan primary source, then we would have further evidence that Earþ was the pinnacle deity of Proto-Germanic times, who was conserved in English Paganism.

E.4) The Herb-Gatherer's Followup

The second component of the prayer is prose appended to the pre-existing Latin-language poem, and it is addressed both to the supreme deity and to the spirit of whatever herb or herbs were being gathered for medicinal use.

E.4.a) Content

This is quoted from Duff's and Duff's (1934: 345-347) rendering, but I cleaned up the English a bit where Duff and Duff too literally reproduced the punctuation of their source documents or where paragraphing is needed; I left the bad grammar and strange dialect.

> All herbs soever which thy majesty engendereth, for health's sake thou bestowest upon every race. Entrust to me now this healing virtue of thine; let healing come with thy powers. Whate'er I do in consonance therewith, let it have favourable issue; to whomso I give those same powers or whoso shall receive the same from me, all such do thou make whole. Finally now, O Goddess, let thy majesty vouchsafe to me what I ask of thee in prayer.
>
> With all you potent herbs do I now intercede and to Your Majesty make my appeal.
>
> Ye were engendered by Mother Earth, and given for a gift to all. On you she has conferred the healing which makes whole, on you high excellence, so that to all mankind you may be time and again an aid most serviceable. This in suppliant wise I implore and entreat: hither, hither swiftly come with all your potency forasmuch as the very one who gave you birth has granted me leave to gather you. He also to whom the healing art is entrusted has shown his favour. As far as your potency now extends, vouchsafe sound healing for health's sake. Bestow on me, I pray, favour by your

potency, that in all things, whatsoever I do according to
your will, or for whatsoever man I prescribe, ye may
have favourable issues and most speedy result. That I
may ever be allowed, with the favour of your majesty,
to gather you . . . and I shall set forth the produce of
the fields for you and return thanks through the name of
the Mother who ordained your birth.

E.4.b) Explanatory Details

The expression "the goodwill of him on whom the art of medicine
was bestowed" in both this version and that of Singer (see below)
refers to the physician.

Duff and Duff added a footnote to their translation, explaining that
"He to whom the healing art is entrusted" is the Roman god Apollo
(imported from the Greek pantheon with a change of name from
Apollon). However, Sandys (1910: 715-716) lists as Roman deities
associated with healing the god Apollo, several gods and goddesses he
did not name, and these goddesses: Salus, Carna, Lucina, and
Carmenta. So it is not obvious that Apollo is *the* Roman god of healing.

The lack of an explicit name must also to be considered. The
Romans (and Greeks) were in the habit of naming their deities when
invoking them and then listing attributes (McEnerny, 1983: 178).
Therefore it is unlikely that a Roman would have invoked any of their
healing deities indirectly, aside from the need to say which god or
goddess they intend to invoke.

E.4.c) Analysis

So in the supplication, the speaker is adding his personal psychic
energy to that of the spirit of the medicinal herb and the great Earth
goddess. This is common in magical spells, and there is another
example of it in part of the land-healing spell in the chapter on
directly-documented evidence of Earþ worship.

Also notice that the two parts are tied together with two common
themes: (1) an Earth goddess named for soil and (2) humane concern.

The supplication begins with an appeal to the supreme deity, the
herb to be harvested is: "Ye who were engendered by Mother Earth
and given (as)...gift to all", and the concluding sentence again refers
to "the Mother who ordained your birth".

Also, both parts of the prayer emphasize the value of the Earth
deity's care for mankind.

And despite the Latin language, the prayer did not originate in
Roman-pagan nor Catholic culture.

E.5) Singer's Version

Because Singer's translation (1920: 32-33) is based on a manuscript that differs from the other four, I have reproduced his translation also. The punctuation and capitalization have been edited, and the boundary between invocation poetry and supplication prose marked, but the dialect, paragraphing, spelling, and grammar are Singer's.

Earth, divine goddess, Mother Nature, who generatest all things and bringest forth anew the sun which thou hast given to the nations, Guardian of sky and sea and of all gods and powers; through thy power all nature falls silent and then sinks in sleep. And again thou bringest back the light and chasest away night, and yet again thou coverest us most securely with thy shades. Thou dost contain chaos infinite, yea and winds and showers and storms: thou sendest them out when thou wilt and causest the seas to roar; thou chasest away the sun and arousest the storm. Again when thou wilt thou sendest forth the joyous day and givest the nourishment of life with thy eternal surety. And when the soul departs to thee we return. Thou indeed art duly called great Mother of the Gods; thou conquerest by thy divine name. Thou art the source of the strength of nations and of gods, without thee nothing can be brought to perfection or be born. Thou art great, queen of the gods! Goddess, I adore thee as divine! I call upon thy name; be pleased to grant that which I ask thee, so shall I give thanks to thee, goddess, with due faith.
=== ===
Hear, I beseech thee, and be favourable to my prayer. Whatsoever herb thy power dost produce, give, I pray, with goodwill to all nations to save them and grant me this, my medicine. Come to me with thy powers, and howsoever I may use them may they have good success, and to whomsoever I may give them. Whatever thou dost grant, may it prosper. To thee all things return. Those who rightly receive these herbs from me, do thou make them whole, goddess, I beseech thee; I

pray thee as a suppliant that by thy majesty thou grant this to me.

Now I make intercession to you, all ye powers and herbs and to your majesty; ye whom earth, parent of all, hath produced and given as a medicine of health to all nations and hath put majesty upon you, be I pray you the greatest help to the human race. This I pray and beseech from you, be present here with your virtues, for She who created you hath Herself promised that I may gather you with the goodwill of him on whom the art of medicine was bestowed and grant for health's sake good medicine by grace of your powers.

I pray, grant me through your virtue that whatsoe'er is wrought by me through you may have in all its powers a good and speedy effect and good success and that I may always be permitted with the favour of your majesty to gather you with my hands and to glean your fruits: so shall I give thanks to you in the name of that majesty which ordained your birth.

E.5.a) Persistence of Polytheism

The manuscript Singer (1920) used for this translation, MS Harley 1585, pages 12 and 13, shows two drawings depicting physicians, and he refers to other drawings of persons in his article. Singer points out that such drawings of untonsured male physicians accompanied by documentation of Pagan rites have an important implication. That is, in the late 1100's some places in Europe still had male doctors who were not monks nor nuns, but instead traditional polytheists.

Singer's primary focus is magic and medicine England, but he analyzes evidence that Europe in general still had literate polytheistic intellectuals and physicians at the close of the early middle age.

E.6) Conclusions regarding the Herb-Gatherer's Prayer

The Earth goddess in the first prayer is an example of a supreme deity. Roman and Greek religion are sufficiently well documented to support the conclusion that this prayer clearly goes beyond the tendencies in Earth religion shown by the literature of the "classics". She is even more primal, independent, and powerful than any Roman or Greek goddess. She appears in the second component of the prayer as the creator of a medicinal plant, but She does not seem to be

specialized except that She alone is the unwed head of the family, the Mighty Being, and the Queen of Deities.

Therefore, this prayer refers to an Earth goddess of some less-well-documented culture.

This is also a deity who benefits fully from the emotional attachment many persons have for their host planet.

F) Overall Conclusions

The specimens of Earth-goddess prayers presented in this appendix appear in order of the national culture of the goddesses addressed (Roman, Greek, unknown) and of the power implied.

These specimens support arguments in substantive chapters, but when considered in together they also support an overall conclusion regarding methods.

What is most interesting overall is the continuum of power implied by the collection of these specimens. The first prayer comes from a story of conflicts among deities, so that the parties partially cancel each other out, and the gratitude of the hero of the story seems a bit confused. The second prayer depicts just one Earth goddess, but She is described only as part of a team of deities and that team is also hindered by conflict among members of the team. The third prayer implies a (Greek) goddess who might be able to act on Her own, but in the surviving text it is male deity who is asked to give blessings. The fourth prayer, also to a Greek Earth goddess, shows a wight able to act on Her own as a supporter of life and death, and as a factor in human afterlife. The two versions of the fifth prayer invoke and supplicate a pinnacle deity in an unspecified cult's pantheon.

Thus, in addition to supplementing chapters with specific data, these specimens lead us from an Earth goddess embedded in a pantheon consisting of multiple, independent, conflicting deities to a an Earth goddess in a pantheon organized by the presence of a supreme deity.

In turn, this implies that the student of religion should be careful to avoid inferring too strong a parallel between "classical" religion and religions native to northern Europe.

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