

Ludwig Fahrenkrog, the Germanic Faith Community, and Balder Rising

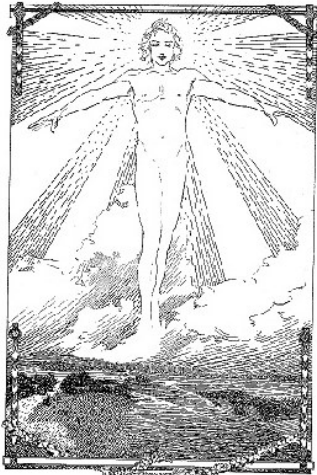
By

Robert Blumetti

From time to time, we get questions about the graphic at the top of our Web page, vriology.org—whether the image of Balder is my own creation, or some modern rendition of what Balder looks like. The truth is, I cut and pasted it from the image on the left of the three paintings by late 19th-early 20th century artist Ludwig Fahrenkrog shown below. He painted at least three versions of “Balder Rising,” as he termed the images.



The banner of the Folk Faith of Balder Rising



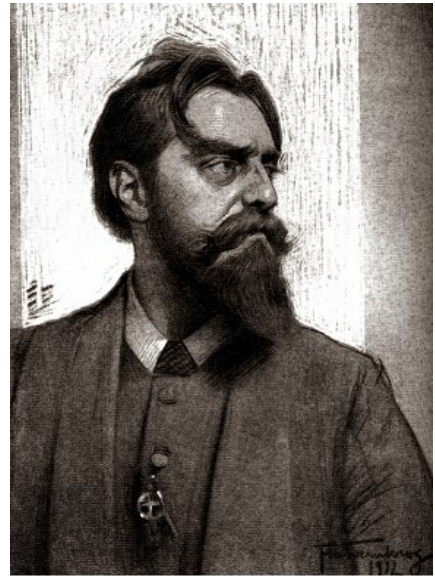
19th Century renditions of "Balder Rising" by Ludwig Fahrenkrog

Ludwig Fahrenkrog was an amazing man. He sought to resurrect a modern-day Germanic heathen religious movement, using the Lore, especially the Edda, as the foundation of a new heathen religion, but updating it to fit the world of the 19th-20th centuries. He wanted to reforge the broken bond between the Germanic folk and the Gods of their ancestors, and make it relevant to the Germanic peoples of his time. He wanted a heathenism that modern-day people

could once again believe, and knew it could not be a reconstruction of a bygone world that died out 900 years ago. He would have to fight hard for his vision, but in the end, both he and those whom we would call “reconstructionists” today were outlawed by the Nazis, and their attempt at reviving heathenism was aborted by the Third Reich.

Fahrenkrog was born in Rendsburg, Prussia, not far from the Danish border, in 1867 (20 October). He was a German writer, playwright and artist. He started his career as an artist in his youth, and attended the Berlin Royal Art Academy before being appointed a professor in 1913. From 1898 to 1931, he taught at the School of Arts and Crafts in Bremen. But he is most known for his involvement in the founding of a series of folkish religious groups in the early 20th century. They soon became part of a movement that its adherents referred to as a Germanic religious community.

Trained in the classical tradition, Fahrenkrog had a successful career as an artist. He became a professor of art in 1913, and was later appointed a guest professorship at Dakota University in 1925. In 1928 he received first prize at the Grand Palace exhibition in Munich. His style, however, is more dependent on Art Nouveau and Symbolist influences than on the classical tradition. In an article on Fahrenkrog’s work, Marcus Wolff points to “his insistence on the religious nature and mission of art.” The “religious mission” in question is the revival of the pre-Christian Germanic heathen faith and the rejection of Christianity. This soon became the primary theme in most of his paintings, such as Lucifer’s *Lossage von Gott* (“Lucifer’s Renunciation of God”) in 1898.



**A self-portrait of
Ludwig Fahrenkrog**

It's important to know that he did not name the painting “*Satan’s Renunciation of God*” but *Lucifer’s*. Lucifer (“Light-Bearer”) is the name of the Roman God who was a seeker of knowledge. He could transform himself into a serpent. It was this Roman God who appeared to Adam and Eve in Eden, in the form of a serpent, tempting them to eat from the *fruit of the tree of knowledge*. In the Hebrew Old testament, Satan is not associated with the Serpent in the Garden, nor is he the devil. He is counted among the angels. It was only in the “Christian” New Testament that Satan was associated with Lucifer and both names were used as labels for the devil.

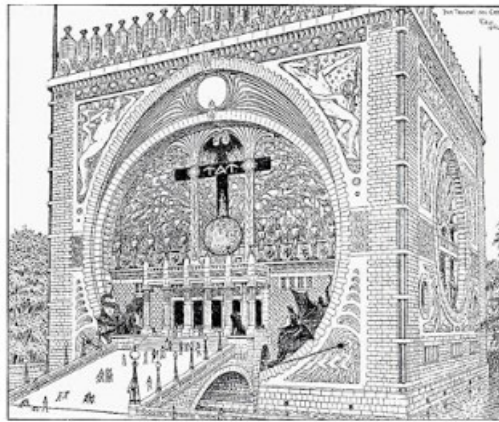
The meaning of all this is simple to perceive if one has the power of Ansuz. The tree of knowledge is the Yggdrasil the serpent is Odin (who transforms himself into a serpent in his quest to obtain the Mead of Knowledge). Odin gave us some of this mead so that we might obtain God-hood—a goal forbidden by the Semitic God Jehovah.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Fahrenkrog was his enormous many-sidedness: not only was he a very considerable painter, he was also a philosopher, playwright and poet, who published extensively throughout his life—for example, seven volumes titled *Gott im Wandel*

der Zeiten (God through the ages) illustrated by his own paintings and including poems and plays of his own. In 1908 he founded the *Germanische Glaubens Gemeinschaft* (Germanic Religious Society). Hugo Hoppener, known as Fidus, another distinguished artist of the period, was a prominent member of this Society and also a life-long friend. Fahrenkrog was not motivated by politics or theories of racial supremacy. He was a deeply religious man but found orthodox religions hollow and empty. They did not speak to his Germanic soul.

The Germanic Faith Community

The first group started by Fahrenkrog was the *Deutscher Bund für Persönlichkeitskultur* (German League for the Culture of the Personality), which also supported a publication called *Mehr Licht!* (“More Light!”, the famous last words of Goethe). He was also involved with the *Deutsche Religionsgemeinschaft* (German Religious Community or DRG), which would change its name several times, first in 1912 to *Germanische-Deutsche Religionsgemeinschaft* (Germanic-German Religious Community or GDRG), then in 1915, following a split in the membership, to the *Deutschgläubige Gemeinschaft* (Association of the German Faithful or DGG). Fahrenkrog remained with the GDRG after several members left following disagreements over the place of the old Germanic gods and the inclusion of a partly Jewish member, and shortly thereafter the group changed its name to the *Germanische Glaubens Gemeinschaft* (Germanic Faith-Community—GGG), its final form. In 1916, the group set out ten points of common belief which they later published in *Das Deutsche Buch* (The German



Fahrenkrog's design for a temple for the Germanic Faith Community

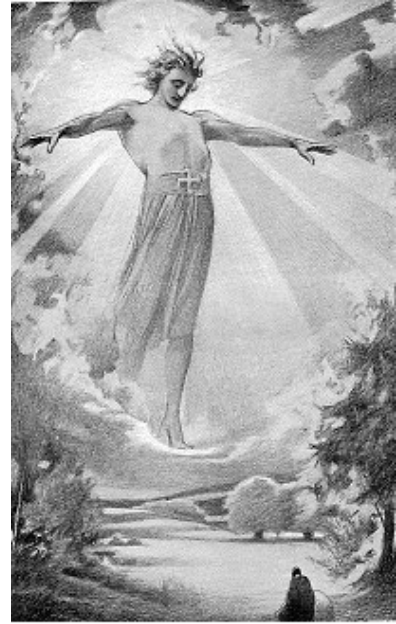
Book).

In 1923, Fahrenkrog gave a speech that emphasized the non-political nature of GGG, and stated the goal of “ascent and united will of all Germanic people.” By this time, the GG had grown and had members in several neighboring countries besides Germany. There were plans for further growth which included the building of a Germanic temple designed by Fahrenkrog's stepson. However, the temple's construction was obstructed by protests from several local Christian groups. Due to disagreement among GGG members, the project was never completed.

In 1925, Fahrenkrog and Adolf Kroll, another early member, argued over the role that the Edda should play in the group's mythology. Fahrenkrog believed that the GGG should evolve a new mythos incorporating but not dependent upon the Edda; Kroll (who today would be described as a "reconstructionist") argued that this was disloyal to the old Germanic myths.

Fahrenkrog used many runic symbols in his art work, including Thor's hammer and the swastika.

Many of Fahrenkrog's woodcuts and paintings have themes concerning a revival of Germanic heathenism. Fahrenkrog relied heavily on Balder (Baldur) as a figure of this revival. His many paintings and drawings of Balder rising out of the countryside as a force of rebirth is the source of inspiration for the image used on the Web site of the Folk Faith of Balder Rising. Fahrenkrog used this image of Balder over and over. He rightly saw Balder as Odin's instrument of an Odinic revival. As in the image of Balder Rising to the right, in the banner shown at the beginning of this essay I incorporated rays of light, a background of the heavens, and at the bottom, a human being inspired by the rising Balder Force.



Rendition of Balder Rising by
Ludwig Fahrenkrog

One of his most important plays was *Baldur*. It was based on Matthew Arnold's long poem, *Balder Dead*. The play was first performed in 1912 in the Bergtheater in the Harz Mountains of Lower Saxony.

The GGG under the Third Reich

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they immediately set about outlawing almost all occult, heathen and other spiritual groups not affiliated with the party. The GGG was able to survive due to Fahrenkrog's international status as an artist. Nevertheless, the Nazis restricted his activities. The GGG could no longer hold public meetings, and after 1938 could no longer use the swastika, which the GGG had been using as its symbol since 1908.

Fahrenkrog himself was reluctant to use the greeting "Heil Hitler!" in letters, and as a result never gained any recognition by the NSDAP. It has been assumed that this is the way he wanted it, and that he refused to be associated with National Socialism. He insisted the GGG was a religious movement and had nothing to do with politics. In 1934 an exhibit of his paintings was prohibited by the Ministry of Propaganda.

He was also disliked by the National Socialists due to his willingness to let individuals who were half Jewish to join his organizations. Unlike so many heathens, Fahrenkrog survived the Third Reich and died in 1952 (27 October).



The Holy Light



The Allfater



The Light of the Black Sun

The German Soul (Deutsch Seele)

by Ludwig Fahrenkrog, 1907

A suggestively Oriental pomp, always zealous for its absolutes, lies within the soul and places in subjection the receptive, faith-rich fervor of the young German. Are you, German soul, not rich enough to build your sanctuary out of your own primal possessions?

Oriental! With that I mean Moses with his “Thou shalt not!”; or Jesus’ “No man can serve two masters,” meaning either/or, God or Mammon; or St. Paul’s inflexible “There is no other name given us under heaven by which we can be saved!” Remember also the Pope’s infallibility in the matters of the human soul. It repeats in mandatory fanaticism to the eternally questing soul an inexorable, rigid “It is so!” And the stronger the soul relies on this, in trust and faith, the sooner it is placed in subjection by means of hypnosis.

The Germanic is subjugated to the Oriental. He is obliged to be, since his rich religious sensibilities still seek for answers in the east. Here they will be given to him. He must remain in subjection like a clever, curious child, that in looking at endless wonders cannot yet answer for himself and half in slumber and dream plays with giant-images and fog-elves, and depends on those humans he regards as mature and wise. Of himself the Germanic wouldn't be as bold or arrogant enough to allege and proclaim a universal “It is so!” He trusted the zealous foreigner — and was truer to the foreign words than their preachers, as the German soul with the coming of Martin Luther awoke and with fervor and might made protest, “Here I stand, I can do no other!” That was the voice of eternity, the sound of religious depth, a compulsion from God. Luther shook off the infallibility of the Romans; but in seeking a balance of power he set up another: the infallibility of the Bible – the revealed word of God of the Orient.

If only he had discovered the soul as the last best and deepest place of divine revelation, and the human soul as the determining law of a religious vision, that after all can give no word other than that which is living in it! — Well, anyway. Since Luther's day Germany's soul began to free itself from alienating oriental myth and sought its Self.

Is not every true science a striving for truth? Every true word — even when it has dogmas and priests lined up against it — a divine word? Did not Jesus also speak of a divine truth when he said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you! — not in that built with hands!"

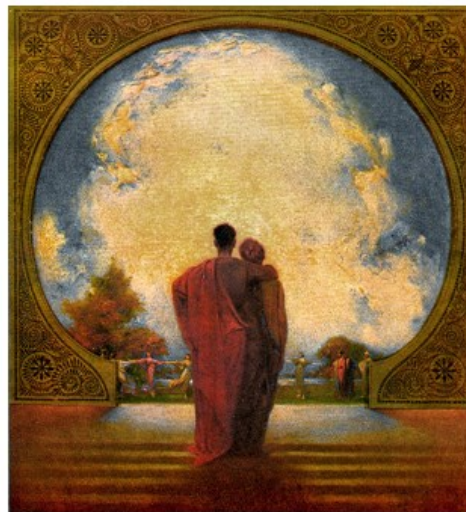
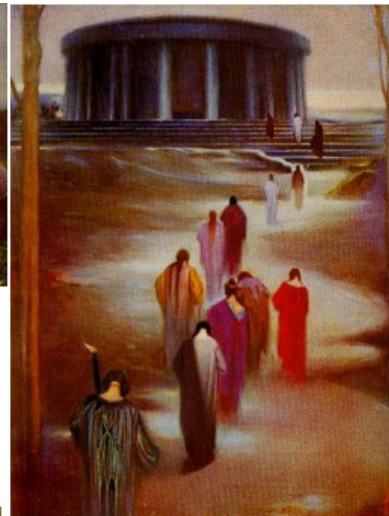
We stand at the turning-point to an earlier era. It is like when a person casts off an old and familiar garment. Fleeing frippery, the soul wants to be simple — to be naked.

Humans are filled with embarrassment at their own soul, and threads which spin across from the soul's womb.



The Holy Hour -- die heilige stunde -- 1918

The Temple of Science -- Der Tempel des Schweigens →



The Golden Gate --- Der Goldene Tor -- 1913



Earth and Sun, Earth and Heaven, Balder and Gerde --- Erde und Sonne, Himmel und Erde, Baldur und Gerda -- 1922

There is a great deal of truth in Fahrenkrog's words when he quotes Jesus saying: "The kingdom of heaven is within you!" Fahrenkrog was referring to the Folk's Soul, and the God that gave birth to it. The essence of Fahrenkrog's message and the message of the entire Germanic Faith Community was the reality of the group Soul. This is not simple to understand, especially if we are brought up within a religion that denies the existence of the group Soul. Let me try to explain.

Even a Folk has a Soul—a real collective Soul. It is at its core a primitive impulse which first gave rise to it, and which survives from generation to generation, even if the Folk dies. We could call this core the Folk Spirit. The Spirit may be a God who gave birth to the Folk. For the Germanic Folk it was Odin. Around this core there is the Folk Soul. This is developed through the incarnation of the Spirit. The Soul is in a sense produced by the body or the biological material, for it depends upon the physical experiences which build up over generations. Thus the Folk Soul is produced by externals operating on the spiritual-biological (the sum total of all the flesh-and-bone members of the group who have lived, live and will live).

From this we may suggest that mixture with other folks who are unable to be assimilated biologically and thus spiritually, can pollute both the folk body and folk soul—even kill them. But it can never destroy the folk spirit. The spirits of folks which have ceased to incarnate for whatever reason continue to exist in the spiritual world and act on ours as demons or Gods through dreams or urges, sending ideas to the chosen mediums.

Individual souls are produced out of the Folk Soul by the specialization which happens to that Folk Soul by the unique factors of birth on an individual, plus the accidents or events of his life history.

The individual spirit was sown in a human female once upon a time by a God's intercourse with her. That God grows the Folk through cultivating lineages within the Folk, through which develop the talents bequeathed to that line from the God. Thus some families turn out criminals and others heroes.

We must conceive of the soul as material, though due to its fineness, it seems to us a Light. We must also conceive of spirit in the same way, and to this degree, more refined and possibly existing in a totally different dimension.

As the folk absorbs individuals from outside itself, the Soul will either grow in strength or become perverted, according to the nature of the individuals absorbed. If these outsiders are spiritually similar, they will be absorbed both physically and spiritually. But if these outsiders are too alien in physical material, and especially in their spiritual beat, the harmonic beat of the soul is no longer able to express the essence of its God. This is the essence behind the folkish philosophy, which seeks to conserve features typical of one's own nation and people, and to resist the material and spiritual influences of other nations and other peoples.