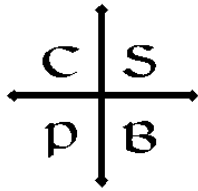


W I Ð U K I ņ Ð



THE  
CODEX  
OF THE  
SWORD

ARTUR BALDER

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*Widukind - The Codex of the Sword*

*For Maaïke Vanderweeën*

*I saw a book in the right hand  
of the One Seated on the Throne.  
It was written on both sides,  
fastened with seven seals.  
I also saw a powerful Angel,  
calling out in a voice like thunder,  
"Is there anyone who can open the book,  
who can break its seals?"  
And there was no one  
—no one in Heaven, no one on earth,  
no one from the underworld—  
able to open the book and to read it.*

*Apocalypse,  
5<sup>th</sup> Revelation*

NOTE

Successive and confusing translations of Angus of Metz's latin manuscript, depict ancient events that took place in the autumn of that time of the Early Middle Ages that the British historians have come to call the Dark Ages. This happens to be a discovery that I would rather keep under wraps, so as not to betray my own promise to those who have allowed me to read and micro-film his writings.

Indeed, the events described by a humble monk from the Benedictine order took place in the shadows of the 8th Century. Angus of Metz joined an expedition whose purpose was to evangelize the heathen sections of Northern Europe in the footsteps of St. Boniface. It is an age that suffers from the absence of historical sources. These elements elicit a certain charm in the reader of our present century.

For Europe, that was the Early Middle Age in which the Carolingian dynasty, which ended up shaping a Christian and Germanic empire, decided to unite the both secular and religious powers. However, in order to reach that *armonia mundi*, which boasted the ideal place on earth to be a reflection of the harmony of the celestial spheres, the empire should face the threat of the heathens and the advent of the Antichrist (whose arrival was expected for the dreaded

year 1000). And it required not only a confrontation with the pagan peoples of the north and the east, but also their profound evangelization. This led to the Saxon Wars (among other confrontations) which lasted more than thirty years on the northern border of Austrasia, with many acts of cruelty committed against their ignorant, yet rebellious people.

Favored by its highly unusual elements, the story of Angus is a legacy that, while arguably (and rightly so) for some scholars, it will be interesting to many readers - those curious of historical adventure and medieval literature. He claims to have a first hand knowledge of the events. Angus of Metz was present on both sides of the religious border that tortuously divided Europe, and that converted the land into pasture of hunger and war, where the saxons, after repeated deportations, could finally sing in unison, with the rest of the empire, the christian *Credo in unum Deum...*

THE TRANSLATOR

THE  
CODEX  
OF THE  
SWORD

RES GESTAE SAXONICAE

CODEX PRIMUS



PROLOGUE

May God forgive me for not fulfilling so many of his sacred precepts by devoting the time he has allowed me for such memories, but it is in this way that I testify and warn others with all that these humble verses I dictate. They may be forbidden by divine grace, because I paid attention to his voice rather than spend, as a devout monk, all my thoughts to the *Verbum Verum*, which is God. I disdained the uncertain fate, the loss that the Providence dragged me to, but it is at the end of my life as sinner that I have realized the value of the destiny that the Lord entrusts upon us. And no matter how unwonted it may seem once it is revealed to us, it is that vision that has driven the soft feather, grasped by my hand, until the very last page of this manuscript...

The owner of such voice, had stopped listening to anyone in his own deliriousness, but many were those who paid attention to his word inside and outside the borders of the unified Carolingian Kingdom. I'd rather not tamper with his name at the moment since it is considered to be a bad omen to good writing (the rules of which I try to follow whilst being aware of my own clumsiness and ignorance in such an art, and that others have made so great throughout the centuries that precede me, with a dark cadence, from the beginning of time, when there

was only The Word, and The Word was God), then His voice was revered among the heathen, so the church fathers had demanded his excommunication years ago by accusing him of being a renegade simonist and an arrogant heretic. He was said to be an emissary of Satan in secret pact with the darkness, which served to feed a desire apparently incontrovertible and oriented with great force towards evil.

However, blessed by his conversation, even if this may weigh upon my soul at the gates of death, I could rebuild, moment to moment, the complicated web of memories, where many threads were missing or broken, escaping my experiences and complicating the plot. This is the reason why (though not the only one!) the subject and person telling this tale changes throughout the three parts of the parchment you are holding in your hands, good reader. It is divided in: the Book of Hours, the *Folia*, and the different *Libri*. All of them refer to what happened after the last mission during the third quarter of the eighth century, to return at the end of the Book of Hours, entrusting the number of perfection of God's grace to send a breath of redemption on the appalling events contained in its threefold form that you, unwary reader, are about to read. But I must warn you, my unknown friend, of the danger this represents, since I must dissuade you of all further reading if your Christian faith is not sufficiently robust – such are the depths of the usurping heresy that will be here described.

During those years I became, under the power of he whose voice I recall but whose name I shall eclipse, the instructor of a dark angel called Widukind. I was a disciple of the heretical force who dominated me and my weak spirit; though this does not excuse the magnitude of my sin. But before that, long before the betrayals and killings, loves and disappointments, before the long war that I will objectively chronicle moment to moment, before the temple of the heretical order was erected with stone and upon the sweat of countless foreheads in a remote corner of the unknown world... before all these vicissitudes there were nine men, seven pilgrims and three missionaries. In the same manner: before becoming a bloody rebel, Widukind was a child, and I his instructor, to the glory and the pain of many others. When that mission was about to leave, I did not think something like that could be possible. Once it was running into the shadows, all of us believed that the mission was nothing but the prayer of a divine force, heading into exile through the pagan world, beyond all the waters that separate and all the winds that carry voices speaking ominous vulgar languages, destined to die in front of the melody that comes from the Holy Word, and whose words are recorded with patience by monks in the libraries of our monasteries.

There was talk, even before the departure, about a noble Sword, whose concept surpassed our earthly understanding, since it was like a

relic brought from the pinnacle of the Hiperunanium himself. Unique, in that it deserved the highest of degrees. It gave form to those molds from which the banal, imperfect, and ungodly reproductions that are welded by the blacksmiths of the earth are removed. Many are the tests of multiplicity in the perishable world, but unique are the ideas in the heaven of perfection shaped by His hand. That was the Sword - The Almighty's. So I was told when I accepted the proposition of my mentor. The nine monks accompanied us, confident in the will of God. The seven spiritual pilgrims were on their way, expecting the holy light. The three missionaries felt that they had been dazzled in Rome with the grace that there blesses those who come to their churches, and that they handled the Sword of the Almighty, the True One, which is invisible but ardent, that which slain the serpent of lust and melts the steel of ignorance in the minds of men, because it is filled with fire.

But please stop, tongue, and stay tied before complicating matters any further! These events are confusing and disturbing enough and I do not want to lose the reader in this sea of signs that is my memory!

I find it difficult, so many years later, to give credit to my memories as well as those of others that I loaned from to complete the story. I feel shamed and disgraced for the many acts, so devious to the eyes of virtue, that I almost drowned, dragged through the uncertain tides of that tempestuous ocean known as Providence.

Although that's how it happened: being a novice intended only to God, in the Benedictine rule of the monastery of Metz, I stopped being one for a long time, during which I never left the faith that fueled the secret fire of my earliest youth; though I paid no attention to the customs, rituals and duties in order to follow the good path I should have stayed on, which can become a thorny one for most mortals. This is proof against the tempting presence of Satan, which turns everything into evil with a thousand tricks. This is why during the *Libri*, the second part of the *Res Gestae* text, person and subject change: since I declare it to be terrible and foreign to my true calling the way I was forced to live. It is only by changing these voices that I feel some relief in the confession of all my sins.

It was in the Northern Lands, so arduously conquered by the Franks and their sacred emperor Charlemagne, that I was to witness how they preached, not verses by holy men, but a heresy that would bring fatal consequences, rather than to promote the gentleness of these animals, who were so far from the hand of God. I will stop my own hand for now, and I will not write any further about that. I will not say anything further about the temple, or about the heretical gospel to which I refer - a book of shadows whose existence unleashed a bloody war, dictated by the voice of a heretic.

I will however write, so that I can place the reader in the tumultuous events of those decades, that the pious Pope Stephen III, who had

succeeded the great Paul I, signed, during the third quarter of the century, the partnerships between the Church and the Germanic prince Pippin the Short, father of Charlemagne and Carloman. They defended Rome from the threat of the Lombards' greed and from the nefarious Greeks, whose empire of the East was enacting the most terrible iconoclasm. It is about the same that I write, because it is a horrible heretical disease that has threatened our aesthetic integrity in the West. How strongly the resilient schism made his way to the fountains of Rome and the wonders of Italy, hidden behind the separatist sects that promulgated iconoclastic lies as inevitable, and how hard they tried to destroy the images of the most devout Christianity throughout the West, from the banks of the Danube to the Rhine, and beyond, in the monasteries of Wessex, Scotland and Hibernia. The good Pope had condemned those currents as heretical, capturing its infiltrators, many of whom came from the shadows of that villainous bilge, dishonest liars and destroyers of bliss who call themselves children of the church in the East.

In turn, it should be remembered that the German princes were elected by the will of Pepin *the Short*, Mayor of the Kingdom of the Franks, so that his two sons were invested as kings during a confusing period of time in the succeeding of the dynasty. Rome accepted the last will of Pepin *the Short*, until the champion emerged as the chosen one and as protector of Christendom, elevated to the greatness of Em-

peror of the Franks. But all of this happened much later.

At that time I was a novice and had not known my father or my mother. As a newborn, I was picked, it was told to me, a cold morning along the road leading to the gate of the monastery of Metz by one of the assistants of the abbe's cellarer. I was possibly left there by my poor mother, sinful soul which nevertheless I forgive, since I do not know the hardships that forced her to act this way. I was adopted by the monastery and taken under its wing, and baptized with the generous name that later signs this manuscript. However, I had found in the image of the Virgin Mary the most beautiful of all possible mothers, because she is the mother of all mothers and her love, though silent, talked to me and hugged me during my childhood in the monastery of Metz.

There I was ordained and considered suitable for the contemplative life as my penchant for solitude, my love for faith, my votes, and my insatiable need to approach the Almighty through learning was beloved by the monks. I became Bernard of Mortrand's assistant, a scholar who ran the monastery's library, and soon learned to read the signs of the codes, the alphabet of the Greeks and even that one of the Arabs. They were just images of images, symbols of symbols that I played with in my mind every night, paraphrasing them in a hundred ways, because they were my toys. Though I must admit that at the age of sixteen, I had such a passion

for knowledge that it awoke the fear of my teacher and also others, who rightly so, felt that my fervor was becoming an unhealthy obsession. In that moment, they decided to calm me with another valuable activity for the Catholic Church, my only mother, to avoid the lust and lasciviousness of knowledge. That was how I was forbidden to read in libraries and accompanied Bernard as clerk in the carrying out of a mission that took us to the new abbeys in the north. At last, I was interviewed by chance at Cologne by several brothers, who gave me the honor of participating in an expedition of great value to them. That which in the library of Metz had been deemed unhealthy, in the heart of the expedition was considered benign and welcome. It is an example of how the Almighty serves their servants.

The mission required not only for the most devoted brothers to fight ignorance and establish new abbeys, but it also required the skills of workers such as blacksmiths, doctors, servants, penitents and also good scribes and readers. While Rome broke free from the iconoclasts of the Orient, increasingly torn by its own intrigues, the Pope, finding wisdom in his most critical decisions, blessed the expedition to the north of Europe, in order to evangelize wandering savages and heathen possessed folks. They were described to us as the remains of a people who lived in the north, from whom little was known, and from which the dark evils of Satan and agitation on earth were expected. These



were considered to be an invaluable threat to the roots of the Christian faith which had been sowed by the hands of devotees such as Boniface, Apostle of the Germans, when they traced the large map of new abbeys under French control over the territories of Thuringia, Bavaria, Cologne, and the prosperous new bishoprics, all under the hand of the Archbishop of Cologne and the unconditional protection of the princes and kings of the Franks.

For various reasons, among which the Saxons' need of freedom was undoubtedly the most important, during the following years repeated uprisings took place under the leadership of the dark angel that I mentioned before. I became, I will use redundancy in exchange for clarity, his unfair instructor. The boy was called Widukind in the language of the northern shadows and pagan barbarism, a *kenning* that should signify something like a *wolf* in our Frankish language - or even *death*. I do not want to, nor should I anticipate any events, but I will leave a few notes regarding this event, so central to the description of the bloody wars between Charlemagne and the Saxons. It was a war of the most foremost ideas, and behind them all, laid a heretic, and behind him laid a cursed book he himself called the Fifth Gospel.

Vindictive raids were carried out under the command of Widukind, causing severe damages to Christianity, as I describe later in the verses of successive *Libri*, both in their own territory, where the Saxons, without mercy, tried to de-

stroy our Christian symbols with all sorts of violent means. They did the same in the northern regions of the Frankish kingdom, where they burned down the temples and prosecuted the monks to their deaths. Despite of the above, after the victory of Charlemagne, the Frankish lords were able to resume the sacred work of evangelization in the last quarter of the eighth century. But to place the reader of this and other times of old (if any manuscript were to survive the arrival of the Antichrist, whose time is coming!), I can assure you with my testimony that the mission made considerable progress during my early youth until the unfortunate year, numbered 782. Though the rest is well known, as it is part of the glorious history of the Emperor of the Franks; but that was long after that place and time from where some of the deepest roots of my memory grow.

As a young novice, I traveled with my teacher, as he wrote, from the chamber of my order in Metz to the rich lands of the kingdom's most powerful archdiocese, following the great river that had once been both Roman and Germanic border according to the accounts of Tacitus: the Rhine, at the height of the high palaces that the Franks rose in the citadel of Cologne, over the remains of a far more ancient empire that had been cursed several centuries ago by God's will over the damage caused to his Chosen One on Earth. I shuddered under the cloudy shadows that nest, ever flashing, on the summits of its hills. I saw the faces of those men from

heathen lands, the Saxons and the Danes, and was able to read the savage strength in their eyes. They practiced the rite of dark gods, whose changing faces behind hid the ugly claw of the vile Beast, which we call the Antichrist. They lived immersed in an ancient age, devoting all of their faith to steel and darkness. The mission for which I was chosen by Ebo of Cologne, who wielded the evangelizing stick on behalf of the Caput Mundi, was about to redeem the ignorance of the peoples of the north. It was, as it was said, another link in a long chain of broken links, one more step in a long and jagged stone staircase, to which the Benedictines added, with stubborn faith, a new step every two years after the martyrdom of Bonifatius, despite continuing and irreparable losses, burned churches, crumbled walls, and martyred lives.

My faith was great and my inspiration, though not divine, was tenacious. I wanted to participate, despite the serious risk that this entailed, in the Benedictine mission. Even though few were the preachers who returned from their evangelical missions into that ominous heart of darkness, I decided to finally join them. I was moved by my faith in humanity and by my hope for the betterment of mankind. I wanted to discover the exotic truths; those truths that others like to identify with a different name. However, the conquest of the earth, sheltered under the power of an idea so lofty and large, beyond the mere mortal understanding of ignorance, will not be carried out with the methods of youth

and enthusiasm, as we would soon learn, but with the severe force, as my teacher had then said, that wields the Sword of God.

I said goodbye to him on an afternoon that dripped the leaves from the trees, and saw how ruthlessly, riding a mule, Bernard, also sad for our separation, left to Aquitaine, visiting his homeland; would be years until we see again each other. However, I had been chosen for another destination, for the will of men is weak and misleading and apparently make choices, but they are always chosen. Next morning, the expedition set out, crossed the long bridge, and I went with it. The stars still glittered in the dawn. The dark Rhine was calm, its eddies and peaks seemed to say goodbye to us as marked with a warning of indecipherable content. I crossed myself and watched the fog, which closed our vision over wooded hills of dense foliage. The company entered the woods, a misty world in which we, emissaries of God, should be like accurate beams of light that search without fear, even in the glooms, the Heart of Darkness.

Now, so long after and just a step away from death, I would like to stop the time so that I can portray it, illuminating, one by one, the images in this Book of Hours, so that others could see the sights and hear the voices enclosed within, with the benign magic that the Lord has given us through its understanding, until the end of this wayward dying world... When the Chosen One,

such as wool and ivory and pure beryl, shall raise his arms, the lightning and the sharp sickle, and make his call be heard across the heavens, and Four of them ride together to ruin the rest... When their hoofs, like flaming bronze, burn the heaven, break the clouds and loose the chains... When you all will hear a loud trumpet and in the final delirium of the senses, as I learned in my visions of early childhood, the omnipotent voice again that once demanded me: *All what you were to live, write it down in my book!*"

Praise the Lord forever and ever...

Angus of Metz  
circa A. D. 800