

Kirk Thomas
ADF Scholars Guild
Mission Statement
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1. *What role does scholarship play in your personal spirituality?*

One of the things that first attracted me to ADF was the emphasis on scholarship. When I had my epiphany in 2001 and came back to Paganism after a long hiatus of 30 years, I immediately went scouring the shelves of my local bookstores in search of information. After wading through what I can only describe as acres of crap, I almost gave up my search for spirituality. Luckily, I found ADF in time.

While I personally rely quite heavily on my unverifiable, personal experiences, I feel an enormous need to back up as much of it as possible through scholarship. This has led to some unpleasant contradictions in my spiritual practice. For instance, my Patron is Cernunnos – when I first found Him (or should I say, He found me) I only saw Him through the lens of the Wiccan understanding of the God, as that was all I had been able to find. He was, to me at the time, primarily a god of male sexuality, nude with erection rampant. Since then, however, I have been fairly convinced of His chthonic attributes due to Cei Serith's excellent paper. So my perception of the God has shifted to an Underworld God of prosperity, rather than sex.

Since my Cernunnos experience, I have become more willing to change my practices to fit with the scholarship I become aware of. In completing the GSP's 1st Circle, I discovered quite a lot that I had not understood concerning ADF Cosmology. This has enabled me to tailor my practices and liturgical writings more closely to the facts as we currently know them.

2. *Why do you wish to be a Scholar? To be known as a Scholar?*

The more I practice ADF religion, the more important scholarship becomes to me. I am seen as a leader in ADF, and as such, I care very deeply about not leading others astray. The more I can learn, the better I will be as a leader.

I believe that inspiration, tempered by scholarship, is the basis of much that goes on in ADF. I also believe that both are essential for spiritual growth. I have plenty of personal unverified experience, discovered through trance and primal practices. My growing scholarship gives me the ability to make sense of all this inspired information.

There is a part of me that wants to be known as a scholar so that I might be taken seriously in ADF. But with this desire comes responsibility. Respect is a kind of power - it can do great damage if used unwisely. Humility is a virtue I must continue to cultivate.

3. Do you have any personal areas of scholarly interest? What are they? What plans to you have for further investigating them?

So much interests me! I have become fascinated by IE cosmology and think I may end up writing a book, geared towards ADF members, before too long. I am interested in the Celts as an ancient people – their culture, history and religion. And I am also interested in the IE peoples as a whole – especially those things many of the cultures have in common.

Currently, I am pursuing a masters' degree in Celtic Studies (on-line) from the University of Wales in Lampeter. This has already led me to study the Welsh language and explore the lives of the 6th century Welsh saints. What amazes me is how much like the old druids those early saints had to be. In the Lives of the Saints, there are references to saints taking over the magical role of aged druids in the households of kings. I am very interested in discovering the Pagan echoes in early Christianity, to better understand that transitional period. Perhaps we can learn lessons that could apply to us today as we re-create our religion.

4. If you were to teach a class, what would it be? Do you feel you could teach it now? What more would you like to learn so you would feel more comfortable teaching it? What would you teach at an ADF workshop? At a local Pagan shop? To your Grove? To Pagan friends who are not in ADF? To non-Pagan (but accepting) friends?

I am already teaching classes at ADF festivals, for our local Pagan network organization (TAWN) and at other Pagan festivals. I also lead a full day's workshop for my Grove (which I have repeated at another, nearby Grove).

The current class (of a scholarly nature) that I am teaching is ADF cosmology. When teaching to a non-ADF group, I alter it to be IE cosmology, with the ADF parts taking a back seat to everything else.

One thing that I have discovered in doing this is that the more I learn, the less I know. This subject, while fascinating, seems to be a bottomless well of knowledge, and there are times when I feel that I am barely scraping the surface. This feeling also inspires me to find out more about the subject, to read more deeply, as it were, and to search out new sources.

I am also teaching classes of a performance nature, which isn't exactly scholarly. As a trained actor/director, I feel that our clergy needs experience in performance (both as a liturgist and a celebrant) and so I do spend some time on these subjects. I also teach on inspirational topics as well, but am fully aware that these are subjective classes growing out of my life experiences and that they really have little to do with scholarship.

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