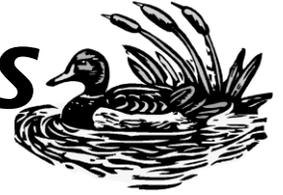




Shining Lakes News

A Newsletter for Shining Lakes Grove, A.D.F.



Fall Equinox 2011

Vol. 18, No. 4

The Poly-Omnipotence Question



The portion given here of Book One of *The Odyssey* is followed by a debate among the gods present in Olympus about the fate of Odysseus, because Poseidon, the god who has exiled him to

an island, isn't present in the hall with them, and wouldn't notice if Odysseus took to the sea because Poseidon was distracted by a festival in his honor.

This is the part of this epic poem that I always think of whenever a Neo-Pagan is talking about our faith and says anything to suggest that our gods are omnipotent or omniscient. The ancient Greeks certainly didn't see their gods in that way, as we can see from this scene—and from, well, pretty much every book of *The Iliad*, in which the gods were constantly distracting each other to favor one side or the other in the Trojan War.

It was the recent tenth anniversary of 9/11 that brought this subject to my attention again, as I read several articles online from pagans who were asking: "How could the gods allow 9/11 to happen?" Which I'm sure is a reasonable question if you believe that our gods are omnipotent and could have prevented it, or that they have the perfect ability to predict the future and could have warned us. And being a priest in an orthopraxic religion, I don't get to go around telling anyone that their concept of divinity is wrong, nor do I really want to. I leave it to others to make the arguments about free will and the other ways the monotheists justify their beliefs.

I only ask: Does it make any sense for us to treat our gods as both many and omnipotent? Just because the Ancients believed something doesn't mean that we need to

believe the same, of course. But I can't help but think of the atheist contributor to About.com who said that polytheism was sillier than monotheism because having more than one omnipotent being would make the universe far more unstable than the one we live in.

And, well, I agree with him.

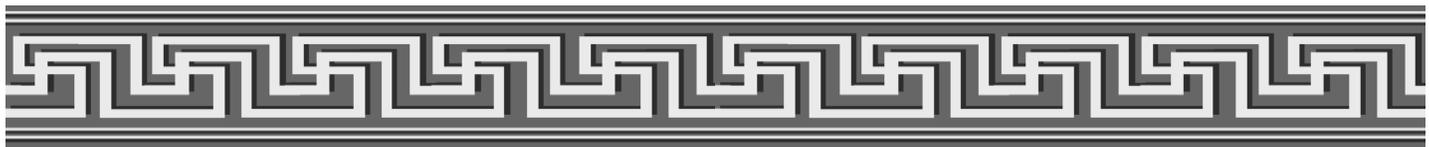
The thought of living in a world of multiple omnipotent deities sounds as unappealing as being trapped in an episode of *Bewitched* (and not even one of the good episodes!). Forget about making ourselves better and healthier and happier; we'd be desperately clinging to our sanity in the face of Random Acts of Deity.

But in a way, I can't blame that atheist for not knowing that there are other ways to view the divine. After all, monotheism is the dominant view among Western religions, and we pagans have not always been getting our own different views of divinity out there.

Howbeit Poseidon had now departed for the distant Ethiopians, the Ethiopians that are sundered in twain, the uttermost of men, abiding some where Hyperion sinks and some where he rises. There he looked to receive his hecatomb of bulls and rams, there he made merry sitting at the feast, but the other gods were gathered in the halls of Olympian Zeus. Then among them the father of gods and men began to speak...

—(Homer's *Odyssey*, translated by S. H. Butcher and Andrew Lang)

Granted, we in ADF end up walking a fine line on any such discussion, since we've defined ourselves as sharing the same practices rather than the same beliefs. So any subset of ADF members is unlikely to have exactly the same opinion on the nature of the gods, and will often have radically different views. Will some of them think that the gods are omnipotent, even if the Ancients we emulate didn't? Quite possibly. But I hope that we can all acknowledge that, whatever the nature of deity is, that's it's still up to us to take an active role in our lives and not rely on the gods to do everything for us, nor blame them for allowing the bad things to happen. It makes more sense to me, even as a wacky Druid priest, to view the gods as powerful allies who can help us to improve ourselves and our world.



If we look to the wisdom of our Ancestors for guidance, then let us remember the ancient Athenian proverb: "In league with Athena set your own hand to work." Or maybe the ancient author and occasional *Bullwinkle* costar Aesop put it best:

A Waggoner was once driving a heavy load along a very muddy way. At last he came to a part of the road where the wheels sank half-way into the mire, and the more the horses pulled, the deeper sank the wheels.

So the Waggoner threw down his whip, and knelt down and prayed to Herakles the Strong. "O Herakles, help me in this my hour of distress," quoth he.

But Herakles appeared to him, and said: "Tut, man, don't sprawl there. Get up and put your shoulder to the wheel."

The gods help them that help themselves.

Yours in service to the Kindreds and the Grove,
Rev. Rob Henderson, Senior Druid

The End of an Era

As many of you have heard by now, Don Botsford passed away on June 27th. The fact that he lived to age 82 speaks well for the healthy lifestyle he maintained for himself and encouraged in others. And all of us who have attended any SLG ritual held on his nature preserve during the last seventeen years have seen the results of his efforts to maintain a piece of wild forest on the edge of a city. Even though he wasn't a religious man, Don saw in our group a shared interest in nature, and he was always happy to share stories of the many animals and plants he encountered there. And our Grove, particularly our old Naturalists' Guild, helped him to tend that land, and learn a few things in the process.

Sadly, with his passing may also come the end of the preserve. The executor of Don's will has told me that the property is in the process of being sold. The development rights for about half of the property (including our nemeton) have been sold to Scio Township and Ann Arbor, so that part of the property will remain as it is now. But there's no reason for us to think that the new owners, whoever they may be, will allow us to continue holding our rituals there. It looks very unlikely that the property will be sold before November, so we're planning to hold our Samhain rituals there as usual. But for next year's rituals, we're most likely going to have to find a new place in the area to hold them. Please give us any suggestions that you may have.

It occurred to me today, as I was getting the fire circle ready for Fire Watch, that it was eighteen years ago this month that ADF official confirmed our protogrove status. Perhaps it's appropriate that now, as we turn eighteen, we need to find a new place to live, so to speak.

In the meantime, I hope that everyone will join us for one last Samhain at the site that has meant so much to us for so many years.

Yours in service to the Kindreds and the Grove,
Rev. Rob Henderson, Senior Druid

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Grove Calendar: Fall Equinox to Yule

Social Events

Coffee Hour: Join us for our monthly discussion of interesting topics. *10/28, 11/18, 12/9, 7-10 pm at Sweetwaters*

Meetings

SLG Business Meeting: Discussion of general business and setting of the calendar. *10/11, 11/8, 12/13, 7-9 at Sweetwaters*

Helping the Huron

River Roundup: Collect water and insect samples from streams in the rivershed. Sponsored by the Huron River Watershed Council. (You must register in advance for this! jfrenzel@hrwc.org or 734-769-5971) *10/8, 9 am-3pm or 11 am-5pm, meet at NEW Center*

Bug ID Day: Count the insect samples we collected from streams in the rivershed. Sponsored by the Huron River Watershed Council. (You must register in advance for this! jfrenzel@hrwc.org or 734-769-5971) *10/16, 12-3 pm or 2-5 pm, meet at NEW Center*

Rituals

An Bruane: Rituals and advanced spiritual exploration for those who wish to go beyond the standard High Day rites. Members only, please. *11/1, 11/29, 7-9 pm at Rob's*

Liturgists' Roundtable—Ritual Planning: Help us plan our Samhain and Yule rituals. All welcome. *10/25, 12/6, 7-9 pm at Rod/Liz's*

Fire Lighting Ceremony: We gather together to kindle the hearth fire and take it to our homes, to tend through the night and bring to the ritual. We will also do craft projects for the next day's ritual. *12/17, 7 pm at Rod/Liz's*

Yule Rite: Join us as we honor Danu and Bel, our primal mother and father deities. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. *12/18, 2-5 pm at ICC Ed Center*

Public Service

CROP Walk: Join us as we help raise funds for local charities! For more info: <http://www.icpj.net/program-areas/hunger/crop/> *10/2, 2 pm at Bethlehem United Church of Christ*



Modern Druidry

Living the Ancient Ways in Today's World

A three-hour class on the practices and traditions of Shining Lakes Grove and Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF), led by SLG Senior Druid Rob Henderson. Find out how we recreate the traditions of the ancient Indo-European cultures in a modern context.

Topics include: ADF ritual / SLG cosmology / basic meditation/ home shrine and rituals.

The class will be held at 11623 Lisa Lori Lane in South Lyon from 4 to 7 pm. The class costs \$5, please pre-register at 734-277-1897 or robh@shininglakes.org

Samhain Weekend

November 4th and 5th
Botsford Recreational Preserve
3015 Miller Rd., Ann Arbor

Two days of rituals, workshops, and celebration!

Schedule:

Friday

7 PM: Fire Lighting Ritual

8 PM: Swearing In of the New Leadership Council

9 PM: Hellenic Ritual

Saturday

1 PM: craft workshop

2 to 4 PM: Samhain Afternoon Ritual: Join us as we celebrate the reunion of our tribal father Lugh and our river goddess Ana. This ritual will feature a craft project, and is suitable for all ages. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite.

4 to 5 PM: workshop (topic tba)

5 to 6 PM: Ritual Prep

6 to 8:30 PM: Samhain Evening Ritual: Join us as we honor the Ancestors and Mannanan, our god of the Otherworld. This ritual uses themes of death and rebirth, and may not be suitable for young children.

8:30 to 10 PM: Ancestor Dinner. Bring your ancestors' favorite dish to share!

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| September 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | October 1 |
| 2 2 pm CROP Walk Bethlehem Ch. | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 9-3 or 11-5 River Roundup NEW Center |
| 9 | 10 | 11 7-9 Business Mtg. Sweetwaters | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 SWEETEST DAY |
| 16 12-3 or 2-5 Bug ID Day NEW Center | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 4-7 Modern Druidry Rob's | 24 | 25 7-9 Liturgist RT Rod/Liz's | 26 | 27 | 28 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters | 29 |
| 30 | 31 HALLOWEEN | November 1 7-9 An Bruane Rob's | 2 | 3 | 4 Samhain Weekend 7 pm Fire Watch 9 pm Hellenic Ritual Botsford | 5 Samhain Weekend 2-4 Afternoon Rite 6-9 Evening Rite Botsford |
| 6 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS | 7 | 8 7-9 Business Mtg. Sweetwaters | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 THANKSGIVING | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 7-9 An Bruane Rob's | 30 | December 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 7-9 Liturgist RT Rod/Liz's | 7 | 8 | 9 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 7-9 Business Mtg. Sweetwaters | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 7 Fire Lighting Rod/Liz's |
| 18 2-5 Yule Rite ICC Ed Center | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 WINTER BEGINS | 23 | 24 |

Addresses:

Bethlehem United Church of Christ,
423 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor
Botsford Recreational Preserve, 3015 Miller, Ann Arbor
ICC Ed Center, 1522 Hill St., Ann Arbor

NEW Center: 1100 N. Main, Ann Arbor
Rob's, 11623 Lisa Lori Ln., South Lyon, (734) 277-1897
Rod and Liz's: 263 Larkspur, Ann Arbor, (734) 998-1029
Sweetwaters Cofee, 3393 Plymouth Rd., Ann Arbor