

Tony Kelly

PAGAN MOVEMENT

Some would say it was love that saw the birth of the Pagan Movement, love of the Goddess, the Green Lady, the Earth-mother of our oldest memories and the womb wherein Time himself found his dreams. And I couldn't say it was otherwise than this. Yet it wasn't only this. It was loneliness that drove my hand where my heart had ever drawn me and my head to assail the mysteries that my soul had ever known. It was loneliness in this way: Do you know someone you love, someone beautiful, whose mind, it seems, was fashioned in the same smithy and by the same cunning hand and the same secret arts whereby your own mind was fashioned? Do you know someone whose deepest feelings were gathered from the same deep dark forest glades wherein you gathered your own most precious yearnings in forgotten days before ever the Sun set his eyes on your face? Do you know someone whose love play is made all of beauty and artistry and whose body exudes scents as lovely as the winds of a summer day? someone whose laughter is as bright as sunshine, whose hands are made all of beauty and deft in the magic arts and whose voice has all the wonders of the darkness and the Moon's enchantments? And do you know another who loves this one as much as you do, and who is loved by them as you are loved? Then such a one is your companion for they love your Love and your Love holds them as dear as your Love holds you. When they write a love song it's as if it were your love song, and when they speak the praises of their love, they speak the praises of yours. But if your companion is lost? Who then will speak the praises of your love? Who will remind you? Who is there then to add their artistry to yours, to sing the love song you have forgotten or bear you up when others, it seems, would bear you down? And so it is with the Earth-mother.

Let the theologians discuss her if they will; let the atheists deny her, the agnostics ignore her, the believers believe in her and the disbelievers disbelieve. None of these is important. Let the logicians play with their truth tables, weigh her in the balance of existence-nonexistence, and all they have in the end is the same tautology they had in the beginning. These are outsiders. To live among outsiders is to be an outsider oneself; and this is loneliness. But we're not all outsiders, and the ending of loneliness is the finding again of our lost companions to share with them, and they with us, the love, the beauty and the wonder of the Goddess. And it was for this, for her, that we made a pagan movement.

Oh, but we were as beginners then and she was all to us! Her womb was eternity, her breast abundance, and her arms were full of stars and her heart was all of love and she taught us, in the way a mother teaches, that her other name was 'Being' and we saw then that there were mysteries of which, before, we knew nothing. She is the Earth, robed in green, full-breasted in the harvest, whose womb we have known since before Time set his footsteps in the void, and to whose arms we have returned and will ever return till Time himself grow weary. She is the priestess who weaves her enchantment in the bright green fields of Bealtaine, the dark green and golden meadows of the Harvest and Samhain's dark and dismal plains of the Winter. And she is the pregnant vault of space herself, deep as the darkness, beautiful as the milky way, mysterious as the lure that first drew atom to atom impelled by an aesthetic urge and which gave the very meaning to 'first', and will give it as many meanings as there are mysteries.

Oh, but we were beginners, as a baby is a beginner again, and we thought her all! And it was a thought wherein was as much deception as there was truth (and as much truth as there was deception). Of the God we thought little, knew less, and felt nothing at all. Of false gods, it's true, we knew much, but still we thought little and still we felt nothing at all. Yet, shall the baby take the sword in his hand? Or count the days? Or set his will where other wills would contend him? He shall not while he is a baby. And shall he be for ever a baby? He shall not, for a road opens before him, a road whereon, with a mother's blessing in his heart, he would set his feet to the very end. And to set one's feet to the very end of a path whereon there shall never be an end is a wonderful thing to do. She is the path, and he is the walking of it; his is the excitement, hers the content; his the glory, and hers the reason why. He is the Sun, the bright new child of Yule, the wielder of the golden spear that stands athwart the Storm Gods of Imbolg; he is the Lord of the Sky and his light is the seed of the Earth-mother's womb. He is the priest, the joy of the Lady in Yule, promise of a summer's bounty in the hard, cold, frozen fields of Imbolg, and leadership, inspiration, power, and the will to go on and on as the shadows shorten and the glimmering edges of the days meet hand in hand through Midsummer's fleeting nights.

Father-mother, God-and-Goddess, weave a story that had no beginning and shall never know an end. And shall we ask them why? No, let's not ask them, not with the head, not with loud words, not for reasons that may be written with a pedant's pen in leaden words for the dull of understanding to read. For if we did, it would be a lie as much as it were a truth. Let us rather find the answer to the riddle in a lover's heart, and the reason why in the deep of the dance, for the oldest of the Old Ones is younger than the young, old as Winter, young as Spring, and the dance shall go on and on. For lust shall be the reason of the ring, the youth shall be the father of the man and the mother shall come from a maiden's womb.

Perfect was the cosmic egg . . . before time . . . like a thing of beauty, grander than the mountain, smaller than the firefly.

Electricity was the warp of her dress and magnetism was the weft, and they wove together like bindweed through a summer hedgerow, like gnats in the mazy dance, and for all the beauty of her dress, she was naked and she was alluring.

And the piper played to her, captivated by her beauty, and she danced to him, danced to his playing, and he played to the dance, and the music grew the faster and the dancing grew the wilder and the music became a tumult, the notes of his pipe rose into a cacophony and the egg was shattered. Still faster he played and the cacophony was gone and the notes were sweet again, but an octave higher, and two there were a dancing, and still he played to her faster and still she danced to him and the two became four and the four became eight and . . . and . . . the allure was a myriad dancing forms and it was all for her beauty he played on his pipe and all for the lilt of his pipe she danced to him . . .

And it's springtime and the Earth is in her calling mood, all green and fragrant and decked with flowers, and here is the May Queen, green-gowned and lovely, priestess and beloved of the Maiden Earth, dancing in the ring and calling with her may scents across the grass and across the flowers of the May, and the sound of the pipe is in the air and it's full of the wild music and the magic of the forest, and here is the Lord of the Greenwood before her, naked as the wild ones, the glint of the Sun upon the tips of his horns and all the lust of the forest in his loins. No mother she is now, but a lover; no father is he, but a lover's swain. And, for I am a man and feel as a man and write as my feelings guide my hand, it is to her, to the Goddess, to the Queen of the May, that all my love and my lust goes out, and the priestess is one with the maytide hills and she casts her green gown wide about her, and my name is one with the wind.

And when the Goddess is old and haggard? What of November when her hair is grey, when her bones are bare and the leaves are falling grey and sodden about her? Who will love her then? Old Hag of the hollow breasts and the withered arms, of the eyes that look only inward, of the empty hand, of the grasping claws that would take all and still be never sated . . . We could not leave her if we would, and would not if we could, for as the tongue forever returns to the aching tooth and grief to the very source of pain, the plight of a Goddess bereft of her all is a pain we have no will to put aside. She is fear, horror, abject despair and the withering of all hope; she is the pit out of which all that is lovely has fled and out of which meaning itself was dug and emptied away.

Have I told you, by hints and by allusions, that the gods are five? Six would be nearer the count. But no one will ever tell you of the one I haven't, for the telling would be a lie to the hearer. And of the One Supreme God above them all? Show me such a One, and I'll show you an imposter!

If paganism is a religion of poetry, of wonder and of beauty, it is also a religion of truth: love the loveable, hate the hateful, and scorn hypocrisy. Here are our ethics:

Have your will and let none stand against you.
Give others theirs and let none stand against them.
Let your youth be neither slave nor robber of your age.
Neither withhold your counsel from those who are young
Nor burden them with the wisdom of your years.
Lovely in the heart of Mabh your gladness
And hateful in her breast your pain.

Our worship is of beauty, in song and poetry, in meaning and discovery, and in the rites of hearth and hill. We meet in the wild rites: in the bright new fields of the May, in the bounty and the warm days of the Harvest, and in the cold and windy fields of Samhain; and again in Yule for the Light of all her Land. The floor of our temple is the rolling plain, the pillars are the greenwood trees and our roof is the open sky. Come Sun, come Moon, come wind and rain, come hail and sleet or snow, there in the heat of the day or there in the eye of the blizzard, are we and the gods. Am I cold? I am the cold. Is the rain pouring down? I am the rain. I am the rush of the river, the noise of the storm, the heat of the sunshine, the lust of the May. And the priestess of Mab the Beautiful, dancing there with the girdle of hawthorn leaves . . . Will I remember her when she is old and the leaves are falling and she bears the elder wand and her girdle is of bones all whitened on the rain-lashed hills? Yes, I'll remember, for she is closer than breath and the dance must go on and on.