

The Future of Paganism: Where Do We Go From Here?

At this time, we find ourselves approaching a threshold. The world has changed enormously over the last thousand years, not only in terms of innovation but in terms of speed; no doubt the next thousand years will bring even more amazing changes. From here we can glance back, peer ahead, and consider what all this means for us here and now.

In compiling this collage of essays, Diane and I sought to capture the thoughts and feelings of our community at this important time. We put together a list of eloquent, insightful Pagans of our acquaintance and invited them to share their ideas. In approaching our contributors, we asked each person to use divination in their favorite system (draw one Tarot card, or take one glance in a scrying bowl or whatever) with the query focusing on the future of Paganism in the next millennium. We wondered how the elder traditions would adapt to new circumstances, how the more recent religions would mature, and how Paganism will shape the future.

Here's what our panel of visionaries had to say.

Paganism in the 21st Century

— Frederic Lamond, London, Great Britain

“The dominant 21st Century paradigm will be a gender balanced pantheism.”

What does Paganism mean? The religious concepts of the immanence of the divine in women as much as in men, as well as in animals, plants and every thing that is on the face of the Earth and in the wider cosmos? Or the organized self-described Pagan movement with its Wiccan, Druid, Asatru and other branches?

The paradigm of immanent divinity now permeates not only all branches of the Pagan movement and of the New Age, but is making its way into the Christian churches. The “Death of God” theologians, having pensioned off the fierce old man in the sky, find that the only meaningful way in which they can still talk of God is as a force for good within us. In his books *Original Blessing* and *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, Matthew Fox calls for renewed recognition and worship of the Earth Mother to balance the aggressive dynamism of the Sky Father. Fox’s influence is growing in the underground of the Roman Catholic church and among more liberal Protestant theologians. Some Catholic theologians want to see the Holy Spirit recognized as the divine feminine Sophia of the Gnostics, and look forward to a new Trinity of “Father, Mother and Child.” Five million Catholic laypersons, priests and even some bishops signed a petition to the Pope last year that he proclaim Mary “CoRedemptrix of the Human Race” with complete equality with her son, Jesus Christ.

Many Protestant churches now pray to a “Father/Mother God” and allow their pastors and members to call God “She.” In Europe, growing numbers of practising Christians are deserting the cold and dark traditional churches and meeting in small groups in “house churches” that bear an uncanny resemblance to Wiccan covens. Observing all these developments, there seems little doubt that the dominant 21st Century paradigm will be a gender balanced pantheism, despite the rearguard attempts of the Vatican and Protestant fundamentalists.

What then of the organized Pagan movement? We have the advantage of affirming divine immanence and pantheism in their purest form, unencumbered by old scriptural dogmas that the churches now have to reinterpret to fit into the new paradigm. In line with pantheist concepts, we are a religion of inner personal experiences and not of beliefs in myths of divine incarnations in distant cultures in the remote past. We strive to empower our members to make their own responsible moral decisions, instead of surrendering their power to some guru or set of holy scriptures.

On the other hand, our numbers, though growing, are still small and almost entirely confined to the traditionally Protestant countries of Northern Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. This need not matter, as small religious and political movements can sometimes influence the spirit of the age out of all proportion to their numbers. In the last 40 years we have already pioneered divine immanence and Goddess consciousness and influenced the Feminist movement (which then influenced the rest of society). Can we repeat this success by reconciling Western society with the natural ecology of our planet and making everyone feel part of Nature instead of standing apart from it and trying to manipulate it?

Humanity’s survival may depend on it. But we can only lead by example, and that means taking much better care of that part of Nature that is closest to us: our own spirits, minds and bodies.

— Fred Lamond is an international lecturer and was a member of Gerald Gardner’s original coven. His book, *Religion Without Beliefs*, was reviewed in the summer issue (#20) of PanGaia and is available from Janus Publishing, London.

A Turning Point

—Pete Pathfinder Davis and Wende Northstar Davis, Washington, United States



***“Spiritually,
the new
millennium
is ours.”***

The Pagan renaissance has reached a turning point. The practice of modern Witchcraft and other Pagan faiths has left its dark closet and strolled quite proudly out into the sunlight. In the forty years since Gerald Gardner, most groups tried (often unsuccessfully) to remain secret by meeting behind closed doors and sharing their knowledge only with a chosen few. This is hardly practical any more.

But all of that has been changing. The secrecy was to perpetuate our faith during times of persecution. Today we are the fastest growing spirituality in America. Certainly, there still are still problems of bigotry, but compared to historical executions and torture, these can hardly be called persecution. They are more properly termed denials of our legally protected Constitutional rights.

Selena Fox (of Circle Sanctuary) recognized that there were thousands of people who wanted to follow Paganism, but didn't want to be leaders or study a lot. Many just wanted to gather with like-minded folk to celebrate the turning of the wheel in the Pagan manner. Selena began to minister to these people, and her efforts and those of many others have led Paganism (and Wicca in particular) into the “Temple movement.”

Many on the Pagan path attend our own churches to gather and celebrate together. Many others continue in small group practice; most Pagans practice as solitaries in between gatherings. In the coming millennium, we will see more large groups established as legitimate, tax-exempt organizations, with open attendance policies. They will provide open worship and celebratory opportunities and establish recognized, accredited seminaries for clergy, as well as Pagan schools for the education of our children.

We are doing something wonderful for humanity by raising children who are without the concepts of inborn guilt and sin. They comprehend that it is they who are responsible for their condition, who own the fruits of their behavior and control their own lives. A whole generation of Pagan folk learn that their ultimate reward is not some “pie-in-the-sky” but here and now, if they are willing to be responsible for themselves.

At first, I didn't think that my goal of helping Paganism become a tolerated spirituality in our modern culture was going to be achieved during my lifetime, but I stand corrected. I will live to see someone yawn when I tell them I'm a Witch. Already several Interfaith Councils have elected the Wiccan faith to membership, and one has elected a Wiccan priest (myself) to be its president — twice! In spite of some southern politicians' efforts to fish for votes by attacking us, the Pentagon has publicly declared its stand firmly in support of all religious practices, including Wicca and Paganism.

In the last few years, our efforts at education have begun to pay off. Virtually all press and broadcast media coverage has been positive and it continues to grow because many of us have chosen to endure the annoyances of the few remaining bigots and stand up to be counted publicly. Those frontrunners were willing to take the body blows that such fights always produce, but stood up because they knew that the rights we enjoy in this country were hard won for us by other brave people who stood up in the face of far greater risks, penalties, and even death.

Spiritually, the new millennium is ours. Mainstream religion knows this, else they would not be rewriting their liturgy to include Mother-Father God and endorsing ecology. History may look back on the twentieth century as “the Christian Interlude.”

It's time for all of us who can endure it to brace ourselves and stand up to be counted. Pagan churches are popping up all over. Join one in your area today. If there isn't one, start one or support a national one. You'll be glad you were a part of it.

— Pete Pathfinder Davis began a coven in 1979 that provided spiritual services and support for the Wiccan community; this grew into the Aquarian Tabernacle Church, of which he is Archpriest and his wife, Wende, is Archpriestess. For more information, see www.AquaTabCh.org or write to ATC, P. O. Box 409, Index, WA 98256-0409.

Ethnic and Modern Paganism

—Jonas Trinunkas, Lithuania

We live a truly exciting time, witnessing the transition of millennia, and we are a part of it. Some of us see it as a lurid crisis; others envision new era coming. The Parliament of the World's Religions announced "The Declaration of a Global Ethic" in Chicago, 1993. The text of the Declaration is very dramatic, beginning with words: "The world is in agony," though the authors of the Declaration apparently were not capable of wording radical and prospective ethical resolutions.

In short, this ethic needs another fundamental demand: "The Earth and all creation must be valued, protected, and we, as human beings, must find our place within the web of all life, not outside and separate from the whole of Creation." (Michael York) It must also reflect the intention to treat all animals in a humane way: "All creation deserves privacy and the very least, a humane death." Such ethical propositions arise from continuing efforts to lead the human being out of the isolation in which he has placed himself.

Here we witness a classic instance of something that appears to be very new being actually very old, and even forgotten. When I read the ideas of new spiritual (religious) or ecological movements, I find all this in ethnic traditions of my country's people.

Not long ago the Earth was addressed as "Mother" and was sacred to Lithuanian villagers. They prayed to the Earth and on special occasions kissed the soil. It was forbidden to strike upon the Earth; to pollute fire or water or to break a tree twig in spring when buds were opening. In our folk ways all creation, including humans, live the same kind of life. This is shown in Lithuanian folk songs that still survive today.

The tide of the heathen revival is overwhelming the Western world, but this is not a cultural crisis or a step backwards. With the growth of modern democracy, the escape from dogmatic thinking and totalitarian political systems, the human being now stands in a wider scope of possibilities for choice and understanding. The diversity of heathen movements in the world is a clear manifestation of this. Our popular motto is: "Unity and diversity." While the Christian church leaders have always been terrified at the idea of diversity, for contemporary Paganism diversity has a great value.

The Lithuanian Romuva is one of many contemporary pagan movements. It rests upon the ancient Baltic religion traditions that have been preserved well in living folklore and customs of the Lithuanian people. We make a clear distinction between ethnicity and nationality. Romuva is not a purely Lithuanian movement; the old Romuva (1300 C.E.) was the symbol of ancient faith of all Baltic people and ethnic groups.

It is remarkable how our folk customs reflect such uniformity. For example, before sowing the first rye seeds to the soil, one would pray: "God, bring this up for the sake of all people, animals, birds, beetles, for the poor and our enemies, and for all living creatures." Here, in a peculiar way, the custom behavior crosses all boundaries dividing people. We call it the *Darna*, harmony principal.

Modern (Wicca and other) and contemporary ethnic (Romuva, for example) Paganism are carrying similar ideas and principles. There should be no contradictions between them. The contemporary human being is aware of the right for choice and will choose the life and activities from that which s/he likes and understands. In 1998, the representatives of ethno-heathen movements from different countries gathered in Vilnius, Lithuania, and established the World Congress of Ethnic Religion (WCER). Their intentions and ideas have been set forth in their Declaration. It reads "We believe that the dawn of a new era of individual and intellectual freedom and global exchange of views and information gives us an opportunity to start again to return to our own native spiritual roots in order to re-claim our religious heritage."

—Jonas Trinunkas is head of the Lithuanian Pagan organization Romuva and of the recently founded World Union of Ethnic Religions. For more information, see www.romuva.lt/ or write Jonas Trinkūnas, Vivulskio 27-4, Vilnius 2009, Lietuvos Respublika



"Modern and ethnic Paganism carry similar ideas; there should be no conflict between them."

a Polytheistic Future?

— Patricia Monaghan, Illinois, United States

“When the next millennium rolls around, I hope people still say mass, but all the celebrants are nude women.”

As the last millennium wheeled round in Ireland, my O'Dalliagh forebears were crafting poems in the old bardic style in the west, while somewhere in the midlands a Monaghan ancestor was keeping alive the heritage of being a priest's son.

I no longer sound my poems to the harp nor lay claim to the cleric's mantle by right of blood. But like my unknown ancestors, I struggle to sustain a vision of the world which goes counter to that of the dominant culture. They lived in a world where Christianity, which had melded with Irish paganism to create what Pronias MacCana calls “a symbiotic religion,” was becoming more rigidly and fervently rejecting of pagan ways. Soon, the bards would be all dead or fled and the Catholic clergy would suppress all memory of married priests, save that which is hidden in the surname I wear.

For my part, I too struggle against the dominant vision of the world as a passive soulless thing upon which we can work our will before discarding it and flying off to a new virgin planet ripe for the despoiling. I like to think I'm living at the cusp of a time when the old ways my ancestors fought to maintain are coming alive again, and that in another millennium they will be flourishing — that we will see our world again as sacred and the body, whether male or female, as sacred as well. I dream, in short, of the restoration of polytheism.

For most of our history, humans have been polytheistic. Monotheism is a recent invention, its 5000 years dwarfed by the 50,000 or so years when the whole world honored multiple divinities. And even during this brief time, most people throughout the world have remained polytheistic. Strict monotheism has been the exception rather than the norm.

But during the past thousand years, the monotheisms have gained strength and power, spreading across the globe so that they are today unquestionably the dominant form of religion (so much so that a recent anthology of “religious” poetry included only monotheisms, with the exception of Hinduism which they represented, peculiarly, only by prayers addressed to male deities). Christianity, Islam, Judaism, theistic Buddhism, all proclaim a doctrine of one true way — and of one true god, for it is invariably a god, not a goddess, who reigns supreme in the monotheistic worlds.

Monotonous, monopolistic, often monomaniacal: that is the world of monotheism. It's often dualistic as well, for if god is to be found in only one place and one form, everything else becomes non-god. Polytheism is vastly different. As Miranda Green has pointed out, monotheism attacks the sacredness of the world, placing god “up there” rather than “in here,” or even more importantly, “over there,” in that bush or up in that tree or flashing by on the wings of that bird.

When there is only one god, there are many things which are *not* god: cliffs, stars, ferrets, polar bears. You. Me.

But where monotheism is exclusive, polytheism includes all, and there lies its subtle strength. When the next millennium rolls around, I hope Mary is standing on the altar under the wings of Isis and next to a leaf that fell from the Green Man as he passed on the Solstice. I hope people still say mass, but that the celebrants are nude women. I hope that all the ways are maintained, all moments and all places honored, and all people known as holy.

That would, at last, be the one true truth.

— Patricia Monaghan, one of the pioneers of the women's spirituality movement, is the author of *The Goddess Path: Myths, Invocations and Rituals* and of the forthcoming *The Goddess Companion*.

Interfaith and Globalization

— Pete Jennings, Great Britain

Ten years ago I could not have imagined a member of the Northern Tradition such as myself heading a major European Pagan umbrella organization. I am living proof that things do change in quite a short time. There have been many significant developments in the UK within that decade: an explosion of books, moots, conferences, positive media coverage, official recognition and people generally coming out of the closet.

I drew a single rune from my bag to indicate what the next decade may bring. It was Ur (u), a symbol of strength derived from the extinct big horned aurochs that once roamed Europe. So, it seems European Paganism will grow in strength, to wander at will again. Certainly I have seen the seeds of it, through our own operations. At the moment, most European Union countries are in a similar state to the United Kingdom of 5-10 years ago: people are afraid of being exposed, satanic abuse stories pop up from time to time, and there is no official recognition of Pagan paths. Yet some other countries are now getting their own moots, newsletters and conferences!

How I see the future of Paganism and how I would like it to be are two different things. I would like it to continue to develop along its many diverse paths, free of dogma from within and free of discrimination from without. However, unless some Pagans are willing to change some of their perceptions, this is unlikely to happen. Dogma from within arises when one or more teachers/leaders are perceived as having got it totally correct, to the detriment of competing ideas. Too many Pagans adopt “gurus,” whether the individuals concerned want that role or not. Dogma breeds discrimination, and we can be just as bigoted as other spiritual paths in thinking our way is superior to others, be it Wicca, Druidry, Asatru, Shamanism, or whatever. It also causes us to perceive other religions outside of Paganism as less worthy — with an arrogance we have often accused them of. There are fundamentalists of many religions and it is an uncomfortable fact that we must face that Paganism has fundamentalists, too.

This is particularly evident in the UK with regards to the issue of interfaith relations, which is to say Pagans talking to representatives of other religions. This is attacked by some on both sides as evangelizing. Those actually involved tend to see it as an information exchange, not a way of conversion. Not everyone feels comfortable with this process, and there are dangers of a religion misusing it, but we can never expect others to be more trusting nor to accept or understand us if we do not talk with them.

Interfaith work is still in its infancy in the UK, with both successes and setbacks. It will be harder to progress in some other countries due to the heavy influence of state religions. If I could have one wish for the future of UK Paganism, it would be that the Government separates itself from the Church. At present the House of Lords has spaces reserved for bishops who clearly do not represent me. I would like to see a level playing field for all religions.

Globalization is another big issue facing us. Access and usage of the Internet is high amongst the Pagans of many countries and, being naturally creative, many have seized the opportunity to network and disseminate information. The Net has its dangers though: once we only had to deal with localized “bitchcraft” — the spreading of lies and gossip. It takes on a new dimension when one individual can reach thousands instantly. Even if it is later disproved, the damage is done. Pagans are going to have to be more cautious in checking the accuracy of their information and where it originates from. What cannot be stopped as more people across the world start thinking for themselves is that even more will rediscover their roots and become Pagans.

“My wish for the future of Paganism in the United Kingdom? That the government would separate itself from the (Christian) Church.”

— Peter Jennings is the current president of the Pagan Federation, a networking organization for Pagans of all kinds in the British Isles and parts of Europe and North America. (www.paganfed.demon.co.uk). He is also High Gothi of Odinshof.

Dining at the Spiritual Smorgasbord

— Anodea Judith, California, United States



“We must shift to being agents of interfaith dialogue, making social contributions, and helping to shape the new myths.”

As we board the Cosmic Chariot to the next millennium, one wonders how an Earth-based tradition fits into the mass of biological sentience cruising the spiritual smorgasbord in the post-modern era of Internet Browsers, Quick Fixers, Spiritual Cynics, and Disillusioned Youth. What do we have to offer and what do we need to survive?

Paganism brings joy and passion, practical moral codes, flexible power structures, archetypal richness, and a strong ecological focus. These are much needed elements that we can offer to the coming millennium’s spiritual syncretism — if we get the chance. Pagans are seldom invited to the dining table of the spiritual smorgasbord and, without our contribution, the table is missing the important elements described above. We have responded by creating our own table. Isolated among our own kind we find ourselves becoming esoteric, inbred, and spiritually xenophobic. Yet our private table is also missing some essential things, and members fight among themselves, trying to find them. This does not command the respect that gets us invited to dinner.

Connection to nature, ritual experience, and simple joy are desperately longed for by many members of other religions. Yet they do not come to Paganism because it seems too strange, too childish, or prohibitively esoteric. If we are to be included at the table, we must shift from being primarily interested in hanging out with our own ranks, to being agents of interfaith dialogue, making social contributions, and helping to shape the new myths.

The changes that are in store for Pagans are not different from the challenge that humanity faces as a whole — to grow up. We must leave the extended infancy of being *children* of the Earth, children of an archetypal Mother who endlessly provides for all our needs, to one of being *stewards* of the Earth, an adult form that provides for the needs of others through co-creation with the source. This makes the emerging time of transformation a coming of age ritual, where an adolescent sheds his or her former identity and emerges as a new adult being, woven into the tapestry of the larger community.

Because Paganism is a religion that worships a mother archetype (among others), there is a tendency to remain infantile. We do rituals of asking and worshipping, but often fall short of taking true responsibility. Many people at Pagan gatherings seem more committed to marginality than true spiritual and personal growth. Paganism will be left far behind if we do not cultivate the discipline of inner practices and add to our strengths the ego-transcending benefits of inner work.

Paganism, at its foundation, is a religion of the Earth and the body, the original thesis from which we as sentient beings emerged. The patriarchal religions typically worship the sky and the mind. In their historical takeover, they created the antithesis that taught us to get beyond our immediate reality and find a broader perspective. Their methods were brutal, but their gift is essential.

It is time now to form a spiritual synthesis between the two, integrating mind and body, Earth and sky, masculine and feminine. We do hold a missing piece of the puzzle, but we are not the puzzle itself, nor is a spiritual path that remains fixed upon an archaic past likely to be the answer to an unknown future. It is the responsibility of Paganism to keep Nature sacred, yet upgrade our own programs enough to offer intelligent discourse in the larger spiritual conversation.

— Anodea Judith, Ph.D. is a priestess, author, and healer who is best known for her work with the transformative powers of the chakra system, integrating inner mysticism with ritual experience. She has been involved in the Pagan movement for 25 years. For more info, find her at www.SacredCenters.com.

Respect Each Other

— Janet Farrar, Ireland

In most European countries, within their various Pagan communities there is a divided attitude of “them and us.” In this respect, Paganism has got to change direction: we’ve got to start respecting each other a whole lot more. Hopefully, we will learn to stop being people of the book. All spiritual books are written by fallible humans. I would prefer to see books used only as guidelines for self-discipline. We need more spontaneity of spirit in our ritual practices. Ritual should come from the heart, not from written words on paper.

Pagans in many European countries are attempting to find their roots, much of which was lost through our grandparents’ and great grandparents’ attitudes toward religion. Religion was reduced to a form of control over the human psyche. By contrast, we are freeing that psyche again. Part of the reclamation is that there is a new priesthood growing who are putting aside dogma and its principles. These people, who are willing to educate the up and coming Pagans of the future, emphasize the need to take Paganism into the larger world community and to use our knowledge to benefit the man in the street, whether on a spiritual or mundane level. We need to learn from other cultures and realize our shamanic roots as mirrored by eastern European countries and Native Americans. The hedgewitch is nearer the truth than we may realize.

— Janet and Stewart Farrar are founding members of modern witchcraft.
You can find them on the Internet at: <http://www.iol.ie/~jsfarrar/intro.htm>.



“Ritual should come from the heart, not written words on paper.”

Independence

— Philip Carr-Gomm, Great Britain

Paganism in Britain has been growing over the last decade. As we move into the next millennium, I believe more and more people will find Paganism a sensible, exciting alternative to mainstream religions.

I used *The Druid Animal Oracle* to inspire me with ideas about the future of Paganism. I drew the Stag, representing Pride and Independence. Here is an excerpt from the interpretation I wrote for the oracle: “The Stag brings us the qualities of grace, majesty, and integrity. The stag signifies independence — both spiritual and physical. In Ogham the Stag is related to *Beith*, the birch tree and the number one. The birch tree is known as the pioneer tree and is associated with the blessing of beginnings. This means that it is auspicious to draw this card when contemplating new projects. Through the stag’s connection with fertility and sexuality, this card signifies that you will find a way to bring dignity, grace, power and integrity to your sexual life.”

As Pagans, we follow a spiritual path that honors independence; I believe that more and more people will be attracted to the freedom that Paganism offers.

Above all, Paganism invites us to reclaim our place in Nature and to reclaim our bodies. It invites us to include our sexuality in our spirituality. This is where I believe Paganism will really succeed in speaking to large numbers of people. And if, as the Stag suggests, we can find a way to bring dignity, grace, power and integrity to the way we celebrate our sexuality, then I believe we will all have helped progress the cause of Paganism, as well as the wider cause of deepening our experience of being human and of becoming more conscious and valuable members of the circle of Nature.

— Philip Carr-Gomm is the current head of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD) and author of *The Druid Way*. For more information, see <http://druidry.org> or write OBOD, P. O. Box 1333, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1DX, UK.

“More and more people will be attracted to the freedom that Paganism offers.”

A General Religion?

— Olivia Robertson, Fellowship of Isis, Ireland

My vision for the future of Paganism is that it's going to become a general religion for everyone. I believe we are moving from a solar-based faith, to a star-based pantheism. I think basically it is going to be a religion of the Goddess, but that happens to be my inclination. I see everyone becoming pantheists. I do very much believe in the future of Paganism.

Spring for all life on Earth is coming. The children of Gaea are moving into an etheric sphere of being. This enhanced consciousness, affecting every human, animal, plant and rock, is a natural evolutionary progression. Evolution proceeds by jumps. We struggle to our feet and our hair is pulled from above! We can observe the gradual development of life and form through ever-increasing complexity. But so far we choose to ignore the onset of mystical and psychic consciousness.

I see a future in which we gladly accept the inspiration of beings from spiritual spheres more evolved than our own, but always balanced by accepting our roots in the Earth. I believe tribes, religions, movements, will be superseded by an amazing development of the individual, expressed in originality, creativity and expressiveness. And this will apply to a surprising self-generated progress in some animals and plants. And this is happening now!

People, plants and animals have always had auras. We shall see them! We shall be able to heal ourselves. We have always had the innate capacity. Our wisdom shall increase when we realize our ignorance. We will love unconditionally. We shall enjoy Heaven on Earth. It is already here for those who can enjoy it with the eyes of a child.

— Olivia Robertson is Archpriestess of Isis and a founder of the Fellowship of Isis, a worldwide Pagan networking organization. For more information see www.fellowshipofisis.com or write to Fellowship of Isis, Clonegal Castle, Enniscorthy Co. Carlow, Ireland. An interview with Olivia appeared in PanGaia #20.



“Spring for all life on Earth is coming.”

The Goddess Movement GROWS UP

— Starhawk, California, United States

As the year 2000 approaches, we Pagans cannot divorce ourselves from the sense that we are reaching a significant watershed. Where is the Goddess movement at this moment? Where do we see ourselves going in the next millennium? As a movement of any size, we're about thirty years old, and like a person of that age, we've emerged from adolescence and are moving toward maturity. We're stepping out of the broom closet and becoming visible, taking our rightful place among the world's religions and spiritual traditions. This development is a mark of our success, but brings with it some losses and dangers. Many of us chose the Goddess because we had deep criticisms of mainstream society, especially of its treatment of women and the Earth. We preferred being on the boundaries of institutions. What happens when we become institutions ourselves; will we become dogmatic and dominating? Yet, if we cling to our marginalization, are we not turning away from the potential power to transform the larger society?

Reclaiming, the group I've worked with since the early nineteen-eighties, is struggling with issues of growth and structure. We've grown from a small local collective to a net-

work extending over many communities in North America and Europe, with a quarterly magazine, annual Witch Camps, local rituals and classes and support for a sister community in El Salvador. We've worked hard at developing an organizational structure that allows each individual and community freedom and autonomy, yet allows Reclaiming as a whole to have connection and communication.

What do we do well? The Pagan movement has created an enormous body of ritual, liturgy, chants, songs, poems, literature, scholarship and art. Granted, some of it is pretty dreadful, but that's true of any religion. The miracle is that much of it is *good*. Reclaiming has developed techniques and disciplines of magic and energy working and a collective ability to create powerful rituals for one person or for a thousand. We've welcomed our newborn babies, marked our children's rites of passage, and sung our dying into the Otherworld. We've created ritual at the gates of nuclear weapons labs, in defense of the redwood forests, in jail, and in city streets. We've been part of the major movements for political and social change.

I'd like to see more focus on youth, an effort to pass our tradition on to the next generation. Today in many parts of the United States, the prejudice and fear surrounding Witchcraft have made it impossible to openly teach youth. But as our own children grow up Pagan, and as other teenagers discover a longing for an Earth-centered spirituality, we can begin to offer our young people some of the resources other religions provide.

The broad Pagan community includes great diversity of age, class background, gender and sexual orientation, even of politics and lifestyle. However, we are not nearly as diverse in terms of ancestry and ethnicity as the society around us. I hope in the next century we confront this issue and have the courage to make changes so that we can truly welcome all who are called to the Goddess.

We continue to deepen our work for social justice and liberation. The Goddess has been an empowering figure for women and men who are willing to challenge patriarchy.

The Pagan movement, by asserting that sexuality and pleasure are sacred, stands as an important counterbalance to repressive religions. Paganism offers a home to people of all sexual orientations. We will continue to be a force for freedom.

As Pagans, we worship Nature, but many of us are far more at home online than in the woods. We say Nature is our sacred text, but many of us are functionally illiterate when it comes to reading it. My own work and practice has shifted to grounding spirit in the natural world, trying to integrate more deeply what I believe and how I live. We will take the symbols we use and make them real: not just invoke air, fire, water and earth, but know how to clean and conserve water, how to grow food sustainably, how to plant a windbreak and how to live with solar power.

In short, I'd like to see us not just sing about the Earth being sacred, but live it. The Goddess movement can become a real force for changing the way we live. Unless that change occurs, the next century will not be a comfortable one for human survival.

— Starhawk lives in California, where she works with the Reclaiming organization. Her books include *The Spiral Dance*, *Dreaming the Dark* and *The Fifth Sacred Thing*.

You may reach Reclaiming at www.reclaiming.org or write to:
Reclaiming, P.O. BPOB 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.

“When our groups become institutions will we become dogmatic and dominating? Yet, if we cling to our marginal status, are we not turning away from the power to transform the larger society?”

These images of the future comprise only a few of the myriad possibilities. Take some time to do some divination of your own; you'll rarely find such a perfect opportunity. What do you think will happen to Pagans in the next decade, or century, or millennium? Where do you think we'll go? We stand now at a point of balance, and anything could tip the scales. Much of what happens depends on us, so work to manifest the kind of future in which you truly want to live. ▲