

Festival of the Christ

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Two of the three full moon festivals that make up the “Higher Interlude” have well-known antecedents in religious tradition. The Christian feast of Easter is celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon in Aries, and the Buddhist Wesak festival is observed at the full moon in Taurus. But the third festival at the full moon in Gemini is, for us at least, a new creation. Known variously as the Festival of the Christ, the Festival of Humanity, or World Invocation Day, it was announced by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul after World War II and was first celebrated in 1952. The new festival can occur anywhere from the last week of May to the third week of June; this year it falls on Monday, May 23.

Announcement of the Festival of the Christ and its placement in relation to the other full-moon festivals came in the context of prophecies of far-reaching importance. Although no dates were given, the Tibetan prophesied that the Christ will reappear on Earth, the Hierarchy of Masters will be externalized, and a New World Religion will emerge to serve humanity’s spiritual needs in the Aquarian Age. The New World Religion, we were told, will grow out of, but eventually replace, the sectarian religions of the Piscean Age. Rather than dividing people it will embrace people of every persuasion and from every nation. The new religion will also embrace some aspects of Masonic tradition, restoring ritual to the importance it had in the ancient mystery schools.

The Festival of the Christ is closely linked to the emergence of the New World Religion. Indeed it will be the high point of a liturgical calendar that, like those of so many ancient traditions, will be based on lunar and solar cycles. The new festival celebrates the increasing presence in the world of the Second Aspect of Deity. It celebrates not the transcendent but the immanent presence of Love-Wisdom, expressed through humanity. The Tibetan explained:

[It] will be the festival of the spirit of humanity – aspiring towards God, seeking conformity with the Will of God and dedicated to the expression of right human relation.... It will be a day whereon the spiritual and divine nature of mankind will be recognized.¹

He added that the festival, while new to us, has long been observed on Hierarchical levels. It synthesizes the messages of Easter and the Wesak Festival, the messages of the historic Christ and the Buddha:

On this festival, for two thousand years, the Christ has represented humanity and has stood before the Hierarchy and in the sight of Shamballa as the God-Man, the Leader of His people and “the Eldest in a great family of brothers.” Each year at that time He has preached the last sermon of the Buddha before the assembled Hierarchy. This will therefore be a festival of deep invocation and appeal, of a basic aspiration towards fellowship, of human and spiritual unity, and will represent the effect in the human consciousness of the work of the Buddha and of the Christ.²

The New World Religion will no doubt include traditional religious activities, such as collective worship, participation in the mysteries,³ and missionary work. But, in a larger sense, it will also embrace the whole range of individual and collective activities that enhance human consciousness. These activities can pervade all areas of human endeavor, including health care, education, business, government, the military, entertainment, and sports. The essential ingredient will be the Will-to-Good: the impulse to reach out to other people, to express those Soul qualities that break down barriers, motivate

service, and improve the human condition. The Christ Festival will celebrate that reaching out, that new sense of joyful involvement in all things human, that commitment to building a better world.

Recently we were given a glimpse of the New World Religion in what might seem an unlikely place: the funeral of Pope John Paul II. The late pope helped free Eastern Europe from Communism, publicly apologized to the Jews for centuries of atrocities perpetrated in the name of Christ, and personally forgave the Turkish man who shot and wounded him. Throughout a life of service John Paul reached out to heads of state, religious leaders of all persuasions, people at all levels of society. He drew the masses to him by his humility, his deep humanity, and his concern for ordinary people, but also by people's conviction that he expressed something higher than the purely human.

However, it was in his death that John Paul truly drew the world to him. His final illness and death dominated the news media. Then, at the end of a week of mourning, his Requiem Mass – the time-honored ritual honoring death and resurrection – was the largest religious event of all time. Leaders of almost every nation, representatives of every world religion, and people by the millions all converged on Rome. The requiem was broadcast throughout the world and watched by hundreds of millions more. Not everyone who participated shared the late pope's beliefs; there are even disagreements within the Catholic Church itself. What we saw was the ability of people of different traditions and different beliefs, Christian and non-Christian, to come together to share in a spiritual experience that far transcended doctrine and authority – an experience that many of the participants said they would carry with them for the rest of their lives. Something happened that day that was unique in human memory.

To set aside differences, as people did at the funeral, to experience the unifying divine presence in the world is what the New World Religion is all about. This is, in no way, to say that the new religion will grow directly or even indirectly from the present Church of Rome. Like every Christian institution, it has perverted the Christ's message;⁴ and some of its beliefs and practices have become crystallized forms. But what lies behind those forms, and behind the forms of other religious (and even some secular) traditions, can provide the foundation on which the new religion is built. The new religion will give new meaning and significance to what is preserved and will offer new spiritual opportunities.

The Festival of the Christ is a time to celebrate these new opportunities. The Christ is not the property of a particular sect but the expression of the Second Aspect of Deity to all religions and all people. The Christ is not divisive but unifying, bringing into harmony all that has been separated and discordant. The sign of Gemini, in which the festival occurs, expresses the juxtaposition of pairs of opposites; but the transit of the Sun/Son through the sign expresses their resolution at a higher level. Tension between the opposites provides the creative impulse to build what has yet to come into manifestation.

We speak of "celebrating" the Festival of the Christ. But it would be a mistake to think of the Christ Festival as simply a new public holiday – a day when the schools close and there is no mail delivery. The fact that it has been observed at Hierarchical levels for 2,000 years should remind us that the festival is not just for souls presently in incarnation. It is a time when the Christ and the masters reach out to us, drawing together everyone in the "three worlds" and raising them to a higher consciousness. It is a sharing – a communion – in which entities on every plane of reality experience the divine presence:

Perhaps one of the major messages for all of us who read these words is this great truth and fact of the physical Presence on Earth at this time of the Christ, of His group of disciples and executives, of Their representative activities on behalf of mankind and of Their close relationship. This relationship comes out at certain of the great spiritual festivals where the relationship demonstrated includes not only the Kingdom of God but also the Father and the Father's Home.⁵

So what should we do? The day of the full moon and the two days preceding and following it are “sacred times.” During the whole five-day period we should open ourselves mentally to the master’s approach, allow ourselves to receive energy and impressions flowing to us in greater abundance than at any other time of the year. Then we should work individually and in groups of every size to impress upon the collective human consciousness the qualities of acceptance, compassion, forgiveness and goodwill that can transform our world. For this very purpose we have been given the Great Invocation. Significantly, the festival is one of “deep invocation and appeal.”⁶ Moreover, we are told that the Christ himself uses the Invocation during the Higher Interlude:

There is the Festival of Easter, the Festival of the Buddha Who in physical Presence expresses the spiritual solidarity of our planet, and the Festival in June [as it was in that year], peculiarly the Festival of the Christ, when He – as leader of the New Group of World Servers – employs the new Invocation on behalf of all men of goodwill in all lands; at the same time, He gathers up the inchoate and unexpressed demands of those masses who seek a new and better way of life. They want love in daily living, right human relations and an understanding of the underlying Plan.⁷

For those who have yet to make the Great Invocation a regular part of their esoteric work, this year’s Festival of the Christ will provide an opportunity to participate in a worldwide act of group service. For those already using the Invocation on a daily basis, the festival can be a time to enhance its effectiveness through special attention to its objectives, energy, and mantric quality. The science of invocation and evocation¹⁸ will become of major importance in the New World Religion. In place of conventional prayers addressed to a personalized God, we shall directly invoke needed energies, making use of universal laws that we shall come to understand and utilize.

The responsibilities are great, but the opportunities are unlimited. Let us celebrate the Festival of the Christ in a way that will honor the divinity in each one of us and in the whole human family. And may we allow that divinity to express itself through new commitment to love our neighbor and put into practice the principles that will produce a new and better way of life. Humanity is at a turning point in the evolution of consciousness. Let us not falter as we prepare to move forward. Through the collective efforts of humanity and the Hierarchy we shall restore the Plan on Earth.



¹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (Lucis, 1957), 421.

² *Ibid.*

³ It is worth noting that, in the Eastern orthodox churches, the sacraments are referred to as “the mysteries.”

⁴ Bailey., *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 542-543.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (Lucis, 1948), 46; see also *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 599-600.

⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *Problems of Humanity* (Lucis, 1964), 164.

⁷ *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 46.

⁸ See, for example, Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 71ff.