

The New World Religion

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The Festival of the Christ – also referred to as the Festival of Humanity, Festival of Goodwill, or World Invocation Day – is the third of the three major full moon festivals that highlight the season known as the Higher Interlude. It was announced by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul after World War II and was first observed in 1952. Like the festivals of many ancient traditions, the timing of the new festival is determined by the intersection of lunar and solar cycles. The Festival of the Christ is observed at the full moon in Gemini, which can occur on any day from the last week of May to the third week of June. This year it falls on Sunday, June 7. Observance of the Festival extends over the five-day period June 5–9. Special emphasis is placed on the actual day of the full moon, but the whole period is regarded as “sacred time.”¹

The first of the three major festivals corresponds to the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter. The second corresponds to the Wesak Festival, which celebrates the annual descent of the Buddha on his assembled disciples. The third, the Festival of the Christ, corresponds to Pentecost – whose name is derived from the Greek word *Pentekoste*, which means “fiftieth day.”² In the Age of Aries, Pentecost was a Jewish feast celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, traditionally collected 50 days after planting. In due course it also came to commemorate God’s revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses, 50 days after the Exodus. Pentecost acquired new meaning early in the Piscean Age, when it marked the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, 50 days after Christ’s Resurrection.³ According to the book of *Acts*, the apostles went forth with new vigor to preach the message of Christ. Reportedly 3,000 people were baptized, an event customarily taken to mark the birth of Christianity. The latest adaptation of Pentecost, the Festival of the Christ, comes into being at the dawn of Aquarian Age.

Pentecost has long been an important religious festival, commemorating what were perceived to be divine interventions in human affairs – interventions that launched major religious initiatives. The Tibetan’s announcement of the Festival of the Christ occurred in the context of another intervention, anticipated in the relatively near future, which will include the reappearance of the Christ and the externalization of the Hierarchy of Masters. Among the new initiatives for the Aquarian Age will be the establishment of a New World Religion. Christ’s new mission, building upon that of his previous appearance, will focus even more clearly on humanity:

In the Aquarian Age, the Risen Christ is Himself the Water-Carrier; He will not this time demonstrate the perfected life of a Son of God, which was His main mission before; He will appear as the supreme Head of the Spiritual Hierarchy, meeting the need of the thirsty nations of the world – thirsty for truth, for right human relations and for loving understanding.⁴

The Festival of the Christ, we understand, is marked by heightened presence of the Second Aspect of Deity, not in transcendent form, but expressed through the immanent presence of Love-Wisdom in the world. The Tibetan described it as “the festival of the spirit of humanity ... a day whereon the spiritual and divine nature of mankind will be recognized.”⁵ He added that the Festival will be one 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.”⁶

The Festival of the Christ is intended to be the high point in the liturgical calendar of the New World Religion. This year’s Festival provides an opportune time to reflect on the new religion insofar as it represents a major step toward “human and spiritual unity.” The New World Religion, we are told, will supplant the religions of the Piscean Age. Rather than dividing people, as has so often happened in the past, it will embrace people of every persuasion and from every nation. Under the leadership of the Christ, the great uni-

fier, the new religion will bring into harmony all that have been separated and discordant. According to the Tibetan, it will be based on six fundamental principles:

1. The Fact of God
2. Man's Relationship to God
3. The Fact of Immortality and Eternal Persistence
4. The Continuity of Revelation and the Divine Approaches...
5. The fact of our relationship with each other....
6. The fact of the Path to God.⁷

The New World Religion will not be created by a committee of high-level representatives of existing faiths. Nor will one of the existing faith traditions be anointed to fill the role. Although the Christ will be the new religion's Hierarchy, Christianity is not guaranteed a privileged position to influence what lies ahead. The Christ expresses the Second Aspect of Deity to all religions and all people. The new religion will draw upon multiple traditions, religious and otherwise. We are told, for instance, that it will embrace some aspects of Masonic tradition, restoring ritual to the importance it had in the ancient mystery schools. Significantly the new religion will have "its new rituals and ceremonies."⁸

The world religions we know today represent a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Each has something valuable to offer and has unique appeal – an appeal no longer constrained by geography, ethnicity or culture. To appreciate that appeal, one has only to look at the success of Christian missionary activities throughout the world – and the corresponding success of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism as they make inroads into traditionally Christian societies. Judaism continued to hold its own throughout the world as well as in Israel. The Tibetan emphasizes that the new religion will be built upon the best of what has gone before:

The Christ and the spiritual Hierarchy will not come to destroy all that humanity has hitherto found "necessary to salvation," and all that has met its spiritual demand. When the Christ reappears, the non-essentials will surely disappear; the fundamentals of faith will remain, upon which He can build that new world religion for which all wait. That new world religion must be based upon those truths that have stood the test of ages and that have brought assurance and comfort to people everywhere.

The New World Religion will not be established in full until the Christ reappears. Nevertheless, it is timely to contemplate what the new religion may look like and lay the groundwork for implementation. We can identify the shared vision and the values and ideals held in common among major religious entities. We can help clarify the vision and encourage universal affirmation of those values and ideals. The Tibetan commented that

the study of Comparative Religion has demonstrated that the foundational truths in every faith are identical. Because of this universality, they evoke recognition and response from all people everywhere. The only factor in reality that militates against the spiritual unity of all people everywhere is the existent clerical organizations and their militant attitude to religions and to faiths other than their own.⁹

Fortunately, intolerance has become less strident since the 1940s, when those words were written. Inter-faith dialogue has increased significantly through bodies like the World Council of Churches and United Religions Initiative. Ecumenical outreach has also increased, and some Christian denominations have merged into larger corporate entities. Greater understanding, the recognition of common concerns, and a willingness to cooperate are all commendable, but the New World Religion will not be established by merger and acquisition.

The New World Religion will not be a one-size-fits-all structure of beliefs, observances, and attitudes. Cultural differences, as well as the very real differences among individuals in every culture, are important elements in the tapestry of human experience. Spiritual development also varies enormously; some people are much farther along than others on their journeys. The new religion must allow for diversity as well as affirming an overarching unity. A conceptual model formulated in a study of Christianity¹⁰ could provide a useful roadmap. As applied to Christianity, the model sought to honor both the essential unity of Christianity

and the obvious diversity that has existed within Christianity throughout its 2,000-year history. The result was a two-tiered archetypal structure.

The model's upper tier is an archetype, a Platonic Form – a *thoughtform* – that expresses the Christian ideal. It recognizes that Christ did not found a religion during his sojourn in Palestine 2,000 years ago; rather he created a thoughtform that would work out over time. All Christian traditions, denominations and sects represent partial, temporal expressions of that thoughtform. The lower tier, capturing the diversity within Christianity, consists of seven archetypal spiritual paths that cut across sectarian boundaries. The focus on spiritual paths to represent diversity enables us to stand aside from the factionalism and divisiveness that, tragically, have plagued Christianity since its inception.

The archetypal spiritual paths capture the ways in which people express their Christianity. They are: Devotion, Ceremony, Knowledge, Healing, Service, Activism and Renunciation.¹¹ The capitalized terms are convenient labels for the paths, but the underlying concepts are broader than everyday usage might imply. For example, “Devotion” refers to the many ways in which the devotee enters into dialog with the Divine, including conventional piety but also including mystical contemplation and the creation and response to sacred art, architecture and music. The seven paths cannot be paired in a one-to-one correspondence with the seven rays, but connections are obvious to anyone familiar with the rays. For instance, the paths of Knowledge, Healing and Service all express the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom. The path of Activism expresses the First Ray of Will and Power, mediated by Love-Wisdom.

The two-tiered archetypal model was formulated as a basis for studying Christianity, but it can apply with equal validity to a New World Religion. Indeed a frequent response to the original model was that it sounds like something more inclusive than the Christianity we know. The upper-tier archetype would become the expanded and strengthened thoughtform that expresses the Hierarchy's Plan for spirituality in the Aquarian Age. The seven spiritual paths of the lower tier can be found, to varying degrees, in all major religions, just as they could be found to varying degrees in all Christian denominations. They will capture the different ways in which people express the New World Religion.

The paths fall into two broad categories – albeit not without significant crossover in most of them. Devotion, Ceremony and Renunciation express humanity's relationship with God. Here we find the first, second and sixth of the Tibetan's fundamental principles. Healing, Service and Activism express our relationships with one another, embodying the fifth fundamental principle. Knowledge – which embodies the fourth principle or, from an alternative perspective, all of them – can be placed in either category according to whether the focus is on study or teaching. We note that the Christ is the World Teacher. The path of Service, with its strong Second Ray associations, epitomizes the spirit of the Aquarian Age. The path of Ceremony expresses the rich tradition of ritual, the oldest of all religious practices. For a while ritual fell out of favor, but it is now being invigorated by the coming into manifestation of the Seventh Ray of Ceremonial Order. The path of Activism expresses the ideal of right relations among people, while Renunciation expresses right relations between us and the planet. We do not have to be ascetics to recognize the need, in a world of limited resources, to aim at sufficiency rather than abundance.

Formulation of the model in terms of archetypes allows for considerable flexibility in the way those archetypes are translated into beliefs and practices by individuals and by religious entities. People with different aspirations and people at different levels of spiritual development can easily be accommodated. Importantly, it also allows for beliefs and practices to grow organically as circumstances change and human consciousness evolves.

Establishing the New World Religion will require a commitment of global proportions. It will require cooperation among people at all levels in the major world religions. We can anticipate that all who have opened themselves up to Hierarchical impression can become active participants. But leadership responsibilities will fall heavily on those who have committed themselves to discipleship work. Writing in the 1930s the Tibetan described the activities of seven groups of disciples charged with helping the Hierarchy implement the Plan on Earth. The work of the sixth group is particularly significant to our theme:

The workers in the Field of Religion form this group. Their work is to formulate the universal platform of the new world religion. It is a work of loving synthesis and it will emphasize the unity and

the fellowship of the spirit. This group is, in a pronounced sense, a channel for the activity of the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom, that of the World Teacher – an office held at present by the Christ. The platform of the new world religion will be built by the many groups, working under the inspiration of the Christ and the influence of the Second Ray and these – in their totality – will constitute this sixth group.¹²

Much of the work will be carried out on the physical plane. But work on the mental plane will be most important, including the use of creative imagination and thoughtform building. In those ways we can contribute to the overarching thoughtform that will define and unify the new religion. Worldwide use of the Great Invocation will also play a crucial role – and it is no mere coincidence that the Festival of the Christ is also known as World Invocation Day.¹³ The Invocation, which will become the liturgical centerpiece of the New World Religion, is at once a ritual, an act of devotion, and a work of service and world healing. It spans at least five of the archetypal spiritual paths. We are told that the Christ himself uses the Invocation during the Higher Interlude, particularly at

the Festival of the Christ, when He – as leader of the New Group of World Servers – employs the new Invocation on behalf of all people 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.¹⁴

The Festival of the Christ acknowledges his role as World Teacher, Head of the Hierarchy of Masters, and Spiritual Head of the New World Religion.

The Festival we are celebrating is not only the Festival of the Christ; it is also the Festival of Humanity – which brings us back to the connection with Pentecost. We note that “Pentecost” is defined by the numbers five and ten. Numerologists associate *ten*, the *decad*, with completion – there were 10 “sayings” in *Genesis* 1, 10 plagues preceding the Exodus, and 10 Commandments in Judaic biblical history; there are 10 sefiroth, or divine manifestations, in the Kabbalah. *Five*, the *pentad*, is associated with humanity, which is still in the fifth root race but is entering a new phase in the evolution of consciousness. Significantly, the fifth plane of nature is the mental, or *manasic*, plane – *manas* is the very word from which “man” is derived. And the Fifth Ray is the ray of Knowledge. During the five days of the Festival, let us celebrate enlightened humanity’s approach to the Fifth Kingdom, where our mental natures will find full expression in love and wisdom.

We honor the divinity in each of us as well as in the whole human family. May we allow that divinity to express itself through new commitment to put the six principles of the New World Religion into practice. Through the collaborative effort of the Christ, the Hierarchy and humanity, we can restore the Plan on Earth.



¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 2 (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 56-58.

² Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1949), 151.

³ *Acts* 2:1-4.

⁴ Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 150.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 421.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 404-405.

⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Problems of Humanity* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1964), 155.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰ John F. Nash, *Christianity: The One, the Many* (Xlibris, 2007).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 310-343.

¹² Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 38.

¹³ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 2, 164-165.

¹⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1948), 46.