

CONTEMPORARY CONSCIOUSNESS
and
The New Approach to Celebrating Spiritual Festivals

A Lecture given by Karl Kaltenbach, O.A.M.
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very honoured to speak here to you, to the Theosophical Society.

Your request for this theme was a surprise to me; you have asked that I speak on the celebration of spiritual festivals. I was surprised because nowadays not many people are interested in celebrating spiritual festivals. Many people want to have a good time at a festival:- they like to express themselves happily only within a community. But to have spiritual values as a content for a festival is rather unusual. We have experienced in the last ten or twenty years a change in the expectations in celebrating today's festivals. For example, I was up at the Three Sisters in the Blue Mountains where I saw a banner: 'Join Us for Our Winter Festival' which must have been organised by the Katoomba community. This was in June. I think here and there are new ways of trying to relate the new celebrations to nature and this is the aspect I would like to focus on in particular tonight.

I feel there is a change of consciousness today. It is that people are looking for new meanings in their get-togethers, in their festivals. They are seeking a meaning beyond the symbolic, beyond commercialism. I think so many of our festivals, particularly the one coming up - Christmas, has become commercialised to the extent that more and more people are now searching for the true meaning of Christmas. Many do not even know the historical, biblical reasons for what have become our public holidays.

I have come across a survey about how many people do not know the actual meaning of Christmas or of Easter, and it was no surprise that only very few knew the actual outer stories behind Easter, Whitsun,

Ascension etc. Christmas might be the one people know of, because of the decorations in shops depict the nativity scene.

I think much the same is happening in other religions. In my travels I've been in India where I have taken every opportunity to ask people about the meaning of traditional religious rituals and I was astonished, even in countries where people still have a strong faith, that many people knew relatively little of the actual background of their traditional festivals. Although they celebrate these festivals with greater enthusiasm than we do, few people can actually explain them. The only difference to our western life is that they have a conviction in their tradition. We seem to have lost our traditions, as well as their meanings. We have commercialised it because that is the only contemporary meaning we, at the present time, can find. And I say this actually with quite a seriousness. I think we, as modern people, are all looking for meaning and the commercial approach to Christmas is one thing we can at least attach ourselves to because it is actual, alive and it is practised. But whether that is sufficient, or whether we need to imbue spirituality into the commercialism, remains to be seen.

What I find interesting in the change of awareness and consciousness today is the renewed interest in, for instance, the Aborigines' way of celebrating or experiencing nature. The renewed interest in what is so-called primitive art - or archetypal art; in the arts which arise out of cultures which have a promordial relationship with nature. The renewed interest to revive traditional natural ways of dance and rhythms. All of that is suddenly acute for people like us who live in a highly technological civilisation. One wonders why suddenly we have in our homes art from Africa or from New Guinea. Or why we suddenly treasure the Aborigine art, thus having larger and larger sections in the National Art Gallery in Canberra, in the Art Gallery of NSW etc. What used to be neglected and destroyed is now valued as irreplaceable. I have come across Aboriginal rock carvings in the Sydney area where, some time ago, they drove bulldozers over these carvings, put houses on them, built roads and totally devalued what we today will protect at all costs. One has to ask why are we attracted to these so-called primitive forms of art and primitive cultures. I would actually replace the word primitive with

archetypal cultures because of their relationships to nature. Why is this suddenly of interest to modern people?

There is something meaningful in this appreciation and understanding of primitive art. I think the seriousness is because we are isolated in our culture, we have experienced a separation from nature and we sense somehow these ancient cultures had this relationship to nature for which we are now yearning. This relationship to nature is of utmost importance in our whole consciousness and, because we have lost it, we have caused this environmental catastrophe. Somehow now we feel there might be a remedy in relating like the ancient cultures to nature. There might be a remedy to our environmental catastrophe, to our blindness to the life processes of this globe, to our blindness to the forces which lay outside our human everyday consciousness.

The Aborigines, who are closest to us, had a different relationship to nature - actually they *belonged* to nature or, one could say, the land really didn't belong to them but they *belonged* to the land. We think the land is our property; they thought the land demands of them to be there, but for the materialist it is the other way round. These cultures were part of nature and nature couldn't exist without them. They themselves had no self-awareness without experiencing their self, together with the trees, with the rocks, in the water, in the elements. What we today are trying to achieve - a union with nature - through a very hard road of self-development, self-denial through spiritual development, was natural to these archetypal cultures. Those of you who are familiar with the philosophy of Zen, know there is an endeavour to reduce one's forces of personality and heighten one's spiritual self to such an extent that one becomes united with the elements, where the 'rain is me' or 'I am the rain', and one doesn't know quite which way it is. This union with nature we have lost but these archetypal cultures have had it naturally.

Now, one finds cultures which related more to specific forces of nature. Some of these ancient cultures related to the earth, and had mysterious sacred sites, but not in the way that they had to learn a lot in scientific terms, but they actually experienced the energy of the geology. Here is something else that is attractive to modern people since we would like to go beyond the pure information on a festival. If

we engage in a festival we really like to experience things like in this ancient culture centres or places in which they related particularly strongly to the earth, or in other places stronger to the water, and in other places to the clouds etc. It is a marvellous excursion to go today through the literature about Aborigine places and find to which element the people related a particular place. This sort of information gives us satisfaction because we no longer can achieve it ourselves.

There were other archetypal, or pre-religious forms of spiritual experiences (pre-religious in the sense that they had no philosophy), other archetypal cultures which did not only relate to the earth and to the weather, to the climatic conditions, to the plants, to the animals. These cultures actually related to the cosmos, to the astronomical occurrences. The Mexicans had this phenomenon, an accurate calendar, by which they organised their society; the astronomers ruled their society. One can interpret their relationship to the stars as being as real as that experienced by the Aborigine who related to the rock and to the trees. In a way the tree was owning the Aborigine. In this sense, the Mexican culture was similar, the stars owned the people. They were not separate from the stars and they were united by instinct with the universe to these given realities which functioned in the cosmos. The cosmos, of course, functions in a mechanical way, it functions in a predictable mechanical way. On the other hand of the world spectrum are the processes on the earth which are open to all sorts of changes and dynamic biology. They are influenced to some extent by the movement of the planet. But there are the fixed stars to which the earth relates in a predictable mechanistic functioning path and nothing was more dear to these Mexicans or middle American cultures than to organise their society in a mechanistic way, in a starry manner, in an astronomical manner. They experienced themselves as part of this cosmic machine. By cosmic machine I don't mean a primitive construction, like in a motor car; I mean in a sublime design. Many cultures brought these geometrical functioning laws into their architecture. We see this in the magnificent expressions of geometry in the Egyptian culture. The stars governed the geometry of the pyramids and the temples with their large corridors, beautifully hewn out of the rock.

This geometry is a reflection of the cosmos. And in this they were also Aborigines. But Aborigines relating (pardon my liberty of using the words Aborigine - I hope you are with me in spirit as I use these words) to the cosmos, relating much more to the mechanistic order of the cosmos. Only gradually as the cultures separated in their instinctive relationships, either from the cosmos, from the earth, from the plants or from the animal, as they separated they gained, at the same time, self-awareness through thought and conceptual values. The concepts became a reflection in man's mind of the divine in nature and the divine in the cosmos. Concepts became reflections of the spiritual experiences. These reflections of spirituality in the concepts were later translated into beliefs and eventually personalised.

We still follow this process to some extent in so far that we can conceive a thought which is a reflection of a reality, but we are not that certain of our ideas any longer and therefore can't cement them into beliefs. But for the Greeks, the late Egyptians, the Persians and the Indians, their concepts had much spirituality and were true reflections of spirituality. Thoughts became real divine wisdom and therefore could be expressed in true belief. Our beliefs today are mostly little more than personal convictions.

An old natural culture, like that of the Australian Aborigines, was a most pure culture. It was a most wonderful expression of nature-consciousness. Since they had no buildings they had a relationship to the living earth. They had no architecture because they related much more to the earth than to the cosmic geometry. The Mexicans related to the cosmos, and to the hard earth form, but to the cosmos more, and they expressed this in their architecture and even in their very formal dress. But the architecture, this reflection of the cosmos was the beginning of self-realisation through concepts. You might ask what this has to do with a modern endeavour for festivals. But the potential here is the relationship of these ancient cultures to the starry cosmos. It was real. Although the stars were distant, it was really beyond the immediate experience of life, not like the living earth where we experience with our body. Here we experience our own life processes in relationship to the earth; we experience the gravity through the earth, etc. But the cosmos is further away from our physical life and therefore we can only come to that through thinking

and concepts and through ideas. Those who have studied astronomy must have very powerful concepts, otherwise they won't understand cosmic mathematics.

Geometric architecture is the cosmos reflected. And when it arose it was the beginning of the independence of the individual and it was a sign of a new era, a new culture. It was an era of about 2,000 years. Beginning at maybe 1500 B.C., reaching right up to our own time. We still have remnants of that, since we still live in a time in which people develop concepts and religious beliefs, but they are not primary experiences - they are secondary experiences.

Now we come to the era of festivals. The Aborigines have festivals, but not like those from our tradition. We decide consciously to go to a place and then plan a festival. The Aborigine experienced life as a continuous festival. Only when in cultures a separation took place through the intellect, philosophy, concepts, did mankind feel the necessity to commemorate what used to be a direct spiritual wonderful daily experience. Now I would say all festivals in the last 2000 years were festivals of commemoration; they come from secondary experiences and no longer from a primary experience. Civilisation developed festivals in which one had symbols of things which, once upon a time, were real in spirit. Today we have festivals to remember that Jesus was born 2000 years ago: we speak of Jesus, or if you are not a Christian and believe in another religion, you commemorate the birth of the founder of that religion long ago, and the spiritual essence of that is only living on in the memory. We think it up but not as primary experience, it is more a secondary experience. Various religious traditions such as Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, even in the Hindu to some extent, no longer have a primary experience; this has actually faded away and what is left in the celebration festival is the secondary experience which has become symbolic.

For instance we can take the monstrance in the Catholic Mass. It is a symbol of the sun, but it is still a symbol. It has a certain spiritual power (the symbol has new power) but the sun is much more powerful. But the primary experience is really what modern people are striving back to. How do we get back to this with our modern consciousness?

When people believed in the rationale of philosophy, of mental pictures, as in Islam and Christianity that is, they got rid of the old

pagan festivals as much as they could. In some countries they didn't succeed. I believe Christianity in South America has taken much of the local paganism and combined it with Catholicism. I believe in Ireland, where Christianity has been introduced to some extent by Roman Catholicism, it took on the traditional nature festival. Or, in the northern European countries, they maintained the mythos of the veda. Perhaps the most absurd instance is in a book by Daisy Bates. A wedding of two Aborigines up in the far north-west of Australia took place where both were in God's own garment, maintaining their nature consciousness, but the bride was wearing a white veil on her head while the Christian clergyman wedded them in the name of one God alone. It must have been a very funny scene. Paganism, so-called paganism, and nature traditions have come into Christianity; they have merged into the age of belief. The rationale couldn't smother fully what was once a primary spiritual experience.

One of the characteristics of these memory festivals which arose out of this symbolism or secondary experience, or out of the age of belief, was that people became convinced that their way was the only right way. This almost belongs to that time because we are psychologically constituted in such a manner that in ordinary consciousness whatever we think and believe in, we think this is absolutely right. Of course, if we are a religious founder, or have a particular religion close to our heart, then we have made that into a totalitarian system. I am stressing this because this is one thing that is disappearing in our modern attitude. The age of religious intolerance is disappearing. Even in the churches. What is really characteristic of modern people is that they are cosmopolitan and in this attitude is an indication as to how we can create new festivals today. Cosmopolitan attitudes make people more tolerant, not only tolerant for tolerance sake but tolerant because of a wider interest. Thus the time of monotheism, which belongs to this age of belief, is somehow coming to an end as it fades into the background. Modern people are once again looking for something which is much more encompassing.

It is interesting that in the 19th century we have the origin of some of our traditions like Christmas. You realise that, up to the 15th century, Europeans, did not relate the Christian Christmas images to

created fellow men. *Suddenly this sense of nature has come again as an additional need to the historic belief.*

We have in quite a number of Christian festivals - I relate this here because we live in a traditional Christian society. We have a peculiar polarity in our contemporary festivals. This is that on one side we relate, for instance, to the locality with its nature. Up in the northern hemisphere they have the Christmas trees which have also found their way down to us. But here it means something different than over there. We in Australia have related Christmas, although we have the Christmas tree, very much to the season of summer. It is the happy season, the season where we enjoy our holiday, we enjoy nature, we enjoy company, we are not inwardly turned as much as one is in a winter season. So there is an expression of a local experience - a locality - and you would find different Christmas traditions all over the globe. In Japan, in Egypt, wherever there are Christians who come together. Christmas is now all over the world. Mind you, no Japanese would want to miss out on Christmas, and probably you will find in other cultures that Christmas today is a world holiday. It is a world celebration to many non-Christians. Thus we have next to the local quality, a cosmopolitan quality. There is a polarity. We all want to be united at Christmas. Christmas has become probably the most universally celebrated occasion in modern times.

Now I would like to come to my last concept and this is about how, as modern people, we find it more difficult than the people two hundred years ago to be convinced of our own belief and to have a kind of a totalitarian monotheistic approach to life, or have a conviction that everything can be understood through one belief system alone. Scientists of today cannot subscribe to Christian fundamentalism. Because as soon as we are convinced about an idea, the next day we realise it was only partially true and we have to work hard to dismantle it in order to form a new idea. Our forefathers didn't have that problem. They had it much easier. Once they had knowledge of something they could rest assured and this was the way they measured the world. We unfortunately, as modern people, have continuous uncertainty as to our own ideas in relationship to others. Therefore our world view and our view about the understanding of a human has become complex and discerning. We can pride ourselves in

this. For example, I am working with disabled people. Two hundred years ago, or even one hundred years ago, once a person was disabled somehow in the face, legs, or the mind, they were totally disregarded in body, soul and spirit, because in this monotheistic totalitarian approach, one saw the world from a single point of view, although basically dualistically the one side they believed in, was the right one. This is different now. Our psychology is pantheistic, we see a person on many levels and with many sides.

Today I came across a remarkable individual; he is the advocate, the secretary and the president of the Self Advocacy Society. The man himself is mentally very slow - he doesn't mind me saying that because he is very proud of it. He is very slow - he is slow at speech, at comprehension; and when you see the person you realise he also has a physical disability. And yet, that person's presence is so strong that he conveys a normality like any other strong individual does. He built up a nation-wide organisation called Self Advocacy. That person would have been in an institution even twenty years ago and would have been regarded as disabled, full-stop. Today he is an individual whom most people with common sense would respect as much as the Minister for Social Services. He has a spiritual presence which is recognised besides his disabilities. This is what we can do in modern psychology. We can discern, we can look at one aspect, let us say, the physical in the disabled and yet experience the inside, the true spiritual being which we perceive separately from the outer experience. And you can see this quality right through the whole social services of this nation. There is discernment. This manifests itself right into our legislation. All people with disabilities have now the same rights as any other citizen.

I believe that the future form for festivals requires such a discernment too. I would like to speak about three ways of celebrating one festival, three ways which go hand-in-hand although they might occur parallel to each other. They are about three forms of relating to three realities, two of which I have already mentioned. Let me make a drawing on the board.

Firstly the earth, purely as a geological globe with all its varying gravitational forces, geological differentiations, individual places with specific characteristics. (See drawing)

Secondly the sphere of the environment, the atmospheric environment, the climate, all what has to do with the movement of the weather, the seas, the winds, and storms. This environment is a total organism. It is imbued with life and there are many scientists today who recognise that the whole organism of the earth is a unity and that what we do here in Australia by way of spray packs and pollution is going to affect the whole environment right from the Antarctic and to the North Pole. One has recognised the environment of the earth as an organism. Psychologically and socially we do relate to this environment and the environment effects our mood too. Like in summer, society is definitely on a different vibration, drawn out into nature, into the summer's heat into the cosmos while in winter we feel like reading a good book, contemplating or philosophising and we think of individual friends. Lucky are those who are more in the colder climate with their philosophers!

In this social environmental climatic sphere (see drawing) it is quite natural that people adjusted their Christmas celebration according to their outer conditions. So that the Christmas festival varies in the custom in which it is experienced according to the location and often pre-Christian conditions. It seems to me that this is intrinsically the nature of the Christ Spirit. If we endeavour for a new way of bringing spirituality into our festivals, coming away from the symbolism, we need to think in terms of bringing the content of nature into our festivals. Real content. Away from the kitch and the trash. And we have an awful lot of kitch and trash around. I guess there are no other values, but nothing separates people more than kitch and trash. Because kitch and trash don't make us change our inner being it does not awaken our spiritual self; with all of those cheap forms of art, we can stay as we are. There is one thing that we have to learn as modern people: we have to actually change inwardly to enter nature in a new way. It is a peculiar thing, no matter how many clothes we take off, even if you take your swimmers off and jump in the water, you don't get closer to the water. We can only get close to the spiritual in the elements in nature through our spiritual self. The human natural life is, of course, part of the elemental world, but it is not conscious of it. We have to awaken our self to this.

The Earth as a geological
globe where individual
life-destiny is shaped.
Personal life experience.
Christ as personal saviour
in destiny.

The environment of
life climate, dynamics of
weather. An organism,
the bridge between the
Earth and the stars.
Social life, group experience.
Christ the Lord of the
Elements.
J.N.R.J.

The fixed stars. The cosmic
machine for the whole Earth.
The same universal thoughts.
Science of mankind. Gnostic.
Christ the Teacher.



One has to begin to meditate in order to have a spiritual perception of the elements. This is the direction I would see future festivals; that one could have a water festival, by which one has meditation, sessions of intensive activity in order to connect to the water. Not long ago I was in Japan and privileged to become a friend of a Japanese lady who took me into a Zen garden. There we kneeled down on a verandah. In front of us was a beautifully raked sand garden where in the middle was an enormous rock and on the further side was a beautiful green moss garden. So I in my simple mind thought, well, this is sand and the rocks are the land, and the green hills over there, well that's life. 'Oh no,' she said: 'You have to imagine that this formal sand (you know they rake the sand in patterns), this very formal fixed pattern of sand - you have to imagine it is water. Get your mind to activate, dissolve the fixed pattern and spiritually you must become so active that inwardly you create the bridge to the real life forces.' Of course, in life these are expressed outwardly but spiritually we must make a jump inside, to meet the divine in nature and metamorphosise ourselves, but if we don't do it we go further and further into the environmental blindness which leads to catastrophe. We won't learn by taking our clothes off in order to experience the life in the water (I am simplifying it) and going into the water. We have to spiritually make the connection for the forces of nature. This exercise which she has given came from Zen Buddhism, I find it very important for our modern minds because our minds are not active enough to make the bridge to the actual spiritual reality. And it is interesting if you do it, if you imagine the opposite of the fixed form of the raked sand, if you imagine the opposite, you are certain to become fluid inside, it begins to swim. And then she said: 'Well, those rocks are actually also not rocks, you are to imagine that they are the cosmos.' Thus, through Zen you learn about polarities.

The Zen Gardens are of course only an exercise yard for imagination which will awaken us inwardly. After we have enlivened our inner activity, we need to go into a Shinto shrine - and there are Shinto shrines all over the world wherever we find nature! In a Shinto shrine we do the opposite to that in a Zen garden, we just let nature stream into us. The pure sense experience, the pure feelings, and our daily will impulses have to be at rest. We only use them for the perception. The

Zen gardens are the preparation through imagination exercises. I now become sensitive to what is really within the sense experience of the water, the rocks and the stars. But first I needed to change inwardly, to awaken in my spiritual self through imagination.

There are many ways to spiritually and psychologically develop a sensitivity for something that is within the sense impressions. And, for goodness sake, modern science has had plenty of time using sense impressions, but has not dared to include an individualised interpretation of the whole perception, and has not allowed a spiritualised interpretation, but we really need to allow spirituality in our sense impression through exercises in order to come to the being of nature, to the spiritual nature of things. This really will lead mankind to a different and a more responsible way of working with the environment.

We find actually potentials of that in Christianity. Now think of the Irish-Scottish early Christianity (not many people know their origin, because they have now merged with conceptual christianity). They had a nature Christianity which was there in Ireland - a Christian relationship to the elements. They called Christ the Lord of the Elements. I read a wonderful interpretation of the letters which were written over the crucifixion, J.N.R.J., which meant Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. But an esoteric interpretation is different. There are various interpretations, as all esoteric symbolism can be interpreted in many ways. This is one way: it stands for the four elements. It took me a long time to find out the Hebrew words for the four elements which fit those letters. And the first one is J (Jabasha) - the earth. The second one, N (Nur) is for the sea - not water - it is the sea, it actually is activity. The third one is R (Ruach) - wind or air, but wind is active. Actually in all those terms is an activity, and Joam is for day (meaning light or fire). So that is one of the esoteric interpretations. The Irish in their own way understood this side of Christ.

What fascinated me in this was that one of the new forms of Christianity is that one takes the Christ's spirit as a spirit which is alive today, not only in history but alive in the present, in individuals, and the result of this will be that it will not make us happy but that it will lead us to more responsibility for the

environment. Because that is really where life is and that is what matters. And if one talks of Christ as the Life, well then, our first concern would have to be about this Life, and our relationship to this environment. So I can see there a tremendous new possibility of expanding the age of belief in Christianity into an age of spiritual perception of nature, a spiritually orientated Natural Science.

There is another aspect to Christ today. There is a reality beside this environmental one. It has to do with the fixed stars, the cosmos, which functions like a machine, a cosmic machine, a cosmic order, a divine machine (see drawing). A lot of ideas in our technology come from the cosmos and these ideas are functional and universal like the star constellations today are universal; they are the same in the south as in the north. The stars have a universal influence on the whole of mankind. The astronomical influences from the stars via the sun and the planets are for the whole globe, they are universal. If one thinks of certain events in a festival which are more of a historic happening, one can see an historic event is of meaning for the whole globe at the same time. We remember the birth of Jesus or remember a special event in Buddha's life, or we remember a great individual birthday all over the globe at the same time, as this has nothing to do with the seasons. This has to do with the cosmic universality, which is the same for all of mankind all over the globe.

Up to now in my presentation I have described two aspects: the environmental one and the cosmic universal one which we find today combined in our festivals because these two aspects are dear to modern men and women.

We have the local and the universal in one. A polarity that mankind has to bridge in every location of the earth in a different form. We have the environmental Christmas aspect expressed in Australia through our Christmas cards about the summer's heat and the red dust in the air, as well as the universal Christmas with the world meaning celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

If one studies the history of Christianity one finds a large part of Christianity has to do with universal teaching. Or a large part of Buddhism or other world religions have to do with universal thoughts, which are applicable irrespective whether one is at the South Pole or the North Pole. And we have to, as modern people,

discern what is meaningful in relationship to the environment and what is meaningful in relationship to the totality of the earth, the cosmic law aspect, the teaching of truths, of universal truth.

In medieval times this last aspect was represented really in the gnostic teaching and in the knowledge of the doctrine in Catholicism. This is one part of Christianity which will need to be reformulated in the near future but in a new form of intellectuality, a spiritual thinking, a universal knowledge, which will bridge the gap between Natural Science and Spiritual Science.

Lastly, but not least, I wish to explain the first aspect of the drawing. I can only indicate the relationship to the earth, a religious relationship to us as people. And this has to do with our own most personal life.

We can say we share with our fellow travellers the air, the rain and this is why we talk about the weather - it is a most wonderful custom, to talk about the weather because, at least if one is honest, one talks immediately about reality. Think about the spiritual content we can give to our talk about the weather. Marvellous. The more we talk about the weather, the more environmentally awake we become. If we give meaning to it. And that has to do much more with us as a group being as we share the environment.

But there is one aspect which we can't necessarily share and that is our own relationship to our own destinies. We carry our destiny, we carry out our destiny as single individuals on a particular spot on the earth. I mean this literally. So in a good novel they always describe where they met, where they had a good fight, what the locality was like. The description of the locality is as important as the human story itself, actually that gives meaning to the individual relationships.

It is remarkable to think how important it is in the choreography of our destinies to travel the earth in the right timing in order to meet someone who is going to become important in our lives. Think of the importance the earth location becomes in the quality of that meeting. Maybe it is Down-town New York or in the Never-Never of the Nullabor Plains. How much planning does it take to get two people together, one is twenty years old, the other thirty-five. Can we

imagine planning thirty-five years ahead to arrange a meeting? Only spiritual intelligence can organise this - not computer thinking.

I could entertain you all evening, and you could entertain me, through stories of so-called well-planned, divinely planned, meetings. But meetings which can only take place on one particular spot on the earth. And this has to do with our spiritual destiny, which has a relationship to the earth, and to a particular spot on the earth. That is an aspect in our festivals that has not yet been fully understood. I think there is one component, probably also in Christmas, that in Christmas we think very much on our personal lives which we share with others. There is a very strong personal component in Christmas, as much as there is a universal and a social environment. We want to be with our friends, we want to think of our family as an expression of our destiny. We want to experience our close friends. Almost at the exclusion of the rest of mankind.

Christianity is a most manifold exposition of human needs and within it are contradictions and polarities but they are mutually supportive and inter-dependent.

There is the universal christian teaching, the body of knowledge and science when the individual destiny must take second place, where universal effectiveness, and the law prevails. The individual becomes the servant of the truth. On the other hand, we have in Christianity the aspect of the personal Saviour for the individual. Here I am thinking of the fine Protestant movement of the Pilgrim Fathers or the Quakers or the Puritans; here Christians formulated their belief in the 17th century. They had a very strong work ethic and they had complete trust in their fate in their destiny. What mattered for them was how they conducted their destinies, how they conducted their personal lives. Think of a Quaker meeting, it is not that one needs a universal truth or a confession, it is much more important; what is of importance is what an individual actually experiences personally. And there is no discussion as to whether that is right or wrong. Every person's life is appreciated since there is a spiritual reality in the individual experiences. That is a reality too. Here we have Christ as the Saviour of our personal destiny. That is as real as the universality. And this Christmas aspect, this spirit of Christ, has a greater emphasis on the Jesus aspect as the Saviour in our

personal destiny. Personal destinies are sometimes very heavy, sometimes full of problems, which only apply to one individual in the context of their personal life, and there is no intelligent argument about it possible. You can't argue about a destiny whether it is right or wrong. We need a different force of intelligence to understand its own rationale. It simply is. And in this situation we need divine spiritual help.

It is wonderful to think that the human mind has this enormous span, a threefoldness in the soul, this capacity to seek the cosmic universal, of striving to understand and join with nature, and of forming relationships with groups and nations, and being an individual.

So we see in the future, if one is thinking of new forms in spiritual festivals, that one could think of a discernment between these three areas. For instance, a lecture, a formal presentation in thought, has always a cosmic universal aspect. We can think of it as an 'intellectual festival' - a festive moment where one celebrates universal thoughts. One can have a festival of nature where one has common experiences through art and through outer sensory experiences - nature celebrations. And one can have through sharing of biographies the expression of destiny, personal destiny, festivals which bring us together. Sharing one's personal life is fascinating and of benefit to others. The sharing of personal destiny has already the redemption for future universal life.

So I can see in the future, maybe in a hundred years, a much greater discernment in the creation of festivals, and I think the totalitarian festival, where one has one festival including everything, is of the past. I think we will have festivals of thought, maybe festivals of nature, and festivals of biographies in which we experience our own personal destinies for the redemption of the world.