

The Christmas Festival In The Changing Course Of Time

By Rudolf Steiner A Lecture given at Berlin December 22nd 1910 GA 125

My dear friends:

When we wander at this time of year through the streets of large cities, we find them full of all sorts of things which our contemporaries want to have for their celebration of the approaching Christmas festival. Indeed, it is one of the greatest festivals of the year which humanity can celebrate: the festival which commemorates the most powerful impulse in the evolution of mankind. And yet, if we contemplate what will take place in the coming days in large cities such as ours, we may well ask: Does all of this correspond rightly to what is meant to flow through the souls and hearts of man?

If we don't give ourselves up to illusions but simply face the truth, then perhaps we cannot help but admit to ourselves: All these preparations and celebrations of the Christmas festival which we see in our time fit in very poorly on the one hand with all other happenings of modern civilization around us; and on the other hand they fit in equally poorly with what should live in the depth of the human heart as a commemorative thought of the greatest impulse which humanity received in the course of its evolution.

So it is perhaps no overstatement if we express the following view: There is a lack of harmony in what our eyes perceive, when we wish to permeate ourselves with the Christmas mood, and wish to receive this Christmas mood from what we can see in today's environment. There is a discord in seeing the streets bedecked with Christmas trees and other decorations in preparation for the festival, and then seeing modern traffic rushing through the midst of it all. And if modern man does not feel the full extent of this discord, the reason may well be that he has disaccustomed himself to be sensitive to all the depth and intimacy which can be connected with this approaching festival. Of all that the Christmas festival can do to deepen man's inner nature, basically no more is left today, especially for the city dweller, than a last faint echo. He is hardly in a position to feel even vaguely its former greatness. His habits prevent him from perceiving this greatness any longer, a greatness to which humanity had become accustomed in the course of centuries.

It would be totally wrong if we would look with pessimism at the fact that times have changed, and that in our modern cities it has become impossible to develop that mood of profound intimacy which prevailed in earlier times with regard to this festival. It would not be right to allow such a pessimistic mood to arise, for at the same time we can feel an intimation — in our circles this feeling should certainly be present — that humanity can once again come to experience the full depth and greatness of the impulse which belongs to this festival. Seeking souls have every reason to ask themselves: "What can this 'Christ festival' mean to us?". And in their hearts they can admit: Precisely through Spiritual Science something will be given to humanity, which will bring again, in the fullest sense of the word, that depth and greatness which cannot be any more today. If we don't succumb to illusion and phantasy we must admit that these can no longer exist at present. What has become often a mere festival of gifts cannot be said to have the same meaning as what the Christmas festival meant to people for many centuries in the past. Through the celebration of this festival the souls used to blossom forth with hope-filled joy, with hope-borne certainty, and with the awareness of belonging to a spiritual Being, Who descended from Spiritual heights, and united Himself with the earth, so that every human soul of good will may share in His powers. Indeed, for many centuries the celebration of this festival awakened in the souls of men the consciousness that the individual human soul can feel firmly supported by the spiritual power just described, and that all men of good will can find themselves gathered together in the service of this

spiritual power. Thereby they can also find together the right ways of life on earth, so that they can mean humanly as much as possible to one another, so that they can love each other as human beings on earth as much as possible.

Suppose we find it appropriate to let the following comparison work on our souls: What has the Christmas festival been for many centuries, and what should it become in the future? To this end, let us compare, on the one hand, the mood which social custom creates nowadays in certain parts of the world around us, with the mood that once permeated the Christmas festival. On the other hand, let us compare this mood of the present time with what can come about in the soul as a renewal of this festival, made as it were timeless, through Spiritual Science.

For a modern urban dweller it is hardly possible to appreciate truly the full depth of what is connected with our great seasonal festivals. It is hardly possible to experience that magic which like a gentle breeze permeated the mood of soul of those who believed that they bore the Christ in their hearts during the great festivities surrounding Christmas or Easter. Today it has become very difficult indeed, especially for the city dweller, to sense anything of this magic, which permeated humanity like a gentle spiritual breeze during those seasons. For those who have had the opportunity of experiencing even a little of this magic wind which permeated the soul mood in those times this will most certainly be a wonderful, glorious memory. As a young child I was able to behold the last remnants of such a magic wind as it permeated the souls, the mood, of country folk in certain remote German villages. When the Christmas season approached I could behold how something arose in the deepest, innermost soul life of young and old, which differed essentially from the feelings and sentiments that prevailed during the rest of the year. When Christmas approached this could still be sensed quite distinctly in certain farming villages as recently as a few decades ago. The souls had then a natural way of making themselves inwardly beautiful. And they really felt something like this: "Into deepest night-enveloped darkness has the physical sunlight descended during autumn. More outer physical darkness has come about. Long have the nights become, shortened are the days. We must stay home much of the time. During the other seasons we used to go outside, to the fields, where we would feel the golden rays of the morning sun coming to meet us, where we could feel the warmth of the sun, where we could work with our hands during the long days of summer. But now, we must sit inside much of the time, we must feel much, much darkness around us, and we must often see, as we look outside through windows, how the earth is being covered with its winter garment."

It is not possible to depict in detail all the beautiful, the wonderful soul moods which awoke in the simplest farm homes on Sunday afternoons and evenings as the Christmas season approached. One would have to depict very intimate soul moods. One would have to tell how many, who had been involved in a good share of fights and mischief during the rest of the year, would feel a natural restraint in their souls, as a result of being filled with the thought: "The time of Christ draws near." They would feel: Time itself is becoming too holy to allow mischief to occur during this season. — That is only a minor aspect of what was extensively present in past centuries, and what could still be seen in its last remnants in those remote villages in recent decades. When the celebration of Christmas retreated into the homes as a family festival you would see there no more than a little display representing the stable in Bethlehem. The children would enjoy everything connected with it, as they saw Joseph and Mary, with the shepherds in front, and the angels above, sometimes done in a very primitive way. In some villages you would find such a display of the "manger" in almost every home. What had thus retreated into the homes was more or less a last echo of something which we will touch upon later. — And when the main days of the Christmas festival, the 25th and 26th of December, had passed and Epiphany, the festival of the Three Kings, approached, you could still see a few decades ago small groups of actors wandering from village to village — the last actors to present plays of "the Holy Story." The actual Christmas plays had

already become quite rare, but a last echo of “The Play of the Three Kings” could often still be seen, as it might be even today (1910) in some remote villages. There were the “Three Holy Kings”, wearing strange costumes, different for each one, with paper crowns and a star on their heads. Thus would they move through the villages, seldom lacking humor, but with humor and reverence together. With their primitive voices they would awaken all those feelings which the soul should feel in connection with what the Bible tells of the great Christ Impulse of human evolution.

The essential thing is that a *mood* prevailed during the Christmas season, the days and weeks surrounding the Christmas festival, to which the heart was given over, a mood in which the whole village would participate, and which enabled people to take in with simple immediacy all the representations that were brought before their souls. Grotesque, comedy-like presentations of sacred scenes, such as have become customary in our time in imitation of the Passion Plays of Oberammergau, would have met with no understanding in those days. The memory and the thought of the great periods of humanity were then still alive. It would have been impossible to find anyone willing to experience the events of the Holy Night and of the Three Kings during any other days of the year. And it would have been just as impossible to accept the Passion story at any other time but Easter. People felt united with what spoke to them from the stars, the weeks, the seasons, what spoke out of snow and sunshine. And they listened to tales of what they wanted to feel and should feel, when the so-called “Star-Singers” went around, wearing paper crowns on their heads, and lately wearing simply a white jacket. One of them used to carry a star, attached to a scissor-like device, so that he could project the star some distance out. Thus they would wander through the villages, stopping at various homes, to present their simple tales. What mattered most was that just at this time people's hearts were rightly attuned, so that they were able to take in everything that was supposed to permeate their souls during this season. I myself have still heard quite a few times these “Star-Singers”, reciting their simple poems as they wandered through the villages, and this is for me still a beautiful memory. An example follows *:

In God's Name now our tale begins.
From Orient came the Holy Kings.
They ride with speed on distant ways,
Four hundred miles in thirteen days.
They ride by Herod's palace-walls
As Herod from his window calls:
Whither go ye, relax your speed!
To Bethlehem our journey does lead.
Ye Holy Three Kings be guests of mine,
I will draw plenty of beer and wine,
I will serve venison roast and fish;
To know of the newborn king is my wish.
In truth, we cannot tell just where;
We have to follow the star we bear:
Over the house the star will shine bright.
Over the mountains the holy men ride.
There found they Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Who is the Savior of all the world.

*From “Deutsche Weihnachtspiele aus Ungarn”, described and communicated by Karl Julius Schröer, Vienna, 1862, “Oberschützens Sternsinger” (The Star-Singers of Oberschützen), p. 160.

The whole village would take part in such things. As certain lines were recited the star would be projected far out. This star of Christmas, of the Three Kings, was an expression of the consonance of the season, the festivity, and the human hearts. That was a great thing, which had spread through centuries like a magic breath of air over large parts of the earth and into the simplest hearts and minds. We must try to place something like this before our souls. As seekers after spiritual knowledge we are able to do so, because through our years of contemplative work on this great event we were able to develop again a feeling for the real power which was thereby given for all of mankind and for the whole evolution of the earth. And it is to this event that our thoughts should be directed during this festival season.

So we may expect to gain some understanding of how in times past the whole Christmas season was immersed in a festive mood, especially among the people of Germany and Western Europe, and how this festive mood was achieved by the simplest means. But perhaps only the spiritual seeker can understand today what was essential in those ancient Christmas plays. What I have presented to you just now as the “Star-Song” is, in fact, only a last remnant, a last ruin. If we would go back several centuries we would find vast regions where Christmas plays were performed when this time approached, in the presentation of which entire villages took part. As regards our knowledge of these Christmas plays we may well say that we were merely in a position of collecting something that was rapidly vanishing.

I myself had the good fortune of having an old friend who was such a collector. From him I heard many stories of what he encountered as a scholarly collector of Christmas plays, especially in German-Hungarian regions. In certain “language islands” in Hungary the German language had been kept alive both as a mother tongue and for colloquial speech, up to the time of the so-called magyarization in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century, when the Hungarian language was imposed. There one could still find many of the Christmas plays and Christmas customs which had vanished long ago into the stream of oblivion in the German motherland. Individual colonists, who migrated into Slavic regions during the previous centuries, had preserved their ancient heritage of Christmas plays, and they renewed them, whenever they could find the right people to play the parts, always recruiting the players from among the villagers themselves. I can still well remember — and perhaps you will take my word for it — with how much enthusiasm the old professor *Schröer* spoke of these Christmas plays, when he told of having been present when these people performed these plays during the festival season.

We can say without exaggerating, that an understanding of the inner nature of the artistic element in these plays can only be reached by actually visiting these village people and witnessing how they have given birth to the simple artistry of such Christmas plays out of a truly *most holy mood*. There are people today, who believe that they can learn the art of speech and recitation from this or that teacher. They will go to all sorts of places in order to learn certain breathing exercises which are considered to be the right ones for this purpose. And there exist nowadays dozens of “right” breathing methods for singing and for declamation. These people believe that it is essential for them to make a real automaton of their body or their larynx. Thus they cultivate art in a materialistic way. I would only hope that this strange view will never really take root in our circles; for these people have no idea how a simple, yet true art was born out of a most reverent mood, a prayerful Christmas mood.

Such art was actually performed by village lads who engaged in good-for-nothing pranks and behaved in a very loose way during the rest of the year. These very same lads would act in the Christmas plays with a most profound Christmas mood in their souls and hearts. For, these simple people, who lived beneath their thatched

roofs, knew infinitely more about the relation of the human soul, even the whole human being, and art, than is known today in our modern theaters or other art institutions, no matter how much ado surrounds these things. They knew that true art has to spring from the whole human being; and if it be sacred-art then it must spring from man's holy mood of devotion. That, indeed, these people knew! And this can be seen, for example, in the “four principle rules”, found in those regions which Schröer could still visit.

As the months of October or November approached, in the regions of Upper Hungary, one person who knew the Christmas plays would gather those people who he felt were suitable to perform them. These plays were passed on by oral tradition. They were never committed to writing. That would have been considered a profanation. And during the Christmas season some people were considered suited, of whom one would perhaps not have thought so at other times: really roguish good-for-nothing lads, who had been involved in all sorts of mischief during the rest of the year. But during this time of the year their souls immersed themselves in the required mood. The participants had to abide by some very strict rules during the many weeks of rehearsals. Anyone who wanted to take part had to adhere strictly to the following rules. — Try to imagine life in these villages, and what it would mean not to be allowed to participate in these Christmas plays. “Anyone wishing to act in the plays must:

1. stay away from the girls,
2. sing no bawdy songs during the entire Holy Season,
3. lead a decent life,
4. obey my orders.

A fine will be levied for all violations, and also for each error in memorizing your lines.”*

* See “Weihnachtspiele aus altem Volkstum; Die Oberufer Spiele” (G.A. 43, Dornach 1965), Christmas Plays from Oberufer, translated by A.C. Harwood, Rudolf Steiner Press, London.

Do you recognize in this custom something like a last echo of the kind of consciousness that prevailed at the holy sites of the ancient mysteries? There too, one knew that wisdom cannot be achieved by mere schooling. Likewise, an awareness prevailed here that the whole human being, including his mind and morals, must be cleansed and purified, if he wished to partake in art in a worthy way. These plays had to be born out of the whole human being! And the attunement to the Christmas mood brought about something like this, brought about that devotion and piety would take hold even of the most roguish lads.

These Christmas plays, of which I have just told you, and which Schröer and others could still observe and collect, were the last remains of more ancient plays, indeed, merely the last ruins. But through these plays we can look back into earlier times, into the 16th, 15th, 14th century and even further, when the relations between villages and cities were quite different. Indeed, in the Christmas season the souls of village people would immerse themselves into an entirely different mood through what these plays would offer them, as they presented with the simplest, most primitive means the holy legend: the birth of Christ with all that belongs to it according to the Bible. And just as Christmas day, the 25th of December, was preceded in the church calendar by the “Day of Adam and Eve”, so what was considered the actual Christmas play was preceded by the so-called *Paradise play*, the play of Adam and Even in Paradise, where they fell victim to the devil, the snake. Thus in the most primitive regions where such plays were performed, people could gain an immediate insight into the connection between the descent of man from spiritual heights to the physical world — and that sudden reversal which was bestowed on man through the Christ Impulse, upward again towards the spiritual worlds.

Suppose when reading the Epistles of St. Paul you would sense the greatness of the Pauline conception of man, who descended as Adam from the spiritual world to the world of the senses, and then, of the “new Adam and *Christ*, in whom man ascends again from the world of the senses into the world of the spirit. This can be sensed and felt in Paul in a grandiose way. The simplest people, even down to the children, could sense this in an intimate, loving, fulfilling way in the depth of their hearts and souls when they beheld in this season in succession first the fall of man in the Paradise play of Adam and Eve, and then the revelation of Christ in the Christmas play. And they felt profoundly the mighty turning point that had occurred in the evolution of humanity through the Christ Event. A *reversal* of the path of evolution, that was the way the Christ Event was experienced! One path, that led so to say from heaven to earth, was the path from Adam to Christ; another path, that leads from earth to heaven, is the oath from Christ to the end of earth time. That is what many thousands of people felt in a most intimate way, when the two plays which I have just characterized were so primitively performed before their eyes. These people really could then experience the complete *renewal* of the human spirit in its very essence through the Christ-Impulse. Perhaps you can feel in all of this a kind of echo of something that was once felt in regard to this reversal of the entire progress of humanity through certain words which have come down to us from very ancient times, from the first Christian centuries. These words were often spoken, even in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, in those regions of Europe where Christianity had spread. There people felt something tremendous when words such as these were spoken:

Ave maris Stella	Ave (I greet you) star of the sea
Dei mater alma	Divine youthful mother*
Atque semper virgo	And virgin eternal
Felix coeli porta	Thou happy portal of heaven.
Sumens illud Ave	Receiving this “Ave” (greeting)
Gabrielis ore	From the mouth of Gabriel
Funda nos in pace	Be thou our foundation for peace
Mutans nomen Evae!	By reversing the name Eva!

* A more conventional translation of *alma* is ‘bountiful’, but Rudolf Steiner translates it as ‘young’.

When these words were spoken people felt man's path from heaven to earth through the Fall — and the ascent of man through Christ from earth to heaven. They felt this even in the names of the two female characters, the name *Eva* (Eve) and the name they associated with the mother of Jesus, with which one greeted her so to say: *Ave!* *Ave* is the reverse of the name *Eva*. When you spell *Ave* backwards you have *Eva*. That was felt in its full significance. These words; express what people sensed in the most elementary phenomena of nature, and at the same time, what they saw in the human elements of the Holy Legend:

Ave, star of the sea,
 Divine young mother
 And virgin eternal
 Thou happy portal of heaven.

Receiving this “Ave”
 As a greeting from Gabriel
 Be thou our foundation for peace
 By reversing the name *Eva!*

In such simple words one felt the greatest mysteries, the greatest secrets of human evolution. And in the reversal of the name Eva to Ave people would feel in a subtle way that same truth which we can learn in a grandiose way from the Epistles of Paul when we read his words about Adam, the “old” Adam, and Christ, the “new” Adam. This was the mood in the days of the Christ-festival when these plays were performed one after the other in that primitive way: the “Paradise play” which shows us the Fall of man, and the “Christmas play” which awakens the hope for the future, in which each single human soul can share by taking up the force that lies in the Christ-Impulse. But it should be perfectly clear that to feel this requires a mood, an inner attunement, which simply cannot exist in this way anymore today. Times have changed. Back then it was not as impossible to look towards the spiritual worlds as it is today. For, that fundamentally materialistic trait, which permeates today the minds of the simplest as well as the most sophisticated people did not exist then. In those times the spiritual world was accepted as self-evident. And likewise a certain understanding was present of this spiritual world and how it differs from the world of the senses. Today people can hardly conceive how one could feel spiritually as late as the 15th or 16th century, and how an awareness of spirituality was present essentially everywhere.

We intend to present such a Christmas play in our art center. It is one from the region known as the Upper Palatinate (Oberpfalz). If we succeed, understanding can again be awakened, also in the outer world, for the spiritual mood that lives in such plays. For us, certain lines in such a Christmas play should become signposts, as it were, by which we recognize the spiritual sensitivity of the people who were to understand the Christmas play at the festival season. For example, if in one or another Christmas play Mary, expecting the Jesus-child, says, “The time has come, I see a little child”, this means she clairvoyantly beheld the child in a vision in the days preceding the birth. Thus it is in many Christmas plays. And I wonder where you could find a similar tale today for such an occasion. The time when a conscious connection with the spiritual world was present is no more. You should appreciate this fact neither with optimistic nor with pessimistic feelings. Nowadays you would have to go very far afield, to the most remote and primitive rural areas, to find instances of a vision of the child that is to be born in a few days. But it does still happen!

What people brought to the Christmas season by these primitive memories and thoughts of the greatest event of human evolution, this could only be carried by a mood such as we described. Therefore, we must find it quite understandable that in the place of this former poetry, this simple primitive art, we have today the prose of electric railways and automobiles, speeding forth so grotesquely between rows of Christmas trees. An aesthetically sensitive eye must find it impossible to view these two kinds of things together: Christmas trees, Christmas sales, and cars and electric trains running through their midst! Today this impossible situation is naturally accepted as a matter of course. But for an aesthetically sensitive eye it remains nevertheless something impossible. Even so, we want to be friends of our civilization, not enemies. We want to understand that it must be so as a matter of course.

But we want to understand too how much this is connected with the materialistic trait which has pervaded not only those who live in the city, but those who live in the country as well. Oh, by listening carefully, we can actually detect how this materialistic mood has taken hold of human minds. When we go back to the 14th or 13th century we find that people knew full well that something spiritual is meant when such a thing as the tree of knowledge in paradise is mentioned. They understood rightly what was presented in the Paradise play. When they were shown the tree of knowledge or the tree of life they knew to what to relate it spiritually. For in those days superstition about such matters had not yet spread to the extent it did later, in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. In fact it can be historically documented that already in the 15th century, in the vicinity of the

city of Bamberg, people went out into the apple orchards on Christmas night because they expected to see physically, materially, that a specially chosen apple tree would bloom that night. Thus people's minds became materialistic, in the period beginning in the 13th or 14th century and extending into the 16th and 17th century. This happened not only in the cities, but also in the souls of simple country folk.

Even so, much of the ancient poetry found its way into the homes, with the Christmas tree. But what wafted through the ancient villages as a most sacred mood, like a mystery, has become merely external poetry, the poetry of the Christmas tree, still beautiful, yet merely an echo of something much greater.

Why is this so? Because in the course of time humanity must evolve, because what is most intimate, what is greatest and most significant at one time, cannot remain so in the same way for all times. Only an enemy of evolution would want to drag what was great in one time over into other times. Each period of time has its own special mission. In each period we must learn how to enliven in ever new ways what should enter the souls and hearts of man. Our time can only appreciate that real Christmas mood, which I have sketched here in brief outline, if this mood is seen as a historic memory, a thing of the past. Yet, if we do accept the symbol of the Christmas tree also into our own festival gatherings, we do so precisely because we connect with Spiritual Science the thought of a *new* Christmas mood of mankind, of progressively evolving mankind. For Spiritual Science means to introduce the secrets of Christ into the hearts and souls of man in a way that is appropriate for our time. Even though modern conveyances rush past us when we step outdoors, or perhaps will even fly away with us through the air — and soon these things will awaken humanity quite differently to the most sobering and terrifying prose — nevertheless men of today must have a chance to find again the divine-spiritual world, precisely by an even stronger and more meaningful deepening of the soul. This is the same divine-spiritual world which in bygone centuries appeared before the eyes of those primitive minds when they saw at Christmas time the Holy Child in the manger. Today we need other means to awaken this mood in the soul. Certainly we may like to immerse ourselves in what past times possessed as ways to find the Christ Event, but we must also transcend what depends on time. Ancient people approached the secrets of Nature by merging with her through feeling. That was only possible in a primitive time. Today we need other means.

I would still like to give you some idea *how* people felt their way into nature when the Christmas festival approached. They did this quite primitively, yet they could speak in a very real and living way out of their sensing and feeling of the elements of Nature. If I may share with you a little “Star Song”, you will perhaps feel only through one single line, how the *elements of Nature* spoke out of the soul — the rest of the song is rather primitive. But if you listen more carefully you will be able to observe this Nature mood in several other lines.

Namely, when the one who gathered his actors for the Christmas play, or for the Three Kings play, would wander with them, and when they would then perform at some place, they would first extend a greeting to those who were assembled there. For, the sort of abstract attitude which prevails today between actors and audience did not exist in those earlier times. People belonged together, and the whole gathering was enveloped by an atmosphere of community. Therefore the actors would start by greeting in a primitive way those who were present, as well as those of the community who were not there. This really would bring out the Christmas mood.

The Star-Song

The star singer:

Beloved singers mine, let's gather as a clan
Like fritters in a frying pan,
Beloved singers mine, take up your place,
We want to pass our while with singing in this space.
Beloved singers mine, so strong and smart,
With greetings do we want to start.
Let us greet God-Father on His highest throne
And let us greet also His only Son.
Let us greet the Holy Spirit by name
And then greet all three together again.

Joseph and Mary enter the stage.

Let us greet Joseph and Mary mild,
And we also greet the little child.
Let us greet the ox and also the ass,
Which stand near the crib with straw and grass.
Let us greet them through sunlight and moonshine
That shine on the sea and the river Rhine.
Let us greet them through foliage and grassy blade,
Through the holy rain that has wet us all made.
Let us greet the emperor and his crown,
And him who made it, a master of great renown.
Let us greet the squire, Sir Palfi by name,
Also his officers we greet the same.
Let us greet our fathers of the church, so stern,
Because this play they allowed us to learn.
Let us greet the judge and the jury elect
With worthy honor and respect.
The whole honored community we greet
All who together here we meet.
Let us greet the honored council of this place
By God ordained to serve in this space.
Let us greet them through the roots, large and small,
Which are in the earth, many and all.
Beloved singers mine, turn now to another thing.
To greet the star we shall now sing.
Let us greet the slats, so carefully matched,
To which our star is then attached.
Let us greet the scissors that can stretch out far
By which can wander around the star.

We greet all the little slats of wood
As many as make our star look so good.
Beloved singers mine, harken well to my words
We sang to the star and to all of its parts.
Now we greet our master singer with glee
And also his hat which here you see.
Let us greet our teacher, who indeed,
With God's help taught us what we need.
Beloved singers mine, note well this thing,
To all of these we did now sing.

Now I ask you, please notice what this means: to call upon Nature in such a way that one greets everyone whom one wishes to greet with a certain mood in one's heart, a mood which arises from: "the roots, large and small, which are in the earth, many and all." That is empathy for Nature's own mood. — Thus we must recognize that people in those days were connected with all that was holy, with all that was great and spiritual, right down to the roots of trees and grass. If you can enter into such a feeling, then, through a line such as the one I have just cited, you will feel something grandiose in the secrets of the evolution of mankind. The times are past when such feelings were naturally present, when they were a matter of course. Today we need to make use of other means. We need ways which will lead us to a well-spring in human nature that lies deeper, to a wellspring of human nature which, in a certain sense, is independent of external time. For the course of modern civilization makes it impossible for us to be bound by the seasons. Therefore, if you truly understand the mood which was felt in olden times as the Christ mood of the holy Christmas night, you will also be able to understand our intent, as we attempt to deepen artistically what we can gain from Spiritual Science. We strive to enliven that well-spring in the human mind which can take in the Christ Impulse. No longer can we awaken this great impulse directly within our souls during the Christmas season, even though we would be happy if we could. Yet we constantly search for it. If we can see a "Christ-festival of the progress of humanity" in what Spiritual Science is intended to be for mankind, and if we compare this with what simple people could feel when the Child in the crib was displayed during the Holy Christmas Night then we must say to ourselves: Such moods and feelings can awake in us too, if we consider what can be born in our own soul when our inner-most wellspring is so well attuned to what is sacred, so purified through spiritual knowledge, that this wellspring can take in the holy mystery of the Christ Impulse.

From this point of view we also try to discover true art which springs from the spirit. This art can only be a child of true devotion, a child of the most sacred feelings, when we feel in this context the eternal, imperishable "Christ festival of humanity": How the Christ-Impulse can be born in the human soul, in the human heart and mind. When we learn to experience again through Spiritual Science that this Christ Impulse is a reality, something which can actually flow into our souls and hearts as a living strength, then the Christ Impulse will not remain something abstract or dogmatic. Rather this Christ Impulse, which comes forth from our spiritual movement, will become something able to give us solace and comfort in the darkest hours of our lives, able also to give us joy in the hope that when Christ will be born in our soul at the "Christmastide of our soul", we may then look forward to the *Eastertide*, the resurrection of the spirit in our own inner life.

In this way we must progress, from a material attitude which has entered and taken hold of all minds and hearts, towards a spiritual attitude. For, that renewal, which is necessary to counterbalance today's prosaic ways of life, can only be born out of the spirit. Outside, the traffic of cars may move by, electric trains may speed on, perhaps even balloons may fly across the sky. Nevertheless, in halls such as these, it will be possible

that something of a holy mood lives and grows. This can however only happen as a result of what has flowed to us from spirit knowledge throughout the entire year. When this fruit of the entire year brings Christ closer to us, as could happen in former times in a much more childlike mood, then we may rightly hope that in a certain sense these halls will be "*cribs*". We may then look upon these halls in a similar way as the children and the grown-ups used to look on Christmas eve upon the cradle that was set up for them at home, or in still earlier times, in the church. They used to look at the little Child, at the shepherds before Him, and at "the ox and also the ass which stand near the crib with straw and grass". They felt that from this symbol strength would stream into their hearts, for all hope, for all love of man, for all that is great in mankind, and for all goals of the earth. If on this day, which shall be consecrated and dedicated to remembering the Christ Impulse, we can feel that our earnest spiritual scientific striving throughout the entire year has kindled something in our hearts, then on this day our hearts will feel: "These our meeting halls are truly cradles! And these candles are symbols! And just as Christmas is a preparation for Easter, so these cradles, by virtue of the holy mood that fills them, and these candles, through the symbolism of their light, are meant to be a preparation for a great era for humanity, *the era of the resurrection of the most Holy Spirit, of truly spiritual life!*"

So let us try to feel that in this Christmas season our meeting halls are cradles, places in which, secluded from the outer world, something *great* is being prepared. Let us learn to feel that if we study diligently throughout the year, our insights, our wisdom, can be condensed on Christmas eve into very warm feelings, which glow like a fire, fueled by what we have gained throughout the whole year by immersing ourselves into great teachings. And let us feel that thereby we nurture our remembrance of the greatest impulse in human evolution. Let us also feel, therefore, that in these halls we may have faith that what now begins to burn within such a confined cradle as a holy fire, and as a light, filled with certainty of hope, will find its way to all mankind at some future time. Then this fire and this light will be strong enough to extend its power even to the hardest, most down to earth prose of life, to permeate it, to enkindle it, to warm it, to enlighten it! Thus can we feel here the Christmas mood as a mood of hope in anticipation of that World-Easter-mood which is to express the living spirit, needed for a renewal of humanity.

We best celebrate Christmas when we fill our souls in the coming days with this mood: In our Christmas we spiritually prepare the "Easter festival of all mankind", the resurrection of spiritual life. Yes indeed, cradles shall our places of work become at Christmas time! The child of light is to be born, whom we have nurtured throughout the entire year by immersing ourselves into the wisdom-treasures of Spiritual Science. In our places of work *Christ is to be born within the human soul*, in order that spiritual life may be resurrected at the great Eastertide of humanity. In its very essence humanity must come to feel spirituality as a resurrection, by virtue of what streams forth as Christmas mood from our halls into all humanity, in the present time as well as in the future.

Four Sundays Celebrating Advent:

December 2, 9, 16 • 7-8:30 pm

at the home of James Lee & Jannebeth Roell, 3135 NE 17th Ave.
Call 503-249-3807, or e-mail jannebeth@mindspring.com to reserve your space.

December 23 • 7-8:30 pm

at home of Mark & Valerie Hope, 2606 SE 58th Ave.

The Foundation Stone Meditation and the Community Building article by R. van Romunde will form the basis for this work. Light refreshments afterward

Four Sundays Celebrating Advent: The Foundation Stone Meditation and the Community Building article by R. van Romunde will form the basis for this work, available on our website, www.portlandanthroposophy.org
Light refreshments afterward.

December 2,9,16 • 7-8:30 pm at the home of James Lee & Jannebeth Roell 3135 NE 17th Ave
To reserve your space call 503-249-3807, or email jannebeth@mindspring.com

December 23, 7-8:30 pm at the home of Mark & Valerie Hope, 2606 SE 58th Ave.
To reserve your space call 503-775-0778 or email valerieannhpx@aol.com

**You are Invited to Four Sundays
Celebrating Advent:**

The Foundation Stone Meditation and the Community Building article by R. van Romunde will form the basis for this work, and are available on our website, www.portlandanthroposophy.org
Light refreshments afterward.

December 2,9,16 • 7-8:30 pm at the home of James Lee & Jannebeth Roell 3135 NE 17th Ave
To reserve your space call 503-249-3807, or email jannebeth@mindspring.com

December 23, 7-8:30 pm at the home of Mark & Valerie Hope, 2606 SE 58th Ave.
To reserve your space call 503-775-0778 or email valerieannhpx@aol.com