

“Rediscovering the Sacred in our Lives and in our Times” *Introductory Message to the Sacred Web Conference 2014*

By HRH The Prince of Wales

Ladies and gentlemen,

For many years, I have found inspiration in the pages of *Sacred Web*, not least in the writings of the man you now honour at your conference, Professor Nasr, and I can only wish him the happiest and most special of 80th birthdays.

Looking at the title of this year’s conference, “Rediscovering the Sacred in our Lives and in our Times”, I am reminded of a recent event that gave an example of how the Sacred can be rediscovered, through practice. A former student of my School of Traditional Arts was recently involved in giving a workshop on sacred geometry to a group of professional designers working for companies such as Tesco, John Lewis, Waitrose and Apple. Inevitably, such has been the denial of access to this knowledge, none of these designers had ever seen such geometry before, and the results were astonishing—and actually rather encouraging. These designers were quite literally amazed. It was as if a veil had been lifted from their eyes and, for the first time, they saw pattern and order and relationship and meaning.

It was as if the loss of the Sacred in their lives had removed from their being something essential. It had removed from their experience and their cognition an entire dimension of truth and therefore of understanding—particularly of Man’s integral relationship with universal principles, as reflected in the Natural world and in the wider Universe. But when it was shown to them they knew it and responded to it. And at the end of the workshop they asked for more.

In such a world, can it be surprising that we find ourselves where

we are—at a loss? And does it not suggest that the great difficulties we face are not, at root, difficulties of technology, a lack of technical skills and resources, but that they are a crisis of perception? We have lost our way because we can no longer see clearly. And so we have forgotten. A world of parts has replaced a world of wholeness. A world of separation has replaced a world of connectedness and entanglement. The secular has pushed aside the Sacred.

How then, might the Sacred be rediscovered? The work of my School of Traditional Arts—and, indeed, my Foundation for Building Community—suggests that it can be rediscovered by practice; which is to say that it is discovered not by talking about it, but by putting it into action. Over recent years, the Outreach Programme of the School has taken the study of these universal and timeless principles into different countries and different groups—sometimes schoolchildren and their teachers and parents, and sometimes students learning their own traditional arts and crafts—and the results are always the same, initial scepticism is set aside and with enthusiasm and delight the work proceeds as those taking part rediscover something that perhaps, somewhere deep inside, they always knew, that there is a relationship between the outer and the inner; that in the end these patterns and orders are familiar and provide a limitless source of creative inspiration through what I can only call “the grammar of Harmony”.

The results are life-changing. It is as if the work itself gives rise to an awakening. And, almost at once, the secular world gives way to the Sacred. This work has taken place in many countries and my School is about to embark upon more such work with schoolchildren of the First Nations in Canada, at Ahousaht, in British Columbia.

And so, as you gather for your conference, I can only urge you to consider not just words, but also ways of practice that will bring the Sacred not only into your lives, but also the lives of others, whether through sustainable, agro-ecological farming systems, for instance, or new urban-development that reflects human scale, local identity and cultural tradition. What could be more of a challenge and an adventure!

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