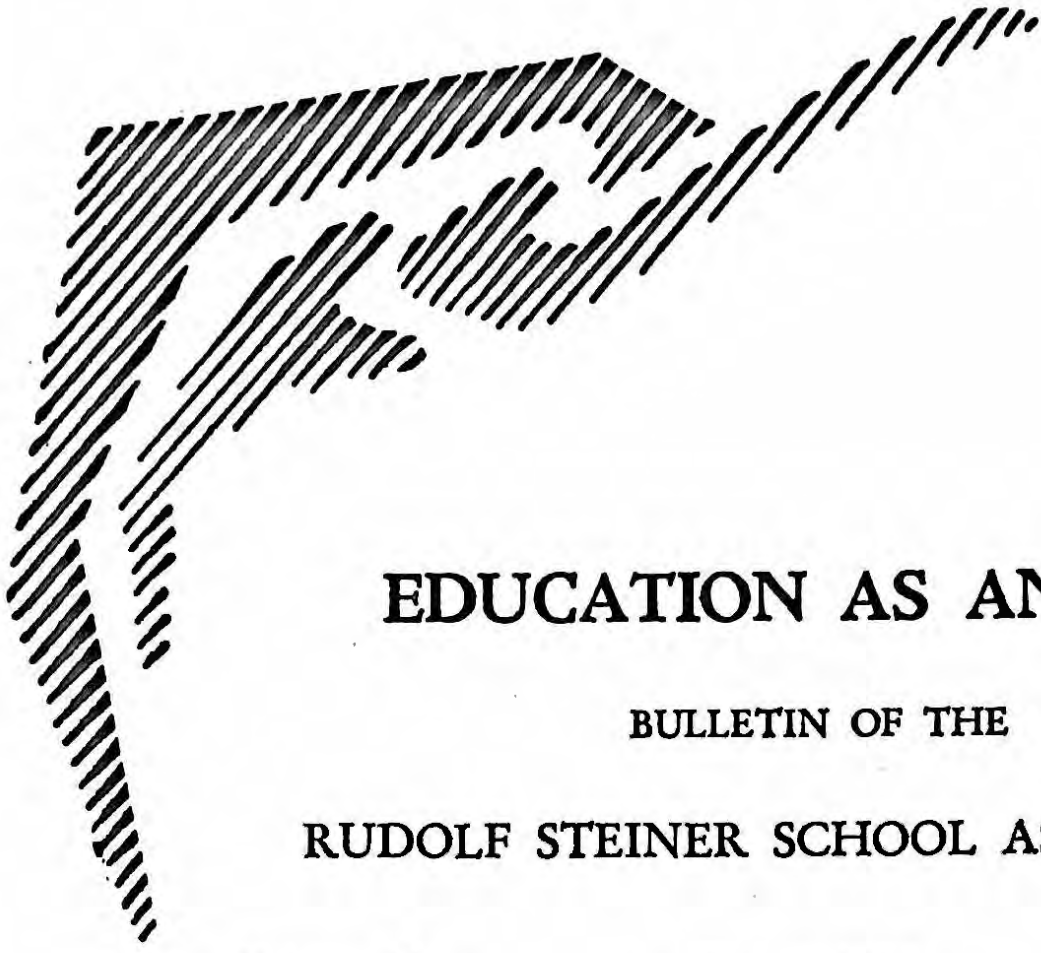




EDUCATION AS AN ART

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RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN THE WALDORF SCHOOL*

In moments of great happiness, and possibly still more in times of danger, the depths of human nature are stirred from sleep into activity. This activity may take the form of a religious awakening. Such an awakening has been taking place in our country ever since the forties, and the end is not yet; for while our epoch could not be called a time of unusual happiness, it certainly qualifies as one of crisis and danger.

Parents across the nation today are being moved to review more and more earnestly the place of religion in the education of their children. When they came to investigate the matter, these parents are often surprised at how radically education in our time has severed its immemorial ties with religion. And a great many parents today wish the case were otherwise. Some, acting through school boards and even through state departments of education, have attempted to return the public schools to devotional practices that were common everywhere in America no longer than a generation ago. They have proposed to introduce again simple prayers, or at least some statement by which children could acknowledge their dependence upon, their aspiration toward, God.

Such parents have been grievously disappointed by what they could achieve with their good-hearted efforts. The general rule seems to be that if

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the action they propose means anything positive and definite, it cannot be agreed upon; while after it has been made acceptable by codification, it means very little.

A political barrier arises whenever there is a move to introduce religious education into the public school curriculum. Too many parents think of religion in terms of churchly dogmas, and concerning dogmas, of course, agreement in the community cannot be obtained. Besides, some citizens are strongly opposed to metaphysical viewpoints of any kind whatever. Thus the public school, which stands so close to state power, has been prevented by common sense as well as by the Constitution from attempting to establish the one or the other method of fostering religion. As far as public education is concerned, religion has been effectively outlawed.

The political factor which thus neutralizes the public school with respect to religion constitutes a formidable problem. It could seem to be the main problem. But teachers in independent schools observe that even when under no obligation to satisfy a voting majority, they still face serious difficulties in every effort to relate religion organically to the rest of teaching.

The heart of these difficulties lies in the fact that teaching today is shaped by the scientific attitude, by the findings of modern science, while for science, religion stands a thing apart. Religion is said to deal with things that science cannot take hold of. Religion concerns itself with metaphysical truths as revealed to faith, while science is occupied with physical facts that are subject to analysis and experiment. Human experience finds itself split between the two discontinuous disciplines.

But although it is quite generally believed of science and religion that as long as each respects the other's dominion in its own sphere, they can have no conflict, the truth is that both seek to account in ultimate terms for the same single world. And although we may theoretically be content to divide this world into two kingdoms, the light of understanding is actually one light. Men rightly frown upon compartmentalization of thought; they are not happy with completely disparate explanations for the same phenomena.

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." The human spirit is insistent upon seeing the world it inhabits as really one world. Rather than hover between opposite conceptions which ignore rather than supplement each other, the mind will seize upon one of the pair and ask it to stand for the whole. Many independent schools and colleges at the present time, to say nothing of public schools, are placing the whole responsibility for the content and method of education upon natural science, to the virtual exclusion of religious influence.

* * * *

The existing impasse between science and religion, as this affects education, is recognized by Waldorf schools as by a considerable number of others. But in the case of the Waldorf schools a desire to solve this problem may be regarded as the reason for their very existence. The feeling that reverence and devotion must live again in teaching, that the school must help children to recognize their spiritual origin and destiny even while they learn to pursue scientific inquiry with vigor, is fundamental to the curriculum and methods of all the Waldorf schools throughout the world.

These schools are sponsored by no church and advance no sectarian creed. Far rather, their teachers interest themselves in the views of others and encourage the children to do the same, meeting all varieties of religious life with sympathetic understanding. How the great religions come to the children's attention during the middle elementary school years when they are approached first as mythological truth and then as historical realities, affords a unique illustration of the practical ingenuity of Waldorf teaching methods. But this feature of the curriculum, one of the many which serve to unite religion and education in Waldorf schools, requires separate treatment.

Waldorf teachers are convinced that the religious life cannot be successfully developed by the family and church alone apart from the school. The time to learn how to view the creation as God's handiwork is when created things are being studied for the first time. This occurs in school. Every fact will then speak from its beauty and immediacy the language of God — or none will. And if the school has presented the detail of Nature materialistically, it may be beyond the power of pastor or parents thereafter to bring Deity into a fully credible relationship with the natural order.

For that matter, even parochial schools will not succeed in this endeavor if they do no more than add ritual and sermons to the standard teaching of science and history. In that event, the gap which in ordinary life divides the concepts of science from those of religion will prevail also in the religious school. Science is the modern approach to the world of externality. Religion, on the other hand, unfolds in inwardness of soul. How outward and inward experience are related in the world-process is doubtless a mystery which can be thoroughly understood only on the summit of wisdom; yet teachers who would bring science and religion together inside a self-consistent curriculum must have begun to explore this mystery.

In the study of all subject matter from the first grade through high school, Waldorf teachers attempt to show that man finds within himself the key to the riddles of Nature — and the world — whole, the key to the riddle of himself. The small and the great worlds mirror and complete one another. It is just the continuing development of this harmonic relationship which assures interest and satisfaction to the student in his scientific study of physical, chemical and biological phenomena; of geography, meteorology and astronomy.

The sun, for example, is not introduced to the children as a mere gaseous body: some distant center of atomic explosions. Waldorf pupils will learn to know the sun first within the aura which surrounds it in fable, legend and myth. They will have observed it for themselves as the gracious source of all warming, enlivening light. They will be helped to feel without cavil the gratitude that in ancient times inspired Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Celt — and in no lesser degree our own American Indians — to worship the divine powers of wisdom and love as whose physical body they saw the sunlight.

Children so educated have some chance in later years of following the poetic-religious experience of William Blake:

“When the sun rises, do you not see a round disk
of fire somewhat like a guinea? O no, no I see
an innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying,
‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.’ ”

Such an awareness of the higher nature of Nature lies behind all the laboratory experiments with heat and light, acoustics and mechanics, electricity and magnetism, which girls and boys undertake beginning with the sixth grade. When the perception of quality is added to that of quantity and time is given to reflect over what has been observed, not the sun alone but every natural object and process becomes expressive. Teaching and learning are then carried on with the outlook of Emerson, who said that "(Man) is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him. And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man. All the facts in natural history taken by themselves have no value, but are barren like a single sex. But marry (natural history) to human history and it is full of life."

It requires no make-believe, no stretching of the facts, and above all no pedantry, to see the whole of Nature as a living parable of the moral, psychological experience which man discovers within himself.

* * * *

Children taught in this manner are heartened as well as made secure by the feeling of being at home in the universe. The sympathy they develop for Nature is the absolute prerequisite of the love and gratitude which nourish true religion. Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school nearly forty years ago on this understanding:

"Gratitude for what human beings do for us and for the gifts vouchsafed by Nature, is what will guide religious feeling on the right path. Failure to nourish the child's sense of gratitude is of the greatest imaginable significance . . . Love for all creation must then be added to the sense of gratitude. If we lead the child of nine or ten in this way, nothing is easier than to reveal in the living world around him qualities he must learn to love. Love for every flower, for sunshine, for rain, will deepen his perception of the world in a religious sense."

Yet those who teach today's youngsters know only too well what Steiner saw clearly: that love for universal Nature cannot be conjured out of pious phrases nor captured by wishful thinking. Nor does it necessarily follow from an explanation of how *useful* Nature is, still less from a *savoring* of the sense-impressions which Nature offers to man. These attitudes tend to be self-centered, fettering the individual to himself, when self-transcendence is what he much more truly desires.

To gain a loving identification with what lies outside himself, man must take the path of direct knowledge. Love is not the result of knowledge *about*, but is the immediate experience of another being. The sound way to this experience is through an objective knowledge from which feeling has not been excluded. The teacher, of course, must tread this path himself before he can lead his students along it.

Seeking intuitive knowledge, man learns to abandon his private standpoint. He allows the objects of the outer world to occupy his whole attention, to engage all his inner capacity and force. Then, by the very power saved when personal sympathies and antipathies are eschewed, he can greatly strengthen his feeling for that which he beholds. His perceptive attention, reinforced by the power of clarified feeling, enters a new dimension of reality.

The striving for a heightened objective knowledge is the real path to self-transcendence, to loving familiarity with natural history and human history, and thus to religion. It so frequently fails to reach this goal only because as scientists and teachers we do not go on to apply our hearts as well as our heads to the work. So-called objective observation can bring the individual beyond himself only in part; it may merely suppress or atrophy the deeper part. But when the life of feeling has become as disciplined as scientific observation and thought have in the course of time learned to be, it will join the latter as an instrument of true insight. Such insight opens the way again for the modern individual to a religious experience of world-reality.

The fact of educational importance to be remembered in this connection is that children start life with no alienation from outer occurrences and beings. Indeed, they are quite at one with the world of perception before they separate themselves out from it as thinking individuals. One might even say that for children Nature is lived before it is felt, and felt before it is known. As Walt Whitman wrote:

"There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became . . ."

Thus teachers do not by any means have to graft into their young pupils the sense of intimacy with Nature. Their problem rather, when the transition is made to the abstract thinking required by modern science, is simply how not to destroy the feeling that already exists. The heart's experience must not be foreclosed by education, but transmitted.

The teacher must guide his pupils so that intellect develops in them with natural slowness, never losing its ground in feeling. Then an alive instead of a dead intelligence results. Thinking becomes vivid, mobile, pictorial. Such thought has power to lay hold on reality without killing it first. Many poets and philosophers have called this higher faculty of knowledge — which teachers must consciously cultivate in order to speak well to children, and which children will naturally develop if they are not mis-educated as their teachers have been — Imagination. They regard it as a kind of second sight, giving the possibility of "union with the things known."

Genuine imagination, objective imagination, holds the key to the science of the future, as experimental observation and logic have held it to the science that must now be superseded. The pupils of today if wisely educated during their elementary and secondary school years, will in future help to create this more penetrating, more artistic — and more religious — science.

* * * *

In earlier times what we call the humanistic or liberal arts curriculum was actually a means for students to cultivate religion in the ordinary course of acquiring knowledge at school. Its mathematical, musical and linguistic studies harbored a definite religious impulse based upon insight into the mysterious, vital correspondences between man and the world. But in modern times this curriculum has been thrown into shadow by the brilliant success of sciences which consider man a dispensable object among other objects in Nature. The liberal arts have also been eaten out from within by the negative attitude which representatives of these sciences take toward religious intuition.

Nowadays all knowledge worthy of the name is too often supposed to be the exclusive preserve of Science and scientific knowledge to be that alone

which can be empirically demonstrated. The difficulty with such a judgment is that it denies, as it should not, empirical status to inward and qualitative realities — to the content of imagination and intuition without which the great scientists would never have risen above the level of laboratory technicians. This dogmatic form of scepticism on the part of scientific positivists not only undermines the humanities which come down to us from the past, but it forestalls the further evolution of science itself, which is our hope for the future.

Just in our own day, which has lost the original spirit of the liberal arts and has not yet attained to a liberal science, we often find school teachers to be the most bereft of all. It is more the rule than the exception in our schools that teachers lack inspiration in teaching the sciences. Natural events are offered altogether baldly, as it were. And while this teaching may 'fascinate' some students by instilling the fever to experiment, by arousing the will to knowledge as a form of power, it repels many more than it entices. In how few does it awaken a wholesome veneration, a loving wonder, a religious awe.

Too often the 'facts' turn out to be 'mere' facts. The events of Nature are placed under observation by the student but these events have been previously so represented that they really have not interest for the human heart. The moral sense cannot read them; the aesthetic sense remains unmoved. The facts themselves undergo change, but the observing student does not. When all is said, the student feels that nothing important is happening to such facts. They are really going nowhere, have nothing to say. Clouds and sky, rock and spring, snake and butterfly, are things that exist as text and teacher say, according to law; but they lack *being*. Considered essentially their fate is beyond the reach of human striving or caring.

But if the world-existence which surrounds us has nothing to say to our human nature, so that it must be accounted morally and psychologically neuter, children can feel neither love nor gratitude toward it. The world then becomes a spectacle with which they have no possibility of being identified. Scientific studies throw them back entirely upon themselves. They for their part react with boredom, then with cynicism, eventually with a serious weakening of the will for life itself. Often their disappointment in knowledge becomes an abiding resentment which passes over into immoral, anti-social behavior.

There are welcome signs of recent date that under the leadership of advanced scientists we are beginning to work our way toward a more humanized kind of knowing. Our world conception is becoming more liberal again in the sense that it is beginning to bring into play, and so to liberate, the imaginative together with the intellectual capacities of the human soul. It is beginning to employ some feeling in the approach to Nature. Thus an 'organic' world view is gradually coming to replace the 'mechanistic' one which still bemuses so many minds.

All this is a step in the right direction, even though an organic world is still far short of an intelligent, compassionate, moral one. But for the sake of the children who wait to be educated for leadership in the world of tomorrow, Waldorf teachers are truly thankful they need not be entirely subject to the 'cultural lag' that will attend the complete overcoming of scientific materialism. They have already found, prophetically in men like Emerson, and actually developed in the work of Rudolf Steiner, a way of knowledge

which enables them to introduce religion soundly into every aspect of Waldorf education. Though Emerson couched it, of course, in the language of his own century, he sketched clearly enough a hundred years ago the kind of 'religious' science which Waldorf schools in many countries are trying to develop for and with their students:

"The reason why the world lies broken and in heaps is because man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit. Love is as much its demands as perception. Indeed, neither can be perfect without the other. In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout, and devotion is thought. Deep calls unto deep. But in actual life the marriage is not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers but they freeze their subject under the wintry light of the understanding. But when a faithful thinker resolute to detach every object from personal relations and see it in the light of thought, shall at the same time kindle science with the fire of the holiest affections, then shall God go forth anew into the creation."

—*John Gardner*

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF FESTIVALS

A festival, truly celebrated, creates a mood which lifts the heart and mind out of the everyday. Real festivals are moments of rare educational value.

The creation of a festival mood requires full concentration. We cannot participate indifferently, nor merely intellectually, but must give ourselves actively and wholeheartedly to the experience. For the children, it means learning to enter reverently and concentratedly into an event which, through its form as well as through its content, raises their thoughts, their feelings and their will into a sphere of deeper, more maturely human experience. When this has happened one reads the impact of the festival in the relaxed and unspoiled happiness which fills the children. The festival has created a true socialability — the audience has become a new community. The children are more themselves and can, therefore, find each other in a new, and freer way.

The creation of a festival evokes a blessing which no other amount of deliberate effort could produce. It is not a matter of good luck.

It is the fruit which ripens out of sustained and conscious effort shared by the children, guided by the adults. Those who have discovered the creative value of a festival know that its effectiveness is like the raising of a number to a power. The 5 and 7 of ordinary experience multiply together to make 35. To raise 5 to the 7th power is a process of another order entirely.

The following articles are examples of certain festive days as they are celebrated in the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City.

—*Henry Barnes*

WHAT THANKSGIVING MEANS AT THE STEINER SCHOOL

Back of the loaf, the snowy-white flour;
Back of the flour, the mill;
Back of the mill, the wheat and the shower,
The sun and our Father's will.

This is the verse which the children of the elementary school said at the Monday morning assemblies preceding Thanksgiving. What do these simple words mean to them?

As the older children repeat the verse they may perhaps recall, out of their study of Botany, that plants are the children of the Sun and the Earth: their roots grasping the firm earth to receive water and minerals, their leaves spreading to receive the blessings of the sun — air and light and warmth, their seeds carrying within them the spark of new life.

Children a little younger will surely remember their study of Farming — the plowing and planting of the fields, the gratitude of the farmer for rain to moisten and swell the seeds and warm sunshine to coax the first green shoots up out of the earth; the ripening through the long summer days, the harvesting of the golden grain in the fall and the grinding of the seeds into soft white flour to be baked in hot ovens into delicious loaves of bread.

The little children may recall the story of the water droplet who, with his brothers, gurgled down the mountainside and slipped out of sight under the ground where an old gnome carried him to a thirsty seedling. The water droplet helped the wheat sprout to grow and so it carried him up through the stalk into a tiny grain of wheat at the top, up in the sunshine. At harvest time the little drop of water was full of joy, waiting to enter the bread which would bring life and strength to human beings.

These and other such thoughts which might come alive again in the hearts and minds of the children show, briefly and simply, how the spirit of thankfulness flows through the life of the school day by day, year by year. Reverence for the Divine without and within man, gratitude for God's gifts to man — earth, air, water, fire, given for man's use; the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms over which man has been given dominion — these attitudes grow in each child throughout the year.

And so at harvest time, when the earth blazes forth in color proclaiming its richness and bounty, when the blessings of sun and shower and the labor of toiling hands reach fruition, it is altogether fitting that this spirit of thankfulness burst forth, and words of praise and joyful singing resound through the school proclaiming God's goodness.

As Nature shares her abundance, so the children share their joys and blessings through the gifts of food they bring to the school — gifts which bespeak love and care in their gay wrappings of bright foil and tissue and ribbon, gifts which surely bear some of the glow that lights the children's eyes as they carry them in a grand procession and present them in the assembly room to await distribution to needy families. Who is more blessed — those who give or those who receive gifts such as these?

Thanks giving — in thought, in feeling, in deed — this is our Thanksgiving.

—*Nanette Grimm*

ST. NICHOLAS

In the wee hours of the morn on December Sixth, the legend tells us, a door in the moon opens and out steps St. Nicholas and his faithful servant Ruprecht. Together they slide down a moonbeam to earth and travel all over the world visiting boys and girls. In New York City, the Rudolf Steiner School is a favorite stopping place for the good Saint. Here for many years he has entered right into the classrooms and spoken to each child.

When a fateful knocking was heard on one of the classroom doors in the middle of the main lesson, a stunned silence fell over the room. The banging was repeated impatiently until at last a boy grew bold enough to open the door. With a rush, dark Ruprecht was in the room, bells tinkling as he ran about brandishing his bundle of sticks. His eyes gleamed mischievously and his shoulders were bent from carrying his heavy and bottomless bag of apples and golden nuts. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, St. Nicholas himself appeared. He was taller by far than any mortal man. On his head was his Bishop's pointed hat, gleaming with gold. His costume was rich, rose brocade reaching down to his feet which were shod most unusually with heavy cloth. His glance was stern but his eyes were kind, and his long, curling beard made it apparent to all that this was an ageless being. In his hand he carried a great book. It was to this book that the children looked, all with eager anticipation mingled with tinglings of guilt; for when the book was opened, the right-hand pages were in gold, and held the good deeds of the children; and the left-hand pages were black and on them were recorded unkind thoughts and actions.

St. Nicholas studied both sides of his book carefully and then he spoke to the children, calling them by name. He seemed to know everything that had happened during the year. An outstanding accomplishment was mentioned, a thoughtful action, an improvement in studies. Ruprecht dove down into his bag and brought forth the reward, a rosy apple, and perhaps a golden nut. Unpleasant happenings had to be gravely referred to, at times, and then Ruprecht with a gleeful chuckle prepared to give the offender a thorough spanking with his sticks; but, with a look, St. Nicholas restrained him and allowed only a gentle tickling. Fortunately, in the Rudolf Steiner School, all the children had more on the golden side than on the black, so that everyone received an apple.

Then, as suddenly as he appeared, he was gone. A great sigh passed through the room. Children gathered together in groups, and relived and retold the whole experience. Others pondered seriously what the Saint had said, for they had learned through the years that each word was carefully weighed and was full of meaning. Over all the happy discussion could be heard the munching of apples and the cracking of nuts.

—Virginia Paulsen

THE CHRISTMAS PLAY

It may well be asked why a school in New York City, educating boys and girls for life in the second half of the twentieth century, should each year perform the Christmas Nativity Play?

In medieval England, the stories of the Old and New Testament were woven into the fabric of life. The story of the Creation and Fall, of Noah and the Ark, of the birth of Jesus, of the Shepherds and the Kings, were everywhere carved in stone, they glowed from jewelled windows, they lived in the telling and retelling, and, above all, in the plays which brought them to life year after year, inscribing them deep in the hearts of each new generation.

These plays acted at first by monks before the altar, then by the guilds, were the breath of life — they were instruction, literature, recreation, festival. They were not played by professional actors, but by men (later by men and women) of the community, who prepared themselves inwardly for their parts and played them with their heart's devotion. In the audience were many who had themselves once acted the plays and nearly everyone must have known well by heart their language of picture and gesture and Biblical spoken word.

Although they were drawn from the Bible and stemmed from the Church, the stories were not narrowly religious in character. They had no hidden axe to grind. They were for all men, because they were themselves essentially human. Adam was in every man. Each man fell when Adam sinned and all men sought to bring the heavenly child to birth within themselves. Just as a painting by Fra Angelico, Raphael or Dürer — be it an Annunciation, a Madonna or an Adoration of the Kings — speaks to us all today, whatever our creed may be, because it speaks an archetpyal language of human experience. so the medieval plays spoke to the community of their day and can speak to us again in our own time, if we choose to listen.

At the Rudolf Steiner School we are fortunate to have as our Christmas Play, *The Little Play of the Nativity*, written in beautiful English verse by Arvia MacKaye (Mrs. Ege), based on the medieval Coventry Shepherds Play performed by the guild of Shearman and Taylors. The play follows the old English folk form. The players sit on benches inside the hall and march through the audience, singing the medieval carols.

As a class teacher who has reached the eighth grade with his class, I would like to say a word about the play in its deeper educational aspect from my observation of what it means to the children. There is in every class a nucleus of children who have come up from the first grade, perhaps even from kindergarten, and there are also many others who have been in the school a good number of years. They have seen the Nativity Play given by the eighth grade each year. They know many lines by heart. The gestures are familiar to them. The costumes, the simple setting, are parts of a well-known picture. All this has become part of them and the thought has taken root through the years: When I am in the eighth grade, I, too, shall act in the Christmas Play.

And then they *are* in the eighth grade and the moment for the Christmas Play actually arrives. New life is poured into the established beauty of the traditional forms. The self-consciousness of the child who overacts artificially has to give way before the reality of the part itself. The shy child grows into a new confidence within the already familiar role. Unrhythmical,

abstractly intellectual speech has to discover the flowing poetic rhythm and "come down" out of its everyday nasal "head tone" into the deeper resonance of full-bodied speech. The child who tends easily to mock — often out of an inner insecurity — learns the gesture and mood of reverence. The roughneck throws his energy into becoming a boisterous, but heartily pious shepherd. Girls, on the verge of young womanhood, learn to carry the ideal of the mother within a heart still essentially innocent, as the role of Mary begins to fill their feeling and imagination. The deep, stately bow of the winged angel, stirs the instinct for gracious beauty in the soul of a child not yet wholly prey to the cheap indifference of the manners of an intellectually-mechanized age.

Little by little, through repetition and practise, the children transcend their everyday selves, growing beyond themselves into their parts. The special value of the school's Nativity Play is that through it the children are led out into a world of dramatic harmony and lasting human beauty which is both a fruit of their childhood years in the elementary school and a seed which they will carry with them into adolescence and later life.

—Henry Barnes

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Words to the Children on his Birthday

Many, many years ago there lived a mighty warrior. His name was Alexander the Great. There was a force in this warrior that drove him as far east as India and everywhere he went, he conquered.

We are not going to talk about Alexander the Great today. But tomorrow is the birthday of a warrior just as mighty, just as forceful as Alexander the Great.

He fought a new kind of battle. He wielded a different sort of sword, a sword smithied from a mightier metal than the world had ever seen before. The stature of this man was known even in the remotest corner of the earth. The chieftain of a mountain tribe in the Caucasus cried to a visitor, "But you have not told us about the greatest general and greatest ruler of the world. We want to know something about him. He spoke with a voice of thunder; he laughed like the sunrise, and his deeds were strong as rock and as sweet as the fragrance of roses. Tell us of that man!"

We have come together this morning in order to remember the deeds of this mighty warrior . . . Abraham Lincoln. I would like to describe to you one of his battles.

The scene of the battle was an enormous room with smooth waxed floors and high ceilings. Along the south wall of this room there were many large french windows, thinly curtained from the world. In the very center of this room there was a small mahogany table, and on this table lay a document. An inkstand and a feather pen rested beside the document. It waited to be signed by Abraham Lincoln.

Abraham Lincoln stood at the large french windows. He was as tall and thin as the rails he had split in his youth. His hands were large, strong, and fierce in the knuckles, but tender to the fingertips. About his mouth was the same tenderness. Tenderness transformed to sadness rested in dark

shadows about his eyes, but from his eyes streamed a light that could perceive things very far away. He had a vision that brought near the greatest distances.

Far to the south he saw a young slave being sold at auction. In a wagon nearby the family of the slave wept and moaned. A well dressed man with a black mustache counted the money this misery earned him.

Abraham Lincoln saw a field of cotton in which a great many people labored. They were all slaves. A mournful mood hovered about them as they worked and dulled the brightness of the day. They sang as they worked. They sang sweet, vibrant songs that hovered close to the ground and wove in and out among the cotton plants.

Along a dusty, gutted road an old negro stumbled with a massive load on his back. He bent closer and closer to the ground under his burden and he seemed to become older with every step. He faltered, staggered to the side of the road and fell to his knees. The sun shimmered along the road and little puffs of dust sifted back to the road where an old man had just walked.

Abraham Lincoln closed his eyes and a shadow of pain crossed his face.

Two men burst into the enormous room. They were advisors to the president, to Abraham Lincoln, and they saw him by the window. They saw that the document had not yet been signed.

"Mr. President," one of them cried. "It is good that you have taken my advice. Let the South go its way. It is weak and poor. They cannot harm us. Don't sign the document."

"Hold on!" the other advisor cried. "The South supplies us with cotton and food. They have no right to desert the North. If they go their own way we will be a small country instead of a large, strong country."

Abraham Lincoln thought of the pictures he had seen as he gazed to the south. Quickly he turned and strode to the little table on which lay the document. As he walked he spoke slowly and strongly.

"I tell you, a nation divided cannot stand."

He signed the document and 75,000 young men went into battle. The history books will tell you that the civil war began on that day, but if you look into your hearts, deep into your hearts, you will know that the battle had already been fought by Abraham Lincoln before the document was signed.

—Siegfried Finser

THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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Virginia E. Paulsen

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