

# On Earth as It Is in Heaven

The Tasks of the College of Teachers in Light of the Founding Impulse of Waldorf Education

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*[Editor's note: This is the second part of Roberto Trostli's article, following the first installment which was published in the Research Bulletin, Volume XVI Number 2. Both parts will be included in a new collection of essays on the College of Teachers being prepared by the Pedagogical Section Council.]*

## II. Who Serves on the College of Teachers?

The College is composed of members of the school staff who are committed to working collegially on behalf of the school. In order to serve on a College, a person will typically have been confirmed in his or her work in the school, intends to work at the school into the foreseeable future, is willing to commit him or herself to upholding the College's processes, and works with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path.

In most schools, the College is composed primarily of teachers. This makes sense because they are most directly involved in the education of students and can keep the education as the central focus of all of the school's functions. Over the years it has been suggested that College membership should be restricted to teachers because they develop special qualities through their work with the children and because the spiritual world expresses itself so directly through children, which helps the teacher perceive what may be needed for the future. I do not think that College membership should be restricted to teachers. While working with the children certainly demands that we grow and develop ourselves, every vocation offers opportunities for growth and self-development. Someone who does not work with children develops other qualities and perspectives, and the College can benefit from

these. Even the first Waldorf school included members who were not teachers because they had a special reason for participating.

The College of the first Waldorf school included those people whom Rudolf Steiner invited to participate in the preparatory course who went on to work at the school. As additional teachers were hired, questions arose about whether all the teachers should participate in the College. At the end of the first school year, in the meeting with the teachers on July 30th, 1920, Rudolf Steiner said:

It is certainly not so that we will include every specialty teacher in the faculty [*Lehrerkollegium*]. The intent is that the inner faculty [*engeres Kollegium*] includes the class teachers and the older specialty teachers, and that we also have an extended faculty [*erweiterte Kollegium*].

... Only the main teachers, those who are practicing, not on leave, should be on the faculty. In principle, the faculty should consist of those who originally were part of the school and those who came later but who we wish had participated in the course last year. We have always discussed who is to be here as a real teacher. If someone is to sit with us, he or she must be practicing and must be a true teacher.

When Berta Molt said that she didn't belong there, Rudolf Steiner replied:

You are the school mother. That was always the intent. Mrs. Steiner is here as the head of the eurhythmy department and Mr. Molt as the patron of the school; that was always the intent from the very beginning.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand more fully who should serve on the College, let us examine what Rudolf Steiner presented in the preparatory course.

### Qualities and Criteria for College Members

What are the qualities that College members should have and develop? In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner spoke about the qualities that teachers would need in order to do their work. They correspond closely to the qualities that he spoke about at the end of the course. At *The College Founding* Rudolf Steiner presented seven other qualities that have to do with the spiritual work of the teachers. Here again the image of the balance arises. In the two trays are the qualities that are needed by teachers to do their earthly tasks, in the middle the qualities needed by teachers to perform their spiritual tasks together.

The qualities outlined here are needed by anyone who intends to work in the earthly and in the spiritual realms as individuals and as a

group. The qualities from the beginning and at the end of the course (the outer columns) are addressed to us as individuals, while those presented at *The College Founding* (the middle column) address us as a group. Members of the College must take up their individual work, but they also have a collective task because only where two or more are gathered is it possible to work directly with the higher spiritual powers.

The Council of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science in North America established the following criteria for participation as a member of a College of Teachers. The person should

1. be confirmed in his or her work in the school
2. intend to work at the school into the foreseeable future
3. commit him- or herself to upholding the College's processes
4. be working with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path

<i>Opening Address</i>	<i>College Founding</i>	<i>Final Words</i>
1. Know your ideals	View our work as a moral spiritual task	"Imbue thyself with the power of imagination"
2. Have the flexibility to conform to what lies far from your ideals	Reflect on the connection between your activity and the spiritual worlds	"Have courage for the truth"
3. Be completely responsible	Work with the spiritual powers	"Sharpen thy feeling for responsibility of soul"
4. Be conscious of the great tasks	See the importance of our work	Be a person of initiative
5. Have a living interest in the world	View the founding of this school as a ceremony held within the Cosmic Order	Have an interest in everything in the world
6. Obtain enthusiasm for our school and our tasks	See each other as human beings brought together by karma	Never compromise with what is untrue
7. Develop flexibility of spirit and devotion to our tasks	More that will be said at the end of the course (work with the Teacher's Meditation)	Never grow stale or sour; cultivate freshness of soul

Let us review these criteria for College membership in terms of what Rudolf Steiner put forth in *The College Founding* and in the faculty meeting of July 30, 1920, that was quoted previously.

1. **The person has been confirmed in his or her work in the school.** This criterion corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's injunction that the person view his or her work as a moral and spiritual task and be a "true" teacher.

2. **The person intends to work at the school into the foreseeable future.** This corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's description of the original teachers as individuals brought together by karma who were working together in the Cosmic Order as well as those who were part of the school in the beginning or who were wished to have participated.

3. **The person commits him- or herself to upholding the processes of the College.** This criterion corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's description of a teacher as someone who will work with colleagues in the "teacher's republic" and in the esoteric collegial work described in *The College Imagination*.<sup>1</sup>

4. **The person is working with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path.** This criterion corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's description in *The College Founding* in which he characterizes how we connect with the spiritual powers and how we work with *The College Imagination* and the *Teacher's Meditation(s)*.

The work of the College is very demanding on the earthly and spiritual levels. These criteria ensure that a person who serves on a

College will have the foundation necessary to attempt to participate in the College. Although none of us is fully qualified, our intention and our striving will bind us to our colleagues and attract the spiritual beings who wish to help us with our work.

### Anthroposophy as the College Member's Spiritual Path

The following questions are often posed with regard to service on a College: Does a member of the College need to be an anthroposophist? Does he or she need to be a member of the Anthroposophical Society or of the Pedagogical Section or the First Class of the School of Spiritual Science?<sup>2</sup> I think that these questions deserve consideration, but the most appropriate perspective will be gleaned by a group of colleagues who consider these questions in the context of their own school. The process of arriving at a common position on such questions brings colleagues together in a way that serves the school.

I do not think that membership in the Anthroposophical Society or the School of Spiritual Science should be required for College membership. Membership in these groups must be based on the principle of freedom, and if a person were to be required to join in order to be eligible for College membership, it would compromise that principle. Joining the School of Spiritual Science expresses a person's willingness to represent and defend anthroposophy; it should not qualify a person for College membership. The Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science

1. In some Colleges, this criterion includes the commitment to upholding confidentiality. The word *confidence* stems from the Latin root *fidere*, which means "to trust." It is also connected to the word *fidelity*, which derives from the Latin root for "faith." When we commit to confidentiality, we commit ourselves to trusting and remaining faithful to each other and, I believe, to the spiritual beings with whom we are trying to work.

2. The School of Spiritual Science is the part of the Anthroposophical Society that works with the meditative content which Rudolf Steiner shared in the iClass Lessons. Anyone can join the Anthroposophical Society who recognizes the validity of anthroposophy and of the Goetheanum as the center for anthroposophical activities, but in order to join the School of Spiritual Science one must also be willing to represent and defend anthroposophy. The Pedagogical Section is one of the vocational sections of the School of Spiritual Science.

benefit when a person joins and supports them, but that participation should arise out of a gesture of giving rather than taking. The requirements for College membership that have been described are stringent enough; there is not need to add to them.

While College membership should not depend on whether a person is a “card-carrying anthroposophist,” I am convinced that whoever intends to serve on a College must be working with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path and way of life. Unless anthroposophy firmly underlies a College member’s worldview, he or she will not be effective in helping the Waldorf school serve as “living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life.” This applies particularly to teaching because Waldorf education is a practical utilization of anthroposophy and it is the teacher’s goal to “transform what we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction.” Rudolf Steiner stressed the importance of anthroposophy in his final message to the teachers in 1925, when he said that the Waldorf school is “a visible sign of the fruitfulness of anthroposophy within the spiritual life of mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

Those who serve on the College strive to bring anthroposophy to life through the College work. This is most evident in one’s work with *The College Imagination*. *The College Imagination* was not intended simply as imaginative content for contemplation; it was intended to be used by the teachers in their work on themselves, with the children, and with one another. Working on the College also requires members to try to create the conditions for what Rudolf Steiner called “the reverse ritual,” which will be described later. The reverse ritual is built on a foundation of shared idealism. It is fostered through a study and practice of anthroposophy, creating a “common language” that supports community building and a connection to spiritual beings.

I believe that a person working in a Waldorf school must be entirely free to pursue

his or her own spiritual path without any kind of judgment or sanction, but there is a big difference between working in a Waldorf school and serving on the College. Working as a member of the College demands fidelity to anthroposophy and to shared meditative work that springs from anthroposophy. Without these, the College will find it very difficult to serve as a bridge between the spiritual world and the earthly world of human beings.

Every school has to develop the processes by which individuals can identify themselves or be recognized as striving to meet these criteria. It is important, however, that College membership not be viewed as a matter of status but as a matter of service, of being willing to make the sacrifices that are required to work together. We cannot confirm ourselves in our work; we have to be confirmed by our colleagues. We cannot commit ourselves to working by ourselves with the destiny of our school; karma demands that we work with others. College work is group work, and it can occur only when a person is recognized in relationship to the group and when the group demonstrates its regard for the person.

Whenever a College welcomes a new member, the possibility arises for the College to reconnect to *The College Founding of 1919*, to celebrate a festive moment in the Cosmic Order. The welcoming ceremony provides an opportunity for the College to re-affirm its roots, to acknowledge its connections to the College members who have passed the Threshold, and to strengthen its commitment to work with spiritual powers. Such a ceremony is also a time to reconnect to Rudolf Steiner, who pledged to remain connected to the work of The Waldorf School.

### Our Connection to Rudolf Steiner

Everyone who works in Waldorf education is connected to Rudolf Steiner in some way, but those who serve on the College need to deepen their connection to the man and his work so that they can continue to receive his help and

he can continue to participate in continuing development of Waldorf education.

At the end of the preparatory course, Rudolf Steiner spoke to the teachers about his relationship to the teachers and to the school:

When you look back in memory to these discussions, then our thoughts will certainly meet again in all the various impulses that have come to life during this time. For myself, I can assure you that I will also be thinking back to these days, because right now this Waldorf school is indeed weighing heavily on the minds of those taking part in its beginning and organization. This Waldorf school must succeed; much depends on its success. Its success will bring a kind of proof of many things in the spiritual evolution of humankind that we must represent.

In conclusion, if you will allow me to speak personally for a moment, I would like to say: For me this Waldorf school will be a veritable child of concern. Again and again I will have to come back to this Waldorf school with anxious, caring thoughts. But when we keep in mind the deep seriousness of the situation, we can really work well together. Let us especially keep before us the thought, which will truly fill our hearts and minds, that connected with the present-day spiritual movement are also the spiritual powers that guide the cosmos. When we believe in these good spiritual powers, they will inspire our lives and we will truly be able to teach.<sup>3</sup>

For five years Rudolf Steiner worked with the teachers in the school, visiting classes, attending College meetings, speaking at assemblies and festivals, and presenting additional courses on education. When he became ill in 1924, he wrote to the teachers one last time reaffirming his connection to them.

Rudolf Steiner is able to remain connected to Waldorf education through our relationship to him. Like every relationship, it takes work to keep it strong and vibrant. We can strengthen our relationship to Rudolf Steiner by continuing to work with anthroposophy, bringing it to life in us and through us.

In *The Christmas Foundation: Beginning of a New Cosmic Age*, Rudolf Grosse refers to an essay by Ita Wegman which quotes Rudolf Steiner as saying that if after his death “the opposition forces then succeed in separating anthroposophy from me by allowing the broad masses of humanity to hear of the teaching without knowing anything about me, it would become superficial, and this would be just what the Ahrimanic beings want and intend.”<sup>4</sup>

As Rudolf Steiner’s life recedes into the distances of time, it will also become increasingly possible to speak about Waldorf education with diminishing reference to him. If this occurs, Waldorf education will suffer by losing its integrity and becoming just another educational philosophy and method. We can prevent this from happening by continuing to affirm Rudolf Steiner’s role as the founder of Waldorf education. This does not mean that we need to exalt or deify Rudolf Steiner, but we must continue to acknowledge his contribution. When the College cultivates its relationship to Rudolf Steiner, it gives him the opportunity to continue to help us and guide us in our work.

### When Should a School Found the College of Teachers?

Most Waldorf schools in North America found a College only when the school has reached a certain level of maturity. Until that time, various individuals and groups carry the responsibilities that the College will eventually assume.

I have long held that a College should be founded before or when a school opens rather than as a later development. Because the College is essential to the work of a Waldorf school, to wait until a school has reached

a certain degree of maturity misses the opportunity to work with the spiritual powers right from the start. The College is the place in the school where the spiritual impulses that are trying to manifest in the school can do so most directly. It is the place where a balance is sought between the earthly realms and the spiritual realms. I think that a school benefits from developing that place from its inception so that it can become firmly grounded in the school's way of working.

This does not mean that a new or young College is ready to govern, administer, or manage a new school. Even a mature College may choose not to perform all of these tasks. Rather, a College—young or mature—needs to make sure that the major decisions about the school are permeated with the goals and values of the education. In the early years of a school, when its Board of Trustees is engaged in many aspects of operations and management, the College has a special opportunity to develop the spiritual aspects of group work so that when it begins to shoulder more earthly tasks, the group will be strong enough to meet the challenges.

If a school waits to found a College, how do the spiritual beings participate in the work of the teachers? It seems to me that the lack of a College makes this more difficult. Rudolf Steiner characterized the work of these beings in *The College Imagination*. There he described how each of us works with our Angel, who gives us strength. This work does not depend on a College. The work that we do with our Angels is taken up by the Archangels, who work together to create a chalice of courage. I believe that even without a College, the Archangels will perform this work, but it may be harder for the group to experience it and to feel unified by it. *The College Imagination* describes how the Archai allow a drop of light to fill the chalice formed by the movements of the Archangels. This light serves as a beacon for the group, giving it the wisdom to take up its tasks. If there is no College, I can imagine that this light will not be experienced as fully.

Whether a school founds its College early on or later in its biography, its members must take up the challenge of working together productively with one another and with spiritual beings. Only by meeting this challenge can the College fulfill its task to serve as a bridge and a balance between the worlds of matter and spirit.

### The Challenge of Working Together

One of the major goals of Waldorf education is to help students become individuals in the context of a group. The College tries to exemplify this dynamic; its members try to work in a way that allows the capacities of each individual to serve the group, which in turn recognizes and utilizes those capacities. A verse by Rudolf Steiner points to the balance that must be achieved in order for an individual to work as a member of a group.

The healthy social life is found  
When, in the mirror of each human soul,  
The whole community finds its reflection  
And when, in the community,  
The virtue of each one is living.<sup>5</sup>

Working in the College depends on the striving of the members to wake up to one another so that they can recognize each other in the deepest sense. Out of that recognition comes the possibility for delegation and for shared responsibility. When Rudolf Steiner spoke about a republican form of administration, he was identifying a way of working together that allowed each person to be fully responsible for his own work and for the group to share the responsibility for the work as a whole.

Any group trying to work together faces many challenges, some in the earthly realm and some in the spiritual. While the earthly challenges are unique to each school, all schools face similar spiritual challenges because they are the result of the work of two beings who take special interest in human beings. According to Rudolf Steiner, Lucifer

and Ahriman are spiritual beings who play a special role in human affairs. They are especially attracted to a group such as a College in a Waldorf school, since it is working for the further development of human beings and society. It is easy to think of Lucifer and Ahriman as being merely adversarial forces or the embodiment of evil, but both of these beings are necessary for our full development.

Ahriman is deeply connected to physical, material existence. His influence can be found wherever earthly matters are most important. The realms of science and technology, government and economics, industry and the military have developed in accordance with Ahrimanic forms of thinking and working. Ahrimanic thinking is clear and logical; work inspired by Ahriman is realistic and pragmatic; goals can justify means. In groups, Ahriman expresses himself through the principle of power, and groups that are inspired by Ahriman have a strictly hierarchical organization. Ahriman's cosmic intention is to keep human beings from developing their spiritual nature. If Ahriman were to succeed, we would remain purely physical beings tied to the earth and governed by our passions and needs.

When we consider practical matters in the College, Ahriman draws near. He can help us solve problems, but we must make sure that the solution is consistent with our values. He can help us streamline our operations, but we must make sure that our processes and procedures remain human. Ahriman can help us be more realistic, pragmatic, and decisive, which is necessary if the College is to work effectively, but we must be careful to keep his help in perspective and not depend on him too much.

Lucifer is connected to the world of the spirit. His influence can be found wherever ideas and ideals govern with little regard for the practicalities of life. His influence can be found in culture, in religion, in the arts, and in all forms of self-expression. Lucifer inspires creativity in thinking and working. In groups, he works through the principles of individual

autonomy, personal initiative, and freedom from constraints. Lucifer's cosmic intention is to transform human beings into purely spiritual beings who would have no need to be incarnated into physical bodies. If Lucifer were to succeed, human beings would be drawn away from the earth to lead a purely spiritual existence as moral automatons.

When we consider spiritual matters in the College, Lucifer draws near. He can help us develop insights into a problem, but we must make sure we don't lose sight of the need to find a timely solution. He can help us humanize our operations, but we must make sure that our processes and procedures are not derailed by personal consideration. Lucifer can help us be receptive and responsive—which is necessary if the College is to work with sensitivity—but we must be careful to keep his help in perspective and not to depend on him too much.

We need Ahriman and Lucifer in order to perform the earthly and spiritual tasks of our schools, but we must remain awake to these beings' one-sidedness and their intention to deprive us of our essential humanity. As members of the College we need to find our place between Lucifer and Ahriman, where we can strive to be true to ourselves, to each other, and to the highest intentions of the spiritual worlds.

According to Rudolf Steiner, the being who holds Lucifer and Ahriman in a dynamic balance is the Christ. Rudolf Steiner represented the relationship between the Christ and humanity's great adversaries in the great wooden statue that was to stand at the back of the stage of the great hall under the small dome of the first Goetheanum. The statue depicts the Christ, the Representative of Humanity, reaching upward with one hand, holding Lucifer at bay and reaching downward with the other hand, keeping Ahriman in his place. The Christ holds the adversaries at arm's length, allowing them to do their necessary work while he continues to stride forward toward his goal.

The statue of the Representative of Humanity provides a picture of the balance that we must strive to achieve: holding Lucifer and Ahriman in a dynamic balance, a balance in which each of these beings can share his gifts but also be held in check so that his excesses do not harm us. If we become true co-workers of the Christ, He will help us to achieve this balance in ourselves and in our work.

### III. Why is it Important for a Waldorf School to Have a College of Teachers?

A Waldorf school is more than an earthly institution; it also has a spiritual mission. In order for the Waldorf school to fulfill its mission, it needs to recognize the spiritual realities that stand behind it and provide a way for the spiritual beings who are trying to help humanity to participate in earthly matters. A College serves as a conduit to and from the spiritual world. Without this living link to the spiritual world, a Waldorf school will find it difficult to perceive and express the will of spiritual beings.

Rudolf Steiner described the work of the Waldorf teachers with the spiritual hierarchies most directly in *The College Founding*, but in various other lectures he also dealt with this topic. It is useful to examine some of these indications because they shed light on our work as a College.

#### Building Community

In 1905, Rudolf Steiner gave a lecture entitled “Brotherhood and the Fight for Survival” (Berlin, November 23, 1905). In this lecture he spoke about the need for community building, and he described how spiritual beings act through communities of people who are working together towards an ideal.

Union—community—means that a higher being presses itself through the unified members. It is a universal principle of life; five people, who are together, who think and feel

harmoniously together in common, are more than one plus one plus one plus one plus one. . . . A new higher being is among these five—even among two or three; “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am among them.” It is not the one or the other or the third, but something entirely new that comes into appearance through the unification, but it only comes about if the individual lives in the other one—if the single one obtains his powers not only from himself but also out of the others. It can happen only if each of us lives selflessly in the others.

Thus human communities are mystery places where higher spiritual beings descend to act through the individual human beings just as the soul expresses itself in the members of the body. . . . One cannot see the spirits who live in communities but they are there. They are there because of the sisterly, brotherly love of the personalities working in these communities. As the body has a soul, so a guild or community also has a soul, and I repeat, it is not spoken allegorically but must be taken as a full reality.

Those who work together in mutual help are magicians because they pull in higher beings. One does not call upon the machinations of spiritism if one works together in a community in sisterly, brotherly love. Higher beings manifest themselves there. If we give up ourselves to mutual help, through this giving up to the community a powerful strengthening of our organs takes place. If we then speak or act as a member of such a community, there speaks or acts in us not the singular soul only but the spirit of the community. This is the secret of progress for the future of mankind: to work out of communities. . . .<sup>6</sup>



It is interesting to note that long before the founding of the first Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner was already speaking to the need to found communities out of the spirit, out of the highest ideals of the soul. “We must learn to lead community life,” he said. “We shall not believe that the one or the other is able to accomplish anything by him or herself.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1923, four years after the Waldorf School was founded, Rudolf Steiner returned to the theme of community building in a group of lectures published as *Awakening to Community*. In Lectures 6 and 9 he describes how communities can attract and engage spiritual beings, a process that is integral to the work of the College.

### The Reverse Ritual

If the College is to be a true spiritual community bound by spiritual idealism, its members need to work in a way that attracts spiritual beings to participate in its tasks. In *Awakening to Community*, Rudolf Steiner describes how this can be done.

Community life is based on different types of common experience. The broadest foundation for community is language, which creates a connection among all who share a mother tongue. The second foundation for community is provided by our shared childhood experience and our memories of them. They create a sense of connection among those who have shared their early lives. The third foundation for community is common participation in rituals. According to Rudolf Steiner, a “cultus” or true ritual is an earthly reflection of something we have experienced in the spiritual world before birth. When we participate in a ritual together, we feel a connection with those who are participating with us because we have common cosmic memories of the experiences from our time before birth. A true ritual, Rudolf Steiner states,

The major decisions about the school [must be] permeated with the goals and values of the education.

“derives its binding power from the fact that it conveys spiritual forces from the spiritual world to earth and presents supernatural realities to the contemplation of human beings living on the earth.”<sup>8</sup> An individual usually decides whether to participate in a ritual, but rituals can easily become tradition, which causes us to engage in them less consciously.

The fourth foundation for community is what Rudolf Steiner terms the “reverse cultus” or “reverse ritual.” This foundation is not given to us; it must be established consciously at every moment. The reverse ritual can occur only when we truly awaken to the soul and spiritual nature of our fellow man. According to Rudolf Steiner, when we begin to awaken to one another in this way, we are able to enter the supersensible realm together.

This awakening to each other’s soul-spiritual nature can occur by sharing a common life of ideals. This attracts the interest of spiritual beings. When we seek to realize our anthroposophical ideals, a spiritual being is attracted to our work. “Just as the genius of a language lives in that language and spreads its wings over those who speak it, so do those who experience anthroposophical ideas together in the right, idealistic frame of mind live in the shelter of the wings of a higher being.”<sup>9</sup> This process of spiritualizing earthly substance together is the reverse ritual.

While a ritual brings the supersensible down into the physical world through words and actions, the reverse ritual raises earthly deeds into the supersensible realm. Rudolf Steiner described it pictorially as follows:

The community of the cultus seeks to draw the Angels of heaven down to the place where the cultus is being celebrated, so that they may be present in the congregation, whereas the anthroposophical community seeks to lift

human souls into supersensible realms so that they may enter the company of Angels.

If anthroposophy is to serve man as a real means of entering the spiritual world, . . . we must do more than just talk about spiritual beings; we must look for the opportunities nearest at hand to enter their company.<sup>10</sup>

When we participate in the reverse ritual, spiritual beings are attracted to our spiritualized thoughts, feelings, and deeds and are able to participate in the earthly matters that we are raising into the realm of the spirit. Just as true rituals bring the life of the spirit into the realm of earth, the reverse ritual brings the life of the earth into the realm of spirit.

The reverse ritual is possible only if the members of the College are working on themselves and working together in a way that fosters an awakening to each other's soul-spiritual nature. This means that College members need to learn to see one another in a new light and to relate to one another in new ways. In order to awaken to our colleagues' soul-spiritual nature we must develop heightened interest in, compassion for, and commitment to one another. This requires dedication and persistence because we are so used to relationships based on our everyday selves. If we begin to awaken to each other, we will find new levels of connection that will allow us to work together not only on earth but in spiritual realms as well.

The reverse ritual is at the crux of College work. When a meeting achieves the reverse ritual, spiritual beings receive an offering of spiritualized earthly substance that is akin to the blessing that we receive when we partake of a sacrament. When the reverse ritual occurs, the will of the spiritual world may be perceived by the listening heart. What is finally voiced aloud by one or another member of the group goes far beyond the sum of the individual opinions or perspectives that have been expressed. In those moments, one

feels humbled by the recognition that one is participating in something rare and holy: the transmutation of earthly thoughts, words, and deeds into spiritual substance.

### The College Imagination

In order for the reverse ritual to be fruitful for our work as a College, we also have to cultivate the ability to perceive what the spiritual beings are trying to communicate so that we can hearken to the will of the spiritual worlds. This demands that we develop ourselves as meditants so that we, like Elijah, can awaken to the still small voice of the spirit. It demands that we engage in meetings that are structured to allow us to perceive that voice of the spirit. And it demands that we develop the qualities of soul that will allow us to speak to and listen to each other in such a way that doesn't stifle the expression of the spirit.

In *The College Imagination and the Final Words*, Rudolf Steiner gave the members of the preparatory course the means by which to imagine, understand, and practice working together with the spiritual powers who help us in our work.

Thus, we wish to begin our preparation by first reflecting upon how we connect with the spiritual powers in whose service and in whose name each one of us must work. I ask you to understand these introductory words as a kind of prayer to those powers who stand behind us with Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition as we take up this task.<sup>11</sup>

Rudolf Steiner asked that his words not be transcribed at that point, but three of the participants later wrote down their recollections of what he had said. [These were included in the Appendix of the previous installment of this article, in *Research Bulletin* 16 (2) – Ed.] The accounts differ in terms of the level of detail they record, but they share the following essential elements:

Our Angel helps us with our individual work, in our strivings to realize our goals for this incarnation. In the *Imagination* Rudolf Steiner describes the Angel as standing behind us and laying hands on our head. Our Angel faces the same direction as we do—perhaps in recognition that it will stand by us as we meet our destiny—and it gives us the strength we need to do our tasks.

The Archangels help us in our work with one another. Rudolf Steiner describes the Archangels circling above our heads, carrying from one to the other what arises out of our spiritual encounter with our Angel. Their movements create a chalice made of courage.

The Archai help us in our work to realize the goals of the Spirit of the Time. Rudolf Steiner describes their movements less exactly, saying only that they come from primal distances or the heights. The Archai allow a drop of light to fill the chalice created by the Archangels.

The correspondences among the parts of *The College Imagination* are summarized in the following table:

Rudolf Steiner shared this *Imagination* so that the participants of the course could recognize the essential elements of how to work with these spiritual beings. We work with our Angel on our own tasks; we work with the Archangels on our common tasks; we work with the Archai on the tasks of our age.

Working with meditative content must be an act of freedom, but when members of a group such as the College commit to working with the same content in an ongoing way, it strengthens the meditative work of each individual and the power of the meditation itself. In my opinion, becoming a member of a College requires a commitment to engage in a group meditative practice in service to one's colleagues and to the school. When all the members of a College make that commitment, the whole that is created is far greater than the sum of the parts.

Rudolf Steiner intended that teachers work with the *Imagination* as part of their daily meditative practice. During *The College Founding* he said, “At the end of our course I will say what I would like to say following today's festive commencement of our preparation. Then much will have been clarified, and we will be able to stand before our task much more concretely than we can today.”<sup>12</sup> At the end of the last lectures, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the qualities that the teachers must develop, and when he concluded the course, he described how teachers could work together with the beings of the Third Hierarchy, and he asked that the teachers pledge themselves to do this. According to the notes of Caroline von Heydebrand:

BEING	Angel	Archangels	Archai
POSITION	Behind each member	Above our heads	From eternal beginnings
MOVEMENT	Stands	Circle	Come from a distance
GESTURE	Lays hands on head	Form a chalice; carry from one to the other what each has to give	Reveal themselves for a moment
ACTION	Gives strength	Gives courage	Allow a drop of light to fall into the chalice
CAPACITY	Imagination	Inspiration	Intuition

On 9th September at 9 am, Rudolf Steiner assembled the first Waldorf teachers. He asked them always to remember the way of working which he had shown to them, namely to work in full consciousness of the reality of the spiritual world. He said: "In the evenings *before* your meditation ask the Angels, Archangels and Archai that they may help you in your work on the following day. In the mornings, *after* the meditation, you may feel yourself united with the beings of the Third Hierarchy."

Then Dr. Steiner walked around the table, shaking hands with each teacher and looking deeply and with moving, utmost earnestness into the eyes of each.

According to the notes of Walter J. Stein:

9 AM meeting. Dr. Steiner asks us, clasping the hand of each teacher in turn, to promise to work together in the way he has shown us: In the evening, before the meditation, ask the Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai to help in our work on the next day. In the morning, after the meditation, know ourselves united with them.<sup>13</sup>

Although we were not present at this ceremony, it lives on as a cosmic moment in which we can participate through our intentions and our efforts. Each us can receive what Rudolf Steiner offered if we take up his work with earnestness, and each of us can pledge to work in the way that he has shown. If we do so, we connect ourselves with Rudolf Steiner and with the Being of The Waldorf School.

### The Being of the Waldorf School

In Waldorf circles people sometimes refer to the "being" of their school. What is meant by that? Whom are they speaking about? Is this

simply a turn of phrase or does it point to a spiritual reality?

### What kind of spiritual being is "the being" of the school?

According to Rudolf Steiner each human being has an Angel who has the spiritual task of helping that human being fulfill his or her pre-birth intentions. Archangels are on the next higher level. They concern themselves with groups of people who have basic background in common: a tribe, a race, people from a geographical region, people who share a language. These beings are sometimes known as the "folk-soul" of a people. The Archai are one level above the Archangels. As Spirits of the Time, they are responsible for the developments that occur within an age. The major Archangels also may serve as the Spirit of the Time for an epoch, and during this period of regency, they act as if they were in the ranks of the Archai.

What kind of spiritual being is "the being of the school?" In my opinion, there are two possibilities: If we view "the school" as a specific Waldorf school, I think the "being of the school" is one type of spiritual being. If we view "The Waldorf School" as an archetype, then I think the "Being of the School" is another type of spiritual being.

As Rudolf Steiner described in "Brotherhood and the Fight for Survival" and in *Awakening to Community*, wherever a group of people come together in the service of an ideal, a spiritual being is drawn to them. It seems to me that this being comes from the ranks of the Archangels, because the Archangels are responsible for and express themselves through a group of people.

The Archangels have the astral body as their lowest member, which allows them to manifest themselves in many places at once. Because the being of a school expresses itself through many members of the school community, this may explain why people in a school have the feeling that they speak a common language, share common values, and belong together.

The astral body can be thought of as a body of air. The air is common to us all, uniting us as we inhale each other's air. Because the air carries our voices, it unites us through our common language. When a school community sings or speaks together, united in its breathing, we can imagine the being of the school breathing through and with them.

The astral body also provides the foundation for our soul life, expressing itself through the personality. This "school personality" may be the earthly expression of the nature of its archangelic being. We can experience something of this being when we share our school's vision and values, participate in its customs and traditions, experience our community through the common ground of the school's biography.

By working to perceive the character of the school, by finding the common language—both spoken and unspoken—that unites the school, by seeking ways to recognize and utilize each other's gifts for the common good, the members of the College can get to know the being of their school and invite it to participate in their work.

"The Waldorf School" transcends all the individual Waldorf schools. It is an archetype that expresses itself throughout all the places and times where Waldorf education is being realized. When we review *The Opening Address* and *The College Founding*, we sense that Rudolf Steiner was inaugurating "The Waldorf School," not just a Waldorf school in Stuttgart. We sense that the festive moment in the Cosmic Order celebrated the beginning of something greater than the establishment of a particular school. When we read and work with Rudolf Steiner's words and ideas from the preparatory course, we sense that what he presented to those original teachers was being presented to Waldorf teachers in all places and times to come. If "The Waldorf School" is an archetype that expresses itself through the individual Waldorf schools, then the "Being of The Waldorf School" is on a higher level than the

Archangels who are connected to the individual schools.

I think that the Being of The Waldorf School is The Good Spirit of the Time whom Rudolf Steiner thanked in *The College Founding* and referred to in *The College Imagination* as that spirit who bestows upon us the drop of light. Although he did not mention the Good Spirit by name, I think that Rudolf Steiner was referring to the Archangel Michael, who is serving in the ranks of the Archai during this age. Just as Archangels can manifest in different places at once, the Archai can manifest in different times at once. As the Spirit of the Time, Michael is able to manifest in all of the different Waldorf schools wherever and whenever they exist.

The Archangel Michael has a special connection to all who are involved in Waldorf education, because we were already members in the School of Michael before our birth. In 1922, in the last lecture of *The Younger Generation*, Rudolf Steiner spoke about Michael in connection with education.

Michael needs, as it were, a chariot by means of which to enter our civilization. And this chariot reveals itself to the true educator as coming forth from the young, growing human being, yes, even from the child. Here the power of the pre-earthly life is still working. Here we find, if we nurture it, what becomes the chariot by means of which Michael will enter our civilization. By educating in the right way we are preparing Michael's chariot for entrance into our civilization.<sup>14</sup>

A year later, during the last lecture of *Deeper Insights into Waldorf Education*, presented to the teachers of the Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner again stressed the importance of uniting oneself with Michael. Afterwards he presented the second Teacher Meditation, which gives teachers the means by which to connect more deeply with the spiritual wellsprings of their work.<sup>15</sup>

The College in a Waldorf school has the sacred duty to get to know and to work with the Archangel Michael. Through him the College can receive the drop of light that enlightens their work. Through him they can unite themselves with his mission to create a more human future. Through him they can experience more fully the Spirit of the Waldorf School.

### The Spirit of the Waldorf School

The Being of the Waldorf School expresses and is the countenance of The Spirit of the Waldorf School. The Spirit of the Waldorf School expresses itself wherever two or more are gathered in their striving to realize the ideals of Waldorf education. Rudolf Steiner spoke explicitly about The Spirit of the Waldorf School in several of his assembly talks and festival addresses to students, teachers, and parents. At the Christmas assembly of the first school, Rudolf Steiner said to the children:

And do you know where your teachers get all the strength and ability they need so that they can teach you to grow up to be good and capable people? They get it from the Christ. ...<sup>16</sup>

At the assembly at the end of the first school year, he said:

There is still something I would like to say today. Alongside everything we have learned here, which the individual teachers have demonstrated so beautifully, there is something else present, something that I would like to call the spirit of the Waldorf School. It is meant to lead us to true piety again. Basically, it is the spirit of Christianity that wafts through all our rooms, that comes from every teacher and goes out to every child, even when it seems that something very far from religion is being taught, such as arithmetic, for example. Here it is always the spirit of Christ that

comes from the teacher and is to enter the hearts of the children—this spirit that is imbued with love, real human love.<sup>17</sup>

During the second school year, at the assembly of November 20, 1920, he said:

What your teachers say to you comes from incredibly hard work on their part, from the strength of their devotion and from their love for you. But what comes from their love must also be able to get to you, and that is why I always say the same thing to you: Love your teachers, because love will carry what comes from your teachers' hearts into your hearts and into your heads. Love is the best way for what teachers have to give to flow into their students. That is why I am going to ask you again today, "Do you love your teachers? Do you still love them?" [The children shout, "Yes!"]

A little later in this assembly, Rudolf Steiner said:

Thus the spirit of Christ is always with you. ... This spirit of Christ is also your teachers' great teacher. Through your teachers, the spirit of Christ works into your hearts.<sup>18</sup>

At the assembly marking the beginning of the sixth school year, Rudolf Steiner again mentioned the teachers' teacher:

Dear students of the highest grade of all—that is, dear teachers! In this new school year, let us begin teaching with courage and enthusiasm to prepare these children for the school of life. Thus may the school be guided by the greatest leader of all, by the Christ Himself. May this be the case in our school.<sup>19</sup>

When Rudolf Steiner visited the Waldorf School, he would ask the students, "Do you love your teachers?" and he would sometimes

ask them several times. By asking this question Rudolf Steiner was helping the students and the teachers to recognize that without the love that streams from teacher to student and from student to teacher, no education is possible. Rudolf Steiner did not explicitly ask the students of the highest grade of all—the teachers—if they loved their teacher, but that question is implicit in all that we do as Waldorf teachers and as human beings living at this time. The Christ is the Spirit of the Waldorf School. If we are truly to serve Waldorf education, we must find our way to the Christ and learn to love Him.<sup>20</sup>

### Conclusion

The College in a Waldorf school has a lofty task: to guide the school by finding a bridge and a balance between the earthly and the spiritual realms. It is composed of people who are committed to working together in recognition of their karma and their common spiritual striving. By working on their self-development and their relationships with one another, members of the College try to create the conditions for the reverse ritual. The College recognizes that it does not work alone. Its members strive to work with the being of their school and to connect to the Angels, Archangels, and Archai who help and guide them. They also seek a connection to Rudolf Steiner, to Michael, and to the Christ so that they can educate students in light of the spiritual and human needs of our time.

I hope that my thoughts in this essay will help those working in any Waldorf school to develop a deeper connection to the founding impulse of The Waldorf School. That impulse, as expressed through The Opening Address, *The*

*College Founding*, and the preparatory course, gives us ever-renewing strength, courage, and wisdom for our daily tasks.

In this essay I have continually referred to the spiritual realm, but I have deliberately refrained from being too explicit because I do not consider myself qualified to do so. The spiritual realm is perceptible to spiritual organs which must be developed individually and can be nurtured collectively. The spiritual realm expresses itself in at least as many ways as the material realm, and it would be a disservice to share my own view as if it were somehow applicable to others.

The spiritual work of the College must be a practical endeavor in the sense that it must be practiced, but every group of people needs to work together to figure out how they wish to do it. None of us is qualified to do spiritual work; we qualify ourselves by our striving, and we should not hold back because we consider ourselves unworthy.

In his poem “Birches,” Robert Frost describes a boy living far from town who climbs birch trees and swings himself back down to earth. When he feels that life is too much like a pathless wood, Frost says:

I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
And then come back to it and begin over.  
May no fate willfully misunderstand me  
And half grant what I wish and snatch  
me away  
Not to return. Earth's the right place for  
love:  
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

Earth is the right place for love. It is the only place for love. As Rudolf Steiner said, “...Human beings are born to have the possibility of doing what they cannot do in the spiritual world.”<sup>20</sup> In the spiritual world we do not have the freedom that allows us to experience or express love; we need to be human beings to do so. As spiritual beings we come to earth, take on physical bodies, and live in the material realm because it is the

20. Rudolf Steiner uses this term in a much broader way than it is typically intended in Christian church denominations. He speaks of the Christ as, among other things, the spiritual archetype of humanity's capacity for love. Readers should be aware that the author of this article is using the term in this sense

right place for love. It is the place where, as a College, we can work together in love for the good of humanity and of the earth.

### Endnotes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1998), pp. 154–55.
2. Rudolf Steiner, *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education* (Dornach: Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, 1991), p. 83.
3. Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2000), p. 189.
4. Rudolf Grosse, *The Christmas Foundation: Beginning of a New Cosmic Age* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 1984), p. 132.
5. Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1985).
6. “Brotherhood and the Fight for Survival,” Berlin November 23, 1905. Available online at <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19051123p01.html>.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Rudolf Steiner, *Awakening to Community* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1974), pp. 92–95.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
11. Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Human Experience* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), p. 33.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
13. *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education: Excerpts from the Work of Rudolf Steiner* (Dornach: Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, 1991), p. 59.
14. Rudolf Steiner, *The Younger Generation* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1976), p. 174.
15. Rudolf Steiner, *Deeper Insights into Waldorf Education* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1988), pp. 50–51.
16. Rudolf Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), p. 59.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
20. Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Human Experience*, p. 44.

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