

DECEMBER 1974

" [. . .] Generally the child is considered as a 'dear little thing', in need of help and support, to be assisted in difficulties, to be consoled when crying, to be cared for when ill. And as he is considered from this materialist point of view, he is nursed when ill and taught when ignorant. But this is not our point of view.

[. . .] The figure of the child must stand before us as a light and a symbol, a light that will show us reality, and a symbol that will teach us. [. . .] This idea is perhaps too far from the concrete conception which we have of the child today; it needs to be proved by the revelations of practical psychology. And as precisely these revelations have been made, and also confirmed by positive experiments, we wish to make them known everywhere. These revelations show us things that were unknown before, things that the child can teach us, and that we must learn if we would take the road of Peace. If, however, we cannot accept this spiritual conception and prefer to be practical, it will still be necessary to consider the child from a different point of view. Socially speaking, we want to see the child regarded as a human being, a citizen, a man with a certain dignity, with the right to live and the right to be protected. To whatever social rank, to whatever race he may belong, in every country of the world, the child must be recognized as a citizen.

[. . .] The protection combined with the education of the child, and implying also the education of the adult, would be a way of preserving the great riches we possess, and might also lead us nearer to that light which we call Peace. May I say to you that no amount of discussion or no meditation on the sufferings of the child can help, but that the new orientation can **convert** us, and on this conversion everything depends.

[. . .] We do not wish to speak only to educational experts, but also to the general public. And above all to the conscience of parents, for it is the parents who should defend the rights of their children.

In fact, the child has not been brought into the world by nature alone, but by a father and a mother to whom it has been given in trust, and whose duty is love! When this union between fathers and mothers is found to imply new social responsibilities, it may lead mankind further along the road of civilization. For all men, in all countries and of all races, have children, and in the child they may find a common interest through which universal sympathy and cooperation may become possible [. . .] The task of protection [. . .] becomes a great and good work which may help us to realize a better world by 'valorizing' the forgotten part of mankind. And this is a practical step towards the realization of Peace."

The Christmas season is known throughout the world. For Montessorians who regard Christ as an historical prophet, the recording of his birth has significance. For Montessorians who regard Christ as Messiah, it is a key to understanding man's spirit that Christ entered the world as a child. For Montessorians who see each Church-year as a loop in the mystical spiral of mankind's spiritual evolution, the Christ-child is an integral part of the salvation mystery.

Whether as metaphor, deeper symbol, or an essential element, commemoration of Christmas is noted by many Montessori adults. For adults of all faiths, adults who further the child in society and in man's evolution, we believe these words by Dr. Montessori will have special meaning during this season. We send them to you together with our best wishes for this festive season.

Excerpts from Dr. Maria Montessori's closing address at the Montessori Congress at Copenhagen in 1937, in which she argues for formation of the *Social Party of the Child*

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Aware of the great changes that occur in the children during the second phase of growth and above all of the great expansion of intellectual potentiality and the potentiality for sentiment-development, directed towards justice and gratitude, Dr. Montessori devised what we know today as *Cosmic Plan of Education*.

Generally humanity takes for granted all that exists, but in the period of growth — 7 to 12 — there is also the tendency to know the reasons of what happens as well as the great expansion of the powers of imagination. Dr. Montessori then advised to give the children facts through illustrations and active experience, which would serve them as keys, in the same way as sensorial education serves them as keys to understand and analyze the environment and the exercises of practical life serve the children to explore and understand certain activities of adult life.

It is the intention of A.M.I. to edit and publish a series of lectures of Dr. Montessori which illustrate the contribution and the appreciation one should have for what is given us. In the following lecture — edited by Mr. Mario M. Montessori — Dr. Montessori illustrates the parallelism of the contribution of nature and that of human society. In the following issues we hope to be able to publish the contribution of nature as an introduction to geography, geology and biology.

COSMIC TASK OF MAN

SO SPOKE MARIA MONTESSORI (LONDON COURSE 1939)

One of the most important items which we have noticed for a long time is this that all living beings, and also inorganic matter such as water, have a task to perform in the equilibrium of the world, each of which essential to the existence

of all the rest. As far as the living beings are concerned there are other things to be taken into consideration, as for instance the needs which they must satisfy if they are to continue to live. It is for this reason that biologists say that the