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Godly Play.

The concept for Playfully Discovering Bible and Faith.

Vol.5: Analyses, Settings, Praxis.

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Analyses**

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Friedrich Schweitzer

Godly Play and the Idea of Religious Education - the Idea of Religious Education and Godly Play.

Considerations and Impulses from the Perspective of Education and Children's Theology

This contribution discusses the Godly Play approach from two perspectives.

First it makes the theory of education in the sense of *Bildung* its starting point. On the one hand, the author shows in which ways this approach contributes to religious education and, on the other hand, he asks what questions must be posed when Godly Play is discussed from an educational point of view.

Second, the contemporary discussion on children's theology becomes the starting point for additional and innovative interpretations of Godly Play. In the author's understanding children's theology entails three dimensions. It must include a theology *for* children, a theology *of* or *by* children, and a theology *with* children. All three dimensions can be fruitfully applied to Godly Play, critically as well as constructively.

In a final step the author takes up the comprehensive perspective of a theology of childhood, thus linking Godly Play to questions of a theological anthropology.

Norbert Mette

The child as Mystery

Godly Play in the Context of Roman-Catholic Concepts for Religious Education and Catechesis

This contribution reconstructs and clarifies the Roman-Catholic roots of Godly Play in the theological and pedagogical concepts of Karl Rahner, Josef Andreas Jungmann and Sofia Cavaletti, seen in the light of the current German religious education-discussion. Especially the "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd" is explored in its similarities and differences to Jerome Berryman's concept of religious education. In addition, the author looks at a German concept called "Religionspädagogische Praxis" which comes from the elementary religious education and Roman Catholic background. Its similarities refer to the focus on sensual, symbolic materials, room and atmosphere and the opportunity for the child to become creative.

The author underlines that all these concepts need to be evaluated in the context of the modern discussion of "spirituality and theology of children." He questions the balance between the confessional and cultural inputs that all these concepts offer and the hermeneutical tasks of contemporary religious education. Moreover, the author cautions to introduce children into a separate "church-sphere" as distinct from the ethical, social and political issues that need to be explicitly (not only implicitly) addressed in religious education.

Christian Kahrs

From the Question of God to the Presentation and Imagination of God

An Essay about Godly Play as a Critique of Protestant Religious Education

The essay argues that current Protestant theory of religious education focussing on the child has a black spot concerning the understanding of church and its tradition. The essay emphasizes that Godly Play should be studied to find out how religious education may deal with tradition.

Under the conditions of modernity the question of God has to be approached in a fundamentally new way because there are not any longer sure answers to the question. Referring to this point the essay gives a brief overview of the theory of Protestant religious education with the intention to see if Godly Play fits in or not. The result is that in Godly Play as well as in the Protestant theory of religious education there are two main and interrelated topics: *relativity of the historic* and *hermeneutics of the presence*. But in the center of this there is an irritation about the relationship between the *individual* (resp. child) and the *institution* (resp. church and its tradition). From a Protestant point of view Godly Play is even if the theme of the lesson is taken from the Bible is ecclesiastical, which raises the classical inter-confessional question: Is church the condition of becoming aware of God? Or does the awareness of God (in the Bible) create something we call church? The essay argues that *awareness* of God is in a constitutional way correlated to the *performance* of God (getting-to-know God through the presentation of God). Performance makes ideas. Presentations which introduce God to people generate imagination and ideas. In this respect church is a culturally elaborated way of "presenting" or "performing" God. Didactic settings in which the question of God is posed can benefit from such "presentation" of God in generate awareness of God in the first place. That obviously is what Godly Play is about. And therefore: discussing Godly Play as a critique of Protestant religious education is to discuss in which sense "church" and "children" are two sides of the same medal. Theory of religious education should learn from Godly Play and discuss what may be the best reference of the childrens and of everybodies *God Creating Play*.

Christina Kalloch

Art in Godly Play

Aesthetic Criteria and Examples for a Didactic of Images in Godly Play

Images play a fundamental role in the process of learning. Children in the pre-reading and pre-writing stage learn through images in an elemental way. Also adults know the power of images which accompany them through life. Often an image has a suggestive power which determines the spontaneous affirmation or rejection by the viewer. The use of images in a learning environment (order: classroom setting) therefore has to be carefully and methodically planned so that their full potential can come to light. Concrete steps for image viewing would be as follows: How can an image be opened to support a conscious way of seeing and allow for a deep inner conversation with the image? Didactical reflection will help consider which aesthetic experiences of viewing images can be presumed, and know on which level of aesthetic judgment the viewer operates. In addition, since the encounter with art is never simply a question of taste the children's cognitive processes in understanding images have to be studied and considered. The goal for working with images in the religious learning environment is teaching to understand images as aesthetic events. An "aesthetic alphabetization" can be relatively easily achieved through illustrations, religious art and art works which possess their own dynamics and challenge the viewer. Children have to be prepared to meet and see images.

Godly Play contains a quite differentiated image didactic using sketches, illustrations specifically made for the stories, and art works of great masters. Thereby Godly Play has not only developed a characteristic of its own, but significantly contributes to the aesthetic education of children by teaching them competency in viewing images.

Martin Steinhäuser

On the Road to One's Own Faith

Godly Play as a Concept for Liturgical Education

This contribution deals with the relationship between "religion" and "pedagogy" through "liturgy" in the concept of Godly Play. Following the distinction between "explicit" and "implicit" aspects of Maria Montessori's concept of religious education, the author argues that Godly Play extends and modifies the relationship between "religion" and "pedagogy" through liturgy by working on three distinct levels: a) detailed contents of story and material (e.g. "The circle of the Eucharist"), b) didactical settings (e.g. verbal and nonverbal connections between liturgical and other stories), c) pedagogical-theological foundations (e.g. aims and intentions, structure of time, silence, ritualized communication, holy play).

After looking at two contemporary attempts to connect liturgy and pedagogy in the German religious education-discussion (Christian Grethlein, Roland Degen) the author pleads for interpreting Godly Play as a concept of "liturgical education" ("liturgische Bildung") under the constructivistic-pedagogical presupposition that it is the children themselves who constitute the "liturgy" – not only through worship but as part of their everyday life.

Delia Freudenreich

"Feeling something good behind me..."

On Scholarship and Studies about Children's Spirituality in Godly Play

This article deals with the question how Godly Play works with and supports the spirituality of children. Jerome Berryman puts great emphasis on the pre-language and pre-reflective (order: precognitive) layers in the human experience. It is an implicit knowledge which is perceived through the senses and can be encountered especially in young children.

Berryman's description of such precognition ties into the scholarship of William James,

Alister Hardy, Edward Robinson, and David Hay about the religious experiences of adults. This tradition is also the background of an empirical study on the spirituality of children by Rebecca Nye and David Hay. The article reports the results of their study to show what exactly is meant by "children's spirituality." Godly Play presumes that children are equipped with a special sense for the mysterious aspects of reality and that they are especially capable of immersing themselves into imagined worlds.

Evamaria Simon

§The wolf has to be God. §

Mystic and Mystagogy in Godly Play

Lately the question of the significance of the child in theology has come into focus with its inherent challenge to pedagogues how to further and support the theology of the child. In addition, this article examines the possibility of mystic of children. Next to the consideration of the role of pedagogy in this context, the author puts the question of mystagogy. How do the encounter with God/mystery and teaching relate in Godly Play? How can the relationship between adults and children be described in the process of mystagogy? The term mystagogy is critically evaluated in comparison with Karl Rahner's and Manfred Josuttis's positions. On the basis of spirituality, ecclesiology, pedagogy of faith formation, and christology ten core themes and problems are offered for a conversation about the theory and praxis of Godly Play. In conclusion different kinds of mystagogy are formulated which help mark in a new way an intersection of pedagogical, theological and spiritual accompaniment.

Peter Müller

Storytelling and translating

Hermeneutical Reflections on Godly Play

After a crisis of storytelling in German religious education in the sixties and seventies new approaches to storytelling have verified its value for the development of religious development and understanding. Godly Play is one of these new approaches. The article deals with the concept of storytelling within the framework of Godly Play. It examines the following questions: In which theological and church backgrounds are the stories embedded? Which stories are told? And how are the stories told? The examination shows that the stories are adapted to the framework of Episcopalian theology and tradition. In quite a few instances not the bible stories themselves are told but combinations of several bible stories within a certain understanding of salvation history. And the impressive way of storytelling is combined with a sequence of "wondering-questions" which shed new light on the texts on the one hand but on the other are not always really compatible with the texts.

The article suggests the opening of methodical action within the framework of Godly Play and tries to clarify how to implement Godly Play into the system of religious education in Germany.

Frank Zeeb:

The Elusive Presence of God

Remarks on the Impact of Samuel Terrien's Biblical Theology on Godly Play

To inculcate Godly Play in a German-speaking context we need to reconsider the biblical and theological presuppositions according to several criteria: Both the settings and the conditions as to society and to church are different from those we find in the United States. Given these differences we may need to reformulate the Godly Play stories.

A main issue in the current exegetical discussion in Germany is the relation of the "Endtext" (the biblical text as we have received it) to different stages of textual development. A second

point is the treatment of the passages that deal with Israel and early Judaism on the background of German history and the now emerging dialogue between Christians and Jews (perhaps to include Muslims in the near future and thereby shedding light on Christian existence in a world of religious pluralism).

Godly Play text passages that quote biblical references verbatim or refer to scripture in quasi quotation, may need to be examined whether they are open enough for the later development of the children into mature adults at which stage need to integrate historical and scientific questions into their personal faith.

Godly Play, as developed by Jerome Berryman, is fundamentally based on the masterpiece of Biblical Theology by Samuel Terrien: *The Elusive Presence of God* (1978). This approach is now more than thirty years old; its historical and textual premises have been seriously questioned in recent years, in Germany even more so than in the United States. The selection of the core presentation and the scope of these lessons are highly influenced by Terrien's sketch of biblical and religious history. Examples are provided from the *Ark and Tent* and *Exile and Return* lessons.

Concluding remarks on possible consequences for further development of Godly Play in German-speaking areas include the theological characterization of God's presence, selection and addition of stories, the basics of biblical hermeneutics to be shared with the children and the relationship of cognitive learning versus learning through symbols and rituals in different stages of psychological development. A last point is the way in which Judaism should be treated in Godly Play.

Evamaria Simon

Touching Deep.

Pre-therapeutic Aspects in Godly Play

What happens in a classroom or in a child during a lesson often cannot be perceived in its entirety through the pedagogical eye. Often times children will reach into a deep dimension of their existence when they are allowed as Godly Play does to be responsible subjects in the learning process (and not the objects of it). They can reach deep layers when they choose the language for what is going on in the learning environment, when they identify with stories (or parts thereof) through play and imagination. Touching deep into themselves allows children to play through their own life stories and problems giving them a safe space to re-live and test out situations.

Such processes occur outside the framework of a therapeutic process of diagnosis and intervention.

What does it mean then for adults to lead a Godly Play lesson? If pre-therapeutic processes do take place in Godly Play, teachers should be given opportunity to learn and increase skills how to observe and respond.

In this article multiple examples from the response time in Godly Play lessons with Kindergarten and elementary age children and with adults show different aspects of *touching deep*. The author offers reflections on children and adult leaders respectively. Finally a roster is introduced to help with focussed and non-focussed observation of such processes, a method borrowed from play therapy and adapted for Godly Play.

Sara Lena Lasch / Tanja Pütz

Don't think about anything, just about what I'm doing

Interviews with pre-school-children about their perception of bipolarization of attention in working with the Godly Play-method

Center of our discussion regarding the parallel of *Godly Play* by Jerome Berryman and the *Free Choice of Work* by Maria Montessori forms the phenomenon of the *Polarizing of*

attention. This concentration-phenomenon offers new perspectives for (religious) education-learning-processes on a traditional base that already went down in the history of educational science.

In our contribution we resolve the question to what extent the phenomenon of "Polarisation of attention" occurs in the work with "Godly Play". Starting point of this research is the assumption of Nye, that preschool children are already able to think themselves into Godly Play-Stories. By doing that they explore important personal topics and emotions, which they want to share with god. We expand this assumption of Rebecca Nye by the following: children have the need for deep concentration and want to experience this "Polarisation of attention". We take into regard, that "Godly Play" offers situations which support attention. This is the place, where children can make special religious experiences as you can see in the documentation of children's interviews below.