# THE HOPE OF THE WORLD:
## THE STORY OF JESUS AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY IN WORKING CLASS GIRLS IN BRITAIN 1900-1945

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# ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the British Sunday school story of Jesus functioned in the formation of identity of working class girls 1900-1945. In doing so, the thesis argues that the British Sunday school network during this period provided an effective institutional base for the promotion of a popular version of developmental theory known as child study, the influence of which fed into the establishment of the pedagogies of storytelling and the educational use of pictures. It explains how the Sunday school story of Jesus was one of the most accessible narratives available to working class children, but argues that this was a reframed version of the story which was formulated to take into account insights into child psychology gained through developmental theory and which acknowledged the varying needs of different age groups. The title of the thesis, *The Hope of the World,* is taken from a Sunday school picture of Jesus and is used here because it is seen as emblematic of the Edwardian view of children as the potential redeemers of the nation.

The thesis analyses the books, pictures and ephemera telling the story of Jesus which were produced for circulation in the Sunday school and argues that, through accident rather than design, these narratives invariably made a greater appeal to girls than boys. It shows that despite the reframing of the Jesus story as a fairy tale, adventure story and chivalric romance there were always problems encountered in producing an image of Jesus which would make a lasting, positive impression on boys. The thesis concludes by arguing that for working class girls in particular, the chivalric romance provided them with the means of identifying with Jesus, their knightly Saviour, through which they could negotiate their negative feelings about their own subordinate socio-economic positioning and that this was an effective means of inculcating the notion of altruistic citizenship.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Altruism, Democracy and the Hope of the World

The 1944 (Butler) Education Act has been seen (Clarke 1997, Stevenson 1990) as a serious, although thwarted, attempt to address the continuing inequalities of class which were believed to deprive the nation of the opportunity to maximise the abilities of all its citizens. According to Stevenson (1990), research conducted at the London School of Economics (the findings of which were published in the 1935 edition of the *Sociological Review*), had 'suggested that the relationship between ability and opportunity was low, particularly for working class children' (Stevenson 1990: 263). Thus the cost of providing greater educational opportunities for all[1] children in the twelve to sixteen age group, was seen as an investment because the subsequent benefits would contribute to the socio-economic health of the nation. The failure to implement properly the tripartite system of grammar, technical and modern secondary education in a way that could produce such benefits is well known. But the 1944 Act did achieve one particular aim which was to have a lasting effect on primary schooling and which was to influence the future aspirations and opportunities of the 'baby boomer' generation of children attending school in the 1950s.

The period covered by this thesis is 1900 to 1945, but takes as its starting point the 1944 Education Act because, for primary school children at least, this legislation was significant for the way in which it made the teaching of Christian values an essential part of their educational experience. In effect, the 1944 Act reversed much of the aims of the 1902 Balfour Education Act which had been

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[1] Of course this was untrue, for the private sector was left untouched and thus one of the main routes to class privilege remained intact.

designed to eradicate the potential for conflict in schools between rival religious groups by minimising the religious content of the curriculum. In the war-time spirit of consensus which characterised the shaping of the Act, such inter-denominational differences were forgotten and parliamentarians apparently believed that they were speaking on behalf of the nation when they claimed that 'millions of humble people', desire that 'Christian morality should be an integral and honoured part of the citizen's education' and also that Britain was 'the most Christian country in the world', while another thought that 'if you would have a plebiscite of parents over 95 per cent would vote for compulsory worship'. (Cannon 1964:151-2)

Through the 1944 Education Act, religious teaching was established in the school curriculum as a component part of British democracy and the Christian ethic was connected to the emancipatory altruism embedded in the discourse of the hope of the world, which framed the future of the nation as dependent on the educational experience provided for the younger generation. In the 1950s, the impact of this legislation was made clear in primary school timetables which made religious activities a central feature of the teaching day, but it was not just the religious content of the curriculum which was significant in its apparent rolling back of the agenda to before the start of the century. It was also the fact that the teaching methods which were used to deliver this religiously-influenced curriculum were derived from educational philosophies which had been promoted through and practised in the Sunday school movement during the previous half century. In particular, the teaching of the pupils in infant's schools deployed many of the pedagogic methods which had identified the story of Jesus as meeting that group's developmental needs.

This thesis argues that for the first half of the twentieth century the much-derided Sunday school version of Jesus occupied a privileged position in the education of working class children in Britain. In providing the evidence to support that claim, it maps the contexts and processes through which this version of the story was able to achieve that position in what is usually seen as a period of increasing secularisation. It goes on to show how the Sunday school version of Jesus was a product of pedagogies influenced by developmental psychology, albeit circulating in a popular form referred to as child study, and which by accident rather than design, culminated in a re-presentation of Jesus which appealed more to girls than boys. The central aim of the thesis, therefore, is to investigate how the Sunday school version of Jesus functioned in the formation of identity for working class girls in Britain in the period 1900-1945

## Narratives, Identity and the Story of Jesus

Fredric Jameson (1981) has argued that our sense of who we are, regardless of temporal or spatial difference, has been gained through a deep social and psychological engagement with narratives of all kinds. Within western culture there is no disputing the claim that the story of Jesus Christ has been the most widely circulated of all narratives. In particular, it has been a central component of education in Britain in the twentieth century through the Church of England's influence on the school curriculum and the mass of publications produced by the Protestant evangelical groups. But Jameson referred to 'narratives of all kinds' and the story of Jesus told to children is not a fixed narrative in either its content or form. It has been told in a thousand different ways through books, films, pictures, hymns, prayers and

school plays. It is also a polysemic text capable of generating both regulative and emancipatory meanings; feelings of pleasure and of fear. and this thesis will investigate the factors which have underpinned the social and psychological engagements with the most widely circulated narrative in Western culture, the story of Jesus Christ. It will do so by investigating the production, circulation and reception of this story told to children through pictures and words in Britain during the period 1900-1945.

The period 1900 to 1945 is one which witnessed some of the most dramatic events and technological developments in British history. It encompasses the trauma of World War One; the ensuing (unsuccessful) efforts in the 1920s for world peace embodied in the establishment of the League of Nations; the General Strike; the fight against fascism in the Depression; the Second World War and the establishment of the Welfare State. It is a period of great socio-economic change in which the British working class was the primary focus of legislation designed to improve its ability to contribute to the nation's economic and social wealth. Within this project children were identified as the key section of the population which would determine the success or failure of that project. Throughout the period 1900-1945 the social and educational welfare of the nation was invariably framed by reference to the country's children, with all the attendant connotations of innocence and optimism. But at the start of the century, and for much of the first three decades after, it was working class children in particular who were identified as being crucial to the future well-being of the nation. This is also a period in which attendance at Sunday school, had near universal support among working class families, ensuring that children received - on average - almost ten years of religious education which, among other activities,

promulgated the view that Jesus was the friend, role model and protector of all children. There is some evidence to show that, despite the support from parents, attendance among the older boys declined steadily in the first half of this century and that many children shook off what they saw as the constraining influence of Sunday school as soon as they were able, (Roberts 1971, Humphreys 1981, Humphreys 1988). But there is also evidence that many others derived a lasting engagement with the stories of Jesus which contributed to their adult attitudes, as we will see in the discussion of Hoggart's work in the next chapter.

If we return to Jameson's statement about the formation of identity being linked to 'narratives of all kinds', before we begin to explore how such processes might function we need to take into account the way in which the narratives put before children have always been the object of close adult scrutiny. As a consequence of this screening process it has been established that certain forms of narratives, or genres, are more appropriate for this age group than others and, particularly in the twentieth century, the fairy tale has come to be synonymous with childhood.

Jack Zipes (1979, 1983) in documenting the historical development of fairy tales in western culture, has challenged taken-for-granted assumptions[2] about the cultural significance of the genre and has emphasised the utopian impulse which drives many of these stories, writing that while:

> Our lives are framed by folk and fairy tales...in the framework we never fill in the meaning of the tales for ourselves. It remains illusive. From birth to death we hear and imbibe the lore of folk and fairy tales and sense that they can help us reach our destiny. They know and tell us that we want to become kings and queens, ontologically speaking to be masters of our own realms...to stand

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[2] It is widely assumed that this is a genre which was primarily produced for children whereas the work of Zipes and other scholars of German and French literature have provided evidence to show that the folk tale had a mixed audience who listened to stories with very 'adult' themes of sex and violence, further that the development of the genre from folk to literary fairy tale was predicated on the notion of an adult and sophisticated audience.

upright as the makers of history... In this regard folk and fairy tales present a challenge, for within the tale lies the hope of self-transformation and a better world. (Zipes 1979: ix)

Zipes' assertion that within popular narratives can be found 'the hope of self-transformation and a better world' viewed as a communal project, underlines the choice of the title of this thesis - *The Hope of the World*. But *The Hope of the World* is also the title of one of the most famous pictures of Jesus produced for children. It was painted by Harold Copping in the second decade of this century, published by the London Missionary Society (LMS) and circulated throughout the British Empire abroad and at home, especially through the Sunday school network. The hope of the world is also the expression, in popular form, of Edwardian sentiments embodied in books, pamphlets and articles which identified the well-being of working class children as essential to the future (the hope) of Britain and who were, as a consequence, perceived as having the ability 'to stand upright as the makers of history'. Thus it is an image derived from a discourse about class and the nation which, unlike previous discourses on the working class, identified the potential of that class to transform for the better the society in which they lived rather than to simply threaten it. It was also a discourse which brought together educationalists, socialists, and evangelists in a common, though not organised, effort to bring to fruition this notion of (working class) children as the redeemers of a corrupt society. To this end, the Jesus story was identified as an effective vehicle for engaging the hearts and minds of children and thus facilitating appropriately receptive attitudes to the notion of altruistic citizenship. But the particular narrative which was used by evangelical educators in this process was not the Biblical text from the Gospels, rather it was a series of versions of the Jesus story adapted to meet the different emotional needs of different age groups.

Thus it was presented in a fairy tale form to make it appealing to the very young and to promote the view of Jesus as their friend and protector, and for older children, the story was re-told as a chivalric romance, presenting them with Jesus as an ideal role-model and companion in their shared struggle for a better world.

The meanings generated by a text can be dependent upon what Morley (1991) describes as their discursive formations. Taking issue with those theories of the relationship between text and reader[3] in which that relationship is analysed without reference to 'social and historical structures *and* ...other texts' he writes that:

> To conceptualize the moment of reading/viewing in this way is to ignore the constant intervention of other texts and discourses which *also* position 'the subject'. At the moment of textual encounter other discourses are always in play besides those of the particular text in focus - discourses which depend on other discursive formations, brought into play through 'the subject's' placing in other practices - cultural, educational, institutional. And these other discourses will set some of the terms in which any particular text is engaged and evaluated. (Hall *et al.* 1991: 163)

Taking Morley's argument and identifying the story of Jesus as 'the particular text in focus', we can see how it is situated alongside the production and circulation of fairy tales and both *sets* of texts - for there can never ever be one final version of these stories - are usually structured around the quest for a better world (Zipes 1979). In addition, the motif of the quest is a narrative function (Propp 1968) which is echoed by the Edwardian educational and political discourses of the nation and children as the hope of the world. In the period under discussion the production and circulation of the story of Jesus represented as a fairy tale, runs parallel with the emergence and popularising of a pedagogy of storytelling, particularly in the Sunday school movement, which was informed by the insights into child psychology which had been

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[3] His criticism is specifically aimed at what has become known as *Screen* theory - being derived from the journal of the same name - which employed a psychoanalytic perspective to explain how subject positions in the cinema are invariably constructed to facilitate the 'male gaze'.

gained through developmental theory. Morley has also highlighted the fact that

in analysing the relationship between texts and audiences that we

should always be alert to the fact that 'subjects have histories' and that if 'it is

correct to speak not of text/subject but of texts/subjects relations to the present, it must

also be the case that past interpellations affect present ones', (Hall *et al.* 1992.: 166)

but we need to ask how this happens? By specific reference to the story of Jesus,

what is argued here is that the mode of delivery (not just address) of the narrative has

been primarily oral and that this pre-industrial mode of communication has enabled

the story to have a resonance for children because it was circulated in the intimate

sphere of the family as well as the realm of institutional discourses.


## Orality, Narrative Organisation and Subjective Regulation

Telling stories orally according to Stone (1988) is an activity which has been

employed to preserve or frame facts and events in the more intimate context of the

family. Writing of the significance of this form of communication she has observed that

people sometimes appear to 'grow up and walk around with their stories under their

skin, sometimes as weightless pleasures but sometimes painfully tattooed with them',

(Stone 1989: 6-7), an interesting metaphor which gives material expression to the

biblical phrase 'the word made flesh'. Stone argues that family storytelling appears to

be something that 'happens casually and unreflectively' and that like fairy stories:

> ...the realms family stories invariably enter into are predictable. The family is
> our first culture, and like all cultures, it wants to make known its norms and
> mores...but it also does so through family stories which underscore...the
> essentials, like the unspoken and unadmitted family policy on marriage or
> illness...or how much anger can be expressed and by whom (Stone 1989: 7)

Stone adds that while it is true that the family's main concern is with itself:

> ...its second realm of concern is its relation to the world. Family stories about the world are usually teaching stories, telling...the ways of the world according to the experiences its elders have had. Often the news is not good - money is too important in the world, in all sorts of ways, and the family, almost any family seems to have too little of it. ...Family stories convey the bad news, but they also offer coping strategies as well as stories that make everyone feel better. (Stone 1989: 7)

Stone claims that family stories are teaching stories which make clear that group's value system providing the listener with a subject position within the group and, while conveying the 'bad news' about the difficulties to be encountered in the world outside the family, the stories offer coping strategies. The communication of narratives through the oral mode of transmission can facilitate a context of intimacy between the teller of the tale and the audience. When - as is usually the case - the storyteller is an experienced adult and the audience comprises children, it is a hierarchical relationship, and if the teller is a teacher and the audience her pupils, then it can also be seen as a relationship in which trust and intimacy are engendered alongside the invisible deployment of authority. This is because investigating the impact of story of Jesus in the formation of identity in working class girls, requires us to consider how the telling of this story in Sunday and later in state schools, has been used to construct a particular relationship between teachers and pupils; one which transferred some of the values of the middle class view of family life and gender roles into the schoolroom of working class students.

**Knowledge, Power and Subjectivity**

The French philosopher Michel Foucault has highlighted the ways in which the modern state has used prisons to develop the most effective ways of regulating or policing wider populations. In *Discipline and Punish* he writes that:

> "Discipline" may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques and procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a "physics" or an "anatomy" of power, a technology. (Foucault 1977: 215)

He goes on to say that these 'disciplinary technologies' have a basic function of delivering knowledge (and thus power) to the state which enables the more effective and economic government or control of populations. To illustrate how these 'disciplinary technologies' are based on knowledge as power, Foucault utilises Bentham's model of the panopticon - an architectural model of a prison with a central tower which looks on to all the cells arranged around it, thus yielding the optimum possibility for surveillance of all inmates by the presence of a single guardian. According to Foucault it is a perfect system for economic regulation because:

> even if there is no guardian present, the power apparatus still operates perfectly. The inmate cannot see whether the or not the guardian is in the tower, so must behave as if surveillance were perpetual and total. If the prisoner is never sure when he is being observed, he becomes his own guardian (Rabinow 1984: 17)

In *Governing the Soul* (1991) Nikolas Rose employs a Foucauldian analysis to map the ways in which psychiatry became established as a regulative tool in British society, showing how this 'therapeutic' science drew into its sphere of observation - and thus of potential control - the most private practices of human relations. Rose writes that the development of the psychological regulation of the family was 'constructed through the intense subjectivisation, emotionalization and eroticization of domestic affairs...a machine held together by the vectors of desire' (Rose 1991:201) and observes that through child psychology and developmentalism there emerged a scientific language to classify and evaluate familial feelings. Development theory in the first three decades of this century established the psychological development of

children as an important object of study linked to the aim of providing an education for the working class capable of producing self-regulating citizens. Popular versions of child development theory, framed as the study of the 'child mind', had a sphere of influence which went beyond formal educational policy and were taken up by evangelical educationalists, particularly in the non-conformist Sunday school network, who were committed to using such knowledge for transforming the attitudes and sensibilities of their students. In particular, developmental theory informed the establishment of a pedagogy of storytelling which was aimed at maximising children's psychological engagement with imaginative narratives in general, but in Sunday schools with the story of Jesus in particular, and through which he was established in the child's mind as someone who was always watching over them; a guardian angel but also a moral guide.

If we look at the provision of primary education in Britain, the story of the life of Jesus has been accorded a very powerful position in curriculum content, pedagogic practices and even in the way in which the school year has been organised. It has undoubtedly had the potential to exert a particularly pervasive, but remarkably little researched, influence on the hearts and minds of generations of young children; children who have sat at the feet of teachers who told them the story of Jesus and of how he was the friend of little children and that, if they loved him as he loved them, they should demonstrate this through their good behaviour. Thus, the regulation of children in the school room might be claimed as having been facilitated through the 'subjectivization, emotionalization and eroticization' (Rose 1991) of their relationship to the fairy tale character of Jesus. Within this context, love is a discourse within which self-discipline is inscribed through a pedagogy of storytelling.

Thus the fairy tale version of the Jesus story told to little children can be said to function as an *erotic* fairy tale because the lovingness stressed within that tale is designed to construct specific relationships and ascribe subject positions within those relationships. If we return to Morley's assertion that 'subjects have histories' and that in the text/subject relationship 'past interpellations affect present ones', (Hall *et al.* 1992.: 166) and relate this to Stones' observations that the function of family storytelling is to provide the listener with a sense of identity and, while conveying the bad news about the world, provide the means by which to cope with such information, we might need to consider if and how this can be used to explain the appeal of this particular narrative. For the story of Jesus has been for some children, an especially poignant story, the events of which were echoed in the experiences of their own lives, in the sufferings, sacrifices and absences of their fathers. While Jesus tells many stories, he does not tell the one concerning his own life; that is left to others to tell, and this thesis argues that in the period 1900-1945, the tellers of the story of his life have usually been women, the Sunday school teachers, infant school teachers, grandmothers, mothers. Jesus is thus a story about a man which is told to children by women and which can be seen as speaking of and for the absence of men. One of the objectives of this thesis within the overall aim of exploring how this particular narrative has functioned in the formation of identity in working class girls is, to explore the ways in which the experience of loss - of fathers in particular - might have been mediated and explained through the story of Jesus the sacrificial man, the man of sorrows. While acknowledging that the argument presented so far has been that the reframing of the story of Jesus has presented that narrative as a fairy tale, it is also

the case that the reading of the story was accompanied by the knowledge that Jesus was cruelly murdered for his beliefs.

## Texts, Subjects and Histories

While agreeing with Morley (Hall 1991) that 'subjects have histories' and acknowledging the need to analyse texts/subjects relationships within their discursive frameworks of production and consumption, it is also the case, according to Jameson's observations, that our sense of self is produced through an engagement with narratives at the psychological as well as the social level. Therefore, I want to emphasise that subjects also have fantasies, that those fantasies are linked to desires and that desire, in turn, is related to the experience of loss. Further, that those unconscious desires may be reflected in a subject's particular reading of a text, for fantasy is not always the unconscious phantasy of Freud's theory. It can be the process of imagining, not as escapist entertainment, but as the conscious expression of desires which are linked to particular needs arising from specific historical and material circumstances, as well as the result of the matrix of desires functioning within the family. Therefore, in exploring how narratives function in the formation of identity, we need to consider the influence of the inner life which is a product of the circumstances discussed above. To this end, psychoanalytic explanations such as those offered by Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1982) can be effectively employed in explaining how the Sunday school version of Jesus functioned therapeutically as well as regulatively for some children. Bettelheim makes the claim that fairy tales more than any other narrative genre function therapeutically for

children in providing them with characters and situations which allow them to work through symbolically their existential dilemmas and their oedipal conflicts.

As the thesis is specifically concerned with the identity formation of *working class* children, then we need to be clear about the unmet desires and existential dilemmas which might have been specific to this group. If we accept that one of the key features of working class identity is the awareness of belonging to a subordinate and economically disadvantaged group, then perhaps we can see the Jesus story as offering various points of identification for this group which move beyond the regulatory. For example, it is the story of the Jesus who left behind his family and his community to follow another, higher path, a choice incomprehensible to his parents but one which was respected because he was born to do great things, to be other than his good, but ordinary[4] parents. It is also the story of the angry Jesus, the rebel, the man with a sense of what is right and is prepared to take violent action when necessary as in the overturning of the tables of the traders in the Temple and the scourging of the money-changers. It is the story of an essentially social Jesus whose innate qualities are intuitively recognised by animals, children, the sick, the poor, the emotionally distressed. But it is very definitely the story of a man who forsook family ties and social obligations to marry and chose instead to use his short life in the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of teaching, which can be seen as the prioritising of education over familial ties.

Such interpretations of the narratives and attributed therapeutic applications have to be seen within the specific historical circumstances which gave rise to national sentiments which, in addition to mourning the loss of men killed on the

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[4] It is acknowledged that a Catholic reading of the story could never see Mary as 'ordinary' and that this is a specifically Protestant-based interpretation.

battlefields of two world wars (as well as those killed through work), identified the next generation as their hope for a more peaceful and rational future world. It is through such discourses that working class children in particular were identified as the key to the success or failure of this project for a better world. Education was seen as an effective means of enculturing a sense of global and British citizenship in the young and although it is reasonable, in the light of current post-colonial sensibilities, to recognise how this was an extension of imperialism, a closer investigation reveals a more complex configuration of interests and influences. If we take MacKenzie's statement (1984), that the centripetal effects of imperialism, that is the influence on the people living in Britain, have been very little studied as compared to the centrifugal effects, that is its impact on those colonised. We can consider how such sentiments which celebrated the hope of a more peaceful world and led to the setting up of the League of Nations (the forerunner to the United Nations) might have harnessed political allies which were strongly opposed to jingoistic imperialism. This was a discourse, after all, which identified working class children as vital players in the transformation of society and which provided them - in words if not in practice - with a sense of having an important role to play.[5] In the following chapters the discussion will consider the various factors which have contributed to establishing the story of Jesus as a powerful and seductive narrative through which children were encouraged to identify with him as an ideal role model.

Chapter Two provides the background to the arguments presented in subsequent chapters and identifies the key concepts and texts which have shaped the direction of the study. It pays particular attention to the early work of Richard

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[5]. Simon (1993) identifies the practical shortcomings if not the downright duplicity of such discourses.

Hoggart, specifically his classic text on working class culture, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) to show how the focus of the thesis connects with the early work in cultural studies which was originally aimed at developing ways of documenting and analysing the structures of feeling in everyday social processes, The chapter also draws attention to the lack of work in those areas of popular culture which Hall (1980) defined as 'reform' rather than resistance, and highlights how this has led to the absence of research in cultural studies into popular religiosity.

Chapter Three describes the methods used for the collection and analysis of the material used in the thesis and explains the problems created by the absence of relevant archive data and how content analysis of primary sources was used as an effective means of filling that void. In doing so, it provides a brief background to the relationship which existed between artists, publishers and evangelical groups. The chapter acknowledges that 'the discursive process of the construction of meanings is frequently analysed without reference to its institutional, economic or material settings' (Morley 1992:4) and explains here the strategies employed to address that problem in the researching of the thesis .

Chapter Four takes up Hall's call for the history of popular culture to take into its remit reform as well as resistance. It explains how the discourse of children as the hope of the world was framed by reference to the need to provide an adequate educational experience for working class children under-five years old. It shows that this discourse arose from concerns about the deprived environment in which many urban working class children lived and argues that education in this context was viewed as providing the child with compensatory experiences to offset the possible harmful long term effects of their harsh home environment. It demonstrates the

influence of Froebel's kindergarten philosophy in such formulations but shows how it was Sunday schools rather than elementary schools which attempted to put such philosophies into practice. It argues that evangelical educationalists, under the auspices of the non-conformist Sunday school network, established, in theory at least, a graded system of education which addressed the varying needs of children according to age. Further, that this version of developmental theory known as child study, was reflected in the teaching methods used in the Sunday school and shows how such methods highlighted the educational and psychological value to children of storytelling. In addition, the chapter provides evidence to show that evangelical publishing groups, through the economy of the Sunday school network, were in a powerful position in overseeing which stories were available to children and that they tempered morality with expediency in developing versions of the Jesus story which would make a direct appeal to children.

Chapter Five examines how the emergence of a pedagogy of storytelling was reflected in the reframing of the story of Jesus as an erotic fairy tale, and of how this story was explicitly aimed at mobilising and organising the emotions and desires of younger children along desired educational and psychological lines. The discussion shows that while a child-centred philosophy underpinned storytelling as a pedagogic activity, there were other equally important considerations driving the popularising of telling stories in general and the telling of the story of Jesus in particular. That in seeking to establish clear guidelines for effective/affective storytelling, Sunday school teachers saw the Jesus story itself as a manifesto for storytelling, with Jesus quite explicitly identified as providing the best example and role model for the practice.

Through close analysis of hymns for children and printed stories which simulated the act of storytelling, the chapter demonstrates that the story of Jesus blessing the children was established as emblematic of the ideal relationship which teachers sought to establish in children's perception of Jesus as their friend and protector. Further, that whereas the disciples were depicted as considering children to be a nuisance, Jesus was invariably portrayed as patient and caring; a maternal male. In addition, evidence is advanced to show that girls in particular are repeatedly presented in such narratives, both hymns and stories, as being the focus of Jesus' love and affection.

The discussion in Chapter Six is primarily concerned with the pictures of Jesus produced by evangelical groups and used in teaching in the Sunday schools. The chapter provides evidence to show how developmental theory embodied in the pedagogy of 'look and learn' was employed in the formulation, selection and use of pictures of Jesus in educational contexts. In doing so, it argues that such thinking drove the efforts to identify and eradicate all negative aspects in pictures of Jesus, particularly the potential to generate fear in the child. It argues, as in the previous chapter, that the scene of Jesus blessing the children was emblematic of this approach. As the background for the subsequent discussion on contemporary representations of Jesus the chapter provides a brief overview, through reference to particular examples of the genre, of the fine art conventions associated with the representation of the scene of Jesus blessing the children. The chapter provides evidence of how the increasing use by teachers of pictures of Jesus, brought with it concerns about the need to establish criteria to identify the most appropriate images

for children and that these concerns, particularly with regard to criticisms of 'effeminate' images of Jesus, led to changes in the modes of representation.

Chapter Seven explores how the hope of the world discourse which positioned children as the guardians of the nation's destiny, was framed as a children's crusade and how this narrative provided the pre-adolescent child with Jesus as the ideal role model by presenting him as a chivalric hero. Further, that this version of the Jesus story which incorporated contemporary themes and issues, was designed to facilitate a greater identification with the persona of Jesus among the older children who were regarded by the evangelical educationalists as more likely to cease attendance at Sunday school. The chapter shows how the presentation of Jesus as a chivalric hero was assumed to make a direct appeal to boys but that within the story he was not only presented to girls as an ideal role model but also as an unobtainable object of desire, and that passivity is not the inevitable characteristic to be derived from this narrative

Chapter Eight investigates how psychoanalysis might be used to explain the appeal of the story of Jesus for working class girls in particular. The discussion draws upon Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* to explain why fairy tales have been seen by many psychoanalysts as beneficial to the psychological development of children and goes on to argues that Freud's 'Family Romance' is a useful way of employing psychoanalytic perspectives as a means of exploring why the story of Jesus might have exerted a lasting psychological influence on the formation of identity in class terms. Through a discussion of the psychological implications of Jesus functioning as a symbolic substitute for the absent father, the chapter makes reference to specific historical contexts which have established the cultural perception of men as physically at risk from the dangers of the world outside the family and

discusses the implications of this for the girl who makes the cross-gender identification with the father figure represented by Jesus. It also argues that some working class children have been privy to knowledge about the hardships of the world outside the home from an earlier age than developmental theory would advise. That the acquisition of this knowledge has accompanied the understanding gained from their experience in the world of the socially subordinate position of their parents. Thus the themes of hierarchies, families, loss and unconsummated desire expressed in the various versions of the story of Jesus, are shown to have a connection to the experiences of working class girls, thus enabling us to see how and why the story of Jesus might have exerted a lasting influence in the formation of identity.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THE PARADOX OF RELIGION AND POPULAR CULTURE

This chapter maps the literature which has informed the writing of the thesis. It is a wide-ranging review which covers a variety of disciplines but which is essentially concerned to locate this investigation within the field of cultural and communication studies. To this end, the focus of the material discussed in this chapter can be divided into four key areas. These are:

1. Religion, popular culture and the British left.

2. Religion and respectability

3. The materiality of books.

4. Narratives and the pleasure of identification

This chapter does not aim to discuss archival material, for that is part of the function of the following chapter; rather it prioritises the discussion presented in the first section to show how the work of Richard Hoggart has been a key influence in grounding of the arguments presented in this thesis.

## Religion, Popular Culture and the British Left

Marx's much-quoted phrase that 'religion is the opium of the people' was used almost as a mantra through the 1960s and 1970s to indicate that for many who have considered themselves marxists, religion could only ever function as a symptom of false consciousness. What many political activists who happily quoted this forgot to

mention was that this phrase was only the last sentence in a paragraph in which Marx

demonstrated his awareness of real human suffering alongside his political analysis,

for what he actually wrote was that:

> *Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and the
> *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the
> heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of the spiritless situation. It is
> the *opium* of the people. (cited in Bocock and Thompson 1985: 11)

The longer quotation provides the reader with much more scope to consider

how the functioning of religion might thus be considered an important area for

investigation by those concerned to understand the popular culture of the working

class. But the research of literature conducted for this thesis has shown this not to be

the case, for there is very little work in this area which is able to move beyond the

'religion as false consciousness' thesis. As part of the *History Workshop* Series of

publications, Obelkevich, Roper and Samuel edited a volume of writing on religion

entitled *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in religion, politics and patriarchy* (1987). In their

introduction they describe the opposition they encountered when they first proposed

the project. What is more interesting, because unexpected, are the comments about

beliefs and the acknowledgement that there were other aspects of the 1960s besides

the political agenda, which exerted a strong intellectual and cultural influence:

> The cultural revolution of the 1960s has perhaps made socialists more
> ready to admit the power and autonomy of the imaginary, to consider
> belief systems as a *primum mobile* which structure and constitute action
> rather than passively reflecting it. It has made us more sensitive to the
> ways in which belief acts, not so much as a reflection of material
> interests, but as an independent cultural force.(Olbekevitch *et al.* 1987:
> 7)

What Olbekevitch *et al.* mean by the phrase 'an independent cultural force' is not

made clear, but they do identify certain assumptions and prejudices which underpin

the British Left's apparent inability to conceptualise human action in a wider

framework of motivation and desires than simply the material when they write that:

> More disturbing to either Marxist or social historical categories of
> explanation and inquiry are...fantasy, desire, myth, fear - what might be
> termed the domain of the psychic...(which) cannot be subsumed under
> the study of 'collective mentalities' which have long enjoyed a legitimacy
> in social history, nor can it be marginalized as study of the exotic and
> safely anthropologically distant. It reaches beyond, to subjectivity and
> individual experience, something which has never formed part of the
> province of the historian. (Obelkevich *et al.* 1987: 7)

This of course rather depends upon which historian and which approach to history is

being referred to - a point which will be returned to in the following section. But it is not

only in the province of political activity or the historian that religion fails to fit into the

theoretical framework.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the role of the Jesus story in the

formation of identity in working class girls in the period 1900-1945 and does so

by reference to the production, circulation and consumption of that narrative

during that period. As this is an area of investigation which brings together

issues of class, gender, identity and representation it has been surprising to

discover how little academic attention has been given to the various activities,

which grouped together, could be termed popular religiosity. The relative

absence of engagement with this area of cultural activity in British cultural

studies is especially striking, for this is a field where one would expect to find

an interest in such a matrix of issues and processes relating to the formation

of identity, particular the formation of working class identity.

In the many years since its establishment at the Centre for

Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham in 1964, British

cultural studies has come to stand for a commitment to bring into the sphere of

academic investigation the 'most basic and pervasive of social processes,

practices and meanings' (Turner 1990: 2) and according to Caughie in the

rhetoric of the seventies 'to assert popular culture as an object of academic

study was as much a political intervention as an academic innovation', adding

that compared to their colleagues in America the British left are 'not yet free of

the tradition of shame which is associated in the British left with academic

study' and that they 'seem always to seek to a very immediate engagement

with a politics which cannot be found in the academy'. (McCabe ed.) 1986:

159)

What is particularly interesting here is firstly the identification of the British left

in terms of the setting of the popular culture agenda and secondly, the use of the

phrase 'tradition of shame' which begins to explain why the popular culture agenda

was shaped with the emphasis on notions of popular resistance. In addition - perhaps

more importantly - it draws attention to the problematic positioning of the working

class in such discourses both as the object of study and as the assumed beneficiaries

of the study of popular culture as an altruistic activity geared to 'political intervention'.

It also provides evidence that emotion and not just intellect can drive the setting of

academic agendas, which is a point which will be returned to later in this chapter.

Shiach (1986) observes that invariably most of those who have written about

popular culture have generally placed themselves outside of its sphere, but adds that

the argument is not that theorists of popular culture should try to locate themselves in

that sphere, for 'such a gesture could only be rhetorical, or simply dishonest', rather

that:

> [the] point is...to note the constant slippage between speaking about, and
> speaking for. In order to legitimate their production of discourse on popular
> culture, theorists place themselves, culturally and linguistically, within the

dominant sphere. At the same time, however, they frequently claim to represent the perceptions, nature and aspirations of 'the people'. (Shiach 1986: 12)

What Shiach means by 'the people' is, of course, the working class, and the discussion which follows will argue that the absence of popular religiosity from the cultural studies agenda is less the result of a conspiracy than the consequences of the accident of birth. Shiach's remarks about the tendency of some cultural theorists to 'represent the perceptions, nature and aspirations of "the people"' clearly implies that some writers seek to document the experiences of sections of the population to which they do not themselves belong, but the founder of the CCCS certainly came from the sphere he wrote about.

Richard Hoggart was born into a working class family in Leeds in 1918 and was the first Director of the CCCS and it is his book *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) which is widely credited with being the catalyst for the establishing of the Centre. It is not the aim of this thesis, nor of this chapter, to map the genesis of British cultural studies for that has been given adequate attention elsewhere (*e.g.* Turner 1990, Harris 1992), but it is relevant to the discussion which follows, to show how Hoggart's innovative study of working class culture did include in its remit the notion of popular religiosity, (although in the book he referred to it as 'Primary Religion').

In *The Uses of Literacy* Hoggart states in the Preface of the book that it is 'about changes in working-class culture during the last thirty or forty years, in particular as they are being encouraged by mass publications'. (Hoggart 1957: 11) He adds that similar results might be gained if other forms of entertainment such as film and radio had been selected as illustrations. The Preface is dated 1952-6 and as Hoggart himself was born in 1918, we can see that the parameters of the study

extend to the period when he was just an infant, so although some of the mode of observation used could be described as ethnographic, other parts of the book are based on evidence as expressed through patterns of speech and cultural activities. Hoggart makes clear that the focus of his book is on the relationship between publications, entertainment and working class life and is divided into two sections, the first defining the culture of the working class that, in the second half, Hoggart sees as being under attack from a mass culture which comes from outside of the value system of that group. *The Uses of Literacy* has relevance to this thesis, firstly because the main part of the period covered is the same for both and, secondly, because the thesis is also particularly concerned with the influence of print media products (in this case the popular narrative of the Jesus story) and the formation of a classed identity.

*The Uses of Literacy* is an insider's account of the life of a northern England working class community. It is an account in which Hoggart makes clear from the outset that within any such project there is always a tendency to romanticise this much-researched group and that he has had to scrutinise his own inclinations in the writing of the book:

> In both halves of the book I discovered a tendency in myself, because the subject is so much part of my origins and growth, to be unwarrantedly sharp towards those features in working-class life of which I disapprove. Related to this is the urge to lay one's ghosts; at the worst, it can be a temptation to 'do down' one's class, out of a pressing ambiguity in one's attitudes to it. conversely, I found a tendency to over-value those features in working-class life of which I approve, and this tempted towards a sentimentality, a romanticising of my background, as though I were subconsciously saying to my present acquaintance - see, in spite of all, such a childhood is richer than yours. (Hoggart 1957: 18-19)

At no point does *The Uses of Literacy* seek to valorise the group about whom it speaks, nor does Hoggart apologise for focusing on what many cultural commentators would have then designated as trash or bad art. One of the great strengths of Hoggart

is that, like Barthes, he makes great efforts to explain to the reader the meaning

embedded in what might seem to be the most commonsensical attitudes or kitsch

artefacts - always he explains as to a stranger in a foreign land and he rarely judges

(except for the much criticised section 'Sex in shiny packets'). Having none of the

preconceptions about the working class which might have arisen if he had been born

outside that group, Hoggart is able to describe what he has known and experienced

without a political agenda getting in the way of that knowledge and experience. *The*

*Uses of Literacy* is remarkable for the way it brings together the myriad, and often on

the surface, contradictory aspects of working class life and makes them intelligible to

the assumed middle class reader. Even while he devotes a chapter to the dynamics

of 'them and us' as a determining feature of working class identity, he manages to do

so without apparently antagonising an audience who might rightly recognise some of

their own privileges as being bound up with working class shame and subordination.

In different ways and words Hoggart paints a picture which exemplifies E. P.

Thompson's view of what should be understood by class:

> By class I understand a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate
> and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and
> in consciousness. I emphasize that it is a *historical* phenomenon. I do not see
> class as a 'structure', nor even as a category, but something which in fact
> happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships.
> More than this, the notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship.
> Like any other relationship, it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt
> to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomize its structure...The
> relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context.
> Moreover, we cannot have two distinct classes each with an independent
> being, and then bring them *into* relationship with each other. (Thompson 1968:
> 8)

This, he argues, is because:

> ...class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences
> (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as
> between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are
> different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is

largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born -
or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these
experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions,
value-systems, ideas and cultural forms. (Thompson 1968: 8-9)

Thompson was one member of the British left who did not shy away from

acknowledging and engaging with religion as an important influence in a working

class history in which working class people were seen as active agents in their

struggles. As we have seen, while Marx did indeed assert that religion was the

opiate of the people, he also said that it was the heart in a heartless world, similarly

Thompson urges the need to try to understand actions and beliefs in context and not

to jump too readily to the understanding delivered through hindsight.

I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the
'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded
follower of Joanna Southcott from the enormous condescension of posterity.
Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backward-looking.
Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary
conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these times
of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in
terms of their own experience. (Thompson 1968: 12)

Hoggart, likewise, doesn't make judgements about the people who found some

solace and hope in religious ideas, rather he shows why and how such attitudes take

root and endure. He writes as someone who has grown up inside the sphere of the

world he seeks to explain to others who have not had that same experience. If, as

Thompson says, class is embodied in relationships then in the section of *The Uses of*

*Literacy* what Hoggart does is to give an account of working class *attitudes* to various

aspects of their everyday experiences, thus the writing is more an explanation than a

simple description; the book is not so much concerned with action and belief, but with

the motivations for those actions and beliefs. To this end, the section 'Primary

Religion' Hoggart is about the *relationship* of the working class to religion and provides an account of the attitudes of the group to various aspects of what might be classified as religion.

He observes that in the period covered by his book there were 'a few working-class areas in which a substantial proportion of people still attend church or chapel.' (Hoggart 1957:112) And that a 'multitude of small sects seem to flourish ...in Gospel Halls of varying solidity, in converted shops on trolley-bus routes.' That there were 'several forms of Spiritualism' which attracted 'understandably, middle-aged widows.' He goes on to say that most families ('in the extended sense') will have at least one member who is a regular attender at church or chapel, both of which are still felt to be an important 'part of the life of the neighbourhood'. So much so that people 'still speak of "our chapel", and that even those who were not churchgoers still felt that an event there was a neighbourhood event, and would always go to 'an anniversary service, or a bazaar, or a concert, or the start of the Whitsuntide walk, or the Christmas pantomime.' But Hoggart adds that even this limited sense of belonging was weakening and that, as he wrote, 'most working class people go neither to church nor to chapel except on special family occasions, once the parental order to attend Sunday school has been withdrawn.' That last part of the sentence has a particular relevance to this thesis, for Hoggart here confirms the view that even though working class parents may have felt that organised or institutionalised religion had no place in their own lives - except for the family rituals associated with births, marriages and deaths - they still sent their children to Sunday school and he provides an impressionistic account of some northern working class attitudes to religion when he writes that:

Insofar as they think of Christianity, they think of it as a system of ethics; their main concern is with morals, not metaphysics. The verb in the commonly used phrase 'I don't believe in it' is usually doing duty for 'agree with' or 'hold with', since the point is almost always ethical. Yet they hold firmly to the view that *Christianity is the best form of ethics.* They will say, without sense of contradiction, that science has taken the place of religion, but that we ought all to try to 'live according to Christ's teaching'...That a sense of moral duties is what they chiefly understand, I have suggested, by Christianity. Christianity is morals; a phrase used above, 'Christ's teaching' is the one most commonly heard when the talk is in favour of religion. *Christ was a person, giving the best example of how to live;* one could not expect to be able to live like that today still, the example is there. They like to speak of 'practical Christianity'. The emphasis is always on what it is right for them to do, as far as they can, as people; *people who do not see the point of 'all this dogma', but who must constantly get along with others, in groups; people who must learn how to cooperate, how to live on an exchange basis, how to give and take.* The assumption behind the treatment of others is not so much that we are all children of God (though a form of that is there, in the background) as that we are all 'in the same boat together'. Here, round *the sense of religion as a guide to our duty towards others, as the repository of good rules for communal life,* the old phrases cluster. Ask any half-dozen working-class people what they understand by religion, and very easily, but not meaninglessly, they will be likely to answer with one of these phrases: 'doing good', 'common decency', 'helping lame dogs', 'being kind', 'doing unto others as y'would be done unto', 'we're 'ere to 'elp one another', minister: "elping y'neighbour', 'learning to know right from wrong', 'decent living'. This is the main reason for the steadiness with which children are enrolled for Sunday school. The subsidiary reasons are familiar: that parents like a quiet Sunday afternoon to themselves, sometimes extended by obliging the children to go for a good walk between the end of school and teatime; or that Mother has been cooking hard all morning and is tired; or that Father wants to doze after looking at the Sunday papers. But behind all these is the notion that Sunday school is a civilizing influence, that it helps the children to avoid 'getting into bad ways'.(my emphasis)(Hoggart 1957: 93-4)

This extensive quotation provides testament to the efficacy of the work of the

various evangelical groups because the parents Hoggart describes were that very

same generation who had been targeted by the same groups when they were young

and who appear to have been actively committed to ensuring that their own children

were exposed to the same 'civilizing influence' as they themselves experienced.

Often their experiences of church and evangelical groups had been positive. Whilst

they might not have had much truck with religious dogma, as Hoggart points out the

ideology and the preaching were patiently borne in order to gain material benefits, be

they a Sunday school outing to the seaside, a Band of Hope Christmas party, the

acquisition of a musical instrument and tuition from the Church Lad's Brigade, or

access to sporting facilities. (Humphries 1981) Green in *Religion in the Age of Decline*

(1996) has written that, contrary to many assumptions Sunday schools had always

offered their pupils 'something more than a cut-price initiation into literacy and

numeracy. And they always furnished something more than a miserable lesson in

social subordination for the children of the working class' (Green 1996: 215) and adds

that:

> Even at their most sombre , Sunday schools were valuable social, recreational
> and cultural outlets for the people and for their offspring. Through their sick
> societies, clothing clubs and savings banks they sustained a mentality of self-
> help. Through their recreational associations, they furnished an outlet for
> serious and improving leisure activities. And, on the occasion of the annual
> treat, they afforded the young (and not so young) an opportunity to travel out
> of town either to the seaside or to some other local attraction, and to broaden
> what might have been sadly straitened personal horizons. (Green 1996: 215)

This is in addition to the ways in which the Sunday school was used as a kind

of 'child-minding service' by many working class parents. But what is especially

relevant to the discussion which follows is Hoggart's explanation that religion as a

system of morality and ethics (as opposed to theological dogma) was seen as

operating not simply as a form of social cohesion as per the theses of Durkheim and

Weber, but as a mode of relating which took into account the acknowledgement of

common difficulties and hardships, in other words part of the consciousness of class

positioning, even if not exactly the class consciousness of Marx and Engels.

Thus we can see how the primary religion of Hoggart's working class community is

one of the ways through which that community handled its experiences 'in cultural

terms' and which were 'embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and cultural

forms'.(Thompson 1968)

But class consciousness is not the exclusive preserve of adults. Children

also inhabit and experience the social world in which the phrases above circulate

relentlessly, teaching them about their position in the social and economic

hierarchies which govern the world outside the family, and in the next section the

Sunday school is the focus of the discussion.

## Religion and Respectability? [6]

The forms through which the story of Jesus was circulated to working class

children in the British Sunday school in the period 1900-1945 are many and varied, as

stated earlier. In many cases they constitute a genre of representation which, it is

argued here, falls within the category of popular culture, but this a categorisation

which requires an explanation which the following discussion provides. A closer

examination of the cultural context in which the Hope of the World discourse and the

story of Jesus retold as fairy tale were originally produced, circulated and consumed

reveals the interplay of a much more complicated set of discourses and relationships

than simply that of the ideological indoctrination of children. This is a period seen by

Stuart Hall as being of particular significance not just for historians but also for

researchers of contemporary culture for he writes that, the closer we look at this

'period of deep structural change':

> the more convinced we become that somewhere in this period lies the matrix of
> factors and problems from which *our* history - and our peculiar dilemmas -
> arise. (Samuel ed. 1981: 229)

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[6] The heading of this section is borrowed from Lacqueur's two volume work *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850* (1976) which is a classic text on the subject but which has not been a central focus of the work presented here for it concerns an earlier period.

Hall's arguments in 'Deconstructing the Popular' highlight some of the difficulties

encountered in trying to pull together several different strands and approaches to the

subject which appear to be contradictory. Hall's observations highlight the possibility

of linking the changes which took place in the first three decades of this century with

current dilemmas.' For he argues that 'transformations are at the heart of the study of

popular culture' but that:

> Transformation is the key to the long and protracted process of the
> 'moralisation of the poor, and the 're-education' of the people...popular culture
> is neither...the popular traditions of resistance to these processes; nor is it the
> forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which
> these transformations are worked. (Samuel ed. 1981: 229)

The discourse of working class children as the hope of the world can obviously

be fitted into the notion of the kind of 'transformations' which involve the 'moralisation

of the poor', but the processes involved and their outcomes are difficult to analyse for

so many reasons. Hall is clear in his acknowledgement of why the early part of this

century should be so significantly absent from popular culture investigations. It is not

just that this period is such a complex matrix of ideological influences and struggles

rather it is that what is 'going on' does not fit in with the usual socialist narratives of

working class histories as struggle:

> It isn't by chance that very few of us are working in popular culture in
> the 1930s. I suspect that there is something peculiarly awkward
> especially for socialists, in the non-appearance of a militant, radical,
> mature working class in the 1930s when...most of us would have
> expected it to appear. ( Samuel ed. 1981: 229)

Hall is highlighting here the theoretical problems encountered in trying to

provide an analysis of popular culture during this period because of the widespread

appeal of popular imperialism among the working class, but such apparent

contradictions are largely the result of a tendency to theorise popular culture by reference to an agenda which has tended to 'oscillate wildly between the two alternate poles of that dialectic - containment/resistance.' (Samuel ed. 1981: 229). Hall emphatically denies the simple equation of popular culture being only an expression of resistance and states that although 'we understand resistance nowadays rather better than we do reform' we might need to take a closer look at those areas of cultural production and consumption which were previously omitted from the popular culture agenda because of their surface ideological content of reform. Hall's argument clearly asserts that what he calls the 'evangelical police' should be accorded closer scrutiny in the study of popular culture:

> The magistrate and the evangelical police have, or ought to have, a more 'honoured' place in the history of popular culture than they have usually been accorded. Even more important than ban and proscription is that subtle and slippery customer - 'reform' (with all the positive and ambiguous overtones it carries today). One way or another 'the people' are frequently the object of 'reform'; often for their own good, of course - 'in their own interests'. (Samuel 1981: 229)

Hall does not make clear which groups he has specifically in mind when he refers to the 'evangelical police', but it is reasonable to assume that this would include such organisations as the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Religious Tract Society (RTS) and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), but especially the British Sunday school movement. For if one of the major 'reforms' in British history is that of the introduction of compulsory education, it is also the case that the support from working class parents for their children's attendance at Sunday school falls into that category and while the much touted explanation for this support has been that the parent's used this time away from the children to enjoy their conjugal rights, it is altogether too unsophisticated a reason to be taken seriously.

In Humphries' *Hooligans or Rebels* (1981) can be seen the kind of approach which privileges the notion of resistance over reform and which implicitly seeks to valorise the experiences of which it writes. Humphries uses oral history interviews as the basis for his account of working class childhood and youth in the period 1889-1939. His aim is to explore aspects of childhood delinquency and to explain such behaviour from the protagonists' point of view, but this perspective is invariably male and often boastful self-mythologisation, although there are some less-partisan sections which explain the material appeals which motivated children's attendances at organisations such as the Band of Hope. His selection of oral accounts presents a particularly scathing picture of the Sunday schools and related organisations, but in presenting this perspective, he overlooks denominational differences, which in turn contributed to different approaches to dealing with working class children, not all of which were regulatory and which certainly did not have the power to compel attendance. (Moore 1974, Cliff 1986, Green 1996) One of the major criticisms levelled at the British Sunday school movement, is that looked at from a class perspective, it has promoted the idea of respectability. But we need to consider why if this was the case, it was such a successful approach, to this end we have to consider what might have been the appeal of respectability for the working class, and one of the answers might be that the acquisition of respectability is consonant with the eradication of shame, and until very recently there had ben very little work which addressed the connection between this powerful emotion and class identity. Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986) was a ground-breaking challenge to the conventions of working class autobiographies which challenged many assumptions about the content and form of the genre. Instead of the usual cosy reassurances about the 'poor but

happy' the book forced the reader to engage with the raw and often uncomfortable emotions such as envy as well as shame. There is now a growing body of work addressing such issues (Fox 1992, Skeggs 1997, Walkerdine 1997, Mahony & Zmroczek 1997) and most of the writing appears to be coming from women academics who were born into working class families. Although this thesis does not focus on shame specifically, the discussion in Chapter Eight does to some extent, address the issue of the negative feelings which can accompany children's growing awareness of subordinate social status and explain how the story of Jesus can be shown to have functioned as a means of negotiating those emotions. For if as Hall says , there has been too great an emphasis on resistance at the expense of equal consideration being given to 'reform', maybe we need to consider why so much writing about the working class has given so little consideration to the psychological pain which can accompany such socio-economic positioning.[7] In addition, the Sunday school network, for all its surface content of 'reform' was the main conduit for the distribution of print media to working class children, and as such deserves greater attention for that reason alone, for this relationship has important implications for the study of the history of publishing.

This was one reason that the work of Raymond Williams was selected for his *The Long Revolution* (1975), which like Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) was committed to investigating the impact of social and technological changes on culture and to do this by reference to the various aspects of the lived experience of any

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[7] Hoggart in the first volume of his autobiography *A Sort of Clowning: Life and Times Volume II : 1940-59* (1988) describes very movingly the shame and embarassment which accompanied the wearing of 'shabby' clothing and of being the 'beneficiary' of other people's donations of footwear.

group. His much referred to phrase 'structures of feeling' clearly expressed an

approach to the study of culture which was committed to:

> trying to develop methods of analysis which, over a range from
> literature to social institutions, can articulate actual structures of feeling
> - the meanings and values which are lived in works and relationships -
> and (to) clarify the processes of historical development through which
> these structures form and change. (Williams 1975: 319)

and which offers:

> ...an account of the essential language - the created and creative
> meanings - which our inherited reality teaches and through which new
> reality forms and is negotiated. (Williams 1975: 319)

But Williams acknowledges the difficulties facing such an approach, and that the first

difficulty:

> lies in the common habit of supposing our society to be governed by
> single patterns, arrived at by averaging the overall trends in familiar
> categories of economic activity, political behaviour and cultural
> development. As I see the situation, we need quite different forms of
> analysis, which would enable us to recognise the important
> contradictions within each of the patterns described, and even more
> crucially, the contradiction between different parts of the general
> process of change. (Williams 1975: 320)

Researching the relevant literature on popular culture had highlighted some of

the contradictions existing between the particular 'different parts of the general

process of change'. In this case the appeal of cultural expressions of popular

imperialism amongst the working classes particularly in the period 1900-1930, and the

degree to which that appeal was incorporated into the many expressions of popular

Christianity around the same time. This connected with the way in which these

apparent dominant ideologies expressed in such popular culture forms also

articulated or shaped the desires and fantasies of the audiences they were aimed at.

It became clear that such fantasies might be rooted in utopian notions of a collective

identity and commitment to building a more just society and Zipes' (1979, 1983) work

on the political meanings of fairy tales enabled a clearer understanding some of the reasons for the continuing popularity of the life of Jesus among the working class - it was popular because the way in which it was framed ensured that it was - or tried to be - *relevant* to the experiences of class. In addition, the *Studies in Imperialism* series published by the University of Manchester Press over a range of texts (MacKenzie 1984, 1986, 1992, Mangan 1984, Richards 1989), explained how the national discourse of imperialism found its way into popular cultural expression through the rapidly expanding print and entertainment industry at the turn of the century which employed the 'civic religion' of imperialism in advertising, cinema, music hall songs and children's books. MacKenzie *et al.* also highlighted the ways in which such messages might be received but not accepted, but the series also provided evidence of the absence of research which adequately addressed the experiences of girls in this period.

## The Materiality of Books

In cultural studies the methods of analysis have determined the areas explored and these have tended to reflect the original area of expertise of those setting what we have already seen would later become identified as a 'political agenda' and as Morley observes:

> almost without exception, the key figures in cultural studies came originally from backgrounds in literary criticism and the humanities and that, consequently, their own primary concerns (and competences) lie with the analysis of texts of one kind or another, while they tend to have , on the whole and with the significant exception of Hall...neither corresponding competence nor interest in matters of economics or social sciences, (notwithstanding the frequent references to Marxism. (Morley 1992: 5)

That last point made by Morley is a very telling one, because it highlights the relative absence of an engagement with the political economy which has produced the texts 'of one kind or another' which are the basis of so much analysis.

In researching the material for this thesis it has become clear that while there is an established body of knowledge which deals with children's *literature,* there is little which engages with children's books. While the materiality of children's books has indeed been studied from the particular perspective of the historical development of illustrations for this audience, the artists whose work is discussed in Chapters Six and Seven receive little or no attention. It seems, that such artists are ignored by modern compilers of collections of illustrations because they were employed in an area of cultural production, the illustration of religious scenes for children, which is not seen as having anything useful to contribute to contemporary concerns. In addition, the fact that to be popular, a product or an event has to be accessible in terms of its cost to a working class audience, it is surprising that there has been so little work which addresses the distribution of tracts, reward cards and prize books. While the contributions of Entwhistle (1994) and Alderson (1974, 1988) are valuable, they tend not to look at the genre which is the concern here which is the Jesus story, but focus instead on the distribution of secular texts.

The materiality of the book and the pictures produced for and circulated within the Sunday school is important, for it was the low-cost of such prizes which made it possible for them to be given away. Also, in relation to the story of Jesus told to children, we are not simply dealing with a recycled narrative, but one which has had the benefits of being copyright free and which could be broken down into separate episodes and presented in different formats to meet the needs of different age groups

and pockets. Jacqueline Rose' *The Case of Peter Pan - or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1985) is one of the few studies which engage with the materiality of the book and her painstakingly detailed research provides a strong challenge to the assumptions that the narrative is the text. But the particular narrative of which Rose writes is one which is considered of value by those who specialise in the collection of juvenilia. The Jesus story on the other hand, is seen as of little value and yet, as argued in the preceding chapter, it is the most widely circulated of all Western narratives. This is a paradox which cannot be resolved here, but does contribute to the approaches employed in the thesis which seek to explain *why* this is a serious absence.

## Narratives and the Pleasure of Identification

In recent years there has been a move away from the view that meaning can reside in texts and towards investigating the ways in which 'readers' are able to produce their own meanings through negotiated or even oppositional readings. (Hall, Hobson, Lowe & Willis1992, originally 1980) (Morley 1980, 1992) It is acknowledged that one of the pleasures provided by narratives is that of being able to identify with the events and scenes depicted and to this end, there has been a substantial body of work which has been concerned with this activity. Some, like Britton and Pellegrini's *Narrative Thought and Narrative Language* (1990) have been concerned with mapping the cognitive processes involved in such engagements. Others, Radway in particular in *Reading the Romance* (1987), have focused on the social situations in which the narrative has a particular communal function. While there has been much published research on children

and the 'effects' of television, there is little or nothing on their relationship to the print media which works from the perspective of the audience rather than the text or which focuses on genre.

The work on fairy tales by Zipes (1979, 1983), Tatar (1987, 1992) and Bettelheim (1982) have all proved useful in their different ways to the development of the arguments presented in this thesis. Zipes' work tends towards a materialistic critique and has been particularly important because of his argument, based on historical research in Germany, that fairy tales originally had a utopian impulse, for this fits with the hope of the world discourse which, this thesis argues, is communicated through the Sunday school version of Jesus. This aspect is important because it emphasises *communal* rather than individualistic endeavour. Zipes also challenges the notion of there being a single text and explains that fairy tales in particular, have always been the subject of adaption and re-presentation, much like the Jesus stories which comprise the focus of this thesis. Tatar was useful for her analysis of fairy tales as part of the pedagogy of fear, and she argues in *The Hard facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (1987) that for girls in particular, fairy tales represent situations in which females, or the breaking of the rules of the feminine ideal, are violently punished. Bettelheim (1992) on the other hand, writing from a psychoanalytic perspective, sees fairy tales as therapeutic in their ability to help children to resolve their existential dilemmas and oedipal conflicts. Nelson's *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction 1857-1917* (1991) was an original piece of work which was discovered too late in the writing of the thesis to be properly integrated into the lines of argument presented here. Nelson argues that the Victorian concept of manliness

was one which could be usefully applied to men and women for it referred to a set of characteristics which was closely connected to Christian values. As one of the arguments presented in this thesis in Chapters Seven and Eight is that Jesus is a role model for girls rather than boys, this was an interesting slant on the same concerns. Again, if discovered earlier, there might have been the potential to have made interesting connections and comparisons with the ways in which Hoggart's writing on 'The Scholarship Boy' in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) presents a view of the 'feminising' experience of being a working class grammar school boy, cut off from youthful male street activities. In addition, Nelson provided some very thoughtful distinctions on the various genres of fiction produced for boys in the period 1857-1917.

In this chapter Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) has been shown to be a vitally important text which explained how religion has functioned in some working class communities. This classic text has been connected to later work in cultural studies in which religion has been significant by its absence and various explanations have been offered here for this absence, the main one being Marxist academics discomfort with cultural activities which appear to move beyond the scope of what could be properly defined as political. What emerges from the discussion presented in the preceding pages is that girls as a group have been all too frequently left out of the scope of studies which have otherwise attempted to present a historical account of British culture, be that from the perspective of the centripetal effects of imperialism or subjective accounts of childhood. In addition, while many authors acknowledge that attendance at Sunday schools by working class children was almost the norm, there is very little work which engages with this important aspect of British history from a

perspective other than resistance. And, we have seen that there has been almost no work undertaken on the connections between the print media and the Sunday school as a distribution network culture.[8] The various texts which have been central to the development of the arguments presented in this thesis have all been discussed in this chapter, but as the subject necessitated a wide scope of research, the attention accorded to the discussion has had to be limited and much of the material which has exerted an influence in the content and direction of this study has had to be left out. The following chapter goes some way to remedying those absences for, while it is primarily concerned to explain why certain methods of enquiry were selected over others, it also focuses on the collection and analysis of archival material.

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[8] Vincent's work (1981,1989) does engage with some of these important issues but in relation to the nineteenth century.

# CHAPTER THREE
# HISTORY, TEXTS AND METHODOLOGY

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main problem encountered in researching

the material for this thesis has been that of absences: the absence of any

documentation or critical evaluation of the popular representations of Jesus with

which the study is centrally concerned; the absence of popular religiosity from the

study of popular culture; the absence of a method of research which could document

and analyse the consumption of texts which acknowledged the role of family

relationships, institutional practices and historical circumstances. The discussion in

Chapter Two advanced some explanations for those absences and also identified

some possible approaches based on the work of Hoggart and Williams. But trying to

respond to Hoggart's call for a study of culture which embraced all aspects of 'the full

rich life' and Williams' call for a mode of analysis which considered 'the whole world of

active and interacting relationships, which is our common associative life' created

difficulties. While both writers had made clear what *needed* to be done neither of

them provided any indication of the *methods* by which this could be achieved.

Trying to find some means of documenting and explaining how texts function in

the formation of identity has required that the methods of research employed in this

investigation have been drawn from a variety of disciplines which include history,

psychology and sociology as well as those from the fields of cultural and

communication studies. As the thesis is primarily concerned with the production,

circulation and consumption of the Sunday school version of the Jesus story in the

period 1900-1945, the classic sociological writings on religion, such as those by

Durkheim and Weber have not been used here, for their concern is with the adult

experience of the religious life seen from the macro-social perspective rather than the

micro- (subjective) experience of children. But the thesis' central methodological

problem was how to bring together the many different strands which together provided

an explanation of the complexity of the processes involved in the formation of identity

by reference to popular narratives.


## Archival Research

This thesis is concerned to investigate how the Sunday school version of the

Jesus story exerted an influence in the formation of identity in working class girls in

the period 1900-1945. To this end, the initial research task was to document how that

story was produced, circulated and consumed in the period under scrutiny. It was

assumed at the start of the thesis, that the main medium of transmission of the story in

the first half of this century had been that of print, be that text or images, it was only

later, as the research progressed, that it became clear that oral transmission had also

been an essential aspect of the circulation of the story. Production in the context of

this thesis covers a wide range of activities which range from illustration and writing to

printing and publishing. As the discussion in Chapter Two revealed, this is a genre of

cultural production which has been given scant attention by academics and therefore,

the process of documenting the production, circulation and consumption of the story

of Jesus had to begin with identifying what material was available in the archives of

relevant organisations, primarily the NSSU. the LMS, and the SPCK and appropriate

publishers, the RTS, Livingstone Press, Blackie, Nelson and the Medici Society. This

approach was selected because, for the purposes of the investigation, it was

important to have an idea of the nature and scope of the activities of the producers/publishers in order to gain some understanding of how the Jesus story fitted in with their overall aims and thus to be able to provide a more accurate contextual analysis of *why* the text was produced in the form it was and for *which* audience(s). Therefore the actual research tasks undertaken in this section comprised the locating and analysis of archival data but also the *collection* of primary material such as pictures and books. This was because even the British Library's collection cannot do justice to the vast number of texts which were produced in this genre and the collection at the Museum of Childhood, in Bethnal Green has yet to be catalogued.

The original aim of documenting the sales figures for the various publications which re-presented the story of Jesus for children met with an insurmountable obstacle. This was the fact that the relevant material for the NSSU and the LMS/Livingstone Press, had gone up in flames during the London Blitz when a bomb hit Bouverie Street, where the two organisations had their offices, (ironically, the material which wasn't destroyed was donated for the war effort paper collections). In addition, the archives of Nelson and Blackie were the subject of negotiations for purchase by different institutions and thus inaccessible during this period. Nevertheless, some material was still available at the Council for World Mission (formerly the LMS) although it dated from the 1950s, and there were remnants archived at SOAS (but of little relevance to this study) and the United Society for Christian Literature (the renamed RTS) was able to provide some information. But the SPCK was able to offer both the services of its archivist - Dr. Huelin - and access to historical material.

What became clear, even with this limited scope of material, was that the different organisations and publishers tended to employ their own artists and writers in the production of materials for children, thus contributing to a house-style in the representation of Jesus. Thus the LMS had Harold Copping, Tom Curr and Paul Dessau; the NSSU had one very successful picture by Copping but tended to use those by Arthur Dixon for work with Bible stories. The SPCK employed Elsie Anna Wood to illustrate their cards and pictures and the RTS had a whole Bible of illustrations by Copping which they could reproduce *ad infinitum*, in a variety of books and ephemera. Among the secular publishers, Margaret Tarrant was their most successful modern religious artist for the Medici Society and Cicely Mary Barker worked for Blackie.

## Content Analysis and the Iconography of the Sunday School Jesus

The original research proposal advanced the hypothesis that within the period 1900-1944 the representations of Jesus aimed at children underwent changes. That this was apparent in the development of a new iconography of the life of Jesus, which had moved away from the awe-inspiring - and therefore distancing - historical drama documentation of fine art and to the mass market of Sunday school materials where the images were constructed to foster feelings of intimacy in the relationship between the audience, that is the child, and the object of the gaze, Jesus. Iconography in this context was defined as 'the knowledge of the meanings to be attached to pictorial representations' (Murray 1972). This raised the question of which groups or individuals could be claimed as having the 'knowledge of the meanings attached' to these pictures, was it the producers or the consumers? It was decided to narrow the

scope of the investigation by focusing on those representations of Jesus which had been particularly associated with children, and to this end three scenes from that story were selected for closer scrutiny: the Nativity, the Good Shepherd and Jesus Blessing the Children.

These were selected because at first glance they appeared to be the scenes most frequently chosen for illustration in books and ephemera aimed at children and because such scenes depicted children alongside Jesus. Thus children were identified as the intended audience and provided with the means for identifying with the people and events in the picture. As the archival data was no longer available which could have verified which images were most frequently used and link such facts to sales and publication figures, it was decided to use the method of content analysis as a way of generating the information which could serve as valid evidence for documenting the popularity of particular images or scenes selected for illustration.

A sample of forty illustrated Jesus books for children published between 1900 and 1945 was selected (see appendix 3). The criterion for selection of images was that they had to be in full colour. Only one exception was made and this was because *The Children's Bible* (Nairne et. al. 1935) full page illustrations were quality woodcuts (not simply line-drawings as used in other books to augment colour illustrations) with a unique version of Jesus blessing the children. The sample comprised many books which were in continuous publication throughout the period and, with one exception, were of a type given as prizes for attendance in Sunday schools, with several of them featuring their presentation plates on the inside cover, and the results of the analysis are discussed in the next section.

From a sample of 40 books, there were a total of 349 illustrations which met the criteria for inclusion. In some books where there was only one full-colour picture, it was usually the *frontispiece*, whereas in some others every other page would be a colour illustration with the accompanying text looking like an afterthought. The categories for the scenes illustrated were not established beforehand, but emerged through the process of enumerating the illustrations. The titles given in the book for the individual pictures were not always accurate, thus it was necessary to stick very firmly to Berelson's (1952) definition of content analysis, which says that this is a method of research which deals with *manifest* content, and interpretation has no place in such an approach. The findings from the analysis were interesting and confirmed some assumptions while refuting others. For example, the scene of Jesus Blessing the Children with 23 pictures, was the one most frequently selected for inclusion as an illustration, but the second most frequent illustration was that of the Flight Into Egypt. The Entry Into Jerusalem was the next highest frequency of inclusion with 17 examples, followed by the Nativity in equal third place with illustrations of Jesus With the Doctors. The Good Shepherd was well down the list sharing tenth place with three other scenes, Jesus Before Pilate, Jesus Appearing to His Disciples and the Angel Appearing to the Shepherds. In the table below the frequencies listed are three and above, so 81 pictures are not categorised. One interesting example of a scene which was selected only once is that of Jesus Cleansing the Temple, and in the discussion in Chapters Six and Seven, this absence starts to have a particular significance. It is also significant that the eight most frequently selected scenes were also those which featured children in one form or another.

In total there were 145 pictures which depicted children alongside Jesus. Thus the

data confirmed the view that the scenes from Jesus' life were selected for illustration

| | |
|---|---|
| Jesus Blessing the Children | 23 |
| The Flight into Egypt | 18 |
| The Entry Into Jerusalem | 17 |
| The Nativity | 12 |
| Jesus with the Doctors | 12 |
| The Wise Men | 11 |
| At Home in Nazareth | 11 |
| The Prodigal Son | 10 |
| Healing the Sick | 10 |
| Raising of Jairus' Daughter | 9 |
| Jesus Calling the Fishermen | 9 |
| Teaching on Lake Galilee | 8 |
| The Good Samaritan | 8 |
| Mary at the Tomb | 8 |
| Healing the Blind Man | 7 |
| Angel Appearing to Shepherds | 6 |
| Jesus Before Pilate | 6 |
| Jesus Appearing to Disciples at the Sea of Galilee | 6 |
| The Good Shepherd | 6 |
| Adoration of the Shepherds | 5 |
| Angel at the Tomb | 5 |
| Jesus Teaching Disciples by Means of a Little Child | 5 |
| The Miracle of the Loaves | 5 |
| Jesus Walking On the Sea | 5 |
| The Annunciation | 4 |
| Presentation at Temple | 4 |
| The Ascension | 4 |
| Women at the Tomb | 4 |
| Jesus' Baptism By John | 3 |
| The Last Supper | 3 |
| The Agony in the Garden | 3 |
| At Emmaus | 3 |
| The Man Who Came Down Through the Roof | 3 |
| The Marriage at Cana | 3 |
| The Sower | 3 |
| On the Way to Calvary | 3 |
| The Sermon on the Mount | 3 |
| The Good Captain | 3 |

**Table 1**

on the basis of the ability of children to identify with what they saw. Another interesting

feature of the analysis was that some unlikely scenes were selected for inclusion in

books aimed at children. For example, in joint eighth place was the scene of Mary at

the Tomb which appeared in 8 books, and further down the list we see Women at the

Tomb, being featured more frequently than the Last Supper, which is such a classic

fine art composition that it might have been expected to feature more often. If we add

together all those pictures in which women or girls are featured specifically, rather

than being part of a group, we arrive at 62 pictures and the significance of this

gendered appeal will be an issue which will be discussed in Chapters Five to Eight.

As a result of the evidence revealed through the content analysis, the scene of

Jesus Blessing the Children was conclusively shown to be the most popular having

been selected for inclusion in over half of the books in the sample. But as content

analysis can only provide quantitative data on manifest content, this could not move

the thesis forward in explaining what meanings were intended by such images, and,

more interestingly, what meanings were derived from these pictures. At that point

psychoanalysis appeared to offer a way of getting at the latent meanings of the

images, but as most psychoanalytic approaches to texts tend to start from the position

of an ahistorical perspective, this was rejected at this stage as being too deterministic

an approach to produce an accurate account of the reasons for the appeal of the

pictures.


**Orality and the Story of Jesus**

If psychoanalysis could be criticised for its tendency towards explanations

which ignore the different contexts in which people live, then it was also true that in

looking only at the *pictures* of Jesus, important historical and cultural contexts which contributed to how that text might generate meanings for an audience, were also being made invisible. As illustrations in books it was obvious that the pictures were produced to be seen *in relation* to the accompanying narrative, and as such the meanings accruing in the visual representations of Jesus drew extensively from that relationship to the verbal text. As a consequence, the books which had been the basis of the content analysis sample were analysed to see what, if any patterns emerged in mode of address, vocabulary and narrative strategies. What emerged through this textual analysis was that the mode of address most frequently used was identified as one which simulated a classroom storytelling session, the evidence for this assertion was provided in the vocabulary used, for the audience tended to be addressed as a collective rather than as individual children. Also, it was the voice of a pedagogue in the way question and answer strategies were built into the stories. In addition, the story was eroticised, this is to say that the mode of address tended to offer subject positions to the audience in which they were located in a loving relationship with the Jesus of the story being told. This was further emphasised in many versions which also appeared to separate girls off from boys in the way the former were described as receiving special treatment from Jesus.

The frequent inclusion of lines or verses from children's hymns in these stories drew attention to the fact that this was another area of educational activity through which the story of Jesus had been told. Therefore, the hymn books produced by the Sunday school organisations became the focus of closer scrutiny. What was significant about such books was that they divided the contents not just according to the Christian festivals and events in Christ's life, but also by reference to different age

groups of infants, general and senior children. Also, there was a large section of hymns under the heading Jesus "The Old, Old Story" emphasising the narrative structure of the songs. Starting with the hymns which had been quoted in the Jesus story books, such as 'I think When I Read', textual analysis was used to explore the content of the lyrics and to identify any recurring themes or modes of address. What emerged was most of the hymns used in the stories were taken from the section of the hymn book mentioned above. In addition, there was an interesting feature in the way that advice was provided in the hymn book that some verses should be sung by boys and others by girls, textual analysis and comparison of these particular verses showed that it was not just the verses that were differentiated but that within the meanings produced by the text, girls and boys were allocated different approaches to their constructed relationship to Jesus. Boys tended to be allocated verses which emphasised physical action and girls those verses which encouraged an emotional response. But the narrative device of storytelling which was employed by the authors of the most popular children's hymns, provided evidence that this was a form of communication which was believed to have a particular appeal for young children because the vocabulary used tended to be simple and reassuring.

## Image, Text and Context

Having firmly established the need to relate text to image in considering the production and consumption of the Jesus story, it became clear that more information was required to explain why there was so much emphasis within the Sunday school system on presenting stories, hymns and pictures for particular age groups. A systematic survey of the Sunday school press and relevant educational journals

published in the first four decades of this century provided the relevant information.

During this period, but particularly in the first two decades, there was a great

enthusiasm among Sunday school teachers in particular, for a popular version of

developmental psychology which tended to be referred to as child study. The central

emphasis of this approach to education was to understand the different needs of each

child at each stage of their physical and emotional development, although the latter

was stressed more frequently than the former. As a result of what were seen as the

possible pedagogic benefits accruing from this educational philosophy, Sunday

schools and the lessons they provided were to be graded according to the different

age groups and the teaching provided was designed - in theory at least - to address

the specific needs of the separate groups.

As a consequence of this information, it was decided to use the influence of

child study in the Sunday school as a framing device for the thesis questions, for it

appeared to explain certain recurring motifs and modes of address which were used

in the pictures and stories of Jesus for children. But the available literature also

indicated some disagreement as to what was understood by the term child study and

that opinions as to what was appropriate for children, tended to change after the first

world war. In addition, the research and collection of archival material showed that

there appeared to be a growth in the production and distribution by evangelical

Christian groups of pictorial cards during this period, and those featuring Jesus and

the children demonstrated remarkable changes from the usual fine art conventions of

representing the scene of him blessing the children. There is a more detailed

discussion of these issues in Chapter Six, but what is relevant to the discussion here

is that such changes necessitated an investigation of the factors which would explain

such changes to the conventions of representing Jesus. Thus, textual analysis was used to identify the conventions in the iconography of these promotional and reward cards but this in itself could only work on the assumption that meaning resided in the text. As the thesis was concerned to investigate how popular narratives might function in the formation of identity, it was felt necessary to identify the ways in which evidence could be found to indicate what children felt about them.

## Texts, Audiences and Subjectivity

As an early decision had been made *not* to use fieldwork interviews to provide relevant data, an alternative method had to be found which enabled the assertions made regarding the audience's reaction to such texts to have validity.

Most previous work on recording and explaining audience responses to texts (Morley 1980, Radway 1987) had been concerned with contemporary media products and modern adult audiences. The methods most frequently used for what has come to be known as reception studies have been those of ethnography, interviews and focus groups (see Hansen *et al.*1998: 258-260). Such methods are clearly inappropriate for a retrospective analysis of audience responses, thus it was decided *not* to make the locating of evidence of audience responses to the texts the central focus of the investigation. Rather, the concern was to identify, from the primary and archival evidence, how the producers (this term to comprise the publishers, artists, authors, but predominantly teachers) thought that children responded to them. The evidence which fitted into this category included: teaching schedules, advice on storytelling, guidance on the use of pictures and other related published material which connected with the promotion of the children's story of Jesus. Again, using content and textual

analysis, this material was scrutinised to identify where changes in the representation of Jesus - in words or pictures - could be shown to be connected to the discourses of child study.

It should be acknowledged at this point, that an earlier decision to use the writer's own experiences as supporting evidence for some of the arguments presented in the thesis was subsequently abandoned. The reason for this decision being that it was felt inappropriate to use such a risk-taking approach in work which is the subject of assessment, for although there is a growing academic acceptance, especially among female academics, of the value of autobiographical perspectives it is still an area of contention. The decision to abandon such an approach did create problems regarding what then would constitue the evidence from the audience's perspective to support the arguments advanced in the thesis. But it was decided that the emphasis would be on what the producers *believed* children's responses *should* be and how they adapted the story to facilitate the specific responses they had identified.

## Class and Psychoanalysis

Earlier in this chapter it was stated that psychoanalysis had been initially rejected as a method of explaining the meanings produced by the story of Jesus told to children. Yet despite the shortcomings discussed earlier, it is, to date, the most effective means of explaining how texts might function in accessing unconscious feelings. In addition, as the research progressed, it became clear that there was a gendered aspect to the reception of the story but one which did not comfortably fit with the socio-historical evidence of the separation of the sexes. This was because it

became clear that girls in particular were given more scope through which to identify with Jesus, the man. Further, the version of the story of Jesus which is the focus of this thesis can be classified as a fantasy rather than a Biblical text, thus it makes sense to use a method of research which can address the latent meanings which are stimulated through the processes of imagination and identification and not simply resting on the denotational level of perception. To this end, the thesis needed psychoanalytic explanations of children's responses to popular narratives which were capable of taking into account the factors of socio-economic positioning and cross-gender identification. No one perspective could address this matrix of factors, and so it was decided to use three different, but related approaches. These were: Freud's essay 'The Family Romance' (1977), Bettelheim's (1982) work on the therapeutic uses of the fairy tale in the process of resolving existential dilemmas and oedipal conflicts and Jessica Benjamin's (1990, 1994) progressive explanations of identity formation. It was felt that the three perspectives combined, enabled a useful discussion of class and gender in relation to psychoanalytical terms.

## Summary

This chapter has provided an abbreviated account of the selection and application of relevant methods of research. In doing so, it has sought to offer an account of the conduct of the research which is coherent, accessible to the reader and which is directly related to the aims of the thesis. As such, it is inevitably, an edited account which leaves out far more than it includes. The areas specifically selected for discussion here represent the central research problems and the strategies which were formulated for their resolution. To a certain extent, the thesis has been trying to

evolve a method of research which could address the aims identified by Hoggart and Williams quoted at the start of the chapter, which could bring together the study of text, context and reception. Undoubtedly, there are difficulties to be expected in a research project which sets out to explain how audiences relate to texts but which does not include interviews as part of the methodology. While acknowledging that oral history interviewing is a method which can yield valuable information, it is also prone to delivering accounts of the past which fit within the paradigm of the researcher's experience or assumptions, as we have seen from the comments regarding Humphries' (1981) work in this area. As the thesis sets out to challenge reductionist assumptions regarding the influence of the Jesus story, it has also been committed to avoiding a valorising account of the production, circulation and consumption of this popular narrative and to move the discussion beyond a simple reform/resistance binary opposition. Thus, the following chapter aims to provide evidence to make such crude formulations redundant.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a political and social climate in Britain which enabled disparate groups and organisations to share a common belief in the ability of working class children to change society for the better and who appeared to be remarkably sincere in their repeated claims that the next generation of children were the hope of the world. The next chapter begins by taking up Stuart Hall's call for the history of popular culture 'to take into its remit reform as well as resistance'. Evidence will be advanced in this (but also in subsequent chapters), to show how evangelical educationalists played an important role as the producers and distributors of the story of Jesus aimed at working class children through their positions in the Sunday school network. Further, that as individuals and

groups they occupied a powerful position in overseeing the ways in which children consumed such texts in the first three decades of this century and that, for the main part, the over-riding educational philosophy of child study was a determining feature of pedagogic advice. The discussion demonstrates that to attribute to the activities of the Sunday school and related groups only religious indoctrination is to overlook the very many ways in which they sought to provide material support to impoverished working class families. This chapter, therefore, provides evidence to show how the story of Jesus was used as the means of engaging the hearts and minds of working class children but was also reflective of the sincere altruistic sensibilities of some individuals and organisations.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# SUNDAY SCHOOLS, WORKING CLASS CHILDREN AND THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

Nikolas Rose has observed that for a 'century and half, social and political concerns have linked the rearing and well-being of children with the welfare of society at large', and that:

> Childhood is the most intensively governed sector of personal existence...in different ways, at different times... the health, welfare, and rearing of children have been linked in thought and practice to the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the state (Rose 1991: 121)

He adds that, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'the anxieties concerning children have occasioned a panoply of programmes' whereby 'the child - as an idea and a target - has become inextricably connected to the aspirations of authorities'. The first section of this chapter argues that in Britain in the early part of the twentieth century, it was not children in general who were the focus and stimulus for such programmes, but it was rather working class children in particular who were identified in educational and popular discourses as the social group upon which the 'destiny of the nation' rested. These discourses marked a shift from the nineteenth century's idealised and individualised trope of the 'romantic child' in need of adult protection to the notion of children as a collective who were frequently presented as active agents for social transformation. The mental and physical health of this group was seen as an indicator of the nation yet to be and, as a consequence, working class children became the object of official enumeration, evaluation and calibration, which aimed to monitor the mental and physical health of the nation's future citizens.

The discussion in this section of the chapter will make close reference to Margaret

McMillan's *Education Through the Imagination* (first published in 1902) and J. E. G.

De Montmorency's *National Education for National Life* (1906). The two texts are

selected because in parallel they offer the chance to work between the former's direct

experience of working class children and the latter's view of this group's relationship

to the future of the nation. Although there are many differences of approach between

Macmillan and De Montmorency, what they had in common is a belief in the efficacy

of the kindergarten as a means of exerting some positive (professional) influence to

offset the damaging home environment believed to be the experience of most working

class infants. But the practicalities of implementing this governmental project, which

aimed to prioritise schooling for the under-fives from 'unsatisfactory homes', was to be

undermined constantly by the financial constraints of local government. (Rose 1991:

181)

The next section of the chapter shows how evangelical educationalists

attempted to fill this gap for working class children through their adoption of a

pedagogy in Sunday schools which drew upon a populist version of psychology which

was known as child-study. It is argued here that the discourse in which working class

children featured as the hope of the world arose not from government legislation but

from the philanthropic work of evangelical groups which sought to extend into the

twentieth century their 'child-saving' project begun a century earlier.[9] Therefore, this

part of the chapter describes how child study was promoted and disseminated

through the substantial institutional base provided by the Sunday school network and

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[9] According to Rose (1991):
> The working-class family in the nineteenth century took place not through the activities of the state, but through an initiative that maintained a certain distance from the organs of political power - philanthropy.

provides evidence to show that working class children were the main focus of such activities. The discussion explains how the pedagogy of the Sunday school - in theory, if not in actual practice - drew upon the work of the German educational philosopher Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852).[10] The kindergarten was identified as an effective instrument in the 'hope of the world' project because its pedagogy was based on the 'oft-repeated arguments that events at this time laid down habits and propensities that endured for the rest of life.' (Rose 1991: 179).

The final section of the chapter describes how, through the economy of the Sunday school, the story of Jesus was established as one of the most accessible texts available to an audience of working class children. It is argued here that the Sunday school versions of the Jesus story aimed at the kindergarten child can be seen as evidence of the influence of developmental theory through the transformation of the story from adult-oriented sacred text to the child-oriented[11] secular fairy tale. This transformation is also explained by reference to the growth in publishing for the juvenile market at the turn of the century and the modes of address which took into account the varying developmental needs of different age groups.

## "An Ever Recruiting Army...Lying Latent"

The rise of literacy among the working class which came before the establishment of the 1870 Education Act, was accompanied by middle class

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[10] According to Steedman(1990) in the nineteenth century, Froebel's ideas had been circulating in British middle class circles through the work of the Froebelian movement and the establishment of the Froebel Society in 1874. Further, in the 1860s and 1870s philanthropists had established charitable kindergartens to cater for working class children living in the deprived areas of some industrialised cities. Steedman adds that by the 1890s that approach to the education of urban working class young children had become established as official Board of Education policy.

[11] This is not to imply that fairy tales have always been produced for an audience of children but to emphasise that by the beginning of the twentieth century there was widespread agreement that this was a genre of writing which was especially suitable for educating children.

fears that the masses were using this precious skill to read the wrong sort of publications, that the aesthetic and spiritual delights of Arnold's 'sweetness and light' were being eclipsed by the appeal of the salacious and sensational. But these fears were later incorporated into the anxieties aroused by the impact of educational reforms on the working class child who was in the process of 'being changed from a component of the labour force into a subject of education' which Steedman identifies 'as one of the major political shifts of all western societies' (Steedman 1990: 37).

The need for a system of education designed to awaken in the working class child a sensitivity to 'sweetness and light' was often at odds with the daily lived-experiences of those children who were more often than not housed in unsanitary conditions, poorly-clothed and fed, and with little or no health care. The connection between material deprivation and poor physical health in children was already established at the turn of the century, but the impact of poor physical health (caused by living in conditions of poverty) on a child's ability to benefit from schooling also began to be considered. The working class child living in such bad conditions was an affront to the Wordsworthian notion of the 'beautiful child' and the concept of childhood innocence. Within such discourses, the child was seen to represent all that had been 'lost', but which, given the right sensibility to beauty and nature, (as opposed to industry and materialism), could be regained. It was also a concept which was rooted in the very real and material circumstances of actual children whose lives were made miserable - or cut short - because of the work they did or the polluted, squalid urban-environments in which they lived. These discourses of the romantic child invariably positioned children as the:

...potential rescuer or reclaimer of corrupt adulthood ... [and that this] process is made clearer if we recognise that this child was always much more than a literary trope - was available as well as one of the means by which scientific and social thought mapped out the psychology of childhood and the stages of child language development throughout the century. 'The child' was also an idea that provided a context of understanding for the anthropological study of childhood, which in turn established the norms of development with which we operate in modern society. (Steedman 1990: 66)

Steedman adds that these developments were driven by the divisions of

social class and that to a certain extent, this way of conceptualising 'the

child' created difficulties for the inclusion of working class children within

this category.

These developments in the study of childhood took middle- and upper-class children as subjects, and there are historical accounts of how Victorian society dealt with the divisions in social position and social function between different classes of children by sometimes denying that working-class were children, in the post-Wordsworthian sense. Indeed, the observed working-class child represented corruption as well as innocence and the natural...(Steedman 1990: 66-67).

Steedman goes on to discuss the way in which working class girls in particular were

seen as connoting danger and impurity and provides some understanding of why they

became the particular object of the attentions of the evangelical groups in subsequent

years. But working class morality was not the overriding emphasis of all sections of

those working and campaigning for the betterment of that class.

One of the influences of this period in terms of both theory and practice was

Margaret McMillan, who worked with working class children in the slums of Deptford,

South London[12]. McMillan drew upon the work of Friedrich Froebel in creating an

environment which was designed to improve the physical, as well as the intellectual

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[12] See Steedman 1990.

well-being of the working class child. McMillan's work was connected to, but indicative of a shift in emphasis from the late nineteenth century concern about the mental and spiritual well-being of working class children, which was also connected to a change in the *perception* of working class children. For within popular discourses, they were no longer to be defined in negative terms as a potential disruptive force living on the fringes of society, but were instead to be spoken of as the group which was integral to the development of 'the nation'.

From the evidence available it seems that the popularising of child development discourses in all areas of society contributed to a greater awareness of the subsequent cost to 'the nation' if such material deprivations were ignored. Many commentators were particularly concerned to ensure that education, rather than legislation, be seen as the means by which the consequences of poverty could be tackled. Many evangelical Christians who were in key roles throughout society used the knowledge gained from child study to argue for greater skills and resources to be put into the education of the very young. While it was common practice at the turn of the century for working class mothers to send their children to elementary school from the age of three, if the school had the facilities to accept them (De Montmorency 1906: 82), many commentators questioned the quality of education they received there.

These discourses around the deprivation of working class children were framed by reference to the harmful effects on the nation as a whole if those in charge failed to take urgent action to remedy the situation. Thus children in general, but working class children in particular, became established in the popular imagination (particularly in popular imperialism) and through governmental discourses as 'the

hope of the world'. Located within this discourse, working class children were thus made central to the project of rebuilding the nation. It was argued, therefore, that failure to address the urgent and vital needs of this group would be a disaster of global proportions because of Britain's perceived imperialist position as being the axis around which the rest of the world turned. But it was not only in geo-political terms that Britain was seen as having a pivotal role to play, for the discourse of 'the hope of the world' was also rooted in a sense of the opportunity offered by this particular historical moment (the start of a new century), and of the need to take urgent action if this opportunity was not to be lost.

The arguments of J. E. G. De Montmorency presented in *National Education and National Life* (1906) are typical of this time when he writes that 'the future of England as a nation depends upon the creation of a really efficient system of national education' (De Montmorency 1906:10). But unlike some of his contemporaries he also draws attention to what was made invisible in a nostalgic view of the 'glorious' past:

> The allegation that England has passed her prime is...untenable, and is really due to the present vivid realisation of problems that 50 years ago existed in a much more threatening form...If we have passed our prime, when did we attain it? Was that the period of prime, when the bulk of our vast industrial population were producing the wealth of the country under conditions of complete intellectual ignorance, complete spiritual neglect, and entire physical misery? We know that we are; we forget what we have been. The glories of the past remain while its miseries are forgotten. (De Montmorency 1906: 127)

and he goes on to describe the particular challenge facing England in the present:

> When one reflects upon the six million children that England is educating, imagination stands aghast. In this vast, ever-recruiting army, whose numerical strength the mind is not capable of fully appreciating, the whole range of human capacity, one would think, must be represented. Lying latent is the power to transform the social world, to extend almost indefinitely the limits of science, philosophy and art, to make England not only the most powerful, but the most happy of nations. (De Montmorency 1906:185)

The phrase 'lying latent' is directly related to child development theory and highlights how effective education for the kindergarten age group was seen to be vital to the new nation project. The linking of child development theory with the discourse of children as 'the hope of the world' (or education for the nation) shows how seriously such theories were taken and how widespread the accompanying discourses. While De Montmorency does not explicitly acknowledge developmental theory as the basis of his arguments there is no doubting that his claim that the future of the nation is to be decided by the ability (or not) to awaken or unleash what is lying latent in children is attributable to that source. Within this context the role of education for working class children was defined as being much broader than teaching the three Rs. Instead it was defined in therapeutic terms which could, through the provision of a healthy and stimulating physical school environment, provide some remedy to the gloom and squalor of many working class homes.

Arguing for the provision of kindergartens for the working class De Montmorency goes on to say that:

> In the recent most interesting report on the education of children between the ages of three to five years, it is made fairly clear that these little people, from a certain point of view, "get practically no intellectual advantage from school instruction." If that means that they get practically no intellectual advantage from organised instruction in the elements of book learning, no-one will probably dispute the proposition. But it is certain...that little children are, as a matter of fact, developing their intellect at a rate which will never again be reached in after life. This is the reason why it is necessary to remove the children from the slum streets to the school house at the very earliest moment. (De Montmorency 1906: 82-3)

Thus the school was seen as the laboratory in which the science of pedagogy was employed in a concerted effort to 'make England not only the most powerful, but the most happy of nations.' To this end:

> To allow an infant of three, in a squalid area, to gather into his brain, there to remain as a life-long environment of the personality - for though the surface memory fails to retain early impression, the personality itself retains them - and all the sights and scenes of a slum, is sheer social madness. The child must be removed, or partially removed, from such an atmosphere, since it has reached the imitative stage, and is nearing the selective stage of life. For the moment he imitates anything; presently he will imitate what pleases him, what gives him momentary pleasure. Before the un-moral selective stage is reached - the stage which inevitably precedes the moral or immoral selective stage - it is essential that children should receive definite and deliberate guidance, that their imitative faculty should be controlled. In the case of innumerable children, this can only be done in nursery schools. (De Montmorency 1906:143)

De Montmorency draws attention here to the 'imitative stage' which child study linked to the kindergarten age group, and this and other related points will be explored in greater detail later. He uses the analogy of food to describe the importance of early learning and he states that the child's whole future will be dependent on what kind of intellectual environment it inhabits and that 'It is the function of the school to supply the child's brain with the food that will...secure such an enforced intellectual development as will naturally lead up to specific book education later on'. (De Montmorency 1906:83) He adds that special consideration has to be given to specific social groups because:

> ...with certain particular classes especial factors have to be considered. Here we are dealing with the children of the very poor. Consider these children as they grow. They, like other children, require food, light, air, shelter, clothes and last but not least, boots. They require more than the lilies of the field, and they get considerably less. (De Montmorency 1906:102)

The analogy with flowers is an apt one in the light of the discussion which follows, for although the phrase alludes to a passage in the Bible, it signals the way in which nature study, an important feature of Froebel's kindergarten, was seen as being of particular value in teaching children in urban areas. But De Montmorency was not a commentator whose concern to bring 'sweetness and light' to the working class blinded him to more prosaic requirements. His mention of the need for boots echoes the frequent calls in the Sunday school press for donations of basic footwear for distribution to impoverished children.

There was a widely shared belief that for children who lived in the city, in particular, there was a special need to bring colour and nature into the classroom in an attempt to ameliorate the dirt and gloom of their urban industrialised environment. Margaret McMillan's struggles to provide for the physical well-being of poor children in the slums of Deptford even went so far as to categorise this need for colour as a hunger, albeit what she describes as a 'higher hunger'. In *Education Through the Imagination* (first published 1902) she writes, 'colour is the joy of the eye, the flame of Life's fire. The little child of our day loves it, and it is part of his great heritage' (McMillan 1923: 60) and observes that in the modern child colour sense develops at around the age of three or four years. She adds that although children in this age group from the 'poorest class' might not know colours when they first arrive at nursery school, their colour sense can be developed early and that 'little children can be trained to see a great deal if only anyone will take the trouble to train them!' (McMillan 1923: 62)

The use of the term 'trained' is significant, for McMillan does not see that such

faculties are instinctual, rather that they have to be awakened in the child: she writes,

'colour-famished children do not always observe colour. They look at it greedily for a

while in the garden or the wall, and forget all about it.'

McMillan's knowledge of physiology and her experience of trying to improve

the physical well-being of the children in her Deptford nursery, are evident in her

approach to what she sees as the consequences of deprivation of colour arguing that:

> Just as little children suffer all their life long because they have a bad illness at
> two, three or four years old, so they feel all their lives long the poverty or
> fullness of early impressions.(McMillan 1923: 62)

Although at an early point in the book she emphasises that what she writes is

of importance for all classes she provides an interesting and skilful perspective on the

usefulness of observing working class children in particular:

> Much is said in this book of the poorest class of children, but of course
> we are not thinking of any one class alone. The feeble-minded have helped
> the gifted, because it has been easier in some ways to study their slower
> development than to follow the flight of a quicker mind. The poor also have a
> great service to render, though a very sorrowful one.
> We know that our methods are really good only if they are good in
> relation to them. For in them, all the education which may be called "organic" -
> the preparation of the whole body, the use and right functioning of every organ,
> the formation of good habits - is left more or less to the schools. We can trace,
> therefore - and it is the saddest kind of study - the effect of poverty, disease,
> neglect of every kind on the young child, and above all, the effect of these on
> the Imagination. (McMillan 1923: 14-5)[13]

McMillan is clearly influenced by the child-centred philosophy of Froebel,

which had its roots in an agrarian society, and applies it, first adapting it to take

account of the material world of working class children. She also establishes the

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[13] Rose (1991) emphasises the importance role played by 'abnormal' or 'problem' children in providing the empirical observations from which psychologists established the criteria which would designate a child as 'normal'.

notion of imagination as an indicator of the 'health' of the child; as something which, if lacking, is an indication of the neglect or the deprivation of that child; a neglect which is considered alongside those of poverty and disease. With reference to colour she tells of how city children in particular are especially 'hungry' for colour in their lives:

> ...the children of dark alleys and crowded streets arrive in school with a colour sense that has had little to feed on. The closed-in class-room cannot do very much. It can do something. Flowers can be brought into it, and window gardens may brighten the dull, heavy building. That the children are keen and grateful one can tell by watching their hungry eyes fixed on the colourful bowls of flowers and the bulbs in the windows. (McMillan 1923: 63)

The city children, the children of the working class are described by McMillan as living in an environment which is not only devoid of colour but also frequently devoid of light. She sees this deprivation as plunging the people who have to live in such conditions back to a prehuman stage of existence:

> Dust and grime, loose and stained paper, ugly and foul walls are everywhere, and in all the long row of tumble-down houses and in the hidden courts and alleys no colour lights the general gloom and torpor. People are back in the prehuman stage of things, not through the eye and the brain but in the dreariness of the modern world. (McMillan 1923: 72)

But McMillan is at pains not to blame the victims for their own dire circumstances, for she was a member of the Independent Labour Party and an active participant in many other socialist organisations. Like De Montmorency she provides a historical account of the dehumanizing process which started with the move away from craftsmanship to the industrial society and here she writes again of the importance of 'light'. It is not perhaps the same light as that which is part of Arnold's more famous phrase 'sweetness and light' but it is indicative of some of the same concerns to bring 'culture' to the working class and thus save them from the debasing effects of their environment. Writing of the working class she states that:

> We think that the lowly workers are "quite different" and even leave them outside the hall of Endeavour and Achievement. But they are not outside. They are, or may be, inside all the time...There is a light in dungeons and caves as well as in windowed houses, shops, work-places and on mountain tops. The brain of every man and child is a kind of world in which degrees of creative power are represented. Day-dreaming, reverie, even hallucinations, are all forms of imagination. (McMillan 1923: 10)

and that:

> In the days of craftsmanship and hand labour people rose at once into the upper sunshine in working. They believed in the Unseen, and this in itself gave an immense stimulus to creative activity. Every niche and hidden corniche was made worthy, "for the gods see everywhere." Leaving out of account the truth or illusion of their political beliefs, they at least lived inwardly as *work people* in the light of them. they were not - as later - hands in a factory, the lamp of the soul literally gone out. (McMillan 1923: 10)

Whilst it was felt that for many of the adult members of the working class 'the lamp of the soul ( had) literally gone out' as a consequence of industrialisation there was the belief that the children of that class could, through the use of imagination in education, rekindle the flame in 'the lamp of the soul'. For the discourse of working class children as the hope of the world was built upon the belief that the new 'quasi-scientific' approaches to education, which fused developmentalism with enthusiasm for education for the kindergarten age group, could bring to fruition all that was expressed in that discourse of a better world.

## Froebel and Christianity

Froebel's educational philosophy with its emphasis on 'nature study', has often been characterised as a pantheistic version of Christianity (Hamilton 1969). Rose (1991) has also noted that Froebel's educational aim, embodied in the practices of the kindergarten, was spiritual in its expression; 'a way of enabling man to give expression to his inner, divine nature as it developed through the stages of childhood'

but that in late nineteenth century England, that his spirituality and romanticism were 'underpinned by the appeal to science' (Rose 1991: 179) and that the educational programmes of Froebel and later Montessori:

> sought to act upon the soul of the child through the experiences of the body, turning pedagogy into a philanthropic science by adjusting the child's experiences into a logical sequence that would reveal the laws of mathematics and the physical world , while at the same time embodying in every activity the central moral principles of love and religion. (Rose 1991: 180)

According to Froebel children needed to develop from within in order to enable them to grow into free, 'self-acting' beings. But the methods of education he had experienced as a child and observed as an adult led him to the conclusion that 'the problem and aim of all education is instruction and training; (that) there can be no other' (Froebel 1912: 13) and that the overall effect of most education was to the reduce the role of the child in that process to that of a passive receiver rather than enabling it to be actively involved in learning in the widest sense of the word. Thus Froebel believed that developing the imaginative faculties of the child was an important educational aim. He believed that only through the employment of the imaginative faculties could children call upon the vital resources of their inner world to help in the striving for self-actualization. The cultivation of the imaginative faculties was, therefore, part of the process of feeding those inner, invisible resources, and the importance of stories to this process is made clear when Froebel writes that:

> The power that has scarcely germinated in the boy's mind is seen by him in the legend or the tale, a perfect plant filled with the most delicious blossoms and fruits. The very remoteness of the comparison with his own vague hopes expands heart and soul, strengthens the mind, unfolds life in freedom and power.
>
> As in colour, it is not variegated hues that charm the boy, but their deeper, invisible meaning; not by the varied and gay shapes that move about in them but by their spiritual life which furnishes him with a measure of his own life and

spirit, by the fact that they furnish him direct intuitions of free life, of a force spontaneously active in accordance with its own law. (Froebel 1912: 306)

Here Froebel is referring to older children, but similar sentiments are applied in his kindergarten philosophy, that is the need to provide the means by which the child can derive a sense of who it is and what it values in order to strive to build upon that knowledge by reference to its own 'vague hopes'.[14] Despite what has been described as the pantheistic nature of Froebel's Christianity, he nevertheless saw Jesus as a central role model for children for:

> The highest and most perfect life which we, as Christians, behold in Jesus - the highest known to mankind ...This highest eternally perfect life itself would have each human being again become a similar image of the eternal ideal, so that each again might become a similar ideal for himself and others; it would have each human being develop from within, self-active and free. (Froebel 1912: 12)

Training for the kindergarten teacher was seen as essential and the majority of the students who were recruited to Froebel's philosophy of education were young women, for 'he had come to the conclusion that young women because of their strong maternal instincts made, when trained for the work, the best teachers of young children' (Woodham-Smith in Lawrence 1969)[15] and Carolyn Steedman[16] has documented the role played by women in bringing Froebel's ideas a wider audience. Froebel himself claimed that his educational philosophy was arrived at through watching mothers at play with their children, and although what he observed was then

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[14].In the *Journal of Education* February 1901 p.154
'Miss Clarke said that in her opinion Froebel did not separate the intellectual life of the child into a series of distinct stages; on the contrary, the essence of his doctrine was that it should be looked at as a whole, and each stage treated with due regard for that which has just gone and that which was to come. As regards the wisdom of placing the greatest achievements of mankind before the children, Froebel certainly taught that this should be done, and, in fact, stories of the deeds of heroes and great men of all time should hold an important place in the time-table.'
No other information is provided about 'Miss Clarke'.
[15]. Lawrence (1952), see also the Haddow Report of 1920s.
[16]. Steedman 'The Mother Made Conscious' (1985)

transformed into a quasi-scientific method, it was women who were seen by him as having the greater aptitude for teaching by reference to this new approach.

Through Froebel's philosophy women teachers were identified as being naturally suited to the teaching of young children, and were, as a consequence of the emphasis on developing the imaginative faculties through story telling, also viewed as the natural teller of stories to children. There is of course nothing innovative in the view of women as natural storytellers, for the image of Mother Goose sitting in front of the hearth with an armful of doting young listeners certainly pre-dates Froebel.[17] What is new in Froebel's approach is the view that story-telling is not simply a form of moralising entertainment for children but is the means to the spiritual development of the child's character. and as such demands the utmost skill from the person telling the story. We can see how the importance of the teller of the story of Jesus is stressed in the subtitles of many books produced in the early part of this century, so that we see again and again, subtitles like: 'Stories told by', or 'retold by...', or 'Told for little children', the latter example raising the question of how to tell the story of Jesus to young children, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

## The Kindergarten and the Hope of the World

Although the term 'kindergarten' is now used to signify nursery schools in general, Froebel's original choice of the name had a more literal meaning for he was concerned to promote a very specific view of the child and the role of the teacher in relation to that child. Froebel's idea of the kindergarten emerged because of his belief that children should be viewed as developing organisms and that, like growing plants,

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[17]. For a fuller discussion of this point see Marina Warner's *From the Beast to the Blonde*.

they required careful tending to help them to grow to healthy maturity. The kindergarten was designed to be a place where the child, supervised by trained adults, would be encouraged in purposeful activities designed to develop its senses and co-ordination and to help it to recognise itself 'as an essential and necessary member of humanity'. The aim of the kindergarten was not to develop the child's intellectual skills through book learning but to encourage the development of active learning, particularly through the observation of nature, which would lead to the development of sound character and harmony with the world. While it could be argued that it was a moral education, Juliet Dusinberre has observed that when Froebel had written that children needed to be provided with gardens in which to grow he did not mean 'Arcadias to dream in or Never-Never lands to ensure perpetual childhood, but territories for the exercise of real power'. (Dusinberre 1987: 198) Thus the motif of the garden as used in relation to the *kindergarten* has two meanings, the first identifying it as a place in which children can be nurtured to reach their optimum in human ability and understanding of the world around them, and the second more literally emphasising how Froebel stressed the importance of allowing children to learn about the processes of nature from discovery through the senses.

Although Froebel's influence was not felt as strongly in the Elementary school as it appears to have been in the Sunday school, the benefits of the kindergarten expressed in material terms were widely acknowledged in that sector. Even before the 1906 Education Act - which authorised Local Education authorities to spend public money on meals for undernourished elementary school children - it was not just concerned philanthropists and evangelicals who had recognised the value of

schooling for the under-fives. Working class mothers had also seen the material

advantages of sending their children to elementary schools:

> Compulsory education begins at five years, but as is well known, it is
> the practice of mothers of the working class to send their little ones to
> school as soon as possible after the age of three years. For years past
> the schools have gladly received them, and it is sincerely to be hoped
> that there will be no reversal of this policy, since the new environment
> undoubtedly makes for the physical well-being of the babies. ( De
> Montmorency 1906: 82)

But concern about the kind of teaching the 'babies', as the under-

fives were known, received, was specifically dealt with in regulations

which required that they should have a special curriculum which 'would

provide opportunities for the free development of their bodies and minds'.

The curriculum designed to achieve such aims was influenced by the

educational philosophy of Froebel of learning through the senses, in its

emphasis on 'games involving free movement, singing and breathing

exercises and various employments that will give the eyes, the hands and

the fingers free occupation suitable to little people' (De Montmorency

1906: 145). But more important was the teacher's role in encouraging children 'to form

ideas "and to express them in simple language of their own" by talking with them...and

by telling them stories' (De Montmorency 1906:145).

What kind of stories should be told to such an impressionable

group was a question which increasingly exercised the minds of

educators and religious groups alike and is the focus of the following

chapter. The 1902 Balfour Act had made the teaching of religion - and

therefore the telling of religious stories - in Elementary schools a difficult

area to negotiate, but that difficulty clearly did not apply in Sunday

schools. The Sunday schools explicit purpose was to provide a religious education, especially after the 1870 Act transferred to secular schools the work previously undertaken by Sunday schools, such as the teaching of the three Rs. Despite the move to a secular society reflected in rapidly decreasing numbers of adults attending church and chapel, the Sunday school continued to be well-supported, for its presence had usually been established in the community well before the coming of the Elementary schools, and its functioning was often characterised by a strong non-conformist approach, not only to methods of worship but also in relation to education and politics. It could be argued that it was this radicalism which enabled the acceptance in Sunday schools of innovative methods in relation to education long before such methods could be properly integrated into the state system. In fact, De Montmorency observed that, 'had it not been for the Sunday schools and their vastly important secular work' then 'it is difficult to see how the gap between the new education and the old could have been bridged' (De Montmorency 1906: 205). But the promotion of progressive educational philosophies in Sunday schools does not by itself adequately explain why so many working class children regularly attended this non-compulsory extension of the teaching week. Instead we need to explore the relationship between popular cultural expression and educational reform as manifested through the economy of the Sunday school. In doing so, we also need to understand how storytelling and the educational use of pictures became central to that project.

Nineteenth century philanthropic activity had been mobilized by the supposed threats posed to the wealthy by the dangerous classes (Rose: 1991), and was frequently concerned with the youth and the rise of the mass media. In the twentieth

century evangelicals and philanthropists adopted a more pragmatic response to such technological developments, seeing opportunities where before they had seen only moral dangers. A consequence of this change of attitude was that some previously despised popular cultural forms - such as fairy tales - were appropriated by Christian educationalists and reworked to deliver entertaining but moral messages. One of the reasons was that it had been shown that these popular genres of writing could be employed very effectively to engage young minds and emotions in the service of the evangelical agenda[18].

## Child Study and the Sunday School

There can be no doubting that the Sunday school network believed it had the necessary understanding and the institutional will to fill the educational gap identified above, for it had by 1910 established a sophisticated system of training teachers, publicising lesson plans and attracting children.[19] In the *Roll Call of 1910* (SSCCO 1910: 939) being the statistics for attendance at Sunday schools in Britain (see Appendix 4), the figures given are for teachers as well as scholars and provide a useful indication of the size of the movement. The Church of England is shown as having the largest number of scholars, with over three million children attending the Anglican Sunday schools serviced by almost three hundred thousand teachers. The Wesleyan Methodists have the next highest attendance figures with over 970,000

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[18] For example, in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century the *Boy's Own* paper published by the evangelical Religious Tract Society, managed to successfully compete against the more obviously secular products of the publishing industry. See Bristow 1991.

[19] The parental support for working class children to attend Sunday school was not always seen as evidence of a positive commitment to the acquisition of religious knowledge. Rev. E. H. Rycroft (1906) was not unique in observing that:

> We have through our system of compulsory education, made the proletariat consider they have no responsibility for their children during the many hours of the day, and quite three-fourths of the children present in every Sunday school are there because their parents do not want them at home'

scholars serviced by over !30,000 teachers. The Congregational church is listed as having almost 700,000 students and over 66,000 teachers, with the next largest group being the Baptists accounting for almost 560,000 scholars and 56,000 teachers. The final total for all the Sunday school denominations for 1910 is: 6,763,492 students and 645,286 teachers and this is for England and Wales only. If we include the statistics for Scotland and Ireland the total is closer to eight million Sunday school students. The accuracy of such figures is, of course, open to challenge and the author of the report simply states that the 'figures ...have been obtained at first hand from the chief officials of the denominations', nevertheless the statistics do give an indication of the size of the educational project undertaken by the Sunday school movement and the report makes clear where, in comparison with the previous year's statistics, there has been a drop in scholars. But the figures also show that the teacher/pupil ratio was in the region of 1:10 at a time when most Elementary schools were working to a ratio of about 1:40. This lower teacher/pupil ratio undoubtedly contributed to the Sunday school's ability to incorporate some of the insights gained from child study in its methods of teaching, as we will see later in the discussion.

The figure of almost seven million children regularly attending Sunday school is an impressive one and we can only begin to see just how impressive it is when we consider the national demographics for this period. The official census of 1911 gave forty five million as the population of the United Kingdom and Stevenson (1990) has noted that, whereas in 1841 almost half the population were under twenty years of age, by 1911 this had dropped to just under one third. (Stevenson 1990: 21) He goes on to say that this substantial demographic change can be partially explained by the massive tide of young people emigrating in the first decade of this century.

Nevertheless, if the under twenties accounted for one third of the population this means that approximately fifteen million individuals were of an age to attend Sunday school, and of that fifteen million, according to the figures provided by the *Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook*, eight million were in regular attendance. These figures do *not* of course, include Catholics who constituted a sizeable section of the population, particularly in the north-west of England. When De Montmorency wrote of 'an ever recruiting army' he was referring to children in Elementary schools but the above statistics clearly demonstrate the size and the extent of the Sunday school network and thus gives some indication of the influence it could wield in relation to the education of working class children.

As mentioned earlier, the Sunday schools had been forced to reconsider the scope and aim of their activities after the 1870 Education Act which placed the responsibility for the teaching of basic literacy skills on the compulsory sector. At the start of the twentieth century the Sunday schools were actively reinventing themselves to take account of the impact of these changes in education provision and also in assimilating and circulating the knowledge derived from what became known as child study. 'Child study' was another term for the populist version of developmental psychology and in its application in the Sunday school it became associated with an approach to teaching which was influenced by the child-centred pedagogies of Pestalozzi and Froebel among others.

G. H. Archibald, the Canadian credited by Cliff (1986) as being the architect of the Sunday school in twentieth century England[20], was a great enthusiast of the benefits he saw as accruing from this new science. He wrote that the main problem

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[20] Binfield (1994) writes that if 'the Sunday school were an art form, then George Hamilton Archibald was its Diaghilev.

with most educators of the past (Comenius, Froebel, Locke, Pestalozzi and Rousseau being credited as exceptions) had been their tendency to see the world from an adult's perspective and to begin their teaching on the false assumption that the child shared this point of view. He wrote that:

> The battle for children's rights is a long one. Adultism relaxes its grip with reluctance, the old slave-owning instincts persist and the slow change over to the child's point of view is made by slow degrees. (Archibald 1913: 2)

but he adds that there is hope because in the twentieth century 'the child is being studied as never before' and that whereas the psychology of the past was the 'psychology of the mature mind' the 'new psychology is the science of immaturity - the growing not the grown' (Archibald 1913: 1-2). With its emphasis on 'the growing not the grown' we see again how, within the new science of child study, Froebel's motif of the garden makes explicit the role of the kindergarten in nurturing the healthy development of the child. Working from this perspective various writers sought to identify the essential characteristics of particular stages of development in order to maximise the positive influence which could be brought to bear on the child through education.

Archibald's evangelical commitment was enthusiastically channelled through this new approach to education and his mode of address to Sunday school teachers owes much to revivalist preaching styles. He writes of the shadow of adultism obscuring the vision of the nature of the child and takes issue with didacticism in the classroom, urging instead methods which enable the child to learn through inference rather than through the blunt instrument of morals tacked on to stories. Observing that the literature on child-life was rapidly expanding, he urged that:

> This literature should be in the hands of every teacher, and especially every teacher of teachers. To study the lesson is not enough; all education must begin with the child, not with the lesson. Every child should be absorbed in that

which he is doing and every teacher should be absorbed in the child. (Archibald 191 : 26-7)

One of the ways that the modern Sunday school identified to ensure that the education began with the child and not the lesson, was to implement a curriculum, the structure of which was derived from developmental thinking. There was, however, confusion as to the age groups connected to specific stages of development. For example, Higgs (1910) in *Evolution of the Child Mind* writes that there are four stages: the un-moral, the imitative, the personal and the altruistic, but these are only vaguely linked to different age groups. Dumville, on the other hand, (1916) identified three stages of development: the first period of childhood - from two and a half years to about six or seven, the second period of childhood - from six of seven to nine years and the third the pre-adolescent period of childhood - from nine years to puberty. Ten years later Catherine Newby[21], in *An Introduction to Child Study for Teachers of Religion* (1926) also identifies three age groups which differ slightly from those provided by Dumville. These are: the infant from birth until eight years of age, the child from eight until fourteen years of age, and the adolescent from fourteen to eighteen years of age (Newby 1926: 117). Newby also provides more detail as to the actual methods used in child study and lists five main approaches:

1. Observation, which she says is not simply a question of *how* a child behaves in particular circumstances but rather *why*.

2. Introspection, which requires the teacher to reflect on their own childhood experiences and relate it to the behaviour and actions of their pupils.

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[21] Vice-Principal of St. Christopher's College, Blackheath, former Secretary to the Sunday School Council for the Diocese of Southwark and a lecturer in Education at Ripon Diocesan College.

3. Reading, which requires the teacher to familiarise themselves with relevant literature about child nature while taking care not to form ideas of 'typical' children.

4. Comparison, to see abnormal children as the means for identifying what constituted normalcy.

5. Experiment, research and analysis, which was the equivalent of clinical psychology. (Newby 1926: 16)

As we will see in the following discussion in this and subsequent chapters, it was the first three methods which were specifically taken up by Sunday school teaching and allied to the 'graded system' of teaching which attempted to match educational resources to children's specific developmental needs. The educational activities of the Sunday school were, therefore, divided according to age and in doing so were designed to meet the different emotional and cognitive needs of the developing child. This 'graded system' was an essential part of the modernising of the Sunday school movement at the start of the twentieth century (Cliff 1986). It was a system built on Archibald's call for an approach which aimed at providing children with teachers who understood the needs of children but which also sought to provide teachers with knowledge which could help them to foster enthusiastic and effective learning. in their pupils

The graded system had four main groups; Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior but these were often subdivided and the Primary section was given particular consideration, again reflecting the importance accorded to the early learning experience. In her guidance to Sunday school teachers working in the Primary

Department Ethel Archibald (1920), writes that the Primary Department is 'the subdivided and graded infant class' and that while it nominally includes 'children from the time they are named until they are eight years of age'. (Archibald 1920:1) She identifies three divisions for this group:

1. the Cradle Department which comprises children up to the age of four,

2. the Beginner's Department for children from four to six years old,

3. the Primary Department proper which comprised children from six to eight years of age.

She adds that the young children in the Cradle Department tended to belong without actually attending as they:

> are still too young to attend the Sunday session but ...are regarded as Sunday-school scholars, since their names are placed upon the Cradle Roll which hangs on the wall of the Primary Department room. (Archibald 1920: 2)

and she adds that the 'wise superintendent will not, as a rule, permit children under four years of age to attend the Sunday session'.

This system of classification and categorisation was a central feature of the Sunday school, which, (unlike the Board schools) tended to follow a national curriculum which was formulated by the largely non-conformist[22] Sunday School Union[23], (SSU) and publicised in the weekly *Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook*. Within this curriculum the educational philosophy of Froebel and other child-centred educationalists exerted an implicit influence. This was particularly so in the theory and methods employed at West Hill [24] which was established as a college to train Sunday school teachers. According to Cliff (1986) the college came into being

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[22] The Anglican church organised its Sunday schools through the *National Society*.
[23] In 1921 the organisation changed its name to the *National Sunday School Union*.
[24] Now known as Westhill College of Higher Education.

through the generosity and support of Quakers in the Selly Oak district of

Birmingham, the main benefactors being Mr and Mrs Barrow Cadbury who enabled

the renting of the premises which changed its name from West Hill to Westhill which

according to Cliff was 'a home for the training of teachers according to the methods of

Froebel'. (Cliff 1986: 208-9)

As will be shown in Chapters Five and Six which discuss the development of a

pedagogy of storytelling and the educational use of pictures respectively, such

educational philosophies were felt to have a direct relevance (within the context of the

Sunday school) to the story of Jesus told to children for Jesus himself was seen as

the first teacher and the ideal storyteller.


## Popular Culture and Reform

While some individuals and groups at the turn of this century continued to

promulgate the nineteenth century discourses of moral panic in relation to the working

class enthusiasm for the products of the rapidly expanding mass media, others were,

as we have seen, constructing a discourse derived from child development theories.

Development within such discourses was used not just to signify the inevitable

physical growth of the child from infancy to adolescence. Rather it was concerned

with the active involvement of relevant professionals to 'bring forth from a latent or

elementary condition' the capacities which contribute to psychological and thus

intellectual development. The ability to bring forth the relevant capacities from such

latent conditions required an understanding of the chronological mapping of

psychological, emotional and intellectual needs according to particular age groups.

The notion of 'the child mind' and the need to understand its functioning, found

popular support among many groups concerned to transform society through changing the attitudes and perceptions of the younger generation. This was because child development theory appeared to offer a magic key to unlock the latent potential of working class children. It was felt that through an awareness of the functioning of the child mind and the provision of appropriate educational strategies geared to specific age groups, it would be possible to accomplish the imperialist dream of Britain as once again the 'superior' nation. All too often the discourses on the child mind were connected to Darwinist theories of the 'race mind': race in this context being used to indicate the British mind.

This imperialist fantasy which embodied the hopes and desires of adults was also expressed in educational practices, at the heart of which was the belief that imagination could be a legitimate and effective tool in engaging the 'child mind' in the project of social transformation. Seen from this perspective, the story of Jesus promulgated by the evangelical educationalists was a narrative which could be effectively employed to articulate the imperialist dream in a way which was appealing to young children. Why the story of Jesus achieved such a wide and influential circulation at a time when church attendance was in sharp decline is a paradox, the explanation of which requires us to consider the ways in which evangelical groups, particularly in the Sunday schools, used the distribution of books and printed ephemera as a means of encouraging regular attendance through the system of material rewards. Through the economy of the Sunday school rewards system working class children gained access to story books and pictures which would have otherwise been beyond their reach. The size of the audience for such texts and the scale of the distribution network makes this an important area for investigation, but as

discussed in Chapter Two, to date there has been very little academic work dealing with the subject.

There have been many writers (Avery 1975, Bratton 1981, Carpenter 1985) who have documented the development of children's literature in Britain, but it is implicit in their assumptions that when they write of children, they mean middle class children. The child in question is positioned within a family able to afford to buy books, make informed choices as to which books were suitable and provide the environment in which reading, as a leisure activity, was both facilitated and encouraged. The ways in which material circumstances facilitate access to texts in general is rarely addressed and as a consequence, this leads to assumptions as to what was actually read. Thus the study of children's literature is not a study of children's relationship to books, reading or even narratives. rather, it is an exploration of the biography of particular authors in relation to their fictional narratives. This approach has made invisible the mass of reading material consumed by the majority of children which has tended to fall outside the remit of authorial invention and aesthetic merit.

This approach has tended to produce a literary canon for juveniles which ranges from *Alice in Wonderland* through *The Water Babies* to *The Wind in the Willows*, which are claimed as the universal texts of childhood and examines the genre from the intellectual perspective of a middle-class educated adult. Whilst there is no disputing the undoubted and enduring popularity of such texts for child audiences, such approaches tend to constitute childhood, and thus children, in universalising terms which make invisible the specific economic circumstances of particular children. To begin an analysis which attributes the same middle class circumstances and concerns to all children is to overlook the ways in which class

positioning might determine the accessibility of certain texts over others and to

obscure how meanings might be generated in different ways for different audiences.

Thus the versions of the Jesus story produced for children might be seen as

inappropriate to be included within this frame of reference. This is because either they

cannot be used to provide an interesting analysis of the author's own experiences or

can be dismissed as simply crude propaganda, doggerel of no literary merit

whatsoever. Using aesthetic criteria for selection presupposes that the audience has

the power to discriminate and that choice exists. But for working class children at the

turn of the century, the means to acquiring a book was mainly the Sunday school

network, so that it was an institutional base which had the power to set the standards

for the books it circulated.

The production of children's literature as a popular and commercially

successful genre began in the eighteenth century and had grown into a major industry

by 1914, but this was an industry that spoke almost exclusively to the middle classes,

which attached great importance to book reading as an improving leisure-time activity

for their children. For working class children it was a different story:

> The better off were often avid readers, while the children of the poor - with no
> children's libraries no money to spend on books, and often no proper lighting[25]
> or space to read at home - read little or nothing. (Humphreys et al. 1988: 70)

At the turn of the century the only books which were likely to be found in the

homes of working class families were The Bible (although it would be wrong to infer

simply from its presence that it was read), *Pilgrim's Progress* and those books which

had been acquired as prizes from Sunday and elementary schools. The fact that

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[25] This is an important factor in asserting that picture books and postcards were more prized for they can be enjoyed in situations which might make reading a difficult, if not impossible activity.

access to these cultural products by a social group whose choice was severely limited

by its economic position, is a major reason for labelling this area of production and

consumption as popular culture, for as Shiach has written 'there are directly economic

reasons which are applied in a phrase such as "all seats at popular prices." '(Shiach

1986). Alderson, writing of the production and sale of children's books in the

nineteenth century, provides graphic evidence of the economic divisions existing

within that society which impinged on the working class child's access to books:

> ...if one considers the pricing and distribution of books during the 1860s
> and 1870s it quickly becomes clear that the exciting developments in
> children's literature were initially available to only a small proportion of
> the child population. At a time when the average weekly wage of
> workmen was considerably less than a pound a week, the potential
> market for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland at six shillings a copy was
> scarcely universal, let alone the market for folios on fairy land at thirty-
> one and sixpence. Given also that the movement towards 'free public
> libraries' was still in its infancy, that school libraries (for those children
> who actually attended day school, or night school or Sunday school)
> were often of the most rudimentary kind, and that the widespread
> publishing of cheap editions was still in the future, it is not surprising to
> find that the only people with a conscience about the reading of 'the
> labouring poor' were the charitable organisations.(Alderson in Briggs
> ed. 1974: 265)

Although Alderson is writing about an earlier period, it was the very same

'charitable organisations' such as the Religious Tract Society (RTS), The London

Missionary Society (LMS), the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge

(SPCK) and others who were still actively involved in publishing and distributing - as

opposed to simply selling - 'improving' literature and other printed material to the

working classes, particularly the children, for many of whom the acquisition of a book

would be as a 'reward' for good attendance at school.[26] Access to these images and

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[26] McKenzie (1986) writes that 'In some working class homes a little library of...books would be
composed entirely of prizes for regular attendance at the Band of Hope or Sunday school' and
cites Roberts' *The Classic Slum* as further evidence.

texts for working class children was acquired as something earned as opposed to

something bought. Acquisition was not dependent on the economic position of the

family, but on the child being positioned within a context of popular support for and

regular attendance at Sunday schools. It was part of the economy of the Sunday

school[27] and other organisations for children and youth, in that regular attendance at

the meetings of such groups and organisations provided not only prize books and

coloured pictures but which could also be the route to receiving rare treats such as

trips to the seaside and Christmas parties. The provision of such treats and prizes

contributed to the continuing high attendance figures for working class children at

Sunday schools even if some commentators at the time thought the practice a barely

concealed form of bribery.

The popular support for Sunday school attendance had been a major factor in

the development of a successful publishing business based on the production of prize

books and postcard 'rewards'. In addition to providing religious and educational

materials for export to the children of the British Empire, there was also the regular

home market supplying books and reward cards for children attending Sunday

schools. As a consequence, illustrated story books and pictures based on the life of

Jesus were produced in enormous quantities, both by the evangelical and the secular

publishers. The advantage of this was that the burden of the cost of such books and

related ephemera was met not by the recipient - the Sunday school scholar - but by

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[27] It was also an economy which had been made famous - perhaps even valorized - by Mark Twain in the depiction of Tom Sawyer's bartering of dead cats for the prized yellow tickets which would gain him a Bible, prized not because Tom was a pious Christian, but because it was a **book** and the knowledge it contained could (in Tom's fantasies), raise Tom's status in the community when it was known that he was the boy 'who had two thousand verses of scripture stored in his head'. I don't know if this makes Tom the original cultural poacher, but it certainly echoes John Fiske's view that the art of popular culture is 'the art of making do'. (Fiske 1987). It demonstrates that the book or coloured picture as an object in a world where such commodities are rare or difficult to come by, becomes valuable not just because of its intrinsic value, but also, and more importantly, in terms of the meanings which have accrued on the way to its acquisition.

the church, chapel or evangelical group which distributed them. Thus the Sunday schools represented a regular and stable income for publishers who could supply what was required. As the distributors of such books and pictures to a guaranteed market, the evangelical educationalists were in a powerful position to dictate to *all* publishers, both secular and religious, what was and was not acceptable in the representation of Jesus, an important issue which will be explored in more detail in Chapter Six. It was also in the interests of both parties to ensure that what was produced and distributed was liked by the children as these rewards were to act as part of the motivation for regular attendance. To this end the stories and pictures needed to be immediately appealing, and the rather austere black and white Sunday school prize books distributed in the nineteenth century[28] were superseded by colourful story books in which the story of Jesus was transformed from biblical narrative to fairy tale romance. This is a change which requires some careful explanation in order to make clear how it was that this narrative which has its origins in the Bible - a sacred text - was able to be re-presented as a fairy tale, which is a secular genre.

## The Secularisation of the Story of Jesus

Although the life of Jesus as a rabbinical/canonical text is outside the scope of this study, it is worth stressing that even in the Bible through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we are provided with not one, but four "official" versions of the life of Christ. It is useful to note that the individual Gospels select different episodes in Christ's life, according to their individual religious purposes and that they are not

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[28] Entwhistle 1994 notes that in the nineteenth century Sunday school prize books could still be in circulation up to sixty years after the first publication date.

primarily concerned with narrative. Thus from a modern point of view, even the canonical text establishes an acceptance that the story of the life of Jesus Christ is told from different points of view, and by different voices.

These conventions produce a chronology which tells of some of the events in the life of Jesus up to the age of twelve years and this is followed by an account of his ministry in the last three years of his life. For a narrative-oriented culture such as ours it is a strange chronology for it provides a life history which is significant for the gaps it leaves.[29] There are also, of course, important commercial benefits to be gained from this apparently relaxed approach to how the canonical text can be represented. In the move from sacred text to educational narrative the Gospel's life of Jesus provided publishers with a story which like fairy tales was copyright free, but also one which being a frame tale, contained within it a whole series of other smaller stories which could be sold either singly, assembled as compilations on a thematic basis or adapted to meet the needs of a particular audience according to sex, age or 'race'.

This is made clear in the way that so many of the books of this genre are subtitled to indicate to the prospective purchaser -the adult - that the life of Christ which is contained within the covers of the book has been carefully constructed to take account of concerns about what is (and is not) fit reading material to put before an impressionable child. Hence, prospective purchasers were assured by such titles as *The Story of Jesus for Boys and Girls, The Story of Jesus for Young People, The Story of Jesus Told for Little Children*, which indicated that the author's awareness of child study discourses in relation to pedagogy and psychology and which identified childhood as a crucial period of moral, physical and intellectual development. There

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[29] See John Oxenham's *The Hidden Years* (1925) and Wilhelm Scharrelman's *The Youth Jesus.* (1936) for fictionalised accounts of this chronological gap.

was frequent reference also to the gates to consciousness offered by the five senses, with commentators advocating that what went in through 'eye-gate'[30] usually produced more effective learning than the methods that relied on 'ear-gate' alone. This was invariably linked to the caution that impressions established early in life could, for better or worse, persist into adulthood. As a consequence, it was acknowledged that there were particular considerations to be borne in mind when adapting the sometimes very 'adult themes' of the Bible for young children. So it was that in re-presenting the story of Jesus for children authors and artists were required to tread a tight rope in rewriting the Bible. The writers of these stories were doubly constrained: firstly because there was the pressure from some Christian educators to stay sufficiently close to the original text to ensure that children had an accurate introduction to the central tenets of their faith and secondly, because there was also to be taken into account the understanding gained from pedagogical and psychological discourses. For how could children benefit - be that in intellectual or moral terms - if they were unable to understand and relate to what they read?

In 'Bible Stories in the Primary - Are They All Sufficient.', an article in the *New Chronicle of Christian Education* Jan 11th 1934, Ernest H. Hayes writes of a minister who has sent him:

> ...a complaint on behalf of his Primary teachers that stories not in the Bible find a place in the Primary Course. His teachers feel that this is a great mistake - when we have had fairy stories in the set lessons they have been dropped and a lesson from Scripture substituted.

He deals with the criticism by replying that for some Bible teaching there 'are either no stories at all, or not sufficient stories.'

> For instance, we want the children to believe that God made all creatures, and that, "kindness to animals" has an essential place in the

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[30] For example see the Foreword of Harding Wood's *A Year With Our Lord.*

spiritual education of the child - yet there are no stories to teach kindness to animals in the Bible. "What about the Parable of the Lost Sheep?" says someone, "or the reference to the animal being lifted out of the pit on the Sabbath day?" These stories *can* be used for such teaching at a stretch, but in any case they are not enough. (Hayes 1934)

Nowadays there is an established body of literature[31] and a generalised agreement that fairy tales are of psychological value to the developing child, but this is a relatively recent phenomenon and the genre has not always been considered as suitable for children[32]. But by the beginning of the twentieth century evangelicals had long since given up on the fight against the popular appeal of the genre and moved instead to appropriate it for their own ends, as is demonstrated here:

> Turning over the pages of a book of nursery tales, it struck me, as something new and unrealised before by me, that there was in them a great deal more than meets the understanding at a first reading. It seemed to me that they held depths of meaning, which perhaps the original writers of the stories had hardly thought of conveying at the time, but which, inasmuch as such meanings *are* discoverable therein, do but bear witness to the exceeding beauty and the lasting merit of the stories themselves. There was the prince kissing the dainty shoe, the emblem to him of the beauty and grace which have fled from his sight he knows not where, but which he vows to pursue until he finds it again. There was the Sleeping Beauty, fast bound in slumber, till the kiss from a loyal, loving heart wakes her up to life, with all its claims and its duties, its joys and sorrows, and its work...There were many, many more, but through them all there ran the same beautiful fairy-tale moral - the reward bestowed after a period of trial, and the triumph of good over evil. (Childe-Pemberton 1902: vi)

and she adds that:

> The framers of these stories which have charmed so many generations, were never tired of harping on the same string, but they executed their variations with such a delicate touch, that the reader may ...hardly realise that one lesson of love lies at the root of them all - that pure, unselfish love which makes all things beautiful, all sufferings endurable, all achievement possible - that same beautiful love of which it has also been written, that it "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (Childe-Pemberton 1902: v-vi)

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[31] Bettelheim 1982, Rustin and Rustin 1989.
[32] On the contrary, the import of fairy tales into Britain in the eighteenth century was originally seen as a threat to the morals of children.

In this re-presentation of fairy tales, the motifs of personal sacrifice, the triumph of good over evil and unselfish love are given more prominence than those which feature magic, monsters and the acquisition of wealth. Nevertheless, this provides a starting point to understanding how the story of Jesus, the man who came to earth and died on the cross so that we might live forever, might be seen as having elements in common with the fairy tale genre which will be returned to in Chapter Seven.

Although there are similarities in terms of moral content with the genre, when comparing the structure of the Jesus story with the classic fairy tale collections such as those of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and *The Thousand and One Nights*, it is the last which yields the most similarities. Firstly, *The Thousand and One Nights* unlike the collections of the Brothers Grimm or Charles Perrault, is a 'frame tale' and although the tales are narrated by only one person - Scheherazade - that narration is the linking device which enables a diversity of stories to be presented as a single entity. Within the frame tale which is the life of Jesus, it is Jesus himself who acts as the linking device for he is both the teller on occasions and the subject of the tales.

This 'frame setting' device was significantly absent from what is widely accepted as the first published collection of fairy tales i.e. Perrault's *Contes du Temps Passe*, of which he claimed, the assortment of tales were united only inasmuch as they all acted as a vehicle, albeit in an entertaining form, for the exposition of morality. The device is also absent from the collection of stories which are known as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* for, according to Bottigheimer (1987), Wilhelm Grimm 'collated individual versions of stories to return to what he imagined to be the tale's core.' and that:

> Grimm's Tales is unique among modern collections of tales, for unlike the other collections discussed, half a century of continuous editing by Wilhelm Grimm produced a collection whose values became ever more internally consistent.' (Bottigheimer 1987: 11)

In the re-presentation of the life of Jesus as fairy tale, there does exist a 'frame setting' which is the biographical and chronological narrative of Jesus' life, but like the work of Wilhelm Grimm, centuries of 'continuous editing' of this narrative has resulted in a collection of stories which can also be presented independently of that 'framing'.

There are even more similarities with *The Thousand and One Nights* because the life of Jesus told to children places great emphasis on his story telling activities, and like Scheherazade, that other story teller, he is from the 'East'[33], and can therefore bring to his storytelling activities the fantasies of orientalism - the connotations of 'an exotic land far away' - that she does. Orientalism is an aspect which is repeatedly emphasised in re-presentations of Jesus' life and shown by this example taken from *Suffer Little Children* by Catherine Shaw, where she writes:

> You look earnestly at the picture on the next page, children, and you see before you an Eastern courtyard, and a man with a very anxious question.
> You wonder what that question is and if you could have been there nearly two thousand years ago, you might have heard the answer for yourselves - "No room! no room!"
> The landlord of that Eastern inn looks sorry, does he not? He knows that Joseph and Mary have come a very long way, and that they are in urgent need of rest and shelter.

The importance of the signifier 'Eastern' is made clear in that the word is used twice, for it is no ordinary setting for the story which is being constructed by the narration, it is one in which the appeal of the 'Orient' is used to gain the audience's attention through appealing to the pleasures associated with this signifier.[34]

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[33] The appeal to female audiences of Rudolph Valentino's portrayal of a sheikh in the 1920s might be said to owe something to that generation's exposure to the 'orientalisation' of Jesus.
[34] Of the pleasures and entertainments favoured by the working class, Hoggart has observed:

Jack Zipes has claimed that the original power of fairy tales was a social one

'which sought to transform the mundane into the utopian as part of a communal

project' (Zipes 1979) and that this original power has been diminished by the impact

of commodity production in the publishing industry. In *Victorian Fairy Tales* (1987) he

writes that this once reviled genre of literary production,[35] had gone on to be utilised

by mid-nineteenth century authors who wanted to substitute utopian thought for the

dominant discourse of rational materialism in society. To support his thesis, Zipes

provides a long list of noted writers - George MacDonald, John Ruskin, Lewis Carroll

and Oscar Wilde who used the fairy tale both as 'a manifesto for itself' and as a social

manifesto.[36]

While not arguing at this point that the images and stories re-presenting Jesus

could be easily understood as a social manifesto, it is the case that such texts were

meaningful to their audience of working class children, not only as religious icons or

scriptural tracts, but because they were some of the very few published materials

which were accessible to them. The word text is used here to signify not just written

texts such as books, but also Sunday School reward cards, postcards, hymns,

schoolroom prints and book illustrations. Therefore, in looking at the emergence of

the mass-produced illustrated fairy tale as a profitable publishing commodity and

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It loves the East because the East is exotic and elaborate. Perfumes should come from the Orient; chapels here for years preferred a bazaar to a sale-of-work (*e.g.* this recent poster: 'Hull and District Band of Hope and Temperance League - May Day Celebrations - Oriental Setting - May Queen: Miss Sheila Pugmire' (Hoggart 1957:119)

[35] Prickett (1979) observes that:

magical and marvellous stories which had once been attacked by such diverse authorities as Rousseau, Mrs Trimmer and Mr Gradgrind, were now being rediscovered as a source of spiritual 'dynamism', in what Carlyle attacked as a 'mechanical' and 'prudential' age.

[36] On the same theme Prickett writes that the 'internalization' of fantasy in the early nineteenth century meant, in effect, the evolution of a new language, the worlds of dreams and nightmares, madmen and children were areas of human experience which had hitherto been all too often been ignored or even denied. Their recognition helped to open up a new view of the human mind in which conventional distinctions between aesthetics and psychology were blurred by a growing awareness of the unconscious in shaping our mental processes.

linking it to the promotion of the life of Jesus as a fairy tale[37], the discussion which follows will show how developments in cheap, improved quality colour printing influenced this transformation. In doing so, the factor of low cost will be the first point to be discussed in relation to an audience of working class children.

## Technology and the Commodification of the Fairy Tale

One of the major attractions of fairy tale books published at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the high quality of the accompanying illustrations. The tales were generally well known, thus it was the addition of coloured pictures by a noted artist that might determine the commercial success of such new versions of old stories; the same concerns and solutions applied to the reframing of the story of Jesus. The prize books and reward cards[38] distributed in great numbers to working class children were viewed by the adults creating, publishing and purchasing them as doubly beneficial to those receiving them. Firstly, because of the religious and moral content, and secondly, because of the awareness of beauty which was believed to flow from the quality of the illustrations themselves.[39] For even in 1908 the moral panic about the dangers of the new mass culture created by the burgeoning publishing industry was still underpinning the work of some evangelical organisations. An example of this is provided by the review of an exhibition of the work of Harold

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[37] Often the *Life of Jesus* was part of a series published for children which included Grimm's Fairy Tales, the Thousand and One Nights, and Hans Andersen's stories.

[38] Many of these reward cards were in fact coloured postcards and McKenzie (1984 pp. 21-26) has provided a useful account of the enormous enthusiasm for collecting which underpinned this successful section of the publishing industry.

[39] In the Preface to *The Child's Life of Jesus* C. M. Steedman, the author remarks that:
> The writer would be ungrateful did he not recognise how much *The Child's Life of Jesus* owes to the graceful dress in which it appears, and to the beautiful pictures with which Mr Paul Woodroffe has illustrated it.

Copping whose drawings and paintings of the Holy Land had been commissioned by the RTS:

> The committee of the Religious Tract Society gave an "At Home" ...
> for...viewing an exhibition of original watercolours by Mr Harold
> Copping, illustrating Bible scenes and embodying the results of his visit
> to the East in 1905. Mr W. F. A Archibald, the treasurer... remarked
> upon the great improvements in printing since the days when the RTS
> was started. The art of book illustration showed a similar improvement.
> Photography alone had brought about an extraordinary change. The
> committee had been fortunate enough to obtain the assistance of Mr
> Harold Copping. They had asked him to go out to the East and bring
> back drawings really representative of Eastern scenes. The result they
> had seen in the beautiful watercolours and black and white drawings
> from his brush. The Rev. Dr Hanson remarked that *in these days, when
> such vile stuff was issued from the press without the thinnest veneer
> over the putridity that lay beneath it, there surely never was more need
> for the work of that society.* (my emphasis) (Times: 5/12/1908)

Such comments are part of what Bristow has described as 'the debate about the need for greater culture among young working class people' (Bristow 1991), for the substance of Matthew Arnold's essay *Culture and Anarchy* had a far-reaching effect and lasting influence in such debates. The idea of the media having powerful and harmful effects upon passive audiences, predates the work of cultural theorists such as Horkheimer and Adorno. It is an argument that has existed since the very early days of the mass media. when there had been moral panics in relation to the popularity of 'penny dreadfuls' among the young and the working classes. The age of the mass media had begun with the development of a publishing industry which, through technological innovations, effective methods of distribution and the cheapness of a product made possible through the economies of scale was available to all sections of the population, for as MacKenzie has commented:

> It has been customary to see the age of the mass media as arriving with the
> cinema, the wireless and the television. But before the era of the electrical and
> electronic media, printed and visual materials became available at prices so
> low as to place them in every home. (MacKenzie 1984: 16)

The commodification of the fairy tale in general, and the story of Jesus in particular, was part of that early impact of the mass media on society and, therefore, a valuable area of investigation for trying to document the ways in which publishers targeted children as a lucrative audience for their products. Morley has pointed out that the text never occupies 'a fixed position, but is always mobilised, placed and articulated with other texts in different ways.' (Morley 1992: 27) And the text which is the story of Jesus Christ is 'mobilised, placed and articulated' alongside the mass produced fairy tales, adventure stories and other books and ephemera which were produced in very great numbers in the first quarter of this century to capitalise on the development of the juvenile mass market.

Some of the publishers competing for a share of this mass market included some of the evangelical groups mentioned earlier, such as the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Religious Tract Society (RTS). Throughout the nineteenth century both organizations had displayed a remarkable willingness to act pragmatically, whether in an effort to save souls or to increase sales. Often, as in the example of the RTS's hugely successful *Boy's Own Paper*, preaching the benefits of imperialism rather more vigorously than the virtues of Christianity, because the former went down rather better with an audience of adolescent boys than did the latter. But the mass market for books, comics and other printed material aimed at the young had arisen because of the conjunction of two major factors, firstly, the educational reforms which were a consequence of the 1870 Education Act, and secondly, the technological developments in the printing industry. The latter enabled printed material to be produced faster and cheaper to meet the growing demand for such

products, which was for many social commentators, a direct consequence of the

former in creating a new 'reading public'. But as Dunae points out:

> ...it was the promise of a new and untapped source of readers rather than any
> actual evidence of a reading revolution that excited contemporary publishers.
> In other words, the industry expected it would reap considerable rewards
> because of the Act and it was this expectation that prompted the industry to
> focus on the youth market for the first time. (Richards ed. 1986: 14-15)

This emphasis on the *youth* market was in reality, dealing almost exclusively

with books and periodicals aimed at adolescent *boys*. This is not to deny that girls

often derived great pleasure from 'eavesdropping' on the dominant male culture. In *A*

*Plea for the Revival of Reading*, published in 1906, W. T. Stead records the views of

one woman reader who informed him that: 'I didn't want a good book for girls, I

wanted to read the books my daddy read' (quoted in Bristow 1991). But, generally

speaking, the publishing industry catering for the juvenile audience was geared to

trying to meet the apparently insatiable appetite for adventure fiction among boys.

MacKenzie (1984) writes of this trend that:

> publishers now chose to divide their wares not according to class background
> or educational attainment, but according to sex. The sharp division between
> boy's and girl's literature became the norm, providing the opportunity to relate
> the patriotic-imperial ideology to a sexual stereotype: aggressive individualistic
> adventure for the boys, submissive domestic service and child-rearing for the
> girls. (MacKenzie 1984: 202-3)

Whilst not denying the development of a market segmentation in the

publishing world along clearly gendered lines, I would question the validity of

MacKenzie's claim that publishers no longer divided their wares according to class

background, for as has been shown, it is often the price of the product that determines

who will have access to it. In addition, on the evidence presented in this chapter, it

becomes clear that one of the visible effects of the influence of developmental theory was that publishers increasingly categorised their texts according to age groups.

## Summary

In this chapter we have seen how the Sunday school network provided a ready-made institutional base through which a popular version of developmental theory could be disseminated and how this was reflective of the popularising of the national discourse of working class children as the hope of the world. The discussion has emphasised how this was a discourse which transformed the nineteenth century philanthropic view of working class children, replacing the pessimistic notion of fate with the more optimistic idea of destiny. In addition, it has been shown that there is a need to take into account the important factor of accessibility when considering how children have related to the many narratives produced for them. And to this end, the chapter has provided evidence to support the claim that the story of Jesus through the economy of the Sunday school, was one of the most accessible texts available to a working class audience; an audience which often lacked the basic economic and environmental resources which facilitated reading as a leisure activity. Thus the discussion has highlighted the ways in which studies of children's books and literature have tended to overlook such factors and in doing so have made invisible the particular concerns and experiences of working class children. It has been argued that the story of Jesus moved from a sacred to a secularised story because of the need for it to make an immediate appeal to children who were known to favour popular narratives such as the fairy tale and the adventure story. Thus the reframing of the story of Jesus as fairy tale was partly a consequence of the expansion of the

publishing industry - and its evangelical base - and the need to sell old stories in new guises. But it was also a consequence of the filtering down of child-centred educational theory into the writing of texts which, in their vocabulary and mode of address, took into account the varying developmental needs of different age groups. Alongside this increasing awareness of the need to understand how children related to stories and the characters portrayed in them, was the belief in the transformative power of the kindergarten system of education. That through this system working class children could be provided with early experiences which ameliorated some of the socio-economic disadvantages they faced and which had been perceived as impediments to the new nation project.

Thus, the chapter has demonstrated how the hope of the world discourse brought together socialists such as Margaret McMillan with educationalists and evangelicals and that their reformist activities, in some instances, produced very real material gains for working class children. For it does seem that it was through these philanthropic activities rather than through political agitation or parliamentary legislation that the welfare of working class children was seriously addressed. This is not to underestimate in any way the underlying ideologies of such discourses. Rather the reformist activities of such organisations are shown in a positive light here simply because they have been so frequently absent from other accounts of working class culture. In writing of their work the writer is very much aware of the political realities which underpin the utopian discourse of working class children as the hope of the world. Nikolas Rose (1991) has commented on how the concerns which have circulated around the disadvantaged child have frequently had an egalitarian ring to them but that whilst:

> We should not deny or minimize the genuineness of the concern for individual well-being and social justice that suffuses this work...alongside the notion of education as an equalizing apparatus runs another conception of schooling as a socializing and moralizing enterprise. For if education was to be a vital apparatus of citizenship, it was never simply because of the intellectual capacities it conferred. Egalitarianism also encompassed a hope that the educational apparatus would be the means of inculcating the *aspirations* of citizenship in children - the will, as well as the means, to organize their lives within a project of self-betterment through diligence, application and commitment to work, family and society. (Rose 1991: 187-8)

The question remains as to how this process of inculcation of the socializing and moralizing values was effected in practice, for as was stated in the introduction, this study aims to uncover those processes at work in culture, specifically within the story of Jesus, from a micro rather than a macro perspective. Further, it aims to explore how such processes have operated at the level experienced by children. To this end the next chapter, will examine the way in which the emergence of a pedagogy of storytelling led to a reframing of the story of Jesus as an erotic fairy tale which could mobilise and organise the emotions and desires of younger children along desired educational and psychological lines. This will provide evidence which shows how developmental theory, concerning effective (affective) storytelling, contributed to the reframing of the story of Jesus as an erotic fairy tale to be told to the younger child.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# THE PEDAGOGY OF STORYTELLING AND THE PRODUCTION OF INTIMACY

This chapter explains why the story of Jesus was seen as being especially suited to meeting the needs of children as identified through the study of the 'child mind' (as discussed in Chapter Four). In doing so, it explores the way in which developmental theory became inscribed in the production and dissemination of the story of Jesus told to children, specifically in British Sunday schools. Where the previous chapter argued that the teachings of Froebel had exerted an influence on educational discourses in relation to working class children in general in Britain at the turn of this century, this chapter focuses on the values attributed to story-telling in the kindergarten age group. It shows how, through the popularising of a pedagogy of storytelling, developmental theory was inserted into the practice of teaching young children about Jesus. The chapter argues that through this emphasis on storytelling, there was constructed an almost familial intimacy in the relationship between children and their (usually female) teachers and that this relationship embodied in text, pedagogy and practice was reflective of the evangelical view of salvation being attained at a personal, rather than organisational, level through the establishment of a loving eroticised relationship with Christ. In order to explore these practices in relation to the central thesis' concern for explaining and evaluating the impact of the story of Jesus on the formation of subjectivity, the discussion is divided into three sections.

The first part will investigate some of the problems which had to be overcome in trying in making the Jesus story a suitable one to put before the very young and will

explain why it was that the scene of Jesus blessing the children was selected and became emblematic of the ideal view of Jesus as the friend of *little* children. The second part of the chapter provides an overview of the theory and practice of the pedagogy of storytelling by drawing upon the work of some of the most popular writers on the subject who published their guidelines for teachers in the period 1910 to 1930. This discussion will concentrate on the work of a religious commentator on the uses of storytelling, Edward Porter St. John[40], and Sarah Cone Bryant[41], whose work was primarily secular in tone. The discussion will show how the general principles of the pedagogy of storytelling were adapted to meet the specific needs of the Sunday school teacher and pupils. The third part of the chapter will focus on versions of the story taken from primary texts, such as hymns and story books. These will be used to provide examples of how the simulation of storytelling was a narrative device which was frequently used in the framing of such texts and of how the pedagogy of storytelling was practised by educationalists and evangelicals. This evidence will show that knowledge of the emotional and psychological needs of the very young, derived from a popular understanding of developmentalism, informed the telling of the story by those who were eager to engage the imagination and emotions of young working class children with the notion of Jesus Christ as their special friend. Further, that this engagement was facilitated through the strategy of re-presenting Jesus as a nurturing, protective man - a maternal male - who was depicted as loving children and who was in return, expected to be loved by them. It is argued here that the pedagogy of storytelling combined with the belief that Jesus was the role model

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[40] Professor of Pedagogy at the Hartford School of Religious Pedagogy and the author of a series of articles published in *The Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook* (and later published as a book in the U.S. and Britain) on storytelling in moral and religious education.
[41] The author of two very successful books on storytelling.

for all storytellers and teachers, also facilitated a closer relationship between teacher

and pupils because of the apparent blurring of the boundaries between the persona of

Jesus and that of the teacher. The chapter will conclude by arguing that the Sunday

school story of Jesus the friend of little children, was in its context of delivery and its

content a gendered narrative which inevitably (even if unintentionally) positioned girls

as the special focus of Jesus' affections.

The story of Jesus blessing the children was specifically selected by

evangelical educators for several reasons. Firstly, it is emblematic of the view of

Jesus as the friend of little children which emerges out of a Froebelian-inspired child-

centred pedagogy. It is also a story about Jesus told to children which has the added

advantage of children being the central concern of the episode. Jesus blessing the

children is also the main event in which the needs of children appear to triumph over

the authority of adults and where children are seen as a greater priority than their

elders, thus, in G. H. Archibald's terms, it is a scene which represents a challenge to

'adultism'. The chapter will demonstrate how this simple scene of Jesus blessing the

children taken from the New Testament provided both teachers and children with the

opportunity to identify themselves within the story - the former with Jesus as the ideal

teacher and the special friend of little children, the latter with the children whom Jesus

blessed. Both adults and children are seen to be interpellated by the content and the

moral of the story, for not only are children provided with the means of identifying with

those in the story, but adults are also able to use it as a means of remembering what

it was like to be a child. This is of particular importance in the context of this

discussion, but not just because of the Christian exhortation that entry to the kingdom

of heaven is only possible if the believer has the innocence of the child. In Chapter

Four we saw how Newby (1926) identified introspection as one of the methods used in child study and that Archibald (1913) had stressed the need to eradicate what he termed 'adultism'. This approach to education requires that the teacher's own memory be used as a conduit to the 'child mind' which will help them to understand the child's emotional needs by reference to their own early experiences. This need for introspection on the part of teachers is one of the methods of child study identified by Newby (1926) and discussed in the previous chapter. The chapter will also show how through the pedagogy of storytelling, the tale of Jesus blessing the children was taken up by writers and teachers and developed into a fully fledged story which went far beyond the small mention in the New Testament.

## In Place of Fear - A Suitable Story for Children

Chapter Four documented how the story of Jesus was adapted from its original sacred text to take account of the competition for audiences in the increasingly secular publishing marketplace. That discussion also emphasised how through the economy of the Sunday school, evangelical publishers could effectively target working class children with their wares as the price of a book or picture was borne by the religious organisation and not by the child. But the particular audience with which this chapter is concerned is that of the kindergarten child and it is the telling of the story rather than the story as product which is the central focus.

This younger age group presented the writers and tellers of the story of Jesus with several difficulties. The study of the 'child mind' had identified four key stages of development with their associated key features, the tendency towards instinctive and imitative behaviour being specifically linked to this age group. It was argued by evangelical educationalists, for example, that if the children exposed to such material

were to develop their imitative faculties by relating to what they heard or saw, there were some areas of human life which might be unsuitable for children, even if such aspects had been documented in the Bible. Therefore, as we saw in the previous chapter, the story of the life of Jesus was adapted from its original source, the Gospels, and re-presented as an expurgated version in which references to sex and violence, like Jesus' association with women of ill repute, and his physical attack on the money-lenders at the Temple were removed. Re-presenting scriptural texts for a younger audience had been a particular problem for authors seeking to adapt the Old Testament, as this review of *In the Beginning; Being the Book of Genesis Told to Children* by S.B. Macey, demonstrates:

> Mrs Macey has succeeded in translating the Book of Genesis into the
> language of childhood...The stories of Potiphar's wife and of Sodom are
> skilfully bowdlerised, but it would have been wiser to pass by the rite of
> circumcision. (*Journal of Education* 1910: 854)

The use of the term 'translating' and the phrase 'the language of childhood' is significant, for it highlights the pedagogical acceptance of developmental theory, of adapting both language and content to meet the cognitive and emotional needs of particular age groups.

The observation in the review that the rite of circumcision would have been best avoided, highlights the problems (for teacher and child) inherent in introducing children to information which is beyond their experience or comprehension. Thus the application of developmental thinking to storytelling can be seen as an attempt to provide important guidelines which aim to protect both the teller of the tale and his/her audience; the former from the embarrassment of having to answer difficult questions

and the latter from exposure to information with which they are not yet psychologically equipped to cope.

As noted above, the kindergarten age group was identified through child study as very prone to suggestibility and while this openness to influence could be a useful tool in the classroom if handled correctly, it was also accompanied by a 'proneness to fear' (Newby 1926: 119). The kindergarten version of the Jesus story emerged out of such dual concerns, for if, as is claimed by Newby, the 'child has a craving for love' and that 'it is the loving attitude of those he comes across which drives out fear' (Newby 1926: 121), then emphasising Jesus' loving attitude towards children is an effective way of eradicating the fear to which this particular age group are prone. But in Mary Higgs' account of development, the emphasis is more on the fact that this is identified as the un-moral stage and that suggestibility here can lend itself to effective moral training.

> By far the largest share in the development of morals is at this stage borne by the imprinting of *habits*. The plasticity of the mind renders the formation of habit very easy. It is only necessary to link certain habits to pleasure and others to pain in order to turn the mind in definite directions. (Higgs 1910:19)

Here, fear is not eradicated but managed and, as we will see in subsequent chapters, is, through its connection with guilt, employed in emotive narrative strategies which are aimed at turning the mind in very definite directions.

Despite the fact that Higgs was a member of the Froebel Society of Great Britain and it was the same organisation which published her booklet *The Evolution of the Child Mind* (1910), her advice tends towards a didactic and mechanistic approach to teaching which is in sharp contrast to Froebel's actual philosophy. Although Froebel's influence is apparent when she writes that

> By exercise of pleasurable emotion the child should have learnt to attach value to Love, Truth, Goodness, Beauty, the abstract beginning to dawn through concrete experience. (Higgs 1910:38)

on the preceding page she talks about instructing the mind:

> The mind should be instructed by story, parable, dramatized history, game, and song in elementary morality so that ideas of honesty, kindness, gratitude, and courage, and other moral virtues are familiar by action. (Higgs 1910: 38)

By contrast, Newby writes more positively that the power of imagination is very strong at this stage of development and 'is readily fed by Bible stories' which are 'illustrated profusely by pictures and models'. There was an obvious tension between those educational strategies which placed the emphasis on training the child as opposed to those which facilitated inferential learning through experience. Such tensions and contradictions are to be found in the various writings on child study. But the one pedagogic strategy which appeared to unite these disparate approaches was the use of storytelling as a positive aid to the cognitive and moral development of the child. To this end, Higgs and Newby were in agreement that the best story for children of all ages was that of the 'hero of heroes' and the ideal role model, Jesus Christ, although the narrative was to be given a different emphasis for different age groups.

The difficulty of presenting the story of Jesus to the kindergarten group was not simply a question of suitable content. With younger children there was the added requirement to give careful consideration to the language used and the mode of address. Such consideration can be seen here in the Preface to *The Sweet Story of Jesus*:

> This little book is compiled on the basis of a carefully collated harmony of the Gospels, and contains such portions of the sacred narrative as seem suitable to children, and can be readily made more interesting and intelligible to them. The wording chosen is what might be used in a *viva voce* explanation to the little ones. (Bate 1907: 1)

The use of the term *viva voce* is interesting for it indicates that the author sees the narrator's role as not simply that of telling the story but also providing explanations through anticipating the questions of her young audience. It is thus not simply a *living* voice which is identified here but specifically a *motherly* voice. It is also the voice of firm but gentle authority which is capable of providing explanations to little ones but which at the same time is formulating such explanations in ways that they can understand and relate to, therefore it is also a *teacherly* voice, but a teacher whose persona is imbued with aspects of familial intimacy. The emphasis on the *viva voce* sometimes led authors down the path of introducing anachronistic detail into the story which owed more to their own (middle-class) upbringing than it did to the original narrative, as the following example taken from *Stories About Jesus for Very Little Children* makes clear:

> As He grew older, Jesus used to have fun helping His mother in the house. He used to help her dust and wash up the dinner-things, and make the beds (Edward 1933: 14)[42]

In other versions, the child Jesus was held up as a paragon who always ate everything on his plate and who never made a fuss about being put to bed for an afternoon nap

The appearance of the 'maternal teacherly voice' in printed books was a literary device which sought to imitate the context of the schoolroom, but it is worth considering in closer detail exactly what kind of schoolroom that is. The voice in such

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[42] Entwhistle 1994 provides an earlier appearance of this remarkably domestic tendency in Jesus when she cites the following from a sermon by Baring Gould:
> What was Christ's first thought (on Easter Sunday)? To escape the tomb; to see his mother? No. He first folded up his grave clothes and put them properly in their proper place.

books is invariably female[43], often maternal in its solicitations and the audience is often addressed in the plural, i.e. children as a group rather than as individuals. Thus the ethos of the Sunday or Elementary - but definitely not Public - school is inserted into books to be read at home by children as well as at school by the teacher.

## The Pedagogy of Storytelling in the Sunday School

As was noted in Chapter Four, according to Cliff's (1986) account of the development of the movement in England, the architect of the modern Sunday school was the Canadian George Hamilton Archibald. Prior to coming to England, he had spent some time teaching at the Hartford School of Religious Pedagogy which specialised in training people for salaried lay work in the Church. Although Archibald was to publish a book of guidance to teachers on storytelling, The Dangers of Pointing the Moral in 1913, three years earlier in 1910, a former colleague of his, Edward Porter St. John, a professor of pedagogy at Hartford had a series of articles on story-telling published in The Sunday School Chronicle which was also published that year in book form. The series of ten articles provides strong evidence of the influence of developmental thinking among Sunday school teachers. Although there is little explicit reference to child study or the influence of Froebel, the articles implicitly assume the reader's familiarity with such ideas as we will see in the discussion which follows.

In the first instalment of the series, 'The Educational Value of the Story', Edward Porter St. John observes that whilst most people enjoy stories they do not take the activity of story-telling seriously and that while most people respond to the

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[43] The majority of the named authors of the Jesus story books listed in the bibliography are female, and usually employ their title 'Mrs.'.

charm of a well-told tale, very few people (including many teachers) are aware that the appeal of the story is rooted in the moral forces it stirs. He adds that:

> When stories have been told for any purpose beyond that of mere entertainment, commonly it has been as the first step in literary training or simply to call back the wandering attention of the pupil to a lesson that is essentially dull. Still such stories as have been used have had their secret influences, and character has been shaped for good or ill. (SSCCO 10/3/10: 199)

St. John's acknowledgement that the stories may have an ability to stir feelings, among which there are moral forces, and that they have 'secret influences' predates the psychoanalytical perspective of Bettelheim by almost 70 years and is a Froebelian-inspired view which is echoed by Sarah Cone Bryant, another 'expert' on the theory and practice of story telling, who writes that:

> A story is a work of art. Its greatest use to the child is in the everlasting appeal of beauty by which the soul of man is constantly pricked to new hungers, quickened to new perceptions, and so given desire to grow.
> ...the storyteller who has given the listening children such pleasure...may or may not have added one fact to the content of their minds; she has invariably added something to the vital powers of their souls.(Cone Bryant 1919: 21-22)

Bryant uses the term 'soul' in a secular context and thus links her discussion to the notion of sweetness and light discussed earlier. St. John's central concern, however, is with story-telling in the service of Christian morality, for he adds that 'The preachers of our own day who have had widespread popular influence, have been those who have not scorned the story-teller's art'. He identifies Jesus as the one whose example as a storyteller is to be followed, and adds that the story of his life is the one which has the greatest effect 'in stirring feelings and exerting its secret influence':

> Jesus was a master story-teller. He did not invent the parable; the rabbis used it constantly; but so skilful was his use of the device that in our thought it is associated almost wholly with His Name...His stories were marvels of perfection both in form and use...It is not strange that the stories impressed His

followers so strongly that many of them found a place in the record of His life and teaching.

Most of us find that we have gained our clearest and most impressive knowledge of His teachings from those parables or from the simple account of His life which is the story of the Gospels. When we seek to minister to a needy heart we commonly turn to the story of His life or to one of the stories He told. (SSCCO 10/3/10:199)

Unlike many of his peers he does not find the Old Testament stories as unsuitable for children. He sees value in *Genesis* and *Samuel* in Sunday School teaching because they are 'full of stories' and that 'the very fact of their selection is a strong, if unconscious tribute to the story as a pedagogical device'. Acknowledging the stages identified in developmental theory, he adds that the story has a special value for children because:

> The child, little creature of blind instinct at first, stands just at the border line between these two levels of life. Controlled chiefly by impulses from within, he is yet ready for the upward step into that stage of existence where the soul shapes itself after a pattern which it has chosen. It is to the story chiefly that the child is indebted for his introduction to this world of the ideal. It shows himself and what he might become. (SSCCO 10/3/10: 199)

Here again is reference to the younger child as a creature of blind instinct and of the embryonic nature of the child, but this is not a deterministic biological model of development, but a psychological model which implies that outcomes are not fixed and that interventions can influence future development. It draws upon the optimistic view of children advanced by Froebel in seeing stories as the information about the world yet to be encountered but which implicitly feeds the emotional life of the child through imaginative engagement.

## Fairy Tales, Children and Morality

In Chapter Four, Pemberton-Clarke's *Fairy Tales for Every Day* (c.1902) was used as an example of the ways in which evangelicals adapted the once reviled genre

of the fairy tale to further their own aims. But the question of how fantasy narratives

could be used to inculcate sound morals in children was a continuing subject of

discussion. St. John's third article 'The Use of Idealistic Stories' focused on the use of

stories which he divided into two groups and which could be used for moral and

religious education:

> These classes may be distinguished as the idealistic and the realistic stories. The first group included those that are imaginary in origin which take liberty with facts, but which embody and set forth principles or truths; the second is made up of those that are or profess to be strictly conformed to fact. ( SSCCO 1/4/10: 296)

While emphasising the need to clearly distinguish between the two, he sees both as

helpful to Sunday school teachers arguing that just because a story is untrue it does

not follow that it is unsuitable for teaching purposes:

> The departure from prosaic and temporary fact is that the ideal and eternal truth may be more strongly emphasized. Events are related that could not have possibly happened, but it does not follow that the tale must have a vicious influence.
> Among the important forms of idealistic stories are fairy and folk-tales, myths, legends, fables, and allegories. Most of these have a moral content, and indeed a moral aim was usually responsible for their origin. (SSCCO 1/4/10: 296)

In the discussion which follows he returns to the debate concerning the status

of fairy and folk tales in relation to religious and moral education with particular

reference to the developmental needs of the young:

> Most fairy-tales and folk-tales whether they are modern in origin or...have come down to us from a very distant past, have this distinctly moral quality, which appears in the fact that virtue is rewarded and wrong-doing receives its punishment. This, the critic will object, is true of real life as well. So much may be granted, but we must remember that "the mills of God grind slowly", and that frequently the child is unable to trace the relation between cause and effect in such cases. (SSCCO 1/4/10: 296)

St. John is emphasising the method of introspection as a means of pointing out that what might be immediately apparent to an adult because of the benefit of experience, has to be presented to children in a form which takes account of their limited experience and intellectual abilities. Fairy tales are seen as good for children because they enable them use fantasy to make the connection between wrongdoing and punishment which can be applied to their own experience. This is because 'In fairy land...penalty quickly follows offence.' And according to St. John, stories are like toys, for although they are the product of another person they enable the child to use its imaginative power in transforming them into something of their own. Thus developmental theory can be seen to inform the understanding which enables St. John to present a child-centred approach to storytelling which is also designed to alleviate the anxieties of teachers concerned about using secular narrative forms in the teaching of religion.

In the 'Story Interests of Childhood' (SSCO 30/6/10: 583) he advises teachers not to worry about telling younger children the stories of Jesus' miracles, because for younger children these stories of wonder are part of their everyday experience in learning about the wider world:

> The very well-known interest of young children in myths, fairy tales, and folk-tales brings no contradictory evidence here, for it is not the supernatural or marvellous elements in these stories that appeals to the mind of the child...He does not yet live in a world of law. and these things are like the everyday happenings of his own life. The real interest is rather that which has been mentioned above, for all the fairies, witches, gnomes and giants that appear in these kinds of literature are really but children masquerading in other forms.[44] (SSCCO 30/6/10: 583)

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[44] This was a view which was later to be challenged by De Lissa who wrote that: 'The miracles are best omitted. They suggest magic, and thus give a totally false impression, and one that has to be unlearned before the true comprehension can be gained.' (1939:122)

This reference to the child living in its own world of symbol and fantasy is important because while St. John does not explore this point in any further detail, he emphasises yet again the view that storytelling provides children with the raw material for imaginative exploration of the world. Sarah Cone Bryant the author of *How to Tell Stories to Children* (1910) and *Stories to Tell to Children* (1911), also adheres to this view of fairy tales as being a useful tool in the development of the child's moral sensibility, even though according to the stages identified by developmental theory, the moral stage is identified as being reached at a later age than the kindergarten group. Here again is observed the influence of Froebelian thinking in terms of the child acquiring information of the world in advance of the point at which such knowledge will be understood or applied. Within such thinking fairy tales function as a pre-conscious preparation for the complexities of the world to come:

> If there were no other criteria at all, it would be enough that the children love the fairy tale; we give them fairy stories, first, because they like them. But that by no means lessens the importance of the fact that fairy tales are also good for them.
> ...First...in their supreme power of presenting truth through the guise of images...Elemental truths of moral law and general types of human experience are presented in the fairy tale; in the poetry of their image, and although the child is aware only of the image at the time, the truth enters with it and becomes a part of his individual experience, *to be recognised in its relations at a later stage*. Every truth and type so given broadens and deepens the capacity of the child's inner life, and adds an element to the store from which he draws his moral inferences. (Bryant 1919: 30-1) [my emphasis]

In both style and content, the language used by Bryant and St. John is a clear echo of Froebel's original view that fairy tales and myths feed the inner life of the child by providing them with resources which will be drawn upon in later life. Thus fairy tales are seen as a vital part of the developing child's experience of the world for they awaken them, albeit at a pre-conscious level, to some of the difficulties which lie ahead.

In 'Some Tricks of the Story-telling Trade' (SSCCO 19/5/10: 456) St. John

discusses some of the many devices used by good story-tellers, the main one being

the use of direct rather than indirect speech because it gives:

> the semblance of reality to an imaginary tale ... by letting the characters speak
> for themselves. The personality of the narrator is less intrusive, and the effect
> upon the hearer is that of looking on at a scene in real life. (SSCCO 19/5/10:
> 456)

Again in this, the third article in the series, St. John reiterates the connection between

story-telling and Jesus and describes how the benefit of employing the device of

direct speech was acknowledged by Jesus in the parables he told to his followers. In

addition, he writes that the use of colloquialisms is as appropriate in most stories 'as

technical terms are in a scientific treatise' for it is another device which is employed to

shift attention away from the form of the story. This view that the story-teller needs to

merge into the background and allow the content of the story to penetrate the

imagination of the listener, provides an indication of how the practice of story-telling

was not only being given serious consideration by teachers but was also being

integrated into the service of pedagogy in both Sunday and Elementary schools.

Bryant is much more explicit about such processes and of the pedagogical benefits to

be reaped from effective story telling when she writes that:

> Intimately connected with the enjoyment given are two very practically
> beneficial results which the story-teller may hope to obtain, and at least one of
> which will be a reward to herself. The first is a relaxation of the tense
> schoolroom atmosphere, valuable for its refreshing recreative power...The
> second result...is not so obvious but it is even more desirable; it is this: story-
> telling is at once one of the simplest and quickest ways of establishing a happy
> relation between teacher and children, and one of the most effective methods
> of forming the habit of fixed attention in the latter. (Bryant 1919: 23)

To emphasise the point she is making about the way in which story telling can break

down barriers between adults and children, she describes how this worked in practice

with her young niece, who, being at first reticent, jumped into her lap for a cuddle after being told a story by her:

> "Oh, blessed tale," thought I, "so easy a passport to a confidence so desired, so complete!" Never had the witchery of the story come more closely home to me. But the fact of the witchery was no new experience. The *surrender* of the *natural* child to the story-teller is as *absolute and invariable* as that of a devotee to the priest of his own sect. (Bryant 1919: 25) [my emphasis]

This is a remarkable statement which makes explicit the eroticised relationship constructed between the 'natural' child and the storyteller to whom she gives her 'absolute and invariable surrender'. Bryant does not attempt to minimise the point she is making, rather she makes very clear that storytelling might function as a seduction of the child by the adult, when she goes on to explore the personal power of the story teller in relation to the audience:

> I believe the inner secret success is the measure of force with which the teller wills the conveyance of his impression to the hearer.
> Anyone who has watched, or has himself been, the teller of a story which held an audience, knows that there is something approaching hypnotic suggestion in the close connection of effort and effect, and in the elimination of self-consciousness from speaker and listeners alike.
> I would not for a moment lend the atmosphere of charlatanry...to the wholesome and vivid art of story-telling. But I would...help the teacher to realise how largely success in that art is a subjective and psychological matter, dependent on her control of her own mood and her sense of direct, intimate communion with the minds attending her.(Bryant 1919: 98)

The phrase 'direct, intimate communion' is a revealing one for it makes explicit the way in which teachers, through the theory and practice of story telling were encouraged to place themselves in the role occupied by Jesus within such discourses. For within the pedagogy of story telling recounted above, Jesus was presented both as the ideal story teller and the perfect teacher, but, more importantly, he was also presented within the story as the friend to little children. Thus Bryant's references to the way in which story telling can be used to relax 'the tense

schoolroom atmosphere' and establish 'a happy relation between teacher and children' (see photograph of Sunday schoolroom in appendix 1), whilst at the same time being 'the most effective methods of forming the habit of fixed attention in the latter', provides clear evidence of the desire of the teacher to establish a mode of regulation which appeared to spontaneously arise from the child. When it was the direct result of subtle and psychological organisation by the teacher seeking to present herself to her pupils as an intimate friend rather than an as an authoritarian figure. Thus the pedagogy of storytelling, through the story of Jesus can be seen to have functioned as an effective tool in the 'eroticization, emotionalization and subjectivization' (Rose 1991) of the relationship between teacher and pupils.

## The Power of Rhythm and Repetition

The discussion so far has explored how the influence of developmental theory was apparent in the guidance offered to teachers by experts in the pedagogy of storytelling, and has tended to concentrate on stories told in prose form, but the life of Jesus, which is the focus of this thesis, is also a story which has been told in verse through hymns and Christmas carols. St John highlights the storytelling value of rhythmic repetition and speeches in verse, particularly for the very young who are in the process of acquiring language skills. Although there is no claim made here for a nursery rhyme version of Jesus, there is no doubt that the plethora of children's hymns sung daily at school assembly did contribute to fixing in children's minds a view of Jesus as their special friend. Children's hymns provide us with the most abbreviated verbal accounts of episodes in Christ's life and can be usefully identified as the means by which very young children were first introduced to the story, a story

which was to be retold in extended and pictorial versions throughout their twelve or more years of attending Sunday school.

The life of Jesus is often used an organising theme in turn of the century hymn books for children. In the Sunday School Hymnary[45] there are 83 hymns collected together under the heading "The Old, Old Story", starting with the Nativity and ending with Jesus's resurrection, and although (as would be expected) there are many Christmas carols, there is also a substantial sub-genre of hymns which make particular reference to story telling, that is both the stories told *by* Jesus and stories told *about* Jesus. Under the sub-heading "Who went about doing good" we find this example:

Tell me the stories of Jesus
I love to hear:
Thing I would ask Him to tell me
If He were here:
Scenes by the wayside,
Tales of the sea,
Stories of Jesus,
Tell them to me.

(Girls) First let me hear how the children
Stood round His knee:
And I shall fancy His blessing
Resting on me:
Words full of kindness,
Deeds full of grace,
All in the lovelight
Of Jesus' face.

(Boys) Into the city I'd follow
The children's band,
Waving a branch of the palm-tree
High in my hand;
One of His heralds,
Yes I would sing
Loudest Hosannas!
Jesus the King!                    W. H. Parker 1904

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[45] No date given but circa 1906. Edited by Rev. Carey Bonner one of the leading lights of the Sunday school movement and published by the National Sunday School Union - the title page boasts three million, eight hundred and ninetieth thousand [copies].

Here we find that different verses are allocated to girls and to boys, with girls being required to sing about emotions, animals and flowers whereas the boys sing the verse which is concerned with action. This allocation of separate verses also produces a gendered division in the children's constructed relation to Jesus with girls being specifically asked to imagine themselves as the children who stand around Jesus' knee and to 'fancy His blessing resting on me...All in the lovelight of Jesus' face'. Where the boys are encouraged to see themselves as part of the band of children following the procession of Jesus their King, into Jerusalem, the girls are asked to view him as a source of physical and emotional love.

Another song in this section of the Hymnary and designated for the junior section of the Sunday school emphasises the need to return to the simplicity of the very young child in order to receive the Christian message. The hymn is also seen as being suitable for `real' little children as well as the penitent adults who wish to recreate that original simple relationship with Jesus:

Tell me the old, old story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love.

Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child.
For I am weak and weary,
And helpless and defiled.                         Kate Hankey 1806

Here we can see a reiteration of Bryant's view of the 'natural' child which is a state of mind which can be returned to through listening to the story...In this hymns, the 'old, old story' of Jesus' glory, but especially the emphasis on his love is reworked from its original nineteenth century exhortation for adults to 'become as little children'

in order to enter the kingdom of God, so that by the turn of the century, the decline in adult church-going contributed to children being the main audience for such songs.

Another hymn in this section is 'The Master has come over from Jordan' written circa 1850 by Julia Gill. It is constructed in story form and begins with the mother addressing the children - the maternal voice referred to earlier. This hymn provides another gendered reading of the narrative but this time it is not simply that, as in the earlier example, girls are asked to imagine themselves in the position of the children blessed by Jesus, rather the narrative is embroidered with extra detail. No longer are we presented with an anonymous group of children, but instead are introduced to a specific family in which the mother, Hannah, has two sons and two daughters named Samuel and John, and Rachel and Esther, and in which the girls are described as being singled out for special treatment by Jesus:

> "The Master has come over from Jordan"
> Said Hannah the mother one day;
> "He is healing the people who throng Him,
> With a touch of His finger, they say.
> And now I shall take Him the children,
> Little Rachel and Samuel and John,
> I shall carry the baby, Esther,
> For the Lord to look upon."
>
> So over the hills of Judah,
> Along by the vine-rows green.
> With Esther asleep on her bosom,
> And Rachel her brothers between;
> 'Mid the people who hung on His teaching,
> Or waited His touch and His word,-
> Through the row of proud Pharisees listening,
> She pressed to the feet of the Lord.
>
> (Boys)
> "Now why shouldst thou hinder the Master,"
> Said Peter, "With children like these?
> Seest not how from morning to evening
> He is teaching and healing disease?"

(Girls)
Then Christ said, "Forbid not the children,
Permit them to come unto Me!"
And He took in His arms little Esther,
And Rachel He sat on His knee. etc.

Again there is a division in the allocation of the verses and whilst the boys are given

the part of Peter the girls sing the words of Jesus, but the last two lines are

particularly significant for they demonstrate how in such retellings of this story, it is

invariably girls who are chosen to receive Jesus' blessing.

Within this genre there is one hymn above all others which is raised to almost

emblematic status as will be shown in the discussion which follows, for it appears to

encapsulate all the key elements of the child-centred version of the Jesus story[46]. In

addition, it is the one most frequently referred to by the authors re-presenting the story

of Jesus for kindergarten children:

I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men.
How He called little children, as lambs to his fold.
I should like to have been with them then.

I wish that His hands had been placed on my head.
That His arm had been thrown around me.
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
"Let the little ones come unto Me."

This very popular hymn among young and old which was written by Jemima Lukes in

1841, manages to encapsulate the way in which Christian educationalists approached

the teaching of Jesus for children at the turn of the twentieth century. This hymn

provides the title for Hesba Stretton's book The Sweet Story of Old (c. 1884) and is

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[46] The hymn's centrality to the Sunday school's child study project is made clear its inclusion in Carey Bonner's (c. 1916) discussion of 'Some hymns and their authors' for in the three 'Celebrated Hymns for Children' it is the first selection and he refers to it as 'this classic hymn for children'. The other two hymns for children are: 'There is a Happy Land' and 'There's a friend for Little Children'.

also used as an endpiece for her account of Jesus blessing the children. In C. M.

Steedman's *The Child's Life Of Jesus* (1906) it is this same hymn, rather than the

biblical text, which is the reference point in her account of the same event.

Steedman's is, moreover, the only one encountered by the writer which attempts to

explain Jesus' fondness for children by reference to the massacre of the innocents. It

is also interesting for the way in which the *viva voce* referred to earlier in the chapter,

is employed to provide an informal conversational relationship with the audience:

> However sad and tired His face might be, it would always brighten up at the sight of children. He liked to have them around Him; to feel the touch of their little hands, and look into the bright and happy faces gazing up so trustfully into His own. *Was it the memory of the little children of Bethlehem who laid down their lives for Him, when He Himself was such a little child, that made Jesus look with such loving eyes on the children, and speak so tenderly about them, I wonder? It may have been so.*
> One day, as He was, perhaps, seated wearily by the wayside, some of the Perean mothers, who had heard that the famous Rabbi and Friend of little children was passing by, brought their little ones to Him that they might receive the touch of His holy hands. The disciples, however, took it ill that Jesus should be thus disturbed. `The Master does not want to be troubled by children,' they said to the mothers; `take them away.' But when Jesus knew it His eyes flashed with anger. `Suffer the little children to come unto Me,' He said, `and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God.' And He took them up in his arms and blessed them. O happy little children of `the other side of Jordan,' to feel the hand of Jesus laid upon their heads and to hear those words of blessing! *To which of us has not the thought come, which the children's hymn puts so well into words-*

> `I think when I read that sweet story of old,
> When Jesus was here among men,
> How He called little children like lambs to His fold,
> I should like to have been with Him then.
> I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
> That His arm had been thrown around me,
> And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
> "Let the little ones come unto Me." '

> Well, dear child, is it not a good thought to remember that Jesus is always the children's Saviour and the children's King? (Steedman 1906: 277-278)[my emphasis]

As we have seen from the examples of hymns for children discussed above, there tended to be a gendered relationship constructed which allocated active responses to boys and emotional responses to girls. The children in the hymns appear to function as role models for the 'natural' child, thus the child is being provided with guidance for what the adults believe is the appropriate response to Jesus. But girls in particular, through being allocated identificatory positions which emphasise emotionality, are provided with an eroticised relationship to Jesus

In a later version of the story by Rev. John Sinclair Stevenson (1928) written for his little daughter and significantly called *The Friend of Little Children* the same verse from the hymn is again used to emphasise the strength of Jesus's love of children. Once more, Jesus is identified as the friend of little children and the verse from the hymn is used to ask children to imagine themselves as the children in the story and to desire the loving touch of Jesus. In addition, the line in the hymn in which 'He called little children as lambs to his fold' is one which encourages children to see themselves as small and vulnerable therefore in need of the love and physical protection of a strong adult, which might be Jesus, but as he is no longer on earth, might be a desire projected on to the teacher.[47]

The eroticisation of that relationship is clearly related to the regulation of the child's behaviour and the stories above make an implicit connection between obtaining Jesus' loving touch and being able to be a 'good' boy or girl. Thus the

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[47] In the Sunday School Times 3/1/24 an anonymous article titled 'Twig-Training by A Teacher of Tinies' observes that:

> A teacher has many temptations in her work. Most of us know how hard it is to keep from with making a favourite of a particularly loveable child. Some children always creep into our hearts so quickly, while on the other hand it is difficult to be fair with the child who constantly annoys one. We must reprove, and if necessary, punish, but we need to pray for love that will be just and kind to those who seem unlovely. We have our reward in the thrill of a confiding little hand on the teacher's knee, or the gentle leaning of a loving little body. (p.6)

regulation of the children is sought through an emotional engagement with the loving

Christ who is presented to them as an ever-present but invisible watcher and listener

of everything they say and do. The divine panopticon gaze of Jesus - unlike that of

God - is eroticized because it emphasises its protective function more strongly than

the 'spy in the sky' regulative gaze and many hymns for children offer ways of

negotiating between the surveillant and the erotic gaze, for a child might sing "There

is no eye like the eye of Jesus, piercing so far away. Ne'er out of the sight of its tender

light, can the wanderer stray." Or

> Jesus bids us shine first of all for Him.
> Well he sees and knows it if our light grows dim.
> He looks down from heaven to see us shine -
> You in your small corner, and I in mine.

alongside the more tender:

> Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me! Bless Thy little lamb tonight!
> Through the darkness be Thou near me, keep me safe till morning light.
> All this day Thy hand has led me, and I thank Thee for Thy care:
> Thou hast clothed me, warmed, and fed me: listen to my evening prayer
> Let my sins be all forgiven! Bless the friends I love so well!
> Take me when I die to heaven, happy there with thee to dwell.

Such hymns by stressing the weakness and vulnerability of children thus

emphasise their need for a strong and watchful protector:

> Very young and weak am I, yet He guides me with His eye:
> In a pleasant path He leads me, with a gentle hand He feeds me.
> Chides me when I am doing wrong. Listens to my happy song.
> He is with me all the day. With me in my busy play:
> O'er my waking and my sleeping Jesus still a watch is keeping;
> I can lay me down and rest, sweetly pillowed on His breast.

Variations on the same theme introduce the idea of Jesus' benign and

protective gaze being part of a contract with the child; one which is based on the

assumption that the child is the beneficiary of the sacrifices Jesus has made and

that there is a debt to be paid:

> Dear Jesus ever at my side, how loving must Thou be,
> To leave Thy home in heaven, to guard a little child like me.
> Thy beautiful and shining face I see not, though so near:
> The sweetness of Thy soft, low voice I am too deaf to hear.
> I cannot feel thee touch my hand, with pressure light and mild,
> To check me, as my mother does her erring little child;
> But I have felt Thee in my thought, fighting with sin for me;
> And when my heart loves God, I know the sweetness is from Thee.
> And when, dear Saviour, I kneel down, moring and night to prayer,
> Something there is within my heart which tells me Thou art there.
> Yes! when I pray, Thou prayest too. The prayer is all for me:
> But when I sleep, Thou sleepest not, but watchest patiently.

The need to develop an intimacy between children and teacher is seen as of

particular use in storytelling as we have seen earlier, just as story telling is seen as

the means to achieving that intimacy. Woutrina A. Bone, a Lecturer in Education at

the University of Sheffield noted that:

> Little children...look before all else for something which comes from the teller,
> an intimacy of relation between him and themselves, a conviction in the telling,
> a *personableness*.. (Bone 1923: x)

Bone's call for a *conviction* in the telling is echoed in the story telling guidance offered

by Bryant who says that the best results arise from telling stories which have meaning

for the teller. Also St John writes that one of the best ways of achieving that level of

involvement is to remember the first impressions the story aroused for the teller:

> ...one may well remember that one's favourite story is usually one's
> best...Whatever one has deeply felt will appeal to many others if it is rightly
> presented. The stories that have moved you are the ones through which *you*, if
> not another, can best stir other hearts.. (SSCCO 22/9/10: 823)

This important issue concerning the stories which have stirred the hearts of the teachers will be returned to in Chapter Eight, but the focus here is on the versions of the Jesus story which were believed to make an appeal to the emotions of children.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to claim to offer verbatim accounts of the story of Jesus told to children in Elementary and Sunday school classrooms in the first half of this century. But it is possible to see how, in the stories above, which were circulated in printed as opposed to oral form, the personableness, referred to by Bone is achieved through the authors' attempts to simulate the *viva voce* referred to earlier; to try to recreate through the published work the same intimacy which was the aim of Froebelian-inspired storytellers. And in looking more closely at various examples of the telling of the story of Jesus blessing the children, it is possible to discern how the points made by St. John and others with regard to how the theories of child study were reflected in story telling practice, for as St. John himself acknowledges in his article 'The Story Interests of Childhood':

> It has been found that certain interests are common to practically all children, and that particular ones are characteristic of particular stages of development...(and that)...This conception of the meaning of interest, which has been well-established by investigations in child-study and kindred branches of psychology, has not only won the favour of many who in the past ignored it, but has changed the attitude of some who formerly valued it as an aid in the teaching process. No longer is the aim simply to make the lesson interesting, perhaps by linking with it in a purely artificial way something to which the child's attention naturally goes out: now the teacher seeks to understand the natural interests of the child, and to shape the lesson from the material and the relations that are thus indicated as the ones that nature would use to prepare the unfolding life for the experiences that are before it. (SSCCO 30/6/10: 583)

Out of such discourses emerges the notion of the 'natural' interests of the child a view derived from Froebel's own observations and the more modern scientific methods of child study:

The teacher who selects stories of child life for children of the Kindergarten and Primary grades is not in error, for both common observation and scientific study testify that young children are especially interested in the doings of others about their own age....there appears a special interest in the stories of the birth of Jesus....it is wholly probable that the child's chief interest in stories...centres not so much in the unusual as in the familiar elements. It is the life of a child, the very life that he knows best, that the child wishes to see portrayed. (SSCCO 30/6/10: 583)

What becomes clear from this line of discussion is that it is not only adults who are involved in trying understand what it is to be a child; that children too wish to know what is to be expected of them and of their capabilities in the wider world. That as Froebel had stated almost a century earlier, children learn about their inner strengths and their value systems through stories which use their imaginative faculties to explore a wider range of experiences than those in which they ordinarily live. But in doing so they are also learning the culturally produced and historically specific meanings about what it is to be a child. This is because 'the child' in Western society has been discursively constructed and individual children have recognised the roles they were expected to play through the way in which the adult discourses of education and psychology have been reflected in the popular culture forms and practices of story telling.

## The Maternal Male and the Gendered Audience

In the preceding sections we have seen how the *viva voce* used in many versions of the life of Jesus for children could be characterised as a maternal and teacherly voice. Further, we have noted that in the version of the story told through hymns, girls were allocated a specific position in relation to Jesus and that this was rooted in an emotional engagement. In this section we will explore the ways in which

Jesus is presented to children as a nurturing man who, unlike his disciples, enjoys the company of children.

In the *Stories of Jesus*[48] published in 1903 the particular story with which we are concerned is titled 'Jesus and the Children'. The text is very minimal, apparently owing its existence to the need to provide the written support for the illustrations. Despite the brevity of the account there is still space given to stress Jesus' face 'full of love' and the comparison of little children with lambs entering their fold.

In *Scenes and Stories from the New Testament* by Rev. H. J. Wilmot Buxton, published about 1907 the illustrator's name - Wyndham Hughes - appears before that of the author thus indicating the growing importance attached to pictures. It emphasises again the child study view that what entered the child's mind through 'eye-gate' was seen as being especially powerful. Buxton's version of Jesus blessing the children - called 'Jesus and the Children' - provides a much more literal explanation of why he might be referred to as their Saviour and connects with the earlier reference to the relationship between children and Jesus as being one in which the former owe a debt of gratitude to the latter. So concerned is Buxton to emphasise the specialness of the relationship that he dares to make a claim which is demonstrably false:

> The Lord Jesus who lay an infant in the Manger at Bethlehem, and played and studied as a child among the hills of Nazareth, was always very careful to teach love and reverence for children. Before Christ came into the world, women and children were little cared for. There was no home life as we know it now. Women were treated as slaves, children were often neglected and killed by heathen parents.

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[48] No author is given but the book is illustrated by C.I. Staniland and is more of a picture book with accompanying text.

This theme of a world which, before Jesus, cared very little for children not only establishes him as the Saviour of children, but is also used to establish an obligation on the part of the child which can be achieved without having to go into too much detail about 'the Good Friday story'. This extract from *The Children's Friend*[49] is typical of so many passages in books and tracts of this genre which emphasise the debt children owe to Jesus:

> Before Jesus came nobody cared much for children, just because they were small and weak and innocent. People loved their children then as they do now, but thought of them as little men and women and were in a hurry for them to grow up. Nowadays almost everyone is kind to little boys and girls. They are more likely to be spoiled than treated cruelly. It was Jesus who made the change. (SPCK 1928)

But the fact that such benefits were achieved as the result of a very great sacrifice is made clear:

> You love to hear about the Friend of little children, how He was so patient and kind with every one and cared for us so much that he died a cruel death for our sakes. (SPCK 1928)

In Mildred Duff's[50] *The Children's Saviour*[51] (1911) the story is titled 'Jesus and some who came to Him' and is prefaced by a reference to the Biblical text Mark X :14. Being part of a programme of stories for children it begins with situating the tale of Jesus blessing the children by referring to other similar tales in which children are centrally featured, such as the raising of Jairus' daughter. Her version is interesting for the way in which it is told from a female perspective, that of the mothers who are

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[49] SPCK 1928. No author given and unpaginated.

[50]. The biography of Mildred Duff by Noel Hope reviewed in the *New Chronicle of Christian Education* 'is a tender and beautifully written account of the life of one of the practical saints of the Salvation Army. Born into a wealthy old-English family, presented at Court, surrounded by all the good gifts of this life, Mildred Duff surrendered all to serve in the slums of London and in the Army editorial office. The book is a benediction and it will surely be widely read. It is a gracious tribute to a selfless and Christ-like life spent in the saving of the last and the least'.

[51] Told in Fifty-Two Chapters, one for each Sunday in the Year illustrated by A.E.Howarth, Marshall Brothers.

rebuffed twice by the disciples the latter group showing that they consider children as unimportant as opposed to Jesus who is welcoming and loving. Also, there is also a clear division demonstrated here between the concerns of adults and those of children. In addition, the children are not depicted as a mass but are ascribed different ages and the evidence that this is a story which is aimed at an audience of younger children is made apparent by the reference to some of the children in the story as being comprised of `one or two big boys and girls, most likely of eight or nine'. The denouement, when at last it comes, is a triumph and vindication for the women, for Jesus sides with them against the disciples, with the children shown to be the beneficiaries of the women's determination. The contrast between the mothers' determination to bring their children to Jesus with the male disciples' attempts to keep them away, is highlighted in many versions of the story, so that not only is Jesus portrayed as the friend to little children but also to women. In addition, the intimacy between mothers and their children is described in detail so that Jesus emerges as the only man in the story who understands mother love and who is shown to be comfortable with and loving towards children.

In Muriel Chalmers version titled "Suffer Little Children To Come Unto Me" the story extends over four pages and acquires a new scene in which Chalmers describes how Jesus spent the night before the blessing of the children. In this version there is a reference to a chubby little child cuddling up to Jesus and the depiction of Jesus as the Stranger' is used to great effect for it enables the writer to show how Jesus was a initially a man whom the children were afraid of, but is later shown to be an adult who could laugh with them and take the time to listen to their stories. Significantly, it is a girl who approaches him first and slips her hand into his,

echoing the emphasis noted in the discussion of children's hymns, where girls

appeared to be singled out for Jesus' physical demonstration of affection.

## Summary

The discussion has shown how through the pedagogy of story-telling which

was established at the beginning of this century (and widely disseminated during the

following fifty years), developmental theory was inscribed in the reframing of the story

of Jesus for the kindergarten age group. The chapter demonstrated how a child-

centred pedagogy influenced by Froebelian thinking was a major influence in the

acceptance of the view that story-telling played a vital role in the development of

children by enabling them to draw into themselves knowledge of the world that they

had yet to experience. Whilst acknowledging that the central aim of the pedagogy of

storytelling was to stimulate the imaginative faculties of children in order to develop

'inner resources' and that this was consonant with Froebel's original intentions, the

chapter has provided evidence to show that there were other equally important

considerations driving the popularising of telling stories in general and the telling of

the story of Jesus in particular. We have seen how evangelists and educationalists

sought to provide clear guidelines for this classroom activity in order to produce

specific responses from a young audience and that the story of Jesus was itself seen

as providing an ideal example of the benefits of the activity for teachers themselves,

with Jesus quite explicitly identified by several writers as providing the best example

of the practice. In addition, we have seen that despite the frequent and often

inappropriate use of the male pronoun in the pedagogy of storytelling, most authors

stressed Froebel's view that the best teachers of the very young were women. This is

supported by the evidence provided which demonstrates that the genre of the Jesus

story told to children, was one written almost exclusively by women. Further, that the narrative device of incorporating an authorial 'voice' which simulated the act of oral storytelling also tended to stress the 'motherly' concern of the writer and that children were addressed as a group in such texts, thus simulating the context of the schoolroom.

In almost all of the versions of Jesus blessing the children examined here, men are depicted as considering children to be a nuisance, whereas Jesus is depicted as their friend; a man who enjoys joining in their games, telling them stories and sometimes even laughing with them - a man who makes time for children, but a man who can also perform miracles, a maternal male with the added attraction of 'magical' powers. On the evidence provided in this chapter the narrative of Jesus blessing the children is the story of a man told by women to children. But the emphasis on the 'feminine' is not confined to the way in which Jesus is shown to embody nurturing characteristics or the emphasis Froebel placed on the special powers of women teachers in relation to early learners. What emerges through the discussion above is that, as was argued in the central hypothesis, girls in particular were the focus of the attempts to construct an eroticised engagement with Jesus through the telling of his story - be that in the form of hymns or prose narratives. This was because within the many different versions of that story, girls feature so prominently as the special recipients of Jesus' physical affection. In addition, the girls in the story are not always anonymous but are often provided with names to facilitate a greater imaginative involvement in the story from those listening to it. The next chapter will extend the analysis of the processes identified above which were designed to engage the imagination and emotions of working class children in the story of Jesus, but whereas

this chapter has focused on how such processes operate through the pedagogy of storytelling, the following discussion will explore the way in which this functioned alongside the pedagogy of 'look and learn' with particular reference to the employment of pictures of Jesus in educational contexts.

## CHAPTER SIX

## LOOK AND LEARN WITH JESUS:

## DEVELOPMENTALISM AND THE PRINTED IMAGE

At the end of the nineteenth century and increasingly in the early decades

of this century many British evangelical publishers responded to the rival

attractions of the increasing volume of products of their secular competitors by

moving into the mass production of coloured religious pictures for distribution to

working class children. Sunday schools, as discussed in Chapter Four, served as

an effective distribution network for the circulation of illustrated prize books and

pictorial reward cards to these children, who would otherwise have been denied

access to them. These developments resulted in the proliferation of coloured

pictures (see the photograph of the NSSU 'Picture and Lantern Department' in

appendix 5) of Jesus produced for children and this expansion in the iconography

of Christ in turn resulted in a growing concern about the dubious quality of some

of the images in circulation.

In February 18 1933 the following letter appeared in *The Times*:

> We plead the courtesy of your columns to urge the need of a serious
> consideration of the modern religious pictures so often put before children. A
> child gets more vivid ideas of religion from pictures than from talk. False ideas
> so engendered take years to eradicate, and in many instances are never
> discarded. One glimpse of a picture of Christ which suggests that He was
> effeminate or weak or merely depressed may easily destroy a living interest in
> Him, and many discourses on the real manhood of our Lord will not restore it.
> There are notable exceptions for which we are grateful; but too many of the
> pictures in use in illustrated Bibles and Prayer Books, in gift books and in
> lantern slides reflect a sentimentalism that is not only bad artistically but which
> suggests a false idea of our Lord.
> Even the old masters, whose great pictures do so deeply satisfy many who
> revere Christ, often fail to meet the needs of children, largely because they are
> apt to pass over all that lay between the Infancy and the Passion Week. It is

the Man of Nazareth in His strength and His Joy and His interest in ordinary people who has power over the hearts of children.

We call upon our teachers, our publishers and all who are interested in the spread of a true and vital religion to use pictures that show a Christ who will win the hearts of the young and whom they will want to follow. The only way to drive out unsatisfactory pictures is to supply good ones.

Will not our artists come to the rescue of childhood and produce pictures worthy of this great subject and more in keeping with our modern teaching? We ask to have the wonderful story told again in pictures that can be understood and believed.

Two years later, in *Pictures of Jesus for Children* (RTS 1935) that original letter was republished together with addresses by eight 'Leading Educationists' which had been delivered at Friend's House, London during the Exhibition of Pictures of Christ which was organised by the Council for Christian Education. The booklet begins by stating that 'through the adoption of modern education in both Sunday and day schools, the use of pictures as a medium for teaching has greatly developed' but goes on to say that there had been serious concerns about some of the pictures generally used for teaching children about Jesus and it was this worry which had led to the sending of the original letter to *The Times*, the consequent responses to which had resulted in the exhibition and the booklet.

In 1934 the inaugural issue of the quarterly journal *Religion in Education*[52] was first published and in his editorial Basil Yeaxlee stated that the aim of the journal was:

> To bring stimulus and help to all ...is...our central purpose...It is our hope that writers and readers from among all the Churches, and those who are attached to none, will make mutually profitable acquaintance in our pages...Experience gained in many types of teaching overseas as well as at home, will be recorded and discussed here. We shall be on the watch for ideas and experiments emanating from very diverse sources. But we believe also that all

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[52] In the very first volume, the editor is Dr Basil Yeaxlee, Principal of Westhill Training College and the editorial board includes Rev. Hugh Martin the editor of the Student Christian Movement Press and editor of *The Teacher's Commentary*, J. W. D. Smith, the General Secretary of the United Council for Missionary Education, formerly the General Secretary of the Scottish Sunday School Union and Assistant Lecturer in Education at Glasgow University, Miss Mercier, Principal of Whitelands College Chelsea and Chairman of Association for Teachers of Religious Knowledge.

who are concerned with the practical aspects of religion in education should at the same time be seeking clearer insight into ultimate meanings and relationships, something worthy to be called a philosophy. *It is surely equally essential that we should learn all that is possible about the actual development of the religious consciousness as psychology illumines it.* There are attractive and rewarding fields of research to be explored. At all times there are new books to be noted, and mutual aid to be given in the acquirement and use of material for the day's work. (*Religion in Education 1934: 2*) my emphasis.

Both of these sources demonstrate in their different ways that new approaches to teaching children about religion had been accompanied by anxieties about the long term effect of some of the materials used. In particular, the increase in the use of mass produced - therefore low-cost - colour pictures of Jesus in the schoolroom had also brought with it fears that such use needed to be carefully scrutinised. Thus concerned groups across the spectrum of Christian denominations adopted an almost ecumenical approach to the project of establishing not only *which* were the most suitable pictures to put before children but also the best educational practice of *how to use them* effectively. In the discussion which follows evidence will be advanced to demonstrate that despite denominational differences, Christian educators found a shared interest in the need to address and remedy the problem of setting standards for the representation of Jesus.

During the period under investigation, picture books - prize books in particular - featuring illustrations of scenes from the life of Christ were produced in enormous numbers, with subjects such as the Good Shepherd and the Nativity being identified as especially appealing to child readers. But this chapter, continuing the discussion started in Chapter Five, focuses on the scene in the Gospels where Jesus says "Suffer little children to come unto me". The selection of this particular episode in Jesus' life is based on the frequency of its inclusion as an illustration in a random sample of Jesus picture books for children (see Chapter Three). The discussion

begins by showing how this one scene had been depicted by artists before the impact of the mass-produced image and thus establishes some of the fine art conventions associated with this sub-genre of representing Jesus. This brief background is provided in order to make clear the later shift from the conventions of fine art formality to the familial intimacy implicit in the mass produced images of this scene which were aimed at children.

The chapter moves on to show how developmental theories informed a pedagogy of looking which identified the positive ways in which pictures could be used to stimulate and shape children's imagination, particularly through their use as aids to the story telling activities discussed in Chapter Five. Where the previous chapter focused on primary sources and educational guidelines published during the period 1900 - 1924, the evidence for the arguments advanced in this chapter draws upon publications from the 1930s, particularly the two sources mentioned above. But it is centrally concerned with showing and discussing the conventions and innovations employed by artists in their task of representing Jesus for children and evaluating to what extent such representations provide evidence of the influence of child study. For while it appears that no formalised guidelines were issued to artists engaged in representing Jesus for children, as there have been in other countries, there is evidence that in the 1930s religious educationalists sought to establish criteria for separating what they saw as the good from the bad. In doing so, some of them attempted to justify their choices by incorporating aspects of developmental theory into their explanations of the psychological implications of using pictures for educational purposes. To this end, these educationalists were concerned to eliminate firstly, those images of Jesus which children might perceive as frightening, secondly

those which were considered sentimental, thirdly, those which presented him as the Man of Sorrows and finally those which were considered to depict him as effeminate or unmanly. Thus the development of the popular representation of Jesus discussed here follows two lines. One is based around a historical chronology linked to technological advances in the printing industry and the other is concerned with trying to ensure that the mass-produced representations meet the different needs of children at different stages of development. To this end, evangelists and educationalists acknowledged that there was a need for the gentle Jesus of the kindergarten (and of so many children's hymns), to evolve alongside the developing child if he was to retain an emotional grip on their imaginations and that some children were resistant to giving up their nursery version of him.

## Picturing the Children's Jesus

At the turn of the century in Britain the printing industry had a huge back catalogue of images of Jesus from which to draw and this was a period which saw the establishment of picture libraries which could be used in the compilation of illustrated books and encyclopaedias. The commercial success of the picture book resulted in publishing houses competing to employ artists whose work met popular tastes, for often it was the added ingredient of illustrations by a much-loved artist which made a previously-read book an attractive new purchase or acquisition. But new commissions meant artists fees; an expense which was spared by using the work of long-dead painters which could, through the medium of photography, be reproduced as illustrations and provide a retelling of the life of Christ through the work of 'great artists'.

Within the Western iconography of Christ, the representation of Jesus blessing the children has never been given the same attention by artists as that accorded subjects like the Virgin and Child or the various stages of Christ's passion. According to Aries (1962) illustrations of this scene of Jesus blessing the children can be found in the moralizing Bibles of the thirteenth century but they are 'commonplace illustrations, devoid of any real fervour or

significance' (Aries 1962: 120), whereas from the end of the sixteenth century onwards it is a frequently recurring illustration. In the many versions of the story of Jesus told through fine art which were published at the turn of the century we find several interesting examples of this scene. Figure 1, a seventeenth century painting by Nicholas Maes from the School of Rembrandt, is an interesting rendition if only for the fact that almost all the people in the group around Christ - including the child - seem uninterested in him and have their gazes fixed elsewhere. Christ's face is shown in profile, he has heavy-lidded eyes, a beard and his head is uncovered revealing long brown hair. He is shown seated with one hand placed on the head of the child in front of him and his other on her(?) arm.

The people in the painting are depicted in contemporary Dutch dress but Christ appears to be wearing a robe which is consonant with the place and period in which he lived. He is shown barefoot.

**Figure 1 Source: Anon. (1948)**

In the version by Pietro Benvenuti (1769-1844) the picture incorporates the

Italian conventions of representing the Virgin and Child, as the woman presenting her

baby to him is as much the object of the gaze of the people in the picture as is Christ

himself. He is shown seated with his face in profile and his head uncovered and while

the others in the picture are shown wearing contemporary dress, Christ is wearing a

robe, as before. His one hand is extended to touch the head of the baby held up by its

mother and the other is around a small child, who has its own hands resting on Christ's knee.



**Figure 2 Source: Shaw Sparrow (1904)**

In the nineteenth century there were versions of the scene which reflected the Orientalist fascinations of Alma Tadema's work, as in this painting by Henry Tidey, 1814 -1872 (figure 3). Here the standing figure of Christ - his head shown in profile and uncovered as before - is holding a baby and is centrally framed in the composition of the painting by the device of the arch behind him, through which can be seen a mountainous vista. In addition, he is the object of the admiring gaze of the women at his feet and of the children to the left of the picture while the disciples are

shown as either looking aggrieved or away from Christ. Nevertheless, the exotic detail

of the painting tends to eclipse the biblical significance of the scene and the

architectural setting to convey formality rather than the intimacy suggested by the

episode in Matthew's Gospel.
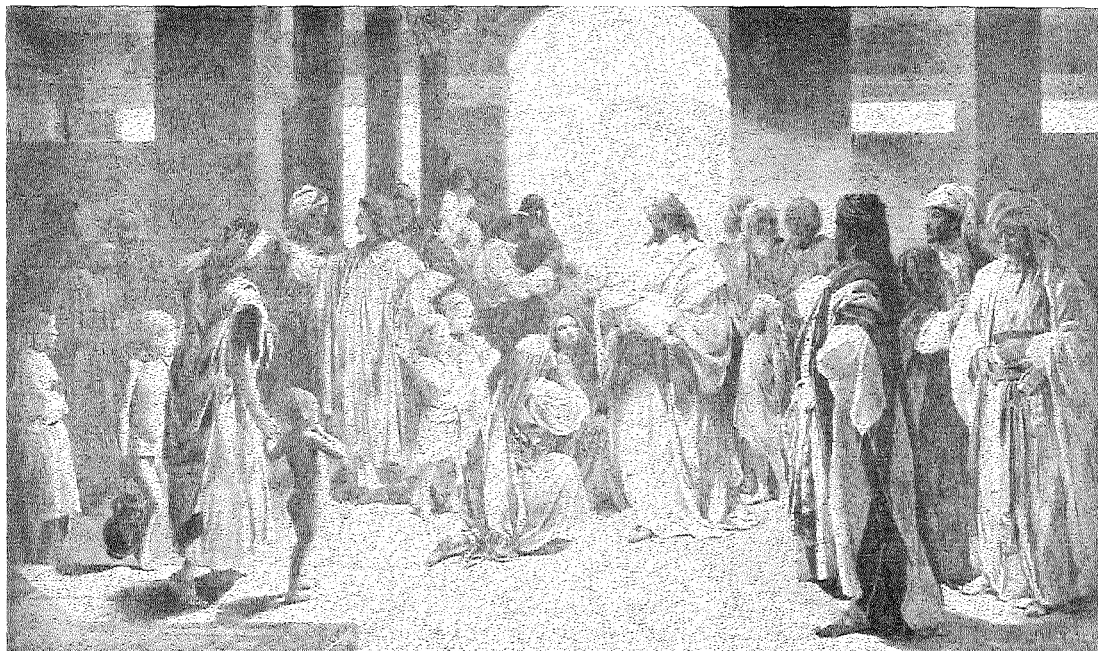


**Figure 3 Source: Temple (n.d.)**

Christ Blessing the Children (figure 4) by the Danish artist Carl Bloch

(1834-1890) is in sharp contrast to the splendour and spectacle of Tidey's picture,

and presents Christ in a scene which, while signalling antiquity through the

symbolism of architecture and drapes, is otherwise devoid of ornament and

embellishment. Unlike the painting shown in figure 1, Bloch's Christ is clearly the

focus of the gaze within the composition and his face presented in profile

emphasises the diagonal line of interest in the picture. He is shown seated, with

his head uncovered and with one arm around the child on his left while he holds

the hand of another on his right, but he is shown looking not at the children but at

one of the disciples.
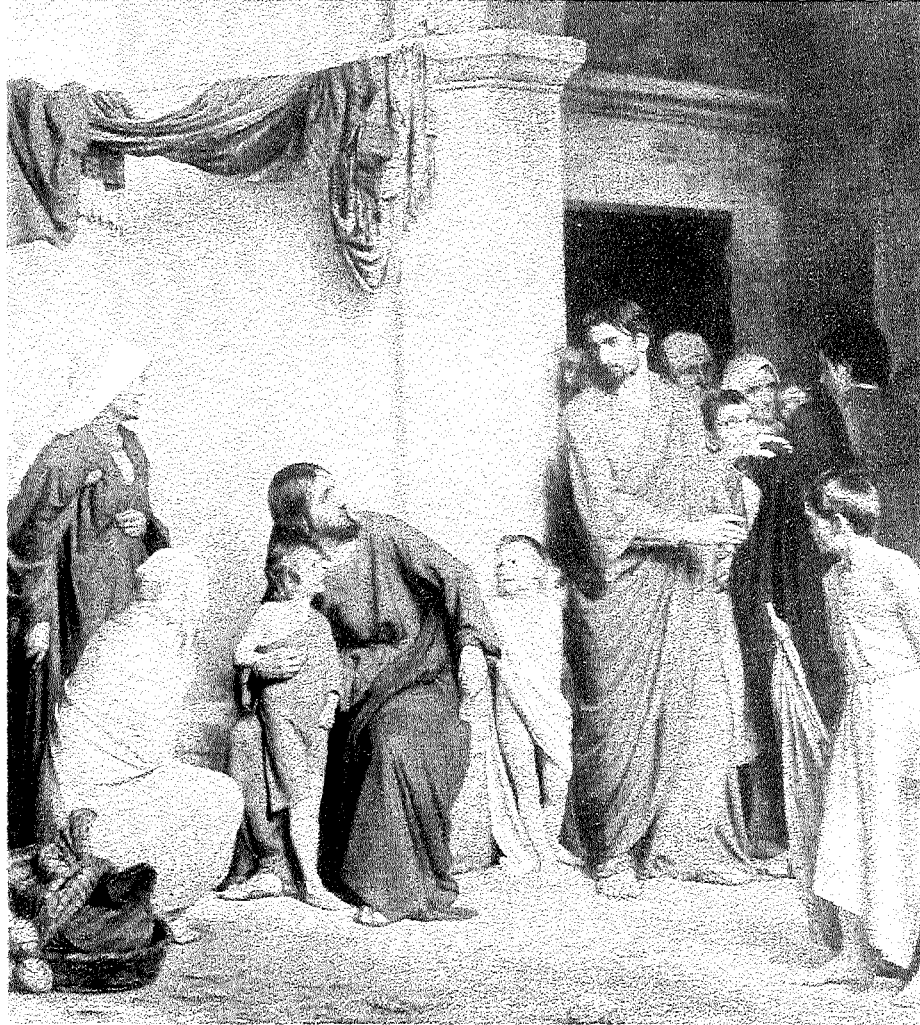
**Figure 4 Source: Anonymous (c.1930)**

In figure 5 below, we see an untypical version by the German female artist

Ottilie Roderstein (1859-1938) which moves away from the historical set-pieces of the

previous examples and presents instead Christ in a modern, not biblical, interior

setting. Again his head is shown in profile, he is seated and his head is uncovered but

his hair is dark brown and relatively straight in contrast to previous examples. He

wears a robe of his own time while the three children are depicted in contemporary

dress. He appears to be returning the gaze of the little boy while holding the hand of

the small girl in the centre of the picture and with his hand around the waist of the older girl on the right who is wearing a pinafore.
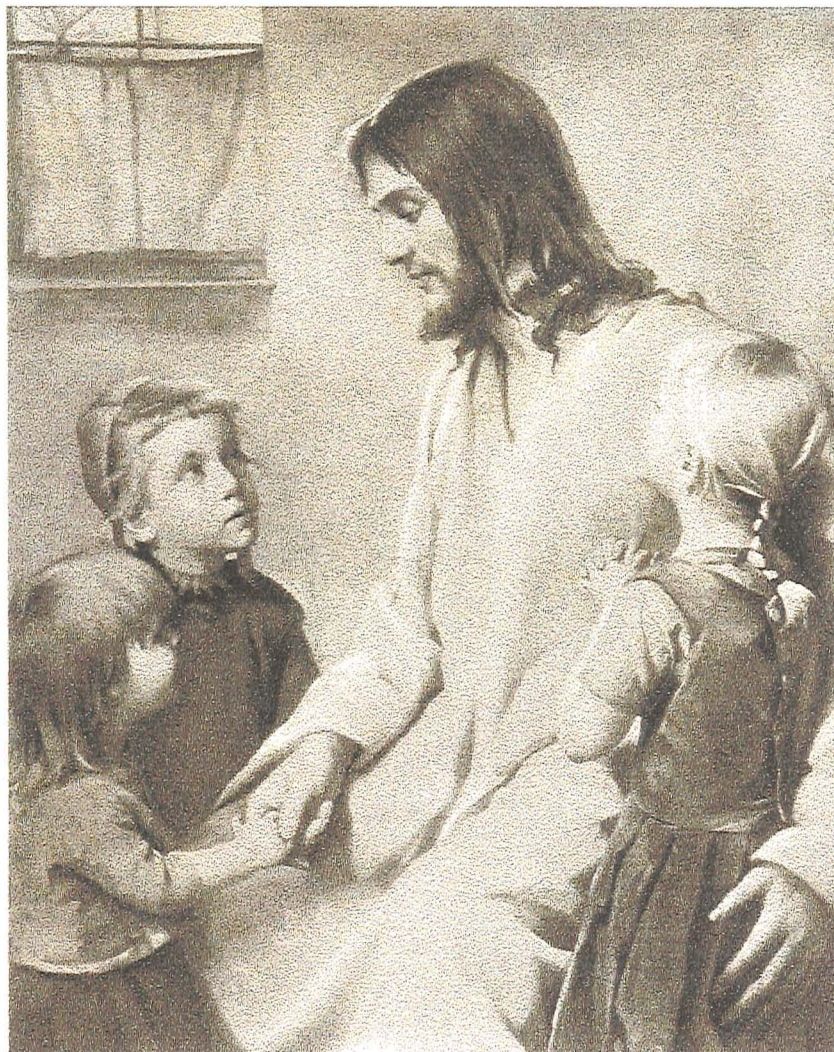


**Figure 5 Source: Shaw Sparrow (1904)**

But it was the work of William Hole (1846-1917) rather than any of the great masters which found particular favour with evangelicals and educators. His *The Life of Jesus of Nazareth* (1906), comprising eighty watercolours, appears to have set the standard for future illustrators of the story. In the preface to the book by William Sinclair the Archdeacon of London much is made of the fact that Hole had actually visited the Holy Land in order to gain the greatest degree of accuracy for his

illustrations. Thus the artist's journey is framed as a pilgrimage and in the process the paintings resulting from that visit acquire a kind of religious respectability through the assumed piety of the painter.

It is obvious from Hole's treatment of Jesus blessing the children (figure 6) that authenticity of location is prioritised above all other considerations for this is



**Figure 6 Source: Hole (1906)**

no biblically inspired tableau; rather it is a street scene with figures. The architectural detail is faithfully rendered, providing depth to the field of vision. Hole's Jesus is also different from the others discussed above. He is shown bending down to hold the hands of a small child and although his face is in profile, his head is covered in and he wears a white robe, in contrast to those worn by the disciples. There is a great deal of movement in the painting with people depicted looking in many different directions and, without the title, this could be one of any number of paintings of the Holy Land from this period. But the mass of detail makes the painting a useful visual aid in teaching about the land and people of Jesus' time.

In the same year that Hole's *The Life of Jesus of Nazareth* was published - 1906 - Harold Copping was exhibiting his own drawings and paintings (see Chapter Four) 'made on the spot' in Palestine[53] having just returned from a visit to the Holy Land[54] paid for by the Religious Tract Society. This visit provided the inspiration for Copping's *The Bible in Modern Art* - later known as 'the Copping Bible' - being a collection of 64 paintings illustrating scenes from the Old and New Testament. While most commentators praised Copping's Bible some felt it to be inferior to Hole's. But Copping's watercolours, particularly those for the Old Testament stories, demonstrate the influence of the Orientalist school of painting,[55] especially those depicting 'eastern' women in languorous poses which come close to the eroticism of Alma Tadema and which appear to be more suitable for an adult audience. The 'exoticism' of the subject matter is clearly signalled in the use of rich colours and the detailed rendering of

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[53] There was a tradition of artists visiting the Holy Land in order to gain divine inspiration from the land in which Jesus had actually lived. Margaret Tarrant, a similar jobbing artist to Copping but of a slightly later period, spent most of her life working for the Medici Society and when she fell into ill health after the death of her parents the Society paid for her to visit the Holy Land to draw and paint.

[54] Some of Copping's watercolours from this journey were also included in Arthur Copping's - the artist's brother - book *A Journalist in the Holy Land* Religious Tract Society.

[55] See Jullian 1977.

'oriental' textiles. For one of the factors which contributed to the commercial success of this genre as a story was its original location in the 'East'. When the emphasis is on the pictures which accompany the text, that location and its associated set of



**Figure 7 Source: Copping (1931)**

signifying practices provides the means by which the story of the life of Jesus is transformed into a highly-coloured exotic spectacle.[56] In addition, these images could also be used in the teaching of Geography, History and Art because the accuracy of

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[56] The sensuality of this genre of illustration is not in itself remarkable as the Renaissance artists had produced images of Christ which some had claimed were more suited to a bordello than a church. But what is important here is the way in which the 'Orient' is presented as adding geographical knowledge to the text, similarly the rendering of buildings, costume were all seen to have an important function in bringing information about the 'people's of the world' to the readers.

the detail of the people, location and artefacts depicted could serve as visual aids to learning.

But for children the most important ingredient was colour and in Chapter Four we saw how McMillan (1923) identified colour as an important - but often absent - part of the working class child's experiences, writing of 'colour-famished' children. In Copping's version of Christ blessing the children it is the red dress of the little girl in the centre of the picture which immediately draws the eye. There is architectural detail but is a minor aspect of the picture, unlike in Hole's version. Copping's composition is filled with people so that the sense of a crowd is conveyed with Christ acting as the visual dividing line between the disciples on the left of the picture and the women and children on the right. He is shown standing and full face with his head covered but unlike all the other versions, part of his lower arm is exposed in the act of holding the little girl and his robes are unlike those of his disciples. In the discussion of the pictures shown on the preceding pages we have seen that although there appear to have been some features which were constant, there were several discernible changes or movements over time in the composition of the original paintings and also in the way that Christ was depicted. In addition there were changes in how the paintings were reproduced. In the overall composition of the original paintings there appears to be a move away from using Graeco-Roman classical conventions (such as architectural details and formal styles of dress) for framing the scene and a shift towards the depiction of detail in the rendering of the traditional dress and the topography of the Holy Land; the accuracy of the place and the people being prioritised over the accurate rendition of the Biblical narrative.

With regard to the depiction of Jesus, we can see that the location of him as the central focus becomes more emphasised in time in the first five of the paintings, with the gaze of the artist seeming to move closer to the figure of Jesus while marginalising the other adults in the composition. In the first five of the paintings discussed, Jesus is shown with his head uncovered, but in the last two, painted significantly by artists who had both journeyed to the Holy Land for inspiration, he is shown with his head partially covered. In the first five paintings again, there is the shared convention of depicting him in profile but in figure 7 he is shown full-face. There is no apparent convention in the way he is shown in the act of blessing the children other than he is always depicted using two hands, whether shown grasping the hands of two different children or holding a single child or baby in his arms. Finally, apart from the later acquisition of a headcovering in figures six and seven, Jesus' attire in all seven paintings remains remarkably constant in its simplicity. The obvious difference between the reproduction of the first five paintings and the last two is that of colour. The illustrations from fine art paintings are based on black and white photographs provided by picture catalogues and the nearest the printing process can come to colour is to render a sepia-toned image, whereas the paintings by Hole and Copping were specifically painted to be mass reproduced in colour picture books.

## Woodcuts to the Coloured Picture Book: The Relationship Between Text and Image

Chapter Five explained how story telling came to be recognised by teachers as a valuable learning activity which not only facilitated imaginative play but also fostered a positive relationship between teacher and child. In *Great Teachers and Mental*

*Health*[57] (1926) W. Burnham draws attention to the book which most educational

historians believe to be the originator of the pedagogy of look and learn:

> In the *Orbis Pictus* Comenius illustrates his pedagogical principles. At
> first this may seem strange, because here he gives not real things, but
> the pictures of things. His idea seems to have been that one should
> learn about everything in the world; but it is not possible to see
> everything at first hand, hence we must resort to the aid of the picture.
> The fundamental principle is the old one, there is nothing in the
> understanding that was not there in the senses. This was the doctrine
> of Aristotle, of Bacon, and of Locke; and on this foundation Comenius
> built a pedagogic of nature, which although naive in its character, and
> largely theological in its form, nevertheless contained in germ, or at
> least paved the way for the higher and clearer educational psychology
> of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and the modern writers like
> Rissman.(Burnham 1926: 168-9)

Burnham's comment that it is not possible to see everything in the world at first

hand, thus we must resort to the aid of pictures, is reflective of Froebel's view as

discussed in the previous chapter, that the child needed to draw into itself wisdom of

the world which went beyond the limitations of its own specific experience and that the

development of the imaginative faculties was the means by which this could be

achieved. Burnham also draws attention to the often unacknowledged fact that the

educational psychology of Rousseau, Pestalozzi but particularly that of Froebel, had

its roots in the work of this earlier scholar. The statement that Comenius' fundamental

principle that 'there is nothing in the understanding that was not there in the senses' is

central to Froebel's kindergarten theory, in which the child is encouraged to learn to

understand the world in which s/he lives through exploration at a sensual level, that is,

through touch, sight, sound, smell and texture. The *Orbis Pictus* is a remarkable

achievement when evaluated in terms of the crude printing technology which was

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[57] The full title of the book is *Great Teachers and Mental Health - A study of Seven Educational
Hygienists* by Wm. H Burnham and among the seven educational hygienists is Jesus Christ.

available to Comenius at the time of its publication, but almost four centuries on

children had become used to pictures which were not only of a better graphic quality,

but which had the very important added ingredient of colour.

The move to cheap colour printing,[58] made possible through the development

of the three-colour process, allowed publishers catering especially for the lucrative

juvenile market to take advantage of this popular and profitable innovation. Hardie

(1906) writes that A. and C. Black were the first to appreciate the scope of this

development and they published a wide range of such books at the start of the

twentieth century. But it was the development of the low-cost picture book for children

made possible through the new colour printing process which was the real innovation

in publications at the turn of the century. Agnes A.C. Blackie (n.d.) in her short history

of the family firm attributes the introduction of the three-colour process to the

profitability of the business and writes that the commercial success of such books

came as a surprise to both publishers and retailers:

> The number, beauty and variety of these picture books had been made
> possible by the recent introduction of three colour letterpress printing at
> Villafield (Blackie's printing works in Glasgow). Because production
> costs were still relatively low therefore it was possible to produce by this
> method books that for content, binding and illustrations were quite
> outstanding, at prices ranging from 6d to 6s. (Blackie n.d.:49)

She goes on to describe how '[In] the pure picture book the artist was of prime

importance; in others author and artists counted equally. Even in story books for the

youngest children the standard of illustration became at this time extremely good.'

(Blackie: 49) The quality of illustration which Blackie refers to was in stark contrast

with what had previously been put before children and in order to understand the

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[58] For a more detailed account of the numerous developments which led up to this situation see
McKenzie (1984) pp.17-18, and Hardie 1906 (republished 1990).

appeal of this new development in juvenile publishing we need to consider what had gone before. Although there is not the space here to permit a considered exploration of the historical development of illustrations of Christ produced for children, what follows provides a brief overview of how changes in technology impacted on the printed image of Jesus.

Figure 8 shows Friedrich Overbeck's (1789-1869) *Christ and the Little Children* which was the picture that Froebel had singled out as the one most suitable for children. But what we have here is an engraving *based* on the original painting and the quality of the rendering is crude, with Jesus standing puppet-like surrounded by cherubic children. This image taken from a nineteenth bible shows the influence of classical themes in the costumes and the Italianate vista in the background. This



**Figure 8**

is clearly not a picture which seeks to establish geographical accuracy. Although there are half tones and thus some attempt at depth in the field of vision, the picture is only one step away from a line drawing and the face of Jesus is so indistinct as to offer no scope for engagement.



Figure 9

Figure 9 is an engraving by Wyndham Hughes[59] which is not much more than

a drawing, but the choice of a coloured ink and background make this illustration

more interesting. Again Christ is shown in profile with his head uncovered (but with a

halo) holding a baby, his hand extended to touch the head of an older child. The

setting of the scene is pastoral and offers no visual clues, apart from what looks like a

church in the distance, which would fix the location. The picture uses the device
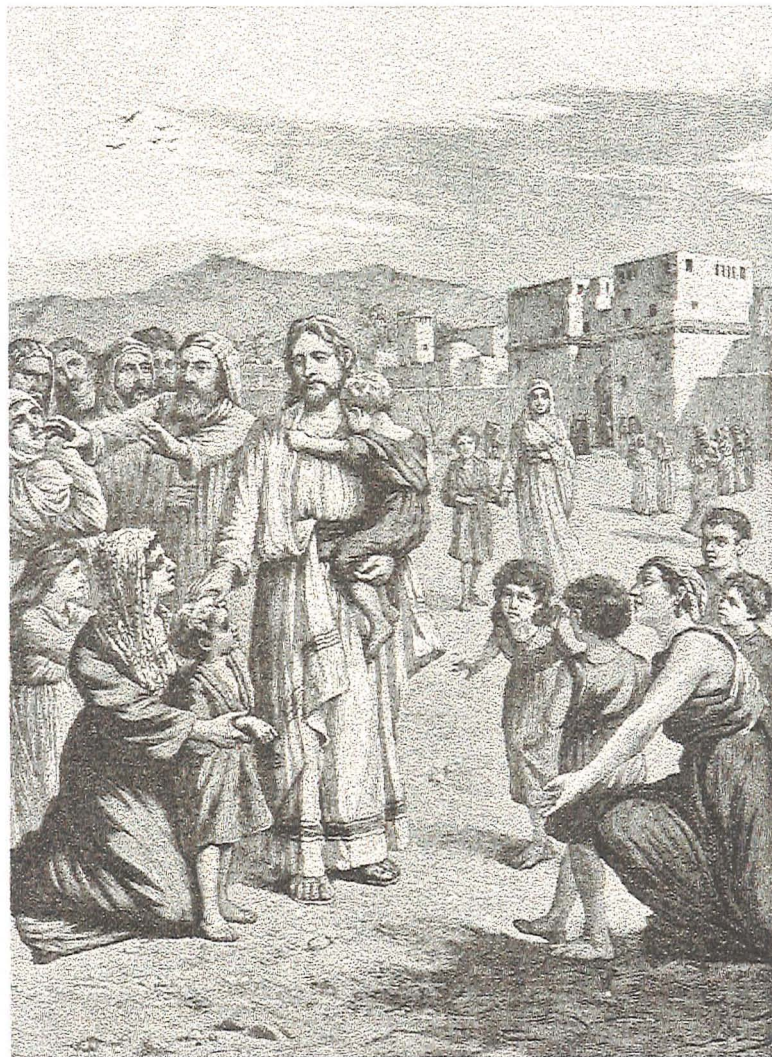


**Figure 10**

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[59] In all of the dictionaries of artists consulted he is not mentioned.

discussed earlier of Christ being the visual dividing line separating the mothers and children from the disciples, and with but one exception, he is the focus of the gaze although his face is, again vaguely rendered.

At the start of the twentieth century there was a tendency for publishers to update existing books by changing the illustrations, as can be seen from the next two examples. Figure 10[60] is taken from *Little Snowdrops Picture Book* and figure 11 from
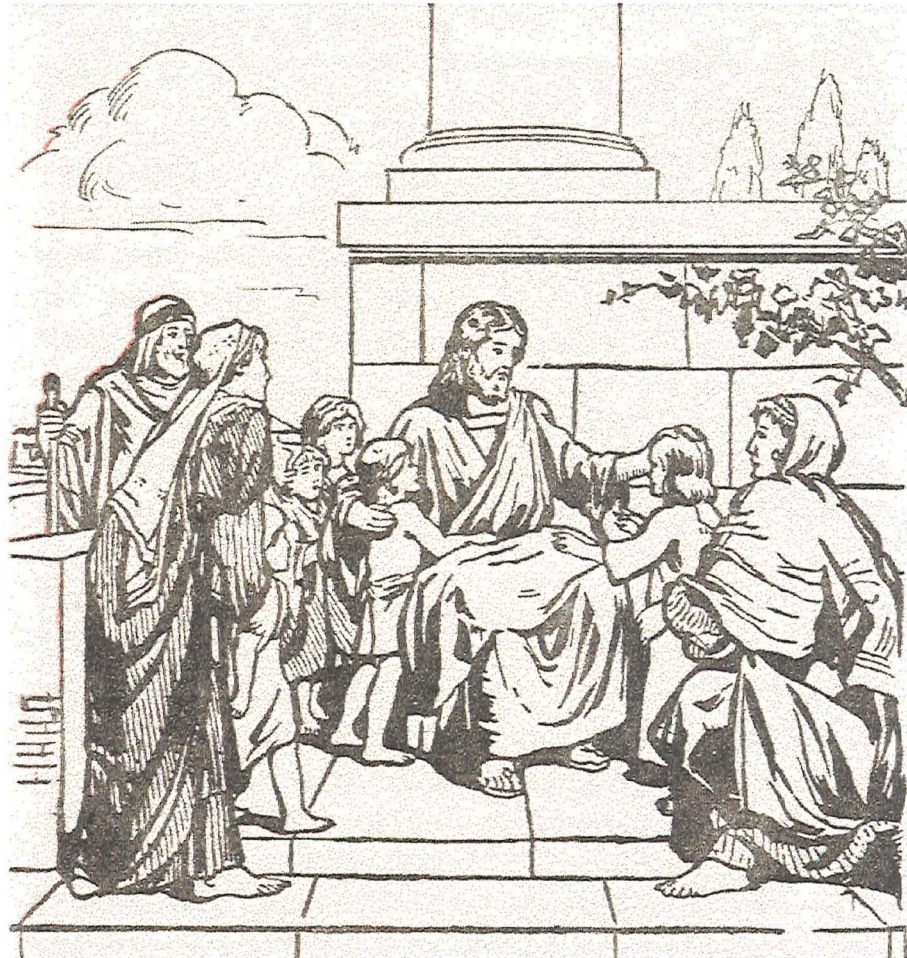


**Figure 11**

a later version of the same title. The second version is less aesthetically pleasing but it does offer the opportunity for children to colour in the picture themselves. The colouring-book style illustrations mentioned were usually included in books

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[60] There is no available information about these pictures or the artists who produced them.

which also included a handful of quality colour illustrations. Quality is not used here not to indicate any aesthetic merit, rather it relates to the clarity of the printed image. But content was not a minor consideration and in figure 12 by J. M. Hartley[61] we can see the influence of Hole's version of the scene (figure 6). But here the architectural detail of is less important than the children shown in the



**Figure 12**

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[61] Hartley is not included in any of the dictionaries of artists.

picture. Whereas previous pictures had rendered the scene giving equal

consideration in the composition to the disciples and the women and children, in

this version we see that only three disciples are depicted and even then they are

relegated to the shadowy background with the children framing Jesus as the focus

of the picture. This was a development which was taken up and refined by other

illustrators perhaps to take account of the fact that the forbidding figures of the



**Figure 13**

disciples did not appeal to children, but it also because of the evangelical

Protestant belief in the primacy of Christ and the directness of the relationship

with him. Hartley's painting of Jesus' face is rather indistinct but from what we can see he looks like an elderly patriarch and not at all like a man of thirty three years, although there has been an attempt to provide some colour in his robe and head-covering.

The same approach can be seen in figure 13 painted by E. S. Hardy[62] which was circulated by the Shaw Picture Library. Again, here there are only three disciples
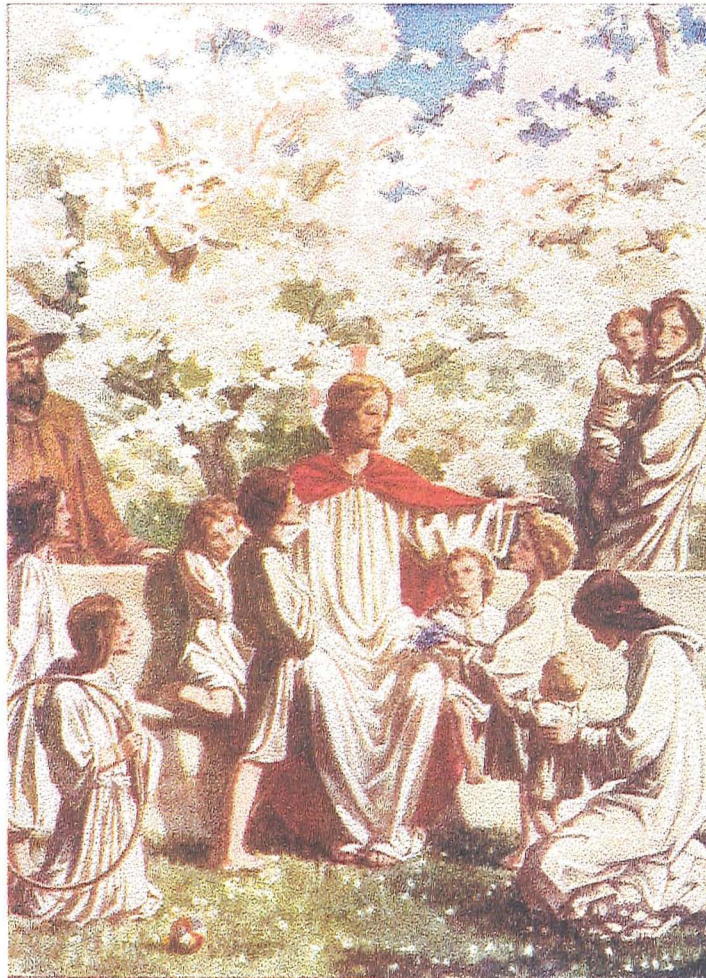


**Figure 14**

and they are situated at the very edge of the picture. The setting of the scene is the edge of a lake - presumably Galilee - and the detail of the women's dress is faithfully

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[62] Hardy is not listed in any of the dictionaries of artists consulted.

rendered, unlike the blonde hair of the little child, who is the focus of Jesus'

attention.[63]

In Paul Woodroffe's interesting illustration *Jesus Blessing Little Children* (1906)

only one disciple and one mother remain in view with a parapet-like seat being used

as a visual dividing line to separate Jesus and the children from the adults in the

picture, rather than Jesus being the divider, as previously. This is an Arcadian setting

framed by apple blossom with Christ seated and shown full face with his head

uncovered. In contrast to other versions of the scene, his hair is quite short and he

wears some sort of braid around his brow. He is shown conforming to the

iconographical conventions established earlier in that he has one hand held out to

touch the head of the child on his right while the other is placed on the shoulder of the

child on the left. Woodroffe appears to have drawn his inspiration from medieval

monasticism rather than classical themes and the centrality of childhood to the picture

is indicated through the placing of the hoop and the ball. It is an interesting version of

the scene but it is untypical of the genre and the book it is taken from is a folio edition

of the life of Jesus for children, the price of which would have put it beyond the reach

of all except well- off families. The cover of the book (shown full-size in figure 15)

gives some indication of the its overall quality and craftsmanship, which is in sharp

contrast to the covers of most of the books referred to here. At the end of the

nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century prize book-versions of the life of

Jesus tended to be decorated with illustrations derived from engravings as in figure

16 published by the RTS. This example also makes clear that it is written in language

suitable for children. Board covers with laminated illustrations tended to be the norm

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[63] The tendency to ascribe blondeness to children is shown in Hardy's pictures of Christ's boyhood.

in the mass-produced stories aimed at the Sunday school market. The books had to be cheap but eye-catching and to this end colour was paramount in the books
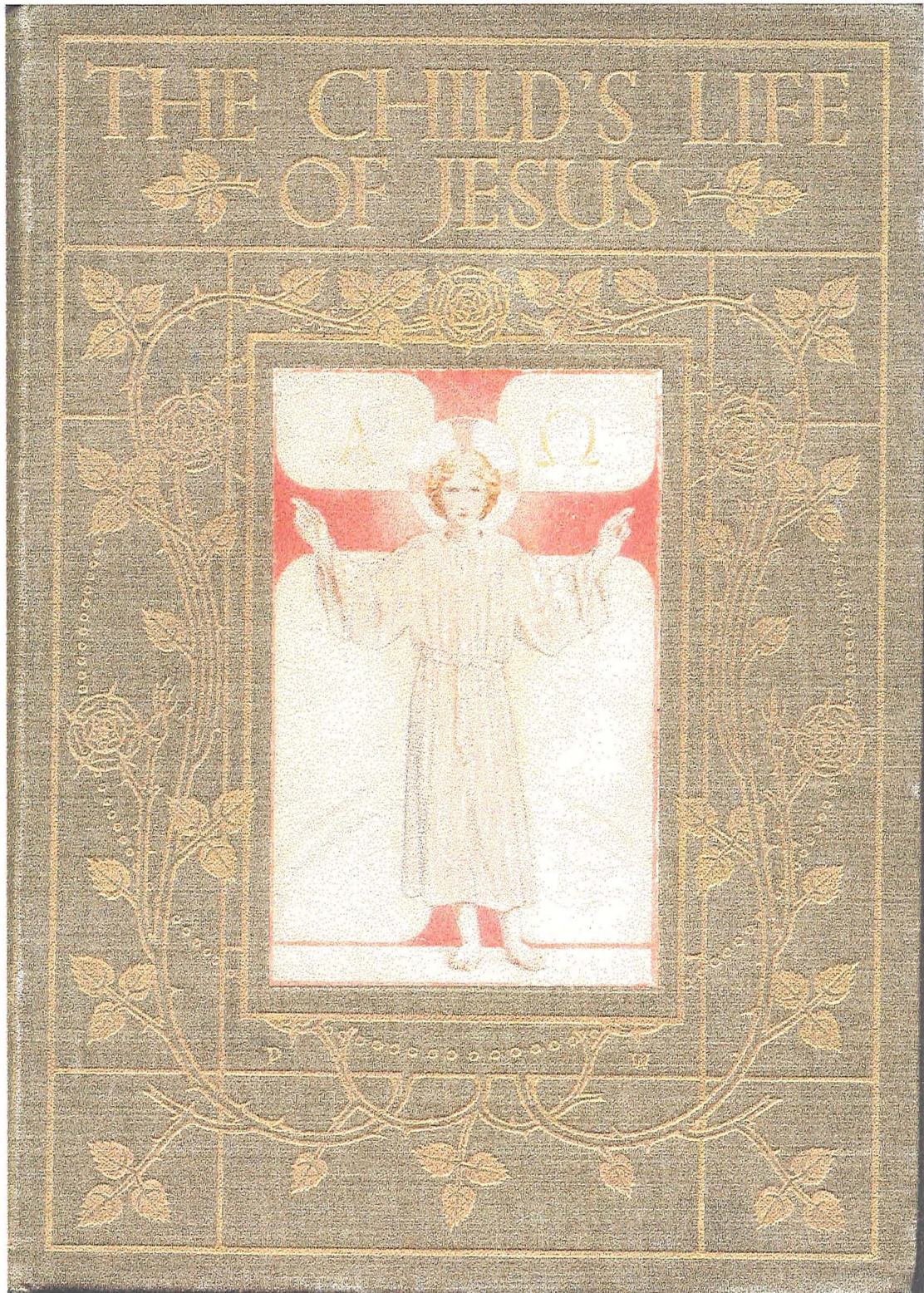


Figure 15

referred to here, being able to make an instant appeal to the young child.
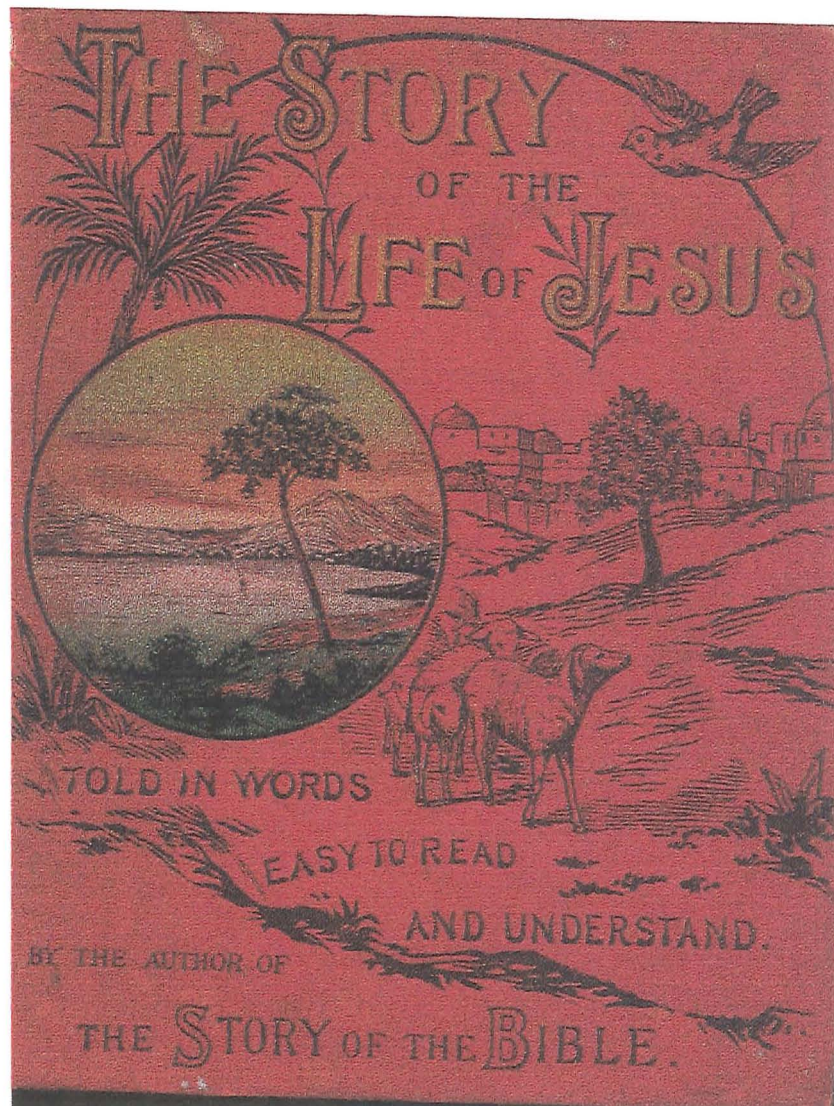


**Figure 16**

In the above discussion of the illustrations of Jesus blessing the children, we have seen how the quality of the reproduced image has improved from the crude engraved rendering of Overbeck's painting (figure 8) to the coloured picture shown in figure 14. This is not to imply that there was an accompanying

improvement in the aesthetic quality of the actual paintings for this is not what is the aim of the discussion. Instead, the focus here is on the connections between the theories advanced through the adoption of child study in the Sunday schools and the production of images of Jesus for children. To this end, what is significant from the images discussed is that as technological developments in the printing industry enabled the mass production of colour picture books at relatively low prices, so colour became seen as an essential ingredient for illustrations, even if, as in figure 11, children were encouraged to complete the task. In addition, in the actual composition of the pictures, the one aspect which is shared by almost all six illustrations is the depiction of Jesus in a pastoral setting, the significance of which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

## Eradicating Fear

Chapter Five showed how in most accounts of Jesus blessing the children the storyteller placed an emphasis on the kindness expressed in his face, and how this enabled the children in the story to overcome their initial fear of 'the Stranger' and approach him, reassured by his gentle manner. In the discussion above we have seen how artists sought to minimise the presence of the disciples, moving them to the edges of the picture, because of a concern that they were rather forbidding figures to young children, even though their inclusion in the picture might have been essential to lend the authority of accuracy to the scene. Religious educationalists who were concerned to establish a pedagogy of looking aimed to limit the use of pictures of Jesus in the classroom to those which addressed the hopes and the fears of children. Just as the writers adapting the story of Jesus to suit a younger audience had

deliberately omitted those aspects of his life believed to be 'unsuitable' for this age

group, so teachers and evangelicals were particularly concerned that the images of

Jesus provided for children did not alienate him from that audience; the production of

intimacy was paramount. We will see in the discussion which follows that the

influence of developmental thinking was demonstrated by the ways in which

educationalists sought to consider possible responses to pictures from the

perspective of a child. They argued that there was an overriding need to provide only

those images which enabled the child to distinguish clearly between Jesus and God,

because the latter was not always an appealing or appropriate figure to set before

kindergarten children. As is shown by this example from the journal *Religion in*

*Education* :

> "I love Jesus; but I hate God." Many readers of these pages will confess
> to the memory of the days when they could at least partly sympathise with the
> outspoken small girl who surprised and horrified her teacher by these words.
> As far back almost as we can remember we learnt of the "gentle Jesus meek,
> and mild"; we knew the stories that He told; we could picture Him as He went
> about doing good, healing poor people who were blind. We were taught,
> perhaps, that He knew how wicked we had been, and so He said: "I'll bear the
> punishment instead"; and this, so far from rousing our theological suspicions
> endeared Him to us the more, and we loved him as we never dreamt of loving
> Jack the Giant killer, or even David the slayer of Goliath. (Lofthouse 1935: 78)

The fact that the writer draws parallels with the fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk*

emphasises again that educationalists saw nothing wrong in discussing the story of

Jesus alongside this genre. More interestingly, the discussion highlights the way in

which the popular version of developmental theory required teachers to use *reflection*

on their own childhood experiences as a means of understanding the emotional

functioning of their students. Here the central point is that Jesus is appealing to

children but that God is frightening[64] and that the task of teachers is to ensure that

children can differentiate between the two, *not* for any theological objective but

because it was seen as essential that children identify with Jesus as their special

friend because:

> It was very different with God; He was the stern sentry over our actions; gazing at us through a hole in the wall, and prompt to exact the penalty for our misdeeds. And even when He was not set before us as the relentless judge, but the great and awful creator of the world, he was equally far from anything like our affection or trust.(Lofthouse 1935:78)

Margaret Snell, another contributor to *Religion in Education,* echoes concerns

formulated through developmental theory in the advice she offers to teachers and

parents regarding the use of pictures of Jesus with young children:

> Pictures are of enormous importance because, particularly before a child can read, they exercise more influence than we sometimes guess. All the religious pictures he sees, for as long as possible, should be carefully chosen. We can avoid, for example, all that purport to represent God the Father, all effeminate, sentimental representations of Jesus, or unduly harrowing pictures of His Crucifixion. (Snell 1936: 40)

She singles out Hole's *Jesus of Nazareth* as being especially worthwhile

acquiring and writes that:

> It has been found a very popular habit with children from four to six years to allow each child to choose one picture from this book before lying down to sleep. The parent explains the picture, sometimes reading the actual words of the Bible, but always with a simple explanation to follow. Not only the whole story of the life of Jesus, but the setting, accurately portrayed, becomes in this way deeply familiar and will never be forgotten. (Snell 1936: 40)

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[64] Binfield cites this example of the same negative perception of God:
A mother, applying at an employment agency for a nurse for her children, was asked whether she had any preference with regard to the religious views of the nurse. She replied 'No, provided her God is a God of love and joy, and not an unpleasant old gentleman who spies on little girls and boys'. (1994: 470)

She adds that good pictures of Bible stories should be as accessible as any other nursery-story books. Snell shows here that the pictures have a range of educational functions in addition to that of teaching children about the life of Jesus. The issue of sentimental and effeminate pictures will be explored in more detail later. What is relevant to the immediate discussion here is the way that Snell explicitly advocates that the practice of storytelling, which has been discussed in the previous chapter, be combined with the use of pictures of Jesus in order to achieve a more lasting influence on children at the psychological level. The combination of the two Froebelian-inspired methods of learning through the senses, was deemed an effective means of establishing the story of Jesus as 'something deeply familiar' that would never be forgotten by the child.


## Show and Tell and the Kindergarten

The new method of combining the pedagogy of storytelling with that of learning through pictures resulted in publishers adapting the presentation of text in the picture book so that the teacher (or other adult) could use it to show and tell with minimum interruption to the oral delivery of the story. In Catherine Shaw's *Suffer Little Children* (n.d. c.1902) we witness a switch to what later becomes a widespread practice, the story being is told by direct reference to what can be seen in the accompanying picture. In this example, it is not left to the reader to decide for themselves which particular features in the picture to call to the children's attention, for the writer has written the story to *support* what is shown in the picture, and thus the story is subordinate to the image:

Look what a number of people are pressing round the dear Lord Jesus!

The mothers have heard how kind He is, and how He is doing good to
everybody who comes to Him, and they are anxious that their little ones shall
be blessed too.
So they take their babes in their arms, and their toddling children by the hand,
and lead them to where they know Lord Jesus is.
When the little ones see His loving face[65] they are not a bit afraid.

In Noel E. Nicholl's[66], *The Children's Jesus,* such production problems are

avoided and although the story of Jesus blessing the children starts on the previous
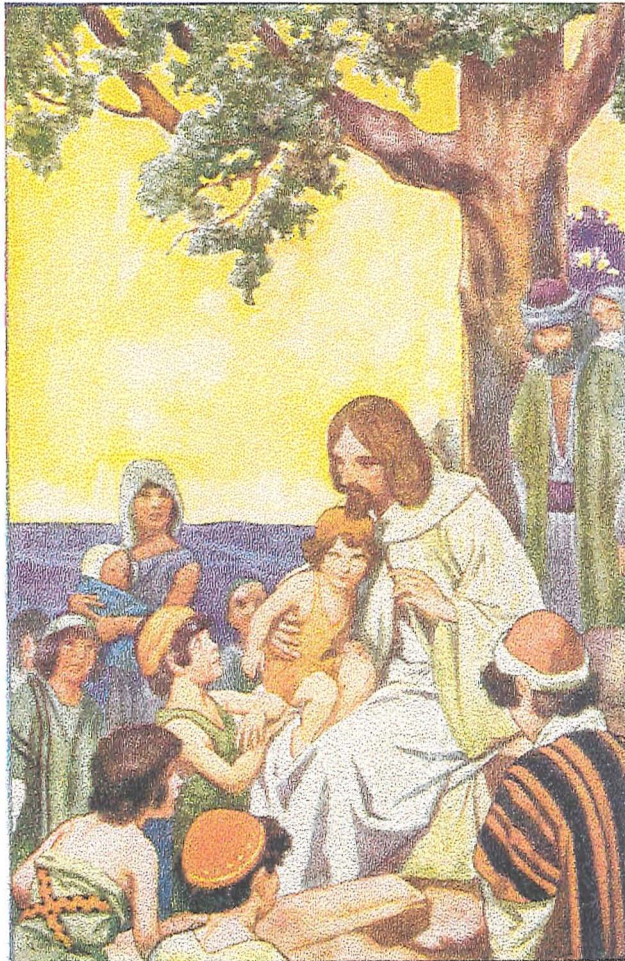


**Figure 17**

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[65] These stories were produced for very young children and the appeal of Jesus is akin to the earliest
visual pleasures experienced by the infant in perceiving the face of its mother. Thus Jesus is easily
connoted as the primal mother.
[66] First impression 1932, second impression 1936, third impression 1940, new edition 1941, reprinted
in 1942, 1943, 1946, 1947 and 1950.

page, the part of the story which makes reference to the accompanying illustration is

placed on the facing page so when Nicholl writes that:

> The big men stood back, and the boys and girls came running to Lord Jesus. See, in the picture He has a little girl in His arms. See all the children crowding round Him, because they love Him, and He loves them.(Nicholl 1932: 60)

The adult can read aloud from the text and show the picture to the listening child(ren)

thus making a direct combined appeal to their emotions.

Chapter Four showed that De Montmorency (1906) promoted the benefits of

the kindergarten for working class children while expressing some doubts about its

connection to the wider educational experience. Voicing his concern at the failure of

the education authorities to decide how the curriculum aimed at the 'babies' could be

dovetailed into the other grades, he provides an argument for the pedagogic value of

using pictures to resolve the problem:

> Tiny children love pictures, and through a carefully graduated series of picture books they can be gradually led on to those conventional pictures, the letters of the alphabet and words...to learn how to write and read, but he would also acquire a love for beautiful pictures and beautiful things. His imitative faculty, which at that age rules his whole being, would thus be guided along the best and most inspiring way. (De Montmorency 1906:148)

De Montmorency's comments make clear that the one of the objectives of using

pictures in the education of small children, was to enable educators to shape future

tastes and attitudes. But in Froebel's original kindergarten system, pictures of Jesus

were seen to perform a vital function for children, that of offering an image of

emotional and physical security as well as presenting them with an ideal role model.

**The Hope of the World: A Case Study**

As was stated in Chapter Three, the search for the original date of publication

for Copping's *The Hope of the World* (figure 18) has been unsuccessful. All that can

be definitely established is that it was first circulated between 1910-1915. The picture

was commissioned by the London Missionary Society for their promotional work in

Britain as well as throughout the Empire, but its circulation was not confined to

missionary organisations. It was bought and displayed by thousands of Sunday and
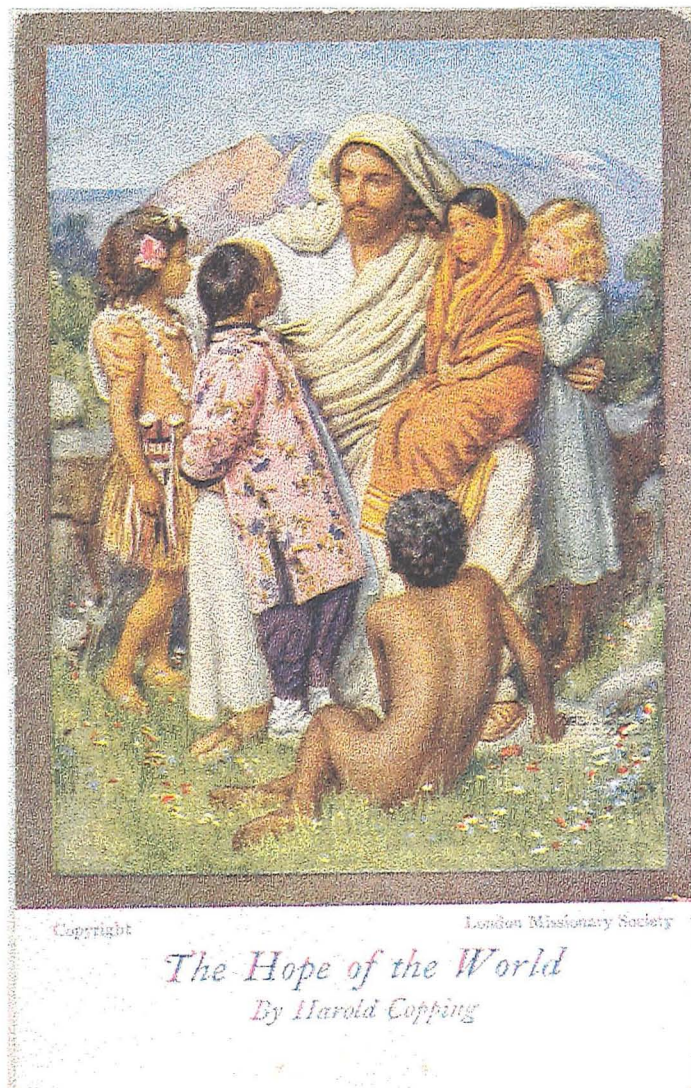


Figure 18

Elementary schools. In the original picture which was available as a postcard to give away as a 'reward' and as a framed print for display in schools (and even in the form of a jigsaw), Jesus is shown with his head and body covered by white robes and has red hair and a beard. He is shown seated in the centre of the picture in a pastoral setting; on his knee sits an Asian girl in a sari, whilst leaning against his other knee is a Chinese boy in traditional costume and with a long pigtail. Two other girls stand either side of Jesus. One, a European girl with blonde hair and a blue Edwardian-style dress has her hand on the shoulder of the little Asian girl, whilst Jesus' hand clasps her around the waist. The other girl's geographical origin is signified as the South Seas' by the beads she wears, which are made from shells and by her grass skirt. Jesus holds her to him by clasping her upper arm. Seated on the grass in front of Jesus and with his back to the viewer is a naked Black (assumedly, African) boy[67]. There are mountains and the sea in the distance behind Jesus and in the foreground the grass is sprinkled with brightly coloured flowers. Not only is this picture emblematic of this popular culture genre, it is also provides an excellent example of how such imagery was employed in the pedagogy of 'look and learn with Jesus'.

In 1916 a booklet for Sunday school teachers was published by the LMS which took Copping's *The Hope of the World* as its central focus. The booklet titled *Children of the Big World* was written by Ethel Archibald (one of the people involved with G. H. Archibald - no relation - in the SSU) and E. Nevill. In the foreword the writers state

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[67] It is easy to read this arrangement as a racist composition with the African boy placed in the most subordinate position without physical contact with Jesus but, according to Copping's biographer, Ken Wilson, the painter depended for his verisimilitude on the availability of suitable models - he could only paint what he saw. As all the children who modelled for the picture were from Copping's village of Shoreham in Kent, the 'African' boy was in fact a local lad 'blacked up' for the occasion, but with his back conveniently to the artist, for Copping's previous attempt to paint to an African face (this was a postcard of Dr Livingstone at work in Africa produced for the LMS) had resulted in a caricature of representation not at all up to his usual standards of representation.

categorically that the talks and stories in the booklet are designed to be part of the

graded system and are aimed to be:

> given in connection with Mr. Harold Copping's picture of Jesus and the children of different races, called "*The Hope of the World*." They are prepared for use with children of from six to eight years either in the Primary Department or the Infant Class and are intended to be given on consecutive Sundays. They are so divided as to provide sufficient teaching material for the whole afternoon. They will therefore take the place of their usual Nature Talk and Bible Story.(Archibald and Nevill 1916: 2)

and in telling of how the booklet can build upon previous lessons they state that:

> In order to lead up to a fitting climax, these missionary lessons would be best taken after a series of stories from the life of Jesus, stories that show how He went about doing good and which have helped the children to realise something of the great love that was in His heart towards all manner of people. they would follow especially well after the story of Jesus blessing the children. Messrs. Nelson & Sons' picture depicting the incident should be used for the lesson, and afterwards it would probably be well to allow it to remain as a wall picture in full view of the whole Department. (Archibald and Nevill 1916: 2)

The phrase 'lead up to a fitting climax' is a telling one for it is indicative of the

strategies employed in order to make the familiar story/picture of Jesus exciting to the

audience of children who are already quite familiar with the narrative. It is also

evidence of what Alderson has described as the tendency to see illustrations as 'the

plum in the pudding' which children need to be kept from consuming straight away, to

this end Archibald and Nevill write that:

> It is not intended that "The Hope of the World" picture shall be shown until four separate Talks and Stories have been given about the different children in the picture. Not until then can its meaning be made clear or can it be received with intelligent interest.
> It is, however, necessary that each Talk shall be illustrated in order that young children may enter into the lives of those brothers and sisters across the seas. (Archibald and Nevill 1916: 2)

As already noted, there are five children featured in Copping's *The Hope of the*

*World* but in this booklet only the children from 'across the seas' have stories told

about them, for the London Missionary Society aimed to use the curriculum of the

Sunday school in order to gain support for their work from the children there. The

support they were hoping for also included financial help and the working class pupils

attending Sunday and Elementary schools were frequently targeted to give money to

good causes. Thus through the imperialist project, a group who had been so recently

an object of philanthropic activity themselves became addressed as philanthropic

activists. This is made clear in the final section of the booklet, for after having told the

stories of the 'brothers and sisters across the seas' we arrive at the moment when the

picture is revealed in its entirety to show Jesus surrounded by the five children. In the

notes on preparation it is suggested that the children should review stories about

Jesus:

> Question children briefly about the stories of Jesus they have recently
> had leading up to "Jesus blessing the children." Call attention once more to the
> picture and suggest the thought of how much we should love to have been with
> the children who were able to gather round Jesus in Palestine. (Archibald and
> Nevill 1916: 23)

This is followed by the suggestion that the first verse of the hymn discussed in

Chapter Five, "I think when I read that sweet story of old" be sung either *by* the

children or sung *to* the children by the teacher. It is suggested that this is to be

followed by a review of the previous four stories, and it after this that the teacher

moves to the 'Presentation' and here the booklet leaves nothing to chance and

provides the teacher with the appropriate words to say to the children:

> I have another picture to show you. It is something like the first picture
> we looked at to-day, and it was painted by someone who knew about the great
> love that was in the heart of Jesus for little children everywhere in the world.
> This artist knew how gladly the little children of Europe, India, China, the South
> Sea islands, and Africa would have gathered around Jesus if they had been
> there that day long ago, and how glad Jesus would have been to have them;
> and he has shown us that in this beautiful picture. (Archibald and Nevill 1916:
> 23)

The teacher is then advised to show the children the picture of *The Hope of the World* allowing them time to study it carefully and for them to feel free to comment upon it, and 'to suggest that the little white girl stands for all those who have fair skins - English, French, German etc.' The teacher was then to go on to sum up the general impressions, that children all over the world are learning to know about Jesus but that there were still many in the Empire who had not heard the good news, and that therefore, the children should think about ways in which they could help their brothers and sisters overseas to share the story. And in the introduction to the suggestions that children might make it is suggested that the teacher can help the pupils to:

1. Make picture books of the stories of Jesus to send to children in one of the countries about which they have been hearing.

2. Mount small copies of "The Hope of the World" to send to the mission field. (They can be obtained from the Missionary Societies in the form of coloured postcards at one penny each.)

3. Use collection pennies to help send a teacher to them, or spend a pennies on buying a large copy of the picture to be sent to a mission school or hospital.

4. Possibly roll bandages for boys in an Indian or Chinese hospital. (Archibald and Nevill 1916: 23)

Thus the picture was used as an incentive to involve children in missionary work. It was a pretty and brightly coloured picture which was specifically designed to elicit the Sunday school pupils' involvement with the children shown in the picture and to foster a particular relationship with Jesus. Such a carefully scripted approach to the use of pictures of Jesus is not unique, for as we have seen from the discussion in earlier chapters, under the auspices of the (National) Sunday School Union, not only were teachers provided with the set programme of teaching for the coming year,

adapted for different age groups, but the (N)SSU also identified the *specific* pictures to be used to accompany the stories told which they sold from their own specialist picture shop (see appendix 5). When not supplied by themselves, they provided the names of publishers supplying the particular pictures required.

But at a later point the widespread use and production of popular images of Jesus was to generate anxieties, the central concern being the way in which sentimental and effeminate portrayals of Jesus whilst being well-received by young children, were felt to be the reason for the older child's (particularly in the case of boys) rejection of Christ as a desirable role model and thus the rejection of Christianity as a source of spiritual and moral guidance. The discussion which follows explores the problems encountered by teachers and evangelists in trying to reach agreement on which particular images of Jesus could be considered suitable for children. As we will see, one of the major problems encountered by educationalists seemed to be the reluctance of the older children to move on from the kindergarten view of gentle Jesus meek and mild.

## Setting Standards for the Representation of Christ

In the first part of this chapter we saw how there were certain fine art conventions which emerged in the depiction of the scene of Christ blessing the children and how some, but not all, of these conventions were carried through into the children's book illustrations of that scene. The discussion highlighted how colour was an important factor in the book's potential appeal for children, thus emphasising McMillan's points on the subject referred to in Chapter Four, which identified colour as being of particular importance for working class children. The discussion went on to

identify the concerns about picturing Jesus for children which were derived from developmental theory. These were the need to differentiate God from Jesus in the child's perception, as the former was often a frightening figure, especially for younger children, and connected with this point, the need to address the ambiguous feelings associated with the panopticon gaze. For as we have seen from the discussion of hymns in Chapter Five, the erotic gaze of the loving, tender Jesus could be seen as comforting, whereas the regulatory surveillant gaze of God was intimidating. In the discussion which follows, we will see that the successful promotion of Jesus as the friend and protector of little children brought with it problems for those teachers who were working with older children.

This chapter began by making reference to a letter printed in *The Times* on February 18 1933 which identified the need for 'a serious consideration of the modern religious pictures so often put before children' and which went on to add that:

> One glimpse of a picture of Christ which suggests that He was effeminate or weak or merely depressed may easily destroy a living interest in Him, and many discourses on the real manhood of our Lord will not restore it. (*The Times* 1933)

The letter ended by throwing down a challenge to teachers and publishers to use only those pictures showing 'a Christ who will win the hearts of the young and whom they will want to follow' adding that as 'the only way to drive out unsatisfactory pictures was to supply good ones' they called upon:

> ...artists come to the rescue of childhood and produce pictures worthy of this great subject and more in keeping with our modern teaching? We ask to have the wonderful story told again in pictures that can be understood and believed. (*The Times 1933*)

M. I. Jacks, Headmaster of Mill Hill School starts his contribution to the booklet

*Pictures of Jesus for Children* (1935) by saying that the issue of what sort of

impressions of Jesus to put before children is of vital importance because it is linked

to the question of 'whether or no the world accepts Christ as its leader'. He

acknowledges that as some people take the position that because no artist can ever

do justice to the subject, the logical conclusion might be to say that there should,

therefore, be no pictures of Jesus. Educationists (sic), Jacks goes on to say, are

against this because of the view that 'the impressions which children gain from

through their eyes are even more important than the ones they receive through the

spoken word', and he adds that this is why 'we must try to give them adequate

pictures of Jesus.' But this raises the problem of what is to be understood as

adequate by reference to developmental theory. For while manliness might be a

quality which is sought in the image of Jesus presented to adolescents, how does it fit

with the image of Jesus as the friend to little children? Jacks tries to deal with this by

arguing:

> What we must try to show to children is the active, healthy, vigorous Christ in
> the days of His manhood. We know He was the kind of man to whom children
> naturally turned. But most pictures of Him suggest a man from whom children
> would naturally and instinctively turn away. Even the old masters are of little
> use to us in this particular connection. They have on the whole concentrated
> their attention on the infancy of Christ and on the days of His Passion. But
> these are not the aspects of the matter which ought to be chiefly presented to
> children. (RTS 1935: 13)

M.E.Lewis the Headmistress of Wimbledon High School for Girls states that

the Byzantine artists' vision of Jesus with his piercing eyes might be frightening to

children. The eyes of Jesus have a particular importance in the context of this study,

for within the accounts of Jesus told to children it is often stressed that although no

longer on earth, he still sees everything that happens there. The panopticon gaze can

be a particularly frightening concept for a young child to confront, linked as it is to an

invisible presence. The pictures of Jesus which are deemed suitable for the young

are therefore those in which Jesus' gaze is turned inward, often to the children in the

picture. This avoids the confrontational gaze which would make the picture so difficult

for the child to look upon with pleasure.[68] As the earlier examples have shown, most

artists and illustrators had done just that in presenting Jesus in profile in the scene of

Jesus blessing the children. M. E. Lewis takes this view when she says that:

> Are not those pictures the most satisfying which portray the central figure in
> profile or turned away from the spectator, the force of His personality being
> suggested in the faces of those figures in the picture which are looking at Him?
> (RTS 1935: 25)

Lewis comments gives an indication of how the children depicted in these

pictures of Jesus function in providing the young viewer with, not only a point of

identification, but also appropriate attitudes to Christ. Thus the pictures are not only

seen as supports to the scriptural narrative, but are offering identification with what is

seen while aiming to establish in children particular modes of behaviour

## Jesus and the Problem of Manliness

One of the recurring concerns in the booklet was that of Jesus' manliness, and

although this is not directly linked to the problems experienced by evangelicals in

making Christianity appealing to boys, implicitly this underpins many of the arguments

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[68] In *Ways of Seeing* John Berger describes the convention of portraying women in European oil paintings and how such conventions allow the woman to be the unthreatening object of the male gaze because she is depicted with her own gaze looking inward to the picture, rather than outward to the audience.

discussed in this section. Jacks calls attention to the dangers of sentimental images

adding that:

> I do not suggest that young children will always turn from sentimental pictures of Christ. They will not, any more that they will refuse to sing sentimental hymns. Many of them at some stage or other have an appalling taste for sentimentality. Therefore our question cannot be answered by finding out what pictures children like. What I do suggest is that if we allow them to see sentimental pictures, a day will come when they will turn away from such pictures, and hate themselves for ever having liked them. And then they are apt to turn away from Christ also. They will think that the "sloppy" hymns and the pictures that were "pretty", etc., really represented Christ. And so they will be robbed of Him who might be their greatest possession. (RTS 1935: 14)

and he identifies the signifying practices which feminise Jesus:

> The long white clinging garments in the conventional picture of Jesus suggest to the child someone who was quite half a woman. And that is not the kind of man children like, however much they appreciate a real woman. I suppose that a case may be made for painting Christ with long hair and a beard. But I deplore pictures in which his hair is made to curl, and I would like for British children pictures in which both hair and beard are short. (RTS 1935: 14-5)

We have seen in figure 14 how Woodroffe depicted Christ with short hair but

with a beard, whereas in figure 19 we see a 1930s version of Jesus blessing

the children by Marjory Whittington, where he is shown clean shaven and with

cropped hair. In addition he is smiling and this is an innovation compared to the

depictions of Jesus discussed up to this point. This version fits well with Jack's

who rejects pictures which show Jesus as being weak and who wants to see

instead 'a man with a strong, well-developed, healthy physical body'. In most of

the images of Jesus discussed so far it would be impossible to say whether or

not he had a strong, well-developed body because he is usually covered from

Figure 19

neck to toe in a robe, whereas in figure 19 he is shown wearing a short tunic which

has no sleeves, thus his arms and legs are uncovered. Although the illustration is not

sufficiently detailed to provide the viewer with the level of information which would

enable an opinion to be made as to whether or not the Jesus shown here has a 'well-

developed physical body', he is, at the very least, shown to *have* a body. Outside of

the depiction of the Crucifixion (which, according to developmental theory, was not a

positive image of Jesus to put before children) there
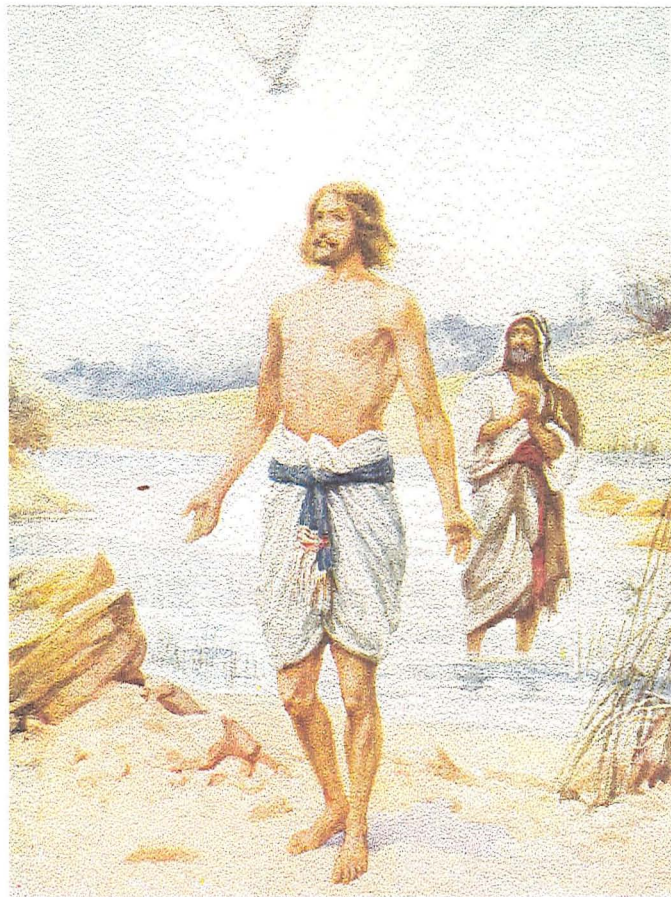
**Figure 20**

has been very little scope for artists to explore the physicality of Christ[69], with the moment of his baptism by John the Baptist being one of the few exceptions (figure 20).

Jacks also against the epithet mild when attached to Jesus and believes that the line "Gentle Jesus meek and mild,"[70] has done great harm to the Christian cause, just as the depiction of Jesus with 'a smooth soft skin and a bland and mild expression often suggest a man who had never known any sincere conflict of thought' and denies the intellectual power of Jesus. Yet he states that tenderness is not an

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[69] As corporeality had been the central focus of earlier (adult) spiritual engagements with Christ, Jacks' comments are understandable.

[70] From a hymn by Charles Wesley.

effeminate feature, that on the contrary only the strong can be really tender and that 'the creative tenderness of Jesus was rooted in His strength.'

Lawrence Wilson, master in charge of religious teaching at Willesden County School, extends the discussion of Jesus' manliness in appealing for pictures of Jesus which portray a virile Christ, reminding his audience that Jesus was not simply the friend of little children but a passionate adult capable of demonstrating righteous
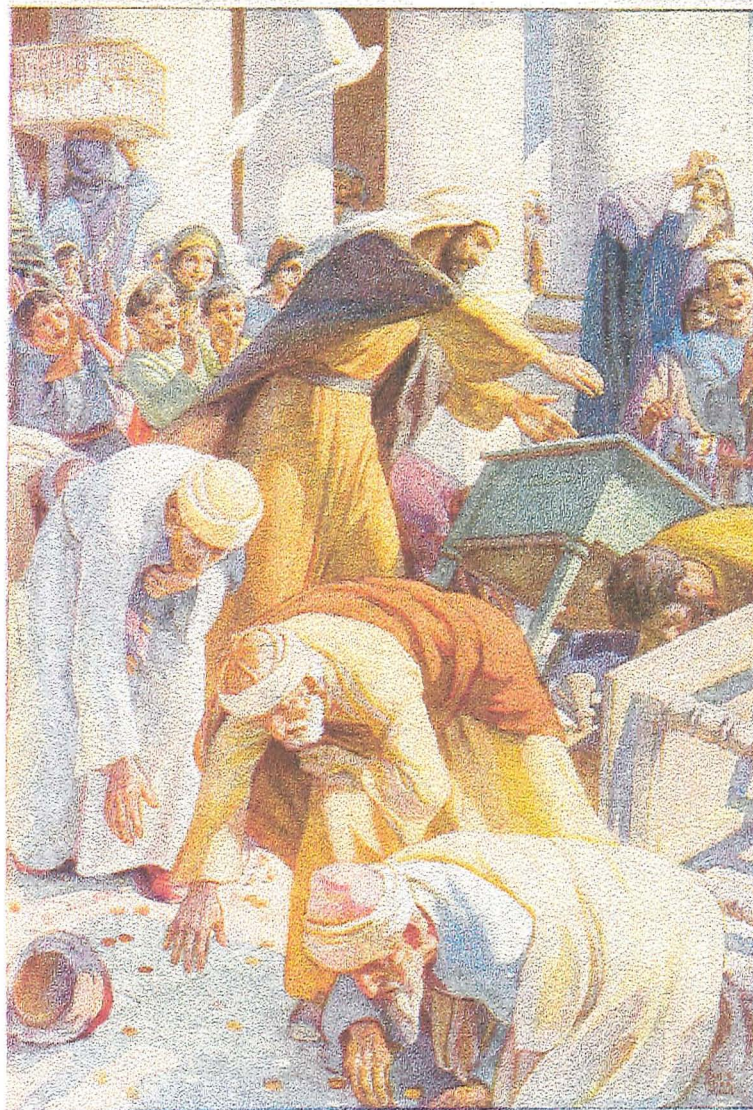


THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE
"Jesus cast out them that sold and bought in the temple." St. Matthew 21: 12-16.

**Figure 21**

anger. The scene of Jesus cleansing the temple is used as an example here, but it is a scene which, in most versions of the Jesus story told to children is significantly absent (see Chapter Three). Figure 21 is a SPCK teaching card illustrated by Elsie Anna Wood and is a rare example of the depiction of this scene in material produced for children. This absence may be partly due to the influence of developmental theory, in that if children at certain stages are susceptible to imitating what they see and read, anger is a difficult emotion to manage successfully in the classroom. Another explanation might be that this is a scene which has seldomly been depicted by the 'great masters' because their patrons believed the event to valorise rebellion against
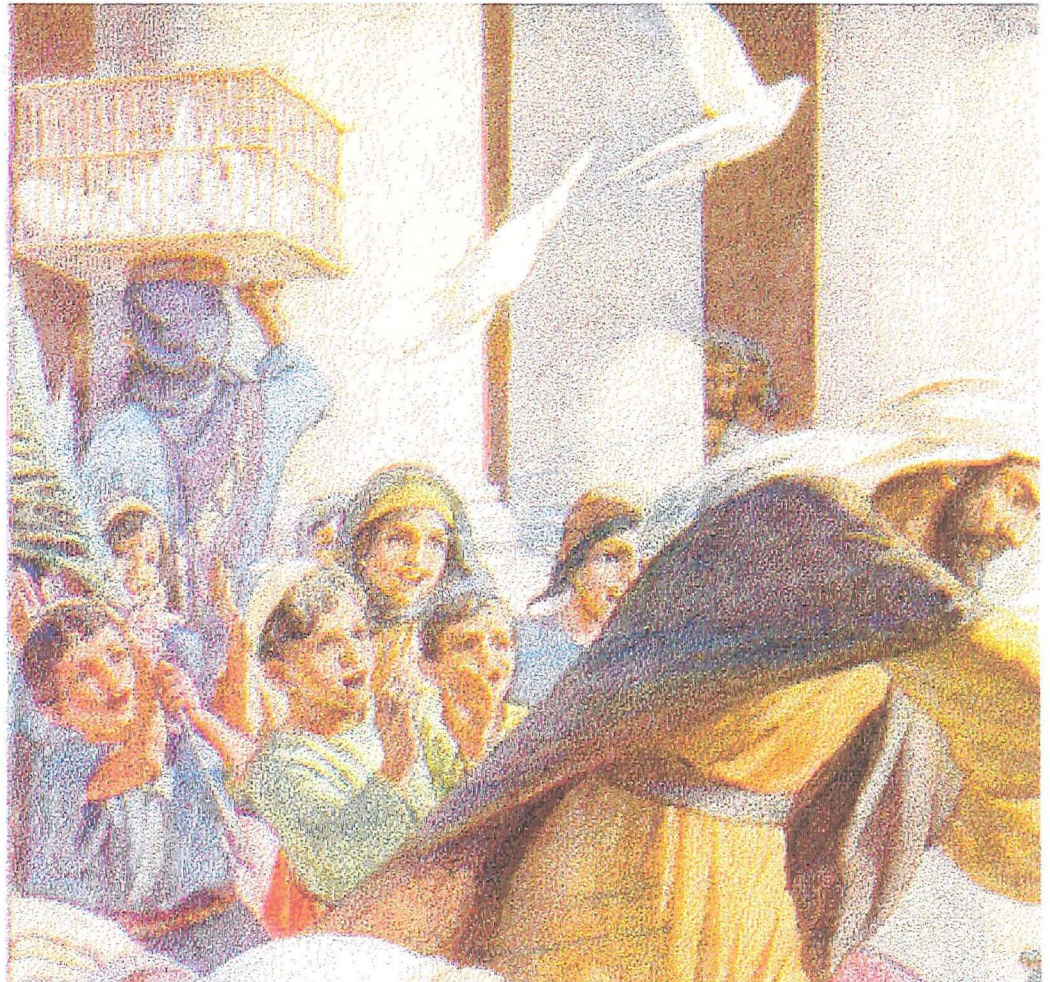


**Detail of figure 21**

authority. Nevertheless, in the detail of figure 21, we see that the children are clapping

and cheering as Jesus goes about upturning tables and causing mayhem among the

money traders in the Temple.

Wilson goes on to say that:

> The Boy who hurt His mother's feelings by remaining behind in Jerusalem, the
> young Rabbi who knotted a scourge of cords and drove the money-changers
> from the Temple, the Man who escaped from the people of Nazareth when He
> had infuriated them to the point of lynching Him...this is not the feeble
> emasculate personality of the child's hymn. No. We must stress the virility of
> our Lord, not a purely hypothetical and effeminate gentleness. (RTS 1935: 29)

Mathews had made similar points (but more thoughtfully) in his Froebelian-inspired

*The Fascinated Child* written over a quarter of a century earlier:

> the one drawback of the splendid fact that most of us get our first impression of
> Him from our mothers lies in the over emphasis on the
>      *"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild."*
> He was all that; but he stood up to the Pharisees alone and with a full
> knowledge of the consequences; His blazing indignation swept through the
> Temple like a whirlwind and drove out the merchants. (Mathews 1909: 16-17)

What is particularly significant here is that Mathews is attributing the

promulgation of the view of 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' to the influence of

mothers and in the 1930s these worries about the representation of Christ as

effeminate are situated alongside those concerning the 'poorer' educational

performance of boys in schools. Among the middle-class In the nineteenth

century there had been similar concerns that boys were better educated in the

public schools and away from the feminising influence of their mothers. In Britain

in the 1930s the feminising threat to boys was deemed to come from their

predominantly women teachers. (Hunt 1991: 36) If emotion was generally

believed to be the province of women, then anger was the one emotion which

boys were allowed to express and which was associated with manliness. Granville

Stanley Hall (1902) in *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relation to physiology,*

*anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education Vol 1* had written that:

> To be angry aright is a good part of moral education and non-resistance under all provocations is unmanly, craven and cowardly. An able-bodied young man, who can not fight physically, can hardly have a high and true sense of honour, and is generally a milk sop, a lady-boy or a sneak. He lacks virility, his masculinity does not ring true, his honesty can not be sound to the core...Real virtue requires enemies, and women and effeminate and old men want placid comfortable peace, while a real man rejoices in noble strife which sanctifies all great causes, casts out fear and is the chief source of courage. (Hall cited in Hunt 1991)

and Hall's influence lasted well into the 1930s when concerns about adolescence

were again brought to the fore of educational discourses. J. Paterson Smyth in *A*

*People's Life of Christ* first published 1921 had devoted a whole chapter to 'The Angry

Christ' which provides a socialist reading of Jesus as a revolutionary who can appeal

to all 'red-blooded men' (Smyth 1921: 116).

Mathews, on the other hand, did not leave girls completely out of the picture in

considering Jesus as the ideal hero and role model for children, but he did divide his

appeal along the lines of gender:

> Above all - and it is a scene to thrill boys and make their pulses leap - at the Trial and at Calvary, we have the supreme example in history of absolutely unboasting, undaunted, heroic bravery beside which even the stirring deeds of Greatheart or Nelson are relatively unimpressive. Grip a boy with the reality of that, and his loyalty to the Hero-Saviour has been won for life. And Jesus' life has also all the qualities that stir the blood and set alight the gentler flame of idealism in the girls.
> The child-idea of Jesus, then, should be of One who does not limit life or ring it round with orders to "keep off the grass" of life. It is the knowledge of a Jesus winning high loyalty to Himself and demanding a noble chivalry and gentleness to others, a Jesus who makes a class of boys who own His leadership feel like some Round Table of Knights, no longer wielding the wooden sword of "make believe" and "Let's pretend," but going out to fight in a larger battle. The girl finds in the service of her Hero not simply the cloistered virtue of "correct" opinion and conventional attire, but the large and joyous adventure of "doing good" and "having life more abundantly". (Mathews 1909: 17)

There is undoubtedly an underlying tension driving such arguments. It appears to be that  the kindergarten teachers having been successful in using developmental theory to establish a non-threatening view of the maternal Jesus for their pupils discovered that it was the very success of this particular perception which made it difficult for children to move on to the next stage of development. This was a stage at
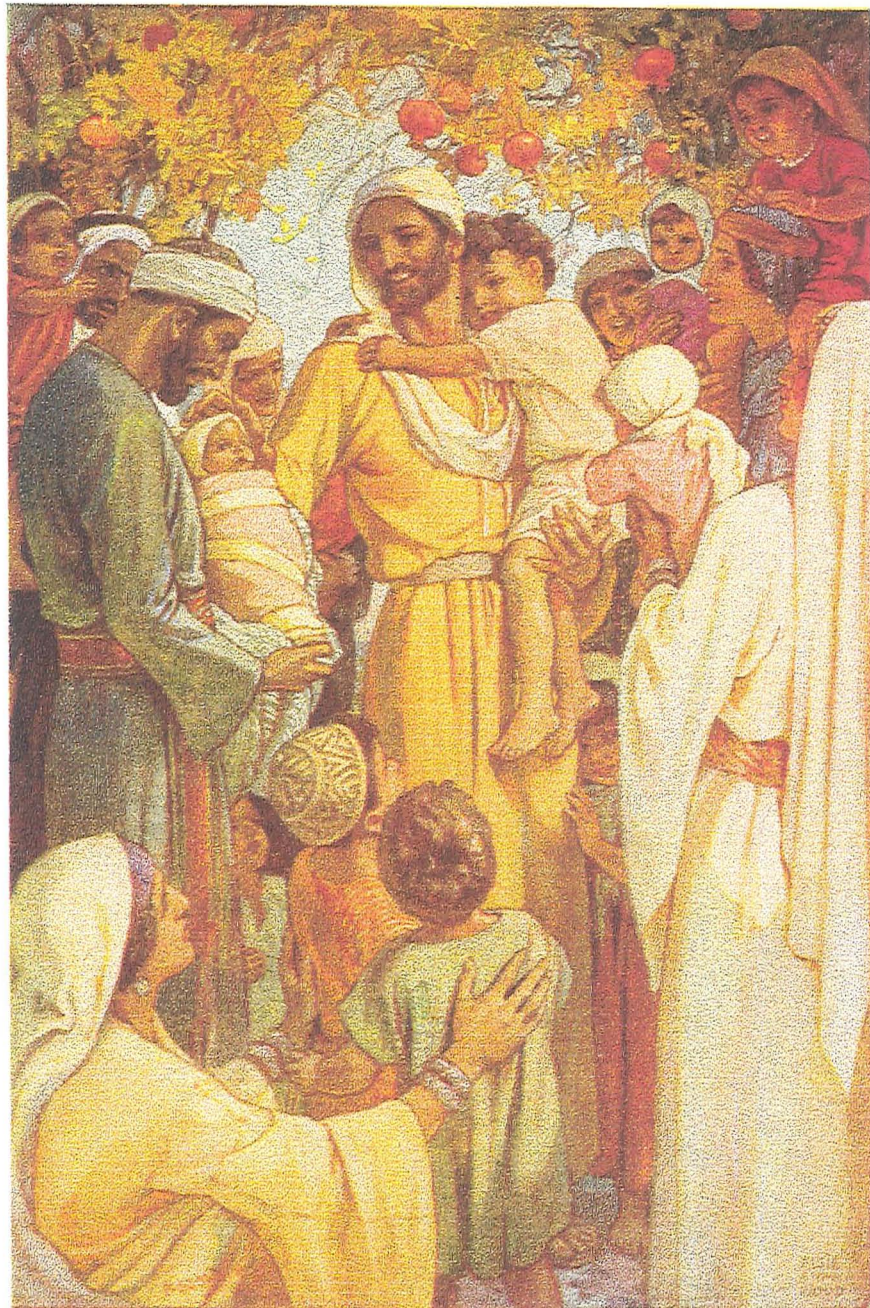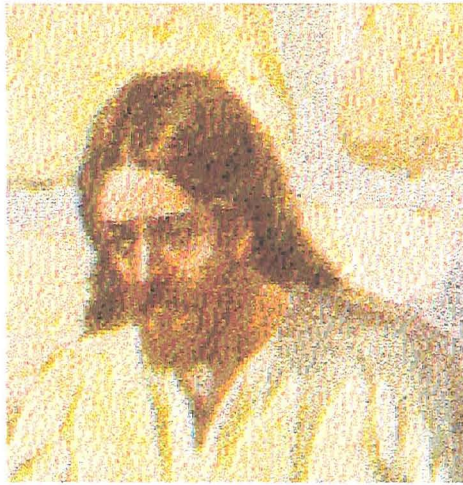


Figure 22

which, according to child study, they needed to be provided with more challenging role models and narratives which would encourage them to move out into the world. Thus the emphasis on the eradication of fear and the stress on Jesus as a symbol of security became, for some children a difficult notion to renounce. The problem then was to try to highlight those aspects of Jesus which might make a direct appeal to this older age group who, according to child study now needed the inspiration provided by a hero or role model rather than familial reassurance.

Hugh Martin of the Student Christian Movement Press (and a member of the editorial board of Religion in Education) seems to be the only man of the group who is familiar with developmental theory and comments that dwelling on the physical and spiritual suffering of Jesus tends to present him only as the Man of Sorrows when he was also the Man of Joy 'with whom children wanted to talk and play', as shown in figure 22.

This picture by Elsie Anna Wood produced by the SPCK is an interesting example, not just because it depicts Jesus as smiling, which is unusual in this genre, but also for the way in which the two disciples on the left of the picture are shown holding children. Although they might look a little uncertain as to what to do with the children in their care, their active involvement in this undoubtedly happy scene, is an effective means of eradicating children's fear of the forbidding adults. In addition, the palette of colours used by Woods - being predominantly shades of yellow - infuse the picture with optimism. Looking in more detail at some of the pictures discussed earlier, it becomes apparent that the concerns voiced regarding the depiction of Jesus as joyful rather than the 'Man of Sorrows' do have some basis. For example, if we take a detail from figure 12, the illustration by Hartley, we can see that not only does

Jesus look older than his supposed thirty three years, he also looks ill and in the detail from figure 18 he appears to have no expression at all.



**Detail of figure 12**
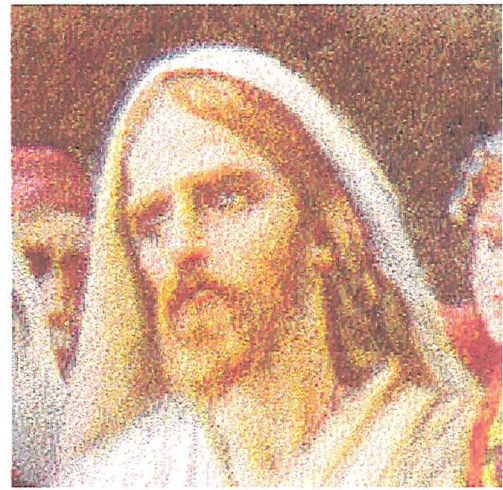


**Detail of figure 7**
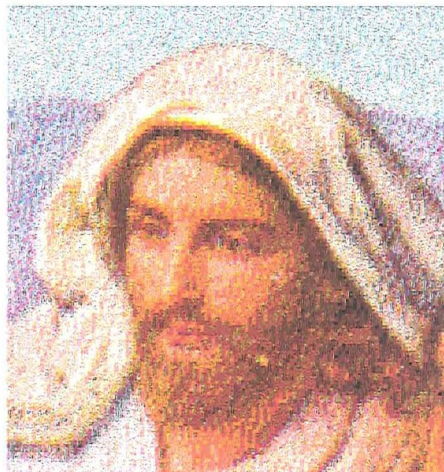


**Detail from figure 18**

The question of Jesus' manliness causes Martin to caution against painters going too far the other way in presenting what he describes as '*a pretty-pretty Christ*, a sleek effeminate figure.' Adding that some paintings in the exhibition show a Christ much too concerned about his personal appearance, depicting him as a courtier and not as a working man.

## Jesus the Fellow-Citizen of Every Land

Hetty Lee Holland of The National Society and a Froebel-trained Sunday school teacher, also demonstrates the influence of developmental thinking when she says that the multiplicity of images of Jesus is good because it compels people to think. She adds that while artists of olden days were given a strict remit concerning the representation of Christ, artists today are free to do what they please and that 'what they individually produce is a compound of their own personalities and their intellectual conceptions of Jesus Christ.' She argues against confining the child's experience to a single picture because:

> I have known little children disturbed at a new picture, because the Child Jesus or the Baby in the manger or His mother were portrayed differently from the single picture with which they had hitherto grown up and which they believed must represent what actually happened. A child cannot be too young to be told that this was the way the artist has *tried* to paint the Lord Jesus and we are free to like it or not as we wish. (RTS 1935: 42-3)

Holland sees this as being directly linked to the child's own 'expression work' in their own paintings of religious subjects. Holland says that in her opinion the Eastern background is not essential for 'there was something spiritually unique in the Personality of Jesus Christ, something above time or space'. (RTS 1935: 45) Elsie Helena Spriggs from the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church Sunday School states that she is not concerned with the reactions of adults to the pictures only with their 'desirability or otherwise from the point of view of boys and girls of school age', (RTS 1935: 48) and to this end her main worry is that pictures, particularly head and shoulder portraits, can have the authority of a photograph which might be difficult to eradicate at a later stage because 'such a picture of Jesus remains firmly printed on the child's mind as being the real Jesus and years of training and contrary impressions will not

eradicate it'.(RTS 1935: 8-9)

Like Holland in the previous discussion, she feels that children can become

fixed on one particular picture and that it is better to show a range of pictures, 'so that

the child's mind can never be tied down to one human being's

imperfect conception.' In such a context innovations are important and

considered acceptable because they challenge accepted images of Jesus and

his re-presentation becomes a site of spiritual regeneration in forcing people to

reconsider Christ's relevance to their own times. Within such discourses the

issue raised earlier concerning the apparent anachronistic elements in pictures is

not considered a problem at all and examples from fine art are used to argue that

this is consistent with artistic conventions. With regard to the accuracy of

historical detail, Martin writes that this is a modern demand and that, as we have

seen in the examples discussed earlier 'Many of the older Italian and Dutch

pictures represent Jesus and His followers dressed in the clothes of the artist's

own time and in the setting of the artist's country...And we must not be unduly

disturbed by such anachronisms' adding that:

> It is a true instinct which feels that Jesus can be at home anywhere, and
> that He does not belong to Palestine, that He is the contemporary of each
> passing generation and the fellow-citizen of every land. (RTS 1935: 38-9)

Elsie Anna Spriggs returns to the same issue in her address when

declaring, with just the hint of an acknowledgement of anti-semitic feeling in

Britain, that there are dangers in over-stressing the geographical and historical

context of the life of Jesus for as 'a Jew of the first century' he could be seen as

alien in race and customs to contemporary audiences. She goes on to say that

after her own visit to the Holy Land she was convinced that he no longer

belonged to Palestine; that he now belongs to the world and that modern realistic

representations bring Christ closer to contemporary concerns and thus make a

more direct appeal to boys and girls because he can be related to their own life

experiences. In addition such representations are 'less likely to arouse prejudice

or dislike'(RTS 1935: 51). But she cautions against the tendency to spoil such

representations by the introduction of symbolism into a picture which attempts to

be realistic and writes that a 'modern boy with a bag of tools does not want a halo

round his head, nor does a Boy Scout sitting at a cottage tea-table' (RTS 1935:

51).


## Summary

This chapter has shown how, in reaction to the developments in the printing

industry which made available cheap coloured illustrations of the life of Jesus, the

pedagogy of look and learn emerged as a means of identifying which pictures were

the most suitable to use in teaching children about Christ. Further, that such

educational and technological developments influenced the ways in which the story of

Jesus was represented for a young audience which, through developmental theory,

was identified as being at a particularly impressionable age. The kindergarten age

group were considered to be especially susceptible to internalising inappropriate

images which might have a lasting influence on their attitude to Jesus and thus to

Christianity in general. The discussion has demonstrated how the images of Jesus

considered suitable for young children underwent certain changes which transformed

Christ from a sacred icon to a fairy tale hero, and how, in the case of Copping's *The*

*Hope of the World*, a whole teaching schedule could be constructed around just one

picture. In addition, examples have been provided to show that in the shift from fine art iconography to popular cultural representation, artists like Copping increasingly depicted Jesus in contemporary settings which emphasised the active role of children. Such anachronisms were viewed by some educationalists as strengthening rather than weakening Christ's appeal to a young audience because it was believed that this enabled them to make a more direct connection between the life of Jesus and their own experiences. It has also been noted that there was a continuing concern that some representations of Jesus were effeminate and thus not an effective role model to put before boys. As in the previous chapter, there is ample evidence in the discussion above to support the claim that, in the telling and the visual depiction of the story of Jesus, the readerly positions offered to girls were more appealing and thus more successful. The next chapter will address that part of the thesis question which asks why it has been the case that the popular narrative of Jesus has been more effective in engaging the emotions of girls rather than boys. In doing so, it will explore the gendered dynamics of the story of Jesus retold as an chivalric fairy tale in which he is portrayed as a romantic and heroic role model. In addition, evidence will be advanced to explain why attempts by evangelicals and educationalists to present a more 'virile' visual image of Jesus, one capable of engaging the admiration of boys, was ultimately unsuccessful.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# JESUS, GENDER AND THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

Far round the world Thy children sing their song,
From East and West their voices sweetly blend;
Praising the Lord in Whom young lives are strong,
Jesus our Guide, our Hero, and our Friend.

Basil Mathews

This chapter explores the way in which the discourse of children as the hope of the world, the guardian's of the nation's destiny, was framed as the story of the children's crusade. It shows how this narrative provided the pre-adolescent child with Jesus as the ideal example for their own actions through presenting him as a chivalric hero and how this version of the story of Jesus, through its emphasis on contemporary themes and issues, was designed to facilitate a greater engagement with the persona of Jesus among older children. This was an age group of special concern to the evangelical educationalists because of their tendency lapse from regular attendance at church, chapel or Sunday school. The chapter identifies the ways in which the presentation of Jesus as a chivalric hero was assumed to make a direct appeal to boys, but that, because of the underlying fairy tale themes relating to the story of Jesus, it was the feminine characteristics of him which emerged most strongly. An exploration of feminist perspectives on fairy tales provides evidence that this is a genre which can be viewed as reproducing the patriarchal ideology of the gendering of human characteristics. But it is also argued here that in considering the influence of texts on their readers, we need to always bear in mind the ability of

audiences to negotiate their own meanings. Thus, through the discussion on the story of Jesus as a chivalric hero, we can deduce that this is a narrative capable of producing transgressive pleasures which resist the obvious ideological aim of inculcating the feminine ideal of passivity and self-sacrifice for within this story Jesus is presented to girls as an unobtainable object of desire.

## Jesus Out of Context

Through the preceding two chapters we have seen how developmental theory informed both the pedagogy of storytelling and of the use of pictures in the schoolroom and how this in turn influenced the re-presentation of the story of Jesus. Chapter Six focused on the pictures of Jesus which were produced as story book illustrations and which depicted the historical scene of him blessing the children in Palestine. But this chapter is concerned with those images of Jesus which were produced to stand alone without accompanying text *i.e.* schoolroom prints or picture postcards to be used as rewards for attendance. In addition, in contrast to most of the images discussed in the previous chapter, those referred to here depict Jesus alongside the children of the world and in a twentieth century context. This genre of representation does not seek to link Jesus to any event in the Bible, but instead works from the position advanced by Hugh Martin that 'Jesus can be at home anywhere, and that He does not belong to Palestine, that He is the contemporary of each passing generation and the fellow-citizen of every land'. As we saw in the previous chapter, Elsie Anna Spriggs, like Martin observed that Christ no longer belonged to Palestine but to the world and that 'modern realistic representations bring Christ closer to contemporary concerns' which were able to make a more direct appeal to

children because what they saw could be related to their own life experiences. Therefore this chapter provides visual examples of this shift from the conventions of representing Christ as a historical figure to the innovation of presenting him as a secular hero.

## The Turn from Fantasy to Fact

Chapter Four concluded by acknowledging the relevance of Rose's (1991) comments concerning the ways in which discourses around the disadvantaged child and educational egalitarianism have often masked the underlying ideological project in which that child has been seen as a particularly receptive subject for the inculcation of the social and moral enterprise of citizenship. Rose's observations implicitly inform this chapter, which explores the way in which the Edwardian discourse of working class children as the hope of the world promoted a vision of world citizenship which mobilised both the story of Jesus and popular imperialist sentiments in a chivalric romance best described as the children's crusade. The discussion will show how the themes of Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur*, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1891) and the legend of St. George were combined with a vocabulary which stressed the virtues of hero-worship, bravery, duty and self-sacrifice. It will show how these themes and virtues were seen as being embodied in the life and character of Jesus thus making him an ideal role model for the older child. But the chapter will also show how, despite the apparently militaristic - and thus by association masculine - emphasis, and the problematic but unavowedly maleness of Jesus, his success as a role model was more apparent among girls than boys and to this end, the claims of Rose are

demonstrated by reference to the effectiveness of such discourses in mobilising the hearts and minds of children.

At the end of the previous chapter we saw how Spriggs referred to the depiction of a Boy Scout with a halo. This is an interesting example, for it brings together two issues which underpin the discussion which follows. Firstly, as we have seen there was a continuing concern with producing images - both verbal and visual - of Jesus which appealed to the interests of boys. While various commentators discussed in the last chapter argued that the need to ensure a lasting engagement with Christ's teachings was endangered by the circulation of effeminate images of him, it is clear from the discussions in the Sunday school press that keeping the interest of boys was always a problem for church groups. Secondly, such groups as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, the Church Lad's Brigade, the Girl's Life Brigade and many others supported the initial work undertaken by the Sunday schools in what Lacqueur (1976) has described as the project of organising the leisure time of the working class, and what McKenzie (1984) has termed the rationalisation of recreation. Whereas Sunday schools had been primarily concerned with religious teaching, the church and youth groups organised activities which combined the promotion of Christian citizenship with the provision of recreational facilities, such as a gym or the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. These groups recruited predominantly from the working class because of the direct appeal to this group of the material benefits noted above, which they could provide for their young, economically deprived members.

Edward Porter St. John in his article 'The Story Interests of Childhood' wrote

that one of the greatest changes in the mental life of children between eight and

twelve years old is:

> ...the rapidly developing sense of law and the rather prosaic and matter-of-fact spirit that accompanies it. It finds manifestation in the changed attitude toward fairy tales and other imaginative literature which seems untrue to fact. Reality and the simplest beginnings of causality have a meaning and stir his interest as they did not before. (SSCCO 1910: 583)

Higgs in the *Evolution of the Child* Mind (1910) had described this as the

'Personal Stage', and St. John goes on to say that this is a stage in development

when the child turns from 'the world of fancy to that of fact' and that the most

frequently asked question of stories told to this age group being "Is it true?" and

that 'whether you use the story to illustrate a principle or to stir his emotional life it

will have a larger audience if you can tell him that it is'.

According to St. John, this movement from the world of fancy is intimately

connected with the child's developing interest in the adult world together with a

reluctance to live only for the moment, being instead concerned with his or her future.

This is accompanied by the development of the tendency towards what St. John

describes as a 'selfishly utilitarian spirit', in other words the child demands to know the

benefits to him or her of this or that action:

> For the most part an egoistic morality, one that demonstrates that it pays to do right, and that it does not pay to do wrong, should be exemplified in these stories. And much of the information can be tactfully conveyed without overloading with details or weakening the story's moral power.
> (SSCCO 1910: 583)

St. John is referring to stories be they written or spoken, whereas the discussion here

is concerned to explore how a single picture can substitute for the story itself.

Commenting on the pervasiveness of the image of St George in Britain at the turn of

the century, J.S.Bratton has described how

> It appears in every sort of publication for the young...The picture
> suggests all that is significant of the traditional story; no narrative needs
> to accompany it, and so no reading ability is needed for the child to
> absorb or reaffirm its suggestions. (MacKenzie 1986: 90)

Bratton does not delve into the complex dynamics which led to the situation where

such pictures might be capable of suggesting 'all that is significant of the traditional

story', but such a process has been mapped in the previous two chapters. This

enables us to understand how it is that the many images of Jesus circulating in this

period - even when considered in isolation from the accompanying written or oral

narrative - were capable of communicating not just the scene depicted but 'all that

was significant' in the story of Jesus. This is because the connotations attached to

any representation of Jesus invariably carried with it the knowledge of his magical

birth and his cruel death. But the connotations attached to such images are also

rooted in the secular world of the fairy tale because the pictures were produced

alongside those illustrating that genre (often by the same artists).[71] The form and style

of illustration used in the two genres can be seen to overlap in many examples

because of the shared aim of seeking to produce pictures which employed fantasy to

capture children's imagination and thus promote a more active involvement in the

story. We can see a good example of this in the work of Margaret Tarrant in figure 23

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[71] Agnes Blackie singles out Cicely Mary Barker, one of the artists whose work is examined in this
study, for special mention as one of the most representative authors of this period:
> With regard to children's books, three popular and representative authors of the period
> were Percy F. Westerman, Evelyn Smith and Cicely M. Barker... (the latter) whose first
> book *Flower Fairies of the Spring* appeared in 1923, is both author and artist. Since
> then she has both written and illustrated many other books, including *He Leadeth Me*, a
> book of Bible stories...Individuality and perfection of detail are characteristic of her
> pictures, whether of flowers or children. (Blackie n.d.: 57)

produced for the Girl Guides in 1925 and in the page reprinted from the Catalogue of the Medici Prints, figure 24.



**Figure 23 - Queen of the Brownies**

In addition, as has been shown earlier, the illustrations were also seen as offering their young audiences entry into a world of higher culture because of the associations of 'sweetness and light' still attached to paintings - even those produced specifically for mass production.[72] As we have seen in Chapter Six the illustrations of the life of Jesus produced for children tended to stress the former aim rather more than the

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[72] In the book review section of the *Journal of Education* at the beginning of the century there is frequent reference to how 'well-got up' this or that book is.

THE MEDICI SOCIETY'S    MODERN CATALOGUE
THE ART OF MARGARET TARRANT

Figure 24

latter, for there is ample evidence that the commissioners of such pictures were only

too aware of the difficulties they were facing in trying to hold the older child's interest

in religion. While at the kindergarten level the story could engage the emotions of

younger children through the fantasy of emotional security offered by the depiction of

Jesus as the friend to little children, older children were often more interested in

stories of action and adventure through which they could begin to explore their

identity in relation to the wider world. This was a stage identified through

developmental theory as the point at which children developed their altruistic

tendencies and who, therefore, needed guidance to ensure that this altruism was

effectively mobilised through the notion of citizenship.

Mary Higgs writing of this altruistic stage, observes that:

There comes a stage to every boy and girl not handicapped by low evolution when suddenly the air clears, and the world becomes magic. Away he looks, no longer with eyes turned inward. They exist! A whole galaxy of heroes to be loved, admired, worshipped. These ideal beings, who may, some of them, in actual flesh and blood, be near the daily life, accomplish that for the self which is at the moment all-important. The life no longer self-centred, yields homage, and altruism begins. (Higgs 1910: 49)

While it was accepted that both boys and girls moved to the altruistic stage

and thus sought suitable heroes as role models, there was also evidence to show that

there were lines dividing boys from girls in terms of what they found appealing in the

persona and story of Jesus. In 1939 Beatrice M Swainson, a lecturer at Lincoln

Training College gave a clear example of this when she published the findings of her

survey of elementary school children's preferences in scripture:

Most marked was the influence of sex difference. Boys preferred the Old Testament, and thrilling stories of war and adventures. In the New Testament they liked mysterious and inexplicable phenomena such as miracles and the resurrection of Christ. They enjoyed parables for their puzzle value, appreciated being left to read, and excelled in the active and practical pursuits of drawing and making models. Girls, on the other hand, showed a more subjective attitude, applying the stories to their own lives and feeling them emotionally. The person rather than the event was the main attraction. The New Testament generally, and tales of women and babies in particular, were most popular, and girls surpassed boys in their preferences for acting, being read to, learning by heart and writing.
(Swainson 1939b: 155)

In answer to the question "Which do you like better, Old or New Testament?" it was found that 55.5 per cent of the total number of respondents, (particularly girls and those in the senior school), preferred the New Testament. The reasons given for their preferences being that "we learn about Jesus how he spent his life from childhood to manhood." But, interestingly, it was also felt that the New Testament was "more likely to be true. The Old may be only legends." Swainson's survey shows how, 'the birth of Christ appealed to the older girls, who saw themselves already as potential mothers', providing evidence that the view of gentle Jesus meek and mild had become integrated into their future feminine roles, for:

> Girls...were more interested in the people cured, and showed natural sympathy with the sick and the suffering. Second on the list came the birth of Christ, but this was first with the girls, particularly in the senior school. The preference was most frequent among older C and D girls, and many gave evidence of motherly feelings and sympathetic imagination with the Virgin Mary's point of view. "His mother must have been proud of him," said a girl of thirteen (C). (Swainson 1939b: 155)

In addition, the survey revealed that interest in the crucifixion was more marked in girls than boys "because it's sad". Swainson also found that many children enjoyed the story of the nativity because:

> "it brings a christmassy feeling to me," and many little ones enjoyed it "because I am used to it," and "because this lesson has been taken before Christmas every year." (Swainson 1939b:155)

Finally, demonstrating the effectiveness of the kindergarten view of Jesus, it was found that the younger children 'referred to Jesus as a "good teller of stories"' and that junior children demonstrated a preference for tales of Jesus childhood because 'They loved to think of Jesus as "just an ordinary boy like me."'

Swainson's survey provides interesting evidence of the different ways in which boys and girls engaged with the story of Jesus. For although it might be assumed that

Jesus, being a man, would offer boys a greater opportunity for identification, the evidence here appears to support the view that girls identified with him, firstly because of the emphasis of him as a baby in the greatly-loved story of the nativity, and secondly, because the emphasis on the caring characteristics of the adult Jesus connote him as a female role model. But such connotations exist alongside those of Jesus the hero, and as was stated at the beginning of this chapter, the discussion here is concerned to investigate why the story of Jesus reframed as chivalric romance was more effective in appealing to girls rather than boys as one would expect from a militaristic narrative. To this end, we need to acknowledge that the usual separations which might be applied to the different genres of fairy tale, romance script and chivalric adventure story tend to become blurred when the same hero inhabits all three narrative forms. In addition, there is further ambiguity about classification when such narratives, through the influence of developmental theory, are aimed at the same children *but* at different points of their lives. This problem of the blurring of boundaries between genres is one which will be returned to later.

## A Children's Crusade

Chapter Four demonstrated how the discourse of working class children as the hope of the world was expressed in De Montmorency's *National Education and National Life* (1906) and it is clear that in his choice of words he was influenced by the themes and images derived from chivalry. For he says that if one stops to reflect on the six million children in English schools 'imagination stands aghast' for in this 'ever-recruiting army...the whole range of human capacity...must be represented'. There was, of course nothing new in using such analogies for in 1749 Charles Wesley

penned his famous hymn which exhorted 'Soldiers of Christ, arise! And put your

armour on; Strong in the strength which God supplies through his eternal Son' and in

1863 J.S.B. Monsell urged his audience to 'Fight the good fight with all thy might,

Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right'. Two years later in 1865 Sabine Baring-

Gould a noted devotee of the Victorian chivalric romanticism, added his Arthurian-

inspired version which described 'Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war with

the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ the royal master leads against the foe;

forward into battle. See his banners go.' There was also Henry Downton's 'Forward,

soldiers, bold and fearless, hear the call of God; prove your courage in the conflict,

tread where brave men trod' and in 1901 the more contemporary 'I want to be a hero!

And bravely take my stand wherever duty calls me; or work awaits my hand; among

the poor and needy, out in the Gloomy night, I'll carry wealth and comfort, Or bear a

torch of light,' by W.H.Parker. The theme of Christian soldiers had proven to be a

successful expression of spiritual duty and all these hymns were included in the

Carey Bonner children's hymn book (1906) referred to in Chapter Five. But the

concern of this chapter is with the promulgation of the Edwardian version of

citizenship referred to earlier and of how this vision of citizenship was expressed as a

quasi-medieval quest which certainly contributed to the reframing of the story of Jesus

as a chivalric romance. It is important to emphasise at this point that this other

interpretation of the story did not come after the fairy tale version told to younger

children, but emerged during the very same period. In addition, the fact that it was

produced for older children did not negate the nursery story. Rather, it subsumed,

incorporated and developed the concerns and themes which have been identified

earlier as being the essential features of the story of Jesus retold as fairy tale. The

simple reassuring nursery story of Jesus the friend of little children was therefore

adapted[73] to meet the developmental needs of this older group, and refigured in order

to foster the idea that active citizenship was a Christian obligation. Likewise the way

in which Jesus was represented visually was adapted to depict not a maternal figure

but:

> ...the Man of Nazareth in His strength and His Joy and His interest in ordinary people who has power over the hearts of children...a Christ who will win the hearts of the young and whom they will want to follow.(*The Times* 1933)

That last line is particularly significant, for it frames children's engagement with

Jesus in quasi-chivalric terms. In winning their hearts, Christ becomes the children's

leader and role model, and they are addressed as active participants in the crusade

to change the world. Thus the chivalric adventure story incorporates features from the

fairy tale genre, one of which is that is centrally concerned with young people set

apart from their parents and embarking on a challenging quest in a world which has

real dangers which must be overcome. Whereas the kindergarten story of Jesus the

friend of little children promoted the idea of how Christ loved children, in this version

told/shown to older children the emphasis is more on the need to foster a loving

attitude in the child(ren) towards Jesus. This is given added authority by the

knowledge that this is not a tale of fiction but of fact. Further, in trying to establish a

relationship in which Jesus is the ideal role model, the motivating reason for the

children to follow in his footsteps is not simply because they want to be like him, but is

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[73] Attempts to provide an accurate periodization in reference to these pictures has not been possible for the reasons outlined in Chapter Three. Some of the changes called for in the *Pictures of Jesus* booklet were already in existence in some pictures even before the booklet was published. It is simply not possible to claim that there is a clear link between such discourses and the changes in styles of representation. One can only note that there have always been fundamental disagreements and controversies concerning pictures of Jesus and that in the period under investigation, those images produced for children were evaluated by reference to a popular understanding of child development theory.

closely related to the way in which they want him to like them. This is because, in the version of the story told/shown to older children, love from Jesus is not framed as being quite as unconditional as it is has been for the kindergartners. Developmental discourses identify that in addition to children having different aptitudes at different ages, that development inevitably brings with it the potential to take on adult obligations and responsibilities and Higgs writing about the altruistic stage and the need for 'Civics' stated that;

> in the older classes there should be definite, though controlled, self-government, mimic citizenship, accompanied by sufficient reality of initiative to be real preparation.

and she adds:

> *Now is the age for the pageant, the historical play, for everything that makes admiration for the noblest deeds done for city or county.* We cannot grow what we never plant. (Higgs 1910: 65) [My emphasis]

and Higgs applies Froebel's imagery from the kindergarten to call for the needs of the older children to be addressed.

As demonstrated in the discussion in previous chapters, working class children were hailed as future citizens (of the nation and of the world), that is 'the hope of the world', and within such discourses children were not seen in pre-nineteenth century theological terms as being the bearers of original sin, but were addressed as the beneficiaries of the sacrifices made by Jesus. To this end, they were continually reminded of the debt they owed to him; a debt which could only be repaid through their good behaviour and their willingness to continue his work on earth. Within such discourses children were constructed as the redeemers of a corrupt and destructive adult world and the ultimate responsibility for changing that world was presented as being in their hands

As we have seen in the preceding three chapters, the Sunday school network

was an institutional base of great value to the rapidly expanding publishing industry

which recognised the potential it provided for new and different ways of re-presenting

the story of Jesus for children. Within the context of such commercial considerations

the story of the life of Jesus far from constituting one single genre, that of sacred text,

was retold in popular culture forms which can be variously classified as biography,

romantic novel, adventure story, as well as the fairy tale form discussed at length in

preceding chapters. Many books which re-presented the life of Jesus signalled an

awareness of the commercial reality of trying to resell an old story in a new and more

competitive context, and provide evidence to support the view that they were alert to

the commercial benefits of reframing the story of Jesus as a chivalric romance which

combined the themes of fairy tales with the Arthurian legends. Mabel Dearmer (1907)

in the Preface to her book *A Child's Life of Christ* addresses her prospective audience

by writing that:

> I am going to tell you a wonderful story, children. It is the most
> wonderful and beautiful story that has ever been written since the world
> began. It is a story of adventure, of peril, of brave deeds, and of
> conquest. All boys and girls like stories of noble daring. Here is one. It
> is the story of a hero, but a hero greater than the Red-cross Knight or
> King Arthur. It is the story of a hero who was so great that by his side
> the noblest and the best of the Knights of chivalry are like little ignorant
> foolish children. It is the story of a man who was sad and yet a happy
> man. It is the story of a hero who was so brave that he conquered not
> only the whole world, but even death itself and the betrayal of friends. It
> is the story of a hero who was born a child, as you are. It is the story of
> a hero who grew up to be a man, as you will grow up. It is the story of
> our Lord Jesus Christ - the Son of Man and the Son of God. (Dearmer
> 1907)

Dearmer's preface demonstrates not only the need to widen the appeal of the

story by making cross-genre connections, it also shows how as the author of such

texts she specifically addresses the intended audience in terms of their search for

suitable role models which will aid them on their journey to adulthood. In addition, she

emphasises how the story of King Arthur was seen as having as great a circulation

among children as the more essentially English legend of St. George

Dearmer's description of the story of Jesus as 'a story of adventure, of peril, of

brave deeds and of conquest' which is also 'the story of a hero who was born a child,

as you are...the story of a hero who grew up to be a man, as you will grow up' sought

to establish Jesus as not only a chivalric hero but also one who serves as the ideal

role model for children. But she adds that it is 'the story of a hero who was so brave

that he conquered even death itself', which does not provide children with an

automatically appealing figure with whom to identify. For Jesus, in his bravery, made

the ultimate sacrifice, and 'died to save us all' so children have been told, but

paradoxically children are also told that he 'conquered death'; that is that he died but

is yet alive. It is easy to understand how the representation of Jesus as an undead

hero might be seen as somewhat disturbing - if not frightening - to children,

particularly when they have some understanding of the reality of death. We have

already examined the difficulty faced by writers and illustrators of the story of his life,

of trying to establish him as separate from the more forbidding image of God and of

presenting him as approachable and loving. In addition, there is also the problem of

overcoming the fears which might be attached to depictions of a person who was

known to have died but who is still referred to as alive, who is the invisible watcher

and silent listener to events in the present.

These difficulties are dealt with by Christian theologians, but this investigation

is not concerned with investigating the subtleties of doctrinal discourse. Rather it is

concerned to examine such contradictions from the standpoint of a child whose

introduction to the story of Jesus has been through that narrative retold as a fairy tale

and seeks to explain how a child might make sense of such contradictions through

identifying what knowledge of the world that child might draw upon in doing so.

According to Applebee:

> The child's gradual mastery of the formal characteristics of a story is paralleled
> by a gradual development of understanding of conventions related to story
> content. The earliest interpretation seems to be that a story is something that
> has happened in the past, a *history* rather than a fictional construct. (and that)
> this early interpretation is often accompanied by a belief in the immutability of
> stories - a faith which is eventually shaken by the recognition that behind each
> story there is a human author who has made it up.(Applebee 1978: 38)


But the story of the life of Jesus told to children has a content which has been

deemed as factual. As the girls in Swainson's (1939b) survey noted the New

Testament was "more likely to be true. The Old may be only legends." So although

the formal characteristics of the story might indeed reveal the presence of a human

author or teller, the content has an unchallenged status as non-fiction. Thus, although

the content may be re-presented and its stylistic embellishments designed to take

account of contemporary conventions, as long as that content has some connection

with the original Gospels it can still hope to retain some of the connotations attached

to a work of historical documentation and not one of fiction. When the re-

presentations challenge temporal and spatial conventions such as the location of the

story in the Holy Land two thousand years ago, cracks appear in the story's ability to

retain its status as fact.

This shift or blurring of conventions allows for another reading in which Jesus

can be seen as an exciting and inspirational story book hero, consumed alongside

other story book heroes such as Saint George or Joan of Arc. The merging of fact and

fiction was apparently not seen as presenting any serious problems for young

audiences just as long as the reading of the narratives still resulted in the inculcation of the appropriate moral values. More importantly, it enabled Jesus to be seen as a secular hero, thus able to transcend the resistance of an audience who might reject a properly-religious or explicitly didactic text. To this extent, framing the story as a chivalric romance can be seen as 'putting the powder in the jam', a phrase much used by the *Journal of Education* at the turn of the century when reviewing books in which the presentation of dry moral values was through the more palatable form of entertaining stories.

## From Sacred Icon to Secular Hero

We have seen in Dearmer's (1907) preface that the written narrative form in the first decade of this century permitted the promotion of Jesus as a chivalric hero, but the visual depiction of him in this role was to in the second and subsequent decades. A close investigation of the large number of images of Jesus produced for mass publication in the early part of this century, reveals that the iconography of Jesus underwent changes which were indicative of the shift in emphasis from sacred icon to fairy tale hero. One key development is that illustrations of Christ start to feature children, no longer confined to the depiction of the scene in which Jesus says 'Suffer little children to come unto me' and children's identification with the content, rather than just the theme of the pictures seems to become an important criteria for artists involved in this genre of representation. As was noted in Chapter Three, the parts of the Gospels most often selected for illustration are those scenes in which children are - or can be - significantly featured such as the Nativity, Jesus blessing the children, the healing of Jairus' daughter and the entry into Jerusalem. As can be seen

from the analysis of 349 illustrations in Table 1, there is clear evidence of which

illustrations were seen as most appropriate or appealing for young readers, by the

frequency in which they appeared in the books. In the pictures which form the focus of

the discussion in the following section of the chapter there is a significant innovation

in the genre in that children now feature not simply as supporting players to Christ's

starring role in the overall composition of the picture, but are established as an

essential visual ingredient given almost equal prominence in the field of vision

bounded by the image. A second innovation is that the children depicted are seen in

modern dress, and are not the usual ethnic stereotyped children from the Holy Land,

wearing flowing djellebas and stripy head-dresses.

The first innovation, like the mode of address employed by the storytellers

identified in Chapter Five, is designed to provide ample scope for child 'readers' to

identify with the children depicted in the picture and with what they are doing, and

thus to feel closer to Jesus. The second innovation, the adoption of contemporary

dress for the children, indicates that the events in the picture are situated in the

modern world not the historical past. This is a particularly significant change because

it deliberately plays with and confuses a common-sense understanding of Biblical

history. This is that Christ was known to have lived and died some 1900 years

previously. Unless the children are supposed to be dead and have gone to meet

Jesus in heaven - which is clearly not what is intended - then their depiction in

modern dress alongside Christ is an anachronism which breaks the unwritten rules of

historical congruence which had hitherto structured how Christ was painted.[74]

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[74] The fine art tradition of paintings of Christ (as discussed in Chapter Six) had often depicted him in the style of dress which was appropriate to the time and place in which such images were produced. For example, in Renaissance paintings of Virgin and child, it is usual to see Jesus and Mary clothed in the contemporary style of dress of sixteenth century Italy but this had not been a convention among British painters of religious subjects in the Victorian era.

It might be argued that such representations are making the invisible presence of the unseen risen Christ perceptible to those he is charged with watching over, but there are inconsistencies in such an explanation. In this new iconography of Jesus, he is wearing clothing which situate him in the Holy Land (and thus in the past), whereas the children are shown as wearing modern clothes, which is a paradoxical juxtaposition. In breaking the conventional visual codes and trying to portray Christ in the 'real' world, illustrators such as Harold Copping, Cicely Mary Barker, Tom Curr, Paul Dessau and Margaret Tarrant shifted the visual depiction of the life of Christ from the fine art conventions of Biblical verisimilitude into the realms of fantasy or the imaginative play of 'let's pretend'. The context provided by such representations is frequently that of a world under threat, where only Jesus and children together can save it or change it for the better, so that Jesus is presented as an evangelical super-hero. But there is one particular image which is the model and inspiration for this genre of representation and that is Copping's *The Hope of the World.*

## Harold Copping and *The Hope of the World*

In Chapter Five we saw how one hymn "I think when I read that sweet story of old" became emblematic of the representation of Jesus which Christian educationalists believed was appropriate for the cognitive and emotional needs of the kindergarten age group. In Chapter Six we saw that a whole programme of study in the Sunday school could be built around just one picture, in this case Harold Copping's *The Hope of the World* (figure 25) and it is Copping's picture which will be the focus of the discussion which follows. This image is selected because there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that it achieved iconic status

The Hope of the World
By Harold Copping
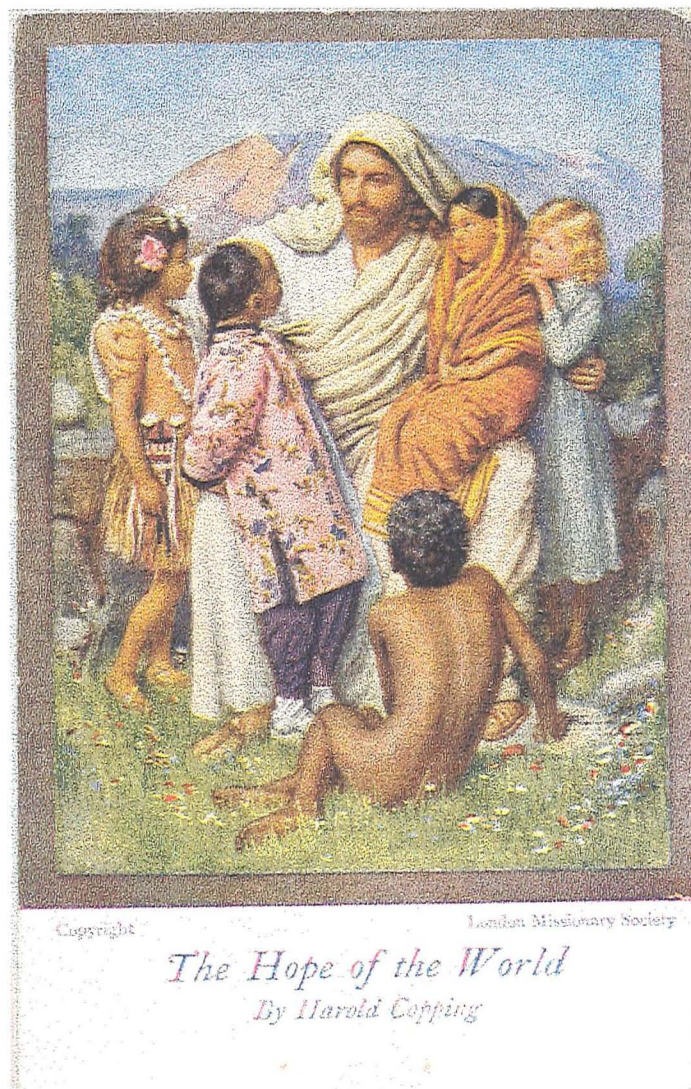
**Figure 25**

in the Sunday school network [75]which persisted for fifty years or more. This success

was based on the belief that the picture was able to make a positive and direct appeal

to children's imaginative faculties. In addition, its centrality to Sunday school teaching

meant that Copping's innovative presentation of Jesus as a chivalric hero and

compatriot in the children's crusade for a better world, very soon became established

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[75] In the film *Whistle Down the Wind*, the central character Kathy takes a copy of this picture to show her 'Jesus' what she claims is a photograph of him 'taken a long time ago'.

as a convention. This in turn was the inspiration for a range of pictures on a similar theme by other artists, as we will see in the discussion which follows.

In Chapter Four we saw how the RTS had praised the work of Copping as representing a bulwark against the 'vile stuff' (*The Times* 1908) being issued from the press in that period and had commissioned him to produce biblical illustrations based on his recent visit to the Holy Land. *The Bible Story in Modern Art* was the finished product of this visit and the fact that it became known as 'the Copping Bible' gives some indication of the high regard there was for the artist's work among evangelical's at least. As we have seen in Chapters Two and Three, this is a genre of painting which has been accorded almost no attention by art historians or those documenting the work of book illustrators. But the status of Harold Copping among Sunday school teachers and pupils is worth exploring further as his paintings were seen to set the standard for other artists working in this field to follow.

When Copping died at his home in Shoreham, Kent in 1932 there was a respectful obituary in *The Times* and articles in the Sunday school press documenting the artist's legacy to their work. Interestingly, despite the fact that *The Hope of the World*[76] was undoubtedly the most successful of Copping's many depictions of Jesus, both in numbers produced and in its appeal for children, the sectarian nature of the vested interests of rival denominations is made clear by the fact that nowhere in *The New Chronicle* (formerly known as the *Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook*) is there any mention of *The Hope of the World*. Instead, the paper takes the opportunity of using the three weeks following Copping's death to promote their own

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[76] It was the predominantly Congregationalist LMS who commissioned *The Hope of the World* as a means of encouraging children to participate in their missionary projects, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

NSSU picture by him called *Jesus and the Children* (see figure 26), a composition

obviously based on



"JESUS AND THE CHILDREN."
By HAROLD COPPING.

**Figure 26**

the LMS-commissioned painting. It is this picture we can see in the foreground of the

photograph of the NSSU Picture and Lantern Department in Appendix 5. But the

evidence[77] is clear that it was *The Hope of the World* which achieved emblematic

status as *the* picture of Jesus for children.

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[77] In his discussion of new Sunday school teaching methods in the churches of Purley, a suburb of South London, Binfield (1994) writes that Copping's *The Hope of the World*, was listed alongside Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* and Raphael's paintings in the Sistine Chapel as a suitable

As described above, Copping's *The Hope of the World* was commissioned and published by the London Missionary Society, therefore it was part of the colonialist ideologies circulating in the first three decades of this century. But it also contained an evangelising message which was that all children are brothers and sisters in the eyes of God. Therefore, in the move to the analysis of the picture we need to bear in mind the historical context in which it was produced and circulated and to beware of attributing meanings to the text which have been arrived at with the benefit of hindsight. We also need to acknowledge the polysemic potential of the image wherein the text has the capacity to rise 'to the surface provoking and pandering to different pleasures, different expectations and different interpretations.' (McRobbie 1984) and that once such re-presentations moved into the public sphere, the power of the producers to control what meanings might be derived from such imagery was very limited. Bearing in mind the points made in Chapter Two concerning the working classes involvement in popular imperialism and popular religion, it is worth considering that there could be many other readings 'rising to the surface'. The conventions of quest narratives are derived from many earlier story forms, especially folk and fairy tales. Thus we need to return to a discussion of the social significance of the fairy tale genre in order to understand how altruism and citizenship became inscribed in this retelling of the Jesus story. Zipes has argued, the original folk and fairy tales 'present a challenge, for within the tales lies the hope of self-transformation and a better world.' And that the power which was in the original folk tales and was then carried over into fairy tales, was a social one because it 'sought to celebrate

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religious image for children. Again, in an article in *Religion in Education* in 1940, reference is made to the picture.

humankind's capacity to *transform the mundane into the utopian as part of a communal project* (Zipes 1979: ix) [my emphasis]. So another reading of the appeal of Copping's *The Hope of the World* influenced by Zipes' 'emancipatory potential' thesis, might be that it signified socialist, rather than simply imperialist ideology, depending on who was reading the image. Further that, in Britain at the turn of the century, socialist, imperialist and evangelist imagery were so intertwined, that it becomes almost impossible to clearly distinguish between them. It is that very ambiguity, the polysemous potential of such images which gave them such universal appeal, in that they were able to 'ferret out those deep-rooted wishes, needs and wants' among a wide range of people, or at least to serve as the basis for a myriad of daydreams and fantasies.

If we then examine Copping's *The Hope of the World* in the light of the claim that fairy tales originally had an emancipatory potential, it then becomes easier to discern evidence of such a utopian influence in both the composition and the title of the painting. The 'world', in this picture is represented by five children, positioned at the feet, on the knee and in the arms of Jesus, the different countries being signified by the 'national costumes' worn by the children or by skin colour (and nakedness) as in the case of the 'African' boy in the foreground.[78] If the painting has the emancipatory potential identified by Zipes, and the children in national costume represent 'the world', the issue of who, or what is the 'Hope' which is referred to in the title *The Hope of the World* is called into question. While it may appear at first glance that it is obviously Jesus, because the children all appear to be looking at him with love and admiration, a more careful examination reveals the possibility of another

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[78] This visual metaphor is derived from an original composition which portrayed Queen Victoria as the mother of the Empire, seated in a central position and surrounded by her 'children' of the empire.

interpretation, and one which helps to identify the specific group who are the intended audience for the consumption of such images. Although all the children are depicted as being partners in a loving and intimate relationship with Jesus, what is the significance of the blond-haired girl in the blue dress, who is positioned on the right of the picture and is shown with Jesus' arm around her waist? In the booklet discussed earlier, *Children of the Big World* (1916), the blonde-haired girl is described as being representative of the fair-skinned peoples of Europe but she can also be read as the symbolic representation of English girlhood for, as we shall see, it is an image which recurs in many pictures of this genre, many of which were produced for the home market only. What is clear is that English girls rather than boys were provided with the means of direct identification with the children depicted in the painting.

In trying to determine who or what is the 'hope' of the world referred to in this picture, we are helped by the editor of *The Children's Newspaper*, Arthur Mee, who wrote in his popular *Arthur Mee's Letter to Girls* (1915) that:

> You will remember what our English homes have been to the men who have gone out into the world to spread our English freedom...It is not an accident that the English race throughout the world, is the most home-loving race of mankind. (Mee 1915: 28)

and he asks rhetorically:

> ...a girl, a woman, the founder of the home - what does she do? She builds up the living future of the world. (Mee 1915: 27)

Therefore it is the girl, not Jesus, who is the hope referred to in *The Hope of the World* because she is identified as bearing the responsibility for determining the future of England, for within such imperialist discourses,[79] England determines the

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[79] See Davin 1978

future of the world. These imperialist and racist conceits saturated both the educational practices and the popular culture of this period (MacKenzie 1984), so it is reasonable to assume that girls confronted with this particular image, would recognise the particular roles it constructed for them. In addition, the 1939 survey by Swainson referred to earlier would tend to prove the effectiveness of this discourse.

## Fairy Tale Narratives and Femininity

The previous chapters have established that the story of Jesus told to children through words and pictures has many similarities with the fairy tale genre particularly with the formal characteristics referred to by Applebee earlier. Many fairy tales present an initial situation in which children are isolated from adult support, either because they have been abandoned by their parents, or orphaned. Another recurring initial situation is one in which, they are required to prove themselves the rightful inheritors of their parent's wealth by undertaking certain tasks, success in which will demonstrate their physical and moral superiority over their siblings. Often the tasks set by the parent necessitate a journey far away from the family home into a strange land. The children in such stories are often described as facing danger from wild or magical beasts and unscrupulous humans on their hazardous journey, but in the end, they are shown triumphing over their difficulties and going on to 'live happily ever after'. In some fairy tales this victory is entirely the result of the children's own moral fortitude and courage, but more often it is the result of their collaboration with a beneficent and wise older person or a creature with special powers who (unbeknown to them) has been destined to protect and save them in their hour of need, just as long as they demonstrate humility and moral behaviour. Within the iconography of

Jesus produced in Britain in the second and third decades of this century, this theme of children alone and facing a challenge was frequently incorporated into a reworking of the scene discussed at length in Chapters Five and Six, that is Jesus blessing the children.

Having established that there was a general understanding of the image of the blonde-haired girl being symbolic of the future (of) England and the Empire we need to relate this archetypal girl to the investigation of the fairy tale quest and its relationship to the visual story of Jesus. This is because this girl can also be seen as the archetypal child of the fairy tale and later of girls' comics[80] in that she is alone and faced with a hazardous task or journey, the outcome of which will be dependent on her courage, sense of duty and resourcefulness. In this context, Jesus can be identified as the giver of wisdom or the beneficent being with special powers (the girl's fairy god*mother* perhaps) with whom the girl is to collaborate. This is a collaboration which, according to the fairy tale conventions, can only be successful if she can prove herself to be a 'good' girl. To be worthy of the role of Jesus' partner in the struggle to 'save the world' she must, as in many fairy tales, prove her worth by undergoing hardships and by demonstrating her ability to resist the temptations which will be placed before her by the enemy or evil forces. The altruistic character of quest in the imaginary narrative is reflected in the guidance offered concerning female conduct in the real world.

Arthur Mee writes of the specific temptations for young girls growing up in the period during and after the First World War; that girls are growing up in an age when:

> ...all too many people are willing to sully the fair fame of a woman...You
> will have nothing to do with the vulgar manners you will see about you,
> with girls who would be men...When you find yourself in the company of

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[80] See Walkerdine in McRobbie & Nava (1984).

a girl who smokes, keep your modesty and leave her; she is not going your way. In such small things begin the end of modest girlhood. (Mee 1915:  )

and again:

You will have good taste, and modesty, and maidenly ways; and the things of these days that your mother would despise - the paint and the powder and the tinsel that hide the natural loveliness of your womanhood - you will shrink from as from poison, or any other ugly thing. (Mee 1915:  )

The allusion to poison and reference to the evils of vanity conjures up visions of Snow

White using the comb (which has been poisoned by her wicked stepmother) in her



FOLLOW ME

By Tom Curr

Figure 27

preening in front of the mirror before falling victim to the bad queen's evil actions. If this fairy tale is the structure through which girls of this period were regulated through codes of behaviour which aimed at safeguarding their 'essential' femininity, then eroticism is the mechanism by which that patriarchal ideology was internalised. In this fairy tale told through pictures, Jesus is presented both as familial role model and as the ideal object of female desire. And in pictures of this genre we are confronted with a symbolic family - the family of humankind - where Jesus is the only adult among many children, and where there is a special relationship between him and the blonde-haired girl in the blue dress. This is demonstrated in a picture by Tom Curr titled *Follow Me* (figure 27) in which the 'English' girl is strategically set apart from the other children and positioned on the left of the picture where she is the object of Jesus' benign gaze. She also appears in a picture by Paul Dessau called *Jesus, the Children Are Calling* (figure 28) where again she is prominently positioned in the line of Jesus' gaze.

Within these pictures, girls are specifically hailed by the construction of images which allocate them a special place in the (continuing) story of the life of Jesus as an fairy tale/chivalric romance. But Jesus' life does not end on the cross, or even with the Ascension into heaven. On the contrary, in the story told to children it is a never-ending story in which they also have a role to play, particularly if they are girls. Just as in Barrie's *Peter Pan*, where Tinkerbell is prepared to sacrifice her own life in order to save the eponymous (male) hero,[81] so

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[81] See 'Video Replay' Walkerdine (1991).
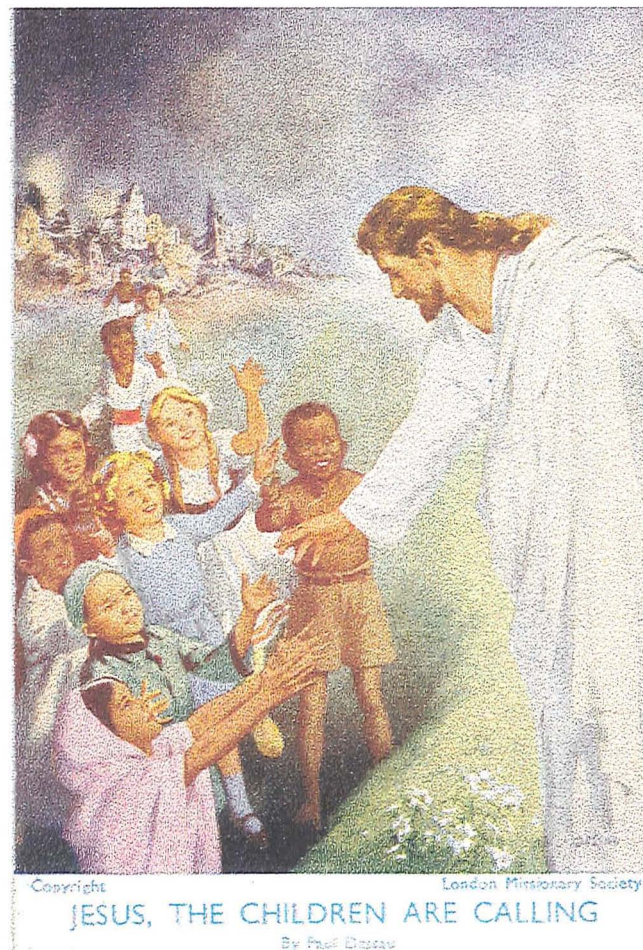
**Figure 28**

involvement in the story of Jesus appears to offer girls the opportunity to redeem

Christ's death on the cross through their willingness to devote their own lives to

building a better world, using whatever modest means they have at their disposal.

From this perspective, it becomes vital that the figure of Jesus is established as a

contemporary hero who is familiar with the specific concerns of particular historical

moments in order to inculcate a sense of civic duty which can incorporate

contemporary concerns.

We see here how the iconography of Jesus manifests changes which

challenge the temporal and spatial facts provided in the Bible and that increasingly

Christ is shown in contemporary settings alongside twentieth century children, as in

the example of Dessau's *Jesus the Children Are Calling* referred to above. In this

picture the composition is structured to take account of the visual impact which is

generated through the use of diagonal lines of interest but the artist has challenged

the convention of Jesus being placed centrally and surrounded by the children, as is

usual in the genre of Jesus blessing the children. He is instead positioned on the right

of the picture with part of his body out of the frame. M. E. Lewis in her contribution to

*Pictures of Jesus for Children* (1935), observed that pictures in which Jesus is shown

in profile and looking into the picture at the children within resulted in a much more

approachable image of Christ for young audiences. In this picture (which undoubtedly

owes some debts to Copping's *The Hope of the World*), Jesus is again depicted with

the children of the world. We know that they are signified thus because they are all

wearing 'national' dress except for the ubiquitous blonde-haired girl in a blue dress

who we can presume now signifies England[82] and perhaps France, but probably no

longer Germany. The background of Curr's picture is in stark contrast to that of the

pastoral serenity depicted in *The Hope of the World*, because on the horizon we can

see the smoking ruins of a town under a grey sky heavy with dark clouds, except

where a shaft of light is breaking through the gloom to illuminate the figure of Jesus

below. The desolated town and the children at the front left hand side of the picture

are connected by a winding path filled by children representing different parts of the

world. Although no definite date is available for the first publication of this picture,

from the evidence available in the Sunday School press, this was probably produced

during the First World War, or some time after, for Elementary and Sunday school

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[82] As noted in Chapter Six, in *Children in the Big World* (1916) it is suggested that children should be told that the blonde-haired girl in the blue dress represents European children i.e. French, German and English.

pupils were often circulated with appeals for 'brave little Belgium' and other people in

distress through war.[83] The production of the picture was directly linked to

encouraging children to play their part as citizens of the world in helping people in

other countries who were the victims of war.[84]

In the picture by Curr called *Follow Me* - also produced for and circulated by

the London Missionary Society - the diagonal line of vision is again used to make a

link via the line of sight between Jesus and the blonde-haired girl in a blue dress. As

before, children from different countries of the world are depicted and signified

through the use of national costume[85] but only the Dutch girl at the right hand edge of

the picture, behind Jesus and the girl from the 'South Seas' at Jesus' elbow are

wearing anything that is distinctly recognisable as such. In this scene the path is in

front of Jesus and the children, thus signifying that it is the road they will travel

together and the title is from the Gospels when Jesus calls Peter and Simon as his

disciples from their boats and says to them "Follow me and I will make you fishers of

men." Thus the text of the title connects the picture with Jesus calling his disciples to

him, but the picture itself has additional connotations. This image of the (adult) Jesus

leading the children away from habitation and away into the wild hills, has resonances

with the depiction of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, for there are no other adults present

which, as has already been established is a significant feature of this genre of

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[83] In *The Sunday School Chronicle* 29/1/20 two adverts appeal to British children for financial assistance. The first is titled 'The cry of the children in Berlin' and the second asks 'Do you hear them calling?' seeking contributions to the Friends; Emergency and War Victims Relief Committee.

[84] It is important to note that the trauma of the Great War left its emotional scars not only on those who were actually involved in the fighting, but also on those civilians who deemed it an unnecessary exercise successful only in demonstrating the potential for brutality of the human race. Arthur Mee was particularly vocal in the post-war period in expressing his abhorrence of the war.

[85] There was a widespread enthusiasm for fancy dress among the working class in particular and this was regularly manifested through Empire Day and other celebrations where children dressed up the national costume of other countries.

representation.[86] Aries (1962) has observed that in the sixteenth century versions of

the scene of Jesus blessing the children they were depicted with their mothers, but

that in the medieval illustrations the children were shown alone with Christ, which was

more in keeping with the literality of the Gospels. He attributes this change to 'the

fresh importance assumed by the family in the general sensibility' (Aries 1962: 120) of

this period, and in Chapter Eight we will consider what might be the significance of the

return to showing Jesus alone with the children, as he is in these pictures.

It is not only the fact that he is shown alone in such pictures which is

significant, for there are several other striking features which address some of the

concerns which were voiced by the contributors to *Pictures of Jesus for Children*

(1935) Firstly, while Jesus is depicted with long hair, it is cut short around his face. He

still has a beard and wears the traditional flowing white gown, but the sleeve in view is

rolled up above the elbow thus displaying the musculature of Jesus' manly forearm

and providing some indication of his physical strength. And just as in Dessau's *Jesus,*

*the Children Are Calling*, Christ is depicted as having just the hint of a smile on his

face.

The Girl's Life Brigade also commissioned Curr to produce pictures of

Jesus which aimed to show him actively involved in, or at least overseeing, the

civic duties of the members in the organisation. The first picture (figure 29) shows

Jesus in a pastoral setting with two members of the Girls Life Brigade. They are of

slightly different ages and are accompanied by a small terrier-like dog. Jesus is again

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[86] Humphrey Carpenter in *Secret Gardens* (1987), writes of how in the 'golden age ' of children's
literature, the narrative invariably shows children outside of the realm of control of adults, either because
they have been orphaned or some other reason, i.e. visiting relatives. Dusinberre (1987) in *Alice to the
Lighthouse* writes of how Lewis Carroll's depiction of *Alice in Wonderland* provided an image of a child
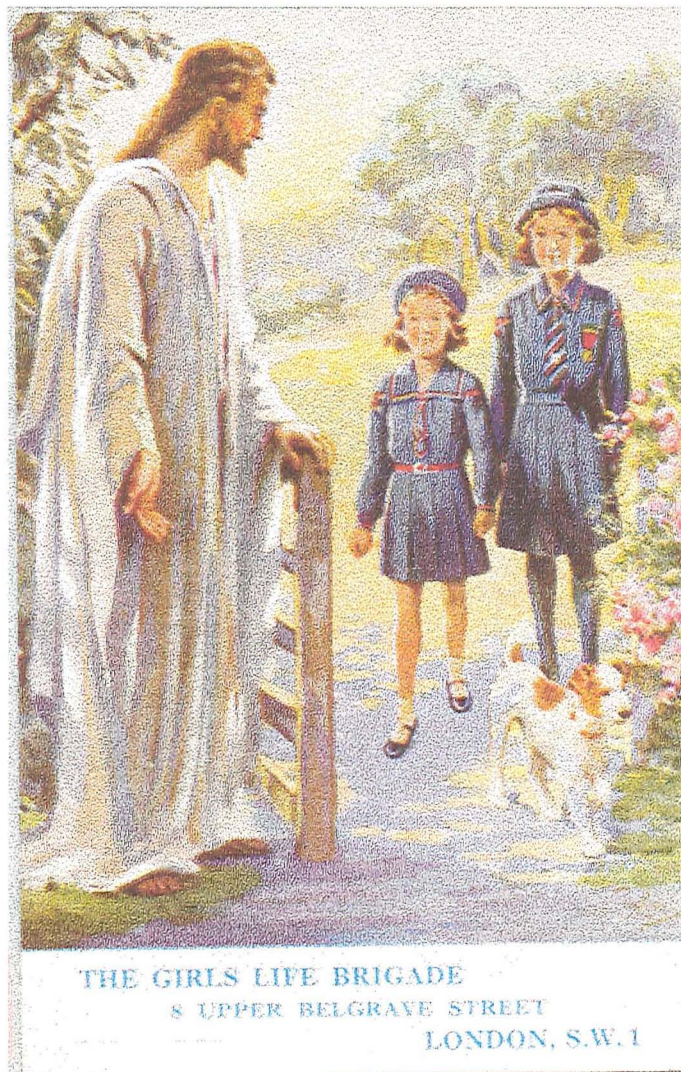set free from parental authority.

THE GIRLS LIFE BRIGADE
8 UPPER BELGRAVE STREET
LONDON, S.W. 1

**Figure 29**

shown in profile and looking into the picture at the two girls and holding out his right

hand in a gesture of welcome and direction, as if to say, "This is the way". His head is

uncovered revealing his blonde hair and he wears a simple white robe.

In figure 30 Jesus is portrayed in an urban setting[87] at night walking down the

road - not the path - with three members of the Girls Life Brigade, and as before they

are of different ages. He is shown looking at the middle girl and he is (unusually for

Protestant imagery) depicted with a nimbus around his head, which seems to imitate

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[87] Curr was born and worked in Edinburgh and the strangely 'European' background can be explained
by the depiction of that city's architecture - the high storied tenements - which have been used here.

THE GIRLS LIFE BRIGADE
8 UPPER BELGRAVE STREET
LONDON, S.W. 1

**Figure 30**

the effect of moonlight in throwing lightness on the dark streets. He is wearing

thonged sandals and he wears one robe over another, the one underneath having a

belt around the waist. He is depicted with his hair short at the sides but long at the

back, giving the illusion of a more or less conventional haircut.

In the above four examples - and there are numerous others[88] - we can see

how the original scene of Jesus blessing the children has been significantly altered in

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[88] These include a card (ref. no. C1479) for the SPCK painted by Alfred E. Bestall (the Rupert Bear illustrator) which shows two boy scouts leaning over a wooden fence and gazing across the fields

order to provide children - particularly girls - with an image of Christ which they understand as having relevance to their own lives and the specific contemporary concerns connected with it. These pictures would have certainly found favour with Hetty Lee Holland and Elsie Anna Spriggs, contributors to *Pictures of Jesus for Children* (1935). According to the former 'there was something spiritually unique in the personality of Jesus' which was above time or space. While the latter observed that 'realistic modern representations' were appealing to children because through them he was brought 'nearer to their own life and experience' and as a result were 'less likely to arouse prejudice or dislike.' These comments provide evidence of the struggles engaged in by evangelical educators trying hard to hold on to the hearts and minds of the children in the Junior and older sections of Sunday schools. But they also acknowledge that for these older children the idea of Jesus was not in itself considered as automatically engaging their emotions and imagination. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the image of Jesus the friend of little children was one which was carefully constructed within educational discourses, narrative and visual conventions and continually amended to take account of new developments.[89] What is particularly significant in the images discussed above, in contrast with Copping's Jesus in *The Hope of the World*, is that it appears that great efforts have been employed to ensure that he is depicted as a *manly* man. Despite this it seems, from

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towards the horizon, where we can see a town which is obviously meant to be Bethlehem. J. Gale Thomas produced a Nativity scene card - also for the SPCK - which features children in contemporary dress looking down into the crib. Lucy Geddes painted the same scene (SPCK ref. no. C610) but in this version the virgin and child are surrounded by the 'children of the world'. B. Butler's version (SPCK ref. no. C1485) of the same scene depicts Brownies and Girl Guides with Mary and Baby Jesus.

[89] In *The Classic Slum* (1971) Robert Roberts writes of his own attitude to religion and how he shook off the influence as soon as he was able to leave school and start work.

the examples provided, that he is still presented as being the special friend and thus the role model of girls in particular.[90]

## Femininity, Fantasy and Regulation

While acknowledging the remarks by Rose (1991) at the start of this chapter, the representations of Jesus have clearly had a much more complex influence on the imagination of girls than simply acting as a vehicle for inculcating morality. This is because the range of representations of Jesus aimed at children has focused on particular moments/events in the chronological and biological development of that life in which women are deemed to have played important roles. De Lissa (1939) felt that children should know Jesus first as a man before being introduced to the idea of the baby Jesus. But the idea of loving Jesus as a man raises questions as to what exactly is the nature of this relationship for girls in particular? Is it that which might exist between father and daughter? If so, then why is the term 'Friend' used here and what significance should we attach to the fact that Mee chose to refer to himself as 'The Children's Friend', and how does the notion of Jesus as a friend sit alongside Jesus as Prince of Peace, King of the Jews or Our Lord?

One reading of these representations of Jesus is to see them as a composite of those male characters - real or fantasy - who are associated with benevolent actions towards children, (as in the case of Father Christmas, Santa Claus, St. Nicholas) or to animals, (as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi). But the former association is one which can raise its own problems of interpretation. We should

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[90] My selection of images is based only on their availability. They have been collected over several years searching stalls at postcard fairs for pictures of Jesus. During that time I have not found any postcards which feature with Jesus with boys. This is not to imply that such cards were not produced, but to draw attention to the fact that those I found had been carefully preserved, which might say something about the ways in which girls in particular had made a particular effort to look after them.

remember that Jesus, like Father Christmas in the narrative told to children, has a panopticon-like vision enabling him to carry out surveillance on the behaviour of children everywhere. In this context, benevolent actions by Jesus/Father Christmas are the result of the child having been observed, seen to be good, and thus deemed worthy of reward. Within such a scenario there is always the implication that being good does not come naturally to children, but that the knowledge of every action - be it good or bad - being observed by a supremely powerful being, (who also has the child's best interests at heart), can serve as a very effective internal regulator of childhood behaviour. In *The Children's Friend*, a picture book produced by the SPCK in 1928, the anonymous author writes:

> Another name (for Jesus) is the Lord, or Our Lord.
> Lord means master, and Jesus is our Master. We
> belong to Him and must do what He tells us.

and, again:

> Our Jesus always looked at children with eyes of love.
> He told the grown-ups to copy their innocence. He is
> still watching the children at their work and play,
> and loves them always. But I think He is often sad
> when He sees them being selfish or quarrelling. He
> would not tell grown up people to copy children
> like that. I hope that every child who reads this
> will try to please Jesus in everything everyday of
> his life. (!928: unpaginated)

and in Swainson's survey she reports that :

> The idea of the all-seeing eye was moderately frequent. It seemed to be linked
> with three main thoughts viz.: (a) an objective wonder at the faculty, (b) a
> subjective feeling of security at being watched over, and (c) an equally
> subjective sense of guilt in been seen doing wrong. (Swainson 1939a: 95-5)

The 'vectors of desire' (Rose 1991) which were identified in the introduction are clearly apparent in these representations, demonstrating how that panopticon-like

vision of Jesus is eroticised through the construction of him as an all-powerful friend

of children who needs to be repaid for this loving protection by good behaviour from

those he 'watches over'. The idea of being 'watched over' can evoke both security and

fear if the one being watched has no power to determine which actions will be seen

and which not.

The reference to St. Francis of Assisi is also important, for although outside of

the Catholic church, he does not have the cultural standing of Jesus - or even Father

Christmas - there is a way in which his kindness to animals is incorporated into the

iconography of Jesus in the motif of the Good Shepherd. The illustrators Margaret

Tarrant and Cicely Mary Barker, in addition to their fairy pictures also produced a

substantial number of paintings in which children, animals and Jesus feature (see

figure 31). This provides them with the



**Figure 31**

opportunity to make reference to some of the Romantic ideas associated with childhood referred to in Chapter Four. Just as with the fairy tales and other children's literature produced in this period, the notion of an Arcadian Britain - 'the real inheritance of childhood...meadows and fresh air' (Ruskin 'Fairyland'1884, cited in Steedman 1990:66) - lost in reality, but regained in fiction and illustrations, is constructed through the constant reworking of a visual lexicon which uses 'nature' i.e. animals and pastoral settings, 'the child' and Jesus to signify a better world, or at least the fantasy (the hope) of that world. In addition, for the younger children the animals can function as the symbolic equivalent of small children so that in the depiction of Jesus tenderly holding the rescued lamb as in the Good Shepherd, children are provided with the opportunity to identify with the animal he is cuddling.[91]

This emphasis on kindness to animals is a recurrent motif in many fairy tales which is often incorporated into the visual imagery of Jesus, and is a reflection of the strength of the animal welfare discourses circulating in the early part of this century. But it is important to remember that, in the fairy tales in which kindness to animals features, it is usually as a means of testing the character of the female characters, and is a test which is very seldom applied to male characters. In such fairy tale narratives it is the vain and the arrogant daughters/sisters who make judgements based on surface appearances and who, as a consequence, fail such tests, whereas the humble and compassionate girl who does not judge by physical appearances is rewarded, *Beauty and the Beast* being the most famous example of this type of narrative.[92] It might be argued that such narratives teach girls from an early age that

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[91] In figure 6, *Loving Shepherd*, it is the little girl who is again the special focus of Jesus' loving attention.

[92] The self-styled 'Children's Friend' Arthur Mee uses the association of femininity with kindness and modesty to voice his opinions on cruelty to animals:

they will select their future partner not on the basis of his physical appeal but on the basis of his good character.[93]

These narratives in bringing together 'fancy' and 'fact' were not produced and consumed in isolation, for, as was stated in the introduction, the text never occupies 'a fixed position, but is always mobilised, placed and articulated with other texts in different ways' (Morley 1992) and being placed and mobilised by the imperialist notions of femininity articulated by Arthur Mee amongst others, the girl is provided with an identity and role which can be seen as constructing her in terms of duty and sacrifice, for:

> The special power of women is to save a nation from the shadow of itself, to lift it up above its sordid selfishness on to a plane from which it sees the wide world of humanity. It has been woman's service to the world throughout the ages, to spread the spirit of gentleness and selflessness, the spirit of sacrifice and long-suffering; it is her proud opportunity to be the keeper of a nation's conscience.(Mee 1915: 67)

The emphasis on the redeeming qualities of passivity and endurance for female characters in fairy tales has been commented upon by several writers. Clerkx, (1987) in her discussion of the role of family relationships in fairy tales, has drawn attention to the apparent sexual division of labour which exists in the genre:

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> ...you will turn away from these entertainments in which animals are made to do unnatural things to please you. You will turn away from them as from a scene of horror, for you will know that you are taking part in an act of cruelty to animals, a wanton act of cruelty for profit.

and in anticipation of the anti-fur and animal right's campaigns, he urges that his girl readers:
> ...will not think it worth while to starve a family of fellow creatures in order that you may wear a pretty hat. You would blush for shame if you were asked to wear a thing that had been stolen: how much more, then, you will blush if you should find yourself wearing one day a beautiful thing bought by torture and cruelty and the wanton shedding of the blood.

[93] In *Arthur Mee's Letters to Girls* the author is at great pains to push home the eugenic message of the need to ensure that a future partner is free of disease - a most euphemistic term.

It is striking that the sister brings about the liberation of her brothers by patiently borne suffering, while the brother performs great deeds on behalf of his sisters to achieve the goal.(Clerxx 1987:85)

Suzanna Rose claims that the fairy tale is the prototype of the romance script which 'is the foundation for a wide variety of entertainment aimed at girls and women.' and that in fairy tales such as Rapunzel, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, it is the heroine's modesty, obedience and virginal nature which enables her to triumph over her evil oppressors, who, in these particular tales are depicted as older women. Thus, the heroine is distinguished from other women by her absolute conformity to the feminine ideal (Rose 1985:252) and that:

> Unlike fairy tales with male protagonists, "doing" is never the route to a relationship for female heroines. Merely "being" or passively waiting as one is, will lead to the ultimate recognition of being loved...Because in the fairy tale "being" or waiting passively leads to sexual awakening, the ground work has been fully laid for eroticization of waiting and anticipation that is fully realised in the adult script. (Rose 1985; 252)

The feminist arguments presented above highlight the ways in which fairy tale narratives can be seen to function ideologically in reproducing patriarchal assumptions concerning gendered roles in society. But these arguments also reproduce assumptions about what audiences actually do with texts.[94] It has already been established in previous chapters that the story of Jesus is a polysemic narrative capable of producing a multiplicity of identifications and interpretations and that there is, therefore ample scope for 'readers' of the text to adopt different positions in regard to their acceptance of the ideological messages contained therein.

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[94] There has been much work on this subject in the last twenty years and perhaps the most groundbreaking contributions have come from Stuart Hall in his seminal essay 'Encoding/Decoding' originally produced in1979 but published in Hall et al. (1980) and David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon's The Nationwide Survey (1980).

## The Children's King and the Chivalric Romance

At the beginning of this chapter the discussion focused on the themes of a children's crusade in relation to the role played by the story of Jesus in the popularisation of the 'hope of the world' discourse. In the discussion which followed, we have seen how the themes of civic duty and self sacrifice which underpinned this discourse are also mirrored in the fairy tale narrative structure, particularly in the characteristics which identify the feminine ideal. But we need to consider what reasons might be offered to explain the appeal of the chivalric romance for girls when, on the surface at least, this appears to be a militaristic narrative which, like the fairy tale genre, provides only passive and self-sacrificing female role models. In order to address such apparent paradoxes, we need to consider the pleasures which might have been generated for an Edwardian pre-adolescent girl by a chivalric romance script which identified Jesus as the White Knight or Children's King and positions her as his companion in the struggle to save Christendom.

Lapsley and Westlake have remarked that 'romance is historically a relatively recent phenomenon which until this century was confined to certain frequently privileged social groups' (1993: 186). This phenomenon of romance, or Courtly Love, was an innovation of the leisured courtiers of eleventh century Provence and its diffusion throughout other privileged social groups was achieved by the poetry of the Troubadours (Lewis, 1936: 2). The innovation of romance may be considered from two perspectives: the spiritual, or Christian, and the secular, or cultural.[95]

A spiritual/Christian perspective is predicated on the Caritas Synthesis that 'God was to be adored, cherished, submitted to, but... a remote figure who seldom

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[95] See Trushell and Brewer 'Dead Romantic' forthcoming in *Lore and Language*.

responded' (Hendrick & Hendrick 1992: 39). Romance, or courtly love, 'explicitly

reduced the Caritas Synthesis to the love of man and woman for each other'

(Hendrick & Hendrick 1992: 38) in which 'the lady became a substitute analog for

God' (Hendrick & Hendrick 1992: 39). This substitution of the lady for God may be

paralleled by the ascendancy of the cult of the Blessed Virgin (Lewis 1936: 8), but is

also attributable to the secular/cultural role of the noble lady who, 'by her social and

feudal position, [was]... the arbitress of manners and the scourge of 'villany'' (Lewis

1936: 13). The secular/cultural perspective would consider romance to be 'the

feudalisation of love' (Lewis 1936: 2) insofar as the virtuous courtly lover, obedient to

his lady's slightest whim, performed:

> a service of love closely modelled on the service which a feudal vassal
> [owed] to his lord. The lover [was] the lady's 'man'... [addressing] her as
> *midons*, which etymologically represents not 'my lady' but 'my lord'
> (Lewis 1936: 2).

This 'service of love' was seldom performed by a lord for his lady - courtly

marriages were alliances inimical to love-matches (Hendrick & Hendrick 1992: 38) -

but often performed by a courtier for his lord's lady: hence, the characteristics of

courtly love which were humility, courtesy, adultery and a reverence for love (Lewis

1936: 2). The romance of the Queen's Champion Lancelot and Queen Guinevere

exemplifies not only these characteristics of courtly love but also that the idealised

consummation of such love is inachievable.

In their discussion of mainstream Hollywood films Lapsley and Westlake

(1993) have identified three principal options whereby consummation may be

avoided: to say that consummation will be achieved, but in the future; to say that

consummation was achieved, but in the past; and to say that consummation would be

achieved but for 'some insurmountable obstacle... [e.g.] if only they had met earlier; if only they had understood each other better; if only she hadn't died...' (Lapsley and Westlake 1993:195-196).

The story of Jesus as chivalric romance combines both the cultural 'feudalisation of love' and the spiritual 'Caritas synthesis' thus fusing the hierarchical conception of service to a lord or his lady with religious eroticism, but all the while predicated on the lack of consummation or absence of desire. In the discussion on fairy tales and femininity above, Suzanne Rose observed that within these narrative structures girls were introduced to the pleasures of erotic anticipation, learning to accept that just by '"being" or passively waiting as one is, will lead to the ultimate recognition of being loved' and that this is because 'in the fairy tale "being" or waiting passively leads to sexual awakening'. If we relate such themes to the story of Jesus, the positive benefits of his panopticon gaze become apparent, for he can observe and register the actions of those girls who follow his example and they can feel that being thus observed they are seen worthy of his love. In the combining of the fairy tale with the chivalric romance we have a situation in which the girl is presented with a narrative which through the deferral of consummation, eroticises the service she offers to her Lord liege Jesus Christ as part of her contribution to the children's crusade. And just in case girls were in any doubt about how they were positioned within this narrative in relation to Jesus books such as John Oxenham's *The Hidden Years* (1925)[96] and pictures like Tarrant's *Behold I Send You Forth*[97] (figure32) were

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[96] There are several examples both visual and written of the portrayal of Jesus as the object of unconsummated female desire, but the most commercially and critically successful is undoubtedly Oxenham's *The Hidden Years*. The novel tells the story of how Jesus falls in love with a beautiful young woman, Zerah, and of how she has to accept that the consummation of their love must be sacrificed in order that Jesus achieve his higher spiritual destiny.

[97] Margaret Tarrant was the artist chosen by Oxenham to produce the pictures for the illustrated version of *The Hidden Years*l.

there to provide an erotic reminder of their civic and spiritual duties. As we have seen

through the discussion in Chapter Five and Six, children had been presented with

very specific views of Jesus, firstly as their protector, but later their role model.
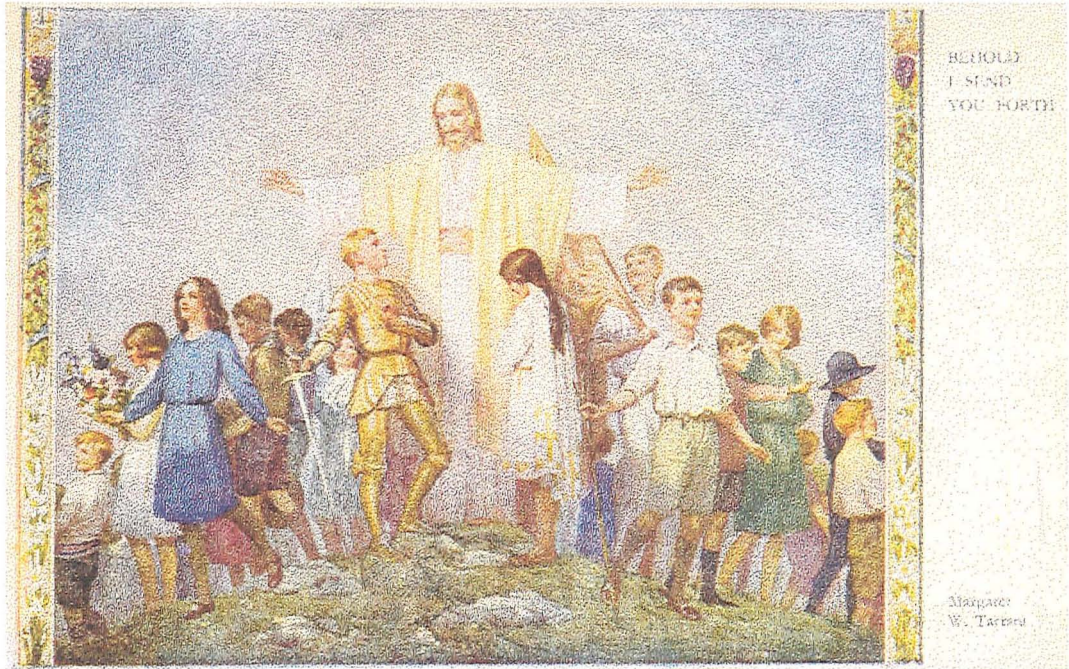


Figure 32

He was the man who had come into the world to make it a better place but who had

been cruelly sacrificed on the cross. Through the stories told in Sunday school Jesus

had been established as the children's friend, therefore it was to children the appeal

was made to take up the responsibility to complete his unfinished business. The

chivalric imagery of Tarrant's picture *Behold I Send You Forth* depicts Jesus

surrounded by children, on his left is a boy clad in armour and holding a sword like a

young King Arthur, while on his right is a girl with long dark hair wearing a white dress

who has her head bowed in prayer.  But if she is Queen Guinevere to his Arthur, she

is not the adulterous wife who betrayed her husband for the love of Lancelot, rather

she is the pious lover who gives obeisance to her liege lord Christ.  In 1910 Higgs had

drawn attention to the dangers of an eroticisation of such fantasised relationships.

She stressed the need to ensure that children at the altruistic stage of development should be prevented from letting this tendency towards hero-worship become erotic as 'the desolating flood of imaginative literature encourages this' (Higgs 1910: 51) but as we will see from the discussion in the next chapter, this proved more difficult in practice.

## Summary

This chapter has explored the way in which the discourse of children as the hope of the world, the guardian's of the nation's destiny, was framed as the story of the children's crusade. It has shown how this narrative was aimed at addressing the specific concerns and interests of the older child at the so-called 'Altruistic Stage' of development by providing them with images of Jesus (both written and visual) which, by presenting him as a chivalric hero, showed him as the ideal example for their own actions. Through textual analysis of pictures produced for children by various evangelical groups the discussion has shown that this version of the story of Jesus, through its emphasis on contemporary themes and issues, was designed to facilitate a greater engagement with the persona of Jesus among older children. The chapter highlighted the paradox of the apparent failure of this re-presentation of Jesus as a chivalric hero to make a more direct appeal to boys than girls and in doing so raised questions as to the equating of manliness with masculinity. While the boy in Tarrant's *Behold I Send You Forth* might indeed be provided with a sword, he has no visible enemy to slay. Thus it might be claimed that this is not an adventure story, despite all attempts to present it as such, but that it is a quest narrative which has as its Holy Grail the aim of eroticising the notion of altruism. Drawing upon the altruistic themes

of fairy tales, it was argued that 'goodness' in this genre is gendered and that Jesus the chivalric hero, appeared to exhibit many of these so-called feminine characteristics. Finally, the chapter ends by arguing that, with regard to the Jesus story, just as has been acknowledged to be the case with other popular narratives, the ability of audiences to negotiate their own meanings can result in ostensibly regulative narratives yielding emancipatory readings. Thus, the story of Jesus as a chivalric as told through words and pictures (and refracted through the particular historical and social circumstances of the time in which such texts were produced) has resulted in a narrative which is capable of producing transgressive pleasures; that the female audience for the story can resist the implicit aim of inculcating the feminine ideal of passivity and self-sacrifice for within this story Jesus has been presented to girls not only as an altruistic role model but also as an unobtainable object of desire.

This immersion in the life of Christ as fairy tale/chivalric romance has its psychological dangers if we apply the thesis advanced by Bruno Bettelheim (1982). In *The Uses of Enchantment* he argues that in order for the child to be able to make effective psychological use of fairy tales s/he has to be able to clearly differentiate between inner and outer experiences. To this end, in telling fairy tales to children, realistic elements should never be mixed with fantasy because such a combination will result in confusion for the child as to what is real and what is not. But as we have seen, the life of Jesus has been recounted both as fairy tale and as historical fact, which makes the identification with him as a hero particularly powerful and deeply problematic if we follow Bettelheim's position. This particular hero, according to the biblical narrative, died for our sins, and his death by crucifixion - significantly absent from the life of Jesus as kindergarten fairy tale, but acknowledged more in the tale

told to older children - is accepted as an historical reality. This can be seen as placing a huge burden of guilt on those who are influenced by the story, and in identifying with Jesus they are at risk of internalising the moral lesson of sacrifice and suffering as the essential characteristics which they are to cultivate if they are to be considered worthy of love. But there are ways of interpreting the dynamics of psychological engagement with fairy stories in general and this story in particular other than those offered by Bettelheim. It might be the case that for some children, working class girls in particular, the ability to connect events in their own lives with those of the story of Jesus, provided just the kind of therapeutic support which Bettelheim claims are facilitated through engagement with ordinary fairy tales. As was stated in the introduction, this investigation aims to do more than simply provide evidence to support the claim that the story of Jesus has had any lasting influence in the formation of identity, for it is centrally concerned to explain how such processes of influence function. Therefore, the next chapter will critically evaluate the psychoanalytic claims made by Bettelheim for fairy tales in relation to the resolution of oedipal conflicts and existential dilemmas and will explore such conflicts and dilemmas specifically in relation to the experience of working class girls. This is because, in Britain in the period 1900-1945, this was a group which was especially susceptible, through its economic positioning, as an audience which might find the story of Jesus functioning therapeutically in helping to cope with loss experienced at several levels.

## CHAPTER EIGHT
## THE STORY OF JESUS:
## NARRATIVE OF LOVE AND LOSS

The previous chapter discussed how the presentation of Jesus as a chivalric hero enabled him to make a double appeal to girls. That is, he could be seen both as an ideal role model and an unobtainable object of desire, the latter being a pleasurable but safe fantasy for the pre-adolescent girl through its accommodation of the love for the father. In addition, the recurring themes of unconsummated love and service to a person of higher birth have been identified as being central to the appeal for working class girls of this story of Jesus reframed as chivalric romance. In this chapter the exploration of the themes of hierarchy, loss, desire and the redemptive power of the good girl will be extended to incorporate psychoanalytic explanations of why this story might have been especially appealing to some working class girls.

In Chapter Four we saw how working class children were the primary target of the activities of the Sunday school movement. In the discussion of the pedagogy of storytelling in Chapter Five, evidence was provided to show that in the kindergarten tale of Jesus blessing the children, whether told through hymns or story, it was girls in particular rather than children in general who were identified as being the specific focus of his attention and that the relationship constructed for them was eroticised. Chapter Six, which explored the development of the visual representation of the same scene, argued that educationalists concerns about the manliness of some of these images of Christ related not to children in general but to boys specifically, and that the pictures appeared to be less problematic for girls and to offer them more scope for identifying with him. In the preceding chapter we have seen how, in the representation

of Jesus as a chivalric hero, there is strong evidence that this version of him was more appealing for girls than for boys because the emphasis on his exemplary altruism was invariably gendered. This is to say that kindness to animals, service to others and the ability to undergo suffering for the greater good have been socially coded as 'feminine' characteristics. Thus, through the preceding chapters it has been established that the Sunday school version of Jesus, despite the best efforts of the producers and teachers, had a gendered audience, in that it was more effective in appealing to girls than boys. In addition it has been argued that the imaginative narratives of the fairy tale and the chivalric quest were seen as an effective means of providing children with the space in which to fantasise about, and through which they could begin to explore psychologically, the life that was to come. The inter-relationship between fantasy and experience underpins the psychoanalytic project. Therefore, in the discussion which follows, that dynamic is looked at from the perspective of working class experience specifically examining how the fantasy narratives of the Jesus story can be shown to engage with the emotions and desires produced through that socio-economic positioning.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section looks at how psychoanalysis has been used to explain the processes involved and the factors informing identification with popular narratives, specifically the fairy tale. It focuses on Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1982) because he claims that (arguing from a Freudian perspective) fairy tales offer children the opportunity to resolve their existential dilemmas and oedipal conflicts. Bettelheim's perspective is one which addresses children in general, whereas in the second part of the chapter, we move on to discuss the ways in which children, according to Freud's 'Family Romances', learn

about and negotiate the knowledge of their subordinate socio-economic positioning and have to come to an accommodation with the familial conflicts this generates. Here, the notion of Jesus as higher status substitute parent is explored through a re-working of the Jesus story as a 'family romance'. Morley (1992) has drawn attention to the tendency to analyse audiences' responses to texts outside of their context of production and consumption and in the third section of the chapter, we will explore some of the historical factors which might have contributed to establishing Jesus as a symbolic substitute for an absent father. In the fourth section, the problem of cross-gender identification is explored, for if as established earlier, Jesus is a more effective role model for girls than boys, then we need to explain what kind of psychological negotiations and strategies facilitate this identification.

## Fairy Tales and Psychoanalysis

To explore the way in which the widespread circulation of the story of Jesus as fairy tale has yielded a polysemy of meanings for children raises important questions. One of the central questions in this chapter is how do children respond to information about the adult world which, according to child development theory, is inappropriate for their emotional needs and which is believed to be psychologically harmful to them? St. John's (1910) view of child development discussed earlier, emphasised the story needs of different age groups. He observed that the child in the Junior section of the Sunday school slowly turns away from fancy and takes a greater interest in fact as part of his/her preparation for moving into the adult world. This turn from fancy to fact is a slow process, even in St John's own account, and perhaps for some children in particular it is shift that is not willingly made, for the adult world is not always one that

makes an automatic appeal to the developing child. But the fairy tale has been identified as having a positive role to play in facilitating that transition. St. John's guidelines on effective storytelling are firmly rooted in the historico-cultural milieu of Edwardian Sunday school teaching. Whilst there is no doubting the importance of the Edwardian pedagogy of story telling which was derived from child development, the theories on which St. John bases his advice are clearly simplistic in comparison with more recent psychological explanations. In the last two decades of the century, it is the work of Bettelheim which has popularised the notion that fairy tales are important for the healthy psychological development of children. In *The Uses of Enchantment* (1982) he attributes to fairy tales the therapeutic ability to facilitate the resolution of juvenile existential dilemmas and oedipal conflicts. *The Uses of Enchantment* is an important text because it has provided an accessible explanation of some aspects of psychoanalysis which has made it popular with educationalists, child psychologists and parents. Therefore, it provides a well-established perspective from which to begin to evaluate the psychoanalytical implications of children's psychological engagement with the fairy tale version of the story of Jesus.

St John's comments about the shift from fancy to fact in children's appreciation of stories assume that, in moving to engage with new texts or narratives, the child leaves behind the earlier ones. But as Morley (1992), Zipes (1979,1983) and others have pointed out, the 'reading' of texts can be a cumulative process and not one which necessarily involves a shift or the giving up of previous reading pleasures. In addition, we need to bear in mind that what children like or gain pleasure from is not always congruent with the view of children's needs as promulgated through developmental theory.

Bettelheim (1982) argues that, through the simple narratives of fairy tales children are provided with opportunities for identifying with the characters in the stories which, in turn, enables them to resolve their oedipal conflicts and existential dilemmas. He goes on to say that the fairy tale has value in providing a symbolic language which permits the exploration of the processes of the conscious and unconscious mind and of the relationship between experience and fantasy. In commonsensical terms, the processes of identity formation are obviously directly related to the processes of internalising the perceptions of others, be they familial or fantasy figures, and this is one of the reasons that Bettelheim provides to explain why fairy tales are of particular use for the developing child. His work is based on what is known as 'classic' Freudianism, therefore his starting point is Freud's concept of the personality with its consequent focus on the emergence of identity through the negotiation of oedipal desires. and the conflicting demands of the id and the super ego. The discussion of such conflicts will be returned to later but at this point, we are specifically concerned to explain how, according to Bettelheim, children use fairy tales to resolve existential dilemmas.

Bettelheim sees fairy tales as performing a therapeutic role for young audiences, arguing that in providing them with a range of different characters and situations, children are enabled to identify with the people and the events in the stories. As a result of that identification they work through, at the level of the unconscious, their own inner conflicts and desires, which according to Bettelheim are many because:

> In order to make the psychological problems of growing up - overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries, becoming able to relinquish childhood dependencies, gaining a feeling of selfhood and of self-worth and a sense of moral obligation - a child needs to understand what is going on within his conscious self so that he can... cope with that which goes

on in his unconscious. He can achieve this understanding, and with it the ability to cope, not through rational comprehension of the nature and content of his unconscious but by becoming familiar with it through spinning out daydreams - ruminating, rearranging and fantasizing about suitable story elements in response to unconscious pressure. By doing this, the child fits unconscious content into conscious fantasies, which then enable him to deal with that content.(Bettelheim 1982: 6-7)

He goes on to say that the apparent simplicity of fairy tales enables the narrative to 'state an existential dilemma briefly and pointedly' which enables the child to get 'to grips with the problem in its most essential form, where a more complex plot would confuse matters for him' (Bettelheim 1982: 8) and that:

> There is a general agreement that myth and fairy tales speak to us in the language of symbols representing unconscious content. Their appeal is simultaneously to our conscious and unconscious mind...this makes it very effective; and in the tales' content, inner psychological phenomena are given body in symbolic form.(Bettelheim 1982: 8)

According to Bettelheim engagement with the plot can only be facilitated through identification with the main characters. Therefore, in order for the child to use the fairy tale in such a way, it is a prerequisite that the child is enabled to enter (in his or her imagination) into the narrative through the process of identifying with one of the main characters, and that:

> The more simple and straightforward a good character, the easier it is for the child to reject the bad other. The child identifies with the good hero not because of his goodness but because the hero's condition makes a deep positive appeal to him. The question for the child is not "Do I want to be good?" but "Who do I want to be like?" (Bettelheim 1982: 10)

We can see that this is certainly the case with the character of Jesus, for through the kindergarten version of the story he is presented as offering the children something they need, that is love and security, and opposing the anti-child attitude of the disciples. In the chivalric quest version, he is a warrior who is represented as

fighting the corruption of the contemporary adult world. It might indeed be the case

that the one scene in the Bible in which he is shown to be angry and challenging

authority has been made almost invisible in the accounts of his life told to children,

nevertheless most older children would have had knowledge of the cleansing of the

Temple. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that children's views of Jesus were a

combination of those perceptions which had been specifically constructed for them by

educationalists fused with their own interpretations of the story. It follows that this

composite Jesus who was allied with children and often against the adults, can

function as a Jack the Giant Killer character, that is a hero who can destroy the

symbolic giant and, according to Bettelheim's thesis, eradicate the fear of the powerful

adults. If we adopt this approach we can begin to see that piety is not the mobilising

feature of children's engagement with the Jesus stories because:

> It is not the fact that virtue wins out at the end which promotes morality,
> but that the hero is most attractive to the child, who identifies with the
> hero in all his struggles. Because of this identification the child imagines
> that he (sic) suffers with the hero his trials and tribulations, and triumphs
> with him as virtue is victorious. The child makes such identifications all
> on his own, and the inner and outer struggles imprint morality on him.
> (Bettelheim 1982: 10)

In the previous chapters, fantasy as a term has been used to indicate

imagination, thus, although it is a psychological process, it is also a conscious activity,

whereas fantasy in the sense used by Bettelheim is connected to the unconscious,

although it might be accessed or triggered by imaginative activity[98]. So when

Bettelheim writes that 'the child fits unconscious content into conscious fantasies,

which then enable him to deal with that content' we can see how fairy tales might

function in addressing deep-seated desires. In addition, we can see how Bettelheim's

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[98] Hence Freud's much-quoted observation that dreams are the royal road to the unconscious.

description of the identification process produced through simple narratives can be applied to the story of Jesus told to children. For if the evangelical educationalists placed so much emphasis on the need for children to identify with Jesus, we need to consider what were the processes through which that identification was established. Also, looked at from a Freudian perspective identification with Jesus can be shown to have much in common with *identificatory* love which is seen as a progression from the *primary object* love which is focused on the mother. Just as with the discussion earlier concerning the transition from narratives based on fantasy to those concerned with facts, so we might need to consider identificatory love as functioning not *instead of*, but *alongside* object love. Jessica Benjamin, a practising psychoanalyst, who has also written extensively on the formation of gendered identities has observed that:

> Perhaps psychoanalytic theory needs to decentre its account of development such that later integrations neither seamlessly subsume earlier positions with later ones, nor replace them, but refigure them (Benjamin 1994: 116).

This is an interesting proposition for although it is specifically concerned with psychoanalytic theory, it echoes Morley's (1992) arguments regarding audiences' relationships to texts, referred to earlier and enables us to see how the processes involved in the formation of identity have similarities with the processes of 'reading' narratives. That is to say, that the process of 'refiguring' for both the subject and the 'reader' is never finished but always in a state of flux, influenced by the material experiences of the world. If experience is an essential component in the process of mediating knowledge of the world, then we need to acknowledge that within the model of child development discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six, there is the acceptance of the need to edit or censor the information which children might draw into themselves. Bettelheim is in disagreement with this approach, noting that while

there is a widespread tendency to keep certain information away from children in the

mistaken belief that being kept in a relative state of ignorance will keep the child safe

from knowing how hard the world can be. He says that there are dangers in such an

approach:

> ... we want our children to believe that inherently, all men are good. But children know that *they* are not always good; and often, even when they are, they would prefer not to be. This contradicts what they are told by their parents, and therefore makes the child a monster in his own eyes. The dominant culture wishes to pretend, particularly where children are concerned, that the dark side of man does not exist, and professes a belief in an optimistic meliorism. (Bettelheim 1982: 7-8)

The phrase 'the dark side of man' signals towards a Jungian as opposed to a

Freudian perspective, but even though Bettelheim might challenge the prohibitions

promoted by child study here, he also makes similar assumptions to those implicit in

that philosophy, in assuming that all children live in an environment in which such

protection from knowing about the hardships of the world might be a feasible

undertaking. Such assumptions for Bettelheim are closely connected to the way in

which he places a greater emphasis on inner (psychological) rather than outer

(material) struggles. If he is guilty of writing about children in a way which often

reduces them to a universalised cipher devoid of ethnic, historical or economic

positioning, he does make genuine attempts to show how psychoanalysis is a project

which is rooted in the harsh circumstances of a real world when he writes that:

> Psychoanalysis was created to enable man to accept the problematic nature of life without being defeated by it, or giving in to escapism. Freud's prescription is that only by struggling courageously against what seem like overwhelming odds can man succeed in wringing meaning out of his existence.(Bettelheim 1982: 8)

There are clear echoes of Froebel's philosophy here in the acceptance that the employment of imaginative exploration of the world in the early years is a preparation for later challenges. Bettelheim also asserts that, despite their trappings of escapist make-believe, fairy tales address such difficulties, adding that they also offer the opportunity to work through them and find solutions:

> This is exactly the message that fairy tales get across to the child in manifold form: that a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence - but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious. (Bettelheim 1982: 8)

Bettelheim's statement could easily have been written by St. John seventy years earlier, because it has much in common with the chivalric quest versions of the Jesus story discussed in Chapter Seven, and because he also believes that 'safe stories' are of no use to children for they offer no preparation for what is to come in life. Although Bettelheim is writing specifically about fairy tales we can see that he would have no qualms about including the Crucifixion in the Jesus story told to children[99], because unlike 'modern stories' written for children, which he rejects, it does not avoid dealing with such existential problems:

> The child needs most particularly to be given suggestions in symbolic form about how he may deal with these issues and grow safely into maturity. "Safe" stories mention neither death nor ageing, the limits to our existence, nor the wish for eternal life. The fairy tale, by contrast, confronts the child squarely with the basic human predicaments. (Bettelheim 1982: 8)

The life of Jesus in its unedited forms is a story which presents such adult themes directly and not masked by symbolism, as Bettelheim claims is the case for fairy tales. Nevertheless, despite Bettelheim's argument for children to be exposed to narratives which give a forewarning of the 'basic human predicament, his thesis

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[99] Bettelheim (1982) makes frequent, positive reference to the role of Bible stories in the development of culture and identity.

reiterates the bourgeois assumptions implicit in the child development project that all

children live in a world where it might be possible to make a choice about what they

might or might not be allowed to know. To this extent, Bettelheim is useful in providing

a psychoanalytical explanation for why identification with the characters and situations

of fairy tales offers children a therapeutic resolution of their existential dilemmas and

oedipal conflicts. What he cannot do is provide an argument which takes into account

differences in the experience of childhood and this is because in psychoanalysis this

is an experience which tends to be presented as universal. Therefore, in the next

section of the chapter the factors of social hierarchies and economic positioning will

be explored by reference to psychoanalytic theory[100] in order to examine how working

class girls in particular, might have seen the story of Jesus as one which was directly

related to their own lived experiences and family life.


## Jesus and the Family Romance

At the root of Freud's 'Family Romance' is the acknowledgement that

society is a hierarchy and that within such a hierarchy many more find

themselves in lower as opposed to higher positions and that children internalise

their knowledge of this division even within the structuring of their unconscious

fantasies. Freud's concept of the 'family romance' is used here to argue that the

effectiveness of evangelical educationalists re-presentation of Jesus as the

protector and role model for children, together with the frequent reference to him

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[100] While the impact of economic positioning might appear to be outside the scope of the psychoanalytic project Freud's own experience of the impact of such positioning on human happiness is made clear in his obviously heartfelt footnote in *Civilisation and its Discontents*:

Anyone who has been through the misery of poverty in his youth, and has endured the indifference and arrogance of those who have possessions, should be exempt from the suspicion that he has no understanding of or goodwill towards the efforts made to fight the economic inequality and all it leads to. (Freud 1994: 42)

in eroticised or familial terms, provided children with a familiar figure through which to fantasise about belonging to someone of higher status than their natural parents.

Bettelheim highlights the view that children have to learn to acknowledge their bad feelings, and he makes reference to the way in which the stepmother motif of so many fairy tales is a reworking of what Freud called the pre-adolescent child's family romance. Bettelheim says that such romances are partly fantasies and partly day-dreams, and that, to a certain extent, the child is conscious of this form of fantasising which is based around the idea:

> that one's parents are not really one's parents but that, one is the child of some exalted personage, and that due to unfortunate circumstances, one has been reduced to living with these people who *claim* to be one's parents. (Bettelheim 1982: 68)

Freud's 'Family Romances' (1977) can provide us with a way of reappraising the life of Jesus as told to children so that other subject positions of identification emerge in addition to that of seeing Christ as a super-ego role model of passive perfection and sacrifice. According to Bettelheim's thesis, children know that they are not always good, and are therefore, in need of some mechanism for accommodating such potentially damaging feelings about themselves. If they are also encouraged to see the life of Jesus as a model for their own, it is possible to 'read' that story from a perspective which presents Jesus as self-possessed, single-minded and certainly not humble, but still, reassuringly the central focus of his parents' love and attention.

In 'Family Romances' Freud writes that:

> The liberation of an individual, as he grows up, from the authority of his parents is one of the most necessary though one of the most painful results brought about by the course of his development. It is quite essential that liberation should occur and it may be presumed that it has been to some extent achieved by everyone who has reached a normal state. Indeed, the whole

progress of society rests upon the opposition between successive generations.(Freud 1977: 221)

In British society since the industrial revolution, that progress has also been measured in terms of the dissemination of bourgeois values[101] with each successive generation of working class children being seen as both a threat and a hope of what society might be. As a consequence, progress for them has been framed in terms of disjunction and movement from - rather than a continuum or reproduction of - the culture and values of their parents, thus we need to consider the way in which education for working class children has been experienced as an estranging process.

Freud's essay suggests that the way in which many children move from their original idealized view of their parents happens because:

> as intellectual growth increases, the child cannot help discovering by degrees the category to which his parents belong... Small events in the child's life which make him feel dissatisfied afford him provocation for beginning to criticize his parents, and for using, in order to support his critical attitude, the knowledge which he has acquired that other parents are in some respects preferable to them.(Freud 1977: 221)

and thus the:

> child's imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom he now has a low opinion and of replacing them by others, who, as a rule, are of higher social standing (Freud 1977: 222-3)

Thus intellectual growth is here connected with a rejection, albeit symbolic and usually of limited duration, of the natural parents. Freud's essay shows how the story of Jesus might have been incorporated into such fantasies of replacement, observing that:

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[101] James Kincaid observes that:
one does notice how much writing the middle class did for the class below it. Among other things, they wrote telling that class how to take care of its children along the lines of received middle-class practices, often, no doubt, sending hurtful signals, pieces of advice quite irrelevant to a situation so different.(1992: 38)

His sense that his own affection is not being fully reciprocated then finds a vent in the idea...of being a step-child or an adopted child. People...very frequently remember such occasions, on which - *usually as a result of something they have read* - they interpreted and responded to their parent's hostile behaviour in this fashion.(Freud 1977: 222) [my emphasis]

Children, according to Freud, are likely to draw upon what they have read in order to give shape to their feelings, and as the Sunday school version of the Jesus story had a privileged circulation among working class children in the period 1900-1944 it is easy to understand how, from a child's perspective, it could be seen as a story which prioritised the child (Jesus) over the parents (Joseph and Mary). If we extend this perspective and bring into play the insights provided by Freud's essay, we can arrive at a version of the story which is the following:

The Life of Jesus as Family Romance.

Once upon a time in a land far away, a child was born to a poor carpenter and his wife. Even though the couple had nowhere to stay that night and the woman had to give birth in a stable, the child's importance was heralded by angels appearing to shepherds exhorting them to go to the stable and worship the baby. But the child's lowly birthplace and apparent humble parentage was no obstacle to the Three Wise Men who travelled thousands of miles proclaiming the child to be destined to do great things. The bad King Herod heard this and had all the children in Bethlehem of two years and under killed, but the baby Jesus was kept safe because his parents, having been warned by the Wise Men, fled to safety in Egypt, even though this meant leaving behind leaving behind all their friends, relatives and possessions.

Some years later when they returned to their own country, the parents took their twelve year old son to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, as was the custom of their people. But on the journey home it was discovered that he was not among his

kinsfolk as his parents had believed, so they left the travelling party and returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found their son in the Temple in earnest discussion with the doctors and "And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." (Luke 2:47) But when his mother chided him for the worry he had caused her and his father, the son replied that he was surprised that they had not realised that he would obviously be concerned with his Father's business.

> "And they understood not the saying which he spoke unto them.
> And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject
> unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." (Luke 2:
> 50-1)

Applying the notion of the family romance to the life of Jesus we can see how it might offer a working class child the opportunity to fantasise about being the child of some higher born person. Firstly, because the story of Jesus describes how he was created by his spiritual Father but reared by his legal, human father, so he is from the start established as being of a higher status than Joseph. Secondly, because the Jesus in the stories told to young children is second only to the most powerful being - God, and this identificatory image of power is very appealing to an audience which knows itself to be under the control of others. Thirdly, Jesus is referred to in familial terms, but in addition to being our father, brother and friend, he is also referred to as our Lord, the Prince of Peace and the King of the Jews, and, more pertinently, the Children's King. Within all hierarchies both familial and regal Jesus is positioned as a powerful and influential being. And because Jesus is the father of all earthly fathers it does not seem to be rejecting the latter if the former is given precedent, for in his eyes all are his children, just as it is not seen as an infidelity for mothers to express love for

this other man who is as dear to her as the earthly father. The story also sends out other messages concerned with the sacrifices that parents make for the children who are perceived as being superior to them, and it also places the wisdom of the 'doctors' (teachers) over the familial bonds. Knowledge is seen as being of a higher value than love and Mary may be hurt by this acknowledgement but she does not say so, even though the Gospel acknowledges that "she kept all these sayings in her heart."

Therefore, the Jesus story refracted through the family romance provides a way of looking at how imagination and fantasies are reflective of the material reality of children's experiences. In particular, Freud's essay offers us a useful paradigm of how working class children in the Sunday school system might have seen themselves in relation to their parents. For if we return to the observations by McMillan (1902) and De Montmorency (1906) in Chapter Four concerning the need to remove the child, as much as is possible, from the harmful influence of its home environment, we can see that working class parents are often presented as being powerless, or reluctant to help their children. It appears that for the evangelical educationalists involved in the provision of Sunday schooling, the aim of establishing Jesus in the hearts and minds of working class children was to provide them with a role model which was believed to compensate for lack of appropriate parental examples. If, at the turn of the century the kindergarten was identified as a means of providing working class children with early experiences which ameliorated some of the material deprivation of their 'unsatisfactory homes', there was a hidden discourse which underpinned the enthusiasm for this particular approach to education and that was the concern that working class mothers - fathers were rarely, if ever mentioned - were not properly equipped to undertake their maternal tasks.

Steedman has pointed out that the 'British nursery/infants school saw compensation in terms of cleanliness and love' for in 'filling working-class children with rich experiences' schools hoped 'to fill the emptiness' and 'to make up for' physical discomfort resulting from overcrowding and noise in a home which lacked '"the usual (i.e. middle-class) parental role of tutor and guide"'. (Steedman 1985). Steedman is writing about state education provision and it is worth pointing out that in the Sunday schools, at least until the 1930s, according to Green (1996) the teachers tended to come mainly from the class that their pupils belonged to.

But we need also to consider the significance of the iconography of Jesus blessing the children and how, the mothers and disciples who were originally a central focus of the composition, were gradually moved to the fringes of the scene before being completely eradicated, thus leaving Jesus as the only adult in the picture. This seems to be a development which was particular to the non-conformist Sunday schools. The Anglican or Catholic church promoted the notion that children developed religious feelings through the observation of their own parent's attitude to worship. Evangelicals from the Free Churches on the other hand, had as a central philosophy, the belief in a direct, intimate and unmediated relationship with Christ, and they also saw service and good work among the underprivileged as an expression of their love for him. Thus the exclusion of all other adults from the pictures of Jesus with children is in line with this philosophy, but undoubtedly owes something to the influence of developmental theory in trying to eradicate any visual ingredient which might prove confusing or disturbing to children.

In the closing paragraphs of his essay Freud takes care to point out that the child's fantasy of the higher born person being the 'real' parent is not a rejection, but a reconstitution of the natural parent(s) for:

> If we examine in detail...the replacement of both parents or of the father alone by grander people, we find that these new and aristocratic parents are equipped with attributes that are derived entirely from real recollections of the actual and humble ones; so that in fact the child is not getting rid of his father but exalting him. Indeed the whole effort at replacing the real father by a superior one is only an expression of the child's longing for the happy, vanished days when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men and his mother the dearest and loveliest of women. (Freud 1977: 224-5)

What Freud is saying here is that the fantasy higher-born parent is a composite figure which incorporates aspects of the natural parent while eradicating those attributes which remind the child of their own subordinate socio-economic positioning. It therefore follows that if psychoanalysis can be used to argue that the normal, pre-adolescent child embarks on such imaginative strategies to work through the negative feelings which accompany the acquisition of this unwelcome knowledge of subordinate social status, then children who are bereaved or experience the loss of a parent might need to develop similar coping strategies. If it is the father who 'has vanished' and not just the 'happy days' then the fantasised substitute father becomes a very important part of the complex processes which the child might be involved with in an effort to deal with such loss.


## Jesus and the Absent Father

In *The Children's Book of Hymns* (n.d.) illustrated by Cicely Mary Barker, one particular picture must have impressed Blackie, the publisher, as reflecting (or appealing to) the intended audience because it is featured twice in the book. It is used

*I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,*
*That His arm had been thrown around me.*
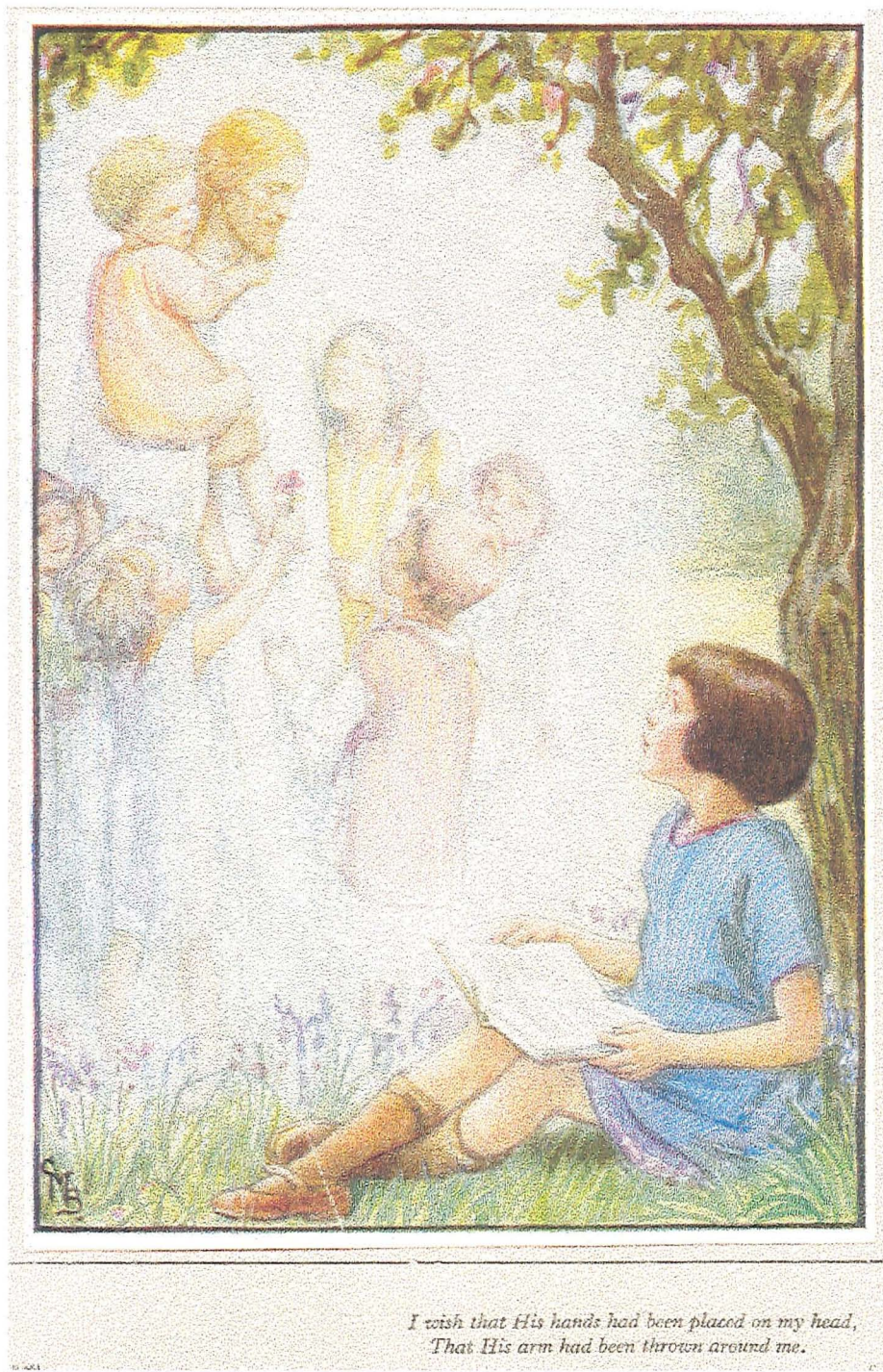
**Figure 33**

not only as an illustration to one of the hymns, but, more importantly, it is featured on

the dustjacket cover, clearly signifying to any prospective purchaser the appropriate

age and sex of the intended audience. On the dustjacket version of the illustration, a

dark haired little girl in a blue tunic is depicted as daydreaming - apparently as a

consequence of reading the book she is holding - and the ethereal image of her

daydream is the traditional rendering of Jesus blessing the children. The image is

significantly different from the others of this genre discussed in Chapters Six and

Seven, for in this version the audience is provided with an entry point to identification

which is *not* through the children being blessed by Jesus. This is because when the

same illustration (figure 33) is used inside the book, it is accompanied by two lines of

text:

> I wish that His hands had been placed on my head
> That His arm had been thrown around me.

Barthes (1983) has described how the meanings of an image are altered by

the addition of text, because the original visual message with its potential for

polysemic readings is fixed by the addition of the words which function to provide a

particular, as opposed to an open reading of the image. In this example, the particular

words used to accompany the picture are taken from the first verse of the children's

hymn called *I Think When I Read* which was discussed at length in Chapter Five:

> I think when I read that sweet story of old,
> When Jesus was here among men,
> How he called little children as lambs to His fold,
> I should have liked to have been with them then;
> I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
> That His arm had been thrown around me,
> And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
> "Let the little ones come unto Me."

The specific use of the two lines of the hymn to accompany the picture results

in a significant altering of meaning for both picture and text. The text is transformed

from two lines from a children's hymn to the articulation of the thoughts of the little girl

in the illustration; the picture now emphasises not the happy scene of Jesus with the

children but the girl's feelings of envy expressed through the verbal articulation of her

daydream. In particular, the juxtaposition of image and text emphasise her desire to be held by Jesus, and her apparent envy of the other children - mainly girls - in the picture, particularly the girl in the yellow dress, because they have what she wants but cannot get - the physical embrace of Jesus.

It seems significant that this book was produced in Britain in the 1920s, because the desire for the return of an absent father would have been a particularly poignant one for those children whose fathers had died in the First World War. Writing of the fantasies of daughters in fatherless homes Kestenbaum has observed that:

> girls who had lost their father for any reason whatsoever, keenly felt the absence. In most cases, fantasies of a loving and protective father who, were he to return to the family, would create an idyllic home life, were present in most cases.(Kestenbaum 1983: 125-6)

and that when a parent is absent 'there is an absence of oedipal reality' and that the 'parent thus becomes endowed with magical power either to gratify or punish' (Kestenbaum 1983: 126).

It is clear that pictures such as this, for all that they play with oedipal desires, are not aimed at establishing oedipal reality, but are, on the contrary, structured to provide pleasure for the girl reader through the medium of imaginary fantasies. But this raises problems concerning the impact of such images, and appears to lend some weight to Bettelheim's concerns about the need to keep elements relating to the 'real' world separate from fairy tale narratives because of the danger of confusing the child. But what is the psychoanalytic project if not the exploration of the relationship between the inner and outer worlds between the psyche and the material? In order for fairy tales to function, as Bettelheim claims, in helping children to resolve existential

conflicts and oedipal dilemmas, connection must be made with actual experiences,

and all such experiences have their own specific historical locations and concerns.

The example used above of the little girl daydreaming of Jesus and envying - just as

she has been urged to by this and other similar hymns - the physical contact that the

other girls had with Jesus, can be connected with specific historical circumstances in

which loss might have been experienced at both a familial and a generational level,

and in the following discussion I intend to provide evidence to lend support to such

claims.

Steedman has written that through the course of their development

children learn that they cannot always have what they want and that this is

part of the process of acquiring social rules, prohibitions and proscriptions which

can 'be seen as the place where a child enters culture, and a culture comes to

occupy a child'. (Steedman 1986: 110) She emphasises that children do not, of

course, see things this way, rather what they experience is loss:

> the loss of something that she believed she possessed, or might possess
> someday, something she had a right to (these things are as ordinary as and as
> various as: a breast, a father, a mother; the sense that she controls the world).
> the child is excluded, cut off from something that was formerly owned and
> enjoyed. (Steedman 1986: 110-111)

adding that:

> Freud's rewriting of the myth of Oedipus is a highly specific account, centred
> on the particularity of losing a parent as possession, of the loss that is the fate
> of every human child to experience in some way or other.(Steedman
> 1986:111)

But she departs from the orthodoxies of psychoanalytic theory when she goes on to

say that:

> If there was no history, if people were not conscious of themselves
> living within time and society, and if they did not use their own past to construct
> explanations of the present, then the myth...could be allowed to stand, as a

timeless and universal allegory of human development, and the relationship of culture to that development. But we live in time and politics, and exclusion is the promoter of envy, the social and subjective sense of the impossible unfairness of things. The first loss, the first exclusion, will be differently interpreted by the adult who used to be the child, according to the social circumstances she finds herself in, and the story she needs to relate.(Steedman 1986:111)

Steedman here highlights the way in which psychoanalysis has tended to overlook how economic and temporal location impact on the way in which the child is forced to come to terms with loss, with giving up what it thought it possessed. This can be a significant absence for, in some cases, at specific historic moments, that giving up has involved more than the negotiation of achieving Oedipal reality, for what has been 'given up' is experienced as having been taken, lost forever and not simply relinquished.

Steedman's observations that this is the moment at which 'a child enters culture, and a culture comes to occupy a child', emphasises how such rule-learning opens the way for the child to enter the world, to become a 'social subject' as opposed to a family member. But this also creates the means by which engagement with the fantasy of the outer world can provide for the accommodation of emotions generated through loss experienced within the family. Thus the appeal of the pictures discussed in the previous chapter - "Jesus, the children are calling" and "Follow Me" - can be understood as operating at many different levels, providing children with the means through which they can deal with oedipal conflicts and existential dilemmas. But the period under investigation includes two world wars and their economic and emotional aftermath. This thesis is particularly concerned to investigate the meanings attached to and generated by the story of Jesus for children in relation

to a specific historical period. It is, therefore, essential that we give some

consideration to the impact of the wars on those meanings by focusing on how

the feelings of loss generated by the absence of men, particularly fathers, might

have been managed by the children affected. In considering the number of

children who lost their fathers during World War One in particular, we need to

acknowledge that there were other factors to be taken into account besides that

of mortality on the battlefield because there 'were three times as many divorces

in 1919 as in 1915, because until 1915 marriage was a way of avoiding service'.

(Quinn 1993: 5)

This is not to underestimate the scale of actual mortalities and the

consequent family disruption because the number of British wives left widowed

after the first world war was nearly a quarter of a million (Quinn 1993: 5) and one in

seven British men between the ages of 19 and 38 was killed or died on active service

during the Great War. In addition to women being widowed and children left

fatherless, there were many men who returned home to their families physically or

emotionally disabled because of their military experiences. The pre-war view of men

and masculinity was shattered by those events[102] and 'Our Father which art in

Heaven' took on a much more literal meaning. It is loss which characterises so much

writing of the period and which also underpins the way in which Jesus can be

interpreted not only as a role model but also as a surrogate parent, but a parent who

also made a sacrifice which the child feels obliged to redeem.

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[102]. See 'The Risen Lord' in *D.H.Lawrence: A Selection from Phoenix* for an interesting discussion about the shift in men's engagement with the image of the Virgin and child to that of the crucified Christ, which Lawrence attributes to the experiences of the Great War.

Brian Simon introduces his article 'Education and Citizenship' (1993) with a

quotation:

> ...very familiar to me, since it was framed like a picture and hung on my
> nursery wall. It remained there through my early youth. It was circulated as a
> Christmas card by my father, just elected Lord Mayor of Manchester, in 1921 -
> just three years after World War I, in which he lost his three brothers. It is a
> quotation from Pericles' famous speech (or funeral oration) commemorating
> the men who died during the decisive victory at the Battle of Salamis. "Such
> then is the city for whom, lest they should lose her, the men who we celebrate
> died a soldier's death. And it is but natural that those of us, who survive them,
> should wish to spend ourselves in her service." (Simon 1993:

Simon goes on to point out 'the canker' at the heart of a noble ideal, for such

ideals of citizenship in the Greek city-state 'were procured...at the expense of an

underclass...who in their turn were denied any participation as citizens of the state.'

He writes that the above quote was very familiar to him because it had hung on his

bedroom wall from early childhood through to youth. It was a quote which had

particular significance for his father, who had used his public position to bring the text

to a wider audience through circulating it as a mayoral Christmas card. Underlying

this public statement and call to civic service and good citizenship, was a private

sorrow and a need to memorialize and make reparation for the deaths of his brothers.

Perhaps also guilt that he, out all of his brothers, had not been killed in the Great

War. But the sentiments which were circulated by the Lord Mayor of Manchester,

were also chosen to guide and inspire his own son. Thus the sorrows of the father for

what had been lost, were communicated to the son and connected to his hopes for

the future that his son would offer his service to redeem their loss, and the sorrows

and hopes are brought together in the selection, distribution and consumption of this

text. Thus loss experienced by one generation became widely established as the debt

to be paid by the next. But what is striking here is that this was communicated through

what is usually considered to be an ephemeral form that is the Christmas card. The card had powerful connotations because it was read and understood by the son in a specific historical and emotional context, that of the loss of his father's brothers through the Great War. The text left a lasting impression on Simon for it said something important about the feelings of his father and was, therefore, also a public expression of male emotions concerning loss.

In his essay 'Civilization and its Discontents'(first published 1930), Freud made clear that repressions and other psychic ills were the price we had to pay for living within society. That although the family might indeed be the site where they were first experienced, it was in fact the demands to retain the controlling structures of society which were the source - the cause - of them. Whilst Freud did not give much space to considering the influence of history on the development and functioning of the psyche, the impact and the trauma of the First World War was of such a magnitude that it caused him to rethink his original view of the human personality. Where before there had been a conceptualisation of instinctual drives which were linked only to gratification through pleasure, Freud now added to Eros (the pleasure principle), Thanatos, the death wish, in an attempt to explain and understand the causes and consequences of the Great War.[103]

Simon's father was in a municipally privileged position which permitted him to frame his private sorrows and hopes in the context of civic duty, but for children of that period, it was education, particularly a system of Sunday schooling inspired by developmental theory, which provided them with access to stories and pictures which could frame their own hopes and sorrows, albeit through the mediating voice of the

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[103] Freud 1920.

teacher. As we have seen, the verbal and visual versions of this story presented Jesus firstly as their nurturer and protector and later as a fellow fighter against the hardships and injustices of the world and thus offered a myriad of readerly positions through which children might identify with or relate to him. In Chapter Four we saw how child study identified the imitative faculty of the kindergarten children and also alerted teachers to the need to eradicate the tendency to fear which accompanied this openness to suggestion. Therefore, we need to consider how such commonplace activities as saying the Lord's Prayer were understood by children, particularly those whose earthly fathers were also in 'heaven' because of war, illness or industrial injury? In such material circumstances the exhortation to see Jesus as the friend to children, the man who, as we have seen from the discussion in Chapter Five was never too busy to cuddle his little ones (who chided his disciples for sending them away) is seen in sharp contrast to fathers who came home late from work, too exhausted through physical labour to do anything but eat and sleep. Kestenbaum's comments concerning the way in which absent fathers are endowed by daughters with magical powers and function within a fantasy that, should father return home he will create an idyllic family life, clearly connects with the promotion and perception of Jesus as a surrogate father. This is after all, a surrogate which, as we have seen, has been carefully scripted through the insights of developmental theory to function in the child's conscious fantasies, but there is evidence to say that it also operated at the deeper level of the unconscious. But, if we accept that the love which children are supposed to have for Jesus, according to the pedagogic strategies discussed earlier, is a fusion of object love and identificatory love, we need to understand how it is that girls could make that cross-gender identification. Therefore, the next section of the

chapter will draw upon the theories of psychoanalysis in providing an explanation of

this process and relate the identificatory processes to the emergence of a classed

identity.

## Jesus, Psychoanalysis and the Paradox of Cross Gender Identification

Wendy Hollway's account of the psychologization of feminism argues that the

'dominant popular assumptions of Western culture' are reflected in a 'psychological

vision of the world' which is only able to understand that world in terms of the

individual and that while:

> ...popular assumptions have more influence on psychology than vice
> versa, ... psychology plays a part in reproducing and legitimating
> popular assumptions about individuals and their femininity or
> masculinity. It places a particular model of the individual at the centre of
> its explanatory world, and while it does so it cannot reconceptualize
> gender issues in terms of the constraints and forces which shape a
> person...(Hollway, 1991: 30)

and she adds:

> A radical agenda for feminist psychology would politicize psychology
> with feminism rather than reduce feminism to psychology.(ibid)

Benjamin argues that such short-sighted perspectives have arisen because:

> Most theories of development have emphasized the goal of autonomy more
> than relatedness to others, leaving unexplored the territory in which subjects
> meet. (Benjamin 1990: 25)

and that this is a consequence of the 'dominant psychoanalytic paradigm, ego

psychology' in separation-individuation theory in which the emphasis is always on:

> ...how the self separates, how the baby comes to feel not-one with the mother.
> Seen in this light, relationship is the ground and separation is the figure,
> recognition appears as a fuzzy background and individual activity thrusts
> forward out of it. This has seemed plausible to many people for many reasons,
> but especially because of our culture's high valuation of individualism.
> (Benjamin 1990:25)

Having documented the tendency towards individualising perspectives in psychology, Benjamin goes on to observe that more recent research has produced a model for early experiences of the infant's emotional functioning which can be seen to emphasize reciprocity as opposed to instinctual gratification. In rejecting the overriding emphasis on the libidinal impulses referred to earlier, Benjamin thus enables us to consider how, from an early age, a sense of self might be derived from reciprocal interaction rather than separation. Having identified non-individualizing approaches within feminist psychology, to what extent does this help us to understand the complex processes of cross-gender identification which are involved in girls/daughters identifying with Jesus/father?

Wendy Hollway's (1991) plea for a feminized psychology which addresses gender difference as opposed to sex difference, and for men to be included in the scope of that project in order for us to be able to understand how such differences have been produced, finds a response in Benjamin's (1994) later account of the formation of identity. Here both the father and the mother of the child are seen as being crucial constituents in the development of gender. This is because the pre-Oedipal child has what she describes as an 'over-inclusive' perception of gender identity:

> they believe they can have or be everything. Initially children do not recognize the exclusivity of the anatomical difference; they want what the other has not *instead* of but in *addition* to what they have. (Benjamin 1994: 108)

and that at the:

> ...point of early separation...we see before and alongside object love something we call identificatory love, a love that first appears in the relationship to the *rapprochement* father.... (Benjamin 1994:109)

At this stage the father's function is:

dyadic as opposed to triadic; that is to say, not rivalrous or forbidding. He represents not so much the one who can exclusively love mother (which the child still imagines doing directly) but the desire for the exciting outside. (Benjamin 1994: 110)

According to Benjamin, this identificatory love for the father (because of what he represents) is:

important to the girl in her effort to define herself as a subject of desire...(for) The girl, too, needs to use the fantasy of power to inspire efforts towards attaining a sense of autonomy regarding her own body and the ability to move into a wider world. Likewise, a girl's identification with 'masculinity' reflects not a primary reaction to a sense of castration but love and admiration of father. (Benjamin 1994: 110)

If the father represents desire for the exciting outside world and the girl's

identification with 'masculinity' is not because it offers a way of gaining what she

lacks, but is reflective of her love and admiration of her father, then we can begin to

see how Benjamin's challenges to the orthodoxies of psychoanalysis provide a way of

understanding the dynamics of how Jesus could have been identified as representing

both entry to higher status and power but also raising anxieties about his vulnerability.

It seems, therefore, reasonable to suggest that the child recognizes that what

she desires *i.e.* the power gained by entry into the outside world, might also be the

power which can destroy the father. As identification with him is part of her sense of

self, according to Benjamin, it follows that that which is desired might also be seen as

threatening to that sense of self. Within such a scenario two options immediately

emerge. The first would be for the girl to back off from entry to that exciting but

threatening outside world because she was aware of the dangers it represented to

her both psychically and physically, because she identifies with the father/Jesus but

there is an alternative to this response.

In this option the daughter recognises the ambivalence of her fantasy of power

which is reflected in her desire for the outside world, which is also the dangerous

place which can destroy father/Jesus. But the psychical threats presented by this desire cannot overcome her identificatory love for him, for that identification is integrated into her developing sense of self. Thus, in order to protect that aspect of her self which is derived from identifying with the father, she is obliged to reject the knowledge of the outside world as a threatening place and replace it with a fantasy over which she has control; a fantasy which is consonant with the child's early delusions of omnipotence.

To this end, the story of Jesus told to children can be seen as a very effective imaginative fantasy which deliberately fosters and extends, through the pedagogic practices discussed earlier, the child's early delusions of omnipotence. Whilst in some cases the daughter's identification with a father who she witnessed as being in danger from or destroyed by the outside world, could cause her to withdraw from that world. For others, that early identification with the father, combined with the later internalisation of the chivalric romance version of the Jesus story, could provide the motivating force for the daughter to confront the threatening and destructive forces of her early emotional life and to take whatever altruistic opportunities for action open to her to make the world a safer and fairer place.

## Summary

We have seen in previous chapters how Jesus has been presented as a chivalric hero involved in a crusade to save the world and to eradicate injustice. But this role model is also the hero who was cruelly murdered and - whilst he was the most perfect of beings, there was no-one there to save him from being captured and crucified. This knowledge, as we have seen from previous discussions, could be seen as disturbing

for the very young child. But the older girl, who internalised the message underpinning the chivalric romance story of Jesus, that the price of redeeming his sacrifice was to serve him through active citizenship, provided a way to think of themselves as potentially powerful - more powerful than their parents - and this, it is argued, has contributed to the formation of an early sense of self which incorporated the need to protect parents from the perceived vulnerabilities to the physical threats posed by the world outside the home. Thus the hope of the world discourse reflected through the retelling of the Jesus story, and which promoted the benefits of altruistic citizenship, can also be seen as providing an opportunity to make reparation for the injuries, physical and emotional suffered by the parents. For working class girls in particular, it can be seen as offering a route to being an active agent for social change rather than simply functioning as a regulatory narrative which condemned them to inhabit the sphere of domestic passivity.

This chapter has investigated how psychoanalysis might be used to explain the appeal of the story of Jesus for working class girls. By initially focusing on the story as a fairy tale imbued with the themes of the chivalric romance, the discussion has drawn upon the work of Bettelheim to explore why he sees the fairy tale genre as beneficial to the psychological development of children. It was argued that while the classic Freudianism upon which Bettelheim bases his argument, is not formulated to take account of socio-economic positioning, Freud's 'Family Romance' can be usefully applied to the project of exploring why it is that the story of Jesus might have exerted a psychological influence on working class girls, particularly in the historical period of 1900-1945. The earlier discussion of how the hope of the world can be seen as a discourse of reparation and redemption has highlighted the cultural perception of

men as physically at risk from the dangers of the world outside the family. It has also shown how working class children have been privy to knowledge about the hardships of the world outside the home from an earlier age than developmental theory would advise, and that this knowledge has accompanied the understanding gained through education, that their parents occupied a socially subordinate position. Thus, through the emotions of envy - the desire to have what is apparently available for others but not granted to self - and the drive to make reparation for the initial rejection of parents through the fantasy of the family romance, to redeem the sacrifice made by others in the historically specific material world, we can see that the Sunday school Jesus may be shown to have a direct relevance to the experiences of working class girls, thus enabling us to see how and why the story of Jesus might have exerted a lasting influence in the formation of their sense of self.

## CONCLUSION

The thesis began by discussing the impact of the 1944 Education Act on the kind of schooling provided for working class children in the early 1950s. It showed how, in the formulating of the Act, the future of the nation was seen to be dependent on the educational experience provided for the younger generation. Further, that within this hope of the world discourse, an education based on the Christian ethic was seen as the most effective means of establishing a sense of altruistic citizenship and that within this discourse, the Sunday school version of Jesus was seen as the ideal role model for children. Chapter Eight ended with a discussion of class, gender and psychoanalysis in relation to the factors and processes which might have facilitated the older working class girl's identification with the chivalric romance story of Jesus, and which argued that this narrative promoted the idea that the price of redeeming his sacrifice was to serve him through active citizenship.

In the discussion in between, the link has been to provide evidence to demonstrate the influence of the story of Jesus in the formation of identity in working class girls in Britain during the period 1900-1945. In addressing this task, it has been necessary to acknowledge that such an undertaking required that several other implicit questions be answered. Firstly, we needed to be clear as to exactly which version - or versions - of the story of Jesus was to be the focus of this thesis and also to identify the particular media through which it was circulated. Secondly, we needed to explain not only how the story was produced and the various forms it had taken, but also who exactly constituted the main audience for the narrative and why. Thirdly, it was necessary to investigate to

what extent different historical contexts had influenced the ways in which the story had been produced, circulated and consumed. Finally, the thesis needed to provide evidence to support the claim that the narrative had exerted an influence in the formation of working class girls in particular.

Chapter One identified the central focus and themes of the thesis which included popular narratives and identity formation, orality and regulation, and the relationship between texts, readers and history. It explained what was to be understood by the phrase the hope of the world and how the Jesus story told to children in the Sunday school had been re-presented to encourage their involvement with the notion of altruistic citizenship and also explained why the thesis focused on the Jesus story retold as fairy tale, in particular.

Chapter Two mapped the academic context of the thesis by showing how this related to previous published work particularly in the fields of cultural and communication studies. The discussion was particularly focused on the work of Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*. And the chapter argued that this was one of the few studies to document the relationship of the working class to religion without being hampered by politically-motivated pre-conceptions. The chapter was divided into four parts which examined in turn: religion, popular culture and the British left., the notion of religion and respectability with particular reference to the British Sunday school, the materiality of books and pictures, and narratives and the pleasure of identification.

One of the key points to emerge from the discussion in this chapter was that girls as a group have all too frequently been left out of the scope of studies, thus we have identified two areas in which there are significant absences which

have impacted on the writing of the thesis. This chapter also argued that while there has been work looking at children's attitudes to Sunday schools, that work inevitably sees only acts of resistance and not the benefits of reform for working class children. We saw that there is almost no published work on the connections between the print media and the materials produced for Sunday schools. In summary, the chapter showed through the work of Hoggart, that attendance at Sunday school by working class children provided an indication by their parents that the education they received there was in line with working class value systems and was part of what he has called primary religion. This being not concerned with institutional practices but rather connected to the culture of the working class.

Chapter Three explained how the study was undertaken with specific reference to the collection of archival material and the difficulties encountered in this particular task. One of the key points to emerge from this chapter was that the genre of representation with which the thesis was primarily concerned, *i.e.* stories and pictures of Jesus, was omitted from most relevant studies such as those of art history, the development of children's books and the illustrators of those books. This was seen to be an important absence, for in making invisible the work of the artists who produced such books and pictures, the 'full rich life' of the British Sunday school was also made invisible. Attention was drawn to the writer's abandonment of the original aim of using autobiographical evidence to support the claims made in the thesis concerning the influence of the Jesus story in the formation of identity in working class girls and the implications of this shift discussed.

Chapter Four provided evidence to show the size and scope of the Sunday school network during the first three decades of this century. It was argued that this constituted an effective institutional base which was able to circulate not only the books and pictures with which this thesis is concerned, but also the more abstract, but equally influential popular version of developmental theory known as the child mind or child study. Further that this was embodied in the hope of the world discourse which transformed the nineteenth century view of working class children as the recipients of philanthropy and replaced it with the notion of working class children as active agents in the shaping of the future of the nation. The evidence presented showed how, in theory at least, the people who modernised the Sunday school at the turn of the century were especially receptive to seeing the advantages for their teaching which could be gained from developmental theory. The chapter also provided evidence to support the claim that the story of Jesus through the economy of the Sunday school, was one of the most accessible texts available to a social group which often lacked the economic and environmental resources which facilitated reading as a leisure activity. Thus the discussion highlighted the ways in which studies of children's books and literature have tended to overlook such factors and in doing so have made invisible the particular concerns and experiences of working class children. It was argued here that the story of Jesus was re-presented as a fairy tale and that this was connected to the influence of child-centred educational theory on texts which, through their vocabulary and mode of address, addressed the varying developmental needs of different age groups. Further, the chapter showed how the production, circulation and consumption of such texts ran

alongside the belief in the transformative power of the kindergarten system of education to provide working class children with early experiences to offset the effects of their otherwise deprived environment.

Thus, the chapter demonstrated how the hope of the world discourse brought together many individuals and groups and argued that their reformist activities, in some instances, produced very real material gains for working class children but that there was always the potential for what appeared to be a progressive discourse to simply be a reformulated system of regulation of the working class by those of a higher status.

Chapter Five showed how developmental theory was inscribed in the pedagogy of story-telling which was established at the beginning of this century (and circulated during the following fifty years), particularly in the reframing of the story of Jesus for the kindergarten age group. The chapter demonstrated how a child-centred pedagogy influenced by Froebelian thinking was a major influence in promoting the acceptance that story-telling could play an important role in the healthy psychological development of children by enabling them to draw into themselves knowledge of the world that they had yet to experience. The chapter argued that there were other agendas at work in the promotion of this approach to storytelling besides that of developmental study and that evangelists and educationalists in seeking to provide clear guidelines for this classroom activity were seen as providing an ideal example of the benefits of the activity for teachers themselves, with Jesus quite explicitly identified by several writers as providing the best example of the practice. In addition, we have seen that despite the frequent and often inappropriate use of the male pronoun in the

pedagogy of storytelling, most authors stressed Froebel's view that the best teachers of the very young were women and that the printed versions of the Jesus story told to children, were written almost exclusively by women.

The scene of Jesus blessing the children was seen as emblematic of the particular view of Jesus which evangelical educationalist sought to establish in the minds of their pupils and it was observed that in most of the versions the scene discussed in this chapter, men were depicted as considering children to be a nuisance, whereas Jesus was depicted as their friend. On the evidence provided in this chapter the narrative of Jesus blessing the children is the story of a man told by women to children. But the emphasis on the 'feminine' is not confined to the way in which Jesus is shown to embody nurturing characteristics or the emphasis. What emerges from this chapter is that, as claimed in the central hypothesis, girls in particular were the particular focus of the story or were provided with more opportunities through which to relate to the story. Further that this was an eroticised engagement with Jesus through the telling of his story in hymns and stories printed and told because girls feature so prominently as the special recipients of Jesus' physical affection.

Chapter Six focused on how the visual images of Jesus have been used in the Sunday school to facilitate a greater engagement with him. It argued that through the developments in the printing industry which made available cheap coloured illustrations of the life of Jesus, the pedagogy of look and learn emerged as a means of identifying which pictures were the most suitable to use in teaching children about Christ. Further, that such educational and technological developments influenced the ways in which the story of Jesus was

represented for a young audience which, through developmental theory, was identified as being at a particularly impressionable age. The kindergarten age group were considered to be especially susceptible to internalising inappropriate images which might have a lasting influence on their attitude to Jesus and thus to Christianity in general. The discussion demonstrated how the images of Jesus considered suitable for young children underwent certain changes which transformed Christ from a sacred icon to a fairy tale hero. Examples were provided to show how in the shift from fine art iconography to popular cultural representation, artists like Copping increasingly depicted Jesus in contemporary settings which emphasised the active role of children. Such anachronisms were viewed by some educationalists as strengthening rather than weakening Christ's appeal to a young audience because it was believed that this enabled them to make a more direct connection between the life of Jesus and their own experiences. It has also been noted that there was a continuing concern that some representations of Jesus were effeminate and thus not an effective role model to put before boys. As in the previous chapter, there is ample evidence in the discussion above to support the claim that, in the telling and the visual depiction of the story of Jesus, the readerly positions offered to girls were more appealing and thus more successful.

The seventh chapter explored the way in which the discourse of children as the hope of the world, the guardian's of the nation's destiny, was framed as the story of the children's crusade. It showed how this narrative was aimed at addressing the specific concerns and interests of the older child at the so-called 'altruistic stage' of development by providing them with images of Jesus (both

written and visual) which, by presenting him as a chivalric hero, showed him as the ideal example for their own actions. Through textual analysis of pictures produced for children by various evangelical groups the discussion showed that this version of the story of Jesus, through its emphasis on contemporary themes and issues, was designed to facilitate a greater engagement with the persona of Jesus among older children. The chapter highlighted the paradox of the apparent failure of this re-presentation of Jesus as a chivalric hero to make a more direct appeal to boys than girls and in doing so raised questions as to the equating of manliness with masculinity.

Thus it was argued that this was not an adventure story, despite all attempts to present it as such, but a quest narrative which had as its Holy Grail the aim of eroticising the notion of altruism. By reference to feminist theories of the function of the fairy tales, it was argued that 'goodness' in this genre is gendered and that Jesus the chivalric hero, appeared to exhibit many of these so-called feminine characteristics. The chapter ended by arguing that, with the Jesus story, just as is acknowledged to be the case with other popular narratives, the ability of audiences to negotiate their own meanings can result in apparently regulative narratives yielding emancipatory readings. Thus, the story of Jesus as a chivalric hero told through words and pictures resulted in a narrative which is capable of producing transgressive pleasures. The female audience for the story could reject the implicit aim of inculcating the feminine ideal of passivity and self-sacrifice, Jesus being presented to girls not only as an altruistic role model but also as an unobtainable object of desire.

Chapter Eight explored how, for working class girls, their economic

positioning contributed to the way in which the story of Jesus was able to function

therapeutically in helping them to cope with loss experienced at several levels. In

addition, it was a story telling of how, while Jesus was presented as a chivalric

hero involved in a crusade to save the world and to eradicate injustice, he was

also the hero who was cruelly murdered, captured and crucified. It was argued

that while this knowledge could have been disturbing for the very young child, the

older girl could relate it to her experiences of parental loss and thus use the

narrative as a way of coming to terms with it. In addition, the chapter argued that

working class girls who internalised the message underpinning the chivalric

romance story of Jesus were taught that that the price of redeeming his sacrifice

was to serve him through active citizenship and that this provided a way of

thinking of themselves as potentially powerful - more powerful than their parents -

and this, it was argued, contributed to the formation of an early sense of self

which incorporated the need to protect parents from the physical threats posed

by the world outside the home. Thus the hope of the world discourse reflected

through the retelling of the Jesus story, and which promoted the benefits of

altruistic citizenship, was also seen as providing an opportunity to make

reparation for the injuries, physical and emotional suffered by the parents. For

working class girls in particular, it was seen as offering a route to being an active

agent for social change rather than simply functioning as a regulatory narrative

which condemned them to inhabit the sphere of domestic passivity.

This thesis has drawn upon many different theoretical perspectives in

arguing that the Sunday school story of Jesus exerted a lasting influence in the

formation of identity in working class girls in the period 1900-1945. It has illustrated the visual and verbal versions of the narrative from the period under investigation to show a progression from the Jesus represented in the conventions of fine art formality to a new iconography in which he is depicted in contemporary settings which feature children as fellow fighters in his struggle to save the world. It is clear from the discussion provided in the previous chapters that non-conformist Christians, particularly Congregationalists, played a major role in disseminating this view of Jesus and that this was linked to their own agenda of encouraging children to become involved in missionary work in the British Empire. For boys, it seems that this campaign, unlike that undertaken through the books and magazines produced in the nineteenth century, was ineffective. One of the reasons for this could be that the appeal of the moving image as presented through the cinema, made the inanimate figure of Jesus redundant, but that, for girls, the notion of stillness could be associated not only with the feminine ideals of passivity and patience, but also with the security of the ever-present, ever-watchful guardian. But in order to evaluate the validity of such explanations it would be necessary to undertake further study and to include oral history interviews as part of the methodology.

*[NOTE: The next page is numbered 302]*

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# APPENDIX 1

## Brief Biographies

**Cicely Mary Barker 1895-1973**

Artist and illustrator famous for her *Flower Fairies* series of books. Worked for Blackie for much of her life, illustrated the *Children's Book of Hymns, He Leadeth Me* and produced cards for the Girls Friendly Society and the SPCK. She was a contemporary - and friend - of Margaret Tarrant. Her (secular) work is much sought after by collectors of children's books.

**Harold Copping 1863-1932**

Harold Copping studied at the Royal Academy's schools of art and won a Landseer scholarship which enabled him to study in Paris. He travelled in Palestine, Egypt and Canada to research background for his work and spent most of his working life as an illustrator of children's and biblical stories. The majority of his work was for the Religious Tract Society, later known as the Lutterworth Press (now known as the United Society for Christian Literature), but he also produced work for the NSSU and the London Missionary Society (LMS). The pictures *The Hope of the World* (LMS) and *Jesus and the Children* (NSSU) and the '*Copping Bible*' are his most famous achievements.

**Basil Mathews 1879-1951**

Writer and teacher on the missionary and ecumenical movement. Worked for the *Christian World* and was editor of the LMS's publications 1910-1919. During WW1 he was employed in the Ministry of Information and later served time with the opium commission of the League of Nations. From 1924-1929 he was literary secretary of World's Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations in Geneva. Noted for his ability to write and speak in a manner which made him accessible to young audiences.

## J. E. G. De Montmorency 1866-1934

Barrister and Professor of Law at the University of London. Editor of the *Contemporary Review* for many years and acted as assistant secretary to the Royal Commission on divorce and matrimonial causes 1910-1912. He wrote on many subjects including the history of education and was a school governor and an active Christian.

## Margaret Tarrant 1888-1959

Artist and illustrator who spent most of her working life with the Medici Society starting there in 1920. Her favourite themes were fairies, children and religious scenes, the latter included two enormously successful pictures *All Things Bright and Beautiful* and *Behold I Send You Forth* (see Chapter Seven). She illustrated the second edition of Oxenham's *The Hidden Years* (1931) and designed cards for the Girl Guide association. She was a committed Christian and in 1936 the Medici Society paid for a study visit to Palestine. Tarrant's (secular) work is much prized by collectors of illustrated juvenile literature.

## Basil Yeaxlea 1883-1967

Congregational minister who later went on to work for the London Missionary Society as an Educational Assistant. Editor of the United Council for Missionary Education 1913-15 and secretary of the YMCA's Universities Committee 1917-20. Editor of the *New Chronicle of Christian Education* (formerly the *Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook*) 1928-30 and Principal of Westhill Training College 1930-35. Editor of *Religion in Education* 1933-57. His publications included handbooks for the teaching of religion as well as books on life-long learning and the *Encyclopaedia and Dictionary of Education*.

# APPENDIX 2

## <u>Abbreviations</u>

**LMS**...............London Missionary Society

**NSSU**..............National Sunday School Union

**RTS**................Religious Tract Society

**SPCK**..............Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge

**SPG**................Society for the Propagation of the Gospels

**SSCCO**............Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook

**SSU**................Sunday School Union

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# APPENDIX 3

## Sample of books used for content analysis of illustrations

Anonymous (n.d.) *The Babe of Bethlehem- Short stories of the life of Christ simply told for children*. London: Thos. Nelson & Sons.

Anonymous (n.d.) *Bible Stories- Old and New Testaments*. London: Ward, Lock & Co. Ltd..

Anonymous (n.d.) *Bible Picture Stories*. London: Partridge.

Anonymous (n.d.) *Our Own Scripture Book*. London: Nister.

Anonymous (c. 1900) *Bible Treasures for the Little Folk*. London: Nister.

Anonymous (1901) *Favourite Bible Stories for the Young*. London: Thos. Nelson & Son.

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**APPENDIX 4**

A COMPARISON OF THE FIGURES FOR 1909 AND 1910.

ENGLAND AND WALES.

SCOTLAND.

IRELAND.

STATISTICS FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM.

For the Year 1910.—729,514 Teachers; 7,644,171 Scholars.
For the Year 1909.—715,010 Teachers; 7,178,344 Scholars.
Net Increase. 2,504 Teachers; 65,127 Scholars.

**Statistics for attendance at Sunday School**

**Source: SSCCO 1910**

# APPENDIX 5

## The Picture & Lantern Department of the NSSU



A Picture-Lover's Paradise.

A photograph of a corner of the National Sunday School Union's splendid Picture and Lantern Department which has b
opened at 57 and 59, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4, and where a magnificent selection of reproductions of modern
classical pictures may be seen. Reference is made to this Department in the article which appears on page 325.

**Source: The New Chronicle 27/11/30**

# APPENDIX 6

## Copping advertisements



**Source: The Sunday School Magazine (1929)**

# HAROLD COPPING
## is dead!

This simple announcement appearing in the daily papers last week has filled thousands of Sunday School Teachers and other Christian workers with sincere and deep regret at the loss of one whose beautiful pictures revealed him as one of the most sympathetic and devout interpreters of Bible incidents amongst our Modern Artists. His works, which have passed into millions of hands, remain as permanent records of devotion to the highest ideals!
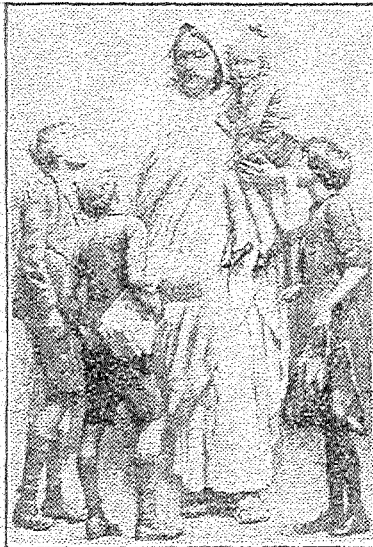


**JESUS AND THE CHILDREN.**
*From the painting by*
**HAROLD COPPING.**

This beautiful picture has had a remarkable sale. Four Editions having already been produced, each in facsimile colours, from the original.

It is issued in Five Styles:—

**No. 1. WALL PICTURE**, size 26 ins. x 20 ins., for hanging in School or Classroom, 1/- net, or packed on roller, 1/6 net, post free.

**No. 2. NEW SIZE FOR FRAMING,** 18 ins. x 24 ins., on velvet Matt art boards, canvas grained. For hanging in the Home. 1/- net, or packed, 1/6 net, post free.

**No. 3. CALENDAR,** 10½ ins. x 7½ ins., gilt bevel edges, tear-off datepad. 1/6 net, or packed, 1/10, post free.

**No. 4. CALENDAR,** smaller size, on board, with silk cord and datepad, 6d. net, post free 8d.

**No. 5. POSTCARD,** for ordinary correspondence and for sending to scholars in illness or on holiday. 1d. per copy, or 1/3 per doz., post free.

Source: The New Chronicle    (14/7/32)