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Religious Education and the Unconscious: an investigation of children from seven to eleven years.

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Abstract.

This thesis examines recent research into the validity of Piaget's theories as to how children assimilate, think, and learn, and analyses in detail the research of Dr. Ronald Goldman, who based his theories concerning Religious Education upon the psychology of Piaget.

The thesis shows how, although having exerted influence over religious education in Britain for over twenty years, the theories of Dr. Goldman are unhelpful for effective teaching in the field of religious education, as they fail to give recognition to the significance of environment and experience for a child's receptivity of teaching, concentrating as they do too much upon chronological age.

By the use of various enquiries, the current level of understanding of religion among children of Junior School age is investigated, and found to be lacking in any conceptual development from the Infant Stage. The problem, apparently, is that the children are not introduced to any other concepts of God than "Father", with the result that unhelpful anthropomorphic concepts form and receive reinforcement. The problem posed is how to make use of children's experiences in order to develop deeper thought concerning religious interpretations of life.

Two basic types of experience are identified and examined, and related to the psychology of Dr. C. G. Jung: the personal experience and the collective experience.

By practical classroom work, which is illustrated throughout, specific religious topics are investigated, drawing upon these two basic types of experience. It is shown that, contrary to Goldman's theory, junior children are capable of analysing quite sophisticated Biblical material, and further, show themselves capable of considerable thought about religious matters and symbolism in general.

The thesis concludes by listing various implications for the Primary School Curriculum. For religious education to be effective, it needs to have its foundations within both personal and collective experience. Thought needs to be drawn out from the children by the use of carefully planned schemes of work, and where possible the children should be given the opportunity of extending and deepening their thought by problem solving activities related to the theme being followed.

In contrast to Dr. Goldman's recommendations, the high potential of junior children for abstract thought and reasoning is illuminated throughout and illustrated, and the use of Biblical, and other religious writings and material is recommended for use in the classroom.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE UNCONSCIOUS:  
an investigation of children from seven  
to eleven years

By Miss Elizabeth Ashton

M A S T E R   O F   A R T S   I N   E D U C A T I O N

The University of Durham  
Department of Education

1989

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25 JAN 1990

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

To Dr. Brenda G. Watson I wish to offer my gratitude for the initial lecture which I found so stimulating and which subsequently inspired this research, and also for her subsequent encouragement whilst I was formulating my research proposals.

To Miss Betty H. Bradshaw I extend my sincerest thanks for introducing me to the writings of Dr. Carl G. Jung, and for the subsequent conversations we had concerning them.

To Mr. Robin P. Minney I offer my thanks for his positive suggestions, criticisms and encouragement throughout the writing of the thesis.

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Chapter One.

After being approached by colleagues at school with the request that I should review the school's provision for religious education and offer guidelines as to how the subject should be taught, I made investigations into the teacher's reference books available in school and discovered the main volumes to be the researches of Dr. Ronald Goldman. As over twenty years had elapsed 1 since these books had been written, I made further enquiries in order to locate some recent theory upon which primary school teaching in the field of religious education could be based. Many articles which I read did, in fact, direct criticisms towards the psychology of Dr. J. Piaget, upon whose researches Dr. Goldman based his own. The psychology of Piaget pointed towards various stages of intellectual development, closely associated with biological growth, which indicated that children were unable to think in abstract form until they had reached adolescence. Biblical material, therefore, comprising as it does abstract, theological writing, was advocated by Dr. Goldman as being unsuitable for children until the stage of abstract thought was reached. Dr. Goldman was surprisingly specific as to when this would be:-

It is evident that a basic literalist stage exists until about 12:11 chronologically, until which time most pupils tend to see the Bible narrative as literally true. It carries with it not only the prestige of the printed word, but also, to the child, the authority of the adult world. It is true because it is old and venerated, and it is true in a literal manner. 2

In her research Professor Margaret Donaldson cites many 3 examples of how the Piaget-type test has endeavoured to probe into the thinking capacity of young children and also how the tests were used to link biological development with intellectual capacity. The important fact to which Professor Donaldson constantly refers, nevertheless, is the importance of experience, or lack of it, to the child's performance. Diverse types of experience were alluded to: language experience, play experience, and in fact the general experiences of life which the children had encountered which were extremely influential in their performance at the test. It was further pointed out that if the actual detail of the testing technique was modified in order to take account of the children's experiences, but the basic structure of the tests left unaltered, their rates of success improved significantly.



If, as Professor Donaldson maintained, experience was the key factor in the learning process of young children, it was necessary to use a framework for religious education which took this important fact into account.

I was, however, unable to locate any teaching materials which took this theory into account, and it seemed that I had reached a dichotomy in my search: the material available was largely based upon the ideas of Dr. Goldman, or even upon methods which had prevailed before Dr. Goldman's researches had been written. No research seemed to have taken place which involved work in the classroom which took account of Professor Donaldson's findings in the field of religious education.

It had been during an In-Service Course in 1983 that I had heard Dr. Brenda G. Watson of the Farmington Trust speak, when she laid great emphasis upon the dangers inherent within, and the futility of, asking young children to draw pictures of God. She argued that such activities, although frequently carried out had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing anthropomorphic concepts which were already held by the children, or even more unfortunately, of even introducing them. Thus, rather than such an exercise helping children forward in their thinking, it actually reinforced such unhelpful ideas of God as an old man in the skies, towering over the earth, and Dr. Watson had been of the firm opinion that even children of junior school age were quite capable of more mature levels of thought than this.

Upon writing to Dr. Watson I requested details of any suitable publications and I also described my interest in the problems which were obviously surrounding the whole area of religious education and the dilemmas which were the result of them. I received much encouragement to formulate my own research proposals and it was obvious that research in this field of study was urgently required, especially research carried out in the classroom itself where the researcher was in constant daily contact with the children.

My research, therefore, was designed to enquire into the validity of the research of Dr. Goldman whose own research had enjoyed overwhelming influence upon how religious education had been tackled in this country for over twenty years. The reason for this fact was recently stated thus:-

"This is chiefly on account of the importance of the issue it purports to address, namely the intellectual potential of children as a basis for religious education. An additional reason is that no similar work has been undertaken in the meantime".

This enquiry would, of necessity, demand some investigation into the psychology of Piaget since this provided the foundation upon which Dr. Goldman based his own researches.

Bearing in mind both the views of Dr. Goldman and of Professor Donaldson, I wished to extend my research into an investigation of the various types of experiences which a child in the junior school brings into the classroom in order to discover how far these experiences could be used as an approach to religious education. I also wished to discover how far their use could open up hitherto unexplored areas of a child's potential for understanding abstract ideas and writing, for such could have important implications for the teacher's expectations of the innate potential of pupils in the classroom.

The following comprises the results of my research which embodies practical work which developed from the children's own receptivity to the material presented to them. The underlying psychology was not used, as was the case in Dr. Goldman's research, to test the children and the applicability of the tests themselves in the field of religious education, but rather as a foundation upon which to base my educational principles and also as a means by which the thinking capacity of junior school aged children could be led forward and helped to deepen.

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Chapter Two.

Psychological Theory and the Researches of Dr. R. Goldman.

The psychology of Jean Piaget, which has had overwhelming influence upon education in this country for over twenty years indicated that children's intellectual capacity was, in fact, closely linked to their biological growth and development and that before the ability to think in abstract could be attained, they had to proceed through a number of definable "intellectual stages" of development. The researches of Dr. Goldman were firmly based upon the psychology of Piaget, and the theories of the latter have been, and are, in the process of being seriously criticised by many researchers. Robin Minney 1 drew attention to the academic background of Piaget, who "qualified in biology and wrote his doctoral thesis on molluscs, before becoming professor of philosophy, and then later he turned to child psychology". This biological background and interest may be identified continually in the work of Piaget, not least of all in his famous theory of "intellectual stages", but as Robin Minney pointed out, there is a big difference between the growth and development of the body and the growth and development of understanding: "Just to mention 'the savage' points this out: anatomically there is little difference between the professor and primitive herdsman ... but the growth of understanding ... the conception of the world ... must be seen in relation to the environment in which this development takes place".

Margaret Donaldson investigated the methods used by Piaget 2 to assess the 'intellectual limitations' of children. An example which she cites involves the child viewing from one side of a table a model of mountains. The tester places a small doll on a mountain 'peak' opposite to the child, who is then asked to select from a number of pictures the view which he/she thinks the doll would be able to see from where it stood. Under the age of about nine most children fail this test and frequently choose the view which they themselves could see. Piaget felt this proved they were unable to see a problem from another person's point of view: they were unable to "decentre". This idea obviously has serious implications for the child's ability to think and to reason, and it follows that this view is relevant for the teaching of religious concepts, the formation of which demand thought and logical reasoning.

However, when the task was altered in detail, although the test remained essentially that of Piaget, and the mountains replaced by a simple network of intersecting walls and two dolls used, one dressed as a policeman and the other as a child, the child was able to place the doll in such a position that it would not be visible to the policeman, and in fact was even able to hide the doll in a position from where it could not be seen by two policemen standing in different places among the walls. Martin Hughes, who conducted the experiment, concluded that the children were able to complete the task successfully because hiding behind walls was something within their experience: it made sense to them, and they were consequently able to understand what it was that they were expected to do.

It was upon such theories of Piaget that Dr. Goldman based his own research, the results of which are embodied within two books, and which were recently stated in research as "still regarded as relevant. This is chiefly on account of the importance of the issue it purports to address, namely the intellectual potential of children as a basis for religious education. An additional reason is that no similar work has been undertaken in the meantime".

Dr. Goldman made his enquiries into the "thinking" of the child in the first instance, in order to test his/her potential for understanding religious education. His self-confessed aim was to discover if "Piaget's three stages (of intellectual development, linked closely with biological growth) could be applied to the realm of religious thinking". It was with this aim in mind that the investigations were carried out by those "psychologically trained and conversant with Piaget's ideas". In other words, Dr. Goldman's researches were really testing the tests of Piaget, but there was no thought, apparently, of considering the validity of the tests themselves.

What Dr. Goldman discovered was that, not surprisingly, the children whom he had questioned about such Biblical material as "Moses and the Burning Bush", the "Red Sea Crossing" and "The Temptations of Christ", showed no theological understanding whatsoever of the material, which was frequently described by the children in anthropomorphic terms. Hence one child described the devil as follows:-

A wicked man under the ground.

Dr. Goldman stated such ideas were common up to about the age of ten years, eight months. Why did he think this was so? It is interesting to examine just exactly what questions the children in the investigation were asked:-

Who was the devil?

(The use of the pronoun "who" immediately suggests to the child that the devil should be thought of in terms of a person: if "What" had been used instead the replies may have been rather different).

Could Jesus see him?

(Again, 'him' would reinforce anthropomorphic ideas of the devil to the child, as would the suggested visual aspect of 'him').

If the child answered 'yes', he/she was then asked

What did he look like?

(This question is an open invitation for the child to imagine more anthropomorphisms!)

If the child answered 'no', he/she was still trapped by the question into answering anthropomorphically, since the question which followed was:

How would Jesus know the devil was there?

The following criticism of Dr. Goldman's questioning technique is just as pertinent to the above discussion as it is to the similar questions which were asked children in connection with "Moses and the Burning Bush":-

It would need an exceptional theological maturity in a child or adolescent to point out to the questioner that he could not really give any answer to this kind of question in the terms in which it is asked, and with all the assumptions it seems to make.

One of the assumptions of Dr. Goldman seems to have been that there are definable answers to such theological considerations, an idea which is highly controversial.

These types of questions lead children upon a false trail of thought, encouraging as they do spatial ideas and testing skills of thought and reasoning which, because of their lack of experience, they have not had the opportunity of acquiring. This, indeed, is the conclusion reached by Margaret Donaldson and Martin Hughes in their considerations of the tests of Piaget as discussed on page 22.

However, basing his conclusions upon such researches, Dr. Goldman was led to state that:-

The Bible is not a children's book ... the teaching of large areas of it may do more damage than good.

As I have indicated, however, the children's lack of success may

be understood not because their biological immaturity had affected their intellectual understanding and capacity for thought, but because they had not been taught the necessary skills which are required in order to understand to what poetic, symbolic writing is pointing.

Dr. Goldman suggested that Biblical material ought not to be introduced to young children until their chronological age indicated a stage of intellectual development which would enable them to appreciate and understand the use of abstract symbolism. However, more recent research has suggested that a child as young as four years has an intellectual capacity resembling much more closely that of adults than has been understood hitherto:- 10

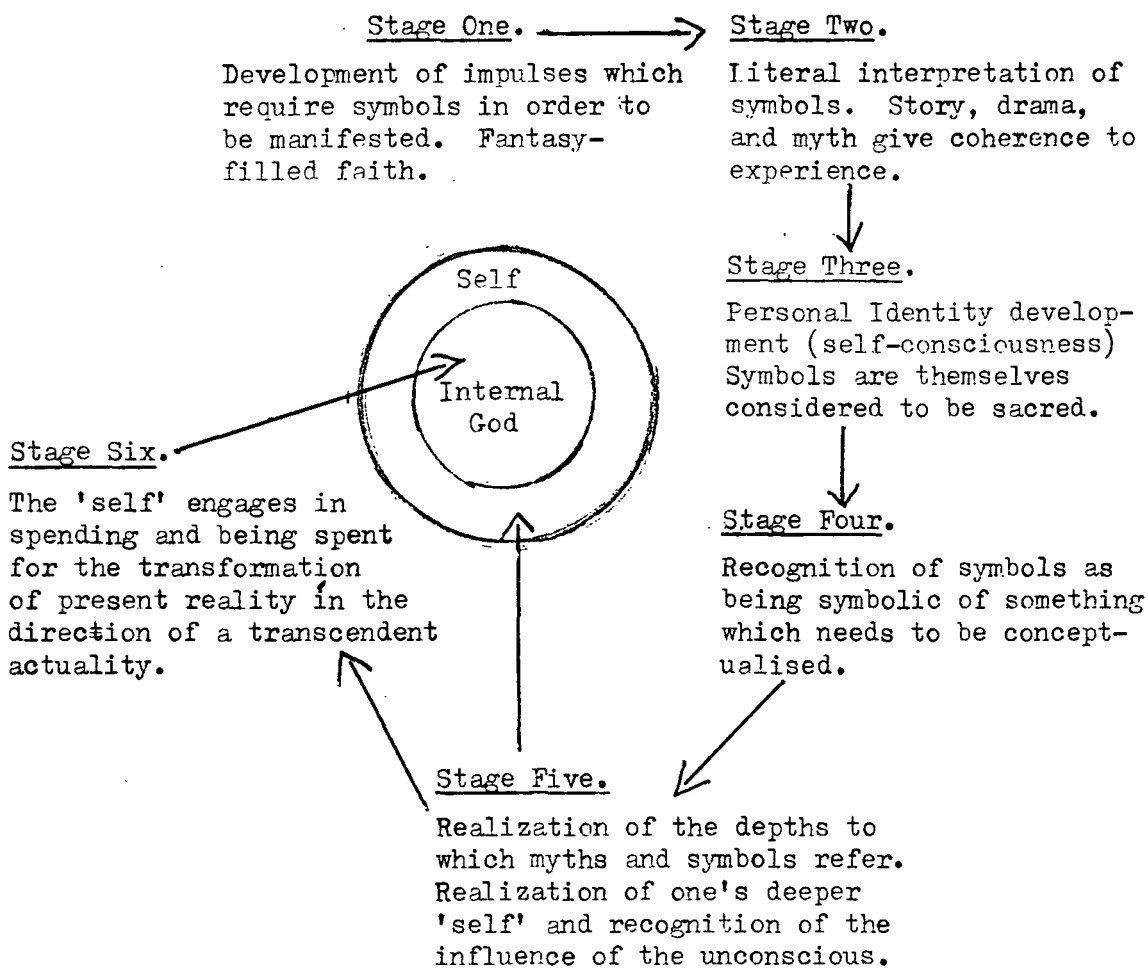
At least from age four, then, we must again acknowledge that the supposed gap between children and adults is less than many people have claimed. 11

Olivera Petrovich further develops this point when she mentions that:-

From age four onwards children can understand the difference between metaphorical and literal statements. 12

What these statements indicate is that children are, in fact, possessed of the potential for abstract thought but the potential needs to be recognised and developed by the use of suitable material and teaching methods if it is to be realised. ✓

The potential for development of religious understanding is illustrated in Figure 1, "The Six Stages of Faith Development", which I constructed upon the ideas of James Fowler, as they are described in "The Stages of Faith". Six stages of faith were identified by Fowler, and these he sees as being similar to the intellectual developmental stages of Piaget, but he does not link them so closely with biological development; according to his theory, indeed, only very few human beings indeed reach Stage Six, and he estimated that most American adults were between stages three and four. The problem in the development of religious understanding seems to lie in part at least in the understanding, or lack of understanding, of the use of symbols. If, as Fowler indicates, many adults do not develop significantly beyond Stage Three, two types of attitude seem to result: either the symbols are accepted literally as sacred and protected as such, or faith disappears because Stage Four is, at best, approached but never consolidated or developed towards Stage Five: the symbols are dismissed because they are merely symbols and their deeper significance within the human psyche is never investigated or known, even, to exist. 13

Figure 1. The Six Stages of Faith Development.

(A brief summary of "The Stages of Faith", James Fowler).

It is interesting to question why, in fact, most American adults do not seem to progress much beyond Stage Three in their religious understanding, as Fowler suggests. Dr. Goldman's researches indicated that children from about early adolescence were able to understand abstract thought and symbolism. One may develop this line of inquiry further by referring again to the fact that modern research into psychology is indicating that at least from the age of four, children have a capacity for abstract thought similar to that of adults.

What seems to be a possible explanation is that the prevailing methods used in religious education are not developing the potential possessed by either young children or adults.

There are two basic influences upon a child's religious understanding: the experiences he/she has outside of school, firstly, and inside of school secondly. Concerning the former, I asked the children various questions concerning their contact with church and religious ideas outside of school, and the results are as follows. The children whom I questioned comprised the class which I was teaching and they were also the children whose work is analysed in the following chapters.

Children's Contact with Religion Outside of School.

Regularly attend church	8 children	19%
Members of church-based organisations, e.g. Brownies/Cubs	8 children	19%
Sunday School attenders	3 children	7%
In church for baptisms occasionally	8 children	19%
In church for weddings occasionally	12 children	29%
Heard carols or hymns played in public places, e.g. Salvation Army, taped carols in Supermarkets, etc.	30 children	73%
Watch/listen to programmes on T.V./radio with some religious content	20 children	48%

N.B. Some children are included in more than one category, and therefore the totals are not intended to be analysed on the understanding that they provide a total of children altogether who have some contact with religious experience.

The emergent pattern suggests that formal religion plays a negligible part in the formation of religious attitudes for the children since only 19% attended church on a regular basis. "I was once at church at a wedding" is a common statement, but three-quarters of the

children had heard some hymns being played in their street, or in the local supermarket at Christmas time, and hymn singing programmes on television attracted 48%, probably on the basis of family viewing.

It is a matter for speculation whether most of the children would have had any influential experience of religion whatever if they had not experienced assemblies daily in school, and lessons in religious education in their classrooms.

Since the religious education carried on in the classroom carries a significant weight of the introduction which the children have to the subject, I enquired of the staff of my school what type of teaching the children received. The following is the result of the enquiry. Sixteen teachers' responses are shown.

<u>Life-Theme Approach - e.g. 'People Who Help Us'.</u>	<u>Bible Stories, as 'stories'.</u>	<u>"Readiness for Religion" (Goldman's schemes)</u>
8 teachers used this	7 teachers use this	1 teacher used this.
<u>Discussion/Analysis of religious writing and children's questions</u>	<u>Historical/Geographical background to the Bible.</u>	
2 teachers use this	3 teachers use this.	

Religious education lessons in the classroom, therefore, are predominantly of "Life-theme" and Bible story approaches.

The daily assembly consists of a story, from either a Christian (although occasionally a story from another faith may be used) or humanist point of view, Christian prayers, occasionally including the Lord's Prayer, and two hymns daily, on four days per week. On the fifth day a class assembly is held, which may be on any theme, not necessarily religious. Most of the hymns used are basically Christian, although some could be described as humanist.

It was now necessary to analyse the effects which these experiences were having upon the development of religious understanding of the children.

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### Chapter Three.

#### The Development of Religious Concepts.

"Without experience, nothing can be known sufficiently", reads an inscription outside of the University Botanic Gardens in Oxford. This statement is of profound significance for education, and not least of all for the understanding of a religious interpretation of life, since it is upon experience that thought processes and understanding are based. I now wished to devise some method whereby I would be enabled to gain some insight into what the children with whom I was in contact were thinking about the nature of God, and why. 1

My first problem was to decide by what method I was most likely to discover the thought which was going on and the concepts which were developing as a result. This was an issue of vital importance since upon such a method the validity of my research would rest. It was imperative that I should not influence the children's responses to the method devised as I wished to discover exactly what their own, private ideas about the nature of God comprised. For this reason, the children included in the survey had not been taught by me and therefore had no opportunity of trying to communicate what they felt I personally would wish them to say, at the expense of their own thoughts. For this reason no help, whether before, or during, the procedure of investigation could be given. It was, in addition, necessary that the children should be able to understand exactly what it was that they were required to do and for this reason instructions would need to be both clear, concise, and specific.

I wished to define, as far as possible, what concepts of God the children were developing and what types of thought and experience these concepts were based upon.

I considered the method used by Dr. Goldman to be unsuitable for my research since I wished to gain some insight into children's concepts and thought. I did not, as was the case with him, wish to test the applicability of Piaget's psychology and testing techniques to the subject of religious education.

Dr. Leslie Francis set out to discover what children, both in their teenage years and those of junior school age, felt about religious matters; he was, therefore, investigating religious attitudes rather than concepts. I wondered, nevertheless, if any of his methods of 2

investigation could be suitable for my own research. He tried Dr. Goldman's method which he called the "Structured Clinical Interview" and defined two fundamental weaknesses; firstly the active involvement of a questioner resulted in the development of a "human factor" which influenced the performance of the child being interviewed. I wished to avoid this problem and therefore rejected further this particular method. Dr. Francis could find no way of objectively analysing and translating the mass of data which he collected which he felt was "amenable to sophisticated statistical analysis".

Dr. Francis then described the "Likert" approach, again a test of attitudes rather than concepts, which involved the children selecting from a pre-devised list of responses the most appropriate one for one's own point of view. The possible responses covered a wide range of intensity of belief; for example they ranged from such statements as "more" to "very much indeed" and could be selected by the child as he/she thought most suitable to statements such as "the idea of God means much to me" or "God helps me lead a better life". Dr. Francis considered that such statements enabled him to assess children's attitudes towards such topics as belief in God and church attendance.

Dr. Brenda G. Watson has questioned the technique used, showing 3 how both the statements and the possible responses to them could be influenced by the different interpretations which could be placed upon them from one child to another, and between one age and another, with the result that the children could, in fact, be answering different queries to those which the tester had really intended.

I should also offer my own response to the "box ticking" approach. The boxes to be ticked in this type of survey actually offer "answers on a plate" to the child or adult taking part in the exercise, who may complete the questionnaire by giving no more than a momentary thought as to which box to tick, perhaps even doing so without even reading what the statement actually said. For this reason, too, I felt this method was suspect as being invalid, and really only indicative of how many children decided to tick which box. A method of investigation was required which demanded comprehension of the instructions, and plenty of scope for the child to attempt to communicate his/her own ideas.

Martin Rogers asked about a dozen independent boarding schools to 4 take part in a project involving children in writing an essay entitled "What I Believe". He mentioned that the circumstances under which the essay was written did, to a large extent, influence what was written,

but his conclusions showed that most children were highly influenced by science-fiction books and that ideas about God were based upon vagaries such as "God seems to be the most agreeable reason for the world's existence" and the actual nature of God caused such complexities as "How can you believe in someone you cannot see?" God was described as covering the whole world, and other children were unable to understand how God could hear so many prayers at one time.

I set this essay for a class of ten year old children, but none of the twenty-six who wrote it mentioned anything about religion at all. Mostly children showed concern over family matters, neighbourhood concerns and problems which had arisen between themselves and their peers which they wished could be resolved. No mention of God was made at all, and for this there are at least two possible reasons. Either the absence of religious ideas being mentioned signifies the increasing secularisation of society, or the essay title was not explicit enough for these particular children and in consequence they were unsure of what it was they were expected to do.

Research carried out in Germany required, in addition to writing 5 questions to God, that pictures of God should be drawn by the children and these were analysed along with the writing and conclusions drawn as to the conceptual development underlying the work and thought. To ask children to write letters to God, however, is to suggest to them anthropomorphic ideas of "Him", since letters are always addressed, in the normal course of events, to other people. I decided to base my research upon writing alone, which would take the form of straight descriptions of the children's ideas of God. I made this decision because, apart from speech, the written word is the most widely used form of communication. I bore in mind the problems inherent within the task given: that it is very difficult to describe God without resorting to the use of metaphorical language. Was I, then, setting an impossible task for the children? I decided this was not so since, whilst a child may be lacking knowledge of symbolism in language, most children are able to appreciate that one thing may be likened to another without actually stating that the object is, in fact, the other: I believed, that is, that it was quite within the capacity of young children to say God was like a good father, or like a very powerful wind, which could be felt although not seen.

To ask a child to draw God is a pointless task, since symbolism in art is something quite remote from a child's understanding. Children would, if asked to do so, (and I suspect the same could be true for many adults) be unlikely to draw anything for God which was not anthropomorphic in character and therefore to request such drawings would be to reinforce crude, naive ideas of this type, and maybe even, to introduce them. Since most children will make an attempt to do as they are requested they would draw something but I felt it would be unfair to judge their conceptual development on this evidence.

I decided, therefore, that my research would involve the children writing what they understood when the word "God" was mentioned. This task was carried out. Upon studying the writing which resulted, I perceived that the ideas of the children fitted into a number of clearly distinctive categories which, nonetheless, had in common overwhelming anthropomorphic understanding; the age of the child did not seem to make any difference to the concepts which had developed with one important exception: that is when tendencies towards atheism or agnosticism were expressed. Below I give my analysis of samples of the children's writing, together with their own reasons for the views expressed.

There were very few children (four per cent of the total of two hundred) whose views were represented who did not reveal crude anthropomorphic ideas of God which were, practically without exception, linked closely to a heaven which was commonly described as a "place among the clouds, in the sky". Typical comments were these:-

Heaven is in the sky and God lives there (six year old)

God is very kind. He is up in the sky. He can see everybody at once. (eight year old).

Occasionally space travel was linked to God and heaven:-

God and heaven are in space, way up above the clouds, where planets, stars, rockets and satellites shoot and little lights flash. (nine year old).

God and Jesus are in heaven. Sometimes I think they would have a halo floating above their heads. I think there are golden gates to get inside. (eleven year old).

Halos, in one view, seemed to be a type of uniform which was distributed to new arrivals in heaven:-

People say when you die it is good because you go to God in heaven and you get a halo. (eleven year old).

Frequently statements such as the following were made, which envisaged God as being a very old man:-

"I think God is a big person with a long white beard, looking down from the sky. He has a big white house there". (eleven year old).

"God is the oldest person in the world. I think God is like Santa Claus because they both have long white beards". (nine year old).

These ideas of the children reflect the language of both the Old and New Testaments, particularly the idea of God being "father": hence the idea of an ancient grandfather figure. I asked a group of ten year old children why they thought children often believed God to be an old man and I was told because of the Lord's Prayer, especially the opening line "Our Father, which art in heaven". One boy said he pictured God as the father of all the people who had ever lived and that he must, therefore, be very old: hence the beard which, for young children is taken to be a sign of old age.

Upon being asked why they thought of heaven as being in the sky, up among the clouds, there was general agreement that this was because of hymns which were sung, and one girl mentioned a few in particular, such as "Away in a Manger", which includes the line "Look down from the sky", and "Glad that I live am I", since it mentions "And see that we grow, Nearer the sky". One boy also mentioned "Morning has Broken" in this connection, since it includes the line "Sweet the rain's new fall, Sunlit from Heaven": since the rain falls down, and comes from heaven, heaven must be up! This last remark demonstrates the ability of young children to be devastatingly logical!

A group of eleven year old children told me they could clearly remember a set of books from their nursery class which showed a picture of God sitting among the clouds, and wearing a long white robe, and the picture had never left their minds although five years had passed which was nearly half of their age: the picture had evidently made a lastingly deep impression upon their minds.

It would seem that the words of hymns and prayers, and the illustrations of young children's books, as well as Christian traditions in art generally, have a profound and lasting effect upon their conceptual development, and in fact, in view of the evidence, it would seem that very little else is experienced of a religious nature that can help restore, or suggest, a balance to the anthropomorphisms which result.

In this connection, the following comment about the nature of God shows an obvious connection with the frequently used hymn "He's Got the Whole World in his Hands":-

"I think God holds the whole world in his whole hands".  
(nine year old).

During an assembly which took place when I was conducting these enquiries with the children, the children were told the story of Jonah being swallowed by the whale, and on our return to the classroom, a boy told me that he had been thinking of God as a person during the story "because he had a voice". He also told me that he had been thinking of heaven, and felt that "I used to think heaven was in the clouds because I could not see it, or get near to it from earth". The fact that the child volunteered this information, whilst being helpful to me, does demonstrate that young children are quite capable of thinking about their own ideas if encouraged to do so.

The story of the Creation is another example of the power of the Old Testament language in the concept-forming process of young children. A boy of ten years of age told me he always thought of God as a person because he said "Let there be light".

The remarks concerning halos prompted me to ask why the children thought of people in heaven always wearing halos, and I was informed this was because "Jesus and the angels always wear them in pictures of the Bible stories".

Sometimes God was envisaged in terms of heroes and saints about whom the children had heard stories:-

God lives in heaven, in the sky, and I think he looks like St. George, wearing shining armour. (eleven year old).

I asked a group of children who did not take part in the investigation why they thought children often thought of heaven as being up in the clouds, and one child told me her grandmother had once told her that God was in the clouds, and when it snowed, he was throwing pieces of cloud down to earth. Others in the group were familiar with this idea, and some had been told this, and similar stories, by older children as well as by adults.

Not only was heaven, in the minds of the children, positioned in the sky as a place for God, but it was seen as a place for the dead, providing they had been "good" whilst living upon earth and it is significant that the abode of the devil was understood to be the place where "bad" people lived after death by way of a punishment:-

Heaven is a place where people meet God when they die and go up, but if they are naughty, they won't and they go down. (ten year old).

When you die you go up to heaven but if you are wicked you go down to the devil. (ten year old).

Occasionally the fairness of this arrangement was questioned:-

If you are naughty you won't go to heaven; you will have to stay dead but I don't think its fair but its their fault. (seven year old).

This distinction between heaven, the place of reward, where all was beautiful, "among the clouds, with angels, pearl gates and harps", is

a strong contrast with the gloomy depths of where you reach when you go down:-

My grandma told me if you do a bad crime you go down into the earth when you die and suffer for ever with fire and the devil, and its very hot. (ten year old).

This description is a popular rendering of the parable of "Dives and Lazarus" (Luke 16, vv 19/29), from which the doctrines of judgement and purgatory derive. A child wrote:-

When you get to heaven the gates are opened by St. Peter. If you have been very bad he tells God and God sends you down, down into the earth to the devil but if you are good he lets you stay in. That is what my mam told me.  
(ten year old).

This popular idea of heaven as described by the children reflects many of the images described in the Book of Revelation: angels, trumpets, clouds: all are featured. One is led to believe that these ideas of heaven and hell probably embody elements of popular piety which have been handed down from one generation to another, perhaps for centuries; an investigation into this could be an important area for research into popular religious belief, but its relevance to this particular research lies in how it affects the children's thought and concepts, rather than its origins.

The following statement probably gives away what is the truth for many who base their belief upon anthropomorphisms:-

I am frightened not to believe in God because if there is no such thing I won't see my grandma again. She died last year. (ten year old).

On occasions it is apparent that the children see their images of God and heaven together with ideas created by fairy tales:-

Is heaven real? Is it a place of rest? I'm not sure. I'm not sure either that there are angels, fairies or goblins. (eleven year old).

Acceptance that life here on earth is "the only thing" seems to have been reached on the basis of crude concepts of God by this eleven year old:-

There is nowhere in the clouds such as heaven. If you get burned when you die you are just cinder. If you get buried you just rot away and only your bones are left. (eleven year old).

Dr. Brenda G. Watson quotes the following, which appeared in an editorial:-

It is from de-theologised adults that young children pick up such cliches ... that God is male, is old, looks after us, makes flowers grow, and that we go to Jesus when we die ... what we find in this repertoire of childlike religiosity is little intrinsic to childhood, but a great deal which indicates

the puerilization of adult religious life". 6.

There seems to be much evidence that influences from both parents and grandparents play their part in the formation of simplistic, naive concepts of God, but their part is not by any means the whole picture. There emerges further evidence that these images are reinforced, if not actually introduced, both by the hymns and prayers which are introduced to the children in school and perhaps elsewhere, and also by the way in which Biblical material is handled both in assemblies and the classroom. The children demonstrated no skill or knowledge of how to handle symbolic writing and ideas, presenting only literal interpretations of figurative writing. There was no evidence that they had been introduced to any other analogy of God than father, and this was, probably, the main reason for the concept of God as an old man in the skies appearing.

Writing in 1961, Harold Loukes expressed the opinion that "here is a vision of God as we should expect it to be expressed by a child under the influence of Old Testament language and Christian art". 7

However, for the child living in an age where he has seen pictures of men walking on the moon, and who has experienced the miracles of the micro-chip, are such concepts of God and heaven adequate?

Dr. Brenda G. Watson does not think they are; she writes:

I recently heard a group of nine year olds talk with some sophistication about rockets and computers and yet they were quite content to draw crude pictures of God as an old man up in the skies. No wonder such absurd notions promote the belief that religion has been replaced by science. How can we expect children or adults to think straight about religion on the basis of such ignorance? . 8

Harold Loukes was optimistic that early, crude ideas of God would fall away when children reached adolescence, with the following results:-

We should hope the adolescent would find it inadequate; that the believers would realize that there is more to be said; that the unbelievers would realize that there is something other than this that they have chosen to reject. 9

How far have these hopes been realized? The following examples are, perhaps, representative of how the thoughts of the children are turning by the time they are ready to leave the primary school for the comprehensive:-

When you die you are supposed to go to God in heaven in the clouds after you are buried and your spirit goes to heaven, but I don't believe it. (eleven year old).

Reasoning is based entirely upon anthropomorphic concepts, and the

following examples of writing point to the same conclusion:-

'When you die, how do people know you go to heaven?  
Has anybody died and come back and told us? I think  
that when you die you just rot away'. (eleven year old).

Scorn at religious belief can sometimes be detected:-

'I don't think heaven is true. I don't think people go  
there when they die. Someone should go to heaven and  
come back so everyone could believe it, but no-one ever  
does, do they?'. (eleven year old).

'I don't believe in God because if he was real he would  
make things happen and make people like me who don't  
believe in him do so'. (eleven year old).

Proof, of a material kind, is demanded by the children if they are to  
believe in the existence of God:-

'I don't believe in God. People say he speaks, but I've  
never heard him'. (eleven year old).

The foregoing discussion and analysis raises certain fundamental  
issues which are central to how religious education requires to be  
handled in schools.

The children's concepts were based upon crude, naive, understandings  
of what religion was about, and yet recent research shows that very  
young children are capable of thinking in abstract form and are able  
to distinguish between literal and non-literal statements.

I felt it was now necessary to examine in detail exactly what  
experiences were actually instrumental in developing the children's  
thought, and in addition it was necessary to discover and to distinguish  
between different types of experiences of the children, and to assess  
how they could be used as a basis from which to develop deeper thought  
concerning the nature of God and the manner in which religious people  
communicate their interpretations of life.

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## Chapter Four.

### The Varieties of Experience.

In order to understand the educational problems underlying the concepts of the children it is necessary to consider not just the concepts themselves, or even the experiences underlying their development: it is also necessary to examine, and distinguish between, the types of experiences which they happen to be. In this connection I should distinguish between one type of experience which I shall call "external", and the other which I shall call "internal", and evaluate them both for the purposes of religious education.

I should point to an "external" experience as one which is based upon information which has been passed on to the child by someone else. The experience is then assimilated and interpreted by him/her in order to make sense of the subject which is being dealt with. Thus a concept is formed, but only upon understanding of a secondhand experience, rather than upon something which has been experienced first-hand. In the case of God, then, the child sees in his/her mind a physical figure which is male and old, perhaps like a grandfather figure because the analogy to which he/she has been introduced, perhaps by saying the Lord's Prayer, is "father". This idea will be understood literally unless the child's thoughts are developed towards considering that what the analogy is really trying to convey is that God is like a good father, and through a teaching programme designed specifically to deal with this, is helped to explore ways in which God can be likened to a father, based upon their experiences. Other analogies may then be introduced to balance "father", in order to build up more adequate concepts by which to begin to understand what is meant by "God".

The practice of "drawing from" the child his/her own experiences is what I mean by using "internal experiences". The experiences are part of the child's interaction with the environment and part of his/her own psyche, rather than ideas imposed upon the mind which are the interpretations of the experiences of others, but remote from his/her own. If it is upon personal experience that work is based, a child is more likely to enjoy success.

It was for this reason that the children were able to complete the task of hiding dolls behind walls successfully (see page 4) in the research of Martin Hughes: they were accustomed to playing "hiding" games themselves, and because the task made "human sense" to them, they were able to understand what they were to do. What was important

to the child's performance was not his/her age, but rather the experience encountered, and the use which was made of it. The skill of learning to reflect upon experience in order to attempt to make sense of what has taken place internally (that is, to interpret), is a crucial element of religious education.

However, whilst the use of experiences and reflections of the children is vital for valuable learning to take place, experiences must be developed if there is to be development in thought, and therefore the understanding of the child:-

"The teacher is also responsible for providing experience so that necessary learning can grow from it",

1

writes Joan Dean. In the words of Mary Warnock, children need to learn how to

"Strain after things which lie beyond the boundaries of experience"

2

but the starting point for effective learning must be with the experiences of the children themselves.

Barbara Watson, when writing about the importance of imagination to human intellectual development, mentioned how

"A person's imagination may very easily be starved and crippled with sad consequences for the individual .

3

Einstein wrote:-

"Imagination is more important than knowledge"

4

and this is an impressive comment, coming as it does from one of the greatest scientists of all time.

Why is imagination so important to religious education? Barbara Watson writes:-

"The listener may reflect within himself/herself upon that which transcends the natural world, and awakens awareness of beauty, Truth, Goodness and that which is holy .

5

When analysing the comments of the children, it was obvious that, in an effort to answer queries coming from them, adults tend to offer "answers on a plate", rather than helping them to think further about their own questions. This point is exemplified in a piece of writing a nine year old child recently gave me:-

"When I was little, my rabbit died and I said to my mam 'where will the rabbit go' and she said 'Up in the sky to God' .

I asked the child what happened next. She had asked how it would get there, and had been told to go into the garden to play. The conversation then stopped, and in all probability the child's thought would

not progress much further; the opportunity had been lost for helping her forward in her thinking imaginatively.

When discussing the function of religious education, Brenda Lealman described it as follows:-

Mystery is at the heart of religion. Or rather, religion is our response to, our articulation and interpretation of mystery. The underlying purpose of religious education is to provoke awareness of this mystery and to make it possible for young children to be educated in religion, to learn within religious transcendence; to perceive ordinary life in a new way, to see the strange within the familiar. 6

In order to help children deepen their thought about religion, it is necessary to understand oneself the type of thought with which the mind of the child is preoccupied, and to understand further how these thoughts are assimilated within the conscious and unconscious psyche. Exploration of the human psyche comprised much of the writing of Dr. Carl Justav Jung (1875-1961), working as a clinical psychiatrist in Switzerland. The writings of Jung are important to this study in so far as they draw attention to the possible connections between personality development and the inherited tendencies which seem to have significant influence upon it. Within recent years it has been written:-

For whatever reasons, the fact is that we are now witnessing the rapid growth of a new generation whose interest in non-normal states of consciousness is leading to a re-discovery of Jung, to a restoration of his theoretical fortunes, and to a sympathy with his concept of the collective unconscious. 7

In order to understand the thought processes of young children, I have examined to what extent their ideas and thoughts may be related to Jung's psychology and illuminated by it. A study of Jung points towards two important types of experience, which apparently influence human emotional and personality development. These two areas are experiences of the collective unconscious and the personal conscious and unconscious. Concerning these theories of Jung, and similar theories which have been based upon them, the following directs attention to their importance in any attempts to penetrate human thought patterns, and suggests the theories merit further study and refinement:-

... the more general impression conveyed (to me at least) is that the evidence available is suggestive, and that it certainly encourages the further examination and refinement of hypotheses which link generalized human qualities with evolution and heredity. 8

In this and the succeeding chapter, I shall be examining Jung's theory of the personal unconscious, and my examination of the idea of the collective experience comprises the final chapters of this thesis.

Jung, writing in 1951, defined one area of human consciousness as the "shadow". As a practising psychiatrist he was able to come to his conclusions after a life-time's observations of patients suffering mental health disorders. He maintained that every human being possesses a "shadow" to some extent or another, and that analysis and understanding of it is an important feature of progressing towards a state of maturity. Failure to recognise the workings of the shadow in the psyche is a failure to understand one's self, and this in turn is a failure to progress towards Stage Five in the search for faith (see figure one).

The personal shadow, Jung wrote, consists of elements of the personal experiences which have been collected during the person's lifetime and which are distinctive from the collective unconscious. The personal shadow's development may be illustrated as follows.

Recently a child told me that:

Everyone calls me a cissy, because I like music. I just ignore them'.

The child had been exposed to ridicule because he is demonstrating an interest which is not, generally speaking, common among other boys. At his own admission, perhaps as the result of adult advice, he is ignoring the ridicule, but in reality it will be relegated to the unconscious with at least two possible effects. The child could begin to seek for "cissies" among other children in order to ridicule them, thereby projecting his shadow towards others, or with the support of both teachers and parents, as well as other adults, helped to understand the idea of a "cissy" being equated with enjoyment of music is quite groundless. The experience may then be understood more thoroughly: those who differ in aptitude and interest from the majority are likely to be held in suspicion and ridiculed by at least a few.

Commenting upon the writing of Jung, Jolande Jacobi wrote:-

The development of the shadow runs parallel to that of the ego; qualities which the ego does not need, or cannot make use of, are set aside or repressed, and thus they play little or no part in the conscious life of the individual. Accordingly, a child has no real shadow.

9

It is, however, possible to perceive the beginnings of "personal shadow" formation in the minds of young children, and I believe it to be equally possible to help children use their experience as a means of self-discovery: that is, to help them begin to understand something of how their thinking is developing.

Jacobi was probably correct in thinking that a child "has no real shadow as such", but the question remains "If not, what does the child

have which causes certain anxieties and perplexities, which manifest themselves in certain behavioural patterns?" Jacobf's statement ought not to be taken to imply also that there are no signs whatsoever of a shadow growing within the child's psyche. The work of Margaret Donaldson shows how a child's understanding of the world is based upon experience, of "making human sense" of experiences, and developing concepts as a result. She also mentions Jung as writing:-

'School is, in fact, a means of strengthening in a purposeful way the integration of consciousness. This development of consciousness, and an understanding of its integration, was what they (the children) need more than anything else'.

10

She enlikens these views to those of Vygotsky, who regarded "consciousness and deliberate mastery" as "the principal contributions of the school years".

11

I now wished to discover how the children were thinking about their experiences, and to encourage them to confide them within me, for two reasons. Firstly, I wished to encourage the children to speak about their anxieties in an effort to help them think further about them and to ultimately see them in a much broader context than their personal circumstances could afford; secondly, I wished to examine their confidences in order to assess whether there was anything within them which could afford a base from which to approach a study of symbolism which could, in turn, be related to some study of a religious nature, involving the type of Biblical material used by Dr. Goldman in his researches, in order to make my own assessment of how far children are able to engage in work associated with Biblical material.

By far the most common area of concern was that which related to the child's relationship with his/her parents, and also over the parental relationship itself:

I sometimes wonder what would happen to me if my mam and dad were killed. I would probably fly over to Belfast and live with Aunt Polly. I would go to school where I went to before'.

The security of the child is threatened if, for any reason, a break between him/herself and the parents seems likely, and the break itself seems to be purely imaginative. Absence from a parent, or parents, causes anxiety for the child who seems to anticipate disaster, and his/her security seems to be thereby threatened. A boy described his thoughts when he went to a Cub Camp recently:-

'I was worried when I went away to the Cub Camp. I had left my mam and I felt worried in case something happened to her when I was away, but when I came home she was alright .

This was similar to another boy's thoughts, who wrote:-

'I worry when I go away from home, even to school, in case something is going to happen to my mam and dad'.

However, it is not the length of time the absence lasts which is important. Even a short absence from a parent which has not been anticipated earlier seems to provoke the possibility of disaster having occurred in the child's mind:-

'I got worried once when my mam had gone to the butcher's. My dad was at the club to check his cards, and she did not come back for an hour. She had been delayed because of one of her friends. I worry about my family all the time'.

Another child describes a similar experience:-

'I worry when my mam is late from work and the front and back doors are locked. I think that something has happened to her. Sometimes she is ten minutes late and my brother and I get very, very worried'.

This child described his thoughts when his mother was out at work:-

'She goes out to work and she does not come back home. She sometimes stays at work all night and I think something is going to happen to her, like somebody is going to murder her, or take my mother away from me'.

Sometimes anxiety is expressed about the father too:-

'I worry about my dad coming in late from work. I wonder where he is, and what has happened to him'.

'When my dad went away for a week to see someone about work, I couldn't get to sleep. I was worried in case he got hurt'.

One child, however, made the following observation:-

'I worry about my mam and dad for no reason at all'.

This child is beginning to see that fears about the safety of the family are unjustified, but why are such fears so common in the minds of young children? It could well be that the fears of parents concerning the safety of their children become the fears of the children themselves concerning the safety of their parents; that is, the "shadow" becomes projected, or reflected, upon the parents, who become a source of concern to their offspring without the fears of the children themselves being justified at all. This question, however, is only relevant to this particular study in so far as consideration of the stresses and anxieties it reveals can be used as the basis for religious education.

As the last child quoted is beginning to understand, the stress which these children create for themselves is without foundation, and produces unpleasant effects and feelings. These are important emotional experiences which seem to be intrinsic to childhood and which are examples of evil. Sometimes, however, this 'evil' is not merely a product of the child's imagination. Upsets between parents seem to cause misery for children, but they are unlikely, in normal circumstances, to admit to their stress and anxiety.

In numberless instances the children referred to occasions when they witnessed arguments and fights between their parents, which they understood to be threats to the stability of their home lives:-

"I am troubled when my mam and dad have an argument. They send me to my bedroom and I cover my head with the sheet. I can hear them shouting at each other. I am troubled because they might break up and I would have to make up my mind who to go with. I love them both very much".

A child describes here how she was, in fact, faced with this decision, and after writing about it she approached me in order to affirm that what she had written was the truth:-

What worried me was one day after Christmas my mam and dad had a fight. My mam went up stairs to pack her bags. She asked who wanted to go with her. Emma went and I stayed, but mam did not go. She just stayed in the passage. Mam and Emma stayed in the passage because they had nowhere to go. I have been scared ever since that they might leave each other.

Although the cause of the anxiety in these latter cases is quarrelling, in contrast to the fear of death as illustrated in the first examples, the result upon the mind of the child is similar: a shadow is gradually forming which will become repressed into the unconscious, and later may become projected upon others, perhaps much later on in life. I have mentioned the possibility that the fears of the children may be parental fears which have become projected, and if this is so, a circle is created of stress and anxiety from which it becomes increasingly difficult to break.

Jung wrote:-

"Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it becomes ... If it is repressed and isolated from consciousness 12. it never gets corrected and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness. At all events it forms an unconscious snag, blocking the most well-meant attempts."

Why do children usually attempt to conceal their anxieties from the outside world, even though their fears are shared by so many

others? I suspect that children often feel ashamed of their anxieties, and too embarrassed to discuss with their parents any questions relating to anything which they see as threats to their home life. Recently, a child complained to me that her friends had been taunting her because she had no father. Fear of ridicule is also illustrated in the following which was confided within me.

'When my dad was late from work I thought he had been in an accident. I don't like telling people these things because they might laugh. I want to tell people when I worry but I know they might tell everybody'.

Another child perceived the common nature of the problem:-

'I think everyone gets worried but doesn't like to say'. Because they "do not like to say" the problem is usually not shared, and therefore not solved, and consequently becomes driven into the unconscious to form a "Jungian" shadow.

Other experiences of young children which could form the basis for shadow formation later in life have already been referred to, and among them could be added bewilderment and sorrow in the face of death, both of humans and animals, and also their own deaths, or their anticipation of this:-

'What happens when you die? Is there life after death, and if there is, what is it like?'

They are also aware of the problem of human suffering in the world:-

'What causes war? Is it arguments? Why do people have to get killed? You would think war was a thing of the past. Some people think that getting into gangs is like war. I wonder if there will be a World War III?'

Insincerity was referred to:-

'Why do grown-ups say do not tell lies when they tell them themselves?'

The following statement, like the others from a ten year old child, goes some way towards suggesting a more exciting dimension of life is yearned for than that of the everyday:-

'Sometimes I wonder why magical things can't happen, instead of doing the same thing every day .

Most of the comments of the children refer to unpleasant experiences, and I wished to teach them how to appreciate the symbols of light and darkness which frequently are used in religious communications of one sort and another. These symbols were discussed with the children, and one child suggested "darkness" as an appropriate symbol for the floods in Bangladesh which had recently featured on television. Another child suggested "Darkness" as a symbol for famine too, which had at

that time also appeared on television, and the children had recently been involved in a fund-raising effort for refugees in Sudan. The discussion led to the children writing symbolically about their ideas of good and evil, and some examples of their work is given below. I have made mention of the factors which influenced individual children in responding as they did.

This child showed she was able to equate human suffering with the idea of darkness. She wrote:-

"Some people live in darkness because of where they live. Windows are always getting broken and people use bad language. Old people live in darkness because nobody visits them. I think darkness is the same as evil, because when it is dark you cannot see clearly".

This particular child lived in a violent neighbourhood which suffered constantly from vandalism and burglary. She told me that her neighbour's windows had been broken during the night before she wrote the above.

The child had, in fact, made moral judgements concerning the facts which she had observed herself and she was able to write symbolically about them.

A number of children admitted to being afraid of the darkness, when their imaginations began to make them think of dangers. This led these children to see darkness in terms of evil, and light as being a symbol of good. Television seems to have a powerful effect upon their imaginations and two children admitted to watching horror-movies before going to bed:-

"I think darkness is evil because it is like when you are asleep and you think someone is in your room just when you wake. You turn the light on and it has gone".

"Darkness makes me feel afraid, like when you go into a dark place without the light on, and you are scared".

"Darkness is like not understanding. Understanding is like light, when you are not afraid. Light could stand for peace and darkness could stand for war and fighting. Light could mean hope and darkness giving up".

The latter child demonstrated her ability to see such facts as lack of understanding as being like darkness, and related war, fighting and "giving up" as negatives, which had in common the metaphor of darkness.

In some instances the children demonstrated their ability to understand death and suffering in terms of darkness:-

"Darkness is like when a cat is killed or when people are horrible to each other. Darkness is when someone dies in your family and everyone is sad".

Ability was also shown to understand light as representing something positive, which was described in terms of their own experiences:-

Light is after the night and it is having friends and being happy".

This comment came from the boy who had been accused of being a "Cissy" because of his love of music some weeks earlier. By this time he had made friends with other children, and could describe his experience in terms of light.

"Light is like when you get your work right and you know what to put."

From early school days this girl had worried about her performance at school, especially about spelling tests: she is using her experience to demonstrate her understanding of symbols.

"Light is like winning a football match, or it is like it being your birthday or Christmas .

Quite simply, the last piece of writing recognises pleasant occurrences as being like light. All of the children made use of their own experiences for their writing, with success.

At this stage, I showed the children a print of the painting by Holman Hunt, "The Light of the World". The figure was immediately recognised as being Jesus, "because of the crown of thorns and the long clothes". I told the children the title of the painting, and asked them to write why they thought the painting was called that. The children showed great interest in the door without a handle and the weeds, and were very curious as to what it was about. The following are examples of their comments:-

"Darkness is like evil, and the devil, and God is like light. Light is like all good things .

"Light stands for God in the picture. Light is a sign of good. If there was no light there would be complete darkness .

"Light is like Jesus and God, and light is happiness, joy, gladness and excitement".

Confusion is evident as to who is God and who is Jesus, but the children were able to associate both with light. We then studied the first few verses from St. John's Gospel, and the children were able to see that 'light' was being used as a symbol for both God and Jesus. During discussion, one boy likened God to a lighthouse (there is a lighthouse near to school) because, he said,

"Lighthouses can save people's lives when they are at sea. A lighthouse guides them to shore .

The above indicates that the children were ready to be led forward in their thinking about God, which had moved forward from the crude

anthropomorphic concepts which had been revealed earlier.

The understanding demonstrated by the children of their ability to perceive of God in terms of light opened up the opportunity of introducing them to further religious writings which made use of these and similar analogies, writings indeed of abstract, theological content. The children were ready to be introduced to them not because they had reached a certain biological age which allowed the necessary intellectual capacity, but because they had been taught to understand the use of symbols by the use of their own experiences and thought concerning them. I now wished to reinforce and develop their understanding of the use of symbolic writing so that deeper, more serious thought about religion could be encouraged later.



Chapter Five.

The Application of Symbols Derived from Personal Experience  
to Biblical Material.

Because the children had been taught, by the use of their own experiences of life and their thoughts concerning them, to understand good and evil in terms of darkness and light, I now wished to discover whether they were able to transfer their skills to Biblical material. Accordingly, we discussed the story of Christ's Temptations when most of the children made statements to the effect that "the devil" was a sign of darkness, that is evil, whilst Jesus' denial of the devil was a sign of "good". Wondering how the children would display their skills pictorially, I suggested to a group that they might like to draw a picture of the story, and that they could discuss in their group how this could be done. I was approached by a few of the children who said they could not do the picture, because

"You cannot draw the devil".

When I asked them why they found this impossible, after some thought a child pointed out that it was because "evil" is a power, and the devil was just a power, and you cannot draw power.

I asked if they could think of any ways of showing this "power" which was "attacking Jesus", and the following illustrations resulted:-

Figure 2. A group of children decided to use a 'key' of colour coding. (This had recently been taught in mapping during a geography lesson). As shown, the colour coding covered such items as a red cloud for the devil, white clouds for God, and so on.

Figure 3. The use of a "thought-bubble" indicated the 'power' of evil which was circulating in the mind of Jesus - a device known to the children from their reading of comics.

Figure 4. Here the children decided to use a combination of the two ideas and coloured the 'thoughts' of Jesus as indicative of either 'good', i.e. the power of God, or 'evil', i.e. the power of the devil. Additional colour coding indicated the activity of the mind (thinking).

This activity is important to the development of the children's understanding of religious ideas and their communication in the following ways. Firstly, the activity was a development of their own experience of good and evil; secondly, both class and group discussion were necessary to solve the problem; the result was a co-operative effort which demanded thought on the part of the children; thirdly, the problem of how to communicate a difficult idea was posed which the children were able to recognise and go some way towards solving.

Figure 2.

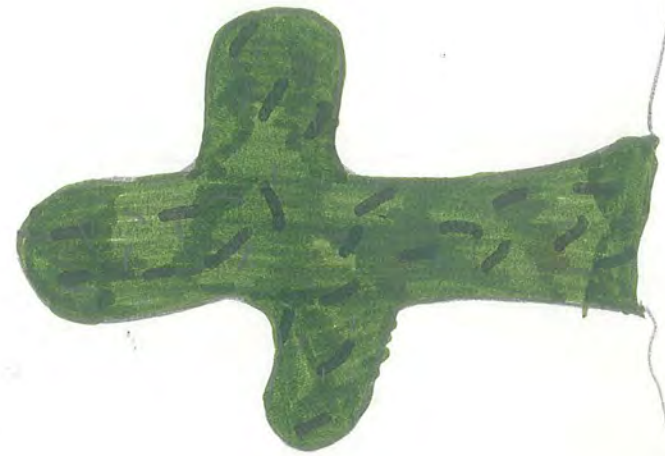


Figure Two.  
The Temptations  
of Christ.

Figure 3: The Temptations of Christ.



Figure 4.



evil



thinking

yellow



GOD

Figure 4. The Temptations of Christ.

This particular lesson concluded with a class discussion about how we are all faced with decisions from time to time, and how difficult it can be to describe the thoughts which enter into our heads. The children had been faced with the problem of how to communicate abstract ideas and had been able to use their skills, and understanding of good and evil, to present solutions to the problem.

The children also demonstrated their ability to transfer their understanding to material other than that which related to their direct experience: they were able to perceive of Jesus's dilemma from his point of view by drawing upon their skills and knowledge of symbolism: in fact they were able to decentre, as were the children who featured in the experiment of Martin Hughes (see page 5), and this because they were able to understand the task, based as it was upon both their own experience and skills.

As a development of what the children had learnt about the use of pictorial representations and the problems associated with them, I introduced them to the story of the "Last Supper". We read the Biblical text and studied various pictures of the event, both those in the children's text books and also in famous paintings, such as Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper'. I told the children of the problem faced by artists of this subject, who are unable to use words to show who is Jesus, and who is Judas.

During the discussion a child mentioned the fact that Jesus was nearly always given a halo in pictures she had seen, and the children who had also noticed this asked what the halo was for: did Jesus really have one? I asked what the halo looked like, and the child said 'a circle of light'.

The literal interpretation given by children to halos has been mentioned earlier (see page 15) and upon questioning the children as to where they had seen halos on previous occasions, I was told 'On Christmas cards. Angels have them, and so do Mary and Jesus'.

Referring again to the fact that the halo seemed to be a circle of light, and that it was usually shown around Mary, Jesus, and angels, I asked the children if they could think of anything which the halo might stand for. A large number of children stated that as it was light, it must stand for good people. We were able to conclude that the use of halos was the artist's way of helping us understand which people in a picture were 'good'.

Figure 5.

There is black and red for Judas. Jesus has a yellow light around his head. Red and black stand for evil, and the light around Jesus stands for good, or God's power.

(Adelle, 10).



Figure 6.

In my drawing I showed Jesus with a halo. I showed Judas wearing black and facing away from Jesus. Everyone else is at the table eating.

(Michael, 10).

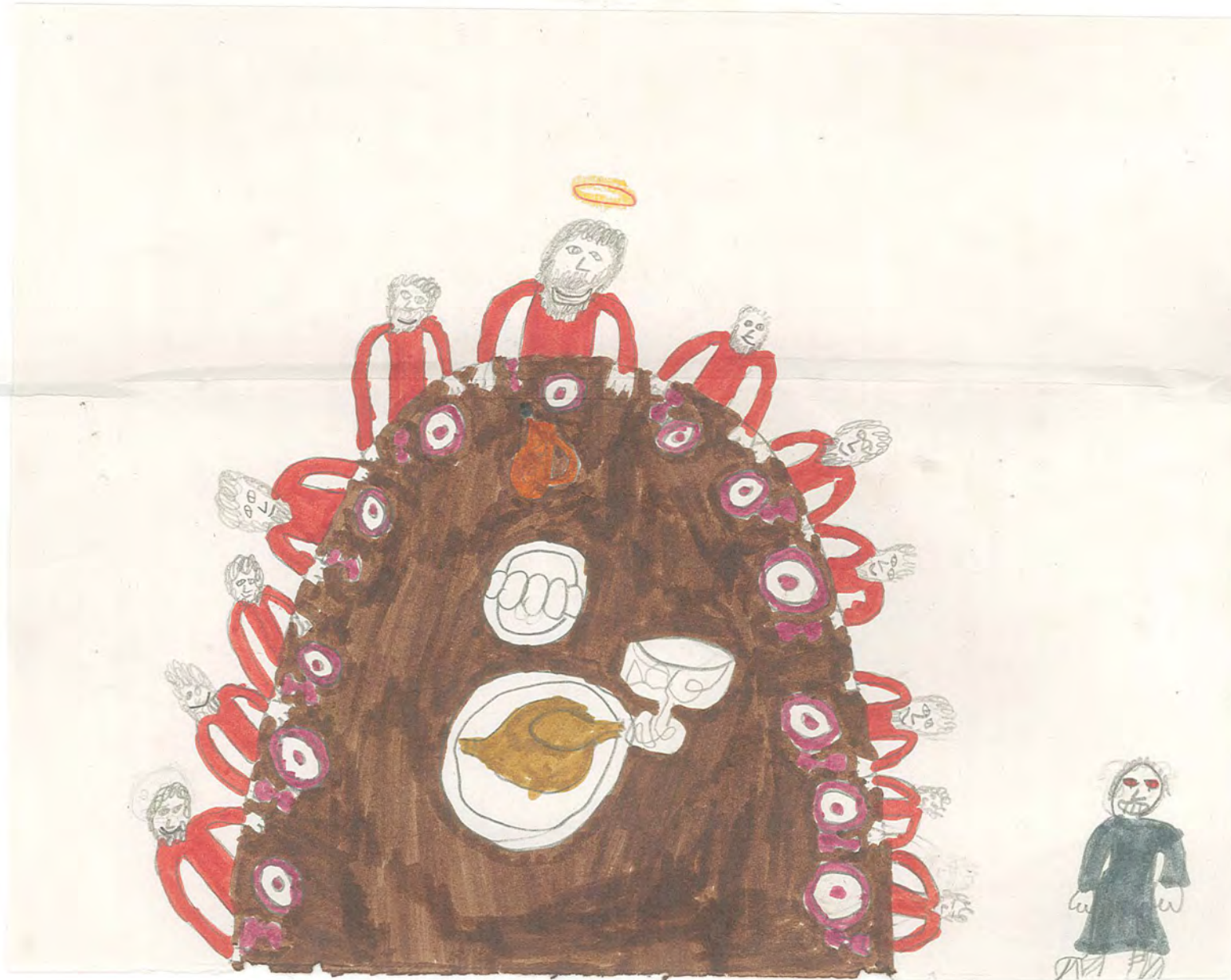


Figure 7.

My picture shows the Last Supper and Jesus is the one with the halo and Judas is the one with a cloud over his head. All the rest are Jesus's friends.

(Paul, 10).



The children then worked in groups and were asked to produce a picture of their own of the Last Supper, using no words, so that I could tell who some of the people in the picture were. I wished to see if the children could use any of the ideas we had discussed in their own work, and also if they were able to transfer the content of the previous lesson concerning Christ's Temptations to this one. The results can be seen in Figures Five, Six, and Seven, and the children's own comments are shown on each picture.

Again, by the use of abstract ideas, namely good and evil, the children were helped to understand what point artists of religious subjects try to communicate, and why the use of symbols is helpful to them and how we need to understand them in order to understand what the painting is really showing us.

The third lesson which was used in this connection concerned a study of the First Day of Pentecost (Whitsuntide), Acts, Chapter 2. I selected this material because it had connections with the earlier observation of the child who equated light with understanding, and darkness with 'not understanding'. (see page 30).

The class worked in groups, using workcards which included the text of Acts, Chapter 2, v. 1/4, and various questions which were intended to cause the children to read the material and discuss it thoroughly among themselves. I read the account to the class as an aid to their reading since the syntax of the passage was unfamiliar to them, and they then worked upon the material presented to them, recording their ideas. The questions and results were as follows.

- Question 1. Did the disciples, or did they not, hear a wind blowing?  
No - 2 groups. Yes - 6 groups.
- Question 2. What, if anything, filled the room?  
Wind - 4 groups; Fire, 4 groups.
- Question 3. Did anything touch the disciples? What are we told?  
All eight groups answered that fire definitely touched, and rested upon, the disciples.
- Question 4. Did anything seem to fill the disciples? What are we told?  
Seven groups - The Holy Spirit; One group - Fire.
- Question 5. Can you think of another name for the Holy Spirit?  
3 groups - God's power; 3 groups - God's spirit; 2 groups - could not give an answer.

I asked a few children to read the account slowly to the class, bit by bit, and one child commented that the Bible actually said "something which looked like tongues of fire" spread out, and that "there was a noise from the sky "which sounded like a strong wind blowing" which

filled the house. A boy suggested the disciples found it hard to explain what had happened, and had to say what it was like, rather than what it was which actually took place.

A few children wished to draw pictures about the story. They approached me shortly afterwards, saying they did not know how to put feelings into a picture. I pointed out this was the problem faced by the writer of the story we had been reading. One child thought one way would be to make the people look amazed, or surprised: that is expressions could be a symbol of what was being experienced 'inside' the disciples (figure eight).

One boy told his group how he felt angry when his younger brother broke a toy:

I was burning, kind of red hot deep inside .

The children thought this might have been something like what the disciples felt only it was, in their case, brought about by amazement and fear.

The children were able to grasp the point being taught: how some feelings we experience, such as feelings of anger, fear, good feelings and evil feelings, cannot be described in terms of straight description: 'ideas in words' have to be used, or symbols, and we have to learn how to distinguish between 'picture language' and straight description, and also how to understand symbols in religious pictures.

Having introduced the children to the idea of 'pictorial symbols', or iconography, I then wished to investigate how far they were able to use their skills to understand Biblical material with which they had already met, and which had caused confusion. I wished to help them look at the material in a new way. Accordingly, in the light of the work done with them about the problem of good and evil, I decided to use "The Flood" story. This was compared with the account of the Baptism of Jesus, and the children were asked to comment upon the following questions:-

1. Can you find any things mentioned in "The Flood" and in "The Baptism" which are the same?  
(All the children mentioned water and a dove).
2. Both stories are about two things. Which two things?  
(Twenty-five children from twenty seven mentioned good and evil, or darkness and light).
3. What do you think the stories might be trying to tell us?  
(Twenty-five children mentioned the stories tell us good wins, and is stronger than evil. Two children stated that both life, and Jesus, survived the water).

Figure 8. Expressions of the disciples show what they were feeling on the first Whitsunday.



4. Can you think of a way in which both stories could be said to be true?

(This question proved to be very difficult; many children wrote because floods do happen, and because babies are baptised. One child mentioned that both stories are true because evil has never blotted out good from the world altogether).

The stories did present problems for the children, but the exercise was interesting in that it showed the children were capable of recognising "non-literal" meanings within the narrative: they could perceive good and evil featured somewhere, and that good was synonymous in some way with God. The discussion which the exercise provoked helped the children understand, and reinforced the idea, that writings such as appear in the Bible need careful thought and study: you need to be a type of detective, searching for the clues or symbols and metaphors in order to work out what the stories are really about. In other words, they were beginning to understand that the Bible was not a mere book of fairy tales!

The foregoing comprises a summary of the work concerning the use of metaphors and symbols which took a full school term to complete, and shows the potential for much further development at some other time; for example the thought of the children could be led further by considering what the fire of Whitsuntide was really a symbol of; further examples of iconography in Christian art could be examined, including the use of various mediums, including glass.

To help the children understand such uses of language and its associated symbolism is to help them "integrate their consciousness" and to catch glimpses of:

myself within the perspective of transcendence; to perceive ordinary life in a new way, to see the strange within the familiar. 1

#### Reference.

1. Lealman, Brenda. The Ignorant Eye - Perception and Religious Education, p. 59. British Journal of Religious Education, 1982.

Chapter Six.Literal and Non-Literal Truth: Some Considerations.

I have shown how the children were gradually beginning to think in a new way about symbolic writing and to recognise metaphorical expression; they were able, too, to use symbols themselves in their interpretation and therefore start to catch glimpses of the communication difficulties which the writers of the Biblical accounts found themselves faced by.

It is imperative that children be led towards understanding forms of symbolic communication, but for such teaching to be pure religious education these developing skills need to be extended towards beginning to consider not just symbolism itself, but what is, in fact, being symbolised: what does "God" mean to religious people.

The children demonstrated (page 34) that they could think of God in terms of power and had shown they were also able to understand the use of symbols and why they are necessary (page 38). Once children have understood something of the difficulty of describing God and have also been introduced to the use of symbols and poetic writing generally, they will be in a position to begin to perceive that complete understanding and knowledge of God are beyond human comprehension and that what is being symbolised is a mystery, which needs many symbols in order to be expressed at all.

The following are ways in which writers have attempted to describe what may be understood to be God, or God's presence: that is an awareness of a dimension of existence over and beyond the material.

William James wrote in terms of experiences which indicated an 'otherness', or a 'definite presence' felt in human consciousness and probably, as believed by Jung, this was passed through the levels of the unconscious to the conscious psyche:-

'It is as if there were in human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call "something there", more deep and more general than any of the special and particular senses by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed'.

1

Psychology, in this view, is unable to account for religious experience which enters the human consciousness from a dimension remote from time and space. Rudolf Otto described such experiences of the

numinous as "overwhelmingly great":-

The awe or dread may indeed be so overwhelmingly great that it seems to penetrate to the very marrow, making the man's hair bristle and his limbs quake. But it may also steal upon him almost unobserved, as the greatest of agitations, a mere fleeting shadow passing across his moods .

2.

Jung defined a religious experience as follows:-

We might say, then, that the term "religion" designates the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been changed by the experience of the numinosum".

3.

Religious experience seems to provide glimpses of a reality, or truth, which transcends ordinary daily lives, and which "changes the consciousness". Otto, in analysing thoughts of Schleiermacher, describes religious experience as follows:-

Their import is the glimpse of an Eternal, in and beyond the empirical and transcending it. They are surmises or inklings of a Reality fraught with mystery and momentousness'.

4.

The key to defining religious experience seems to lie in the certainty which is expressed by the subject that he has experienced something approximating to Reality, or Truth; that is something of "cosmic consciousness".

How far may young children be led towards recognising and distinguishing between literal and non-literal truth, and how far may they be introduced to the skills required for discovering meaning?

To attempt to answer this question it was necessary, firstly, to teach the children that there are two distinct kinds of truth. This had, in fact, already been noticed by one child when she was dealing with the Flood narrative (page 45). I now wished to consolidate further the children's experience of how to deal with the idea of "truth" and further to help them understand how this truth is an aspect of what is meant by "God", since this is an aspect of the reality which comprises the "cosmic consciousness" or "otherness" which appears to be an identifiable element of the experiences of the numinous.

To make this point concerning truth, the children worked in groups, each one being directed by means of work cards upon which were printed nursery rhymes with which they had been familiar since early childhood, such as "Humpty Dumpty", and "Jack and Jill". The children's task was to discuss, firstly, whether they felt the nursery rhymes were true! If not, why. Such an idea was greeted with derisive laughter by those dealing with "Humpty Dumpty". Such responses as "Of course its not true: egg men don't exist", and "eggs cannot walk

or talk" were common. The children could, of course, clearly perceive that the story was not literally true. They then were asked to say what they thought the writer of the poem was trying to teach very young children. Again, they were able to see that the poem was a warning about the dangers of climbing on walls:

The poem is to warn you not to climb on high walls  
or trees . (ten year old)

I think people should not go up trees or onto the  
roof. That is what Humpty Dumpty is telling us  
and it is true". (ten year old)

The poem is trying to say do not go climbing on walls .

When the group was asked why children should not climb in dangerous places, they said it was because they could fall and hurt themselves; they could see that "Humpty Dumpty" was true in "another way".

The results were similar with the other groups of children. Concerning the "Kittens Who Lost Their Mittens", one child wrote:-

It is not true because kittens do not wear mittens and  
do not eat pies. It tells you that you should not leave  
your things lying around because if you lose them you will  
get upset . (nine year old)

This latter point was the truth of the rhyme, which the child was able to perceive. Another child made the observation that:

'We are happy when we find our things that have been lost ,  
which was also recognised as something else which was true about the  
rhyme.

Concerning "Jack and Jill", a boy wrote:-

I think Jack and Jill are just made-up characters and that  
the poem was probably made up for safety for little children.  
I think the poem tells us not to run down hills and it is  
true that you could break your head open if you do . (ten year  
old).

They could also perceive of some elements of truth in "Ding Dong Bell";-

The poem starts with a cat being put down a well by Little  
Tommy Green. A boy called Johnny Stout pulled the cat out  
of the well. It tells young children not to be cruel to  
animals. (ten year old).

One child was quite indignant about the subject-matter of the nursery rhyme:-

I don't believe in this poem because no-one would throw  
a cat down a well. Part of it is true because people do  
harm animals and sometimes kill them . (nine year old).

I don't believe in this poem because there are no wells  
now. The people are made up, but you should not be cruel  
to animals . (ten year old)

The lesson finished with a class discussion when it was agreed the poems

had, in all probability, been made up but with the purpose of teaching something which is true: therefore they were all true in some way. The children had used familiar material in order to bring into their consciousness what had probably been learnt unconsciously from the poems some years earlier.

In carrying out the exercise they had encountered a basic fact about truth: some principles are true for any age, even if the form of expression is mythical as in the case of Humpty Dumpty, or if objects are now obsolete, such as the well. The point had been taught, and generally understood, that it is often necessary to search very hard to find the way in which stories and poems which seem to be merely fantasy are, in fact, true and that these "truths" are true for all people, no matter in which century they are born. It is this knowledge of 'truth' which is a pointer towards understanding something about "God".

The importance of this lesson lay in the discussion which developed with the children as a result of the nursery rhyme analysis. It was established that the truth of stories does not necessarily rest upon historical accuracy of what the story or rhyme describes, but rather upon what the narrative means. The children were helped to understand that if, according to "Humpty Dumpty" you did not climb in dangerous places you would, in all probability, not fall, and that if you did not run down hills in a dangerous manner you would, again, be less likely to have an accident: this was good, and also true: upsets and accidents were like being "in darkness" whilst avoiding unpleasant happenings such as these was like "being in the light", and that being in the light was how some people understand being close to understanding something about God.

We looked back to work done concerning The Flood (page 43) and it was pointed out to the children that the story was true in a certain sense: that good was stronger than evil, and that "good" won in the end: people often understand God as being like this 'good' or what is 'true', goodness, and therefore God, lasts for ever.

Some children said that they found the idea of something which lasts for ever very difficult to understand. A boy said he sometimes looked at the stars and wondered where space ended, and mentioned that he found it impossible to understand space going on for ever. Another child mentioned how difficult it was to imagine a power strong enough to keep the earth and "all of space" moving, too.

It was pointed out that this difficulty is why it is necessary to use many different ways of expressing God, and the power of God. The idea of God being like 'true' things or 'good' things are two of these ways.

Encouraging children to think in this way is one method of helping them reflect upon experiences which they have undergone very early in their lives. Certainly the children had been familiar with the nursery rhymes used at least since their time in the nursery, if not before. In order to reflect in this way the children were having to bring into consciousness an understanding of what I believe to have been in their unconscious mind already. Whilst experience or nursery rhymes was part of their 'personal consciousness' the underlying ability and readiness to reflect upon them and see them in the light of truth and to relate this in turn to understanding something of the nature of God were elements of the collective unconscious taking form and entering full consciousness: thus the idea of God being like 'good' or 'true' things began to make sense to them.

The awe expressed by the children concerning the vastness of the universe is an example of one of the 'primordial images' used by Jung to explain the archetypes. There is a tendency towards recognising certain stimuli and responding towards it even though the cause of the stimuli taking effect is outside of direct, personal experience (see Chapter Seven).

Two skills, therefore, had been introduced to the children which have recently been recommended as being intrinsic to religious education:-

Firstly pupils must recognise the existence of a spiritual dimension in human experience and secondly they (should) have been given some information about, and provided with some skill in approaching, various modes of religious thinking . 5.

I now wished to help the children approach Biblical narratives in this way: that is to search further than the surface of the story in order that deeper meaning and significances of the material could be discovered.

One Biblical narrative with which the children were all familiar, and that from infancy, was the Nativity story. I wished to help them further in their understanding of God by relating their concepts of the idea to their thoughts about the vastness of the universe, about which we had recently completed a detailed scientific study, and I also wished to introduce them to the idea of the incarnation.

The familiarity which the children demonstrated concerning the

Nativity narrative appeared to have been overwhelmingly influenced by their experiences of Nativity plays in their infant classes at school. A number of children remembered having played one part or another in their early life and could describe the costumes they had worn in detail, as well as parts of the story, although with inaccuracies concerning place-names: Nazareth was frequently confused with Bethlehem and Jerusalem. It had been four years since these plays had taken place. Other influential factors were pictures of the stable which appeared annually on Christmas cards, together with the words of such familiar carols as "Away in a Manger".

The children's comments made it obvious that they looked upon the story of the shepherds as being literally true. When one child mentioned

'Can angels exist now?'

I reminded them about the earlier work we had done about halos (The Last Supper, p. 38) and the problem of how to describe good and evil; we looked back at some of the pictures they had produced then (Figures 5, 6, 7). A boy announced that he thought angels were probably signs that God had sent a message to "certain people", in this case the shepherds.

I told the children that Christian people believe that God actually came to earth at Christmas time, and that they call God "as a human" Jesus Christ, and that is why the birth of Jesus is so important.

This class discussion was followed by viewing the slides which form part of the Farmington Institute's "Nativity" work scheme. The slides begin with a frame showing the birth of a galaxy and continue to explore the views of various astronauts of the earth from space, before making the point that at Christmas Christians remember what they call the Incarnation.

Also included are slides which show the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the traditional site of the manger. We discussed each slide in detail, and I made the point that Christians believe it was to this particular spot, out of the vastness of the universe, that God came at Christmas in the body of Jesus Christ.

This was obviously a new idea to the children. One child asked:

'Does that mean God died when Jesus died on the cross?  
(nine year old)

and he was answered:

"No, of course not stupid. He came alive again, didn't he?  
You cannot kill power. (ten year old).

I told the children that this is the meaning of the Christmas story as a whole, and we planned later to investigate the story of the shepherds in order to discover what that story might mean.

The children, during a later lesson, were given copies of the shepherds' story (St. Luke, Ch. 2, vv. 8/20) and I told them a few things about shepherds of that time: that they were unable to go to the Jewish synagogue services regularly (after having explained about Jews and their religion), and that as they lived outside a great deal of the time on account of their job they would look windswept and dusty. One child asked if the shepherds ever got washed, or had a bath, and the general feeling seemed to be that they would be ragged and dirty with being outside most of the time. Upon being asked why they should be the first to be told about the birth of Jesus Christ, one child exclaimed:-

Because everybody else was asleep ,  
but no-one, until the idea was suggested to them, thought of the possibility of shepherds being a sign that God cares for the poor, and those whom respectable people despise. A long discussion ensued, but later, when the children wrote about the shepherds, only three of them demonstrated that they had understood the point taught:-

Shepherds look after sheep, but even dirty as they are,  
they still mean a lot to God.

I think shepherds are a sign that God wants to help people  
like the shepherds who are always tired and scruffy .

I don't know what I think. Some people think God was born  
in Jesus' body .

The other twenty-one children found the idea of the shepherds perhaps being symbolic of a deeper meaning in the story too difficult to grasp, and for a number of reasons. Firstly, as pointed out by A. G. Dickens 6 when writing of pre-Reformation popular religious belief, church teaching tended (and formal education tends still) to dwell upon the Nativity and Passion narratives of Christ, which are presented as literal stories which do not take into account the symbolic nature of much that was written. There is a very long tradition of this, and the possibility of another interpretation is frequently viewed with hostility on the part of many adults (an area ripe for further research) and seems to be remote to the imagination of most young children. Secondly, shepherds are not familiar figures to children living in urban England, and as such seem unreal to them and to the majority, therefore, their minds seem unable, or unwilling, to see the sense in too much thought about them. Thirdly, the literal interpretation of the Nativity has

been reinforced in the minds of the children from their earliest days, as discussed above, and even by the age of ten, their attitude towards the story is quite inflexible.

It was easy to perceive that some method was required whereby the children could be presented with the Nativity story in a new manner which would invite the children to experience anew the surprise which early readers felt, in all probability, when hearing St. Luke's narrative concerning the shepherds for the first time. Accordingly I wrote a short play entitled "Thieves and Bell Ringers". We read the play through and parts were allocated. Great excitement ensued and this was because many of the children's homes had been burgled (see page 30) and all of the children admitted to having played 'Knocky-Door-Neighbour' at some time in their lives. Whilst the idea of shepherds may not have made particular 'human sense' to them, these two types of people did, and the children were able to identify either themselves, or others whom they knew, with the wrongdoers in the play.

Following their performance of the play, the children made, and wrote, comments such as the following:-

Bill was sad, but they could see Jesus because they were sorry.

"The play tells us about God. If you are sorry, he will forgive you."

"The play teaches us that God felt pity for the two thieves because he let them see Jesus."

"The shepherds and the thieves were similar and so were the bell ringers. Most people did not like them, but God did, and they saw Jesus first."

God tells us that if you turn over a new leaf God will forgive you when you try to be good.

(All ten year old children).

Most of the children were able to grasp some similarities between the traditional Nativity play and the "Thieves and Bell Ringers", but most of them were only able to see possible meaning in the latter, understanding it as having non-literal truth hidden inside the story: this was because the play dealt with characters who suggested people known to the children themselves, and therefore the meaning of the play was clear, whether or not the story was literally true.

The children were extremely excited about being involved in "doing a play" and on numerous occasions throughout the week it was suggested to me by them that I should write another one for them to perform. Accordingly, in order to help them interpret, and to appreciate in a fresh way the story of the Magi (St. Matthew, Ch. 2, vv. 1/12), I wrote a short play entitled "The Doctor and the Strangers". We read the play & through and it was acted and discussed. The children were quite indignant about the fact that only local people were allowed into the hospital:-

I think that the hospital was not being fair by putting up the sign. They should have let travellers in, even though they did not come from North Shields.

This comment from a child typified the general feeling of the class, and the children gave many examples of times when they themselves had visited hospitals and they all agreed it was "fair" that doctors should treat any sick person. Many of the children thought the first nurse was "horrible", and one child stated that:-

The first two nurses should have lost their jobs.

We then examined the story of the Magi, and I reminded the children that Jesus belonged to a tribe of people called Jews. They could understand that the "wise men from the east" were foreigners.

I suggested to the children that they discussed in small groups the ideas in "The Doctors and the Strangers" and the account from the

Bible to see if they could discover anything "that meant the same" in the two stories. The following are examples of what the children worked out among themselves, and recorded:-

"The meaning in the stories is the same, because Jesus helps people and so does the doctor. The nurses didn't care about people who weren't from North Shields, but the doctor cared about everybody. I think Jesus was like the doctor".

This child shows a clear idea of the use of "hidden meanings" in stories, which is of more significance than their literal truth. In the following account, the child shows a quite complex understanding of the interweave of literary symbolism in the stories:-

"The wise men were like the travellers because they brought something. The travellers brought a boy. The doctor was really Jesus because he helped. I think the play means Jesus was there for everyone, not just the Jews, just like the Doctor helped everyone who felt ill, not just the people of North Shields".

This child added an additional idea, spotting the symbolism of the first two nurses:-

"Jesus is like the doctor treating the people, and the two nurses are like two of the Jews who tried to stop the Wise Men seeing Jesus. The story was like the Wise Men searching for Jesus, but in the form of strangers".

The following shows recognition of the character of the third nurse, which indeed is a valid interpretation, although not consciously intended by myself when I wrote the play:-

"The third nurse was like God because she let them see Jesus, who was like the doctor".

The archetype of searching for something (see page 89) is revealed here:-

"The three strangers are the same as the wise men because they were all searching for something, and the thing was the same. They were searching for God".

The meaning of the story of the Magi is probably encapsulated in the following comment:-

"Both stories are like each other because God loves everyone. The doctor is God and the nurses are the Jews and the strangers are the wise men .

Why were the children so receptive to this way of approaching Bible stories? The answer may be found in the fact that the narrative was approached from a familiar experience: all the children had been sick at some time or another, and were able to feel sympathy for the servant boy in the play; the idea of searching for something is an archetype

of the collective unconscious (see page 89) and was excited by the symbols provided both in the play and the Bible account of the Magi: the symbols were appropriate stimuli for the dormant 'blueprint' in the mind. From these foundations the children were able to develop their thinking; in fact this lesson demonstrates how:

The underlying purpose of religious education is to provide awareness of this mystery and to make it possible for young people to be educated in religion ... to perceive life in a new way, to see the strange within the familiar.

9.

Later in the week a group of boys approached me to say they had a play ready themselves, based upon "The Doctor and the Strangers". The following is the script of what they wrote and acted, and is based upon "The Three Little Pigs" fairy tale, and their own interpretation of the play follows.

"The Two Wise Pigs".

DAD PIG. There isn't enough room for you son. We'll take you to the estate agent. (THEY GO TO THE AGENT).

1st PIG. Could I have a room, please? Yes, the straw one will do. DAD TAKES HIM TO HIS NEW ROOM).

DAD PIG. Son, there isn't enough room. We'll take you to the estate agent. (THEY GO TO THE AGENT).

2nd PIG. Could I have a room, please?

AGENT. Will this one do? Its made out of sticks.

2nd PIG. Yes, thanks. That will do. (HE GOES INTO HIS HOUSE AND DAD AND MAM STAY IN THEIR HOUSE. A WOLF COMES TO FIRST LITTLE PIG'S HOUSE).

WOLF Come out, come out. I'll blow, and blow, and blow your house in. (LITTLE PIG RUNS TO FATHER'S HOUSE).

1st PIG. Dad, dad, let me in. (HE RUNS INSIDE. THE WOLF RUNS OFF TO 2ND. PIG'S HOUSE).

WOLF Come out, come out. I'll blow, and I'll blow, and blow your house in! (2ND PIG RUNS TO DAD'S HOUSE).

2nd PIG. Dad! Dad! Let me in! It's safe in your house!

FATHER Come in, son. Yes, you can stay here. You know you are safe with me.

The children told me that the father was like God because he is always ready to help them when anything goes wrong and you are in danger. The children were again using an archetype in their form of expression (see, for example, the later chapter concerning 'The Stone'), but the significance of the play lies in the fact that the children had consolidated at least one idea about God: that God provides a safe

place and those in need are always welcome. The children had expressed this idea in their own way and had understood that the play was not literally true but had an essential element of truth hidden inside it.

When considering the work of these children, all of whom were aged between nine and ten years, I believe that one is justified in questioning the validity of this statement of Dr. Goldman:-

The recommendation may have to be faced that very little Biblical material is suitable before secondary schooling. 10

This statement is preceded by the following:-

... there would appear to be a pressing need for further research of a systematic nature into recommended Biblical material to test out the suitability of the material recommended.

The research described in this thesis is an attempt to meet this "pressing need", but the recommendation as anticipated by Dr. Goldman cannot be acceded to on the basis of the evidence which has been gathered. To the contrary, if children are introduced to the skills of interpreting complex writing and helped to develop them, even when at the age of nine years, if suitable experiences have been drawn upon they are quite capable of applying the skills to complex writing. No one would expect anyone to be able to drive a car without learning the necessary skills to do so, and one is equally justified in maintaining the same about using the Bible in an informed manner. In the words of Dr. Brenda G. Watson:-

The changes which occur between the ages of four and ten are greater than any subsequent change at secondary level or later. Such developments occur in language skills, understanding of concepts, and interpretation of experience. 11

If children are to be introduced to the subject of religion, it follows that the ideal time to do so is when these skills and concepts are in the process of development, because the use of figurative writing, and the metaphorical writing which comprises much Biblical material, enables and assists the pace of development to both quicken and deepen.

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## Chapter Seven.

### The Collective Unconscious.

The idea of the personal shadow, and the working of personal experiences and their integration within human consciousness and unconscious thought was described earlier (page 26), where an example of its working was given. I now wished to examine the theory of Professor C. G. Jung regarding the collective unconscious, which is an area of human experience thought to be of great influence upon individual development:-

Development is a continuous unfolding and, for Jung, it is much more ruled by the collective unconscious than man likes to admit.

Jung believed the collective unconscious comprised experiences of human beings from earliest times, and the need for further research into this area has been expressed thus:-

Jung seems most interested in showing us how the collective unconscious influences us and in this endeavour he constructs an interesting and consistent theory which deserves further research.

Forgus and Shulman continue by stressing the importance of the theory of the archetypes, and the collective unconscious of which they form part, as being of specific importance for study into personality development:-

... one would assume that the archetypes of the collective unconscious are the primary cognitive foundations of personality because they are inborn and guide the development of personality.

The opinion has been declared that it is essential to understand our "deep psychic roots" if our comprehension of western civilisation is to be retained:-

Jung's emphasis on our need to retain our connection with the deep psychic roots of our western heritage merits serious consideration as so many people turn East for spiritual guidance.

Western civilisation, most people would agree, has been profoundly influenced by Christianity, and therefore the language and imagery of the Bible:-

Western civilisation has been deeply and lastingly influenced by Christianity. There is therefore a cultural obligation to help the young understand Christian belief and practice to the extent that they are then able to make sense of the civilisation of which they are a part ...

Much of the Biblical material already studied used as symbols such natural phenomena as fire and wind (Whitsuntide, page 42), water (The Flood, page 43) and Christ's Baptism (page 43); wild countryside

(Christ's temptations, page 34) and the darkness of the night-time (The Last Supper, page: 42 ). All of these images have the power to stir human imagination for some reason: they appear to appeal to some dormant, primitive understanding which is seated deeply inside the human psyche. The power of the writing stirs this instinct and helps excite the imagination to give meaning to what is written. Meaning itself is something for which human beings are constantly in search. Jung wrote:-

"But how do we give meaning? From what source, in the last analysis, do we derive meaning? The forms of our interpretation are historical categories that reach back into the mists of time ... interpretations make use of certain linguistic matrices that are themselves derived from primordial images. From whatever side we approach the question, everywhere are we confronted by the history of language and motivation, and this leads straight back into the enchanted, primitive world .

6

Jung went on to give an explanation of a "primordial image":-

"A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious material ... the representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect they correspond in every way to the instincts, which are also determined in form only .

7

Thus, to Jung, archetypes represented the:

sum of the latent potentialities of the human psyche - a vast store of ancestral knowledge about the profound relations between God, man, and the cosmos. To open up this store in one's own psyche, to waken it to new life and to integrate it with the conscious, means nothing less than to save the individual from his isolation and to gather him into the eternal cosmic process .

8

These archetypes are stirred by certain stimuli, when a response is made, but remain dormant until this stirring takes place by some activating image. Jung's theory may be contrasted here with the ideas of Piaget which were analysed by Margaret Donaldson as follows:-

"Piaget tells us again and again that knowledge does not come to us from 'outside' ready made. It is not a copy of reality - not just a matter of receiving impressions as if our minds were photographic plates. Nor is knowledge something we are born with. We must construct it. We do this slowly, over many years .

9

According to Jung, the "blueprints" which form the possibility of knowledge being assimilated and given form exist in the collective unconscious of the human race and are inherited, as described in his writings quoted above. As Margaret Donaldson mentions in her analysis, according to Piaget, knowledge has to be constructed, not

upon pre-existing instincts as taught by Jung, but upon a void. This latter theory of Piaget may be adequate where only a superficial understanding of human personality and behaviour is demanded, or where superficial experiences are concerned, but the theory of Jung in this connection points towards the seemingly unfathomable depths of the human psyche. The archetypes have been metaphorically compared to the patterns made by snowflakes:-

Archetypes form the infrastructure of the psyche. Archetypal patterns are similar to the patterns found in crystal formation. No two snowflakes are exactly alike; however every single snowflake has the same basic six-pointed structure. Similarly, the contents and experiences of each individual's psyche is unique but the general patterns that these experiences fall into are determined by universal parameters and generating principles, which Jung called archetypes .

10

An example of the working of this type of archetype in a child which could be contributory to shadow formation later may be illustrated as follows. If a child is ridiculed for being afraid of darkness, the element of fear (which is an instinct) will be gradually relegated to the unconscious to prevent further ridicule. Secretly, a child may indulge in some manner of ritual when left alone in a dark bedroom, for example. Recently a boy told me he always placed one shoe under his bed before switching off the light, and felt that this would prevent anything sinister or evil from happening. Eventually, however, the impulses which warn of danger may become oblivious, and therefore go unrecognised: they have become unconscious. The fear, nevertheless, continues to live within since fear is an instinct which has been passed down throughout countless generations, and if it is not acknowledged consciously the emergence of the archetype may take effect unconsciously. Elements of the collective unconscious cannot be totally banished from the psyche by an effort of will.

Jung described how the shadow of the unconscious manifested itself by way of projections. Just as a bright light forms a shadow, an effort of will to eliminate what cannot be eliminated will cause a shadow to fall; thus the child who has suppressed the feeling of fear into his/her unconscious will tend to look for the embodiment of fear in others. In the early stages he/she will be unlikely to discuss his/her secret with others until at length, maybe not until adulthood when total assimilation is completed, and he/she has become aware that

fear of darkness is intrinsic to human nature, will he/she admit to the presence of fear. Should fear be projected towards someone else, perhaps another child, it is common for the subject to ridicule the child since it results in a sense of superiority to find someone else possessed of the feeling which one feels has been overcome.

Although this example of the personal shadow of the unconscious appears in many respects to be similar to the example given on page 25, it differs in that its origins stem from an instinctive emotion, that is fear, rather than from one which has been learned personally.

The primordial image used earlier, for example, fire and water, do not depend upon personal experience for their power to grasp attention and excite the emotions. On numerous occasions in the classroom I have noticed how the attention of the children has been extremely acute, perhaps only for a few minutes, and I have also noticed that when this happens mention has been made of one, if not more, of the primordial images.

As an example of this, I quote the following. On each occasion that I have read to the children "The Wind in the Willows" I have noticed that the following passage has never failed to excite intense interest and awe. This is part of the quotation:-

Trembling he obeyed, and raised his humble head; and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seems to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns gleaming in the growing daylight; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously, while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners; saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supple hand still holding the pan-pipes only just fallen away from the parted lips; saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward; saw, last of all resting between his very hooves, sleeping soundly in entire peace and contentment, the little, round, podgy, childish form of the baby otter. All this he saw, for one moment breathless and intense, vivid on the morning sky and still, as he looked, he lived, and still, as he lived, he wondered.

11

Why should this passage capture the awe and wonder of the reader?

Certainly there is nothing mentioned that could be seemed likely to be reminiscent of any personal experiences of most children, and yet, mysteriously, its appeal is obvious, and recognition of what is described results in absorbing interest and appreciation.

Jung, upon being asked to account for the existence in the unconscious

of what he called the archetypes, responded as follows:-

I have often been asked where the archetypes or primordial images come from. It seems to me that their origin can only be explained by assuming them to be deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity .

12

Archetypes were, nevertheless, seen as distinct from instincts, the latter being understood to represent "physiological urges which are perceived by the senses". Jung continued to describe archetypes as the manifestations of instincts which could take the form of fantasies and which "often reveal their presence only by symbolic images". The above passage from "The Wind in the Willows" makes use of Jung's archetype of the "Wise Old Man" (to name but one), which he believed to have originated in primitive society, being as it was a descendant of the medicine man, who:

13

Penetrates the chaotic darkness of mere life with the light of meaning. He is the enlightener, the teacher, and master .

14

This archetype is part of the unconscious:-

This part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. The collective unconscious, as far as we know, is self-identical in all western men/women .

Such archetypes as the "Wise Old Man" lie dormant in the human psyche awaiting stimulation when they are aroused and become active, manifesting their presence to the observer in a variety of ways: in the case of the quotation under analysis by their power of claiming intense interest and excitement and a feeling of awe and wonder. Other archetypes identified by Jung include water (which is the mirror of the unconscious) and which features frequently in mythology - as for example in the myth of Echo and Narcissus, as well as many other symbols and signs which are manifestations of the form of the archetype:-

Here belong likewise the cellar and cave, watery depths and the sea, as also fire, weapons and instruments ... monsters personify primordial, cold-blooded animal nature ... cave and sea refer to the unconscious state with its darkness and secrecy .

15

How far can the archetypes of Jung be seen in relation to the forms, or 'ideas' of Plato?

As I have said, every human soul by its very nature has beheld true being - otherwise it would not have entered into the creature we call man - but it is not every soul that finds it easy to use its present experience as a means of recollecting the world of reality. Some had but a brief

glance of the truth in their former existence: few are left who retain sufficient memory. These, however, when they see some likeness of the world above, are beside themselves and lose all control, but do not realize what is happening to them because of the dimness of their perceptions .

16

Here Plato is indicating that before conception, every soul sees something of Truth or Reality; however, because of the traumas of birth and human life recollections of this revelation become dimmed; nevertheless for a minority some recollection can be stirred by what is perceived as a symbol, or image, of Truth. For Plato, it is the "dim recollections" of Truth or Reality once experienced that respond to stimulation, at which time they become manifested in some outward, observable manner. For Jung, these "recollections" are the archetypes and their origins, he believed, reached back to primitive human society which have left "blueprints" upon human memory.

Jung himself perceived of similarities between Plato's 'ideas' or 'forms' and his archetypes. Concerning Plato's 'forms' he wrote

Ideas are primordial images preserved ... being therefore transcendental, eternal forms perceived by the winged eye of the seer ... images of dream and the revealing vision .

17

Jacob Jacobi, a colleague of Jung, wrote:-

The archetypes are also akin to what Plato called the 'ideas'. But Plato's idea is a model of supreme perfection only in the 'luminous' sense, whereas Jung's archetypes are bipolar, embodying the dark side as well as the light .

18

The archetype, then, represents unformed, dormant tendencies which are deeply seated in the collective unconscious. They take form and manifestation when a suitable stimulant occurs which has the power to excite them into activity, forcing them into the conscious mind where they are able to be recognised because of the emotional arousal which they stimulate.

What has Jung seen as their positive attributes in developing understanding of the transcendental? How can they be utilized in the religious education of young children?

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Chapter Eight.

A Manifestation of the Archetype: Treasure Seeking.

I quoted earlier from the writing of Margaret Donaldson who was herself quoting from Jung:-

"School is, in fact, means of strengthening in a purposeful way the integration of consciousness ... an understanding of its interpretation is what they (the children) need more than anything else".

Integration of the conscious and unconscious involves the use of two distinct types of experience; firstly personal experience, which is the result of one's interaction with life generally and the interpretation one puts upon it, the results of which may be lodged in either the conscious or unconscious mind, and also the collective unconscious which comprises the experiences of humanity from the dawn of time. Jung wrote with certainty about this collective unconscious, which needs to be integrated with the personal conscious if maturity and understanding of the self are to be reached:-

The mind has grown to its present state of consciousness as an acorn grows into an oak ... As it has been developing so it still 'develops and thus we are moved by forces from within as well as by stimuli from without .

1

By the use of stories, images and symbols are provided for the impulses and feelings within the young child:-

"Younger children depend upon rich stories to provide images, symbols and examples for the vague but powerful impulses, feelings and aspirations forming within them .

2

James Fowler isolated this need as being characteristic of his Stage One in the quest for meaning, and this is closely linked by him to the pre-concrete thinking stage of Piaget. The development which follows from this is the ability to reflect upon stories and to communicate their meanings by abstractions.

What are these "powerful impulses, feelings and aspirations" which Fowler mentions? They seem to represent the forms which are represented and expressed by the archetypes, and the attention of the children was held during the extract from "The Wind in the Willows" (page 62) because the description gave expression to some primitive form of understanding in the unconscious: when the appropriate stimulation occurred, the response was made, in this example by the children's concentration being heightened.

I wished to teach the children that an attempt to understand what is meant by "God" is a complex problem, rather than a simple process

such as involved in, say, a simple addition sum, where, when the answer has been reached it may be proven. I believed that the most suitable way of doing this was to appeal to two types of experiences: those of the personal and collective conscious and unconscious.

The aim of the lesson material was to help the children reflect upon the possibility of an internal God. Christopher Bryant warns of the dangers consequent upon this idea not being introduced:-

It is to be feared that many have been brought up to conceive of a God as a Being wholly external to themselves, without any idea of his immanence within them. Such an externalised idea of God would inevitably ... make the development of an individual's full humanity more difficult .

3

In order to make some attempt at illuminating these "inner signs" I planned a series of lessons around the theme of "treasure seeking", the concept of which is an archetype itself. The "treasure" in myths concerning this type of subject symbolises the "true self" of the searcher (see page 74) who frequently has to brave many dangers in the process of his search, which frequently takes place in deep water (symbolic of the unconscious) in order to find his true identity. Many myths and stories symbolise this: Jason and the Golden Fleece, "Treasure Island", and the Dragon and His Hoard were all familiar subjects to the children from infancy, and their memories of these were vivid because, as mentioned previously, these myths had "provided images, symbols and examples for vague, powerful impulses, feelings or aspirations forming within them".

I suggested to the children that they might like to construct treasure maps, and taught them how to give grid references. Figures 9 and 10 show examples of the results of some work done. Common features of all the work produced by the children are the perils which have to be overcome in order to discover the treasure, and sheer effort needs to be given to the search. Upon completion of the task, they were asked to write stories about the actual adventures of the imaginary searcher. Figure 10 gives examples of the response. The children were able to see treasure hunting as an activity which involved the unknown and mysterious, but which justified the risks because of the successful outcome: the treasure is always found in myths.

I believe the children were able to achieve this understanding of the task set because it was based upon an archetypal form which had



Figure 10. Treasure Hunting.

Treasure Seeking.

One day Kerry called of me because we were going on a treasure hunt. I got a map and off we went. We came to a Grabbing Hand and Kerry got stuck. In the bottom of the hand there was mud. I managed to go and get some help. I got the monkeys from their cage and they pulled Kerry out. We then passed the quick sand and came to the Grabbing Foot. We did not go in. I came to some mountains. Kerry had fallen off but she found she bounced back up. We came to a camp and the men shot at us so we threw stones and killed them. We saw a treasure chest and looked inside and there was treasure. It was full of silver. We went home but it had been an exciting journey.

\*\*\*\*\*

Searching for Treasure.

My friend and I decided we would go on a treasure hunt. When we got there we were not looking where we were going and we walked into some quick sand. It took us one hour to get through it. Next we saw a swamp and a grabbing hand. The hand grabbed at us and threw us into the swamp. We came to some mountains and climbed up them. My friend fell into someone's tent and she got up and looked out of the tent and I saw people dancing around a fire. We came to a pond and we saw something shining deep down in the water. Diving in we managed to reach it. We then climbed into a nearby boat and sailed across the water. We took the treasure home.

\*\*\*\*\*

been provided with symbols earlier in their lives, and the treasure maps and stories were a way of consolidating this understanding.

To most of the children, treasure consisted of gold, silver and precious jewels. In an effort to help them to begin to think of treasure in different ways we had a discussion about things which were important to them. The idea that these could be thought of as treasure was suggested to them, and one child was of the opinion that anything that money could not buy was the best type of treasure, since it could not be replaced. The following are extracts from their writing. All of the children were ten years old.

My treasure is an old pair of slippers. Because my grandma was ill in bed, she died, but just before this, she gave me some slippers. When I got a new pair, I did not think they were a treasure as much as my other ones .

The slippers acted, in the mind of the child, as a reminder of her grandmother whom she would not see again. She later mentioned her grandfather:-

My grandfather could not hear properly. We took him to the doctors and he got a hearing aid. That was like treasure to him'.

Treasure was frequently described as being such because of its sentimental value. Often, too, parents and other members of the family were mentioned:-

My treasure is my baby sister. She is very nice and I love her a lot'.

One child's mother had recently suffered a severe, and permanent disability as the result of a surgical operation. The child wrote:-

"One of my favourite treasures is a photograph of my mam when she was well. My family is a treasure that money cannot buy'.

In this connection, I read the myth of "King Midas and the Golden Touch" to the children, which helped them to grasp the idea that there are things more valuable than money and precious metal.

Pets were often mentioned as treasure, because they could not be replaced by just "going into a shop":

The treasure I like is my two cats, Vincent and Tibby. I go to bed with them at night, and I feed them every day. When I come in from school I stroke them and brush them .

My treasure is my little dog that I have had for ages.

My dog was not walking properly because her blood was not circulating. We had to have her put down. I cried, and my dad said "She is at peace now". I had grown up with her

and then dad said "I think she would like you to have these". It was her lead and collar, and that is my treasure. I miss her a lot .

The children had come to understand that treasure can be anything which is important to them, especially if it cannot be replaced. This is the underlying significance, particularly, of the child's comment about her grandmother's present to her of the pair of slippers. To her they represented her grandmother and her kindness, and this, to the child, was irreplaceable.

The principle taught here now needed to be applied to religious material to encourage some development of thought. A few days later the children were given the texts of "The Pearl of Great Price" (Matthew 13, v. 45/6) and the "Treasure Field" (Matthew 13, v. 44) and they were asked to discuss the stories with neighbours. All of the children were able to understand that the Kingdom of Heaven was like treasure, and a few offered their own ideas in addition:-

I think the stories are about people trying to get, or find, love and care in their hearts .

I think the stories are about people trying to devote themselves to God .

Heaven is like treasure to them, so they must find it".

The stories mean that people love God and they will give all they have to stay near him .

I think the stories are about finding your treasure and what your treasure is .

The following week the children were reminded about the story of the Magi, and were shown a radio-vision programme about "Baboushka". I asked the children what kind of treasure the Magi and Baboushka were seeking, and everyone agreed the treasure was Jesus Christ. A number also mentioned that Baboushka could not find Jesus because she had not understood that "he was somehow inside of her".

By following these lessons the children had been introduced to the idea that searching for treasure is something like searching for God and heaven: the inference that God may, in at least part, be inside of people, came from the children themselves, and was expressed by them. To conclude this lesson scheme, the children wrote stories entitled "Treasure with a Difference", and the following are the stories of two boys, both of whom have very limited use of language.

In my story there is a man called Jesus. John was a Christian and he had a dream. The dream had a voice and it was God's voice. John believed he could find this voice and he was searching the world for a man, and searching, but he never found him. A couple of years later John died, and that was when he found God.

About two thousand years ago some people went to search for the treasure of God. The treasure was the belief, or love, of him. Jesus had hidden the treasure. The people who knew about the treasure were some believers in God. When they set off for the treasure they found it was easier said than done. They had to climb high mountains and go into the deepest valleys. When they got there they knew it was the treasure because they saw something like a dove, but it was not a dove. They waited and they saw, or felt, something in their hearts and they knew it was God.

In both of these pieces of writing the children have begun to write symbolically, using symbols which they have encountered in literature; for example the dove had been remembered from the story of "The Flood", and the hills and valleys which they mentioned had featured in some work which we had done a few months previously concerning the prophecies of Isaiah. One of the children told me that he meant God was like the dove, hopefulness was the mountains and feeling "fed up" was the valleys. The story written by the other child I believe to have been based upon the story of Eli and Samuel. What is of interest and significance is that the children had begun to reflect themselves about God, and were doing so symbolically. The idea of an internal God was beginning to make sense to them. Gradually foundations were being formed to enable a more serious consideration of religion to be made at some later time, since progress could be seen to have been made along the "Stages of Faith" of James Fowler (Figure 1).

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- |    |                      |  |                                  |
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Chapter Nine.

The Archetype of the 'Self' and the Internal God.

The process of individuation, as described by Jung and which he considered to be most important from middle life, he defined as follows:-

By it I mean the psychological process that makes of a human being an 'individual' - a unique, indivisible unit or 'whole person'".

1

To achieve maturity it is necessary to accept, and to come to terms with, all aspects of one's psyche: to recognise the shadow's existence and working in the unconscious, for example, is an important, if unpleasant necessity, if the true self is to be discovered. Just as important is the recognition of the persona, or the 'social mask' of acceptable behaviour which the individual habitually presents to the world. However Jung points out the truth which lurks behind this mask:-

The (person) who looks into the mirror of the waters does, indeed, see his/her face first of all. Whoever goes to him/herself risks a confrontation. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor, but the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face.

2

If, however, one is to discover the truth about oneself, it is necessary to accept personal realities, whether or not such are consciously revealed. This is essential if true potential and talent is to be accepted and the Self discovered.

As a teacher, however, I find it impossible to agree with Jung when he states that:-

... when normal, the child has no real problems of his/her own. It is only when a human being has grown up that he/she can have doubts about him/herself and be at variance ...

3

Perhaps, to a practising psychologist, dealing with adults suffering from serious psychic disorders, the problems facing young children would appear to be negligible. A discussion of this was given on page 25, and the following pages from there gave details of how shadow-growth takes place in children of at least eight years.

The intensity and seriousness of problems were real enough to the children whose concerns I described, and for this reason, I feel teachers are justified in concluding that children suffer from problems to an extent equal to that of many adults, and because of their minority often depend upon the co-operation and help of adults for the solving of them. In the case of worries about parental argument,

it was often the adults who caused the children to have troubles initially - see, for example, the case cited on page 28 .

For this reason, therefore, I feel it to be important that children be helped wherever possible to accept situations which they cannot influence and to assist them upon the path towards individuation from an early age, and the previously described work done with them using the theme of Treasure Seeking was used as an introduction to this search for the "true self" and the internal 'God image'.

There are two aspects to the children's work which unfolded in response to the theme which I call "Self Discovery" and they comprise two important areas of work: images and symbols of the self, and the stone as an archetypal symbol of both self and another way of approaching understanding of God.

When discussing the development of concepts of God, Dr. Brenda Watson writes:-

"It is easy for young children to acquire the idea that the Christian God is a sentimental Santa Claus figure, or that he is just a God of "All Things Bright and Beautiful" who has nothing to say about the nastier aspects of life. At a more sophisticated level it is easy for people to acquire the idea that "God" is simply the reflection of the highest qualities and ideals, or that he is a "wish fulfillment" and so forth".

4

In the foregoing I have stressed the necessity of leading children on in their thinking from their early notions of God as an anthropomorphic figure in the skies and it was shown that if this notion is not recognised and dealt with by careful teaching, symbols are understood as being identical with what they are meant to symbolise - thus thinking about religious subjects stops at Fowler's Stage Three, when either the symbols are protected defensively as being themselves sacred, or on the basis of this understanding the idea of God is rejected.

I have indicated (page 67) the necessity of directing children's thoughts towards the idea of a God whose power works internally through our thought processes. Jung discussed the difference between a psychic fact and an image, drawing out the distinction between God being understood as merely an archetype of the unconscious rather than as a distinct actuality working within humanity. Concerning an image, Jung wrote:-

"... we find numberless images of God, but we cannot produce the original. There is no doubt in my mind that there is an original behind our images, but that it is inaccessible".

5

Whether or not the 'original' is inaccessible is questionable; there are many Christians of past, and present, generations who, because of their faith, believed that they had drawn close to what they understood to be God, but certainly God may be understood most readily by the use of analogies and symbols, all of which provide 'pointers' towards the possibility of a deeper understanding.

The following refers to the Muslim idea of Allah:-

Muslims believe that Allah is beyond any adequate description by human beings. He surpasses in an infinite way all that we have experienced .

6

Jung expresses this view:-

Why should we be so immodest as to assume that we could catch a universal being in the narrow confines of our language? We know that God images play a great role in psychology, but we cannot prove the physical existence of God .

7

It is, therefore, from deep inside the psyche that images of God take form, and both thought and experience of life help develop these images towards a deeper understanding of the interpretation of life from a religious belief.

In essence, this is how the archetypes can be usefully employed in the teaching of religion, and children helped towards seeing symbols as pointers towards a transcendent reality rather than as the reality itself. Because, to Jung, the 'Self' was the total human being, understood and accepted by the integration of the personality (that is, all levels of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious), he used the 'self' interchangeably with the 'God-image', since both infer wholeness, or the state of being complete - this is illustrated in Figure One, Stage Six of Fowler's "Stages of Faith".

Children may be helped from a young age to differentiate between good and evil, darkness and light (see Chapter Five) and to understand symbolism in these terms. I wished to help the children direct their thoughts towards their own inner lives in order to help them recognise the various forces working within. To do this, I based my lesson material on the idea of the mandala (a Sanskrit word for 'magic circle').

We discussed the idea that our lives move along from day to day in a similar way to that in which the wheel of a car or a bicycle moves around, with the hub in the centre. I explained that this centre in a circle is a symbol of our real self, that is the person we really are. I asked the children to think about this idea with the intention of helping them see themselves as complex beings who require symbols

themselves to enable interpretation to take place. It would then be within their capacity to study the symbols used to describe others. In the work which ensued, they were shown how to construct 'circles within circles', with their true self in the inner one, surrounded by pictures which were symbols of things which they had done, or helped with, or hoped to do in the future.

Figures eleven and twelve are examples of the work produced. Figure eleven shows how the child has used traditional symbols from Christianity to depict himself: he is half angel and half devil, which in his own words, indicate that 'inside me, I am both bad and good'. By applying anthropomorphic symbols to himself, he was demonstrating his ability to understand symbols: they were personifications necessary to communicate non-physical, and yet existent, psychic facts.

Figure Twelve is similar in content. The physical activities and emotional worries of the child are symbolised pictorially. The child sees herself, in analysis, as 'deep inside ... very good'. The halo is used as a symbol of this, an indication that the child sees the symbol as denoting an overall analysis of personality traits.

The significance of this work lies, firstly, in the fact that the children were able to reflect upon their lives and use symbols to communicate their thoughts; secondly, they could perceive of themselves as having a deep, inner core, or personality, and the lesson concluded with the suggestion that the children might like to think of all their activities, and ways of thinking, as being important for how this 'core' would grow and develop.

I now wished to use an archetypal symbol for my lessons which could be, in turn, used as a symbol of God. Dr. Brenda Watson, in private correspondence, pointed to the importance of introducing children to many different, and even paradoxical ways, of attempting to understand what is meant by 'God':

'It might be important to develop the point of how difficult it is to describe God. Quite a lot of discussion could relate to how difficult it is to describe, say, mother or a friend ... helping the children to see that such things as character can perhaps best be thought of in terms of poetry or metaphor, and not in terms of straight description. It is certainly necessary to help children, as early as possible, to see that there are many ways of thinking about God.'

Figure 11.



I hate to think of cars getting broken into. I would hate to work on a pig farm, or to have a kettle of water pulled onto me. I'd like to join the Navy or be in the Air Force. Inside me, I am both good and bad.

Figure 12.



I imagine that we have just scored the last goal for my school and the score is 4-0. In rounders I have just scored the last rounder making the score 11-10. In the third picture I am worrying that my mam and dad have left each other and I don't want that to happen. When I go to sleep I get a very good sleep and dream. I do not want to work in Presto or be a ballet dancer. Deep inside I am very good.

References to Chapter Nine.

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2. Jung, C. G., *ibid.*      , p. 69
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5. Philip, H.L.      "Jung and the Problem of Evil", p. 15      Rockliff,  
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6. Watson, Dr. B.G., *op. cit.*, p. 165.
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Chapter Ten.

The Stone: An Archetypal Image of 'Self' and 'God'.

An archetypal image common to mankind is the stone. Stones and rocks are symbols of remembrance: hence the cenotaph in Whitehall and the gravestones of the churchyard, as well as many others. The prehistoric world abounded in images cast in stone: the pagan Celtic God Anteniciticus from Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne, and the stone circle at Stonehenge in Wiltshire being examples.

Why should the stone provide an image for religious purposes and expression? The following extract provides, I believe, an answer:-

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods;  
time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes  
the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal  
rocks beneath - a source of little visible delight, but  
necessary.

Emily Bronte contrasts the changeable nature of the trees' foliage with the eternal endurance of the rocks beneath them. It is this eternal, unchanging characteristic of rocks and stones which embodies them with attributes suitable for symbols and images of eternal life and remembrance: hence its use in memory of the dead.

The stone is, too, however, a symbol of the central point of humanity itself, the Self:-

The alchemical stone symbolises something that can never be lost or dissolved, something eternal, that some alchemists compared to the mystical experience of God within one's own soul.

A round stone is a symbol of the self, and as discussed on page 75, the Self is understood to be an image interchangeable with the God-archetype. The human habit of collecting stones has been remarked upon as having significance here:-

Many people cannot refrain from picking up stones of a slightly unusual colour or shape and keeping them. Men have collected stones since the beginning of time and have apparently assumed that certain ones were containers of the life-force with all its mystery.

In dreams the centre, or Self, of the stone frequently appears as a crystal. Annela Jaffe makes the point that stones laid on particular spots by way of expressing remembrance, or awe, exemplify the human urge to express an otherwise inexpressible experience. Gravestones have already been mentioned, and to them could be added the practice, in Scotland particularly, of piling stones into cairns where some act of corporate remembrance is demanded.

The rubbing and polishing of stones and other objects is a common

idea and practice, which symbolises the activating of powers lying within: hence the myth of Aladdin and His Lamp. This in itself is a symbol of the emergence of the Self from within the depths of the psyche.

I now wished to discover if this "stone image" stirred any archetypal images within the children which could be used as bases for religious education. Without prior discussion, I asked the children to write stories about the following: "The Adventure of the Stone", and "The Story of the Stone", in order to disclose any images which the titles would themselves activate. It could be suggested that previous experience of the symbol could be an influential factor in their responses but if, in fact, the symbol had previously been encountered, remembrance of it and the ability to use it independently, would suggest some archetypal importance for the image itself. If indeed, stones are devoid of archetypal qualities, that is free from the power to excite primitive "blueprints" in the psyche, an experienced teacher of young children would expect and receive a negative response to the task given.

The following are examples of comments taken from the work of the children.

This school is close to the coast and this affords the children the opportunity of beachcombing; correspondingly many of their stories involve searches for stones on the beach. The stories took them a considerably longer time to write than is usual for this type of activity, and this may be accounted for, firstly, in that collecting rocks and stones is something which all the children do regularly, and they therefore have something personal to contribute to the lesson; secondly, the concentration which the children were able to give to the lesson was probably because of the archetypal images which stones arouse in the mind, an experience of the human race which reaches back into the mists of time: the activity appealed to both the personal and the collective unconscious, experiences which were brought into consciousness because of the arousal brought about by a suitable image.

I analysed the children's comments and ideas, looking for patterns, and my observations are as follows.

I have mentioned that stones will be collected and retained if judged unusual. The children wrote:-

I went to the beach and saw a stone in the water.  
It was glowing and I picked it up and decided to  
keep it . (ten year old).

I have a stone at home. It has red circles on it.

I keep thinking that it is magic and it helps me take my mind off things that I worry about .  
(nine year old).

We were amazed to find a stone which changed colours. One turned orange, green, and red. I had a bag and I put the stone inside to take it home . (ten year old).

The idea of the stone changing colour was the unusual aspect which the children frequently used as a reason for taking stones home, and this idea was often developed by attributing magic powers to the stone:-

When we found the rock we got power from it and we hid it. When we were crossing a road a car nearly ran us over, but we just used our power to stop it. Then our power ran out, and we went back to the rock .  
(nine year old).

Back at the laboratory we melted rocks down and mixed them. This gave us an anti-evil spell . (ten year old).

In this last extract, and in the one above, the stone is said to be possessed of a power strong enough to defeat evil: either of private thought, or, in the last case, dark-robed figures from space who posed a threat to the earth. This idea is one which can clearly be seen to have potential for developing into a God-image.

The necessity of keeping the possession of the stone a secret was a common idea:-

We told nobody about the stones we found. They would not believe us, anyway . (nine year old).

I did not even tell my mam because if I did they would tell everyone and I'd probably end up on television. I took it straight to my bedroom . (nine year old).

I kept my secret to myself, except for the person who is my best friend. We kept the secret between the two of us and we never spoke about it to our friends or anyone.  
We always kept it between ourselves . (nine year old).

Secrecy, on the part of young children seems to stem from a belief they would be subjected to ridicule if they told others, or because their treasure would be taken from them or destroyed.

A number of children mentioned "treasure" hidden inside the stone itself:-

I grabbed a stone. It began shining and a figure came half out. "Help" he cried. Emma began to chip the stone away. I put my fingers in a crack and out he came . (ten year old).

I heard something when we were on the rocks. I put my ear to a rock and heard a sound. My dad listened and he heard a sound. A man came from inside . (nine year old)

"We noticed a rock with four little pebbles stuck to it. Lee tried to pull the pebbles off. All of a sudden there was a burst of flame and the rock flew out of Lee's hand and into the sky". (nine year old).

Julie and I went on the beach. We heard little voices. We sat on two rocks and the rocks were talking. We made friends and told nobody about this. (ten year old).

"I carried it to my bedroom and cracked it open, and inside were lots of shining stones". (nine year old).

As mentioned above, the stone as a symbol of some mystical experiences of God in one's search for the soul is a Jungian interpretation of statements such as these, which are also frequently encountered in dreams. Children are much more likely to give expression to this type of thought than are adults, who dismiss such as being childlike.

The following describes how a child wrote of a stone which she buried on the beach, and which never disappears:-

It was buried far down in the sand and when I came to get it, it was always there - it was never gone. (ten year old).

This is the eternal quality of the stone which itself is a symbol of eternity, and the God-image.

I wished to reinforce the idea of stones and rocks having eternal qualities, and being possessed of strength. A story familiar to the children for many years was "The Three Little Pigs". I re-read this story to them and asked why they thought young children loved it so much. Typical replies were "Because we know that the pig came back and beat the bad wolf in the end". When asked how he managed to do it, a child said "Because his house was built of stones, and they were very strong".

I then gave the children the Biblical text of the House Built on Sand (Matthew 7, vv. 24/9) and we discussed why the storm was able to destroy one house but not the other. We related it to the story of the little pigs, and they were able to understand with no difficulty that the house built on a rocky foundation was much stronger than that built on sand.

We then discussed people: did we know any people who were like rocks and stones? The children mentioned their friends and parents whom they could trust. Did they know people who were like sand? They said people were like this who "did not keep their word and did not call for you when they said they would", or people who "let you down when you thought you could trust them".

Having established with the children the symbolic use of rocks

and stones in stories, I wished to consolidate their understanding by introducing more Biblical analogies.

I gave the children the text "Thou are Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". By using workcards, the children were directed towards considering what kind of person Peter was: that is, just what did Jesus mean when he called him "a rock". They commented as follows:- 4

I think Peter was a strong person who could fight bad, because he was like a rock. Perhaps he did do wrong things and made mistakes, but not very many, though.  
(ten year old).

Peter could put up with things. (ten year old).

Jesus meant that he wanted Peter to be in charge of things because he was strong and brave, and would not give into evil because he had a strong will. (ten year old).

Peter must have had a strong will power because he wasn't afraid to say 'no'. (nine year old).

Peter wasn't afraid, and the church would not become evil if he was the leader. (ten year old).

Peter was strong in the mind. Perhaps he was strong in the body, too. (ten year old).

Jesus meant Peter would start a new life with a new name. (nine year old).

Jesus meant that people could be safe with Peter, and they could trust him. (ten year old).

These comments of the children showed that they were able to recognise the symbolic use of "the rock" and were, in addition, able to add ideas which they thought out for themselves concerning the meaning of the imagery.

I developed this lesson the following week, when a work-sheet (Figure Thirteen) was given to the children. I wished to investigate how far the children were able to transfer the work done about the symbolism of stones and rocks to specific Biblical passages, and in addition to assess their capacity for weighing up evidence and coming to conclusions as to what meaning the symbolic writing was pointing towards.

In response to (1), they wrote:-

It is very difficult to move a stone, just like it is very difficult to move Jesus from you because he is true .

Jesus is like a stone because he is powerful .

A foundation stone is the main thing in a building, just like Jesus is the main thing in your heart .

(all ten year old children).

The qualities attributed to the archetypal image were transferred to the character of Jesus, as had been done in the previous work about St. Peter: recognised were the clues which pointed towards strength of character, power, and "truth" itself.

Concerning questions two and three, the children wrote:-

"The secret was there was something precious inside".

"The stone and the cave shared a secret because they both had treasure inside".

One child wrote at length about what was turning over deep inside her thoughts:-

It is true that you can build things with stones and it is true that stones are strong and heavy. It is difficult to break a rock and you cannot take the goodness out of Jesus. Jesus' power is trying to get inside you and give power. He is like a stone because he is strong. He is not strong in strength but he is strong in love and happiness. We should try finding Jesus' love most of all, and if we do we have found Jesus himself. What people should try to find in themselves in their lives is the joy they might never have had if it hadn't been for God and Jesus. (ten year old)

The foregoing was written spontaneously by a child with no church connections whatsoever; she told me she had "just thought it out" for herself.

In response to question three, other children wrote:-

"We should try to find love and caring".

"People should try to find treasure because you cannot be as good as you could be without treasure like love, God, and the whole universe".

"We should try to find the power of God".

"I think we should find love. God created us and that is why we can love other people, like our baby sister, so much."

"I think the treasure is love. God created us and we should try to find happiness deep down inside us".

"Most people feel love inside them but they don't like to say". (All ten year olds).

Because the children had worked extensively on a theme, namely rocks and stones, they were able to gradually work towards an analysis of quite sophisticated Biblical material, and were able to see the significance of what was written and apply the teaching to their own lives. They were beginning to think, and had begun to understand one way in which it is necessary to approach the Bible if it is to be understood.

Figure Thirteen.Worksheet About Jesus.

1. These things have been written about Jesus Christ. What do you think they mean?
  - A. Jesus is like an important foundation stone in a building. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you will never be beaten. (1 Peter, Chapter 2).
  - B. To those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, he is like a "stone of stumbling".

Before writing down answers, it would help if you asked yourself how Jesus could be like a stone. What are stones like?

Now read this:

'He laid the body of Jesus in a cave which had been carved out of rock. A stone was rolled over the entrance'.  
(St. Matthew).

Last week somebody in this class wrote:-

'I was walking on the beach when I saw a shining stone. I picked it up. Later I cracked it open and inside there was a shining diamond'.

Now answer these questions:-

2. What kind of secret did the rocky cave, and the stone on the beach, share?
3. Sometimes people say that human beings are "like a special stone", deep inside them. What should we try to find deep down inside ourselves?

\*\*\*\*\*

I consider the most important aspects of the work to be, firstly, the children were able to share their thoughts with others, including the teacher; secondly they were extending their own thoughts beyond the basic image itself, and thirdly, I could perceive that their conception of God was moving towards a greater sophistication: the anthropomorphic ideas which had been revealed earlier had become transformed, and this largely because the use of symbols, in this instance rocks and stones, had been studied and examined in depth and applied to complex religious writing. Because of their developing skills and increasing maturity of thought, the children were able to "make human sense" of the material.

The performance of the children, and the ability which they demonstrated in dealing with abstract language, may be compared with the conclusions and general comments of Dr. Ronald Goldman, who also wished, by his research, to discover how far children were possessed with the potential for theological insight and understanding.

References to Chapter Ten.

- |                                   |  |                   |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------|
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| 4. St. Matthew, 16, v 18.         |  |                   |

Conclusions and Implications for the School Curriculum.

Dr. Goldman's conclusions and recommendations for religious education are unhelpful to work in the classroom because they seriously underestimate the potential of children in primary schools. The reasons for this miscalculation of Dr. Goldman are as follows:-

1. His researches were based upon the psychology of Piaget which itself failed to penetrate the way in which young children assimilate, think, and learn;
2. The varieties of experiences underlying children's responses to Dr. Goldman's questions were not analysed, and nor was the underlying significance of experience recognized.
3. Distinctions between biological maturity/immaturity and intellectual capacity were not fully understood or recognized.
4. Influences resulting from environmental factors upon children's growth of understanding were not given recognition.
5. Too rigid an interpretation was placed upon the possible meaning of Biblical material which implied "set answers" were possible to the questions posed; added to this criticism may be the tendency of questions to suggest responses which fitted into Piaget's 'intellectual stages' of development.

A possible element of Dr. Goldman's work which was positive is that attention was drawn towards the need for further planning in the field of religious education: a mere reading of Bible stories was inadequate if understanding was to be encouraged. The weakness of Dr. Goldman's research was in his failure to recognize the true potential of young children for abstract thought, and the importance of experience for its development. There is no justification, on the grounds of their biological immaturity, to assume intellectual incapacity and therefore omit Biblical material from the religious education of junior aged school children. Skills of interpretation need to be taught in religious education just as they are in other areas of the school curriculum, such as mathematics or science.

The intellectual capacity of children in the primary school is considerable, and this coupled <sup>with</sup> innate curiosity and enthusiasm enables them to study abstract symbolic language and to discover its meaning. Children have the ability to transfer learnt skills from one area of work to another and are well capable of applying what they have learnt to their own everyday lives.

For religious education to be effective, it must hold relevance

for the children themselves. If their studies are based upon experience, the relevance and meaning of religion is more likely to make sense to them. The interest they show in the material provided for them may be used to assess its relevance to the children's experience.

Two types of experience may be discovered within the human psyche: personal experience which may be lodged in either the conscious or unconscious mind, and also the collective experience of humanity, which is lodged in the unconscious but which becomes conscious when activated by an appropriate symbol. It is this wealth of collective experience which opens up an immense area which can, and has been, used in religious symbolic interpretation of life; hence the Biblical symbols such as rocks and stones, fire and water, wind, searching activities, all of which (and many more besides) have the power to activate the "blueprints" within the human mind as appropriate symbols for the manifestation of the archetypes. Thus, children will be able to "make sense" of such ideas as God being like a rock, the wind, or light in darkness, etc. or as a treasure worthy of pursuit. The results of the use of archetypal images in this thesis supports the suggestions made in recent years that the theory of Jung concerning the collective experience of humanity justifies further research.

It is necessary, if children are to be enabled to develop informed opinions about what it is with which religion deals, and to recognize genuine religious questions about life generally, that they be given direct teaching about the necessary skills to do so. They are capable of understanding the difference between literal and non-literal truth and can learn to write symbolically themselves. A study of symbols is well within their grasp if based upon their own personal experience or upon experiences of the collective unconscious.

A variety of activities, related to a particular symbol or "truth", is helpful in reinforcing and developing the young child's understanding. Thus, religious education becomes integrated with science, art, language, and every aspect of the curriculum.

For the children's learning to be most effective, it needs to be based upon exciting imagery which stirs the imagination and arouses recognition of the underlying archetypes; thus superficial topics such as "People Who Help Us" (which were advocated by Dr. Goldman) appear banal to the children and frequently fail to develop thought in a creative, stimulating manner. Material found in both the Bible and

other religious writings frequently appeals to the collective unconscious, and if planned thoroughly and handled sensitively and imaginatively, could stimulate much exciting work in the classroom.

Experience should be used as a beginning in religious education, rather than as an end in itself. Children respond eagerly to teaching which uses experience as a starting point, but they must learn to move towards the unfamiliar imaginatively.

Flexibility in the methods used in and out of the classroom is necessary if children are to influence how their work develops. Thus, if children are enthusiastic about some area of work this should be offered to them personally for development, perhaps in the form of a problem to solve, as this approach offers scope for creative thought and its expression.

Regarding the use of experience, and bearing in mind the problems posed in the classroom such as lack of time, numbers of children demanding attention, etc., it is realistic, in my opinion as the result of many years of teaching in the classroom, and in the light of this research, to assume children in primary school have certain basic experiences upon which religious education may be based. Such experiences are concerns about their family, and their relationships with peers; curiosity about the nature of the universe of which we are all a part; experiences of death, happiness, and illness, as well as the experiences of the collective unconscious as described above, which offers immense potential for development. All of these provide metaphorical 'platforms' from which a sound understanding of religious interpretations of life may grow and develop, enabling the formation of mature, informed opinion being possible later in life.

Reference.

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Appendix One.  
Thieves and Door Bell Ringers.

Bill - a thief	Joseph
Sid - a thief	Angel
May - doorbell ringer	Innkeeper
Eve - doorbell ringer	Old Lady
Mary	

Scene One. (TWO THIEVES ARE WANDERING DOWN THE STREET).

SID. Come on, Bill. Lets rob this house. Nobody is in because the lights are out.

BILL I'll look around first. Right, I'll kick the door down. (HE KICKS THE DOOR IN).

SID QUICK! Lets get something. (THEY GO INSIDE AND COME OUT WITH LOTS OF GOODS).

BILL. Lets get to my house and hide. (THEY BOTH RUN AND HIDE).

SID I'm wishing we'd never done it, Bill. What if the old man who lives there gets a shock? He could die.

BILL I know what you mean. I wish we'd left the stupid house alone. I feel horrible inside. (THEY SETTLE DOWN AND FALL ASLEEP. ENTER TWO GIRLS, MAY AND EVE.)

MAY Come on, Eve, lets ring this bell and hide when they come to the door.

EVE I'll ring and lets hide in the bushes. (SHE RINGS THE BELL AND THEY HIDE).

WOMAN Now then, who is at my door? I've had a very tiring day. Oh dear, oh dear. (SHE LOOKS ALONG THE STREET). Nobody there again. I'm so tired, too. Now I really feel ill. (SHE GOES INSIDE).

EVE I wish we'd never done that. Wasn't it stupid? Poor old soul. It might have been my granny, and I would hate her to be teased.

MAY Come on, then, lets go home. I feel mean. (THEY ARE JUST WALKING SLOWLY ALONG, AND SIT DOWN ON A WALL TO TALK. ENTER MARY AND JOSEPH).

MARY Joseph, you will have to find somewhere for me to stop. Please try this Inn. I cannot go on any further.

JOSEPH Innkeeper! Innkeeper! Have you a spare room for the night? My wife is very tired.

INN. Everyone in Bethlehem is tired. We are full up. But perhaps I could find you a place. I know. There is a cave in the back there. Will that do? You'll have to sleep with the animals though, and it will be a bit smelly.

JOSEPH Yes, we'll take it. (THEY SETTLE DOWN. MARY PICKS UP HER BABY FROM BEHIND A CHAIR. MEANWHILE AN ANGEL APPEARS AND GOES TO THE THIEVES).

ANGEL Wake up! Wake up! God has come to earth!

BILL. What is that? Hey, Bill, look - its an angel!

ANGEL. You must come with me to see the baby. It is really God. God has come to earth tonight.

SID But we are thieves. God isn't interested in people like us.

ANGEL If you are sorry, God will forgive you and welcome you. I have two other people to pick up on the way who have been stupid, too, who are also sorry. Hurry now. Come to the child who is God. I'll show you the way. (THEY MOVE ACROSS THE STAGE, COLLECTING THE BELL RINGERS ON THE WAY. THEY GO TO THE STABLE AND KNEEL DOWN. MARY HOLDS OUT HER HANDS TO THEM.)

The End.

Appendix Two.The Doctor and the Strangers.

Doctor                    Three strangers  
 Three nurses            All people  
 Servant Boy

Scene Set.    Patients are lying ill in bed. A doctor is treating them. A sign is on the wall which reads "North Shields Patients Only". A few nurses are going around the patients. A knock is heard at the hospital door.

Nurse 1.            (She opens the door). Yes, can I help you?

Stranger 1.        Excuse me, madam. We are three strangers who are looking for a doctor. We have travelled a long way with a little boy who is ill. Could your doctor help him, please?

Nurse 1.            Doctor only treats people who were born in North Shields. He is very busy, anyway. (NURSE 2 COMES UP).

Nurse 2.            Why should you see the doctor? You are strangers. You do not live in North Shields.

Stranger 2.        Please help us. Have pity on us. Our boy is ill: see how he groans in pain! (BOY GROANS LOUDLY).

Stranger 3.        He should be so grateful if you would help us. (NURSE 3 COMES UP).

Nurse 3.            Now then, what is happening here?

Nurse 1.            These three strangers won't go away. They want to see the doctor with this boy. I've told them he only looks after people from North Shields, but they will not go away.

Nurse 3.            Doctors should help any sick person. I'm sure of that. I'll ask him. (RUNS TO DOCTOR). Doctor, there are three strangers outside. Will you see their sick boy, even though they don't live in North Shields?

Doctor.            Of course! It will give me pleasure to see the boy, or any ill person, no matter where they come from in the world.

Stranger 1.        Thank you so much, Doctor. We came from the eastern part of the world, and we heard what a good doctor you were. We knew you would help us.

Doctor.            How could I turn you away? Bring the child to me. (ALL THE ACTORS AND ACTRESSES LOOK AT HIM IN AMAZEMENT).

Doctor.            I will take that stupid notice down, and it will never be hung up again.

THE END.

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\* (Now part of a D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University)

