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THE USE OF PUPPETRY  
IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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A Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

THE USE OF PUPPETRY  
IN  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

Puppets have always fascinated people. Children, especially, seem to like them. With the popularity of puppets in mind, educators and others are today making good use of puppets. The little make-believe people have invaded schools, hospitals, and television studios and are being received with tremendous enthusiasm.

Puppets have been used also to a limited extent by Christian educators in church schools, daily vacation Bible schools, and clubs.

It will be the purpose of this thesis to study and compare the extensive use of puppetry in secular fields with the rather limited use of puppetry in Christian education with a view toward formulating some principles by which Christian educators can make more effective use of puppetry. These principles will then be tested in a project in a church school situation to determine the value of puppets in meeting group and individual needs.

## 2. The Subject Justified.

The wide use of puppetry in secular fields indicates in some degree its popularity and value. The use of puppetry in Christian education indicates to a certain extent its value in promoting the goals of Christian education but it is obvious that it is a new tool of the Christian educator, who has only begun to explore its possibilities. A study of the use of puppetry in secular fields and an appraisal of its value in meeting group and individual needs will aid the Christian educator in using puppetry in a more effective way.

### B. The Method of Procedure

The first step, described in the first chapter, will be to investigate some common uses of puppetry in secular fields with a view toward determining the value of such uses. The second step, treated in the third chapter, will be to analyze the information brought to light by the investigations covered in the first two chapters, and in the light of this analysis to set up and carry out a puppetry project at Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City. Part of this step will be to record the progress of the plan and the achievement of aims. Recommendation for the use of puppetry in Christian education will then be made.

### C. The Sources for the Study

The source material for this work will be: (1) books, (2) periodicals, (3) theses, (4) curriculum materials, (5) data from an experiment in the use of puppetry with third graders at Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City.

#### D. Definition of Terms

The terms "puppetry" and "puppets" will be used throughout the thesis. Although a technical definition of "puppets" would refer to fist, or hand puppets, and "marionettes" is used to refer to those figures manipulated by strings attached to their limbs, the terms "puppetry" and "puppets" will be used in this study as an inclusive terms to denote any type of puppet or marionette.

SOME COMMON USES OF PUPPETRY WITH CHILDREN

## CHAPTER I

### SOME COMMON USES OF PUPPETRY WITH CHILDREN

#### A. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter will be to survey the evolution of puppetry and some common uses of puppetry with children today with a view toward understanding the value of puppets in meeting group and individual needs.

#### B. The Evolution of Puppetry

Historians differ as to the birthplace of the puppet, Egypt or Greece being the main contenders for the honor. It is interesting to note that priests in Egypt used puppets for religious purposes. In many other ancient countries puppets were used, mainly for entertainment purposes. The early Christians used puppets to teach religion to non-Christians. The churchmen of the Middle Ages also used puppets for teaching purposes, but in the sixteenth century puppets were banned from the church, an edict declaring they were more amusing than devotional.

There are records of puppets and puppet shows being used in almost every country in the world. Although puppets have been used for teaching purposes, they have been used mainly for entertainment purposes. The best example of the entertaining puppet show is the Punch and Judy show which originated in Europe. Punch and Judy were slapstick, hoodlum-type puppets which everyone seemed to love.

In America the first record of puppets is found with the

Indians, who used them in religious rites and dances. The Indians even believed that the little figures were endowed with life by means of the Great Spirit.

There is reference to a puppet production in New York City as early as 1738, and records indicate that Punch and Judy arrived from England about 1828. Puppets have been used mainly for entertainment purposes here in America ever since.

Our own century has seen a new interest in puppetry. As someone has put it:

The lost art is being re-discovered and is spreading everywhere - into our schools, our night clubs, our films, our variety theatres, our church halls, our parlours.<sup>1</sup>

Puppets are now being used for more than entertainment purposes, as the comment above indicates. Puppetry is being re-discovered not only as entertainment, but also as a means of meeting the needs of disturbed children and sick persons. It has also found favor as a stimulating hobby. An association of puppeteers, the Puppeteers of America, which holds conventions and publishes its own magazine, testifies to the new interest in puppets. Numerous books have been published on the history and construction of various types of puppets. It is not unusual to find a shelf in a fairly large public library devoted solely to books on puppetry.

Three of the fields in which puppetry has been used to great advantage are the fields of secular education, therapy, and television.

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1. Jan Bussell: The Puppet Theatre, p. 13.

### C. Puppetry in Education

#### 1. Its Use.

Puppetry is used in education today in the following ways:

(1) as a handcraft project in itself, (2) as a project which will serve to unify or correlate with different aspects of the curriculum, (3) as a group activity which may tend to help work out various personal and social problems of persons in a specific group.

As a handcraft project puppetry may be taught during the time allotted to art in the schedule. For instance, in most elementary schools it is now customary to have a special art teacher who teaches every class in the school certain skills and techniques in various media. In such a case, children might learn the technique of constructing puppets, such as simple fist puppets with papier-mache heads. A show may or may not be presented upon completion of the puppets.

As a project which may serve to unify or correlate with various aspects of the curriculum, puppets are used in areas of study such as English or social studies. For instance, in an elementary school with which the writer has contact, a third grade made puppets to act out stories they had been reading, a fifth grade made puppets in connection with its study of American Indians, and a sixth grade used their own puppets to dramatize Greek myths. In a New York City kindergarten class the children became very conscious of shadows. They indicated interest in puppet shows, so the teacher showed them how to make shadow puppets. Using the simple stick puppets they had made, the kindergarten class put

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on their show, based on one of their favorite tales, "Gingerbread Man."<sup>1</sup> In another New York City classroom, a fourth grade began a science and geography unit on the effects of climate and land on the life of the people. The country chosen for the study was Switzerland. The class became interested in marionettes at the time of this particular study, and indicated a desire to make a family of Swiss marionettes and present a puppet show which would help the other children in the school understand more about Swiss life.<sup>2</sup> An eighth grade class, also in a New York school, presented a play based on a story of Chinese life, using their own puppets patterned after the lovely old translucent puppets used in ancient Chinese shadow plays.<sup>3</sup>

As a project which tends to help children to work out personal and social problems, puppetry is used both as a handcraft project and a theatrical performance. In a New York City school a teacher planned such a project for a class which had many behavior problems. The teacher and principal conferred together and decided that since there were so many disturbed children in the class and because the group was lacking in social unity a puppetry project should be attempted. The teacher recalled that the class had shown no little interest in a visiting marionette show, so she proposed that the class make marionettes in connection with a social studies unit on Mexico.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Board of Education of the City of New York: Puppetry in the Curriculum, pp. 47-50.
2. Ibid., pp. 58-60.
3. Ibid., pp. 69-71.
4. Ibid., p. 153.

Teachers today are making good use of puppets. They have taught children how to construct various types of puppets. They have attempted to use puppetry as a means of unifying the curriculum. They have endeavored to use puppets to help work out behavior problems of disturbed children, and to unify groups which need socialization.

2. Its Value.

a. As a Handcraft Project.

Puppetry is, of course, a type of handcraft, and as such may be of value to children. Educators feel that arts and crafts now have a real place in the curriculum, whereas previously many felt that any type of art activity was a waste of time.<sup>1</sup> The basis for this opinion is the child himself who has within himself the urge and ability to create.<sup>2</sup> Rugg and Shumaker describe the creative capacity within the child in this way:

For the creative impulse is within the child himself. No educational discovery of our generation has had such far-reaching implications. It has a two-fold significance: first, that every child is born with the power to create; the second, that the task of the school is to surround the child with an environment which will draw out this creative power.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the opportunity for creativeness is treated in detail by Hockett in Modern Practices in the Elementary School. He says:

The person who succeeds in expressing this spirit achieves a number of values, of which the following are the most significant:

1. Self-discovery. The individual comes to know his own

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1. Florence Williams Nicholas, Nellie Claire Mawhood, and Mabel B. Trilling: Art Activities in the Modern School, pp. 1-4.
2. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
3. Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker: The Child-Centered School. pp. 228-229.

abilities and his own strength through trying them out. He becomes an individual through expressing himself, his ideas, and his conceptions. He achieves poise, since his emotional stability is furthered and outlets for emotional energy are given.

2. Self-reliance. Creative achievement increases courage, self-confidence, and satisfaction. It frees the individual from damaging inhibitions, timidity, and self-consciousness. It brings the feeling of power and mastery. Hence, personality is built up, integrated, strengthened.
3. Persistence. The development of intense purpose, the habit of hard work, and the ability to stay with a task are frequent accompaniments of the attempt to create.
4. Enthusiasm. Creative-mindedness leads to emotional warmth. The creative person simultaneously loses himself and finds himself in his effort to produce...he lives fully and satisfyingly.
5. Intellectual honesty. Opportunities for creative expression bring intellectual sincerity. Things are valued for their true worth. The creative student works for the love of his idea rather than for a grade or some other extraneous symbol.
6. Intellectual adventurousness. The person who has learned to express his desire to create is constantly lured to delightful new interests, new ideas; constantly he finds new purposes... He knows how to have fun with his own mind; the whole of life is crammed with the joys of discovery and doing. He knows how to escape boredom.<sup>1</sup>

Puppetry, as a type of handcraft project, can be said to be of value to the child because it helps to foster the creative spirit within the child. All of the values received by the child as this spirit is developed, as described by Hockett above, can then be ascribed to puppetry as a type of handcraft project. The list by Hockett is penetrating and worthy of much consideration.

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1. John A. Hockett: Modern Practices in the Elementary School, pp. 167-168.

Puppetry not only serves to help develop the creative spirit within the child, but it may also serve to provide him with a recreational resource. Nicholas, Mawhood, and Trilling cite the importance of a productive use of leisure time and the place art may play in helping people to find worthwhile leisure time pursuits.<sup>1</sup> Puppetry may become an especially valuable recreational resource for the child. Materials used for making puppets are inexpensive and can be found around the home. A child may entertain himself with puppets or may be one of a group that enjoys puppetry. Puppetry can become a fascinating hobby. George Sand and her son, Maurice, became interested in puppetry. They produced many plays, even giving them for their friends. Ficklen describes their interest in A Handbook of Fist Puppets:

This was not a short-lived fad, but a deep and abiding interest. For more than thirty years, through happy times and through sorrowful times, the puppets brought interest, merriment and distraction from anxiety. George Sand helped to write and adapt and to act the plays, and sat up to all hours to sew the puppets' costumes. Her son carved their heads from wood, skillfully but crudely, for Madame Sand felt that thus they expressed more than more highly finished faces which left nothing to the imagination. Photographs of these puppets show them most interesting, in face and costume.<sup>2</sup>

Puppetry may even become a money-making proposition. Children could easily produce short puppet shows to which admission could be charged. For the talented child, who may become especially fond of puppets, puppetry offers the possibility of a future profession. Burr Tillstrom, the originator of the television program, "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie," is an example of the person who became interested in puppets as

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1. Nicholas, Mawhood, Trilling, op. cit., pp. 14-17.

2. Bessie Alexander Ficklen: A Handbook of Fist Puppets, pp. 24-25.

a hobby but who later ventured into puppetry as a profession. Bil Baird, designer and operator of the Baird Marionettes, seen regularly on television, became interested in puppetry when seven years old, never lost his interest, and is now making puppets for advertising and television. His puppets are among the most original and clever puppets being produced today.

Puppetry can become a recreational resource of unlimited possibilities.

b. As a Correlative Project.

As a project used in conjunction with other areas of the curriculum, puppetry has proved to be a great aid in stimulating learning in areas where poor learning might be the rule. The natural love which children have for puppets helps them to learn and stimulates their interest in things which sometimes nothing else can. The value of puppetry as a means of correlation has been spoken of in a pamphlet published by the Board of Education of the City of New York:

Puppetry is a useful medium through which the teacher can integrate experiences and essential learnings in all the major curriculum areas... Puppetry is one of the most useful techniques in vitalizing the regular classroom work.<sup>1</sup>

In a New York City kindergarten a teacher recorded thirty-two learning experiences related to various areas of the curriculum resulting from a puppet play based on the story, "The Gingerbread Man."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Board of Education of the City of New York, op.cit., p. ix.
2. Cf. ante, p. 8.

For instance, the children learned new words that were part of the story, became interested in repeating rhymes, developed a concept of farms and farm work, observed what caused shadows, learned why the length of shadows differs during the day, learned to sing many new songs, learned that the sun is necessary to life, sewed crepe paper curtains for the stage, and learned how to make shadow figures in profile.<sup>1</sup> In another New York City classroom, referred to in this thesis,<sup>2</sup> the children, through a puppet show based on Swiss life, learned to use research materials in acquiring information for the show, improved their speech patterns and enunciation, learned much about Swiss life, learned about glaciers and mountains, became familiar with Swiss music, sewed costumes for their marionettes, and made and decorated programs for the show with original drawings.<sup>3</sup> The eighth grade class referred to previously,<sup>4</sup> enriched their vocabulary with many new words, increased their power of reading comprehensively, showed interest in all phases of Chinese life, learned respect for the art contribution made by the Chinese to world civilization, were eager to know all about the history of shadow figures, showed new appreciation of beauty in color, line, and use of light, learned that various materials differ in their ability to transmit light, selected appropriate records to accompany the show, and developed a clearer understanding of proportion.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Board of Education of the City of New York, op. cit., pp. 51-53.
2. Cf. ante, p. 8.
3. Board of Education of the City of New York, op. cit., pp. 61-63.
4. Cf. ante, p. 8.
5. Board of Education of the City of New York, op. cit., pp. 73-75.

In all of the classroom situations cited above, learning became a thrilling experience because of the puppetry projects. The learnings, related to other areas of the curriculum such as English or social studies, became alive and interesting because they were undertaken in conjunction with an exciting puppetry project.

c. As a Group Project.

Puppetry is useful, too, as a group project through which the teacher hopes to help various individuals resolve personal problems and to bring together all the members of the group into a compact unit. It may be said then that puppetry can be used to work out individual and group behavior problems.

The seventh grade class with many problems<sup>1</sup> resolved some of them through a carefully planned puppetry project. A boy who was an habitual truant took the main part in the play. His position of leadership in the group earned the respect of the children; this boy learned that life could hold responsibility and dignity, and that he himself had an essential role in life. A girl, very neurotic, learned to transfer her attention to something besides herself through her participation in the project. Another boy who was very destructive learned to use his energy in a constructive way making scenery for the play. The value of the puppetry project in this instance was that it offered to each child the opportunity to use his own talents and abilities, thus helping each one to gain the recognition and self-expression which his ego craved and providing a way for the individuals to work on a common task, thus

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1. Cf. ante, p. 8.

binding them together into a compact group.<sup>1</sup>

Puppetry offers to the teacher in today's school many opportunities: she may find it useful as a handwork project; she may find that it is a useful means of unifying the curriculum; she may discover that it helps in working out behavior problems. Puppetry offers to the child in today's school many possibilities for rich learning experiences: it may offer him an outlet for creative expression and a recreational resource; it may stimulate him to learn of many things he would not ordinarily find interesting; it may enable him to adopt better behavior patterns.

#### D. PUPPETRY IN THERAPY

##### 1. Its Use.

Puppetry as a tool of the therapist working with persons suffering from mental or physical disorders is being used extensively in many hospitals and institutions. Like the teacher, the therapist uses puppetry in a variety of ways. It is used as a handcraft project in itself. It is used as a diagnostic measure. It is used as a theatrical performance.

Puppets are fascinating and easy to make. Therefore they have proved themselves to be a popular handwork project in hospitals and institutions. Often patients needing something to focus their thought on, other than themselves, have found making puppets a delightful pastime.

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1. Board of Education of the City of New York, op. cit., pp. 153-156.

Arts and crafts are a part of the program at a home for children and youth convalescing from rheumatic fever. This disease leaves the patient with a weak heart, thus making much physical activity impossible. Because craft work requires a small amount of physical activity and exertion the arts and crafts program at the home is an essential one. At the home puppetry has been used both as a handcraft project and a theatrical performance. Children usually show interest in making puppets in the craft shop. One boy at the home made a dog puppet which was dressed like a human and in appearance was quite comical. A little girl became interested in puppets and her interest developed into a hobby. She made several puppets, then announced she was going to take them all home with her and give shows of her own. A small boy became very attached to the "big bad wolf" he made for "Little Red Riding Hood."<sup>1</sup>

In the psychiatric wards of some hospitals, puppetry has become useful as a means of diagnosing the emotional problems of children. At Bellevue Hospital in New York City, puppet shows are given to children who are then observed very closely for their reactions. The children are encouraged to react in any way they choose, even shouting approval or disapproval. After the show they are encouraged to express their

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1. The home described here is Herrick House in Bartlett, Illinois. The writer and her husband spent the summers of 1955 and 1956 working in Herrick House as arts and crafts counselors. The children mentioned were observed by them during that time. A description of the plays participated in by the children can be found on page 17 of this study.

opinions of it, the characters involved, and the "problems" presented. The free, verbal reactions of the children are often good indicators as to their emotional problems. For instance, in the shows at Bellevue, hand puppets which represent different "types" are used, such as witches, giants, magicians, animals, and cannibals. Children react to these characters, sometimes because a certain character may be similar to someone he knows. In one instance cannibals represented parents to a child. As the therapist begins to see the child's problem he is able to help the child to see it and together they can work towards a solution.<sup>1</sup>

Puppetry is also used as a theatrical performance in order to provide needy patients with a happy group experience. For instance, a puppetry project may be planned by a therapist for individuals who do not feel themselves a part of the hospital ward. As these individuals participate in the puppet project, they become part of a group. At the home referred to in another section of this thesis<sup>2</sup> the writer used puppetry as a theatrical performance. There were two shows given, one by the little children, "Little Red Riding Hood", the other by two adolescent girls and a counselor, an original play.

The therapist is finding puppetry to be a useful handcraft project in itself. He is using it as a diagnostic measure and he is discovering it to be a good means to draw individuals into a group.

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1. Adolf Woltmann: "The Use of Puppets in Understanding Children" Mental Hygiene, July, 1940, pp. 445-458.
2. Cf. ante, p. 16.

2. Its Value.

a. As a Handcraft Project.

The value of art and handcraft in therapy cannot be emphasized enough. Herbert Read, eminent British authority on art says in this connection:

In the clinic and the hospital it can be shown that the practice of art has a therapeutic effect, hastening the process of healing even in functional disorders, and in mental disorders being a prime mode of healing. There is even evidence which suggests that art can reform the brutalized mind of the criminal.<sup>1</sup>

The value of puppet making for the rheumatic fever patients referred to in a preceding section of this study<sup>2</sup> was mainly that of providing an interest in something outside themselves. With this new interest came joy and self-confidence. In the case of the adolescent boy, the puppet earned him the respect and admiration of everyone in the home. It was important for the boy to have this recognition for he was rejected by his parents and under the custody of a city court. The little girl whose puppet making turned into a hobby came to a realization that she could "do something." When she first came to the home she was a dejected little girl whose most common expression was "I can't." Her puppet making convinced her that there were things she could do and enjoy doing. The little boy whose wolf was used in "Little Red Riding Hood" came to have an attachment to his puppet. It became in his mind a thing he had made which was his very own to keep and to love. This little boy was a lonely child, full of fears, who had an insecure family life. A puppet provided something for him to really love.

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1. Maria Petrie: Art and Regeneration, foreword.  
2. Cf. ante, p. 16.

Puppetry has also been used in hospitals to help patients develop an interest in something outside themselves. There is a story<sup>1</sup> told of a patient in a neuropsychiatric hospital who could not adjust to hospital routine. He was morose and bitter. The therapist interested him in making a puppet which he later called "Sad Sack" because it was typical of himself and fate. As his interest in puppetry grew, he became more receptive toward hospital routines; he even stimulated the interest of others in puppetry and gradually his ward became a puppet workshop. Through this experience the patient's joy and confidence were restored. He began to realize he had talents and abilities that could be developed. His interest in puppetry let him to explore other areas of arts and crafts and this interest in various areas of art continued long after his stay in the hospital was over.

In many places puppetry is being used as a therapeutic measure to help patients, both children and adults, focus their attention on something outside themselves. With new interest there usually comes new joy and confidence.

b. As a Diagnostic Measure.

In an article on puppetry in the Encyclopedia of Child Guidance, Adolf Woltmann states that puppets are particularly well-suited to act out the emotional problems of children. Emotional problems usually revolve around attitudes of love or hate. Hand puppets, since they are so easily manipulated, can portray these attitudes through exaggerated action such

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1. Anne Blood: "The Value of Puppetry in a Neuropsychiatric Hospital" Recreation, December, 1951, pp. 394-396.

as fighting, killing or kissing. Such simple actions are easily understood even by dull children. Puppets also lend themselves to representation of specific types of persons. Children usually identify a certain puppet with themselves or with relatives. Then, too, a puppet play is usually an informal affair and so children feel free to express themselves about it as the show progresses.<sup>1</sup> If puppets and puppet plays can be used in such a way as to invite identification and free expression, then a program such as is carried out at Bellevue<sup>2</sup> would be extremely valuable in helping therapists understand the difficulties of children. Woltmann says that the shows given at Bellevue do reveal the emotional problems of children and are used purposely to help the therapist understand those he is working with.<sup>3</sup> Even nursery age children can be helped by such a diagnostic measure.

The value of puppetry as a diagnostic measure is enabling the therapist to understand the problems of a child so that he may help the child to work them out.

c. As a Theatrical Performance.

Puppetry may also be helpful to therapists who are working with patients who need a happy group experience. Blood tells of a schizophrenic, paranoiac patient who learned to relate happily to others through a puppet production. The patient, through his part in the puppet project, gradually

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1. Adolf Woltmann: "Puppetry," Encyclopedia of Child Guidance, pp. 843-845.
2. Cf. ante, p. 16.
3. Adolf Woltmann: "The Use of Puppets in Understanding Children," loc. cit.

entered into other activities in the wards. His quiet introvertish ways became less quiet and introvertish as he was absorbed into group activities.<sup>1</sup> The little girl who became so interested in puppets, and referred to previously,<sup>2</sup> was helped also by the group show given after the puppets were completed. The child was not a popular girl, and she sensed it. Being able to make a puppet gave her new confidence and enabled her to take part in the rehearsals for the show in a healthy frame of mind. She enjoyed every minute of the play and through this participation in a group project felt more at home with the group.

Puppetry can be very useful to the therapist working with patients suffering from physical and mental disorders. It has been found to be a good handcraft project by means of which a patient's interest is transferred to something other than himself. It has been found to be a useful way of helping the therapist to diagnose the emotional problems of children. It has been used as a theatrical performance to help patients adjust more freely to a group situation.

#### E. Puppetry on Television

##### 1. Its Use.

The use of puppets on television programs is extensive. Both local and national stations make use of puppets, which have been referred to as "the staples"<sup>3</sup> on most of the nation's stations.

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1. Anne Blood: loc. cit.

2. Cf. ante, pp. 16, 18.

3. "The Handiest TV Actors, " TV Guide, November 17-23, 1956, p. 18.

Puppets have literally invaded the television studios. TV Guide states:

The world of television is being peopled by somewhat less than human creatures these days - meaning the puppets and marionettes without whom few stations seem able to get along. They can be seen in almost any city, almost any day, in almost any form.<sup>1</sup>

Puppets are used in a variety of ways on television. On a Dallas station they are used to announce parties, birthdays, and commercials. A puppet acts as an art teacher on a Santa Barbara station. A storyteller on a Chicago station is aided by a puppet.

Though puppets are often used for functional purposes, as described above, they are perhaps most often used for entertainment purposes. "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" is probably the best known and most commended of all puppet programs. It has been seen for over ten years. It is a rather spontaneous show (no script is used) using nine puppets, all manipulated by the originator of the show, Burr Tillstrom. An ex-school teacher, Fran Allison, converses with the puppets. The characters on the program are many, varied, and humorous. They include a bald boy with a monstrous nose, Kukla, a one-toothed dragon, Ollie, a Southern gentleman, Colonel Cracky, a grande-dame, Madame Ooglepuss, a wizened witch, Beulah, and a rabbit, Fletcher.

A typical "Kukla" show is hard to describe, and by description, probably sounds quite dull. The show can perhaps best be summed up by saying that it is a running commentary on "things." The puppets talk, sing, and cavort around the stage. There is no plot, but there is what one might call a common idea or theme to each show. For instance, one

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1. Ibid.

program that the writer watched had as its theme "rain." The bulk of the show consisted of comments on rain and solos or duets which had to do with rain. Burr Tillstrom is a skillful manipulator; his puppets look very life-like as they talk or sing, and this particular program was extremely funny and entertaining mainly because of the masterful way Tillstrom handled the puppets. Tillstrom has never regarded his program as anything more than fun, and that it surely is.

"Howdy-Doody" is another popular puppet program which is also very entertaining; it, however, probably is more than entertainment. The program revolves around the adventures of various characters, both people and puppets, in a cowtown,- Doodyville. Howdy-Doody, a drawling, cow-country boy, is the main character. Doody is a puppet, as are Phineas T. Bluster, a scheming old man, Dilly-Dally, a rather pathetic boy, and Flub-a-Dub, a strange creature with a face like a duck, ears like a dog, and a neck like a giraffe. Master of ceremonies Bob Smith and several other humans also share in the adventures of the Doodyville gang. One show watched by the writer had a definite moral tone to it. It had as its main idea the unfortunate results of conclusions based on too flimsy evidence. The story attempted to show how one person was wronged because others jumped to hasty conclusions about him. The whole thing was funny, indeed, ridiculous, and yet the tone of it all was definitely moral which would make the program more than entertainment.

Puppets are used in many ways on television. Though often used for functional purposes, they are most used for entertainment purposes and even for purposes of moral influence.

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2. Its Value.

a. As Entertainment.

The value of puppets as entertainment fare for youthful television-viewers seems to be the wholesome quality of the puppets as over against more sordid entertainment. Ewbank and Lawton comment on the "whimsy, fantasy, and reality" of two puppet programs.<sup>1</sup>

There has been much praise for "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie." It has not only been called the best children's show originating in the midwest (it is broadcast from Chicago) but has been called the best show of any kind on midwestern TV.<sup>2</sup> In 1951 the show lost a sponsor and as a result its time was cut in half. "Kukla's" fans rose to the defense of the program and about the ensuing uproar Time said:

TV's children's hour is largely a desert of western films and space ship serials. But for the past four years, Burr Tillstrom's "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie"... has flourished in this desert as an oasis of intelligent fantasy. Last week the oasis was still there, but it was growing smaller: NBC had cut the show from half an hour to fifteen minutes.<sup>3</sup>

Critics agree that puppet programs such as "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" have a real place in providing wholesome entertainment for children.

b. As a Means of Influence.

Puppets are used as a means of influence, directly and indirectly. As a direct means of influence puppet programs may be geared to setting a distinct moral tone, such as the "Howdy Doody" show among children (it was rated sixth on the Hooperatings in 1949 and apparently is still

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1. Henry L. Ewbank and Sherman P. Lawton; Broadcasting: Radio and Television, p. 339.
2. "Stars on Strings," Time, January 17, 1949, pp. 68-69.
3. "Shrinking Oasis," Time, December 10, 1951, p. 50.

popular) indicates that it is well-received, moral tone and all. It is impossible to evaluate the influence of the show, but it is probable that it is helpful in setting a moral tone which is much needed.

The indirect use of puppets as a means of influence is harder to describe than the direct means. It is known that puppets have great attraction for children; it is not uncommon for a child to develop great affection for a puppet character. A little English boy fell in love with a mule puppet which had been popular on British TV for some time. He wrote: "I am four years old. I love Muffin."<sup>1</sup> Children in America also love puppets. The extensive array of Howdy Doody products on sale today is only one indication of the affection that children have for the freckle-faced puppet. Phillips, Grogan, and Ryan declare:

There is no doubting the popularity of such regular radio and TV features as "Howdy Doody"... "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" and others. Many puppet programs have struck responsive chords with the younger set, and Oliver J. Dragon can be sure of as loyal a following as Hopalong Cassidy or other real-life heroes.<sup>2</sup>

Such affection for puppets is especially significant in the light of a study made of children's interests. Jersild and Tasch comment as follows:

...interests are more than a cluster of favored activities. They represent, in the aggregate, modes of life in which the child's emotional well-being and his social relations are deeply involved.<sup>3</sup>

If, then, the child's interests represent a significant part of his life, surely they must represent a possible avenue of influence. Jersild and

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1. "Stars on Strings" Time, January 17, 1949, p. 68.
2. David C. Phillips, John M. Grogan, and Earl H. Ryan: Introduction to Radio and Television, p. 107.
3. Arthur T. Jersild and Ruth J. Tasch, Children's Interests and What They Suggest for Education, p. 86.

Tasch suggest that interests offer great possibilities to the educator because the child himself is so bound up with his interests.<sup>1</sup>

It is known that children are greatly interested in puppets. The study by Jersild and Tasch reveals the significance of child interests and the avenues of influence these interests open up to the educator. On the basis of such facts the inference may be drawn that puppets are a means of influencing children, though in what specific ways it is not sure. It will be readily seen that a puppet such as Howdy Doody, who appears in a context which has a moral tone, may exercise significant influence over children.

Puppets on television provide children with good wholesome entertainment. They are also of value as a means of influence. A show with a distinct moral tone may be a means of direct influence; individual puppets, representing a significant child interest, may be a means of indirect influence, and may in turn influence them for good.

#### F. Summary

A survey of the evolution of puppets revealed that puppets have been used for many centuries and have proved themselves a popular form of entertainment, as well as a tool of religious and moral education.

A survey of some common uses of puppets revealed that they are currently much in use in education, therapy, and on television.

In education, puppetry is used as a handwork project, as a correlative project, and as a means of socialization. As a handcraft

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1. Ibid.

project puppetry is valuable as a means of developing creativity and as a recreational resource. As a correlative project it helps to stimulate learning in areas of the curriculum which might otherwise be dull. As a means of socialization, puppetry has been found to be a helpful device in solving personal and social problems of children.

In therapy, puppetry is used as a handwork project, as a diagnostic measure, and as a theatrical performance. As a handwork project it is helpful in focusing the attention of patients on something outside themselves. As a diagnostic measure it is invaluable in giving to the therapist insight into the problems of the children with whom he is working. As a theatrical performance puppetry can be a means of providing happy group experiences for those in need of such.

On television puppet programs are mainly entertainment programs, and as such, provide wholesome entertainment which is very popular with children. Puppet programs can have a moral tone, and if this is the case, children may be morally influenced by such programs. Because of the affection children have for puppets, it is probable that they could be influenced by the puppet itself; such affection is especially significant if the puppet here appears on a program that has a moral tone to it.

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THE USE OF PUPPETRY IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

## CHAPTER II

### THE USE OF PUPPETRY IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

#### A. Introduction

Handwork has a place of importance in Christian education today. One writer says this:

Handwork is a definite and valuable part of the process of educating the child. This is one method of creative expression and deserves its rightful place in the curriculum. Handwork is no longer limited to drawing from a pattern and coloring, nor daubing color on a copy of some beautiful masterpiece. It is a program of enrichment, a supplement to the work that is being carried on in class... It is an outgrowth or an interpretation of the curriculum, and not something extraneous.<sup>1</sup>

Puppetry is an especially valuable handcraft which has been used to some extent by Christian educators. It will be the purpose of this chapter to study and evaluate the use of puppetry in Christian education today. Data for the study will be taken from books and curriculum materials which discuss the use of puppetry, and from interviews with persons who have either observed the use of puppetry or actually used puppets in a Christian education setting.

#### B. The Use of Puppetry in Christian Education

##### 1. Survey of Books.

The use of a cloth doll which can be converted easily into a fist puppet is recommended by LeBar in Patty goes to the Nursery Class.

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1. Rebecca Rice: Creative Activities, p. 7.

The author suggests that such a puppet be used with various units of study throughout the year. The main use of the puppet is to serve as a model of behavior for the children in the group. The teacher may talk with the puppet who will in turn nod her head, perhaps indicate her desire to hear a song, or show the children how to talk to God by bowing her head.<sup>1</sup>

In Here's How and When, Keiser devotes thirteen pages to the use and construction of puppets. She suggests using puppets to act out stories the class may have studied. Instructions for making many different types of puppets, costumes, and stages are included.<sup>2</sup>

A puppet project by a fourth grade church school class is described in Lobingier's book, Activities in Child Education. The author relates how this class developed their own play after hearing the story of Ruth from the Bible. The puppets were small dolls operated by strings. A stage was a box. Spontaneity characterized the play, though part of the dialogue was memorized from the Scripture narrative.<sup>3</sup>

Rice devotes several pages to the construction of simple fist puppets in Creative Activities. She suggests that they may be used for dramatization of Bible stories or in a missions study unit. The same author also suggests that simple cardboard paper dolls may be mounted on sticks and moved about on a table as puppets.<sup>4</sup>

In Puppets and Bible Plays, Robbins and Bracher have included a section on the use of puppets in the church school. They advise using

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1. Mary LeBar: Patty Goes to the Nursery Class, pp. 59-60.
2. Armilda B. Keiser: Here's How and When, pp. 51-64.
3. Elizabeth Lobingier: Activities in Child Education, pp. 198-202.
4. Rice, op. cit., pp. 89, 99-102.

puppets to act out Bible stories in order to help the children better retain the content and meaning of the stories, and as a project in cooperation. The type puppet suggested by the authors is a spool marionette. This type of marionette is made entirely from spools, except for the head which is a ping pong ball. Plans are given for constructing a spool marionette and a simple stage. Several short Bible plays are also included.<sup>1</sup>

Beck suggests using puppets in studying missions in Aim Your Activities at Teaching Religion. Also included in this book are directions for making shadow puppets, paper bag puppets, and cloth puppets.<sup>2</sup>

A survey of books which describes the use of puppets in Christian education reveals, then, that puppets are used in a variety of ways. A puppet may be used as a visual aid to help influence behavior; puppets may be used to act out Bible stories studied by a class; puppets may be used as a handcraft project in connection with a special unit of study such as missions; puppets may be used to help children to learn how to cooperate with each other.

## 2. Survey of Curriculum Materials.

### a. Christian Faith and Life.

Opening Doors, the magazine of the Christian Faith and Life Curriculum, Presbyterian, U.S.A. for teachers and parents of primary children, has from time to time had many suggestions for the use of

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1. Josie Robbins and Marjory Louise Bracher: Puppets and Bible Plays, pp. 2-6, 26-32, 37-50.
2. Ruth Armstrong Beck, "Using Simple Puppets in Teaching," Aim Your Activities at Teaching Religion.

puppets in the church school and in daily vacation Bible school.

A paper bag puppet is suggested as an aid in telling a story. The children are then encouraged to make a puppet like the one used by the teacher. This puppet is for the children to take home and use in relating the same story told in class to their parents.<sup>1</sup>

Another type puppet, the stick puppet, which is really a paper doll mounted on a flat stick, is suggested for use in playing conduct situations.<sup>2</sup> The teacher might present situations like the following to the children:

1. Kathy goes into her brother Richy's room. She borrows his airplane and accidentally breaks a wing. What might happen?
2. Kathy is learning to roller skate. She often falls down. Some children who skate well watch her. What might they do?<sup>3</sup>

The children are then encouraged to act out the different possible endings to each situation. Conversation is held in which the children are asked what happened to the people in each case and what solution to the problem they liked best.

Simple fist puppets were used for a puppet play based on a reading book used in conjunction with the Faith and Life Materials, And So the Wall Was Built. The children even wrote the script themselves. Puppets and stage were constructed by the children and the play

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1. Eva Watson Frye, "Being Christian Friends," Opening Doors, October-December, 1950, pp. 44-45.
2. Deborah H. Vaill, "Words and Deeds that Hurt," Opening Doors, April-June, 1951, pp. 42-43.
3. Ibid., p. 43.

given to the kindergarten class of the church school. A description of the play and the script used are included in Opening Doors.<sup>1</sup>

In Discovery, the magazine of the Faith and Life series for teachers and parents of junior children, hand puppets and marionettes are listed as possibilities for dramatizing such Old Testament stories as Ruth, Esther, and Job.<sup>2</sup>

b. Scripture Press Foundation.

The Scripture Press materials do not emphasize handcraft work for church school classes. Workbooks are used, but more complicated types of handcraft, such as puppetry, are not suggested in the materials. However, in the daily vacation Bible school materials, puppets have been suggested several times ever since 1948. Puppetry was featured in connection with the theme of the parables in 1948, 1951, and 1954.

In 1954 the daily vacation school materials published by Scripture Press for intermediates featured puppets. The theme for that summer was the Parables of Jesus. The puppets were to be made by the children in the handwork session, then used to act out the Parables as they were studied. It was suggested that the play the children did best be used as part of the closing program of the school. Hand puppets were chosen for the project and complete directions given for making them, their costumes and simple stages.<sup>3</sup> In this instance, puppets were

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1. "And So the Wall Was Built," Opening Doors, January-March, 1956, pp. 52-53.
2. "Fun With Puppets," Discovery, July-September, 1950, p. 33, and "Drama in the Bible," from the same issue, p. 49.
3. Bernice T. Cory: Intermediate or Junior High Teacher (Scripture Press), 1954.

suggested both as a handcraft project, a means of dramatization, and a visual aid.

c. The Seabury Series.

This curriculum, which is the official Episcopalian curriculum, is still in the experimental stage and materials have not yet been worked out for all age levels. However, in two of the teacher's manuals, those for the first and fourth grades, puppets are recommended for use in the church school classes. Suggestions are made and directions given for making various types of puppets.

In The Church is My Home, Too, the manual for teachers of first graders, there are directions for making stick puppets, paper bag puppets, and fingerettes, a small paper figure or animal that is held on the finger.<sup>1</sup>

The teacher's manual for fourth grade classes has even more pages devoted to the use of puppets. In this book, Right or Wrong?, there are suggestions for making simple fist puppets. A description of a class at work on a puppetry project is also given.<sup>2</sup>

A survey of curriculum materials has revealed that puppetry is a popular project, suggested for both Sunday Church schools and daily vacation Bible schools. Puppets in these materials are suggested as a handcraft project, a means of dramatization, and as a visual aid.

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1. "Resources and Methods," "The Church is My Home, Too, pp. 107-109.
2. "Classroom Materials," Right or Wrong?, pp. 105, 115.

3. The Use of Puppets and Puppet Plays as a Visual Aid.

a. Puppets.

The United Lutheran Church in America uses a single puppet to promote its stewardship program. The puppet is named Stewart the Steward. He is a freckle-faced boy with locks of hair falling over his forehead and a determined cowlick. Stewart is dressed in overalls which display a cross on the front. These clothes are symbolic, the overalls representing work and the cross representing God's work.<sup>1</sup>

A lady in a local church conceived the idea of using this little boy puppet as a means of making stewardship vital and specific to children. Her idea was noticed by others and gradually Stewart the Steward became a well-known, much used, little puppet. Directions for making Stewart the Steward puppets were sent to interested workers in churches. A cartoon strip featuring Stewart was added to "Let's Go," the children's monthly bulletin of the United Lutheran Church in America.<sup>2</sup>

Stewart is used as a visual aid in presenting the idea of stewardship to children. He "talks" to children in church school about his adventures, particularly those in which he travels to other countries. perched on offering envelopes. He explains where he goes on these trips and exactly how the money which he accompanies is spent. Stewart has been used throughout The United Lutheran Church in America for some three years.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Janice Clodfelter, personal interview, New York, February 19, 1957.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

b. Puppet Plays.

A puppet play may be a visual aid, that is, it may be used to help a teacher present content in visual form. Such a puppet play may be given in a daily vacation Bible school for instance, as a means of presenting some aspect of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup>

Puppet plays may also be used in Sunday church schools, camps, rallies, and at missionary meetings. Mrs. Blanche Fuhrman, wife of an Evangelical United Brethren pastor, began making fist puppets with carved plaster heads to use in teaching in such places. She dramatizes both Bible stories and conduct stories with her puppets. She has used her dramatizations in many ways: (1) to enable children to remember Bible stories, (2) to help children and youth understand and work out their problems, (3) to explain the way of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Fuhrman has made a number of puppets (about two dozen) which she uses over and over in different plays. A puppet's name is carefully chosen in order to emphasize the type of character he represents. Some of her characters are Toughy Blabber, Cecile Upper crust, Timothy Tightwad, and Mrs. Popular.<sup>3</sup>

The situations used in the plays are drawn from life situations.

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1. The writer and her husband presented puppet shows during the summers of 1955 and 1956 in the Evangelical United Brethren Churches in the vicinity of Sumner, Illinois. The plays were brief and were geared to some of the problems of the children in the churches. Fist puppets were used.
2. Blanche Fuhrman, personal interview, New York, January 5, 1957.
3. Ibid.

These are observed by Mrs. Fuhrman or confided to her. Each play is written in an exaggerated, humorous style. One of the most popular series of plays given by this worker is one in which two devils tempt Christian boys and girls.<sup>1</sup>

Puppets and puppet plays may, then, be used in a variety of situations for a number of purposes.

### C. The Value of Puppetry in Christian Education

Puppetry is a unique type of handcraft in that it involves not only the making of an object, but also the actual use of the thing made. To discover the value of puppetry in Christian education it is therefore necessary to examine puppetry not only as a handcraft project but also as a means of dramatization. Puppetry as a handcraft and as dramatization are thought of as projects for children, carried out by the children themselves.

Puppetry may also be used as a visual aid, and as such is usually used by a teacher to convey some aspect of Christian truth. Sometimes one group of children may present a puppet show for another group of children; such a puppet show would also be considered a visual aid. Puppetry must then be examined also as a type of visual aid in Christian education.

The following segment of this thesis will be an attempt to determine the value of puppetry as a handcraft project, as a means of dramatization, and as a type of visual aid.

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1. Ibid.

1. As a Handcraft Project.

Puppetry is a type of handcraft, and should be evaluated as such. Bowman states that children need an opportunity for creative expression:

The attempt to create something essentially "my own" is one of the most powerful drives of human nature, and brings some of the most satisfying experiences of life. The smallest child feels this desire for self-expression and will use whatever media are available.<sup>1</sup>

Bowman goes on to say "In religious education creativity assumes a deeper significance when it becomes working cooperatively with God; and sometimes, working with God for someone else."<sup>2</sup> Bowman also feels that creative activity helps give a child a better grasp of religious knowledge and enables him to interpret truths in terms of everyday life. Too, the joy that children find in creative work has an unconscious effect on their attitude toward religion.<sup>3</sup> Van Riper mentions that creative activities are extremely helpful in meeting the child's spiritual needs.<sup>4</sup>

It is thus apparent that handcraft is considered a valuable tool of the Christian educator. Puppetry as a type of handcraft is, therefore, of value in Christian education. But puppetry is a special kind of handcraft<sup>5</sup> and should also be considered as such. As Robbins and Bracher comment:

Puppetry is a visual aid, and a creative activity. In both categories it is a practical teaching medium for the schools of the church.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Atha Bowman, "Creative Activity-Of Course You Can Do It," You Can Do It!
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Joan Van Riper: The Use Of Creative Activities in the Christian Education of Primary Children, p. 6.
  5. Cf. ante, p. 36.
  6. Robbins and Bracher: op. cit. p. 4.

The value of puppetry as a creative activity or type of handcraft, will first be considered.

Robbins and Bracher feel that one of the chief values of puppetry comes through making a puppet. Because of the interest children have in puppets there is great joy derived from making a puppet. They say:

Children love puppets. To the child, a marionette he has made or can manipulate, is little short of human. The appeal of puppetry is strong enough to meet the competition of movies, radio, television, and comics.<sup>1</sup>

Keiser also comments on the joy of puppet-making:

It is fun to make puppets representing familiar characters in stories. Once a person, be he child or adult, has made a puppet, it will never seem like a bag or box or a lump of papier-mache. Instead it will become a person, and its creator will find himself really loving it, laughing at it, playing with it - and delighting in it.<sup>2</sup>

Puppetry not only provides an interesting and joyful experience to the child but also affords the teacher a chance to give her class an adventure in cooperation. Because many puppets are being made by a group for a play which the group will present it is essentially a group project.

Robbins and Bracher comment:

One marionette is useless. A play is not made of one character. It is peculiar of puppetry that boys and girls from first grade up to the eighth will work together with no antagonism due to difference in age level or sex.<sup>3</sup>

According also to Robbins and Bracher puppetry is unique in that it offers an opportunity for the child to learn more thoroughly things he is supposed to learn:

The chief value of puppet productions in the church school is that

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1. Robbins & Bracher, op. cit., p. 2.
  2. Keiser, op. cit. p. 51.
  3. Robbins & Bracher, op. cit., p. 3.

the child is learning while he is working. He learns the Bible stories most thoroughly...where time permits, as in vacation school or summer camp, the research and investigation necessary for making costumes, scenery, and properties will increase the child's acquaintance with the Bible and with life in Bible times.<sup>1</sup>

Constructing puppets provides an interesting, joyful experience for the child, it affords him lessons in cooperation, and enables him to learn more thoroughly the contents of a story or whatever is being studied.

2. As a Means of Dramatization.

A project in puppetry involves not only the actual construction of the puppets but also the use of the puppets in a dramatization. Such a dramatic presentation has many values. Robbins and Bracher have this to say concerning the value of puppetry as a means of dramatization:

As the child uses his marionette, or one that was made by someone else, he has the fun of being a performer and bringing pleasure to others. His work was done for a reason, and it brings satisfaction.<sup>2</sup>

Here again there is the element of joy, as the child manipulates his puppet and presents a play for others, and as he is content in the fact that his work has been purposeful.

Then, too, a dramatization with puppets also helps some children find emotional release. Keiser says:

Many a shy and withdrawn child has been helped to establish contact with his fellows by means of puppets... Agressive children can drain off some of their energy and hostility as they handle their puppets ... With puppets, children make their own magic, and this brings a sense of power, a release, and keen joy that is conducive to good mental health.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Keiser, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

Acting out stories with puppets helps a child to learn more thoroughly that which is being taught. Robbins and Bracher state that "...because he identified himself with the puppet he is manipulating, he learns the deeper meaning of the stories, and is helped to form attitudes."<sup>1</sup>

Using puppets to act out conduct situations helps children to view behavior problems more objectively and to "see more clearly the connection between cause and effect in human relationships. And in this way they can understand how other people may feel in various kinds of situations."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. As a Visual Aid.

Puppets or a puppet play may also be considered as a visual aid. The puppet used by The United Lutheran Church in America, "Stewart the Steward," is of value for several reasons.<sup>3</sup>

The use of the puppet stimulates interest in the subject of stewardship. Children, from primary age children to junior age children, love the little boy puppet and never tire of seeing or hearing him.<sup>4</sup>

The use of the puppet not only stimulates the interest of children in stewardship, but also makes the subject alive and vital to them. Through the recounting of the imaginary trips taken by Stewart to other lands, the children are made aware of the program of stewardship

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1. Robbins & Bracher, op. cit., p. 3.
2. Deborah H. Vaill, "Planning Ahead for the Church School," Opening Doors, April-June 1951, p. 63.
3. Clodfelter, op. cit.,
4. Ibid.

to which they are contributing. They understand where their offering goes and how it is used. Their offering is no longer just a coin in an envelope but it is a contribution toward a hospital or a school or some other aspect of Christian work. The whole stewardship program becomes alive to children through the use of a simple puppet.<sup>1</sup>

The use of the puppet also motivates the children to participate in the program of stewardship. Because they like Stewart, they want to be like him, a steward for God. By means of identification with Stewart, then, they are motivated to imitate his behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the puppet play as a visual aid, Robbins and Bracher have this to say:

A well-done puppet show is a superior type visual aid for the church school. Puppet productions are high in entertainment value, and are worthy of a place on church school programs.<sup>3</sup>

The use of original puppet plays by adults, discussed in another section of this chapter,<sup>4</sup> also has value for teaching. Because puppets are appealing a puppet play may stimulate the interest of a group which might not otherwise be interested in Christian things. Fuhrman has found that puppets are appealing to all, regardless of age, and that this appeal accounts in part for the puppet play as an effective teaching tool.<sup>5</sup>

Because puppets lend themselves so well to humor, puppet plays can often be written in a humorous, almost satirical manner. Fuhrman has discovered that satire helps people to laugh at their foibles. This

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Robbins & Bracher, op. cit. p. 4.
4. Cf. ante, pp. 35, 36.
5. Fuhrman, op. cit.

ability to laugh at oneself seems to enable one to want to change his behavior. Fuhrman has had many people come to her after a play and tell her that it really helped them to straighten out their thinking and gave them a desire to alter their ways. Fuhrman believes that a satirical puppet show can preach more powerfully to people than a minister can through a sermon.<sup>1</sup>

Fuhrman has also found that puppet shows help children to remember stories as no other method can do. She has purposely compared puppetry with other methods of teaching, such as storytelling, and has found that children remember content as presented in a puppet show better than content presented through stories and other methods. Even young children can repeat almost verbatim a story told through a puppet show after a long lapse of time.<sup>2</sup>

The value of a puppet play given by one group of children to another is discussed elsewhere in this study.<sup>3</sup>

Puppets and puppet shows, used as visual aids, are of great value. A single puppet may stimulate interest in, and bring reality to, a certain topic of study. Because children identify themselves with a puppet they like, a puppet is often useful as a means of motivating children to do a certain thing. Puppet plays also serve to stimulate interest in various topics or areas of study. A satirical type of puppet show is helpful because it enables people to laugh at themselves, thus making them open to changing their behavior. Puppet plays also enable children to retain content in a remarkable way.

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. post, p. 61.

Puppetry in Christian education has great value. As a handcraft project, as a means of dramatization, and as a type of visual aid it can help the child in many ways.

However, puppetry in itself may not be enough to help further the thinking and understanding of the child. In a rather penetrating article in the International Journal of Religious Education, Spoerl raises this problem. She says:

Some years ago my junior age pupils...presented a puppet play of the story of "Joseph," culminating their study of his life. After the service I was listening to the delighted comments of the parents and church school children...as I listened to the comments I realized the source of my dissatisfaction throughout the total period of preparation. The children had created artistically, but there was no time left in the church school year to utilize any thought process which had accompanied the artistic creation...the question remains what has the creation been: An artistic end product, or the furtherance of the creative thought process of the child as related to religious education? This is the question which we must face as teachers, for unless the creative activity leads to some releasing of thought, some new ideation, some inspiration to the child to go forward with the subject matter about which he has devised an artistic production, the value is not what it might have been.<sup>1</sup>

For puppetry to have real value to children, the Christian educator must help them to crystallize any thinking that may have accompanied a puppet project so that they will be guided into new ways of behaving.

#### D. Summary

A survey of books discussing the use of puppetry in Christian education revealed that puppets are used as a visual aid, as a means of dramatization in acting out Bible stories and conduct situations, as a handcraft project, and as a means of teaching children to cooperate with each other.

1. Dorothy Tilden Spoerl, "Is Creative Activity Enough?", International Journal of Religious Education, April, 1947, p. 7.

A survey of curriculum materials revealed that puppets are often suggested for use in Sunday church schools and in daily vacation Bible schools. In these materials puppets are suggested as a handcraft project as a means of dramatization, and as a visual aid.

Puppets and puppet plays may be used by teachers as a type of visual aid.

Puppetry has great value as a handcraft project, a means of dramatization, and as a visual aid.

As a handcraft project puppetry gives the child deep satisfaction and joy, helps him to get along with others, and enables him to learn more thoroughly that which is being studied.

As a means of dramatization puppetry again affords joy to the child, both through manipulating his puppet and presenting a play for others, and through the knowledge that his work has been for a purpose. Dramatization with puppets helps some children find release from emotional problems. Acting out stories and conduct situations with puppets enables a child to learn thoroughly what is to be learned.

As a type of visual aid, a single puppet can arouse interest in, and bring reality to, a topic under discussion. A puppet can also be used to motivate children to adopt certain behavior.

Puppet shows are also a means of stimulating interest in certain areas of learning. Satirical puppet shows are especially helpful in enabling people to understand and change their behavior. A puppet can help children to retain content.

The value of puppetry in Christian education can be further realized if the teacher will guide the children involved in a puppet project in any thinking and understanding which may have accompanied the project. A puppet project is important not as an artistic production but as a means of furthering the spiritual understanding and growth of the child.

AN EXPERIMENT IN THE USE OF PUPPETRY WITH THIRD GRADERS

CHAPTER III  
AN EXPERIMENT IN THE USE OF PUPPETRY  
WITH THIRD GRADERS

A. Introduction

The first two chapters of this study have been concerned with a survey of some common uses of puppetry with children. This chapter will be a report of an experiment in the use of puppetry with third graders in the church school of the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City.

The first part of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of insights gained from the study covered in the first two chapters. The next section of the chapter will contain the main part of the chapter; observations of the group and of individual children will be included. Progress of the group and of individuals will then be evaluated. A general evaluation of the experiment, with recommendations for the use of puppetry in Christian education, will conclude the chapter.

B. Insights Gained from the Study of Puppetry

From the study of puppetry discussed in the first two chapters, several facts concerning puppetry stand out.

First, puppets are used for many, varied purposes. Second, in the areas of education, both secular and Christian, and therapy, it has been found that puppets can definitely meet some needs of children and can, to some degree, help to modify certain behavior patterns. Third, the appeal of puppets always has been, and continues to be, very great.

Fourth, puppetry offers great possibilities to Christian educators, possibilities which may not as yet have been explored. In the following segments each of these observations will be discussed.

### 1. The Uses of Puppetry.

Puppets throughout history have always been a popular form of entertainment. Today, while they are used sometimes for entertainment<sup>1</sup> they are no longer valued only as a form of entertainment. Puppetry is now being used by persons working in the fields of education, both secular<sup>2</sup> and Christian,<sup>3</sup> and therapy.<sup>4</sup>

The uses of puppetry are many and varied. In secular education it is used mainly as a handcraft project, as a correlative project and as a group project.<sup>5</sup> In Christian education it is used mainly as a handcraft project, a means of dramatization, and as a visual aid.<sup>6</sup> In therapy puppetry is used mainly as a handcraft project, a diagnostic measure, and a theatrical performance.<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Puppetry and Children.

No matter how puppetry is used with children it is obvious that its value is primarily in meeting the needs of children and in influencing behavior.

For instance, as a handcraft project used in secular education, it can help to meet the need children have to express themselves.<sup>8</sup> As

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1. Cf. ante. pp. 21-23.
2. Ibid., pp. 7-9.
3. Ibid., pp. 28-36.
4. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
5. Ibid., pp. 7-9.
6. Ibid., pp. 28-36.
7. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
8. Ibid., p. 9.

a handcraft project in therapy it may be helpful in providing an interest for a patient who is too occupied with himself.<sup>1</sup> As a handcraft project used in Christian education puppetry can be a source of real joy and satisfaction to a child.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Appeal of Puppetry.

The survey of the preceding two chapters points up the appeal of puppetry. Throughout history the little people have fascinated most everyone. Today it is not only the puppet show, as for instance, the "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie," program, that delights, but it is every aspect of puppetry that brings pleasure to the child. The making of a puppet is pure pleasure to the child.<sup>3</sup> Manipulating a puppet is also a joyful experience.<sup>4</sup> Participating in a play brings great satisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

It would seem that there is undoubtedly a relation between the widespread use of puppets and their appeal. They are appealing to children, and it is the tremendous appeal which is the basis for the effective use made of them by educators and others. An instance of this relation between the appeal of puppetry and its effective use is the seventh-grade "problem" class discussed elsewhere in this study.<sup>6</sup>

A further qualifying statement should probably be made here in regard to puppet-making and the appeal of this activity. While it is

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1. Ibid., p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 38.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 39.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp. 7, 14.

true that puppets appeal in a unique way to children, it is also true that creative activity in itself also appeals to children. As was pointed out in a previous section of this thesis, the innate desire to create is a powerful drive and accounts in part for the appeal of puppet-making as a type of handcraft project.

#### 4. The Significance of Puppetry for Christian Education.

In the light of the survey discussed in the preceding two chapters it is clear that the use of puppetry has value as it relates to the needs and problems of children. And while puppetry has been used to some extent in Christian education it has not been used in that area as much as it has been in other areas. The more extensive use of puppetry in secular education, therapy, and television would indicate that its value has been more thoroughly considered in these fields than has been done in Christian education. Puppetry thus offers itself to Christian education as a tool to be more extensively and effectively used.

On the other hand, as puppetry is considered as a tool of the Christian educator it is obvious that it can be used not only as an artistic production, as Spoerl so succinctly stated.<sup>1</sup> The aims and objectives of Christian education should be kept clearly in mind as puppetry is put to use.

The significance of puppetry for Christian education would seem to lie in (1) the possibilities of its effectiveness in meeting the needs and the problems of children, (2) the danger of its being

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1. Spoerl, loc. cit.

considered an artistic production, with no relation to the aims and purposes of Christian education.

### C. The Formulation of the Plan

#### 1. The Purpose of the Plan.

As was pointed out in the preceding discussion, a study of some common uses of puppetry revealed that it can meet certain needs of children and can be effective in changing behavior. Its appeal is great and is probably the reason for its effective use by educators and others. It became the purpose of the writer to discover whether puppetry could be useful in helping achieve certain goals in a specific Sunday church school situation.

A puppet project was planned which included all aspects of puppet-making, a dramatization of a story with the finished puppets, and an evaluation of the project by the class, under the guidance of the teacher.

While other uses of puppetry could have been chosen for the experiment, the particular aspects of puppetry, puppet-making and dramatization, were chosen because it was felt that these activities would interest the children and bind them together as a group. The interest and needs of the group, then, dictated the particular aspect of puppetry chosen for the experiment.

#### 2. The Determination of Aims.

Before any aims were set for the group the writer spent several months observing the children, making some notes concerning their behavior and thinking about their needs. Other information about

the children was afforded through discussions with some parents and the director of the Church school. With all of this information in mind the aims for the group and individual children were determined.

As the experiment was conducted careful observations were made week by week of the group and of four individual children. These weekly records form the basis of the description of the experiment.

a. Aims for the Group.

The group to be used in the experiment was composed mostly of highly intelligent children from wealthy homes. There were several children from homes where there was only one parent. The group was not a unified one. Little appreciation was shown by the members of the class for one another. The children had little knowledge of the Christian life and not much awareness of God as One who could help them. There was little or no understanding of the meaning of the death of Christ.

It was the aim of the writer, then, to provide for certain social, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the group. The intellectual aim was to help the children grow in their knowledge of God and of Jesus, and of the Christian life. The spiritual aims were: (1) to help the children understand more fully the reality of God, His nearness and ability to help us, (2) to help the children understand more fully the meaning of the death of Christ, (3) to help the children grow in their understanding of the Christian life, (4) to promote more desirable attitudes, such as concern for others.

b. Aims for Individuals.

Every child in the class had needs. The children picked for the experiment were picked for several reasons. First, the children who were chosen were those whose attendance was best. This was a necessary, practical consideration. Obviously, children who rarely came could not be counted upon to be in the class long enough for careful observations to be made. Second, the children chosen were those who would probably benefit most from the puppet project.

(1) Child A.

This little girl was abnormally shy, but very responsive to love and attention. She was from France and often had a hard time understanding what others in the class said. She very seldom spoke to anyone unless spoken to. The aims for child A were (1) to help her express herself more freely, (2) to help her feel more a part of the group.

(2) Child J.

This boy was a restless, silly child, usually one to disrupt a class session. He showed unusual talent in drawing and seemed to enjoy any creative work done in class. His father had committed suicide.

The aims for Child J were (1) to help him channel his creative ability and energy into something constructive, (2) to help him develop self-control.

(3) Child R.

R was a very sweet cooperative little girl who was a joy to have in the class. Not only did she show a sweet disposition but also revealed a grasp of spiritual things far beyond that of the other

children. She was, however, a bit too reserved and serious and needed to learn to relax and enjoy herself.

The aims for R were (1) to help her to participate in the project in an easy, relaxed manner, (2) to increase the knowledge she already had concerning the Christian life, (3) to deepen her awareness of God and Jesus Christ.

(4) Child T.

Child T. seemed preoccupied. He never exhibited enthusiasm for anything. T was usually silly and showed little interest in anything done in class.

The aims for Child T were (1) to help him develop an interest in something, (2) to help him channel his energy into something constructive.

3. Determination of the Place of the Experiment in the Class Sessions.

It was felt by the writer that the puppetry project should not be undertaken until some time had been spent with the class. It was felt, too, that the project should relate to the curriculum materials used. As the writer thought about an appropriate time to begin the project and examined curriculum materials, it seemed that the puppet project could be started sometime after Christmas, when a new quarter would begin. The work of the second quarter was concerned with the world-wide church, emphasizing the work of missions and the life of Christians in other lands.<sup>1</sup> A puppet project could fit into this study very nicely.

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1. The curriculum materials used were Christian Faith and Life, of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The particular theme for the year 1956-1957 was "The Church."

#### 4. Determination of the Story to be Used in the Experiment.

There were many considerations to be taken into account by the writer in regard to the choice of a suitable story to be used in the puppet project, as a basis for the show which could be given.

It must, first of all, be related to the curriculum materials. Therefore, it would have to be concerned with the church in other lands.

It must also be a story which would deepen the children's knowledge and understanding of God, Jesus, and the Christian life. It must be a story with outstanding spiritual content told in a way that would meet the children on their own level.

As a story, it must be a story worthwhile in itself. Arbuthnot states that any story that is worthy of reading or telling must fulfill certain literary criteria: a substantial theme; a good plot with action, unity, logical development; and truth to human nature.<sup>1</sup> It must also be a story which could easily be adapted into a puppet play.

The last factor to be considered was the age levels of the various children who would view the finished production. Since the entire primary department would see the puppet play the story presented would have to be simple enough for first graders to understand yet exciting and interesting enough to appeal to third graders.

Many stories were considered, Some did not emphasize the things it was felt necessary to emphasize. Others were not good stories as far as literary criteria were concerned. The story finally selected,

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1. May Hill Arbuthnot: Children and Books, p. 394.

after much prayerful consideration, was one based on a true incident. It was titled "Probhu and the Tiger." In brief it was the story of a little Indian boy who contracted leprosy and set off to find Jesus Christ Who he knew could heal him. The story is part of a flannelgraph published by The American Mission to the Lepers; the abbreviated form used in the experiment may be found in Appendix A.

5. Determination of the Type Puppet to be Used.

Just as there were factors to be considered in the selecting of a suitable story to be used there were factors to be considered in the selection of the type puppet to be used.

Some puppets are difficult to make; others are quite simple. The type puppet to be used would have to be one that was not too hard for third-graders. On the other hand it should not be so simple that they become bored.

The puppet used should be easily manipulated and easily seen from a distance.

The puppets should be durable enough to withstand rehearsals and the final performance.

The finished puppet should be something that its maker would be proud and happy to own after the project is over.

It was felt that a fist puppet with a papier-mache head met all of the above requirements.

#### D. The Experiment

##### 1. Record of Weekly Sessions.

###### a. The First Week.

###### (1) Procedure.

This first session was introductory as far as the project was concerned. Up to this time the class knew nothing of the plan to make puppets and present a puppet show, so this session was planned primarily to launch the project.

When the children came to class, they were attracted by the materials for making the puppets, which had been laid out on the work table. They seemed delighted when told they would be making puppets and asked many questions concerning the process.

During the actual class session, the class discussed how it might feel to live in a country where people had not heard of Jesus. This matter was discussed in order to help the children feel more keenly the experience of the boy in the story. Then the story, "Probhu and the Tiger," was read. At the conclusion of the story the puppet project was explained, parts in the play assigned, and directions given for constructing the puppet heads. The remainder of the session was spent making the heads.

###### (2) Observations of the Group.

The group was very attentive during the story. It was obvious that they liked the story and were interested in the experience of Probhu.

They were enthusiastic about making puppets and presenting a play. While working on the heads, they talked about their parts in

the play, or about their puppets. Some children went about the room in a quiet way, looking at others' work and commenting on it. One child asked if parents could come to the play.

(3) Observations of Individuals.

Child A showed interest in the project and was delighted with her role as nurse in the play.

Child J was extremely disruptive. He showed no interest in the project. He gave up working on his puppet head.

Child R seemed happy with her role as Probhu's mother. She worked on her puppet quietly.

Child T showed much enthusiasm. He worked hard on his puppet and seemed anxious to do a good job. He conversed with the other children about his part in the play saying, "I'm the man that told the story of Jesus."

b. The Second Week.

(1) Procedure.

The aims for this session were to finish the puppet heads and arrange the story into scenes for the show.

When the children arrived, materials for painting the puppet heads were all laid out; as they finished painting they cut out the costumes for the puppets. During the class time the story was reviewed in preparation for arranging it into scenes for the play. The remainder of the session was spent completing the puppet heads.

(2) Observations of the Group.

The children as a group were obviously interested in the project. Upon arrival they immediately went to work on their puppets.

While they worked they talked about the story, particularly the part concerning the water which was supposed to wash away sins. There were no discipline problems during this pre-session time when the children were working on their puppets.

During the discussion the group showed interest in talking over the story. Their comments revealed that they had been deeply impressed by the story and had not forgotten any part of it, even the most minute details.

The last part of the class session was spent in finishing the puppets and showed that the enthusiasm of the class for the project continued.

### (3) Observations of Individuals.

Child A showed no unusual behavior; she worked quietly on her puppet. In response to a request by the writer for cloth and other scrap materials, she had brought a large bag of such things from home and seemed pleased that she had had a part in contributing something to the project.

Child J seemed interested in the story, particularly the part concerning the water of the river which supposedly washed away sin. He was not disruptive, but worked quietly on his puppet. He did not, however, show any outward sign of real enthusiasm for the project.

Child R did not come to class.

Child T was also absent.

### c. The Third Week

#### (1) Procedure.

The puppets still needed a few finishing touches so one

of the objectives of this session was to attend to this detail. The other aim was to have the first rehearsal of the play.

During the pre-session, while the children were arriving, most of the puppets were completely finished. The children worked with enjoyment and conversed with each other about their puppets and the play.

In the class period the plan for rehearsal was outlined, then the children finished up all the remaining puppets. They helped one another and were extremely cooperative. The first rehearsal then took place and was almost a total failure because Child J was so disruptive.

(2) Observations of the Group.

Every part of the session revealed that the children were interested in the project. There were no discipline problems, except for Child J.

(3) Observations of Individuals.

Child A seemed unusually happy and friendly.

Child J cooperated well until rehearsal time. He noticed the others' puppets, remarking how good they were. He said one that his puppet wasn't good. During the rehearsal his silliness almost ruined this procedure.

Child R was her usual happy self. She brought a bag of materials from home.

Child T was absent again.

d. The Fourth Week.

(1) Procedure.

This was the week when the play itself was to be given. The aim for the session was to rehearse the play in readiness for the final presentation. The story was read as the children acted it out.

The class rehearsed the play twice in preparation for the assembly period of the primary department. During this assembly period the children presented the play to the entire department, parents, and teachers.

(2) Observations of Group.

The children were most cooperative during the rehearsal. Though they were excited at the prospect of giving their play their excitement did not hinder the rehearsal. There was a feeling of unity in the group. Some of the children asked what would happen to the puppets after the play was over, apparently not realizing that they were theirs to keep. They showed real delight when told they could take their puppets home.

During the actual presentation of the play there were no complications and each child performed beautifully. They were delighted with the response of the audience and quite proud as they held up their puppets to have their picture taken.

(3) Observations of Individuals.

Child A was thrilled when told she could take her puppet home. She showed obvious enjoyment of the whole session and was more excited than she had ever been before in class.

Child J was absent.

Child R was very happy and took a real interest in seeing that the rehearsal went well. She was quite excited but well-controlled.

Child T cooperated nicely and showed real enthusiasm at the prospect of giving the show.

#### 4. The Puppet Play as a Visual Aid.

An extensive study of the puppet play as a visual aid was not made. However, from the writer's own observations and reports by teachers in the primary department it was obvious that the puppet show accomplished two things.

It aroused interest. The children looked and listened with rapt attention.

It also enabled the children to live the story. The children in the audience identified themselves completely with the puppets. One boy, upon seeing the child who had manipulated Probhu, with the puppet, said, "Oh, there's Probhu."

The puppet play helped make the story interesting and alive for the children.

#### e. The Fifth Week.

##### (1) Procedure.

It was felt that there was a real need for testing the spiritual aims<sup>1</sup> of the experiment and for helping the children to chrySTALLIZE any concepts they had learned during the experiment. The thoughts expressed by Spoerl, discussed elsewhere in this study,<sup>2</sup> were a factor in planning a discussion for the fifth week which would help

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1. Cf. ante, p. 51.

2. Ibid., p. 43.

the children verbalize any learning which had accompanied the experiment.

Another follow-up procedure was the making of scrapbooks for leper children. This was planned for two reasons: (1) to sustain the interest the children already had in the lepers because of the story, (2) to help the children channel their interest in and sympathy for, the lepers, into a concrete project through which they could help them. It was felt by the writer, too, that the scrapbook project would be a way to discover whether the children really had any feeling for the lepers and thus prove whether they had grown in their concern for others, one of the spiritual aims of the experiment.<sup>1</sup>

The procedure for the fifth week thus involved a discussion<sup>1</sup> and the making of scrapbooks.

(2) Observations of the Group.

From the discussion it was learned that the puppet project had definitely aroused interest in the group. The children had loved and lived the story. They all said that the puppets had enabled them to remember the story.

The children evidenced growth in certain concepts and attitudes. They said they learned that Jesus could actually help people today, even little children. From this remark it may be inferred that their concept of God and Jesus changed considerably. Both God and Jesus became more real to them, and the fact that God could be relied upon to

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1. Cf. ante, p. 51.

2. The questions used as a basis for the discussion may be found in Appendix B.

help people began to dawn on them. Their attitude toward the lepers was one of deep sympathy. One boy had asked his doctor father at home whether there was yet a cure for leprosy. All of the children showed eagerness to make scrapbooks for lepers. Growth in their attitude towards others, at least a certain group, the lepers, was thus revealed.

(3) Observations of Individuals.

Child A was absent.

Child J. was also absent.

Child R showed a grasp of the spiritual aspects of the story. She understood what had actually happened to Probhu and his mother when they had become Christians. The essential idea of forgiveness and new life through Christ seemed to be understood by R while it had not been grasped by the others in the group.

Child T did not say much. His enjoyment of the story, the puppets, and the play were obvious, and he said, with the others, that the puppets had helped him remember the story.

2. Results of the Experiment.

The results of the experiment will be discussed first in terms of achievement of aims for both the group and individuals. Then a general evaluation will be made.

a. Achievement of Aims for the Group.

There were many aims for the group.<sup>1</sup> Some were achieved while some were not. Still others were a bit difficult to determine.

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1. Cf. ante, p. 51.

The social aim was achieved. There was more of a feeling of unity in the group while the experiment was being carried on than at any other time during the whole year. One of the most significant indications of the unity of the group was the conversation of the children. They discussed the play at length, always in terms of how they as a group were involved in it. The term "we" was used continually. The other significant indication of the unity of the group was its cooperative spirit. There was cooperation and help observed between members of the group and between the group and the teacher.

The intellectual aim was partially achieved. From the discussion during the fifth session it was learned that the group had probably realized for the first time that God and Jesus were real and able to help people. They seemed to realize that by "people" children were meant, too. Although they understood that forgiveness cannot come through the cleansing of a river, as portrayed in the story, they failed to grasp the fact that Jesus gives forgiveness and that as a person receives this forgiveness he becomes a child of God. The most significant question discussed at the last session was one regarding the matter of becoming a Christian. The teacher asked the children what they would have told Probhu about becoming a Christian had they been the doctor or nurse in the story. Most of the group thought they would have told him to be baptized. Child R seemed to be the only one who realized that to become a Christian means to receive forgiveness from Christ.

Of the four spiritual aims,<sup>1</sup> two were achieved. The children

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1. Cf. ante, p. 51.

did begin to have an understanding of the reality of God and they showed growth in desirable attitudes, particularly kindness to each other and concern for people in other lands, like the lepers in the story. However, there was little or no comprehension of the meaning of the death of Christ and almost no understanding of the nature of the Christian life. Child R was the only member of the group who seemed to indicate that she understood what it means to become a Christian and what it means to be a Christian.

b. Achievement of Aims for Individuals.

(1) Child A.

Both aims for A were achieved,<sup>1</sup> though probably only in a partial way. She has begun to express herself a little more fully, but much remains to be done in this realm. From all appearances it looks as if she feels herself more a part of the group than before, but it will take time for her to learn to enter into group activities freely.

(2) Child J.

Neither of the aims for J was achieved.<sup>2</sup> His creative ability did not find expression in puppet-making; instead, he found himself frustrated by puppet-making. His lack of self-control was much in evidence. There was no evidence that he was interested in the project or helped by it.

(3) Child R.

It was difficult to determine whether the aims for R were achieved.<sup>3</sup> She seemed to participate in the project in a relaxed manner

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1. Ibid., p. 52.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

yet there was no overwhelming evidence that the project helped her to do so. That is, there was no real indication that the project made any difference in her behavior. She showed more enjoyment of the puppet-making than anything else the class had done, but it is difficult to know whether she really learned to relax through it. Her knowledge and understanding of spiritual things seemed to deepen, yet at this point also it is difficult to measure growth. In time of discussion she spoke quite freely and it was felt by the teacher that perhaps her understanding of certain points had deepened; for instance, she was able to explain quite adequately how a person became more aware of Jesus Christ as Savior.

(4) Child T.

Both aims for T were achieved.<sup>1</sup> He became very interested in the project and was especially concerned that he make a good puppet. He was very excited the day the play was given. Both Sundays that he was in class his behavior was excellent. His energy definitely was channeled into something constructive and as a result he had no time to get into trouble.

c. General Evaluation of the Experiment.

(1) Achievement of Aims.

The experiment could not be evaluated only in terms of its aims. Some of its value could not then be realized. For instance, the aims for Child J were not achieved. But another child was greatly helped by the project. His interest in the class increased. His relation with

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 53.

the group and the teacher improved. He showed joy and satisfaction for the first time. Regardless of the fact that in one instance the experiment failed to help a child, in another instance it was very useful in promoting interest, changing attitudes, and providing a joyful experience.

The experiment did not produce any startling changes in the group but it did help in the general growth of the children. There was, for instance, a growth in their awareness of the reality and nearness of God and Jesus as a result of the experiment.

The experiment revealed that the children were not yet ready to grasp some of the concepts which the writer had hoped they would understand through the experiment. For instance, one aim had been to help the children understand more fully the meaning of the death of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it was clear that some of the aims could not have been achieved because of the level of understanding of the children.

The experiment, then, was both a success and a failure. Some aims were not met; some aims were met in a partial way; some aims could not have been met.

#### (2) New Problems.

The experiment was originally set up to meet needs and solve certain problems. As it progressed it became apparent that while some problems were being solved the puppet project, by its very nature, was causing new problems to arise.

These new problems were mainly related to teacher planning and also to class procedures. Puppetry, while not a complicated

. . . . .

1. Ibid. p. 51.

type of handcraft, is an involved one. Puppet heads must be made, the hair put on, the face painted. All of these steps take a considerable amount of time. As the experiment progressed, it was obvious that the children were working far more slowly than had been anticipated. Since the puppet show had been scheduled for a certain date it was necessary to complete the puppets speedily in order to give the play on that date. The time factor, then, became very important and necessitated very careful planning on the part of the teacher so as to complete the project.

Classroom procedures also presented a problem. There was lack of space and lack of good sink facilities. These lacks complicated the control of the class. For instance, clean-up had to be very carefully supervised. Attention to minute details was a necessity in weekly planning.

The puppet project turned out to be a project which demanded very careful planning, not something that progressed along by itself.

### (3) The Experiment and the Teacher.

While the experiment was not concerned with the teacher, there was, however, a definite affect made upon the teacher by the experiment.

The experiment revealed the level of understanding of the children to the teacher and the need to be aware of this. For instance, before the experiment it was not fully realized where the children were in their understanding of Christianity. The experiment revealed that they had some awareness of God or Jesus as real, but very little understanding of the fact that Jesus could be to them a Savior, a helper, a friend. They also showed no understanding of the fact that a person becomes a

Christian through faith in Christ.

The experiment also revealed the need for careful planning in Christian education if one is to do really effective teaching. No detail is too small to be considered before the teacher stands before her class.

The participation of Child J in the experiment brought home the fact that in Christian education teachers are dealing with the problem of sinful human nature and this problem involves spiritual warfare. For such warfare spiritual weapons must be employed, one of which is intercessory prayer.<sup>1</sup> After prayer the teacher must do all in her power to help the children she has prayed for. For instance, in the case of Child J, it was decided that since the experiment revealed that he was frustrated while making puppets<sup>2</sup> the teacher could help him gain self-confidence by praise and attention. It was also decided that his lack of control might be helped by a closer relationship with him, thus enabling the teacher to discipline him more easily. The situation with Child J thus helped the teacher to see both the importance of prayer and the importance of working out spiritual concerns in the classroom through teacher-pupil relationships.

These insights made a real contribution to the growth of the teacher and while they were not anticipated seemed to be significant.

d. Recommendations for the Use of Puppetry in Christian Education.

The following recommendations are made on the basis of this entire study, but are meant to apply only to a puppet project such as was used in the experiment conducted by the writer.

(a) A puppet project should be used not as a panacea but

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 51.  
2. Ibid., p. 65.

- a means of meeting certain human needs and problems.
- (b) A puppet project needs to be used in conjunction with vital prayer.
  - (c) A puppet project needs to be used intelligently and purposefully, with knowledge of what it may accomplish and with definite aims as to what it is hoped it will accomplish.
  - (d) A puppet project should be carefully planned. No detail is too small to be overlooked.
  - (e) A puppet project should, if at all possible, culminate in a play. This is the natural end result of a puppet project and children expect it.
  - (f) A teacher using puppets with a class should know something of all phases of puppetry. It is best to have done the various steps in the puppet-making process beforehand.
  - (g) Ample time should be given to the project. The Sunday church school is not the best place in which to have a puppet project because of the limitation of time. However, some churches have long sessions which would lend themselves well to such a project.
  - (h) All materials for the project should be secured beforehand. Puppetry requires many materials so careful planning, buying, and collecting are necessary.
  - (i) The story for the project should be carefully selected, with special concern for the content and its relation to the needs of the class.

.....

- (j) Some sort of follow-up should be planned. A discussion is valuable to both children and teachers in that it helps reveal and clarify thinking which has accompanied the project.

#### E. Summary

Insights gained from the study of puppetry discussed in the first two chapters were cited at the beginning of the third chapter. These included (1) the varied uses of puppetry, (2) the value of puppetry, (3) the appeal of puppetry, (4) the significance of puppetry for Christian education.

A plan for the use of puppetry in a specific church school situation was described, with special reference to aims, selection of a story, and the type puppet to be used.

The weekly sessions of the class were described, with observations of the group and of individual children.

An evaluation of the experiment in terms of the stated aims was then made. Some of the aims were achieved while others were not.

A general evaluation of the experiment with some recommendations for the use of puppetry in Christian education concluded the chapter.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It was the purpose of this study to survey the uses of puppetry in education, both secular and Christian, in therapy, and on television, and to determine the value of puppetry as it is used in each of these areas.

It was seen that puppetry is extensively used in secular education, therapy, and on television. Puppetry in these areas can be of value in meeting some needs of children and in influencing behavior. In Christian education puppetry is used less extensively but has been used in a variety of ways and found to be of value.

It became the writer's desire, after this survey was completed, to determine whether puppetry could be useful in achieving certain goals in a specific church school situation. Therefore an experiment involving a third-grade class was planned, with the insights gained from the preliminary study in mind. The experiment included a complete puppet project, from the making of the puppets to the presentation of the finished puppet play. Weekly observations were made in regard to the entire group and to four individual children. Evaluation of the experiment in terms of its aims revealed that it succeeded in most instances to achieve the aims of the experiment. The group grew in its intellectual and spiritual understanding of Christianity and as a group became more unified. Three of the four children especially observed became very interested in the project and showed considerable social growth because of it. A brief general evaluation of the experiment revealed that: it had not produced any

phenomenal change in the group or in any of the children; it had, while attempting to solve some problems, because of the nature of puppetry, given rise to new problems; it had affected the growth of the teacher. Following the evaluation of the project some recommendations were made for the use of a similar puppet project in Christian education.

Out of the survey and experiment two main conclusions have emerged. Puppetry is, first of all, a useful tool to people working in various fields. Its value and appeal are obvious. Second, puppetry offers to the Christian educator many possibilities for helping children. However, puppetry can in no way be considered a panacea. Rather, it should be considered a tool to be used intelligently and purposefully in the task of guiding children into the life in Christ. Since this task is essentially a spiritual work involving the use of spiritual tools such as prayer, no device or technique in Christian education can be used effectively except in conjunction with spiritual tools. Techniques, such as puppetry, and spiritual tools, such as prayer, must both be used if the Christian educator is to do most effectively the job of guiding children into the Christian life.

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APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### PROBHU AND THE TIGER

On the other side of the world, in a very large country called India, live millions of brown-skinned people called Indians. In a village of northern India there once was a little brown Indian boy called Probhu. Now Probhu was strong and healthy. He played with other little Indian boys in his village, and helped work in the garden near his house. However, Probhu was very sad, and very much afraid.

It all started one day when Probhu and his mother came home and found Probhu's father very sick with fever. "Run quickly, and get the medicine man!" cried the mother.

Probhu ran down the dusty road. He was afraid of the medicine man, but his fears were forgotten as he thought of his sick father, lying so still, and burning with fever.

As soon as Probhu and the medicine man reached Probhu's house, Probhu ran to a clump of trees behind the house. He didn't want to be any where near the medicine man while he did his awful work. He could imagine the horrible old man, bending low over the sick man. He could almost feel the pain his father would feel, as the medicine man beat him with a stick to drive away the evil spirits which are responsible for his sickness. As Probhu leaned against one of the trees and thought about what was happening inside the little house, tears came to his eyes and trickled down his brown cheeks. He thought of the gods his mother had taught him to worship: Ganesh, Annpurna, Sasthi, and others with equally strange names. How far away they seemed, and how powerless to help in time of need!

The medicine man could not help Probhu's father. No one could help him. Probhu and his mother knew that he would die. Quickly they made ready to go on a journey to the Holy City where the father would be washed in the waters of the Holy River, to be cleansed of his sins and made ready for heaven. But the little boy and his mother were unable to get to the Holy City before the father died, and when they finally arrived, all they could do was to arrange for the funeral of the dear father. Then they made plans to return to their village.

As they drew near to the city gates, Probhu saw a strange man by the side of the road. The strange man wore foreign clothes and had white skin! He was smiling, and holding up something for the people to see. Probhu tugged at his mother. The strange man was going to tell a story! How Probhu loved stories! From his mother and father he had heard many stories: stories about gods and goddesses, demons and evil spirits, elephants, tigers, snakes, monkeys, the Holy City, and big feast days. But the story that the strange man told was different than any Probhu had ever heard.

It was a short story, about a wonderful Sadhu, or holy man, the Sadhu Jesus Christ. As he talked, the strange man held up a lovely colored picture. Never had Probhu seen a Sadhu like the one in the picture. The Sadhu Jesus Christ looked so clean and strong and good. He seemed to be helping someone. Probhu's eyes did not leave the

picture once while he listened to the story. This is what the strange man said:

"And the fame of the Sadhu Jesus Christ went into every place in the country...and when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick...brought them unto him and he laid his hand on every one of them and healed them...And it came to pass, when the Sadhu Jesus Christ was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy, who seeing the Sadhu Jesus Christ besought him, saying, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' And the Sadhu Jesus Christ put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, 'I will: be thou clean.' And immediately the leprosy departed from the man...Then great multitudes of people came together to hear the Sadhu Jesus Christ and to be healed by him...The Sadhu Jesus Christ saith to the sick: 'These things are done so that ye might know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.'"

The strange man finished the story and put away the lovely picture. But Probhu did not forget the story, or the lovely picture. He and his mother talked about it as they walked away. "The message was not for us, my son, but for sinful ones. Our sins have been taken away by the waters of the Holy River as we washed in it this morning." Probhu was not sure that the water of the river could take away his sin. He remembered things he had done, things that troubled him deep down inside. He had not always been kind to others; he had not always been truthful; he had not always done all the things he knew he should have. How could water in a river wash away the remembrance of all the things he was sorry he had done? He kept thinking of what the strange man had said about the wonderful Sadhu. The Sadhu could forgive sins. And the Sadhu could touch people and heal them, even lepers. Probhu would never forget the story about the wonderful Sadhu. How beautiful the face of the Sadhu was! He could see the picture still...

Probhu and his mother finally reached their little village again. How strange not to have the father with them. Life was going to be very hard for them without the father to work in the rice field and in the garden. The mother would have to do all the work herself, with only small Probhu to help.

Life was hard. There was very little money to pay the man who owned the field and the garden and the little hut. Frantically Probhu and his mother turned to their gods—the idols, Ganesh, Annapurna, and Sathi. Every day they bowed before the idols, and every day they did everything they could think of to please the gods, and every day things only grew worse. Probhu and his mother did not realize it but the gods they bowed to neither heard their cries nor were able to help them.

One day the worst thing of all happened. Probhu ran to his mother as soon as he saw the queer pale spot on his leg. Probhu's mother was frightened. "It is the evil disease, my son," she said. Probhu had the terrible disease, leprosy, and he knew he would get worse.

As the months went by, Probhu did get worse. There were more pale spots on his body, and wherever there was a pale spot there was no feeling. If a thorn pricked Probhu, he never felt the prick.

Probhu knew that soon the village people would force him to leave for fear that their children would get the dread disease.

One night after the lamp had been put out in the hut, Probhu lay in the dark and thought about his problem. Out of his thoughts came the beloved memory picture of the wonderful Sadhu Jesus Christ. As Probhu lay thinking of the wonderful Sadhu he could almost see the lovely picture that the strange man had shown that day. Probhu imagined himself before the wonderful Sadhu. How kind the Sadhu's eyes were! The words that the strange man had spoken came to Probhu: "Let not your heart be troubled." And then Probhu thought of the story the man had told, the part where the man full of leprosy had come to the Sadhu Jesus Christ and been healed. Probhu began to repeat the words of the story over to himself:

"A man full of leprosy fell on his face before the Sadhu Jesus Christ and said, 'Lord, thou canst make me clean.'... 'Be thou clean,' said the Sadhu, and immediately the leprosy departed from him."

Probhu wondered if the Sadhu would cure little boys with leprosy. Surely he would not turn away a little boy. As Probhu repeated the words of the story he found himself substituting the word "boy" for the word "man" in the story:

"A boy full of leprosy fell at the feet of the Sadhu Jesus Christ..."

"Yes," he thought to himself, "I must find the wonderful Sadhu, because he will make me well. But I shall have to go alone because if my mother goes with me there will be no one to work in the field or the garden. When I find the Sadhu he will make me well and then I can come back and help my mother."

So little Probhu crept out of the hut as soon as it was light enough for him to see his way, and went off into the jungle-alone. Birds sang and monkeys chattered as they raced from tree to tree. Suddenly Probhu stopped. Away off in the distance he could hear the sound of drums, and he knew from this that hunters were near. Then he turned to go on his way, and found himself staring right into the terrible face of a tiger.

Probhu felt himself go cold all over. In an instant he was up a tree. He looked down. There, far below him, stood the tiger, looking up with his terrible yellow eyes. Then it sat down, like a huge cat in front of a mouse hole...to wait.

Probhu hung on to the tree. Even in the heat of the jungle he felt as cold as ice. He began to feel dizzy and weak. How long could he hold on? Tears streamed down his face. How could he ever find the Sadhu Jesus Christ now? Probhu laid his head on the branch of the friendly tree. He was so tired, and weak, and dizzy. Suddenly he felt his hands slip from around the tree, and he sensed that he was falling. Then, a shot rang out. Hunters appeared out of the jungle. "Biggest tiger I ever killed. And look, we have captured a boy, too."

Probhu did not know it but he had been found by the hunters whose drums he had heard only a short while before. The kind hunters knew that Probhu was a sick boy, and so they decided to take him to a hospital where he could be cared for. The little sick Indian boy was hoisted to the back of a great grey elephant, and taken to the hospital.

The hospital that Probhu was taken to was one that the missionaries had built. There were kind Christian nurses and doctors there who lovingly took care of Probhu. They even sent for his mother to come see him.

Probhu had to stay in the hospital for two years, for leprosy is a disease that takes a long time to heal. But he was happy, and did not mind staying in the hospital.

For Probhu was full of joy. He knew he would one day be well again. And better still, he had found the wonderful Sadhu, Jesus Christ. The nurses and the doctors told him more of Jesus, how he had lived on earth but then had gone to heaven to be with his heavenly Father. Even though Probhu could not see the Sadhu, he could feel his presence with him, and he knew that because the Sadhu was the Son of God and alive in heaven that he heard his prayers and could help him, just as he helped people when he was alive on earth. Probhu knew also that the Spirit of the Sadhu lived in all Christians at the hospital, and it was this Holy Spirit of the Sadhu that made them do such kind, loving things. He wanted to be like them, and like the Sadhu, too, so the nurses and doctors explained how he could ask the Sadhu to send his Holy Spirit to live in him.

Probhu's mother came to know the Sadhu, too. She no longer bowed down to the idols, or ashed herself in the Holy River to be cleansed from her sins. She worshipped the true God, and asked his Son, the Sadhu Jesus Christ, to take away her sins, and she learned that the wonderful Sadhu had even died on the cross to save her from her sins. She was so thankful for the love of the Sadhu Jesus - surely Ganesh, Annpurna, and Sasti had never loved her like the Sadhu!

Both Probhu and his mother wanted to do something for the Sadhu. They decided to give some of their small amount of money to help the missionaries help more boys and girls in the hospital. They decided to tell all the people in their village about the Sadhu, so the people could worship him instead of the idols who could never hear their prayers. And they decided to love and help others, just as the Sadhu had done while he lived on earth.

APPENDIX B

1. Did you like the story? Why?
2. Did you learn anything about God that you hadn't known before?
3. Did you learn anything about Jesus that you hadn't known before?
4. How did the story make you feel about the lepers?
5. If you had been the doctor or the nurse in the story what would you have told Probhu when he asked how one becomes a Christian?
6. Did you like making the puppets? Why?
7. Did you like giving the play? Why?
8. Do you think making the puppets helped you to get to know one another better?
9. Did the puppet play help you to remember the story better? Why?