“Prepared to do, prepared to die.” Evangelicalism, Imperialism, and Late-Victorian Canadian Children’s Publications

GORDON L. HEATH

McMaster Divinity College

Abstract. Canadian churches took seriously their commitment to nation and empire-building in the welter of late-Victorian imperial commitments. This particular study explores one unique and little-known expression of Canadian Methodist and Presbyterian imperialism: the infusing of children with imperial virtues. What is striking for the purposes of this essay is the conflation of family values, evangelicalism and imperialism. The lived experience is decidedly imperial in these children’s publications. Evangelicalism’s emphasis on family was an important motivating factor in nurturing young imperialists, and the editors of these publications believed that imperial values were synonymous with Christian values, and that girls and boys who embodied the ideals of their papers would become good mothers, fathers, citizens, as well as defenders of empire. While it is difficult to determine how many children took the imperial message to heart, the fusion of family values and imperialism reveals just how enmeshed evangelicalism had become with late-Victorian imperialism.

Key words: imperialism, evangelicalism, children, newspapers, war

The Seventy-First Annual Meeting of the Methodist Sabbath Schools in Montreal on New Years Day, 1900, was a jingoistic affair:

* GORDON L. HEATH is Associate Professor of Christian History at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.
The most interesting thing in this New Year’s gathering, and the thing which will render it memorable, was the enthusiastic spirit of patriotism that was displayed. The scholars came provided with small Union Jacks and made use of them heartily at different points in the service. It was truly a sight not soon to be forgotten to see five thousand children in the body and galleries of our noble Methodist Cathedral waving their small flags as they sang with joyous faces:

God bless our native land!
Firm may she ever stand,
Through storm and night,
When the wild tempests rage,
Ruler of wind and wave,
Do thou our country save,
By thy great might!”

to the tune of the National Anthem, or as they took up the chorus:

Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves,
Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.

Patriotism reached fever-heat, however, when Dr. Morton suggested the sending of messages to the Queen, and to the Canadian Contingent in South Africa. The suggestion was at once taken up with deafening applause and frantic waving of flags. The Empire is safe for the future as it is safe in the present when the children of the colonies display such loyalty and patriotism as were manifested in St. James last New Year’s morning.¹

This youthful imperial zeal in a province known more for its lukewarm support for British imperialism was neither an exception nor an accident, for Methodists in Canada were quite intentional in the way they went about nurturing ardent little

¹ “Great Sunday School Meeting in St. James’ Church on New Year’s Day,” Wesleyan, 10 January 1900, 4.
imperialists in their ranks. Elsewhere in the Methodist press a line in one poem read: “The Empire’s children stand, prepared to do, prepared to die.” This poem is but one example of the imperial sentiment in its children’s literature, for this late-Victorian genre featured poems that extolled the empire and imperial virtues, maps that outlined the growing boundaries of the British Empire, pictures that portrayed the many subjects of empire, and stories of adventures, battles and “glorious deeds” done for the sake of the empire. John MacKenzie has noted how in Britain there was no pressing need for government agencies to be involved in imperial propaganda, for a number of non-governmental agencies were enthusiastically doing it for them.

In late-Victorian Canada it was much the same, and one example of such voluntary promotion of the empire was the extent to which Canadian Protestant churches sought to inculcate imperial virtues among the young readers of their children’s publications.

Canadian Protestant churches at this time were imbued with an ardent imperialism, and were firmly and enthusiastically committed to the imperial cause in South Africa. In the dan-

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gerous social-Darwinian world of competing races and clashing empires, matters of nation and empire were considered to be life or death. Imperialism also was an ideology where a number of different movements and impulses such as the social gospel, missions, racism, constructions of gender and the “other” coalesced. In this welter of imperial passions, the churches took seriously their commitment to nation and empire-building. This particular study explores one unique and little-known expression of Methodist and Presbyterian imperialism: the infusing of their children with imperial virtues. What is striking for the purposes of this research is the conflation of family values, evangelicalism and imperialism. Marguerite Van Die’s research into religion, family and community in late-Victorian evangelical Protestant Canada draws attention to how religion shaped family identity, and the variety of ways in which religion adopted cultural forms; a process she refers to as lived experience. The lived experience—to use Van Die’s expression—is decidedly imperial in these children’s publications. Evangelicalism’s emphasis on family was an important motivating factor in nurturing young imperialists. The editors of these publications believed that imperial values were synonymous with Christian values, and that girls and boys who embodied the ideals of their papers would become good mothers, fathers, citizens, as well as defenders of empire. Consequently, articles on faith, heroes, vocation, patriotism and entertainment were permeated with imperial sentiment. And while it is difficult to determine


how many children took the imperial message to heart, the fusion of family values and imperialism reveals just how enmeshed evangelicalism had become with late-Victorian imperialism.

**Children’s Literature**

Out of all the literature that pervaded Victorian-Edwardian culture, “few were as prominent or as inspiring as popular literature.”\(^5\) Cheap papers and magazines flourished in late-Victorian Britain, and during those years children’s books and periodicals constituted one of the largest genres in the industry.\(^6\) There were two broad categories of children’s literature, “wholesome” and “pernicious,” and the latter included the “penny dreadfuls”\(^7\) or the “shilling shockers.”\(^8\) Many churches were concerned that such papers challenged respectable morality, and the Religious Tract Society’s attempt to counter the penny dreadfuls by publishing the Boy’s Own Paper is the most well-known attempt to respond to the perceived danger. The Boy’s Own Paper experienced remarkable growth, and eventually had a circulation in Britain of over one million.\(^9\) The growth and impact of these children’s publications in Britain has received


\(^9\) There were numerous other children’s papers; however, the Boy’s Own Paper had the largest circulation of them all. See Dunae, “Boy’s Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914,” 108. The Boy’s Own Paper was circulated in Canada, often as a complete set (one year bound as a book). Circulation figures are unknown.
significant attention from a number of historians,\textsuperscript{10} however, this has not been the case for this little known genre published in Canada.\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{11} R. G. Moyles examines \textit{The Boy’s Own} paper from the perspective of how the paper portrayed Canada to its readers in Britain. He does not look at distinctly Canadian publications. See Moyles, “A ‘Boy’s Own’ View of Canada,” 41-56. Janice Hill identifies the conflation of evangelicalism and impe-
Late-Victorian Canada also experienced rapid growth of the press, and the religious press comprised a significant part of this increase. Merrill Distad claims that the “largest single genre [in late-Victorian Canada] was the religious press which accounted for at least one-fifth of all non-government imprints.” The late-Victorian Canadian Protestant press had a significant number of publications, with some papers surpassing secular newspapers in circulation. One significant genre among these numerous church publications was that of children’s literature, often distributed in Sunday Schools or by visiting clergymen in homes, but usually mailed directly to homes through subscriptions. Publications such as the Methodist Pleasant Hours or the Presbyterian King’s Own sought to provide material for the spiritual and character development of children, and other publ-
cations provided similar material for teens. The two main sources for this research are the Canadian-made Pleasant Hours (1899-1902), a bi-weekly with a circulation of almost 52,000, and the King’s Own (1899-1902), with a weekly circulation of over 20,000. While these numbers may not seem impressive when compared with the circulation figures of the Boy’s Own Paper, they are impressive numbers for a late-Victorian Canadian magazine (secular or religious).

The caliber of these children’s papers was far from Shakespearean, but, as Patricia Barnett asserts, this should not deter one from studying them. Imperialism peaked in the decades after the 1870s, and these papers provide remarkable insights into the heightened sensitivity to all things empire. It should be noted that the “popular literature for boys was, however,

15 The most noteworthy other publication was the Methodist Onward. It had a circulation in 1902 around 39,000.
16 The focus in this research is on magazines and papers published from within Canada by Canadian editors for Canadian denominations. These Canadian publications often re-printed material drawn from American, British, and other sources.
17 With a circulation of over 50,000, the Pleasant Hours was one of Canada’s largest publications. For a summary of these two publications, see Heath, “Forming Sound Public Opinion,” 147, 151.
18 The Baptists did not seem to have a children’s publication, whereas the Anglicans had the Canadian Church Juvenile. The Canadian Church Juvenile was an inferior product compared with the King’s Own and Pleasant Hours. By 1912 the publication had become something closer in quality—but even then it was still inferior.
20 Christopher Banham argues that boy’s literature was one of the cultural forms where imperialism was most evident. See Banham, “England and America against the World,” 151.
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more that just a mirror of imperial thought. Throughout the period the literature also played an important role in promoting an interest in empire among a large and impressionable audience.”21 The Victorians were convinced that these publications played a significant role in the shaping of young lives,22 and while just how much of an impact this literature had on its readers cannot be precisely determined, a number of contemporary historians are convinced that the press made a profound impact on its readers.23

Imperialism in the Press
Like the genre best exemplified by the Boy’s Own Paper, the Pleasant Hours and the King’s Own are rich sources, for, along with the expected Bible stories and moral instruction, their contents included a potent mix of imperialism and nationalism. And while the Pleasant Hours and King’s Own could not compete with the circulation of the Boy’s Own Paper, the editors were convinced that their papers had no small part to play in the formation of the virtues that they wanted to inculcate in their young Canadian readers.24

In keeping with their evangelical roots, the two publications encouraged children to make sure that their faith was a genuine

24 To what degree the inclusion of imperial themes was driven by the need to sell papers is hard to discern. What is known is that imperialism sold papers. See MacDonald, “Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy,” 520; MacDonald, “Signs from the Imperial Quarter,” 34, 37.
faith and not an empty religion. However, Christianity was considered to be more than right doctrine or pious prayers, for true religion was also supposed to be marked by Christian actions and Christian character. Consequently, the pages were filled with exhortations to avoid booze and the saloon, to support overseas missions, and, in the spirit of the social gospel, to transform society. Doing was the key to a real Christian faith, and a great deal of the doing related to empire. In addition to doing, youthful readers were exhorted to develop and exhibit cardinal Christian virtues such as discipline, duty and responsibility; virtues that were, as the end of the nineteenth century drew nigh, increasingly considered necessary for church work as well as for the momentous task of expanding, defending, and developing the empire.

25 For example, see “Heartless Prayers,” Pleasant Hours, 4 February 1899, 19; “Formal Prayer,” King’s Own, 27 July 1901, 119; “No Time to Pray,” King’s Own, 26 October 1901, 172; “Saying and Doing,” King’s Own, 19 April 1902, 64.
26 There were myriad articles, poems and artwork related to temperance. For examples of some poems, see “We’re Coming to the Rescue,” Pleasant Hours, 21 January 1899, 12; “Wanted. A Million Boys,” Pleasant Hours, 23 September 1899, 151; “Glass Number One,” Pleasant Hours, 18 November 1899, 182; “When Daddy Comes Home,” King’s Own, 21 September 1901, 150.
27 For example, see “China’s Dying Millions,” Pleasant Hours, 6 April 1901, 54; “What They Do in China,” Pleasant Hours, 11 May 1901, 76; “South America’s Need of Missions,” Pleasant Hours, 7 June 1902, 89.
28 The poem “Shine Where You Are” expresses the desire to make the world a better place. A part of it reads: “Would you have the world better and brighter?/ Then light up the way as you go;/ Make some little part of it lighter;/ With beams from your life’s steady glow.” See “Shine Where You Are,” King’s Own, 19 April 1902, 64.
29 Robert MacDonald identifies a noticeable shift at the turn of the century away from moral issues to imperial concerns. See MacDonald, “Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy.”
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The life portrayed for boys was a life of action, adventure, and heroic struggles against all sorts of evils, personal, national and imperial. This late-Victorian fusion of manliness with imperialism represents, according to Norman Vance, “an extension of the mid-Victorian combination of manliness and patriotism.” And the call was for heroes in a form of Victorian chivalric manliness. Poems such as “The Real Hero,” “Our Heroes,” “Onward, Youthful Heroes,” and “Heroes,” made it quite clear that Christian boyhood (and ultimately manhood) entailed standing up for justice and truth, regardless of the cost. The *Pleasant Hours* reprinted the poem “The Boys We Need” three times in one year, and this poem provides a glimpse of ideal manliness, as well as the type of children needed to reverse the perceived decline of the Anglo-Saxon race:

Here’s to the boy who’s not afraid  
To do his share of work;  
Who never is by toil dismayed,  
And never tries to shirk.  
The boy whose heart is brave to meet  
All lions in the way;  
Who’s not discouraged by defeat,  
But tries another day.

The boy who always means to do
The very best he can;
Who always keeps the right in view,
And aims to be a man.
Such boys as these will grow to be
The men whose hands will guide
The future of our land; and we
Shall speak their names with pride.
All honour to the boy who is
A man at heart, I say;
Whose legend on his shield is this:
“Right always wins the day.”

The call was for boys to grow into men of character, and that
cracter would ultimately shape the nation’s destiny. Within
these poems, one gets glimpses of how the press sought to in-
culcate imperial values that would make Canada’s children the
saviors of the nation and empire. There was significant anxiety
in Britain about the condition of the empire at the end of the ni-
eteenth century, and much of the imperial zeal was reaction to
feelings of insecurity about Britain’s continued dominance.
There was also a fear that Britain’s decadence and sins threat-
ened the empire, and that the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon
race would be lost. A popular conviction was that war and sol-
dierly qualities could reverse the corrosive influences of an in-
creasingly materialistic society; in that sense imperialism was

32 “The Boys We Need,” Pleasant Hours, 28 January 1899, 15; “The Boys We
Need,” Pleasant Hours, 24 June 1899, 98; “The Boys We Need,” Pleasant
Hours, 8 July 1899, 106. For another example of the heroic ideal, see “For Bat-
te,” King’s Own, 3 February 1900, 17.
33 For instance, see “Wanted,” Pleasant Hours, 2 September 1899, 139. Moss
notes that the role of childhood shifted from the mid-nineteenth to the early-
twentieth century. By the early-twentieth century, children were seen to be
the “future” of the country. See Moss, Manliness and Militarism, 44ff.
perceived by many to be “an antidote to the evils of contemporary social life.” Consequently, as John Tosh notes, the overseas threats contributed to the convergence of the language of empire and the language of manliness.

In late-Victorian Canada, the nation’s destiny was intimately associated with that of the British Empire, and this was made clear in every issue. Images of, and reporting on, the monarchy abounded in the press, and what made for more than the normal fair was the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the coronation of Edward VII in 1902. The Protestant press in general spared no efforts to report on the Queen’s death, and in this regard the Pleasant Hours and King’s Own intensive coverage of events was in concert with other publications. Articles such as “An Incident in Victoria’s Childhood,” “The Queen’s Early Years,” “A Kind Little Princess,” “The Queen’s Dolls,” “At Twelve Years Old,” and “The Princess Who Became Queen,”


36 For examples of articles on the Queen’s death, see “The Death of the Queen,” Pleasant Hours, 23 February 1901, 30; “The Queen’s Funeral,” Pleasant Hours, 23 March 1901, 46; “Tributes to the Queen, Pleasant Hours, 18 May 1901, 1; Rev. Dr. Carman on the Queen,” Pleasant Hours, 18 May 1901, 1; “The Queen’s Funeral,” Pleasant Hours, 18 May 1901, 78. For examples of articles on the coronation of Edward VII, see “Edward VII, Pleasant Hours, 29 June 1901, 1; “The Coronation Procession,” Pleasant Hours, 1 November 1902, 1; “The King’s Coronation Robes,” Pleasant Hours, 21 June 1902, 98; “England’s King,” Pleasant Hours, 21 June 1902, 1; “The Coronation of King Edward VII,” Pleasant Hours, 25 October 1902, 1.

37 Heath, “Were We in the Habit of Deifying Monarchs,” 72-97.
reinforced traditional roles for girls. Articles that focused on the Queen’s adult life covered a wide range of topics, including how she traveled, her birthdays, her character, her concern for children as well as the elderly, and her home life in general. What pleased the editors most of all was the religious life of Queen Victoria: in all cases, she was not found wanting. Queen Victoria’s faith, discipline, sense of duty, and character were all worthy of emulation. She was a Christian Queen, and while young girls could not be a queen like her, they could be an ideal mother—or what one author coins “mothers of empire.”

38 “An Incident in Victoria’s Childhood,” Pleasant Hours, 16 March 1901, 42; “The Queen’s Early Years,” Pleasant Hours, 18 May 1901, 78; “A Kind Little Princess,” Pleasant Hours, 17 May 1902, 80; “The Queen’s Dolls,” King’s Own, 2 March 1901, 34; “At Twelve Years Old,” King’s Own, 2 March 1901, 34; Elspeth Moray, “The Princess Who Became Queen,” King’s Own, 2 March 1901, 33-34. For other examples of the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, see “The Grown-Up Land,” King’s Own, 17 February 1900, 27. (The same poem was published in the Pleasant Hours. See “Growing-Up Land,” Pleasant Hours, 1 July 1899, 101.) See also “Loveliness,” King’s Own, 5 October 1901, 160; “The Girl Who Smiles,” King’s Own, 1 September 1900, 140; “Grandma’s Angel,” King’s Own, 29 September 1900, 154; Constance M. Lowe, “Isn’t It Mother?” Pleasant Hours, 16; “Girls That Are Wanted,” Pleasant Hours, 4 November 1899, 176.

39 “The Queen and Her Children,” King’s Own, 2 March 1901, 34; “Stories of the World’s Greatest Queen,” Pleasant Hours, 16 March 1901, 43; “How Queen Victoria Traveled,” Pleasant Hours, 6 July 1901, 104; “The Queen’s Birthday,” King’s Own, 18 May 1901, 79; “What the Queen Read,” Pleasant Hours, 2 March 1901, 34; “Anecdotes of Queen Victoria,” Pleasant Hours, 25 May 1901, 82; “Incidents of the Late Queen’s Life,” Pleasant Hours, 29 June 1901, 106.

40 This idea can best be seen in the Boy Scout and Girl Guide manuals. See Hill, “Governing Children,” 140; Tim Jeal, Baden-Powell (London: Hutchinson, 1990). As authors such as Joanna Trollope have shown, numerous women had caught the imperial vision. See Joanna Trollope, Britannia’s Daughters: Women of the British Empire (London: Pimlico, 1983).
Despite the fusion of imperialism with manliness, both boys and girls were inculcated with a passion for empire. The link between Canada and the empire was made clear to the young readers, and the neo-British white identity identified elsewhere was often expressed through poetry.41 While there were poems that waxed eloquently just about Canada, poems such as “I Love Thee England,” “The U. E. Loyalists,” “Victoria,” “The Queen’s Birthday,” “God Save the King,” “The Union Jack,” and “England’s Heroes Too” expressed and nurtured the imperial connection.42 As Carl Berger, Robert Page and others have noted, imperialism was one form of Canadian nationalism, and to be loyal to Britain did not mean that you were a disloyal Canadian.43 In promoting such connections to Britain, editors were shaping a particular type of national identity that

41 See Banham, “England and America against the World,” 162.
placed Canadian identity in the familial bonds of a global empire. They also drew upon such shared history as a way to encourage and inspire good behavior in the children (an interesting example of finding a usable past in history): in order to stir boys out of their laziness one editor reprinted a poem from Young Canada (a boy’s publication published in Toronto), a poem that recounted Nelson’s watchword at Trafalgar “England expects every man to do his duty,” and vividly painted a picture Britain’s glorious past.\footnote{To British Boys throughout the World,” \textit{Pleasant Hours}, 19 January 1901, 11.} This hope was that such martial and imperial memories would be just what was needed to get the boys motivated.

The oft-criticized war in South Africa between Britain and its empire against the Boers (1899-1902) meant that the reputation of the empire needed defending. Britain’s conduct in the war was presented as impeccable.\footnote{The children’s press was reflecting wider support among Canadian Protestants for Britain’s cause, for this defense of the empire was matched in all Canadian Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian publications. See Heath, \textit{A War with a Silver Lining}.} A utopian picture of Boer refugee camps was printed to counter any negative perceptions of the camps, and the humaneness of British rule was emphasized.\footnote{Pleasant Hours, 12 April 1902, 60.} One article stated that “blessing was her mission” and everywhere Britain went it sought to “elevate people.”\footnote{“Britain’s Humaneness Emphasized,” \textit{Pleasant Hours}, 5 July 1902, 106.} Poems reinforced this conviction, for a number spoke of the association of liberty with the Union Jack,\footnote{“Only a Small Bit of Bunting,” \textit{King’s Own}, 26 May 1900, 84. A variation of the same poem is “The Union Jack,” \textit{Pleasant Hours}, 1 June 1901, 88.} or of Britain’s clemency towards its enemies.\footnote{Henry Tisdale, “British Clemency,” \textit{Pleasant Hours}, 12 April 1902, 57.} The Boers were blamed for the war, and
the actions of Britain (and Canada) were entirely—and without question—just.50

Like in many Victorian and Edwardian papers, war and soldiering in the King’s Own and Pleasant Hours was idealized.51 Battles were described and the heroic nature of battle emphasized, but death, maiming and the horrific nature of war were glossed over. The modern-day heroes for the boys were the soldiers. Since the Crimean War and the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, soldiers in Britain had provided examples of Christian heroism, and “abundant hagiographical literature” had flooded the press.52 They were the modern-day heroes, and in the King’s Own and Pleasant Hours they were, in “iconography of power,”53 the ones commonly portrayed in pictures and stories as people to emulate.54 Lord Roberts, Lord Kitchener, General French, General White, Colonel Steele, Major-General Baden-Powell, and Admiral Nelson were the well-known heroes,55 but

50 “What England Asks of the Boers,” Pleasant Hours, 10 March 1900, 38; “British Views of the Boer War,” Pleasant Hours, 10 March 1900, 40; “Britain Vindicated,” Pleasant Hours, 21 June 1902, 100.
53 MacDonald, “Signs from the Imperial Quarter,” 40.
54 “With virtually every facet of society teaching boys that the warrior was the ultimate masculine ideal, there could be little mistake about the message.” Moss, Manliness and Militarism, 20.
55 “The First in Command,” King’s Own, 3 February 1900, 17; “Bobs,” Pleasant Hours, 21 April 1900; “What ‘Bobs’ Never Does,” 9 March 1901, 37; “Lord Roberts and the Children,” King’s Own, 5 May 1900, 72; “Lord Kitchener of Khartum,” King’s Own, 17 February 1900, 28; “General French,” King’s Own,
even the lowly private was worthy of imitation. Of course, what made their lives fun to read were the adventures and dangers that they experienced, and what made the soldiers heroes was their loyalty, bravery, fair play and sacrifice. But for the publishers of the papers, what made them ultimately worthy of imitation was their Christian character.\textsuperscript{56} The press made it clear that soldiers fighting for a Christian empire needed to be Christian, and the British soldiers were deemed to have lived up to that expectation (especially unlike their counterparts the Boers). Hopefully, Canada’s future soldiers—those children reading the magazines—would too.

J. R. Watson has noted how in Britain there was a “blurring between metaphor and literal truth in the matter of fighting.”\textsuperscript{57} There was also a striking fusion of the secular and the spiritual in the discourse of empire and conflict, for God’s and Britain’s kingdoms were often hard to tell apart. One of the most conspicuous examples of this union of Christian and imperial causes was the poem “A New Patriotic Anthem,” recommended sung to the tune of the well-known jingoistic “Rule Britannia.” A portion of the poem read:

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4 August 1900; “The Hero of Ladysmith,” King’s Own, 31 March 1900, 52; “A Favorite Commander,” King’s Own, 28 April 1900, 68; “One of Britain’s Idols,” King’s Own, 7 July 1900, 106; M. A. W., “Nelson as a Boy,” Pleasant Hours, 25 May 1901, 81.
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\textsuperscript{56} For instance, the Pleasant Hours ran a four-month long serial entitled “A Methodist Soldier” which extolled these virtues. See January-April 1899. For other portrayals of ideal soldierly conduct, see “Dr. Bonar, “The Soldier’s Prayer,” Pleasant Hours, 27 July 1901, 118; “Only a Soldier True,” Pleasant Hours, 21 April 1900, 64; “The Victoria Cross and the Heroes Who Wear It,” King’s Own, 13 October 1900, 162.

The nations not so blest as thee
Prostrate to idol gods still fall;
While those more blessed bend the knee
To God, Creator of them all.
Rise, Britannia, and shine upon the waves;
Whom Christ makes free shall never more be slaves.
From north to south, from east to west;
Where’er thy banner is unfurl’d
Be this henceforth thy great behest,
To spread the Gospel through the world.
Rise, Britannia, and shine upon the waves;
Whom Christ makes free shall never more be slaves.\(^{58}\)

With imagery and language that equated the bending of the knee to Christ with those within the growing boundaries of the British Empire (not to mention singing about the Gospel in a well-known jingoistic tune), it is no small wonder that in little more than a decade the churches would have a difficult time separating the waging of war against Germany from fighting a holy war in defense of that same empire. Referring to spiritual activities in the language of warfare only reinforced the association between the two kingdoms.\(^{59}\)

Of course, it is a truism today that constructions of the other often reveal more about the constructor than the constructed, and that the colonizer’s construction of the other justified empire. Regarding the *King’s Own* and *Pleasant Hours*, both presented to their children readers an idealized view of the benefits of the empire, as well as the inferiority of its subjects or enemies. Not surprisingly, the expansion of the empire was depicted as a boon to those within its borders, and the artwork and commentary on cultures in Asia and Africa constructed

\(^{58}\) “A New Patriotic Anthem,” *Pleasant Hours*, 28 June 1902, 102.

\(^{59}\) For instance, using military terms to describe Christian activities (e.g., soldiers of Christ).
images of exotic and inferior peoples. The superiority of British rule and religion was also touted when referring to the Boers, the white-Protestant settlers that Britain was at war against in South Africa. Boer culture and conduct was considered to be second-rate, especially when contrasted with heroic, noble, Christian, British soldiers and their civilization. British rule was deemed to bring blessings to all, and the Union Jack was the emblem that reminded people of just that:

We hoist it to show our devotion,  
To our Queen, to our country and laws,  
It’s the outward and visible emblem  
Of advancement and liberty’s cause.

This sense of superiority over all races and cultures was reinforced by the ultimate claim of divine endorsement: “God is with the Union Jack. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’”


“Only a Small Bit of Bunting,” King’s Own, 26 May 1900, 84.

The larger quote read: “The Union Jack is the emblem of a mighty nation, whose success is not in the size of its armies, but in the moral and spiritual
Desmond Morton provides a detailed and helpful survey and analysis of the growth of the cadet movement in public schools in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods, as well as identifies concern over the growth of militarism in Canada.\textsuperscript{64} The Boy’s Brigade in Britain had begun the practice of fusing military drill with Bible classes in the early 1880s.\textsuperscript{65} The promotion of martial skills and love of empire manifested itself in the practice of military drill in church youth groups. One example from Rat Portage (now Kenora) Methodist Church in Ontario indicates that there was enthusiasm for such a practice in Canada. The following report from the editor of the Rat Portage Methodist provides a glimpse of this fusion of children’s ministry with military training:

We had the pleasure of attending drill the other evening, and were greatly pleased to note the progress the boys were making under their patient and efficient instructor, Mr. S. D. Craig. We trust that the boys will never have occasion to use any rifles more death-dealing than the ones now in their possession. We certainly do not wish to foster any undue military or jingo spirit, but we do express our hearty approval of the Brigade as an excellent means of drill and discipline. We think the parents should encourage the boys to regularly attend drill as a valuable means of physical culture, and our suggestion is that the parents go themselves occasionally as an

strength of its individuals. It believes in the Bible and love[s] God. Its national anthem is a prayer... God is with the Union Jack. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’” See Adele Stillwood, “The Union Jack,” \textit{Pleasant Hours}, 22 June 1901, 98.


\textsuperscript{65} Summers, “Militarism in Britain before the Great War,” 119-120.
encouragement to the boys, and an evidence to the instructor that his work is appreciated.66

More research needs to be done to get a clearer sense of just how widespread the use was of military drill in Canadian churches. What is known is that the military drill practiced in church youth groups mirrored the emphasis on imperial virtues, martial skills and patriotism in the *King’s Own* and *Pleasant Hours*. Mark Moss has identified how young boys in militarized late-Victorian and Edwardian Ontario were “educated for war.”67 And the examples from the *King’s Own* and *Pleasant Hours*, as well as the military drill in churches, provides even further examples of just how that militarization was supported by the churches, especially since it was deemed to provide just the right values for their youth.

It should be noted that there was some alarm expressed in the adult religious press over rising militarism in society and in the church, for both the Methodist Christian Guardian and the Presbyterian Westminster lamented the growing jingoism in Canada.68 Ironically, however, while the Christian Guardian was rejecting militarism with such statements as “muscular development is not a high ideal for a man, and still less is military development a high ideal for a nation,”69 its children’s counter-

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67 Moss, *Manliness and Militarism*.


part the *Pleasant Hours* presented the very opposite—a muscular and militaristic manhood.\textsuperscript{70}

**Conclusion**

There was a powerful current of imperialism in late-Victorian Canada which found ample expression in the Presbyterian and Methodist children’s publications. The Canadian churches were ardent nation-builders, and to build the nascent nation they believed that they must also support the empire to which the nation belonged. Through the empire, it was believed, the nation (as a distinctly Christian nation) could find its purpose, gain global influence, further the cause of justice, and spread the Christian faith. That being the case, instruction and inspiration for such an important (and providential) task needed to begin at an early age, and the *King’s Own* and *Pleasant Hours* did just that. What needs to be noted, however, is that evangelicalism’s concern for the family was a significant reason for looking upon imperialism as an ally, for imperial virtues were deemed to be family values. The editors believed that imperial values were synonymous with Christian values, and that girls and boys who embodied the ideals of their papers would become good mothers, fathers, citizens, as well as defenders of empire. Consequently, articles on faith, heroes, vocation, patriotism and entre-

\textsuperscript{70} The dissonance can, in part, be understood by noting that imperialism and militarism were not considered to be synonymous. One could supposedly ardently endorse the empire, but at the same time be opposed to militarism. Ideally, imperialism was considered to be providentially established to bless nations, but militarism was deemed to be patriotism run amuck with destructive consequences. Militarism was considered to be a perversion of imperialism, and that is why the opposition to the growing jingoism did not translate into opposition to the war, or empire. Consequently, churches could encourage imperialism among its youth, but oppose militarism elsewhere. And that is why the children’s publications prepared their readers to be good soldiers of empire.
tainment were permeated with imperial sentiment. This conviction was so strong that the call was for children to become adults prepared to die for the empire:

With loyal hearts and ready hands,  
The Empire’s children stand,  
Prepared to do, prepared to die,  
For Queen and native land.71

While it is difficult to determine how many children took this call to die for the empire to heart, this fusion of family values and imperialism reveals just how enmeshed evangelicalism had become with late-Victorian imperialism.

**Bibliography**


71 “The Queen’s Birthday,” *Pleasant Hours*, 20 May 1899, 78.