Chapter 4

RELIGION IN CHILDHOOD

> He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.
>
> Seven children aged 6 to 14 have been removed from their homes in Aylmer, Ontario, because their parents, who accept the literal truth of the Bible, refuse to promise they will never again hit them with switches if they disobey.
>
> Around our house we try to keep our kids from having imaginary companions. I think they are associated with the devil and it would be very bad if they had imaginary companions.
>
> True love and religious experience are almost impossible before adolescence.
>
> King Solomon must have been fond of animals, because he had many wives and one thousand porcupines.[1]

BORN TO BE RELIGIOUS?

Does our human DNA carry some genetic code that predisposes us to be religious? Are we "naturally" religious, as Elkind (1970) has suggested? In Chapter 3, we have reviewed different theories and some empirical evidence suggesting that evolutionary processes might have "hardwired" humans to be predisposed to become religious beings. These ideas seem to be taken more seriously now than they were a few years ago, possibly because of the huge advances occurring in biology, medicine, and neuroscience with respect to our understanding of the genetic code and physiological functioning. Genetics and the nervous system clearly play important roles in human behavior, and this could include religious behavior. As we have seen in Chapter 3, there is no shortage of "instincts" that have been theorized to underlie religion.

However, many behavioral scientists remain skeptical that religious and other attitudes somehow result from genetic influence, just as they would be suspicious of a claim that we humans are "naturally" inclined to like (or dislike) heavy metal music, or that we have a genetic destiny to be "political" or to be "sports fans." Rather, many social scientists would argue that our love (or hate) of heavy metal music, and our inclinations towards politics and sports, come more from our socialization experiences and environmental factors than from the DNA

1. These quotations come, respectively, from the following sources: Proverbs 14:24; Saunders (2001, p. A1); a mother quoted by Taylor and Carlson (2000, p. 247); Kupky (1928, p. 70); and a child quoted by Goldman (1964, p. 1).

we inherited from our parents (see, e.g., Kagan, 1998). For example, Olson, Vernon, Harris, and Jang (2001) have concluded that "A truism in the social psychological literature on attitudes is that attitudes are learned" (p. 845). Albert Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasizes the role of modelling and imitation of behavior, has been especially influential in promoting the view that many of people's attitudes and behaviors are learned.

However, authors and theorists from analyst Carl Jung (1933, 1938) to developmental psychologist David Elkind (1970) have concluded that at least some aspects of, or capacities for, religiousness may be inherited. Jung believed that we humans have an unconscious need to hunt for and to find a deity. Elkind suggested that cognitive-stage development is partially inherited. Therefore, at least some aspects of religion "can be traced to certain cognitive need capacities that emerge in the course of mental growth" (Elkind, 1970, p. 36). These "nativist" speculations were given an injection of new life when research on twins seemed to lend empirical support to the notion that religion is somehow innate. As noted in Chapter 3 (see Research Box 3.1), researchers at the University of Minnesota (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990; Waller, Kojetin, Bouchard, Lykken, & Tellegen, 1990) followed monozygotic and dizygotic sets of twins who were separated in infancy and reared apart, as well as many more identical and fraternal twins who were raised together. They concluded that religiousness, like many other psychological characteristics, has fairly strong heritability components. More recent research on twins has generally confirmed this conclusion, but acknowledges that environmental factors seem to play an even stronger role in attitudes toward religion (Olson et al., 2001). Another study found that, at least during adolescence, there was no evidence of genetic influence on religious attitudes (Abrahamson, Baker, & Caspi, 2002).

Of course, the heritability research does not claim that one person is "born to be a Baptist" and another "born to be a Muslim." Rather, it is suggested that there may be some genetically inherited predisposition in all of us—for example, to find meaning in our existence—and that these might be satisfied by belief in a supreme power. Or an inborn need to affiliate with others might be easily satisfied by involvement in a religious group. In this chapter, however, we address the substantial evidence suggesting that religion affects and is affected by our experiences as we grow up.

"Religious development" has been an area of interest and study since the formative days of the psychology of religion (see, e.g., Hickman, 1926), and a number of major books and articles summarizing theory and research in this area have been published in the past half century (e.g., Allport, 1950; Hyde, 1990; Oser & Scarlett, 1991; Strommen, 1971; Tamminen, 1991; Tamminen & Nurmi, 1995). Also, Rosengren, Johnson, and Harris (2000) have produced a book titled *Imagining the Impossible: Magical, Scientific, and Religious Thinking in Children*, which offers a stimulating collection of articles with novel approaches to understanding religious thinking in childhood. The reader is referred to these scholars for more extensive treatment of the relevant research.

In this chapter we outline several major theoretical positions on religious development, consider relevant empirical work that has tested these theories, and we also review research in several related areas. First, Gordon Allport's insightful reflections on child religious growth are examined. We then turn to a consideration of Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development, since they have served as the basis for much subsequent theory and research on cognitive religious development. This is followed by an exploration of the work of Elkind and Goldman, both of whom attempted to apply Piaget's concepts directly to religious growth.

Subsequent developments in stage theories are then considered, including Kohlberg's theory of moral development, Fowler's conceptualization of faith development, and Oser's thinking on the development of religious judgment. Then attention is directed to specific related topics, including the development of God concepts, prayer, and religious experience; links between religion and attachment theory; and work in other areas. Finally, in our chapter overview, we offer a critical assessment of previous efforts—especially with respect to "what's missing."

In general, in this chapter we restrict our consideration of "religious development" to theory and investigations involving *children*—here taken to include persons up to their midteen years. This purposely avoids many studies of college students and adults, unless such research has implications for child religious development, or unless it extends child-related findings to adolescent or adult samples. Most of the adolescent and adult material related to religious socialization is discussed in Chapter 5.

THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Allport's Analysis

Gordon Allport (1950), in *The Individual and His Religion*, described his ideas about how the child moves from essentially no religion to the point where faith becomes an integrated part of the personality. Allport believed that religion is acquired, not inherited biologically, though he allowed that it does to some extent grow out of basic human needs. He suggested that, at least initially, babies are (psychologically) a bit like a ball of modeling clay—they can be shaped and molded into all sorts of interesting forms. Consequently, culture and environment shape religious orientation, just as they contribute to other aspects of the developing child. Thus babies move from a state of no religion through the acquisition of social responses and habits (e.g., bowing their heads, clasping their hands—things as routine as brushing their teeth). Children do not understand why they are doing these things, but are taught to "go through the motions" of some religious rituals.

According to Allport, young children are very egocentric, perceiving that the world revolves around them; thus prayer may be seen as a means of getting material things. Similarly, young children weave adult explanations and words into meanings that the *children* understand. For example, Allport told the story of a youngster who thought God must be the weathervane on top of the barn, because the child had heard that He is very high and bright, and the weathercock was the highest, brightest thing in the child's world. Furthermore, young children's religious concepts tend to be anthropomorphic (ascribing human characteristics to God); they may visualize God as a king, an old man, or a "superman."

Allport believed that children's egotism inevitably leads to disappointment and deprivations in the years preceding puberty; this process is initiated by such things as the death of pets or denial of material goods, and and in turn leads to revisions of their views of Providence. Essentially, Allport argued that children then pass from a "self-interested" type of religion to a "self-disinterested" religion. As time passes, older children begin to comprehend the abstract aspects of religiousness and no longer need to put everything in concrete terms. Also, they begin to identify with an "ingroup" (i.e., their religious group). All of this leads, usually in adolescence, to the development of religion as an integral part of the personality. This has been described as moving from a faith that is really "second-hand fittings" (i.e., understanding and "believing" parental religious teachings) to a religion of "first-hand fit-

tings" during adolescence (i.e., religion becomes part of an adolescent's own personality) (Allport, 1950, p. 36).

This is an interesting and insightful analysis of children's religious development, but it is rather unsystematic compared to other theories of development that posit specific stages. Moreover, there has been little research to assess Allport's suggestions. Allport did acknowledge that Piaget's conceptualization of cognitive development influenced his own description of religious growth, but Piaget's impact was much stronger on some other theories of religious development, which in turn have stimulated many studies.

Stage Theories of Religious Development

Experiences relevant to faith development begin very early in our lives, and it has been suggested that there are common "stages" in religious growth. Allport did this in a general way, but we need to examine several important and more systematic theoretical positions in this regard. First, as Hyde (1990) pointed out over a decade ago, "The study of religion in childhood and adolescence has been dominated for thirty years by investigations of the process by which religious thinking develops" (p. 15), and this has been largely attributable to the influence of Piaget.

Piaget's Cognitive Stages

Jean Piaget, a dominant figure in developmental psychology, believed that the ways children think about their world change systematically as they grow up (Piaget, 1932/1948, 1936/1952, 1937/1954). That is, Piaget argued that "cognitive development" involves a series of stages. Beginning in the 1920s, he studied these stages in part by sitting on street corners and playing marbles and other games with his own and other children, asking about the "rules" of each game, posing problems for the children to solve, and so on. He was just as interested in the "errors" the children made as he was in "correct" answers to his questions, and noted that there were striking similarities among the ways in which children of the same age reasoned about things. Piaget concluded that there are four major identifiable stages of cognitive development, which reflect the general reasoning abilities of children of different ages:

1. *Sensorimotor stage* (birth to about 2 years). During this stage, children seem to understand things through their sensory and motor ("sensorimotor") interactions with the world around them (e.g., by touching and looking at things, and by putting them in their mouths). It is during this period that infants come to realize that objects continue to exist even though they are no longer immediately perceived ("object permanence"), and also that infants develop a fear of strangers ("stranger anxiety"). Both of these cognitive changes appear at about 8 months or soon thereafter.

2. *Preoperational stage* (about 2 to 7 years). During this second stage, children live in a very egocentric world, being unable to see things from others' perspectives. Preoperational children become quite at home in representing things with language and numbers, but lack sophisticated logical reasoning capability, and are unable to grasp more than one relationship at a time. Also, children at this stage are prone to errors, especially for concepts of conservation. That is, they have difficulty grasping the idea that such characteristics as volume, mass, or length of objects remain the same, in spite of changes in their outward appearance. For example, even when a child has seen the same amount of liquid poured back and forth

between a short, fat beaker and a tall, thin beaker, the youngster may fail to understand that the amount of liquid in the two containers is the same. Rather, he or she may think that the tall, thin beaker holds more water because it "looks bigger."

3. *Concrete operational stage* (about 7 to 12 years). During this stage, children become capable of understanding the concepts of conservation that gave them so much trouble at the previous level. They are also able to reason quite logically about concrete events, to understand analogies, and to perform mathematical transformations such as those involving reversibility (i.e., 4 + 3 = 7; therefore 7 – 3 = 4).

4. *Formal operational stage* (12 years and up). The last stage of cognitive development allows a move away from the concrete in thought processes. These older children are capable of complex abstract thinking involving the hypothetical—for example, by generating potential solutions to a problem, and then creating a plan to systematically test different possibilities in order to arrive at a "correct" solution.

Although Piaget's proposals have not escaped criticism, one of the most important contributions of his cognitive development stages seems to have been his recognition that children are not simply miniature adults and cannot think as adults do. Rather, cognitive growth proceeds sequentially in order to allow growing children to assimilate and deal with their environment, and also to make alterations in thinking in order to accommodate new information. Each stage builds on the previous stages in order to further cognitive development. This has important implications for religious development. For example, it suggests that children are not cognitively capable of understanding the complex and abstract concepts involved in most religions of the adult world. Piaget did not write directly about the religious growth of children (Hyde, 1990), even though he wrote a book on moral development (Piaget, 1932/1948). It was left to others to relate Piaget's theories of cognitive stages to religion.

Applications of Piaget's Stages to Religious Development

Elkind's Approach. David Elkind proposed that religion is a natural result of mental development, such that biological roots of intellectual growth interact with individuals' experiences. Specifically, Elkind suggested that four basic sequential components of intelligence (conservation, search for representation, search for relations, and search for comprehension) are critical in religious development, and that this sequence parallels the cognitive stages described by Piaget (Elkind, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1970, 1971). Three studies investigating Elkind's ideas about cognitive religious development are described in Research Box 4.1. Essentially, his research supported a Piagetian kind of progression as religious understanding emerges in children. A subsequent study (Long, Elkind, & Spilka, 1967) revealed a similar cognitive sequence for children's ideas about prayer.

Some authors apparently saw in these findings implications for religious education. For example, it has been recommended that children not be taught basic concepts about God until they are capable of understanding them, at about age 6 (Williams, 1971). Abraham (1981) also found that it may be possible to hasten the transition from concrete to abstract religious thinking by deliberately stimulating cognitive conflict in religious education instructional materials at the sixth-grade level. As discussed below, Ronald Goldman in particular has extended Piaget's stages to the realm of religious education.

Research Box 4.1. The Child's Concept of Religion (Elkind, 1961, 1962, 1963)

In three separate studies, Elkind posed a series of questions to Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant children, respectively, concerning their understanding of their religious identity and ideas. For example, in his 1961 study, Jewish children were asked questions such as these: "Are you Jewish?", "What makes you Jewish?", "Can a cat or a dog be Jewish? Why?", and "How do you become a Jew?" Elkind found considerable age-related cognitive similarity in children's responses to such questions across his three major religious groups. The development of religious ideas seemed to parallel Piaget's cognitive stages to some extent.

In the 5- to 7-year range (comparable to Piaget's late preoperational stage), children seemed to think that their denominational affiliation was absolute, having been ordained by God, and therefore it could not be changed. A few years later (ages 7–9, comparable to Piaget's early concrete operational stage), religious ideas were indeed very "concrete." Religious affiliation was seen to be determined by the family into which one was born, and if a Catholic family had a pet cat, it was thought to be a Catholic cat. At the next stage of religious development (ages 10–14, corresponding to Piaget's late concrete and early formal operational stages), children apparently began to understand some of the complexities of religious practices and rituals, and they could conceive of a person's changing his or her religion because they understood religion to come from within the person rather than being determined externally. Abstract and differentiated religious thinking was beginning to appear. In the end, Elkind concluded that children were not capable of an abstract "adult" understanding of religion before the age of 11 or 12 (i.e., the beginning of Piaget's formal operational period).

The Work of Goldman. Goldman applied Piaget's theory of cognitive development to religious thinking, claiming that "religious thinking is no different in mode and method from non-religious thinking" (Goldman, 1964, p. 5). Working in England, he asked 5- to 15-year-old children questions about drawings with religious connotations (e.g., a child kneeling at a bed, apparently praying), as well as questions about Bible stories (e.g., Moses at the burning bush). He then analyzed responses to the questions by looking for evidence of Piagetian stages of development. He concluded, as did Elkind, that religious thinking does indeed proceed in a fashion similar to more general cognitive development.

A number of studies have confirmed these general conclusions about "cognitive stages," especially the implication that children are capable of more abstract religious thinking as they grow older (see, e.g., Degelman, Mullen, & Mullen, 1984; Peatling, 1974, 1977; Peatling & Laabs, 1975; Tamminen, 1976; Tamminen & Nurmi, 1995). There has also been some confirmatory cross-cultural work (see Hyde, 1990). Some studies have examined specific predictions of the Piagetian approach for religious development. For example, Zachry (1990) concluded that his data, obtained from high school and college students, were "consistent with the prediction of Piagetian theory that abstract thought in a specific content area such as religion depends on an underlying formal logic" (p. 405).

Evaluating Goldman's Findings. Some empirical work has not been entirely supportive of Goldman's conclusions about the development of religious thought. For example, Hoge

and Petrillo (1978b) studied 451 high school sophomores in different Protestant and Catholic churches, and concluded that Goldman had overestimated the importance of cognitive capacity and underestimated the role of religious training in the development of religious thought. This conclusion, however, was apparently based primarily on differences between public and private school Catholics. Hoge and Petrillo attributed such differences to religious education at the private school, but there might well have been selection factors at work, such as socioeconomic status or parental religiosity. Hoge and Petrillo themselves acknowledged the bias in their sample, such that "the youth most alienated from the church refused [to participate] disproportionately often" (pp. 142–143).

Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis (1993) reconsidered Hoge and Petrillo's (1978b) results and concluded that their conclusions were inappropriate. In fact, they suggested that Hoge and Petrillo's findings were "precisely what Goldman would have predicted" (1993, p. 62). The disagreement between these two groups of authors apparently hinges partly on a specific Goldman prediction concerning the level of religious *teachings* (e.g., "concrete thinking" about religious content) and adolescents' overall *capacity* for higher, more abstract ("formal operational") religious thinking. Hoge and Petrillo did not measure this "gap" directly, but assumed that higher absolute scores on a measure of abstract religious thinking meant that a smaller gap existed. Furthermore, their findings were not consistent across different measures of religious rejection or across different participant groupings, and the majority of reported correlations did not achieve statistical significance. It is not surprising that there was some disagreement as to the interpretation of these findings.

Some authors (e.g., Godin, 1968; Howkins, 1966; Kay, 1996; McCallister, 1995) have been quite critical of Goldman's general conclusions, especially the implications he drew for religious education. Apparently Elkind's research has escaped the severe criticism applied to Goldman's work, in part because Elkind avoided theological biases or assumptions (see Hyde, 1990), whereas Goldman "assumed a particular theological point of view" (Hyde, 1990, p. 35). For example, Greer (1983) has suggested that the cognitive tests of Goldman and those of Peatling, who developed a measure of religious cognitive development (Peatling, Laabs, & Newton, 1975), were biased in such a way that theologically conservative respondents would tend to endorse responses indicating concrete (rather than abstract) religious thinking.

In the end, although it has been argued that the religiosity of children is *not* dependent on cognitive development (Pierce & Cox, 1995), the works of Elkind, Goldman, and others have demonstrated the utility of a Piagetian framework for understanding the development of religious thinking. These researchers also set the stage for much subsequent work in related areas, such as moral development, faith development, and the emergence of the God concept and prayer.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg's (1964, 1969, 1981, 1984) theory of moral development has served as a basis for the investigation of many issues related to morality. Building on Piaget's belief that the moral judgments of children derive from their cognitive development, Kohlberg attempted to identify cognitive stages that underlie the development of moral thinking. In a series of studies, he asked people what they thought about different "moral dilemmas."

His most famous dilemma involved a woman near death from cancer who could potentially be saved by a new drug developed by a nearby druggist. The druggist, however, wanted 10 times what the drug cost him to make—more than the sick woman's husband,

Heinz, could afford—and refused to sell it for less. So Heinz considered breaking into the druggist's store to steal the drug for his wife. Respondents were asked to comment on the morality of Heinz's potential decision to steal the drug, and to indicate the reasoning behind their response. Based on such responses to such dilemmas, Kohlberg proposed that individuals pass through three broad levels of moral development, each with substages. As Sapp (1986) stated, "each stage is distinguished by moral reasoning that is more complex, more comprehensive, more integrated, and more differentiated than the reasoning of the earlier stages" (p. 273). Table 4.1 outlines the levels and stages of moral development proposed by Kohlberg.

Kohlberg's theory has been criticized (Darley & Shultz, 1990), and Bergling's (1981) extensive assessment of its validity suggests that the theory may have limited utility outside of Western industrialized countries. But there is some support for Kohlberg's conclusions that children do progress through moral stages, especially from the preconventional level to the conventional level of morality. Also, Snarey's (1985) review of the literature suggests that this progression *is* reasonably similar in different cultures.

TABLE 4.1. Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Preconventional level (develops during early childhood)

Stage 1. Punishment and obedience orientation
The first stage is characterized by avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power as values in themselves. Morality is seen as based on self-interest, and the goodness or badness of actions is determined by their physical consequences, regardless of any human meaning attached to these consequences.

Stage 2. Instrumental relativist orientation
This stage is defined by a focus on instrumental satisfaction of one's own needs as the determiner of "right." Reciprocity may be present, but is of the "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" variety.

Conventional level (develops during late childhood and early adolescence)

Generally, this level involves a move towards gaining approval or avoiding disapproval as the basis for morality; law and social rules are seen as valuable in their own right.

Stage 3. Interpersonal concordance or "good boy/nice girl" orientation
Early in the conventional level, the individual is driven by behavior that pleases or helps others and that receives their approval.

Stage 4. "Law and order" orientation
Subsequently, in the conventional level, the person focuses on the maintenance of the social order and the importance of authority and strict rules.

Postconventional level (may develop from late adolescence on)

People at this level tend to be concerned with morality as abstract principles. They are able to separate their own identification with groups from the principles and moral values associated with those groups.

Stage 5. Social-contract/legalistic orientation
The fifth stage involves recognition of the relative nature of personal values, and the importance of having procedural rules to reach consensus. The individual can separate the legal world from individual differences of opinion.

Stage 6. Universal ethical principle orientation
The last and highest stage of moral development, according to Kohlberg, involves defining "right" in one's own conscience, consistent with one's own abstract ethical principles, but with a sense of responsibility to others. There is a clear emphasis on universality, consistency, logic, and rationality.

One might expect that Kohlberg's conceptualization of moral development would be closely linked to religious growth, or that religious development would directly affect (and possibly determine) the emergence of morality. However, Kohlberg was very clear that moral and religious development are quite separate, and the two should not be confused. For example, he suggested that it is a fallacy to think that

> basic moral principles are dependent upon a particular religion, or any religion at all. We have found no important differences in development of moral thinking between Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, and atheists. . . . Both cultural values and religion are important factors in selectively elaborating certain themes in the moral life but they are not unique causes of the development of basic moral values. (Kohlberg, 1980, pp. 33–34)

Research has confirmed Kohlberg's conclusion in this regard (Bruggeman & Hart, 1996; Cobb, Ong, & Tate, 2001; Gorsuch & McFarland, 1972; Selig & Teller, 1975), and other experts on moral development have taken a similar stance (e.g., Turiel & Neff, 2000). Moreover, Nucci and Turiel (1993) found that older children and adolescents were able to distinguish between moral and religious issues, and that they viewed moral rules as unalterable by religious authorities. However, this has not stopped many, many researchers from speculating about and investigating possible relationships between moral development and religiosity (e.g., Clouse, 1986; Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Glover, 1997; Hanson, 1991; Kedem & Cohen, 1987; Mitchell, 1988). Such research has been facilitated by the development of a less subjective scoring system to evaluate stages of moral development.

Rest's (1979, 1983; Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, & Anderson, 1974) Defining Issues Test (DIT) asks people to respond to a series of 12 statements concerning each of six moral dilemmas. The DIT was intended to be both simpler and more objective than Kohlberg's initial scoring of moral stages, and it has stimulated numerous studies on moral development and religion, though apparently few with children. These investigations have reported some relationships between level of moral judgment and religious orientation, though typically not strong ones (Clouse, 1991; Ernsberger & Manaster, 1981; Holley, 1991; Sapp, 1986). There have also been claims that people from fundamentalist denominations have lower DIT scores (Richards, 1991; Sapp, 1986). The validity of the DIT for conservative religious groups has been called into question, however, by Richards (1991; Richards & Davison, 1992). Recently an improved measure of moral judgment, the DIT2, was published (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 1999). It remains to be seen whether this new measure will help to clarify the literature on moral development and religion.

Gilligan (1977) has criticized Kohlberg's theory and research for their failure to deal with unique aspects of women's moral development, especially the care and responsibility orientation of many women, as contrasted with the male justice orientation emphasized by Kohlberg. This could have implications for religious development—for example, in terms of gender differences in images of God, if God is seen as a person's anchor for morality. There is evidence that images of God diverge along gender lines, with women more likely to see God as supportive and men more likely to see God as instrumental (Nelsen, Cheek, & Au, 1985). Reich (1997) has pondered more generally whether such considerations might suggest the need for a theory specifically for women's religious development. However, he has concluded that there is no need to modify current theories of religious development, or to generate new ones in this regard. Others (DeNicola, 1997; Schweitzer, 1997) have been critical of Reich's stance; they have argued that, at the least, revisions to current theories are needed.

In general, Kohlberg's stages of moral development can at least stimulate our thinking about religious growth. For example, Scarlett and Periello (1991) have suggested that Kohlberg's ideas could help in understanding aspects of the development of prayer. Furthermore, religion has much to say about morality, and understanding how moral development occurs is certainly relevant to the communication and understanding of moral issues at different ages. At the same time, we must take Kohlberg's warning to heart and not assume—as some researchers have—that moral and religious development are necessarily directly and causally related.

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development

James Fowler (1981, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1996) has suggested that individual religious faith unfolds in a stage sequence similar to that described by Piaget for cognitive development and Kohlberg for moral growth. (For an analysis of similarities between Fowler's and Kohlberg's theories, see Hanford, 1991.) Faith is defined as "a dynamic and generic human experience . . . [that] includes, but is not limited to or identical with, religion" (Fowler, 1991a, p. 31). That is, although Fowler's use of the term "faith" does overlap with institutionalized religion, the two are also independent to some extent. Faith is seen as a deep core of the individual, the "center of values," "images and realities of power," and "master stories" (myths) involving both conscious and unconscious motivations. In other words, faith involves centers of values that vary from one individual to the next, but that are foci of primary life importance (such as religion, family, nation, power, money, and sexuality).

Furthermore, people tend to align themselves with power in this dangerous world—possibly religious power, but also sources of secular power, such as nations and economic systems. "Faith is trust in and loyalty to images and realities of power" (Fowler, 1991a, p. 32). Also, Fowler argues that faith involves stories or scripts that give meaning and direction to people's lives (e.g., what it means to be a good person or a part of a religious community).

Fowler and his colleagues have carried out extensive interviews with hundreds of people about these aspects of their faith. They have concluded that there are essentially seven stages in faith development, although some people never progress very far through these stages. Fowler's stages "aim to describe patterned operations of knowing and valuing that underlie our consciousness" (Fowler, 1996, p. 56), and are described in Table 4.2, with the approximate time of emergence of each stage shown in parentheses.

Fowler concluded that it is extremely rare for people to reach the seventh and final stage in his sequence, but people who have attained universalizing faith might include Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa. It is no coincidence that both Gandhi and King were assassinated. Fowler claims that people who achieve universalizing faith are in danger of premature death because of their confrontational involvement in solving serious problems in the world.

Fowler's analysis of stages of faith is rich in ideas, provides a framework for empirical work, and can potentially contribute to our understanding of what it means to be "religious." However, it has been pointed out that Fowler's conceptualization is complex and difficult to comprehend, and it has failed to generate relatively rigorous empirical research. Also, Fowler has generally declined to analyze his own results statistically and ignored related work in the psychology of religion (Hyde, 1990).

Recently the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* has devoted a special issue to critical discussion of what it calls Fowler's "faith development theory" (FDT). Streib

TABLE 4.2. Fowler's Stages of Faith Development

1. *Primal faith* (infancy). This first stage involves the beginnings of emotional trust based on body contact, care, early play and the like. Subsequent faith development is based on this foundation.
2. *Intuitive/projective faith* (early childhood). In the second stage, imagination combines with perception and feelings to create long-lasting faith images. The child becomes aware of the sacred, of prohibitions, of death, and of the existence of morality.
3. *Mythical/literal faith* (elementary school years). Next, the developing ability to think logically helps to order the world, corresponding to the Piagetian stage of concrete operations. The child can now discriminate between fantasy and the real world, and can appreciate others' perspectives. Religious beliefs and symbols are accepted quite literally.
4. *Synthetic/conventional faith* (early adolescence). During the fourth stage, there is a reliance on abstract ideas of formal operational thinking, which engenders a hunger for a more personal relationship with God. Reflections on past experiences, and concerns about the future and personal relationships, contribute to the development of mutual perspective taking and the shaping of a world view and its values.
5. *Individuative/reflective faith* (late adolescence or young adulthood). The fifth stage involves a critical examination and reconstitution of values and beliefs, including a change from reliance on external authorities to authority within the self. The capacity for "third-person perspective taking" contributes to the development of consciously chosen commitments and to the emergence of an "executive ego."
6. *Conjunctive faith* (midlife or beyond). In the sixth stage, there is integration of opposites (e.g., the realization that each individual is both young and old, masculine and feminine, constructive and destructive), generating a "hunger for a deeper relationship to the reality that symbols mediate" (Fowler, 1991a, p. 41) "Dialogical knowing" emerges, such that the individual is open to the multiple perspectives of a complex world. This enables the person to go beyond the faith boundaries developed in the previous individuative/reflective stage, and to appreciate that "truth" is both multidimensional and organically interdependent.
7. *Universalizing faith* (unspecified age). The relatively rare final stage involves a oneness with the power of being or God, as well as commitment to love, justice, and overcoming oppression and violence. People who have attained this stage of faith development "live as though a commonwealth of love and justice were already reality among us. They create zones of liberation for the rest of us, and we experience them as both liberating and as threatening. These people tend to confront others concerning their involvement in, and attachments to, dehumanizing structures which oppose 'the commonwealth of love and justice'" (Fowler, 1991a, p. 41).

(2001) proposes that revisions to FDT are needed—for example, to free the theory from "its almost unquestioned adoption of the structural-developmental 'logic of development' . . . in order to account for the rich and deep life-world- and life-history-related dimensions of religion" (pp. 144–45). Similarly, Day (2001) claims that "contemporary research challenges the fundamental assumptions of the cognitive developmental paradigm" (p. 173); therefore, we need to look elsewhere if we are to understand religious development. He has suggested that greater attention should be addressed to (religious) speech and narrative. McDargh (2001) focuses his critique of EDT more on its theological foundations, and claims that a more individually focused approach would be useful. McDargh (2001) and Rizzuto (2001) have both argued for more incorporation of psychoanalytic concepts and processes in analyzing faith development. However, Fowler (2001) has defended FDT, arguing that it continues to serve as a useful framework for studying faith development at different levels (individual, family, and social group).

One problem with FDT has been the difficulty in operationalizing the stages, and consequently there have been attempts to simplify the measurement of Fowler's proposed stages.

Barnes and Doyles (1989) constructed a "faith development" version of Rest's Defining Issues Test (which itself was intended to simplify measurement of Kohlberg's moral stages). More recently, Leak, Loucks, and Bowlin (1999) have developed an 8-item Faith Development Scale intended to measure Fowler's proposed stages. However, attempts to validate this scale have generated mixed results. Leak et al. (1999) have suggested that this either might be due to limitations of the scale, or might suggest that we should have "reservations on the beneficence of mature faith within a Fowlerian framework" (p. 122). In light of these problems, Fowler's conceptualization of faith stages has yet to live up to its promise as a useful and important explanatory construct in the psychology of religion.

Oser's Stages of Development of Religious Judgment

Fritz Oser with Gmunder and other colleagues (Oser, 1991, 1994; Oser & Gmunder, 1991; Oser & Reich, 1990, 1996; Oser, Reich, & Bucher, 1994), has focused on a related aspect of religious development called "religious judgment." Apart from the work of Elkind, Fowler and others, Oser (1991) concluded that

> there have been few investigations directed at building up a theory about the development of an individual's constructions and reconstructions of the religious experiences and beliefs. [Therefore we] are attempting to formulate a new paradigm of religious development, using a structural concept of discontinuous, stagelike development and the classical semiclinical interview method as our primary research strategy. (p. 6)

Oser's research has revealed five stages in the emergence of religious judgment as qualitative changes occur in people's relationship to an "Ultimate Being" or God. Individuals move from a stage of believing that God intervenes unexpectedly in the world and that God's power guides human beings (Stage 1), through belief in a still external and all-powerful God who punishes or rewards depending on good or bad deeds ("Give so that you may receive") (Stage 2). Individuals in Stage 3 begin to think of God as somewhat detached from their world and as wielding less influence, with people generally responsible for their own lives, since they can now distinguish between transcendence (God's existence outside the created world) and immanence (God's presence and action from within). In Stage 4 people come to realize both the necessity and the limits of autonomy, recognizing that freedom and life stem from an Ultimate Being, who is often perceived to have a "divine plan" that gives meaning to life. Finally, in Stage 5 the Ultimate Being is realized through human action via care and love. There is "universal and unconditional religiosity" (Oser, 1991, p. 10).

Overall, there is a growing need for autonomy as people advance through the five stages, as well as a "deepening appreciation for the unity or 'partnership' of opposites" (Oser, 1991, p. 13). Elements of this stage analysis of religious judgment parallel aspects of the other stage theories considered above. For example, Oser's claim that people move from seeing God as all-powerful and as guiding human behavior to a much more autonomous, self-defined view of the deity and world is similar to Kohlberg's observation that people move from unquestioning deference to power (at the preconventional level) to the recognition of the relative nature of personal values and an emphasis on universality (at the postconventional level). This in turn is similar to Fowler's conceptualization of the early

stages of faith development as a process of teasing apart the real from fantasy; of the middle stages as involving an increasing appreciation of other's perspectives, not just one's own; and of the later stages as characterized by the integration of opposites and the emergence of a universalizing faith.

Oser and Reich (1996) have pointed to limited empirical support for this stage conceptualization of the development of religious judgment; some recent research (e.g., Bucher, 1991; Di Loreto & Oser, 1996, as cited in Oser & Reich, 1996; Roco & Ticu, 1996; Zondag & Belzen, 1999) has provided further support for Oser's proposals. Huber, Reich, and Schenker (2000) have argued that it is important to match the technique of measurement to the goals of an investigation in this area; their findings suggest that combinations of methods may be appropriate.

Stage Theories: Enough Is Enough?

How many different stage conceptualizations of religious development are needed, especially with respect to the cognitive aspects of religion? Given the overlap among current stage conceptualizations, it might be productive to attempt an integration and synthesis of Piaget's, Kohlberg's, Fowler's, Oser's, and others' stage theories of development, in order to delineate the common elements of these theories as they apply to the development of religious thought processes. Such an integration has been attempted by Helmut Reich; his work is discussed later (see "Is a Unified Approach to Religious Development Possible?", below). However, it is clear that there has been a strong emphasis in existing theories of religious development on *cognitive* components of such growth, and a tendency to ignore or underemphasize other aspects of religious socialization (see Chapter 5).

More generally, is the "stage" approach the best way to conceptualize religious growth and change? Certainly this approach has increased our understanding of the general processes involved in the emergence of adult religiousness. However, it is possible that an obsession with stages may detract from our ability to understand the complexity and uniqueness of individual religious development. That is, the tendency to assume that such growth involves cognitive commonalities across all members of specific age groups can to some extent blind us to the idiosyncratic nature of religion in childhood and adolescence (see, e.g., Day, 1994, 2001; Streib, 2001). Furthermore, the stage approach implies a certain amount of discontinuity in religious development, whereas it may actually be a reasonably continuous process.

It has been argued that solid empirical investigations of the development of religious concepts are rare (Boyer & Walker, 2000), and the topic of religious development has been generally neglected (Harris, 2000). The studies that do exist are often "misguided" (Boyer & Walker, 2000, p. 140), because they compare how children think with "how adults ought to think, according to theological doctrine" (p. 141). Boyer and Walker have pointed out that we do not know whether adults' religious representations are indeed consistent with church doctrine; nor should we assume that children's religious development can be assessed by comparing it to adult religious thought. Possibly investigations of children's religion simply elicit "theologically correct" information. That is, children may say what their church, parents, or culture expect them to say, and this tells us little about, for example, religious concept development. In a similar vein, Harris (2000) has concluded that in spite of appearances to the contrary, the Piagetian legacy has actually led us to neglect the development of religious thinking. Maybe we need to rethink our thinking about children's religious thinking!

Is a Unified Approach to Religious Development Possible?

Helmut Reich (1993a, 1993b) has attempted to summarize the "smorgasbord" of differing theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of religious development. In addition, he has attempted to distinguish between the degree of "hardness" and "softness" of stage theories. "Hard" stages

> describe organized systems of action (first-order problem solving), are qualitatively different from each other and follow an unchanging sequence with a clear developmental logic: A later stage denotes greater complexity and improved problem solving capacity. Each hard stage integrates the preceding stage and logically requires the elements of the prior stage. (Reich, 1993a, p. 151)

The stage models of Piaget, Kohlberg, Elkind and Goldman would be considered "hard." "Soft" stages, on the other hand, "explicitly include elements of affective or reflective characteristics (metatheoretical reflection) that . . . do not follow a unique developmental logic" (Reich, 1993a, p. 151). Oser's and Fowler's theories above would fall into this "soft" category. The "hard–soft" distinction could be helpful in understanding and categorizing theories of religious development, and also the circumstances under which one theory might be more appropriate than another. However, Fowler (1993) has criticized this approach, suggesting that the use of "hard" and "soft" categories is obsolete; that Reich's formulation does not incorporate the important work by Gilligan (1977) on the ethics of responsibility and care; and that Reich fails to acknowledge important differences between Oser's and Fowler's stage theories.

Reich's work does a considerable service by mapping common elements in different theories and empirical investigations, critically evaluating and integrating theories, and suggesting the need for clarification and some standardization in terminology and approaches. In reaction to Reich's proposed integration, Wulff (1993) has suggested that "in the long run . . . the psychology of religion and its practitioners will be best served if we not only recognize the limitations of these theories and their associated research techniques, but also strive to develop new ones more faithful to the traditions and life experience of the persons we seek to understand" (p. 185). Reich's beginning could stimulate further integrative conceptualizations. However, a single major integrative theory of religious development remains an elusive goal (see also Tamminen & Nurmi, 1995).

Aside from the theoretical work described to this point, many studies have attempted to evaluate different aspects of "childhood" religion and its development. This research sometimes incorporates elements of the stage theories of religious growth described above, but specific issues are often studied empirically without direct reliance on the stage approach. We now turn to an examination of some additional theoretical work, as well as several empirical areas.

CONCEPTS OF GOD

When children think of God, what sort of an image forms in their minds? Many studies of religion in childhood have focused specifically on this issue. Some of this research was based on psychodynamic theories about the development of an image of God. For example, Freud (1913/1919, 1927/1961) interpreted the God image as a father figure, a kind of projection of

one's real father in the context of the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Jung (1948/1969) apparently agreed that there is some projection of one's earthly father into one's God image, but he felt that "archetypes" (images/symbols with biological roots, found in many cultures) also play a role in concepts of God. Although such analytic theories of the origins and development of a God image are difficult to test directly, they suggest that there should be a firm link between how children see their real fathers and their images of God. What does the research show?

Parent and Gender Issues

Psychodynamic approaches tend to focus on the underlying psychoanalytic explanation of the origin of God concepts, and the relevant psychodynamic research has been criticized for serious methodological and conceptual problems, as well as an inadequate theoretical basis (Gorsuch, 1988; Kirkpatrick, 1986).

Some research has confirmed that God images are typically male-dominated in Western culture (Foster & Keating, 1992), possibly more so for girls than boys (Ladd, McIntosh, & Spilka, 1998). But empirical support for the prediction that God images should be related to children's views of their own fathers has been mixed (Spilka, Addison, & Rosensohn, 1975). Vergote and Tamayo (1981) suggested that the God image may actually bear more similarity to the mother than to the father, and Roberts (1989) found a correspondence between images of God and images of self. There is also evidence that general qualitative aspects of relationships with parents may be related to positive (e.g., warm, loving) images of God (Godin & Hallez, 1964; Potvin, 1977).

Krejci's (1998) investigation of college students, led him to concluded that God images were organized around three dimensions: "nurturing–judging," "controlling–saving," and "concrete–abstract." He found few gender differences, with the exception that control was more salient in men's God images. More gender differences appeared in another study (Dickie et al., 1997), which emphasized the importance of parents in affecting children's God images, both directly and indirectly. Dickie et al.'s results suggested that girls' God concepts were more closely related to attributes and discipline styles of parents than were boys' God concepts.

Hertel and Donahue (1995) examined more than 3,400 mother–father–youth triads from data obtained through the Search Institute in the United States in 1982–1983. The young people in this study were in fifth through ninth grades. Results showed that although relationships were not large, there were significant tendencies for parents' images of God to be reflected in young people's impressions of parenting styles. In particular, fathers' and mothers' loving God images both apparently affected children's images of their fathers and mothers as loving, respectively. In turn, parenting styles and parents' God images predicted youths' God images. These relationships remained even after social class, religious denomination, church attendance, and youths' ages were controlled for. Hertel and Donahue also concluded that there was a strong tendency for their participants to perceive God as love ("maternal") rather than as authority ("paternal"), and that mothers played a more important role in socializing their children's God images, especially for daughters.

At least one study has found evidence that teachers may be more important than parents in God concept development. De Roos, Miedema, and Iedema (2001) found that kindergarten children who evidenced a close relationship with their teachers also tended to display a loving God concept, whereas the mother–child relationship did not make a significant prediction in this regard.

In general, the literature on children's God images seems reasonably consistent in confirming the importance of parents in the development of these concepts. There is less agreement about gender differences in God images, the actual nature of those images (e.g., loving vs. authoritarian), and the relative impact of mothers and fathers in contributing to the development of God concepts.

Does a God Concept Develop in Stages?

Attempts to understand the developmental aspects of God concepts have typically focused on cognitive development. Some of these approaches are clearly Piagetian in orientation, whereas others have a more general cognitive focus. This area has benefited from research carried out in several different Western countries.

Harms (1944) suggested that previous investigations of children's images of God had erred by asking children to respond to fixed questions. Instead, he asked more than 4,800 U.S. children (aged 3–18) both to talk about and to draw their representations of religion, especially God. Their responses led Harms to conclude that there are three stages in the development of God concepts:

1. *Fairy-tale stage* (3–6 years). Children see little difference between God and fairy-tale characters.
2. *Realistic stage* (6–11 years). As children's cognitive capacities begin to expand, they see God as more concrete and more human. They are more comfortable using religious symbols.
3. *Individualistic stage* (adolescence). Adolescents no longer rely exclusively on religious symbols. They take a more individualized approach to God, resulting in very different conceptualizations from person to person.

Another major study of the development of God concepts was undertaken by Deconchy (1965) in France, though he did not include children under 7 years of age. He concluded that the development of God concepts occurs in three stages, revolving around themes of attribution, personalization and interiorization, respectively; these are described in Research Box 4.2.

There have been variations on these themes, but different authors describe similar stages in the development of God concepts (Ballard & Fleck, 1975; Fowler, 1981; Nye & Carlson, 1984; Williams, 1971), including some based on a Piagetian framework (Elkind, 1970; Goldman, 1964; Nye & Carlson, 1984). Others have simply noted the general change from fragmented, undifferentiated thinking through very simple, concrete God concepts to more abstract and complex images as children grow older (see, e.g., the review of European research on this topic by Tamminen, Vianello, Jaspard, & Ratcliff, 1988). However, attempts to further specify the parameters of such development, and the processes through which this unfolding occurs, have not been particularly successful (Ladd, McIntosh, & Spilka, 1998). For example, Janssen, de Hart, and Gerardts (1994) used open-ended questions about God in a study of Dutch secondary school students. They concluded that perceptions of God among their participants were complex and "can hardly be summarized" (p. 116). Furthermore, although there was evidence of abstract thinking among their Dutch adolescents, the authors pointed out that there was no proof that it resulted from a developmental process. However, it was questionable whether a developmental process *could* have been demonstrated in a study of teenagers only.

Research Box 4.2. The Idea of God: Its Emergence between 7 and 16 Years (Deconchy, 1965)

In this investigation, Catholic children and adolescents were asked to free-associate when they heard words such as "God." An analysis of their responses led Deconchy to conclude that these children exhibited three major stages in the development of God concepts. Those from about 7 or 8 to 11 years of age used predominantly "attributive" themes; that is, God was seen as a set of attributes, many anthropomorphic with overtones of animism. God concepts were relatively independent of other religious constructs, such as the historical events in the life of Jesus. The associations of children between 11 and 14 years of age emphasized "personalization" themes, such that God took on parental characteristics and was seen in more sophisticated anthropomorphic terms (e.g., "just," "strong," "good"). Finally, by approximately the age of 14 a further shift began to take place, focusing on "interiorization" themes. That is, in middle adolescence anthropomorphic characteristics of God disappeared, and God concepts became more abstract and tended to reflect relationships with God (e.g., involving love, trust) emanating from within the individual, rather than simply involving descriptive characteristics.

Does the development of God concepts vary across cultures or different religious groups? Vergote and Tamayo (1981) found that although there are commonalities in God images across cultures, at least some cultural differences do emerge with respect to maternal and paternal symbolism. Ladd et al. (1998) found that God concepts developed similarly across Christian denominations, in a manner generally consistent with Piagetian theory, in their study of almost 1,000 children from eight Christian groups in the United States. These authors have suggested that more research is necessary to understand how and why very different religious education experiences do not lead to divergent concepts of God by adolescence.

Diversity of Method and Direction

Harms's (1944) call for less constraining measures of ideas about God has not been ignored. In addition to his own attempt to allow subjects greater freedom in description of their God concepts, other researchers have used diverse techniques: pictures or drawings (Bassett et al., 1990; Graebner, 1964; Ladd et al., 1998); word associations (Deconchy, 1965); adjective ratings (Roberts, 1989; Schaefer & Gorsuch, 1992); open-ended questions (Janssen et al., 1994); letters written to God (Ludwig, Weber, & Iben, 1974); semantic differentials[2] (Benson & Spilka, 1973); Q-sorts[3] (Benson & Spilka, 1973; Nelson, 1971; Spilka, Armatas, & Nussbaum, 1964); other card-sorting tasks (Krejci, 1998); standardized scales (Gorsuch, 1968); combination techniques such as "concept mapping" (Kunkel, Cook, Meshel, Daughtry, & Hauenstein, 1999);

2. The semantic differential technique involves rating concepts on a series of bipolar adjective descriptors, such as "good___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___bad."

3. The Q-sort technique involves having a person sort cards with words (e.g., "loving") on them into various piles according to how well they describe, for example, one's concept of God.

and sentence completions, essays, and "projective photographs" (Tamminen, 1991). There has been some interest in comparing the utility of the different approaches. One study (Hutsebaut & Verhoeven, 1995) concluded that closed-ended questions concerning God offered slight advantages over open-ended questions, but the participants in that research were university students. Comparative studies involving children are needed.

Measures used can apparently influence research findings. Tamminen's (1991) extensive research with Finnish children and adolescents involved both structured questions about God and unstructured methods, such as sentence completion and "projective photographs." His results were generally consistent with the stage approach outlined above. However, Tamminen noted that the images of God that emerged varied somewhat, depending on the measures used: "For example, God's effect on people, making them be good to each other, which was considered very important in the alternative answers chosen in the questionnaires, was not often mentioned in the fill-in sentences or essays" (Tamminen, 1991, p. 192).

The first edition of this book (Spilka, Hood, & Gorsuch, 1985) pointed out that despite the value of studies in this area, research has tended to be descriptive rather than carefully designed to test theories of cognitive development. This is still generally true today. Also, relevant research sometimes involves only older adolescents or adults. Furthermore, Hyde (1990) has suggested that research on children's ideas of God has been "occasional and sporadic, with no continuous theme and [it] has tended to remain so, following the varied interests of those undertaking it" (p. 64). Additional research is needed, but it must address these problems.

PRAYER

Children's concepts of prayer seem to develop in a manner consistent with Piaget's cognitive-developmental stages. For example, Long et al. (1967) interviewed 5- to 12-year-olds about prayer (see Research Box 4.3). The authors concluded that there was a clear tendency for these children's concepts of prayer to evolve in three stages: They moved from habits and memorized passages, through concrete personal requests, to more abstract petitions.

Other studies seem generally to be consistent with this Piagetian view of prayer development (see, e.g., the review by Finney & Malony, 1985)—from relatively direct replication research by Worten and Dellinger (1986) to, for example, Brown's (1966) investigation of adolescents, which suggested less emphasis on the material consequences of prayer among older children. Scarlett and Perriello (1991) asked seventh- and ninth-grade Catholic school students, as well as college undergraduates, to write prayers for six hypothetical vignettes (e.g., a woman's best friend is dying of cancer). They found a shift from "using prayer to request changes in objective reality" (p. 72) among the younger students, toward prayer as a way to deal with feelings and become closer to God among the older participants. This shift is apparently consistent with the second and third stages of prayer outlined by Long et al. (1967), though at slightly older ages for the Scarlett and Perriello (1991) sample.

Tamminen (1991) also found some divergence from Long et al.'s (1967) stages in his Finnish young people. Personal conversation with God was important at younger ages (7–8 years) than Long et al. (1967) had found (9–12 years); moreover, petitionary prayer remained important up to age 20, whereas Long et al. reported decreasing importance of petitionary prayer as children grew older. Woolley (2000; Woolley & Phelps, 2001) also found that prayer and its connection to God developed years earlier (age 5) than Long et al. reported (9–10

Research Box 4.3. The Child's Conception of Prayer (Long, Elkind, & Spilka, 1967)

In a Piagetian context, these researchers interviewed 80 girls and 80 boys aged 5–12 about prayer. They asked them open-ended questions, such as "What is a prayer?" and "Where do prayers go?", as well as giving them sentence completion tasks (e.g., "I usually pray when . . ."). Three judges independently analyzed the children's responses according to a scoring manual that outlined levels of differentiation and degree of concretization–abstraction. The results suggested three stages of prayer concept development:

1. At the younger ages (5–7), children responded to the questions with learned formulas based on memorized prayers.
2. Children aged 7–9 identified prayer as a set of concrete activities, with time and place defined; the purpose was also concrete, typically centered on personal requests.
3. For children between the ages of 9 and 12, prayer was more abstract, and tended toward shared conversation rather than specific requests. Prayer was more focused on abstract goals than on material objects.

Thus, across the 5- to 12-year age range, prayer seemed to evolve from habits and memorized passages, through concrete personal requests, to more abstract petitions with humanitarian and altruistic sentiments. There was also an emotional shift noted: Praying was emotionally neutral for the younger children, but by the older ages prayer had important emotional implications (e.g., expression of empathy, as well as identification with others and the deity). All of this is quite consistent with the Piagetian conceptualization of cognitive development. The first two stages of prayer development parallel the preoperational (preconceptual substage) and concrete operational stages. Long et al.'s third stage is best characterized as transitional, giving evidence of the abstract thought characteristic of Piaget's stage of formal operations, which he felt did not begin until approximately 12 years of age.

years). Finally, Woolley and Phelps (2001) and Barrett, Richert, and Driesenga (2001) observed less tendency for children to anthropomorphize their concept of God than did Long et al. (1967). More research is necessary to determine the reasons for the differences across these studies. They could be attributable to culture, unique samples, method, time period of the research, and so on. For example, Woolley and Phelps (2001) pointed out that her sample came from religiously affiliated schools, compared to Long et al.'s private school sample. Also, her procedures involved new forced-choice questions and a variety of tasks, in addition to open-ended questions similar to those of Long et al.

Francis and Brown (1990, 1991) carried out investigations of influences on prayer, rather than cognitive stages in development of prayer. They found some denominational differences; for example, Church of England schools exerted a small "negative" influence on attitudes toward prayer, compared to the lack of influence in Roman Catholic schools. They also reported a shift in influence from parents (stronger among their 11-year-olds) to church (stronger among the 16-year-olds). They have interpreted their results as sup-

porting a social learning or modeling interpretation of prayer, since prayer among children and adolescents seemed to result more from "explicit teaching or implicit example from their family and church community than as a spontaneous consequence of developmental dynamics or needs" (Francis & Brown, 1991, p. 120). This research is highlighted in Research Box 5.2 (see Chapter 5), in the context of our discussion of religious socialization.

Some research has also attempted to relate prayer to (nonreligious) aspects of adjustment in children. For example, Francis and Gibbs (1996), in an investigation of 8- to 11-year-olds, found no evidence to suggest that prayer contributed to the children's self-esteem, or that low self-esteem led to prayer. Other studies have reported negative links between prayer and psychoticism scores on a personality test (Francis, 1997b; Francis & Wilcox, 1996; Smith, 1996).

Prayer has also been associated with identity status, such that private prayer was less frequent for college students with higher "moratorium" scores (an indication of searching for answers to religious and other questions, but without ideological commitment; McKinney & McKinney, 1999; see Chapter 5 for a discussion of identity status). McKinney and McKinney also found that the social identity reflected in the prayers of adolescents tended to be limited. Prayers involved family and friends, but usually did not involve the broader community.

In an older sample (college students) that is potentially relevant here, Byrd and Boe (2001) studied three different types of prayer and found that colloquial (conversational) and meditative (contemplative) types of prayer were negatively related to high avoidance scores (indicating discomfort with interpersonal closeness) on a measure of attachment. Petitionary (material help-seeking) prayer was more common among individuals with higher anxiety scores on this measure.

These relationships suggest that prayer is linked to personality and adjustment characteristics, and this area deserves further investigation. However, some of these investigations involved older adolescents; the implications of the findings for prayer in children, or for early prayer development, are not clear.

It is surprising that more research attention has not focused on prayer as it relates to religious development. Although there are problems in operationalizing and studying prayer (especially spontaneous personal prayer), prayer is an important religious ritual that could potentially serve as a "window" into more general religious development, as well as the meaning of faith to religious persons. Furthermore, there remain many questions about the nature and function of prayer in individual lives, as well as the nature of social and contextual factors in shaping prayer (Francis & Brown, 1991). Brown's (1994) book *The Human Side of Prayer* has initiated an exploration of some of these issues and provided an integrative review of the diverse research in this area, especially in his chapter devoted to the development and meaning of prayer.

Finally, Woolley (2000) has pointed out that there are "clear connections between magic and religion" (p. 118); in particular, [illegible]nceptually similar to wishing, which in turn is related to magical thinking. Goldman (1964) also referred to magical thinking in the early stages of children's thought processes related to religious development. However, Woolley (2000) has also concluded that prayer is a more complicated process than wishing, since, for example, it involves an intermediary (God) between thinking and physical events. Research is needed to further explore connections between magical thinking in childhood and the emergence of religious faith and prayer.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN CHILDHOOD

Kalevi Tamminen's (1976, 1994; Tamminen & Nurmi, 1995; Tamminen et al., 1988) studies of the religious experiences of Finnish children and adolescents, highlighted in Research Box 4.4, deserve attention in this chapter for several reasons. First, almost 3,000 young people have been studied. Second, this research program has produced limited but important longitudinal data. Third, and possibly most important, these studies have moved a step beyond the more traditional cognitive-stage approach by investigating the meaning and implications of religious *experiences* for children's lives, in addition to aspects of religious cognitive development.

Tamminen's research program is not without problems. It is difficult to know what to make of written questionnaire responses from relatively young children; probably the younger children were not able to express themselves well in writing, and it is not clear that their self-reported "religious experiences" are consonant with what adults would call "religious experiences." Also, questionnaires were administered in school classrooms, suggesting that peer pressure, contextual influences, and other such factors may have influenced responses. For example, children may have been reluctant to reveal personal religious experiences to an unknown adult, especially while sitting among their classmates. As Scarlett (1994) has pointed out, "These are surveys carried out in impersonal settings not conducive to tapping into what God and religious experience *mean* to adolescents" (p. 88). Furthermore, the children and adolescents were fairly homogeneous in terms of their religious background (Lutheran), and it is not clear to what extent Tamminen's findings generalize to children from other religious backgrounds or no religious background at all. For a better appreciation of differences in religious experience across religious traditions (though not specifically in childhood), the reader might consult the first six chapters of Hood's (1995b) *Handbook of Religious Experience.*

In spite of these problems, this research program has made important contributions to our understanding of children's religious experiences. Tamminen's research has confirmed that there is a developmental sequence with respect to religious *experiences*, though his results are quite cognitive in nature. Although these investigations were not intended to test a Piagetian-based cognitive-developmental theory of religious development, the results are consistent with that approach (especially with respect to the shift from concrete to abstract thinking about religion as children move into adolescence). Also, the longitudinal trends in the data are consistent with cross-sectional findings.

Furthermore, it has been pointed out that these studies "enlighten by countering the old view that God becomes important only after childhood" (Scarlett, 1994, p. 88). Certainly there is a rich description of the nature and content of children's and adolescents' self-reported "close to God" experiences. Finally, this research should serve as a stimulus to other investigators to approach the topic of religious development from different perspectives, and not to be constrained by previous research carried out from within a Piagetian-based framework.

ATTACHMENT THEORY AND RELATED RESEARCH

Kirkpatrick (1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, 1992) has extended Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) theory of parent–infant attachment to the realm of religion. In so doing, he has provided a unique approach for the study of links between early

Research Box 4.4. Religious Experience in Childhood and Adolescence: Finnish Research (Tamminen, 1994)

Tamminen began his series of investigations with a 1974 study that tested 1,588 children and adolescents (aged 7–20), who were mostly Lutheran and fairly evenly divided between boys and girls. Longitudinal data were collected 2 years later on 277 of the original participants, and a final longitudinal wave of data was collected in 1980 on 60 of those who had participated in the first and second stages. Also, 242 classmates of the "third-wave 60" were studied for comparison purposes. Finally, in 1986, a study was carried out to replicate and extend the 1974 investigation, involving 1,176 students. Most of the data were gathered by means of group questionnaires administered in classrooms, although the youngest students (first grade) were also interviewed. Tamminen acknowledges that many students up to fifth grade had difficulty expressing themselves in writing, and that this could have compromised his findings for the younger children.

Religious experience was operationally defined by the question "Have you at times felt that God is particularly close to you?" and its follow-up, "Would you like to tell me about it, when and in what situations?" Interestingly, 10–16% of the two youngest groups of students reported that they had *not* felt particularly close to God, and this figure grew steadily to 53% of the 17- to 20-year-olds. That is, older children and adolescents were significantly less likely to report any religious experiences involving closeness to God.

Closeness to God among the 7- to 11-year-old children was most likely to be linked with "situations of loneliness, fear, and emergencies—such as escaping or avoiding danger—or when they were ill" (p. 81). Tamminen notes that these reports correspond to a more general concreteness of thinking at these ages. Similar experiences were reported by the 11- to 13-year-olds, though they also linked closeness to God with encounters with death, loneliness, prayer, and contemplation. There was not much evidence of more abstract thinking until later ages.

The 13- to 15-year-olds evidenced a variety of religious doubts (e.g., concerning God's existence and trustworthiness, as well as the efficacy of prayer). Reports of decreased closeness to God were more common, and those reports of closeness that did appear were more often linked with death and external dangers. Finally, the religious experiences of older students (15- to 20-year-olds) tended to involve personal identity issues and existential questions (e.g., the meaning of life and death), and this material was more obviously abstract in nature.

Overall, Tamminen has concluded that the results of these far-reaching studies showed "a developmental line from concrete, separate, and external to more abstract, general, and internalized. In addition, experiences in childhood were related almost exclusively to everyday situations—as was the case also with evening prayer—whereas at the age of puberty and in adolescence, such experiences were more frequently related to congregational situations [i.e., church-related contexts]" (p. 82). In general, parallel findings appeared for other questions dealing with God's guidance and direction in life.

Note. A more extensive treatment of Tamminen's research on religion in Finnish young people can be found in his 1991 book *Religious Development in Childhood and Youth: An Empirical Study.*

development and religion, and their implications for children's and adult's lives. As Kirkpatrick (1992) describes Bowlby's work, attachment theory "postulates a primary, biosocial behavioral system in the infant that was designed by evolution to maintain proximity of the infant to its primary caregiver, thereby protecting the infant from predation and other natural dangers" (p. 4). Attachment theory is not without its critics (e.g., Kagan, 1998), but Kirkpatrick has pointed out that this theoretical basis may help to explain individual differences in religiousness. For example, he has noted the extent to which the God of Christian traditions corresponds to the idea of a secure attachment figure. Similarly, religion more generally may serve as a comfort and a sense of security, especially during times of stress or other difficulties.

These observations led Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) to suggest that attachment and religion may be linked in important ways. They posited a "compensation hypothesis," which predicts that people who have not had secure relationships with their parents (or other primary caregivers) may be inclined to compensate for this absence by believing in a "loving, personal, available God." This was contrasted with a "mental model hypothesis," predicting that people's religiousness may be at least partially determined by early attachment relationships; that is, they may model their religious beliefs on the attachment relationships they experienced early in their lives.

In a study designed to test these ideas, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990; see Research Box 4.5) found some support for the compensation hypothesis, but only for people from relatively nonreligious homes. Findings generally contradicted the mental model hypothesis. Subsequent studies of adolescents (Granqvist, 2002b; Granqvist & Hagekull, 2001) and university students (Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999) in Sweden, and of adult women in the United States (Kirkpatrick, 1997), also lend some support to the compensation hypothesis.

Kirkpatrick's writings on attachment and religion have provided a rich source of ideas for empirical investigation. For example, it has been suggested that attachment theory has relevance for understanding conceptualizations of God, religious behaviors such as prayer and glossolalia (speaking in tongues), and links between religious experience and romantic love (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1997; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992).

Subsequent research has confirmed the utility of attachment theory for understanding religion. Eshleman, Dickie, Merasco, Shepard, and Johnson (1999) interviewed 4- to 10-year-old children, and also surveyed their parents. Eshleman et al. concluded that their findings supported Kirkpatrick and Shaver's (1990) attachment theory model. For example, as children moved from early to middle childhood, their distance from parents increased as perceived closeness to God increased, just as attachment theory would predict. As a sidelight, these researchers also found that "perceiving God as male may distance God for girls and women" (p. 146). Dickie et al. (1997) also found evidence that seems to support attachment theory predictions; they concluded that "God becomes the 'perfect attachment substitute'" (p. 42) as children become more independent of parents.

Granqvist and Hagekull (1999) found that retrospective accounts of attachment to parents suggested a positive association between security of attachment and socialization-based religiosity. Avoidance in attachment to parents was associated with emotionally based religiousness. Insecure attachment was linked to sudden religious conversion. A subsequent study of Swedish teenagers found that attachment insecurity was linked to emotionally based religiosity, experience of religious changes, and a "new age orientation" (belief in alternative medical treatment, belief in parapsychological phenomena, interest in alternative reli-

Research Box 4.5. Attachment Theory and Religion (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990)

In this investigation, Kirkpatrick and Shaver tested the compensation and the mental model hypotheses (see text) with respect to links between childhood attachment to parents and adult religiousness. Data were collected from two surveys—one involving 670 respondents to a questionnaire in a Sunday newspaper, and the other including a subsample of 213 of these same people who agreed to participate in a further study. Various measures were used to tap aspects of religiousness, including the Allport and Ross (1967) scales for assessing Intrinsic and Extrinsic religious orientation (see Chapter 2). Child–parent attachment was measured in a standard way, which placed respondents into one of three categories (percentages in parentheses are from Kirkpatrick and Shaver's study): secure (51%), avoidant (8%), and anxious/ambivalent (41%).

Attachment did indeed serve as a predictor of religiousness, but in a somewhat complicated way. There was a tendency for those from avoidant parent–child attachment relationships to report higher levels of adult religiousness, and also for persons with secure attachments to report lower levels of religiousness, but only for respondents whose mothers were relatively nonreligious. The attachment classification apparently had a more direct relationship with reported sudden conversion experiences, with anxious/ambivalent respondents much more likely to report such conversions at some time in their lives (44%) than respondents from the other attachment groups (fewer than 10%). Home religiosity did not affect this relationship.

This study relied on adults' retrospective reports of earlier attachment and family religiousness, so memory and other biases may have affected responses. The authors pointed out that their investigation was very much an exploratory study of attachment–religion relationships. However, their initial findings are provocative and tend to support the compensation hypothesis (though only for people from relatively nonreligious homes in this study); they generally contradict the mental model hypothesis (i.e., that religiousness may be modeled after early attachment relationships). The reasons for this are not clear and call for further investigation.

gious ideas, etc.) (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2001). These findings seem consistent with attachment theory predictions.

Finally, it is important to note that the research discussed above attempted to relate *childhood* attachment experiences with adolescent and adult religion. Other research has explored relationships between *adult* attachment and adult religiosity. For example, Kirkpatrick (1998) concluded that university students who viewed themselves and others positively tended also to have positive images of God, as well as perceived positive relationships with God. Furthermore, longitudinal data from a subsample of these students revealed that a tendency to become more religious less than a year later was linked to negative views of self and positive models of others at the time of the original survey. These findings are consistent with other research on relationships between attachment and religion in adult lives (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 1995; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Also, TenElshof and Furrow (2000) found that among conservative seminary students, secure adult attachment styles were posi-

tively related to a measure of spiritual maturity. Apparently attachment theory has implications for religion beyond child–parent attachment relationships.

OTHER WORK ON RELIGION IN CHILDHOOD

It is difficult to summarize the considerable literature on childhood religious development in a chapter such as this one. To this point, we have attempted to outline several major theoretical and empirical directions, and the resulting knowledge accumulated from many studies. We have given little attention to other theories (e.g., psychodynamic) and to the many articles that do not offer theoretical advances or that lack an empirical base (e.g., some in the religious education and pastoral counseling literature). Furthermore, many empirical studies have not fallen neatly into the subcategories used in this chapter. Other authors (e.g., Benson, Masters, & Larson, 1997; Hyde, 1990) have summarized much of this other work. Here we offer a sampling of recent research directions not discussed above.

Personality and Attitudes

Leslie Francis (1994) has summarized a considerable body of research on personality and mental aspects of religious development, relying heavily on the work and orientation of Hans Eysenck (e.g., Eysenck, 1981). Francis's own studies (e.g., Francis, Pearson, & Kay, 1982; Francis, Pearson, & Kay, 1983b) suggest that among children, religiousness and introversion are positively related, and that these in turn may be related to rejection of substance use (Francis, 1997a). An extensive literature on religion and substance use/abuse exists, but it tends to focus on postchildhood samples and is discussed in the chapter on morality (see Chapter 13). Bible reading has also been linked to increased purpose in life among 13- to 15-year-olds (Francis, 2000).

Another line of research has focused on influences on religiousness and attitudes toward religion among young people (especially the influence of parents, but also peers, schools, church, etc.). Some of this work has included samples of children or early adolescents (e.g., Francis & Gibson, 1993; Francis & Greer, 2001); however, most of these studies have involved older adolescents and young adults, so a review of these efforts is left to Chapter 5. Likewise, there has been some emphasis on the influence of religiously affiliated schools versus public institutions on values and other aspects of children's lives, but these have not shown much difference between the two types of schooling (see, e.g., McCartin & Freehill, 1986). However, Francis (1986) has found variations between the influences of Catholic and Protestant schools in England. The effects of schooling on religiousness are also considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

Much other work has included religion as simply one of many variables of interest. For example, Archer's (1989) investigation of gender differences suggests that among early to late adolescents, males and females use the identity process similarly with respect to religious development. de Vaus and McAllister (1987) concluded that gender variations in religiosity are not attributable to child-rearing roles of females, and Albert and Porter (1986) found that liberal Christian and Jewish backgrounds were related to less rigid conceptions of gender roles in 4- to 6-year-old children. An Israeli study (Florian & Kravetz, 1985) found that Jewish and Christian 10-year-olds had internalised a Western scientific conception of death to a greater extent than Muslim and Druze children. Other work (Saigh, 1979; Saigh, O'Keefe,

& Antoun, 1984) has pointed to a link between religious symbols worn by examiners and performance on intelligence tests, such that performance may be better when young people are tested by same-religion examiners.

There has been interest in the difficulty of getting children, especially at young ages, to understand and respond appropriately to questions about religion (e.g., Tamminen, 1994). Similarly, tendencies have been noted by Francis for children's scores on attitudes toward religion to be positively related to lie scores on other scales (Francis, Pearson, & Kay, 1988), and also for children to bias their responses in a proreligious direction when a priest, as opposed to a layperson, is the test administrator (Francis, 1979). Similar effects were not found by Hunsberger and Ennis (1982) in several studies of university students, however. The best conclusion seems to be that caution must be exercised in studies of children involving measurement of religion, and that appropriate checks should be included to assess possible biases or distortion of responses whenever possible.

Meaning and Implications of Religion in Childhood

We know relatively little about the meaning and implications of religion for children as they grow older, beyond the cognitive and experiential components discussed earlier in this chapter. We need to find novel ways of studying children's religious development without assuming that adult thought is the gold standard for comparison in this regard (see, e.g., Boyer & Walker, 2000). What impact, if any, does religion have on the day-to-day lives of children—including their physical and mental health, personal identity, and social relationships? How does childhood religion affect later religiosity, as well as nonreligious social attitudes? Does religious training affect a child's concept of death (see Florian & Kravetz, 1985; Stambrook & Parker, 1987)? What role, if any, does religion play in childhood psychopathology, and what role does (and should) religion play in the clinical treatment of children (see Wells, 1999)?

Findings suggest that a conservative or fundamentalist religious upbringing has implications for educational attainment and gender roles (see Sherkat, 2000; Sherkat & Darnell, 1999). A broad survey of children and young adolescents (fifth through ninth graders) led Forliti and Benson (1986) to conclude that religiosity was related to increased prosocial action, as well as to decreased incidence of sexual intercourse, drug use, and antisocial behavior. They also concluded that a restrictive religious orientation was linked to antisocial behavior, alcohol use, racism, and sexism. These latter conclusions are not always consistent with those reached for older adolescents and adults (see Chapters 5 on socialization and 13 on morality). Also, given the moderately strong associations among right-wing authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, and prejudice observed by Altemeyer (1988, 1996; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), it would seem appropriate to investigate childhood antecedents of such relationships, as well as the developmental dynamics fostering such connections.

Child Rearing

Parenting Style

There is general agreement among developmental psychologists that parenting practices have important implications for child development (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In spite of the likelihood that parental religious orientation influences parenting style (see Luft & Sorell,

1987), there has been little research relating parenting approaches, religion, and child development. A few early studies (e.g., Bateman & Jensen, 1958; Nunn, 1964) suggested the potential of such links. Subsequent theoretical and empirical work on "parenting styles" has provided new avenues for exploring the relationship between parenting and child religious development.

Baumrind (1967, 1991) has suggested that there exist four very different styles of parenting, based on parental responsiveness and demandingness: "authoritarian," "authoritative," "permissive," and "rejecting/neglecting." Authoritarian parents are high on demandingness but low on responsiveness, preferring to impose rules on their children and emphasize obedience. Authoritative parents tend to be both demanding and responsive, explaining why rules are necessary, and being open to their children's perspectives. Permissive parents make few demands, use little punishment, and are responsive to the point of submitting to their children's wishes. Rejecting/neglecting parents are neither demanding nor responsive, being generally disengaged from their children.

Correlational and longitudinal research has suggested that the authoritative style of parenting may have benefits for children's development, whereas the authoritarian and rejecting/neglecting styles may involve some negative implications (Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, & Mueller, 1988; Rohner, 1994). Other research suggests that parental emphasis on obedience is related to "cognitive accomplishment" (Holden & Edwards, 1989) and to personality development (e.g., right-wing authoritarianism; Altemeyer, 1988). There is also tentative evidence that permissive parenting is associated with an extrinsic religious orientation, and that authoritative parenting may be related to an intrinsic religious orientation among adolescent offspring (Giesbrecht, 1995), and to greater religiosity among parents (Linder Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999).

The authoritarian parenting style bears some similarity to Biblical injunctions to emphasize obedience among children, and not to "spare the rod." Zern (1987) has argued that from a religious perspective, obedience is a preferred trait. In fact, research by Ellison and Sherkat (1993) has revealed that conservative Protestants (and, to a lesser extent, Catholics) tend to endorse an authoritarian parenting orientation, valuing obedience in children. Religion has also been linked with parental disciplinary practices (Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992)—including a preference, among more conservative groups and those who subscribe to a literal belief in the Bible, for the use of corporal punishment (Ellison, Bartkowski, & Segal, 1996; Gershoff, Miller, & Holden, 1999; Grasmick, Morgan, & Kennedy, 1992; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001; Wiehe, 1990). Similarly, religiousness has been linked with emphasis on obedience to cultural norms generally (Zern, 1984).

As described in Research Box 4.6, Danso, Hunsberger, and Pratt (1997) found evidence that more fundamentalist university students (Study 1) and parents (Study 2) were more likely to condone the use of corporal punishment and to value obedience (rather than autonomy) in child rearing. However, mediation analyses suggested that the greater desire of fundamentalists to socialize their children to accept the (parental) religious faith was linked more closely to right-wing authoritarianism than to religious fundamentalism per se. One wonders, then, whether conservative religious groups (or religious fundamentalists more generally) might be inclined to use an authoritarian parenting style, with consequent implications for their children. Also, what role does right-wing authoritarianism as a parental personality trait play in such a relationship?

Darling and Steinberg (1993) have suggested that parenting goals and values should be distinguished from parenting styles and parenting practices. In light of the discussion above,

Research Box 4.6. The Role of Parental Religious Fundamentalism and Right-Wing Authoritarianism in Child-Rearing Goals and Practices (Danso, Hunsberger, & Pratt, 1997)

These authors concluded that previous research had established links between stronger parental religiosity and a greater parental emphasis on obedience for their children, and also more positive attitudes toward corporal punishment (e.g., spanking) in child rearing. It was further hypothesized that parents' desire to raise their children to accept the family religion ("faith keeping") would have an influence on the goals that they set for their children. More fundamentalist parents were expected to place greater value on faith keeping, to emphasize obedience for children more strongly, and also to be more likely to condone the use of corporal punishment in child rearing. But beyond this, the authors explored how these factors were linked—suspecting, for example, that right-wing authoritarianism would mediate the relationship between religious orientation and child-rearing attitudes.

Two studies were carried out; the first involved 204 university students, and the second 154 mothers and fathers of university students. Measures included Faith Keeping, Attitudes toward Corporal Punishment, Autonomy, and Obedience scales developed for the research, as well as Religious Fundamentalism and Right-Wing Authoritarianism scales (the last scale administered in Study 2 only). The university students were asked to respond to parenting items by imagining that they had children of their own. The parents were asked about their actual child-rearing attitudes when their (university student) children were between 7 and 12 years old.

The results of both studies indicated that religious fundamentalism was positively correlated with greater valuation of obedience, stronger endorsement of corporal punishment in child rearing, and the importance of socializing children to accept their parents' faith. Fundamentalism was also linked with weaker valuation of autonomy in one's children. In both studies, it appeared that faith keeping seemed to play a mediating role between fundamentalism and obedience attitudes. That is, more fundamentalist parents' child-rearing attitudes (e.g., increased emphasis on obedience, endorsement of corporal punishment) seemed to be a result of their stronger desire to have their children uphold the family's religious faith.

However, the addition of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale in Study 2 indicated that it was actually a more powerful mediating variable in these relationships than was faith keeping. That is, the fact that religious fundamentalism was strongly positively correlated with right-wing authoritarian attitudes "explained" the links between fundamentalism and child-rearing attitudes (e.g., the tendency to emphasize obedience, and condone the use of corporal punishment). The authors suggested that future researchers should consider the role of parental personality variables such as authoritarianism in studies of religion and child rearing.

This study's limitations include the facts that university students were simply speculating about what their child-rearing attitudes would be *if* they had children (Study 1), and that parents had to reflect back 5–10 years to recall what their child-rearing attitudes had been at that time. We do not know the extent to which such speculations and memories are accurate. Also, the authors do not discuss the "chicken and egg" problem of whether fundamentalism or authoritarianism comes first, or whether they might be causally related. This issue reappears in Chapter 14.

it seems apparent that religious orientation is likely to have some impact on parenting goals and values. Certainly, some conservative Christian books on child rearing emphasize the importance of authoritarian-like goals for parents—for example, by explicitly advising parents that raising obedient children is an important goal (Fugate, 1980; Meier, 1977). Such goals in turn are likely to influence both general parenting style as delineated by Baumrind, and specific parenting practices such as the use of corporal punishment to teach obedience (e.g., Danso et al., 1997). The role of religion in this process might even help to explain variations in the prevalence of different parenting styles in North American ethnic groups (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

Parenting goals and practices can have important real-world implications beyond their direct effects for the children themselves, as illustrated by the second quotation presented at the beginning of this chapter. To recapitulate, in Aylmer, Ontario, Canada, seven children whose family belonged to a conservative religious group were taken from their parents by child welfare authorities (Saunders, 2001). The parents reportedly sometimes disciplined their children by hitting them with a rod or strap. When the authorities met with the parents, the parents justified their disciplinary methods by reference to their literal belief in the Bible, and they refused to assure the authorities that this practice would stop. The children were eventually returned to the family when the parents reportedly provided some assurance that they would not use certain types of physical punishment to discipline the children. However, the broader issues of the legality of such religiously based justification for corporal punishment, and of whether or not authorities should remove such children from their homes, have yet to be resolved.

It is important to note that the research and ideas discussed above involve conservative or fundamentalist religion groups and measures, and that the hypothesized relationships between conservative/fundamentalist religion and authoritarian parenting style may not hold for more general measures of religiousness. For example, Linder Gunnoe et al. (1999) did *not* find a positive link between authoritarian parenting style and a measure of the extent to which parents' religious beliefs played a role in their daily lives. Furthermore, Wilcox (1998) found that the strict discipline characteristic of conservative Protestant religious parents is tempered by the finding that conservative parents are also *more* likely to praise and hug their children. Wilcox has therefore argued that parents who hold theologically conservative beliefs may show aspects of *both* authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. This possibility, as well as its implications for child and adolescent development, needs further investigation.

Other Aspects of Parenting

Religion may play more subtle roles in child rearing as well. Carlson, Taylor, and Levin (1998) found that the ways in which children use pretend play can differ across religious groups, even for different varieties of Mennonites. Ojha and Pramanick (1992) studied mothers in India and found that Hindu mothers began weaning and toilet-training their children earlier than did Christian mothers, on average, who in turn were earlier than Muslim mothers. Of the three religious groups, Christian mothers were the most restrictive toward their children. The role of religion in these aspects of parenting and child rearing (and consequences for child development) has received little empirical attention to date.

Parenting techniques have been linked with religion in a somewhat different context. Nunn (1964) suggested that some parents invoke the image of a punishing God in an attempt to control their children's behavior. He hypothesized that relatively ineffective, powerless par-

ents would be inclined to use God in an attempt to gain some semblance of power, telling their children such things as "God will punish you if you misbehave." Nunn's data supported this view of parents who formed a "coalition with God," and also suggested that this "God will punish you" approach had negative consequences for the children, who were reportedly more inclined to blame themselves for problems and to feel that they should be obedient.

Nelsen and Kroliczak (1984) have pointed out that there has been a general decline in people's belief in a punishing God, and that this decline is at least partly attributable "to parents being less likely to use coalitions with God. Hence, fewer children form this image" (p. 269). Nelsen and Kroliczak examined data from over 3,000 children in Minnesota elementary schools in an attempt to replicate Nunn's findings. They found a decreased tendency of parents to resort to the "God will punish you" approach (73% of respondents said that neither parent in a family employed this approach, compared to Nunn's 33%). But the children whose parents tended to use the "coalition" also tended to view God as malevolent, to have higher self-blame scores, and to feel a greater need to be obedient. Essentially, Nelsen and Kroliczak replicated Nunn's finding some 20 years later.

These studies have implications for the development of God images, but they also suggest that parents' approach to discipline may be important for children's religiosity, as well as for more general child development (e.g., tendencies toward self-blame and obedience). There may also be noteworthy ramifications for how parents deal with other child-rearing issues, such as illness. For example, research has indicated that parents who believe more strongly in divine influence are more likely to seek spiritual guidance in coping with (hypothetical) child illnesses (De Vellis, De Vellis, & Spilsbury, 1988). All of these findings are consistent with the suggestion that parenting goals, styles, and practices may have significant links with religious orientation.

Much of the research above has assessed the extent to which parenting affects religion in one's children. We should not forget that religion can also affect parenting and parent-child relationships (e.g., Pearce & Axinn, 1998). There is also evidence that parenting can itself contribute to religious change in fathers (Palkovitz & Palm, 1998).

Child Abuse and Religion

In the past decade, there has been increasing interest in possible links between religion and child abuse (e.g., Bottoms, Shaver, Goodman, & Qin, 1995; Capps, 1992; Greven, 1991). As we have noted earlier, evidence suggests that conservative and fundamentalist religious orientation is linked with a tendency to condone the use of physical punishment in child rearing (e.g., Ellison et al., 1996). Greven (1991) has argued that the inclination of some religious groups and individuals to legitimize and promote the use of corporal punishment in child rearing can effectively condone child abuse. Whether or not this is true, abuse can apparently have implications for religiosity. Rossetti (1995) found, not surprisingly, that people who were sexually abused as children by priests expressed less trust in the priesthood, the Catholic church, and relationship to God (see Chapter 13 regarding sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy). Similarly, others concluded that childhood sexual abuse more generally was associated with lower levels of religiosity (Doxey, Jensen, & Jensen, 1997; Hall, 1995; Stout-Miller, Miller, & Langenbrunner, 1997) or a more negative view of God (Kane, Cheston, & Greer, 1993).

However, some researchers have concluded that those who were sexually abused as children may turn to religion for support (Reinert & Smith, 1997), or at least may show some

evidence of increased religious behavior, such as prayer (Lawson, Drebing, Berg, Vincellette, & Penk, 1998). Possibly such increased religiousness acts as a form of compensation, as discussed earlier in the context of attachment theory. Others (Gange-Fling, Veach, Kuang, & Hong, 2000) found that a group of individuals in psychotherapy for childhood sexual abuse did not differ in spiritual functioning from a group of people in psychotherapy for other reasons. However, both of these groups scored lower in spiritual well-being than people not in psychotherapy did.

In view of the apparently conflicting results of recent studies, more research is needed. Possibly there are gender differences in response to abuse, and factors such as the religious environment before and after the abuse need to be taken into account, as well as the type, perpetrator, and context of the abuse.

A Note on Psychoanalytic Work

A considerable body of relevant theoretical work from a psychoanalytic perspective exists, but it has received little attention in this chapter. The theories of Freud and Jung have been mentioned in the context of the development of concepts of God. However, usually we have not discussed more general implications of psychoanalytic theory for religious development (see, e.g., Coles, 1990; Fitzgibbons, 1987; Rizzuto, 1991, 2001). Nor have we mentioned the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1958, 1963, 1969), whose theory of psychosocial development could be interpreted as a model of religious development (Wright, 1982), although Erikson's influence is sometimes apparent in the work of others. Fowler, for example, made use of Erikson's theory in his conceptualization of faith development.

Although these psychoanalytic theories can offer rich sources of ideas and insights into religious development, in general we have not given them more attention because (1) they have not generated much empirical research; (2) the relevant research that has been carried out has been compromised by the difficulties inherent in operationalizing and testing some psychoanalytic concepts; and (3) the conclusions of related studies are somewhat ambiguous and contradictory.

OVERVIEW

Fresh conceptual approaches are needed to revitalize the study of children's religious development. The area of religious development is top-heavy in theory, especially stage theories of religious cognitive development. There has been a considerable amount of overlap in research that "tests" these theories, but not much integrative work has been done to make sense of it all. Furthermore, there has been little or no empirical research on many issues related to childhood religious development, and some studies of religious development have little to say about *children*, having focused on older adolescents or young adults.

Clearly, Piaget's original description of stages of cognitive development has been important in guiding theories and studies of religious growth. Probably because of the mostly *cognitive* theme of the theoretical approaches, there has been a relatively narrow focus on cognition in empirical investigations of religious development. The resulting accumulation of knowledge typically confirms the development of patterns of religious thinking that parallel stages of more general cognitive development. However, this emphasis on cogni-

tive development may have diverted attention from many other issues in child religious development.

There is evidence to suggest that children's religious identity, morality, faith, images of God, and prayer all emerge in stages that parallel the Piagetian stages to some extent. In general, the progression involves a move from an inability to understand religious concepts at all early in life, through a very egocentric religion, to an understanding of religion limited to the concrete, and finally to a more abstract and complex religiousness.

Theoretical conceptualizations of religious growth generally (Elkind, Goldman), as well as of moral (Kohlberg) and faith (Fowler) development, have apparently been stimulated by Piaget's formulations. And much other work on religious development (e.g., images of God, concepts of prayer) has also used the Piagetian framework as the basis for empirical studies. The results of numerous investigations have confirmed the utility of Piaget's cognitive stages for understanding various aspects of religious growth. However, promising non-Piagetian theoretical conceptualizations and empirical work have also appeared in the psychology of religion. For example, Tamminen has directed attention to the religious experience of children, and Kirkpatrick has shown the potential of attachment theory for understanding aspects of religious growth.

In spite of attempts at integration of work on religious development, we are left with a kind of "smorgasbord" of differing directions (Reich, 1993b, p. 39). This is not necessarily a bad thing, since this diversity has stimulated many different creative and useful empirical studies of religious development. Further integration of this work could eventually lead to a more comprehensive theory of religion in childhood. Future research on religious growth could take many potentially fruitful directions. The role of religion in parenting goals, styles, and practices, and the consequences for child development, are especially promising in this regard.

We would encourage researchers to diversify their efforts in the area of child religious development. In particular, they might consider the implications of more traditional developmental and social-psychological theories in the context of child religious development—for example, attribution theory (Spilka et al., 1985), attitude theories (Gorsuch & Wakeman, 1991; Hill, 1994; Hill & Bassett, 1992), personality constructs (Altemeyer, 1996; Francis, 1994), attachment theory (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1998), self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1989), schema theory (McIntosh, 1995), and so on. We need to escape from the confines of the Piagetian approach to religious development. It is possible that the Extrinsic, Intrinsic, and Quest religious orientations (Allport & Ross, 1967; Batson et al., 1993; see Chapter 2) may appear in developmental sequence (Batson et al., 1993). Furthermore, the implications of childhood religious development for the children themselves, as well as for other individuals and groups (e.g., peers, parents, social and athletic groups, schools), need to be investigated.

These issues have generated considerable research with adolescent and adult populations, but not with children. As one example, recent work suggests that religion may affect childhood fantasy behavior and parental interpretation of such behavior (Taylor & Carlson, 2000). There continues to be a distinct paucity of *longitudinal* research on child religious development issues. Such research is critical if we are to escape the serious limitations of cross-sectional studies (Gorsuch, 1988). Historically, there is also a lack of strong experimental research in this area (Gorsuch, 1988). Additional consideration needs to be given to the studies that have investigated isolated topics in childhood religious development (e.g., personality, gender differences, methodological issues, child abuse), with an eye to integrating and making sense out of the diverse findings.

Compared to other areas in the psychology of religion, relatively little new empirical work is being published on religion in childhood. There is a rich theoretical framework dealing with developmental aspects of religion, as discussed earlier in this chapter. But with a few exceptions (e.g., God concepts, parenting issues), there is a dearth of solid empirical work. Why? For one thing, research with children is often more challenging than comparable studies with adults. For example, ethical and related permission issues may be time-consuming and frustrating for researchers. New measuring instruments may have to be developed for child populations. Additional research staff may have to be hired, and extra training may be needed to insure that research assistants are qualified to work with children. Interpretation of research findings can be problematic, since it is often difficult to establish validity of measuring instruments, and the meaning of children's responses is not always clear. Simply put, research with children can be time-consuming, expensive, and difficult to carry out. And much-needed longitudinal research is even more time-consuming, expensive, and problematic.

Finally, we would suggest that the main theoretical focus over the years, based on a Piagetian framework, has become stale. We need new theoretical directions. Yet, there are indications of vitality in some areas of research on religion in childhood, and there is considerable potential for investigators to pursue a variety of important questions in this area.