SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PUBLIC EDUCATIVE CARE OF CHILDREN: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF BIBLICAL AND DYNAMIC SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVES.

Christopher Glenn Cupit

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Being a dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy,
Murdoch University.
I declare that this dissertation is my account of my research and contains exclusively work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

Signed:

C. Glenn Cupit, M.A. (Hons) (UNSW), B.A.(Hons)(Syd), MAPS, MACE.
CONTENTS

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. i

Some notes on language use ......................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... iii

Chapter 1. Identifying the issue ...................................................................................... 1

Requirements for a ‘model’ of spiritual development in secular educative care .......... 4
  The meaning of the term and nature of the phenomenon ........................................... 5
  The model must clarify the relationship of ‘spirituality’ to an underlying ontology, and the
  relationship of both to alternative understandings ....................................................... 8
  The model must identify in what sense spirituality is developmental and open to change through
  educative care intervention, and it must indicate what specific developmental changes are to be
  seen as spiritual..................................................................................................................... 12
  The model must be consistent with an accepted paradigm for the understanding and study of
  human development ........................................................................................................... 14
  The model must be able to explain the rôle and status of spiritual development, in its terms,
  within a secular system of educative care ...................................................................... 17
  The model must specify practical implications flowing from these matters ................. 19

Limitations of the study ................................................................................................. 20

The aim of this dissertation ............................................................................................ 21
  Theses ............................................................................................................................. 21

Methodology .................................................................................................................... 22
  Approach to the biblical material ................................................................................... 22
  Principles of organisation ............................................................................................... 24
  Interpretation as narrative ............................................................................................ 25
  The evangelical framework ........................................................................................... 33
  Approach to psychological material .............................................................................. 38
  Approach to application ................................................................................................. 38

Chapter 2. The modern debate: A critical review and evaluation ............................... 40

The relevance of spirituality to state provided educative care ..................................... 41

The vexed definition of ‘spirituality’ ............................................................................... 44
  Spirituality’s Locus within and / or beyond the human person ....................................... 48
    Intrapersonal definitions ............................................................................................. 48
    Interpersonal definitions ............................................................................................ 52
    Impersonal definitions ............................................................................................... 53
    Theo-personal definitions ........................................................................................ 55
    Combinations of definitions ...................................................................................... 57
  The Moral quality of spirituality ................................................................................... 59
  The inclusion / exclusion of children from spirituality ................................................ 61
  The Source or aetiology of spirituality ......................................................................... 64
  Reflection on the definitions ......................................................................................... 65
People as spiritual
The human spirit
Human spirituality as encounter
Implications of recognising humans as spiritual
The generation and termination of spiritual entities
Sources of spiritual encounters
Human response to spiritual influence
Circumstances of spiritual encounters
Spirituality of creation or destruction
God’s creation
Human sub-creations
The creative act
Spirituality of relationship or alienation
The cultural community
The gathered group
Interpersonal relationships
Spirituality of truth or deceit
Spirituality of providence or neglect
Spirituality of intervention or temptation
Spirituality in childhood
Definitions
Conclusion
Chapter 4. The spirituality of children
God’s disposition towards children
Who is a child?
Children share a distinct relationship with God simply through being children
All Children in their own right belong within the Kingdom of God
The existing relationship between children and God is a model for the desirable relationship between adults and God
The spiritual obligations of children Are limited and directly related to their characteristics as children
God shows interest in the lives of individual children
God’s acceptance of children is unconditional
God is well disposed towards children regardless of accidents of birth, or membership of a community of faith, or rites related to that membership
God’s acceptance of children is independent of any faith commitment they may or may not make
Children are not held responsible for their own or humanity’s sin

225
226
228
229
250
252
255
256
257
261
263
Children's encounters with God's Spirit have impacts upon them consistent with their nature as children. ........................................................................................................ 270

Children are open to being controlled by God's Spirit to fulfil its purposes. .................................................................................................................. 270

A spirituality totally pleasing to God is fully consistent with any phase of childhood and this may be marked by evidence of the Spirit's work in their lives. ........................................ 271

Spirituality develops as children mature and children are active participants in that development. ........................................................................ 277

Children's spirituality is normally mediated rather than based on direct encounter. ........................................................................................................ 278

The household and especially those who fulfil parental roles are central to the developing spirituality of children ........................................................................ 278

The spirituality of parents is imputed to Their children................................................................................................................................. 286

While children are not held responsible by God for sin in which they are involved, they are identified with the spirituality of their households and local community and share the immediate common consequences of that identification ........................................ 288

Sources of spiritual encounters other than household and community also mediate spirituality to children ......................................................................................... 290

Children encounter spiritual evil and cannot resist being influenced to their detriment. ........................................................................................................ 292

A narrative metaphor of children's spirituality ................................................................................................................................. 295

The parable of the city ................................................................................................................................................................. 296

Exposition ........................................................................................................................................................................ 298

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................................................ 299

Chapter 5. The nature of development ................................................................................................................................. 300

Epistemological bases of theories of development ............................................................................................................................. 300

Limitations of linear concepts of development ............................................................................................................................. 301

The misrepresentation of linearity ................................................................................................................................................... 303

The misrepresentation of preformation ....................................................................................................................................... 304

The misrepresentation of stability ............................................................................................................................................... 305

The need for a new paradigm ......................................................................................................................................................... 305

Dynamic systems theory ................................................................................................................................................................. 306

System ........................................................................................................................................................................ 308

Dynamic system ........................................................................................................................................................................ 308

Magician systems ........................................................................................................................................................................ 318

Dynamic systems of development .................................................................................................................................................. 320

Development as dynamic ................................................................................................................................................................. 323

Magical development ........................................................................................................................................................................ 330

Spirituality as a dynamic system ....................................................................................................................................................... 335

An hypothesised ordering of systems .................................................................................................................................................. 336

Spirits as systems ........................................................................................................................................................................ 339

The Divine Spirit ........................................................................................................................................................................ 342

Definitions ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 345
Towards a dynamic approach to spiritual development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical constructs</th>
<th>348</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System parameters</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trajectories</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractors</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase transitions</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Stable periods and transitions in development                | 351 |
| The prenatal period                                         | 351 |
| Phase transition at birth                                    | 352 |
| Infancy - the trust period                                   | 352 |
| Transition to pre-critical linguistic symbolisation          | 357 |
| Pre-critical symbolic - the period of beliefs                | 357 |
| Transition to discernment                                    | 361 |
| Dependent critical symbolic - the period of discernment      | 362 |
| Transition to exploration                                    | 364 |
| Independent constrained - the period of exploration          | 365 |
| The transition to maturity                                   | 366 |
| Spiritual maturity                                           | 366 |

| Summary                                                      | 369 |

| Conclusion                                                    | 370 |

Chapter 6. Spirituality and secular educative care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reconceptualisation of spirituality in educative care</th>
<th>372</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The spiritual ontology</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The personnel</th>
<th>386</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and educative caregivers</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and Christian ed-caregivers</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The environment</th>
<th>393</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and the natural environment in educative care</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and the constructed environment of educative care</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The relationships</th>
<th>399</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and culture</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and group relationships</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual development and personal relationships</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The pedagogy</th>
<th>409</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious activities</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The nurture</th>
<th>424</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The context</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Summary                                                      | 429 |
Chapter 7. Efficacy of the biblical model of spiritual development in educative care ........................................ 431

Developing a model................................................................................................................................. 431
Implications of the model........................................................................................................................ 433

Tasks for future research ......................................................................................................................... 433
Conceptual issues ................................................................................................................................ 434
Empirical issues...................................................................................................................................... 434
Practical issues......................................................................................................................................... 435

List of references and bibliography of manuals consulted dealing with children
from a Christian perspective ..................................................................................................................... 437

References................................................................................................................................................ 437

Bibliography of manuals consulted ........................................................................................................ 459

Appendix 1 ............................................................................................................................................... 462

References to children excluded from analysis ..................................................................................... 462

Appendix 2 ............................................................................................................................................... 463

References to matters of spiritual significance in the National Statements and Profiles for
Australian Schools................................................................................................................................. 463
Direct references to the spiritual ............................................................................................................. 463
References to religion.............................................................................................................................. 464
References to the sacred........................................................................................................................... 465
References to literary or oral religious texts ........................................................................................... 465
References to matters which, in context, have spiritual significance ..................................................... 466
References to student responses likely to generate spiritual questioning ........................................... 468
References to beliefs............................................................................................................................... 468
References to philosophy ......................................................................................................................... 469
References which combine some of these............................................................................................... 470

Appendix 3 ............................................................................................................................................... 471

Definitions and quasi-definitions of spirituality ..................................................................................... 471
Intra-personal........................................................................................................................................... 471
Inter-personal definitions ......................................................................................................................... 478
Impersonal definitions.............................................................................................................................. 478
Theo-personal definitions......................................................................................................................... 480
Intrapersonal + Interpersonal definitions............................................................................................... 482
Interpersonal + Impersonal definitions................................................................................................... 482
Interpersonal + Theopersonal definitions............................................................................................... 482
Intrapersonal + Interpersonal + Impersonal definitions ........................................................................ 482
Intrapersonal + Interpersonal + Theopersonal definitions..................................................................... 483
Intrapersonal + Impersonal + Theopersonal definitions......................................................................... 483
Intrapersonal + Interpersonal + Impersonal + Theopersonal definition.................................................. 484
Appendix 4 ........................................................................................................................................... 485

Some additional anecdotes in Cavalletti ........................................................................... 485

Appendix 5 ........................................................................................................................................... 488

Recommendations for activities to foster children’s spiritual development .................. 488
Garth’s meditations ......................................................................................................................... 489
  The star prelude ............................................................................................................................ 489
  The little white cloud ................................................................................................................... 490
  Easter morning ............................................................................................................................ 491
Suggestions from the Kent SACRE ............................................................................................. 491
  Directly related to spirituality or religion .................................................................................... 491
  Using spiritually relevant terms and/or concepts ...................................................................... 492
  Questioning .................................................................................................................................. 493
  Values .......................................................................................................................................... 493
  Tolerance of differences ............................................................................................................ 493
  Cross-cultural understanding ...................................................................................................... 493
  Valued personal qualities ........................................................................................................... 493
  Feelings and emotions .................................................................................................................. 494
  Self-expression ............................................................................................................................ 494
  Competence and achievement .................................................................................................... 494
  Communication ............................................................................................................................ 494
  Discipline related .......................................................................................................................... 494

Appendix 6 ........................................................................................................................................... 495

Exegesis of texts referring to children..................................................................................... 495
  The Infancy of God ....................................................................................................................... 495
  John 1:1-18 .................................................................................................................................. 495
  Isaiah 9:5-7 .................................................................................................................................. 495
  Matthew 1:18-2:5 ........................................................................................................................... 495
Biblical stories about children ..................................................................................................... 497
  The first child: Genesis 4:1 ........................................................................................................... 497
  Ishmael: Genesis 16:1-16 / 21:8-21 .............................................................................................. 498
  Various young women: Genesis 19:6-8;38:5-30 / Judges 19:11-30 ........................................ 500
  Esau and Jacob: Genesis 25:21-28 .............................................................................................. 500
  The sons of Joseph: Genesis 41:50-52;48:1-20 ......................................................................... 501
  The children of a rebellion: Numbers 16:27-32 ....................................................................... 501
  The exempt children: Numbers 14:26-35 / Deuteronomy 1:34-40 ......................................... 501
  Achan’s children: Joshua 7:24-26; 22:20 .................................................................................... 502
  Jephthah’s daughter: Judges 11:29-40 ....................................................................................... 502
  Samson: Judges 13:2-24 ................................................................................................................ 503
  Samuel: 1 Samuel 1:1-4:1 ............................................................................................................. 503
  David’s child: 2 Samuel 11:27-12:23 ........................................................................................... 504
  Solomon: 1 Kings 3:7-9 ................................................................................................................ 504
  Abijah: 1 Kings 14:1-18 ............................................................................................................... 504
Psalm 72:4 ........................................................................................................ 514
Psalm 106:36-38 .................................................................................................. 514
Psalm 113:9 ......................................................................................................... 515
Psalm 131 ........................................................................................................... 515
Psalm 139:13-17 ................................................................................................. 515
Psalm 148 .......................................................................................................... 515
Proverbs 8:30-31 ............................................................................................... 515
Proverbs 17:6 ..................................................................................................... 517
Proverbs 20:11 .................................................................................................. 517
Ecclesiastes 7:1 .................................................................................................. 517
Ecclesiastes 11:10 .............................................................................................. 517
Isaiah 1:2 ............................................................................................................ 517
Isaiah 3:1-5 ........................................................................................................ 518
Isaiah 7:14-16 .................................................................................................... 518
Isaiah 8:18 ......................................................................................................... 518
Isaiah 11:6-9 ...................................................................................................... 518
Isaiah 13:16,18 ................................................................................................... 518
Isaiah 38:19 ....................................................................................................... 518
Isaiah 49:14-15 .................................................................................................. 518
Isaiah 50:1 ......................................................................................................... 518
Isaiah 65:17-25 .................................................................................................. 519
Isaiah 66:7-13 .................................................................................................... 519
Jeremiah 7:17-18 ............................................................................................... 519
Jeremiah 19:4-5 ................................................................................................ 519
Jeremiah 20:14-18 ............................................................................................ 519
Jeremiah 47:3-4 ................................................................................................ 519
Lamentations 4 .................................................................................................. 519
Ezekiel 9:1-11 .................................................................................................... 520
Ezekiel 16:4-6; 16:20-21; 20:31; 23:37 ................................................................. 520
Ezekiel 36:12-15 ................................................................................................. 520
Hosea 9:11-14 ................................................................................................... 520
Hosea 11:4 ........................................................................................................ 521
Joel 1:3 ............................................................................................................... 521
Joel 2:15-17 ....................................................................................................... 521
Zechariah 8:4-5 ................................................................................................ 521
Malachi 3:17 ...................................................................................................... 521
Jesus’ Teaching about Children ....................................................................... 521
Matthew 11:25-27 ............................................................................................. 521
Matthew 14:21; 15:38 ....................................................................................... 521
Matthew 18:1-14 .............................................................................................. 522
Matthew 19:13-15 ............................................................................................ 522
Matthew 21:1-17 .............................................................................................. 522
Mark 9:32-50 ..................................................................................................... 522
Mark 10:13-16 ................................................................................................... 522
Luke 18:15-17 .................................................................................................. 522
John 9:1-41 ........................................................................................................ 522
John 16:21 .......................................................... 522
The Apostolic Teaching about Children .............................................. 522
Romans 5:12-21 ........................................................................... 522
Romans 7:9-11 ............................................................................ 522
Romans 9:10-13 / Galatians 4:22-31 ............................................... 523
1 Corinthians 3:1; 13:11; 14:20 .................................................... 523
1 Corinthians 7:12-16 ................................................................. 524
1 Corinthians 12-14 ..................................................................... 524
Galatians 4:1-9 ................................................................. 524
Ephesians 5:1 ........................................................................ 524
Ephesians 6:1-4 / Colossians 3:20-21 ........................................... 524
1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 ............................................................. 525
1 Timothy 3:1-5,12 / Titus 1:6 ................................................... 525
2 Timothy 3:12-15 ....................................................................... 525
Hebrews 5:11-14 ...................................................................... 525
Hebrews 12:5-11 ...................................................................... 525
1 Peter 2:2 ............................................................................. 526
1 John 2:1-29 ............................................................................ 526
ABSTRACT

A useful model of spiritual development in the public educative care of children must: specify the meaning and nature of spirituality; clarify its relationship to an underlying ontology; identify in what sense spirituality is developmental; be consistent with a justifiable paradigm of human development; explain the rôle and status of such spiritual development within a secular system of educative care; and specify practical implications flowing from these matters.

Using narrative criticism within an evangelical framework, the biblical descriptions of spirituality and childhood were critically examined as a basis for such a model. Biblical spirituality was developmental and was identified with encounters, usually naturally mediated, between human spirits and God’s Spirit, and spirits which alienate from God’s Spirit. All children, without qualification of belief, community, rite or age, were identified as spirits who share a special relationship with God’s Spirit both ontologically and experientially. Biblical childhood was not defined chronologically but functionally by inability to take responsibility for one’s own spiritual life because of openness to God’s and other spirits.

Principles of ‘magician systems’ in Dynamic Systems Theory parallel phenomena of human development and those commonly designated as spiritual. Consequently, a dynamic model of spiritual development is proposed which is consonant with biblical teaching and grounded in an established scientific paradigm. This indicates that spirituality is an inescapable aspect of any educative care setting or system and need not be introduced as though children lack it. Spiritually salient aspects of educative care will lead children to spiritual encounters which are derivative of a positive life affirming principle or fundamentally destructive and alienating. These aspects encompass the spiritual ontology of the setting, the children, the personnel, the physical environment, the nature and quality of relationships, the curriculum, religious activities, the nurture provided, and the wider context, all of which are of spiritual moment.
SOME NOTES ON LANGUAGE USE

Inclusive language is used except in direct quotations. The plural pronoun is used where gender is unspecified, though this leads to discrepancy in grammatical number. Because number is theologically relevant, that strategy is inappropriate for references to deity. In consistency with biblical usage, the male pronoun is used when referring to the Judaeo-Christian God. The possible offence to some women is balanced against that to some traditional Jewish and Christian believers by alternatives. This is acknowledged as a moot point. The Greek term ‘hypostasis’ is used in preference to ‘person’ when referring to Father, Son or Spirit to avoid the anthropomorphism inherent in the latter. More generally, ‘person’ is used as common terminology for the individual human (i.e., the singular of people) and could be substituted by ‘individual’, ‘human being’, ‘character’, or similar terms. The impersonal pronoun is employed for all uses of the word ‘spirit’, including the ‘Holy Spirit’,1 because ‘spirit’ includes impersonal phenomena and, even in Scripture the Holy Spirit while ‘personal’, as are all hypostases of the Trinity, is not personalised in the same sense as the Father and the Son. The danger of creating a distinction between hypostases is recognised but is not intended. A distinction is made between ‘Christian’ as a reflection of the nature of God revealed by Jesus and ‘christian’ as representative of group membership or cultural identity related to that revelation. This is to allow description of situations such as people who do not identify as ‘christian’ but still share ‘Christian’ values.

Within quotations, American spelling has been altered to Australian usage for consistency with the general text; errors, marked ‘[sic]’, are uncorrected; and square brackets represent my authorial comment, except in a few cases where the source of the quote has used this device to comment on someone else’s text. References are uncorrected.

Though ‘schools’ are emphasised in the literature, the state also provides child care, family day care (FDC), preschools / kindergartens / child-parent centres, out of school

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1 Serious consideration was given to using the female pronoun for the Holy Spirit, as the New Testament (NT) Greek term pneuma is female. However, to use different gender specific pronouns for the hypostases of the Trinity would be unnecessarily contentious, and gender specification tends to be arbitrary. Latin spiritus, the derivation of ‘spirit’, is a male form.
hours care (OSHC), and the like which furnish an educational environment, even where that education is under a rubric of ‘care’. Except for direct quotations, when ‘education’ is used, it has a narrow sense relating to the deliberate transmission of ideas and attitudes, etc., and is never equivalent to ‘schooling’ as that gives insufficient weight to the inescapable ‘care’ function of the school. To express the broader rôle of state provided institutions for the young, the more fully descriptive term ‘educative care’ (ed-care) has been used. ‘School’ and ‘teacher’ are inappropriate to indicate any and all of the different institutions and personnel that offer educative care. Consequently, ‘educative care setting’ or just ‘setting’ will be used for the institutions, and ‘educative caregiver’ (ed-carer) to include qualified educators, support and untrained staff, and volunteers.

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But essentially my work stems from the many children who ornament my world; from the preschooler who accosted me to ask if I was the devil, to the young child who wanted to know if God went to the toilet, to the Muslim girl who, with a laugh, suggested, with supporting argument, that Mary was pregnant for three years, and to the trainee thug who after being publicly disruptive took me aside to ask could I give him a Bible for his mother because he thought it would help her. No wonder God likes them!
CHAPTER 1. IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century states: “Schooling provides a foundation for young Australian’s intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development.”2 This parallels the earlier resolution of the British Parliament described by Erricker: “The Education Reform Act 1988 sets out as the central aim for the school curriculum that it should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural mental and physical development of pupils and society...”3 Both place some responsibility for the spiritual development of children upon state provided systems of educative care (ed-care) without elucidating the requirement. As Erricker says: “...no specific example of how spiritual development should be included in curriculum subjects other than Religious Education was provided. In effect there was a charge to deliver across the curriculum and beyond with insufficient guidance.”4

Watson poses the question “Whose model of spirituality should be used in spiritual development of school children?”5 Her concern is that, in legislating to make schools responsible for the spiritual development of their students, the 1988 Education Reform Act led, de facto, to the implementation, in the United Kingdom (UK), of one particular model to the exclusion of others. “Education, therefore, has assumed both that spirituality is a universal, naturalistic human attribute, which is experientially based, and that this inherent spirituality can be developed by general, naturalistic (classroom) methods.”6 She quotes Wright’s critique that:

The old confessional model of nurturing into a specific spiritual tradition has quite properly been firmly removed from the agenda, only to be replaced, however, by a

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6 ibid, p.96.
similar nurturing model that seeks to avoid the charge of indoctrination by stripping spirituality of any material content. The result is indoctrination, by default, into the world-views of romanticism and post-modernity.\textsuperscript{7}

Watson demurs on Wright’s depiction of the model as post-modern, seeing it as more attuned to modernistic influences:

Today’s educational model for spiritual development … is a naturalistic model of spirituality that derives credence and authority through a melding of ideas and values from a variety of closely related sources - humanistic psychology, natural theology, liberal Christianity and religious universalism.\textsuperscript{8}

Consequently, she asserts, “...the model has no greater claim to authenticity than the supernatural / traditional Christian models of spirituality that went before. It is simply different.”\textsuperscript{9} Her conclusion is premised on the argument that spiritual development cannot occur independent of a context of meaning, a faith, which she finds expressed in the naturalistic model. Her alternative is that “…schools should encourage children and young people to explore different models of spirituality so that they can make their own sense of life and of the challenging world around them.”\textsuperscript{10} However, this owes too much to the very understanding of spirituality she is criticising. It accepts romantic assumptions that:

- spirituality, including the spirituality of children, is a matter of individual rational choice;
- that the quality of spiritual development is independent of the model chosen, only tenable if none represent ontological reality; and
- that the intention to find spiritual meaning is universal to, and inherent in, children.

It also presupposes the independent ability to process a variety of alternatives, which is developmentally untenable when considering the very young.

Nevertheless, her question is both fair and necessary and transcends the particular accidents of the current debate in the UK. Her question is expanded by the Kent Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (Kent SACRE):

\textsuperscript{7} ibid, p.97. See also Erricker, C. (1998), op. cit., p.53.
\textsuperscript{8} Watson, J. (2000), op. cit., p.98.
\textsuperscript{9} ibid, p.98.
\textsuperscript{10} ibid, p.100
what is the human spirit?
what activities foster the flourishing of the human spirit?
what aspects of the ‘life of the spirit’, should be fostered in a school?
what is the goal of this process of development?11

From the earliest pre-historic artefacts and ancient texts, until the most contemporary media, there is ongoing witness to the persistence of questioning and encounters in human experience which have traditionally been identified as ‘spiritual’.12 Any system of ed-care that ignores such a powerful source of identity and motivation is not grounded in a comprehensive perception of human life and culture. Even if one posits a fully secularised system of ed-care, it too has adopted a model of spirituality; either that it is a matter of merely individual moment without a community or cultural dimension, or that it is a superstition to be rejected.

There is just as powerful and persistent a witness to spiritual diversity and conflict. No community is a spiritual monoculture and any system of ed-care that fails to recognise differences with respect to spirituality must alienate those with whose understandings the chosen approach is in conflict. In a state provided system of ed-care, it is impossible to avoid consequential ambiguities and tensions. For a society where no particular set of beliefs can be taken for granted, and where settings are cautious about proselytisation for any religion, it is not immediately obvious how diverse spiritualities can be reconciled with ed-care. Consequently, though often by default, children’s genuine spiritual concerns can be ignored, treated with indifference, or even disparaged. To have no model, to avoid considerations of spirituality, is tantamount to having a model that treats spirituality as ontologically invalid and phenomenologically unimportant. Even if spirituality is an ontological chimera, it is disrespectful of the child, and possibly their family, not to recognise that their spirituality is a phenomenological reality; that they take their illusions seriously. If spirituality is an ontological, as well as phenomenological, reality, then to ignore it is to offer a truncated educational experience. Claims to offer ‘comprehensive education’, or to educate the


‘whole child’, become vacuous. And if, as many claim, spirituality is both integrative of the human person and ubiquitous, ed-care which fails to take it seriously is essentially compromised. The claim to have no model is clearly spurious, and the nature of the chosen model is important for the integrity of what occurs in ed-care. So Watson’s question is germane: Which model is it appropriate to apply when considering matters of spiritual development in a state provided system of ed-care?

Watson has not specified the criteria such a ‘model’, or ‘approach’, or ‘philosophy’\textsuperscript{13} should meet in order to be used as a basis for understanding how spiritual development occurs in environments for ed-care or for identifying what might optimise such contexts for spiritual development.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR A ‘MODEL’ OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN SECULAR EDUCATIVE CARE**

Best poses a series of pertinent questions:

‘What is spirituality’? What constitutes ‘spiritual development’? What is the rôle of the curriculum in this? What do different faith perspectives have to say about the place of spirituality in personal-social education and in the role of the school as a whole? Can / should spiritual development be integral to Religious Education? What are the dangers if it is not located within a liberal tradition? What are the dangers if it is? How do children develop spiritual ‘knowledge’ and what images do they employ to make sense of ‘spiritual’ statements and ‘spiritual’ experience? What are the philosophical and psychological roots and justifications for talking about spiritual and moral education in the way that we do? Must the spiritual be ‘religious’, or is a fully secular spirituality conceivable? If the conventional school curriculum lacks a spiritual dimension, can it be genuinely educational? In what ways might education be more holistically conceived so that the spiritual is given its rightful place while avoiding the pitfalls of indoctrination?\textsuperscript{14}

Such questions should be asked of any proposed model, however, Best’s questioning is unsystematic. What he requires may better be provided by subjecting claims of alternative models to consideration in terms of their performance against six formal criteria:

\textsuperscript{13} I shall use ‘model’ throughout this dissertation but only as a convenient term for any approach that tries to specify the relationship between spiritual development and educative care. It does not carry the sense of a formal scientific ‘model’.

1. The model must specify the meaning of the term, and nature of the phenomenon, designated as ‘spirituality’;
2. The model must clarify the relationship of ‘spirituality’ to an underlying ontology, and the relationship of both to alternative understandings;
3. The model must identify in what sense spirituality is developmental and open to change through ed-care intervention, and it must indicate what specific developmental changes are to be seen as spiritual;
4. The model must be consistent with an accepted paradigm for the understanding and study of human development;
5. The model must be able to explain the rôle and status of spiritual development, so understood, within a secular system of ed-care;
6. The model must specify practical implications flowing from these matters.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM AND NATURE OF THE PHENOMENON

"...The question ‘What does spiritual development mean?’ has rarely been asked by those who have made the role of the teacher as carer, supporter and developer of persons central to their conception of the mission of the school." 15 By its very nature a study of ‘spirituality’ is vested with definitional difficulties, particularly with reference to children’s ‘spiritual’ development. While many people would profess an intuition of its meaning, the concept of spirituality confronts rational discussion with layers of ambiguity. Part of the problem lies in separately defining ‘spirituality’, the noun form derivative of the adjective ‘spiritual’, without consideration of the root noun ‘spirit’, the basis for such derivations. 16 This tendency is an inevitable consequence of taking the experiential stance Watson identifies and criticises, because ‘spiritual’ is used to describe the quality of that experience, or else the characteristics of people who have such experiences. However, it isolates the term from its conceptual roots and leaves it free to be used to mean whatever experiences or characteristics one chooses. Brown quotes a namesake as suggesting, “Spirituality is a weasel word: it is a convenient

15 ibid, p.5.
16 This process finds a parallel with respect to religion: “‘The heart of my point’, Dewey declares, ‘is that there is a difference between religion, a religion, and the religious; between anything that may be denoted by a noun substantive and the quality of experience that is designated by an adjective.’ [Rosenow, E. (1997). The teacher as prophet of the true God: Dewey’s religious faith and its problems. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 31(3), 427-437.]
catch-all, suitably vague and illusive of definition”,\textsuperscript{17} which may be what Hay is alluding to in saying: “The word ‘spirituality’ itself has not been forgotten, but its connotations have been rarefied to the point of effete ness.”\textsuperscript{18}

The word ‘spirit’ is itself very versatile and robust in common English usage: it describes a refined single malt whisky and a crude bathtub gin; it denotes the realm with which mediums say they communicate, and its inhabitants; it depicts an individual’s courage or energy, and is so used with particular connotations of a girl, or a horse; it is used for that sense of corporate identity which stimulates groups to endeavour, especially when they display heroism in danger or endurance in adversity; demagogues invoke it to identify a sense of club, national or cultural identity; it signals the very essence of something; even of a human being; it is used to symbolise and even epitomise the nature of deities and other supernatural beings; and it is the ‘name’ Christians accord one hypostasis of the divine Trinity. Thatcher says, “...it is hard to think of an equivalent homonym which has spawned such a diversity of use.”\textsuperscript{19}

Something of this diversity of common usage is also to be found in professional literature on the topic, with spirituality, for example, represented as intrapersonal, interpersonal, impersonal and ‘theopersonal’,\textsuperscript{20} and also differentiated on a number of other criteria such as moral quality.

A first step towards definitional clarity is consistency in the use of terms. This is not found in writings or popular discourse about spirituality and spiritual development. As indicated, ‘spirit’ is used in a wide variety of contexts, and clearly there is significant difference between its use to describe a class of alcoholic drinks, as an equivalent term for ‘ghost’, and in the term ‘Holy Spirit’. More significantly, the variety of usage in


\textsuperscript{20} I use the term ‘impersonal’ to represent views that see spirit as expressed in a cosmological ‘connectedness’ to something to which personal characteristics are not ascribed, and have coined “theopersonal” for perspectives which see spirituality as related to encounters with a personal deity or supernatural self-aware entity.
academic and professional sources compromises their use in building, or demolishing, an argument in support of a model. A statement may appear to be supportive, or destructive, if excised from its own ideological context, but in that context may have a totally different impact. The statement, “It is not essential to believe in a god to be spiritual...”, would fit well with what Watson calls the naturalistic model and be anathema to a model premised on a religion’s claim to exclusive access to spirituality. However, in context of the rest of what Wolf has to say it would probably leave proponents of both unsure whether she was supportive of them or not:

It is not essential to believe in a god to be spiritual, but it is important to believe in something that the word God has historically signified. It has been called by a myriad of names - Allah, Tao, Goddess, the sacred, immanence, community, the ground of all being - and indicates an overarching reality, a oneness of all things. Whatever functions as the centring, unifying linchpin of our pattern of meaning functions as God for us. What is crucial is that an individual believes that there is a unifying force to creation and acts in the world based on that sense of unity.21

One particular problem is the overlap between the terms ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ both in popular discourse and more deliberately theological writings.22 Sometimes spirit and soul are treated as quite distinct entities in a tripartite understanding of human nature.23 When this occurs, ‘soul’ almost becomes a synonym for the more recent terms ‘personality’ or ‘character’, and ‘spirit’ represents a core identity, sometimes shared with a deity. Occasionally the meanings of the two terms are reversed.24 Elsewhere ‘soul’ is used to express both, or the terms are interchangeable, apparently implying a bipartite nature.25 A judgment has to be made as to whether statements about ‘soul’ are intended as equivalent to statements about ‘spirit.’ A similar judgment is required by recent use of the term ‘faith’ in ways which ascribe to that term characteristics elsewhere ascribed to ‘spirituality’. For example, “Artfield (1994), writing from within

22 Even within the foundational documents of the Judæo-Christian tradition usage is not entirely consistent and care has to be taken in interpretation.
the Christian tradition, uses the terms ‘faith’ and ‘spirituality’ in an interchangeable manner, and noticeably sees them as being interdependent with religious belief...”

One aspect of this ambiguity is the objectification of the concept of spirit to something one has rather than something one is. The distinction is important in the relationship between spirit / soul and body. If one ‘is’ spirit, then that is incorporative of the body. Consideration of spiritual development is inseparable from that of all aspects of human development, and every aspect of ed-care is spiritually significant in so far as it has any impact on the person. If one ‘has’ a spirit, then some form of dualism is implied and it is unclear what ‘it’ is which possesses this spirit. Spiritual development may be regarded as separate from other aspects of the development of the person and capable of independent consideration in the process of ed-care.

It is inconceivable that a single definition will encompass so ambiguous a term with such a diversity of denotations and connotations. Consequently, an adequate model will have to describe the nature of spirituality to clearly identify which phenomena are included under the term and which are excluded. That is, the model should describe occurrences indicative of spirituality, the conditions under which these occur, the phenomenology of occurrences and their consequences for participants. It should clarify spirituality’s relationship to similar categories such as religious experience, æsthetics, and morality.

THE MODEL MUST CLARIFY THE RELATIONSHIP OF ‘SPIRITUALITY’ TO AN UNDERLYING ONTOLOGY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF BOTH TO ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDINGS

There is a conundrum which can be most clearly seen in attempts to understand spirituality by studying spiritual experience. One cannot identify which experiences

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describe spirituality without predetermining what spirituality is. This is exemplified by Hay and his associates who described to interviewees a type of experience or awareness and asked whether they had shared an equivalent.\textsuperscript{27} This necessarily excludes experiences inconsistent with their description of awareness of, or influence by, “a presence or power”, even if participants considered them indicative of spirituality.\textsuperscript{28} This is not a criticism, as their transparent methodology casts the question as an operational definition. They are also unambiguous about what these experiences represent: “We conceive of an innate spiritual capacity ... it is an awareness that has evolved through natural selection during the course of biological evolution because it has survival value for the individual.”\textsuperscript{29} Inescapably implicated in the meaning ascribed to these terms are presumptions about the nature of the phenomenon described which rest on prior answers to ontological questions.

For a reductionist to ascribe the term ‘spiritual’ to phenomena is only an admission that certain experiences and behaviours temporarily elude reduction to their physical concomitants. Alternatively, one may hold that underlying the observable is a supernatural spiritual reality, to relate to which is the central and most important purpose for each person. Or one may see spirit as a transcendental aspect of human persons, without relating that to any supposition of further metaphysical realities. Spirituality is one of those very difficult areas where semantics cannot be isolated from ontology and definitional clarity cannot be obtained apart from the context from which the meaning is derived.

Consequently, an acceptable model of spiritual development needs to go beyond definition to identify the ontology which provides the contextual meaning ascribed to occurrences. As Crompton says, “...concepts of the spirit / spirituality depend on beliefs about, for example, religion, the meaning and nature of life, and / or the existence /

\textsuperscript{27} “Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?” By comparison Greeley & McCreary in the US used: “Have you ever felt you were very close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift you out of yourself.” [Hay, D. (1982). \textit{Exploring inner space: Is God still possible in the twentieth century}. London: Penguin, p.113 & 114.]

\textsuperscript{28} E.g., \textit{ibid}, p.212.

destiny of the soul.” 30 One will respond differently to a child’s claims to ‘speak in
tongues’ if one believes that all such experiences are evidence of the indwelling of the
Holy Spirit; or that all such experiences outside, or prior to, a ‘conversion’ experience
are demonic; or that they are entirely natural, even if puzzling, expressions of human
emotionality. Many may agree with White that spirituality is: “the highest aspirations
and achievements of the human spirit” 31 But he then adds “in a naturalistic world”,
whereas, as he himself notes, the Christian may only see these aspirations fulfilled in a
relationship with the Holy Spirit. The addition would also be of concern to those whose
spirituality is not theistic, but does go beyond the natural:

I mean the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something
larger and more trustworthy than our egos - with our own souls, with one another,
with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the
mystery of being alive. 32

It is necessary to specify this wider framework of meaning to preclude Jews, atheists,
Fundamentalists, spiritualists, humanists and pentecostals accepting a spurious
concordance because each speaks from, and translates into, their own perspective.

An acceptable model of spiritual development must specify such an explanatory
framework, not so that all will agree, but to clarify the bases of their disagreement. It
then becomes possible to test the implications derived from the model against the
underlying explanation and identify why the implications of different models depart
from each other. It also makes it possible to differentiate common ground (which is
useful in trying to serve a diverse community) from irreducible differences where
alternative strategies are needed to maintain harmonious, rather than acrimonious,
disagreement.

In this respect, a central matters is the rôle of religion in any understanding of spiritual
development as much of the most vigorous debate about the spiritual in ed-care, centres
on its traditional identification with formal religion. The close traditional relationship

32 Palmer, P. J. (1998/9). Evoking the spirit in public education. Educational Leadership, 56(4), 6-
11.
between the practice of religion and claims of spiritual experience is undeniable. Christianity specifies the nature of the Deity as 'spirit' (John 4:24) and describes its adherents in spiritual terms. (e.g., Romans 8:1-13) Similar claims to forms of spirituality, with varying assertions of exclusivity, are made by adherents of other religious communities, but are also the basis of non-religious spiritualism, and heard from proponents of 'secular' ideologies such as eco-spirituality. 33 This may suggest that spirituality is a class of human experience that transcends religious adherence and that by attention to those experiences as independent of religion, ed-care can maintain its claim to be secular while providing a 'spiritual dimension'. This is precisely the logic of the approach about which Watson was exercised. Any model must therefore make clear, and justify, where it stands with regard to several different understandings of the relationship between religion and spirituality:

1. spirituality as a defining characteristics of the adherents of one religion and limited to its adherents (consequently, all other claims to spirituality are spurious, delusional and, perhaps, demonic);

2. spirituality as a defining characteristic of one religion, but with influence which extends more widely than to its adherents (consequently, other claims to spirituality may describe real occurrences, but their explanation is erroneous);

3. spirituality as a defining characteristic of religion, which may be observed in any person with a strong 'religious' conviction, regardless of the particular nature of that conviction (consequently, secular spirituality is essentially religious, and different religions are valid paths to an underlying reality of which none is a complete revelation);

4. spirituality as a defining characteristic of existence, of life, or of the person, and bearing no particular relationship to religion at all, being equally available to all simply because of what they are (consequently, religion has appropriated spirituality to its own ends whereas, in fact, it can be experienced without any religious sensibility at all);

5. spirituality as a defining characteristic of a naturalistic human need for 'transcendence', or something similar (of which religions offer an invalid explanation).

Although understandable, Rodger's demand cannot possibly be met:

Any adequate definition is required to include every instance of what is defined and to exclude every non-instance: a tall order! What is needed is a general statement which is capable of accommodating all the specific forms of spirituality so that those whose spirituality it intends to include may be able to say, "Yes, that does fit, or at least allow room for, what I refer to when talking of my experience of spirituality." 34

However, in identifying its stance on these issues the model must be clear as to the status of claims which are inconsistent with its assertions. If a model so defines spirituality as to exclude some claims, it must identify what those exclusions signify. For instance, a model that asserted that adherence to a particular religious faith was a requirement for spirituality, must explain the descriptions of spiritual experience offered by non-adherents, whether devotees of another religion or people unaligned to any faith. If these are delusional, their ubiquity must be addressed; if the delusion is demonically inspired, claims of calls to virtue need explanation. Alternatively, if the model regards all spirituality as intrapersonal, an expression of a natural human desire for transcendence, it must identify the source and apparent universality of that desire, and the emotional strength of some people's belief that they are in genuine contact with a dynamic extra-personal entity who, or which, has a clear disposition towards them, for good or ill.

THE MODEL MUST IDENTIFY IN WHAT SENSE SPIRITUALITY IS DEVELOPMENTAL AND OPEN TO CHANGE THROUGH EDUCATIVE CARE INTERVENTION, AND IT MUST INDICATE WHAT SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES ARE TO BE SEEN AS SPIRITUAL

It is not axiomatic that spirituality is developmental in the ontogenetic sense. Certainly if it is an entirely human characteristic, i.e., it is intrapersonal, it will necessarily share the development of the person, as do all one's capacities. But if its locus is sited beyond the person, for example, if it is more than a human capacity but represents a form of

‘sharing’ with an ‘other’, spirituality may not be age related and ‘spiritual development’ may be an oxymoron. Spirituality could be a deity’s gift, given entire, and transcending the age characteristics of the person. Alternatively, an identical embryonic spirituality might appear at any life period and ‘development’ take the form of progressive learning or sequential ‘upgrades’ (to borrow a computer analogy) not directly related to the ontogenetic maturing of the human person. To classify spiritual development with such phenomena as cognitive or social development may be a category error. It might better classified with ‘enculturation’ or ‘aesthetic sensibility’

Rather than taking the developmental nature of spirituality for granted, a model must demonstrate both that it is, and how it is, developmental. As Crompton says:

...Is a child’s spiritual experience recognised as rich and mature, irrespective of chronological age? It is important also to ask whether ideas about spirituality are based on concepts of progression (from ‘immaturity’ to ‘maturity’), regression (from ‘perfection’, having come from God, to imperfection, as the individual grows away from God), or cycles of reincarnation.\footnote{Crompton, M. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.82.}

Nevertheless, an assertion that spirituality is independent of normative human development cannot stand without clarification. Children do develop in perception, understanding, relational style and emotionality (amongst a number of other relevant characteristics), so, to the extent that such are implicated in spirituality, they are relevant to how it will be experienced and expressed. Even if spirituality is a divine gift, to represent an infant’s spirituality as parallel to that of a mature and experienced person is demonstrably absurd. There are only two alternatives. Either there is a developmental cut-off point prior to which talk of a gifted spirituality is fanciful myth, or spirituality is given in a form consistent with the developmental attributes of any age. The first requires the model to specify the timing and nature of this developmental watershed; the second to describe how what is given will change in its expression with age.

Establishing the developmental nature of spirituality does not clarify its ontogeny. The dynamic, course, conclusion, and contingencies for its development need to be specified. The model must distinguish whether spirituality is a maturational capacity unfolding along prescribed normative lines to a largely predetermined outcome, as does
height or bone calcification, or whether it is a learned capacity, like problem solving, whose path and endpoint are exquisitely linked to the environment with which it interacts. If environment is an important factor in the course of spiritual development then the model needs to indicate how influential are various aspects of that environment and what form their influence takes. It must also identify how these factors operate within an environment offering ed-care. If a predetermined unidirectional maturational unfolding is argued (as with eye colour), then ed-care has but to provide a suitably supportive general environment. If alternative end-points are possible (as with Erikson’s psycho-social crises), then what leads to separation of trajectories must be identified and attention paid to the contribution ed-care makes to the selection of trajectory. If the nature of spirituality is largely a matter of environmental influence (as with manners), the contributions of the environment of ed-care need to be incorporated within the model.

As ‘development’, having a strong teleological sense, implies more than ‘change’, it is important to identify what spirituality develops to; what ‘spiritual maturity’ is. Not that there need be a single answer to that. For many developmental phenomena there are a variety of outcomes, usually different points along a continuum, as with height, but sometimes discrete, as with handedness. Similarly, as some developmental pathways for human personality lead to a person’s failure to fulfil their potential, or even to dysfunctional ends and psychopathology, the model has to indicate whether there are sub-optimal or even defective outcomes for spiritual development, representing a failure to progress to spiritual maturity or achieving a spirituality deemed as destructive; and why such outcomes occur.

THE MODEL MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH AN ACCEPTED PARADIGM FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND STUDY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

To devise a concept of spiritual development consistent with a particular philosophical or theological system would be a considerable outcome in itself. However, seriously to address spirituality as developmental requires that the model take into account contemporary understandings of child development. There is no point in a model in which the depiction of the child is irreconcilable with well established patterns of

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development; for example, which represents children as diminutive adults or guileless innocents. This means the developmental aspects of the model must be capable of translation into the language of science where conclusions derived from metaphysical argument can be tested against what is observable as children develop. Ideally this means that the terms of the model can be given operational definition and become open to falsification. This is by no means a trivial endeavour. The commitment to empiricism, objectivity, and to mechanistic concepts of cause and effect, which has defined classical conceptions of science since the days of Newton, does not readily extend to phenomena frequently described as unpredictable, subjective and evanescent.

Yet science has had to adjust to relativity theory; quantum uncertainty; cosmologies assuming seven unobservable dimensions of space-time, in addition to the four observable; and even to Schrödinger’s cat.\(^{37}\) Approaches to human science which are premisssed on positivism and reductionism may well be unable to encompass spirituality, which seems by its very nature to elude mechanistic, and even organismic, theorisation. But paradigms have developed which incorporate the unobservable and emergent as theoretical constructs. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the model builder to identify, or, if necessary, create, a developmental paradigm which allows statements about spirituality to be subjected to systematic appraisal for consistency with what is observed and / or extrapolations from those observations - just as the existence of black holes was initially extrapolated from gravitational theory. Subsequently ‘observed’ black holes are not observed directly (as their name indicates) but identified through consistency with those extrapolations, demonstrated by their influence on other bodies.

The model need not embrace the conclusions of any existing developmental theory because no current theory incorporates the spiritual. The approaches most often appealed to as providing close equivalents to spirituality or religious understanding are structuralist theories of cognitive and, sometimes, socio-emotional development.\(^{38}\) Utilisation of these theories leads to conceptualisation of spirituality primarily in

\(^{37}\) A thought experiment imagines a situation where a cat in a box is both alive and dead until someone opens the box whereupon, once under observation, the universe adjusts to only one, instead of two, realities. It seems to happen at a quantum level.

cognitive terms,\textsuperscript{39} with emphasis on children's stages of understanding, and sometimes relational ability.\textsuperscript{40} This fits well with an emphasis on curriculum in ed-care and universal stages offer easy prescriptions for dealing with large numbers of children. A puzzling diversity of individual patterns is reducible to mere variations from an underlying archetype. However, while the cognitive and relational may contribute towards age related expressions of spirituality, if taken as its entirety, conclusions will be skewed by the conceptual narrowing involved, particularly if spirituality is an emergent phenomenon with characteristics unpredictable from any of its component features. Moreover, as Kelsey notes:

Religious experiences do not belong just to the intelligent or the sophisticated. Quite the contrary, they are given to children and simple peasants, as well as to philosophers and theologians; they come to sinners bent on destruction, as well as to pious folk who feel they need no special help. This encounter is a real leveller of mankind.\textsuperscript{41}

So the model must be cautious in applying ideas derived from particular dimensions of development based on an analytic premiss which may be false.

Though it is not widely documented, when dealing with issues like ethnic spirituality, the early childhood field is influenced by Vygotsky\textsuperscript{42} and the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner\textsuperscript{43} both of which see culture as an important factor in development.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{39} "Children's cognitive capacities are precisely those which allow for the purest experience of the spiritual." [Levine, S. (1999). Children's cognition as the foundation of spirituality. \textit{International Journal of Children's Spirituality}, 4(2), 121-140, p.129.]


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This reflects an assimilation of spirituality to culture, which may be appropriate in
discussions of those aspects of indigenous spirituality which are reflections of the
underlying culture, and could even apply to some aspects of trans-cultural religions like
Islam or Christianity. It fails to address any transcendent conception of spirituality nor
the possibility that spiritual development involves processes which are not culturally
bound. The theories address externalities which express a culture’s spirituality related
beliefs and activities, rather than that aspect of being human so expressed, which seems
universal and leads some people to critique or stand outside their culture.

THE MODEL MUST BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE RÔLE AND STATUS OF
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT, IN ITS TERMS, WITHIN A SECULAR SYSTEM OF
EDUCATIVE CARE

Adoption of various divergent models of spiritual development will have significantly
different consequences for a system of ed-care. One extreme position would hold that
spirituality is only truly encountered within a specified faith community; that it is
relationship with a strict and jealous deity; and, consequently, that it is essential that all
be brought within that community of faith. Other supposed expressions of spirituality
would be demonic delusions which blind people to the reality of that faith. Proponents
of such a model cannot allow spiritual development any rôle ‘within a secular system of
ed-care’ as such a system, and any ‘spiritual development’ it encouraged, would be
essentially destructive and to be resisted. A similar conclusion could be reached with a
model that saw spirituality as a relic of a superstitious era which has become an
volutionary disadvantage that humanity needs to supersede with scientific rationalism.
However, a model which represents the nature of the cosmos as spiritual, and humans as
alienated from their true nature until they are able to ‘connect’ with the cosmic
consciousness, will both see the entirety of the ed-care environment as of spiritual
moment and attention to that spiritual element as a core value which cannot be ignored.
What Watson identifies as the educational model would share the sense of value but be
more inclined to see spirituality as something needing to be introduced into the
environment by appropriate curriculum, rather than as immanent.

44 I was reminded of this by Valerie Aloa, a specialist in infant development and care at the
University of South Australia.
Where a model accepts that spirituality has an appropriate place in ed-care, a significant issue is whether it is:

- analogous to a matter like ‘safety’, where the entire nature of the setting environment must be engaged by any discussion of its implications;
- a discrete area of curriculum, analogous to ‘Aboriginal Studies’, which can be taught by any teacher of demonstrated competency in the area regardless of their own ‘spirituality’;
- a discrete area of curriculum but one which is identified so closely with particular systems of belief and / or practice that it can only be taught by (and perhaps to) those who identify with that system; or
- some general educational theme, analogous to ‘communication’, which, even if taught separately at some point, also has significant cross-disciplinary implications and is likely to be introduced in various curriculum areas, or emerge spontaneously from the children being taught.

The model also needs to clarify whether it is something to which the setting introduces children, or whether the setting has simply to, or can only, react to spirituality as a pre-existing quality of children as Myers & Martin infer.45

The status of concerns for spiritual development also needs to be addressed. A number of possible models would lead to a conclusion that it should be a very high priority. This would follow from a model which identified spirituality as a characteristic essential for the development of an integrated human person capable of relating positively to themselves, to others and to life’s realities. Other models would diminish that priority, such as those that might see children’s spirituality at a particular age as entirely derivative of that of their parents and resistant to influences from other sources.

The status in ed-care of questions of spirituality cannot be divorced from:

- the age at which children first experience extra-familial ed-care and when it terminates;
- the length of time which they spend there each day;

• the characteristics of the professionals with whom they interact, including the number of these;
• the types of activities available to them within ed-care;
• alternative institutions which may also be spiritually significant.

All affect the importance of the experience of ed-care in the life of the child and, therefore, the significance of the field engaging with issues of spirituality. Where ed-care is a minor component of children’s lives, and they relate to other social institutions where such matters can be attended to, there is less need to be exercised on this issue than in situations where children spend significant amounts of time from birth to late adolescence in ed-care, other institutions, such as religious organisations, are of reduced relevance, and families are less stable. A model premised solely on traditional ideas of schooling, and of families and religious institutions, will be inadequate. A model has to engage with the degree to which the experience of ed-care within state regulated settings now dominates children’s lives through new settings like Infant and Toddler Care, Long Day Care, OSHC, FDC, and the like; the decline in acceptance of the Christian church as the primary source of spiritual guidance; and increasing hours of parental absence from the home.

THE MODEL MUST SPECIFY PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FLOWING FROM THESE MATTERS.

Unless a model of spiritual development denies ed-care a rôle, to be complete it must have practical ramifications. It may require the system to be active or reactive or both. A model of spiritual development may identify matters not part of current programs which, if implemented, would have a positive affect on children’s spiritual development. An example might be acting to set aside periods for silent meditation. Alternatively, the model may recognise inescapable aspects of ed-care as having spiritual implications for children. Features of any interpersonal relationship may be important for spiritual development and, consequently, settings may need to react to the quality of relationships between children and the ed-carers with whom they interact.

However, it is important that the relationship between proposed implications and the underlying explanation of spiritual development is unambiguous and defensible lest spirituality be used to rationalise implementing other curriculum goals or pre-existing hobby-horses and prejudices. So flexible a concept is all too easily stretched to justify
what a setting is already doing, or directions into which it wishes to move, which may have only a marginal, or no, relationship to a prior conceptualisation of spiritual development. For instance, while physical education may be justified on a variety of grounds, its justification as a source of spiritual growth could only be accepted if the model identifies elements of physical education curricula that lead specifically to change consistent with what it has identified as spiritual development.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In a personal communication, Buckland commented that once one opened up the theology of childhood, every doctrine and practice of the Christian church came into question. Many cannot be avoided but consideration will be restricted to what is relevant to state provided ed-care. In particular spiritual nurture in church programs, including church schools will not be addressed. In similar vein, it is not intended to explore pneumatological issues except as they pertain to spiritual development.

The broad field of academic writing about childhood is a background to this study but is not directly used as part of the argument. This is restricted to writers who specifically contribute to the focus on children’s spirituality. It is noted in passing that there is an awakening interest in the questions of childhood in fields such as history, philosophy and sociology.

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The distinction may be arbitrary, but as the focus of concentration will be the development of spirituality, little attention will be given to debates about religious education or the array of research into children’s religious thinking and behaviour except where they cast a light on the core issues. While criticism of existing models will be made, it will be directed to highlighting the distinctives of the alternative being proposed. This does not deny the need to evaluate the presuppositions of various writers on the topic, but a full analysis of their often unstated ontologies is beyond the scope of this study.

One consequence of reading contributions from Australia, the UK and the United States of America (USA) is an awareness of the extent to which the questions are context dependent. It is not my intention to tease out socio-cultural divergences except as they are necessary to understand a writer’s viewpoint. There is room for a detailed study of how various education authorities and individual schools are dealing with this issue, particularly in the UK, but what is currently occurring is not directly relevant to the intent of this dissertation. The ‘guidance’ document of one school district is, however, used to illustrate how one particular approach converts into practice.

THE AIM OF THIS DISSERTATION

If one is to have an appropriate model, there is a need to conceptualise the development of spirituality in unambiguous terminology with a clearly articulated philosophical basis; one which not only elucidates the ontogeny of spirituality but identifies a framework within developmental theory which allows its conclusions to be expressed in terms permitting objective evaluation of its validity, at least in principle. It should lead to justifiable implications for ed-care which are able to be implemented within a state provided secular system. It is the intention of this dissertation to propose such a model based on an evangelical Christian understanding of spiritual development.

THESES

To fulfil these requirements this dissertation will articulate and justify the following theses:

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The distinction may be arbitrary, but as the focus of concentration will be the development of spirituality, little attention will be given to debates about religious education or the array of research into children’s religious thinking and behaviour except where they cast a light on the core issues. While criticism of existing models will be made, it will be directed to highlighting the distinctives of the alternative being proposed. This does not deny the need to evaluate the presuppositions of various writers on the topic, but a full analysis of their often unstated ontologies is beyond the scope of this study.

One consequence of reading contributions from Australia, the UK and the United States of America (USA) is an awareness of the extent to which the questions are context dependent. It is not my intention to tease out socio-cultural divergences except as they are necessary to understand a writer’s viewpoint. There is room for a detailed study of how various education authorities and individual schools are dealing with this issue, particularly in the UK, but what is currently occurring is not directly relevant to the intent of this dissertation. The ‘guidance’ document of one school district is, however, used to illustrate how one particular approach converts into practice.

THE AIM OF THIS DISSERTATION

If one is to have an appropriate model, there is a need to conceptualise the development of spirituality in unambiguous terminology with a clearly articulated philosophical basis; one which not only elucidates the ontogeny of spirituality but identifies a framework within developmental theory which allows its conclusions to be expressed in terms permitting objective evaluation of its validity, at least in principle. It should lead to justifiable implications for ed-care which are able to be implemented within a state provided secular system. It is the intention of this dissertation to propose such a model based on an evangelical Christian understanding of spiritual development.

THESES

To fulfil these requirements this dissertation will articulate and justify the following theses:

1. That the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures provide an understanding of the meaning and nature of spirituality which is developmental and is applicable both to children of the Christian faith community and those outside that community.

2. That the Scriptural understanding of children validates the belief that all children enter into a relationship with God’s Spirit at conception but are also open to the influence of destructive spirituality, and that consequently, spirituality is a ubiquitous feature of children’s lives, and an inescapable aspect of the process of ed-care.

3. That Dynamic (or Complex) Systems Theory provides a model of development of human persons which is consistent with a biblical theology of spiritual development.

4. That it is possible to elucidate a model of spiritual development which incorporates biblical and contemporary psychological concepts.

5. That such a description of spiritual development provides a framework to consider how participating in a secular system of ed-care will influence children’s spirituality and how such systems can contribute to developing a positive spirituality acceptable to the broader community.

**METHODOLOGY**

The first two theses will be addressed primarily through a hermeneutical study of the biblical understanding of ‘spirituality’, and of the treatment of childhood in the biblical text. To defend the following two theses will require application of an existing scientific paradigm to fields where its applicability has been intimated but not explicated. This application will need to be demonstrably consistent with the outcomes of the biblical exegesis. The final thesis will be upheld by consideration of the ed-care setting in the light of the biblical and developmental material.

**APPROACH TO THE BIBLICAL MATERIAL**

To investigate the meaning of a concept like ‘spirituality’ where there is so much definitional confusion, an operational definition is required to set boundaries for the study. There is an unavoidable danger of question-begging in such an operational definition. For instance, if it limited the study to interactions with the phenomenon designated by the term ‘Holy Spirit’, all reference to spirituality in the Old Testament (OT) would be excluded and spirituality would be restricted to a characteristic of the Christian community. A semantic strategy was adopted to overcome such biasing as far as possible. English translations do not use the term ‘spirituality’, but ‘spirit’ frequently
translates the Hebrew ruach\textsuperscript{48} and Greek pneuma. The strategy adopted was to consider the use of those words in the Hebrew and Greek text to delineate their contextual connotations. General usage was considered, as that provides the semantic context for use of the terms with respect to God, humans and other spirits.

The second area, the treatment of children, is more complex. There is a plethora of terms relating to children: bar, ben, and yalad - son, offspring or descendant; bath - daughter, offspring or descendant; brephos - newly born; huios - acknowledged inheritor; manon - “continuator”; nepios - limited in speech; nin - posterity; oel and ul - suckling; pais / paidion - little or under authority or requiring direction or education; taph - little; teknon - born; thugater - daughter or offspring; and zera - progeny.\textsuperscript{49} The first task was to exclude usage that was not unambiguously age related, or was incidental and without theological implication even through its context. It is not always easy to ascertain whether references to ‘children’ necessarily imply an age group. In many particular cases, when such terms may suggest a reference to childhood and are even translated as ‘child’, they actually refer to ‘descendant’ regardless of age; to servants or to soldiers,\textsuperscript{50} or sarcastically to adults. Excluding these reduced the references significantly. (The excluded passages are listed in Appendix 1.) All remaining references were analysed using an approach influenced by narrative criticism but within an evangelical framework, as explained below. However, a preliminary caution is necessary.

It is inherently dangerous to systematise biblical teaching. The Bible is a broad collection of various types of literature, written by different people, responding to

\textsuperscript{48} The term neshamah is twice used for ‘spirit’ (Job 26:4; Proverbs 20:27). It was decided to exclude these from the study because: (a) it is a very rare translation; (b) the term is frequently associated with the nose or exhalation and normally carries the sense of breath as indicative of life, translation as ‘spirit’ being a variation of that meaning; (c) an analysis of the 21 uses found them to correspond closely the usage of ruach, even at one point being used as a poetic parallelism. They only served to confirm an analysis based on ruach.


\textsuperscript{50} Much as blacks were demeaningly called ‘boy’ and army officers talk about ‘the lads’.
different situations, over more than a millennium. It is far from systematic in its teaching about children which has to be inferred from many scattered and diverse passages. It is usually tangential to the author’s primary intent. However, it was important to draw together the disparate elements in a coherent way to identify the implications of the biblical material for how one should think about and act towards children. Fortunately, unsystematic is not the same as inconsistent. It is possible to derive a theological understanding of children from the diverse strands of the tradition, though the caveat about the dangers of systematisation applies and recognition needs to be given to the implications of passages which seem incompatible.\textsuperscript{51}

\textit{Principles of organisation}

With such diverse material, the principles of organisation required to draw the disparate strands together were not self-evident. Yet the conclusions which would be drawn depended on the principles chosen. For instance, if one were to apply general statements about people directly to children, one would have to ignore, retranslate, or force the interpretation of, passages that were specifically about children so that they conformed to the passages about humankind. If one were to interpret general statements about people to conform to specific statements about children, one would have to consider how implications of the broader passages were qualified. This dissertation assumed three organising principles reflecting varying level of authority attributed to different types of biblical material:

- Primacy was given to accounts of Jesus’ life and records of his words, followed by other New Testament (NT) teaching, OT material which made direct assertions about God (such as prophecy and liturgy), and finally other biblical material (such as chronicle, proverb and apocalyptic).

- Greater authority was imputed to explicit statements about children than implications about children derived from statements inclusive of adults.

- While direct statements took precedence, importance also attached to attitudes and beliefs assumed by writers which could legitimately be derived from the text.

A consequence of the first principle was that the cornerstones of this argument were the doctrine of the incarnation, the words of Jesus about children, and his actions towards

them. They became the grid through which other biblical material was passed. If a conclusion about children denied either the divinity of the child Jesus, or the humanity of the Christ-child, it could not stand. If the conclusion contradicted statements about children’s relationships to God and his kingdom attributed to Jesus, or required that people act towards them in ways inconsistent with his recorded behaviour, then it was wrong. The interpretation of those passages from which it was derived had to be reconsidered.

The second principle required that general statements about people which were inconsistent with specific teaching about children, did not apply to children. Applying a passage about people to children was only allowed if it did not contradict explicit statements about children. Consistent themes in biblical passages which relate specifically to children provided the framework against which such passages were evaluated.

The third principle reflected the fact that biblical writers seldom felt the need to explain or justify their statements about children. They assumed their audiences would consider such assertions as self-evident. Paul was so confident of this consensus, that at one point he used it to validate a quite different argument. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16) Accordingly, it was appropriate to attend to what the biblical writers found it unnecessary to state. While such matters could not discount what was actually stated, the writers’ clearly discernible assumptions about children were relevant data.

**Interpretation as narrative**

The traditional Reformed Evangelical approach to hermeneutics is based on the assertion that revelation is propositional. To ascertain the meaning of biblical material requires logical consideration of the text. This is reasonable but incomplete. Propositions take meaning as much from the context of their use as from the denotation of their constituent terms. “Come up and see me some time”, shifts meaning significantly from the literal when mouthed by Mae West’s cultivated persona and cinematic rôle. Interpretation must accommodate the variety of literary form and devices adopted by authors struggling to express matters which seem to transcend logic. Few authors show any influence of the logical discourse being developed by the
Greeks,52 and many predate it. They rely primarily on forms which operate at an intuitive level, especially narrative.

The recent emergence of narrative theology,53 has made an important contribution to theological studies by calling attention to the evident truth that much of the biblical text is narration and the writers, narrators: “Biblical writers tell stories, declare judgment, expound hope, write letters, lay down laws, offer advice, lament affliction, and celebrate blessings, but they do not do theology as such.”54 The Gobels concur: “The dominant method used by the prophetic and apostolic writers is to speak of God and man in the form of narrative.”55 The variety of theological stances identified with ‘Narrative theology’56 value in common the new insights and analytical questions generated by treating text as narrative. This ‘narrative criticism’:

...is a method of interpreting biblical narratives with the help of modern and ancient literary theory. It approaches the biblical narrative not as an historical source for something that lies behind the text but as a literary text that must be analysed in literary terms (plot, characterisation, point of view in narration, etc) like other works of literature.57

Goldingay contrasts it positively with other approaches to the text.

The scriptural narrative exists in order to offer a patterned portrayal of events, to express a vision. The central aspect of its importance is ignored when interpreters are preoccupied with discovering what historical events it refers to (the open, critical approach to the task) or with proving that it refers to historical events (the apologetic, conservative approach to the task) - or with disproving that it had any significant reference to historical events (the correlative skeptical [sic] approach to

52 Paul is a definite exception but he demonstrates some antagonism to it, e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16.
56 Including some that are inconsistent with the idea of the Bible as authoritative text. [ibid, p.491.]
the task). Any of these concerns are distractions from the task of interpreting the narrative itself. 58

In narrative criticism the Bible is treated less as a text to be analysed than as a communicative bridge between humans, to be interpreted in terms of the nature of those people, real and assumed. "It is usually concerned with the possible effects on the reader or hearer of the literary techniques employed in the text" 59 Here Tannehill makes an important point that, where biblical text is concerned, the audience are 'hearers'. "In the ancient world, as far as we can tell, the normal way to attend to scripture would be hearing it read, not reading it silently; few people had access to a personal copy of a biblical scroll in order to read for themselves." 60 The Scriptures were primarily intended to be heard not read, and heard in specific cultural contexts, assembly, temple, synagogue and church, though it is in the nature of story also to find 'popular' outlets. The authors wrote to these audiences:

If scriptural authors had in mind a means of dissemination of their work, then, it would have been the reading of it to a congregation or group. This has implications for interpretation of their work. 'In the beginning was the word,' Martin Buber was fond of pointing out - the spoken word. The reading of a story is indeed a speech-act. 61

Consequently, some of the normal canons of analysis of written text do not apply. For instance, community stories are intended to be told and retold to reinforce and transmit the tradition they embody. The surprise ending or eucatastrophy of the well written story does not successfully survive multiple repetitions. Well told stories have layers of complexity which are revealed gradually as the hearer gains familiarity and attends to subtlety and pattern. For example, a common biblical form is the story structured around a key central point with parallels and contrasts as one moves outwards from that point in either direction. These parallels enhance understanding of the central passage. 62 This sometimes renders a new meaning which contrasts with interpretations

which fail to recognise the pattern. For instance, Genesis 1:1-4:16 consists of a single narrative in three parts recounting the ‘fall’ of humanity, the parts differentiated by use of a different divine appellation, *elohim*, *Yahweh elohim*, and *Yahweh*.63 The combined form used in the central narrative makes a strong theological point about the identification of the austere Divinity (*elohim*) with the Hebrew tribal god (*Yahweh*). Such recognition would not be argued but gradually absorbed over many retellings. The same story form is frequently used by Jesus.64 Over a lifetime of recitations, the layered meaning would emerge to, or be absorbed unconsciously by, the hearer.

The nature of the reader / hearer is an important issue for hermeneutics because, “The content of the story ... does not come into being apart from the activity of the reader.”65 While it is true that contemporary readers were not the originally envisaged audience of any biblical story, the act of imagination required to enter into the world of that audience is parallel to the act required of them to enter into the experience of the protagonists. Critical are their concerns as ‘audience’; how they engage with the stories.

Audiences do not treat narrative as sets of words. They invest themselves in the story, transforming the words-about-people into apprehensions of real persons. “Real readers know that characters are persons, that Hamlet is a full person, that Tom Jones is a full person, that every character one meets in narrative is a full person.”66 The hearer of the stories of Jesus recreates the story character as a ‘full person’ to whom they attribute

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63  The documentary hypothesis would attribute these to ‘elohist’ and ‘Yahwist’ sources of these stories, and that may be true. It does not explain why the central narrative consistently uses the combined form, but that does make sense in one of a series of stories told among a newly formed nation to help them see the one God who created everything as their traditional tribal god. The point is specifically made in the story of the call of Moses (Exodus 3) which reads, “You are to say to the sons of Israel: ‘Yahweh, the *elohim* of your fathers, the *elohim* of Abraham, the *elohim* of Isaac, and the *elohim* of Jacob, has sent me to you ... say to [the king of Egypt] ‘Yahweh, the *elohim* of the Hebrews, has come to meet us.”


66  *ibid*, p.103.
motivations, emotions, history and future. They have feelings about this person.\textsuperscript{67} This is particularly the case when the character is part of the historical tradition of their family or group; even more so if acknowledged as their ‘Saviour and Lord’. Because they do not know what the reader brings to the story, “In practice authors may well have been unconscious of some of the implications inherent in what they said.”\textsuperscript{68} This emphasis on audience response leads to a totally different direction in criticism.

Redaction critics have sought the theology of a gospel writer as the key to understanding the message that the writer wishes to convey to a particular historical audience. It is not the purpose of narrative criticism, however, to distil a message from the text that can be expressed in a series of theological statements. Indeed, narrative criticism would suggest that such an attempt inevitably reduces the complexity and richness of narrative communication. Instead, one can explore the narrative rhetoric employed to persuade readers to adopt particular views of the persons and events in the narrative, indirectly influencing readers’ views of their own situation ... A narrative message is the complex reshaping of human life which it may cause through the reader’s sensitive involvement.\textsuperscript{69}

Goldingay identifies a distinctive of the biblical narratives:

To view scriptural narrative as a \textbf{witnessing} tradition suggests on the one hand that this narrative is intrinsically concerned with factual events ... The tellers of biblical stories are creative artists. Their stories do not claim to be God-given, as prophetic oracles do. They are works of creative human imagination. Treating them as a witnessing tradition, however, implies the conviction that these particular stories do reflect God’s story. Their world may have been imagined, but that does not mean that it is merely imaginary.\textsuperscript{70}

The approach taken in this study varies that of Keegan, proposing a pattern of persons and ‘implied’ persons to be considered in narrative criticism.\textsuperscript{71} Goldingay’s point that ‘witness’ is involved implies that the narrative is initiated by a reporter who observed and told others of the event. They are ‘implied’ as they are only known through the text. For instance, many people could be the implied reporter of Jesus’ ‘blessing of the children’. Its interpretation might be quite different if Jesus is the reporter than if it were the parents of the children or the rebuked disciples. The implied reporter in the

\textsuperscript{67} This is not unique to Jesus but applies as much to Hamlet, Tom Jones, Scrooge, Bilbo Baggins, Harry Potter, etc.

\textsuperscript{68} Goldingay, J. (1995), \textit{op. cit.}, p.34. [Emphasis mine.]

\textsuperscript{69} Tannehill, R. C. (1990), \textit{op. cit.}, p.488-489.

\textsuperscript{70} Goldingay, J. (1995), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.15,16.

\textsuperscript{71} Keegan, T. J. (1985), \textit{op. cit.}
story of the sacrifice of Isaac has to be Abraham as it contains information to which only he was privy. His motivation for entering the story into the tradition may be as important as the reason the real author chose to use it in their narrative. It could be argued that those who maintain the story in the tradition are equally relevant, and there is some force in that, but it is less important because stories, once they become part of a community’s life, tend to be self-sustaining. Fairy stories and nursery rhymes persist long after the reason for their creation has disappeared. On the basis of this argument, the process of interpretation for biblical narrative is expressed in the following diagram.

| implied reporter ⇒ real author ⇒ implied author ⇒ implied reader ⇒ real reader |

The assumption underlying this argument is that there were actual events to report. “Witnesses testify to what has actually happened.”72 That is not to deny that a narrative is constructed, even at the level of the reporter: “…witnesses report on things from their individual angles … biblical narrative is not merely annal or chronicle but story, manifesting an interest in plot and character and written from a point of view.”73

The difference that consideration of the implied reporter makes to interpreting the narrative process can be exemplified by the Gospel of John. Without considering the implied reporter, the implied John is “almost God-like”, recounting events of which he was not a part and revealing Jesus’ inner feelings.74 These may well be taken with a grain of salt. But often Jesus himself is the implied reporter, telling the disciples what he had done and sharing his feelings, especially with John, one of his intimate inner circle. John’s narration of occurrences he did not see and Jesus’ emotions becomes more plausible.

There are inevitable limitations in the narrative approach to exegesis:

- Sometimes there is insufficient information about one or more of the narrative persona to help the process of interpretation;
- Sometimes, even when there is sufficient information, it is hard to identify what it adds to our understanding;

73 ibid, p.15.
74 See Keegan, T. J. (1985), op. cit., p.100 for a description of the omniscient third person narrator.
Always the ‘inferred’ persona are subjective constructs of the interpreter.

This final limitation means that there is always room for multiple interpretations of any narration, but that is precisely the technique of narrative. Stories are open-ended and offer different meanings to different people, or to the same person at different times. "One of the ways in which stories do things to an audience is by leaving questions and ambiguities for their audience to answer or to resolve." So it is only a limitation for an interpreter who aspires to have ‘the last word’ or for those who demand a closed theology where every matter can be answered unambiguously. Goldingay indicates that:

Traditional biblical interpretation has difficulty tolerating ambiguity and openness; it assumes that the author aimed at clarity and precision, and it brings all the resources of historical and linguistic scholarship to bear on elucidating the text’s clear meaning. It is likely to assume that apparent ambiguity in texts is there because we do not share the conventions and assumptions that the text’s author and first audience shared.

The difference between approaches is indicated by Tannehill:

Historical criticism tends to view gaps and repetitions as indications of a composite narrative, a secondary compilation of earlier sources. The gaps and repetitions are then used to argue for a particular understanding of these sources. Narrative critics would affirm that gaps and repetitions are very common in narratives and that both may be effective literary techniques.

Keegan expands this point: “An important element in every narrative ... is the gaps, the things left unsaid.” Indicating that story is not a complete consecutive record like a camera, Keegan continues:

One never receives a step by step sequential presentation of everything. One is given the important things. These important things are carefully arranged, with the arrangement highlighting some events, subordinating others, relating things from one time period to things in another time period.

One aspect of those techniques is suggested by Goldingay:

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76 ibid, p.40.
...an audience oriented approach to interpretation presupposes that ambiguity is inherent in a story and asks what its opennesses do to an audience, or what it does with them, aware that precisely in its ambiguity the story can challenge an audience regarding its own attitudes. This comes about through the need for us to "fill in the blanks" in the story. We do not do that once and for all; the openness of the story means we have to keep coming back to it, "brooding over gaps in the information provided".79

The Bible offers multiple accounts, similes, metaphors, parables, letters, poems, etc. Understanding grows from ongoing interaction with the whole body of narratives and the interpretation of the naive reader will differ markedly from that of the reader who has learned wisdom from long term reflection on the text. However, that naive reading is itself necessary to build that wisdom. What both must share is the quality of imagination: "Thus with regard to interpretation of the biblical stories 'A man without an imagination is more of an invalid than one who lacks a leg.' (Barth, Church Dogmatics III/1, 91)"80

A final issue to consider is the boundaries of the narrative framework. The 'meaning' of the text is distorted by abstracting single pericopes or components from different narratives as the elements for analysis which are separate from the narrative context to which they contribute and which shapes their form and content. In contrast, a narrative approach looks for formal signals which identify the beginning or end of a narrative which it then treats as an intentional and meaningful whole. It is also hierarchical, seeing groups of stories forming broader narrative structures.

There are many ways to signify the beginning of a new individual story, e.g.: introductory statements ("This is how Jesus Christ came to be born." (Matthew 1:18)); ‘sequence’ statements ("After Jesus had been born..." (Matthew 2:1)); time statements ("In due course..." (Matthew 3:1), "Then..." (Matthew 4:1), "At that time..." (Matthew 11:25)); etc. Intermediate length narrative combinations are normally recognised thematically: the incarnation (Matthew 1-2; Luke 1:1-2:40); Jesus' miracles respond to human need (Matthew 8-9 centred on his eating with social outcasts; Mark 6:30-56); etc. A further level of organisation is provided by the ‘book’. Even composite books, e.g., Proverbs and


80 ibid, p.38.
Isaiah were collected together because they were seen to have a level of coherence which organised their separate narratives. Finally, for the evangelical, there is an overarching narrative incorporating the two Testaments separately and jointly. This is not uncontested, suggestions of coherence despite diversity having been criticised for presupposing, "...some metahistorical entity standing behind the various historical expressions."\textsuperscript{81} The evangelical would assert that there is such a "metahistorical entity" behind both Testaments, the inspiring Spirit of God. (2 Timothy 3:16) However, the argument can be advanced on other levels, such as a community of understanding reflected in the development of the canon. "It is a reasonable working assumption that a religious community will believe that documents which it accepts as its scriptures mutually cohere."\textsuperscript{82} Stacey makes the point that:

The canon was not established by authority. Nothing was confirmed until the general usage made the confirmation a formality. The common mind of believers gave us both testaments, and the vast influence of the Bible today is a witness not to the perspicacity of ecclesiastical gatherings, but to the vitality of the religious life of Jewish and Christian communities.\textsuperscript{83}

Goldingay concurs: "It is historically certain then, that the Jewish community believed that its scriptures were theologically coherent and that the divergent material they include was capable of coalescing into a form of unity, and the first Christians naturally shared such a belief."\textsuperscript{84} Consequently, "...the process of collecting and defining the scriptures is ... one with implications for the interpretation of the resultant collection as a unified whole."\textsuperscript{85}

\textit{The evangelical framework}

These narratives are interpreted within an evangelical framework, another ambiguous descriptor. Kropf says:

The title 'evangelical,' which derives from the Greek word for 'gospel,' is widely used today to denote a Bible-centred religion ... While the adjective 'evangelical' generally indicates an emphasis on the Bible, it does not necessarily mean a

\textsuperscript{81} Goldingay, J. (1987), \textit{op. cit.}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{ibid}, p.26.
\textsuperscript{84} Goldingay, J. (1987), \textit{op. cit.}, p.27-28.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{ibid}, p.27.
fundamentalistic or literal approach to reading and interpreting it, even though many calling themselves 'evangelicals' today lean in this direction. 86

'Evangelical' as used in this dissertation differs from Fundamentalism in accepting the value of contemporary research, post-biblical Christian reflection, other religious traditions and the experiences of those who nurture children. Such insights are not accepted uncritically but in the light of the biblical record. However, the Scriptures are neither creed nor systematic theology. They provide no definition of 'spirituality' or 'childhood'. The Bible is a sprawling collection of unsystematic and disparate accounts of individual and corporate encounters with what the authors perceived as spiritual realities. It requires interpretation.

'Evangelical' signifies an approach which treats the scriptures as a reliable witness to the events, attitudes and teaching which gave rise to the Jewish and Christian faiths. It treats the authors of the biblical documents not as superstitious primitives, nor as religious leaders creating imaginary tales to meet needs within their own sect, but as sophisticated and subtle thinkers honestly and imaginatively creating records whose truth they valued as a revelation of the nature of God.

Taking an evangelical approach to interpretation does not signify unawareness of, nor refusal to use, contribution of alternative perspectives. However, they are not accepted uncritically. 87 For instance, Marshall, in analysing the Lucan birth narratives, the nature of which is important to understanding scriptural ideas of childhood, identifies the contradictions of recent criticism:

- the whole has been characterised as "legend", "midrash", and "akin to ... haggadic literature";
- it has "a Semitic background" (though the significance of its Semitic language has been disputed); is "Palestinian", is explicable as the result of Luke's adoption of Septuagintal style; has "an Aramaic source", and rests "on a Hebrew source";

87 I use the Gospels as an example. The details of other parts of the Bible differ, but the attitude does not.
• it is based on oral rather than written sources; and on “a proto-Lucan document ... in Hebrew”;

• 1:5-80 is based on a Baptist\textsuperscript{88} source and the announcement of his birth to Elizabeth and the Magnificat spoken by her were transplanted to Mary; 1:5-25, 57-66 was “a Baptist legend, to which the originally independent hymns were added”; these passages were one legend, the announcement another, 2:1-19 a third and 2:22-38 a fourth; most of 1:5-80 is a Baptist legend in Hebrew; 2:22-39, 41-51a are from a source close to Jesus’ family and strongly attached to the temple, combined by a “Nazarene” adaptor who was a Palestinian Jew working in “a sort of Hebrew-Aramaic mixture”; the Magnificat and Benedictus were Maccabean war hymns; 2:14 is a fragment from a Hebrew Messianic psalm; 2:29-32, 34b-35 are fragments of Christian hymns;

• there are two sources, “one centred on Mary ... comprised 1:5-45, 57-66, 80, 56; 2:21; 1:46-55”, the other “centred on Jesus ... comprised 2:1-20; 1:46-55; 2:28-38; 1:68-79 ... 2:39-40; 2:41-52”; and 1:5-25, 57-67, (68-75), 76-79, (80) “was a unified Jewish-Christian Baptist narrative ... to which was added parallel constructions 1:26-38 and the linking narrative 1:39-56”;

• the Benedictus of Zechariah is attributed to Anna.

He wryly notes that, “...at the end of his investigation Schürmann has to confess that the tradition history of Lk. 1-2 is still wrapped in darkness”\textsuperscript{89}

One problem with these proposals is that there is no independent evidence of the existence of any of the proposed documentary sources or of the hypothesised groups; their existence being established on the basis of the documents that they are then adduced to explain.\textsuperscript{90} There is an inherent circularity in this until some independent verification of their reality is provided.

Another problem is that they attribute a very strange psychology to the authors of the final documents. People committed to a religion based on a claim of ‘truth’ are held to

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88 Referring to John the Baptist.


90 See \textit{ibid}, p.50.
have constructed a piecemeal narrative by borrowing and stitching together fragments, sometimes parts of verses, from a variety of sources, many of which were legendary. This is peculiar. Goldingay indicates that:

Although for the most part the Second Testament is not directly the work of eyewitnesses, the view that the tradition about Jesus was radically changed between his day and that of the work of the Evangelists presupposes that those who passed it on were either unconcerned or unable to pass on historical testimony to Jesus, and this seems implausible. The tradition may not have preserved material out of a concern for mere facts and may have preserved only what seemed relevant to it, but this does not mean that it preserved nothing or that it invented materials from scratch. We have noted that at least the earliest Evangelists lived within thirty or forty years of the events they relate, and that the gospel by which they and their churches lived (and in some cases died) implied a concern with historical facts.91

That is not to deny that the writers used existing materials and oral traditions, nor that their accounts differ. Rather, it suggests that it is necessary to refocus the question upon what the texts were intended to convey; upon what governed their choice of materials and what the materials were used to construct. The authors are neither historians (the question of historicity is anachronistic), nor theologians (theological subtlety is unlikely). They were believers caught up in the excitement of a new and dangerous religious movement using the common media of story-telling and letter writing to maintain and convey the faith tradition as the message spread to new cultural groups and particularly as the availability of first hand testimony faded. They clearly saw themselves as involved in writing down matters which were of great importance.

That order within the documents is not always chronological is undisputed, but the idea that elements are linked associatively rather than thematically, e.g., because they contain common 'catchwords' (such as 'little ones'), demeans the sophistication of the Gospel authors. It is far more likely that they use repeated catchwords to reinforce the unity of elements in a story sequence rather than that they would make accidents of vocabulary the basis of teaching which were of central significance for the development of the early churches.

An Evangelical stance does not imply literalism. Revelation is seen as propositional, but those propositions must be interpreted in their own terms. As Marshall says:

Two extremes must be avoided. There is the extreme which insists on taking literally what was never meant to be taken literally and fails to do justice to the literary character of the Gospels. There is also the extreme which sees so little history in the Gospels that there remain no grounds for ascribing to Jesus (rather than to anybody else or to nobody) the significance which the Evangelists attached to his historical existence. Despite Lewis Carroll, it is impossible to have the Cheshire cat’s grin without the Cheshire cat as its bearer.\(^{92}\)

This applies to the broader corpus of Scripture and some judgment needs to be made as to the nature of every text, to the extent it directly claims to express the mind of God, to the canons of ‘truth’ it adheres to, its intent and its literary form. Metaphor is embraced in line with Levine’s recognition: “Within Judaism the use of metaphoric logic is ... of paramount importance...”\(^{93}\) This is just as true of Christianity. So is the realisation that the narrative may use myth, fable, poetry, proverb, and none of these are to be confused with objective history. But these literary devices are used with narration of observed and reported events to create an overall narrative witness to what the authors valued as true. This is what the Christian community came to identify as the gospel.

It is not by chance that the bulk of scripture is narrative. This characteristic corresponds to the nature of the Christian faith. The fundamental Christian message is not an ethic, such as the challenge to humanity to live by the law of love, a challenge Christianity shares with some other religions. Nor is it a theology, a collection of abstract statements such as “God is love” - statements that it also shares with some other religions. It is a gospel, an account of something God has done, a concrete, narrative statement: “God so loved the world that he gave his only son...” Christian faith affirms the ethic and the theology just described, which it is glad to share with other religions, but it believes that the grounds for the former and the evidence for the latter is the gospel.\(^{94}\)

That gospel provides the interpretive framework for the narratives considered in this dissertation.


\(^{93}\) “One clear example of the is the interpretation of the Old Testament references to harlotry as isomorphic to the relationship between Israel and God. The conclusion drawn is that the loyalty of the marriage bond best exemplifies the ideal relationship between the Kneset Yisra’el - the ‘Jewish people as a collective whole’ (Zwi Werblowsky & Wigoder, 1997, p.396) and God.” [Levine, S. (1999), *op. cit.*, p.135.]

APPROACH TO PSYCHOLOGICAL MATERIAL
The biblical material provides the limit conditions for a psychological approach to spiritual development, that is, its conceptualisation of spirituality and childhood must be within the range of possibilities allowed by Scripture. This immediately disallows positivist paradigms, but even organismic and structuralist paradigms do not easily fulfil this criterion. The aforementioned silence of developmental psychology about spiritual development is not solely a matter of psychologists' personal disinterest or antagonism to spirituality; it also reflects conceptual difficulties within the theories themselves. Either their linearity with respect to causal relationships disallows qualitative change not inherent in previous conditions, change of the kind which seems to mark spiritual encounters; or it is impossible to disentangle the spiritual from the psychological with the former interpreted as a special case of the latter. While these may allow a naturalistic theory of spirituality to be propounded, where ‘spirituality’ is a description of morally desirable character traits, they cannot encompass any view of spirituality as transcendent. This is not surprising in a field that evolved to study those aspects of organisms which are empirically accessible or where there is a strongly defensible relationship between observed behaviour and inferred cognitive or affective characteristics.

Dynamic systems theory evolved separately, weaving together pure mathematical reasoning and the study of complex phenomena such as liquid flow, weather systems and electronic networks. It has gradually expanded analogically to other less physical and even more complex phenomena such as social and economic systems, individual and group patterns of movement, and human behaviour. More recently, it has been applied to issues in human development and suggestions have been made that it could apply to an understanding of matters which would often be considered spiritual in nature. These latter emphases have not been fully developed nor integrated as yet and so to address the issue of spiritual development requires an extrapolation from existing conceptualisations, and a melding of work in the two areas. To allow this, the concepts of dynamic systems theory will be explicates as an explanatory metaphor within which a provisional theory of spiritual development can be articulated.

APPROACH TO APPLICATION
The implications of any understanding of spiritual development will be so extensive as to encompass all aspects of ed-care, requiring a degree of selectivity. Attention will be
paid to the general conceptualisation of spiritual development as related to ed-care, and other foci will reflect issues commonly raised in the existing literature. Where appropriate, specific ramifications for ed-carers who identify with Christian understandings will be identified, but the principal concern is to identify implications for those who do not share that identification. It is not to be expected that a system of ed-care in a diverse community will operate to accomplish outcomes identified with any particular religious commitment, but it is expected that implications of a biblical model will find substantial common ground with people of good will, including those who espouse a secular ideology. Where disagreements are inevitable, the terms of the debate will be articulated, presumptions challenged, and the need for other orientations to develop more conceptually defensible positions identified. This will be in the light of specification of what a biblical model characterises as the consequences of failure to attend appropriately to children's spiritual development.
CHAPTER 2. THE MODERN DEBATE: A CRITICAL REVIEW

AND EVALUATION

In this chapter, a broad sample of contributions to the contemporary debate about the development of spirituality in ed-care will be employed to articulate the way issues to be addressed in this study are currently approached. It provides a framework for the argument presented in subsequent chapters by identifying the diversity of expressed viewpoints and their inconsistency at both a theoretical and practical level. It also indicates the range of matters which impinge upon consideration of these questions.

An extensive literature about spirituality in ed-care continues to be generated by the UK 1998 Education Reform Act, as well as by ongoing work associated with the Religious Experience Research Centre. Publications arise from the international early childhood field. Christian publishers produce a continuous flow of academic and popular works about children’s religious beliefs and behaviours and the way they relate to God. An ongoing contribution is made by those associated with the ‘holistic education’ movement and the Steiner schools. Rediscovery of indigenous spirituality, particularly, but not exclusively, of the first nations of Canada and the USA, has created a literature advocating its practice in a range of professional settings. Movements like

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the Awhina Whanau in New Zealand have established systems of preschool education specifically based on indigenous spirituality. A continuous search maintained by the author for general professional reasons as well as the present study generates about one new reference every week. Judgment is required not only of the quality of the contribution, but also of the degree of relevance. For instance, study of the extensive literature about spirituality in management, administration, and in counselling, while worthwhile in its own right, is tangential to the emphasis of this study.

THE RELEVANCE OF SPIRITUALITY TO STATE PROVIDED EDUCATIVE CARE

Halstead argues, inter alia, that there is a, "...willingness of governments to give some attention to children’s spiritual development", and Fisher indicates that, "Mention of students’ spiritual well-being was first made in Australian and Victorian state curriculum documents in 1994". In policy statements, politicians and educational bureaucracies countenance the relevance of spiritual development. Even when educational documents do not specifically identify spiritual development as a goal of schools, they find it hard to avoid spiritual matters, as exemplified by the Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools which include matters of spirituality in almost all

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99 The Awhina Whanau is heavily influenced by both Maori and Christian traditions of spirituality.

100 The search engine is Uncover Alert.


their separate areas, despite Hill’s identification of an intention to exclude such matters. References in the final documents include: 15 directly to the spiritual; 26 references to religion; 2 references to the sacred; 19 references to literary or oral religious texts; 26 references to matters which, in context, have spiritual significance; 5 references to student responses likely to generate spiritual questioning; 18 references to beliefs; 1 reference to philosophy; 12 references which combine elements of these. (See Appendix 2)

Justification for mandating schools to foster spiritual development is offered by Pascall, in these terms:

The important role which education, in partnership with the home, can and should play in the spiritual and moral development of our children hardly needs emphasising. These dimensions are vital underpinnings of all aspects of school life and should provide a provide a foundation for adulthood and our society in the future.

A revealing list of responses to the question, “Why should schools promote the spiritual development of children?” is provided by Kent SACRE: “To develop the whole child”, “It is a statutory responsibility” and “OFSTED will inspect the school’s provision for

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105 From the Statements and Profiles for Arts, and Health & Physical Education, the Statement for Science, and the Profile for Society & Environment.


107 From the Statements for Arts, and Society & Environment.

108 From both Statements and Profiles for Society and Environment, and the Profile for English.

109 From the Statements and Profiles for Science, and the Profiles for Arts, Society & Environment, and Health & Physical Education.

110 From the Statements for Arts and Science and the Profiles for Health & Physical Education

111 From both Statements and Profiles for Society & Environment, Statements for Arts, and Profiles for both Science, and Health & Physical Education.

112 From the Statement for English.

113 From the Statements and Profiles for Society & Environment, and Physical Education.

spiritual development”. It seems that noble principle needs the support of law and threat to be implemented.

Many ed-carers themselves feel the need to address issues of spirituality in ed-care. For instance, in many places a traditional response to issues of spirituality has been religious education. Rodger identifies, “The recent resurgence of interest in human spirituality as an appropriate focus for attention within schools…”, and Halstead points to:

…the growing interest amongst educators, psychologists and others in the development of the whole child. The heavy emphasis in the past on cognitive development is now being balanced by an increasing amount of research on emotional development, spiritual health and well-being and holistic education.

Fisher indicates from interviewing ed-carers that, “All the teachers believed that spiritual health should be included in the school curriculum, in a variety of ways.” Palmer reports on the success of the “The Teacher Formation Program” which offers: “a two-year sequence of eight four-day retreats for groups of 25 K-12 teachers … to give teachers an opportunity, in solitude and in community, to explore the spiritual dimension of a teacher’s life.” These straws in the wind are made plausible by the attitudes expressed by individual ed-carers in a variety of settings.

There are many difficulties involved in promoting spirituality in children through ed-care, well summarised by Kent SACRE:

115 Kent SACRE (1999), op. cit., pp.4-5.
118 Halstead, J. M. (1999), op. cit., p.5
the elusiveness of the nature of spiritual development
the difficult of arriving at an acceptable workable definition which can be used as
the basis for policy and practice
the diversity of views about spiritual development and the lack of a clear and
widespread consensus as to what it means to promote the spiritual development of
pupils in the non religious and pluralist context of most maintained schools
the lack of sufficiently clear and detailed guidance from official bodies concerned
with education
the suspicion, of some, that the term ‘spiritual’ is a cloak for the term ‘religious’
and that its aim is to make pupils religious
the unfamiliarity of the term spiritual development in the field of education, for
example the term very rarely appears in standard textbooks on child development
or human development
the lack of sufficient research on the spiritual development of children outside the
context of a specific faith
the difficulty of distinguishing spiritual development from moral and social
development. 122

There is little wonder that many find the issue daunting.

THE VEXED DEFINITION OF ‘SPIRITUALITY’

Discordant definitions of spirituality are a major hindrance to furthering the promotion
of spiritual development in the ed-care community. Haynes, who works in mediation,
entreats educators to: “Define terms carefully and be clear about goals before putting
students and teachers in the middle of yet another culture war. If public school
educators are determined to delve into the spiritual, they should do so with their eyes
open.” 123 The definition of spirituality is important not only for reasons of semantic
clarity, but also in the polemic of public affairs.

Spirituality is a very broad and vague concept. There are many definitions of
human spirituality and it is not my intention to try to propose one ‘correct’ one.
Nonetheless, a fair degree of consensus exists as to what is meant by educated
people in the field when they refer to spirituality. 124

Rodger’s confidence is not widely encountered in the literature, 125 Rose asserting,
“there is no consensus as to its accepted meaning”. Moreover, “…the task of promoting
spirituality in schools is not an easy one, not least because it is an area which is not

122 Kent SACRE. (1999), op. cit., pp.5-6.
125 However, see Davis, C. F. (1989). The evidential force of religious experience. Oxford: Clarendon,
p.29.
easily defined.”

Kibble notes that, even after the NCC discussion paper and documents from OFSTED,

...teachers need more detail concerning the whole idea of what spiritual experience and therefore spiritual development might mean if they are to develop a policy on spiritual and moral development and education, and even more so if they are to put such a policy into practice in the classroom.

As Macquarrie comments:

...‘spirituality’ has become a word of doubtful repute. To some it suggests a kind of hot-house atmosphere in which people are unduly preoccupied with their own inward condition. To others it suggests a pale ghostly semi-existence in which the spiritual is contrasted with the bodily and material. To others again, the word has connotations of unctuousness and pseudo-piety.

Even in academic and professional usage, where precision might be expected, ‘spirituality’ is widely recognised as filling so extended a linguistic range that its meaning defies clarification, at least for the time being. Webster suggests the attempt to define is futile:

It has to be accepted that what words can explain is the least part of spirituality: that there is within experience what the mind cannot translate. This removes a mistaken

expectation for logical clarity or for accurate conceptualisation or worst of all, for rational demonstration.\textsuperscript{132}

This viewpoint is not unique:

It worries David Smith, for example, that, "an agreed definition of spiritual development is still not available". Definition is a necessary tool of the scientific method but not a religious or an artistic one. "The spirit bloweth where it listeth". Define it and you kill it.\textsuperscript{133}

Were the situation as hopeless as Webster implies, it would be difficult to engage in a shared enterprise in ed-care with any confidence. Nor should we accept as insurmountable the divide between science and religion / arts, as does Priestley, or his cavalier dismissal of the need to define. Crawford and Rossiter's proposal offers a less pessimistic strategy:

Spirituality, like identity, always appears to be an important concept when education and personal development are being considered. However, it is notoriously difficult to define. For the purpose of this discussion we need to avoid:

1. Defining spirituality more or less exclusively in formal religious terms. This tends to alienate those who have a spirituality that is not associated with religion. Also, it does not take into account the way many of today's young people form a secular spirituality that relates to religious traditions in different ways to those often presumed by religious people. Similarly, it tends to neglect the spiritual significance and potential for human fulfilment in contemporary non-religious movements.

2. Defining spirituality with the exclusion of any reference to religion. This ignores the long-term focus on spiritual issues that has been important for religions; it can neglect the significance of religious heritage as a component of culture and the place of contemporary religious movements.

3. Defining spirituality so broadly that all aspects of life are regarded as spiritual. This makes anything and everything relevant to education for spirituality and curriculum implications become vague and impractical.\textsuperscript{134}

As is evident from the examples in Appendix 3, Crawford and Rossiter's strictures reflect some contemporary problems in defining spirituality and spiritual development.

The word 'spirit', common in everyday usage and in traditional texts, is seldom used and even less often defined in current academic writing. For instance, Wolf argues that:

\textsuperscript{133} Priestley, J. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.168.
\textsuperscript{134} Crawford, M, & Rossiter, G. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.306.
In the light of the original basic importance of nurturing the spirit in Montessorian education, I believe that present Montessorians of all ages and from all cultures must take time for serious reflection on the meaning of the word spirit and its derivatives, spiritual and spirituality. We must take these words and wrestle with them, examine their nuances and determine their many meanings.\(^{135}\)

However, she indicates that ‘spirit’ itself is virtually undefinable, “While it manifests itself in a person’s mental and physical activities, the spirit itself cannot be seen, heard, touched, analysed or proven”. This does not apply to ‘spirituality’, as she offers a range of definitions from different authors.\(^{136}\) Though Wolf does offer one meaning of “spirit in man”, it is only to differentiate it from ‘soul’.

Soul is a psychological organism set between the world of the senses and the world of the spirit ... Spirit in man ... is the point of his communion with the universal spirit which rules and penetrates the whole universe. This is the point of human transcendence, the point at which the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the many and the One meet and touch.\(^{137}\)

Definition of ‘the human spirit’ are offered by Bailin, Phenix, and Myers, all in terms of ‘transcendence’, by Cousins as “the inner dimension of the person” and by Oladélé as a divine gift.\(^{138}\) Though, occasionally, an undefined reference is made to ‘spirit’ as deity, usually with reference to the Holy Spirit\(^{139}\) or as some, largely unspecified, cosmic force,\(^{140}\) ‘spirit’ is treated almost exclusively as an aspect of the human person.\(^{141}\)

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However, "It seems there are as many attempts to define spirituality [and it is equally true for 'spiritual'] as there are articles on the subject." In fact there are more, as no two writers agree and many offer multiple definitions. These definitions can be differentiated along a number of dimensions:
1. locus within and / or beyond the human person;
2. moral quality;
3. inclusivity of children;
4. source or ætiology.

SPIRITUALITY’S LOCUS WITHIN AND / OR BEYOND THE HUMAN PERSON
Definitions of spirituality fall into four basic categories based on where the concept has its locus, and combinations of those four. These categories can be designated ‘intrapersonal’, indicating spirituality endogenous to the human person; ‘interpersonal’, indicating that its locus lies in relationship between people; ‘impersonal’, indicating connectedness to a separately existing force or presence which is not personalised; and ‘theopersonal’, indicating spirituality centred in relationship with a being with characteristics of a personal deity. It should be noted that some authors offer alternative definitions in different categories.

Intrapersonal definitions
A definition is ‘intrapersonal’ if it describes spirituality as a characteristic of the human person without any external reference. Spirituality is, or occurs, within the person and explicitly does not involve an encounter with any other person or existent extrinsic phenomenon. It may be stimulated by the external world but remains an entirely internal process. This approach reflects the transformation to which Wright refers: "Since the Enlightenment the language of spirituality has shifted its point of reference from the divine to the human: anthropology came to replace theology as the

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143 Henceforth, the term ‘definition’ will be used to include formal definitions, and statements or descriptions which perform the same function, or are implied by descriptions of spiritual development.
fundamental locus of spirit." Retreat from the numinous has not led to a concomitant consistency in definition. The 49 intrapersonal definitions and descriptions sampled (see Appendix 3) used about 120 separate descriptors of spirituality, the imprecise count reflecting possible of alternative decisions when grouping terms like ‘sacrificial love’ and ‘love’. Spirituality is most often described as a capacity, but also awareness, “a due sense”, experience, feeling and predisposition. A few definitions have directly to do with, or have strong overtones of, religion or religiosity, such as ‘religious beliefs, ‘purification of the heart’, ‘personal piety’, ‘faith’, and ‘religious experience’, though others specifically deny this connection.

The extraordinary diversity reflects definition by varying inconsistent lists of indicative characteristics. Only one concept that was not a composite was used in more than 20% of cases: five uses of some form of the term ‘transcendence’, and six using the word ‘beyond’ to express the same idea. Only one provided any sense of that to which one transcends; what lies ‘beyond’, and that was merely “what we do not yet understand”. More common was a composite concept around values / ethics with six references to ‘values’, and two to ‘moral’, and many to individual moral qualities: ‘love’ (6), ‘compassion’, ‘courage (to do what is right)’, ‘goodness’, ‘responsibility’ (2 each), and ‘discipline’, ‘forgiveness’, ‘fortitude’, ‘generosity’, ‘gentleness’, ‘gratitude’, ‘honesty’, ‘humility’, ‘justice’, ‘patience’, ‘peace’, ‘purity of heart’, ‘tolerance’, ‘truth’, etc. There were also relatively frequent references to a sense of special understanding or level of awareness: ‘insight’ (5), ‘self-knowledge’ / -perception’ / -consciousness’ / -understanding’, ‘depth’, and ‘higher consciousness’ (2 each), ‘breadth of outlook’, ‘ecstasy’, ‘golden moments’, ‘unity with humanity’, ‘unity with the universe’. Other concepts appearing in more than 10% of cases were: ‘wonder’ (7), sometimes connected with ‘awe’; ‘questioning’ (including ‘wondering about’) (5); ‘beliefs’; and ‘creativity’ (4 each). There was a further list of more than eighty seldom mentioned characteristics which often overlapped or may have been trying to express similar ideas. It is only


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when the whole list is displayed that the level of mystification becomes evident. Either spirituality means everything, or its meaning is largely idiosyncratic.

While it may be cogently argued that certain of these characteristics are constitutive elements of human spirituality, to see them as determinative of the nature of spirituality creates a number of problems:

- Spirituality is identified with humanity and the possibility of non-human spirituality is excluded. Spirituality without ‘the Great Spirit’, the Holy Spirit, evil spirits, ancestral spirits, community spirit, team spirit, and even animal spirits is robbed of important layers of meaning.\textsuperscript{147}

- A second problem pertains to list definitions. The basis for inclusion in each such catalogue is unclear. For instance, Bailin says with respect to Beck:\textsuperscript{148}

  ...these traits describe a nice person, the kind of person we would probably all like to be with. Thus, it is difficult to object to an educational enterprise directed toward the formation of such nice individuals. Yet there are questions which can be asked. Why choose these particular traits? What is the basis for picking out just these? It is possible to say about any one of the traits that it is not positive in all circumstances, that there are occasions when it is best not to be detached but to challenge. Moreover, there are notorious philosophical problems in attempting to specify a set or ‘bag’ of virtues. There is always the possibility that such virtues are tied to the ethos of a society or some segment

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{147} Wink argues that even Satan is an essential aspect of healthy spirituality. [Wink, W. (1986). \textit{Unmasking the powers: The invisible forces that determine human existence}. Philadelphia: Fortress, pp.9-11.]

thereof, a thesis which has been argued by many, including Marxist and feminist theorists.\textsuperscript{149}

One may also ask why characteristics like ‘interpersonal affection’, ‘self-sacrifice’, ‘curiosity’, ‘playfulness’ and, perhaps, even ‘fear’ are not considered constitutive elements of human spirituality by any of the definitions cited.

- Generally, most writers who adopt this focus exemplify Western dualism of body and spirit with its negative connotations for appreciation of the body.\textsuperscript{150} By implying that ‘spirituality’ is the truly human element, and excluding physical characteristics from it, spirituality becomes a genie confined inside a baser container.\textsuperscript{151} There is little consideration of the possibility that spirit is incarnate, inseparable from, and expressed through, a person’s physicality.\textsuperscript{152} Humans are just as distinctive for full bipedalism, the opposable thumb, the size of one gender’s mammary glands, wearing clothes, an obsession with bodily form and adornment, and certain diseases, as they are for the listed cognitive-affective characteristics. Yet such physical distinctives are ignored as irrelevant to human spirituality.

- It is difficult to identify any human characteristic which is not evident in other animals to some degree. What is distinctive may simply be a matter of degree, as in problem solving, or of co-occurrence of characteristics, as in language and self-awareness. If so, there is a consequent question as to what degree of a characteristic, or which collection of characteristics, is capable of, and required for, generating spirituality. With respect to the characteristics in these definitions, some animals may be spiritual (higher anthropoids and cetaceans come to mind), and some humans fall short of it (such as the retarded or brain damaged). This is surely not what is intended.

- Similarly, by linking spirituality to what the writers see as humanity’s ‘higher’ or most attractive qualities, some writers intrudes a presumptive evaluative element.


\textsuperscript{150} Cf. Clinebell, H. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}


One might equally say that what is distinctively human is also personal fragmentation and confusion, bestiality, wilful destruction, hatred and denial of relationship, yet such characteristics are not seen as spiritually relevant.\textsuperscript{153}

Haynes criticisms are pertinent to intrapersonal definitions:

But what if we define spirituality in ways that are neither sectarian nor religious? Why not simply assert that by spiritual we mean the life of the mind and emotions, a meaning entirely removed from any conception of the soul or the transcendent?

There are at least three problems with this approach. First, no matter how thorough the attempt to separate the spiritual from the religious, many religious people will still find the terms inseparable and will continue to see schools as usurping the prerogative of the family and the religious community...

Second, removing the transcendent and the soul from the word spiritual may render the term meaningless for many who advocate a place for spiritual development in public education...

And third, if spiritual becomes synonymous with intellectual or emotional, then why use the term at all?\textsuperscript{154}

Interpersonal definitions

Interpersonal definitions see spirituality as occurring between people. Rarely found alone, they do appear in combination with other categories. The most explicit advocacy of this approach in ed-care is by Hull and even then it is qualified as “an aspect” of spirituality.

This essence of the ‘communality’ of spirituality is explored in the work of Hull who rejects some of the more conventional understandings, such as spirituality being the “cultivation of the inward, ... the antithesis of materialism, ... and to be found in the ‘beautiful’ ” (Hull, 1995, p. 131). Instead he argues that “spirituality exists not inside people but between them” (op. cit.) ... Hull expanded on this to illustrate that spiritual development occurs in relationships, both positive and painful, and spiritual development in education ought to focus on this communal and public side of human nature.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{153} Hill’s emphasis on spirituality as, “...distinctively human attributes about which general agreement might reasonably be hoped for”, though not intrapersonal, is open to the last two criticisms. [Hill, B. V. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.7,14 and Hill, B. V. (1989). Spiritual development in the Education Reform Act: A source of acrimony, apathy or accord. \textit{British Journal of Educational Studies, XXXVII} (2), 169-182, pp.170-171.] The question of the moral assumptions of definitions of spirituality is an important issue addressed later.


\textsuperscript{155} Kendall, S. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.64.
Elsewhere the relational nature of the definition has to be inferred: "Bradford (1995) in suggesting that human spirituality consists of being loved, feeling secure, responding in wonder, being affirmed and sharing together, centres on the positive impact of the relationship on the person. Yet, surely spirituality is reciprocal and must also include loving, providing security and affirming."  

If spirituality occurs in relationship between people, it is important to specify an ontological basis for the assumption that people together generate a class of phenomena which is not otherwise encountered. These isolated examples do not allow that. They serve as a corrective to excessive individualism, but it is hard to ignore consistent reports of the importance of solitude in generating experiences identified by people as their encounters with the spiritual.  

**Impersonal definitions**

Many definitions are influenced by concepts which depersonalise deity to an immanent entity, force or consciousness. Influential in this has been Steiner, whose thought is reflected in the Waldorf schools, in some strands of the Montessori movement and in aspects of ‘holistic education’. The ‘entity’ is described in terms such as: being, benevolent universal non-physical power, design, force, God-force, the Infinite, oneness, operative intellect, (overarching) reality, spirit, or alternatively, “beckoning transcendent truth and rightness”, “the sacred, mystical or numinous”, “the transpersonal, transcendent, mystical or numinous”, and “the Beyond”. The approach may

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157 E.g., Hay, D. (1982), *op. cit.*, p.145,


160 Primarily expressed in journals such as *Holistic Education Review*.

best be expressed by Davis, noting that he uses ‘religious experience’ as a synonym for spirituality:

[Religious] experiences involve at least one of those ‘other-worldly’ factors which is missing in quasi-religions such as Marxism and humanism: the sense of the presence or activity of a non-physical holy being or power; apprehension of an ‘ultimate reality’ beyond the mundane world of physical bodies, physical processes and narrow centres of consciousness; and the sense of achievement of (or being on one’s way to) man’s sumnum bonum, an ultimate bliss, liberation, salvation, or ‘true self’ which is not attainable through the things of ‘this world’.162

There is no real consistency in depiction of this ‘other’; no sense of a consistent common ontology underlying the definitions. The words may even disguise an implicit assumption that this ‘reality’ is actually a personal, albeit unrecognised, God. For instance, Potaka’s use of ‘God-force’ is consistent with the impersonal depiction of spirituality used in the rest of her amazing address:

Welcome to the gallery of Taha Wairua or the dimension of spirituality. Taha Wairua is: The timeless twinkle of celestial lace in a crystal-crisp night sky, the warm open smile of an innocent child, the calm caring touch of a faithful friend, the denial of pleasures to give to another, and the protection of basic principles for the families of Nature and Human-Kind. Taha Wairua is the unforgettable cry of birth, the magical moment of natural death and the sobering hallowed anguish from crucified Humanity. Everyone has some Taha Wairua, but rarely is it used all day and every day. Some people deny its existence and endure a life-time of spiritual emptiness. Taha Wairua is the God-force that transcends all man made boundaries.163

Yet Potaka has based the programs of the Awhina Whanau preschools on both Christian and Maori theologies which assume personal deities. Similarly, Griffiths refers to the ‘universal spirit’, but also to ‘the One’.164

Most of these definitions relate spirituality to an experience. Of this it is said, “The experience when it comes has always been quite different from any other type of

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163 This is an extract from the transcript of an address of welcome when I visited the Awhina Whanau Early Childhood Program in Te Puke, New Zealand delivered by its Director, Hine Potaka, OBE. The original text is far longer and one of the most powerful and poetic affirmations of the spiritual nature of existence I have discovered. It has never been published.  
experience they have ever had".\textsuperscript{165} "It may be experienced as special moments ... It is an experience of awe and wonder...",\textsuperscript{166} "...a life-long process of encountering, responding to, and developing insight from [these experiences]".\textsuperscript{167} But it is always implied, and sometimes stated, that 'spirituality' is active outside personal experience, as exemplified by Potaka's address. It is also said: "It's what makes a tree grow and what makes a bird sing. What makes a human smile. Spirituality has its own force and has its own being, something you can't see",\textsuperscript{168} and "...it animates all of life".\textsuperscript{169}

Some definitions lack the sense of a single entity, but substitute external impersonal phenomena, for example, "our earth and its creatures", "creation ... the forest ... the heavens ... cloud formations".\textsuperscript{170}

\textit{Theo-personal definitions}

In contrast to its definition as 'inner feelings and beliefs', the UK Department of Education and Science (DES) offers a second definition which is forcibly theistic: "The spiritual area is concerned with everything in human knowledge or experience that is connected with or derives from a sense of God or Gods." In fact, "Spiritual is a meaningless adjective for the atheist and of dubious use to the agnostic."\textsuperscript{171} Most theopersonal definitions, which identify spirituality as encounter with a personal divinity, are written from a Christian perspective, expressing in various ways the concept of spirituality as relationship with the Holy Spirit. Dawn is explicit: "...the world encompassing and life-transforming action of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ in the life of a person or community, and her / his / their experience of and response to that action of God."\textsuperscript{172} Similar ideas are expressed by \textit{The Oxford dictionary of the

\textsuperscript{165} Hardy, A. (1979), \textit{op. cit.}, p.1.
\textsuperscript{166} Gang, P. S., Lynn, N. M. & Maver, D. J. (1992), \textit{op. cit.}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{167} Beesley, M. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.70.
\textsuperscript{168} Burns, M. C. (1991), \textit{op. cit.}, p.8
\textsuperscript{170} Fitzpatrick, J. G. (1991), \textit{op. cit.}, p.8; Gang, P. S., Lynn, N. M. & Maver, D. J. (1992), \textit{op. cit.}, p.9
\textsuperscript{172} Dawn, M. J. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.76.
Christian church: "...exercises and beliefs which individuals or groups have with regard to their personal relationships with God", 173 and by Merton:

...the spiritual man (pneumatikos) is one whose whole life, in all its aspects and all its activities, has been spiritualised by the action of the Holy Spirit, whether through the sacraments or by personal and interior inspirations ... The spiritual man is one who, "whether he eats or drinks or whatever else he does, does all for the glory of God." 174

One variation relies heavily on a strand of NT usage which identifies spirituality with 'piety' or 'Godliness'. Banks uses spirituality, "...to refer to the character and quality of our life with God, among fellow-Christians and in the world". 175

For secular ed-care, the obvious problem with such definitions is their exclusion of those who do not share a particular religious perspective. Similarly narrow, though for different reasons, are indigenous definitions which necessarily exclude those who do not share their ethno-cultural background. 176

Of those definitions which are not Christian, Burke offers, "an internal, albeit universal, felt sense of God" without doctrinal beliefs, 177 and Bradford a formulation described as "totally multicultural and multifaith in its applicability” consisting of both:

- a healthy attitude towards and a positive pattern of engagement
  - with ourselves and our family;
  - with our God and our faith community; and
  - with our day-to-day activities and involvement with others in the wider world;

and “some indication of ‘presence’, ‘providence’ or the sense of a companionship of a ‘hidden friend’ ” 178 Such broader and more apparently inclusive definitions are problematic because they postulate a ‘God’, but if such an entity exists, it will have

175 Banks, R. (1986), op. cit., p.15.
characteristics which are real and capable of specification. It may wish to be addressed in those doctrinal terms, not as each person deems fit. The alternative is that each person creates a god in their own preferred image to which their spirituality is directed. This is idolatry abstracted from the physical idol. If the nature of the deity doesn’t matter, then ‘God’ is merely a personal construct, and this form of definition is a variant of the intrapersonal.

**Combinations of definitions**

There are a range of different combinations of these types of definition:

- two combine the intra- and inter-personal,\(^{179}\) in both cases by adding ‘relationships’ to a list of what Shire refers to as ‘spiritual virtues’;\(^{180}\)
- one combines the intra- and impersonal referring to human characteristics but indicating that these help people, “reach out towards super-sensible realities”;\(^{181}\)
- Fitzpatrick combines inter-personal and impersonal, referring to, “our sacred connection with all of life”;\(^{182}\)
- Thatcher marries the interpersonal and theopersonal in two definitions referring to, “…that element of personal being which is open to others and to God” and stating “I am a spiritual being because I am constituted ontologically by my Maker to be open to and formed by others as others are open to and formed by me: in being constituted this way I am also open to and open to be formed by God.”\(^{183}\)

More complex combinations are found which meld three of the categories such as Palmer’s fusion of the intra-personal, inter-personal and impersonal\(^{184}\) and the statement

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179 Hill, B. V. (1997), *op. cit.*, p.7; NCC (1993), *op. cit.* Cited by Davies, G. (1998), *op. cit.*, p.124. Hill is deliberately offering a definition intended to be acceptable to as wide a range of the educational community as possible as a basis for dialogue. The definition is open to the earlier criticism of ignoring humanity’s destructive distinctives.


184 “By ‘spiritual’ ... I mean the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our egos - with our own souls, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the mystery of being alive.” [Palmer, P. J. (1998/9), *op. cit.*, p.6.]
about spiritual development from the NCC which combines intra-personal, inter-personal and theo-personal.  

A similar amalgamation is presented by Thatcher, except that the theo-personal is not limited to believers. Spirituality is said to be the "...study and / or the practice of the renewal of individual and communal life, within which the presence and activity of God is discerned." Thatcher also offers a definition which melds the inter-personal, impersonal and theo-personal where spirituality is related to "the ways in which human beings are related to each other, to creation, and to God." A number of definitions combine the intra-personal, impersonal and theo-personal, though sometimes the impersonal and theo-personal are offered as alternatives, "be it a supreme being or a cosmic consciousness", "the ‘ultimate’ or God", or possibilities, "often, but not always, revolves around belief in God."

Only one definition was found to encompasses all four foci. It is by Fisher whose emphasis is spiritual health:

One of the earliest attempts at a definition of spiritual health or well-being was that proposed by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (1975), which suggested that "spiritual well-being is the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community, and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness" (from Ellison, 1983, p. 331). The four relationships are of a person with:

- self
- others
- environment
- something / some-One beyond the human level (Transcendent Other).

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185 [Spiritual development] "... needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and / or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity - with our responses to challenging experiences such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil. It has to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live." [NCC (1993), op. cit., p.124.]


187 ibid.


THE MORAL QUALITY OF SPIRITUALITY

It would appear that the [English] educational policy-makers are committing schools to the delivery of something which has yet to be defined in any meaningful way, and which crudely conflates the moral and the spiritual. Here, ... there seems to be a false syllogism:
   Religion is about morality;
   Religion is about spirituality;
therefore:
   Moral and spiritual development must be inseparable.

Whether or not morality is entailed in spirituality - or vice versa for that matter - is an important issue, as is the way morality and spirituality might be developed through the curriculum. Neither question seems to have received much examination by those most powerfully placed to influence what schools do and don't teach.\textsuperscript{191}

The definitions vary widely as to how they relate spirituality to morality. Most make no direct reference to morality, though a moral element is common in lists of ‘virtues’. Only one specifically differentiates spirituality and morality.\textsuperscript{192} Nineteen represent spirituality as an unqualified ‘good thing’, only three identify the possibility of negative aspects in counterpoint to the positive. Understandably, none treat it as solely negative.

Positive evaluation is expressed in a variety of ways. Ploeger baldly asserts that, “...spirituality ... is a positive concept”,\textsuperscript{193} and Banks directly identifies it with ‘piety’.\textsuperscript{194} Two refer to spirituality as the ‘highest’ aspect of humanity,\textsuperscript{195} one to being authentically human (without using that term).\textsuperscript{196} Other definitions associate spirituality with personal and community ‘renewal’,\textsuperscript{197} with a healthy attitude,\textsuperscript{198} and with, “the most distinctive and desirable capacities of the human person”.\textsuperscript{199} In ten cases the

\textsuperscript{194} Banks, R. (1986), \textit{op. cit.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{196} Myers, B. K. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.61.
\textsuperscript{197} Thatcher, A. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.226.
\textsuperscript{198} Crompton, M. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.41.
\textsuperscript{199} Kent SACRE. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.17.
affirmation is inherent in the ‘distinctively human’ traits listed as aspects of spirituality (See Appendix 3) and in one, a list of unfavourable characteristics is evidence of lack of spirituality.200

Of the three definitions which countenance a darker side to spirituality, Hull asserts that, “spiritual development occurs in relationships, both positive and painful”; Potaka asserts in her poetic style that spirituality is expressed in “the sobering hallowed anguish from crucified Humanity” and the NCC is explicit in associating it, “with our responses to challenging experiences such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil”. But even these examples identify negative elements in what stimulates spirituality, not in the spirituality itself. Painful events may lead to spirituality, but spirituality itself is a positive outcome.

This consistent bias may be an unacknowledged relic of traditional Christian identification of spirituality with the moral influence of the Holy Spirit. It is also a sensible polemic choice. Ed-care authorities and professionals would be unlikely to embrace education for spirituality in their settings were it just as likely to result in destructive behaviour as in constructive. However, human experience, folk tradition and religious doctrine all acknowledge devils and demons, witches and necromancers, possession and oppression by spiritual evil; symbols of the existence and / or experience of the antithesis of the idea of spirituality countenanced in these definitions.201 Crompton says:

It is not suggested that religious and spiritual experiences are always welcome or beneficial. Indeed, the concept of spiritual distress in relation to children seems to receive little attention. However, spiritual experience is by no means all a matter of wonder, love and joy. If spiritual / religious experience can contribute to the well-being of the whole child, it must, by implication, also be involved in abuse and neglect.202

201 Kelsey, M. (1972), op. cit., pp.149-150. Kelsey indicates that, “Human experience bears out this conclusion about the reality of evil. In the first place, literature is filled with examples representing imaginatively how the sensitive person is subject to invasion and attack by this destructive spirit. They are found in the classics from Shakespeare’s Macbeth and Goethe’s Faust to Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Tolkien’s Lord of the Ring. [sic] And in popular narrative the same ideas as Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker expressed in Frankenstein and in Dracula are still giving television viewers the cold shivers.”
and then quotes Bradford:

It is possible for a child or young person to suffer spiritual damage for example by cruelty or violence, from the atmosphere of extreme ugliness and squalor and acute deprivation, or through the influence of damaging ideas (not excluding the possibility of these being through the mass media) which decry the principle of humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Such experiences may result in what might be called ‘spiritual handicap’. 203

The definitional lists could all be restated as their antonyms, as in this reconstruction of Elkind’s statement: Individuals who, in their everyday lives, exemplify the lowest of human qualities such as hatred, vindictiveness, and meanness might also be said to be spiritual - but it will be a quite different quality of spirituality. Crompton suggests ‘fear’, ‘terror’ and ‘despair’ may be outcomes of spiritual experience. Crompton aside, current definitions lack any real sense of the possibility that spirituality itself might be morally bipolar.

THE INCLUSION / EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN FROM SPIRITUALITY
A definition of spirituality need not include children, but when definitions exclude all or some children, the basis of that exclusion needs consideration. Similarly, definitions of spirituality which specifically include children allow insight into how the writer perceives children’s spirituality.

Most definitions are ambiguous about children. Many neither include nor exclude: “Spiritual refers to the universal personal concern for the questions.” 204 Whether others apply to children is indeterminable because of an opacity of expression: “becoming a person in the fullest sense ... [and] this dynamic form ... can be described as a capacity for going out of oneself and beyond oneself; or again, as the capacity for transcending oneself” 205

Those that exclude children do so because, explicitly or implicitly, they define ‘mature’ or ‘optimal’ spirituality. For instance, the editor of Holistic Education Tasmania

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introduces his list of spiritual characteristics thus: “Spirituality in education could promote the following qualities of spiritual maturity.” More often the exclusion is implicit; the stated characteristics are excluded, particularly in the very young, for developmental reasons, for example:

*Breadth of outlook.* Spiritual people take account of a wide range of relevant considerations and thus are able to make wise decisions ... it means that within one’s particular life situation, one should have a sense of context and perspective and be both sensitive to and take account of the range of considerations that bear on one’s thought and behaviour. ...intellectual achievement and physical activity, surmounting suffering and persecution, selfless love, the quest for meaning and for values by which to live. ...the pain-filled struggle with the contradictions between personal life-experience and received, authoritative wisdom. The tendency to make peace rather than war, emphasis on collaborative rather than competitive efforts, and the recognition of common needs experienced by people of every culture and creed. Spirituality is ... the purification of the heart, the cleansing of the ordinary turbid cup of the heart filled with lust, anger, greed, possessiveness, vanity, and egoistic consciousness.

The general tenor is that spirituality is to gain or achieve; something children lack but will attain given the right opportunities. One can see the polemic advantage of this assumption about spirituality, but it is nevertheless prohibitive of childhood spirituality. It resonates with some streams within Christianity which see ‘faith’ as requiring a certain level of maturity, particularly of intellect.

Those few definitions which quite explicitly include children are worthy of individual consideration. Newby represents a ‘secular’ concept of spirituality as, “...identified

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with the development of personal identity”, a process which children undergo rather than a characteristic they have. Similarly, Gang, Lynn & Mavor suggest it is a life-long evolution, though stimulated by special moments. Crompton quotes a welfare worker with seemingly parallel ideas who worries about children given no chance to develop spirituality because they have no source of ‘golden moments’. Bradford also speaks in process terms: “...becoming in the sense of being ‘in process’: open to growth, open to response, open to renewal and open to hope.” He incorporates children by making spirituality something one receives or a response, and by recognising what is to the adult a ‘presence’ may be a ‘hidden friend’ to the child.

Two definitions do identify children as possessing characteristics indicative of spirituality. The NCC argue that children would suffer considerable detriment were they to lack certain spiritual characteristics. Their choices indicating how broad a range of common human characteristics are corralled within the NCC’s understanding of spirituality:

Without curiosity, without the inclination to question, and without the exercise of imagination, insight and intuition, young people would lack the motivation to learn, and their intellectual development would be impaired. Deprived of self understanding and, potentially of the ability to understand others, they may experience difficulty in co-existing with neighbours and colleagues to the detriment of their social development. Were they not able to be moved by feelings of awe and wonder at the beauty of the world we live in, or the power of artists, musicians and writers to manipulate space, sound and language, they would live in an inner spiritual and cultural desert.

Lovecky identifies a cocktail of precocity by which gifted children demonstrate spirituality: “...spiritual sensitivity encompasses precocious questioning, unusual types of questions asked at an early age, and reported experiences of transcendent moments. It also encompasses areas of faith and compassion.”

212 NCC (1993), op. cit., p.3.
214 Crompton, M. (1999), op. cit., p.82.
215 NCC (1993), op. cit., p.3.
Dawn and Pattell-Gray stand in counterpoint. The former, writing from a Christian perspective depicts spirituality as an invitation to join what one currently stands outside. The latter represents it from an Aboriginal standpoint as something one is part of from birth as a matter of cultural identity.\textsuperscript{217}

If spirituality is to be represented as developmental, its definition must be inclusive of children of all ages and more aligned with those which recognise a process as being involved.

\textbf{THE SOURCE OR \AE TIOLOGY OF SPIRITU ALITY}

Most definitions do not address the origin of spirituality, and some treat it as a social construction rather than an actuality.\textsuperscript{218} Among those who approach questions of source, similar numbers attribute spirituality to environmental influence as see it as arising outside the mundane scheme of cause and effect. Among the former it is commonly assumed that spirituality can be inculcated by education,\textsuperscript{219} which is unsurprising given the bias to educators providing the definitions. It is also said to be a consequence of, or at least shaped by, general experience.\textsuperscript{220} Sometimes it is more specifically related to contemplation of the natural world,\textsuperscript{221} or to relationships.\textsuperscript{222} The latter represent the source of spirituality in two ways: as an endogenous, sometimes biological, derivative of some ‘deep’ or ‘high’ level of the person, or the consequence of an internally driven quest,\textsuperscript{223} or as \textit{sui generis}, a transcendent cosmological reality which impacts upon humans.\textsuperscript{224} Occasionally, this reality is a personal deity.\textsuperscript{225}

\begin{footnotesize}


\textsuperscript{221} Galycan, B. C. (1989), \textit{op. cit.}, p.8.


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\end{footnotesize}
REFLECTION ON THE DEFINITIONS

It is extremely difficult to find a consistent theme or set of alternative themes amongst the definitions. While there is a widespread apprehension that there is a set of human characteristics indicative of spirituality, no agreement exists as to the particular characteristics involved. In fact, the definitions contradict each other. While some provide characteristics that emphasise the mundane, others stress profound or mysterious human traits, and yet others define in terms of the supra-mundane. A similar variety of positions is found with respect to the source of those characteristics. Some represent spirituality as unequivocally a positive moral force, a few deny any relationship or countenance a darker side to spirituality. These subgroups demonstrate little internal consistency in representing their particular orientations. There is ample evidence of the influence of underlying ideologies shaping these definitions, but also of idiosyncratic variations on some basic ideologies. One has to sympathise with writers cited earlier who have been frustrated by definitional imprecision.

It is just as frustrating to apply these definitions to children. For some, spirituality lies beyond the reach of the young, being very much an attribute of the mature reflective person of liberal sentiment. While others specify or allow the inclusion of children, they vary widely as to what such inclusion implies.

The literature suggests two conclusions for this dissertation. First, a pre-emptive attempt to define spirituality is to be avoided. A genuine conceptual definition needs careful and comprehensive consideration of the world view of which it is an expression. Second, even that will not automatically clarify developmental issues. A definition which is developmental has to be stated in the context of a comprehensive approach to human development.

THE ONTOLOGY OF ‘SPIRITUALITY’

Constructing a debate around the understanding of spirituality is somewhat akin to attempting to take the bull by the horns, in that it invites the exacerbation of conflict as one party, with a particular ideological stance, rises to the challenge of

another party. In effect the analogy would seem to be more like taking the bulls by the horns with the likely outcome of being ravaged by both combatants.\textsuperscript{226}

Part of this contentiousness arises from addressing outcomes through policy development without consideration of the unstated and antagonistic world views which provide the context of the policy: “One of the criticisms of the SCAA approach was that it had no theological basis and thus ignored the very foundations on which spiritual development had to occur. How can you carry out spiritual education if you have no identifiable ends to which it leads.”\textsuperscript{227} The difficult is recognised by Kent SACRE which cogently argues:

...There are different religious and non-religious views about “what it is for a human being to flourish” and so different views about:

1. human nature and what it means to be a person
2. ways to develop the human person
3. the goal of human development.

These different views about the nature of humanity are associated with different views about the nature of reality and whether, for example, they are or are not based on a belief in God.\textsuperscript{228}

The literature is not transparent in revealing how conclusions follow from assumed cosmologies, even when the author identifies their metaphysical stance: “…Wright identifies the lack of any hermeneutical underpinning in policy making.”\textsuperscript{229} The contending camps represent such divergent understandings of reality,\textsuperscript{230} and that reality is so potentially momentous, that such hermeneutical self-analysis would be a major contribution to the debate.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{227} Erricker, C. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.57.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Kent SACRE. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.17-18.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Erricker, C. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.53.
\item \textsuperscript{230} “Some writers have mistakenly suggested that the different spiritual traditions and the various views they hold about spiritual development are all, at their heart, really saying the same thing, i.e. they are all seeking the peak of the same mountain but by pursuing different routes. A careful examination of different spiritual traditions will indicate that this is not the case. For example, some traditions claim that a conscious relationship with God is central and essential to gaining full spiritual maturity, whilst others deny the existence of God. Spiritual traditions do often have much in common but they do have distinctive features. [Kent SACRE. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.18.]”
\end{itemize}
The divergence is more stark in the counselling literature. Zinnbauer & Pargament, in an article which treats religion and spirituality as cognate phenomena, identify four incompatible orientations “based on their differing ontological assumptions”: the rejectionist; the constructivist; the pluralist; and the exclusivist. The “most notorious” rejectionist orientation “reduces religion to the level of a psychological defence or disturbance”, a position one sees expressed about religion in the ed-care literature, but not about spirituality itself. The other three positions do have parallels but they are not exact. The ‘constructivist’ orientation assumes that, “Absolute reality does not exist ‘out there’ to be found or discovered but is constructed by humans in their interactions, interpretations, and strivings to understand information, contexts, situations, and other humans.” While constructivist elements are prevalent in one group of writings about children’s spirituality, it is not the principal focus. Because the group concentrate on the material character of the phenomena, the term ‘Naturalistic’ will be preferred in this dissertation. The ‘pluralist’ orientation, “recognises the existence of a religious or spiritual absolute reality but allows for multiple interpretations and paths towards it.” The counselling literature is less kaleidoscopic than that dealt with here and to use ‘pluralist’ would ignore the fact that much of this literature does take a distinct stance of its own, while acknowledging the validity of some alternatives. In an attempt to reflect its philosophical precursors it is termed ‘Romantic’. The ‘exclusivist’ is consistent with what is found in the some literature about children’s spirituality but the term fails to capture the actual character of the orientation. ‘Theistic’ is a better term to describe, a fundamental belief in the ontological reality of a religious or spiritual dimension of existence. Included in this orientation are assertions such as God exists, spiritual experiences influence human behaviour, absolute values exist and are grounded in scripture or religious texts.

233 Ibid, p.166.
The three positions identified differ from Wright’s four\textsuperscript{236} not because of a dispute with his classification but because they have a different basis. Wright classes positions according to ‘allegiance’ or ‘adherence’, allowing him to differentiate ‘religious’ from ‘theological’. The categories used in this dissertation follow Zinnbauer & Pargament in focussing on the assumed nature of the transcendent. The existence of three discordant ontologies, the Naturalistic, the Romantic and the Theistic, poses a difficulty recognised by Chater and White\textsuperscript{237} even though they also classify the ontologies differently. It is exacerbated by the imprecision of much writing about spirituality. The same writer may even seem to reflect different approaches at different times.

Because the approaches are radically contradictory, an attempted fusion must fail to truly represent all. A legitimate model of spiritual development cannot avoid ideological presuppositions. However, it must be crafted in such a way as to recognise the force of the alternatives. Any model will have to be concordant with one fundamental presupposed ontology.

It seems more likely that the route to spiritual development will depend, at least in part, on the perceived aims and purpose of an individual’s particular understanding of spirituality. In other words, spirituality can only be developed by buying into one of those cognitive understandings - that is, a particular belief system or worldview.\textsuperscript{238}

The question then becomes what place it then allows features of alternatives. As Starkings says:

The challenge for anyone who wishes to form a view of the nature of spirituality that is sufficient for the comprehensive purposes of a national education system is ... to draw such a map of spirituality’s overall landscape as may relate spirituality’s distinctively religious forms to its broader and secular manifestations.\textsuperscript{239}

As this dissertation is focussed on developing an approach consistent with the Judæo-Christian Scriptures, theistic approaches will be emphasised but some comment needs to be made about the other ontologies represented in the literature.


\textsuperscript{238} Watson, J. (2000), \textit{op. cit.}, p.96.

THE NATURALISTIC APPROACH

There are two distinct orientations amongst those who treat spirituality in naturalistic terms. The first articulates a concept of spirituality consistent with optimistic humanism. Its advocates presume a philosophy which has no place for any element of the supernatural. To the basic assumption that humanity is the measure and limit of all things are added the claims that spirituality is no more than a term for the best qualities of people, and that these ideal qualities can be acquired by a liberal education or inner reflection.

A key feature of this collective tradition is that of the primacy, within philosophical debate, of the individual self as a thinking being: cogito ergo sum, and in an ideal state I do so autonomously, self-sufficiently and free from external constraint. Into this notion of personhood is inserted the discourse of spirituality. It is by turning inwards, by exploring the hidden depths of the self, that the individual encounters his or her essential nature, appropriates an understanding of ultimate meaning and truth, and thus confronts the heart of existence as a spiritual being. As a result the spiritual education of the whole child is equated with the expansion of the self-awareness of the individual, the illumination and revelation of an esoteric depth of personal experience that previously lay hidden. Thus we find a recent educational consultation addressing the thesis that “education in spiritual growth is that which promotes apprehension of ultimate reality through fostering higher forms of human consciousness.”

The ideological intent is underscored by Wright:

Retaining the image of the disengaged and autonomous self, [the equation of spirituality with the esoteric depth of human consciousness] the task was to protect the distinctiveness of humanity from the rationalisation and reification of science by affirming a spiritual depth within humanity that transcends such reductionist intrusions ... It is in this dual movement, of the affirmation of the isolated self and the protection of its essential distinctiveness in the face of reductive rationalism, that the contemporary debate regarding spirituality functions. Over against a rationalistic hermeneutic of suspicion, humanity, it is argued, must rediscover a hermeneutic of faith: faith, that is, in the transcendental spiritual depth of the individual self. This is achieved by supplementation of the rational, science and objective with the creative, aesthetic and subjective.

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240 E.g., British Humanist Association (1993), op. cit.
The second orientation is more pragmatic than ideological. Recognising reports of experiences which have been considered beyond the realm of scientific research,\textsuperscript{243} they wish to bring spirituality within the ambit of naturalistic science.\textsuperscript{244} They assume spirituality is based in evolutionary biology,\textsuperscript{245} even if their methodology owes more to phenomenology than to empiricism.

It is beyond the scope of this investigation to offer a critique of humanism or naturalism; such critiques can be found elsewhere.\textsuperscript{246} Watson's paper offers a trenchant criticism of the way these approaches in spiritual education, have become orthodoxies as rigid as traditional religious approaches are claimed to be.\textsuperscript{247} Myers attacks the "culture of excessive individualism" and "the narcissistic flight from social engagement" which she sees as a consequence of spirituality being seen as something an individual gains through exercises directed, "...to jump start an inner life and further develop the spiritual dimension of that life".\textsuperscript{248} The same criticisms can, of course, be made of some religious concepts of spirituality which can range from requirements for unquestioning compliance to individual mystical withdrawal.

Where the naturalistic approaches are uniquely open to criticism is in their demeaning trivialisation of the phenomena of spiritual experience, while claiming the contrary. Some writers ignore what people believe they are encountering, representing spirituality as a social construct and focussing entirely on personal characteristics and virtues. Others take Hardy's position: "For me the 'personal God' is not a person out there but has none the less an equally important personal reality of a psychological nature."\textsuperscript{249} However, people's reports of spiritual encounters show that they identify the phenomena as existing independent of the self, not as psychological, existing only in the mind. They are quite specific about the external locus, the sense that they were

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{243} Priestley, J. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.168.
\item \textsuperscript{245} Hemming, J. (1970), \textit{op. cit.}, p.35.
\item \textsuperscript{246} E.g., Guiness, O. (1973). \textit{The dust of death}. Downers Grove: IVP.
\item \textsuperscript{247} Watson, J. (2000), \textit{op. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{248} Myers, B. K. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.88.
\item \textsuperscript{249} Hardy, A. (1979), \textit{op. cit.}, p.3.
\end{thebibliography
encountering an actuality, and often that the actuality connected with them in a personal way. For instance, Crompton reports a dying child’s vivid description of meeting Christ in taking communion, where he had “a really good talk to Him” and “He always answered me back”.\(^{250}\) Others also report such a sense of conversation,\(^{251}\) or loving and being loved,\(^ {252}\) feeling secure,\(^ {253}\) being addressed,\(^ {254}\) feeling a physical touch,\(^ {255}\) sensing a ‘presence’,\(^ {256}\) or being invaded.\(^ {257}\) The reality of this encounter is expressed: as a certainty, and one that brought “intense delight”; as a “curious thrill”; as “...terror, so much that I could not call out or move”; as an awakened spirit of love for others; as “a ‘flash’ of happiness” and “a glow of contented feeling”; or as fear, or a lack of fear while in danger.\(^ {258}\) It is hard to reconcile the accounts of the children Coles interviewed with the idea that the encounter was something each individually imagined.\(^ {259}\)

Cavalletti summarises a career of sharing such experiences with young children in these terms:

The experience [of young children] just described is remarkable in its complexity, the nature of which is affective, cognitive and moral: the certitude of a presence, a presence of love which attracts with a great force of ‘seduction,’ but not more than the child was ‘inclined toward and had decided to follow’; therefore a presence that does not impose but appears to await a response.\(^ {260}\)

\(^{251}\) “...Talking to someone who was ‘there’.” Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., p.69.
\(^{253}\) “I felt very strongly that a power in which I could be wholly confident was acting for and around me...” Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., p.75; “...there was somebody to assist me.” Hay, D. (1982), op. cit., p.137
\(^{254}\) “...Someone or something said to me: ‘That is beautiful’, and immediately the whole scene lit up...” Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., p.39.
\(^{255}\) “I felt a hand firmly but gently on my left arm just above the elbow...” ibid, p.43.
\(^{256}\) “...This evil force or presence”; “...a sweet, cool presence in and around me”; “...a ‘presence’ whose hand I should like to grasp in affection and gratitude”. ibid, pp.63, 67, 91, 152.
\(^{257}\) “...A sense of complete well-being, which invaded my consciousness from the outside.” ibid, p.91.
It is not that Naturalists fail to recognise this sense that the phenomena represent reality. Hay says, "There is not much doubt that people are telling us about something that is real in their experience, even if it has extraordinary features", even "more ‘real’ than everyday reality". However, it is only accepted as phenomenologically real, there is no assumption of ontological reality. If the naturalistic position is more than a working hypothesis, and it is certainly widely treated as such, respondents reporting experiences of transcendent realities are deluded, as are all those who for millennia have reported encountering extra-personal spiritual realities. This is incongruent with any claim that spirituality represents a superior level of human cognition or affect. The naturalistic approach has yet to clarify how, if there is no transcendental reality to encounter, so prevalent a delusional state is a worthy goal for a system of ed-care.

THE ROMANTIC APPROACH

Elements of many different cosmologies underlie what I term the ‘romantic approach’, although all share an orientation towards phenomenalism and individualism:

1. There is something of classical nature mysticism with its idea of ‘connectedness’ to an entity which either is, or is expressive of, the natural world. This is most explicit in eco-spirituality where awe in the presence of nature is married to the moral demand to protect.

2. There is an element suggestive of theosophical discourse emphasising religious affect without doctrine, except for the existence of an otherwise uncharacterised benevolent transcendent entity. The particular colour this gives is demonstrated by comparison of what is derived from the work of Maria Montessori by Wolf’s romanticism and Cavalletti’s Catholic catechetical perspective.

3. The influence of ‘New Age’ thinking can also be recognised though more often in popular magazines and books than in the academic literature. Hill says:

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Another recent trend has emerged in ‘New Age’ writings. Some thinkers argue that tradition religions have had their day, and the need at this time is to emphasise the inner resources of human beings. Shirley McLaine has been widely quoted as saying that we are potentially gods. Linked with this optimism is talk about ‘spirituality’ as something to be fostered through self-development exercises.\(^{268}\)

As Warren Nord (1995) has pointed out, many in the New Age movement proclaim a spirituality that is meant to transcend particular religions. Though New Age thinking is highly eclectic and diverse, it emphasises a holistic approach to life and a belief that a higher self can be awakened within each person. In other words, New Age spirituality is itself a worldview ... Those who propose that public schools address spirituality by taking a holistic approach to education or by encouraging students to seek their higher selves must expect to have their ideas identified with this way of thinking. - and to be challenged for promoting one religious view over others.\(^{269}\)

This could almost stand as a statement on the whole romantic position. There is a sense that they offer an alternative which is ‘superior’ to individual religious systems because of its phenomenological inclusiveness of all beliefs, or rather ontological exclusion of all. Erricker quotes Thatcher’s comment: “...in treating religions as equal or religion as a universal feature of existence, the stipulation that no religion is absolute is as absolute as the stipulation that any religion is absolute”\(^{270}\) That this constitutes a higher level of religious consciousness is moot.

The individual stances within this approach are both ‘eclectic and diverse’, yet one can discern some common ontological assumptions. These consist of the benevolence of the impersonal Immanence, an interconnectedness of all elements of the cosmos, and that developing awareness of one’s own relation to the whole awakens a ‘higher self’.

A concomitant of romantic tolerance is that spirituality becomes a matter of individual choice: “...spirituality, ‘has to do with the universal search for individual identity’, a statement at odds with most theological, anthropological, historical and psychological understanding but consonant with neo-conservative notions of the primacy of the


individual.” Whether such individualism is neo-conservative is less important than its disregard of the community and cultural. For instance, Pridmore states that:

...in the Old Testament ... the child is not generally thought of in isolation from the family to which he belongs. The child belongs to his father’s house, to the family, to the tribe. His membership of these groups ... is not merely that by birth as an individual he is attached to this or that family. His ‘belonging’ is of far more organic a nature. The closeness of the overriding unity that holds these social groups together is such that the child is, as it were, submerged or hidden within the family.272

Myers notes the hazard involved:

Any use of the term spirituality implies that there is something beyond the individual; yet, in today’s western culture spirituality is often viewed as individualistic, as a way which individuals can privately draw strength in isolation from ‘otherness.’ This conceptualisation of a spirituality which exists outside of community is dangerous.273

Because of its diversity, and of phenomenology’s resistance to questions assuming any objective concept of truth, the romantic approach is the least open to a scrutiny of its underlying ontology.

“Truth within spirituality will then be detected less by argument and proof and more by symbol, story, parable, poem, ‘allegory’ sound, gesture, movement or form” (Webster, 1990, p. 357; Cf. Starkings, 1993; Harris, 1988). Inherent within this framework is a distinction between the public, object truths of science and the private, subjective truths of the aesthetic and spiritual realms. This “had the effect of giving rise to a romantic idealism where the human spirit could range at will, uncontrolled by scientific evidence or knowledge” (Torrance, 1980, p. 27)274

One may be critical of the approach’s expression in one writer, but that will not necessarily stand as a critique of others because of the nuances each brings to their understanding. The lack of consistency or clarity about the essential ontological elements of the approach stands as the central issue in any critique. One is left with a profusion of questions:

271 Yates, P. (1999). The bureaucratisation of spirituality (1). International Journal of Children’s Spirituality, 4(2), 179-193, p.189. Yates does not specifically address the romantic view, but rather the NCC report which has elements of the naturalistic as well, yet, because their denunciation of individualism applies to both, it is included here.


1. What is the nature and genesis of the immanent entity?
2. In what sense is it conscious?
3. If it is a Consciousness, is it is self-aware?
4. If it is benevolent, what is the source of evil or negativity in the cosmos (negative spirituality is given credence in New Age thinking)?
5. What is the precise meaning of ‘connection’ between a person and this transcendent presence?
6. Why is this presence experienced by many as communicating with them and what meaning has the content of such communications?
7. How can spirituality be a distinctive of humanity when it also suffuses the whole of the natural world, including other living creatures?
8. Given the radical incompatibilities of different spiritual traditions, how are the distinctives of these approaches reconciled in a common underlying reality?

Until there are clear answers to these questions the romantic approach remains a less than credible contender for use in a state provided system.

**THE THEISTIC APPROACH**

With theistic positions one encounters far more developed ontologies, however Christian literature dominates exploration of where children fit with understandings of spirituality and, in particular, consideration of how the answer to that question relates to secular ed-care. Christianity has a long history of involvement in children’s spiritual nurture, and in the provision of state systems of ed-care, though frequently as critic. Nevertheless, it would be remiss not to acknowledge contributions from other traditions, recognising that these tend to represent the perspective of religious minorities concerned to defend their distinctives not only against secularism, as is also the case for Christianity, but also against a perceived Christian cultural hegemony. Kendall indicates that Shire:

- attempts to provide a Jewish perspective, and is categorical in the way he links spirituality to religious practice. He is critical of the [UK] government papers and accuses them of:
blurring the significant differences between religious traditions ... Jews have been uncomfortable with the usage of the word spiritual when it has merely related to a series of spiritual virtues.” (Shire, 1998, p. 3)\(^{275}\)

A rabbi gives a more personal but no less trenchant response:

If I were a Jewish parent sending my kids to public school, not only would I not want the teacher to preach the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, I wouldn’t even want the teacher to say that all religions are equal. I’m prepared to teach my child that all religions are equally deserving of respect, but not that they are all equally valid. If my child were to come home and say, “According to school, one religion is as good as another and therefore it doesn’t make any difference whether I observe my religion or some other.” I would feel undermined as a parent.\(^{276}\)

Haynes indicates the gravity of this problem: “For some faiths, such as Christianity and Islam, inner life or spiritual growth must be guided by revelations found in scripture. Otherwise, it is dangerous and potentially demonic.”\(^{277}\) One of the difficulties with approaches that try to be ‘multi-faith’ is that minorities (and in Australia all religions are minorities) may strongly oppose their beliefs being dissolved into a socio-cultural mélange.

The Christian material is far too extensive to be comprehensively reviewed within the limits of this dissertation. Rather, the argument will be restricted to an explanation and justification of the nature of the study here undertaken. Exegetical literature will be utilised in detailed textual argument in subsequent chapters rather than at this stage.

Christian thinking encompasses two different issues:

- the nature of spirit with respect to God;
- the relationship of children to God;

Spirituality is bound up with the nature of God and work of the Holy Spirit:

All Christian spirituality begins in the wonder that God is for us and with us;\(^{278}\)

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\(^{275}\) Kendall, S. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.63-64.


\(^{278}\) Dawn, M. J. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.76.
The first reliable sign of true spirituality is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. True saints have the Holy Spirit living inside them on a permanent basis. From within, the Spirit imparts his holiness and a new spiritual sense to the saint.\textsuperscript{279}

Pneumatology is a central and seminal aspect of all Christian theology. By describing God as spirit and designating one hypostasis of God as the Holy Spirit, Christian theology both denies the exclusive designation of spirit to the human and any attempt to depersonalise its nature. It is radically contrary to the Naturalistic and Romantic models.

It is not necessary to review the pneumatological literature at length except where it has relevance in the later hermeneutical study, however it is important to note that to apply this perspective to the present issue requires consideration of a series of questions:

1. how does the divine Spirit relate to the material world?
2. how does the divine Spirit relate to other spirits if such exist?
3. how is the divine Spirit encountered by human beings?
4. how is destructive spirituality accommodated within the moral orientation of the divine Spirit?
5. how can one identify whether there has been an encounter with the divine Spirit?

Most Christian literature about children’s relationship to God is written for the popular or practitioner market. The scholarship varies from erudite to impressionistic. Given how central the work of the Holy Spirit is to Christian theology one would expect to see it as central to such books. In 49 monographs which were strongly recommended by people working with young children in a variety of rôles and across a range of denominations this proved not to be the case. (See List of References and Bibliography)

Some made no mention of the Holy Spirit at all. This is consistent with a general Christian neglect of how spirituality is expressed in childhood. For instance, Wakefield’s comprehensive dictionary of Christian spirituality has no entry relating to childhood.\textsuperscript{280} Most that did mention the Holy Spirit, did so in the context of an exhortation to adults who work with children to maintain their own dependence on the


Spirit. A few mentioned, in passing, children's conversion and nurture as being an autonomous work of the Holy Spirit but focussed on how adults should help make this autonomous act occur. This anomaly reflects an ambiguity between one popular theology of childhood and the way Christian workers actually carry out their responsibilities towards children, which will re-emerge later in this argument. Some writers affirmed that the Holy Spirit is at work in children but that we must remain agnostic as to its activity. Only the five discussed below gave more than passing consideration to questions about the Holy Spirit's relationship to children.

A report from one agency involved in evangelism and nurture of children addressed 'theological' and 'psychological and social' aspects of their ministry. The theological section mentions the Holy Spirit three times: to assert its autonomy, as one of a list of evangelistic tools, and as a resource for the evangelist. Implicit here is a struggle between the desire to credit God with outcomes and the recognition that the work of the Spirit is usually mediated through some agency. A sub-section of the 'psychological and social' section headed "The spiritual development of the child" identifies improved religious cognition as a measure of spirituality though the wider section does include feelings and responses. While the undefined term 'spiritual' is sprinkled throughout the sub-section there is only one reference to the Holy Spirit and that is in relation to the Christian worker. The provocative concept of a "spiritual


282 "God may use, for example, a particular lesson in Sunday School, a special family event, a mission or camp, a visit from a children's evangelist, or some personal crisis, to lead the child to himself. In all of this the Spirit of God is sovereign, and moves as he wishes". ibid, p.18.

283 "The child, like the adult, is won by love, by prayer, by God's Word, and by the Holy Spirit". ibid, p.20.

284 "...Let us dedicate ourselves afresh to the evangelism of boys and girls who do not know Christ, seeking the strength and wisdom of God's Spirit to do our work carefully, sensitively and effectively". ibid, p.22.

285 "In the spiritual realm ... increasingly capable of understanding ... increasing awareness ... increasing ability to grasp ... particularly the meaning ... what he knows ... more meaningful." ibid, p.16.

286 "...Where plans have been devised and carried out prayerfully and in dependence upon God, the Holy Spirit." ibid, p.26.
solidarity to the home" is vitiated by characterising 'spiritual' only in terms of "central focus".

Bridger attempts to dissuade his readers from encouraging children to exercise the spiritual gifts described in Paul's letters. 287 This argument is made in a section entitled "Children and the Spirit" from which actual reference to the Spirit is strangely absent, as though children's use of the gifts can be considered separately from their relationship to the Giver. His assertion that, "He [Paul] assumes that they are only to be used by adults", uses a dubious argument from Paul's silence on children's use. Bridger himself notes that the few references to the gifts are all stimulated by their misuse or confusion about them. 288 By contrast Stone comments: "The Bible makes no age distinctions about the gifts of the Spirit and believers. As many churches explore the use of gifts in the life of the congregation, experience has shown that children have much to contribute." 289

Stone does draw attention to the need to address the more mysterious aspects of the work of God's Spirit if one's approach is to be comprehensive. It is hard to see how a naturalistic understanding can accommodate this aspect of Christian spirituality but for the Christian no account of spirituality can be complete if it disregards the 'gifts'.

By contrast, Shelley presents a succinct concept of the relationship of the child to the Holy Spirit stating: "The spiritual development of the child begins at conception initiated by the Holy Spirit. From the beginning God not only shapes our physical bodies but also instils in our lives meaning and purpose". After quoting Psalm 139:13-16 she continues, "Foundations for faith are laid not only in the child himself, but also in the parents as they grow in their own relationship to God and to one another, Spirituality develops as the child responds to God at work in his or her life". 290 Shelley then moves on to practical advice on quality caring for children rather than expanding

288 *ibid*, pp.175-176, 184.
on her underlying theology. What she has said poses a significant question. If the Holy Spirit orchestrates this development, why are so many lives marred and why do so many repudiate God from their lives?

Butler, in addressing how children make moral and religious choices, reflects that:

...if children make moral choices largely based on what they have been told, experienced and observed as being right or wrong, and then on what their friends think is right or wrong, it is likely that the same influences will be of real significance when a child comes to make choices about God and what they do or do not believe. In the Holy Spirit’s work of bringing about conviction of sin he will normally use the means he has himself built into the processes of life. Hence he will use authority figures, peer groups and individual conscience to highlight the need to be in a right relationship with God.\(^{291}\)

This suggestion that the Spirit’s work is mediated is important. Even more important is his assertion, strongly influenced by Fowler and Westerhoff, that faith is, “...integral to being human. The Holy Spirit, as Creator Spirit, in this sense gives faith to all people.” He argues that this faith develops independent of its focus; the validity of faith is separate from its authenticity in people.\(^{292}\) This proposes that there is a spirituality given by the Holy Spirit to all children but that this natural capacity may be directed towards God, or towards that which is not God.

A very provocative idea is offered by Cupit who argues on the basis of Philippians 2:13 that:

...a child’s ability and readiness to see Christ as Saviour is proof that the Holy Spirit is already present in her life. The Spirit may have been there long before you appear on the scene. Tuning into God’s presence means playing along as his instrument, not being the conductor.\(^{293}\)

She clearly suggests a presence of the Spirit in children’s lives prior to and separate from Christian belief and this forms a framework for her explanation of the task of children’s evangelism, however she goes no further in developing the theology of this framework.


\(^{292}\) *ibid*, p.59.

\(^{293}\) Cupit, Cecily. (1992). *Come and follow: Talking with children about following Jesus*. Homebush West, ANZEA.
To limit the review to direct reference to the Holy Spirit and children would ignore important concepts derivative of the more general consideration given to the child’s relationship to ‘God’ without specifying the third hypostasis. Such arguments may, and should, be taken as incorporative of relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Christian understanding of how children relate to God takes three basic positions:

1. children have no relationship to God because all children are rejected until they make a conscious decision to accept his grace;
2. some children share a relationship with God because they are accepted on the basis either of belonging to some community or undergoing some rite;
3. all children have a relationship to God because they are accepted by him until they make a conscious decision to reject his grace. 294

However, this needs to be qualified by recognition that most Christian thinking only addresses the situation of children in the Christian community or in the process of being evangelised. The question of the relationship to God of the majority of children, who do not fit these categories, is seldom considered in depth.

The first position is associated with some strands of salvationist and evangelical thinking and is common among Christians concerned to ‘save’ children from what they see as their impending doom. 295 Calvin says of children: “…they bring their condemnation into the world with them, are rendered obnoxious to punishment by their own sinfulness”. 296 Even more extreme was Puritan Calvinist Jonathon Edwards who referred to infants as, “infinitely more hateful than vipers” until they, “...have been ‘reborn’ in Christ”. 297 In more recent terminology it was stated: “‘Reformed theology’ taught them that children are subject to God’s wrath because of the shared sin of the

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294 The varieties between and within these positions are well argued in Buckland, R. (1977), op. cit.
Adamic race and are therefore doomed to hell until such time as they repent and receive Christ."  

While the theological stance seems to lack compassion, it is often compassion for such 'lost' children that motivates the work of those who adopt this theology. If they were chosen by God, "children of wrath" became "children of grace" who could, "symbolise ideal piety."

As 'spirituality' means being related to the Spirit of God, and as God has no part in 'unregenerate' children, then to talk about a general human spiritual experience is meaningless. Claims of spiritual experience amongst young children or children who have not demonstrated God's election by responding to the Gospel can only be delusional or demonic. Shelley explains the implications well:

...Some pilgrim bands ... argue that in our natural state we are dead in trespasses and sins and are unable to discern spiritual truth. Thus there is little point in teaching spiritual concepts to those who cannot understand them. All our energies should be exerted in bringing children to the point of decision after which they will have spiritual discernment and be able to appreciate subsequent teaching. Those who hold this viewpoint feel that on every occasion they preach to children they should urge them to put their trust in the Saviour. Because they believe all children of any age to be in danger of judgement - none are too young to be persuaded to decide for Christ.

It is common for those who hold this view to be seeking a response even from preschoolers...

...It is important to notice that while some of us may deplore this practise it is consistent with the theological position that all will be lost unless they respond to the gospel through repentance and faith.

This position is hard to defend phenomenologically, and such writers do not engage in that debate, largely ignoring accounts which are inconsistent with their theology. However, the most significant deficiency of this stance lies in its treatment of the very young who are excluded from God a priori, with no opportunity for redemption.

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299 Bunge associates it with "...inhumane pedagogy ... the absolute obedience of children to parents, and the need to 'break their wills' at a very early age with harsh physical punishment." [Bunge, M. J. (2001). Introduction. In M. J. Bunge. (Ed.), op. cit., p.5.]
300 Edwards was himself tireless in his efforts to save children, even if his methods and attitudes are abhorrent to modern ears. [Brekus, C. A. (2001), op. cit., pp.303,313.]
The second position is adopted by those who believe that either having Christian parents or receiving baptism provides children with a privileged status before God. For instance, the extreme Calvinism of Edwards was tempered by his fellow Puritan's exemption of their own children from God's wrath through relationship with their parents who were part of God's 'new' Covenant. The emphasis on baptism is primarily found in ritualistic churches. Koulomzin says, "The Church makes the infant a bearer of grace and protects him from the power of evil long before he shows any hint of awakening intelligence and understanding." Kropf indicates that acceptance is based on, "...some type of 'infused' grace or potential faith held to come along with the sacrament of baptism". There is a recognised need to 'confirm' this status personally at a later stage and to guard against apostasy. What this means for other children is ignored in most writing. One possibility is simple agnosticism. Another is to see the privilege in practical terms of access to the presence of God in the church, allowing that other children are equally sought by the Holy Spirit as its intent to draw people to Christ never varies. Catholic doctrine resolved the issue through Aquinas' idea that such children were in an intermediate state referred to as 'limbo', neither under grace nor under condemnation. Protestant thinking of this kind tends to revert to the first position with respect to children who are not designated as belonging to the church. This follows Augustine who expressed great distress over the state of the unbaptised

304 "...children within the covenant were better off because of being less threatened by the devil, more likely to obtain saving grace, and more apt to survive." [See Brekus, C. A. (2001), op. cit., pp.304-305,323.]
307 In a personal communication, Dimitri Conomos, Professor of Byzantine and Eastern Christian Studies at London University, indicated that the Orthodox Church did not permit speculation on the eventual fate of any person except oneself.
308 Personal communication, Sister Magdalen, Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, Tolleshunt Knights, Essex.
infant.\textsuperscript{310} By contrast, the Anabaptist, Menno Simons attacked infant baptism as giving parents a false sense of security and removing from parents the need to concentrate on raising their children so they would adopt Christian faith.\textsuperscript{311}

Anabaptists like Simons are early adherents of the third position which argues either that children are ‘innocent’\textsuperscript{312} and incapable of sin\textsuperscript{313} and therefore do not stand under God’s judgment, or that, because of distinctive characteristics of childhood, children are accepted by God regardless of their sin. Each alternative requires a reconsideration of the application to children of doctrines such as ‘original sin’ and ‘salvation through faith’. This third alternative raises the question of when it is that children do become capable of, or answerable for, sin; what has been called the age of accountability or discretion.\textsuperscript{314}

While all three positions have long co-existed, the implications of the third were particularly addressed in evangelical thinking during the 1970s and 1980s. Though evangelical publications representing the first position continue to be available,\textsuperscript{315} several significant works questioned its biblical credentials and began to develop an approach to children’s evangelism and nurture consistent with the third.\textsuperscript{316} Attention has focussed on the exegesis of a cluster of passages describing Jesus interacting with children.\textsuperscript{317} This has engendered ongoing discussion of children’s status before God.


\textsuperscript{312} \textit{ibid.}, pp.194-203.

\textsuperscript{313} “We do baptise infants. Although they are not guilty of any sins.” John Chrysostom, cited by Guroian, V. (2001), \textit{op. cit.}, p.70.

\textsuperscript{314} Miller, K. G. (2001), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.203-207.


especially their subject status before God as Sovereign and juridical status before God as Judge. Critical is Jesus’ statement: “...for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs”. Much has turned on the interpretation of toioouton, ‘such as these’, to refer primarily to children, in contrast to traditional exegesis of the term to mean ‘adults like children’. 318

For many, these debates were an important and liberating influence indicating that ‘Reformed’ systematic theology was not necessarily the final word on the nature of spirituality in childhood, even for conservative evangelicals. Many Christian workers find it intuitively difficult to see the children they love as unacceptable to God, and wonder how God’s ‘love’ can be so harsh and unreasonable compared to that of parents and themselves. The new teaching allowed them, “...to offer [grieving parents] the comfort that the little one is with the Lord”. And, “For the children’s evangelist it releases him from feeling it necessary to exert pressure upon small children to respond to his message.” 319 In particular it allowed theology to be reconciled with practice: “John Prince drew attention to the inconsistency of the Scripture Union’s position in Whose is the Kingdom? when he said: ‘The inherent incompatibility between the theological and the practical approaches remained unrecognised’. 320

This conflict is not the result of romantic sentimentality, though some workers guiltily suggest so. Rather, they unconsciously discern the inconsistency between the theology of childhood they were taught, the first alternative, and the overall nature of the gospel, including, especially, the nature of the children with whom they work. 321 Some have discovered in the studies of Pridmore, Buckland, Inchley, Bridger and others 322 a way of

318 If toioouton means ‘all examples of this class of phenomenon’, it is inclusive of children. For them to be excluded it must mean ‘not this class of phenomenon but other like classes’. Just such an exclusion leads the recently published Contemporary English Version to translate it as “people like these children”. The relevant passages are discussed in depth in later chapters.


320 Ibid, p.3.

321 Cf., Bridger’s reference to John Inchley [Bridger, F. (1988), op. cit., pp.100-101]. This mirrors informal conversations I have had with children’s evangelists in Australia and New Zealand over the last two decades.

conceptualising their ministry which sits more easily with their consciences. However, even these make clear the trauma of bringing this conflict into consciousness.

It was in the early seventies that Ron Buckland introduced a group of us to the propositions put forward in John Pridmore’s thesis namely “That all children belong to God until they deliberately refuse Him”. Many of us who were present were shattered by this suggestion as it challenged the basic foundation upon which our work was based.\(^\text{323}\)

Others rejected it outright. Shelley heard, “Pridmore’s proposition described by a leading evangelical as heresy.”\(^\text{324}\) However, he recognises that they had ignored precursors in practice and in earlier writings.

Although at the time we were confronted with his proposition it seemed so radical we had in fact been singing it for years.

“Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to him belong
They are weak but he is strong, etc”

What Pridmore’s material did was to give a theological base for an attitude that had been stated by others without any Scriptural support. For example in Principles of theology an exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles (or statements of doctrine) of the Anglican Church, Dr Griffith Thomas states:

“What we think of children dying or living the fact is the same. What is the Scriptural position of these infants in relation to our Lord? Surely the truth is that all children are included in the great atoning sacrifice and belong to Jesus Christ until they deliberately refuse him.”\(^\text{325}\)

The struggle this new thinking created for traditional children’s workers is reflected in the following unpublished passage circulated by a professional children’s worker:

Some key questions are:

Does original sin mean that children go to Hell if they die before they are converted?

If so, are the children of at least one Christian parent exempt from this?


\(^\text{324}\) ibid, p.8.

\(^\text{325}\) ibid, p.6. Also “...Goodman in Suffer the Children thirty years before” and “Horace Bushnell in Christian Nurture” [ibid, p.5.] Much earlier Menno Simons said: “...our innocent children, as long as they live in their innocence, are through the merits, death, and blood of Christ, in grace, and partakers of the promise. [Simons, M. (1956). Reply to Gellius Faber. In J. C. Wenger (Ed.) The complete writings of Menno Simons. (Translated by L. Verduin.) Scottsdale: Herald, p.708.]
If children ‘start out with God’, and stay with God (because of the teaching/example of parents and church), do they ever need to repent/be converted?

Is baptism the ‘antidote’ to original sin?

If all children belong to God at the beginning, at what point do they cease to belong to Him?\textsuperscript{326}

While an irrational theology is not acceptable just because it feels congenial, there are many occasions when intuition grasps truth that people’s limited rationality distorts. This is especially likely when the latter is applied to events (and the language used to express those events) whose meaning is not transparent and requires interpretation. A theology may be quite logical, and yet quite wrong, if its assumptions miss the point of the biblical narrative. These writers, and their successors in the 1990s who assumed and extended their reasoning,\textsuperscript{327} provided a theological argument which was just as logical as ‘Reformed theology’, but which also endorsed the experience of those engaged in the evangelism and nurture of children. It was also argued to be more consistent with Scripture.

Yet, the discussion has been limited by its emphasis on abstract soteriology. It was as though, when Jesus said “such as these”, he referred only to the legal status of a formal class of objects rather than to the lives of flesh and blood children in his arms and other similar living, breathing, developing people.\textsuperscript{328} Centring the argument around the fine interpretation of Greek terms precluded consideration of children as living spirits in dynamic relationship with God’s Spirit, and other spirits, on a moment by moment basis. The debate has not clarified the relationship with, and experience of, God implied by according ‘included’ status to children. In fact it poses new questions:

- If the kingdom of God does belong to all (or some) children, does that imply any sort of encounter with God?
- Where do children stand with God as Friend, Father, Brother, Spirit?

\textsuperscript{326} Stone, P. (1989). \textit{op. cit.}


\textsuperscript{328} This is far from a criticism of those involved in the debate. Those I know personally enjoy ‘flesh and blood’ children. The abstraction is an inescapable consequence of the initial emphasis on the question of ‘status’. 
• How does the experience change with a child’s profession of faith, or baptism, or affirmation of disbelief?

Nevertheless, by demonstrating that no ‘sin’ barrier made children unacceptable to God, they made it possible to ask such questions. This leads to consideration of the extremely important work of Cavalletti.

Cavalletti – spirituality and catechesis

The previous authors primarily applied combinations of exegesis and professional reflection. By contrast, Cavalletti used anecdotal observations collected in the work of catechists. She was particularly concerned with early childhood, the focus of her catechetical practice:

...It interests us to know if, before this intellectual age [7+], there exists a relationship between the child and God that is more deeply rooted than in the intellect alone. Such an investigation requires instruments of verification that are difficult to obtain, since we must concentrate on facts that are totally spontaneous in the child’s life, the expression of which may be less explicit and direct than in the [7+] cases we cited.  

She quotes Gnocchi, one of Montessori’s first collaborators, that, “God and the child get along well together.” Cavalletti applied a creative adaptation of Montessori’s guided reflective play, which she sees as essentially spiritual in direction, to collect anecdotes based on her own observations and those of many catechists using her methods around the world. From these anecdotes she concluded that behind the reported phenomena lies the metaphysical reality of an ongoing discourse between each child and God. Berryman calls attention to the relative stress on the relational in her thinking: “Cavalletti has as great a respect for the religious experience of children as she does for that of adults. It is the relationship itself that is important rather than the form.

330 ibid, p.44.
332 "...Agricultural and industrial areas, in Rome and the environs, as well as in Africa (Chad), Brazil, Mexico, the United States, and Canada..." [Cavalletti, S. (1983), op. cit., p.22.]
God cannot be fully caught by the logic structures of any age or stage anyway.” She herself said:

We have attempted to document the existence of a mysterious bond between God and the child. This bond occasionally manifests itself following some solicitation - even the slightest and most discreet - on the part of the adult, but it subsists in early childhood even in cases of spiritual ‘malnutrition’ and appears to precede any religious instruction whatsoever.  

Cavalletti was very impressed with the gravity with which children approach matters of the spirit:

The depth of the children’s penetration of the mystery of the Incarnation is shown in their prayer, such as Carlo (six years old) who prayed before the child’s crib: “I say to him: Alleluia to the mighty God.” Expressions like these are a warning for us not to use baby talk with children, not to minimise what they know how to receive in all its greatness. We have observed how easily we speak in diminutives, whereas the child speaks of “the mighty God.”

Most profound of Cavalletti’s findings was the catechists’ reflection that they encountered a responsiveness in children which exceeded what they themselves brought to the situation; that there was another layer to the relationship.

The adult is often made aware of the disproportion between what one has given and what the children manifest to possess and to live. At times our hands touch the presence of an active force that is not ours, and it is precisely because it is not alone that it fills us with wonder and deep joy. There is a deep bond uniting God to the child, the Creator to His creature; it is a bond that cannot be explained as the result of any human work, a bond with which no person should dare to interfere.

The cautionary note is important. Her catechetical method does not try to ‘do’ things to the children. It facilitates the child’s own reflection on the nature of this “active force”. She said, “We should take the greatest care not to intervene between God and the child with our encumbering person, with our insistent words” and more poetically, “The incandescent moment of the meeting with God occurs in secret between the Lord and His creatures, and into this secret the adult may not and should not enter.”

334 ibid, p.22.
336 ibid, p.52.
337 ibid, p.52.
338 ibid, p.53.
This ‘meeting’ is easy for the child, “With regard to the Holy Spirit, it is striking to see the facility with which the children enter into relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit’s work appears obvious to them, and they know how to recognise it spontaneously in the most important moments.”339 (See Appendix 4) A consequence of this ‘bond’ is that, “...children from three to six had a natural sense of God and his proximity; they were capable of appreciating those biblical and liturgical symbols which express God’s presence in their lives.”340 Consequently, “Early childhood presents itself ... as a privileged age for accepting the kerygma.”,341 and a time when children have an ability to cut through to the essentials of that message.342 This capacity is one that is lost with greater maturity.

The adult no longer has that open and peaceful relationship with God which is natural to the child; for the adult, the religious life is sometimes strain and struggle. For the adult the immediate reality at times acts as a screen to the transcendent reality that seems to be so apparent to the child. And above all, the adult has lost in his relationship with God the essentiality that is one of the most characteristic aspects of the religious personality of the child. The younger the child the more capable he is of receiving great things, and the child is satisfied only with the great and essential things.343

A most important aspect of this is that children seem to have knowledge of God which has not come from adult teaching. Cavalletti observed that, “In the religious sphere, it is a fact that children know things no one has told them.”344 Wolf, equally a devotee of Montessori, made a similar assertion though from a perspective which is probably closer to Montessori’s own.345 “Our task as spiritual nurturers becomes easier when we realise that we do not have to instil spirituality in a child, we have only to protect it from being trampled and to nourish its natural growth.”346 This was exemplified by Cavalletti in a number of moving anecdotes where children responded to information

339 ibid, p.117.
342 ibid, p.50.
343 ibid, pp.24,47.
344 ibid, p.42.
about God, even in one case from an atheistic father, with joy at having their prior experience explained or understanding confirmed. (Appendix 4) For example, one exclaimed on first hearing the story of Jesus from a cousin, "I knew He existed and I have always talked with Him before going to sleep; I knew He was everywhere and that He sees me when I get into mischief, only sometimes I was afraid of Him. How can I speak with Him?"  

Young children seemed to deal easily with Christian teaching and to be drawn naturally to it even in the face of more seemingly attractive alternatives. It was usually an experience of joy. There were examples of children recognising that this relationship as more important than their relationship with their parents. This led Cavalletti to wonder, "Does there exist in the child a mysterious reality of union with God?" This would explain her sense of the child's spiritual insight: "It is a fact that the child seems capable of seeing the Invisible, almost as if it were more tangible and real than the immediate reality ... Children penetrate effortlessly beyond the veil of signs and 'see' with utmost facility their transcendent meaning, as if there were no barrier between the visible and the Invisible." (Appendix 4)

She speculated as to whether this special relationship conveyed some immunity from negative influences. "Examples like this [3 year old described in Appendix 4] lead us to consider that the religiousness of the young child is so strong that, as opposed to what happens during adolescence, it does not let itself be damaged by negative environmental conditions." It may even compensate:

It has been noted by many catechists that often the children most lacking in human affection are the happiest in the encounter with the Good Shepherd. One could say therefore that the experience of His love need not necessarily be grafted onto an

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348 ibid, pp.38-39.
349 ibid, p.37.
350 ibid, p.37.
351 ibid, p.36.
352 ibid, p.32.
353 ibid, pp.35-36,43.
354 ibid, p.32.
experience of human love, but that it is independent of it, uniting the child in a
direct bond with God.\textsuperscript{355}

Cavalletti asks, “Why then does even an abandoned child, who has never experienced
parental affection, when meeting the Good Shepherd, draw in the centre of the page a
‘happy heart,’ her own?”\textsuperscript{356}

Children remain children and they do not live in constant awareness of this relationship.

...we are dealing with ephemeral moments, like a flash of light that shines vibrantly
and then fades away. However, they let us glimpse in some way the mysterious
reality present within the child; they manifest the child’s potentiality and richness,
the nature of which we are not successful in defining clearly. The fact that we are
dealing with flashes does not invalidate their importance, because it is proper to the
child to live at first in a discontinuous way the riches he possesses, which only
gradually and through the aid of the environment later become a constant \textit{habitatus} in
him.\textsuperscript{357}

This turns common ideas of spiritual nurture on their heads. The rôle of the
environment is not to bring children to relationship, but to prevent an existing
relationship from being lost. The idea parallels what Shelley took from Pridmore’s
thesis: “That all children belong to God until they deliberately refuse Him.”\textsuperscript{358} As a
consequence of this relationship:

It is a fact that children have an extraordinary capacity for prayer, as regards
duration as well as spontaneity and dignity of expression. Theirs is a prayer of
praise and thanksgiving, which expresses the nearness and transcendence of God at
the same time.\textsuperscript{359}

Children pray with great facility; we find that they are always disposed to prayer,
which can be a time of special enchantment for them.\textsuperscript{360} (Appendix 4)

At no point did Cavalletti assume this represented quasi-adult belief: “The hands that
are lifted up are a manifestation of the child’s joy and not as yet of his moral
conviction.”\textsuperscript{361}

\begin{footnotes}
355 \textit{Ibid}, p.70.
357 \textit{Ibid}, pp.36-37.
359 Cavalletti, S. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.44.
360 \textit{Ibid}, p.120
361 \textit{Ibid}, p.88
\end{footnotes}
If spirituality arose out of an existing relationship with the active presence of God, assessment of that spirituality against any predetermined outcome was excluded:

So it is with courage that we renounce asking unjustified questions of the child. I say ‘with courage’ because certain controls that are academic in nature give the catechist a sense of security, which is none the less empty: The catechist teaches, the child appears to know, and the adult has a quiet conscience. But this may be done on a scholastic, not a catechetical level. When speaking of matters of profound spiritual significance, all controls become illusory; we cannot exercise such control even on ourselves.

She also offered some startling insights into the nature of early education. Some appear contrary to orthodox educational psychology, but actually stem from seeking quite distinct outcomes:

It is most important that [wonder] not be extinguished in the child. It has been remarked that one of the negative points of modern education is that it is “losing more and more the sense of surprise,” and that “we are no longer amazed by anything.” What can the adult do so that this most important feature will not be lost?

First of all, what the adult should not do: We should not give too many things, we should not offer too many stimuli. We should not alter too often or too rapidly the object of the child’s attention, in which case the child would defend himself with an intentional indifference to this kind of wearying, continuous movie. If the child does not have time to dwell on anything, then everything will come to seem the same to him and he will lose all interest in things. The Italian novelist Pavese observed: “We all know that the surest - and quickest - way for us to wonder is to fix your gaze undauntedly on the same object. One fine moment this object will seem to us - miraculously - as if we have never seen it before.”

The child’s wonder will be stifled by too much food, but also by food that is not nourishing. Wonder will be quenched if it does not find a worthy object, if it lingers on limited objects; such objects will inevitably disappoint the child. It is the educators task, therefore, to offer the child’s wonder an object capable of taking the child always further and deeper into the awareness of reality, an object whose frontiers are always expanding as the child slowly proceeds in the contemplation of it.

Cavalletti provides her own summary:

All that we have been able to observe over these years, whether directly or through collaborators and former students, leads us to consider the child as a ‘metaphysical’ being (the phrase is not ours) who moves with ease in the world of the transcendent and who delights in satisfied and serene - the contact with God.

362 ibid, pp.94-95.
363 ibid, p.140.
364 ibid, p.44.
THE RELATIONSHIP OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

Many writers ignore the relationship of spirituality and religion,⁶⁶⁵ and, of those who address it, many assume a shared apprehension of the nature of religion centred on adherence to a formal institutional organisation, negatively perceived, which requires unquestioning compliance with agreed doctrine and conformity to restrictive behavioural practices.⁶⁶⁶ Terms used include ‘religious establishment’, ‘organised religion(s)’, ‘credal formulations’, ‘angels or ethers’, ‘the word God’, ‘religious beliefs’, ‘an established, theistic framework of beliefs’, ‘time-honoured languages and symbols’, ‘religious beliefs and observances’, ‘a special institution’, ‘a stumbling block because of the bigotry it teaches’, ‘an institutional affiliation’, ‘institutionalism and formalism’.⁶⁶⁷ Crompton points out that, “For many people, ideas associated with spirituality are acceptable only if dissociated from religion.”⁶⁶⁸ Many assert just such a disjunction of spirituality from religion and others see religion as merely one manifestation of a much broader phenomenon. The NCC indicate that spiritual development “…is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith”,⁶⁶⁹ while Lovecky indicates that, “Spiritual sensitivity does not necessarily mean that the child or family belong to a religion or even believe in a Supreme Being”.⁶⁷⁰ A common implication is that religion is an idiosyncratic expression of the ubiquitous human capacity termed spirituality.⁶⁷¹ Whether religion is perceived as fallacious, or as just one of many possible expressions of spirituality, such viewpoints create real tensions

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366 Whether this is a valid representation of religion is not the concern of this dissertation. Even if false, it is a potent prejudice.
369 NCC (1993), op. cit., p.34.
with children who believe their religious spirituality represents truth, especially if, as Hill asserts, "Many teachers bear a grudge towards the representatives of religion and morality."372 If these representatives are children in their care and under their tutelage, the resentment may well be exacerbated.

One outcome of the narrow understanding and negative evaluation of religion is expressed by Hirschman: "Religious teaching should not be a part of classroom teaching and the class teacher should be in no way involved in teaching religious doctrine."373 However, as Haynes argues:

One attempt to avoid conflict - adopted by some advocates of spirituality in education - is to define spiritual in terms that purport to be nonreligious. This approach reflects a move in some sectors of popular culture away from organised religion and towards a more generalised spirituality ...

But this more universal definition of spirituality doesn’t solve our problem - it merely compounds it. Separating spiritual life from particular religious traditions make it nonsectarian, but not necessarily nonreligious.374

Whether one accepts the dismissal of religion depends on whether one is prepared to grant the limited meaning and disapproving appraisal of religion. Many of those involved in religious education provide a spirited defence of the value of the disciplined study of religion for spiritual development. Rudge is typical:

Rudge (1993) identifies three areas where RE contributes to spiritual development: The first is where pupils are encouraged to be aware of those areas of human experience from which a religious view of life and questions about its ultimate meaning and purpose may arise ...

The second element is developing in pupils an understanding of religious beliefs, values and experiences and appreciating what it means to be a believer ...

Thirdly, relation education involved developing in pupils capacities to reflect and respond to these issues, and to help them express their own ideas, beliefs and values.375

An interesting perspective is offered by Shepard, who uses ‘religion’ to refer to religious doctrine: "Religion may be taught, a cognitive base for the tradition can be programmed, learned, even measured, but the sense of spirituality that motivates and

provides meaning for the learning is all too absent.”

Even writers who recognise a dynamic aspect of belief seem loath to apply the term ‘religion’ to that. Without denying that religious establishments and doctrines are currently unpopular with many, the theistic writers mentioned above would see the essence of religion as lying elsewhere, in a dynamic relationship with a personal deity who can share a person’s life in an exciting and fulfilling way. Cavalletti and other Christian thinkers, see spirituality as indivisible from religion, though not necessarily from institutional identification.

Being based in belief in a God who becomes incarnate spirit, it is inescapable that, “A Christian view of spirituality will be an ‘eccentric’ one.”

Believers see spirituality as grounded in their belief:

For many children and their families, spirituality is inseparable from religious faith. Attention to and understanding of children’s religious backgrounds, beliefs and observances is an essential means of demonstrating respect for, and interest in, every aspect of their lives.

Koulomzin, speaking to Orthodox schools in America, emphasises the relational aspect to religion which transcends the doctrinal but that is found in the doctrine of God’s reality: “The first basic, indispensable, and difficult task of the Christian educator is to convey to the child a sense of the reality of God: in other words, to help the child to know God, as distinct from conveying to the child knowledge about God.”

This raises the question of whether a theistic ontology can accommodate the spirituality of other religions or those who deny any religious sentiment. The answers offered vary from extreme exclusivity, to acceptance that spirituality occurs within other belief systems, even the belief system of unbelief, and that such a phenomenon requires explanation. There is a long history of antagonism to spirituality outside one’s own religious community, often as strong between sub-groups within a religion as between different religions. Neither is it obvious that Christians should necessarily validate spiritual encounters beyond the framework of Christian belief. However, at least as far as children are concerned, many Christians would acknowledge that children outside the

378 Crompton, M. (1999), op. cit., p.84.
Christian faith community encounter and respond to the Spirit of God without knowing Christian doctrine. However, most would assert that lack of Christian understanding and the support of a Christian household or group will lead to the child eventually surrendering open receptivity to God’s presence, that is, the child will become ‘lost’. No-one who writes from a strong theistic position sees children’s beliefs as insignificant to the nature of their spirituality, nor is willing to concede that all spiritualities are equally worthy, or that questions of ontological truth are irrelevant to the experience of spirituality.

Bailin questions what makes a ‘spiritual virtue’ spiritual: “For the religious view, the common ground is provided by postulation of a transcendent spirit; spiritual qualities are those which partake in the supernatural element. But what is the common ground for these traits for a nonreligious theory?”

380 It is hard to see how a Christian could countenance spirituality which gives no cognisance to the Holy Spirit. Some conclude that fostering spirituality should not be a responsibility of a secular system, but should remain with families and religious institutions. Most Christians books on the topic imply this, being directed exclusively to Christian parents, church workers or Christian schools. Dawn is quite explicit in referring to “children (our own and those in our Christian community)”.

381 However, some have tried to enter cooperatively into the educational debate and been prepared to join the discussion on the assumption that in accepting spirituality as a core feature of personhood, which most Christians would agree it is, they establish common ground for dialogue with those of a naturalistic orientation.

382 It is certainly an appropriate starting point for the necessary discussion but ultimate resolution is impossible while the naturalistic position rules out a priori the possibility that spirituality represents an encounter with a deity. That denial has disturbing ramifications if Cavalletti is right that children are already accessing the divine, apart from and prior to adult intervention. Viewpoints which perceive religion

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381 Dawn, M. J. (1999), op. cit., p.73. This is certainly also driven by publishers’ reading of where the likely market for Christian books lies.

382 Hill has taken this position in a number of articles. This is also true of Myers who is, however, more guarded about her own religious background though she is clearly in the theistic camp at some level. For example, she argues that, “Until there are ways to understand and name spiritual life within the secular world, a dynamic component of development will remain ignored” [Myers, B. K. (1997), op. cit., p.xi.]
as fallacious, or as just one expression of spirituality, will not be easily accommodated by children who believe their religious spirituality represents truth. Myers & Martin exemplify this in two anecdotes. Children argue the validity of their religious stance but have ways of resolving such disputes:

On Monday afternoon a small group of four-year-olds and their teacher chat as they munch on cheese and crackers in their public school early childhood classroom. Talking about the weekend, Sam says, “We went to church.” His teacher responds, “Tell us about that.” Sam sings a little song that he has just learned. “Pretty,” affirms his teacher. Sam adds that at church he learns about God. “What is God?” Cassie wants to know. Several children respond: “God is up in heaven.” “God watches you.” “God is at church.” As the discussion continues the teacher comments that different people believe different things about God. Cory stands up and firmly commands, “Stop!” Immediately the conversation ends, and everyone looks at Cory. Waving his hands dramatically, Cory explains, “I want to tell you about God.” Then he takes his right hand and places it over his heart and continues, “God is love and lives in your heart - inside of you. God is in you all the time.” Cory seems clear, definite, sure. He sits down and confidently reaches for another cracker as the group switches to the topic of Marco’s new puppy.383

Daniel and Brian are nose to nose. Daniel — although at four-and-a-half years old being the same age as Brian - is several inches shorter, so he has to look up as they speak or, like now, raise voices at each other. Quite an intense discussion is going on. The teacher, knowing that each of these two good friends can stand on his own, watches. She hears the word ‘God.’ She moves a little closer, curious. They are having a debate about who knows the real God. Is it Daniel, who knows God from synagogue? Or is it Brian, who knows God through the Holy Spirit in his Pentecostal church? The teacher cannot hear all that is said. The discussion is heated. At some point these two wise children, realising that there is no resolution and accepting the fact that they disagree, grin at each other and run off to play together.384

The adult ed-carer may find such flexibility harder. Zeece’s anecdote is instructive:

For several days, Barton interrupted group time and asked questions about God. He was particularly interested in the idea of heaven. Barton’s inquiries made his teacher uncomfortable, so she suggested that Barton share his questions with his parent and redirected him to listen to the story she was telling. Frustrated, the small boy sat for a few minutes longer and then blurted out: “What, can’t God come to day care?”385

384  ibid, p.55.
The difficulty of accommodating religion is that the debate about spirituality is not about what children may experience; there is some agreement about that. It is about the ‘meaning’ to be attached to their spirituality. It is a seductive idea that ed-care should concentrate upon what children experience and avoid the vexed question of meanings, but it is vacuous as children themselves are meaning makers and will seek explanations. The importance of such an explanatory framework is asserted by Wright: ‘There is a danger if such programmes do indeed enable pupils to encounter a hidden depth to their existence, that the child is left with no viable framework for interpreting, evaluating and understanding such depth.’

The religious issue cannot neither be ignored or resolved while, as at present, ‘religion’ is treated as a negative facet of life, as opposed to spirituality as a positive asset. One useful contribution towards a definition of religion as related to spirituality is offered by Wulff who argues, ‘...religion can be defined as metaphors used to verbalise the spiritual.’ While this is limited by failure to incorporate affective and behavioural components, it does recognise religion as the attempt to give meaning to spirituality. In these terms, spirituality is the heart of the matter, and all explanations, theistic, romantic and naturalistic, are religious in nature. Each provides a set of propositions as metaphors expressing a reality which does not itself come in propositional form. This dissertation assumes that the metaphors provided by the biblical text reflect the reality of spirituality and yet make it possible to respectfully incorporate the spirituality of those who use other metaphors.

THE APPLICATION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL TO SPIRITUALITY
Lovecky recognises that, “The sparseness of literature on spiritual development may be due, in part, to difficulties of definition”, and Erricker has pointed out, “...the lack of clarity in official documentation both about the meaning of the term and ways in which schools can help foster spiritual development.” Levine indicates a limitation of

existing definitions: "...these definitions do not offer us a concrete entry point for comprehending whether children are capable of these experiences." 391

Not all authors offer definitions of 'spiritual development', separate from their definitions of 'spirituality' and in some of those that do, it is hard to discern any real sense of ontogenesis. 392 Rather, spiritual development is represented as either a set of spiritual activities, or a process of learning or education.

Rodger typifies the former. He describes spiritual development as "a different way of knowing ... a different way of doing ... a different way of being", 393 and, similarly, Wright, "reflective self-awareness and an exploration of the ultimate questions in life". 394 Brown & Furlong propose eleven values, "...all teachers would accept as essential aspects of pupils' education" and which would mean that "...every subject area would be able to place spiritual development in their curricular objectives". The values are commendable, but their relationship to 'spirituality' is not always transparent, e.g., "to promote the quest for learning", and there is nothing in the list that relates to a process of development. They also list eight ways school worship can assist spiritual development about which the same comment pertains, even though one makes passing reference to age relevance. 395 One of the OFSTED discussion papers is a prime example of development-as-activity:

Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. 396

McCreery comments:


392 An exception may exist in the NCC Report where it is said that, "The notion that pupils will develop spiritually raises the expectation that this is an area in which pupils can make progress, though it is not clear that this does not mean achievement in terms of curricular goals which is more attuned to the rest of the document. [NCC. (1993), op. cit., p.3.]


396 OFSTED (1994a), op. cit., p.46. See also Kibble's discussion of the NCC and OFSTED description of spiritual development or the NCC documents themselves. [Kibble, D. G. (1996), op. cit., pp.66-68; NCC. (1993), op. cit.]
Teachers are charged with promoting the spiritual development of children, and now we see materials being developed with this aim in mind. However, not only is the notion of 'spiritual' itself a complex and much-debated term, but as yet there is no evidence to show the relationship between designed activities and spiritual development.\textsuperscript{397}

Beesley is typical of the conflation with learning: "...a life-long process of encountering, responding to, and developing insight from what, through experience, we perceive to be 'the beckoning transcendent truth and rightness' and the sacred, mystical or numinous".\textsuperscript{398} The NCC report suggests, "...learning experiences that will contribute to a pupil's spiritual development".\textsuperscript{399}

Berryman, proposes some indicators of spiritual 'growth' based on Cavalletti's work: a global and deep joy, a 'mysterious knowledge' which no adult told the child, awareness of the 'invisible' (nonmaterial) meaning in the material environment, and a capacity for deep and personal prayer that expresses itself in praise and thanksgiving. However, these seem to refer to 'single event' changes rather than an ongoing process.\textsuperscript{400}

Others are simply confused about the nature of development. Young, Cashwell & Woolington write of 'development' in terms more properly descriptive of learning, confuse 'maturation' with 'maturing', and disconnect "general psychological maturation" from "normal development." They say, "...spiritual development is conceptualised as a linear process ... thought to be interrelated in a general way with chronological development."\textsuperscript{401}

The difficulty these writers experience is not surprising given that, "Within our existing child development theories there is a reluctance (if not an aversion) to address the spiritual dimension of development."\textsuperscript{402} Nye has been influential in reinforcing this point:

\begin{itemize}
\item[401] Young, J.S., Cashwell, C.S. & Woolington, V.J. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.64. [emphasis mine]
\item[402] Myers, B. K. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.50.
\end{itemize}
Nye (1996) comments: in contrast to the developmental paradigms of researchers looking at children’s religious intellectual abilities, few have attempted to construct an account of spirit development which addresses the particulars of, or stages in, the developmental process by which the vast range of phenomena associated with children’s spirituality may evolve together. One reason for this apparent oversight may be a resistance to the concept of ‘development’ applied to spirituality. (2 / 12) 403

Nye identifies two obstacles to pursuing research into spiritual development: “The concept of development is potentially controversial since it implies moving from a less valued to a more valued state, such as suggested in the terms underdeveloped, developing, highly developed. It also implies a consensus about an idea [sic] end state, such as agreement about what maturity is.” She refers to the work of Hull (1991b) (Professor of Religious Education, Birmingham University), who suggests that “as the concept of development usually implies that early forms of the phenomenon will be inferior, impoverished and less valuable, it seems an inappropriate model to capture the richness demonstrated by children’s spirituality in its own right” (cited in Nye 1996 2 / 12). 404

Nye herself points out that:

...there is no contemporary general developmental psychology textbook that mentions spirituality in childhood, despite the apparent importance allotted to this dimension of development in British education, where it appears alongside areas that are frequently the focus of psychologists: the intellectual, moral, social and cultural. 405

Lovecky identifies a significant hindrance to creating a theory of spiritual development in definitions of spirituality which, “...require a differentiated and autonomous self that can reason abstractly”, which means any theory must, “begin in late adolescence”. A similar point is made by Harkness:

This legacy of the Enlightenment, the assumption that the most significant area of spiritual growth lies in knowledge or the intellect (Drane, 1989, 17; McCoy, 1987, 35f), has reinforced the perspective that children are in some manner ‘deficient’ spiritually until they are able to articulate verbally the propositions of the faith to which they are adhering. This usually comes at the time when they are able to think abstractly, that is as they move though adolescence towards adulthood. 406

403 Rodger, A. (1996), op. cit., p.53
Consequently, in Lovecky’s words, “Children, who are still in the process of forming selves and learning to reason abstractly, are not seen as capable of spiritual development.”\footnote{407} That older children are the focus is exemplified by inclusion of “...the right to deepen, doubt or alter the spiritual commitment into which he or she is being nurtured or educated” in the five spiritual rights for children postulated by Bradford.\footnote{408}

This problem does not affect theories cast in religious terms in quite the same way, but the definitional problems remain. Neither of the two influential theories of ‘faith development’\footnote{409} uses faith as synonymous with spirituality. The thrust of Fowler’s argument is cognitive\footnote{410} and, consequently, faith equates to a ‘guiding ideology’ or, following Moseley & Brockenbrough:

> an active process of meaning-making ... a generic feature of the human condition ... the affective and cognitive dimensions of the human capacity to shape life in relation to some transcendent regulative principle or centre of value, whether or not the latter is interpreted in theistic language,\footnote{411}

Westerhoff is less precise but ‘religious commitment’ is the primary focus. Neither directly contributes to a demonstration of the developmental nature of spirituality.

The most direct references to spirituality as development are isolated statements particularly about early childhood. Several writers emphasise the importance of the early years,\footnote{412} Cavalletti being most explicit: “...we think early childhood is primarily the time of the serene enjoyment of God.”\footnote{413}

\footnote{408} Rose, D. W. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.179. The individualistic emphasis of the suggestion that a child’s spirituality stands separate from their nurturing and educating context is dealt with later.
\footnote{410} Young, J.S., Cashwell, C.S. & Woolington, V.J. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.64.
\footnote{413} Cavalletti, S. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.74-75.
Bridger identifies some distinctives: “In the infant (0-6) stage, a child operates entirely at the instinctive, discovery level. The ingredients of moral and spiritual understanding are undeveloped. Both sin and accountability are inappropriate categories.” With reference to early childhood, Koulomzin makes an important distinction between immature and invalid: “The very young child simply sees, tastes, touches, smells, and hears the things that make up the church. But what he thus perceives is just as true and valid as that which is perceived intellectually and spiritually by a mature person.” The implication that the young child’s experience is not spiritual would seem unintended being inconsistent with what else he says.

More generally, people who deal regularly with children’s religion have always been forced to respond to the reality of age related differences. From a Jewish perspective, Alexander indicates that, “In formulating a response, the developmental level, intellectual capacity, and spiritual condition of the questioner are as important to the sages as the questions. The Mishnah states ‘the father teaches his son according to his level’ (Mishnah, Pesahim 10:4).” Similar sentiments appear in Catholic writing: “The religious world of the child presents itself with a physiognomy all its own.” Many Christian books about childhood (see List of References and Bibliography) embrace a ‘folk’ developmental psychology based on experience and anecdote, often insightful, occasionally trite.

The developmental nature of spirituality is clearly an area where the literature of all orientations is found wanting. Much of the literature concentrates on activities related to spiritual experience in the present, which have neither an articulated association with the spirituality expected at a particular developmental level, nor a justification in terms of how they contribute to a child’s progress to a higher level of functionality. One is left to suspect that there is no formulated picture of how spirituality develops, but a

416 ibid, pp.36-37.
hope that involvement in ‘spiritual activities’ will make children more spiritual. Despite definitional claims that spirituality is a core human characteristic, it is treated more like a skill, or perhaps an appetite, to be learned.

The requirement that the model be consistent with an acceptable paradigm for the understanding of development cannot be met. The basic paradigms of most developmental theories, which “overemphasise scientific reductionism and rational thought”, are antagonistic to concepts of spirituality.\(^{419}\) It is true that there are references to theories of development, but these are adventitious rather than integral. Most common are references to Structuralist theories, such as the use of Piagetian stages to describe the characteristics and limitations of children’s spirituality at different age related stages, though such references are not always uncritical.\(^{420}\) There is no application of Piaget’s dynamic theory which justifies those stages and explains the transition between them. A partial exception is Richards who mentions ‘equilibration’ as one of three important features of structural theories largely to emphasise that one cannot teach children how to move to a higher state but must wait for, “…the development of internal structures of mind permitting the new way of thinking.”\(^{421}\) Other stage theories (e.g., Kohlberg, Grannell) receive occasional mention and are similarly used.\(^ {422}\) Erikson’s early stages are invoked\(^ {423}\), but the psycho-social theory


\(^{421}\) Richards, L. O. (1983), *op. cit.*, pp.101-102. The others are ‘invariant sequence’ and ‘egocentrism’. This selection of features of Piaget’s theories is extremely idiosyncratic.


\(^{423}\) Erikson, E. (1963), *op cit.*
which undergirds these is ignored. 424 ‘Trust’ does relate semantically to ‘faith’, a relationship Erikson acknowledges:

Erikson draws attention to the ritualisation of the ‘numinous’ early in the communicative interaction between mother and infant. Erikson depicts the numinous as a transcendent source of power to which persons are related ontogenetically. This is the foundation of basic trust - what Fowler refers to as primal faith. Theologically speaking, it is the encounter of human love and divine grace. Erikson suggests that the social resource for the nurturance of this primary connection to the transcendent is religion. However, he is aware that not all persons acknowledge themselves to be religious. Some even deny the validity of religion.

Whoever says he has religion must derive a faith from it which is transmitted to infants in the form of basic trust; whosoever claims that he does not need religion must derive such basic faith from elsewhere (1959, p. 65). 425

In a bizarre twist Kao identifies the defiance observed during the ‘autonomy vs shame and doubt’ crisis as ‘the Fall’. 426

Goldman’s theory of religious thinking, 427 which is heavily dependent on Piaget, is only occasionally referred to in recent literature even though his immediate impact was substantial and led to a strong reaction from evangelical Christians. 428 Hill lays his finger on the essence of the evangelical critique:

Goldman’s work provides us with an interesting case-study of the way presuppositions steer research ‘evidence’ in certain directions. It was because he held a theologically Liberal view which baulked at attributing human-like characteristics to God, and de-emphasised talk of personal relationship with him, that Goldman defined religion on such an abstract level. 429

Hay quotes Goldman’s assertion that, “direct sensations of the divine” were “practically unknown” in children. 430 This catches the flavour of Goldman’s approach where to be ‘mature’ in interpretation is to show the characteristics of a ‘liberal-critical’ theology.

424 Stonehouse is a noteworthy exception. [Stonehouse, C. (1998), op. cit., pp.44-45.]
Hyde argues that this theological objection should not distract from the developmental framework he provided, though that framework is equally open to criticism. Many of his specific claims have not been consistently supported by research. For instance, his designation of children’s early religious thinking as ‘magical’ evoked this response from Tamminen:

The results of my study, in contrast to Goldman’s, show that the concept of the Bible of even the youngest subjects contain hardly any magical traits. Neither does their concept of prayer include any clear magical traits, which were in Goldman’s study central up to the age of nine. However, the interpretation of these results depends essentially on the way ‘magical’ is defined.

Elsewhere, Tamminen and his colleagues comment that, “If God is magical, this is because in some way everyone is magical to a lesser extent.”

Of more apparent significance is Fowler’s theory, mentioned above, which is derivative of Piaget, Erikson, and particularly Kohlberg, and which:

...falls within the tradition of the structural developmental approach which seeks to understand the undergirding structures of operation in the human mind and to discover natural patterns of development in their mode of operation over the years of maturation. These theorists argue that in the development of moral reasoning and the development of cognitive structures, natural development occurs through invariant sequences of recognisable stages.

...Fowler identified six patterns of faith which he claims are sequential, hierarchical and invariant. These stages are closely associated with the six stages of Kohlberg’s moral development theory. In both systems a person moves from stage to stage in sequence, with each stage building on the one before it. Each stage is superior to the one that precedes it, so the task of the educator is to help the students advance to the next stage.

If they are accurate representations, the use of such stage descriptions is not inappropriate in itself but their employment alone does not mean that the writer has adopted the theory that generated the descriptions. To effectively guide a process of

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spiritual education requires not only a set of static descriptors but also a dynamic explanation of how children move from one state to the next.

It should be noted that most of these theories address cognitive development and their descriptions have the, presumably, unintentional consequence of directing consideration of spirituality to issues of spiritual understanding, usually religious doctrine. Moreover, over twenty years of failure of the Piagetian descriptions to match empirical observations has led to such structuralist theories of cognitive development being largely sidelined in developmental psychology and attention redirected to theories within the framework of ‘information processing’ or ‘cognitive science’. There is no recognition of this shift in the literature relating to children’s spirituality.

Nye refers to Vygotsky, whose theory is currently in vogue in the field of early childhood education in America and Australia. While Vygotsky provides a useful single dynamic explanation for changes in competence which, through accumulation, may appear developmental, it is not a comprehensive theory of development as it does not specify commonalities in age related characteristics. It is closer to an alternative theory of learning and as such can be accommodated within broader developmental theories as a demonstrable vehicle for incorporation of additional knowledge and competencies.

In only one theory which addresses human development does one find direct reference to spirituality and that is not mentioned in any of the extant general literature on children’s spirituality. This is Complex or Dynamic Systems Theory (sometimes called Chaos Theory) which will be discussed later in this dissertation.

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THE RÔLE AND STATUS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A SECULAR SYSTEM OF EDUCATIVE CARE

There is a high level of agreement amongst writers of diverse orientations about the importance of any system of ed-care making efforts to foster children’s spirituality. The exceptions are a few representatives of religious groups concerned about handing over the responsibility for their own children’s spirituality to those who do not share their persuasion. This relative consensus may, however, be artefactual as many of the opposed may wish not to be associated with the topic or may not see the point of publication in the current climate where the debate seems to be over, in the UK, or scarcely begun, in Australia. One may speculate that the ‘religious right’ in the USA would express opposition to state involvement but their literature is not readily available nor particularly relevant outside its own context. However, one should note the almost mantra-like rejection of any rôle for religion in state schools one finds in American writers:

Religious teaching should not be a part of classroom teaching and the class teacher should be in no way involved in teaching religious doctrine.

...It is inappropriate for us to advocate any specific religious belief.


...we must step away from any dogmatic faith stance as prescribed by a particular religious tradition...  
As I explore ways to evoke the spirit in public education, I want neither to violate the separation of church and state nor to encourage people who would impose their religious beliefs on others ... I reject the imposition of any form of religion in public education, including so-called 'school prayer.'  
Clearly we cannot advocate one religious view no matter how sincerely we hold it ... Although there is a place in society for people to talk through their religious differences, it is not the public school ... I just don’t think it’s the school’s job to teach a unit on religions.

This does not deter their advocacy of spirituality but does add a defensive cast to what they write.

Elsewhere attitudes are more generally positive though they vary in detail and between the poles of pragmatic justification and ideological vindication. The pragmatic tends to pervade policy based discussions. The NCC is at pains to defend its decision that schools should be inclusive of spiritual concerns. For instance, it is necessary for other learning:

Spiritual development is an important element of a child’s education and fundamental to other areas of learning. Without curiosity, without the inclination to question, and without the exercise of imagination, insight and intuition, young people would lack the motivation to learn, and their intellectual development would be impaired.

Moreover, it provides “vital underpinnings of all aspects of school life and ... a foundation for adulthood and our society in the future.”

However, educators themselves also seek pragmatic outcomes. Montessori saw her approach as directed, “...to bring about a better world by nurturing the spirit of the child.” Her inscribed epitaph reads that she, “...dedicated her entire life to the spiritual renewal and to the progress of humanity through the child.”  

Spirituality is also an

442 NCC. (1993), op. cit., p.3. Note again the undefended assumption that curiosity, questioning, imagination, insight and intuition are equivalent to spirituality. See also Shepard, M.J. (1988), op. cit., p.101.
alternative to invasive commercial culture: "If we are trying to create a space where children's spirits can thrive, we must attempt to shut out the clutter of the commercial world."  

Pragmatism may simply be a recognition that it is encumbent on the ed-carer to respond to the spiritual needs children bring with them:

Young children think about and try to make sense of issues related to faith and formalised religion within their own understandings of the world ... they may bring religious words and symbols into our early childhood programs whether we want them to or not.

Yet young children develop meaning from all the contexts with which they are involved (i.e., home, early childhood programs, community) (Myers, 1997; Myers & Martin, 1993). They think about and have questions relating to God and seek answers to these questions from people they interact with and trust most: parents, peers, teachers and caregivers.  

Fowler noted:

...that despite our secularisation and religious fragmentation, religious symbols and language are so widely present in the society that virtually no child reaches school age without having constructed - with or without religious instruction - an image or images of God.  

Not all are driven by pragmatic concerns; for some the issue is a recognition of the value of spirituality per se and the danger of ignoring it. For instance, Palmer states:

As a teacher, I have seen the price we pay for a system of education so fearful of things spiritual that it fails to address the real issues of our lives - dispensing facts in the place of meaning, information at the expense of wisdom. The price is a school system that alienates and dulls us; that graduates young people who have had no mentoring in the questions that both enliven and vex the human spirit.  

Wright indicates:

The child, it is assumed, is immersed in, and suffers from, the constraints of a rationalistic, reductionist, bureaucratic and spiritually sterile culture. Indeed, the

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445 ibid, p.151.
448 Note all the definitions in Appendix 2 which identify spirituality as the better aspects of what it is means to be human.
major function of the curriculum is, from such a perspective, precisely to inform and legitimise such an immersion. Induction into such a limited culture alone inevitably fails to address the needs of the whole child, and thus must be supplemented by a spiritual education that offers a counterbalance to such constraints. Spiritual education will then make the attempt to enable the child to transcend such limitations by stimulating an awareness of his or her own spiritual nature, of his or her own inward encounter with truth.  

Wright identifies spiritual education as a last ditch effort to salvage the liberal-progressive understanding of ed-care:

...there is little evidence that contemporary programmes of spiritual education have been able to develop a philosophical justification that transcends the old conflicts between traditionalist, subject-based theories of education as induction into culture, and progressive, child-centred theories of education as the process of fulfilling the potential of the whole child. In a political environment in which legislation has imposed the former and eclipsed the latter, it is possible to read programmes of spiritual education as existing in, and representative of, the twilight of educational progressivism.  

Suhor implies the same evaluation by choice of language: “Spirituality grows in classrooms when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence, rather than merely as licensed trainers or promoters of measurable growth.” Hay sees spirituality as supportive of what we really are and resisting a deleterious tendency: “This way of conceiving of the tasks of spiritual education is to see them as twofold: simultaneously nurturing a natural predisposition and deconstructing a socially constructed individualism which is destructive of human community.”  

As the ed-care setting is part of humanity’s ‘immersion’, Kelsey’s comment pertains: “Man is immersed in the spiritual world, and when he does not deal with its contents as consciously as possible, then they deal with him.” Hill’s statement is very strong: “We are *homo religiosus*, and the curriculum which neglects the study of this dimension

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451 *ibid*, p.144.
of human culture is a cheat, a lie, a form of enslavement or indoctrination not less damaging than substance abuse."  

The danger may lie in the creation of people who are in some sense less than human. Macquarrie asserts this from a theological perspective:

The more man goes out from himself or goes beyond himself, the more the spiritual dimension of his life is deepened, the more he becomes truly man, the more also he grows in likeness to God, who is Spirit. On the other hand, the more he turns inward and encloses himself in self-interest, the less human does he become."  

Myers & Myers suggest a direct relevance to ed-care:

Omitting any talk of ‘spirit’ and ‘spirituality’ from teacher lore, however, deprives educators of an important concept of what it means to be human (i.e., that the hopeful spirit transcends limitations). This impedes our ability to name what it is that teachers do in the early childhood setting.  

The writers of the Ealing Agreed Syllabus agree: “An appreciation of the spiritual is integral to human life.” It is “the essential personal quality of fully human living”. As previously indicated, Palmer describes ed-care without spirituality as, “...a school system that alienates and dulls us.”

Palmer is an example of those who write with disappointment or anger about the exclusion of the spiritual from ed-care:

[Education] continues to be dragged down by a great sadness. I mean the sadness one feels in too many schools where teachers and students alike spend their days on things unworthy of the human heart - a grief that may mask itself as boredom, sullenness, or anger, but that is, at bottom, a cry for meaning.”

Others include Robinson and Webster:

From this rich and fascinating picture of school life there emerges a general impression of the irrelevance of the whole educational process to something that

456 Macquarrie, J. (1972), op. cit., p.45.
461 ibid, p.8.
was going on independent of it at a much deeper level; something again that they felt to have an autonomous reality of its own, and so an authority. 462

Mr Tyson’s blank stare taught me that education was not about those things which brought joy and were ineffable, but about those things that were public and measurable. From that time I began to understand that education had to do with the objective and the general and not with the subjective, the sensuous or the imaginative. With bitterness I realised that education was abstract, not personal, that it held no place for poetry. Cycling home alone in dark, beating rain, I wept that the spiritual had fled from schooling. It was, I was told, an emotional fantasy which would disappear with the acne. 463

The setting may also be seen as inimical to pre-existing familial or community spirituality: “It is at school that the child is exposed to a cluster of differing or even conflicting beliefs which challenge the world in which he has grown up”, 464 “...the values the school tries to inculcate are not necessarily always in accordance with the Spirit of truth. Peer pressure can also create value-conflicts for the child.” 465

This negative picture of ed-care makes it doubly surprising how little attention is given to spirituality as a destructive force in settings. Bradford and Warner both recognise the potential for ‘spiritual damage’ from behaviour, environment and / or ideas but neither represent these as spiritual per se.

It is possible for a child or young person to suffer spiritual damage for example by cruelty or violence, from the atmosphere of extreme ugliness and squalor and acute deprivation, or through the influence of damaging ideas (not excluding the possibility of these being through the mass media) which decry the principle of humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Such experiences may result in what might be called ‘spiritual handicap’. (p.11) 466

It would appear from this part of the research that cramped conditions of either building or site are the most damaging factor in the spiritual life of young people, along with the absence of a place of quiet and noisy or obscene surroundings. Old


buildings may have a negative effect if not well-kept, but most head teachers cherish ones that have been well cared for.\textsuperscript{467}

Implicit in both these statements and in other treatments which ignore the issue is an unrecognised form of Manichæism where spirituality represents the 'good' in life, and, in contrast, 'the material' is cast as various influences which war against people being able to achieve that higher plane represented by disengagement from the mundane and corporeal.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SPIRITUALITY FOR SYSTEMS OF EDUCATIVE CARE**

The NCC indicates that, "The notion that pupils will develop spiritually raises the expectation that this is an area in which pupils can make progress."\textsuperscript{468} How this progress will manifest itself is less clear. As Crompton argues, based on a passage from Nye quoted earlier, the difficulty consists in the lack of agreement about the nature of mature or developed spirituality.\textsuperscript{469} These difficulties do not deter writers from proposing a way forward, although Rossiter's qualification is apt:

While a general concern to foster the moral and spiritual development of students through their education at school is not in question, how this is best carried out remains an important question. The natural possibilities and limitations of the school's scholastic process in facilitating personal change are of great significance; they are not always taken into account realistically by those who theorise about schooling for moral and spiritual development.\textsuperscript{470}

The way the 'how?' question is answered in the literature will be addressed by considering in depth single examples representative of the naturalistic and romantic viewpoints. No comprehensive attempt to provide a theistic answer has been identified, despite the number of contributions to the literature which have that stance as their


\textsuperscript{468} NCC. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.3.

\textsuperscript{469} Crompton, M. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.82.

\textsuperscript{470} Rossiter, G. (1994), \textit{op. cit.}, p.47.
background.\textsuperscript{471} However, prior to considering the two exemplars, themes from other less complete formulations will be summarised.\textsuperscript{472}

THEMES FOUND WITHIN THE LITERATURE

Perhaps the most honest component of the literature recognises the limitations of ed-carers in this matter. As Turner says: “While we can provide children with enriched environments for cognitive and physical skill development, the affective domain is a bit more elusive for caregivers. By and large we are not as skilled at enriched environments for children’s souls.”\textsuperscript{473} Gay calls attention to trepidation in ed-care settings:

...schools have shown considerable concern and often uncertainty about spiritual development and the ways in which it can be promoted. This is understandable in view of the conceptual difficulties with the term and, as Erricker pointed out, the lack of clarity in official documentation both about the meaning of the term and ways in which schools can help foster spiritual development (Erricker, 1998).\textsuperscript{474}

Gay argues that, consequently, schools in the UK are not fulfilling their mandated responsibilities.\textsuperscript{475} Kibble suggests a reason for this:

In the day-to-day operation of a school, spiritual development and spiritual education have not been things that have occupied much of teachers’ time or thought. Now they have to and many of us are far from clear in our minds what the concepts actually involve.

Kibble proposes that, while ed-care cannot provide spiritual experience for children, it may assist them in the process of interpretation.\textsuperscript{476}

A contrary argument, that teachers are already fostering spiritual development in the ordinary processes of contemporary ed-care, is common in early childhood. McCreery calls attention to the fact that:

\textsuperscript{471} The most recent catalogue from RoutledgeFalmer announces a new book by Clive and Jane Erricker which may give the lie to this assertion. It was not accessible in time for this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{472} Though the work of Kent SACRE and Wolf will be considered separately, they are quoted when they succinctly summarise themes scattered through other contributions.

\textsuperscript{473} Turner, S. B. (2000), \textit{op. cit.} pp.31-33.

\textsuperscript{474} Gay, B. (2000), \textit{op. cit.}, p.61.

\textsuperscript{475} \textit{ibid.}, p.63.

\textsuperscript{476} Kibble, D. G. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.64.
...although it was never made explicit, many teachers would say that within the work they do with young children, a lot of the activities might be contributing to spiritual development. For example, many early years classrooms do work with nature, studying animals, growing plants, etc.477

This may reflect Montessori’s influence which makes it easier for early childhood staff to speak in spiritual terms, or there may be less reticence amongst young children in speaking openly about such issues. Consequently, early childhood ed-carers find it more comfortable recognising spiritual elements in their programs. Those who report difficulties tend to come from situations where novel efforts are being made to spiritualise curricula, and from ages where children avoid public expression of spirituality.

Another theme is the evocation of the entire ed-care setting as the arena for spiritual development, and / or a denial that it is restricted to particular aspects of the setting. Kent SACRE, whose approach will be detailed later, identifies the breadth of the, “...contexts where suitable opportunities for promoting spiritual development arise”. It proposes religious activities (religious education and collective worship), curricular subjects, pædagogy, interpersonal relationships, modelling by ed-carers, ethos, and special and extra-curricular activities.478 It is consistently denied that spiritual development is a subject within the curriculum;479 McCreery noting that subject boundaries are artificial constructs of adults not attended to by children.480 Rather, spiritual development is to be: “across the curriculum”; “at the heart of every subject we teach”; “in every subject / classroom / school activity / relationship”; “embedded in every discipline, from health to history, physics to psychology, entomology to English”; “encountered and expressed in English Literature, Art, Music, Drama”; in “the ethos of the school, all subjects of the curriculum and collective worship”; “a shared interaction

480 “...The barriers which define subject areas are not yet drawn, everything is ‘life’.” [McCreery, E. (1996), op. cit., p.199.]
with nature or a thoughtful response to a child’s question”; through “literature, music, art, science, religious education and collective worship”\(^{481}\)

Some are adamant that it is not the province of Religious Education,\(^{482}\) nor identified solely with the school assembly or organised worship.\(^{483}\) However, some sources assert that Religious Education does have a special rôle in its nurture.\(^{484}\) A balanced perspective is offered by Kent SACRE:

As has been suggested schools will, whether they recognise it or not, induct their pupils into some kind of spiritual tradition and set of spiritual values. A school needs to ensure that this is not an induction, by default or by design, into:

1. a merely secular form of spirituality which brackets out or ignores for example in collective worship, any religious options

2. a vaguely and superficially religious spirituality which blurs the distinctions between theological traditions and excludes any consideration of secular alternatives.\(^{485}\)

One element in the literature rejects a formulaic approach. Wolf, whose approach is the other to be considered in detail, expresses it well:

Unlike the teaching of academic subjects, spiritual nurturing cannot be approached with detailed steps that tell the teacher exactly how to present specific concepts with appropriate materials. The effort to nurture the spirit must flow freely from the teacher’s own inner essence and from his or her belief that each child is truly a spiritual being.\(^{486}\)

It is not surprising that practical implications are identified with many aspects of the ed-care setting. They are discussed from least to most personal.

*The environment for educative care*

Nowhere in the literature is the significance of space and form for spirituality elucidated, and there is little consideration of the physical environment in which ed-care

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484 Croydon Agreed Syllabus (1992), op. cit., p.178.


occurs. As indicated above, some of Warner’s Principals perceived the nature of the physical context to be important but the precise relationship between building or site and spiritual response was scarcely clarified.

It would appear from this part of the research that cramped conditions of either building or site are the most damaging factor in the spiritual life of young people, along with the absence of a place of quiet and noisy or obscene surroundings. Old buildings may have a negative effect if not well-kept, but most head teachers cherish ones that have been well cared for. 487

One can readily agree that the environments listed as, “...damaging the spiritual life of pupils” are less than optimal for ed-care, but only one mentions spirituality and that is unclarified. The rest depend on unstated assumptions about the interaction between urban design and spirituality. 488 Given the frequency with which accounts of spiritual experience implicate natural or built environments in the encounter, a comprehensive model needs to be more aware of the physical setting than is apparent in the current literature.

The ethos of the educative care setting

More commonly mentioned is ‘ethos’, “the fundamental spiritual characteristics of a culture”. 489 By its use secular writing is able to avoid reference to ‘spirit’. The NCC identifies ‘ethos’ as an effective way to develop spirituality in children describing it as, “...the values and attitudes which characterise the community, the atmosphere of the school, the quality of relationships, and the way in which the school helps pupils to deal with conflict, loss, grief or difficulties.” 490 Kibble indicates that it, “...fails to spell out how this might be achieved.” 491 The concept of ‘school spirit’ deserves more attention. It may primarily be utilised as a hortatory device to encourage group identity and striving but, if Wink is correct, that does not disqualify it from taking on real spiritual

488 “...A large site with two buildings requiring excessive movement of pupils; limited size of teaching areas and therefore not enough space for small group work; crowded playground; grey inner-city wall, ugly site, poor physical environment; deprived area in a run-down estate with a small amount of play space; spiritual darkness of the area; claustrophobic, overlooked by next-door sex shop; a busy snooker hall and a main road nearby.” [ibid.]
'power' and shaping the character and behaviour of people who identify with it, or rebel against it. He argues that, "...the spirituality of an institution exists as a real aspect of the institution even when it is not perceived as such." Using examples such as 'mob spirit', team spirit and national spirit, he asserts *inter alia* that:

None of these 'spiritual' realities has an existence independent of its material counterpart. None persists through time without embodiment in cellulose or in a culture or a regime or a corporation or a megalomaniac ... Popular speech, often more accurate in unconscious matters than it is given credit for being, has quite properly referred to the whole range of phenomena as 'The Powers That Be' ... 'Spiritual' here means the inner dimension of the material, the 'within' of things, the subjectivity of objective entities in the world ... The spirituality of institutions does not drop from heaven, however. It only arises ... within a definite social organisation.

Wink implies that, in creating an institutional spirit, one inescapably engenders forces which have a dynamic of their own and which 'transcend' the material elements of that institution while never having an existence apart from them. The most secular setting generates and is a spiritual power with dynamics which cannot be reduced to or deduced from its constituents. This applies to a state system of ed-care and its ed-care settings. It cannot be ignored in considering how spirituality is fostered in children.

*Issues of curriculum*

Much of the literature centres on the expression of spirituality in curriculum. 'Motherhood' claims are common:

Worldviews are explored, aspects of life are experienced, and tried paths are pursued ... A spiritualised education would seek to open the mind, warm the heart and awaken the spirit of each student. It would provide opportunities for students to be creative, contemplative, and imaginative. It would allow time to tell old and new stories of heroes, ideals and transformation. It would encourage students to go deeper into themselves, into nature, and into human affairs. It would value service to others and the planet.

A spiritualised curriculum would value physical, mental and spiritual knowledge and skills. It would present knowledge within cultural and temporal contexts, rather than as facts to be memorised or dogma to be followed. It would be integrative across all disciplines emphasising inter-relationship and inter-

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493 *ibid*, pp.105-109.
connectedness. It would challenge students to find their own place in space and time, and to reach for the highest aspirations of the human spirit.\footnote{495}

More helpful is Kibble’s suggestion as to how to achieve spiritual development within curriculum:

(1) helping children and young people to \textit{acknowledge} the spiritual experience and learning which they already have; (2) offering them regularly a variety of ways to \textit{explore} and develop this aspect of their being; (3) helping them to find a language, not necessarily in words, to \textit{express} their spiritual experience, learning and insight.\footnote{496}

As indicated, the entire curriculum is often cited as the appropriate source of spiritual development. The NCC was specific:

In most aspects of the curriculum pupils should encounter questions about the origins of the universe, the purpose of life, the nature of proof, the uniqueness of humanity and the meaning of truth. They should be encouraged to reflect on the possibility of certainty, and to question the often exaggerated view of the infallibility of science as the only means of understanding the world, and the equally exaggerated view of the inadequacy of religion and philosophy.\footnote{497}

Of curriculum areas, the Arts draw most attention reflecting the long tradition associating spirituality with aesthetics:

Teachers of performing arts, of course, have a special advantage in bringing heightened awareness into the classroom. They have on hand the very stuff from which high levels of aesthetic experience are made. In teaching the performing arts, we often traffic in the direct evocation of joy. Even a technical breakthrough, like executing a difficult musical passage effectively, can be an epiphany to a struggling student.\footnote{498}

Suhor also emphasises the importance of literature:

Teachers of literature also have a special role. Beyond helping students become directly enthralled with the ideas, feelings, and language of literature itself, they show students how literature can give them vicarious entry into worlds outside their direct experience. Through literary study, students can achieve a tender readiness for response to experiences - in nature, various art forms, rich ceremony, parent-child love, and contemplative bliss.\footnote{499}
Suhor’s statements epitomise one tendency in this literature, a disposition to claim outcomes for educational processes without explaining how the process and outcome are related, or presenting evidence that they are. Zeece barely avoids the same criticism:

One of the best ways to address children’s inquiries about God and religion is to provide developmentally appropriate literature experiences that extend children’s knowledge base, cultivate their critical thinking skills, and develop their tolerance for religion-based differences.500

Other areas of curriculum are seldom used as examples, particularly those at the ‘objective’ pole. However, a group of mathematics teachers related to a Christian organisation addressed their discipline, despite initial scepticism: “Mathematics departments have, largely, considered themselves exempt from [spiritual matters]. Mathematics is value free, objective and cross-cultural; and it is these very qualities which appeal to many of us who teach it.”501 They concluded:

...we discovered that we were able to identify areas in the mathematics curriculum which could encourage students to think a little more deeply about such issues. Furthermore, the subject matter of mathematics itself can stimulate a child’s imagination and cause speculation about what might be termed ‘spiritual’ issues. The concept of infinity, the properties of the Golden section, the idea of proof and of what is true and false, even the value of π, all raise issues beyond the immediate problem.502

They failed to see the spiritual implications of considering mathematics as “value free, objective and cross-cultural”. Examples they cite to demonstrate the spiritual potentiality of mathematics include:

...mathematics deals in concepts such as ‘truth’ and ‘proof’ ... testing proofs by getting students to ‘convince yourself; convince a friend; convince an enemy’ can raise questions of faith, sufficient evidence for belief, and absolute values ... mathematics allows us to explore the Universe in a unique way ... Many of the ideas that mathematics unlocks are awe-inspiring. If just a few of our mathematics lessons cause some of our students to experience what we called the ‘Wow!’ factor, then we felt that this was a desirable (if not a measurable) outcome.503

500 Zeece, P. D. (1998), op. cit., p.243. Zeece uses ‘religion’ in such a broad sense that it can be considered as equivalent to ‘spirituality’.
502 ibid, p.32.
503 ibid, p.33.
However, this group conceded defeat when it came to translating these generalities into specific mathematical curriculum:

One or two educationalists had given some thought to the spiritual aspects of mathematics but none had developed their ideas into classroom materials. Development Education in Dorset (DEED) had, however, produced an excellent set of worksheets setting mathematics in a moral context by examining third world issues. We could see the way forward as far as moral development went, but spiritual...? 504

Particular stumbling blocks were that:

...it was considered important and desirable that the materials could be used by teachers and students with a wide range of beliefs ... there was concern amongst the team members that the integrity of the mathematics should not be compromised. There was no sense in which the ‘spiritual and moral’ should be ‘bolted on’ to the mathematics. Pious platitudes and moralistic stories were to be avoided. 505

Their fallback position is, “…to encourage ourselves and others to look for the opportunities that arise in every classroom, even in our mathematics lessons!” 506

Activities

McCreery comments on:

...the growing number of books and articles ... which aim to promote spiritual development. These offer activities which teachers can do with children in the classroom and which are supposed to develop the spiritual. The activities are very similar in all these publications and tend to focus on the idea of personal reflection on events and situations. Some appear to be similar to activities used in psychotherapy. I was interested to know how such activities had been identified as good for developing young children spiritually. 507

Generic lists of the types of activities which foster spirituality are provided by several sources, and these are complemented by individually suggested activities. (Appendix 5) Many are common educational activities, such as those suggested by McCreery himself: “...nature studies and stories, and situations in which the child may encounter danger, failure, reward, companionship and success, as well as many of the things first

504 ibid, p.33.
505 ibid, p.33.
506 ibid, p.33. The use of ‘even’ bespeaks their attitude that this was really quite unexpected.
encountered at home."  However, some owe more to traditional 'spiritual formation', especially 'meditation' and the related idea of 'silence'.

The efficacy of silence is asserted by Wolf and supported anecdotally by Standing:

...Standing tells of a directress who asked the children to say what they had heard in the silence. Besides the usual sounds of a chair creaking and a train chugging in the distance, 'one child said she heard 'the Spring coming' and another 'the voice of God speaking inside me.'

Suhor suggests that, "methods like imaging and meditation", though originating "in religious traditions", are rendered acceptable by being "...not inherently connected with organised religions", though they must be used with sensitivity. Garth has published three collections of meditations or 'creative visualisations' for children and two for adolescents. She claims that:

Relaxation and visualisation, if taught at an earlier age [than 7 years], could enhance not only children's school work but other areas of their lives. Their concentration would improve; their artistic abilities would develop; they would feel more centred; their daydreaming could not only bring joy, but be constructive.

Teachers are advised that, "Meditation or visualisation could be very constructive in harnessing the thoughts of children who tend to scatter their energies in directions which are not productive." Moreover:

The ones whose concentration is good settle into a calm and tranquil state that is beautiful to behold. They like to share their experiences, while the ones who have difficulty will have little or nothing to relate. But if you persevere for a time, you will find that the restless ones will start to settle, to see things, and to fidget less. Remarkably, their school work will improve, because they are learning the art of concentration.

508 *ibid*, p.198.
512 *Starlight, Moonbeam, Sunshine, The inner garden, and InnerSpace*, all published by HarperCollins.
514 *ibid*, p.9.
515 *ibid*, p.10.
The flavour of these meditations is given by selected titles: the star prelude; the animals; the grandfather tree; the little white cloud; the busy ants; the fairies; the waterfall and the cave; the pool of reflection; the sandcastle and the swan; the rainbow; the flower and the busy bees; the dancer and the swing; birthday meditation; Christmas: Santa’s workshop; Christmas at Bethlehem; Easter Bunny; and Easter morning. (Appendix 5 includes her prelude to meditation, a fairy meditation and an Easter meditation.) Garth’s meditations are strongly influenced by the romantic tradition. Christian themes are treated identically to both nature and fantasy visualisations.

‘Worship’ activities in educative care

There is long experience of involving children in worship in religious communities. For instance, Stewart & Berryman describe how artistic activities are used in children’s Christian worship:

The children are also encouraged to use art materials. Art responses enable the children to express understandings and work through critical issues they cannot or do not wish to express verbally. Sometimes they resolve personal problems through their art. The artwork may be a means of talking with God, a form of prayer. The children may experience healing and wholeness.

There is little attempt to assimilate this experience in the ed-care literature. In England worship is a mandated activity but it is unclear precisely how worship devoid of specific religious content can foster spiritual development. Nevertheless:

Brown and Furlong (1996, p. 18) provide a list of ways in which school worship can contribute to spiritual development:
1. celebrating all that is good and lovely and expressing thankfulness for the joy of being alive;
2. providing opportunities for pupils to share what is meaningful and significant to them, including the ‘darker’ side of life;
3. ensuring that the experiences provided are relevant to the age, aptitude and family background of the pupils;
4. giving time for silent reflection [sic] and exploration of inner space;
5. illustrating forms of worship that others have found helpful in their spiritual development, e.g. silent contemplation, dance, singing, poetry, art and investigation;
6. providing a rich variety of forms of expression, e.g. art, drama, music, story, and giving pupils the opportunity to experience these at their ‘own level’,

516 They are somewhat reminiscent of Joyce Grenfell’s kindergarten monologues.
looking to teachers to provide guidance rather than to impose their own interpretation;
7. taking place in an environment that is conducive to worship, where the worship is properly resourced and presented;
8. always inviting, never coercing, remembering that pupils will be at different stages of spiritual development and that they should feel able to respond and participate at their own level.518

These are excellent suggestions but there is little else to assist ed-carers foster spirituality by involving children in worship if this is to be done outside a religious tradition.

*Relationships within the educative care setting*

Surprisingly little attention is paid to the pædagogical relationship, possibly a consequence of the individualistic bias noted earlier. What is said demonstrates the need for this issue to be considered more fully. The potential for both positive and negative outcomes is noted by Fisher: “The teachers, as the living curriculum, at times enhance, at other times hinder the students’ spiritual health.”519 Hill asserts from a Christian perspective that, “The truest root of self-esteem is the conviction that we matter to God. But a step along the way is to know that we matter to other people, of whom the teacher is one.”520 Koulomzin concurs that a “relationship of friendship” with children will have a more profound effect than “a class project or the information given”.521 There must be more involved than ‘mattering’ and friendship but beyond this there is no description of how the pædagogical relationship contributes to spiritual development. However, the importance of relationship may be implied by attention to the ed-carer’s attributes.

*The professional’s personal characteristics*

Palmer recognises that:

> Spiritual questions are embedded not only in the disciplines we teach - they are embedded in our own lives. Whoever our students may be, whatever subjects we teach, ultimately we teach who we are ... “How can I get through the day?” is not as

promising a question as “What truth can I witness to today?” If we do not live good questions, and live them in a way that is life-giving, our own deformations will permeate the work we do and contribute to the deformation of the students whose lives we touch.522

In Fisher’s study, teachers were unsure what aspects of character are desirable, the most commonly supported being a “caring, sensitive, personal approach (70%)”, “concern for individuals (68%)”, and “committed to personal beliefs and values (57%)”.523 Suhor is certain about one claimed characteristic: “...when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence”.524 A specific matter which is also given too little attention, though it looms as a significant question for religious communities and many families, is the spirituality the ed-carer brings to the task of fostering spirituality. If they are ‘living curricula’, there has to be some doubt that spirituality can be fostered independently of their own spiritual characteristics.

The educative caregiver’s own spirituality

“Spiritual nurturing can never be reduced to a set of techniques of a routine curriculum. It can only flow freely from the teacher’s own inner essence and from his or her belief that each child is truly a spiritual being.”525 If this is true, Rodger is right to call attention to what distinguishes this aspect of ed-care from most others, the need for personal commitment, not to curricular content, but to a personal formative process:

Obviously we cannot hope - and should not try - to engage our pupils in learning activities of this sort if we are not prepared ourselves for the discipline of submitting to the reality we claim to be studying:

allowing ourselves to be called in question by it

submitting ourselves to truth which is not yet realised in our awareness

committing ourselves to obligations which are not yet embedded in our practice.526

This may not be generally endorsed and creates a significant problem if spirituality is addressed in all areas of curriculum, presumably by all staff. Wolf challenges Montessori-trained staff that, “In order for the children in Montessori classes today to fulfil Maria Montessori’s great desire to create a better world for the future, it is vital for

them to be in the care of adults - both parents and teachers - who live day to day in spiritual awareness." This requires spiritual discipline of the ed-carer:

The best preparation for teaching, Maria Montessori emphasised many times, is a study of one's self. This may be the most profound advice that she gave us about teacher training ... “We insist that a teacher must prepare himself interiorly by systematically studying himself so that he can tear out his most deeply rooted defects, those in fact which impede his relations with children. In order to discover these subconscious failings we have need of a special kind of instruction. We must see ourselves as another sees us. We must be willing to accept guidance if we wish to become effective teachers.”

This vulnerable reflective self-reforming ed-carer would struggle in the current competitive bureaucratic and sometimes combative settings. The need for professional support for ed-carers engaged in spiritual reflection is identified by Palmer, yet he faces the dilemma of coercion to engage in spiritual activities:

The most important step toward evoking the spirit in public education is to bring teachers together to talk ... about the deepest questions of our teaching lives. Only if we can do this with one another - in ways that honour both the importance of our questions and the diversity with which we hold them - will we be able to do it for our students, who need our companionship on their journeys ... Of course, such opportunities must be invitations, not demands. The soul cannot be coerced into inner work, and when an employer tries to do so, it is both ineffective and unethical.

Wolf also recognises this need: “One of the most effective means of nurturing the spirituality of teachers is a strong sense of community in the staff.” She quotes Westley as identifying community itself as spiritual in nature:

Community is much more than a social reality, something humans can achieve by their will and their efforts. It is, rather, one of the most profound and important of the spiritual realities. As something ‘of the spirit,’ it is also something of a mystery, more easily experienced than talked about.

How to a generate a supportive spiritual community amongst staff in a secular setting is only addressed in any depth by Wolf and will be considered below.

528 ibid, p.34.
Characteristics to be engendered in children

One alternative is to focus on outcomes rather than the process for producing them. There is an occasional suggestion that the task is to elicit spiritual experiences. This assumes such experiences are neither sui generis nor stimulated by encounter with an autonomous Transcendence, but are programmable consequences of interventions by others. This casts the ed-carer in the rôle of ersatz-priest. The risk of spiritual domination is a danger long recognised by, though not expunged from, religious spirituality. It should not be ignored, but is.

Characteristics which should be engendered in children fall into two groups: wonder, and anything else.

The quality of wonder

"If I had influence with the good fairy," [Carson] continues, "who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength."

Wolf speaks eloquently of the importance of wonder and appeals for its greater priority:

If wonder becomes a fundamental attitude in a child's life it will confer on him or her a spiritual character, because wonder constantly reminds us of all the mysteries of reality. there is hardly anything beautiful or powerful in nature that is not touched by some mysterious, unfathomable or transcendent characteristic. Whenever possible the spiritually aware teacher directs the children's attention to an object of wonder and marvels with them at the miracles it represents. Why not make more room for this spiritual dimension in our classrooms? Why not give it precedence in the activities we select and make it a recurring theme in discussions with children?

The position is shared by Cavalletti: "Wonder is an extremely important stimulus for the human spirit," and "It is most important that [wonder] not be extinguished in the child." Wonder is also mentioned by Beck, Gay, and Myers & Martin, though the

533 Wolf, A. D. (1996), op. cit., p.73.
534 ibid, p.87.
latter's example, "I wonder where the worm will crawl?", is so banal as to suggest they confuse simple 'wondering' with profound 'wonderment'.

The natural world is commonly evoked as a source of wonder, Wolf being an eloquent advocate:

Basically, wonder is nourished by opportunities to observe the intricate workings of nature. Truly such observation is a spiritual act. Joseph Cornell, a pre-eminent nature educator, writes, "The unutterable beauty of a blossom. The grace of a high-flying bird. The roar of wind in the trees: At one time or another in our lives, nature touches ... all of us in some personal, special way. Her immense mystery opens to us a little of its stunning purity, reminding us of a Life that is greater than the affairs of man."537

To the recognition that many children do not have ready access to nature in the large, Wolf responds:

Nevertheless, if nurturing wonder is a priority, a teacher in any school can call children's attention to the marvels of nature in whatever outdoor space is available, no matter how small.

For example, you don't need several acres for cloud watching.538

However, wonder is seen by Wolf as requiring adult interpretation: "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."539

Other characteristics

Variously cited in the literature are a plethora of other characteristics that should be engendered in children, with or without a strategy to lead to this end.540 These can be organised into seven categories: tradition spiritual values,541 sensibilities,542 knowledge /


538 ibid, p.75.

539 ibid, p.73.


541 Ability to derive values from [personal beliefs]; ability to give some account of [personal beliefs]; an appreciation of the interconnectedness of all things (2); connection with the earth, nature and everyday life; faith; feelings of transcendence; hope; joy; personal beliefs (2); personal response to
understanding, virtues, attitudes / behaviour, character, and motivations. Again there is the danger that ‘spirituality’ is spread so wide that it encompasses almost all esteemed human characteristics.

GUIDANCE ON SPIRITUAL EDUCATION FROM A SECULAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The UK legislation has led school districts to produce documents to guide their constituents in fulfilling the requirement to promote pupils’ spiritual development. The Kent document is an exemplar of the application of the naturalistic perspective. It offers, “…practical suggestions for work in curriculum subjects and in various areas of school life”. These suggestions have to be seen in the context of spiritual development defined as: “…the most distinctive and desirable capacities of the human person, i.e. those capacities that, above all, distinguish human beings from other living creatures. It ... relates to what sort of person they are and are becoming.” This elicits a set of families of ‘spiritual capacities’, “…which are both worthy and capable of development in schools”. These ‘families’ are: self-awareness and self-knowledge,

questions about the purpose of life; personal response to (spiritual) experiences; a reverence for nature; the search for meaning and purpose; spiritual awareness.

Awareness; awareness of the relationship between belief and action; insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth; self-awareness; self-knowledge (3); a sense of wonder, mystery, and reverence; a sense of purpose; a sense of place in space and time; sensitivity.

Knowledge of the central beliefs, ideas and practices of major world religions and philosophies; knowledge and insight into values and religious beliefs; understanding; understanding of how beliefs contribute to personal identity; understanding of how people have sought to explain the universe through various myths and stories, including religious, historical and scientific interpretations.

Compassion (2); discipline; generosity; gentleness; gratitude; honesty; humility; love (4); patience; peacefulness; responsibility; service; tolerance; wisdom.

Behaviour and attitudes derived from knowledge and understanding of major belief systems; behaviour and attitudes which derive from personal conviction; behaviour and attitudes which show awareness of the relationship between belief and action.

Acceptance (2); authenticity; clarity; creativity; happiness; humour; inner impulses, desires, and feelings influence, (and are influenced by) the whole person integration; inner security; inner strength; living in the present moment; reflection on experience; relationships with others (2); personal freedom; responsiveness; a sense of community; serenity; synergistic energy; trust; willingness.

Aspirations; seeking; striving.

Kent SACRE. (1999), op. cit., p.4.

ibid, p.17.

ibid, p.20.
sensitivity and responsiveness, inner strength and resilience, ideals and aspirations, love and relationships, striving and seeking, reflection and experience.551 Each is explicated in 4-5 dot points, virtually all of which are important but mundane human characteristics. Though religious questioning is encouraged: “ask questions and seek answers to deep or ultimate questions such as our place in the world, the purpose of life, our origins and final destiny, the nature of ultimate reality and the possible existence of God”; the closest they come to a sense of transcendence is: “develop intimate and enduring relationships with other people (and, for some, with God)”552.

That spiritual development has been subsumed by social development is evident in the advice on identifying progress. Acknowledging that, “...such progress cannot always be detected”,553 the document nonetheless advises that it can be observed when a shy and reserved child flourishes and becomes more confident or assertive in drama, or when an easily frightened child becomes more courageous through involvement in competitive sport. One of the suggested supplementary aims for policy statements of curriculum subjects uses ‘personal development’ as synonymous with spiritual development.554

The curriculum
Kent SACRE provides suggestions for fostering spirituality in each compulsory curriculum area.555 They indicate that these do not directly relate to the previously identified spiritual capacities but suggest it should be easy to make connections. This disjunction between the apparent model and the practical suggestions is common in the literature. The desire to foster spirituality does not direct the development of the curriculum. Despite the rhetoric of many defences of the spiritual in education, the curriculum is the ‘given’, and the spiritual qualities are characterised ex post facto. Spirituality is deduced from the activity, rather than activities being derived from the desired spiritual quality. Nevertheless, specific curricular suggestions include much

551 These are included in the general list above.
552 Kent SACRE. (1999), op. cit., pp.21-22.
553 ibid, p.24.
554 ibid, p.24.
555 Art, business education and vocational subjects, design and technology, drama, English, geography, history, information and communications technology, mathematics, modern languages, music, physical education, religious education, and science. [ibid, pp.26-32.]
that is uncontroversially related to spirituality and obviously arise from a genuine attempt to address that aspect of human life. They also include much that is disputable, as though trying to include everything they can under the rubric of spirituality. (See Appendix 5.)

Many suggestions are expressly related to religion or tradition ideas of spirituality, and not only in Religious Education. The thoughtfulness of those who have developed so rich and comprehensive a set of goals directed towards spirituality is impressive, even if their connection to prior definitions and theorising is less than transparent. These suggestions are supplemented by others less clearly focussed on that area but which use language suggestive of traditional ideas of spirituality. Sometimes they slide into common usage, for example, ‘inspired’ has alternative numinous and qualitative connotations and the latter seems to be the primary intent. Perhaps the emphasis on ‘questioning’ is also seen as spiritual, though the issues being questioned seldom are.

The association of spirituality with values is strongly reflected; in particular, tolerance of differences and cross-cultural understanding are emphasised. Valued personal qualities are instanced, primarily related to discipline. Such emphases on tolerant understanding and self-discipline, though worthy in themselves, have more to do with social and institutional goals than with the nature of spirituality. Emotions and feelings are identified as part of spirituality, as is the liberal value of self-expression. A collection of suggestions centre around ideas of competence or achievement and a related group addresses communication. Some seem to be directed at the nature of, or at social and conceptual issues within a subject. It is much easier to identify many of these suggestions with worthwhile comprehensive education, than with the development of spirituality.

Other areas
Kent SACRE then considers other areas of school life; environmental education, collective worship, the ethos of the school, teaching and learning strategies, and relationships between staff and pupils.\textsuperscript{556}

\textsuperscript{556} ibid, pp.33-34.
In the area of environmental education one finds the same mixture of direct references to spirituality and more marginal concerns. (See Appendix 5.)

The comments on collective worship are directed to giving opportunity for 'inwardness'; stillness, receptivity to students' inner world, and experience of their spirits' deepest concerns. This is offset by a single reference to 'community' without explaining how this community is to be engendered. While all have the opportunity to consider the value of religious belief, prayer and worship, pupils are only to offer worship or prayer, "...if they wish to do so". This vitiates the concept of 'collective' worship and voids 'community' of meaning. In discussing worship, the document is in conflict with its own definition of spiritual development, referring to the human spirit, not as a reflection of the individual, but as a single corporate entity: "...the human spirit and the earth on which it dwells". 557 There is no elaboration of this idea.

The section on the ethos of the school is confused. Unlike other non-curriculum areas, ‘ethos’ is not described as providing opportunities for spiritual development, but only as being ‘displayed’. Most comments merely nominate areas of school life, 558 without offering advice. Three do imply a preferred ethos: “the celebration of individual and collective success”; “the extent to which pupils believe they are listened to...”; “the extent to which bullying is treated with the utmost seriousness”. Specification of the preferred qualities of these three makes more sense in terms of contemporary social attitudes in ed-care than in spiritual terms.

With the exception of, “questions about meaning purpose and value to be addressed in different curriculum subjects”, “consideration of ultimate questions in different contexts”, and perhaps, “times for quiet, stillness and silent reflection ...”, the suggested pedagogical strategies are what one would expect of a sound liberal education: active learning, personal response, building self-esteem, pupil-staff communication, pupil-pupil communication, flexible spontaneity in response to opportunity.

557 ibid, p.33.
558 "...Ways in which the school helps pupils deal with difficulties such as conflicts with others and grief and loss ...; values and attitudes promoted; the school culture; staff attitudes to pupils; pupils' attitude to staff; the way pupils interact in the playground; attitudes towards visitors; the management of pupils' behaviour; the way that conflicts are resolved; systems for rewards and sanctions; the pastoral system; admissions; home-school links."
In relationships between staff and pupils, the former are enjoined to, "take seriously the need to develop a child's spirit as well as its mind, heart and body and learn about ways in which this can be achieved." Avoiding gendered language by resorting to the impersonal pronoun when referring to a child shows some blinkering of sensitivity to the spiritual impact of language usage. The other advice is what one would expect in any treatment of such relationships: having regard for school ethos; taking responsibility as rôle models; encouraging and inspiring pupils; and trusting, respecting and listening to them.

Summary

Summarising, Kent SACRE identifies five 'Ps': make it a PRIORITY; involve the whole school in PLANNING; produce a whole school POLICY; think about the needs of the whole PUPIL; and think about the PRINCIPLE involved. That principle is formulated as:

Promoting spiritual development involves takes seriously [sic] the educational principle that schools should be concerned about:

1. the development of the whole child
2. the formation of character
3. learning about and learning from spiritual traditions
4. the development of pupils' beliefs and values.

It is instructive to see how far these differ from the definition with which Kent SACRE started.

IDEAS FOR NURTURING THE SPIRIT FROM AN AMERICAN MONTESSORIAN Wolf writes to reinforce the commitment of American Montessori staff to the emphasis on spirituality in Montessori's original vision. To study the extent to which other influences have accreted to Wolf's ideas about spirituality is beyond the scope of this study, but one can identify elements of Steiner's thought, of indigenous spirituality, and of 'folk' spirituality mediated through anecdotes of other ed-carers. Her approach is eclectic.

As intimated earlier, the spiritually aware adult is central to Wolf's program. Consequently, it is vital to nourish the spirit of the ed-carer. This is accomplished by:
1. **mindfulness**: “...periodically stopping our random thoughts and giving full attention to what we are doing at that instant”. She advocates the practice of ‘mindful breathing’ which, “...reminds us that we are alive”.  

2. **meditation**: “...deep prolonged focussing on a particular word or theme”. This meditation may be transcendental or, “for people of faith”, religious. Wolf notes that:

In some schools the staff meditates together before the children arrive. Nina Brown, director of the Hollow Reed School, writes, “When we meet to meditate each morning our purpose is to relax, to centre ourselves and to draw on our inner resources to meet the day in our most positive way.” It also brings about a feeling of unity and connection among staff members.

3. **controlled movement**: Yoga and t’ai chi are recommended. She quotes Sidwell, who teaches t’ai chi to education students: “A mind / body reconnection in the individual ... is the first and necessary step towards the creation of a spiritual dimension in education - one which ultimately connects the centred individual to the universe.”

4. **self-understanding**: Wolf cites Powell’s assertion that spirituality, “...begins with self-knowing, with being aware of one’s thoughts, desires, fears, motivations; in short, the whole machinery of the mind”, and recommends a simplified form of the Myers-Briggs Inventory, the Enneagram, or Transactional Analysis to assist in the process.

5. **religious roots**: Exploration of one’s childhood religious faith is recommended using a series of questions she devised. She notes one Montessori teacher’s ‘conversion’ through this process, “...from the superficiality of her present religious affiliation to the actual spiritual treasures in its own scriptural origins.”

6. **familiarity with other educational movements that are concerned with spirituality**: By this Wolf means ‘Holistic Education’, ‘Waldorf Education’ and ‘Quaker Education’.

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560 ibid, p.43.
561 ibid, p.44.
563 ibid, p.46.
Wolf dedicates a chapter to strongly advocating the importance of community in the ed-care setting. Community may be achieved by working together on a common project, Outward Bound trust programs, community building workshops, staff retreats, and discussions. She then presents a developed program for nurturing children’s spirituality

_Cultivating stillness_ 564

The nature of the _group silence game_ and the _individual silence game_ is self-evident, differing only in the number of children involved. _Position cards_ require children to emulate for one minute a sequence of pictured poses which, “...in a general way suggests reverence and care”. 565 _Quiet corners_ are places where children can simply sit and look at “a few of nature’s wonders”. 566 This can be extended to an _Outdoor quiet space_ or _Quiet garden_. More complex is the _Japanese rock garden activity_, a sand-tray where children are encouraged to build a miniature display of rocks following a “cultural study of Japan”. They are told: “This is a work for one person, There are no watchers allowed. It is a good work to do when you want some quiet time to yourself.” 567

_Developing wonder_ 568

Wolf addresses this in two chapters. The first deals with nature and does not propose specific ‘activities’. Rather wonder is engendered by reflective exposure to the natural world. She calls attention to sky watching, playground nature walks, spaces to observe seasonal change, bird watching including devices to attract birds, planting, and visiting trees. These actions are supplemented by reflective questioning, discussion and expression of the adults’ own feelings. In the second chapter, about the classroom, the activities are more specific: the use of a prism to observe the spectrum of light; using numbers to introduce ‘infinity’; making snowflakes; planting; raising doves; discussing the death of a pet, and raising butterflies. In each case the true dynamic is the questioning and explanation by the ed-carer.

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564 _ibid_, pp.59-68.
565 _ibid_, p.64.
566 _ibid_, p.65.
568 _ibid_, pp.71-87.
Cosmic Education\textsuperscript{569}

Cosmic education derives from Montessori who said, "Let us give the child a vision of the whole universe ... for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity."\textsuperscript{570} This is a ‘cosmic’ vision, that term preferred to ‘universe’ because, “the word cosmos implies a plan in which all nature and all people are part of its unfolding”.\textsuperscript{571} This is not a divine teleology but an evolutionary process in which ‘Life’ both is and has its own purpose.\textsuperscript{572} “This universe is a single multiform unfolding of matter, mind, intelligence, and life.”\textsuperscript{573} If we teach children to see the cosmos in this light, certain outcomes may be expected: ‘peace’ because to harm others is to harm ourselves; ‘conservation’ because, “...there is only one universe - home to us all”; ‘values’ because “...we make it possible for the universe to know and feel itself through our awareness”; ‘hope’ because of evolutionary progressivism; ‘gratitude’ “...for the billions of years of evolutionary labour that gave us human life and the thousands of years of human labour that gave us modern technology”; ‘openness’ because evolution is ongoing; and a ‘cosmic task’ because they belong to an entity much greater than themselves in which they can play an important part.\textsuperscript{574}

Encouraging care of the earth\textsuperscript{575}

The primary foci of this part of the program are discussion of conservation with the children and involving them in simple ‘green’ activities. The examples Wolf provides include: keeping a worm box to produce vermicompost for the gardens at the setting; reducing waste by utilising washable rather than disposable materials and using the reverse side of paper; observing how long different substances take to decompose; putting up conservation signs and pledging allegiance to the Earth.

\textsuperscript{569} \textit{ibid}, pp.89-97.


\textsuperscript{571} \textit{ibid}, p.90.

\textsuperscript{572} Though Wolf only refers to him once and without reference, there is a clear conceptual debt to Teilhard de Chardin.


\textsuperscript{574} \textit{ibid}, pp.93-96.

\textsuperscript{575} \textit{ibid}, pp.99-107.
Wolf strongly advocates the value of teaching peace, and suggests that ed-carers seek their own peace and model a peaceful way of living. Her three suggestions for peace activities are consistent with some aspects of humanistic education. The first is that the ed-carer reduce stress. She cites examples of relaxation exercises including guided visualisation similar to Garth’s approach described above, yoga and focussing attention inwards. The second is building self-love. The examples she gives are somewhat banal; a box containing a mirror where children can see the most important person in the world, a ‘child of the week’ display, using an ‘I spy’ game to name helpful children, insisting children’s proper names are used, and birthday celebrations. The third is to get in touch with inner goodness where she recommends Garth’s meditations, an unpublished equivalent developed by a Montessori teacher, and singing This little light of mine. She then argues that the most important aspect of peace education is to build a peaceful community in the classroom. She suggests a number of ways to foster this. In Who is missing children sit in a circle and identify whose picture has been removed from a full set of their photographs. The Medicine Wheel utilises a Sioux icon revealed in a vision and used by the occasional therapist to focus the process of healing. This icon incorporates a tree to which children can attach a flower after an act of kindness. The iconic metaphors, ‘the black road of difficulty’ and ‘the red road of peace’ are used to interpret children’s behaviour to them and exhort them to behave peaceably. The Peace rose is a silk flower which conflicting children grip while expressing how they feel about the conflict and then hold together to declare peace. Another unnamed activity uses vinyl balls named for emotions to demonstrate to children that though they may be unable to avoid having feelings, they can choose what they do with them. Building bridges out of walls is a ‘drama’ where two children build a wall between them and pretend not to like each other but then take the same blocks and build a bridge while the rest of the children sing the song which gives the activity its name. In what is almost a discursion Wolf advocates the acquisition of virtues as a road to a community of peace and the use of the golden rule to shape children’s behaviour. Each day’s peace-making behaviour can be reported at a ‘closing ceremony’ and recorded in the Good heart journal. Working cooperatively on a shared project is another way to build

a community of peace. Her final suggestion is the use of a recitation where children both express empathy for others and invite them to work together for peace.

From this point on Wolf's ideas become less thematic and more fragmentary. She supports parental involvement and appreciating different cultures. She believes children should learn about injustice and participate in celebrations. They should study *Haiku* and the centre should have classical environmental music and fine art reproductions at child eye level. Artistic creativity will flow from meditation and should be experienced in joy.

**Summary**

Wolf's approach is a combination of high minded sentiments and activities which range from the truly creative to the frankly jejune. Unlike the Kent document, it is clear that the desire to nurture spirituality drives the development of the curriculum activities. This may be easier in the 'informal' curriculum of early childhood settings and especially in Montessori schools, than in a state system for older children. Where there is already a long tradition of discipline based curriculum development, thematically based ideas tend to be grafted onto the existing stock rather than becoming new rootstock. However, the mystical nature of the romantic concept of spirituality does not lend itself to specific curricular components. Most activities relate to engendering quiet contemplation and meditation with the ed-carer in the rôle of guru, guiding the contemplation, questioning to elicit insight and dispensing personal wisdom. It might function beside the rest of the curriculum but it is tangential to what is usually taught in settings, rather than readily integrated with it.

**CONCLUSION**

If one impression emerges from the literature it must be the lack of consensus either between or within putative models. At root is the failure to scrutinise ontological assumptions and to have concepts of spirituality and spiritual development that arise out of a defensible metaphysic. Without this, definitions become arbitrary and idiosyncratic and there is no basis for resolving whether people are trying to develop the same attribute. Equally, proposed implications for the practice of ed-care cannot be demonstrated to achieve what they claim. McCreery's question is pertinent: "How do
we know that we are developing the spiritual?" In this context, to look for a credible understanding of spiritual development is pointless.

Consequently, in the next two chapters, biblical concepts of spirituality, childhood and spiritual development will be examined to provide a definition of the relevant concepts, an ontological basis for such definitions, a foundation for linking spirituality to a theory of development, and a perspective on the rôle of spirituality in systems of ed-care.

CHAPTER 3. THE NATURE OF SPIRITUALITY

"...Educationists are not generally aware of the rich heritage of thought about spirituality in Christian faith and practice." In this chapter the following thesis will be defended: That the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures provide an understanding of spirituality which is developmental and incorporates spirituality both related and unrelated to the Christian faith community. This will be done by a comprehensive review of biblical references to spirituality organised to indicate what entities are described in spiritual terms, the moral polarity of spirituality, and the dynamics and contingencies of spiritual encounters. This will lead to the proposition of a set of definitions for spiritually relevant terms.

SPIRITUALITY AS PARADOX

A distinctive of the biblical understanding of 'spirit' is the paradox evident in the account of a conversation beside a rural well between Jesus and a woman from a different spiritual tradition. (John 4:5-24) Though God, as spirit, is transcendent and separate from the material world, nevertheless he can be known through the doctrine of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

" 'I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship' ". (4:19-20) The audience would recognise the centuries old dispute between Jews and Samaritans which, on both sides, presumed a nexus between the Divine and a

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578 Hill indicates that: "...the Bible doesn't use the word spirituality at all. But it does talk in many places about the human spirit, and there are many references in the New Testament to the 'spiritual' person, 'spiritual things', and 'spiritual gifts.' We need at this point to distinguish between two uses of the words 'spirit' and 'spiritual': one to point to something about human nature as such, and two, to refer to the person who is consciously seeking God and turning away from sinful practices. The first usage is descriptive; the second, evaluative." [Hill, B. V. (1997), op. cit., p.3.] Throughout this dissertation the former usage will be applied.


580 Names marked with an asterisk, e.g., Matthew*, refer to the implied author. Implied reporters, authors and audiences are similarly indicated.

particular material locale. Jesus neither denied the validity of her spirituality nor retreated from the Jewish assertion that the Samaritans failed to understand that spirituality. He asserted that there was truth and ignorance in different ways of expressing humanity’s spiritual aspirations.

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. (4:22)

However, he radically shifted the focus of the conversation.

Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. (4:21)

But the hour will come—in fact it is here already—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants.

God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. (4:23-24)

To a person focussing on the tangible trappings of worship, Jesus emphasised that God’s nature transcends such matters. He contrasted her focus on the material with the essence of God the Father, which he identified as fundamentally spiritual. The Greek highlights this point by placing ‘spirit’ first in the clause “God is spirit” (pneuma o theos.) He told her of an imminent time when people would offer spiritual and true worship, untramelled by physical inessentials and freed from the errors of ignorance.

This dual emphasis, that God is spirit and not part of the physical world, and yet, that he can be truly known and worshipped by physical beings, is woven into the very fabric of Scripture. From the beginning God is depicted as simultaneously transcendent and personally immanent. God whose existence antedates the physical-temporal cosmos (Genesis 1:1) forbade the creation of material images for worship but revealed the truth about himself to his people with such intimacy that they were to address him by name rather than divine title. (Exodus 20:1-4) This emphasis is there to the end. The author* of Hebrews comments that “What you have come to is nothing known to the senses”, and consequently is spiritual, and he contrasts “shakeable” created things with the “unshakeable” divine kingdom his readers now know, though they cannot observe it in their current material state. He calls on them to “worship God in the way that he finds acceptable, in reverence and fear”. (Hebrews 12:18-29). While not denying that worship within other religious traditions may partially express spiritual truth, Christians maintain
that their understanding of the spiritual is ontologically true and the yardstick against which those other traditions are to be measured.

John* represented Jesus as affirming a further distinctive of the biblical understanding of spirit: the more complex paradox that, though God was spirit, his Spirit was separate and distinct. Jesus introduced the idea of God as a tri-unity of Father, Son and Spirit. The teaching occurred as part of a question and answer session with his remaining disciples shortly before his execution. (John 13:31-14:31) Philip said: "Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied". (14:8)

Jesus first identified himself with the Father, "...to have seen me is to have seen the Father". (14:9-15) He continued:

I shall ask the Father
and he will give you another Advocate
to be with you forever,
that Spirit of truth
whom the world can never receive
since it neither sees nor knows him;
but you know him,
because he is with you, he is in you. (14:16-17)

He then identified this Spirit who was with them, yet was still to be given, with himself.

I will not leave you orphans;
I will come back to you.
In a short time the world will no longer see me;
but you will see me,
because I live and you will live. (14:18-19)\[583\]

Just as Jesus identified himself with the Father, yet was separate from him; so, while God was spirit, his Spirit was distinct and capable of personalisation. Similarly, though separate from Jesus, the Spirit of God was also identified with him.

It is worth noting another paradox about how God’s Spirit relates to humans that Jesus posed here. The Spirit was yet to be ‘given’ to the disciples, yet they already knew him

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582 Conomos cautions that this separateness should always be qualified by the term ‘hypostatically’. (Personal communication.) I have no quarrel with his theological point but it is an attempt to reconcile the paradox created by the practice of speaking of the Holy Spirit as distinct.

583 MacLeod argues that Jesus is referring to his resurrection appearances but the phrase ‘...not leave you orphans’ suggests a more permanent return. [MacLeod, A. J. (1954), op. cit., p.891.]
because he was in them. This tension is central to the argument presented in this dissertation as to how children interact with the same Spirit.

**THE NATURE OF ‘SPIRIT’ AS APPLIED TO GOD**

If God is ‘spirit’, the meaning of that term requires exploration. The recent rise of Pentecostal streams of Christianity has focussed attention on the Holy Spirit treated as almost separate from the other hypostases of the Godhead. Yet monotheism is the defining tenet of Christianity, one which it shares with Islam and with Judaism, from which it evolved. “Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one Yahweh”. (Deuteronomy 6:4) There is but one God, and God is one.

Orthodox thinking never allows divisions between members of the Godhead. The experienced presence described by Christians as the ‘Spirit of God’, is involved in all the works of God and does not act independently of ‘the Father’, nor of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of your Father” (Matthew 10:20) and “the Spirit of his Son” (Galatians 4:6), “the Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9), “the Spirit of Jesus (Christ)” (Philippians 1:19) and “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7).

Arguments about whether it is a separate ‘person’ reflect Western thought forms foreign to Scripture which never refers to the Spirit in terms that might be translated as ‘person’. That the Spirit is ‘personal’ is required if God is personal; that is, self-aware and entering into relationships with other self-aware beings. However, to use the term ‘person’ risks a subtle temptation to humanise the Divine Being. Human persons may be made “in the image of God”, (Genesis 1:27) but God is not limited to the confines of being human. That the Spirit’s activity should be understood, even subconsciously, as constrained by the characteristics of human personhood is a significant departure from biblical pneumatology.

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585 Here ‘Spirit of God’ and ‘Spirit of Christ’ are used together in a way which indicates their equivalence.

586 ‘Christ’ is in the Greek though inexplicably omitted by the Jerusalem translators.

587 This identification with Jesus is also indicated by the use of *parakletos*, the description of the one who was to come in Jesus place, and also to describe Jesus in 1 John 2:1.
Scripture is vivid and varied in its depiction of ‘spirit’. The words so translated are ‘ruach’\textsuperscript{588} in Hebrew (used 378 times) and ‘pneuma’ in Greek (used 220 times). Alternative translations attest to biblical writers’ connotations of the spiritual. Both words are open to a wide variety of interpretations, not unlike the English word ‘spirit’, though the basic meaning is dynamic moving air.\textsuperscript{589} Eichrodt says: “...in the blowing of the wind and in the rhythm of human respiration the ancients detected a divine mystery, and saw in this element of Nature, at once so near to them and yet so incomprehensible, a symbol of the mysterious nearness and activity of the divine.”\textsuperscript{590} Kamlah catches the phenomenology well: “The idea behind ruah is the extraordinary fact that something as intangible as air should move; at the same time it is not so much the movement per se which excites attention, but rather the energy manifested by such movement.”\textsuperscript{591} That two unrelated language groups should tie these meanings together suggests the underlying phenomena have a coherence whose apprehension transcends cultural boundaries. Latin partially maintains this grouping. “‘Spirit’ originates from the Latin spiritus, ‘breath, breath of god, inspiration’, and from spirare, ‘to breathe’ (Ilson 1984)...”\textsuperscript{592} The Jerusalem version\textsuperscript{593} translates ruach nearly thirty different ways and pneuma about fifteen. These form eight groups of closely related ideas:\textsuperscript{594}

- The atmosphere and its movements: ‘air’, ‘breeze’, ‘gust’ and ‘wind’;\textsuperscript{595}
- More tempestuous atmospheric events used only for ruach: ‘gale’ and ‘storm’;\textsuperscript{596}

\textsuperscript{588} ‘ruah’ in some texts.


\textsuperscript{591} Kamlah, E., Dunn, J. D. G. & Brown, C. (1978), \textit{op. cit.}, p.690.

\textsuperscript{592} Westrup, J. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.106.

\textsuperscript{593} Which is used as the basis for this study unless otherwise indicated.

\textsuperscript{594} Cf., Congar, Y. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.3. “The word ruah occurs 378 times in the Old Testament and these occurrences can be divided into three roughly equal groups. It is used in the first place to denote wind or a breath of air. Secondly, it is used for the force that vivifies man - the principle of life or breath and the seat of knowledge and feeling. Finally, it indicates the life of God himself, the force by which he acts and causes action, both at the physical and at the ‘spiritual’ level.” Though useful, Congar’s summary fails to capture all the nuances of the term and conveys too strong a sense of distinctive uses.

\textsuperscript{595} Genesis 8:1; Jeremiah 2:24; 14:6; Proverbs 25:14; Hebrews 1:7.
• ‘Inhalation’ and ‘exhalation’; again a sense of moving air which may tend to be violent: ‘blast’ and ‘breath’ (sometimes).  


• Terms with ‘being alive’ as their core meaning: ‘breath’ (sometimes), ‘life’ and (ruach only) ‘breath of life’ and ‘vigour’.

• A person’s core or inner being: ‘heart’, ‘mind’, ‘spirit’, and (pneuma only) ‘inwardly’ and ‘soul’.

• At times the word remains untranslated and represents the essence, or heightens the sense, of the following word: ‘Spirit of ability’ becomes ‘ability’ or ‘spirit of disturbance’ becomes ‘deeply disturbed’. This large and diverse group includes: (for ruach) ‘ability’, ‘be humble’, ‘be out of patience’, ‘bitter disappointment’, ‘cool’, ‘despondency’, ‘be hasty’, ‘I’, ‘in great trouble’, ‘lacking self-control’, ‘living’, ‘master of himself’, ‘trustworthy’, ‘was deeply disturbed’, and (for pneuma) ‘are unanimous’, ‘has no more worries’ and ‘was a soothsayer’.

Some translations are not easily classified: ‘prediction’, ‘side’ and ‘spiritual gifts’.

In three other translations from different backgrounds consulted to guard against idiosyncratic translation patterns, the range of alternative renderings was equally wide. They even added new variations: ‘arrogance’, ‘body’, ‘feelings’, ‘knowledge’.
‘power’, ‘strength’ and ‘whirlwind’. Moreover, the four translations were inconsistent in a high proportion of cases. Six of the more interesting divergences reveal how imprecise the meaning is:

‘courage’ (TEV), ⇒ ‘heart’ (AV), ⇒ ‘spirit’ (I, NIV);
‘heart’ (I, NIV), ⇒ ‘knowledge’ (TEV), ⇒ ‘spirit’ (AV);
‘breath’ (J), ⇒ ‘wind’ (TEV), ⇒ ‘spirit’ (AV, NIV);
‘blast’ (J), ⇒ ‘power’ (TEV), ⇒ ‘spirit’ (AV, NIV);
‘ability’ (TEV), ⇒ ‘mind’ (NIV), ⇒ ‘spirit’ (I, AV);
‘breath’ (TEV), ⇒ ‘ghost’ (AV), ⇒ ‘spirit’ (I, NIV). 605

It is obviously unwise to be dogmatic about the precise English equivalent of either word, though pneuma seems to be more consistently translated as ‘spirit’. Nevertheless, it is possible to paint in broad brush strokes the sort of encounters people identified with the words translated as ‘spirit’. Four definite sets of connotations are evident:

1. First is a sense of mysterious yet discernible presence at once immanent and evanescent. This presence is in everything but eludes any attempt to hold on to it.
2. The second connotation is of unpredictable dynamism.
3. Third is the impression of a person’s intimate nature; their strong feelings and emotions.
4. Fourth is the sense of touching the life or essential being of something.

Dunn summarises biblical usage of pneuma thus: “...pneuma denotes that power which man experiences as relating him to the spiritual realm, the realm of reality which lies beyond ordinary observation and human control.” 606 All of these connotations find echoes in the words of Jesus once more recorded by John*.

I tell you most solemnly,
unless a man is born through water and the Spirit (pneumatos),
he cannot enter the kingdom of God:
what is born of the flesh is flesh;
what is born of the Spirit (pneumatos) is spirit (pneuma).
Do not be surprised when I say:

605 Joshua 5:1; Judges 15:19; Psalms 76:12; Proverbs 1:23; 17:27; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Isaiah 4:4; 25:4; 37:7; Jeremiah 14:6; Ezekiel 11:5; Daniel 5:12; Matthew 27:50; Mark 2:8; John 11:33; Philippians 1:27.

You must be born from above.
The wind (pneuma) blows wherever it pleases;
you hear its sound,
but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit (pneumatos). (John 3:5-8)

The subtlety of Jesus’ statement is lost in English. ‘Wind’ and ‘spirit’ can be
interchanged at each of the five uses of pneuma or pneumatos. Without
capitalisation in the original, its use in the English translation to indicate reference to the
Holy Spirit is theologically driven. The statement’s enigmatic nature would have been
even more striking as originally spoken in Jesus’ native Aramaic.

A refinement is to consider only instances of use of ruach and pneuma specifically
associated with the Divine, having first decided whether a use of the terms should be so
ascribed. On this, the four translations consulted differed repeatedly, to the extent that
the ascription of adjacent references was occasionally reversed.

There was a divergence between renderings of ruach and pneuma. In the Jerusalem,
examples of all eight connotations were ascribed to God when translating ruach.
Pneuma was consistently translated as ‘Spirit’, the only exceptions being Revelation
11:11 (‘breathed’) which echoes Ezekiel 37, and John 3:8, as mentioned above.
Theological considerations appear to lie behind the translators’ decisions preferentially
to personalise the dynamic activity of God in the NT compared to the Old by using
‘Spirit’ rather than ‘wind’ or ‘breath’.

The alternative connotations are certainly present in the NT. In John 20:22 where Jesus
breathed (emphusao) on the disciples and said, “Receive the holy pneuma”. At
Pentecost, there is “a powerful wind (pnoe) from heaven” associated with a visitation of
the Spirit. (Acts 2:2-3) Elsewhere the Spirit is associated with motivation, power, as aspects of personality, life and mind.

[607 This despite Smalley’s unequivocal assertion that in 3:8 “Wind is the correct translation”.
p.1212.]

[608 Genesis 6:3; Numbers 27:18; Job 32:8; 34:14; Psalm 104:30; Micah 2:11; Ezekiel 1:12,20, [Cf.,
Romans 2:29; 7:6; 8:5; 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 John 4:1,2,3; Jude 19.

[609 The Johannine and Acts accounts of the giving of the Spirit can be seen to contradict each other.
There are several ways to resolve the contradiction without denying the validity of either. John]
The need for circumspection about the meaning of the terms is evident in the different cast Johnston gives the outcome of a similar analysis:

Some of the principal ideas were as follows:
(a) The Spirit is sent forth by God in the act of creation and in maintaining human life ...
(b) Extraordinary endowments of body or leadership for God’s people is due to the ‘invasion’ of the Spirit ...
(c) Wisdom and discernment are especially gifts of the Spirit ...
(d) Prophecy is a characteristic mark of the Spirit’s presence among men.\(^{615}\)

That *ruach* and *pneuma* are expressed by a variety of English words should not disguise their conceptual unity for speakers of Hebrew and Greek. Certainly they differentiated types of *ruach / pneuma* as English speakers differentiate types of love; a gentle ‘*ruach*’ was different from a fierce ‘*ruach*’, a personal ‘*ruach*’ different from an ‘*East ruach*’. But just as in English the forms of love have a common quality, so would Hebrews and Greeks have interpreted all *ruach* and all *pneuma*. Spirit, breath, wind, etc., were not qualitatively different phenomena as they are for Anglophones. However, even for them, the relationship makes sense, as illustrated by a respondent to Hardy:

As far back as I can remember there has been a sweet, cool presence in and around me ... It is in me, it knows about me and I belong to it, but it is not a Person, so that praying in words seems crude. I prefer to ‘inhale it’ at prayer time, or at quiet moments in the day.\(^{616}\)

**THE SPIRIT’S PLACE IN THE GODHEAD**

It is hard to avoid assigning independent rôles to different hypostases of the Trinity, thus limiting their spheres of activity. However, in Scripture, no function is ascribed to

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611 Luke 4:14; Acts 1:8; Romans 15:3.
612 John 14:17; Romans 14:7; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:21.
613 John 6:63; Romans 8:2; 2 Corinthians 3:6.
614 1 Corinthians 2:11-16.
one hypostasis which is not elsewhere attributed to the others. For instance, God’s *ruach* or *pneuma* was depicted as active in creation and providence, in assurance, empowerment, evangelism, fellowship, incarnation, judgment, redemption, restoration, revelation, and sanctification.\(^{617}\) Nevertheless, there was a preferential tendency to associate different hypostases with particular forms of divine activity.

God’s activity in creative, providential, magisterial or imperial form was most often attributed to the Father. God’s rôle in sacrificial, redemptive, fraternal and companionable form was usually attributed to the Son. When God was experienced as immanent, dynamic and involved directly in people’s lives, or when an experience seemed to express the essence of God’s being, this was preferentially ascribed to God’s Spirit. In particular, the Spirit was seen as revealing God’s will to people, calling them to repentance, declaring the gospel, validating and nurturing faith, and empowering for service. Macquarrie expresses it thus: “The Spirit, in this sense, is not something other than God, but God in that manner of being in which he comes closest, dwells with us, acts upon us.”\(^{618}\) Nevertheless, wherever the Spirit acted, the Father and Son were implicated; nor was any act of God not also identified as an act of the Spirit. This tension is reflected in the division between the Eastern and Western branches of the church.

Western theology has tended to confine the activity of the Creator Spirit to the redemptive realm of the Church, but Eastern Orthodoxy has vigorously challenged this confinement, and contended for both a creative and redemptive work of the Spirit ... creation cannot be excluded as a realm in which the Spirit works.\(^{619}\)

That this spiritual hypostasis of God is active throughout the creation is essential for understanding how its activity is experienced by all human beings, rather than only those within the faith community.

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\(^{617}\) Genesis 1:2 and Nehemiah 9:20; Isaiah 33:11; Numbers 11:25-30 and Mark 12:36; Luke 1:35; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ezekiel 36:27 and Revelations 22:17; Acts 13:2; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 2:1; Galatians 5:16-26; Zechariah 4:6 and Mark 13:11. This assumes, here and below, that these are instances where the reference is specific to the Divine Spirit; this is not always uncontested.


LEVELS OF SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER

Scripture records different kinds of encounter with God’s Spirit. The biblical approach may be illustrated by an analogy. Many people have encountered my wife. For some, the encounter was unrecognised. Her person was mediated through broadcasts she wrote for radio or television, or through reading her books. Some encountered her through training programs she ran. Her influence was direct, but the encounter was limited and the relationship was not reciprocal. Her friends entered into a reciprocal relationship where the encounter was direct, ongoing, developing and mutual. But the marriage encounter has a qualitative intensity and solidarity which separates it from other relationships. It is distinct in its level of commitment and intimacy.

Such an analogy is important to understanding passages like John 7:39: “He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive; for there was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not been glorified.” This could indicate that John held that, prior to the resurrection, people had no experience of God’s Spirit, which would make nonsense of some of Jesus’ own statements and discredit the OT witness. Rather, John was expressing the particular quality of that experience of the Spirit which his audience recognised as exclusive to Christian believers. In this, it is analogous to the marriage relationship. Given previously quoted passages, he did not discount other forms or levels of encounter with the Spirit, of which the Bible identifies four. These are not intended to represent a developmental progression but alternative expressions. Only the first is a pre-requisite for the rest.

FIRST LEVEL OF ENCOUNTER

The Biblical text asserted that to be alive in God’s world was to encounter his Spirit not only through appreciation of the created world but also directly in the very experience of life itself. His presence was inescapable. A direct parallel was drawn between how difficult it was to “...flee from your presence” and to “...escape your Spirit”. (Psalm 139:7) This bedrock of spirituality was never depreciated by comparison with more

621 This analogy is used by Jesus (e.g., Matthew 9:15) and the writer of Revelations (e.g., 21:2,9).
622 Genesis 2:7; Nehemiah 9:20; Job 27:3; Psalms 33:6; 51:11; 104:29-30; Ecclesiastes 11:5-7; Revelations 13:15.
personal or dramatic encounters. It was encountered by all people at all times. It could be ignored, misinterpreted or denied; but it could neither be avoided nor permanently excluded from consciousness.

SECOND LEVEL OF ENCOUNTER

The second pattern of spiritual encounter was direct, profound, overwhelming and temporary. Though details vary, it usually occurred to people God was using, not always of their own volition.\(^{623}\) This Spirit was external to the person: it “begins to move”, “carries away”, “comes down on”, “comes into”, “comes on”, “enters”, “falls on”, “lifts”, “seizes”, “seizes upon”, “takes possession of” and “takes up”. For a short time, it took control of them, inducing them to behave in extraordinary ways or to exercise incredible powers to fulfil a specific purpose of God. As McDermott says: “...many people are touched and influenced by the Holy Spirit but without the Spirit's permanent indwelling.”\(^{624}\) This form of ‘ecstatic’ encounter is evidenced in both Testaments.

THIRD LEVEL OF ENCOUNTER

The third form of recorded spiritual encounter was less intense and more enduring. It occurred primarily to selected individuals in the OT: some craftsmen, Bezalal, Moses, seventy elders, Joshua, David, perhaps Saul, Elijah and Elisha.\(^{625}\) Only John the Baptist is a NT example of this category which seems subsequently to be subsumed into the final form.

FOURTH LEVEL OF ENCOUNTER

McDermott differentiates the final level of encounter from all others in these terms:

... think about the difference between a planet and a star. An unregenerate person, whom Paul calls a “natural man,” is like a planet that reflects the light of the sun but does not have light of its own. If the sun does not shine on it, the planet is dark, because light is not part of its nature. But a star is light by nature. It generates


light. So too, the regenerate produce light and life because they have a light
generator within them - the indwelling Holy Spirit. One could say that the Holy
Spirit works from within a true Christian, but the Spirit acts on a non-Christian
from the outside. 626

The fourth level was ongoing and potentially available to all. Though only described as
occurring in the NT, it was presaged in the prophetic writings of the OT. Isaiah*
depicted this ongoing presence of Spirit as an attribute of the prophesied Messiah. (Isaiah
11:2; 42:1; 61:1) He and others expressed an expectation of a time when this Spirit would
be universally accessible. 627 Luke* identified this future hope as fulfilled at Pentecost.
(Acts 2:17-18) 628 It ushered in a new intimacy with God's Spirit, 629 an affinity open to all
who committed themselves to Jesus. The flames, denoting the divine presence, 630
"...entered into them". 631

This exclusive experience stimulated a new vocabulary to convey the unprecedented
character of this experience. Rather than an irresistible force from outside, the Spirit
was given to, and possessed by, the person. 632 The language implied a comprehensive
and sustained involvement. 633 While they remained distinct, in some sense there had

627 Numbers 11:30; Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 3:1-2; Zechariah 6:8;
12:10.
628 For discussion of some of the details and difficulties in this account see Munck, J. (1967). The Acts
Christianity according to the traditions in Acts: A commentary. Minneapolis: Fortress.
629 "Certain it is that the disciples had an experience of the power of the Spirit flooding their being
Andrews Press, p.15.
630 Bruce, F. F. (1954). Commentary on the Book of the Acts: The English text with introduction,
631 The sense is not that they formed a halo above them. [Conzelmann, H. (1987). Acts of the
632 Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38; 8:15-16; 10:44-47; 15:8; 19:2; Romans 5:5; 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 6:19;
7:40; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Galatians 3:2-5,14; 4:6; Philippians 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 1
Ephesians 2:22; 5:18; 2 Timothy 1:14.
been a synthesis of the believer with the Spirit.\textsuperscript{634} The terminology of interpersonal relationship was also employed.\textsuperscript{635}

Sometimes this new vocabulary was applied to a specific individual, sometimes to all believers but as individuals, and sometimes to believers as a corporate group. The confidence of the early church in depicting their relationship with the divine Spirit is astonishing:

\begin{quote}
We are witnesses to all this, we and the Holy Spirit... (Acts 5:32)

One day while they were offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said... (Acts 13:2)

It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves... (Acts 15:28)

...the Holy Spirit, in town after town, has made it clear enough... (Acts 20:33)
\end{quote}

It is in this context that Hill’s distinction is to be understood:

\begin{quote}
We need at this point to distinguish between two uses of the words ‘spirit’ and ‘spiritual’: one to point to something about human nature as such; and two, to refer to the person who is consciously seeking God and turning away from sinful practices. The first usage is \textit{descriptive}; the second, \textit{evaluative}.\textsuperscript{636}
\end{quote}

Within the early church, spirituality came to be identified less as a general human capacity, Hill’s first usage, more as faithful commitment to the Spirit of Christ, his second.

Christian thinking has usually concentrated on this most profound level of spiritual encounter, though it is often confused with the less permanent infilling for specific tasks. That is, while the guidance of the Spirit is for all and at all times, (Galatians 5:16-6:1) no ‘gift’ of the Spirit is for everyone but each is given to assist with a specific ministry of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) Yet the latter may sometimes be assumed to be as general as the former.

Nevertheless, recognition of this most intimate experience of the Spirit does not exhaust the biblical understanding of the Spirit’s activity with people. A statement by Macquarrie pertains: “The point here is that, just as spirit belongs to all men, so the

\textsuperscript{634} John 3:5-8; Romans 8:16, 26-27; 9:1; Galatians 5:25.

\textsuperscript{635} Romans 8:14-15; 15:30; 2 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

\textsuperscript{636} Hill, B. V. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p..3.
working of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the church or even to the religious community in the broadest sense but may operate powerfully beyond its borders." As previously noted, John* indicated that the disciples’ ability to know the Holy Spirit, when he came as promised by Jesus, was contingent on their prior experience of his presence. Encounters with God’s Spirit precede faith rather than being derivative of it, except, as noted, for the fourth level. Consequently, children outside the Christian community are not excluded from encounters with God’s Spirit.

THE DARKER SIDE OF SPIRITUALITY

In Scripture, *ruach* and *pneuma* are normally positive influences ascribed to a benevolent God. Nevertheless, some encounters with the spiritual were far from positive: “Rather, I take heed from scripture that spirituality is a universal human attribute, and one which may as easily take a turn for the demonic as the divine.” Or, as Kelsey says: “Evil and destructiveness are realities in that [spiritual] world which man also finds when he comes into touch with this realm...” Spirituality is consequently bipolar. Even apparently morally neutral elements of creation either exist as God intended and exercise a positive influence or they are not as God would wish and so their influence is deleterious.

Negative, destructive *ruach / pneuma* were obviously hard for the authors to understand. Early, in the chronicles of the pre-exilic kings, evil *ruach* were occasionally attributed to God and they were never seen as independent spiritual entities able to rival God. Nevertheless, over time, ‘evil’ came to be seen as represented by entities or forces antagonistic to God. This was solidly established by

638 The question of theodicy is beyond the scope of this dissertation and probably intractable. However, the reality of spiritual evil cannot be ignored.
639 Hill, B. V. (1997), *op. cit.*, p.4
641 1 Samuel 16-19; 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 18. [Cf., *ibid.*]
642 Psalm 82; Job 1-2. See Kamlah, E., Dunn, J. D. G. & Brown, C. (1978), *op. cit.*, p.695; Wink, W. (1984), *op. cit.*, p.64; Wink, W. (1986), *op. cit.*, pp.109-112. Wink’s study of the ‘powers’ mentioned in the scriptures is an important contribution to the understanding of spiritual evil, bringing great erudition and detailed scholarship to a field more usually marked by sensationalism and speculation. The scope of his work is far beyond the reach of this dissertation and so, though a number of his conclusions are presented, the full scope of his supportive argument has had to be omitted.
Sometimes, they were sufficiently individual to have names, but this was unusual. More often, even if named, they were devoid of genuine personality or were groups. If they were differentiated, it was by their impact on humans. These entities were not anthropomorphised. They were never described as 'person'. They were not restricted to human modes of activity. Like God, they were primarily experienced as ruach or pneuma, analogous to wind or breath. Moreover, the NT continued to represent these malevolent entities as impersonal powers. Wink explains that:

Modern Christians, for most of whom religion is tantamount to a personal relationship to a personal God, have had difficult appreciating the impersonality of such divinised elements. Translators and commentators insist on treating as animate personal beings what for the ancients were inanimate principles.

'Satan', far from being exclusively the name of an evil spirit, was used of a potential saboteur, of a faction leader, a foreign king and the angel who confronted Balaam. Wink identifies Satan with "the total world-system" which "...is a conspiracy against God".

The Bible is ambiguous about spiritual evil. Achilles states, "The Old Testament has no comprehensive theory of evil"; Bietenhard, "The NT contains no speculations at all about the origin or nature of the devil" and Kelsey, "The Christian has no answer intellectually to the problem of evil." These conclusions are not shared by Wink who


644 Mark 1:13; 3:22; Revelation 9:11.


648 Wink, W. (1984). op. cit., p.75. His extension of this principle to God himself is harder to accommodate to the person of Jesus.


draws heavily on apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, the Septuagint, and contemporary Jewish mysticism to argue that the NT authors* assume a well developed angelology of 'powers' under the rule of Satan and opposed to the work of Christ.\footnote{Wink, W. (1984), \textit{op. cit.} But note that for Wink these 'angels' are impersonal representations of 'powers' represented both in heaven and in earth. These powers vary from ideas to nations.} The argument is highly technical and tendentious. It turns on meanings to be ascribed to the terms \textit{arche, archon, exousia, dynamis, thronos, kyriotes} and \textit{onomata}, and assumptions that their pseudepigraphal use to denote both good and evil angels, which also applies to \textit{pneumata}, translates to a general world view shared by the biblical authors. Wink notes that, "...it is surprising that we find so little clear evidence for [national angels] in the New Testament",\footnote{Matthew 6:13; 12:43-45; 13:19,38-39; Mark 4:15; Luke 11:24-26; John 8:44; 17:15; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:26-27; 6:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 2:18-23.} and indicates that this is true for angelology as a whole. Even if he is right about the assumed world view, the nature of evil was not a major concern of biblical authors*. However, its reality was asserted and vigilance enjoined.\footnote{Kamlah, E., Dunn, J. D. G. & Brown, C. (1978), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.694-695.}

The authors* paid little attention to how the influence of evil was mediated. They described instances of direct intervention. However, there was no close analysis of the broader working of spiritual evil. Though evil spiritual entities were never depicted as coequal with God,\footnote{Numbers 5:14, 30; Mark 9:17-18; Luke 8:29; 9:39.} they were able to counteract God in their influence on people. There were references to pervasive spiritual evil,\footnote{Mark 1:23; 5:2; 7:25; Luke 4:33; 13:11; Acts 16:16-18.} to evil spirits which seized upon people,\footnote{Hosea 4:12; 5:4; Zechariah 13:2; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 4:1-6.} and to ongoing possession.\footnote{Hosea 4:12; 5:4; Zechariah 13:2; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 4:1-6.} However, there was no parallel to the sense of intimacy and identification used to describe the believer's relationship to the Holy Spirit.

The biblical authors* were concerned with what God's Spirit was doing in the world. Spiritual evil might mar that, but not finally prevent it. Humanity's emphasis was not to
be on directly confronting the forces of evil.\textsuperscript{659} Evil was resisted by the denial implicit in personal and corporate commitment to good.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive biblical understanding of children’s spiritual development must take seriously the existence and influence of spiritual evil. Anecdotal accounts are easy to find.\textsuperscript{660} Kelsey says:

Evil and destructiveness are realities in that [spiritual] world which man also finds when he comes into touch with this realm ...

...by avoiding the reality of evil, the church ... fails to deal with the realities of man’s inner life, and so it does not speak to modern man in the dark night of the soul. It does not deal with man.\textsuperscript{661}

Scriptural spirituality is ethically bipolar, even though the focus is primarily on one pole. So it is necessary to consider not just whether one fosters a child’s spirit, but also in what direction it will develop. As Merton says: “The spiritual director ... must teach others to ‘discern’ between good and evil tendencies, to distinguish the inspiration of the spirit of evil from those of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{662}

This assumes that people are spiritual, an assumption needing to be justified.

\textbf{PEOPLE AS SPIRITUAL}

\textbf{THE HUMAN SPIRIT}

The biblical authors* utilise three basic concepts to reflect their perception of people. They were aware of humans as ‘body’; as material entities of flesh and substance.\textsuperscript{663} They were also aware of humans as ‘animate’; as thinking, feeling and desiring personalities.\textsuperscript{664} However, something about humans set them apart from the merely physical or organic. They recognised a third quality for which they used \textit{ruach} and \textit{pneuma}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{659} This is the temptation of ‘white’ magic. My assertion is contrary to Wink’s exegesis of Ephesians 6:12-17, where he interprets the ‘armour’ as offensive as well as defensive, but the difference is semantic.
  \item \textsuperscript{661} Kelsey, M. (1972), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.149-150 and see his argument there.
  \item \textsuperscript{662} Merton, T. (1987), \textit{op. cit.}, p.17.
  \item \textsuperscript{663} Expressed by such terms as \textit{basar, gevivyah, geshem, etsem, sarx} and \textit{soma}.
  \item \textsuperscript{664} Expressed by such terms as \textit{nepesh} and \textit{psyche}, though both terms are complex and themselves derivative of ‘breath’. [Brown, C. (1978). \textit{yun}. In C. Brown (Ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 3, pp.676-682.]
\end{itemize}
According to the book of Genesis, the spiritual dimension of human existence was constituted by God breathing his own Spirit into humanoid creatures, so that they were thereby "...made in the image of God." (Genesis 1:26,27;2:7) This suggests that the spiritual domain is the plane on which we experience kinship with God (or its obverse, alienation from God).\[665\]

Thatcher is more personal: "I am a spiritual being because I am constituted ontologically by my Maker to be open to and formed by others as others are open to and formed by me: in being constituted this way I am also open to and open to be formed by God."\[666\] When John* reported Jesus saying, "...what is born of the Spirit is spirit", he was calling attention to the nature of humanity as spiritual because it derived life from the breath of God: "Spirit is present in and constitutive of man, as well as God."\[667\] As mysterious as its source, the human spirit was the essence of the person and yet distinct; was from God and yet could deny him; was extinguished at death and yet lived on.\[668\] The authors* never interpreted this 'spirit' as the 'divine' or 'eternal' component of the person in contrast to the mortal body and personality, as was common in Hellenistic thinking.\[669\] They distinguish these aspects for convenience, but it was the whole person who was the focus of God's attention. "May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23) In marked contrast to many recent definitions of spirituality, "The term spirit is never used for that higher quality in man which distinguishes him from the beasts."\[670\]

It is important to recognise the emphasis on the indivisibility of the human person as the subject of God’s care to exclude any tendency to treat physical and psychological well-being as irrelevant to spirituality. Despite later church attitudes affected by Hellenistic dualism, in biblical thinking a person’s spirit was not independent of their body or


\[667\] Macquarrie, J. (1993), op. cit., p.43.

\[668\] Genesis 45:27; Numbers 16:22; Job 17:1; Psalms 104:29; Proverbs 18:14; Isaiah 42:5; Ezekiel 37:5-10; Zechariah 12:1; Malachi 2:15-16; Matthew 27:50; Luke 8:55; Acts 7:59; Romans 8:10, 1 Corinthians 2:11; 5:3-4; Hebrews 12:23; James 2:26.


\[670\] ibid, p.691. Qoheleth with typical cynicism denies that the human 'soul' does differ from the animal 'soul'. (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21)
personality. Though the spirit might be willing, if the flesh was weak the spirit also slept. (Matthew 26:41) Body, soul and spirit were different facets of one indissoluble being. Distinct in quality, they always acted as an integrated whole. This is the context of the metaphor of a sword that can "...slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit". (Hebrews 4:12) The word of God cut so fine it could divide the indivisible. The 'body' nature might conflict with the 'spirit' nature (Romans 8) but this was dangerous precisely because the two were so intimately related. The indivisibility of body and spirit underlay Paul's concern about sin, "against your own body". In this case, the "...Holy Spirit ... received ... from God" could not be isolated from what happened to its temple. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20) To quote Congar: "The ruah-breath of the Old Testament is not discarnate. It is rather what animates the body."\textsuperscript{671}

HUMAN SPIRITUALITY AS ENCOUNTER

From a biblical perspective, what is called 'spirit' in people is a God endowed capacity so they may enter into relationship with other spiritual beings, primarily each other and himself. 'Spirituality' has to be seen as a shorthand expression for those encounters between spirits. As a consequence of the 'Fall',\textsuperscript{672} humanity was also exposed to encounters with destructive spiritual influences, what Paul\textsuperscript{*} called 'sin' and 'death'. (Romans 5:12) To call a person 'spiritual' was less a description of their inner characteristics than a statement about the quality of their relationship with God's Spirit and other spirits.

There is a need to differentiate spirituality and mysticism. The latter is a set of techniques for attending to the spiritual, either as encountered in an 'object', as in contemplation, or in the silence of a mind emptied of distractions, as in meditation. Willis calls it, "the art of union with the Infinite".\textsuperscript{673} However, Hill points to a nexus between spiritual 'style' and temperament: "This is not to deny that there are many different ways of expressing our spiritual natures. Some by temperment are drawn more to contemplation than activism, some find the intellectual more congenial than the

\textsuperscript{671} Congar, Y. (1983), op. cit., p.3.
\textsuperscript{672} Or perhaps as symbolised in that story.
\textsuperscript{673} Willis, G. (2000). On balance: Spirituality, mysticism, the Arts, and Education. Educational Horizons, 78(4), 173-175, p.173. This consciously varies Underhill's 1915 definition: "the art of union with Reality."
It is equally true that the temperament is an expression of the spirit. Mystical withdrawal is no more necessarily spiritual than engagement in virtuous action on behalf of others. God’s Spirit may be encountered in either, and so may spiritual evil. If one is pursued to the detriment of the other, the risk of it turning to evil is exacerbated. Leech says, “The linking of contemplation and action is one of the essential aims of spiritual guidance.” Many books on mysticism or ‘spiritual direction’ point to specific dangers. The more general association of withdrawal with spirituality is contended by Holt:

I may well be able to brush this sense of frustration off as an aside if this spirituality of withdrawal did not have the pervasive influence it has today upon the Christian community. Almost everywhere I look I see spirituality defined by this basic approach. In the tradition in which I was raised, the ultimate measure of one’s personal spirituality was the daily ‘quiet time’ - a period of personal solitude for Bible reading, meditation and prayer. Depending on our tradition, spirituality may be broadened to include other related experiences such as liturgy, eucharistic celebration, charismatic worship, and days of ‘spiritual retreat’. Though we may speak of discipleship, mission, social action and witness as activities important to the Christian life, when we speak of spirituality more often than not we revert to images of personal piety, inner reflection and solitude; images of withdrawal ... if a spirituality of withdrawal is definitive of our understanding of spirituality, then we will be forever sold short when it comes to our experience of the presence of God.

Be it mysticism or activism, charismatic fervour or devotion to icons, an approach can only stimulate spirituality if it provides a medium through which the person’s spirit encounters other spirits. The nature of spirituality depends on matters other than the approach. Mysticism can lead to inner darkness and despair, activism to dilettantism. Pentecostalism may lead to the problems Paul* addressed, (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4) icons to superstition or sentimentality. Consequently, the NT did not emphasise such practices but seeking truth, avoiding error, righteous living, and renunciation of evil. The existence and use of a gateway does not predetermine what will be encountered within.

676 ibid, pp.31-34, 38, 42-43, 45-47, 53.
IMPLICATIONS OF RECOGNISING HUMANS AS SPIRITUAL

That humans are endowed as spiritual has important ramifications for the fostering of spirituality. It cannot be divorced from the cultivation of body and mind. While distinct, they are indivisible from spirit. What develops them develops spirit. What is deleterious to them is deleterious to spirit.

Being 'spirit', human beings are in some way akin to God, but also to entities antithetical to him. People enter into relationship with other spiritual entities. They share something of the freedom from corporeal limitations implicit in being a spiritual being. They may be wrought upon by other spiritual entities. At times they may be helpless to resist the impact of these presences. But they are also agents. They make choices. They resist. They commit themselves. They influence other spirits. The language that describes their interaction with other spirits is that of common human social intercourse.

THE GENERATION AND TERMINATION OF SPIRITUAL ENTITIES

The authors* simply assumed that spirits exist. They never stated how they come to be. Inferences can be drawn from the way they described them, though the conclusions are somewhat speculative. God's Spirit always existed, sharing, or being, God's eternal nature. That it issued from the Father implied source, not creation. This eternal existence was unique. Human spirits came into existence as the person was created. They shared the tendency of people to develop and change. That they continued to live, even after death, required an act of God's will. Spirits of evil were not eternal. Even Satan was created and will be destroyed and its rôle and power are not fixed. Such spirits form, metamorphose and dissipate with the phenomena whose nature they manifest. Wink expresses this well:

A 'mob spirit' does not hover in the sky waiting to leap down on unruly crowds at a soccer match. It is the actual spirit constellated when the crowd reaches a certain critical flashpoint of excitement and frustration. It comes into existence in that

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678 And the Son in Western credal interpretations.

679 Wink's argument is persuasive but has to be held in tension with Jesus' description, recorded in Matthew 12:43, of a spirit after leaving a man as wandering "through waterless country looking for a place to rest". [Wink, W. (1984), op. cit., p.124.]
moment, causes people to act in ways of which they would never have dreamed themselves capable, and then ceases to exist the moment the crowd disperses.\textsuperscript{680}

Spirits were precisely as consistent and enduring as that which generated them. If there was a spirit of the age, there was also a spirit of the hour, and a spirit of the moment. Wink continues:

...a high school football team ... spirit is high during the season, then cools at the season’s close, although it continues to persist in history ... and hope ... The spirit of a nation endures beyond its actual rule, in the lasting effects of its policies, its contributions to culture, its addition to the sheer weight of human suffering.\textsuperscript{681}

This is not to imply that these spirits are epiphenomena, mere derivatives of the material world. They have a real existence and the material can no more exist without the spiritual than the spiritual without material expression. Jesus’ words have broader application. All spirits, as God’s Spirit, are like the wind. If one senses their presence, one still does not know where they come from or where they go.

\textbf{SOURCES OF SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS}

Questioning of the source of spirituality always seems most pointed in contact between cultures representing different spiritual traditions, whether the Egyptian adoption of Semitic gods into their pantheon, the Greek identification of Semitic and Roman gods with their own or the Christian attribution of pagan deities to demonic sources. One of the most important Christian teachings is expressed in the story of an attempt to evangelise a pagan town in Asia Minor. (Acts 14:8-18)

Unable to understand the local dialect, Paul and Barnabas used Greek in attempting cross-cultural communication. As Jews, heirs of a long monotheistic tradition, they did not immediately recognise that their own divinity had become a matter of religious enthusiasm. To Barnabas had been assigned the rôle of Zeus, king of the gods. Paul, as spokesman, has been identified with Zeus’ herald, Hermes. (14:8-13) Paul realised they had a problem when the priests of ‘Zeus-outside-the-Gate’ brought garlanded oxen to sacrifice to them.

\textsuperscript{680} \textit{ibid}, p.105.

\textsuperscript{681} \textit{ibid}, p.105.
Nor was the crowd’s reaction surprising, given their own narrative culture. Luke’s audience* knew that Paul and Barnabas were where stories said Zeus and Hermes once visited in disguise. Offended by the lack of hospitality and rudeness of the entire population, except for an old priestly couple, the gods subsequently drowned all except that pair.682 The Lycaonians had no intention of repeating that mistake.

Paul had to decide what to say to these convinced pagans, heirs to a polytheistic tradition even more ancient than his own, where gods visited disguised in human form. Paul was an evangelist intent to reveal Yahweh, the one God, as incarnate in Jesus Christ. But the people knew nothing of Yahweh’s self-revelation to Israel, nor of the events of Jesus’ life. Paul had to intervene sufficiently quickly and effectively to head off the sacrifices. He responded confidently with an approach which contrasts with the idea that such ‘pagans’ were beyond the reach of God. He assumed that his God, Yahweh of Israel, was also the God of the heathen Lycaonians. Just as he revealed himself to Israel, he must have been revealing himself to them. They had only to recognise his voice. But it is not the voice of special revelation, nor derivative of reason; rather it is the voice of everyday occurrence.

Paul first appealed to the evidence from creation, varying an argument he would use elsewhere. (Romans 1:18-25) “We have come with good news to make you turn from these empty idols to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that these hold.” (Acts 14:15) He then assured his hearers that this living God revealed his reality even among peoples he had permitted to move away from him and choose their own gods. “In the past he allowed each nation to go its own way; but even then he did not leave you without evidence of himself...” (14:16-17) Paul’s delineation of this evidence is important. He knew Yahweh’s nature as both good and generous. This grace provided evidence both of his presence and his nature: “...evidence of himself in the good things he does for you: he sends you rain from heaven, makes your crops grow when they should, he gives you food and makes you happy.” (14:17)

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165
To represent God’s providence as evidence of his benevolence had precedents, but Paul’s evocation of the experience of ‘happiness’ as indicative was new and is intriguing. That people without God could still be happy provided a justification of the good news that would turn such pagans from futile idols to the living God, the source of all such happiness. Cavalletti applies the same argument to children: “Psychology places strong emphasis on the importance that an experience of prereligious happiness may have in the relationship with God.”

It is also employed by Koulomzin:

The longing for happiness, the instinctive feeling that it is a desirable state of life and that when we are unhappy we have broken away from that which is intended for us, seems to be inborn in man. Perhaps it is a kind of subconscious memory of the human condition before the Fall...

In other words we become unhappy when we accept evil as an authentic part of our real self.

Paul was doing evangelism, not theology. What he said is incomplete and poses a conundrum: If God provides clear evidence of himself, why don’t all human beings know him? From childhood, every person should grow progressively into fuller appreciation of his nature and a deeper relationship with him. Yet even Paul and Barnabas were hard pressed to overcome the Lycaonians’ determination to deify them instead of responding to their message. (Acts 14:18) If the evidence from the goodness of God is so strong, it is surprising that nations should go their own way. It suggests God’s Spirit is a very ineffective communicator.

An alternative explanation is offered by Scripture. God’s self-revelation is limited by the activity of those spirits of evil which contradict his work. Even as God tries to woo people by his gracious goodness, other entities try to blind them to, or draw them away from, that goodness. (Acts 26:17-18) The NT perspective is that a battle is waged for each human being. It is a spiritual battle, waged by spiritual entities, for the spirits of people. (Ephesians 6:10-12) God’s Spirit is arraigned against forces of evil that desire

685 This is not a denial of the freedom of human choice. Choice is not a random act in an information vacuum but depends on weighing up alternatives. The NT position is that spiritual evil provides an alternative path of life choices for people. In the original story, Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit, but only after the choice of disobedience was put to them by the serpent.
people’s destruction which is, in biblical terms, alienation from God. Each child’s spirituality develops in the context of this conflict of opposing principles.

While Scripture uses the metaphors of human warfare, this conflict is waged between beings unconstrained by the limits of human physique and psychology, and using weapons appropriate to their kind. This is why the weapons with which Christians are advised to arm themselves are “truth”, “integrity”, “eagerness to spread the gospel of peace”, “faith”, “salvation” and “the word of God”. These are obtained from the Holy Spirit through prayer. (Ephesians 6:13-18)

Scripture is very clear about how to differentiate the influences of spiritual good and spiritual evil. There are precursors in the OT, but the method becomes a common idea in the New, stated succinctly by Jesus in a warning about false prophets.

You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit. Any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruit. (Matthew 7:16-20)

For biblical audiences* ‘good’, and therefore the ‘good tree’, was only to be attributed to God. As James* says: “Make no mistake about this, my dear brothers: it is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as an alteration, no shadow of a change.” (James 1:17)

Paul’s letter to the Galatians applies the ‘fruit’ imagery to the work of the Holy Spirit, represented as a way to test whether a person was exercising the freedom that comes from responding to God’s call, or merely being self-indulgent. (Galatians 5:13-26) These ‘fruit of the Spirit’ were not moral attributes for which Christians should strive. Rather, Christians were enjoined to “...look to faith for those rewards that righteousness hopes for, since ... what matters is faith that makes its power felt through love”. (5:5-6) The

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fruit were indicative of whether the person was living by faith and therefore able to “...receive what the Spirit brings”. (5:22)688

The Bible is explicit about the characteristics indicative of the Holy Spirit’s work. In one sense all the attributes of the Godhead could be adduced, but it is more pertinent to focus on those which are specifically associated with God’s ruach or pneuma, distinguishing features essential to God’s Spirit from the situation specific or those equally attributed to spirits of evil. For instance, ‘power’, a frequent association, is not included because:

1. it is always power to accomplish a specific end;
2. power is also exercised by evil spirits;
3. the exercise of power is, at one point, contrasted to the exercise of God’s Spirit.

(Zechariah 4:6)

Even so circumscribed a list is impressive. Central is ‘holiness’ or ‘righteousness’. Not only does the NT regularly use ‘holy’ as an appellation of God’s Spirit (hagion pneuma), but throughout Scripture the Spirit is active in opposition to evil, in establishing justice in society and in engendering traits of holiness, goodness and righteousness in people.689 This holiness is far from grim wowserism. The Spirit is associated with the affirmation of life,690 joy,691 and love.692 John* strongly identifies the Spirit with truth.693 Other authors* use the related concept of wisdom.694 Understandably, the Spirit is associated with having a right attitude to God.695 There is a much longer list of characteristics which feature less frequently.696

688 A related argument is presented in James 3:13-18.
689 Exodus 15:10; Isaiah 30:28; 33:11; 34:16; 42:1; 59:15-20; Hosea 13:15; Micah 3:8; Romans 1:4; 14:17; 15:16; Galatians 5:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2.
690 Psalm 104:30; Ezekiel 37:14; John 6:63; Romans 8:2; 10:2; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 5:25; 6:8.
692 Romans 15:30; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 1:8.
694 Nehemiah 9:20; Isaiah 11:2; Ephesians 1:17.
695 Isaiah 11:2; Ezekiel 36:27; Romans 5:5.
696 Examples are consolation, courage, creativity, freedom, gentleness, grace, hope, kindness, patience, peace, reconciliation, self-control, the spread of the gospel, trustfulness, unity and valid interpretation of dreams. It is significant that there are counterfeits of these ‘fruit’. Lust may pose
The Galatians list is not exclusive, but remains the most comprehensive statement of the idea. "What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. There can be no law against things like that, of course." (Galatians 5:22) God would hardly interdict what is consistent with his nature being derivative of his Spirit. This list does not consist of special 'religious' traits like reverence for God, worshipfulness or piety, but of commonplace aspects of human life. People emphatic in unbelief demonstrate love, experience joy, have times of peace, exercise kindness, and so on. Paul* certainly implied that those who say they are '...guided by the Spirit' should exemplify these characteristics. Nevertheless, if all good is sourced to God, then even when observed in those who deny God, such behaviour is still to be attributed to his Spirit's work. Whenever observed, that which discloses the true character of God bears the clear signature of his Spirit.

The imprecise biblical description of spiritual entities antagonistic to God carries through to characteristics which define their presence and activity. The work of spiritual evil must often be inferred in Scripture rather than being identified as such. Where indications are clear they are either fairly broad or seldom attested.

Predominant is the appellation 'unclean' (akathartos), used much as God's Spirit is called 'holy'. Similarly 'evil' is used to name the being who epitomises or directs the forces of spiritual enmity to God. Their only other consistent characteristic is to lead people away from God by deceit or by temptation. Other indicators are rare and seldom repeated. Nowhere is there a list of signs of the work of evil spirits, as there is for the Holy Spirit.

as love, as may possessiveness; hedonism may pose as joy, as may levity; smugness may pose as peace, as may moral laziness; and so on. However, this is not relevant to the current argument. If Christians worship a God who sends rain on both just and unjust, it should not be suggested that non-Christians may only know counterfeits. Moreover, Scripture knows that Christians counterfeit as adeptly as non-Christians.

697 Matthew 13:19-38; Ephesians 6:11-12,16; 1 John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18. As will be argued below, Satan may best be understood as that emergent principle of evil which integrates all the separate 'evils' that exist.


700 Antagonism to humanity (Job 1 & 2; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10); diverse aspects of death (Psalm 106:36-38; John 8:44; Hebrews 2:14); darkness (Acts 26:17-18; 2 Corinthians 6:15;
It is not that evil behaviour was unrecognised, but it was seldom sourced to the intervention of spiritual forces. The same indicators were frequently assigned to faults in the human person. The authors* may have been loath to diminish human responsibility by assigning people’s wrongdoing to outside causes.\textsuperscript{701} They would have wanted to avoid any suggestion that evil spirits were coequal with God. The Galatian list of fruits of the Spirit is contrasted with a list of fruits of ‘self-indulgence’. This reflects the overall Scriptural approach to spiritual evil. Its ultimate goal is a person so alienated from God and other people as to live only for self. By including behaviours indicative of such alienation, it is possible to identify a much fuller list of signs of spiritual evil, albeit at one remove from their source.\textsuperscript{702} The pattern of behaviour is very clear: disrupted relationships with God,\textsuperscript{703} and between people,\textsuperscript{704} and destructive personal qualities.\textsuperscript{705} While some, such as blasphemy, idolatry and sorcery, pitilessness, delusion and depravity are consistent with traditional concepts of evil spirits, most are not. Rather, in parallel with the marks of God’s Spirit, they are everyday human characteristics. Similarly, while Paul* uses them in moral instruction, they are certainly also diagnostic of lives influenced by spiritual evil, wherever they are found. Even the Church, where God’s Spirit is said to reside, was not insulated against their effects, prompting Paul’s* warnings to the churches at Corinth, Ephesus and Colossae, and in Galatia.

It is a facile truth that every aspect of people’s experience is a potential part of the field where spiritual forces contend but it nevertheless advances our understanding by precluding some inadequate understandings of spirituality such as the Fundamentalist

\textsuperscript{701} There is certainly no biblical warrant for exorcism of the ‘demon lust’ or the ‘demon selfishness’, etc. Wink argues that this is dangerous. [Wink, W. (1986), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.52-53, 56-58.]

\textsuperscript{702} Such lists are found in Paul’s letters at Romans 1:29-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:17-19; Colossians 3:5-8; Titus 3:3.

\textsuperscript{703} Blasphemy, disobedience, estrangement from God, hatred of God, idolatry and sorcery.

\textsuperscript{704} Abusiveness, conflict, dissension, factionalism, feuding, hate, jealousy, libel, lovelessness, lying, malice, pitilessness, quarrelling, rebellion against parents, rudeness, slander, spite, treachery and wrangling.

\textsuperscript{705} Anger, arrogance, bad temper, boasting, darkened intellect, delusion, depravity, drunkenness, dulled moral sense, eagerness for indecency, enslavement to hedonism, envy, evil desires, greed,
emphasis on the ‘salvation of the soul’\textsuperscript{706} to the neglect of other aspects of the person. As indicated earlier, Scripture never supports the insulation of spirit from body. ‘Preaching the gospel’ or religious education, independent of more comprehensive concerns for the person, is an inadequate way to promote spirituality.\textsuperscript{707}

Even within more open Evangelical traditions which encourage concern for the whole person, discussion of spiritual growth is often limited to the understanding and affirmation of doctrine.\textsuperscript{708} Spiritual responsiveness is gauged by assent to the cognitive content of teaching. Involvement of feeling and will is acknowledged but as subordinate to, and consequent upon, what people think. A recognition of the Spirit’s all-encompassing work contradicts this. Affective and conative responses, independent of, or prior to, understanding, are possible and valid spiritual responses.\textsuperscript{709} A person will feel strong feelings for their partner, and want to be amenable to them, long before they begin to understand them. Years down the track, understanding will still lag behind feeling and will.

At another extreme, it is inadequate to offer physical and / or emotional care without teaching people how to relate to God. A human spirit may be well-fed and content, yet suffer from ignorance of its true nature and destiny.

**HUMAN RESPONSE TO SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE**

The biblical picture is of humans subject to the allure of conflicting spiritual forces whose activities are revealed by ‘fruit’, or signs, consistent with their nature as ‘holy’ or ‘evil’. The Bible taught that adults respond in two alternative ways to spiritual influences. First, one could accept the rule of Christ and identify with God’s Spirit.

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\textsuperscript{706} The issue is admittedly pedantic but some use of ‘soul’ as in ‘salvation of the soul’, ‘harvest of souls’ in evangelistic discourse is inconsistent with biblical usage which more closely parallels what I have called the psychological person than the spiritual person.

\textsuperscript{707} The Bible is all in favour of ‘eagerness to spread the gospel of peace’, but not as a way to rescue one aspect of the person in despite of the rest of their being.

\textsuperscript{708} The leadership given to such streams of evangelicalism by graduates of the university-based Inter Varsity Fellowship and, later, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students may be relevant to this strong emphasis on cognitive factors.

\textsuperscript{709} Later argument acknowledges the importance of sound doctrinal teaching and of growth of understanding as part of spiritual growth.
Those who did so were required to become an integral part of the way God’s Spirit worked in the world. They could call upon his help to that end.\footnote{Matthew 12:33-35; John 3:19-21; 14:12-21; 15:1-17; Romans 6:12-14; 8:1-17; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:21-6:18; Philippians 1:27-30; Colossians 3:5-4:6; 2 Peter 1:3-11.} Second one could deny the rule of Christ and be progressively drawn to alienate oneself from that which reflected God’s Spirit and adopt a lifestyle which would increasingly flow from destructive spiritual forces. Inevitably, those who did so would slide towards growing identification with systems of spiritual evil.\footnote{Matthew 12:33-35; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19-21; Acts 7:51-53; Romans 1:18-32; 8:1-13; Ephesians 4:18-20.} There could even be a point of no return where people became so involved with evil that, for them, values were reversed and they spoke evil of the goodness which flowed from the Spirit of God.\footnote{Isaiah 5:20; Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30.}

By definition, mature spirituality is the terminus of developing spirituality. Consequently, we may infer important principles about children from what the Bible says about adult responses. Children are also subject to the influence of both good and evil spirits respectively trying to draw them towards or away from God. The question is whether their responses differentiate in the same way as adults. As outlined earlier, some Christians would answer ‘yes’. However, it is not self-evident that children will or are required to respond in the same way as adults. Alternative ways to characterise their response may be required. This is taken up later in this dissertation.

The adult in Scripture was not the hapless victim of spiritual forces; their impact was usually depicted as influence or persuasion, not compulsion. Satan relied on deceit, rather than coercion. God might compel, but did not normally do so. Even after a person made a conscious commitment to God’s Spirit, vigilance was required, and armament against attempts to undermine that commitment.\footnote{Romans 13:14; 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 5:13-6:2; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 1:13-18; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 4:1-3.} Conversely, God’s Spirit might still prompt those who denied it to acts of self-sacrifice, kindness or justice.\footnote{Isaiah 65:6 is misinterpreted if seen as a rejection of this point. It is a situation specific prophecy about Yahweh’s support of Israel. Isaiah is identifying the tawdriness of their self-defined righteousness and calling them to concentrate on faithfulness to God.}

Such works did not earn God’s favour because salvation was always an act of grace.
(Ephesians 2:8-9) But they were inspired by God (because only God could inspire
goodness), and they were praiseworthy. The obverse also applied. It was not
inconsequential that those who accept the lordship of Christ sin, but those consequences
did not necessarily invalidate their salvation. God’s people were not exempt from the
activity of spiritual evil, nor were those outside his covenants excluded from the work
of the Holy Spirit. Quite the contrary! Paul attributed his repeated inability to visit the
church at Thessalonika to Satanic intervention (1 Thessalonians 2:18)\textsuperscript{715} and Jesus promises
that the Advocate will reveal to ‘the world’ that they are in error. (John 16:8-11)

CIRCUMSTANCES OF SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS

Considering how people respond requires identification of that to which they respond,
the phenomena through which spiritual influence is mediated and development occurs.
It is assisted by classifying these by circumstances where \textit{ruach / pneumā} are
encountered. These categories are heuristic rather than ontological. Any attempt to
classify the descriptions of the work of God’s Spirit in Scripture is necessarily arbitrary.
The five categories, ordered from least to most intimate, are:

- spirituality of creation or destruction;
- spirituality of relationship or alienation;
- spirituality of truth or deceit;
- spirituality of providence or neglect;
- spirituality of intervention or temptation.

They represent an attempt to identify the media of influence but could equally well
represent the aspect of the person addressed, for these are directly related. The
categories are neither exclusive nor discontinuous and some phenomena might well be
included in more than one class. For instance, an act of corporate worship will almost
certainly include aspects of the first three, and potentially the others as well.

The biblical authors\textsuperscript{*} recognise the work of spiritual evil in all those things which
interpose themselves between God’s Spirit and human beings, rather than in specific

\textsuperscript{715} “Paul probably does not have in mind an actual confrontation with Satan as a figure blocking his
path but means simply that circumstances were such as to frustrate his attempt to come ... The
point is that he was ‘hindered’ on the earthly plane by the ‘God of this world.’” [Wink, W. (1986),
\textit{op. cit.}, pp.138-139.]
evil occurrences. Because everything is created by God, spiritual evil is limited to the means of influence he has provided. It is seen primarily as marring and distorting the process of communication so God’s voice is either not heard clearly, or the message is changed. So, in each of the categories referred to, except the last, the principal rôle of spiritual evil is negation and distortion; hindering God from drawing people to good rather than effecting an active strategy to win people to evil.

SPIRITUALITY OF CREATION OR DESTRUCTION

There are three arenas where people are exposed to acts of creation and destruction: the natural world, the constructions of others, and their own creative activity. All are identified in the Bible as conduits through which spiritual influence may occur.

God’s creation

That the natural world mediates God’s Spirit is a central tenet of OT cultic expression.

The heavens declare the glory of God,
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork;
day discourses of it to day,
night to night hands on the knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2)

It was a consistent biblical theme that the natural world revealed the nature of God. The idea stemmed from Genesis 1, which is structured around God’s preference for form over chaos (days 1-3) and life over sterility (days 4-6). God himself designated the rainbow as the “sign” of the covenant which, through Noah, he made with “...every living thing that is found on the earth”. (Genesis 9:12-17) The Psalms abounded with inspiration from natural imagery and often asserted its rôle in allowing people to understand God. A similar idea was common to the prophets. Isaiah, in particular,

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716 This is not to be confused with work or labour which is often viewed negatively in Scripture, e.g., Genesis 3:17-19; 5:29; Exodus 1:11-14
717 The key is found in Genesis 1:2 where the world is described as “formless and desolate” before God begins its reformation. See also McKay, K. L. (1962). Creation. In J. D. Douglas (Ed.) op. cit., p.271.
718 Psalm 1, 18, 23, 24, 29, 33, 39, 42, 46, 50, 52, 57, 68, 72, 80, 84, 90, 93, 95, 98, 102, 103, 114, 121, 133, 139, 144, 146.
720 Isaiah 40:12,21-22; 45:11-12,18-19; 51:13,16; Jeremiah 10:10-13; 51:15-19; Daniel 3:52-81; Amos 4:13; 5:8.
used the image of nature restored as a metaphor for the ideal kingdom yet to come.\textsuperscript{721}

There was ample OT precedent for the argument more explicitly stated by Paul*:

For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity - however invisible, have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made. That is why such people are without excuse: they knew God and yet refused to honour him as God or to thank him... (Romans 1:19-21)

Paul* here showed himself to be well aware of the paradox he ignored while addressing the Lycaonians. (Acts 14:8-18) People do not deny God for lack of knowledge about him. In the observable creation all can perceive the nature of the invisible God.\textsuperscript{722} Belief in God was the rational response to the world people observe. If they failed to recognise God in creation, it was because "...they made nonsense out of logic and their empty minds were darkened". (14:21)

According to Paul*, the natural world revealed God’s “everlasting power and deity”. Elsewhere, it was seen as indicating his preference for form over chaos; his affirmation of life; the greatness of his name; his glory, majesty, greatness and praiseworthiness; his love, faithfulness, provision, generosity, protection and consolation; his righteousness and judgement; his strength, power and prowess; the sovereignty of his will; his wisdom, infinite understanding and discernment; and the clarity of his self-revelation. The content of that list reflects the predominance of cultic and devotional material derived from the Psalms. It is not exclusive but indicative. Hendry says: “Nature, which, like man, is God’s creature, is credited with a sensibility or responsibility to its creator no different from that of man.”\textsuperscript{723} Dodd calls attention to the implication of Jesus’ nature parables:

[Jesus’ use of parables] arises from a conviction that there is no mere analogy, but an inward affinity, between the natural order and the spiritual order; or as we might put it in the language of the parables themselves, the kingdom of God is \textit{like} the processes of nature and the daily life of men. Jesus therefore did not feel the need


\textsuperscript{722} Just as scientists identify the properties of gravity, and other hypothetical constructs which they cannot actually observe, by inference from their effects on themselves and what they can observe.

of making up artificial illustrations for the truths he wanted to teach. He found them ready-made by the Maker of man and nature.  

The biblical material has strong extra-biblical parallels, indicating that the biblical material reflects a common human experience, even if a different interpretation is offered. Once confidence is established, many people will tell stories about spiritual encounters while in the bush, or while watching the sun set at the beach, etc. Similar accounts appear at times in ‘wilderness’ magazines and are reflected in Australian song and poetry.  

Most describe a positive experience of transcendence and of immanence; what they encountered was ‘other’ yet ‘close’. Others experienced the event as frightening, or at least discomforting; ‘panic’ derives from the name of a classical god of wild places. Informal conversations and literary expressions parallel accounts in the research literature on ‘religious experiences’. From a biblical perspective people are close to the nature of Deity when exposed directly to the works of his hands.  

There is a tradition amongst evangelicals of the Reformed tradition to devalue ‘natural theology’ in comparison to propositional theology. “Calvin tells us, on the basis of the biblical witness, that the faculty of perceiving the Creator in His works is not merely impaired, but lost; that man is not suffering from bad eyesight, but from total blindness.” Were this true, all revelation in nature would be restricted to the ‘saved’, and this contradicts Paul’s arguments in Acts 14 and Romans 1.  

The denigration of natural revelation flies in the face of the Scriptural witness. It requires that nature speak with a clarity not found in the biblical text with which it is compared. For instance these excerpts from Achtemeier: “The God of Israel cannot be


726 Hardy, A. (1979). op. cit., pp.39, 61, 67, 82. For these researchers, the term ‘religious experience’ is equivalent to what is elsewhere called ‘spiritual experience’.


identified with the cosmos that he has created, and that cosmos is therefore inadequate to reveal the true nature of God.”729 By this argument, unless God can be ‘identified’ with propositional revelation, that is also inadequate to reveal his true nature. “If nature is revelatory of our God, then it reveals a purpose of death as well as life, and the lesson we must draw is that the big gods eat the little gods.”730 Setting aside the slightly hysterical rhetoric, the point only stands if the issues of death and, by implication, evil are unambiguously clarified by other sources of revelation.

It is sometimes implied that natural theology can only lead to a form of pantheism or romanticism. Certainly, there is no inescapable nexus between nature spirituality and Christian faith; it can lead in other directions:

Some are telling us, for example, that we will truly appreciate and understand the natural world if we adopt the animism of early American Indians, while the New Age religionists wish us to see it in terms of a Hindu-like monism. Similarly, some feminist theologians want us to believe that the world is the body of God and that panentheism is the only proper religion. Other writers urge us to see the divine in the natural processes of the world, while some believe that the nature of God must be deduced from the findings of modern physics. All such positions are foreign to the biblical faith...731

And there is certainly a relationship between nature worship and the re-emergence of etsatz-paganism:

The Goddess is ... earth - Mother Earth, who sustains all growing things, who is the body, our bones and cells. She is air ... fire ... water ... mare, cow, cat, owl, crane, flower, tree, apple, seed, lion, sow, stone, woman. She is formed in the world around us, in the cycles and seasons of nature, and in mind, body, spirit, and the emotions within each of us. Thou art Goddess. I am Goddess. All that lives ... all that serves life, is Goddess.732

None of these is a biblical response to ‘general revelation’; they do not reflect “...what is to be known of God in the work of his hands”. Paul* argued that people may distort

730 _ibid_, p.15.
731 _ibid_, pp.4-5.

177
God’s revelation and therefore be blinded to his true nature. That fact does not vitiate the value of natural revelation.

Scripture does not claim that the Spirit teaches all doctrine through the wonders of creation. Natural revelation is incomplete. One cannot extrapolate the life of Jesus from a sunset, or the doctrine of redemption from a rosebud. The most impeccably orthodox propositional revelation is also limited if it ignores, not just the content, but, especially, the form, of God’s self-declaration in nature. Calvin also said: “For God - otherwise invisible ... clothes Himself, so to speak, with the image of the world, in which He would present Himself to our contemplation”, and

We see the world with our eyes, we tread the earth with our feet, we touch innumerable kinds of God’s work with our hands, we smell the sweet and pleasant fragrance of herbs and flowers, we enjoy boundless benefits; but in those very things of which we attain some knowledge dwells such an immensity of divine power, goodness and wisdom as absorbs all our senses.\(^{733}\)

The propositional revelation of Scripture itself provided a corrective by referring to other ways humans encountered the Holy Spirit. Certainly, no collection of words about ‘the glory of God’ communicates that idea to the human spirit like seeing the star-clouds in Sagittarius on a moonless summer night, or observing the passage of a great storm in all its awesome power. No proposition can convey God’s creative imagination so well as the variety of jewel beetles or the smells of the bush on a hot afternoon. Words are important, but just as incomplete as any other single source of revelation. God’s Spirit mediates the nature of God to people as they open themselves to the spirit of what he has made; and no word need be spoken:

No utterance at all, no speech,  
No sound that anyone can hear;  
Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their message to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:3-4)

As Calvin again said: “Different nations differ from each other as to language; but the heavens have a common language to teach all men without distinction...”\(^{734}\)

\(^{733}\) Calvin quoted by Parker, T. H. L. (1952), \textit{op. cit.}, p.14.  
\(^{734}\) Calvin quoted by Parker, T. H. L. (1952), \textit{op. cit.}, p.22.
The natural world is occasionally represented as less than benign in Scripture. In some passages whose interpretation is disputable, the weather itself seems to become an expression of the demonic. This may be seen in passages where Jesus ‘rebukes’ the wind and the waves in language which parallel his confrontations with demonic possession. (Mark 4:35-51; Luke 8:22-25) However, with this exception and that of ‘wilderness’, as discussed below, God’s creation is generally represented as exercising a positive influence on people.

While it is not an issue the Bible addresses directly, the destruction of the natural environment, or isolation from it, has to be seen as a basic level at which evil operates. The heavens cannot declare the glory of God if veiled with smog or lost in neon glare. People cannot hear their voiceless message if they are never taken out under a sky dark enough for their glory to be seen. They cannot comprehend streams of living water if all the creeks are toxic, or imprisoned within concrete tubes. If the work is marred, so is the image of the Creator.

Wilderness has a special place in contemporary ‘conservation’ discourse which is not totally consistent with the biblical approach. Wallace asserts: “This understanding of the distinctive rôle of wilderness in evolutionary processes is both a science and spiritual insight: ...spiritual, because this recognition accords to wilderness the supreme value of being essential to the maintenance of life itself.” Today, ‘wilderness’ is a positive term with connotations of nature untouched by human hands, which is contrasted with damaged land suffering from human exploitation. In Scripture, the contrast was between wilderness as sterile unwatered land, more closely rendered by ‘desert’, and fertile land supplied with adequate water, whether naturally or by human action. Understandably for the semi-arid Middle East, the biblical ideal was the


736 The issue would not arise for biblical writers living in marginally arable land where sustainability was a life and death issue. Prohibitions on the destruction of trees during warfare probably have an economic rather than spiritual basis.


740 Deuteronomy 11:10; 2 Chronicles 26:10; Isaiah 1:30

179
verdant ‘garden’ which provides sustenance for those who dwelt there,\textsuperscript{741} modelled on “the garden of God”.\textsuperscript{742} Wilderness was certainly a place to meet with God (at least to protect the person from the threat wilderness posed)\textsuperscript{743} and a place of refuge in extremity,\textsuperscript{744} but it was never spoken of with great enthusiasm\textsuperscript{745} and sometimes with great negativity.\textsuperscript{746} It could be the place where the spirit of evil was met.\textsuperscript{747} God’s ultimate promise was that even wilderness would be watered and blossom into life.\textsuperscript{748} Louth sees in wilderness a metaphor for the fallen state of man: “It is between the garden [Eden] and the city [the new Jerusalem] that we find the desert.”\textsuperscript{749}

An attempt to foster spirituality in children cannot ignore the potency of the natural world in mediating the presence of the Creator Spirit. Equally, to the extent that an environment excludes the natural world it fosters a negative and uncreative spirit in the school community and individual children. One of Nye’s respondents created an imaginary garden for spiritual solace as a child.\textsuperscript{750} The garden, always an artifice in the biblical world, is a natural bridge between the world of God’s creation and the world of humanity’s sub-creation.

\textit{Human sub-creations}

People were not created, as other animals, to be hunter-gatherers living from God’s bounty. The Garden of Eden was not for lotus eaters, but a place of work. “The man”

\textsuperscript{741} Kings built gardens for their pleasure and \textit{inter alia}, they provided imagery for the expression of pleasure: 2 Kings 21:18,26; 25:4; Nehemiah 3:15; Esther 1:5; 7:7-8; Song of Solomon 4:12-5:1; 6:2; Isaiah 58:11; 61:11; Jeremiah 31:12; 39:4; 52:7; Hosea 14:7; Micah 7:14

\textsuperscript{742} Genesis 2:8-3:24; 13:10; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 28:13; 31:8-9

\textsuperscript{743} Exodus 3:18; 5:1-3; 7:16; 8:27-28; 16:10; Numbers 1:1; 3:14; 9:1; Deuteronomy 1:30-31; 2:7; 8:16; 29:5; 1 Kings 19:4-14; Nehemiah 9:18-21

\textsuperscript{744} Judges 20:42-42; 1 Samuel 23:14-15; 2 Samuel 15:23-28; Psalm 55:7; Revelation 12:6-14

\textsuperscript{745} Exodus 14:3; Numbers 10:31; 16:13; 20:4; 21:5; Deuteronomy 1:19; 8:2,15; Joshua 4:5-6; 24:7; 1 Sam 17:28; Psalm 78:15-20; Isaiah 27:10; 64:10; Jeremiah 2:31; 9:10-12; 12:10; 17:6; 50:12; Hosea 2:3; 9:10; Joel 3:19

\textsuperscript{746} Exodus 14:11-12; 16:2-3; Numbers 14:28-35; 32:13-15; Deuteronomy 11:5; 32:10; Jeremiah 2:6; Joel 2:3; 2 Corinthians 11:26

\textsuperscript{747} Leviticus 16:7-22; Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2

\textsuperscript{748} Psalm 65:12; Isaiah 32:15-16; 35:1-9; 41:18-19; 43:19-20; 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35; Joel 2:22

\textsuperscript{749} Louth, A. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p38.

was settled in the garden by *Yahweh-Elohim* "...to cultivate and take care of it".751 Humans were to be ‘sub-creators’. In the genealogies of Cain, mention is made of individuals who developed new modes of human creativity in music and metalwork. (Genesis 4:21-22) From the beginning of the OT cult, human creations were central as expressing, or perhaps stimulating, the desire to worship.

While most Christians would accept that the creative works of God are used by his Spirit, evangelical thought struggles with spirituality vested in or channelled through a built environment or constructed object. Catholic and Orthodox theology is less constrained. It is a commonplace idea in paganism and ‘New Age’ spirituality. Bruce, surprisingly for an evangelical scholar, is so confident that ‘holiness’ may be vested in objects and transferred from object to object that he describes Paul’s* argument that children are made holy through their parents as: "...an interesting extension of the Old Testament principle of holiness by association (e.g., Exod. 29.37, ‘whatever touches the altar shall become holy’; Cf. Leviticus 6.18)."752

As God’s first recorded act in the Bible is creation (Genesis 1:1), acts of human creation may be the most fundamental expression of the image of God.753 They also evidence the marring of that image. That spirituality should operate through a constructed object is inane to the secularist mind. It represents a comic absurdity in films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Last Crusade*. Ironically, choice of the Ark of the Covenant in the former reflects the mystery and spiritual power that surrounds it in the OT record. It is the most obvious and continuously attested biblical example of God working through a constructed object.754 It is not that the ark, or any artefact, was believed to store spiritual efficacy

751 Genesis 2:15
753 Though certainly not the only one.
754 The detailed design of the ark was attributed to *Yahweh* as the first step in the construction of the Tabernacle where *Yahweh* would live among his people. (Exodus 25:7-15) It was to contain the tablets of stone inscribed by the very finger of God. (Exodus 25:16; 31:18) It was made by an individuals "singled out" by *Yahweh* and, "...filled ... with the Spirit of God". (Exodus 31:3; 35:30-31; 37:1-5) *Yahweh* would, "...appear in a cloud on the throne of mercy" making approach potentially lethal. (Leviticus 16:2) God was even concerned about how the ark was wrapped for transport. (Numbers 4:5-6) God spoke from, "...above the throne of mercy which was on the ark of the Testimony". (Numbers 7:89) Its absence presaged defeat. (Numbers 14:44) It is involved in the
like a battery, though that may well have been popular superstition. That superstition is attested by the desire of Israelite troops to carry the ark into battle to reverse a defeat and the consternation of their enemies on hearing of its presence. In the subsequent rout the ark was lost. (1 Samuel 4:1-10) It had no intrinsic power except as a mediator of God’s presence. It was seen as an agency through which God’s Spirit chose to act.

Once built, the temple replaced the ark in the nation’s and individuals’ experience of God. The ark’s removal is unremarked in canonical Scripture, being known only because Josiah made its return a significant act. (2 Chronicles 35:2-3)755 Even its eventual fate is uncertain, though its loss was popularly felt as a sign of God’s displeasure. Jeremiah reassured his people that its presence would not be required in the restoration that would follow their repentance. (Jeremiah 3:14-18)

This cycle where God worked through a constructed object, the people invested their faith in the object rather than God, and it suffered ignominious destruction, is recapitulated in the story of Moses’ bronze serpent. Despite its hallowed place in the history of the Exodus (Numbers 21:4-9), it was smashed by the reforming King Hezekiah because its spiritual power had been personalised and it was being worshipped as the god *Nehushtan*.756 (2 Kings 18:4)

It was understood that God dwelt in his temple and acted from its precinct.757 Vows and prayers were preferentially to be offered in, or at least oriented towards, the temple.758 It was a place which stimulated praise and piety; where prophets heard, and sometimes

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755 There is an Apocryphal story that Jeremiah removed it and hid it in a cave. (2 Maccabees 2:4-7, but see the notes on this passage in the Jerusalem Bible) Ellison’s suggestion that it had been removed for a period of repairs is possible but makes Josiah’s speech to the Levites read strangely. See Ellison, B. D. (1954). I and II Chronicles. In F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, & E. F. Kevan (Eds.), *op. cit.*, p.363.

756 This seems the most likely rendering of a very difficult verse.


758 1 Kings 8:31-51; 2 Chronicles 30:8; Psalm 48:1-3; 96:9, 99:9; 100:4; 108:7; 116:17-19; 134:2; 138:1-2; 150:1; Jonah 2:8.
saw, God; a potent symbol in prophetic vision. Its destruction precipitated a major spiritual crisis; it was, after all, "a copy of high heaven". (Psalm 78:69) Its restoration was taken as an indication of re-established favour with God. As with the ark, the temple's virtue did not reside in its masonry, but in God's choice, and it could be withdrawn. In the conversation described earlier, Jesus challenged the Samaritan woman's confusion between the fabric of the temple and the Spirit which could be encountered through that fabric.

The ark and the temple were major features of the OT system of worship. Such cannot be said of Paul's personal apparel, yet: "So remarkable were the miracles worked by God at Paul's hands that handkerchiefs or aprons which had touched him were taken to the sick, and they were cured of their illnesses, and the evil spirits came out of them." (Acts 19:11-12) This narrative is the introduction to the story of the sons of Sceva. (19:13-20) The Jewish exorcists attempted to confront spiritual evil without understanding the source of the spiritual good expressed in Paul's ministry. Without the work of God's Spirit, invocation of the name of Jesus was useless and actually proved dangerous, even with 'Paul' thrown in for good measure. With God's Spirit, a mere cloth would suffice. This suggests that it is not just the artefactual nature of the object that was relevant but that some degree of efficacy could be transferred to objects in proximity to the exercise of spiritual power. There is little other biblical warrant for this position, though it is a commonplace in other religious traditions, as with the Maori concept of 'mana'.

That God's Spirit can work through artefacts indicates the danger of limiting his forms of activity to human modes. However, no magic was involved. No power to compel God, or his creation, resided in the artefact. Efficacy depended on God's autonomous choice to use the object as a channel. Nor is veneration of any artefact ever justified; both the story of Moses' serpent and prophetic denunciations of idolatry preclude that.

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759 Psalm 26:6-8; 27:4; 42:4-6; 43:3-4; 48:9,12-14; 65:4; 84:1-10; 96:6; 122:1-9; 134:1-2; Isaiah 6:1; Jeremiah 17:12; 24:1; Ezekiel 8:16; Jonah 2:5.

760 Psalm 74,79; Isaiah 63:18; Jeremiah 51:11, 51; Lamentations 1:10, 2:7; Ezekiel 37:26-28; 40:1ff; Daniel 9:17; Zechariah 6:12-14; Malachi 3:1.

761 Isaiah 7:4-11; Ezekiel 24:21.
Recognition of the Spirit's use of human artefacts is implicit in Christian architecture. Mediæval cathedrals were designed as 'sermons in stone'. Most churches incorporate articles to stimulate worship or piety: altars, banners, chalices, commemorative boards and plaques, communion tables, crosses, elevated pulpits, flower arrangements, Orthodox iconography (which also extends into the home), picture windows, sentimental paintings, statues, vestments, and so on. Even the renowned economy of Shaker architecture was an expression of the spiritual value of simplicity. St Catherine of Siena said, "The city is the image of the soul" and, more recently, Stevens & Collins aver that "...in a church the environment does most of the talking."

It is also a commonplace that the aesthetic and spiritual response are very closely allied. As Hardy indicates: "To some, the presence of this abstract non-physical power is strongest when contemplating natural beauty or listening to music: others feel it when they paint or create." The 'label' worn by the artefact's creator is not what is important, but the creative spirit of the work. Creative artists whose artefacts express joy, a love of beauty and form, an affirmation of life and goodness, a desire to enhance human welfare, and so on, may, perhaps inadvertently and unconsciously, and certainly indirectly, contribute to the Spirit's work.

Macquarrie asserts that:

One might even come to believe that the more men attempt to restrict the operation of the Spirit to what they take to be the 'approved' channels, ecclesiastical or traditional, the more vigorously the same Spirit will manifest himself outside of these channels. ... The Church has always needed ... the stimulus of writers, artists

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762 Tour guides at Chartres Cathedral still tell captive groups stories from the Bible and of the Saints from the windows and statuary of that place.

763 "Liturgical life spills over into the home, or rather, as St John Chrysostom puts it, members of the Church can make the home into a 'micro-Church'. On the visible level, the same icons which adorn the church building bring the events and saints portrayed in them into the home." [Sister Magdalen (1996). Orthodox tradition and family life. In A. Walker & C. Carras (Eds.) Living Orthodoxy in the modern world. London: SPCK, p.54.]


and others who, though not themselves Christians, have been voices through which the Spirit can speak to the churches and, indeed, to all men and women.\textsuperscript{767}

Conversely, there are artefacts of the Christian community which are ugly, mean, florid, cheap, tawdry or uninspired and, therefore, deny the very nature of the one they claim to honour.\textsuperscript{768} This is not an elitist argument for ‘high’ art. While spiritually positive artefacts include examples of art and design of high aesthetic quality, they also include simpler and more homely products. An artefact created with loving care but lack of talent may yet bear the spirit of its creation and be a powerful spiritual influence. The story of the widow’s mite (Luke 21:1-4) prohibits Christians from despising the gift of someone who gives all of the little they have. Works of untutored piety are not at issue, but those that spring from an impious spirit, which may as well be ‘high’ art as ‘vulgar’. There is a paradox here. Crass commercial objects may be valued as serving a religious function: reinforcing beliefs or used as props in the cult. But this is despite their spiritual impact, the beliefs and cult themselves being lessened by the usage. Human creations guided by a spirit other than the Spirit of God will reflect and convey values inconsistent with God’s nature.

The idea of a ‘city of God’ must seem strange to people living in Australian slums, US ghettos or third world shanty towns: “Goudge (1974) ... asks: ‘How can a child in a slum experience God? Can it have a theophany with nothing to look at but dustbins and brick walls and never a moment of silence and loneliness?’ (pp.73 and 74).”\textsuperscript{769} If children grow amongst ugly and mean-spirited artefacts, we can expect their lives to be influenced by that.

The idea that an artefact can act as a direct channel for evil, as Paul’s handkerchief did for good, is common in paganism and Satanism, and is held by many Christians, despite the danger of superstition. There is an ongoing biblical tension between the themes of the impotence of idols, which are no more than human constructions, and of evil

\textsuperscript{767} Macquarrie, J. (1993) \textit{op. cit.}, p50.

\textsuperscript{768} One example, seen amongst the glorious architecture of York Cathedral, was a bin of small mass-produced plastic crucifixes dumped at £1.50 each in the bargain box of the bookshop. That a representation of the one worshipped as God incarnate and the most significant act in the Christian story of salvation should be so treated indicates an amazing lack of spiritual sensitivity.

\textsuperscript{769} Crompton, M. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.56.
influences which work through the physical presence of idols.\textsuperscript{770} Though few Scriptures transparently attest to the latter, Mundle says:

This does not imply, however, that there is no reality behind the heathen idolatrous worship. Idols are \textit{bdelygmata}, abominations, behind which stand \textit{daimonia...}, demonic powers, with which one cannot come into contact without moving God to wrath (Deut. 32:16f., 21). In 2 Chronicles 24:18 the worship of idols is equated to that of the Asherim, i.e. of the powers behind the idols.\textsuperscript{771}

This understanding does seem to be behind vehement prophetic denunciations of idolatry. Mundle traces the Rabbinic prohibition of eating meat sacrificed to idols to, “The thought that demonic powers stand behind heathen idolatry...”\textsuperscript{772} Paul* shared this belief about food sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 10:14-22) but it is unclear whether his concern, and that of the prophets, specifically related to the ‘fabric’ of the food or idol, or to some aspect of the sacrificial rite.\textsuperscript{773} Paul* certainly reflects the ambiguity of the unreal yet demonic nature of idols in Corinthians.

It may seem a long step from heathen idols to secular art and architecture but, in so far as these reflect worship of, or reverence for, that which is not God, the prophets would have seen them in similar terms.\textsuperscript{774} The story of the Tower of Babel indicates that human pride in their own building achievements, could attract God’s judgment. (Genesis 11:1-9) There can be no doubt about the common human experience that some art and architecture can impoverish, darken and oppress the human spirit.

Consequently, in considering how spirituality is fostered in ed-care, one must take into account the environment within which the setting is placed, the setting itself, and the artefacts which are used within it.


\textsuperscript{771} Mundle, W. (1976). \textit{πιθανόν.} In C. Brown (Ed.) \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 2, p.284. He is referring to the Septuagint but the original verses are hard pressed to bear this interpretation.

\textsuperscript{772} \textit{ibid}, p.285. The OT passages cited by Mundle refer both to idol and rite in ways that are hard to separate.

\textsuperscript{773} The church expresses a similar ambiguity in its explanations of the rôle of the elements in the communion.

\textsuperscript{774} In both Wink references an association is drawn between the powers behind idols and behind secular power structures, the gods of this age.
The creative act

That spirits of good and evil act through artefacts produced under their influence implies that the act of creation in itself can be a source of spiritual influence. Davis says:

In the aesthetic realm, works of art and the act of creating works of art can often trigger religious experiences, and aesthetic experiences sometimes merge into religious experiences with no clear moment of transition. Some artists, musicians and writers even see their activity as a religious exercise, though many may be using the word metaphorically.\(^{775}\)

Scripture pays little attention to the creative act except as it applied to cultic life. There, the involvement of the Spirit was clearly indicated as in the case of Bezalel mentioned above. It is not surprising that secular art was ignored when an absolute ban on the creation of graven images for fear of idolatry (Exodus 20:4-5) could be seen to be justified in the story of the bronze serpent. (Numbers 21:9; 2 Kings 18:4) This negative attitude to art is sustained into later Judaism:

No invention of perverted human skill has led us astray,
no painter’s sterile labour,
no figure daubed with assorted colours,
the sight of which sets fools yearning
and reverencing the lifeless form of some unbreathing image. (Wisdom 15:4-5)

Such denunciations should not be extended out of context. Idolatry was the primary target and the prohibition on representing the non-human world was soon lifted.\(^{776}\) Where it could not lend itself to idolatry, the artistic impulse was highly honoured as an expression of the spiritual life of the nation. Although the archaeological evidence is thin,\(^{777}\) the biblical record demonstrates acceptance particularly of decorative art, ironically indistinguishable in form from that of neighbouring nations,\(^{778}\) and of music.\(^{779}\) References to ‘new’ songs indicate an ongoing creative process.\(^{780}\) There are

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778 Wiseman, D. J. (1962), op. cit., p.87.
779 Not only are there references to singing but to dancing and a wide variety of instruments: e.g., Exodus 15:20-21; 28:3,15-28; 35:10; 36:8; Judges 5:3,12; 1 Samuel 18:6-7; 2 Samuel 1:18; 6:5,16; 22:1,30; 1 Kings 7:13-45; 2 Kings 24:14-16; 1 Chronicles 13:8, 15:16-29, 16:7-9,41-42;
also references to embroidery, jewellery, painted house interiors, metalwork, perfumery, and wood-carving. On some occasions the artist’s skill is directly attributed to Yahweh. But Wiseman indicates that, as affluence led to increased social stratification, the prophets took exception to the luxurious lifestyle reflected in the personal collection of art.

The NT has almost nothing to say about artistic creation except two obscure references Blaiklock represents as attacks on idolatrous statuary. Once the danger of idolatry was largely past, the church embraced representational art as a component of Christian spirituality, despite the iconoclastic movements that swept the Byzantine church, and later tension with some aspects of art such as Classicism’s idealisation of paganism. Despite occasional periods of puritan antagonism, other forms of creativity have flourished, especially music and architecture.


780 Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1-6; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 26:1; 42:10.
781 E.g., Exodus 26:1,31; 28:4-15, 33; 39:1-3; Psalm 45:13
783 E.g., Exodus 39:3; Jeremiah 22:14; Ezekiel 23:14.
784 E.g., 1 Kings 7. However, the principal artisan, though having an Israelite mother, was imported from Tyre.
785 E.g., Exodus 30:25,35; 37:29; 1 Chronicles 9:30; 2 Chronicles 16:14; 1 Samuel 8:13; Nehemiah 3:8; Job 41:31; Song of Songs 1:3,12; etc; Isaiah 57:9; Amos 6:6; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37. It should be noted that these various substances may have had utilitarian and ritual as well as aesthetic justification. [Kitchen, K. A. (1962). Cosmetics and perfumery. In J. D. Douglas (Ed.) op. cit., pp.258-262.]
786 E.g., Exodus 26:38; 35:33; 38:2-4; 2 Chronicles 3:5; 1 Kings 6:15-35; Ezekiel 41:16-26.
787 Exodus 31:2-11; 35:30-36:2; Deuteronomy 21:19-22; Psalm 42:8; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18-20;
788 Wiseman, D. J. (1962). op. cit., p.87-88. However, his use of Psalm 45 as an example seems to directly contradict the force of the psalm which, if anything, justifies what he says it condemns.
Artists without Christian commitment talk about their ‘inspiration’ and, though Davis is right that this is often metaphor, the very metaphor attests to the understanding of the creative act as consequential upon the influence of ‘another’. The ‘other’ may be ‘muse’, ‘Nature’, the human spirit, or an engaging person.

While creativity is not necessarily of God’s Spirit, it is clearly a potential source of encounter with the ‘spiritual’. The idea that all human creativity is spiritually beneficial gains no support from Scripture. A creative act can be prompted by the worship of evil in a variety of forms, such as totalitarian use of doctrinaire art to support militarism, self-aggrandising architecture, scripts, lyrics or images written to demean groups or individuals, etc.

How, and to what ends, creativity is encouraged in ed-care is another focus for consideration as part of fostering spirituality.

SPIRITUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP OR ALIENATION

A second major source of spirituality is the way people relate to each other. A person’s spirituality is strongly influenced by their identification with, or alienation from, other people. The Bible addresses three levels of relationship:

- with the community as a cultural group;
- with gathered social groups; and
- with other people as individuals.

*The cultural community*

Wright says:

>The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualistic mode, is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide.\(^{790}\)

Koulomzin makes a similar point with a specific Christian focus:

>Within our Orthodox experience of Christian life man is not *alone* under God. *We*, all together, are with God. *We* are gathered under God. *We* are one: one Body.

The small family unit, the larger fellowship of friends, the nation, the church are all aspects of this oneness of many.⁷⁹¹

This biblical perspective is embodied in the nature of the Church. Its root lies in the spirituality of Israel where people identified with the national, then racial community. Pedersen says, “Every community forms a unity, but the unity is not mechanical: it does not consist in obliterating the individual, but in imbuing him with the common character and spirit of the community”.⁷⁹² Before the Jewish diaspora, the people gathered en masse to participate in the great spiritual events that reflected and shaped their spiritual life.⁷⁹³ Failure to accept that identity and the obligations it implied led to expulsion or, where the individual placed their interests ahead of, and to the extreme detriment of, the community, to death.⁷⁹⁴ In contrast, the NT church worked very hard to establish itself as independent of racial-cultural ties, though this was not without struggle.⁷⁹⁵ The church represented an alternative source of cultural identity.⁷⁹⁶ Identification was still expected and breaches still led to expulsion or worse.⁷⁹⁷ Bridger, reflecting on the OT metaphor ‘house of God’ to describe the church in Hebrews 3:2-6, argues that:

...they had to understand that they were not a collection of individuals each going his or her own way but rather a community with a sense of family oneness, a household belonging to God. No less importantly, the same kind of obligations and bonds which had characterised families in the Old Testament must now characterise

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⁷⁹¹ Koulomzin, S. (1975), op. cit., p.23. The inclusion of ‘nation’ is a focus of a ‘national’ church like the Greek or Russian Orthodox.


⁷⁹³ E.g., Exodus 12:3-20; 19:1-24:8, though there are some hints that this excluded women and children; 33:8-10; Numbers 15:22-26; Joshua 5:2-8; 23:2-24:28; Judges 2:1-5; 1 Kings 8; 18:19-39; 2 Kings 11:13-20; Ezra 3:1-4; 6:14-16; Nehemiah 8:1-18


⁷⁹⁶ E.g., Romans 9:25-26; 1 Corinthians 4:12-27; 5:7; 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 6:14-17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:15-22; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9-10. It will be later demonstrated that the OT concept of the household was not based on blood ties alone.


190
the Christian family. They might not be tied by bonds of blood but their unity in Christ laid upon them no less powerful obligations of love.798

The OT emphasis on the Israelites revisiting their historical roots799 reflects their understanding of the spiritual solidarity of their culture. Revisitation was achieved through regular cultic observances of important events, recitations of their history, and public reading and reaffirmation of the terms of their contract with Yahweh. Richards says: “To live as a member of the chosen people and participate in their life in the historic land was to live amongst constant reminders of God and His commitment to His covenant people.”800 The king stood in relationship to the nation much as the father did to his family. A king’s decision which impacted on the general culture, for instance, whether he permitted or destroyed pagan altars, had great spiritual import for the entirety of the people.801 His attitude to ‘high places’ served as a litmus test for the corporate spiritual health of the nation.

A parallel struggle involved intermarriage with non-Israelites. Racism was not the issue.802 Israel was already racially mixed.803 Much of the pre-existent Canaanite population was absorbed, rather than exterminated, and individuals with foreign parents or background are commonly recorded.804 Racially, Israel scarcely differed from its neighbours, except for the proto-Greek Philistines, the Anatolian Hittites and the Egyptians. Moreover, the important tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh traced themselves to the Egyptian wife of Joseph. (Genesis 46:20) Ezekiel suggested that even the Hittites

799 Exodus 12:21; Deuteronomy 6:1-25, 11:18-21; Psalms 105-107
801 2 Kings 18:1-8; 21:1-15. This was so important that the Deuteronomistic code forbid the appointment of a king who was not part of their own community, Deuteronomy 17:15.
802 “Since their return, priests and Levites, rulers and people alike have intermarried with the heathen peoples around, a thing forbidden by God.” (Deuteronomy 7:1-5)
803 “Without the teaching of the law, without the invincible faith and fearless action of these two leaders, it is doubtful if a distinctive Jewish religion and community ... could have survived. To this end their strong line on mixed marriage was essential. The objection to foreign women was not on the grounds of race, but because of their debased religions.” “The Old Testament does not condemn inter-racial marriage if both partners worship the God of Israel.” [Alexander, D. & Alexander, P. (1973). The Lion handbook to the Bible. Sydney: ANZEA, pp.308, 312.]
804 2 Samuel 1: 13; 3:3; 11:3; 23:37; 1 Kings 7:13-14; 14:21; Ruth.
were part of their racial background, but he may be speaking metaphorically of their culture.\textsuperscript{805} The Law specifically allowed Edomites and Egyptians\textsuperscript{806} to be accepted into the covenant community after living amongst the Israelites for two generations. (Deuteronomy 23:8-9) Third generation children were so imbued with Israelite culture that they were no longer a cultural threat. They had become Judaised and thereafter were indistinguishable from the ‘native’ population. Even more inclusive was the Law covering slaves, who had to be foreign, but whose children born into an Israelite household were to be circumcised into the community. (Genesis 17:12-13)\textsuperscript{807}

The real problem with intermarriage was that foreign wives introduced an alien religious culture:

King Solomon loved many foreign women ... from those peoples of whom Yahweh had said to the Israelites, “You are not to go to them or they to you, or they will surely sway your hearts to their own gods” ... When Solomon grew old his wives swayed his heart to other gods. (1 Kings 11:1-14)

Nehemiah’s strong reaction has to be seen in this context as well. (Nehemiah 13:23-27) He specifically notes the adoption of foreign languages in place of the native language as a dangerous consequence of such marriages.

According to the prophets, the Israelites made the mistake of assuming that preserving the form of their exclusive monotheistic culture was sufficient; that the culture was the end rather than the means. However, identification with the community was only a vehicle to bring people to identify with Yahweh. Prophets railed against a religious culture which failed to engender genuine worship expressed in social and personal righteousness.\textsuperscript{808} This was seen as the inevitable consequence of the intrusion of the evil spiritual influences of idolatry into Israelite cultural life.

\textsuperscript{805} “By origin and birth you belong to the land of Canaan. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.” (Ezekiel 16:3)

\textsuperscript{806} But not Ammonites or Moabites for historical reason, though Ruth is an important exception and probably not unique.

\textsuperscript{807} The implications of this are discussed more fully later.

\textsuperscript{808} Isaiah 1:10-17; Jeremiah 7:1-11; Hosea 4:4-14; Amos 4:4-5; Malachi 1:14
Nevertheless, aspects of the Israelite culture were essential to maintaining their understanding of God. In Psalms 105 and 106, reflection on their history is used to stimulate praise and confession respectively. Of these Goldingay notes:

The psalm [105] recalls the story [Israel’s] beginning with God’s promise to Israel’s ancestors up to their entry into the land, the story told at length in the opening six books of the First Testament. At the beginning of the psalm this story is the basis of thanksgiving and testimony, and at the end it is a basis for obedience and worship. By implication, if Israel has difficulty in opening its mouth or in directing its feet in any aspect of these activities, recalling its story is the means to putting the matter right...

...In Psalm 106 Israel’s story is the secret to assurance of forgiveness.809

Being a Jewish book, the Bible pays little attention to God’s ability to speak through other cultures but there are references to his doing so. Despite their contamination of Jewish culture with elements foreign to Judaism, the despised Samaritans shared Messianic expectations. (John 4:25-30) In his address to the Athenian Council of the Areopagus, Paul referred to their sensed need to worship, (Acts 17:22-23) their search for God (17:27) and even quoted ‘truth’ he had found in their poet, Epimenides.810 “Yet in fact he is not far from any of us, since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist, as indeed some of your own writers have said: ‘We are all his children.’ ” (17:27-28)

God was seen as having chosen the culture of the Jewish people, the people of God, as a source of information about himself, but only in so far as it continued faithfully to reflect his character. Though other cultures had not had the privilege of such a choice, they too pointed to God wherever they affirmed values consistent with his nature, supported justice and righteousness, and encouraged subordination of selfish hedonism to a higher ideal. However, not being chosen by God, they were far more open to evil spiritual influences and therefore more likely to draw people away from, rather than towards, God:

“I have the most extraordinary religious experiences. It would be so easy for me to be sucked in if I were not careful. If I took them seriously, I would probably end up forgetting everything I have worked for and become a one-sided religious believer.” What is the stress that makes it possible for such a person to be flooded with these experiences, and yet simply ignore them? And at the same time, what is

810 Bruce, F. F. (1954), op. cit., p.924.
the lack in our culture that actually makes many people prefer to know nothing of such experiences...\textsuperscript{811}

Just as the historical culture of Israelites attested to the reality of God, some cultural traditions, even if Jewish, isolated people from the influence of God’s Spirit. A ruthless militaristic culture would combat the Prince of Peace; individualistic capitalism could not buy the preacher of good news to the poor; the demands of faith were too painful for those raised to hedonism; the One would find himself lost in the motley pantheon of a syncretistic polytheism. Paul gained a hearing in Athens because of the city’s cultural predisposition to the introduction of exotic new deities, in this case ‘Iesous’ and ‘Anastasis’, ‘Jesus’ and ‘Resurrection’. (Acts 17:18) This was not the last time a preacher’s words would be misread because of the cultural background of his audience. Hay suggests that by, “...assimilating the culturally constructed norms around them” in current times “...many people come to ignore their spirituality or to hide it.”\textsuperscript{812}

The Scriptures indicate that, the more people became involved in those aspects of Israelite and later Christian communities which reflected God’s Spirit, the more likely they would be to find themselves culturally attuned to meet God. The cultural memorials of the work of God in the community’s life and history sustained the reality of those works for people. The more their spirituality was alienated from these communities; the harder they would find it to integrate their fundamental cultural being with living a life attuned to God's Spirit. In extreme cases, only a total alienation from their prior acculturation would allow re-acculturation to Christian community.

Despite limited references to the matter, it is consistent with what biblical material there is to extend the idea to other communities. The relative distance of a culture from the influence of God’s Spirit, and the extent to which systemic spiritual evil is endemic to it, determines the extent to which its members suffer a culture-based alienation from God-oriented spirituality.

\textsuperscript{811} Kelsey, M. (1972), \textit{op. cit.}, p.147.

\textsuperscript{812} Hay, D. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, unpaginated.
The church was called consistently to its roots by rites, memorials and reiteration of the foundational stories. Central were the two ‘sacraments’, Baptism and Communion. In the first, the convert and, later, the child shared symbolically in the central acts of redemption, the death and resurrection of Jesus. As the church shared in the rite they were reminded of their spiritual essence. The sacramental meal was even more immediate, being shared on a regular basis and involving the use of Jesus’ own words. In NT times it provided a bridge between cultural involvement and more intimate relationships being a ‘love feast’ between community members. Consequently, the manner of its celebration was a particular matter of concern for Paul*. In so far as a system of ed-care or a setting constitutes a culture it is spiritually potent. While shared rites and attitudes tie individuals together, identification is valued and transgression has negative sanctions, the setting creates its own spirit of which children become a part.

The gathered group

The social environment of the gathered church became far more important in NT thinking as relationship with God shifted from a national religion of birth to a cross-cultural religion of group affiliation. Jesus told his disciples, “Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.” (Matthew 18:20) He referred to his Spirit, rather than his physical presence. Jesus’ followers had, “...all met in one room” when the pentecostal visitation occurred. (Acts 2:1-4) The authors* expected the Spirit to come upon a group of believers open to his presence and henceforth remain with them. As a corporate group infused with his Spirit, the church became ‘Christ’s body’. (1 Corinthians 12:27) Incarnate in the group of believers was a strong witness to the nature of God.

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814 1 Corinthians 11:20-29. Later developments of the rite have tended to minimise this element in favour of formalism.
815 Acts 9:31, 10:44-46; 11:15-17, 13:2-52; Ephesians 3:16-19; 4:3; Colossians 1:7-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17; 12:1-14:40. This final passage may partially be interpreted as referring to individuals but it builds towards advice on the conduct of meetings, which suggests its primary focus is corporate not individual.
When youngsters notice our gladness in worship, when they see the work of the Holy Spirit in us and observe our practices of waiting in God’s presence, when they see our eagerness to serve God in response, they are encouraged to participate in the vitality of the Christian faith-life.  

It is easy for a highly individualistic culture to overlook the corporate nature of biblical spirituality. Many puzzling passages make sense if spirituality is vested in the group, not just individuals in the group. It justifies judgments and blessings on families, even across generations, and also the conversion of entire households. Audiences knew that individuals could exempt themselves from what was happening in their spiritual reference group but, in general, assumed they shared a common spirituality, usually determined by the head of the group. Typical is the story of the Roman gaoler at Philippi:

Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all his family. Late as it was, he took them to wash their wounds, and was baptised then and there with all his household. Afterwards he took them home and gave them a meal, and the whole family celebrated their conversion to belief in God. (Acts 16:32-34)

It is possible that each individual in that household separately considered Paul’s case and was converted, but not very likely. The audience would know that a corporate family group, including, servants and employees, would make a joint decision incorporating each individual. Given the culture, the father would dominate that process and individual understanding and commitment would have varied. Paul and Silas had told the gaoler: “Become a believer in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and your household too.” (Acts 16:32-34) Although Bridger’s reading that the decision was reached by the gaoler alone and then ascribed to the rest is a possible interpretation of the text, it is unlikely. Luke makes it clear that the family were assembled to hear the preaching of the gospel, suggesting a group process. The same can probably be assumed of the president of the synagogue in Corinth, particularly as Paul recognised in his letter to this church that households did not always convert in their entirety. Such a difference did not necessarily lead to a breach in the spiritual unity of these families, but it could.

817 Dawn, M. J. (1999), op. cit., p.75
819 Ibid, p.142.
This contrast between corporate family spirituality and the reality of divided families is the context of one very difficult passage. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16)\(^{820}\) Paul's concern was the criteria which should guide a Christian in deciding whether to stay with or leave an unbelieving spouse. Family spiritual solidarity could be breached by the disparate commitments of husband and wife. It seems to have been a particular problem in morally decadent Corinth for those who had been converted from the dominant paganism.\(^{821}\) The Christian should not terminate the marriage, ‘...because the unbelieving husband is made one with the saints through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made one with the saints\(^{822}\) through her husband. If this were not so, your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy.’ (7:14)\(^{823}\) While the unbeliever might choose to remove themselves from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the household, the Christian spouse should not initiate the split. Christian partners should neither encourage nor resist as the choice was with the unbelieving spouse. Unbelieving partners willing to share the new spiritual environment were incorporated in the wider spiritual community, despite their unbelief. Sharing this environment might lead to their subsequent conversion.\(^{824}\) The Jerusalem version supports this reading in rendering hegiastai (to become holy) as ‘...made one with the saints’, even though the subsequent reference to children retains ‘holy’ as the translation for hagia. Paul justified his argument that the spouse is made ‘holy’ by the presumption, which he expected his audience to share,\(^{825}\) that the children of the marriage were already so.

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\(^{820}\) One source of difficulty in interpreting NT passages about children lies in the degree to which they assume rather than argue an understanding of childhood and this is evident in this passage for which Paul disclaims divine authority. (7:12) One of the harder Pauline passages, it falls within a chapter with many difficulties. So there is a question as to how much weight one should accord it.

\(^{821}\) Despite the evidence for household conversions, it is clear the proclamation of the Christian gospel caused divisions in some.

\(^{822}\) This is a statement about their current state, not a description of an ongoing process.

\(^{823}\) This passage has to be read in the context of the very tangible presence of the Holy Spirit described by the early church. It might not be true of a Laodicean church whose tepid spirit bears little resemblance to wind and fire, power and presence.

\(^{824}\) v16 is ambiguous and could be read as interpreted here (an interpretation shared by most translations and commentaries) or as contradicting the false belief that pagan spouses were likely to be converted, and thereby justifying the separation.

NT authors* represented the group of Christians living in God’s Spirit as the ‘ideal’, despite their simultaneous ‘warts and all’ depiction of particular Christian groups. Corporate failure to live up to the presence of the Spirit seems to have been as prevalent as individual backsliding. From a biblical perspective, the insignia worn by a group is less important than the extent to which it engenders love between members, works in fellowship to achieve common goals, demonstrates personal sacrifice for the mutual good, supports its weaker members, and so on. The nature of the spiritual influence of a group that designates itself ‘Christian’ is contingent upon the degree to which it is responsive to the authority of the Spirit. Conversely, groups that do not wear a ‘Christian’ designation are not thereby insulated from being a source of the Spirit’s influence. As Macquarrie says:

This expression [the community of the Spirit] does not refer to an exclusive characteristic of the church, but asserts that in the church there is going on in a concentrated manner that work of the Spirit which, in a more diffuse way, is going on throughout the whole creation.\(^\text{826}\)

Christians would affirm the truth of Myers & Myers statement: “...spirituality thrives within hopeful communities that sustain, support, guide and protect the human spirit.”\(^\text{827}\)

While a group creates its own corporate spirit, that spirit reflects the impact and influence of contradictory spiritual forces. So a group can become infused with a vengeful spirit, or a spirit of goodwill, a factional spirit, or a generous spirit, a brutal spirit, or a joyous spirit, a self-indulgent spirit, or a sacrificial spirit, a sceptical spirit, or even a Holy Spirit; and that spirit can vary with time. The life of every group bears the marks of the spiritual conflict between God’s Spirit and spiritual evil. One need only reflect on the fragility of Christmas ‘celebrations’ suffered by many households\(^\text{828}\) gathered to reaffirm their sense of ‘family’. They struggle to maintain the good inherent in the ideal, but are constantly ambushed by old hatreds, past strife, unforgotten slights,


\(^{827}\) Myers, B. K. & Myers, M. E. (1999), op. cit., p.28.

\(^{828}\) Except where context makes it impossible, or another writer is being reported, the term ‘household’ is used in preference to ‘family’ to avoid the ambiguity and social presumptions of the latter term. By ‘household’ is implied cohabitation which is sufficiently more than transitory to establish a network of mutual obligations and sense of relatedness, even if relationships are destructive.
unresolved betrayals and unforgiven hurts. One finds the same struggle in political and community organisations, sport and social clubs, returned soldiers’ associations, church councils and diaconates, meetings of heads of churches, school councils, staff teams, and classrooms. However, these fall far short of households in their potential for good and ill.

The household gains its special influence from the duration and intensity of its group life and from the level of dependence and interdependence of group members. Pridmore describes the biblical household thus:

The social entity constituted by his father and his household is welded into unity by the strongest possible ties of kinship. The father and his family form a single psychical unit. At the centre of the family stands the father, the source of kinship and coherence within the house. Without the father the unity of the family is disrupted and the remaining members of the family become vulnerable and isolated individuals, the ‘fatherless and widows’ whose existence is felt to be so anomalous by the biblical writers. Next in importance to the father is the mother who provides the father with offspring, thus guaranteeing the perpetuation of his name; then his children, in particular his sons who will bear his name and thus secure it from oblivion. Father, mother and children, form the kernel of the family, but what makes them a family is not so much their external relatedness but the profound sense of kinship that unites them. 829

Some assume the ‘family’ has a ‘spiritual solidarity’. However, when OT households are used to justify this idea, the differences between households then and now need to be recognised. Bridger points out that: “...Seth would not be merely Seth, but Seth son of Reuben, of the clan of Libni, of the tribe of Benjamin and so on.”830 Similarly, in Awhina Whanau preschools Maori children learn to recite not just their name and address but their ‘pa’ and their ‘canoe’. Such households have solidarity being embedded in a self aware culture which spans not only generations but various levels of kinship. A contemporary household, nuclear family or not, may have little such spiritual solidarity and may be a relatively temporary grouping of people with meagre committed attachment to each other and no sense of incorporation. This applies to many households affiliated to Christian churches. But even if lacking the idealised

solidarity of the biblical family-clan, the modern household remains the primary source of group spiritual influence for most people:

*Home* is the place where children first learn about their own identity and role in life. They start to learn about relationships and others’ rôles and they begin to find answers about the world in which they live. Events or situations they may have encountered might include birth and death, love, trust, joy, sadness, special occasions, religion, etc.\(^{831}\)

As Bridger emphasises, whether the household calls itself Christian or not is less important to spirituality than whether its group life reflects the influence of God’s Spirit.

On the one hand, children from loving and accepting non-Christian homes may well come to a robust faith in Christ upon hearing the gospel, for they have experienced from birth what it means to be loved and to trust even though they have not been exposed to Christian teaching. On the other hand, children who have experienced rejection (even in a nominally Christian home) may have immense difficulties in entering into or sustaining a deep faith because, while they may know the content of belief, they have not experienced human love which paves the way for accepting God’s love.\(^{832}\)

The same social environments which could mediate God’s Spirit could powerfully counteract his influence. The Scriptures attest the danger of associating with ‘the wrong crowd’, most particularly in Psalms and Proverbs.\(^{833}\) Crowds can become mobs capable of acts of evil unthinkable to individual members acting alone. People can be driven from the gospel by destructive social behaviour within a church group when it meets. Paul* was particularly direct in his denunciation of such conduct.\(^{834}\) He questions how people could appreciate the value of fellowship with Christ, if the fellowship between those who profess his Spirit was barren, sterile, factional, or competitive, and no better than that between groups who made no such claim.

If households can be powerful influences for good, they can equally serve as a focus for spiritual evil.

...it can be a situation of conflict and violence, of individuals with scarcely any interest or concern for one another, where little or nothing is done as a corporate

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832 *ibid*, p.56.
833 E.g., Psalm 1:1; 26:4-5; Proverbs 1:10-19; 2:12-19; 13:20; 14:7; etc.
834 1 Corinthians 11:17-22;12:12-13:40; Galatians 5:13-6:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22
activity. In the ‘best’ of families there are arguments and pain as well as harmony and joy; the home can be the place where the worst sides of our natures are all too apparent, and the frustrations of our lives in the wider world are taken out on one another.\textsuperscript{835}

Ed-care is structured around particular types of groups, numbers of children led by one or more adults. The structure is quasi-familial and the groupings persist over significant periods of time. It would be unwise to ignore their contribution, as groups, to children’s spirituality.

\textit{Interpersonal relationships}

Despite emphasis on the group in biblical thinking, the complementary rôle of individual personal relationships is recognised and required by the doctrine of the incarnation.

The Word was made flesh,  
he lived among us,  
and we saw his glory,  
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,  
full of grace and truth... (John 1:14)

No-one has ever seen God;  
it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father’s heart,  
who has made him known. (John 1:18)

The Gospel authors* believed that the work of God’s Spirit was accomplished in relationships. When a follower asks, “Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied,” Jesus answers, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father”. (John 14:8-9) The language of everyday human relationships was regularly employed to describe relationship to God.\textsuperscript{836} Quintessentially, he was father, particularly in the teaching of Jesus.


\textsuperscript{836} God was: betrothed (Hosea 2:19-20); bridegroom (Isaiah 62:5; Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2); creditor (Matthew 6:12); cuckold (Jeremiah 3:20; Ezekiel 16:15-45; Hosea 1:2-9; 2:2-13); divorcée (Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8); employer (Genesis 30:18; Matthew 9:37; 20:1-16); enemy (Lamentations 2:4-5); friend (Exodus 33:11; 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; Matthew 23:37; John 15:13-15); husband (Isaiah 54:5-6; Ezekiel 16:8-14; Hosea 2:16; 2 Corinthians 11:2); king (Psalm 10:16-18; 84:3; Isaiah 33:17-24; Matthew 18:23-35; 22:1-14); master (Exodus 14:31; Leviticus 25:55; Numbers 11:11; 12:7-9; 14:23; 32:31; Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1-15; Judges 2:8; 1 Samuel 3:9-10; 2 Samuel 3:18; 7:5-29; 24:10; 2 Kings 9:7; 21:10; Ezra 5:11; Nehemiah 1:5-11; Job 1:8; Psalm 19:11-13; 27:9; 31:16; 34:22; 79:2; 10; 86:2; 4, 16; 109:28; 113:1; 119:17; 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 89, 91, 122, 124, 125, 135, 140, 176; 134:1, 135:1;
While no human relationship fully exemplified people’s relationship to God, they did provide appropriate metaphors. The descriptions were not literal. Analysis of the structure and quality of the listed relationships, either in their current form or in biblical times, would be inconsistent with the narrative form the authors* used to explain the nature of human interaction with the Divinity. Neither can the relationship as apprehended by the writers be experientially recaptured. There are no longer kings nor masters of slaves of the ilk of those of the Ancient Near East. The ways children relate to parents, wives to husbands, teachers to students, betrothed to each other, have all changed markedly in the intervening millennia. The details of the ancient relationships are historical accidents which should not distract. It is not that Israelite parents, husbands, friends, masters or teachers were wholly Godlike. However, within flawed relationships something mirrored what it was like to know God and be known by him. Every king, parent, bridegroom, or sibling, could demonstrate something Godlike to those in relationship with them. They may have shown much that was evil, but they still revealed some image of good that the Spirit could use to say: “That is what it is like to know God.” Nor, given the diversity of their usage, would the authors have seen that inventory as exclusive. Contemporary forms of relationship provide similar metaphors. There can be something Godlike in mateship, in a working mother, even in a Prime Minister, because there can be something Godlike in each of those rôles properly fulfilled.

Christians do not usually baulk at recognising that human relationships are a powerful source of spiritual influence, though some may quibble about relationships outside
Christian commitment. But God reveals himself in any human relationship where a person experiences ‘what the Spirit brings’. There is genuine love outside the church. There are times of joy in the relationships of most people. There are peacemakers who do not acknowledge the Prince of Peace. There are friends whose patience is their great asset. There are acts of kindness; the good Samaritan story is instructive. (Luke 10:29-37) Integrity is practised. Trustworthiness is not unknown, nor are gentleness and self-control. Even the ‘evil’ parent, may be expected to give ‘good’ to their children. (Matthew 7:9-11) In Luke’s* variant of this saying, this is paralleled to God giving the Holy Spirit. (Luke 11:11-13) Neither between Christians or others will they be unalloyed, but God uses what good they offer.

It is relationships with people identified with God which are most potent as a force for destructive spirituality. Though the warnings about false prophets refer primarily to what they teach, some also call attention to the interpersonal behaviour of those who say they speak for God. The quality of their relationships is commonly used in the NT to challenge those who claimed a higher level of spirituality based on esoteric knowledge. The apostate often attribute rejection of faith to the negative influence of particular church people, just as the converted often point to their positive impact. Recent press coverage of cases of sexual abuse of children by church workers has highlighted the long-lasting spiritual impact of destructive personal relationships. Crompton quotes Kennedy who says:

Children who are abused, in whatever form, are ... abused spiritually. The capacity for trust and self-esteem, for giving and receiving love and expecting security and affirmation, community and sharing, is assaulted; delight and wonder are all too probably replaced by despair, anger and guilt...

When children associated with a religion suffer abuse, trust in a deity who should have offered protection is challenged, especially if both abuser and deity are male. Children may respond: “Where was God when I was abused?”; “I knew that I had committed a terrible sin of some kind, and that I was evil; I was going to Hell.” Survivors may be expected to “heal quickly because people have prayed for them, and want to see the power of prayer” and may be blamed for ‘failing’ to be healed because “You must be blocking God’s healing by some sin...”

839 E.g., Romans 12: 3-21; 1 Corinthians 12-13; 2 Timothy 2:14-26; Titus 1: 15-16; James 3:13-18.
In his own words:

An adult may use the word ‘love’ while engaged in an act of abuse, sexual or otherwise. Physical punishment or chastisement may be justified by: “I’m doing this for your own good, because I love you.” If love is a tenet of the child’s religion, what messages are received about the intentions and behaviour of the ‘loving’ deity and co-religionists who apparently permit and perpetrate such acts in the name of love? ... Abuse within a context where children are taught that they should feel safe destroys the roots of trust. If the context includes religious teaching and responsibility for spiritual well-being, immense spiritual damage is implied: at the very least, how can people who have been abused physically within a religious environment dissociate the sins of the perpetrators, including lies, from teachings about right behaviour in the sight of the deity which may now be seen to be ‘false’, especially if the perpetrator is not apprehended and receives no punishment, whether temporal or divine. 841

Crompton recognises how deeply children can feel their exposure to spiritual evil:

Some children “feel that they are in some way controlled by evil. That what they have done is the result of this evil and that therefore there is nothing they can do to stop themselves.” Others speak of people who held ‘demonic power’ over them (cited in Crompton 1996: 4/46-7, 44). Concepts of evil and demonic power have spiritual / religious connotations with which we need to engage if we are really to listen to children. 842

Relationships in ed-care have to be examined as a potent source of spiritual influence.

SPIRITUALITY OF TRUTH OR DECEIT

In the beginning was the Word:
the Word was with God
and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

One of the most consistent biblical themes is the importance of words, and the concepts they convey, in creating and sustaining a relationship to God, and also in undermining that relationship. The author* of the letter to Hebrews says: “At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son...” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Timothy is told:

You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember who your teachers were, and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures - from those you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through

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faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired\(^{843}\) by God and can profitably be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be holy. This is how the man who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

The nexus between God and truth,\(^{844}\) the Messiah and truth\(^{845}\) and, particularly, between the Spirit and truth\(^{846}\) is a significant emphasis of the biblical record. Jesus described himself as "the truth". (John 14:6) Truth is a major theme for John* and in the story of 'the woman at the well', discussed earlier, he emphasised that as well as being "in Spirit" worship acceptable to God is "in truth". Both the prophets and teachers of the OT and early church saw their message as God's truth, an evaluation shared by their audiences*. This is reflected in the evangelical’s apprehension of the Bible as the transmitted record of that truth: "...the Reformers referred to ... the perspicuity of the Bible. Though complicated in detail, and profound in its ontology, the Bible speaks clearly and simply in the essentials. Spiritually speaking, one can go far with nothing in one's possession except the Scriptures."\(^{847}\)

This does not mean that 'truth' is to be accepted unquestioningly from scripture or ecclesiastical authority. The expectation that children would question has been identified previously. Even the Orthodox, whose name signals commitment to doctrine as 'given' and unchanging, are not necessarily doctrinaire. Koulomzin notes, "There can be no faith without freedom, you can truly believe only if you are free to doubt."\(^{848}\)

The contentious suggestion that the Spirit also reveals the truth about God through concepts expressed in other traditions is colourfully addressed by Luther: "Whatever does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching. Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic even if Judas, Annas,

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843 A direct reference to the 'in-Spirited' nature of the concepts transmitted.
844 1 Kings 17:24; Psalm 25:5; 86:11; 96:13; Isaiah 45:19; Jeremiah 5:3; Zechariah 8:19; Romans 15:8; 2 John 3
845 John 1:17; 4:23-24; 14:6; 18:37; Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:10; Ephesians 1:13; 4:21; 2 John 3
846 John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; Romans 9:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:6
Pilate, and Herod were doing it.”\textsuperscript{849} Moses\textsuperscript{850} clearly knew and used many stories and ideas of the source cultures from which the people and faith of Israel were emerging.\textsuperscript{851} While many supposed ‘borrowings’ owe more to scholarly invention than Moses’\textsuperscript{852} intentions, his understanding of God did not spring fully-formed from a conceptual vacuum. The Hebrew slaves lived in Egypt through the theological turmoil of Akh-en-Aten’s flirtation with monotheism and its suppression; a time when the nature of deity was deeply questioned.\textsuperscript{853} Moses\textsuperscript{854} depicted his younger self as an active member of the family / court of Rameses\textsuperscript{854} whose dynasty had Semitic roots and oversaw the


\textsuperscript{850} While the documents of the Pentateuch are very complex and a variety of hands have reworked the text, a single theological mind has shaped the books of Genesis to Numbers into an uncompromising monotheism unparalleled in the Ancient Near East. That this should be an unknown ‘redactor’ or priestly caste of a later period seems less likely than that it should be the acknowledged founder of the faith of Israel. One would question what led hypothesised later authors to their world changing ideas. The scholarly convention that fragments of different ‘documents’ can be identified by what term is used for ‘God’ is not the only way to read the text. This dissertation assumes that the basic content and structure of the first four books stemmed from the historical figure of Moses although he used earlier material and the documents were very heavily edited in later times to fit changing circumstances and reconcile variant versions. However, to avoid argument as to the real authorship of the Pentateuch, the ‘implied’ author will be designated Moses*.

\textsuperscript{851} Originating in Southern Mesopotamia where they worshipped the gods “beyond the River”, descendants of a “wandering Aramean”, refugees from Egypt where they also worshipped the local pantheon, and living cheek by jowl with Canaanites, from whom they were racially indistinguishable. (Joshua 24)

\textsuperscript{852} To identify ‘the deep’ (\textit{tehom}) in Genesis 1:2 with the Sumero-Akkadian monstrous ocean goddess (\textit{Tiamat}) [Achtemeier, E. R. (1992), \textit{op. cit.}, p.12]; or to trace the ‘Moses in the bulrushes’ story to the legendary birth of the 24th Century Sargon of Babylon; is to confuse similarities of language or story detail with derivation. One might as well derive Thor Heyerdall’s Kon Tiki stories from the Norse storm god and Noah’s ark.

\textsuperscript{853} From about 1380-1362 BC, Pharaoh Amen-hotep IV changed his name to Akh-en-Aten and proclaimed Aten, the sun-disk, as the supreme, and perhaps, sole god. His nineteen year reign caused extraordinary national disruption which almost cost Egypt its Asian empire. His successor began the reversion to the old pantheon and within thirteen years all memory of his and his god’s name was erased from Egyptian life and monuments. The story was rediscovered during the 20th Century from a surviving depository at Tell-el-Armana.

\textsuperscript{854} Rameses II is likely to have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus, though the Bible avoids his name, perhaps to evade its close similarity to ‘Moses’. It is incongruous for an Egyptian princess, sister of a god, to derive her adopted son’s name from the Hebrew word \textit{mashah} (to draw out), choosing thereby to identify him with a despised, feared and oppressed group of alien slaves. ‘Moshe’ is Egyptian for ‘child’ and was used as a god-name suffix, e.g., Tuthmosis. Given the dynastic name Ra-meses, ‘child of Ra’, Moses may well have signified his changed identification by dropping the sun-god’s name and basing his chosen name on a Hebrew assonance. Driver says such derivation puns were common. [Driver, S. R. (1913). \textit{Notes on the Hebrew text and the toponography of the Books of Samuel with an introduction on Hebrew palaeography and the ancient versions and facsimiles of inscriptions and maps}. Oxford: Clarendon, p.16.] Though I incline to the Rameses hypothesis the argument only requires that a palace child received a ‘son-of-the-god’ name.

206
incorporation of many Canaanite deities into the Egyptian pantheon. He could not have avoided vigorous theological debate. It is out of the ferment of ideas, the clash of religious cultures,\(^\text{855}\) the rise and fall of gods and goddesses, that the faith of Israel was born. This is not to deny the rôle of the theophanies to Moses (Exodus 3-4, 19ff) but he was predisposed to recognise that pantheons change, that the reality of gods can be questioned, that there might be only one God. He discovered that one universal God in the tribal deity of his enslaved people.

Later, the concept of kingship, alien to tribal Israel and resisted by early prophets, is incorporated into understandings of God’s kingdom and the Messianic king. Such borrowings occur despite prophetic insistence on maintaining cultural separation from pagan neighbours. The very frequency of biblical polemics on the topic indicates a high incidence of foreign borrowing. While some required active resistance,\(^\text{856}\) some enriched the Jewish faith. The ancient literary form called ‘Wisdom’ is an example, only finding a significant place in Jewish thinking late in the OT period. The use of Septuagint readings of the OT in the New indicates the impact of Greek culture. Each language structures thought forms differently with a consequential impact on the conception of faith.\(^\text{857}\) The vernacular shift from Hebrew to Aramaic must have made its own impact upon popular understanding.

There was a critical change when the Babylonian deportation ended for ever the national and regional concept of the faith of Israel. It emerged as racial and cultural. The early Christians transformed Judaism from a law-based cultural adherence into a faith-based cross-cultural proclamation. Paul confidently used non-Jewish sources for information about God. He quotes Greek poets and borrows freely from Greek and Roman ideas to illustrate the gospel.\(^\text{858}\) In his address to the Council of the Areopagus he states:

\(^{855}\) It was a time of sustained war between Egypt, Assyria and the Hittites over the Canaanite and Aramean lands. Each great power represented a distinctly different politico-religious culture.

\(^{856}\) The tradition of cultic prostitution is one example.

\(^{857}\) As indicated earlier, the equivalence of the ‘breath-spirit-wind’ concept is lost in translation to English.

\(^{858}\) Acts 17:23,27; Romans 7:24; 8:38-39; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 15:33; 2 Corinthians 12:2; Colossians 2:14-15; 1 Timothy 4:2; 5:18 (attributed to ‘Scripture’ but not found in the OT); 2 Timothy 2:4-5; Titus 1:12-13. For a fuller account of possible references to extra-canonical texts
From one single stock he not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed how long each nation should flourish and what the boundaries of its territory should be and he did this so that all nations might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him. (Acts 17:26-27)

Although outside the revelation to Israel, such seeking could lead to God’s truth and person.

Despite an ongoing undercurrent in the church asserting a radical divorce between ‘revealed truth’ and the ‘vain philosophies’ of the world, Christians have always adapted concepts from their own cultures. Never an unmixed blessing, this has, nevertheless, enriched worship, stimulated missionary endeavour, provided thought forms for theology and shaped the nature of Christian hermeneutics. Even creation scientists defending the literal scientific inerrancy of Scripture use contemporary cosmology rather than that of the Genesis account.

There is no unbridgeable chasm between inspired and secular words. Inspiration has always been recognised as a matter of degree, rather than ‘all or none’. Scripture was divided into ‘canonical’ and ‘apocryphal’ in the centuries around the time of Jesus and a number of the documents in both testaments were disputed. For instance, Augustine accepted the Maccabees; Athanasius Baruch and The Letter of Jeremiah, but not Esther. Both collections were published together in Bibles until recent centuries and some versions retain the practice. Even amongst canonical books, most people recognise that not all are equally valuable. For instance, few would assert that Esther asserts God’s truth in the same way as John’s Gospel.

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859 ‘St Patrick’s Breastplate’, the hymn beginning “I bind unto myself” borrows the form of a pre-Christian Celtic incantation.
860 Through the confusion of ‘gospel’ with ‘Western’ and ‘civilised’.
861 Creationists accept a heliocentric solar system, the rain cycle, the Linnaean concept of species, the physical nature of sun and moon as huge agglomerations of gas or rock. Moses* whose inerrancy they defend did not describe that sort of universe at all.
864 Paul himself differentiates between statements he makes “from the Lord” and those he makes “from me”. (1 Corinthians 7:10-12)
Moreover, many Christians attest to being led towards God by writings far from Christian in orientation. Lewis attributes his awakened religious sensibility to his introduction to Siegfried and the myths of the Norse gods.\textsuperscript{865} An important feature of Lewis’ autobiographical account is his sense that it was an ongoing process; from atheism to ‘northernness’, to theism, and thence to Christianity. It is as a part of such a process that the conceptual environment is important. A person is unlikely to be converted from thoughtless hedonism to Christian faith by a reading of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. But they might be set to wonder about themselves, and their place in the created world after hearing the ‘what a piece of work is a man’ soliloquy.\textsuperscript{866} A passage, a collection of words, an idea, does not need to be encanonned to be inspired, and, therefore, revelatory. It need only be consistent with truth that God wants people to know. As such, it will necessarily be compatible with the scriptural witness. This may be particularly true of spiritual traditions other than Christianity. Puls argues this even applies to ‘New Age’ and kindred movements:

In all these [spiritual] movements and trends there is a common trend. A greater awareness of the relationship between our inner and outer worlds, between temporary achievements and lasting fulfilment, superficial satisfactions and qualitative peace. However distorted or fanatical the searches may become, there is within them a spiritual quality. In many, perhaps most, instances, there would be no conscious acknowledgment of the role and impulse of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is within these natural leanings and these everyday interests that the Holy Spirit lurks, anonymous perhaps, unrecognised, and often uncelebrated.\textsuperscript{867}

The Bible frequently refers to the destructive power of the lie.\textsuperscript{868} It is difficult to recognise truth if one lives in a society whose structure is based on a pattern of lies. One has only to turn on the television, or read newspapers, to observe how words and ideas undermine truth in politics, advertising, industrial relations, commercial encounters and interpersonal relationships. It is not necessary to contradict truth directly, only to fail to consistently tell the stories of God’s work in the world or to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{868} Proverbs 21:6; Jeremiah 9:3-9; 14:14-16; 23:16-40; 27:10-22; Zechariah 10:2; Romans 1:24-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 21:27; 22:15.
\end{itemize}
consistently tell a different ‘world story’ from the truth revealed in Scripture. The power of language to be used destructively is most vividly expressed by James*:

Think how a small flame can set fire to a huge forest; the tongue is a flame like that. Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world in itself: it infects the whole body; catching fire itself from hell, it sets fire to the whole wheel of creation. Wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish can all be tamed by man, and often are; but nobody can tame the tongue - it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison. We use it to bless the Lord and Father, but we also use it to curse men who are made in God's image: the blessing and the curse come out of the same mouth. My brothers, this must be wrong... (James 3:5-11)

The association of falsehood with spiritual evil was noted earlier. Jesus said:

The devil...
...was a murderer from the start;
he was never grounded in the truth;
there is no truth in him at all:
when he lies
he is drawing on his own store,
because he is a liar, and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

He exemplifies a broad Scriptural theme where deceit was indicative of evil. 869 If truth is characteristic of the work of the Spirit of God, then error, and particularly deceit, is distinctive of the work of forces of spiritual evil. 870

Hill, in arguing against trying to restrict children to ‘approved’ Christian doctrine, brings out the ambiguity of the situation in which children live.

[Some earnest Christians’] desire is to see their children grow smoothly into the faith they themselves hold dear, even if it means shielding them as much as

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869 E.g., lying to harm other people (Exodus 20:16; 23:1,7; Deuteronomy 5:20; 19:16-20; Psalm 15:3; 27:12; 50:20; Proverbs 14:25; 25:18; 30:10; Ezekiel 22:9; Matthew 15:19; Mark 10:19; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:31; Revelation 2:9); false prophetic or similar utterances (often associated with people being lost or led away from God (Deuteronomy 18:22; Isaiah 9:14-16; Jeremiah 8:5-8; 14:14-15; 23:14-32; 27:9-16; 28:1-17; etc.; Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 12:24; 13:1-23; 22:28; Micah 2:11; Zechariah 13:2-4 (where lying prophets are directly associated with evil spirits); Matthew 7:15; 24:11,24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6-11; 20:30; Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:17-26; 3:6-9; 4:4; Titus 1:13-14; 1 John 4:1); a contrast to the truthfulness of God or the good person (Deuteronomy 32:4-5; Psalm 34:13; Proverbs 13:5; 30:5-6; Jeremiah 5:1-3; Ephesians 4:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-13); descriptions of evil people(Job 15: 34-35; Psalm 4:2; 5:9; 7:14; 10:7; 12:2; etc.; Proverbs 10:18; 12:20; 26:24-26; Isaiah 57:4; 59:3-4,12-15; Jeremiah 7:28; Daniel 8:12,25; 11:27 Hosea 10:13; 12:1; Amos 5:10; Micah 6:12; Zechariah 10:2; Matthew 19:18; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:18-31; Colossians 3:8-9; 1 Peter 2:1; 2 Peter 2:1-14); and threats of, requests for or instances of judgment (Psalm 5:6; 59:12; 101:7; Proverbs 19:5,9; 20:17; 21:28; Isaiah 5:18-24, 28:14-19; 30:9-14; Jeremiah 9:3-9; Hosea 7:13; Amos 2:4-5; Acts 5:3-5; Romans 2:6-8, Revelation 21:27; 22:15).

possible from exposure to the other persuasive belief systems which are contending in the middle ground of our pluralistic society. But there is a strong likelihood that such a policy of protectionism will prove counterproductive. When you live in a pluralistic society, free trade is the order of the day. Truth claims compete for customers.  

The voice of truth may not be labelled as Christian but that will not prevent the Spirit of God using it in that competitive market. If falsehood is employed by Christians, who the user is will not prevent its use by spiritual evil.

Because verbal learning dominates ed-care, the power of the words and ideas used, whether they convey truth or falsehood is a matter of great spiritual moment.

SPIRITUALITY OF PROVIDENCE OR NEGLECT

"The well regulated successions of summer and winter clearly indicate with what care and benignity God has provided for the necessities of the human family." As indicated earlier, Paul used the evidence of God’s gracious provision for people’s daily needs in his argument to the Lycaonians. He invoked a biblical tradition which saw such care as indicative of the nature of God. Paradoxically, the tradition represents this care as both gracious and provisional.

Paul argues from the understanding that God’s provision for humanity reflects the Creator-creature relationship. Both creation narratives express this teaching.

Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of the heaven and all living animals on the earth ... See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this shall be your food. (Genesis 1:28-29) Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east and there he put the man he had fashioned. Yahweh God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat... (Genesis 2:8-9)

The withdrawal of this automatic provision was seen as a major consequence of the ‘fall’. Humanity, who were to cultivate the garden of Yahweh-elahim, would now labour tilling the soil for inadequate return. (Genesis 3:17-19) God’s care could no longer

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873 To understand Isaiah’s depiction of creation restored under God’s rule, one must recognise the vegetarian nature of the Genesis provision. (Isaiah 11:6-9)
be taken for granted, but was certainly not terminated. His first act after cursing Adam, Eve and the serpent was to make clothes for the humans to wear. (Genesis 3:21) Jesus himself pointed out that God’s sun rose on bad and good and his rain fell on both honest and dishonest. (Matthew 5:45) However, Moses saw humanity’s disobedience as causing a radical shift in that provision so that it became a counterpoint to God’s moral demands.

In the flood narrative, God destroys humanity for their evil, exempting only one family. (Genesis 9) He subsequently renews the Edenic covenant with creation, including the provision of food. However, the provision shifts in significant ways; for instance, the new diet is omnivorous. Later national covenants make no mention of God’s sustaining care. In fact, the Exodus narratives emphasise God’s care as occasional and miraculous. Yet psalmists frequently refer to God’s provision and prophets justify God’s judgment on Israel by their ingratitude for his constant sustenance. It is a conditional providence; its withdrawal indicative of Divine displeasure, its restoration a sign of his forgiveness. By Malachi’s time, it was represented as tithe dependent. (Malachi 3:6-12)

The evidence of God’s love implicit in his provision does not necessarily engender a positive response. Yet, even in the prophetic polemic, God’s wrath against ingratitude expressed in faithlessness is not central to his character. Grace is always available:

Ask Yahweh for rain
at the time of the spring rains.
For it is Yahweh who sends the lightning
and gives the showers of rain;
he gives bread to man,
and grass to the cattle. (Zechariah 10:1)

874 Exodus 16:1-17:7; Numbers 20:6-11.
876 Isaiah 56:9-57:1; Jeremiah 2:7-9; Hosea 2:8-13; Amos 4:6.
878 Hosea 2 (translations vary on verse numbers); Joel 2:21-27; 4:18; Amos 9:13; Haggai 18-19; Zechariah 8:12.

212
Jesus strongly endorses this theme. He taught his disciples to pray, "Give us today our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3) This remains an essential element of Christian liturgy: It is also implied by the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

So Paul in Lycaonia represents a rich strain of teaching. However, he extends that tradition remarkably by using it outside the context of the Covenant. This particular source of evidence for God's existence and nature is as fully available to people outside God's covenant community as to those within. Moreover, this is precisely so it can act as revelation to those who have not had access to the revelation available within the Covenant. Similar thinking lies behind Sister Magdalen's statement:

The gospel calls us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked ... Again, I stress that the spiritual dimension includes every aspect of the person, down to the question of how they dress and what they eat.

Kropf sees this as particularly significant in infancy:

Most authorities seem to agree that unless, during these critical months of infant development, the child can consistently depend on the parents' expression of love and care, there will later appear in the child's psychological make up a profound lack of confidence in persons and in the world at large. A baby who cries for help, for food, or simply to have its diapers changed, and whose cry brings no response, could very well grow up to become a distrustful and suspicious person - a person who has little or no instinctive foundation for belief in a loving God.

This suggests that failure of providential care can undermine the work of God's Spirit. It is a consequence of the decisive testing of Adam and Eve, and that is represented by Moses* as archetypical of humanity's plight. Historically, the Israelites under Moses attributed their grumbling and turning back to Yahweh's failure to care for them in the manner to which they wished to become accustomed. In the Job story, Satan used a series of personal calamities to undermine Job, and partially achieved his end.

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880 Matthew 6:25-34; 7:9-11; Luke 12:22-31; John 6:30-35 (where Jesus uses the accepted belief as the basis for a pun).
883 Kropf, R. W. (1990), op. cit., p.44.

213
It is a significant act of spiritual evil when human activity interposes itself so that people are not cared for, or to prevent God's providential care being evident to those who receive it. This may be systemic, where a social system withholds care from certain groups. It was a requirement under OT Law that landholders actively provided for gleaning by the poor. (Deuteronomy 24:21; Ruth 2:2-19) Alternatively, refusal of care may be an individual choice. Jesus used this to epitomise real depth of evil:

Is there a man among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:9-11)

One should not be surprised if a victim of neglect finds testimonies to God's benevolence less than convincing. The quality of care is a central issue in the way ed-care fosters spiritual development.

SPIRITUALITY OF INTERVENTION OR TEMPTATION

It is not unusual to meet, or hear interviews with, people who sincerely report events that they interpret as God intervening directly in their lives. Books of Christian piety are full of such accounts. Once they feel assured that their admission will be treated with sensitivity, some people with a secular belief system refer to a sense of a supportive presence in a time of stress, or to hearing a 'voice' approving or disapproving or instructing, or of being able to trace a sequence of events in a way that they interpret as a form of guidance from 'someone'. Occasionally it leads to religious faith. However, that further step is far from automatic. It is necessary to ask how such events are to be interpreted.

There is solid biblical precedent for direct encounters with God's Spirit. The specifics vary and include what could be described as extraordinary if not bizarre. Not all who receive these visitations are part of Jewish or Christian communities, nor even


sympathetic to God’s work in the world. Because of the nature of the biblical record, appearances to people outside the Covenant communities are only described when they affect the life of those inside. Contemporary research indicates that they are not rare, even in children. It should also be noted that the occurrences seem arbitrary and unpredictable. It is hard to say why an intervention occurs in some circumstances and not in others.

The Scriptures both acknowledge the reality of spiritual evil and attest to its direct intervention in people’s lives. Usually this is identified as temptation, direct prompting to do what is wrong, though more obvious interference is not unknown. (1 Thessalonians 2:18) As argued earlier, the biblical writers seldom separate such promptings from those of the person’s own will. One meaning of the experience expressed by the doctrine of ‘original sin’ may be that those aspects of people which persist in opposition to God themselves embody spiritual evil, rendering external temptation superfluous. Satan may dwell within. However, occasionally the authors describe special times of temptation for which such explanations do not suffice. Jesus’ account of his own temptation (Matthew 4:1-11 and parallels) certainly validates explanations in terms of direct Satanic intervention. While the danger of ‘satanising’ all evil is pertinent, the Scriptures teach that people are susceptible to direct external temptation. The relationship of temptation to deceit is exemplified in McDermott’s account:

Willis, ... is a lecherous, heavy-drinking old farmer who ignored his handicapped son for years because he was embarrassed by his inability to play baseball like other boys. But because he heard a voice many years ago promising him salvation, Willis resists the urgings of his relatives to repent and turn his heart to God. Willis insists that he is already saved and has no need for organised religion.

It is difficult to know whose voice spoke to Willis years ago. Perhaps it was his own desire to be free from spiritual terror. Or it may have been what Paul referred to when he said that Satan sometimes disguises himself as an agent of light.

889 Numbers 22-24; 31.
890 E.g., Coles, R. (1990), op. cit.
891 Wink identifies one type of demon as the “inner personal demonic”.
Children also report such experiences:

At the age of nine, at boarding school, I knelt one evening as usual to say my prayers, as I have always done, when suddenly, like a flash, came the question, as if asked from outside myself. "Is there anyone to pray to?" and the answer seemed to come: "No!" there was no God. This was followed by a great sense of relief, thankfulness, pleasure. I need never pray again. Why pray to nothing and no-one? I never did pray again.  

Children's reports of such encounters, for good or ill, cannot be ignored if their spirituality is to be taken as seriously as many of them do.

**SPIRITUALITY IN CHILDHOOD**

The spirituality of the child is an ideological minefield:

We look upon the outward appearance and in some children we see little evidence of sinfulness. But let us not be deceived; "God looketh on the heart", and if we want to know what the heart of an unsaved child is like, we shall find the answer in our Lord's own words in Mark 7:21 - "for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." This is our Lord's picture of the human heart, even the heart of a child, for he makes no age limit.

Pope is more explicit than most, but not unique in denying the relevance of age to spirituality. Doherty is more typical:

There are two groups of people (including children) - and only two...

a. Those who have repented and believe are
   -in Christ (their federal head)
   -regenerate
   -justified

b. Those who have not repented and believed are
   -in Adam (their federal head)
   -spiritually dead
   -condemned

There are NO exceptions given in the Bible to this two-fold classification of mankind. All children who have not repented and believed are in the second group. This includes little children who, although they may not yet have

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897  This necessarily assigns the writer to the previously identified first position held by Christians about children's relationship with God.
DELIBERATELY sinned against God, DID sin in Adam, and DO have a sinful nature.898

I believe that a child, even a little child, can really understand all that is needed for him to trust Christ. How much understanding is needed. He needs to understand that he has sinned against God, to be sorry for his sin, and to be willing to turn from it; he needs to understand that the Lord Jesus died for him, and he needs to trust and receive Him. On this simple basis, he can be saved in exactly the same way as anyone else.899

Another slant on this attitude is attributed to Baptists by Bridge & Phypers:

The church is made up of Christians and only Christians. One becomes a Christian by personal faith in Christ, and proves it by a changed life. Therefore infants cannot be Christians, should not be regarded as church members, and should not receive the church ordinance of baptism.900

As indicated earlier, such attitudes are found in many aids to evangelism901 and Fundamentalist books about ‘children's ministry’. They are justified by applying to children statements originally addressed to adults, and by discounting the force of statements directly relevant to children. It is an unsustainable position. As Bridger says of Pope’s statement:

Firstly, Pope makes no distinction between inborn sinfulness and conscious sin - it is all equally damnable in God’s sight; and, secondly, Pope’s view makes no allowance for age. It does not matter whether your sin is unwitting or deliberate, or whether you are nine months or ninety: you are equally accountable before God. This, as we shall see, requires careful and critical examination if we are to do justice to biblical theology and to what we have learned about child development.902

899 ibid, p.104. Doherty justifies this specifically on a rejection of treating children differently from adults: “...the Bible does not teach a theology of childhood which is separate from, and different to, a theology of adulthood. The Bible gives a theology of man which includes both children and adults.” ibid, p.75
901 Bridger indicates that, “...evangelists have not always recognised ['that sin means something radically different to a child of three from what it means to a child of fifteen'] either theologically or practically”. [Bridger, F. (1988), op. cit., p.111.] The Wordless Book/Glove is a pertinent example. The colour coded salvationist mnemonic is intended to be applied to people regardless of age.
902 ibid, p.100.
The very fact of physical and psychological development requires that spirituality must also be developmental. The ‘heart’ of a child is not just the ‘heart’ of an adult in a smaller body. For example, the development of language is an age related change which allows for the articulation of spiritual encounters and reflection upon the understanding of others. One of Hardy’s respondents expressed it well: “As I look back it seems to me that my whole life has been a religious experience, in the sense that my religious consciousness has grown and developed as inevitably as my body and mind.”

Biblical authors treated children as different from adults in their spirituality:

But your little ones who, you said, would be seized as booty, these children of yours who do not yet know good from evil, these shall go in there; I will give it to them and they shall possess it. (Deuteronomy 1:39)

Now get up and go home; at the moment your feet enter the town, the child will die. All Israel will mourn for him, and bury him; and he alone of Jeroboam’s household will go to the tomb, for it is in him alone of the House of Jeroboam that anything pleasing to Yahweh, the God of Israel, is found. (1 Kings 14:13)

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as prophet to the nations”. I said, “Ah, Lord Yahweh; look, I do not know how to speak: I am a child”. (Jeremiah 1:4-6)

When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me. (1 Corinthians 13:11)

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903 This is not saying children become better, more holy or closer to God as they age. While one use of spiritual is as a synonym for holiness, that is not how the term is used in this dissertation.


905 Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., p.70.

906 The author attributes this to Moses who, in turn, attributes it to Yahweh, according it divine authority.

907 As will be argued later, the context makes it clear that this is a young child, though this is not uncontested.

908 There is much to consider in this exchange. For now, it suffices to note that certain spiritual responsibilities were deemed inappropriate for children.

909 This is part of a passage about insufficiencies. The apparent negativism towards children reflects Paul’s deliberate choice of nepios, a word which implies incomplete language ability. The deficiencies created by that are the focus of his comment.
In this way we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself. Then we shall not be children any longer, (or) tossed one way and another and carried along by every wind of doctrine, at the mercy of all the tricks men play and their cleverness in practising deceit. (Ephesians 4:13-14)\textsuperscript{910}

Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord - that is your duty. (Ephesians 6:1) Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)\textsuperscript{911}

If children are different, the nature of that distinctiveness needs to be clarified in any discussion of the spirituality of children. To pose the question of spiritual development in biblical terms is to ask whether children encounter the Holy Spirit in a way that is different from adults. It asks whether particular church rites, or resolutions made by children, change the nature of the Spirit’s work with them. It demands that one asks about the different rôle of the Spirit within and beyond the Christian community of faith. Furthermore, the issue presumes parallel questions about the rôle of spiritual evil in the development of children.

These questions are not addressed in the creeds or liturgies of the Christian church. Their strongest theme is that children receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and Satan is expelled. How this occurs is not explained except by the broader sacramental theology of the church using each creed or liturgy. Such assertions about the effects of baptism leave many questions unasked, let alone answered:

- Are there encounters between the Spirit and unbaptised (even unborn) children?
- What difference does ‘receiving’ the Spirit at baptism make to the child’s experience of God?
- Why do many baptised children seem just as resistant to the gospel as unbaptised children?
- Is the experience of receiving the Spirit at baptism the same as receiving the Spirit on ‘conversion’ or as being ‘filled with the Spirit’?

\textsuperscript{910} The “or” is a translator’s interpolation and typically weakens the sense that the rest of the verse is descriptive of children. This passage indicates that children’s lack of critical faculties render them vulnerable to being misled.

\textsuperscript{911} The last two are both part of instruction on family relationships. However, Paul’s* extension of each suggests this is a more general statement to children. By obeying their parents, the local concrete expression of divine authority, they fulfil their obligations and please God. This will be discussed more fully later.
The list could be expanded.

Questions about children’s spirituality are not merely academic. Answers are commonly assumed in the popular theology of many Christians who work with children in church and secular contexts. Forms of relationship are regularly assumed to exist between children and the Holy Spirit, and between children and evil spiritual forces. In evangelistic settings, Christians pray that God’s Spirit will work in the lives of children to whom they are presenting the gospel. At other times, they assume the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the nurture of children raised within or responding from beyond the church community. What is not clear is what the Spirit is thought to do with each child; how it is supposed to influence them. Some form of infilling or possession of the child, leading to a direct and miraculous change of thinking and sentiment seems to be envisaged. People also pray for God to prevent Satan from ‘blinding children’s eyes to the gospel’ and talk about children being subject to temptation. Once more a direct internal influence seems to be supposed.

It may be that such discourse is no more than ‘churchspeak’, a conventional language code which establishes the speaker’s credibility within the church community. As its function is social rather than informational, it need express no articulated theology. However, as a dogma is implied without theological reflection, it is perilous, especially if carried over to work in public ed-care. If children, as spiritual beings, are in relationship with spiritual forces of good and evil, those who work with them must try to understand those relationships. One perspective is implied in a parable Jesus told:

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner’s servants went to him and said, “Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?” “Some enemy has done this,” he answered. And the servants said, “Do you want us to go and weed it out?” But he said, “No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.” (Matthew 13:24-30)

Spiritual development is part of the world’s mixed crop. Children are exposed to that which belongs to God’s Kingdom and to that which belongs to the “evil one”. (Matthew 13:38)\textsuperscript{913} To adequately analyse the contingencies of spiritual formation in ed-care requires recognition of the mixture and polarity of spiritual influences that operate in such settings. And what spirituality in children really means must be addressed seriously.

What is written about children’s spirituality is based on a very limited biblical base, much of which is not specific to children, reflecting a sentiment that the Bible has little to say directly about children and God.\textsuperscript{914} Pridmore asserts:

Any kind of deliberate analytical study of the psychology of the individual was foreign to the Hebrew mind and it is therefore not surprising that the Old Testament shows little awareness of the distinctive psychology of children ... Equally we do not find in the Old Testament any clearly formulated ‘theology’ of childhood. The question of the child's relationship to God, his individual religious life, is not discussed.

In view of this dominance of the father it is not surprising that it is only exceptionally that biblical writers focus attention on individual women or children ... But for a theological attitude to childhood, that is to say an attitude that has regard to the nature and importance of a child’s relationship to God, the Old Testament is on the whole silent.\textsuperscript{915}

At least some of that perceived paucity is interpretive fashion. Passages mentioning children are exegeted with, at best, a passing note as to what they might say about children.\textsuperscript{916} Even translation may disguise a reference to children. For instance the Jerusalem translates Luke 10:20: “It was then that, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, ‘I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes Father, for that is what it pleased you to do.’ ” The TEV, replaces “children” with “the unlearned”.\textsuperscript{917} There is nothing in that translation to suggest the verse might be relevant to children.

\textsuperscript{913} The interpretation of the wheat and darnel as referring only to good and bad people is excluded by 13:41 which also refers to “all things that provoke offence”.


\textsuperscript{915} Pridmore, J. S (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.1,4.

\textsuperscript{916} See commentaries by Atkinson, B. F. C., Ellison, H. L., and Manley, G. T. C. In F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, & E. F. Kevan (Eds.) (1954), \textit{op. cit.} Swift, C. E. G. is an exception.

\textsuperscript{917} In full, Luke 10:21-22 reads in the TEV: “At the same time Jesus was filled with joy by the Holy Spirit and said, ‘Father, Lord of heaven and earth! I thank you because you have shown to the
DEFINITIONS

It is now possible to proffer definitions grounded in a scriptural ontology of some terms used in later argument.

_Spirit_ denotes a real non-material entity to which is ascribed characteristics allowing encounters with other spirits and the material world such as a desire to communicate, intention, influence or affect. Encounters with such entities vary allowing description as a ‘person’, ‘presence’, ‘influence’ or ‘force’, however they are always perceived as actual and independent of the recipient of the encounter.\(^{918}\)

_Holy Spirit_ or _God’s Spirit_ nominates a spirit identified with the God worshipped by Christians and recognised by a constellation of positive characteristics sometimes referred to as the ‘fruits of the spirit’.

_Evil spirit_ or _spiritual evil_ refers to any spirit which acts contrary to God’s Spirit and is recognised by a constellation of destructive characteristics antithetical to the ‘fruits of the spirit’.

_Spiritual_ describes a phenomenon or aspect of a person which has the characteristics of a spirit as defined above. A second usage to describe a person whose life is consistent with the indwelling Spirit of God is not used in this dissertation to avoid the implicit ambiguity.

_Spiritual encounter_ denotes an event in the life of a person or group which is attributed by the person or someone else to the activity of a spirit or spirits and which has all or most of the following characteristics:

1. it carries affective and / or conative potency for the person which may be powerful enough to be life changing;

2. it conveys a feeling of having received from beyond oneself some kind of significant insight or having touched the central reality of something or of oneself;

\(^{918}\) Later an alternative representation of ‘spirit’ as an ‘Integrative System’ will be used but this does not qualify the definition given here but express it in an alternative explanatory vocabulary.
3. while it may be initiated or terminated by the person, it remains outside of their control and may equally occur unsought or conclude unbidden;
4. even if expected, it is unpredictable in detail, and often totally;
5. it seems fleeting and evanescent regardless of the time it consumes.

*Spiritual experience* is used for spiritual encounters of which the person is consciously aware and which they identify as spiritual.

*Spiritual influence* refers to the current and residual effect of spiritual encounters in people’s lives.

*Spirituality* has two meanings. It describes the degree to which one seeks or is accepting of, describes, values and responds to spiritual encounters however interpreted. It is also an abstraction denoting the spiritual nature of a phenomenon.

*Spiritual person*\(^{919}\) denotes a person for whom spirituality, in its first definition, is a significant life focus whether or not this is expressed in traditional spiritual terminology or activities. Such people will often nominate a set of spirits to which they preferentially respond but they are designated ‘spiritual’ regardless of the appellation of the spirits involved. No judgment of ethical commitment is ever implied by the term.\(^{920}\)

*Spiritual openness* means that one is neither able to avoid encounters with other spirits nor to prevent them from exercising an influence on one’s own spirit. It is a relative term and contingent upon the degree to which one may resist the influence of other spirits.

*Spiritual competence* refers to the ability to autonomously determine which spiritual encounters will be allowed to have an influence upon one’s own spirit. It implies the ability to accept, reject or filter spiritual encounters.

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\(^{919}\) This reflects the inescapable ambiguity of spirituality. Considered ontologically everyone is a spiritual person but phenomenologically some embrace this while others are in denial. [See Myers, B. K. (1997), *op. cit.*, p.12.] The sort of person envisaged here is described by Holt: “...in the midst of turning the dirt, pulling the weeds and running the hose, my wife often notices the voice and presence of God.” [Holt, S. (1997), *op. cit.*, p.5.]

\(^{920}\) This is recognised to be inconsistent with some New Testament usage but the intent is different.
Religion refers to a system of doctrines, rituals and lifestyle developed in response to spiritual encounters to identify their meaning and guide their expression. Not all adherents of a religion need share the encounters though, for those who do not, the religion will be a matter of form and adherence. In different people the same encounters may generate different religious responses or no response at all.  

CONCLUSION

'Spirituality' is represented by the biblical authors* as a consequence of encounters with entities whose activities seemed metaphorically akin to the action of the wind or of breath. These 'spirits' are morally bipolar; good identified with God's action in the world, evil with that which was antagonistic to his benevolence. While humans are spirits, other spirits are not analogous to humans but seem to represent another plane of being. Far from being eternal, with the exception of God's Spirit, spirits are created and, apart from an act of God, dissipate with the phenomena of which they are a reflection. Humans, as spirits, are able to encounter and interact with other spirits which are normally mediated through a range of everyday experiences. Adults are called to commit themselves to the Spirit of God or to spiritual evil; equivocation is not possible. Such a demand is not necessarily applied to children, a matter to be addressed in the next chapter which explores children's relationship to God, as the source of spiritual good, and also to the sources of spiritual evil.

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921 Cf. "Spirituality is an attitude or a way of life that recognizes something we might call spirit. Religion is a specific way of exercising that spirituality and usually requires an institutional affiliation. Spirituality does not require an institutional connection." [Halford, J. M. (1998/9), op. cit., p.29.]
Religion refers to a system of doctrines, rituals and lifestyle developed in response to spiritual encounters to identify their meaning and guide their expression. Not all adherents of a religion need share the encounters though, for those who do not, the religion will be a matter of form and adherence. In different people the same encounters may generate different religious responses or no response at all.²²¹

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⁹²¹ Cf. "Spirituality is an attitude or a way of life that recognizes something we might call spirit. Religion is a specific way of exercising that spirituality and usually requires an institutional affiliation. Spirituality does not require an institutional connection." [Halford, J. M. (1998/9), op. cit., p.29.]
CHAPTER 4. THE SPIRITUALITY OF CHILDREN

This chapter defends the thesis that the Scriptural understanding of children validates the belief that all children are conceived into a relationship with God’s Spirit but also open to influence by destructive spirituality, and consequently, spirituality is a ubiquitous feature of children’s lives, and an inescapable aspect of the process of ed-care. This will be accomplished by a comprehensive review and exegesis of all passages which make more than trivial references to childhood. This will lead not to formal definitions of spiritual development but to a narrative metaphor which allows the progressive nature of spiritual development to be explored.

GOD’S DISPOSITION TOWARDS CHILDREN

For children to encounter God’s Spirit requires that God should intend to enter into relationships with them. Despite a dearth of Christian scholarship on the issue, there is a wealth of material about God’s relationship to children in both the Old and New Testaments.

1. accounts of the incarnation which provide the bedrock of Christian understanding of spirituality in childhood;
2. stories in which children, including Jesus, have a part;
3. teaching about children in both the Old and New Testaments.

Detailed exegesis of all relevant passages is provided as Appendix 6. Conclusions about children’s spirituality derived from this material are argued below. In most cases, the biblical material in the text is referenced without exegesis, except for some passages which are so central to the argument that detailed in text exegesis has been considered necessary.

The common assumption that biblical attitudes to children are negative is based on reading the biblical text through the Calvinist presuppositions of Reformed systematic

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922 A small number of passages which appear to contradict the consistency of the biblical approach are dealt with in Appendix 6. They do not seriously compromise this argument.


theology. In fact, the biblical attitude to children is fundamentally positive, especially in contrast to attitudes expressed in extra-biblical religious texts and pagan writings.\textsuperscript{925} This orientation is consistent across both Testaments although what is implicit in the Old is made explicit in the teaching and action of Jesus. This conclusion is based on the following scriptural themes:

1. children share a distinct relationship with God simply through being children;
2. God's acceptance of children is unconditional;
3. children's encounters with God's Spirit influence them in ways consistent with their nature as children;
4. children's spirituality is normally mediated rather than based on direct encounter;
5. children encounter spiritual evil and cannot resist being influenced to their detriment.

**WHO IS A CHILD?**

To understand these themes, one must first determine whom the biblical authors* included in the category 'child'. Alexander asserts: "Childhood, as we understand it today, is a product of post-Enlightenment romanticism (Aries, 1962, pp. 33-49). The Bible, therefore, contains no clearly defined picture of the child."\textsuperscript{926} This is sophistry. That these authors* had a different concept of childhood, does not mean they had no concept. Their picture of the child is well drawn, but unromantic.

When they use a term translated as 'child', 'children' or equivalent, they do not have in view a person between birth and some particular age, as in modern usage where contemporary childhood is generally delimited chronologically. There are few references to age in Scripture, which is not surprising in a largely pre-caldendaic society. The only 'age' which might serve as a *terminus ad quern* of childhood is twenty when men became subject to the census and draft but it is very doubtful that this related to a perceived end of childhood.\textsuperscript{927}

When, according to the Old Testament, did a child become an adult? Later Judaism pronounced a boy 'a son of the Law' at the age of twelve but this dividing age does


\textsuperscript{927} Exodus 30:14, Leviticus 27:3, Numbers 1:3 etc., 2 Chronicles 25:5, Ezra 3:8.
not appear in the Old Testament. At the age of twenty a youth became liable for the ‘head tax’ ... and for war service ... Twenty would seem to have been the age, at least on the later formalisation, that a young man might be called an ‘adult’.

Biblical childhood was defined functionally rather than chronologically and the critical issue was children’s dependence on the direction and nurture of others. The terms which identify a child usually connote, if not denote, a characteristic (as English uses ‘toddler’) or limitation (as ‘pre-pubescent’). Children were those who lacked moral discernment, ability to understand (Nehemiah 8:1-3) practical sense, (1 Kings 3:7) ability to express themselves, (Jeremiah 1:1-7) and power. (Galatians 4:1-9) Jesus also implied an important aspect of being a child: they ask for what they need and assume adults will meet those needs. Usually they are right. It is a childlike attribute to ask, to trust that your needs will be met, and to have God meet them. (Matthew 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13) Paul* assumed ‘openness of mind’ was a characteristic of childhood. (2 Corinthians 6:13) The understanding of ‘child’ encompassed those who were not young but who shared such characteristics either involuntarily, as the retarded, the possessed, and even the helplessly ill, (Mark 2: 5) or voluntarily, as disciples were urged to do.

What harmonises such depictions is that children were those who could not exercise mature competency, or lacked the position or power to act on their own behalf. They were necessarily under the care and authority of adults and, as argued below, they were identified with and shared common fate with those adults, especially their parents, except where God directly intervened on their behalf. Because they had no human champion and were unable to defend themselves, God became “father of orphans, defender of widows”. (Psalm 68:5; also Exodus 22:21-24) God’s special concern for the

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928 Nor in the New. No theological point is made of the age as such. Crompton says the issue is the onset of puberty, usually ‘12’ for girls and ‘13’ for boys. The eruption of a second pubic hair was the actual signal. [Crompton, M. (1998), op. cit., p.91.]


930 *ben and yalad -descendant; brephos - newly born; huios - acknowledged inheritor; nepios - limited in speech; oel and ul - suckling; paidion - little, or under authority, or requiring direction or education; iaph - little; teknon - born; and zeta - progeny.

931 Deuteronomy 1:39; 1 Kings 3:9; Hebrews 5:14.

932 This refers to a younger group of children excused from attendance at the reading of the Law.
parentless child gives an assured status in the faith community to children isolated from the usual familial status.

Childhood ended when the person demonstrated the ability to act as an autonomous spiritual entity, most clearly evident when they rejected the ethical or religious demands of their household and community.933

There is a qualitative difference between fostering the spirituality of children and of non-children so defined. Ed-care settings include both, but distinct approaches are required. Some confusion in the ed-care literature springs from attributing to children spiritual capacities which, as children, they do not yet have. Those who do, are no longer children in a biblical sense. Children in ed-care cannot evaluate and decide to adopt particular spiritualities and resist others; they will be incorporated in whatever spirit the setting expresses. The most devout child in the Sunday school may be a tearaway in the playground. As previously described, it is not inconsistent for a boy who is actively disruptive in a group later to take a teacher quietly aside and request a gospel for his mother. Ed-care settings need to be sensitive to the spiritual dynamics at work with those who are children.

In the biblical text, a child is a person of any age, though normally young, who is unable, for any reason, to exercise autonomous competence but relies on others to take care and decide for them.

CHILDREN SHARE A DISTINCT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD SIMPLY THROUGH BEING CHILDREN

At its most basic the relationship between God and children requires nothing more of the child than their being. The relationship between God and children was possible because all children carried into the world the image of God which they received by descent from Adam. Both children who were genetic descendants of Abraham and those of purchased foreign slaves shared the Covenant relationship with Yahweh. Some adults traced their relationship with God to infancy.

933 More normally they assumed personal responsibility for them, but while an older male survived they might not be perceived to have done so.
But a far more significant relationship is implied by the acts and words of Jesus, a relationship which may be expressed as ‘being heirs to the Kingdom’, as ‘belonging to Jesus’, and even as identification with him and with God. The relationship is marked by God’s gracious acceptance of, pleasure in, and communication with children. This is variously ascribed to their inability to distinguish good from evil, that they ask in trust and expect to have their need met, their openness of mind and their powerlessness; but what can be said with certainty is that no further qualification is required than that they be children, the characteristic is inseparable from childhood. This conclusion is based on several strands of the biblical argument:

- All children in their own right belong within the Kingdom of God;
- The existing relationship between children and God is the model of a desirable relationship between adults and God;
- The spiritual obligations of children are limited and directly related to their characteristics as children;
- God shows interest in the lives of individual children.

ALL CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN RIGHT BELONG WITHIN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Central to understanding God’s disposition towards children is their standing with respect to the Kingdom of God In Isaiah’s* vision of the renewal of conditions before the Fall (Genesis 1:30; 2:18-19) which would follow the coming of the spiritual ‘David’ (Isaiah 11:1-2) children had a significant place, even the playing infant. Integral to the vision was that the young share the world with dangerous animals without fear of harm. Even the serpent was redeemed as all relationships were re-established. (11:8) On Yahweh’s holy mountain, “a little boy” (11:6), “the infant”, and “the young child” (11:8) appeared as examples of generic groups, their place no more conditional than that of the animals. They were there as part of what defined humanity in this ideal future realm. Moreover, in Isaiah’s prophecy of the “new heavens” and “new earth”, amongst the signs of Yahweh’s blessing were, “...no more will be found the infant living a few days only”, (65:20) and “They shall not labour in vain, or bear children for calamity.” (65:23)934 Ezekiel* also saw children as essential to the restoration God was to bring,

934 The second verse is from the NIV as the Jerusalem is ambiguous and could be read that the calamity related to the parents rather than the child.
three times promising that people would not fear to be robbed of their children in the restored land of Israel. (Ezekiel 36:12-15) Zechariah’s vision of Jerusalem under the rule of Yahweh depicts it as:

Full
of boys and girls
playing in the squares. (Zechariah 8:5)

This teaching is brought to its highest level by Jesus in words and actions recorded by all the synoptics. These will be discussed at some lengths as they are pivotal statements and enactments of God’s relationship to children.

Matthew described Jesus’ disciples, concerned about their status, posing this question to Jesus: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1) Jesus called a child over and placed them in the middle. (18:2) Matthew does not explain why there was a child there, signifying that it was not uncommon for children to be part of a group listening to his teaching. That people felt free to bring children suggests he communicated that he welcomed their presence. Moreover, the child is not described. The ‘accidents’ of their identity are irrelevant, what counts in the narrative is that they are a child. Matthew said Jesus ‘called’, proskeleō, the child, using the same expression as when he ‘called’ disciples. (10:1)

With the child in front of him, Jesus made the startling claim that to welcome “a little child like this” in his name was to welcome him. (18:5) This may mean that, if a person, acting in Jesus name, welcomed a child, then Jesus counted that as welcoming him.

935 Arguments made in relation to any passage apply to parallels unless otherwise indicated. Throughout the synoptics the same words of Jesus are repeated in different contexts. There can be various explanations of this [Cf., Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., pp.120ff]. There is no compelling argument that Jesus only said things once. Alternatively, with the passage of time reports of events become clouded. Observed variations may have less to do with subtle theologizing than with variant memories.


939 So Meier, J. P. op. cit., p.201.
That is not the only possibility. "In my name" may be an adjectival phrase qualifying "child", rather than an adverbial phrase qualifying "welcomes". The likelihood of this alternative is strengthened by the parallel it creates with a phrase in the next sentence which Jesus used as a counterpoint. That is, "a child like this in my name" is echoed by "...one of these little ones who have faith in me". If the phrase is adjectival, then Jesus was saying that people welcomed children as his emissaries. This was a remarkable statement. Brown relates it, "...to a theme which finds recurrent expression in the gospels: Jesus is present (albeit incognito) in those who are his." Weber says:

It is the relationship with Jesus which makes these children representatives of God. As such they are teachers. In their objective humility and need, they cry 'mother', 'father', 'Abba', and they stretch out their empty hands. If we want to learn how to become God's representatives, we must learn it from the child in our midst.

Harkness attributes their proposed status as God's representatives somewhat differently:

Because, for Jesus, children were bearers of the essence and spirit of God's kingdom (Stewart, 1978, 45), they can be perceived as divine representatives, mediating the values of God's kingdom and being channels of God's grace (Drane, 1989, 14; Weber, 1979, 51).

Gundry-Volf offers a more subtle reading that, "...the child thus represents Jesus as a humble suffering figure. Welcoming the child signifies receiving Jesus and affirming his divinely given mission as the suffering Son of Man." It is doubtful such a meaning would occur to an audience* listening to the story being recounted.

However, on any reading, Jesus' description of welcoming a child as welcoming him and, through him, his Father, was his most profound assessment of the special value of children.

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He contrasted this with a savage denunciation of those who provide obstacles to "these little ones". Various commentators suggest that the shift from 'child', paidion (18:5), to 'little one', mikros (18:6), signifies a shift from children to disciples.\footnote{This is based on the assumption that paidion is more specific referring usually to children from 8 days (circumcision) to 12 years (legal responsibility). Atkinson refers to this section as an 'interlude'. [Atkinson, B. F. C. (1954), \textit{op. cit.}, p.794.] Pridmore says the "real child...fades into the background". [Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.148.] Schweizer, says the term mikros 'undoubtedly' refers to the disciples. [Schweizer, E. (1976). \textit{The good news according to Matthew}. London: SPCK, p.365.]} Nothing else in the passage would indicate this. Rather, the use of mikros touton, (18:6) parallels the immediately previous use of paidion toutou (18:5).\footnote{Cf. Patte, D. (1987). \textit{The Gospel according to Matthew: A structural commentary on Matthew's faith}. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, p.248.} If the change of focus was intended, Matthew* scores points for subtle theology, but fails dismally as a narrator transmitting a tradition to a popular audience. For an audience* looking to the gospel read, the most obvious meaning would be that this denunciation extended what Jesus was saying about the child standing in front of him. Nevertheless, Brown draws a parallel to those "appointed witnesses of Christ ... those in need ... and ... those in prayer and service" in whom Jesus is also to be found and concludes "...those who maltreat the representatives of Christ (perhaps not even realising the significance of their actions) bear a terrible responsibility".\footnote{Brown, C. (1975), \textit{op. cit.}, p.285.} One may argue such an application but to lose the fundamental reference to children makes nonsense of the passage as narrative and of the logic of Jesus' teaching. It leads some proponents to extraordinary inconsistency:

\textit{little ones}. the context suggests that here not children but disciples of Jesus are meant...

In Jewish belief each child (in the original context of the saying this may have been the meaning of 'little one') had a guardian angel.\footnote{Argyle, A. W. (1963). \textit{The Gospel according to Matthew}. Cambridge: The University Press, p.138.}

To accept that these 'little ones' are children, is to confront Jesus' description of them as those "...who have faith in me".\footnote{Pridmore [probably following Nineham, D. E. (1963), \textit{op. cit.}, p.255] sees this interpolation about belief both here and in Mark 9 as an example of the early church applying a saying originally about children to disciples. [Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.125.] Yet, if Mark is the oldest synoptic gospel, the reference to faith is in the earliest document and, while embellished by Matthew, must have been removed by Luke. This is hard to reconcile with Pridmore's account of increasing reference to the disciples by the early church. Matthew certainly focusses the passage on faith being in the person of Jesus, the only Synoptic to do so, but why this should "make plain" that Matthew was thinking of "weak Christians" as well as children is unexplained. Meier is even}
requiring a level of cognitive competence, denies the possibility that children can exercise faith. Otherwise the phrase may have two different meanings. It could describe a contingency, separating faithful children from the unfaithful. This has two difficulties: it is hard to reconcile with the child Jesus was using as his example, whose faith was not apparently ascertained; and it means Jesus excluded a majority of children from divine concern. The alternative is a claim of great gravity; that faith in Jesus is characteristic of all children. As Harkness says: “When Jesus challenged adults to welcome children, it was because in children he saw qualities which are marks of the ‘faith-ful’ person, but which tend to be ‘enculturated out’ of people in the course of their cultural conditioning.”

Aleshire shares this viewpoint: “...children’s faith is not unerringly wonderful. It has fault lines and pitfalls, just like the faith adults have. Children’s faith is not magically pure. They quickly learn about sin and the shadow side of self. But children can be - are - people of faith.”

Faithfulness is not a permanent state because children they can be “brought down” by people putting obstacles in their way. (18:6) Jesus was not talking about committed faith that endures; ‘saving faith’, as Salvationists use the term, was not in view here. Yet Jesus asserted that some form of faith which was fundamental to childhood was important to God. Gower explains this in terms of grace: “Only if God abolishes means of approach to him through merit, qualifications, qualities, deeds, are all men equally able to approach Him, and that which all men, women and children are able to exercise quite simply, is faith.”

Jesus reserved his most savage denunciation for people who were obstacles to such ‘faithful’ children. Even his vitriolic attacks on scribes and Pharisees did not carry the same degree of threat. Rather than digressing or changing focus, Jesus underlined how

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less clear. [Meier, J. P. (1980). Matthew. Wilmington: Glazier, p.203.] Argyle sees the reference to children as inescapable and therefore has to conclude that, “...these little ones are old enough to be believers”. [Argyle, A. W. (1963), op. cit., p.138.]

953 Gower, R. R. (1971), op. cit., pp.1,3. Though this is difficult to reconcile with his later demand that faith requires “an element of understanding”.

233
seriously people should take any obstacle (skandalon)\textsuperscript{954} to children they found in themselves. (18:8-9) They were so perilous that the draconian step of amputation was preferable to the judgment they would bring. Jesus emphasised his point with a warning, "...never to despise any of these little ones". (18:10) The reason was an extraordinary claim that an 'angel' (aggelos)\textsuperscript{955} represented each individual child constantly to God. Their concerns were in heaven, just as was their praise. (Psalm 8:1) Barclay indicates that: "...to say that these angels behold the face of God in heaven means that these angels always have right of direct access to God."\textsuperscript{956} Meier is more specific:

Jewish theology had developed the idea of the guardian angel; but the rabbis also held that only the highest of angels could see God's face, i.e., have direct access to the divine presence. Jesus thus declares that it is the highest types of angels who watch over the little ones and who plead their cause before God - who, Jesus pointedly adds, is "my Father".\textsuperscript{957}

Jesus asserted that children were of direct moment to God, and his interest was not occasional but continual. (Matthew 18:10) He illustrated this by the story of the lost sheep which follows immediately but is discussed later.

Matthew* argued that children belong to God and are extraordinarily precious to him. Jesus identified them with his and his Father's presence. Children may, however, stray and God rejoices when one such is drawn back to his presence before becoming irretrievably lost. God's anger towards a person who causes a child to lose their ability to respond is almost boundless.

Mark* and Luke* shared with Matthew* the report of Jesus' affirmation that to welcome a child was to welcome him, and thus to welcome God. Moreover, Mark*

\textsuperscript{954} Ellis' argument that this refers to some unspecified scandalous behaviour in Matthew's community is far fetched relying as it does on acceptance that the use of 'little children' in 18:3 is a metaphor and a "catchword to refer to individual Christians as the 'little ones who have faith in me' ". [Ellis, P. F. (1985). Matthew: His mind and his message. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, p.68.]


\textsuperscript{957} Meier, J. P. (1980), op. cit., pp.203-204.
captured Jesus exemplifying his teaching in a very human way as he “...put his arms around him”. (Mark 9:36)\textsuperscript{958} Williamson explains the event thus:

The force of Jesus’ action hinges upon recognition of the low esteem in which children were held in the Greco-Roman world ... and realisation that the word used here for ‘child’ is the same as that used for the suffering servant of the Lord in the Greek version of Isa. 53:2 (‘We heralded him as a child’). Original readers of Mark would readily have seen in Jesus’ embrace of the child his self-identification as lowest, least, and servant of all.\textsuperscript{959}

One does not have to accept Williamson’s reversal of emphasis, that Jesus used the child’s given status to illustrate his own lowliness, to appreciate the reality of that status.

Marshall makes the point that in shifting the child from the midst of the disciples to “by his side” (Luke 9:47) Luke\textsuperscript{*} indicated that Jesus was honouring the child.\textsuperscript{960} Luke\textsuperscript{*} also replaced totiouton (one such), with touto (this) which strengthens the reference to the flesh and blood child and not to the childlike. Marshall adds:

At this point the saying takes a surprising turn. Instead of affirming the greatness of the person who is prepared to serve in this way (receiving children), or of stating that he is like Jesus, Jesus states that to receive a child is to receive himself. This shows that the original point of the saying is concerned with the worth of the child, and that it affirms the importance of serving the child by saying that to do so is to serve Jesus himself.\textsuperscript{961}

The additional sentence about the least being greatest is usually referred to the disciples, but Marshall notes sympathetically that Schürmann holds the passage to address ‘being’ great, not ‘becoming’ great and consequently ‘least’ is another reference to the child who is great simply because he is least.\textsuperscript{962}

In a subsequent story involving children, (Matthew 19:13-15) Matthew\textsuperscript{*} again differs from the other gospel authors* in drawing no adult implication from the events, though

\textsuperscript{958} Pridmore notes that there is no known rabbinical parallel to such an act towards an actual child. [Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., p.119.]


\textsuperscript{961} ibid, p.397.

\textsuperscript{962} ibid, p.398.
commentators interpolate such into his account. Carter has to remind readers that the passage is about children:

The passage makes a double affirmation. At the literal level, it affirms the importance of children in the alternative households of the kingdom. At a metaphorical level, it identifies disciples as children and children as a model for discipleship...

While the metaphorical use is frequently discussed, the literal affirmation is often omitted.

Children were brought to Jesus to place his hands on them and pray. (19:13) Those who brought them were not identified, they were just "people". There is force in Pridmore's argument that Mark's parallel silence indicates that Jesus welcomes them as children, not because of their parents. Carter comments:

Though the identity of those carrying out this action remains unstated, their motive is indicated by the verb 'were brought'. The audience has previously encountered this verb twelve times. It expresses a reverent approach to Jesus from people seeking his power, blessing and favour ... The audience knows that in bringing the children to Jesus the unspecified 'they' seek his favour.

Behind the words the audience would have recognised the people and their behaviour.

They brought the children because they believed the very presence of Jesus, his prayer, and particularly his touch, would benefit them. While Nineham indicates that, "...to secure for children the 'touch' of a great and holy man is a common custom in most civilisations", Derrett adds an important perspective on this particular 'touching':

In the 17th and 18th centuries it was widely known that ... [Mark 10:13-16] was connected with Genesis 48; but some time in the last century the reference was

963 Schweizer, E. (1975), op. cit., p.384. Schweizer gives this passage 14 lines compared to 112 lines for the slightly longer Matthew 18:1-5, perhaps because it is difficult to assimilate to a conjectural gospel constructed long after Jesus' death to meet the needs of an adult community.


965 That this may have been an early expression of the later practice of taking children to scribes and elders for blessing after the Day of Atonement is unimportant as it is omitted from the narrative. See Gundry-Volf, J. M. (2001), op. cit., p.37.


968 See the discussion of Mark 10:13-16.

dropped from the margins of our bibles, and it recently disappeared from view, so that no modern commentator utilises it ...

As a matter of fact until one has meditated on Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh one has not equipped oneself to study Mk 10:13-16. Once one has digested that story one finds little interest in existing commentaries upon our passage.

It is accepted that there were descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh who became unworthy: At the moment when the blessing was to be given the boys’ own qualifications were in doubt. As they were below the age of puberty they could have no moral quality - the question related to their legitimacy.\(^{970}\)

On this basis Derrett asserts:

At once the proposition comes to mind that they are *undisqualified* coinheritors with himself. The children whom Jesus blessed have, like Ephraim and Manasseh, a *vested interest* in the Kingdom ... Therefore (i) the children will inherit - unless the disposition is forfeited for ‘faithlessness’ or disobedience, and (ii) only those who receive the Kingdom as a child receives a (promise of an) inheritance will ‘enter into’ it, i.e. take possession of it when (as English lawyers say) that which was previously ‘vested in interest (only)’ becomes ‘vested in possession’.

They have a vested interest by reason of the blessing - but they can disqualify themselves from obtaining possession of it. As it stands our pericope means that *contact* with Jesus may preserve those who are without sin so that they may turn their *vested interest* in the Kingdom into an interest in possession.\(^{971}\)

This argument is consistent with OT passages. Like Joseph’s children before Jacob, these children before Jesus are acceptable to God and remain so until they disqualify themselves. It echoes arguments that children ‘opt out’ rather than having to ‘opt in’.\(^{972}\)

Derrett says:

Mk 10: 13-14 is about charismatic contact, the passing of charisma by direct touch. The persons who take the initiative, whichever their sex or whatever their motive, expect the children to benefit. In the little drama children are helpless appendages to their parents, sharers (it was conventionally supposed) of the latter’s fates, devoid of responsibility for their futures. He exceeded the adults’ expectations: he embraced them as his kindred (and thus superior to his disciples!), and placed on them his hands (obviously on their heads)

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\(^{971}\) *ibid*, pp.10,14,15,16.

\(^{972}\) See Pridmore, Inchley, Buckland, etc.
and thoroughly blessed them, κατευθυνομαι being an emphatic form of ευλογεῖ. The word has overtones of congratulations and thanks as well as extolling.

“The desire that Jesus bless the children results ... from a recognition of Jesus’ authority as the one who determines human destiny.” Jesus accepted this.

His welcome is strongly worded, with the double and contrasting imperatives ‘allow / permit’ (19.14a) and the negative ‘do not forbid / hinder’ (19.14b), and with the emphasis on personal contact (‘to me’). “Therefore” (19.14c) introduces a reason for permitting the action, that the kingdom of heaven “belongs to such as these”.

He neither instructed the children nor demanded anything of them. He “...laid his hands on them” but then he “...went on his way”. (Matthew 19:15) It is not said that he prayed but this would be assumed. One has to ask why Jesus behaved as he did. Matthew’s audience* would understand that Jesus shared the belief that his presence and touch conveyed spiritual benefit. Derrett says: “Jesus’ touching of the children, ‘is an acknowledgment in acted metaphor - a well-known Semitic usage ... that they are his relations and co-heirs’. Butler describes it as, “the symbolic embrace of welcome by the Messiah” and continues: “...children have a place in the kingdom (rule / reign) of God. You cannot keep them out of it by saying they are not yet old enough, because they don’t understand properly, or whatever other excuse could be given. No child is too young for the kingdom.”

This sharply contrasts with the attitude of Jesus’ disciples who “turned them away”.

(19:13) Carter says:

The audience’s assumed cultural knowledge of children and of their place in household structures is significant for understanding the contrast between Jesus’ welcoming response to the children and the disciples’ rejection of them ... The opening clause focuses the audience’s attention on the children through the aorist passive ‘were brought’, the absence of a genitive of agent or dative of instrument to


975 ibid, p.93.

976 ibid, p.93.

977 ibid, p.10.

identify those performing the action, and the explicit use of ‘children’ (paidia) as the subject. 979

The disciples’ action, for which no explanation is offered, is consistent with rabbinical attitudes to children. 980 They may be protecting the dignity of their teacher (and themselves). More likely their theology was as expressed by Brown:

...it should be remembered that Yahweh always covenants with those who are competent to enter into such an agreement, that is to say, with the men. They represent the people. The children, the women, the slaves and the resident aliens are not the people, but rather the possessions of the people. The child, then, brought into the covenant-community by birth, was not a fully-fledged member of the community. Although found within it, the privileges of the covenant may be said to have been mediated to him through his father ... during his minority he was merely in statu pupillari. 981

Carter sees a broader significance:

The disciples’ turning away the children ... would seem to the authorial audience to reflect the general insignificance and marginality accorded children by the dominant values of the first century. The disciples’ actions are compatible with this understanding that would regard the children’s presence as disrupting adult social order. 982

Mark* counterpoints Jesus’ acceptance of the children with his anger towards the disciples for hindering their approach. (Mark 10:14) Jesus is seldom depicted as being angry; this is the only application of the strong term eganaktesen to him. Nineham indicates that: “In Markan usage the Greek word tends to have a solemn flavour and to presuppose really serious evil - cf e.g. 4:39, 8:32 and 33, 9:25.” 983 Derrett says:

The child, as an authentic heir to the Kingdom, must be recognised as such even by those who are, in point of age, his seniors.

The reason [Jesus rebuked the disciples] was that such as they were, being indeed heirs of the Kingdom and in sense his collaborators (Isaiah 8: 18), were not subject to the disciples’ direction.  

Jesus rejected his disciples’ attitude. He insisted the children be allowed to come to him. He justified it by another profound statement of children’s unique relationship with God: “...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs”. (Matthew 19:14)  

Carter sees a relevance to the households of the audience*: “...Jesus affirms for the audience that all members of the kingdom’s households are valued recipients of divine blessing and presence, regardless of status (adult / child) or age (young / mature).”

There has been considerable disagreement about who Matthew* had in mind in his phrase ‘such as these’. Harkness gives some examples:

Commentators are divided over the meaning of ‘τον μικρον τουτον’. Some (e.g. Michel, in Kittel, 1967, vol. 4, 651; and D. Hill, 1972, 273f) suggest that the referent is disciples of Jesus; others suggest Jesus had in mind believers (e.g. Davies and Allison, 1991, 763), or ‘the poor’ of the Beatitudes (e.g. Schweitzer, 1987, 197); others (e.g. Gundry, 1993; and Manson, 1949, 138f) claim that the allusion is ‘to the children represented by the child that Jesus caused to stand in the midst of the Twelve’ (Gundry, p512). Marshall (1978) is uncertain, although suggested that [sic] ‘the curious feature is the uniform use of ouvto in the phrase, presumably referring to people present’ (641); and Guhrt (in C. Brown, 1975, vol 2, 709f) wrote that ‘Jesus was probably thinking not only of children but of all who need the help of the church because of their defencelessness when they face the great and strong’. In the light of the immediate context in which the phrase is used in both Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, I will adopt a position akin to Guhrt’s: That Jesus was referring primarily to children, represented by the one who was standing with him; but the principle is an enduring one applicable to believers regardless of age.

Pridmore argues that the language of the passage indicates the primary reference is to children as children. Brown attributes to Ninehan that, “The term such may suggest

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985 The Greek is literally: for - of such - is - the - kingdom - of the - heavens. See also Derrett’s comment on the parallel passage in Mark 10. [ibid, p.3.]


987 This position is also taken by Patte, D. (1987), *op. cit.*, p.249.


'these and other (literal) children' or 'these and others who, though not literally children, share the characteristics of children'". Barclay suggests both are simultaneously intended as the word often carries both a literal and metaphorical sense.

However, the argument does not depend on the precise meaning of "such as these". The passage is the second half of a statement in which Jesus instructs his disciples to let a group of children come to him. This clause justified that command. If it referred to 'childlike adults' the whole sentence must read: "Let the children come to me because the kingdom of heaven belongs to childlike adults". It is inconceivable that Jesus would say or Matthew* write that. The primary reference must be to children.

A similar argument surrounds Mark’s* use of the same term. Nineham is prepared to countenance that one of two possible interpretations is that actual children are referred to:

What does the word such mean in his reply? There are two possibilities:
(i) ‘these and other literal children’. In that case Cf. such passages as Psalm 8\textsuperscript{2}, Matthew 21\textsuperscript{15–16}, 11\textsuperscript{25}. Just as it is God’s inscrutable will that the truth should be "hidden from the wise and understanding and revealed to babes", so is his will that those who have not yet reached 'the age of the Law' should inherit his kingdom ...
(ii) The meaning may be: ‘these and others who, though not literally children, share the characteristics of children', in which case we have to ask what characteristics.

Nevertheless, commentators have found this hard to accept. For instance, Hunter asserts without justification: "Obviously Jesus treats the children not as citizens, but as symbols of the kingdom" and Belo interprets in dialectical terms: "...the practice of children is the practice of play and pleasure, involving some aggressivity indeed but no

relations of domination; that is how it will be in the kingdom.” Anderson hints at the reason for the resistance:

...a considerable variety of opinion exists as to the scope of this such. Does it refer to all actual children who have not yet attained the ‘age of the Law’? If so, then Jesus appears here as demolishing all legal prescriptions about the who and the when of entry into the inheritance of the kingdom.

Marshall sees Luke’s* omission of the embrace as deliberately generalising the teaching from the specific children present to extend the teaching to disciples. He is certain that Luke* taught that “…the kingdom belongs to children and people like them”.

These accounts pose two questions whose answers are not evident from the text. The first is the characteristic difference between children and adults which allows the former to be described as possessors of the kingdom. Pridmore and Buckland helpfully exclude a number of possible answers. In particular, the plethora of subjective qualities listed by many commentators do not stand up to their testing. Their solution, that it is children’s ‘objective helplessness’, is similar to the conclusion drawn by Anderson with respect to Mark’s* usage. He accepts the generalisation to adults but says, “So here the kingdom is promised to those who quite objectively are obscure, trivial,


998 For example, “…the power to wonder, before he has become deadeningly used to the wonder of the world; the power to forgive and to forget, even when adults and parents treat him unjustly as they so often do; the innocence, which, as Richard Glover beautifully says brings it about that the child has only to learn, not to unlearn; only to do, not to undo … the child’s humility … the child’s dependence … the child’s trust…” [Barclay, W. (1958), op. cit., pp.193-194.] Patte adds lack of pretence and efforts at self sufficiency. [Patte, D. (1987), op. cit., pp.248-249.] For Gould it is ‘docility’. [Gould, E. P. (1896). A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to St Mark. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, p.188.] Plummer indicates that older commentators like St Jerome and Euthymius Zigabenus see reference to the qualities of humility and trustfulness. [Plummer, A. (1922). A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke. 5th Ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, p.421.] Price offers “trust, lack of pretence, dependence, openness and willingness to learn…” [Price, N. (1983). St Luke’s Gospel: A class-room commentary. Exeter: Religious and Moral Education Press, p.77.]

unimportant, weak (Cf 1 C 1:26ff), who come empty handed like a beggar.\textsuperscript{1000} The degree of implied denigration is easily overstated; they were not ‘nобodies’ as Crossan asserts.\textsuperscript{1001} This idea of objective helplessness is useful but needs further analysis. Pridmore rightly observes that children are not innocent, loving, natural or unspoiled.\textsuperscript{1002} But neither are children entirely ‘helpless’ nor ‘totally dependent’ as seems to be required by Pridmore and Buckland. However, the description of the characteristic will be in the area identified by both Pridmore and Buckland; possession of the kingdom is related to lack of personal defences. As any single descriptor fails to capture the subtlety of children’s status, it may be that a descriptive analogy is required.\textsuperscript{1003}

The second question is what consequences follow from the assertion that children belong to the kingdom. Buckland says: “...when Jesus says that the kingdom of God belongs to children, he is saying that children belong to him. He embodies the kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{1004} He uses the word ‘safe’ to describe their state, while baulking at the word ‘saved’. While their juridical status around concepts of sin, guilt and judgment is important, it is only part of the answer. What Jesus implied in terms of everyday encounters and relationship with God is also important. Children’s present experience is prior to and determinative of their ultimate fate. Brown comes closer in his assertion that, “...Jesus’ categorical statement that the kingdom belongs to such implies that they may be full members of the church...”\textsuperscript{1005} but this is still a statement of institutional status rather than the phenomenology of the child.

While Mark’s* account generally parallels Matthew’s*, it contains two significant additions. As earlier, one reveals Jesus in very human interactions with children. He

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1000} Anderson, H. (1976), \textit{op. cit.}, p.246.
\item \textsuperscript{1002} Hunter similarly rejects innocence and opts instead for ‘dependence’ which has some coherence with ‘helplessness’ but retains a subjective quality. [Hunter, A. M. (1949), \textit{op. cit.}, p.101.]
\item \textsuperscript{1003} This will be addressed at the end of this chapter.
\item \textsuperscript{1004} Buckland, R. (1988), \textit{op. cit.}, p.24-25.
\end{itemize}
took them into his arms, enacting God’s welcome to them in his kingdom. (10:16) 1006
Williamson captures the right emphasis: “This warm human note is the climax of the unit’s meaning: Jesus likes and blesses children.” 1007 Yet Jesus’ theological point is not to be missed:

Jesus’ action in v. 16, which goes even beyond what was asked of him, emphasises the contrast between his attitude and that of his disciples, and the verse gives a sort of pictorial expression to the truth in 14b, for the early Church certainly believed, if not that ‘Jesus himself is the Kingdom’, [quoting Vincent Taylor] at least that reception by him carries admission to the kingdom. 1008

Koulomzin draws out the implications more fully:

He illustrated God’s relationship with little children: He took the children in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them. He gave His love, not through teaching, not even through a story, but through bodily contact. He made them feel His closeness through their physical senses and, speaking to adults, He stressed that children’s perception of His love, the way in which they received the grace of His blessing, was valid and religiously meaningful... 1009

A third variation from Matthew’s* account is that Mark’s* sources remembered Jesus’ challenge to his disciples to become like little children as occurring during this interchange.

Derrett concludes about the Mark* passage: “That the children are, so long as they are children, heirs of the Kingdom is a teaching complete in itself.” 1010 This is echoed by Inchley who, after considering the parallels says:

Jesus spoke of the kingdom belonging to them. In their case, however, this was not for any reason of race or of possible Christian parent relationship, and certainly not because of childlike worthiness or coming to Jesus in repentance and faith in an adult-orientated way. It was only through God’s grace and because of the atoning work of Christ.

We believe all children are included in the great atoning sacrifice and belong to Jesus Christ until they deliberately refuse him. 1011

1006 Taylor notes, “The action of Jesus is as significant as his words.” [Taylor, V. (1966), op. cit., p.424.] Hunter asserts that the other evangelists left this detail out because it ‘scandalised’ them. [Hunter, A. M. (1949), op. cit., p.102] This suggests Matthew* and Luke* strained a gnat while blissfully swallowing camels. If there is ‘scandal’ it is in what Jesus said, which they record, not in this simple act.

1009 Koulomzin, S. (1975), op. cit., p.36.
Luke’s* account added three new elements to the narrative. First, some translators find in the use of kai an element of surprise. This accentuated the importance of what Jesus did and said here. Luke’s* second variation, the use of brephe, rather than paidia, emphasised that the kingdom belonged even to very young children. The other significant difference is that Luke* understood Jesus to have addressed himself directly to the children. Jesus “…called the children to him”. (18:16) They came, despite the disciples’ displeasure. What Jesus asked of these very young children, they did.

This interpretation has caused controversy in the Evangelical community primarily around possible implications of this exegesis. Prince expresses one aspect of this concern, that traditional children’s evangelism was under attack:

Furthermore, the very idea of evangelising children has recently been questioned on theological grounds. Jesus’s words in Luke 18:16, “Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these,” have been interpreted to suggest that all children are members of God’s Kingdom anyway and that it is only spiritual nurture which they need rather than evangelism.

It is very hard to find anything in recent Evangelical texts which would substantiate Prince’s claim. What is questioned is the rationale for and content of evangelism. Buckland and Inchley have long careers in children’s evangelism in an organisation of which it is the raison d’être.

The strongest argument against this understanding of the relationship between children and God comes from a Calvinist position which ascribes ‘original sin’ to infants. The primary biblical justification lies in Romans 5:12-20, which is used as the key to interpreting other passages. So it is necessary to consider its interpretation but this will be in the light of Jesus’ statements about children which, as indicated earlier, are given greater authority. Romans 5 is highly ambiguous and lends itself to a variety of

1012 “People even brought little children to him” (Jerusalem); “Now they were bringing even infants to him”. (RSV) (Luke 18:15)

245
interpretations,1015 some directly contrary to the Paul’s* teaching intent1016 as when it is used to justify belief in the condemnation of children from birth.

Paul* was trying to demonstrate the greatness of God’s grace by a contrast: “If we would understand the benefaction which God through Christ has spread abroad to all mankind, we do well, according to Paul, to take note of the condemnation which has passed from Adam to all men.”1017 Each statement which describes a state of ‘original sin’ is immediately counterbalanced by a surpassing description of what should, by analogy, be described as ‘original grace’.

Sin entered the world through “one man” and thus death also entered the world. In this Paul* reasserted the teaching of Genesis 2-3. Paul* did not emphasise Adam’s particular sin but specifically indicated that death spread because “...everyone has sinned”, even though their sin was qualitatively different from Adam’s. Death extended to “the whole human race” (pantas anthropous) because “everyone” (pantes) sinned. (Romans 5:12) Byrne quotes 2 Baruch as a parallel: “For though Adam first sinned and brought untimely death upon all, ... each of us has been the Adam of his own soul. (54:15-19)”1018 Barth is probably correct in quoting Lietzmann’s view that: “The doctrine of Original Sin, as it has generally been understood in the West, would not have been to Paul an ‘attractive hypothesis’.1019 Part of the issue was the translation of eph ho into Latin as ‘in whom’ rather than its “correct Greek meaning”, ‘because’.1020


1016 “The Christian theological tradition, fastening upon the ‘Adam’ side of Paul’s equation, have read out of this passage primarily an account of the onset of sin and death, specifically a theology of ‘original sin’... But Adam and the onset of sin are not the primary focus. This lies on Christ and the effect of his righteous act for the benefit of the human race.” [Byrne, B. (1986), op. cit., p.112.]


1019 Barth, K. (1933). The epistle to the Romans. London: OUP, p.171. Byrne says, “The theological tradition stemming from Augustine which found here ‘original sin,’ in the sense that all human beings somehow sinned (preconsciously) ‘in’ Adam, is based upon a translation of the concluding relative clause in v21 [sic - reference is to v12] that cannot be sustained.” [Byrne, B. (1986), op. cit., p.116.]

As Black says: “Adam’s trespass was the beginning of sin and death among mankind: but this does not carry with it the necessary implication that, therefore, Adam’s trespass was the cause of sin and death in the world.” 1021 Adam’s sin is significant because “Adam prefigured the one to come”. (5:13-14) Several commentators attach much greater importance to Adam’s rôle asserting that Paul* saw humanity as a single corporate being:

...we cannot grasp Paul’s thought unless we observe that his view of man is quite different from the present individualistic and atomistic concept. Paul does not think of humanity as a chance gathering of individuals, comprehended under an inclusive concept. He sees mankind as an organic unity, a single body under a single head. 1022

Käsermann is one of a number of commentators who deny that some principle of racial incorporation can be read into Paul’s* statement of whom he says “…the apostle does not know of an inheritance of sin and death in the strict sense.” 1023

Adam’s ‘prefiguration’ of Jesus leads Paul* to compare the two to demonstrate the extent to which the gift or grace (charisma) of Jesus outweighs the fall of Adam. (5:15) “The whole passage is diacritical: it is concerned with emphasising a distinction. Much more! How completely differently! How much more certain.” 1024 Paul* is quite deliberate in his use of language emphasising his point by repeated parallels: phrases are linked and emphasised by reiterating and varying terms. If the fall affects “so many” 1025 (oi polloi), how “much more” (pollo mallon) will grace in Christ affect “the many” (tous pollous). (5:15) If one single fall brought judgment, grace leads to acquittal “of many” (ek pollon) falls. (5:16) If death reigns as a consequence of one man’s fall, how “much more” (pollo mallon) will Jesus’ grace allow those who receive its abundance to reign. (5:17) “Everyone” (pantas anthropous) is condemned through one man’s fall; equally “everyone” (pantas anthropous) is made righteous by one man’s good act. (5:18) As one man’s disobedience made “the many” (oi polloi) sinners, one man’s obedience

1025 Both Black and Best point out that ‘many’ here is an idiomatic form meaning ‘all’. [Black, M. (1981), op. cit., p.83; Best, E. (1967), op. cit., p.63.]
will make “the many” (*oi polloi*) righteous (5:19) Any assertion that children are automatically incorporated in the Adamic condemnation has to be counteracted by the more strongly attested assertion that they are automatically incorporated in the justification of Christ. One cannot assert the former but not the latter on the basis of Paul* argument.\(^{1026}\) Either the passage includes children but will not bear an interpretation based on universal sin and judgment without a counterbalancing assertion of the universality of God’s grace and acceptance, or it says nothing about God’s relationship to children.

If children are included in the passage, Best’s interpretation has much to recommend it:

This sin of Adam was the first sin of all, and once it had entered no one was able to escape its power; just as a child picks up the words and gestures of those among whom it is reared, so it picks up the sin that is already in the world. Thus though *all men have* indeed *sinned* by their own personal acts, these sins cannot be dissociated from the *sin that entered the world* when Adam disobeyed. No one can ever be back in the position of Adam when there was no sin in the world and so be unaffected by the sin of Adam.\(^{1027}\)

Paul* saw Adam’s act as the key that opened the door to Sin and Death to behave as ruling powers in the world in antipathy to God.\(^{1028}\) This act established the condition of spiritual assault to which all people, including children, are subject on a daily basis. Chrysostom refers to an inherited mortality rather than an inherited guilt.\(^{1029}\)

However, as Paul* was addressing adult Christians, assuring them that their faith ensures their salvation (5:1-11) and calling them to righteousness, (6:1-11) it is unlikely that he addressed the status of children at all.\(^{1030}\) To apply the passage to children is an unwarranted extrapolation, especially when it leads to conclusions which contradict the Scriptures already considered.

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\(^{1026}\) In this Augustine is in error, as in the logic of his claim that sin was transmitted through Adam’s semen. [Stortz, M. E. (2001), *op. cit.*, pp.91-93.]

\(^{1027}\) Best, E. (1967), *op. cit.*, p.60.

\(^{1028}\) This argument is consistent with Wink’s approach to the ‘powers’ though not derived from his writing. [See Wink, W. (1984), *op. cit.* and Wink, W. (1986), *op. cit.*]


\(^{1030}\) Bridger is adamant in denial that the passage refers to children. [Bridger, F. (1988), *op. cit.*, pp.95,103.]
Two chapters later, if Paul* was speaking autobiographically as Pridmore asserts,\textsuperscript{1031} he asserted that, not knowing the Law in his childhood, he was not condemned for its breach and so "...was alive". (7:9) Such an interpretation is strongly denied by most commentators who divide between rebuttal that the ‘I’ referred to is Paul* (Kümmel, Lyonnet, Käsemann, Byrne, Barth and Jerusalem notes ),\textsuperscript{1032} and those who accept that it was Paul* but vitiate the force of the term "was alive" (Augustine, Luther, Hodge, Sanday & Haslam, Bruce and Williams).\textsuperscript{1033} The first is fanciful. The audience* heard Paul* use ‘I’ in self reference throughout the letter.\textsuperscript{1034} They would conclude Paul* was also here referring to himself as there are no signals that ‘I’ was a metaphor for humankind. They would recognise as metaphor his use of ‘alive’, just like his ‘death’ when he became aware of the law and capable of sin. Pridmore is surely right that Paul* meant ‘was alive’ to refer to relationship with God as used elsewhere by both Jesus and him.\textsuperscript{1035} As part of his wider argument about death and the Law, Paul* is consistent with other biblical narratives in assuming an accepted understanding that children below a certain age were not condemned by the Law and so were ‘alive’ in relationship to God. ‘Sin’\textsuperscript{1036} used his awareness of right and wrong to end his relationship with God and, consequently, to ‘kill’ him.

Certain conclusions follow for any Christian model of spiritual development. Spirituality is inherent in all children in that all are valued by God, have access to him and have right of possession of his kingdom. One does not introduce children to spirituality but allows them to realise what they already have. Those who are in a position to hinder that relationship bear an enormous responsibility and the consequences of damaging it are extreme.


\textsuperscript{1032} "a supra-individual I", "the unnamed I", identified with Adam, denial that it refers to "a particular epoch in the life of a single individual, or of a group, or indeed of all mankind", and "mankind" respectively.

\textsuperscript{1033} Replacing it with "I was under the illusion that I was alive" or a mere subjective innocence.


\textsuperscript{1035} Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.193-201. See his argument about different approaches to the passage and also Black, M. (1981), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.97-98.

\textsuperscript{1036} A personalisation of the power of evil.
THE EXISTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN AND GOD IS A MODEL FOR THE DESIRABLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADULTS AND GOD.

The relationship between God and children is not a trivial adjunct to adult relationships to God. Rather it specifies the sort of relationship with humans that God desires. A Psalmist* takes the trustful contentment of the young child in its mother’s arms as the ideal model for adult faith. (Psalm 131) Relationship with God is not epitomised by adult sophistication.

Jesus identified children as models for adults to emulate if they were even to enter the kingdom: they must become like children. (Matthew 18:3) This is unique in Jewish literature1037 and compels consideration of how adults are to imitate children. Egger’s suggestion, supported by Gundry-Volf, that Jesus meant “as one who has neither obedience nor obligation to the Law”1038 is interesting but would contradict Jesus attitudes expressed elsewhere (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 16:17) and ignores the precise detail of what Matthew* records. His audience* would interpret this as narration of an event, not as text. Rather than talk about children as an abstract category; Jesus insinuated the presence of a very concrete child into the discussion. Disciples were not only to become “like children” but “as this little child”. (18:4)1039 He was quite specific about the similarity required. The adult must become “as little” (tapeinosei),1040 which carries the sense of status or estate rather than mere size.1041 For disciples concerned about status, Jesus took a specific child as an example of those who have no power, no rights, and no position, and can only approach God as a small child approaches their father.

1040 Pridmore follows older translations in seeing tapeinosei as a reference to the subjective quality of ‘humility’ and therefore has to divide 18:4 from 18:3 to be consistent with his argument that the child’s acceptance does not stand on such subjective qualities. [Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., pp.149-151.] The Jerusalem, by capturing the alternative sense of the child’s objective state, is both consistent with his argument and allows the much more likely circumstance that consecutive verses are related.
1041 In this light, it is hard to agree with Ellis that, “...the child is taken as an example, not of humility, but of dependence.” [Ellis, P. F. (1985), op. cit., p.68.] Argyle is more reasonable in arguing children’s humility “lies in” their dependence on their parents. [Argyle, A. W. (1963), op. cit., p.137.]

250
Pridmore helpfully calls attention to Jesus’ own habitual and unprecedented use of the Aramaic infant term “Abba” to address God.  

"We must forget our Christian and romantic views of childhood and realise that, at the time of Jesus, children were pieces of property without any rights, powerless to defend themselves, they had to rely totally on others."  

The particular slant that Prince puts upon this may validly reflect the experience of a reflective children’s worker but is without warrant as an interpretation of the passage.

You do not have to persuade boys and girls that they are sinful. They know it! Mum and Dad never stop telling them. And when their parents are not at it, the teacher is hammering the same theme. It is only as we become adults that we start trying to live and act and pretend we are all but perfect. In this way the average child is much nearer the kingdom than the average adult, which is just what Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, “I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.”

Mark* and Luke’s* treatment of the record of this event, or the memories of their reporters*, differed significantly from Matthew*. Their accounts addressed questions of discipleship and service. They recorded elsewhere the admonition to become like children and the story of the lost sheep. Statements which, in Matthew’s* account, only made sense as applying to children, were applied to Jesus’ followers. (Mark 9:42-48; Luke 9:46-48)  

Even the child was not called but taken and is only an illustration of what was meant by, “If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all”, (Mark 9:35) and “...the least among you all, that is the one who is great.” (Luke 9:48) A demonstration of that sort of humility was to welcome one of these little children in his name. (Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48) “Who can measure or count the deeds of sacrifice and love to which this saying has prompted? Wherever Christian men and women have sought to cherish and save helpless little children, we can almost hear the

1042 Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., p.154. The closest English equivalent is ‘Dada’. There is an echo of Psalm 131.


1045 Yet ambiguity remains, Nineham saying: “But if, as is possible, the saying originally referred to children, it ‘may have emphasised the reverence due to children and the sin of leading those who were literally little ones astray.’” [Rawlinson’s Westminster Commentary. Cited by Nineham, D. E. (1963), op. cit., p.255.] Bowman indicates that: “The child may be an actual child or for Mark the catechumen about to enter the Church.” [Bowman, J. (1965). The Gospel of Mark: The new Christian-Jewish Passover Haggadah. Leiden: E. J. Brill, p.205.]
echoes of this saying.” Nevertheless, the passages only carry force if it is first recognised that what is required of adult faith is to be as a child already is.

The viewpoint that adults have what it takes to be spiritual and children do not, cannot feature in a Christian model of spiritual development. Educational discourse which presumes that adults can develop a pædagogy whereby children learn spirituality from them is disallowed. Rather, children are the model of the spirituality God desires of all people. Ed-carers will only achieve spirituality themselves by emulating the spirituality of children. They can only foster children’s spirituality by themselves adopting the humility and spiritual helplessness that comes naturally to children.

THE SPIRITUAL OBLIGATIONS OF CHILDREN ARE LIMITED AND DIRECTLY RELATED TO THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AS CHILDREN.

The difference between the child’s relationship to God and that of the adult was indicated by the different level of obligation each carried. Adults could claim to be children to avoid demanding spiritual tasks only on the assumption that children were exempt. (Jeremiah 1:6-7) Requirements laid on children were appropriate to the child’s capacities and societal rôle. Children were to question the reasons for their household’s spiritual activities. In this context, the answers offered to children reflected their identification with the household and community: “For us, [as a family who are part of a redeemed community] right living will mean this...” (Deuteronomy 6:25) Children were not asked for individual affirmation of belief. Yet it was essential that they understood their obligations. Pridmore indicates that: “The Deuteronomiac understanding of Yahwistic religion sets the teaching of children at the very heart of the religious life of the community, not as an appendix to it.”

Paul* addressed the children of the early church but his instruction is simple and limited: “...obey your parents”. (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20) In Ephesians, he refers to that as “your duty”; in Colossians he says, “...that is what will please the Lord”. As he mentions nothing else Paul* probably saw obedience to parents as the sole responsibility of Christian children on the assumption that Christian parents will lead

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them to do what is right. In obedience to parents, they fulfil their responsibility to their Lord. While Pridmore argues that in Colossians Paul has offspring of any age in mind, this is unlikely as it implies that an adult relationship to Christ can be derivative. He elsewhere argues that Ephesians 6:4 does only apply to younger children but it is hard to see the basis for the distinction between these verses. Harkness contradicts Pridmore’s conclusion:

The issue of the age of the children being addressed is not easily resolved. τα τεκνα “primarily denotes relationship [to parents and forefathers] rather than age, and can be used of adults as well as small children. From the context [of the Ephesians passage], the children in view here have to be old enough to be conscious of a relationship to their Lord and to be appealed to on the basis of it; but young enough to still be in the process of being brought up (Cf. 6:4)” (Lincoln, 1990, 403) ... In the light of current understanding of the ability of children to respond spiritually, the children in these passages may have been as young as 6-8 years.

Bridger concurs, seeing this injunction as particularly appropriate for the middle childhood years:

In the late infant / early junior stage, the young child is learning to test limits even further. He knows what it means to say “no” and to disobey. Wilful identity is starting to develop but right and wrong are still defined by what parents say. If ‘sin’ has any meaning at all it is in terms of disobeying parents. But even here the intellectual dimension of sin is missing. The decision to disobey is not based on a knowledge of what right and wrong are, or on being able to work out what they mean in practice. It is not a rational decision at all.

Pridmore indicates that:

Paul’s teaching about the proper relationship of children and parents remains true to Israel’s inherited conviction that the parents, in particular the father, have a God-like status in reference to their children. We have seen ample evidence of the belief that a child’s dutiful submission to his parents was equivalent to his obedience to God.

One has to doubt Mitton’s, and others’, interpretation: “Colossians requires total obedience to parents, since this is a Christian duty. Ephesians requires obedience to

1049  ibid, pp.178-179.
1052  Pridmore J. S. (1977), op. cit., p.176. And see his discussion following.
parents provided this is in the Lord, that is, consistent with Christian commitment.¹⁰⁵³ This requires the unlikely proposition that Paul* considered that children both could and should defy their parents in some circumstances. Bruce indicates that ‘in the Lord’ signals that Paul is writing only to the children of Christian families.¹⁰⁵⁴ Pridmore says: 

...the apostle does not contemplate the possibility of the child having to choose between obeying his parents and obeying God. Indeed the notion of a young child defying his parents to obey God would have been a contradiction in terms to Paul as to anyone with his Hebrew background.¹⁰⁵⁵

In Ephesians, Paul* reinforced his instruction by invoking their sense of being part of a long cultural tradition, referring back to the Mosaic Law. (Ephesians 6:2-3) Paul’s* focus is on the Christian household, so there is no teaching here for believing children of non-believers. It would have been an unlikely scenario given the social structures of the times. However, it is possible to extrapolate the principle to children with parents outside the faith community. The command that children obey their parents was God’s requirement and Paul* would not have seen children as spiritually competent to judge their parents’ requirements against the law of God. No personal guilt would attach to the child who did ‘ill’ in rightful obedience to their parents.

That children could sin by disobeying their parents is implicit in these injunctions, but Paul* said nothing about the consequences, except to suggest that they put the longevity of the Christian community in doubt. (Ephesians 6:2) It is important to recognise that any requirement for obedience, i.e., any law, creates the possibility of disobedience, (Romans 7:7-8) and the Bible nowhere denies that children can be as disobedient as adults. There is a difference in the way God responds to that disobedience, a matter to be argued below.

¹⁰⁵³ Mitton, C. L. (1976). Ephesians. London: Oliphants, p210. Mitton notes that: “The phrase in the Lord is, in fact, missing from some early MSS, but the majority of the more reliable ones retain it and on their authority RSV includes it in the translation.” Gundry-Volf shares Mitton’s claim that obedience was qualified by the obligations of discipleship. To argue that, by according divine authority to obedience to parents, the text thereby gives children the right to choose whether or not to obey in some contexts, is neither logical nor likely to have been perceived by the audience*


While the author* of Hebrews is addressing adults, the argument is based on assumptions about the nature of children. Consistent with OT usage, children are functionally defined as unable to, “...distinguish between good and evil”. (Hebrews 5:14) It is presumed that children are not required to learn anything more than “elementary principles” (5:12) and certainly not doctrinal “solid food”. (5:13-14) This is so firmly agreed that it can be used to castigate adults who reveal themselves as immature in faith by failing to master the discrimination of good and evil.

The Bible does not conceive of a spirituality divorced from moral responsibility. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit children are expected to seek to do what is right. While they are children that responsibility is directed to obedience to parents. However, this was in a context where responsible authority was entirely vested in the parents. In a context where for much of the day responsible authority is vested in ed-carers one must consider whether children’s obedience is to be directed to them. They would then carry a heightened level of responsibility to God for the spiritual welfare of the children under their tutelage.1056

GOD SHOWS INTEREST IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN.
If children have a special relationship with God, one might expect him to intervene in the lives of particular children both within and beyond the covenant community. Such stories are scattered through the Bible. The interventions begins in utero but do not eliminate children’s freedom of spiritual response. God chose Isaac before his birth to bear the promise made to Abraham. (Genesis 17:15-22) Of Ishmael, whom Yahweh both named and protected (16:1-16), the author* wrote, “God was with the boy” (21:20)1057 and this followed his exclusion from the Covenant family. (21:14) Samson was born after an angel instructed the parents in both pre-natal and post-natal regimes to follow. Yahweh was said to bless him as he grew. (Judges 13:2-24) Samuel’s call to a prophetic rôle came while he was pre-adolescent. (1 Samuel 3:1-18) Yahweh declared he both knew Jeremiah prior to his conception and consecrated him prior to his birth, (Jeremiah 1:1-7) though

1056 That teachers stand in loco parentis is widely assumed and is enshrined in the 52 Principles of the National Quality Improvement and Accreditation System employed in child care in Australia. [V. Aloa, personal communication.]

1057 See Appendix 6 for a discussion of Ishmael’s age which is assumed here to be congruent with his being carried by his mother and crying when left under a bush.
what this means is ambiguous. He certainly arranged for him to grow in an
environment which would fit him for the prophetic rôle and the divine words may have
been a hyperbolic expression of God’s prescience. God’s involvement with John the
Baptist also predated his birth and continued through his childhood. (Luke 1:5-25,39-45,57-
80)

Psalm 139 celebrated Yahweh’s intimate knowledge of David* since each human life
from conception was God’s personal creation, occurring in full knowledge of the
choices the person would make. God’s involvement in the development of children was
not contingent upon who they were, or what they would do. In fact, no person avoided
God’s lifelong guiding hand.

There are sufficient such stories to suggest that God’s interest may be generalised to all
children. God is mentioned as involved in an individual child’s life just as often as he is
involved with individual women and few would deny that God is personally concerned
for each woman. Children in ed-care are subjects of God’s concern and some may
evidence significant influence of his Spirit.

GOD’S ACCEPTANCE OF CHILDREN IS UNCONDITIONAL
It has already been demonstrated that the Bible identifies children as belonging to the
Kingdom of God despite various commentators qualifying that possession. Common
qualifications are: being recipient of some religious rite (e.g., circumcision or baptism);
belonging to a particular faith community (usually identified as involving a Covenant
relationship with God); or being of an age to make a rational decision to identify with
God (signalled by a ‘conversion experience’ or an expression of personal commitment);
or showing evidence of charismatic ‘gifts’ identified as evidence of ‘the baptism of the
Spirit’. To rebut the claim that these are obligatory is not to deny their value. Scripture
is full of evidence that God’s acceptance of children is based solely on the fact that they
are children. This evidence is of three kinds:
1. God is well disposed towards children regardless of accidents of birth, or
   membership of a community of faith, or rites related to that membership;
2. God’s acceptance of children is independent of any faith commitment they may or
   may not make;
3. Children are not held responsible for their own or humanity’s sin.
GOD IS WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS CHILDREN REGARDLESS OF ACCIDENTS OF BIRTH, OR MEMBERSHIP OF A COMMUNITY OF FAITH, OR RITES RELATED TO THAT MEMBERSHIP.

Every child’s birth was an outcome of an act of God, a consequence of receiving the breath / spirit of God.¹⁰⁵⁸ Moreover, the careful use of the same language to describe the relationship between God and humanity, and parent and child, (Genesis 1:26 and 5:1-3) indicated that the divine image was transmitted to each child.

The first story in which a child features established the ongoing theme that children were a gift from God,¹⁰⁵⁹ and the more the better. (Psalm 127:3-5; 128:3-6) Gundry-Volf finds the source for this idea in the creation narrative instruction to procreate.¹⁰⁶⁰ Pridmore indicates that:

The Hebrews’ certainty that their children were God’s gift is often expressed in the names they give them. Over half the names given in the OT include, or imply the inclusion of the divine name (e.g., Nathaniah = Jonathan, ‘Yahweh has given’ - such a name may be shortened to Nathan). Names like these express the Old Testament recognition of the child as the gift of Yahweh and are an ascription of praise to him for his gift.¹⁰⁶¹

This positive affirmation is also inherent in the doctrine of the incarnation, of God’s gift of himself as a baby.

Women suffered pain in childbirth but that was a consequence of human sin rather than what God intended. (Genesis 3:16) As a counterpoint John* recorded Jesus as saying:

A woman in childbirth suffers
because her time has come;
But when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering
in her joy that a man has been born into the world. (John 16:21)

Childbirth brings such joy that it serves as a metaphor for how the joy of Jesus’ promised return removed the pain of the present era. (Romans 8:18-24) In contrast to other societies, Israelite children did not need purification as they were not regarded as unclean. After birth only the mother was purified. (Leviticus 12:1-8)¹⁰⁶²

Yahweh was strongly committed to the protection of children. (Psalm 68:5) This was also the rôle of the king, especially the Messianic king, of whom it was said: “...he will save the children of those in need.” (72:4) This was related to his responsibility to the oppressed. In Yahweh’s name, the Law and prophets were savage in their denunciation of child sacrifice. Ezekiel* emphasised by repetition that Yahweh was Father to sacrificed children: “…the sons and daughters you bore me”, “my children” and “…the children they had borne me”. Parents had no right to immolate children because they did not belong exclusively to them but also to Yahweh. (Ezekiel 16:20-21; 23:37)

Child sacrifice must be included amongst those practices which the Old Testament attests but which had no part in the religion of Yahweh. The practice is consistently denounced in the Old Testament in all three strands of its literature, law, prophecy, and didactic historical narrative. But the condemnation has to be constantly reiterated, which itself testifies to the extent of the practice. 1064

Given its prevalence in the Ancient Near East, Scripture rarely mentions exposure of infants, with only Ezekiel providing a single unforced reference. (16:4-5)

The ‘sacrifice’ of Isaac might seem a contradiction to the idea that God opposed child sacrifice. (Genesis 22:1-18) However, the original audience* already knew the story had a propitious outcome. They never believed that God genuinely sought the sacrifice of Isaac. Both Moses* and his audience* identified themselves as the descendants of Isaac. That Isaac might die was inconceivable. 1065 Abraham, as reporter*, did not know this, and yet was obedient to God to the extent of sacrificing the very promises for which he had surrendered his previous life. Moses specifically notes that this story was in the nature of a test for Abraham. (22:1).

In accusing God of failure to bring the wicked to judgment, Job specifically instanced exploitation of children as something God would be expected to prevent:

There are those who snatch the orphan child from the breast, and take as a pledge the infant of the poor. They go about naked, without clothing; though hungry, they

1063 Leviticus 20:1-5; Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 18:10; Ezekiel 20:30-35.
carry the sheaves; between their terraces they press out oil; they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst. (Job 24:9-11)1066

Children were adopted into the covenant community solely on the decision of family heads who were instructed to circumcise all children who shared their household, even if the offspring of foreigners. God specifically included those, “...born within the household or bought from a foreigner not one of your descendants”. (Genesis 17:12-13) Rather than being a prerequisite, circumcision signified that these foreign children already belonged.

However, God’s concern was not limited to such children but, as previously indicated, was sufficiently inclusive to encompass a child such as Ishmael who was specifically excluded from the Covenant community. (21:20) Moreover, Jacob adopted the progenitors of powerful tribes Ephraim and Manasseh, as children, into the community of El Shaddai (48:1-20) even though their mother was the daughter of an Egyptian priest and they were born into a pagan household. (41:50-52) Elsewhere, a child’s life was seen as being at Yahweh’s disposal, even though the child lived in pagan Phoenecia, and was probably outside the Covenant. (1 Kings 17:17-24)1067

An apparent contradiction was Ezra’s ordering children of foreign wives to be dismissed with their mothers. (Ezra 10:44) However, Clines argues that the text should be translated: “...and they put their wives from them, even if there were children,”1068 an interpretation strengthened by Ezra’s* concentration on the wives, only mentioning “and children” as the last words in the chapter. Clines leaves the children’s fate as ambiguous though OT practice would suggest the children remained the property of the father rather than of the mother.

1066 This passage is quoted from the NIV as the Jerusalem reorders the verses in this chapter, omitting many, and then translates the passage to give a quite different sense from most alternatives. The first sentence is rendered:

Fatherless children are robbed of their lands,
and poor men have their cloaks seized as security.

The remainder is transferred to earlier in the chapter where it describes the working conditions of adults, not children.

1067 See also the similar account in 2 Kings 4:18-37 though the rôle of Yahweh is implied rather than stated.

That a child could personally displease Yahweh is only suggested at one point (2 Chronicles 36:8-10) and the age is almost certainly wrong: “Jehoiachin was eight years old when he came to the throne and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what is displeasing to Yahweh.” (36:9) It is hard to imagine what eight year old Jehoiachin could have done in three months and ten days to deserve this opprobrium. However, elsewhere his age is recorded as eighteen. (2 Kings 24:8) This is more consistent with his replacement by his twenty year old brother. (2 Chronicles 36:10) Regardless, the audience* would recognise this as formulaic rather than a genuine evaluation. It exactly mirrors all the other summaries of kings’ reigns used by the author*.

Contrary to common rabbinic practice, Jesus was depicted in interaction with children. They were noted to be present when Jesus was teaching.\(^{1069}\) He held them\(^{1070}\) and he healed them, even the daughter of a pagan\(^{1071}\). He never questioned their right to his blessing.

There is never any suggestion in Scripture that God places any conditions on which children he welcomes. Miller, reflecting Simons’ writings, says: “Christ's grace is not only for those within the Christian fold but for all children, apparently including even those of the Turks.”\(^{1072}\)

Spirituality is not coterminous with religion. In ed-care settings it is not only to be expected in children from particular faith communities. They may have language to articulate encounters in terms of a belief system but, even if inarticulate, spiritual encounters will occur to any child as indicated by Coles’ discussion of children from secular backgrounds.\(^{1073}\)

\(^{1069}\) Matthew 14:21; 15:38; 18:2 and parallels.


\(^{1073}\) Coles, R. (1990), *op. cit.*, ch.12.
GOD'S ACCEPTANCE OF CHILDREN IS INDEPENDENT OF ANY FAITH COMMITMENT THEY MAY OR MAY NOT MAKE.

The incarnation implies that God's favour cannot be premissed on any precondition of understanding or life commitment either at the time or subsequently. As Pridmore states, "To make the fullness and sufficiency of the God-child relationship in any way conditional upon the nature of the subsequent God-man relationship is to deny the incarnation." Yahweh was the God of the child from birth, which provided the basis of an appeal for salvation from adult troubles. (Psalm 22:10)

Boys were circumcised when only eight days old, yet it was the sign that they were incorporated within the Covenant community. (Genesis 17:12) This was based on an understanding of the relationship between God and children also reflected in the belief that Yahweh received praise from the youngest:

Above the heavens is your majesty chanted
by the mouths of children, babes in arms. (Psalm 8:2)

In this Psalm, David* exalted the greatness of God and expressed amazement at the honour he accorded humanity. He chose the youngest possible representatives of humanity as those who chant God's praises. It may be poetic hyperbole but this praise was "above the heavens", (8:1) as though these infants had access to the divine court, an idea adopted by Jesus. (Matthew 18:10) David* implied, at least, that their praise was heard where it counts. This signals something of God's attitude to the very young: their praise is acceptable without understanding, or even language.

This Psalm was used by Jesus in dispute with temple authorities. Matthew's* narrative began with a parade. During the great annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration people travelled in large groups for security. One group contained Jesus and his disciples, and a crowd of children. Jesus used the situation for a carefully planned


1075 Olet and yanaq are babies who are still breast feeding. The argument which links this couplet to the second half of the verse [see ibid, pp.53-53] relies on earlier translations and ignores the use Jesus made of it. It is not addressed here.

1076 Indicative of the tendency to downplay references to children, M'Caw interprets this verse to isolate the praise above the heavens from the praise by children despite Jesus treating them as linked. [M'Caw, L. S. (1954) The Psalms. In F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, & E. F. Kevan (Eds.), op. cit., p.418.]

1077 There are numerous biblical references to the worship offered by the inanimate world.
demonstration. With an obvious eye to prophecy, Jesus lined up a donkey and a colt. (Matthew 21:2-5) One must assume he permitted the chants, if, indeed, he did not actually initiate them. (21:8-9) The acclamation probably started with his disciples and spread by contagion, as is the way with crowds. Pilgrims from Galilee and the Jordan Valley, where Jesus’ reputation was best established and memories of his wonder-working most immediate, would have most eagerly joined in. Later events suggest that few locals participated. Jesus moved to the Court of the Gentiles for a dramatic confrontation with entrepreneurial religion (21:12-13) and to heal those who came to him with their needs (21:14). At this point the religious establishment finally reacted. Matthew* tells us they were “indignant”, “...at the sight of the wonderful things he did and of the children shouting”. (21:15) They could hardly publicly object to ‘wonderful things’. The children were a different matter.

To understand the story one must take a step back. During the parade Jesus gained a retinue of children who, like most children, lacked a proper sense of decorum. The adults stopped cheering when they reached the Temple; their children did not. It hardly required great imagination for Matthew’s audience* to see children crowding around the centre of attention, wriggling their way to the front and, after each healing, renewing the chant they learnt during the parade. “Do you hear what they are saying?” (21:16) They were saying precisely what the adults had said. (21:9,15) They did not understand the full historical, political and theological implications of what they were shouting; of what it meant to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of David. They simply copied the grown-ups. Their praise was spontaneous for the person and occasion; not considered for its content.

Jesus responded to the indignation of the priests by quoting the Septuagint version of Psalm 8:2.1078 He referred not to the children who were the subject of complaint, but to the youngest children possible: nepios, (pre-verbal child) and thelazontion, (sucking ones). He challenged his opponents complaint about children’s noise in the temple on

1078 The Hebrew reads: “Above the heavens is your majesty chanted by the mouths of children, babes in arms”. As Jesus quotes the Greek it is rendered: “Out of the mouths of infants and sucking ones you prepared praise”. The notes in the Jerusalem suggest he conflates that with the apocryphal Book of Wisdom 10:21 which described the praise of the Israelis during the Exodus as: “...for Wisdom opened the months of the dumb and gave speech to the tongues of babes”.

262
the grounds that, from the beginning, the One the temple honoured ensured himself of praise by giving voices to those too young to forms words. Considering the range of sounds of which such infants are capable, the level of their theological sophistication, and the stability of their faith commitment, what Jesus identified as God’s conception of praise is discordant with many concepts of appropriate worship. Jesus did not see the ability to respond to God as contingent on language, understanding, permanent conviction, or even decorum; capacities children clearly lack. Rather, as Copsey realises, children’s praise “…doesn’t need maturing, it doesn’t need refining, it is ‘perfect praise’ just as it is now.” The children’s responses were not trivial; their source was in God. This directly contradicts any theology that asserts that children are born so marked by sin as to be unacceptable to God. Such ideas are disallowed by Jesus’ affirmation of the validity of children’s praise.

In ed-care there is a bias towards the academic and assessable as a measure of progress. But if the inarticulate praise of infants is ‘perfect’, spirituality cannot be restricted to those with developed cognitive or language ability. Spirituality is an issue from the first day a child enters infant care settings. The phrase ‘readiness for religion’, derivative of Goldman’s approach, at best can only apply to religious understanding. There is no equivalent ‘readiness for spirituality’; each child is born ready.

CHILDREN ARE NOT HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN OR HUMANITY’S SIN

God was represented as restrained in his response to children’s misbehaviour, even when it was a direct challenge to his authority, and, when they strayed from him, as going to great lengths to find them before they perished.

The examples of children who suffer with their parents for the latter’s wrong-doing are balanced in Scripture by passages which indicate that God accepted children as having a special relationship with him which excludes them from the full consequences of his judgment of evil and assures them of a place in his kingdom. The reasons are complex.

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1079 It is hard to see how Schweizer can so diminish the teaching about children given here, even to the extent of interpolating regularly the phrase “little ones”, which is used of disciples elsewhere and creates ambiguity in chapters 18 and 19, but is not used in this passage at all. [Schweizer, E. (1976), op. cit., pp.407-409]

but, in part, they stem from a recognition of their developmental limitations. For instance, in declaring his judgment that the Israelites would never enter the promised land for refusing to enter when he instructed them,\textsuperscript{1081} \textit{Yahweh} said to them: “But your little ones who, you said, would be seized as booty, these children of yours who do not yet know good from evil, these shall go in there; I will give it to them, and they shall possess it.” (Deuteronomy 1:39) That the children of the Exodus were exempted from the full weight of the punishment reflected a recognition that lack of moral competence distinguished children from others, an idea also adduced by Isaiah. Pridmore writes:

They [Deuteronomy 1:39; Isaiah 7:15-16] express awareness of the fact that the child, to this degree at least, is set in a category apart from that of the adult, in that he cannot be held morally responsible for his actions. Viewed objectively no doubt, the actions and attitudes of infancy, will demonstrate again and again his natural propensity towards what is wrong, but the Old Testament does not proceed from this fact to pass judgment on the guilt and culpability of infants.\textsuperscript{1082}

The clause, “...do not yet know good from evil”, added in the Deuteronomy account clearly echoes the first temptation of humanity: “...you will be like gods, knowing good and evil”. (Genesis 3:5) It is in being able to make clear moral choices that people are able to reject the good. The author\* of Deuteronomy implied that, lacking moral understanding, children were not subject to God’s judgment. Mayes says: “...the children, having no moral discernment, cannot be judged faithless.”\textsuperscript{1083}

In Job, the fate of the newborn child who dies is expressed in positive terms as: “...lying in peace, wrapped in a restful slumber”. (Job 3:13) Because of its literary form, interpretation of this passage needs to be cautious but there is no sense that infants suffer any form of judgment. Jeremiah expresses the same idea, preferring the state of the prenatal dead, to the sorrows of maturity. (Jeremiah 20:14-18)

A further reflection, albeit a somewhat uncomfortable one, is seen in the account of the death of one of David’s children, specifically at the hand of \textit{Yahweh}, in order to punish his father: “...because you have outraged \textit{Yahweh} by doing this, the child that is born to you is to die”. (2 Samuel 11:14) Hertzberg explains the necessity of the child’s death thus:

\textsuperscript{1081} Numbers 14:26-35; Deuteronomy 1:34-40.
\textsuperscript{1082} Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., p.49.
Matters have been put right between the sinner and the Lord through the grace of God, but the death of the child was to show how God feels about the clear transgression of his commandments and to stop the mouths of all those who might think to forge evidence against him for such an instance.\textsuperscript{1084}

Though David pleaded with \textit{Yahweh}, (11:16) he was not concerned for the child’s welfare but his own: “Perhaps \textit{Yahweh} will take pity on me...” (11:23) As a person with faith in \textit{Yahweh} he expected the child to share his afterlife: “I shall go to him but he cannot come back to me”. (11:23) This was not argued, so the author* must have relied on a shared audience* expectation. That would not be a concept of heaven such as developed among Christians. But it was not as bleak as Hertzberg says: “...David’s statement that he cannot bring the child back but must in the end go to him is no expression of hope in a future life, but simply of the immutability of death.”\textsuperscript{1085} What they would understand was that David, a believing adult, would share the future, whatever it was, with a child who died too soon after birth to have had a chance to believe anything.

A more direct indication of God’s unconditional acceptance of children is found in the story of Abijah, son of Jeroboam 1, one of those idiosyncratic, if not bizarre, stories which add a sense of veracity to the text. (1 Kings 14:1-18) There could be no theological reason for fabricating such a tale. No-one would invent it outside black farce. Both Gray and Jones consider the prophetic denunciation (14:7-11) to have been the original material and the Abijah story to have been added by some unknown and uninspired pen. Yet, neither gives a plausible reason for the addition and it leads to some strange logic when applied to aspects of the tale.\textsuperscript{1086} As a story, it is full of characteristically Jewish humour: the apostate king sending his wife in disguise to ask the blind prophet of \textit{Yahweh}, whom he has abandoned, about his son’s fate. Abijah prophesied doom for everyone except the dying child. The audience* would not miss the irony in the names; the king called ‘Enlarger’, his son named ‘\textit{Yahweh} is my father’ and the prophet

\textsuperscript{1086} \textit{ibid.;} Jones, G. H. (1984). \textit{I & 2 Kings.} Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.273. The latter is heavily derivative of the former, even to turns of phrase. Jones explains the theologically critical phrase, “...because in him there was found something pleasing to the Lord” thus: “This has been added secondarily in order to reconcile the threat against the descendants of Jeroboam with the fact that Abijah was mourned and given a burial.”
‘Yahweh is my brother’. It makes perfect sense as a narrative in its own sardonic terms, disparaging the despised family of Jeroboam.

Abijah’s age is never stated but is critically important for the interpretation of the events recorded. Some commentaries argue for late adolescence. The reason may be the theological consequences of seeing him as a young child, though the justification is the use of *nāʾar* (14:3,17)\(^{1087}\) which can also refer to an older child or slave. This allows them to argue that he must have been particularly faithful or worthy to earn *Yahweh’s* accolade. It is possible, but makes a nonsense of the narrative. Abijah is also called *yeled* (14:12),\(^{1088}\) a word that certainly suggests a younger child.\(^{1089}\) Neither Abijah’s parents (14:2-3) nor the prophet (14:12-13) refer to him by name; surprising if he was old enough to have ‘made himself a name’ for righteousness. In fact, outside this story, Scripture never mentions Abijah.\(^{1090}\) If, in the appalling family of Jeroboam, (1 Kings 13:34) there was such a shining light, it seems strange that there is no record of his faithfulness, particularly as this would be an important theological point to make. It cannot have been omitted because his early death contradicted the ‘virtue leads to longevity’ argument as this makes the story’s inclusion anomalous. The prophet made no reference to any particular virtue of the child in his savage denunciation of Jeroboam’s end. In context, it is a strange issue to miss. Listening, the audience* would picture Abijah as a young child, probably little more than an infant, as there is nothing in the narrative to suggest anything else.\(^{1091}\) As such the passage makes significant assumptions about children.

The prophet declared *Yahweh’s* judgment upon the whole clan of Jeroboam, except the child. His death would be a blessing, not a punishment. He would avoid the violence


\(^{1088}\) A point ignored by Ellison [Ellison, H. L. (1954), *op. cit.*, p.313.]

\(^{1089}\) It is used just seven times to mean older children and only once in the singular, the unusual verse attributed to Lamech. (Genesis 5:23) It is used over seventy times to indicate younger children, over forty times in the singular.


\(^{1091}\) This conclusion is shared by the very conservative Peloubet’s *Bible dictionary* though no reasons are stated. [Peloubet, F. N. & Adams, A. D. (1947), *op. cit.*, p.4.]
and dishonour which would befall the rest of the family. He received this grace: "...for it is in him alone of the House of Jeroboam that anything pleasing to Yahweh, the God of Israel, is found." (4:13)

The author* suggests that a child could be pleasing to God even if part of a dynasty that, as an act of political cynicism, had excluded itself from the Covenant, (12:26-33) led their entire nation to desert normative Yahwism, and earned God’s most savage condemnation. This disallows any claim that it is parental faith which determines children’s acceptability. The text is silent about what about this child pleases Yahweh. This suggests an audience* that accepted that children are intrinsically subjects of God’s favour.

Elisha’s retribution for the boys’ insults at Bethel is revealed by careful exegesis as another example of judgment on children being constrained. (2 Kings 2:23-35) Elisha’s response was not petulant, but deliberate. He took time to assess what was going on, and then specifically cursed them “in the name of Yahweh”. (2:24) His intent seems have been to leave an indelible impression with the boys that what was to follow was a direct consequence of defiance of Yahweh. To combat these small emissaries of evil, God’s Spirit seized upon two she-bears as its emissaries. These were Ursus arctos syriaticus, a paler sub-species of the brown bear.1092 Essentially herbivores, though known occasionally to take small domestic animals, presumably when winter limited their options,1093 their fierceness when roused was proverbial.1094 Yet this attack was very controlled. The author* specified that the bears mauled forty-two children, but none were killed.1095 The animals’ traditional fierceness was obviously being restrained. God graciously limited his response in a way that he did not in other

1094 2 Samuel 17:8; Proverbs 28:15; Lamentations 3:10; Hosea 13:8
1095 That there were deaths would hardly be overlooked in an account which is so precise about the number savaged. Gray’s explanation that 42 was ‘conventional’, based on his claim that forty was a traditional Semitic usage for an indefinite number and two was added to make it look like a genuine count, is internally inconsistent. To use a recognisable convention, and then disguise it, defeats its conventionality. 42 is only used on two other occasions. (2 Kings 10:14; Revelation 13:5)
contemporary conflicts. The audience may reasonably have presumed that God stayed his hand precisely because, despite being used by forces opposed to Yahweh, they were children and therefore without the understanding or independence to resist.

While it was not a commonly expressed idea, the description of children as ‘innocent’ was present as a polemic device. The concept did not carry the Romantic connotations for the Israelites that it does today.

The attitude to children’s moral competence was not unequivocal.

You know I was born guilty,
a sinner from the moment of conception. (Psalm 51:5)

Right from the womb these wicked men have gone astray,
these double talkers have been in error since their birth... (58:3)

These read as assertions that generically children are born guilty. David is writing music rather than theology, but that does not itself vitiate his assumptions. His audience would recognise the first as an expression of self-loathing referring only to himself. The second was a savage imprecation against a specific group of adults. Yet David countenances the possibility of prenatal sin. Given the thrust of the rest of OT thinking, his audience would almost certainly see this as hyperbole emphasising the depth of the wickedness.

The idea of God’s concern about children caused to stumble by obstacles (Matthew 18:5-10), leads Jesus directly into the parable of the ‘lost sheep’. Jesus does not identify the ‘man’ but he has usually been interpreted as God or as Jesus himself. That the

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1096 E.g., the confrontation on Carmel only slightly earlier (1 Kings 18:16-40), or with the equerry of King Jehoram (2 Kings 7).
1097 Psalm 106:36-38; Jeremiah 19:4-5.
1100 ‘Lost’ is an ambiguous term denoting things mislaid and things destroyed. Pridmore’s assertion that it is “hard to see how at any stage the parable could have been applied to children” fails to put it in the context of the overall narrative which fits together as an integrated statement of the value God places on children. [Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., p.158.]
former is intended is more likely given how Jesus links the passage to the previous narrative, "I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven. Tell me..." (18:10-12)\(^{1102}\) While it is often unwise to read too much into the detail of parables, it is important for the meaning and structure of the parable that Jesus' starting point is that the man "has" the sheep. (18:12) They belong to him or are in his care. His real love is shown when one of them "strays". The Greek *planēthe* is cognate with concepts like 'deceit', 'delusion' and 'error' and the connotation of wandering from truth would be recognised by Matthew's audience*, particularly in the light of the antecedent narrative elements. The sheep has strayed but is not yet 'lost' (*apoletai*) which is connotative of destruction. This is made clear in the way Jesus applied the parable.

Just as the man would rejoice when he brought the stray home, thereby preventing it from being lost, "...it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones be lost" (18:14). By repeating 'one of these little ones' \(^{1103}\) Jesus both tied the narrative together and recalled his hearers' attention to the real child in their midst. This child, and those like him or her, initially belong yet may be caused to stray. The 'man' will go to great lengths to arrest their wanderings and prevent them from being lost.

The NT does not treat children as sinful and facing judgment, (1 Corinthians 14:20) despite some interpretations of Romans 5:12-21 discussed above. Concepts of spirituality which exclude children because of an assumed sinfulness are not consistent with the biblical witness. Attempts to stimulate guilt in children, or to threaten them with God's judgment have no place in ed-care, or anywhere else. It is not that children do not do what is wrong, nor that they are unaware of that. Shame and guilt are built in to children's acculturation as a matter of social control. Rather, God does not hold them

\(^{1102}\) The use of a rhetorical question (*Ti umin sōkei*, "What to you seems it?" in the Greek. "What do you think?" as the RSV renders it.) signals that what is to follow is an exposition of the previous. That the initial audience* recognised this is suggested by the missing 18:11, a gloss reading "For the Son of man came to save the lost" (RSV). This may be the basis for the identification of the 'man' with Jesus.

accountable while they are children and to foster their spirituality must start with making them aware of God’s welcome to them.

CHILDREN’S ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD’S SPIRIT HAVE IMPACTS UPON THEM CONSISTENT WITH THEIR NATURE AS CHILDREN

Most biblical description of spiritual encounters relate to adults. This is only to be expected but carries the inherent danger that the nature of adult encounters will be taken as normative for children as well. What biblical accounts exist of children’s encounters with God’s Spirit indicate that those encounters are different in kind, being consonant with their developmental characteristics. This conclusion is based on the following arguments:

• Children are open to being controlled by God’s Spirit to fulfil its purposes,
• A spirituality totally pleasing to God is fully consistent with any phase of childhood and may be marked by evidence of the Spirit’s work in their lives.
• Spirituality develops as children mature and children are active participants in that development.

CHILDREN ARE OPEN TO BEING CONTROLLED BY GOD’S SPIRIT TO FULFIL ITS PURPOSES.

‘Openness’ is not a subjective quality but a description of children’s objective inability to resist spiritual influences. Children may act under the prompting of God’s Spirit to behave according to God’s will without mature understanding of the meaning of their actions.

There are only a few stories where specific children are seen as open to influence by Yahweh and acting for him, but they are significant. The best known example is Samuel conveying Yahweh’s message to Eli, discussed later. (1 Samuel 3:1-18) Another important story is that of an unnamed slave girl. (2 Kings 5:1-27) It indicated how a spiritual influence may persist with a child, allowing her to be of use to God. Despite the inappropriate moralistic use of this story to encourage children to witness, Naaman, as reporter* did not portray his servant girl as a faithful Yahwist proselytising her captors. She made no mention of God at all. She recounted a child’s memory that the

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1104 Throughout my Baptist childhood, in telling the Naaman story, preachers and Sunday school teachers alike drew this moral on the way to exhorting us to persist in faith even if the first six submisions did not seem to work.
“prophet of Samaria” could heal people and, like any child, she trusted the memories of
er her childhood in the faith community. The consequences would lead the audience* to assume that God himself prompted that memory.

A Christian model of spirituality must countenance the possibility that some children mediate God’s grace to others, sometimes without any recognition that they are doing so.105

A SPIRITUALITY TOTALLY PLEASING TO GOD IS FULLY CONSISTENT WITH ANY PHASE OF CHILDHOOD AND THIS MAY BE MARKED BY EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT’S WORK IN THEIR LIVES.

That childhood is no bar to spirituality is required by the incarnation which prohibits an understanding of Jesus as a special type of child-being pleasing to God. If the divine Being can be a totally human child, then a totally human child may be divine. If Jesus was fully human, such God consciousness as Jesus showed is available to other children, even if the precise nature of their relationship to God is different. Nothing is said of Jesus’ early childhood that sets him apart from other children.106 He was not so holy he refused his mother’s breast on holy days, a hagiographical claim for one infant saint. The Christ-child shares the normal humanity of any child. So the everyday characteristics of ordinary children do not hinder response to God’s Spirit.

God could have become incarnate as an adult, but chose rather to fully experience humanity from birth to death. This decision was presaged in prophetic writing.

There is a child born for us,
a son given to us
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;
and this is the name they gave him:
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,
Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:5-7)

The divine appellations belonged to the gift-child at his naming; they were not achieved with maturity.


1106 The fancies of the gnostic gospels such as the Infancy Gospel of Thomas have never been accepted by the Christian church.
Matthew* and Luke* used their narratives to assert the divine-human nature of Jesus as a baby. 1107 Matthew* saw no incongruity in this toddler receiving the homage of the ‘wise men’. (Matthew 2:1-12) Luke* identified the real humanity of this divine child. (Luke 2:40,51-52) Given the mutual love and pleasure within the Godhead, there can never have been an age when Jesus was not fully pleasing to God. Age is not, therefore, a barrier to spirituality fully acceptable to God. If a concept of relationship with God disbars any child, the limitation is in the concept, not in children:

Childhood can no longer be considered as merely a provisional and preparatory episode. The childhood of Jesus does not allow the church any understanding of childhood that measures a child by what, not yet being an adult, he lacks. Jesus was a child. This forbids our beginning exclusively with some definition of what a Christian should be in terms of what an adult should be and then planning only what must be done to turn the child into the man ... A child at any age may be wholly human and wholly God’s. 1108

The paradox of the incarnation is heightened by consideration of what it means to be such a divine child. The spiritual child retains the characteristics, including limitations, of fully human childhood. People can barely imagine the perfection of life of a divine adult. To conceive of a child living ‘without sin’ (Hebrews 4:15) is even harder. Luke’s* story of Jesus in the temple exemplifies this difficulty. Luke* carried the theme of the special / ordinary nature of Jesus the child into the only other canonical narrative of his childhood. (Luke 2:41-50) Jesus’ age was significant. Luke* said “the boy, Jesus” was twelve, indicating that he was still considered a child, (2:43) yet he was close to what his community would have considered spiritual maturity. While Jesus showed precocious understanding of the Law, Luke* did not describe a quasi-adult teaching the teachers, as did some apocryphal gospels, 1109 though his understanding, as a child, astounded the learned. (2:47)

His behaviour is consistent with his age. Judged on appearances and consequences for others, the audience could have judged what Jesus did as genuinely naughty. They would have understood his parents’ annoyance. Jesus added about forty kilometres and five days to their walk; and that was time without income. He caused them great anxiety. (2:48) Like many children, he impulsively did what he thought was right, without considering the consequences. Yet Luke expected his audience to recognise that Jesus, rather than his parents, was in the right. They could only concede that if they entered into the narrative by perceiving Jesus as a real child, and considering his intent and interpretation of events. He demonstrated the singularity of purpose that marks the moral questing of children. With typical childish egocentricity, he expressed real surprise that his parents had not understood that he was doing what he thought was right. (2:49) If Jesus’ divine, and therefore perfect, spirituality encompasses misplacing his parents, other children’s spirituality may retain the most infuriating characteristics of their immaturity. As with other children, in Jesus genuine spirituality cohabited with immaturity; it did not conflict.

However, Luke was less concerned with Jesus’ human childlikeness as his early self-awareness. Even in childhood Jesus is conscious of a special relationship to God:

There is a gentle but decisive correction of his Mother’s words, “Thy father and I,” in the reply, “where should a child be (δέκε), but in his father’s house? And My Father is God.” ... It is notable that the first recorded words of the Messiah are an expression of His Divine Sonship as man; and His question implies that they knew it, or ought to have known it.

Jesus’ self-consciousness is the context for Luke’s second summary of his childhood. (2:51-52) Despite his awareness of who he was, he continued to show his parents dutiful respect and to develop as a person.

Luke ascribed age appropriate spirituality not only to the Christ. An angel told the father of John the Baptist that, “...from his mother’s womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit”. (1:15) This was illustrated during Mary’s visit to John’s mother while both

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1110 Marshall recognises this but points out that it is not a matter Luke took up, intent, as he was, to emphasise the tension between the demands of earthly life and those of the relationship Jesus had with God. [ibid, pp.128-129.]
1111 Plummer, A. (1922), op. cit., pp.77-78.
were pregnant. (1:39-56) Luke* intended that his audience* understood that the unborn John responded to the presence of the unborn Jesus. John’s movement was both a consequence of his mother’s reaction to Mary’s voice (1:44) and a work of God’s Spirit. Luke* specifically juxtaposed “...the child leapt\textsuperscript{1112} in the womb” and “...Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”. (1:41) Elizabeth\textsuperscript{1113} found spiritual meaning in the foetal movement; joy being one of the signs of the Spirit’s work. (1:44) John, in utero, shared that moment of experienced blessing with his mother. However, Luke’s audience* would remember the angel’s earlier words were, “...from his mother’s womb”. (1:16)

It is elsewhere intimated that some people never knew a time when they were not aware of a relationship with God:

I have relied on you since I was born,  
you have been my portion from my mother’s womb,  
and the constant theme of my praise. (Psalm 71:6)

The pleasure that God takes in children extends to service children offer, (1 Samuel 1:1-2:20) The Hebrew text says that priests were organised to help in the temple from the age of three. (2 Chronicles 31:16) Translations amend this to ‘thirty’, which is very similar in Hebrew, but, given the example of Samuel, young children may have been given simple rôles in the temple. The young children of the priestly families were certainly included in the contiguous ‘organisation’ of the priests. (31:18)\textsuperscript{1114}

God’s pleasure also incorporated what children offered as praise. In summoning the cosmos to praise God, the Psalmist* included all people regardless of nationality or, apparently, religious faith. (Psalm 148) The praise of natural phenomena consisted of being what God made them. Children were subject to the same summons; (148:12) their praise was of the same kind, just being what God had made them. Children are active participants in the rejoicing over the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem by Nehemiah, a celebration noted for its noisy exuberance. (Nehemiah 12:43)

\textsuperscript{1112} eskrithsen connotes ‘leapt for joy’ and this is made explicit in 1:44.

\textsuperscript{1113} Only Elizabeth could report her emotions, even if Mary later told the story.

\textsuperscript{1114} Limited weight should be placed on these verses as the variations between translations indicates that the original meaning is unclear.
Children were tacitly assumed usually to choose to behave well. Their spirituality was expressed within the household and it was presumed that children would respond to their parents with love and respect. That they did not do so was both surprising and disappointing.\(^{1115}\) Paul used this expectation that young children are not prone to wickedness in order to justify another argument. (1 Corinthians 14:20)

Once again, it is Jesus’ words and behaviour which enforce most strongly the conclusion that children’s spirituality is pleasing to God and his Spirit was at work in their lives. Matthew 11:25-27 is often misinterpreted as a reference to Jesus’ disciples with no implications for our understanding of childhood. What Jesus said was extended to Jesus’ followers by Luke*, (Luke 10:21-22) but applied only to children by Matthew* who made no reference to the disciples in the passages that surround this event. The ‘time’ of “at that time” (11:25) was the aftermath to a visit of envoys of John the Baptist. (11:2-6)\(^{1116}\) Jesus commended John, (11:7-15) condemned his contemporaries, (11:16-19) reproached the lake towns, (11:20-24) made this statement, and concluded with a call to come to him. (11:28-30) Matthew* reported this discourse as addressed to “the people”.

(11:7) He chose the word nepiois, which refers to children’s lack of linguistic sophistication. It was used to refer to children,\(^{1117}\) but also ironically of adults.\(^{1118}\) “The people” Jesus addressed would have heard this as a metaphorical reference to themselves. Both authors* were right to apply it to children and disciples respectively. But English translations have disguised the primary reference to children, ironic or not, by the use of terms like ‘the simple’.\(^{1119}\) Marshall says the use of nepiois, translated by him as “infants”, emphasised “…the weakness, helplessness and submission of the child

\(^{1115}\) Job 19:18; Isaiah 1:2.

\(^{1116}\) This could conceivably be formulaic [Schweizer, E. (1975). *op. cit.*, p.268] but this rests entirely on his assumption that Matthew 11:25-30 consists of a collection of unrelated sayings, probably formulated after Jesus’ death and therefore unauthentic, [*ibid*, pp.271-272] and grouped together on tenuous grounds.

\(^{1117}\) Matthew 21:16; 1 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 4:1.

\(^{1118}\) Romans 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:1; Hebrews 5:13.

over against the adult”. The simplest reading is that Jesus contrasted the openness of young children to the resistance of “this generation” (11:16) and the towns. (11:20) It “pleased” the Father to reveal “these things” to young children, rather than to those whose intellectual competence should have made the message clear. (11:15,19,23)

This may be metaphor but unless such revelation genuinely can come to children, the metaphor is hollow. The Son may choose to reveal the Father to anyone, even children, and all were invited to come and share that revelation. The contrast with the Qumran sect’s emphasis on the need to be part of the knowledgeable group to receive the “obscurity of God’s mysteries” is interesting but the narrative context suggests that Jesus addressed all who should be able to recognise God at work in their midst, rather than the writings of one sect. For Jesus, the things of God could be received without linguistic skill, nor did possession of developed intellect ensure they would be received. God’s revelation came to children of any age.

It is certain that John* used teknia, and paidia as diminutive forms of address for adults as part of a literary device. (1 John 2:1-29) They were the first stages of a progression from toddlerhood to parenthood (teknia, paidia, neaniskoi, pateres). However, implicit in this device is the assumption that spirituality is equally relevant to each of these stages.

Children will demonstrate a spirituality fully consistent with what it means to be a child. There is a spirituality appropriate for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school age children. Spirituality is not dependent on particular maturity in any aspect of children’s development. In pursuit of their spirituality children may behave in ways that adults consider annoying or even as misbehaviour. They may also demonstrate insight that eludes those who teach them.


1124 But not that the teaching is addressed to each separately.

SPIRITUALITY DEVELOPS AS CHILDREN MATURE AND CHILDREN ARE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THAT DEVELOPMENT

There is an apparent ambiguity between seeing spirituality as a divine gift, which the Bible certainly does, and recognition of its seemingly developmental nature. Bridger says:

The answer lies in understanding faith as part of God’s gift in creation as well as his gift in salvation. The two are intimately connected because God is the Lord of both, as the incarnation demonstrates. When, therefore, we think of children as somehow possessing faith ‘naturally’, we do not mean that they do so independently of God. He is the author of their lives from the beginning and it is by his grace in creation that they (and we) are capable of trust and response both to other human beings and to God himself.1126

The developmental nature of spirituality is strongly affirmed in the Bible. Luke* said: “And Jesus increased in wisdom, [i.e., psychological development] in stature [i.e., physical development] and in favour with God and men. [i.e., spiritual and social development]”. (Luke 2:52) Even the perfect divine child had to mature and this encompassed his spirituality. (2:40,51-52) Plummer says:

That he advanced in favour with God plainly indicates that there was moral and spiritual growth. At each stage He was perfect for that stage, but the perfection of a child is inferior to the perfection of a man; it is the difference between perfect innocence and perfect holiness.1127

Other children were recorded as developing spiritually:

...the boy Samuel went on growing in stature and in favour with Yahweh and with men. (1 Samuel 2:26)

...the child [John the Baptist] grew up and his spirit matured. (Luke 1:80)1128

Pridmore asserts that, “...there is for every child, at every age, the appropriate perfection of life, not only of physical life, but of life lived in relation to God”, and, “...individual

1127 Plummer, A. (1922), op. cit., p.79.
1128 The Greek translated ‘matured’ is ‘became strong’ and describes a gradual process, not a sudden event. Marshall says this refers to his “human personality” though acknowledging with Schweizer that such growth is suggested to be due to the hand of God. [Marshall, I. H. (1978), op. cit., p.95.] The use of pneumatō rather than a form of psyche suggests the ‘godward’ aspect of John is more in view than the personal, particularly as Luke* has been at pains to emphasise the involvement of the Holy Spirit with the child.
religious experience is not confined to adults. A child’s relationship to God may have a
completeness and sufficiency appropriate to his age.”

However, the nature of this development was neither passive nor inevitable. Children
were actively involved in their household’s spirituality, for good or ill, and learnt
through questioning the spirituality of their parents. Like Jesus, children may amaze
with their questioning and spiritual insight, even while they fail to understand the
importance of keeping their room tidy.

The spirituality observed in children in ed-care will be a developing spirituality. It will
not be mature, but it will be appropriate to the child’s development. Children may be
expected to be active and inquiring about spiritual issues.

CHILDREN’S SPIRITUALITY IS NORMALLY MEDIATED RATHER THAN
BASED ON DIRECT ENCOUNTER

Children encounter life mediated through choices and decisions made by others. While
Scripture provides examples of direct involvement of spiritual entities with children,
more normally children are exposed to spiritual influence as a consequence of their
involvement with people or situations. This is reflected in the following arguments:

• The household and especially those who fulfil parental rôles are central to the
developing spirituality of children;

• The spirituality of parents is imputed to their children;

• While children are not held responsible by God for sin in which they are involved,
they are identified with the spirituality of their households and local community and
share the immediate common consequences of that identification;

• Sources of spiritual encounters other than household and community also mediate
spirituality to children.

THE HOUSEHOLD AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO FULFIL PARENTAL
RÔLES ARE CENTRAL TO THE DEVELOPING SPIRITUALITY OF CHILDREN

In Scripture, spirituality was assumed to be corporate; households, communities and
even nations shared a united spiritual commitment rather than pursuing individual

relationships to God. Jesus asserted the vulnerability of a divided household in a discussion about spirituality.\textsuperscript{1131} Children were assumed to participate in the corporate spiritual life of their home / town / state.

Even while emphasising the divine nature of Jesus-the-child, Matthew\textsuperscript{*} was at pains to describe the household in which he was nurtured, emphasising Joseph who, as head of the household, established its spiritual climate. (Matthew 1:18-25) He was a man of honour, but also of sensitivity and compassion. His piety could encompass obedience to a vision which required courage, not only to believe Mary’s virginal pregnancy, but also to face public ridicule and shame as a consequence. Luke\textsuperscript{*} concentrated on Mary, depicted as humbly obedient to the angelic visitation (Luke 1:38) with a cultivated spiritual imagination reflecting considerable education in God’s Law. (1:46-55)\textsuperscript{1132} She came from a priestly family with relatives both remarkable and renowned for their piety. (1:5-25,57-66) The authors\textsuperscript{*} identified the home climate in which Jesus matured and where his understanding of God was shaped as one of OT piety with strong commitment, not just to knowing, but also to doing God’s will.

The story of Samuel reinforces the advisability of referring to ‘household’ rather than ‘family’ as the source of this influence. (1 Samuel 1:1-4:1)\textsuperscript{1133} It is environmental rather than genetic. Usually the biological family establishes the spiritual milieu in which children grow, but this is only a norm, not an essential. This is especially indicated by acceptance of slave children in the covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17:12-13) but also by attribution, under certain circumstances, of ownership of the children of a released slave, not to the biological father, but to the slave-master. (Exodus 21:4-5) In Acts, children become part of the church through the conversion of their household, which primarily meant of the head of that house. As part of their household they were automatically members of the church community. (Acts 2:37-47,21:5)

\textsuperscript{1131} Or kingdom, or town. Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-22.

\textsuperscript{1132} This was quite unusual for a Jewish woman of her time. For rebuttal of attempts to attribute the poem to Elizabeth rather than Mary see Marshall, I. H. (1978), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.77-79.

\textsuperscript{1133} One should not be too pedantic about the use of such terms. Brown, who prefers 'house', points out the variety of patterns that term expressed, while emphasising that in the OT it was, “a community gathered about one man”. [Brown, B. S. (1971), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.21-22.]
Moses* described God’s relationship to humanity in the same terms as the relationship of parent to child. (Genesis 1:26; 5:1-3) This parallel emphasised the importance of anyone fulfilling parental roles: “[Barth] stresses that the authority of parents over children springs from the fact that from the child’s standpoint his parents have a Godward aspect, they are to him God’s primary and natural representatives.”

In relationship to their children, parents, and particularly the father, stood very much in the place of God. There were clear implications for care and nurture, authority and discipline by parents, and for responsive respect and obedience by children. It is in this light that one understands some of the early Israelite customs and laws about parent-child relationships. Even if the exchange between Jacob and Reuben was rhetorical histrionics, it indicates that within the tribal structure of ancient Israel, fathers had life and death authority over their children. (Genesis 42:35-38) However, by the time the Deuteronomistic codes were developed, the father’s prerogatives in ruling his children were circumscribed by the Law. (Deuteronomy 21:15-21) In Isaiah’s time it was legal for parents to sell their children into slavery to redeem debts, but that it could serve as a complaint against Yahweh suggests it was not seen as acceptable parental behaviour. (Isaiah 50:1) In Nehemiah’s time, it remained a cause of public complaint and was stopped. (Nehemiah 5:1-13)

The foundations for children’s relationship to God were laid in relationship to their parents. How well parents acted would be an important determinant of the quality of that relationship. Paul* reminds Timothy of the important role his mother and grandmother played in his spiritual development. (2 Timothy 3:14 with 2 Timothy 2:5) So confident are the biblical authors* of the nature of parental love that it often stands as a symbol for God’s love for his people, although Isaiah reminds his readers that Yahweh’s love is more enduring even than maternal love. (Isaiah 49:14-15) This metaphor is at its most audacious in Malachi where in describing “…the day which I am

1135 The role of parents is described in a quote from Hardy: “How far [Robinson asked] did they feel they owed their early religious ideas or feelings to the influence of their families, and to what extent was their childhood image of God derived from what they saw in their parents? Most were as positive in their replies to the first of these questions as they were negative over the second.” [Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., p.106] Note the denial of the Freudian idea that God is a projection of the parent. [Hay, D. (1982), op. cit., p.38]
1136 Deuteronomy 1:31; Psalm 103:13; Hosea 11:1-4; Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Peter 2:2.
Preparing" Yahweh says: "I will make allowances for them as a man makes allowances for the son who obeys him." (Malachi 3:17) It is powerfully used by Paul: "Try, then, to imitate God, as children that he loves." (Ephesians 5:1)

By using an ordinary parenting situation as an analogy for divine action, Jesus made a strong statement about the spiritual nature of the relationship between parents and children. Not only 'good' parents gave their children "what is good" but, "...you who are evil". Even a bad parent could stand as an exemplar for God in the good they accomplish despite the evil in themselves: "...in the love of every earthly father for his children there lives something of the Father from whom all fatherhood on earth is named". Moreover, as all good was to be sourced to God, even the evil person could be a conduit for God's providence. Luke's version of this saying related parents giving good gifts to God's giving the Holy Spirit. Jesus was aware of parents who gave their children stones, snakes and scorpions, both literally and metaphorically, (Matthew 10:21) and saved his most virulent condemnation for such. (18:5-7) He used the illustration because he knew that evil which damaged children created an abhorrence in others which itself testified to his point. People expect parents to seek the good of their children and are indignant or upset if they do not. Jesus also implied an important aspect of being a child: children ask for what they need because they assume adults will meet those needs. Usually they are right. It is a childlike attribute to be able to ask, to trust that your needs will be met, and to have God meet them.

God was depicted as particularly angry about abuse of children including children outside the covenant community. The grossest curse the author of Deuteronomy could imagine was that people withhold food from their own children and even eat them. (Deuteronomy 28:53-57) In the same vein, Jeremiah indicated that the terror about to fall upon the Philistines would be so extreme that, "Fathers forget about their children". (Jeremiah 47:3) In fact, failure to care for children seemed to epitomise a community in the throes of destruction.

1139 Many OT prophetic utterances use the same device; ill-treatment of children illustrating how terrible a situation is. This same revulsion at abuse of children lies behind the need to protect perpetrators of child sexual abuse from victimisation by other prison inmates.
The very jackals give the breast,
and suckle their young,
but the daughters of my people have grown cruel
like the ostriches of the desert.
The tongue of the baby at the breast
sticks to his palate for thirst,
the children go begging for bread;
no one spares a scrap for them. (Lamentations 4:3-4)

With their own hands, tender-hearted women
have boiled their children;
these have been their food
in the disaster that fell on the daughter of my people. (4:10)

The parents’ status in loco dei conveyed a far higher level of responsibility than of privilege. Parents were to teach their children the requirements of Yahweh as delineated in the Deuteronomica law code. (Deuteronomy 6:1-25; 11:18-21)\(^{1140}\) This audience* knew nothing of ‘school’.\(^{1141}\) Teaching was grounded in the parents’ personal commitment: “Let these words I urge on you today be written on your hearts” (6:6); “Let these words of mine remain in your heart and in your soul”. (11:18) So based, it was integral to parents’ everyday life with children; “at rest”, “walking abroad”, “lying down”, “rising”. (6:7; 11:19)\(^{1142}\) Parents were to display God’s words in their person (6:8) and in their homelife. (6:9; 11:20) Teaching would occur because children were part of a ‘lawful’ family. What Yahweh had said and done was to be the natural talking point of the household. Children’s awakening awareness of what was important to their father would lead them to ask questions about those “testimonies, statutes and judgements”. In response to the child’s aroused desire to learn, the father would explain to them the greatness of Yahweh’s acts and the need to fear and obey him.\(^{1143}\) Sister Magdalen notes:

In a home filled with prayer, God is ‘tasted’, prayer is as natural as breathing, and Holy Tradition is passed to the next generation less by preaching than by life and

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1140 This is probably best understood as an adaptation of the Mosaic laws as Israel shifted from a seminomadic to a settled agricultural village society.


1142 These phrases, "...are to be seen in the context of the general Semitic idiom of using antonymic pairs in order to signify totality...One should talk of the commandments at all times." [Mayes, A. D. H. (1979), op. cit., p.177.]

example, which is the most enduring lesson. Prayerful love is the keynote of the Christian home.\textsuperscript{1144}

Failure to fulfill this responsibility was perilous: "Though a parent may lead an otherwise virtuous life, if he or she neglects the needs of the child and fails to instruct the child in godliness, than that virtue does not count for much in the eyes of God."\textsuperscript{1145} Both Chrysostom and Menno Simons see the story of Eli (1 Samuel 2:12-17,27-36; 3:12-18) as typifying punishment of the parent who fails to raise their children to love God.\textsuperscript{1146}

Learning did not require docile compliance with anything parents said. The author\textsuperscript{*} of Deuteronomy accorded children the right to question their parents' reasons for adherence to these laws. (Deuteronomy 6:20) Parents were to treat children's questioning with respect. (6:21) Butler indicates that, "...as part of their participation it was expected that children would have questions that needed answering. Such questioning was not treated as an expression of doubt or faithlessness but as an opportunity for further recall of God's dealings with his people."\textsuperscript{1147} Parents were to answer with the stories of their culture describing God's acts of gracious deliverance. (6:21-23) They were also to remind children of the promises God had made to the faith community. (6:24)

Holt notes the contrast with contemporary spirituality:

Thomas Howard, in his book \textit{Hallowed be this house}, grieves the fact that our modern scientific world-view has rendered our daily lives devoid of any sense of divine mystery. Everything can be explained apart from religious faith. Consequently, even the church has embraced the resulting and tragic division between the sacred and the secular. Expression of religious faith, therefore, is removed from the ordinary contexts of life, relegated to the imagination, places of withdrawal and retreat, and the ritual of Sunday worship.\textsuperscript{1148}

Psalm 78 echoes Deuteronomy with parents enjoined to teach their children, "...the titles of \textit{Yahweh}, his power and the miracles he has done." (Psalm 78:4) Isaiah 38:19 and Joel

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\textsuperscript{1144} Sister Magdalen, (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.54-55.

\textsuperscript{1145} Guroian, V. (2001), \textit{op. cit.}, p.71.

\textsuperscript{1146} \textit{ibid}, pp.72-73 & n.24.

\textsuperscript{1147} Butler, P. (1992), \textit{op. cit.}, p.21.

\textsuperscript{1148} Holt, S. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.7.
1:3 refer to fathers telling their sons about *Yahweh's* faithfulness and judgment respectively. Chrysostom gave this powerful expression in the fourth century AD:

To each of you fathers and mothers, I say, just as we see artists fashioning their paintings and statues with great precision, so we must care for these wondrous statues of ours. Painters when they have set the canvas on the easel paint on it day by day to accomplish their purpose. Sculptors, too, working in marble, proceed in a similar manner; they remove what is superfluous and add what is lacking. Even so must you proceed. Like the creators of statues so you give all your leisure to fashioning these wondrous statues for God.

Children were expected to be submissive and obedient to the household’s chosen way. Consequently, children’s spirituality was expressed within the constraints of the authority exercised by the parents. As Pridmore concludes: "...because family life is basic to mankind as God has created it, from the child’s standpoint there is a divine aspect to the authority of his parents. In yielding honour and obedience to his parents the child does so to God." Gower is even more explicit:

In this connection it is interesting to remember the great premium set upon the obedience of children to parents in the days of the Old Testament. It was when they learned to obey their parents, literally as representatives of Yahweh, as those who taught His laws, that they learned to obey God; and it was in this obedience to God that they expressed their faith, for they believed that He meant what He said, and they acted accordingly!

However, the parent's authority was tempered by their own requirement to be consistent with the Law (Deuteronomy 21:15-21) and, later, the Gospel. The discipline the parent applied incorporated punishment but that was always to be delivered in love, was not to be extreme, and always to have the clear intention of teaching for a better life. Paul followed his direction to children in the early church community with a strong admonition to parents not to create unnecessary difficulties for children who are trying to comply. Parents should not create negative and destructive feelings at odds with the

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1149 Though it is likely it is not certain that either reference is to childhood.


1151 Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20.


nature of the gospel.\textsuperscript{1155} Looking to the ancient traditions, he urged parents to take responsibility for the spiritual nurture of their children. They stand in God’s place and must act “...as the Lord does”. (Ephesians 6:4) It is therefore unnecessary to tell them to love their children. Not only will nature “...draw even the unwilling parent to the love of their children”,\textsuperscript{1156} but it is precisely what the Lord does. Parenting is not just a matter of learned skills, techniques, personality or power. It is a reflection of the ability to establish a spiritual climate in the household, analogous to church leadership.\textsuperscript{1157} Pridmore quotes Barth’s description of the nature of that parenting: “In the aeon inaugurated by the first parousia of Jesus Christ the task of parents is not primarily and decisively to attest the Law to their children, but primarily and decisively the Gospel”\textsuperscript{1158}

However, even the lack of an appropriate household did not exclude children from the faith community as Yahweh himself stood in for missing human parents. (Psalm 68:5) In similar vein Guroian notes: “Chrysostom nowhere suggests that God cannot find other means to save his ‘children’. Children of bad parents are still related to a gracious and merciful God.”\textsuperscript{1159}

The translation of these concepts into contemporary ed-care requires identification of similar functions within markedly different social structures. As parenting was defined functionally in Scripture it can be said that what is addressed to parents there is addressed to all who fulfil ‘parental’ rôles today. As children spend a considerable proportion of each day away from their household and under the tutelage of ed-carers, it is reasonable to identify some ‘parental’ responsibility as falling on their shoulders.

The environment they establish will be very important in shaping children’s spirituality. Children will identify with the corporate spirituality of the setting and, to a large extent, that depends on the ed-carers and particularly the Principal / Director. They stand not only in loco parentis but also in loco dei. Ed-carers may not want to see themselves as

\textsuperscript{1155} Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.
\textsuperscript{1156} Guroian, V. (2001), \textit{op. cit.}, p.71.
\textsuperscript{1157} 1 Timothy 3:1-5, 12; Titus 1:6.
\textsuperscript{1158} Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.182.
\textsuperscript{1159} Guroian, V. (2001), \textit{op. cit.}, p.69, n.16.
surrogate parents (far less surrogate deities) but, so long as they function as adults responsible for nurture and education, the responsibility belongs to them, as to anyone else who functions in such rôles. They are expected to ensure the welfare of children and God holds them accountable for that. That expectation is not limited to Christian ed-carers; even a ‘bad’ ed-carer would be expected to give the children in their charge ‘good things’.

Central is the ed-carer’s own spirituality and what they express in their setting. What will be transmitted is the spirituality with which the ed-carer fills their own life and working days. Central to the transmission of spirituality is recounting the stories of God’s dealing with people. There is no direct parallel between the theocratic state of Israel or the church community and the multi-cultural nature of contemporary ed-care. However, whatever ‘world story’ the ed-carer narrates, formally or informally, will indicate a perspective of the God-person relationship. One would expect God’s Spirit to speak through the good in any story, regardless of source. This is not proselytisation, but exploring what it means to be human. The extent to which ed-carers choose stories which have ‘the ring of truth’, which uphold virtue and affirm the goodness of life will depend on their own spirituality, and they will be held responsible for that.

Children may be expected to respect and obey ed-carers. Where punishment is required it should be measured, spring from love of the child and the intent to help them learn.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF PARENTS IS IMPUTED TO THEIR CHILDREN
Mark’s* account of the ‘moonstruck’ child indicated, incidentally to his intent, that a parent’s faith can suffice to allow healing when their child is so far entrapped by spiritual evil that they cannot exercise faith in their own right. (Mark 9:23-27) This extension of the ability of the household head to speak for all highlights the child’s own helplessness.

Paul* extended this to either parent in the passage noted earlier. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16) The reference to children is incidental but it carries all the more force for that, revealing what Paul* felt was self-evident to his audience*. Children, even of a mixed marriage,
were ‘holy’. Pridmore says, “No one doubts that.”1160 That assumption was the entire justification of his advice to adults. The spouse, “...is made one with the saints” (7:14) through the believer because otherwise it would exclude their children and that is not countenanced. Paul* was not talking about all children, but only children who had a Christian parent. But he did not differentiate the baptised from the unbaptised,1161 nor children born before the person’s conversion from those born after. He may have assumed that the spirituality of the Christian would be the dominant spirituality of the family group. Bridger asserts: “In a home where there is at least one believing parent, it is his or her faith which counts for the rest until they deliberately reject God.”1162

Paul* drew a clear distinction between current sharing of Christian spirituality and the person’s ultimate salvation. (7:16) He held out the hope that the spouse might eventually be saved but that was not the same as “...being one with the saints” now. So, when Paul* described a Christian’s children as “holy”, he was not giving assurance of their ultimate fate, only of their present state. However, Paul* saw it as an important contribution towards that final outcome. As Pridmore says, “By the parent’s belief the child is brought into a new relationship with God.”1163 Morris would diminish the weight to be placed upon ‘holiness’ but in doing so he proposes a status for the children of Christian parents which writers such as Buckland have been loath to affirm.

If the believer’s sanctification extended no further than himself, his children are unclean. The word is used of ceremonial uncleanness, ‘that which may not be brought into contact with the divinity’... This is an unthinkable position. Clearly Paul regarded now are they holy as an axiom. Until he is old enough to take responsibility upon himself, the child of a believing parent is to be regarded as Christian. The parent’s ‘holiness’ extends to the child.1164

While this can certainly be applied to modern households, it is not clear whether it has relevance to ed-care. It might be argued that children come under the ægis of the faith

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of a Christian ed-carer who is responsible for them, but that is speculative and may
depend on such factors as whether the children identify with them in a very personal
way. This brings into focus not just the quality of the relationship, but also factors like
its duration.

WHILE CHILDREN ARE NOT HELD RESPONSIBLE BY GOD FOR SIN IN
WHICH THEY ARE INVOLVED, THEY ARE IDENTIFIED WITH THE
SPIRITUALITY OF THEIR HOUSEHOLDS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY AND
SHARE THE IMMEDIATE COMMON CONSEQUENCES OF THAT
IDENTIFICATION

Children are not seen as separate from their household or community’s spirituality but,
for good or ill, involved in it and sharing its immediate consequences. This corporate
identity may lead to shared divine blessing or judgment,1165 or civil consequences. (2
Kings 4:1-7) However, Jesus specifically denied that there was a link between genetic
handicap and punishment for parental sin. (John 9:1-41)

It was inevitable that children were caught up in the spirituality of the household.
(Jeremiah 7) They could not exempt themselves from the worship of Ishtar; they collect
the wood used by their mothers to bake cakes for her rites. (Jeremiah 7:17-18) However,
examples of shared judgment are few and the Deuteronomia code asserts that children
should not suffer for their parents’ sins, or vice versa. (Deuteronomy 24:16) Elsewhere,
King Amaziah is praised for obeying this law with respect to his father’s murderers.1166
Children convey the promise inherent in God’s Covenants into the future. Without
children there was no Covenant. (Genesis 15:1-6) Hosea declares the destruction of
Ephraim by announcing that they will cease to have children. (Hosea 9:11-14) Intergen
erational pride reflects the solidarity of these relations. (Proverbs 17:6)

Children participated in the religious celebrations of the community.1167 When Joel*
issued a call to repentance, they were included. Moreover, “even the infants at the
breast” were called. (Joel 2:15-17) Children’s involvement was gender inclusive. As
Pridmore says:

1165 Numbers 16:27-32; 1 Samuel 15:1-3; Psalm 137:7-9; Isaiah 13:16-18; Jeremiah 6:11,21; 7:17-18;
1166 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chronicles 25:3-4.
...there is no trace in the Old Testament of the later Jewish attitude that confined the privilege of education to boys. So long as the responsibility for education, practical and religious, lay within the family, such a distinction between the sexes would not have been made. We have no evidence that participation by children in the festivals was confined to the boys.\footnote{1168}{Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.31.}

Bridger states:

...circumcision indicated that \textit{children were to be treated as would-be believers rather than as unbelivers}. The rights and privileges of the covenant relationship were theirs. There could be no question of them being treated as outsiders: they were counted as insiders until they excluded themselves from God's blessing.\footnote{1169}{Bridger, F. (1988), \textit{op. cit.}, p.134.}

Pridmore concludes from the NT teaching: "...the acceptance of children within the religious life of the community is unquestioned."\footnote{1170}{Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.215.} Children are so much part of the early church that Paul\* could address them directly in general letters to the churches.\footnote{1171}{Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21 [\textit{ibid}, p.185.]} The use of 'believers' (Titus 1:6) may indicate that children were described in such terms in the early church because of the faith they shared as members of Christian households. However, it is more likely that it referred to children who chose to follow beliefs of their parents. Unless Paul* intended Titus to apply this to those still within the parents' household but sufficiently mature to exercise spiritual independence, to use their children's belief as a test of eldership is no test at all.

As this understanding of childhood applied also to the local community, it applies directly to ed-care. Children cannot avoid being caught up in the institutional spirituality of which they are a part. Nevertheless, in the biblical situation children were only exposed to one basic spirituality because of the close association between household and community, though this must have been tested in Christian communities in towns dominated by Greek and Roman paganism.\footnote{1172}{Which may explain the separatist calls in Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18.)} The ed-care setting will only be one of a number of 'communities' which children encounter and its own spirituality is likely to be problematic. Because of their identity with these communities, children's

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1168 \hspace{1cm} Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.31.
1169 \hspace{1cm} Bridger, F. (1988), \textit{op. cit.}, p.134.
1170 \hspace{1cm} Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.215.
1171 \hspace{1cm} Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21 [\textit{ibid}, p.185.]
1172 \hspace{1cm} Which may explain the separatist calls in Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18.)
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spirituality may be exposed to real stress by the inconsistencies. Consequently, many children may find the ed-care setting spiritually uncomfortable.

SOURCES OF SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS OTHER THAN HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY ALSO MEDIATE SPIRITUALITY TO CHILDREN

The story of Samuel clearly exemplifies special divine intervention in a particular child’s life which marked a watershed in his spiritual experience. (1 Samuel 1:19-4:1) It indicated that the prophetic word of God could come to a child as well as to adults. However, it was a mediated intervention. From birth, his family would have emphasised his special relationship to God as a dedicated one, reinforcing this each year when they visited him at the shrine. He grew up working with a priest of genuine piety. It is likely that as his sons moved further away from him and his God, Eli turned increasingly to Samuel. The child regularly served in the presence of Yahweh in the shrine and so was exposed to the rites and celebrations. (1 Samuel 2:18; 3:1) The importance of involving children in religious rites is frequently attested.1173 It is not absolutely clear what is meant by: “Samuel grew up in the presence of Yahweh”, (1 Samuel 2:21) but the audience* would have seen the presence of the Ark of the Covenant as a medium through which God’s presence was accessible. The ark’s presence was a clear signal that his call was a work of God’s Spirit. God spoke to him while he was sleeping in the sanctuary with the Ark from which God had spoken in the past.

A similar story surrounded the boyhood of John the Baptist. (Luke 1:5-23,39-45,57-80) This child was to be “great in the sight of the Lord” and God gave careful instructions for his nurture. (1:14-15) He was raised among rural hill communities (1:39-40) of traditional conservatism and messianic piety, (1:61,65-66) rather than in the decadent environment of central Judæa where the debased legalism of Judaism coexisted with the seductive hedonism of the dominant Græco-Roman pagansms. However, his immediate family were not simply pious country folk but a priestly family known to have, “…scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of the Lord”. (1:16) On his mother’s side, they proudly traced their lineage back to Aaron, the first priest of Israel. (1:5) His father had a very high view of what John was called to be. (1:76-79) He would not be one amongst a typically large Eastern family but a late-born

only son; as the angel said, “your joy and delight”. (1:14) His name, declared by the angel in direct contradiction of tradition, was a constant reminder to him that “Tahweh is gracious”. (1:13,59-62) No doubt his father would remind him of the divine source of his name given that when asked “...what he wanted him called”, he replied emphatically that he already had been named: “John is his name”. (1:63) Even his birth was surrounded by awe-inspiring wonders which made his special status a matter of community gossip; a powerful force in small villages. (1:65-66) He was to be kept away from wine and strong drink, which separated him from other children in a culture which taught children how to drink alcohol as part of community life. This was probably intended as a constant reminder to him that he was a person under a vow, (Numbers 6:1-5) though the omission of the other requirements of the Nazirite is somewhat puzzling. A lot of care went into making the situation optimal for the Spirit’s work with the child: “And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.” (Luke 1:66)

Children’s spirituality could be stimulated by the very architecture of the holy city.

Go through Zion, walk round her,
counting her towers,
admiring her walls,
reviewing her palaces;
then tell the next generation
that God is here,
our God and leader,
for ever and ever. (Psalm 48:12-14)

This could refer to children of any age, but the most obvious reading is that the Sons of Korah* intended that people, while taking their young children to see the architecture of the “holy mountain”, should tell them that God lived there.

Children “old enough to understand”1175 were included in the reading of the Law under Nehemiah indicating both that they were expected to benefit, and that there were younger children who would not. (Nehemiah 8:1-3) Paul, in advising his protégé Timothy that it was inevitable that those who tried to live “in devotion to Christ” would come under attack, (2 Timothy 3:12) indicated that deception was characteristic of this attack. (3:13) He urged Timothy to hold on to, “…what you have been taught and know to be

1174 This is the meaning of the Hebrew name rendered Joannes in Greek and ‘John’ in English.
1175 Again the distinction is functional rather than chronological.
true”. (3:14) He first reminded Timothy of his teachers, probably referring to his mother and grandmother. (1:5) Then he asked him to remember, “...how ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures - from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”. (3:15) It is evident that he considered childhood exposure to Scripture as an important factor in an adult’s ability to sustain their clarity about and commitment to truth.

The most startling example of children’s openness to other spiritual influences is the unborn John the Baptist’s response to Elizabeth’s Holy Spirit induced joy at the visit of the Messiah’s mother, referred to earlier. He cannot help but share the encounter through his biological link to his mother. (Luke 1:39-45)

One has to consider all aspects of the ed-care setting which are potential mediators of spirituality to gain a comprehensive picture of how a setting may foster development.

**CHILDREN ENCOUNTER SPIRITUAL EVIL AND CANNOT RESIST BEING INFLUENCED TO THEIR DETRIMENT**

Children are unable to resist the influence of negative spiritual forces, any more than they can positive, and consequently may be seen to have a propensity to evil. Evil may operate through all those encounters which mediate God’s Spirit and especially through the household.

Children may stray from God. They may be so taken over by spiritual evil as to act destructively towards themselves or others. The idea of childhood sinlessness finds little resonance in the Bible. However, references to childhood sin are remarkably lacking, especially if Proverbs is excluded. Nevertheless, children were open to influence from evil from life’s very beginning. (Genesis 8:21) As Bradford says:

> It is possible for a child or young person to suffer spiritual damage for example by cruelty or violence, from the atmosphere of extreme ugliness and squalor and acute deprivation, or through the influence of damaging ideas (not excluding the possibility of these being through the mass media) which decry the principle of

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1176 Stibbs indicates that the reference is to Timothy being taught at a very young age, as a ‘babe’, and almost certainly refers to his instruction in the OT. See Stibbs, A. M. (1954). The epistles to Timothy and Titus. In F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, & E. F. Kevan (Eds.), *op. cit.*, p.1078.


humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Such experiences may result in what might be called ‘spiritual handicap’.\(^{1179}\)

An intriguing example of children used by spiritual evil is the story of the boys from Bethel who mocked Elisha, (2 Kings 2:23-35) the consequences of which were discussed earlier. As intimated, the entire passage requires detailed exegesis lest it be dismissed as unworthy to belong in the biblical material and so irrelevant to this argument:

This is in every respect a puerile tale, and serves as a gauge of the moral level of the dervish communities from which the strictly hagiographic matter in the Elisha cycle emanated ... There is no serious point in this incident and it does not reflect much to the credit of the prophet.\(^{1180}\)

Gray fails to recognise the artfulness of the narrative. The author* is not recounting the story of a hyper-sensitive old groucher overreacting to the natural cheekiness of young boys.\(^{1181}\) Nor is it about God’s anger at an implied insult to Him. There is something more subtle and significant occurring.

The audience* would know Bethel, once a centre for the worship of *Yahweh*, as one of the two foci for the idolatrous cult maintained by Jeroboam I and his successors to rival the cultic centre at Jerusalem. (1 Kings 12:26-33) From the narratives in 1 Kings they would know that prophets lived there but were so ineffectual that *Yahweh* sent a “man of God” from Judah to curse the altar. (13:1-3) The ambiguous rôle of the old prophet whose false prophecy led to the man of God’s death indicated that their basic spirituality was suspect. (13:11-32) They also knew that Hiel, who defied *Yahweh’s* curse upon rebuilding Jericho, came from Bethel. (16:34) The immediately preceding narrative told them that Elisha had just assumed the mantle of Elijah as God’s envoy. (2 Kings 2:1-18) From Bethel he would move to Mount Carmel, scene of Elijah’s great struggle with the prophets of Baal and another centre of Canaanite worship. Then he moved to Samaria, the other focus, (2:25) where Ahab had instituted an official cult of Ba’al. (1 Kings 16:32) Given the sequence of destinations, the audience* would interpret


\(^{1181}\) Ellison would argue that these are “young lads” but no translators agree. [Ellison, H. L. (1954), *op. cit.*, pp.318-319.] Pridmore strongly argues that these are young children. [Pridmore, J. S. (1977), *op. cit.*, p.12.]
his coming to Bethel as an assertion of authority over the evil spiritual forces ensconced there. The action of the boys would be seen in the context of the challenge of the newly appointed man of God to the town based on idolatry.

The author* does not describe a few mischievous boys, but a mob in excess of forty. (2 Kings 2:24) But they are only boys, not as Alexander & Alexander assert: "...young men - local louts, yelling abuse at the prophet and his God, telling him to ‘Go up’ like Elijah." The boys didn’t just happen to be on the road; they specifically came out of the town to meet him. (2:23) There is probably an implied antithetical parallel to the prophets coming out to meet him earlier. (2:3) The boys’ insult was directed to his status as a prophet of Yahweh. Without accepting his bizarre assertion that these were children of the local prophetic community, it is possible to recognise the force of Jones’ argument on this score.

The reference could not have been to natural baldness, since the oriental, particularly a stranger on a journey as distinct from a slave or labourer at work, would not have had his head uncovered. Hence it was a kind of tonsure as a mark of the separation of the prophet from the profane sphere of life to the service of God. This was inferred by the boys, who knew Elisha as a prophet by his mantle, and were familiar with the tonsure, since many of them were themselves the progeny of the prophets of Bethel and all were familiar with the conventions of the large dervish community there.

The audience* would certainly recognise the import of the insult. The author* probably implied that the spiritual evil which resided in the town, represented by the altar, led the children to the confrontation. It makes sense to see it as an example of children becoming so much part of the spirituality of the community and group to which they belong that they become its tools.

By NT times the concept of possession by evil spirits was well established and child victims were identified. The ‘moonstruck’ (seleniazomai) child’s story is narrated in each synoptic Gospel, albeit with variations. To impose contemporary Western medical categories and refer to the child as ‘epileptic’, as in most translations, does not

1182 Alexander, D. & Alexander, P. (1973), op. cit., p.272. The Jerusalem actually translates this as "small boys".
elucidate the story. The audience* would see a child in the grip of spiritual evil so profound that it was life endangering and resistant to the disciples even though they had been given "...authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out". (Matthew 10:1) They are rebuked for lack of faith. (Matthew 17:20) One can speculate that their failure was associated with their negative attitude to children. (19:13) They may have lacked the faith to assert the Spirit's claim on the life of the child. (17:19-20) An important feature of Mark's* account is that the father's limited faith sufficed for the child who, in the grip of demonic forces, was beyond faith. Williamson comments: "Significantly, the faith of the boy is not mentioned. In no case of exorcism in Mark is healing contingent on the faith of the demon possessed person."1185 The audience* would understand that such children were not themselves evil, but the victim of forces beyond their control.1186 Though their faith was not required, Jesus challenged the father to demonstrate faith before he would act. Simply to end the possession of a helpless child would still leave them unable to defend themselves and vulnerable to future seizures. He tells the father that, "Everything is possible for anyone who has faith." In choosing to be faithful, the father interposed his changed spirit to protect his son.

A child in ed-care may be possessed by evil. At its lesser end the generally destructive spirit of a household, or community may lead a group of children to obstructive negativism or persistent disrespect. It may also be seen in media-incited behaviours which diminish children's abilities to learn or limit their social flexibility. However, more extreme control may occur. Cinematic images of possession should not shape what is meant by this. While the 'moonstruck' child's mutism was unrelenting, extreme symptoms were intermittent, and consisted of some form of seizure and self-destructive behaviour. Like the disciples, teachers and counsellors may well find such children resistant to their most powerful techniques.

A NARRATIVE METAPHOR OF CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY

The nature of children's spirituality and its development has been hard for Christians to specify, largely because any single verbal descriptor seems to mis-state the reality.

1186 The possessed are not blamed for their condition. Matthew 12:43-45 comes closest to attribution of blame but only for failure while the person was free of their possession.
Several different ideas contribute to the biblical concept of childhood, such as inability to distinguish good and evil, receptiveness, linguistic incompetence which is probably intended to indicate cognitive limitations, lack of ‘estate’, and so on. Typically, the use of the term ‘objective helplessness’ has advantages but may suggest children are incapable of spiritual agency which does not truly represent the biblical picture. The alternative proposed here is to suggest that a child is anyone who has limited ability to resist spirits and is consequently ‘open’ to their influence. This statement defines childhood rather than describing children. It is not just that children are spiritually open, but that spiritual openness is determinative of childhood. ‘Openness’ is preferred partly because it has more positive connotations than ‘helplessness’. But it also fits a narrative metaphor which helps to flesh out the meaning of children’s spirituality. The meaning ascribed to the terms, ‘open’ and ‘unable to resist’, can be better expressed in images than by a proposition. Verbal definitions push one towards closure, as though the words complete the meaning. Images may always generate fresh insights and have a sense of open endedness, that the image strives towards what is always greater than itself. This mimics an approach used by both OT prophets, Jesus, and NT authors to speak of the Kingdom of God or of the nature of Christ’s death, i.e., to offer multiple metaphors. No one image is complete but each contributes to a composite understanding which operates at an intuitive level. This metaphoric narrative of children’s spirituality is presented as a parable.

THE PARABLE OF THE CITY

The development of children’s spirituality is like this: “In Mediæval times, in a highly contested realm, a collection of houses and shops began to see themselves as a community. Initially it had no real identity and residents hid while contending armies marched through it meeting no resistance. As time passed the community became larger and more complex and set up a system of governance to help it grow and develop. Eventually it reached a significant size and declared itself a city. Yet, the reality was that it was so small and poor that it was unwalled and could not even conceive of defending itself from attack by the armies which contended for control of the land. Inevitably, it became an ‘open city’. Passing armies could enter and billet their troops without resistance. The citizens had to hope that the soldiery would be benevolently inclined as they could do little if their ‘guests’ chose to plunder. So they would make themselves congenial to the occupying forces. For the time that an army
invested the city, it was run according to the nature of the occupying forces and the orders of its commanding officer. From time to time rival armies contested the very streets and particularly the hill around which the city clustered. Even when an army withdrew, the city continued to be marked by its occupancy. Some armies built, both for the well-being of the people and to remind them of the ruler the army served. There were also armies whose actions led to significant damage. Most sought the allegiance of citizens and influential burghers began to side with one force or another. But their resistance necessarily fell short of active opposition. The citizens envied a nearby city which though similar in size and powerlessness was under the ‘protection’ of the legal king who ensured that, though it suffered occasional depredatory raids, it was not pillaged by other armies.

Over time the city grew more prosperous and larger and began to consider self-protection. First it built a stockade on the hill to give temporary protection from marauders. From the security of this sanctuary citizens would view the rest of the city forced to comply with outsiders’ commands. This keep did not protect the city from more determined occupations and the damage they might cause. But as time passed the city began to build walls and gates, and an armed militia capable of resisting encroachment. It began to be able to determine its own destiny. Initially small raiding parties were sent on their way but major armies still had to be met with acquiescence, though increasingly armies found the city less compliant. Eventually, its walls became thicker and higher, its gates heavier, and its militia larger and more effective as a defensive force. It reached a state of guardedness where it could close its gates to anyone and resist all but the most prolonged of sieges. The same process occurred with the city they had envied, until eventually it became strong enough to eject its protector and declare itself a ‘free’ city.

At this point the citizens faced a dilemma. They could also determine to be a ‘free’ city, determined to be in total control of their own destiny but risking being subverted and perhaps razed to the ground by forces resolved that such free cities should be under their control. If they went in that direction, the city faced constant danger from active ‘fifth columns’, developed during earlier occupations, advocating that the city declared itself for one of the contending forces. Some of these might even betray the city by revealing faults in the defences through which the city could be attacked and even overthrown. Alternatively, the city could declare themselves for either the king or a pretender
depending on with whom they identified. They could offer them ‘the keys to the city’. They would be open again, but only to one protagonist. They would consequently become a target of attack by his enemies though they could rely on his assistance to effectively withstand them as their joint enemies. If they chose for a pretender, they were promised the semblance of self-government, though that did not exclude them being open to his agents and required to bear any cost he chose to levy. If they chose for the king, he would assign a regent to represent him in the organisation and defence of the city, and ensure its continued allegiance. The city would retain a freedom to govern itself but within parameters laid down by the regent. In return the city could find itself levied of their wealth and militia to help defend and develop others of the king’s cities, or even to assail the strongholds of his enemies.”

EXPOSITION

Unlike a fable, a parable is not intended to lend itself to an isometric translation into non-metaphoric propositions but to leave a memorable impression which poses questions. Yet a parable is not a projective device into which readers can read their own issues. It has an intent and some exposition is possible provided it does not vitiate the ability of the parable to intrigue into questioning. Jesus ‘explanations’ tend to be a new set of metaphors. (Matthew 13:18-23, 36-43)

While no metaphor completely captures the child’s spiritual reality, in the context of this metaphor, the term ‘open’ has certain advantages. It recognises children’s initial state of availability to a variety of spiritual influences. But this openness is relative as children becomes progressively better able to resist. Yet it appreciates that, in each instance, there is a point at which the defences break down and children are again open; each outcome for children is not finally relative but involves a surrender. Such surrenders are not permanent but leave marks on children which persist. It also acknowledges that some children come under the spiritual protection of others. It identifies that increasingly children will be able to resist less powerful influences while still being vulnerable to the more powerful or prolonged. And it notes that children internalise spiritual influences. In particular, there is a suggestion that, for a time, children may have a protected ‘centre’ such that, while they cannot effectively resist, there is part of them which is aware that what is occurring is other than what they want. The image of maturity also rings true as the state where the person can open themselves
to the spiritual influences with which they choose to identify and close themselves to and withstand those they reject. That there will be a continuing element within the person working contrary to that identification is phenomenologically meaningful. The metaphor identifies the cost, a surrender of autonomy, involved in that voluntary openness, and the subsequent difficulty in changing allegiance. It also indicates that people may be 'recruited' to act for that spiritual principle to which they are committed.

Despite the appropriateness of this parable as a depiction of spiritual development, it remains only one of a number of metaphors which may reasonably be used to explicate the statement: "The development of children's spirituality is like this..."

CONCLUSION

The Bible is very positive in its evaluation of the spirituality of children indicating not only their incontrovertible acceptability to God, right of entry to his kingdom, and openness to his Spirit, but also their status as models for emulation by adults who wish to achieve those qualities. Realistically it also recognises their openness to contrary spiritual encounters which mar relationship to God and draw children away from him. Development is recognised and a rudimentary description is possible, but its dynamics are not directly explained beyond the importance of learning through active spiritual involvement, ideally with adults who live their spirituality, but also through other sources of encounters with God's Spirit, particularly knowing the Scriptures. It is therefore important to determine whether a contemporary scientific approach to human development can be consistent with this framework and provide insight as to how spiritual development may proceed. In the next chapter the most recent comprehensive theory of human development, Dynamic Systems Theory, will be applied to the biblical understanding of spiritual development advanced in this and the previous chapter.
CHAPTER 5. THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT

This chapter addresses the recognised lack in the biblical material of a comprehensive theory of development as currently understood. The biblical material was written in a cultural milieu in which theistic explanation sufficed and the idea of an empirical specification of relationships between phenomena was not extant. This is not the milieu of contemporary developmental theory or of educational practice. In a real sense, empirical science cannot serve as a test of what is essentially unobservable and so it might be seen that requiring that the biblical understanding of spiritual development be consistent with empirical theories of child development is to commit a category error. Yet, in so far as the former refers to empirical phenomena, its descriptions should be consistent with what is observed. And certainly its validity should not be excluded by adoption of a developmental model which eliminates the possibility of spiritual phenomena a priori.

In this chapter, the limitations of some dominant theoretical approaches to development in dealing with matters of spirituality will be identified. It will be proposed that a very recent theory represents a radical departure from traditional psychology which allows the maintenance of scientific rigour while encompassing the apparent unpredictability and evanescence of spiritual phenomena. Dynamic systems theory will be described in some detail because of the significance of the differences between it and more familiar approaches, and, as will be seen, the variation between different formulations of the theory. This detail is necessary to specify the particular elements of the theory which will be emphasised in this dissertation. First the general theory will be presented, then its application to development and finally its ability to encompass concepts of spirituality. The chapter will end with an outline of a framework for describing spiritual development which is consistent with the biblical material previously surveyed.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASES OF THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

Psychology has constructed its epistemology and research paradigms primarily from two foundations: classical materialist determinism and organismic phenomenализm, exemplified respectively by Skinnerian behaviourism and Freudian psychoanalysis. Developmental psychology understandably adopted these stances, typified by the information processing paradigm and Piagetian genetic epistemology. These
foundations reflect psychology’s roots in biological science, therapy for ‘non-physical’ disorders and the philosophy of human nature.\textsuperscript{1187} They also reveal the inescapable tension between psychology’s desire for scientific respectability and the idiosyncrasy of its human subjects, which leads, at one extreme, to a positivism more stringent than classical physics\textsuperscript{1188} and, at the other, to the romanticism of ‘humanistic psychology’.

It has proved difficult to discover a paradigm which marries the intellectual rigour of normative science with acceptance of humanity’s self portrayal as agent, as choosing, and as free.\textsuperscript{1189} The complexity of human behaviour and development has led researchers to the adoption of increasingly abstruse statistical techniques capable of multivariate analysis. However their interpretation has become almost as perplexing as the original data. An increasing number of developmentalists has come to see the problem as ineluctable; the obstacle lies in irremediable limitations in traditional linear concepts. Human behaviour lies outside the boundaries of what they can successfully explain.

LIMITATIONS OF LINEAR CONCEPTS OF DEVELOPMENT

It is not that traditional approaches have been valueless but each is incomplete:

Traditional theoretical families have each contributed unique and crucial insights to the study of development. The greatly oversimplified, mechanistic theories have been valuable for modelling the rule-based regularities in development, especially those that are common to human and non-human information-processing. Organismic theories have been successful at capturing the wholeness of developmental order, including normative progressions and their qualitative reorganisations (e.g., stage shifts). Contextualist approaches have investigated the effects of interaction and goodness-of-fit between children and their environments. Learning theories have established the importance of knowledge organisation in the world and its transfer from the world to the child. Nativist theories, in contrast, have shown how developmental acquisitions rely on the specialised cognitive and emotional propensities of our species. Finally, constructivist approaches have resolved some of the tension between nativism and learning by positing the assembly of internal structures through the child’s active engagement with the world.


\textsuperscript{1188} Which has moved to embrace an indeterminate and relativistic cosmos.

Yet the widely divergent perspectives of these theoretical families produce very different accounts of development. This divergence suggests that each perspective is limited, incomplete or specialised, and that some sort of integration or synthesis is necessary to get a comprehensive picture of human development.  

The problem is that their value is vitiated by mutual contradiction:

...mechanistic explanations are completely incompatible with the organismic metaphor, which emphasises the wholeness of a development process that cannot be reduced to its parts (Overton, 1984). Organismic theories, in turn, imply a centrally directed, unfolding continuity that is difficult to reconcile with contextualist arguments for environmental causation, sudden interruptions, and individual differences in timing (Lerner, 1995; M. Lewis, 1997; Ryan, Kuhn & Decca, 1997). Moreover, organismic seeks to explain the origins of developmental forms, whereas contextualism is concerned with the processes that modify them. Thus, neither mechanistic, organismic, nor contextual theories can fully explain development on their own, and it may be impossible to integrate them because they are incommensurable.

Similarly, the nativist and learning camps, each highly productive and influential, have no common language to discuss developmental causation (see Molar, 1986). For nativism, the structure of the nervous system prescribes the structure of development. For learning approaches, orderliness is already present in the world, recorded by the mind, and mirrored by developmental acquisitions. Constructivist theories have attempted to resolve this contradiction, explaining developmental order as the building of new assemblies from pre-existing constituents. Yet for some constructivists these constituents are supplied by learning (e.g., Case, 1985; Fischer, 1980), and for others they are innate (e.g., Karmiloff-Smith, 1992); there still seems to be no comfortable middle ground. Moreover, constructivist assumptions of universal teleology and progress are difficult to square with the diverse outcomes of individual developmental contexts (Keating, 1990). Thus, nativist and learning explanations remain incompatible, even through the lens of constructivism, and constructivist formulas for progress ignore the diversity that is central to contextualist accounts.

These contradictions spring from their different images of the human person:

It appears that each of these theoretical traditions owe their family resemblance to a particular metaphor, emphasis, or viewpoint, not a scientific explanation ... Mechanistic theories compare developing humans to machines, organismic theories compare them to plants, and constructivist theories compare them to builders with a universal tool kit.

1191 ibid.
1192 ibid.
The misrepresentation of linearity

The central critique is that each ‘tradition’ misrepresents the nature of the human person in a number of key ways. First is the assumption that human behaviour is determined by a small number of linear interactions despite the non-linearity of empirical data:

Psychology has traditionally proceeded on the assumption that humans behave like steady-state systems; and that their behavioural attributes can ultimately be reduced to a few fundamental interactions in terms of linear deterministic laws. (Davies, 1988; Monod, 1972). Research motivated by this assumption focuses on attributes that are stable within and across individuals at any given point in development, and it draws its conclusions from results obtained after the moment-to-moment fluctuations and individual differences of behaviour have been partialled out by statistical smoothing procedures. 1193

Wolff is not alone in suggesting linearity is supported by ignoring the actual form of the evidence about development. After outlining four, “...prototypical ways of bridging the gap between initial and final states”, van Geert explains:

The paths, however, are not characteristic in the empirical sense, in that they have not really been found in empirical data, except in very confined situations such as the classic learning experiment. Rather, they are widely seen as prototypes of development, as curves that we should find if measurement problems would stop playing their dirty tricks on us. 1194

He provides an example:

The simple additive or logarithmic increase serves as a powerful prototype for short-term change in many developmental investigations. If a researcher repeatedly tests a child for the same developing variable (such as writing skill or moral judgment) and finds an irregular, oscillatory or downward path, it is usually assumed that this must reflect random fluctuations or measurement errors and that the true variable follows a path of linear or log-linear increase. 1195

Discrepancies occur because mechanistic models cannot, even in principle, reproduce the complexity of the human mind:

What would happen if we really did simulate the brain on a real scale? Would this help cognitive neuroscience? Let’s say we successfully simulated a person by connecting a million input units to a billion hidden elements, which themselves

1194 van Geert, P. (1994), op. cit., pp.38. The four paths are “a gradual and uniform reduction of the distance”, “...nothing happens at all”, “...a combination of gradual increase ending in a steady state” and “a stepwise increase”.
1195 ibid, p.32.
were connected (each with several tens of thousands of connections) to other hidden layers, and so on until the information accessed the output motor system with its tens of millions of neurons. The result would be a (very) large set of weightings linking the inputs to the first hidden layer, and the hidden layer with other hidden layers, etc. How do we go about finding out what the mind is like from this? Or for that matter how the brain is organised? ... The bottom line is that a neural network with a hundred connections is extremely difficult to interpret; and there is no known way to fathom the theoretical significance of thousands or millions of connections.1196

The misrepresentation of preformation

The second misrepresentation is a modern form of preformationism; the assumption that blueprints for the outcomes of development pre-exists in the genes or environment or some combination of those:

Traditionally, developmentalists have looked for the sources of new forms either in the organism or in the environment. In the first case, complex structures and functions emerge because the complexity exists within the organism in the form of a neural or genetic code. Development, then, consists of waiting until these stored instructions tell the organism what to do. Alternatively, the organism gains new form by absorbing the structure and patterning of its physical or social environment through interactions with that environment. In the more commonly accepted version, the two processes both contribute: organisms become complex through a combination of nature and nurture.1197

Thelen and Smith outline the problem with preformationism:

...whether development is viewed as driven by innate structures, environmental input, or a combination of the two, the fundamental premiss in the traditional view is that "information can pre-exist the processes that give rise to it" (Oyama, 1985, p. 13) ... But if the instructions to develop are in the genes, who turns on the genes? If the complexity exists in the environment, who decides what the organism should absorb and retain? The only way to answer these questions is to invoke yet another causal agent who evaluates the information, whether genetic or environmental, and makes decisions. Some clever homunculus must be orchestrating a developmental score while knowing how it must all turn out in the end. This is a logically indefensible position, however; it says that novelty really does not develop, it is there all along. Postulating an interaction of genes and environment does not


remove this logical impasse. It merely assigns the preexisting plans to two sources instead of one.\textsuperscript{1198}

They imply that treating the mind as a computer suffers a similar flaw:

The mind-as-computer metaphor is very deep and powerful. People do have hardware (brains), and they do process information. But computers are static entities whose order comes from the people who build them. The metaphor is not a good one for development, where there is no program and the issue of the origins of order is paramount.\textsuperscript{1199}

Preformationism prevents the creation of anything genuinely novel, which is a difficulty in either phylogensis or epigenesis:

...in order to produce a developmentally advanced more complicated thought or thinking structure, the mind must assemble that thought or structure and therefore it must be capable of harbouring or containing that structure. But this is an impossible achievement, for how can you assemble a box that is bigger than the hall in which the assembly takes place? Consequently, all structures that the mind can create must be present before that creation occurs, which, therefore, is not a genuine creation but a form of retrieval.

The problem with this Socratic contention is that it reduces the mind and the meaning of whatever is in there to the mind's own confinements and enclosures.\textsuperscript{1200}

\textbf{The misrepresentation of stability}

The third misrepresentation lies in ignoring the variability in rates of change: "...how can a gradual mechanism that never ceases to operate explain a long-term process of stability penetrated by sudden changes?"\textsuperscript{1201} Treating deviations from linearity as 'error' deviations from an underlying trend, or 'noise', or measurement deviations, distracts from the reality of complex behaviour which is not consistent but varies in pace over various time spans.

\textbf{The need for a new paradigm}

There have long been signals that a more flexible understanding of developmental science was necessary. Relativity, quantum uncertainty and similar concepts suggest that the simple linear determinism of classical physics has limited applicability to the

\textsuperscript{1198} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{1199} \textit{ibid}, p.568.
\textsuperscript{1200} van Geert, P. (1994), \textit{op. cit.}, p.11.
complex and dynamic nature of observed reality, even in the physical sciences, but especially in the human sciences:

Mechanistic accounts have largely shifted from traditional information processing to connectionist models, in which developmental patterns emerge (spontaneously) without instruction or rules (e.g., Schulz, 1998). The limitations of organismic models have led Chapman (1991), Ryan, Kuhn, and Decca (1997), Sameroff (1995), and others to embrace a systemic perspective highlighting adaptive self-organisation. Contextualist researchers have achieved flexibility through systemic thinking (Lerner, 1995; M. Lewis, 1997) and increased explanatory power by modelling the emergence of unique outcomes from indeterminate beginnings (Keating, 1990). The incompatibility of nativism and learning led Molenaar (1986) to propose self-organisation as the real source of developmental novelty. Ten years later this position has become elaborated and extended with reference to connectionist networks and human biology (Elman et al., 1996). In the constructivist camp, neo-Piagetians have looked to dynamic systems principles to model growth profiles that arise from recursion rather than construction (Case et al., 1996; Rose & Fischer, 1998)... the organisational approach to socioemotional development, based largely on constructivist assumptions, has begun to make use of dynamic systems ideas (e.g., Sroufe, 1995).

Application of linear deterministic models to human development has recently undergone trenchant criticism from such proponents of the new approach variously known as complex systems theory, dynamic(al) systems theory, chaos theory, complexity science or some rearrangements of these terms. It claims to offer a way to conceptualise and study the actual complexity of real human systems.

**DYNAMIC SYSTEMS THEORY**

Dynamic systems theory is not easy to summarise, a fact commented on by most of its practitioners. Summary is not assisted by some of its adherents’ propensity for

1201 *ibid*, p.7.
1203 "...Dynamic systems cannot yet be claimed as a fully articulated and unified theory of development ... At its current state of development, dynamic systems is being used by different researchers for many different levels of analysis, for behaviour ranging from the physiologic to the social, and for describing change over time scales from seconds to years." [Smith, L. B. & Thelen, E. (1993), *op. cit.*, p.xii.] "The greatest drawback in stimulating others to enter this research arena is probably the esoteric language in which dynamic systems theory is packaged." [Roberton, M. A. (1993), *op. cit.*, p.114.] "One of the characteristics of DSP is the use of a very different set of terms from those typically employed by developmental psychologists." [Astin, R. N. (1993). Commentary: The strange attractiveness of dynamic systems to development. In L. B. Smith, & E. Thelen, (Eds.) *A dynamic systems approach to development: Applications*. Cambridge: MIT, p.386.] "It is true that variance in terms, definitions, and applications of DS concepts confuses both DS researchers and their audience ... Terminological imprecision and ambiguity are unavoidable given the novelty of DS ideas in developmental psychology (Lewis & Granic, 1999).
fanciful language such as 'chaos', 'butterfly effect', 'strange attractors', 'magician systems', 'structural conspiracies' and 'toy iterations'. Dynamic systems theorists describe their own field thus:

We see a science that is based on fuzzily defined but intuitively recognisable abstract forms - a science that manifests, in the most striking possible way, Plato's notion of abstract Ideas which are only approximated by real entities, in various different ways.\textsuperscript{1204}

Contemporary dynamic systems theory is an extension of classic thermodynamics to irreversible changes in open, physical, and biological systems engaged in energy exchanges with the environment.\textsuperscript{1205}

...a view on development and a technique of model building ... associated with the notion of dynamic systems, of non-linearity, self-organisation and of complexity and chaos.\textsuperscript{1206}

The systems tradition is holistic, antimechanistic, probabilistic rather than deterministic, and emphasises self-organisation and self-stabilisation.\textsuperscript{1207}

The diversity of their ideas is immediately apparent. They may be better understood by unravelling some of the terminology which is not well recognised within social science, being mainly derivative of mathematics and engineering. Some attempts to draw parallels to existing developmental concepts seem banal; highly technical dynamic terms being resolved as developmental commonplaces:

...many of these new terms are analogous to terms already in the psychological literature. For example, an attractor state has much the same meaning as a stage of development, a limit cycle is similar to a constraint, and a control parameter is an example of an independent variable.\textsuperscript{1208}

What this really means is that these prosaic constructs are identified with concepts which in other field are highly conceptually articulated.

\textsuperscript{1204} Goertzel, B. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.xvii.

\textsuperscript{1205} Butterworth, G. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.171.

\textsuperscript{1206} van Geert, P. (1994), \textit{op. cit.}, p.viii.

\textsuperscript{1207} Smith, L. B. & Thelen, E. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.xi.

\textsuperscript{1208} Aslin, R. N. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.386.
SYSTEM

A system is an aggregate of interrelated and interconnected variables which form a whole to which an observer relates.\textsuperscript{1209} To be a system a phenomenon must have these characteristics:

1. it consists of separate elements;
2. those elements mutually interact reciprocally in such a way that each element influences the rest and thereby influences its own subsequent state;
3. the elements cohere so that what influences one influences all and there is a sense of 'common fate';
4. it is an artefact constructed by an observer and not necessarily an ontological reality.

The number of elements can vary from two upwards but each extra variable adds significantly to the complexity of the system. A single star with one planet can be perceived as a simple system with few variables defining the system behaviour.\textsuperscript{1210} ‘The market’ has so many interacting variables which affect how it behaves that it represents a highly complex system. A system is sufficiently stable to be recognisable through time and its state at one point in time contributes to its states in subsequent time periods (iteration). The definition does not deny that ontological actualities underlie systems but the boundaries of any system studied are determined by the observer. The biological cell is a system, as are the circulatory system, the sensory system, the brain, consciousness, the human spirit, the family, the community and so on, at least to the person who studies them. But there is no self evident or impermeable boundary to any. Each is a contributive element of other systems and subject to the characteristics of those systems.

DYNAMIC SYSTEM

When defining dynamic systems, theorists err on the side of over-simplification.

A dynamic system is simply a set of variables that interact in a stable temporal pattern.\textsuperscript{1211}
The term *dynamic systems*, in its most generic form, means simply systems of elements that change over time.\textsuperscript{1212}

...we define a *dynamic system* as a set of variables that mutually affect each other's changes over time.\textsuperscript{1213}

It is hard to imagine what would be excluded by such definitions, and that may well be the intent. Occasionally simplicity is replaced by opacity: "A *dynamical system*, first of all, is just a mapping of some abstract space into itself. The abstract space is the set of 'states' of the system (the set of states of the real-world system modelled by the mapping, or the abstract dynamical system implicit in the mapping)."\textsuperscript{1214}

However, when they proceed to describe dynamic systems, a far more complex and precise picture emerges. It is difficult to describe the characteristics of a dynamic system as to depict any feature of dynamic systems requires understanding of others. Some confusion is also inherent in using computer simulations to explain real-world phenomena. Their explanatory languages are different. Moreover, theorists do not always concur about terminological usage nor phenomenal descriptions. The summary below presents Dynamic Systems Theory in a way that expicates its use in developmental theory.

A system becomes 'dynamic' when it is, "...composed of very many individual, often heterogeneous parts: molecules, cells, individuals, species."\textsuperscript{1215} Each of these is a 'system variable' and interacts with other system variables. "The principle distinctive property of a variable is that it changes over time. Consequently, mutual interaction among variables implies that they influence and co-determine each other's changes over time."\textsuperscript{1216} Accordingly, a dynamic system acts as a coherent whole and the behaviour of that whole across time organises the behaviour of the parts, the system variables, so that they contribute to the functioning of the entirety. They are said to be 'entrained';

\textsuperscript{1214} Goertzel, B. (1997), *op. cit.*, p.4. Unfortunately, such language is not uncommon.
they ‘cooperate’. This ‘top-down’ conceptualisation of causality declares the radical divergence of Dynamic Systems Theory from traditional scientific thinking.

To be dynamic a system must be ‘open’:

Open systems, where many components are free to relate to each other in nonlinear ways, are capable of remarkable properties. When sufficient energy is pumped into these systems, new ordered structures may spontaneously appear that were not formerly apparent ... The system may behave in highly complex, although ordered ways, shifting from one pattern to another, clocking time, resisting perturbations, and generating elaborate structures.\(^{1217}\)

Such systems are described as ‘dissipative’; that is, they, “…absorb energy to increase their complexity”.\(^{1218}\) The system is open to energy or information entering from outside its boundaries, and utilises that to create order or internal information.

The organisation of dynamic systems is hierarchical, as when a weather system organises the movement of a storm which then structures that of air molecules, and heterarchical, as when birds flying in flocks mutually influence their flying patterns to coordinate flock behaviour.\(^{1219}\) Such organisation is not mechanistic as the outcome of the process of organisation is, in principle, not predictable from the parts or past of the system. Smith & Thelen say: “Central to all dynamic formulations is the assumption that behaviour and its change over time are the result of emergent, rather than prescribed processes.”\(^{1220}\) Lewis explains: “The word emergence has a special, even radical, significance in scientific explanation: it refers to the coming-into-existence of new forms or properties through ongoing processes intrinsic to the system itself.”\(^{1221}\) Emergent behaviour is not derivative of any of the system’s constituent parts but only of the pattern of the whole: “The system creates its own form, and this form or organisation will contain properties that are qualitatively different and novel when

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1219 Reynolds’ artificial ‘boids’ simulate flocking behaviours in response to simple individual instructions: “First, don’t get too close to anything, including other boids. Second, try to match your velocity to that of the other boids around you. And third, always move toward the centre of the pack of nearby boids.” [Accessible at www.red3d.com/cwr/boids.] Dolan has simulated the value of flocking through carnivorous boids called ‘floyts’. [www.aridolan.com/eFloyts.html] [Carlson, S. (2000). Boids of a feather flock together. *Scientific American*, 283(5), 94-95.]


compared to earlier organisations.\(^{1222}\) This is called self-organisation: "...self-organising systems permit true novelty: New forms spontaneously appear with time, entraining the interactions of the elements that give rise to them..."\(^{1223}\) Over time, ‘entrainment’ reconfigures the organisation of all subsidiary elements of the system into conformity with the whole. ‘Entrainment’ is an important explanatory concept in dynamic systems theory. In the same way as ‘determined’ expresses the idea that the character of lower levels of organisation ‘cause’ the behaviour of higher levels, ‘entrained’ expresses the idea that the character of higher levels of organisation ‘cause’ the behaviour of lower levels. How each of these ‘causal’ processes operates is equally obscure.

Dynamic systems also demonstrate self-stabilisation. Despite being in a context of constant change, they behave in conformity to persistent patterns which maintain the integrity of the system. This ability to maintain identity of the whole while change affects elements is called ‘autopoiesis’. Organisms are autopoietic because they remain the same identifiable creature even though, over time, every molecule is exchanged. An autopoietic culture persists even while its adult members die and are replaced by new children.

Though potentially a system of many interactive elements could take up a multitude of states, only a few are actually adopted:

A critical property of self-organising, open systems is that, although an enormous range of patterns is theoretically possible, the system actually displays only one or a very limited subset of them, indexed by the behaviour of the collective variable. The system ‘settles into’ or ‘prefers’ only a few modes of behaviour. In dynamic terminology, this behavioural mode is an attractor state, because the system - under certain conditions - has an affinity for that state. Again in dynamic terms, the system prefers a certain location in its state, or phase space,\(^{1224}\) and when displaced from that place, it tends to return there.\(^{1225}\)


\(^{1224}\) "A plot of the values of each variable over time on a graph whose axes are the set of variables in the system is termed the phase space of the system." [Newtson, D. (1993), op. cit., p.243.]

Dynamic systems not only maintain themselves but also evolve as they exist in time and each change reconstitutes systems so that while they may revert to similar states, they never return to the identical state. This process is called hysteresis: "...the system evolves because, formally speaking, each system state is the input to an iterative function that produces the next state (or a next state) as its output. What is this function? It is the way in which each of the variables involved affects the others." Consequently, while autopoiesis ensures that the system stays within identifiable limits allowing its future state to be identified probabilistically, hysteresis ensures that no future state can be precisely determined until it is observed. This system evolution is internally driven even though it derives its energy from beyond the system: "...growth ... is autocatalytic. By that I mean it is a process that sets itself in motion and whose own products keep the process going." Those changing states, when appropriately mapped on a computer, follow what are termed ‘trajectories in the phase space’. Most trajectories develop towards conformity with a pattern of behaviour described as an ‘attractor’:

The key notion for studying dynamical systems is the attractor. An attractor is, quite simply, a characteristic behaviour of a system ... The striking insight of dynamical systems theory is that, for many mathematical and real world dynamical systems, the initial state of the system is almost irrelevant. No matter where the system starts from, it will eventually drift into one of a small number of attractors.

An attractor is a pattern to which behaviour is drawn; a trajectory is the actual pattern of behaviour through time which never exactly matches the attractor but varies around it.

There are different types of attractors, the three most commonly described being:

1. the ‘point’ or ‘equilibrium’ attractor, where ‘...they drift into certain ‘equilibrium’ conditions and stay there’;

2. ‘periodic’ or ‘limit cycle’ attractors, where ‘...they lock into a cyclic pattern of oscillation between a certain number of fixed states’;

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1226 van Geert, P. (1994), op. cit., pp.50-51. "An iteration is a process that takes its output as its new input, produces new output, which it takes as input, and so on, ad infinitum." [ibid, p.14.]

1227 ibid, p.96.


1229 ibid.
3. ‘strange’, ‘mixing’ or ‘chaotic’ attractors, “...with strange but stable shapes”.\textsuperscript{1231}
An example of a point attractor is a simple pendulum: “...for a damped pendulum, oscillations induced by an initial displacement from equilibrium will wind down and eventually come to a halt. The attractor in this case is a \textit{fixed point} at rest.”\textsuperscript{1232} But the situation is different if the gravitational damping is counteracted by a drive mechanism:
“A system, like the clock pendulum, that tends to stable oscillation, is said to have a \textit{limit-cycle attractor}.”\textsuperscript{1233} A pendulum swinging in three dimensions around two repulsive magnets will settle into a ‘figure of eight’ orbit but it will be a \textit{strange attractor} because the pendulum never repeats the same track around the orbit, even though the basic form is retained. Strange attractors are found in systems which exhibit ‘chaos’: “Chaos describes systems whose behaviours look random at close glance, but, when plotted over a long time on a state space, are not random, but display extremely complex geometric structure.”\textsuperscript{1234}

A phase space may have alternative attractors. It can be described topologically as consisting of attractors represented as ‘basins’ separated by ‘saddles’.\textsuperscript{1235} Basins may be either deep or shallow, depicting the ease with which external influences may push a trajectory from one attractor over the saddle and into a different attractor basin. Though it is not discussed in the literature, it is logically necessary that basins also differ in width, some drawing trajectories which are initially markedly disparate, others only acting on trajectories which are already close to the attractor.

Attractors are not necessarily permanent characteristics of a system, which may shift to a qualitatively different attractor or even to a different type of attractor.\textsuperscript{1236} After a period of relative stability within an attractor state, the changing context within which

\textsuperscript{1230} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{1231} Newtson, D. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.244. This imprecise definition exemplifies Goertzel’s statement: “The formal definition of ‘strange attractor’ is a matter of some contention.” His own definition identifies them as any attractor that is not a point or limit cycle.

\textsuperscript{1232} Kelso, J. A. S., Ding, M. & Schöner, G. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.18

\textsuperscript{1233} Newtson, D. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.244.


\textsuperscript{1235} This metaphor is not equestrian but geographical, a saddle being a low curved ridge between two valleys. The visual image is of a convex form capable of being straddled.

\textsuperscript{1236} Kelso, J. A. S., Ding, M. & Schöner, G. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.15.
the system exists, its control parameters,\textsuperscript{1237} may lead to a period of instability which is resolved by a ‘global reorganisation’\textsuperscript{1238} or shift to a totally new attractor state entirely unpredictable from its precursors:

...qualitative change is seen as the post hoc result of a change in another variable, known in dynamic systems parlance as a “control parameter” (Scholz, Kelso, and Schöner, 1987). (The latter is similar in concept to an “independent variable” except that nature has no scientist manipulating the control parameter.) When scaled past some critical value, the control parameter causes reorganisation of dependent variable (known as the collective or essential variable) (Scholz et al., 1987).\textsuperscript{1239}

For example, when one boils a saucepan of water, one control parameter is the heat applied to the bottom of the pan. Initially the water rises and falls without any particular organisation. Then suddenly it develops what are called ‘bumps before boiling’, large convection cells, the number depending on other control parameters like the depth of the water and the radius of the pan. These will remain stable for a time as the temperature rises but then, after an interlude of instability, an increased number of smaller cells will suddenly develop, a process which can repeat several times. Eventually the temperature reaches a critical level where the organisation of the convective cells breaks down and the turbulent behaviour called ‘boiling’ presages a radical change from liquid to gas and the system dissipates. While the pattern is predictable, just when the changes, called phase transitions,\textsuperscript{1240} occur, and how many cells there will be depends on the control parameters. So every example of the system will be unique and therefore unpredictable as unprecedented.

While the change to a control parameter can be linear and continuous, the system may respond with a sequence of qualitatively distinct stable organisational states separated by phase transitions or ‘bifurcations’ marked by instability.

\textsuperscript{1237} “When a factor influences variables in a system, but is not itself influenced by them, it is said to be \textit{a parameter}. Parameters are said to \textit{fix the dynamics} of the system.” [van Gelder, T. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.235.]


\textsuperscript{1239} Roberton, M. A. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.97.

\textsuperscript{1240} “...A transition is an event that is qualitatively different from the states it connects ... it connects prolonged system states that differ in one respect but are similar in another and, finally, the transition duration should be significantly less than that of the states it connects.” [van Geert, P. (1994), \textit{op. cit.}, p.45.]
Phase transitions are both global and abrupt, indicating that new configurations require the cooperation of all system components; they cannot remain at in-between states of partial reorganisation.\footnote{1241}

...not all changes in a system are phase shifts. At some values of a control parameter, the system may respond in a linear and continuous manner. Nonlinearity is a threshold effect; a small change in the control parameter at a critical value results in a qualitative shift. Control parameters, whether they are nonspecific organic or environmental parameters, or specific experiences, lead to phase shifts by threatening the stability of the current attractor. Recall that all complex systems carry in them inherent fluctuations. When the system is coherent and patterns are stable, these fluctuations are damped down [by convergence to the attractor]. However, at critical values of the control parameter, the system loses its coherence, and the noise acts as perturbations on the collective variable. At some point, this noise overcomes the stability of cooperative pattern, and the system may show no pattern, or increased variability. Then, as the control parameter passes the critical value, the system may settle into a new and different coordinative mode.\footnote{1242}

Emergent order necessarily results from spontaneous coordination entrained with macroscopic form and function. This principle necessarily yields qualitative changes as new organisations entrain the interactions of lower-order elements. These qualitative changes are necessarily discontinuous and sensitive to small effects because movement from one orderly regime to another necessarily spans a phase of relative disorder.\footnote{1243}

Given this sensitivity and because it is impossible to specify all the control parameters, one can never exactly reproduce previous events. Nor can any event be replicated because one can never recover the original state of the system:

The contexts and conditions that determine the stability of a system at any point in time \(t\) constitutes the initial conditions for the state of the system at the next instant of time, \((t+1)\). Likewise, the properties of the system at \((t+1)\) determine its state at \((t+2)\), and so on. The system is thus \textit{reiterative}, each state is dependent on the previous state.\footnote{1244}

\footnote{1243} Lewis, M. D. (2000), \textit{op. cit.}, p.39.
\footnote{1244} Thelen, L. & Smith, L. B. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.592. \textquoteleft\textquote right Originally, the notion of iteration came from mathematics, where it denotes functions like:

\[ x_{n+1} = f(x_n) \]

and an example of such a function would be:

\[ x_0 = a \]
\[ x_1 = 2x_0 = 2a \]
\[ x_2 = 2x_1 = 4a \]
\[ x_3 = 2x_2 = 8a \]
This iterative description of the path of dynamic systems through time is a central feature of the evolution of these systems. A dynamic system never revisits the same state. Involvement in a first event subtly changes the elements: heating the saucepan may change the heat transference properties of the metal; every heating will lead to the loss of some of the volume of the water or cause chemical changes in the various contaminants that exist in all water. Classical science would consider such changes as too small to have significant affects on the outcome. But dynamic systems are not linear but profoundly sensitive. Small changes in the initial conditions or control parameters of a dynamic system can lead to large differences in outcomes. This is called the ‘butterfly effect’, named for a paper given by an early chaos theorist who suggested that whether a butterfly fluttered its wings in a Brazilian rain forest could determine whether a storm struck New York. It is a way of expressing the non-linear aspect of dynamic systems: “...the so-called butterfly effect (Gleik, 1987; Schuster, 1988), ... implies that under specific conditions extremely small initial state differences will magnify exponentially, thus leading to developmental sequences that diverge dramatically after some time.”  

Changes may not be commensurate with the magnitude of the stimulus to change. The system may either refuse to change or may respond with a major qualitative reorganisation. This old idea is recited in the nursery rhyme For the want of a nail the battle was lost.

Dynamic systems autonomously generate complexity as phase transitions transform energy or information coming into the system into more elaborate forms. But the existence of the attractors prevents the reorganisation from being random or arbitrary, providing stability within the system and comparability between similar systems. The

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which we recognise as the doubling scenario ... It starts with an initial value of $a$ (e.g. 1), doubles it, then doubles this number and so forth. The function taking its output as its new input is the function “times 2” ... Biological processes too can be seen as iterations. Take for instance sexual reproduction. Sexual reproduction is a biological process that takes two individuals, a male and a female, as its input, and, on average, produces individuals of opposite sex as its output. The individuals of opposite sex enter the sexual reproduction operation again, produce new individuals of opposite sex, and so on, ad infinitum.” [van Geert, P. (1994), op. cit., pp.14-15.]

particular state of a system is context dependent, the context determining the value of the control parameters.

A characteristic of some computer modelled dynamic systems is ‘self-similarity’ at different scales. This is epitomised by the Mandelbrot set which is generated by the repeated iteration of the formula \( z \rightarrow z^2 + c \).\(^{1247}\) No matter how often one takes a small portion of this set and expands it, and then expands a small portion of that portion, the complexity of the set never decreases. At whatever magnification, similar geometric forms appear, yet no two are ever identical. Natural landscapes, clouds, sea-shore, mountains show the same ‘fractal’ geometry. Two implications may be drawn from the fractal nature of dynamic systems: analysis of a complex system does not lead to elements which are easier to comprehend because they are less complex; and extraordinary complexity and sometimes beauty can be generated by repeated iterations of simple equations. The second point means that complex phenomena do not necessarily require complex explanations. For instance, simple reiterated formulae reproduce the marvellous patterns observed in slime mould colonies, and the angelfish’s exquisite moving stripe ornamentation.\(^{1248}\)

This description of dynamic systems has specific implications for concepts of causality: “...we must discard our notions of simple linear causality: that event A or structure X caused behaviour B to appear. Rather, causality is multiply determined over levels and continually changing over time.”\(^{1249}\) Moreover, the type of physical causality presumed by reductionist science is excluded by the ability of higher order systems to operate through a range of different biological systems even in relatively simple organisms:

...an extensive review in the well-developed field of invertebrate pattern generation reveals that there is a uniform lack of common neuronal mechanisms, despite similarities between the patterns generated (Selverston, 1988; p.377). This fact, that many physical mechanisms may instantiate the same pattern, hints strongly of universality, that some underlying law(s) or rule(s) governs pattern formation.\(^{1250}\)

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However, those laws or rules are not derived from any physiological sub-stratum.

MAGICIAN SYSTEMS
Once one assimilates his whimsical language, Goertzel’s ‘magical’ extension of Dynamic Systems Theory is a powerful explanatory tool. He acknowledges Kampis’ ‘component system’ as the basis of his idea. A component system, “…is simply a collection of components which are capable of transforming each other, and of coming together to form larger components.” Kampis’ assertion that current mathematics do not allow formal mathematical specification of component systems is a limitation on that concept. Goertzel’s ‘Self-Generating System’ or ‘magician system’, “…captures largely the same insight as Kampis’s component systems, but in a more precisely specified way.”

A magician system is a dynamic system whose components can ‘cast spells’ which create, transform or destroy other elements. Spell casting components are ‘magicians’. “Magician A can ‘cast a spell’ transforming magician B into magician C; or magicians C and D can cooperatively ‘cast a spell’ creating an anti-magician A, which annihilates magician A.” The postulation of anti-magicians is a device which allows the mathematical specification of the system, “…to have the full computing power of Turing machines.” Conceptually it is equivalent to having the original spell annihilate the targeted element. Goertzel’s concept can only make sense if magician systems are of different potencies so that one has the power to impose its ‘spell’ on another. Conversely there must be varying capacities to resist such impositions to avoid the situation of unresolvable stalemate.

The description of a magician system’s development though time is reminiscent of the game Diplomacy. Given a ‘starting’ disposition of nations with their armies and navies, participants representing these nations, after a period of negotiation, write secret orders for the movement of their forces. (“At each time step, the dynamics of a magician system consists of two stages. First the magicians in the current population act on one

1252 ibid, p.14.
1253 ibid.
another, casting their spells on each other, producing a provisional new population."\(^{1254}\) These are then enacted and the consequences may be a successful move, a move blocked by someone else's move, or the creation of new, or destruction of existing, forces. ("Then the magician / antimagician pairs in the provisional new population annihilate one another."\(^{1255}\) This creates a new game disposition and the process repeats. ("The survivors are the new population at the next time step."\(^{1256}\)

If this seems rather static, Goertzel recognises the need to allow greater variety of interaction:

There are many ways to vary the basic magician system dynamic: for instance, there is a question of which magicians get to act on one another at each time step. The pairs may be selected at random with certain probabilities (the 'well-mixed' approximation), or else some spatial structure may be imposed, with each magician acting on its neighbours. Also, the restriction to pairs is somewhat arbitrary and unnecessary. One may have magicians which create other magicians all by themselves, or magicians which create by acting on groups of magicians. The product of a magician's action need not be a single magician; it may be a group of magicians. Finally there may be a 'filtering' operation which acts on the magician population as a whole, before it is turned into the next generation. However, these variations do not affect the basic ideas.\(^{1257}\)

The magician system concept allows Goertzel to apply Dynamic Systems Theory to a range of matters involving non-material entities: mind, perception, evolution, music, the origin of life, consciousness, hallucinations, sentence production, dreams, self, intersubjectivity, sub-selves, personality, romantic love, masochism, creativity, divine inspiration,\(^{1258}\) and sublimation.

\(^{1254}\) *ibid.*

\(^{1255}\) *ibid.*

\(^{1256}\) *ibid.*

\(^{1257}\) *ibid*, p.15.

\(^{1258}\) "From the modern scientific perspective, the concept of 'divine inspiration' is preposterous. On the other hand, many pre-scientific, wisdom-oriented world views have taken a different attitude. From a holistic, non-scientific perspective, what is preposterous is the idea that the inspirations which pop into one's head from outside are just mechanical productions of brain dynamics." [Goertzel, B. (1997), *op. cit.*, pp.352-353]
DYNAMIC SYSTEMS OF DEVELOPMENT

Dynamic systems theorists are divided between those who would limit its applicability and those who would extend it.\textsuperscript{1259}

The argument partly turns on whether science is seen as an isomorphic representation of reality or as providing metaphors which help people grasp phenomena whose exact realities are beyond human comprehension.\textsuperscript{1260} The 1990s saw the expansionists predominate in this approach to psychology and human development. Several different factors contributed to this:

- the availability of parallels in other fields;\textsuperscript{1261}

- the emphasis on change and novelty;\textsuperscript{1262}

- the elimination of reliance on teleology;\textsuperscript{1263}

- a shift in emphasis from the states at different points to the process generating those states;\textsuperscript{1264}

\textsuperscript{1259} “A potential danger associated with [Dynamic Systems Theory] is its overapplication to inappropriate domains. As noted by Perkel (1987), proponents of any new approach have a tendency to ‘find areas of application in the spirit of the proverbial small boy with a hammer, who discovers an entire world in need of pounding’.” [Aslin, R. N. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.386.]

“The approach has scientific generality. Many disciplines study the appearance of new states or patterns. Therefore, the question of the generation, dissolution, and further generation of new patterns (or states or stages) is a question that extends beyond morph development and developmental psychology to meteorology, fluid dynamics, astronomy, and anthropology, to name only a few fields (Gleik, 1987)” [Roberton, M. A. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.97.]

\textsuperscript{1260} For a recent discussion which represents science as related to reality as maps are related to landscape see Agnew, N. McK. & Pyke, S. W. (1994). \textit{The science game: An introduction to research in the social sciences}. (6th Ed.) Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

\textsuperscript{1261} “...To the extent that the dynamic systems model of behavioural development draws at least metaphorically on the findings of the broad field of study variously called dynamic principles, chaos, or self organising systems, it enables the behavioural and developmental researcher to draw upon a vast array of phenomena for insight, principles, and questions.” [Eckerman, C. O. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.355.]

\textsuperscript{1262} “In seeking theory, developmentalists are first and foremost eager for an explanation of change, and particularly how new forms of behaviour can arise from precursors that do not themselves contain that form. Development psychology, like other branches of experimental psychology, has borrowed heavily from physical sciences before - information processing is the notable example - but these metaphors have fallen short because they do not address this fundamental question. Dynamic systems are systems that change over time and that can autonomously generate complexity and form. Even on the surface the metaphor fits.” [Smith, L. B. & Thelen, E. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.xii.]

\textsuperscript{1263} “It is a metaphor of change, and a metaphor that can remove teleology from the system. Pattern can arise without design: Developing organisms do not know ahead of time where they will end up. Form is a product of process.” [Thelen, L. & Smith, L. B. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.586.]
• the reality that change depends not on the absolute magnitude of individual characteristics but the relative magnitude of interacting characteristics which requires a systems approach;\textsuperscript{1265}

• the value of Dynamic Systems Theory as an integrative framework for disparate developmental research.\textsuperscript{1266}

• pragmatically, Dynamic Systems Theory works as an explanation of development;\textsuperscript{1267}

These have all contributed to a growing conviction that previous approaches have failed to render a full explanation and that the developing human actually ‘looks like’ a dynamic system: “…developmentalists will be receptive to dynamic systems because we

\textsuperscript{1264} “The idea that behaviours are generated by constant structures that sit in the head rather than by process is just a metaphor too ... But the metaphor of mental structures as thing-like has had a powerful influence on what data have been collected (and sometimes what data have been dismissed) and has strongly limited theoretical advance. Even if ... dynamic systems is just a metaphor, it is no mere metaphor. It is a metaphor that turns empirical questions around by focusing attention on mechanism, the relation between stability and variability, and the process of change. It is a metaphor that asks us to shift our attention from the study of knowledge structures in development to a study of the developmental pathway itself.” [Kelso, J. A. S., Ding, M. & Schönér, G. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.166.]

\textsuperscript{1265} “...Motor output at any point of time is the product not just of one variable or construct, like ‘maturation,’ but rather a result of a confluence of intrinsic and extrinsic variables. These variables interact in relative and transactional ways: Not the babies’ leg mass alone but their leg mass relative to their strength caused the stepping reflex to disappear by eliminating or ‘constraining’ the possible movements that the \textit{central nervous system} could produce at that point in time. Thus ... ‘a systems perspective’ is needed to understand why a certain movement appears or does not appear at a certain point in development.” [Roberton, M. A. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.96-97.]

\textsuperscript{1266} “After decades of theoretical fragmentation and insularity, a converging explanatory framework based on general scientific principles is an important goal for developmental psychology. Dynamic systems approaches may provide such a framework, using principles of self-organisation to explain how novel forms emerge without predetermination and become increasingly complex with development. New trends in traditional theoretical families emphasise systemic, emergent processes, and these can now be explicated with principles of self-organisation that apply to all natural systems. Self-organisation thus provides a single explanation for the multiple facets of development, integrating diverse developmental viewpoints within a larger scientific perspective.” As a consequence: “Motor development has now been quite thoroughly examined from a DS perspective. Cognitive development is following suit, and papers on emotional and personality development, temperament and developmental psychopathology are beginning to incorporate DS principles as well.” [Lewis, M. D. (2000), \textit{op. cit.}, p.36.]

\textsuperscript{1267} “Mathematical theories of dynamic systems help explain a number of characteristics of organic development: why certain forms of organisation are more stable than others, how the gradual growth of a system may result in a sudden and radical reorganisation as new equilibrium is achieved, how complex forms may be derived from their precursors, and why the control of behaviour resides in the interrelations among constituent subsystems. In short, dynamic systems theory helps explain the changes observed during ontogeny.” [Butterworth, G. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.172.]
come face to face with complexity, nonlinearity, and context-dependency every
day.” It is this sense of similarity between the concepts of Dynamic Systems Theory
and the phenomena of development that drives the attempts to bring the two together.
Many theorists identify dynamic systems principles in developmental phenomena:

- Smith & Thelen note complexity, universality of stages, stage transitions and
  novelty;\(^\text{1269}\)

- They also call attention to Kelso’s work on motor systems which demonstrate self-
  organisation, spontaneous phase shifts, hysteresis, coupled oscillation and frequency
  entrainment, and instability only at phase transitions;\(^\text{1270}\)

- Goldfield finds nonlinearities and emergence in brain development;\(^\text{1271}\)

- Clark, Truly & Phillips extend this from biological systems to behaviour identifying
  self-organisation and sensitivity to control parameters;\(^\text{1272}\)

The implications for our understanding of the determinants of development is profound:

Thus, in every stage of ontogenesis, every response is determined not only by the
stimuli or stimulating objects, but also by the total environmental context, the status
of anatomical structures and their functional capacities, the physiological


\(^{1269}\) “Ontogenetic complexity, in this view, has its origins in the pattern-generating abilities of
dissipative systems (those that absorb energy to increase their complexity) with many degrees of
freedom ... Developing organisms show global similarity of stages because certain cooperative
patterns are more likely under converging organic and task demands ... Developmental phase shifts
or bifurcations are heralded by the dissolution of previously stable states, which frees the system to
explore new, and potentially more complex and functional, patterns. Indeed it is this exploration of
potential cooperative solutions that allows for novel combinations to be generated.” [ibid, p.5.]

\(^{1270}\) “Kelso and his colleagues have provided strong empirical evidence that the human motor system
does indeed obey dynamic principles of organisation. Using a simple paradigm involving
bimanual arm and finger coordination, they have uncovered complex and remarkable dynamics,
including self-organisation, spontaneous phase shifts, hysteresis, coupled oscillation and frequency
entrainment, and intermittency. Predictions based on dynamic principles, for example, that
systems will be unstable just at phase shifts or bifurcation points, have been fulfilled.” [ibid, p.4.]

\(^{1271}\) “In the dynamic systems approach, there is an appreciation of the significance of nonlinearities in
growth for the emergence of new forms. Consider, for example, that ... the growth of the brain is
not entirely progressive. Brain growth involves not only addition but also deletion of neural
elements throughout early genesis by mechanisms such as cell death, axon retraction, and the
appearance and removal of transient brain structures (Bekoff, 1981; Cowan, Fawcett, O’Leary, and

\(^{1272}\) “Behaviours result from the process of self-organisation. New behaviours appear when control
parameters (i.e., constraints) are scaled to some critical system-sensitive magnitude.” [Clark, J. E.,
Bronfenbrenner sees dynamic principles as underlying even his venerable ecological theory of development:

Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment.\(^{1274}\)

Lewis identifies the value of relating the principles of development to a more general set of principles applicable to a wider, he says universal, range of phenomena:

Dynamic systems approaches [use] principles of self-organisation to explain how novel forms emerge without predetermination and become increasingly complex with development .... Self-organisation thus provides a single explanation for the multiple facets of development, integrating diverse developmental viewpoints within a larger scientific perspective .... According to principles of self-organisation, these entities achieve their patterned structure without prespecification by internal rules or determination by their environments, and human development is just one exemplar of a universal tendency toward higher-order coherence.\(^{1275}\)

DEVELOPMENT AS DYNAMIC

For a model of developing spirituality to be based on Dynamic Systems Theory it is necessary to demonstrate that the developing person is adequately represented by the dynamic metaphor. This can be argued on general principles:

...while animals are made of tissues and cells, and cells are built from complex molecules, knowing the structure of the molecules even in the greatest detail cannot inform us about the behaviour of the animal. Something happens when complex and heterogeneous parts came together to form a whole that is more than the parts. The system properties need a new level of description - one that cannot be derived from the behaviour of the components alone. These systems principles, in turn, are so universal that they apply to widely diverse beings and entities. We can ask for principles applying to systems in general, irrespective of whether they are of physical, biological, or sociological nature. If we pose this question and


conveniently define the concept of systems, we find that models, principles, and laws exist which apply to generalised systems irrespective of their particular kind, elements, and "forces" involved. (Bertalanffy, 1968, p.33)\textsuperscript{1276}

Lewis says: "...the generality of DS principles makes them easy to apply to almost any developmental phenomenon. A DS lens can also analyse phenomena at any scale and link these phenomena within a single macroscopic model."\textsuperscript{1277} Some are even more confident: "At the core is the fact that the organisms we seek to understand are dynamic systems."\textsuperscript{1278}

A person is indisputably made up of heterogeneous elements which change over time. It is demonstrable that these elements influence and co-determine each other. Developing children function as integrated entities because their elements do cooperate so the child evinces coherence:

Developing humans are likewise composed of a huge number of dissimilar parts and processes at different levels of organisation, from the molecular components of the cells, to the diversity of tissue types and organ systems, to the functionally defined subsystems used in respiration, digestion, movement, cognition, and so on. But behaviour is supremely coherent and supremely complex...\textsuperscript{1279}

They also fit the definition of open dissipative systems:

...developing humans create order from dissimilar parts because they fall into a class called open systems, or systems that live far from thermodynamic equilibrium. A systems is at thermodynamic equilibrium when the energy and momentum of the system are uniformly distributed and there is no flow from one region to another...\textsuperscript{1280}

Humans both absorb energy from and discharge it to the environmental context, and redistribute it between the elements that constitute their system to increase their organisational complexity. There is evidence of both hierarchal and heterarchal organisation of the elements. Classification is an obvious model of the former and Goertzel finds an example of the latter in processes like memory:

\textsuperscript{1276} Thelen, L. & Smith, L. B. (1998), \emph{op. cit.}, p.574.
\textsuperscript{1277} Lewis, M. D. (2000), \emph{op. cit.}, p.40.
\textsuperscript{1279} Thelen, L. & Smith, L. B. (1998), \emph{op. cit.}, p.587.
\textsuperscript{1280} \emph{ibid.}
...the heterarchical structure is seen most vividly in the study of memory. The associativity of human long-term memory is well demonstrated (Kohonen, 1988), and has been simulated by many different mathematical models. The various associative links between items stored in memory form a kind of sprawling network. The kinds of associations involved are extremely various, but what can be said in general is that, if two things are associated in the memory, then there is some other mental process which sees a pattern connecting them. This is the principal of the heterarchical associative network.\textsuperscript{1281}

Though the path of their development is statistically predictable, strict deterministic prediction is only seen in the simplest elements studied in isolation. It does not determine the behaviour of the whole. New structures and behaviour patterns emerge whose nature is not derivative of prior structures and behaviours. Of grammar it is said:

The self-organising property of systems, when applied to grammatical development, suggests that we view the emergence of complex rules not as the unfolding of some prearranged plan or instruction (the functioning of the “homunculoid gene,” as Oyama (1985) nicely termed it). Rather the control parameters as “agents of change” (Thelen, 1989) engenders system-wide reorganisations throughout development.\textsuperscript{1282}

That developing humans are self-organising cannot be directly observed, however, “Self-organisation ... appears well tailored to describe the emergence of psychological forms, which are macroscopic and highly ordered and which both emerge from and constrain interactions among their constituents.”\textsuperscript{1283} They show many of the features of self-organisation including qualitative change and entrainment. There is no doubt that they are autopoiotic; despite the changes that occur, the mature adult is still identifiably the same person they were throughout their process of development. There is also a narrowing of the infinite possibilities into a limited set of behavioural outcomes:

Developing organisms have a degrees-of-freedom problem; their systems could conceivably generate many solutions for function. In reality, however, members of a species develop only a limited subset of the possible ways of acting, speaking, or thinking.\textsuperscript{1284}

Specifying the sort of questions generated by a dynamic systems approach Goldfield asks: “If infants have at their disposal many different ways of performing a goal-

\textsuperscript{1281} Goertzel, B. (1997), op. cit., p.25.
\textsuperscript{1283} Lewis, M. D. (2000), op. cit., p.41.
\textsuperscript{1284} Smith, L. B. & Thelen, E. (1993), op. cit., p.4.
directed task, what is the process underlying the selection of a stable and preferred mode of performing the task? The answer offered is self-reorganisation.

Like self-organisation, hysteresis cannot directly be observed but must be inferred:

In a dynamic view... every act changes the overall system and builds a history of acts over time...
Because the history of acting in real time counts, the real-time dynamics of actions may display this important property of hysteresis (e.g., Hock, Kelso, & Schöner, 1993), when the same conditions lead to different behavioural outcomes, depending on the immediate previous history of the system. Behavioural acts therefore carry with them not only the dynamics of their immediate performance, but a kind of momentum (e.g., Freyd, 1983, 1992), so that the system is always impacted by every act of perceiving, moving, and thinking, albeit to various degrees.

The autocatalytic nature of development would be affirmed by most who deal with children. All three types of attractors have been observed. The idea of basins and saddles closely approximates some topological explanations of the different developmental paths children follow. Observed basins do differ in depth:

Although some attractor states are so unstable as to almost never be observed, other attractor states are so stable that they look like they are inevitable. Because these behavioural states are so reliably seen under certain circumstances, it is easy to believe they are generated by hard-wired structures or programs within the system. Very stable attractors take very large pushes to remove them from their preferred positions, but they are dynamic and changeable nonetheless ... many mental constructs and movement configurations - object permanence and walking, for example - are attractors of such strength and stability that only the most severe perturbations can disrupt them. They look as though they are wired-in. Other abilities - transitive inference, visual illusions, and many sport skills, for example - have attractors whose stability is easily upset by contextual manipulation or lack of practice, or by not paying attention.

Thelen & Smith assert that development is non-linear and van Geert points to its ready observability:

1289  "How, then, do patterns change, as they do in development or in learning? Here we invoke the notion of nonlinearity, a hallmark of dynamic systems. A pattern in a dynamic system is coherent because of the cooperation of the components. This coherence is maintained despite the internal fluctuations of the system and despite small external pushes on it ... But as the system parameters
...Every parent will be able to give examples of development that seems to proceed slowly for quite a time, then suddenly explode and later slow down again ... Sometimes temporary regressions may occur, in which children seem to get worse instead of improving on some specific skill ... Very often this announces a leap to a higher level of mastery... 1290

Non-linearity is attested by the existence of stage theories. "A stage of behaviour, in this view, may reflect a stable (albeit transitory) state resulting from a particular interaction of components, each of which has its own rate of growth." 1291 To describe qualitatively different periods of stability separated by phase transitions makes sense of developmental data. 1292 van Geert differentiates two types of transitions:

A weak transition connects two semistable states by travelling through all the intermediate states...
A large number of systems exist where such intermediate states do not really occur, or are even difficult to conceive ... I shall call a developmental transition a strong transition if it amounts to a sudden shift from one state to another and if it has a number of properties characteristic of a catastrophe (in the mathematical sense of the word). 1293

Thelen & Smith relate non-linearity to development thus:

How, then, do patterns change, as they do in development or in learning? Here we invoke the notion of nonlinearity, a hallmark of dynamic systems. A pattern in a dynamic system is coherent because of the cooperation of the components. This coherence is maintained despite the internal fluctuations of the system and despite small external pushes on it...But as the system parameters or the external boundary conditions change, there comes a point where the old pattern is no longer coherent and stable, and the system finds a qualitatively new pattern. 1294

or the external boundary conditions change, there comes a point where the old pattern is no longer coherent and stable, and the system finds a qualitatively new pattern." [ibid.]

1292 "New levels of complexity appear discontinuously, as exemplified by developmental stages ... Taken together, the properties of phase transitions ensure that novelty is progressive, discrete, idiosyncratic, and unpredictable - a synthesis that transcends mechanistic and organismic accounts." [Lewis, M. D. (2000), op. cit., p.39.]

327
There is also ample evidence of sensitivity to small variations in the process of development: "Development is strongly influenced by small effects at these junctures, such that new forms are not determined by their precursors..." Specifically:

...factors that are not necessarily the apparent and obvious precursors to a particular behaviour...may indeed be critical contributors. "Experience may contribute to ontogeny in subtle ways," wrote Schnierla (1975, p. 90) and also in ways that are nonspecific. Small effects of temperature, light, and gravity, at critical times, for instance, can cascade into large developmental differences. Nonobvious and nonspecific factors are important considerations in a dynamic systems view as well.

The changed view of context is stated by Bronfenbrenner & Morris:

(I)t made no sense at all to control for ethnicity, social class, or household composition in an attempt to isolate "pure" process. No process occurs outside of a context. And if we want to understand context, we need to take it into account, not pretend to control it away.

Clearly the process of development is reiterative; the child’s acts at one point of time become part of the process for determining their nature at the next. That self-similarity features in human development is asserted but harder to demonstrate. Thelen & Smith relate it to the time frame of reiteration:

Most importantly, this reiterative process occurs at all time scales ... In dynamic terms, the time scales may be fractal (Grebogi, Ott, & Yorke, 1987), or having a self-similarity at many levels of observation ... Likewise, we argue, while perceiving, acting, and thinking occur in their own times of seconds and fractions of seconds, these accumulated actions constitute the larger coastline of developmental change.

The time frame can be highly varied: "Whereas the iterations of evolutionary biology take place at the time-scale of successive generations, those of developmental

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1298 "Although the nature of the concepts involved differs over different developmental theories, they all basically agree on an elementary iterative form. It is so elementary that it appears almost trivial; it states that the next developmental state ($d_{n+1}$) is a developmental function ($DF$) of the previous developmental state:

$d_{n+1}=DF(d_n).$" [van Geert, P. (1994), op. cit., p.20.]
psychology require a time frame ranging from seconds to several years, but all within a single life span."\textsuperscript{1300}

Causality has to be totally reconsidered:

The implications of seriously viewing developing organisms as dynamic, open, contingent systems are profound. Because the state of the system depends on the organism within its total context, there can be no logical distinction made between the organism and the environment as the cause of behaviour and its change. Causality, as a linear chain of precedent and antecedent events, cannot be singularly assigned to any agency within or surrounding the organism. Rather, the organism's position in the state space - the space defined by all the possible parameters of the cooperating components - is determined by the collective activity of those components.\textsuperscript{1301}

Being inconsistent with preference for certain levels of explanation, this challenges the tradition of reductionism:

Behaviour is the condensation of all the contributing components, both those within the skin and those in the supporting environment. At the same time, no component or level of organisation is causally privileged. This means that as we search for the mechanisms of change during development, we may define these mechanisms at different levels of organisation ... the metabolic explanation should not be construed as any more basic and more real than one at any other level. Indeed, because levels and processes are mutually interactive, it is impossible to assign one level as the ultimate causation.\textsuperscript{1302}

Non-material causal agencies become possible: "Must we stick to physical descriptions to invoke scientific explanations? In fact, explanations can be independent of the mechanisms that instantiate them."\textsuperscript{1303}

These arguments indicate that one is justified in representing development in dynamic terms. However, a further refinement is required before it can be applied to spiritual development. This is application of the concept of the 'magician system'.

\textsuperscript{1300} van Geert, P. (1994), \textit{op. cit.}, p.15.

\textsuperscript{1301} Smith, L. B. & Thelen, E. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.xiii. 'Antecedent' seems to be a mistake; 'subsequent' is probably meant.


\textsuperscript{1303} Lewis, M. D. (2000), \textit{op. cit.}, p.41.
MAGICAL DEVELOPMENT

The whimsical expression of magician systems is less jarring when applied to supra-biological human systems, though it will continue to rankle with those committed to a positivist scientism. But then so will the very evocation of metaphysical levels of causation in a scientific theory. Nonetheless, it is a powerful explanatory tool both for biological system behaviour, and for systems which, though physically expressed, may be specified in non-physical terms. Goertzel’s own applications to non-material aspects of the person invites application to systems like mind, consciousness, self, personality, and spirit. These can be advantageously represented as systems whose elements ‘cast spells’ which lead to the creation, transformation or destruction of other elements. For the first time it becomes possible to integrate the phenomenology of agency with the empiricism of physical causation. In this context, mathematical precision is less important to this argument than conceptual clarity:

...we would like to vigorously defend this theoretical system as useful and extraordinarily generative even as we await the desired formal models. First, all extant developmental theory is metaphor in the absence of mathematical formalism. But theory need not be mathematically expressible to generate testable and falsifiable hypotheses and to explain data in a logically coherent fashion. While formalisms are desirable, empirical usefulness is equally important. Can a theory explain existing data better than previous theories, generate interesting questions that are empirically testable, make predictions, and provide principles that generalise beyond the specific phenomena studied?\(^{1304}\)

This position is justified by the disjunction between such processes as agents, and their measurable attributes which are actually plotted in a phase space. Goertzel recognises this with respect to mental processes even though he strove to make magician systems computable, and his argument can be extended to other processes:

In the laboratory ... one cannot directly study mental processes. One can only study observable ‘properties’ of mental processes - and these are usually numerical properties. The attractors of these numerical data sets reflect but do not entirely capture underlying process dynamics. Some of the noise and ‘messiness’ involved in psychological time series data ... has to do with the inherent inaccuracy involved in the step from largely unknown process dynamics to observable but meaning-obsured numerical dynamics.

Freeman (1995) has observed, in the context of his analysis of EEG data, that the mathematical concept of ‘attractor’ is really too rigid to apply to complex

\(^{1304}\) Smith, L. B. & Thelen, E. (1993), *op. cit.*, p.10. Consequently, the postulation of anti-magicians (or their equivalent) is unnecessary. It should be noted that not all dynamic systems theorists see mathematical formalism as so desirable as indicated by the subsequent quote.
biological and psychological systems. A real psychological attractor, he points out, is only approximately defined: it is not guaranteed to be attracting, and once it has been reached, it may eventually be moved away from. This complaint, in my view, has to do with the fact that mental entities are attractors of magician systems, process systems, rather than numerical systems such as Likert scales or EEG readings.\textsuperscript{1305}

A science which deals with phenomena exercising agency and denying predetermination is sufficiently novel to require comparison with mainstream concepts of scientific research. Bronfenbrenner & Morris believe its difference reflects its rudimentary state which will gradually change as more is understood:

\ldots the research design must provide for carrying out an \ldots essential and necessarily prior stage of the scientific process: that of developing hypotheses of sufficient explanatory power and precision to warrant being subjected to empirical test. We are dealing with science in the discovery mode rather than in the mode of verification.\textsuperscript{1306}

Goertzel sees the difference as more related to the nature of the phenomena which means that it will persist:

In observation-based sciences like evolution and cosmology, however, the emphasis has to be placed on conceptual coherence. One is looking for theories which explain a wide variety of data with minimally complicated hypotheses \ldots Just as history-based sciences have to be treated differently, so, I claim, does complexity science. By its very nature, it deals with high-level emergent patterns, which behave differently from the simple physical quantities studied by other natural sciences.\textsuperscript{1307}

The 'magical' imagery remains a difficulty as it gives either a mystical or a jocular appearance to what is as serious a scientific explanatory framework as any other.\textsuperscript{1308} A better terminology might be 'Integrative Dynamic System' (IDS) because the essential rôle of magician systems is to produce the integration of the whole by creating elements needed to fulfil its corporate functions (constituting), eliminate elements which act in ways which are disintegrative, i.e., which refuse to cooperate (culling), and to change the function of other elements so that they support the coherence of the totality.

\textsuperscript{1305} Goertzel, B. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.95-96.


\textsuperscript{1307} Goertzel, B. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.xvi-xvii.

\textsuperscript{1308} One is reminded of sub-atomic particles with 'flavours', 'up- or down-ness', or 'quantum strangeness'.
The instability of phase transitions can then be seen, not as some form of mage-war, but as conflict between different integrative principles until the control variables create the context where one principle predominates and entrains the sub-systems by a process of constituting, culling, and transforming.

In this formulation, that which gives coherence to any dynamic system is an IDS. In constituting the dynamic system as self-organising, Dynamic Systems Theory presumes a 'self' which is organised and, in the concept of entrainment, it presumes a 'self' that does the organisation: "Self-organisation also appears well tailored to describe the emergence of psychological forms, which are macroscopic and highly ordered and which both emerge from and constrain interactions among their constituents." This is true even if it is a phase transition which brings the 'self' into existence. Consequently, any real 'self' is an IDS. In parallel to what was said earlier about 'spirit', 'self' is what one is, not something one has. This conclusion is also emerging in cognitive science.

There is no room for reification here. The 'self' does not exist as an executive entity apart from the physical and psychological. Rather it expresses an emergent function integrative of the system which, to accomplish this integration, operates to entrain subsidiary systems, both psychological and physical. The 'welfare of the whole' exercises agency which, with varied success, supervenes the independent operation of subsystems. Subsystems which prove resistant to the demands of the welfare of the whole, such as debilitating anxiety, or cancerous growths, are seen as alien; as not part

1309 Henceforth the term 'Integrative Dynamic System' (IDS) will replace the term 'magician system' but without any significant change in meaning. Capitals are used to differentiate the designation of a type of system from simple description of function.

1310 This does not carry the sense of 'self' as derived from humanistic psychology.


1312 "What will happen to the self in the coming neuroscientific age? To understand what is in danger, we must distinguish two complementary notions of the self that have been fundamental to Western thinking for centuries. One is that we are selves, the other is that we have selves. We are selves in the sense that each of us is an independently willing, acting, and responsible individual; we have selves in the sense of some inner Cartesian core that constitutes our real identity. These two ideas have not always been kept clearly distinct, but we can no longer afford to confuse them. While the fact that we are selves cannot be denied, the claim that we have selves seems increasingly dubious." [Neisser, U. (1997). The future of cognitive science: An ecological analysis. In D. M. Johnson & C. E. Emeleng (Eds.) The future of the cognitive revolution. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 249-250.]
of one’s ‘self’. The self will seek to have such aberrant subsystems ‘cured’, that is transformed to become consistent with the welfare of the whole through medical or psychological treatments, or culled from the whole through behavioural therapy, chemical suppression or surgery.

Development of an IDS will be marked by identifiable progressive changes leading towards greater functionality:

- the IDS will entrain an increasing number of hierarchically subordinate systems;
- it will create greater subordinate complexity by differentiation and integration of entrained systems;
- it will become relatively more powerful with respect to influencing (constituting, culling, transforming) other systems;
- it will be able to resist the influence of other IDSs and consequently will evidence a greater level of stability.

These changes will be partly linear but significant developmental progression will occur through phase transitions. On either side of major phase transitions the system remains the same system, which requires an identity which transcends the ‘accidents’ of the dominant attractors, an identifying principle which persists through all systemic ‘catastrophes’. This persistence of integrative coherence is only terminated by a ‘catastrophe’ so catastrophic as to ‘dis-integrate’ the entire system. Examples would be the dissipation of a storm system such as a tornado, the collapse of an empire, or organismic death.

‘Purpose’ in an other is always an inference based on the semblance of goal direction, which one relates to one’s own phenomenology of ‘intent’. Consequently, an IDS can be seen as having purposes, whether or not they are conscious. Most obvious ‘purposes’ would be system preservation expressed in autopoiesis, and the stability supplied by attractor states. System preservation encompasses preventing the dissipation of the system during the dramatic reorganisation involved in a phase transition. It demands maintenance of identity and, in some circumstances, utilisation of the transition to initiate improved functionality.

It is hard to imagine human development without such an integrative function:

Both the neuromaturational and perceptual-cognitive theories rely on complex neural prescriptions that must manage a neuromusculoskeletal system with incredible degrees of freedom. Consider that the CNS is comprised of about $10^{11}$
neurons; that the skeleton has more than 200 bones, and about 100 movable joints; that there are over 620 paired muscles (620 on the right side of the body, and a similar number on the left); and that this does not include the motor units (i.e., the motoneuron and the muscle fibres it innervates), which in fact are the units of activation, nor does it include the sensory receptors that provide important information about the status of the system. The management of this vast number of degrees of freedom is made more difficult by the varying contexts within which movements occur (referred to as context-conditioned variability). The neuromuscular system is never in the same state nor is the environment within which the movement is made ever the same. And yet as every coffee drinker knows, picking up a cup of coffee is a rather simple act that is reliably performed many times a day. Our movements seem to be made consistently and yet still retain the necessary flexibility for ever-changing internal and external contexts.  

Human language strives to express this integration of human sub-systems through concepts like ‘mind’, ‘consciousness’, ‘personality’ and ‘self’. In particular Goertzel has explored consciousness as such a system: “[Neuropsychology] tells us, to put it in a formula, that consciousness serves to group disparate features into coherent wholes. This conclusion has been reached by many different researchers working under many different theoretical presuppositions.” If we see such systems themselves as sub-systems of a greater whole, we come close to the biblical concept of spirit, not as something a person has, but as that which constitutes the most central, persistent and integrative understanding of what a person is. The human spirit is a hierarchically superordinate derivative of body and personality which coordinates the activity of those hierarchically subordinate systems. This allows us to recognise humans as both related to animals, which also show the characteristics of IDSs, and yet distinct, if one postulates a complexity based phase transition as separating humans from even the most functionally able other species.

Lewis says: “New macroscopic forms and new patterns of microscopic coordination cause one another in self-organising processes (Haken, 1987), providing nature with a marvellous means for creating what was not previously there.” One could use another term like ‘self’ or ‘person’ with the same meaning. Choice of ‘spirit’ reflects a recognition that other entities which are not human, and not persons, may have IDSs

which are in some sense analogous to that of humans. Goertzel hypotheses, "...a ‘Universal Dual Network,’ a mind magician system which binds together different individuals in a greater, social mind", which he sees as equivalent to Jung’s collective unconscious. 1316 This raises the interesting conjecture that emergent superordinate systems of groups and institutions may exist as agents in an ontological sense. This is very close to Wink’s description of the biblical ‘powers’, spiritual agencies both derivative of groups and institutions and which have the capacity to shape the behaviour of those groups and institutions and the individuals of which they are constituted. 1317

SPRITUALITY AS A DYNAMIC SYSTEM

Dynamic systems theorists themselves have noted the possibility that dynamic systems may serve as a metaphor for spirituality: “The oddest thing about the whole situation - the new science approach and deep ecology in its many guises - is that science, pragmatism, and spirituality are in fact becoming intertwined.” 1318 Even the non-material nature of spirituality is not prohibitive: “...DSP may also serve the function of a metaphor in cases where a specific model cannot be tested, either because the data set is not rich enough or because the potential underlying mechanisms cannot be evaluated directly.” 1319 As such it can also provide models for applied practice:

...dynamics also provides a perspective, a [metaphorical approach], to professional applications. That is, it forms the basis of informal models for viewing the complex nature of the universe and of various psychological phenomena, using them as a perspective for making decisions concerning therapy, social progress, and organisational development, with or without the assistance of scientific instantiation of those metaphors...

In applied psychology it is common to use ideas borrowed from theoretically oriented research and modelling without a complete specification of the relationship between the original research situation and the applied situation, or without confirmation through applied research. 1320

The language is not religious but the parallels between the higher order systems described above and the idea of immaterial spiritual entities is hard to ignore. Goertzel

1317 Wink, W. (1984), op. cit. and Wink, W. (1986), op. cit. Wink also appropriates the collective unconscious to explain the survival of the biblical powers.
criticises cognitive theories for their inability to encompass such higher order realities: "...cognitive science, with its broad-based and incisive understanding of details, has no way of reaching up toward higher-level structures." He rightly recognises that the ontological nature of such structures is a matter of interpretation: 

...to say that the meditative state involves tapping into randomness, is to say that the meditative state involves tapping into some source that is beyond one's own cognitive structures. Whether this source is quantum noise, thermal noise or the divine presence is an interesting question, but one that is not relevant to the present theory, and is probably not resolvable by rational means.

Although the literature on the irreducibility of higher order mental processes to other levels is extensive, it is only in the last decade that Dynamic Systems Theory, which obviates this necessity, has been applied to human development, and, despite suggestions in the literature that it encompasses spirituality, there has been no detailed analysis of spirits as dynamic systems. Consequently, the following is an interpretive, or perhaps speculative, extrapolation of the theory. It is a first attempt towards an integration of human phenomenology, which attests the existence of human and other spirits, Christian theology, which explains such spirits in moral terms, and Dynamic Systems Theory, which provides a way to relate such entities to human development through an argument that 'complexity' gives rise to higher order IDSs.

AN HYPOTHESISES ORDERING OF SYSTEMS

Dynamic systems theory implies that there is a hierarchy of complexity with each level separated by a phase transition leading to the emergence of more structurally complex and functionally sophisticated entities. This is not in itself controversial, but the specification of the phase transitions may be. The formulation below is only intended as indicative as reality is sure to prove more complex. Detailed study is likely to reveal additional more subtle phase transitions and transitional forms.

The lowest order consists of simple physical forms like chemicals or rocks which may demonstrate some internal ordering but cannot be seen as autopoietic.

1322 ibid, p.195.
1323 Complexity represents a continuum so this is necessarily an oversimplification used for heuristic purposes.
At a second level of complexity these gain the ability to reproduce as is seen in crystalline minerals, single celled organisms which divide into identical forms and complex molecules like DNA which can make copies of themselves. Such systems may be autopoietic but phase transitions tend only to separate organisation from dissipation. Other transitions are cumulative.

The next step is the ability to reproduce by adding one’s own level of complexity to that of another similar entity to produce what is a partial copy of each but a singularity in its own right, as occurs with sexual reproduction. At this level we see entities which in biblical terms might be described as body. These are certainly simple\textsuperscript{1324} dynamic systems.

There may be a number of further phase transitions which mark levels of complexity within the phylogensis of animals marked by such changes as the development of a backbone, of air breathing, of live birth, of binocular depth perception, of upright gait, and so on. Their specification is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

However, at some point, growing complexity saw the emergence of the awareness of self and other. Self-awareness probably signifies an entity about which the biblical term ‘soul’ is appropriately used. One recognises in these systems some sense of ‘personality’. Some animals are obviously included, but not all.\textsuperscript{1325} It is appropriate to express this level in terms of ‘consciousness’ or ‘mind’ or ‘self’ and to deal with the system as non-material in nature though expressed through material sub-systems. There is evidence that these systems have the characteristics of IDSs.

It is only with respect to the complexity of human life that there seems to emerge a superordinate integrative function that perceives itself as having purpose and seeks meaning for its existence. This new emergent system experiences itself as something more than a mere body or personality and recognises similar systems in other persons. It names itself, and them, as ‘spirit’. In this sense, those who consider spirit as a distinctive aspect of humans are right, but not as a collection of characteristics which

\textsuperscript{1324} This is used as a relative term; bodies are very complex entities in their own right. The status of bacteria, virus and prions requires specialist knowledge.
other entities lack. The distinctiveness of the human spirit lies in the complex pattern of characteristics, particularly cognitive abstraction and symbolic language, and self- and interpersonal-awareness, which instantiates an emergent IDS which is able to conceive of itself as having a purpose for being, as entering into relationships, and as responding to requirements which transcend simple hedonism and reproduction in favour of aesthetics, ethics and religion. It is not simply an immaterial epiphenomenon, but an unprecedented mode of being which can be addressed as distinct even while identified with its components. This spirit is an emergent function following a phase transition and is marked by self-awareness and autopoietic stability, and self-organised behaviours, totally unpredictable from less complex systems, which it integrates to create novel outcomes.

Collectively human groups and institutions also generate higher order IDSs signalled by human spirits recognising in them a similarity of category. Many feel humans are more attuned to these spiritual IDSs than to the material world:

In their nature, our psyches (both conscious and unconscious) seem to be much more like the spiritual world than like the physical world. The discovery of the spiritual world also takes far less effort on our part. Instead, it is thrust upon us. The central meaning of the nonphysical or spiritual world seems to wish to communicate itself to us, to convey to us some relationship with itself and some experience of its centrality and purposefulness.\textsuperscript{1326}

Humans talk about group spirits (e.g., class spirit, team spirit, crowd spirit) and institutional spirits (e.g., school spirit, club spirit, congregational spirit). There are also wider institutional groupings reflected in language like ‘national spirit’, ‘the spirit of Christmas’, ‘it’s not cricket’; ‘Cup fever’. The relationship of such entities to time varies. No spirit persists beyond the physical systems which instantiate it. Some higher order systems are ephemeral, like the spirit of a meeting. Some have cyclic elements like club spirit or the Olympic spirit. Some, such as a democratic or hedonistic spirit, persist across time and institutions. Wink argues that members of these persist because they reflect continuing profound characteristics of the human spirit and are what used to be personalised as ‘the gods’. For instance, he believes that the spirit of ecstatic excess,

\textsuperscript{1325} Human attribution of personality to certain animals is consequently seen not as anthropomorphism but as recognition that they exist at a level for which that language is appropriate.

\textsuperscript{1326} Kelsey, M. (1972), \textit{op. cit.}, p.146.
"Dionysus is alive and well and staging a major revival in voodoo, Macumba, the charismatic movement, the drug culture, the rock scene, and generally mocking to derision the rigid etiquette and emotional sterility of the traditional religions."  

Within these time parameters spirits are both stable and evolving. It is necessary to ask whether these higher order ‘spirits’ genuinely conform to the description of IDSs. The answer would seem to be a qualified affirmation, the qualification lying in the need for detailed study to specify the characteristics of spiritual systems.

SPIRITS AS SYSTEMS

That developing humans, which are biblically designated as spirits, are psychologically describable as IDSs has been argued above. Lewis extends the concept of the IDS beyond the personal, to the trans-personal and the supra-personal, "to societies to ecosystems to the biosphere itself", and to "stock markets, and social organisations".

Spirits fit well the criteria for being considered IDSs. Spirits as defined earlier behave in a manner that is not predictable by classical scientific theories or laws. They are integrative of disparate elements and act as coherent wholes in ways unpredictable from their constituent elements. As Hill notes: "Spirit integrates all our functions, from defecation to cerebration, so that we live not only in the moment, but with reference to both the past and the future." It can be argued that they use the energy of the system to develop more functional self-organisation. Having indicated earlier that the developing human system is organised hierarchically and heterarchically, it necessarily follows that a system which is integrative of human persons will also have those characteristics. By definition their attributes are emergent, the term ‘spirit’ signalling that one is dealing with something more than a body and mind, or than an aggregation of individuals. Spirits are self-organising and entrain subordinate systems. However, being comprised of entities which are self-aware systems in their own right, this

1329 This is not referring to ‘disembodied spirits’ which by definition do not fall within the ambit of empirical science, but spirits whose activity may be discerned in the physical world as can concepts like ‘forces’, ‘fields’, and ‘motivation’.
1330 Hill, B. V. (1997), op. cit., p.3.
Entrainment may be more problematic than in less complex systems. Autoapoiesis has to be a feature of systems with temporal extension, though how this might apply to transient spirits is moot. It may well be that, just as some weather systems dissipate without coming to fruition as storms, despite having all the necessary constituents, some phenomena with the elements to become spirit also dissipate before undergoing the phase transition to being autopoietic. It can be argued that of all the possible degrees of freedom of the behaviour of systems, actual outcomes are restrained to a limited number of attractors. However, until there is some specification of the attractors of spirituality this cannot be certainly determined.

It is likely that such attractors are best described as chaotic in that, while there seem to be patterns to the behaviour of spirits, each individual spirit is unique in its activity. Alternative attractors in the same phase space seems likely given the alternative patterns of good and evil and the ‘basin and saddle’ scenario described above has heuristic value at least. What is certain is that spiritual systems are reiterative, changing through time on the basis of their own acts in previous time periods. They never return to a previous state as their experience and the situation can never be exactly reproduced. This change through time has the characteristics of autocatalysis, it seems self-driven.

Spirit is quintessentially unpredictable which suggests that non-linearity is an appropriate designation. It is not clear how sensitive such systems are to conditions but the sense of their evanescence, and the efforts people put into creating a situation without distractions, or into establishing particular moods, to encounter spirits, suggest they may be highly so. People report spiritual restructuring consequent on as little as an overheard phrase, seeing wet spider-webs lit by sunshine, the architecture of a building. However, other spirits are sustained through persecution, loss or illness as though invulnerable. This pattern of stability despite significant change in context, qualified by the ability for catastrophic change in response to marginal variations in conditions typifies dynamic systems.

Phase transitions can be attributed to human spirits as a consequence of the developmental processes of subordinate systems acting as control parameters. Whether group or institutional spirits also undergo phase transitions beyond those that initiate or terminate them is less certain and the precise nature of those transitions would certainly need to be specified. If Wink is right about the ‘gods’, a phase transition may be
identified at the point they cease to be worshipped and begin to be suppressed and, as he
would suggest, repressed.\textsuperscript{1331} Some control parameters which operate at the naturalistic
level can be readily specified. For instance, club spirit is influenced by the age of the
club, the degree to which its adherents are from a powerless group, team success, and
the collection of defining narratives and heroic archetypes. Whether other control
parameters operate unperceived at a spiritual level is hard to determine. It is one way to
conceive of the operation of prayer or sacrifice.

The question of self-similarity would need further analysis to see whether the
characteristics of superordinate spirits are recapitulated in their subordinate spirits and
vice versa. One would have to suggest that the human spirit is no less complex than
higher order spirits of groups and institutions. The possibility that they are fractal with
respect to their behaviour in time would need to be explored but is at least plausible.

The multiple layering of cause makes sense when referred to spirit. There is a sense in
which events at both physical and personal level determine the nature of the human
spirit, but it is also the case that determinations at the level of spirit ensure by
entrainment the operation of personal and physical systems. A mob spirit gains its
power from individuals, and it seems that those individuals also surrender their control
of themselves to the mob.

Traditional descriptions of the behaviour of spirits is consistent with the 'magical' or
integrative nature of IDSs. The biblical concepts of God as Creator Spirit bringing into
existence both 'heavenly' and human spirits, of spiritual warfare, and of spiritual
influence and possession fit well with the constituting, culling and transforming
character of IDSs.

There is still a great deal of re-conceptualisation, phenomenal introspection and
empirical observation needed to clarify the nature of spirit as an IDS but the parallels
are already sufficient for the relationship to serve as an effective metaphor with
heuristic value.

THE DIVINE SPIRIT

The idea of God as an autopoietic emergent system instantiated, one assumes, in all subordinate spirits is hard to reconcile with biblical descriptions of an eternal Creator independent of the order he created. It parallels the difficulty the early church had with the idea of an incarnate God. To some extent the issue is resolved by recognising that this is metaphor. God is no more a system than he is a shepherd, no more dynamical than wrathful, no more a magician system than king of the universe. All such terminology takes some aspect of humanity's understanding of the mundane world and utilises it as a way to approach conceptually the mystery of a Divinity who transcends any such formulation.

One needs to be discerning about new metaphors as one does not wish to inadvertently misrepresent the nature of the Deity. However, this sort of metaphor is not unprecedented. Writing in the early 1980s, before Dynamic Systems Theory had made any real impact on psychology, let alone theology, Wink argues:

Perhaps the time has come to recast the henotheistic metaphor of God\(^\text{1332}\) as a king presiding over his court into a new, less patriarchal, hierarchical and antiquarian image. Not all forms of coordination require central control, after all. An ecosystem, for example, has a most intricate coordination of synergistic actions, yet there is no central power. A market economy can likewise rely on Adam Smith's "invisible hand" to weave together the pursuits of individual economic agents into a coherent fabric of exchange. In each case the control is in the total system, not some key point in it, much as the self cannot be located in any central point in the body, but pervades the whole. The picture of God as King requires a controller outside the system or atop its hierarchical apex, directing the whole. It is only in direct contests of power that a directing authority is required at the centre. It may be that the very power-system of civilised society has entrapped us into conceiving God as a despot anxious to maintain ascendancy, demanding unquestioning obedience, and served by a heavenly army (the original meaning of "Lord of hosts"). For the very epitome of centralised control is the military organisation, with its pyramid of power and centralised chain of command. What the ancients designated by "King", we are free to reconceive as the System of systems, the Soul

\(^{1332}\) Wink argues that the term 'monotheism' mis-states the biblical revelation. He asserts that the Bible teaches 'mono-Yahwism', not that there are no other gods but that they are an order of creation subordinate to the Creator who reveals himself as Yahweh. He calls this 'henotheism'; many gods but only one God of gods who is worthy of worship. [ibid, p.124.] The distinction is semantic. Both monotheism and henotheism are compatible with the idea of subordinate spiritual entities. One may call these 'gods', but not 'God', or one may use an alternative appellation like 'power' or 'angel' or 'demon' without actually differing as to the substantive nature of the beings. The Bible does both.
of the cosmos, the Mother of all, The Life of life, the I AM still and forever, the Eternal.\textsuperscript{1333}

Wink’s use of “Perhaps...” suggests uncertainty about his proposed concept of God. An Evangelical would be more concerned with the implied criticism of metaphors used by the canonical text than the employment of alternative metaphors. If Wink were arguing that his imagery should replace biblical metaphors, being ontologically a better representation, then he would claim greater authority than the biblical authors. He is not guilty of such hubris, noting shortly after:

This is finally the only way to keep the gods in their place - to remind them of their fealty to their sovereign. (And here, too, despite every attempt to recast the image, the metaphor of kingship means something so central to the life of faith that one wonders if we will ever be able to dispense with it.)\textsuperscript{1334}

When one considers the nature of the Godhead with respect to the created order, one can be so mesmerised by the imperial metaphor that one loses sight of the way God preferentially acts within creation. In the biblical account, to bring about the salvation of humanity, God could have intervened as the ‘Lord of hosts’, as during the Exodus, but did not. Rather, he chose to act as a flesh and blood person who “...lived among us” and was “completely like his brothers”. (John 1:14; Hebrews 2:17) He dealt with humanity’s rebellion by incarnation of the filial hypostasis. By analogy, the Spirit of God also lives among us, but as Integrative Dynamic Spirit rather than as ‘flesh’, working within the limits of that form, just as the Son worked within the limitations of a material body.\textsuperscript{1335} This may lie behind Fisher’s insight that, “The work of the Holy Spirit is similar to a stage crew - working silently and effectively, with the intent to draw our attention to the Lord God.”\textsuperscript{1336}

The Pentecostal encounter (herein the ‘fourth level’) provides the Spirit with flesh as the inspired church becomes the ‘body of Christ’.\textsuperscript{1337} Like the Son, the Spirit exists ‘without sin’ (Hebrews 4:15); its integrative principle or attractor is the life affirming

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1333} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1334} ibid, p.126.
\item \textsuperscript{1335} The danger of argument by analogy is recognised. The analogy is used to explain, not to justify the proposal.
\end{itemize}
goodness of God unsullied by the ‘fall’. It is not just the Spirit of God, but the Holy Spirit of God. Its work is still the work of Jesus, to reconcile human beings to God so they will live fulfilled and productive lives as his children. Nevertheless, as Spirit it works through the subordinate components of the systems it integrates: people, institutions and higher order spiritualities. All these components, including the church, are fallen and some are committed to trajectories which lead away from rather than towards God’s goodness. The Spirit operates within that constraint. It does not exercise God’s omnipotence but is bound by the need for the system to operate wholistically through the cooperation of its constituents. In any situation it seeks to establish God’s rule but, because some of its components are themselves IDSs, its efficacy is affected by their ‘magic’. It strives to entrain but it seldom compels. While it will elicit what good it can from those components, because human spirits are also agents, the outcome is indeterminate. Often God’s Spirit is defeated in that the person / system reorganises itself in conformity to an attractor which leads away from God:

“A curious episode took place. I had a religious experience. It took place in the church of San Lorenzo, but did not seem to me to be connected with the harmonious beauty of the architecture. I can only say that for a few minutes my whole being was irradiated by a kind of heavenly joy, far more intense than anything I had known before. This state of mind lasted for several months, and, wonderful though it was, it posed an awkward problem, in terms of action. My life was far from blameless: I would have to reform. My family would think I was going mad, and perhaps after all it was a delusion, for I was in every way unworthy of receiving such a flow of grace. Gradually the effect wore off and I made no effort to retain it. I think I was right; I was too deeply embedded in the world to change course. But that I had ‘felt the finger of God’ I am quite sure and, although the memory of this experience has faded, it still helps me to understand the joy of the saints.’”

This experience of intense awareness was commanding, in the sense that he felt under obligation to do something about it. But he was free to choose not to. There is a clear sense of his being addressed by the reality encountered, of being put under obligation to it and of its claim on him. It is significant that, though a response was called for, it was not compelled; and that the refusal to respond in action was followed by a loss of the awareness. This is the kind of thing which Augustine, centuries before, described as “the return journey to habitual self”. Spirituality is rooted in awareness and calls for expression in action.

We ought not to think that the matter is always as dramatic as this. It can be as mundane as feeling deeply the needs of another person or persons, the inner urging to visit a lonely person, to forgive someone or to risk oneself in an activity where

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1337 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:23; 4:11-16; 5:29-30; Colossians 1:18,24.
1338 Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 1:19-22.
success is not guaranteed. The essentials are the same, as are the consequences of moving forward or holding back.\footnote{Rodger, A. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.52. The quote is from Clark, K. (1986). \textit{The other half}. London: Hamish Hamilton, p.108.}

Such an idea allows us to conceptualise God both as transcendent and immanent; as providing evidence of his existence and nature, yet failing to persuade. His Spirit remains one with him, but it operates in this world as an IDS constituted of all that God’s creation and, especially, humanity are. It functions to constitute systems (individuals, groups and institutions)\footnote{I.e., believers, congregations and churches.} committed to share its work, to transform systems to conform to the nature of God (described as reconciliation, redemption or salvation), and to cull those systems which pass beyond redemption (which includes nations, movements and churches). At points its operation may undergo phase transition such as the four levels of encounter described earlier. The ultimate phase transition leads to an incorporation of God’s Spirit with that of the Christian,\footnote{John 14:17; Romans 8:9-17; Galatians 4:6-7.} or, in dynamic parlance, the person becomes entrained by the guiding principle expressed as the Holy Spirit.

**DEFINITIONS**

The theological definitions offered earlier may now be restated to incorporate the conceptual terminology of Dynamic Systems Theory.

\textit{Spirit} denotes an immaterial IDS which is physically instantiated in institutions, behaviours and relationships and to which is ascribed characteristics allowing encounters with other such IDSs and the material world, such as a desire to communicate, intention, influence or affect. Encounters with such IDSs vary allowing description as a ‘person’, ‘presence’, ‘influence’ or ‘force’, however they are always perceived as actual and independent of the recipient of the encounter.

\textit{Holy Spirit} or \textit{God’s Spirit} nominates an IDS identified with the God worshipped by Christians and instantiated in subordinate IDSs and lesser systems. It is recognised by a constellation of positive characteristics sometimes referred to as the ‘fruits of the spirit’.
Evil spirit or spiritual evil refers to any IDS which acts contrary to God’s Spirit and is also instantiated in subordinate IDSs and lesser systems. They are recognised by a constellation of destructive characteristics antithetical to the ‘fruits of the spirit’.

Spiritual describes a phenomenon or aspect of a person which has the characteristics of an IDS in the definition above.

Spiritual encounter denotes an interaction between the IDSs of individuals or groups which has all or most of the following characteristics:

- it carries affective and / or conative potency registered by the appropriate sub-systems and potentially pushing one or both IDSs from existing attractors and potentially into a phase transition; 1342
- it conveys a feeling of having received from beyond itself some kind of significant insight into how it or some other IDS actually operates, i.e., its parameters, attractors or trajectories or of having touched the central reality of itself or another IDS; 1343
- while it may be initiated or terminated by one IDS, it remains outside of their control as at least one other IDS is involved, and so it may also occur unsought or conclude unbidden; 1344
- even if expected, it is unpredictable in detail, and often totally as it arises from beyond the IDS’s own parameters; 1345
- it usually seems fleeting and evanescent regardless of the time it consumes because it introduces an intrusive and unstable element in the IDS’s established system of attractors. 1346

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1342 For example, temptation of a ‘good’ person to act selfishly, or stimulating awe of God’s works in nature.

1343 For example, recognition of God’s forgiveness, or recognising one’s life course as leading towards family breakdown.


1346 This is not to deny persistent ‘temptation’ or sense of God’s presence, etc, but to suggest these represent influences incorporated in the IDS’s own system of attractors.
Spiritual experience is used for spiritual encounters which are registered by the ‘consciousness’ sub-system of an IDS.

Spiritual influence refers to current and residual changes in the trajectory of an IDS as a consequence of spiritual encounters.

Spirituality has two meanings. It describes the degree to which an IDS follows trajectories which seek or accept, describe, value and respond to encounters with other IDSs, especially higher order IDSs. It is also an abstraction denoting the spiritual nature of a phenomenon.

Spiritual person\textsuperscript{1347} denotes an IDS which follows trajectories consciously related to spirituality whether or not this is expressed in traditional terminology or activities. Such IDSs will usually preferentially respond to particular spiritual IDSs, but which these are does not affect the person’s designation as ‘spiritual’.

Spiritual openness means that the system is neither able to avoid encounters with other IDSs nor to prevent them from pushing it away from some attractors and towards others. It is a relative term and contingent upon the stability of the attractor system or the depth of the attractor ‘basins’.

Spiritual competence refers to the ability of an IDS to autonomously determine which other IDSs will be allowed to have an influence upon its trajectories, and how. It implies the ability to accept, reject or filter spiritual encounters.

Religion refers to a sub-system of doctrines, rituals and lifestyle developed by spiritual people in response to spiritual encounters to instantiate their IDS. Its system of attractors identifies their meaning and guides their expression. Not all who shape their behaviour around such attractors do so as an expression of encounters with the higher order IDSs described by the doctrine. For those who do not, the trajectories will instantiate an alternative IDS orientation such as cultural conformity or political opportunism. In different IDSs the same encounters may generate different religious instantiations or the IDS may resist either the encounter or its religious instantiation.

\textsuperscript{1347} See n.917. No definition of ‘person’ is implied here. As earlier indicated the use here is the common singular of ‘people’.
TOWARDS A DYNAMIC APPROACH TO SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The dynamic systems field is not currently sufficiently developed to allow detailed specification of a theory of child development, let alone a theory of spiritual development. What is offered here is an initial conjectural framework upon which to build such a theory and identification of areas which need further theoretical or empirical study to allow that theory to be fleshed out.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

System parameters

Most system parameters, those contextual factors which feed energy / information into the system, will be features of the natural environment observable by existing empirical methods. 'Spiritual' factors may be interpreted as entraining, that is, constraining to behave in particular ways, system parameters which are also sub-systems of the relevant spirit. In particular, a principal of spiritual 'good' will operate to organise parameters in a way which will optimise the child's developmental trajectory towards health and wisdom. An alternative principle may be inferred in parameters which direct the developing child into trajectories leading to disorder and folly. Both will operate through those sources of spiritual encounter described earlier. Parameters may or may not operate in a linear fashion and can stimulate both linear progression within stable periods and phase transitions to new levels of self-organisation.

There is a danger of circularity here if observed parameters are attributed to an explanatory principle post-hoc. It is necessary that the 'good' and deleterious be identified pre-hoc on the basis of the perceived nature of the principle, the nature of its instantiation specified and this be evaluated by empirical observation. While Biblical substantiation of which factors represent these different principles will not be uncontested in a community with diverse values, the actual factors are likely to be less controversial.

Trajectories

By the very nature of the theory, developmental trajectories will be unique and unable to be specified in detail. However, general conclusions about the nature of the
trajectories can be drawn. For instance, they will not exhibit continuous linear progression. Amongst periods of steady progress there will be intervals of stability, regressions, and qualitative shifts. The trajectories will be marked by sensitivity to changing conditions so that a small input may lead to significant change, and children raised in very similar contexts may follow vastly different trajectories because of subtle variations.

**Attractors**

Biblical theology would propose that the Divine intent was that people would follow a particular set of sequential attractors, which could be depicted as ‘walking with God’, ‘living as God’s children’ or ‘sharing the Holy Spirit’. But the reality of human life affirms the fuller biblical depiction of people always drawn towards alternative attractors, one which conforms to God’s intent and the other (or it may be others) spiralling away from God towards what may variously be called ‘death’, ‘destruction’ or ‘damnation’. This duality of attractors expresses not the spiritual and the unspiritual, but the moral bipolarity of spirituality. Initially these attractors would be represented as wide and very flat basins separated by minimal medial saddles. One of the marks of development would be the narrowing and deepening of these basins, increasing the saddle height and leading to greater spiritual stability and a decreased tendency to shift between attractors. Nevertheless, attractors are general patterns and while they may be described in their ‘ideal’ form, no child’s trajectory ever exactly matches that ideal.

**Phase transitions**

Developmental phase transitions will not be exactly like those that occur in mathematical systems any more than their attractors will be precisely the same.\(^{1349}\) In particular, time contexts need to be seen as relative to the system. A ‘sudden’ phylogenetic phase shift may take years to entrain an entire species, centuries to work through a phylum. ‘Sudden’ ontogenetic transitions may also be of somewhat extended duration. It seems probable that previous organisations are not actually lost, but subsumed within the emergent organisation as a part of the functionality of the new system. For instance, children who have gone through the phase change that allows them to walk can choose to crawl; the emergence of logical thinking does not cause the

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\(^{1349}\) Goertzel, B. (1997), *op. cit.*, pp.95-96
disappearance of intuitive thought which remains a powerful tool of the more complex, and flexible, cognitive system. Moreover, the signification of the change may not be in identifiable biological functions, but in patterns of intellectual problem solving or of social relationships.

The developing person goes through many phase transitions of greater or lesser generality. Not all of these will be treated as transitions in spiritual development even though many may have spiritual implications. For instance, the transition that allows walking will not be considered despite the fact that it allows rapid locomotion, and consequent significant changes in perceptual perspective, problem solving and agency. It is an important step towards what does seem a major spiritual reorganisation, the emergence of semantic symbolisation. Further research may lead to reconsideration of the spiritual status of such transitions.

Given the qualification that further empirical, phenomenological and metaphysical research will allow the actual transitions to be more finely articulated, initially a number may be suggested a priori, signalled by the emergence of qualitatively distinct patterns of behaviour. Each marks a significant shift from 'openness' or 'helplessness' to spiritual competence. The most obvious occurs at birth. There is an important transition with the emergence of functional language as a system to symbolise, organise, store and utilise information. In particular this allows the symbolic representation of the 'self' and others, of good and bad, true and false. Another is signalled by the ability to critically consider information for its truth value and behaviour for its rightness. This presumes the ability to disagree with and therefore cast judgment on the ideas and behaviour of adults, and particularly of those fulfilling parenting rôles. The next is signalled by the emergence of the ability to formulate and maintain one's own position on important matters. This will be most clearly observed where the position is at odds with that of authoritative adults. A final transition comes with the ability to identify with a particular spirituality and effectively resist involvement with alternatives.
STABLE PERIODS AND TRANSITIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

The prenatal period

Prior to birth the child-system is biologically linked to and dependent on the mother. In a real sense the mother-child is a single system\(^\text{1350}\) as the child is incapable of independent existence and its part of the system would be dissipated by separation. The developmental parameters are hereditary factors encoded in parental DNA, and environmental factors mediated by the uterine environment. The ‘child’ only encounters the various sources of spirituality through their impact upon the mother. Consequently, both the mother’s environment and choices need to be considered in specifying what parameters operate and how they function.

The non-hereditary factors are well known; they form part of any course of antenatal advice to parents. Nutrition, drugs, infection, radiation and the like are easiest to specify. But the mother’s general state of health and well-being are also important as indicated by the need to avoid stress and obtain sufficient rest and exercise. Most are identified by their negative effects, that is, by outcomes such as death, deformity, retardation, low birth weight, foetal distress and less clearly related temperamental or emotional states. While this is understandable given contemporary society’s propensity for remediation rather than prevention, a need exists to characterise influences which lead to identifiable positive outcomes. If the biblical understanding is valid, prayer for and by the mother-child system may be an efficacious parameter on a spiritual level. It cannot nullify other parameters but it may ameliorate the negative and fortify the positive through directly involving the Holy Spirit to influence the way the relevant prenatal systems work.

The attractor which creates trajectories which lead to healthy development to birth usually predominates. This reflects the effective activity of hereditary and environmental systems entrained to the Spirit of God operating as parameters of the mother-child system. Other attractors are signalled by trajectories which lead to the

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1350 Elizabeth experienced not a separate response of her baby to the presence of Mary but a coordinated response of the mother-child system. The reaction is consciously registered as joy, and reflected in the child-system’s kick. This contrasts with Sister Magdalen’s use of this event to argue that a foetus can independently experience God’s presence. [Sister Magdalen, (1996), op. cit., p.53.]
negative effects nominated. Children in utero are both vulnerable and resilient. The basin of the primary attractor is both very flat and wide. Consequently, it is easy to jolt the child's trajectory away from close conformity to it, but equally it requires an extreme impact to push the child so far that it is not drawn back. However, some of the alternative attractors are very deep and narrow, though this is unusual for early attractors. For example, to push the foetus into an attractor eventuating in perceptual deficit would require an extreme circumstance like exposure to rubella. The system disruption is such that it is virtually impossible to return to the original attractor for this period and this has lifelong effects.

The child-system is not itself an IDS at this time so to apply the term 'spirit' may be inappropriate though this is an area which requires considerably more research.

**Phase transition at birth**

The termination of this period is brought about not by a re-organisation of the child system itself, but a re-organisation of the mother-child system into two physically independent systems. Though children continue to remain dependent on others for their needs, it need no longer be the biological mother. A consequence of the nature of this transition is a significant increase in distal sensory input as eyes, ears, nose and tongue are freed from intra-uterine restrictions. The child-system enters the second period of relative stability with the history of the first as its iterative starting point.

**Infancy - the trust period**

Children are born as open IDSs. They are delivered into a world of systems ranging from simple physical interactions, through complex biological structures, to immaterial principles instantiated in the material world through people and institutions. Initially, their:

...developmental systems begin in a relatively undifferentiated state. During this initial period, the system's "learning potential" (degrees of freedom) is much greater than it will be in later developmental periods ... as each successive systemic reorganisation takes place, the system ... [becomes] more rigid, less flexible, less susceptible to perturbations from the environment, and more automatic.1351

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All things are new and the infant-system finds fascination and meaning in everything it encounters:

Each afternoon I take my little girl for a walk around our local neighbourhood. She is just 16 months old, and I am constantly fascinated by what she sees as we walk. She can be transfixed by the rays of light coming through the trees, or the shape and ‘crunch’ of the fallen leaves as we walk over them. She watches as the water trickles through the drains and delights in touching the hedges as we walk by. Her eyes will follow the path of a small black beetle crossing from one side of the path to the other and she giggles when we see our neighbour squirting the cat with the hose. And then when we are home, and she stands on a kitchen chair next to me as I prepare dinner, she loves to run her hands over the chicken fillets and splash her palm in the little puddles of water on the bench. My little girl observes and notices things that I have long since brushed aside as insignificant. And yet with her help I am learning to see again.\footnote{1352}

Children do not enter infancy on an equal footing but in the context of their previous developmental trajectory. This may influence which attractors are followed in this period, but it need not determine this. The parameters which were influential during the previous period remain so though their potency is somewhat reduced and other parameters become important. Previous attractors also operate but are of less spiritual moment as the infant-system is less vulnerable to their effects. Nevertheless, the quality of nurture received from parents or whoever exercises parental roles\footnote{1353} remains an essential parameter. But now the quality of caregivers’ relationships to infants becomes of parallel importance. The physical expression of caregiver love in sustenance and interaction provides the informational input which will largely determine which trajectory amongst the primary attractors the infant-system will follow. Other sources of encounter are available to infants but what they encounter will generally be limited by caregiver choices.

Many psychologists, especially Erik Erikson, and also theologians have recognised that the attractors of infancy are organised around the concept of trust. The experiences of the early years determine whether children approach life with a basic orientation to trust

\footnote{1352}{Holt, S. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.7,8.}

\footnote{1353}{Hereafter the term caregiver(s) will be used to refer to parents or other adults who take on significant nurturant, educational or disciplinary responsibilities for children whether in ed-care or elsewhere.}
or a tendency to mistrust. Which way infants tend is dependent on whether their world proves itself trustworthy or not. This has permanent spiritual consequences.

For example, Erikson sees in the development of trust in the infant the beginnings of faith. He says:

It is not the psychologist's job to decide whether religion should or should not be confessed or practised in particular words or rituals. Rather the psychological observer must ask whether or not in any area under observation religion and tradition are living psychological forces creating the kind of faith and conviction which permeates the parent's personality and thus reinforces the child's basic trust in the world's trustworthiness ... Whosoever says he has religion must derive a faith from it which is transmitted to infants in the form of basic trust; whosoever claims that he does not need religion must derive such basic faith from elsewhere.1354

Bridger concurs from a Christian perspective:

The central point in this early infant period is that children unconsciously absorb their attitudes of trust through their relationship with their parents, particularly the mother. The foundations of faith are being laid even at this early stage. A child who does not learn how to trust adults now will have difficulty trusting anybody at more than a superficial level later on. This extends to trust in God.1355

He illustrates with two extreme exemplars:

Lee who is loved and valued and Lizzie who is unloved and rejected. The one learns faith through the most fundamental of human experiences: the love and affection of the doting parent who sees her child as a gift and a treasure. The other knows nothing of faith for she does not know how (or whom) to trust in a world where adults seem only to care for themselves.1356

Of a child following the attractor of trust he says:

This trust has been directed towards persons. Or to be exact, one person - Lee's mother. Whenever he has needed her, she has been there. Food, warmth, safety have all been found in her arms. As time has gone by, Lee has discovered that these things come regularly and reliably. At first, he was fearful if he woke and his mother was not there. When first this happened, he experienced sheer terror. But he soon learned that his source of love was never far away. The constant experiences of touching, cuddling and being cuddled, holding onto and being held have assured Lee that the world is orderly, kind and trustworthy. The have given

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1355 Bridger, F. (1988), op. cit., p.13. His emphasis on the mother may more reflect a common contingency than a universal necessity.

1356 ibid.
Lee a far deeper understanding of love and trust than any later form of words will be able to do.\textsuperscript{1357}

The outcome of the alternative he describes thus:

Their desire to follow [Jesus] may be completely genuine and they may long to love and be loved both by God and by Christian people. But, in the crucial first months of their lives, they have missed out on the fundamental experiences of trust-building. As a result they find it hard to trust and to believe that others trust them at the deep level of their beings.\textsuperscript{1358}

However, the development of trust is not the same as religious belief and one needs to be cautious about urban myths and stories of preternatural religious understanding in infancy even if reported in professional literature.\textsuperscript{1359} Sister Magdalen’s perspective relates parental love to later belief but through infant trust:

A baby cannot discourse on maternal love, but a baby knows, even better than any discourse could explain, whether or not he or she is receiving sincere maternal love. At baptism, ... in the case of infants, the godparent, proclaims the traditional Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed as his or her own vision (‘I believe in...’). For this belief, which is initially based on trust, to become experientially confirmed, theological diplomas are not a prerequisite.\textsuperscript{1360}

The importance of the infant period for later adult life and spirituality\textsuperscript{1361} is related by Koulozman to the development of the unconscious.\textsuperscript{1362} What is learnt during this period is encoded within the system in a way that does not use verbal symbols. Consequently the person will find it hard to articulate this learning and it is very hard to reconfigure later as it is not exposed, and therefore is not vulnerable, to logical argument.

Some strands of the church see infant involvement in spiritual activity as allowing direct encounter with God’s Spirit and therefore as highly important in shaping the later spirituality of the child. This is reflected particularly in the rite of infant baptism which

\textsuperscript{1357} ibid, pp.10-11.
\textsuperscript{1358} ibid, 13.
\textsuperscript{1359} Lovecky reports a child so gifted that, “when only a few months old, she was calling out ‘Halleluia’ and ‘God is good’ at appropriate times in church.” [Lovecky, D.V. (1998), op. cit., p.178.]
\textsuperscript{1360} Sister Magdalen, (1996), op. cit., p.52.
\textsuperscript{1361} See also Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., pp.104-106.
\textsuperscript{1362} Koulozman, S. (1975), op. cit., p.34.
constitutes babies as, "full members of the Body of Christ", but Koulozmzin also suggests that sensori-motor involvement with the everyday life of the church is important:

Our church life offers many opportunities for such a perception of religious values through the senses. Let the baby handle his baptismal cross; let him see, touch and kiss the icon over his cradle; let him feel the smell of incense and the bright colours in the church building; let him receive Holy Communion with his lips and feel its taste; let him feel the sprinkling of holy water on his face, hear the singing, make the sign of the cross, even though it is only a kind of finger play for him. In our Church all these physical objects, sensations and experiences are not merely religious baby-talk to be discarded later. Each of the things I mentioned remains a perfectly valid, meaningful action, gesture or experience throughout an Orthodox Christian's life. The baby enters into them, begins to participate in them through his own, perfectly authentic infant experience.

It is Koulozmzin's intent to imply that what happens in infancy predetermines later religious commitment, however it is rather the style of that commitment that is shaped. One need not be a follower of Jesus to approach life with a trusting disposition, though one would be predisposed to understand how to trust him. One could well be a follower and yet suffer difficulties with trust, as Bridger describes. One may also be drawn to spiritualities such as Wicca and some forms of paganism where magic offers the promise of protection from life and / or malevolent spiritual forces.

One cannot let discussion of this period pass without emphasising that the infant is not as dependent as the fœtus but exercises reciprocal influence on those systems which offer the loving nurture. Normally infants generate in caregivers the need to offer that care:

We can see that the baby is as much an instrument of nourishment for us as we are for him. We can foster his growth as a peaceful and loving individual only if we nourish him with love and peace. And we can know love and peace only if this is what we hunger for and feed upon in consciousness. Most of us would do more for our babies than we have ever been willing to do for anyone, even ourselves. In this way the child, seemingly so helpless, performs the mighty work of awakening in us a tremendous appetite for understanding and so brings us to the table of love.

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1365 By his own statement he assumes ongoing spiritual experiences leading into mature faith.
Transition to pre-critical linguistic symbolisation

This stable period is undermined by a number of gradual contextual changes, i.e., changes in the control parameters, of which no one is sufficient to bring about the reorganisation. Elements of the change include growing gross motor competence, identification of one as a 'self' separate from others and of others as selves in their own right, weaning and toilet training. But most important is growing use of language and, especially, the shift from language as a sign systems to language as a symbol system, with the change in the cognitive system that is both allowed by but also requires that shift. The chronological time when this transition will occur is of reasonably limited duration because it is strongly constrained by aspects of maturation such as the innervation of the bladder. This allows a partially chronological designation of the earlier period as signalled by the name. Later periods vary more widely in the time frame of their emergence and dissolution and consequently are named functionally rather than by an age related term.

Pre-critical symbolic - the period of beliefs

With the emergence of symbolic language children are able to contemplate that which is beyond their immediate experience. Kao indicates that:

Another dimension in the development of autonomy is the learning of language. As the child acquires names for things, actions, and relationships, he or she controls the world in a new way. Once enclosed in the immediate situation, now the child can talk about it, think about, [sic] even when it is outside the experience of sensory perception ... In this linguistic symbolisation, we find the principle of transcendence, making the child gradually stand above the physical world mentally. 1367

Children begin to hear the formative narratives of their family and community. They also hear caregiver evaluations in terms of aesthetics and morality, and manners or culture. Matters of spirituality begin to be articulated to and by them. However, apart from what they experience directly, what they 'know', including how they interpret those experiences, is entirely dependent on their caregivers. Hyde says:

Young children's ideas are still very fluid and ill-formed and they are expressed with difficulty whether verbally or pictorially. They are much influenced by the style of the question or the person who asks it. Because there is no certainty that they have ever thought about it before they may make a quite spontaneous reply.

Yet they appear to have some understanding of God in ways that are not crudely anthropomorphic, with a positive attitude of trust in him. Much depends on what they have learned at home or in church, what pictures of God they have seen - if any at all, and what vocabulary they have come to use. Some children will have been taught to pray to God, some taught to pray to Jesus, some not taught to pray at all.\footnote{Hyde, K. E. (1990), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.69-70.}

How children exit from infancy iterates into the commencement of this period. Children enter with a predisposition to trust what they are told unless, in infancy, they were drawn into an attractor related to mistrust. One would expect that prior attraction to continue to be reinforced unless the system parameters relevant to trust undergo their own phase transition. Such a transition in the child will be harder to accomplish than earlier as by the end of infancy the trust / mistrust attractors have significantly deepened.

Consequently, the critical spiritual attractors and essential parameters of this period relate to belief in those who offer loving care. Children have a continuing physical and emotional dependence upon caregivers and are, in a very real sense, under their control. This strengthens the tendency to believe. Caregivers will usually be accepted by children as authorities, that is, what they say will be believed. There will be questions but these will seek further information rather than having any evaluative element. And often they may be only a game. There are four cardinal parameters: increasing intellectual and linguistic competence; the commitment of caregivers to truth; their commitment to goodness, and the ontological truthfulness of what they say about each. In theological terms, as goodness is an expression of the truth of God’s nature, the last three can be expressed as a single spiritual attractor of commitment to God’s truth. While children are responsive to all spiritual sources, those categorised as related to truth and deceit become particularly significant. In other words, caregiver expressions may draw children into an attractor marked by commitment to caregiver ideas which accurately represent what is true and what is good. This is often expressed in teaching children rote forms of religious involvement. For example,

Seth D. Kunin (1996) (a rabbi and lecturer, Nottingham University) stresses the importance of observance: “young Jewish children’s spirituality is focussed on particular times of prayer”, including public worship and private prayers “before
and after eating to thank God for providing sustenance ... upon going to sleep and waking up ... [including] the Shema, which is an affirmation of the Oneness of God and God’s connection with the Jewish people”(3/16).1369

Children will also believe what they read, once they are able, and also what they see on electronic media which they evaluate only in terms of perceptual appeal, not in terms of validity.

However, this should not lead to a depiction of children as passive recipients of caregiver beliefs. They are active meaning makers and will construct their own explanations of spiritual encounters. But children make these constructions in the context of an inability to identify truth and falsity in what they encounter. Consequently, Cavalletti asserts the value of giving children “direct access to ... the scriptural and liturgical texts”,1370 rather than entrusting instruction to unreliable catechists. She says:

To give the child direct access to the sources means to position the child in a state of independence from us, thereby helping him to establish a personal relationship with the Word of God; it is to make possible and incite the child’s personal meditation, the dialogue with the interior Master.1371

It is the attempt to make sense of complex ideas without the ability to apply critical logic which leads to the seemingly ‘quaint’ nature of spiritual beliefs during this period: “Because there are so many children there must also be many Jesuses, so that there would be enough of them for all of us.”1372 Far from being quaint, these children often reveal a profound though naïve spirituality:

“When I was nearly five years old I would often cry bitterly at night ... at the realisation that some day may [sic] parents would die, and indeed the overwhelming knowledge that everything in the world would die some day. I found it an absolutely terrifying thought. I can still remember the feeling of utter desolation. Although I knew then that there was a life after death I was always so afraid that there would be a journey, a long, dark journey and people would perhaps get lost or too tired before they found Jesus.” (Robinson, 1977, pp. 124-125).

1371 ibid, p.54.
My overall impression of this individual child’s experience of pain is that it is profoundly spiritual: connected with belief, connected with universal human experience, unselfish and carrying considerable power. \footnote{Chater, M. F. T. (1998). Woundedness and the learning child-spirit - Ontology and epistemology of a therapeutic education. \textit{International Journal of Children's Spirituality}, 3(2), 147-157, pp.149-150}

Ruby Bridges was 6 when she braved hostile mobs, the only black child to claim her right to attend an integrated school in New Orleans ... She responded to hatred, threats and insults with cheerfulness, determination and compassionate charity, forgiving her persecutors in accordance with the example of her religious and spiritual leader, Jesus, because: ‘When he was dying, he asked God to forgive the people who were killing him’ (quoted in Coles 1984, p.xiii). \footnote{Crompton, M. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.ix}

The first alternative to children learning caregiver truth which equates to God’s truth, varies only a little and the saddle is very low. It is found where those authorities are committed to seek truth and goodness but misunderstand the nature of those qualities. Children do not reject parental ideas but accept from them as true what is untrue, and as good what is not so. This is because ‘not knowing good from evil’ they cannot discern whether what they do is right or wrong or what they say is true or false, except by what caregivers tell them. Kropf sees this as a significant peril for the young: “Or to take another variation of this same problem - that caused by wrong or false religious teaching. Of course, this can happen at any age, but again the danger is greatest when false images and ideas are given to the small child”. \footnote{Kropf, R. W. (1990), \textit{op. cit.}, p.52}

The other alternative is a more significant departure but again the saddle is not difficult to cross either way. It is a failure to value truth or goodness at all based on an emulation of caregivers who themselves do not have such values. This is a far more serious situation. If one has been taught to seek truth then error is open to correction. It is much harder to present truth to someone who has learnt that the very idea of truth is vacuous. In parallel, if one has been taught to value the ‘good’, one can adjust to new ideas of virtue. If ‘good’ has been accepted as a meaningless concept, then any new concept of goodness falls on infertile ground. But children may slip from one attractor to another. This may happen when, for instance, a child has alternative models, often
parental influences counteracted by grandparents, and, more recently, contrasts between parents and ed-carers.

How deep these attractors will be will depend on the resolution of the previous period. The more trusting the child, the deeper the attractor. Ideally, a trustful child will be taught truth and goodness by trustworthy caregivers. The outcome of the period will be a child able to believe, as well as to trust, trustworthy people. That is not to say the beliefs these children hold have any stability. Rather they are extremely context dependent and mutable. What is often seen as a methodological difficulty in determining these children’s religious beliefs at least in part reflects that there are no enduring beliefs there to find.\footnote{1376 Tamminen, K., Vianello, R. Jaspard, J-M. & Ratcliff, D. (1988), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.76-77.}

Not all outcomes are optimal. Some children emerge believing error to be truth and seeing virtue in what is not virtuous. It is not that such children emerge with a commitment to untruth or to evil. Rather, they are committed to a distorted idea of truth and goodness. But there are some children who do not develop a commitment to truth and goodness, whether valid or mistaken in content. Instead they follow an attractor which leads away from belief in truth and goodness and towards relativism and anomie.

Ideal caregivers do not exist. Rather children grow up with caregivers who are contradictory of each other and inconsistent with themselves. What they learn is an alloyed commitment to verity and virtue and a mixed understanding of truth and error. Nevertheless, the child enters into the next period from within an attractor oriented to commitment to knowing the truth or from one oriented to a determination to deny it.

\textit{Transition to discernment}

It is the acquired cognitive ability to recognise discrepancies between various accounts of reality and different moral demands which precipitates the next phase transition. After a period when they will assert mutually exclusive information as though both were true, automatic acceptance of caretaker authority breaks down. Real questions begin to be asked:

At the same time, many people who have worked with young children, and of course many parents, can recount stories where very young children have raised
questions of a ‘spiritual’ nature. Such questions often arise out of a particular situation and event which leads the child to question what it already knows in an attempt to understand that which seems to conflict with previous experience.\textsuperscript{1377}

What emerges is an increasing ability to judge alternative realities and to reflect that adults can and do get it wrong. This means children exercise the intellectual autonomy to choose between alternative views, even while their ability to exercise emotional and social autonomy is significantly constrained.

\textit{Dependent critical symbolic - the period of discernment}

This period is marked by a tension: the ability to decide what is true or false for themselves is qualified by continued emotional and practical dependence on caregivers. It remains ‘good’ to obey caregivers even if you doubt that what they require is itself good.

This period is marked by the recognition of alternative possibilities and the intellectual tools to discriminate between them. Children will try out options and begin to use their own experience and others’ reactions to evaluate them. Exposed to a far wider range of spiritual sources, including multiple caregivers, they will ask questions, often of different people, and weigh up the various answers they receive. Koulomzin notes:

...the process of sorting out what is ‘real’ and what is ‘unreal’ becomes very important. Any story told to a seven- or eight-year-old child always provokes the question ‘Is it true?’ and children often try to puzzle out just how true something is that does not fit in with the rest of their experience. Maintaining a sense of reality of God is more difficult than at an earlier age. Seven- to nine-year-old children are rationalistic on a rather primitive level...\textsuperscript{1378}

In particular children have greater access to human ‘extelligence’,\textsuperscript{1379} that repository of human intellect deposited beyond persons in culture, religion, writing, art and performance, and especially in ed-care systems.

The period is also marked by social dependence. Children are not autonomous individuals and retain strong emotional ties to caregivers. They will find it very hard to concede that caregivers are wrong on important matters of values or to contradict them,

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though they will be increasingly intellectually able to do so. Consequently, they may become reticent about spiritual matters as noted by Hay.\textsuperscript{1380}

The stability of this period is maintained against the continuing development of important system parameters such as increasing experience and world knowledge, improving intellectual strategies and also growing social competence, decreasing dependence on particular caregivers and increasing self-reliance. In the spiritual realm, these would seem to relate to the degree to which children are able and allowed to explore the beliefs they are being taught, and how caregivers respond to their questioning. One axis expresses the degree to which children's questioning is welcomed. At one extreme, authority becomes authoritarian and insists on unquestioning conformity. Caring is contingent upon strict concurrence with caregiver ideas and moral demands. At the other, children's questioning is encouraged as a chance to extend their understanding. Another axis expresses the degree to which questions elicit affirmations of a coherent and consistent spirituality, or confusion about or denial of its reality.

The primary attractor will be a spirituality which, as it begins to experience a far wider range of spiritual alternatives, discriminates between encounters which are true and good and those which are distorted and destructive. That is not to say that these children can resist either, but that they will demonstrate preferences and may seek to be excused from some. They may express disapproval of aspects of caregiver spirituality even while they find themselves constrained to involvement. They will be very sensitive to discrepancies between what caregivers assert and what they enact. The ambiguity of independent belief and social dependency is poignantly expressed by one of Hardy's respondents:

> My sense of conscious contact with the power at the heart of the universe dates from the age of 11 or 12 when I used to run as quickly as possible through the prayers I had been taught to say in order to get on with the real business of talking to someone who was ‘there’.\textsuperscript{1381}

\textsuperscript{1381} Hardy, A. (1979), \textit{op. cit.}, p.69.
Caregivers may find it increasingly difficult to penetrate children’s spirituality from now on.\footnote{1382 Kouломzin, S. (1975), op. cit., p.68.}

Once again there are two alternatives both of which represent a failure to develop spiritual discrimination. One carries the child to unquestioning acquiescence to a particular ‘truth’ a caregiver asserts or spiritual practices in which they involve the child. This would reflect caregivers who refuse to acknowledge the growing intellectual and social competence of their children and enforce the maintenance of a spiritual immaturity. The other is represented by a similarly unquestioning and uncritical acceptance of all knowledge as equally reliable (or as having no currency beyond the pragmatic), and all spiritualities as equally acceptable within the limits of a basic hedonism. In this case caregivers may not themselves have been able to articulate their beliefs or may not respect the importance of spiritual questions to the child. Some children are accorded a quasi-maturity whereby they have to address spiritual questions without the guidance of caregivers. In the extreme, one alternative constitutes a spirituality of rigid codes having less to do with genuine compliance than with the need to be accepted; the other a spirituality without cognitive content or ethical constraint.

This pattern of attractors may prove so stable that parameter change does not affect it. Under some conditions caregivers may arrest the development of children so they do not move on to the sort of social competence that would allow them to conceive of themselves involved in a spirituality which differed from that of their parents. Alternatively, the requirement to prematurely approach spiritual matters as an autonomous adult may leave the child without the intellectual and social capital needed to recognise and accept their own spirituality. Subsequent reorganisations may be contingencies rather than universals.

_Transition to exploration_

For those that do transit to a following stable phase, the main precipitating factor will be growing social independence from caregivers, even if physical dependence is maintained. Sometimes these will be achieved concurrently as when a highly dependent adolescent has to move out of home for work or educational reasons. For some
children, caregiver restraint is gradually withdrawn allowing them the freedom to exercise emotional autonomy in that they may make spiritual decisions without jeopardising their important relationships. For others, autonomy has to be seized as caregiver restraint becomes intolerable. In either case, the control variable seems to relate to contextual and social factors which lead the child to wish to disarticulate from emotional dependence on the rest of the household, to make their own choices about what they believe and do.

*Independent constrained - the period of exploration*

For many, but not all, children there is a period when their social autonomy is such that they can see themselves as separate from their caregivers, as even adopting a contrary approach to spirituality, even while for pragmatic reasons they may have to comply with caretaker requirements. Some indicate this autonomy, while avoiding irreconcilable conflict, by apparent rejection of the spiritual trappings of the household, usually reflected by symbolic choices about dress, hairdo, music and styles of speech. Those from a background without religious affiliation may experiment with religion. Children from religious backgrounds may resist attendance or active participation. This may be recognised as necessary to the process of maturing and be actively encouraged by caregivers. They will help the children reflect upon their experiences, recognising that their spirit can no longer be compelled, though it can still be placed under physical restraint. However, in some households and ed-care settings this can be a source of considerable conflict as children assert their right to consider and experiment with matters which cause caregivers grave discomfort. Certain caregivers will experience great unease if children deny the reality of the spirituality of their households.\(^{1383}\)

At this time, spiritual encounters no longer need caregiver mediation and the types of spiritual encounters which occur are the critical control parameters. For the first times these children are able to generally choose for themselves what sources of spirituality they will expose themselves to. They are close to spiritual competence but do not yet bear that responsibility as caregivers may still require of them participation in spiritual

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activities where they may be unable to resist the influences encountered. A competent adult might flee influences they felt unable to resist, but a constrained child cannot.

The ideal attractor sees a child choose to expose themselves to spiritual influences reflecting the goodness of God's Spirit and to recognise these for what they are. Some may be drawn into that attractor but not have the language or concepts to know the actual Source. Another attractor exists which leads off in an alternative spiritual direction marked by growing alienation from the good. Both these attractors are wide and accommodate a wide range of individual trajectories. Now they begin to deepen and transition between attractors becomes increasingly problematic.

*The transition to maturity*

In some cultures the previous period can also become a stable state from which it is hard for people to transit. This occurs where a dominant religion or ideology mandates its own spirituality as the only acceptable pattern and uses the instruments of the state to enforce involvement. A person may not believe but may be forced to participate in situations where the 'national spirit' is inescapably encountered. However, the final phase transition can be precipitated at any time that a person chooses to accept the responsibilities of spiritual maturity, which may include persecution or death. At that point that person ceases to be a child.

*Spiritual maturity*

The final stable period is marked by the system being able to resist entrainment by other spiritual systems. That is not to say that higher order IDSs, ideas, institutions, and powers, no longer seek to bring about such entrainment, nor that they no longer seek to transform or destroy the mature spirit. It is certainly the case that the system will still be entrained by other systems, but this will be a matter of choice amongst contending principles, a choice which can change, but cannot be compelled. A biblical understanding of spirituality suggests that there is an attractor which reflects God's will for the mature person and an alternative or alternatives which lead away from that.

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1384 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22
The attractor ideal will see a healthy, trusting person, with a personally owned commitment to truth and goodness and the intellectual, emotional and physical autonomy to exercise that commitment. Sub-optimal attractors will include ill health, inability to trust, denial of truth and goodness, unresolved interpersonal dependence or enforced compliance with others. Given people's mixed developmental histories, the ideal is never fulfilled: "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 – RSV)\textsuperscript{1385} In dynamic terms, mature people follow life trajectories that vary from the ideal in so much as their sub-systems are either entrained to, or, at least, are still open to influence by, IDSs which exist beyond the person's system boundaries.

The former might be seen, for example, in the person whose spirituality centres in the search for a guru or priest, someone to exercise 'parental' responsibility by conducting their spirituality for them. To identify what it was that remained vulnerable to such influences, the Bible used terms like 'your old self', (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9) 'your natural weakness', (Romans 6:19) 'my / our unspiritual self(ves)', (Romans 7:18,25;8:12) 'self-indulgence' (Galatians 5:13-24) and 'your bodies'. (Romans 13:14) Many of these are renderings of sarx, perhaps by recognition that so much of what drew people away from the spiritual ideal operated through the physical body which remained resistant to spiritual entrainment and required constant discipline. For instance, the body and personality of the addicted (the glutton, the drug addict, the lascivious) adapts to the addiction in such a way that the fixation cannot be broken without extreme effort and usually pain, and always remains a potential source of spiritual weakness.

The latter may be referred to by terms such as 'temptation' or 'trials'\textsuperscript{1386} or 'all that can soil' (2 Corinthians 7:1) and represents an ongoing pressure on the system to move towards other trajectories through control parameters which continue to operate even though the person has escaped entrainment to the principles they reflect.

As a consequence of these factors, there will be many variations to the actual trajectories followed by people who are nonetheless within the basin of this attractor.

\textsuperscript{1385} The RSV is used because the Jerusalem interpolates 'Jew and pagan' for 'all' (\textit{pantes}) and 'falls short' better captures \textit{uterournai} than 'forfeited'.

\textsuperscript{1386} 1 Corinthians 7:6;10:13; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:9; Hebrews 2:18; James 1:2,12-15; 1 Peter 1:6.
Total consistency with the ideal is associated with Christian commitment but, even with that commitment, people vary widely in trajectory. Moreover, if they have not heard the Christian gospel, or have not heard it adequately explained, a person may well be within the ambit of the attractor while not committed to a normative Christian belief system. That is, a person may make themselves open to the Spirit of God even though they do not know that is what they are doing. One would expect such a person to ‘recognise’ the gospel as making sense of their life experience once it was adequately represented to them.\textsuperscript{1387} Conversely, Christian commitment may exist despite trajectories which depart considerably from the ideal. One would expect people in this situation to experience considerable spiritual conflict as the Holy Spirit progressively seeks to entrain more of their life and draw them towards the centre of the attractor. It also should be noted that neither affirmation of Christian faith nor membership of a Christian community signifies a life trajectory which accords with the attractor ideal.\textsuperscript{1388}

There are those who choose to embrace those life patterns associated with attractors antithetical to the ideal. They may express mistrust in God’s goodness through angry suspicion of others, encysting their spirit in bitter fear of betrayal. They may live in denial of truth and advocacy of evil. They may be so determined to sustain the authoritative truth they received that they drift into bigotry or pharisaiism, whether religious or secular. They may drift along accepting whatever is the group norm and never developing a commitment to anything except through conformity to others.

\textsuperscript{1387} Lewis seems to share this viewpoint. Aslan, the Christ figure of his Narnia fantasies says to a devotee of the evil god Tash: “...all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me ... because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him ... if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath’s sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted ... unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly.” [Lewis, C. S. (1964). \textit{The last battle: A story for children}. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 145-150.]

\textsuperscript{1388} Acts 5:1-11; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:7-8; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; 3:6-9; Titus 1:10-16; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 2 John 7-11; 3 John 9-11; Jude 4, 11-13
In maturity to change from such a trajectory to the biblical ideal requires a radical transformation justifying the biblical terminology of ‘new birth’ or ‘repentance’.\textsuperscript{1389} To move in the other direction was seen as even more portentous. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

SUMMARY

In this model, spiritual development is represented as an emergent phenomenon reflecting the complexity of children as Integrative Dynamic Systems, and marked by qualitative change in their encounters with other spiritual entities. Children move through a series of phase transitions from a state of unqualified openness to influence from extrinsic spiritual entities and situations, to a mature state where they identify by choice with a particular spiritual orientation and are able to exclude alternatives. The dynamic for this development lies in all those factors which foster the general development of the child, but especially in the nature of their exposure to the sources of spiritual encounter identified earlier. Of particular moment, at different times, are parental nurture, the validity of assertions of trusted authorities, response to attempts to exercise discernment, and freedom to explore alternatives. Children will pass through a series of stable periods separated by shorter periods of conflict which indicate the dissolution of previous patterns of spirituality to be replaced by emergent patterns of greater spiritual efficacy and autonomy. Though there will be an order and consistency in the development of these patterns such as to allow general statistical conclusions to be drawn as to characteristics and sequence of stable periods, each child will follow an individual trajectory within the broad parameters set by this overarching order. Their trajectories will reflect the conflicting appeal of alternative attractors leading to either to entrainment by God’s Spirit or by principles of spiritual evil. Initially children will be unable to avoid shifting between attractors. Increasing maturity will be characterised by enhanced ability to identify, discern between, and either identify with or resist these influences.

The relationship between stable periods and chronological age is highly variable and sensitive to societal and cultural, as well as personal, factors. However, the sequence is predictable and is expressed in the following table.

\textsuperscript{1389} \textit{metanoia}, literally “to undergo a change in frame of mind and feeling” or “to make a change of principle and practice” [anon. (1973 reprint), \textit{op. cit.}, p.266.]
Table 1. Sequence and characteristics of stable periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of period</th>
<th>Central issue</th>
<th>Primary control parameters</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Attractors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal</td>
<td>growth</td>
<td>uterine environment</td>
<td>spiritual identity with the mother</td>
<td>healthy development to birth versus lasting disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td>trust</td>
<td>parental nurture</td>
<td>easy transitions between attractor states / total spiritual dependence</td>
<td>disposition to trust versus disposition to mistrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-critical</td>
<td>beliefs</td>
<td>authority figures’ commitment to truth and goodness</td>
<td>deepening attractors / spirituality shared uncritically with adults</td>
<td>orientation to truth and goodness versus orientation to false truth and distorted goodness or to relativism and anomie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symbolic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>discernment</td>
<td>wider societal or cultural influences and personal responsibility</td>
<td>degree of independence about spirituality limited by social dependence possibility of fixation</td>
<td>discrimination versus conformist acquiescence or uncritical relativism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symbolic</td>
<td>exploration</td>
<td>exposure to alternative spiritualities as genuine alternatives</td>
<td>personal and social independence with continued practical subordination possibility of fixation</td>
<td>choice of goodness amongst alternatives versus alienation from goodness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>constrained</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>self-determined experiences</td>
<td>full spiritual autonomy</td>
<td>personal commitment to spiritual good versus commitment to any alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>maturity</td>
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</table>

CONCLUSION

Current approaches to human development are not conducive to the consideration of matters of spirituality because of their adherence to a linear paradigm which is incompatible with most conceptualisations of the nature of spirit and particularly to its implications of the reality and agency of metaphysical entities. Dynamic systems theory does not suffer from these paradigmatic limitations but rather proposes across a wide range of phenomena that complex entities behave in ways which transcend their component parts. While the literature is currently tentative in its application of dynamic principles to development and almost reluctant to extend its scope to incorporate the
spiritual, steps have been made in this direction and, as argued here, the theory has considerable heuristic value, at least as a way of approaching these matters with some of the rigour expected of a scientific enquiry. It allows the specification of a theory of spiritual development which is compatible with biblical and other understanding while using principles of wide explanatory power across a range of other phenomena. The identification of 'control parameters', 'attractors', 'phase transitions' and the like represents an enormous project far beyond the scope of this dissertation, yet even now the biblical material and our existing understanding of child development provides a tantalisingly realistic picture sufficiently provocative to serve as a metaphor and also to contribute to an understanding of how ed-care may influence the development of spirituality.
CHAPTER 6. SPIRITUALITY AND SECULAR EDUCATIVE CARE

In this chapter, previous arguments are applied to selected aspects of secular ed-care. The implications are so extensive that there is a need to be selective, yet it is important to recognise the ramifications not only for the setting but also for the education system and for ed-carer education. It is not suggested that the requirements for positive spiritual development in ed-care can easily be met. The conclusions drawn here identify what characteristics of ed-care may militate against fulfilment of those requirements.

RECONCEPTUALISATION OF SPIRITUALITY IN EDUCATIVE CARE

The literature reveals that systems and settings for ed-care regularly misconstrue the nature of spirituality by assuming it can either be ignored or controlled. Neither approach is consistent with a biblical understanding of the reality of children’s spirituality. Spirituality is not only ubiquitous but is the integrative of children’s lives and efforts to control it will rather reshape it into less positive forms.

While not sharing his view of spirituality, one may agree with Palmer’s statement: “The spiritual is always present in public education whether we acknowledge it or not.” However, by presuming that children require the ed-caregiver’s mentoring to develop, he assumes the latter’s control of the situation: “Spiritual mentoring is not about dictating answers to the deep questions of life. It is about helping young people find questions that are worth asking because they are worth living, questions worth wrapping one’s life around.” Children need no help to find such questions; they are generated spontaneously by their encounters with the spiritual. They may need help to value the questions, to articulate them, and to consider a range of answers humanity has offered throughout its history of reflection on the spiritual.

To control children’s encounters with the spiritual, one must understand the phenomena, and agreed understandings are notably lacking, as Watson noted: “There was sufficient variety in people’s understandings of spirituality to call into question the assumption

1391  ibid.
that spirituality is universally understood or that it can be developed by general, universal methods." Consequently:

Administrators often find difficulty in writing about the spiritual aspects of their work in a mission statement or in school publicity. Nurturing the child's spirit cannot be demonstrated to parents in the same way that the moveable alphabet or golden beads can be used as illustrations of hands-on academic activities.

The model proposed here would suggest this difficulty is the result of confusion about the signifiers of spirituality rather than lack of demonstrable evidence of attributes of the setting and pædagogy which contribute to healthy spiritual development. In attributing the difficulties to the former, it recognises the force of Rodger's argument:

A major difficulty in pursuing spiritual development effectively and providing sensitively for it in education is that human spirituality is, to a large extent, a forgotten language in the Western world...

We are like people trying to speak in a foreign language about experiences we have ignored or lost touch with.

However alien to contemporary Western academic discourse, spirituality is both an ontological reality, and a phenomenological commonplace. If, as the biblical material suggests, it has its source in the intent of the Creator Spirit to communicate with its creation, it is inescapable and of great importance in any ed-care system established by any society. It is not important that they 'introduce' spirituality to children, but that they recognise the essentially spiritual nature of everything they do and how they do it. Spirituality is not centred in any one aspect of the ed-care setting: "The appearance of the classroom, the teacher's tone of voice, and her selection of songs, stories, and activities all reflect the spiritual nurturing occurring." It is essential that ed-carers be able to identify the potential sources of spiritual encounters that already exist in the ed-care setting and be able as necessary either to 'cooperate' as a components of the system, or resist that which would entrain them.

To tease out the implications of a biblical understanding of spiritual development for a state provided system of secular education, one has to consider at least some of the

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1395 *ibid*, p.35.
separate elements that make up the dynamic system which is the ed-care setting. Some derivative implications for ed-care bureaucracies will be noted as necessary. The elements to be considered are: the spiritual ontology; the children; the personnel; the environment; the relationships; the curriculum; religious activities; the nurture; and the context.

At times the implications for Christians involved in ed-care will differ from those which apply to people who do not share that commitment. Where necessary the separate implications will be noted. Initially it should be said that the secular ed-care system is not *per se* inappropriate for the development of spirituality consistent with God’s desire for children, as was recognised by early Christians:

> In fact, we know that the children of Christians were normally sent to pagan Greek and Roman schools that served children in that society. There the curriculum was the writing of pagan poets, and the subject matter the loves, hates and sins of the gods. Even Tertullian (ca A.D. 160-220), who insisted that no Christian could in good conscience be a school teacher, justified sending Christian children to such schools. After all, how else could they learn?\(^{1396}\)

The idea that the world is full of ‘holy’ or ‘evil’ institutions misunderstands the nature of spirituality. As Matthew* records in Jesus’ parable, reality is a world of institutions within which these alternative principles operate together and where spirituality consists of an as yet unresolved discord. (Matthew 13:24-30)

THE SPIRITUAL ONTOLOGY

Any effort to promote children’s spiritual development will only be effective if it responds to the real nature of spirituality. In biblical thinking, spirituality begins with the nature of God, who is encountered as an existent non-material entity who communicates with created spirits both directly and through the material world, who intends the cosmos and all in it to reflect his love and holiness, who acts to influence people and events to achieve justice and righteousness, and who feels both pleasure when his will is effected and pain when it is denied. The fact that it is denied, that hate and injustice are found, presumes the existence of entities with the freedom, power and intent to thwart God’s purpose. These are not co-eternal spirits but part of God’s creation; intended for good, but free to work evil, able to resist God and exercising their

\(^{1396}\) *ibid*, p.37.
will in opposition to his. Amongst these spirits are people, including children. Other spirits express realities of the created world, principles, powers, environments, events, and have no existence apart from these. Nevertheless, as spirits they transcend and integrate the phenomena they express. An ed-care system which denies or ignores this reality may still foster authentic spiritual development but it will be inadvertent rather than intentional.

Spirit is immanent, existing in and through everything that is. Spirits are not separate from matter but instantiated by matter. Spirituality is not an optional extension to human life and institutions. It is certainly not the highest aspirations or finest aspect of persons. Rather it is observed in everything they do and are, but also in every aspect of the environment in which they live. The question is never whether a situation is spiritual or not, but 'how' it is spiritual; what spirit(s)\textsuperscript{1397} are operative in it and what are their characteristics. Ed-care is fundamentally a spiritual activity and ed-care settings instantiate spirits. The issue is the nature of those spirits as that will define their impact on children's spirituality.

The existence of all spirits is moral in character; good in so far as they lead people into encounters with God's goodness; evil in so far as they alienate them from it. Spirituality is entangled with morality because the spiritual entities which children encounter and become are representative of diametrically opposed moral principles. One is characterised as 'holy' or 'righteous', terms which describe an existence marked by qualities such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, self-control, truth and freedom. It is affirmative of life being derivative of life's Author. The other is characterised as 'unclean' or 'evil'. It seeks to mar all that is positive in life and to entrap people in a distorted view of reality leading to futility and hopelessness. Any human situation sees both in contention. It is not his main point but Rodger identifies the conflict:

The kinds of things we can be moved by, then - our values, attachments, the things which are important to us - indicate what kind of spirit we have. Thus we talk of a loving spirit; a peaceable spirit; an envious spirit; a spirit of competition; a generous spirit; and so on.\textsuperscript{1398}

\textsuperscript{1397} Remembering that spirit does not imply person.
\textsuperscript{1398} Rodger, A. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.48.
Children are influenced by each spiritual principle and may come to represent either. The tendency in the literature to treat spirituality as inevitably beneficial or as identifiable with the best aspects of the liberal humane person is directly contradicted in Scripture. Ed-care can also foster spirituality marked by self-centredness, arrogance, materialism or bigotry. Because of God’s particular relationship with children, initially they are most sensitive to whatever good exists in the setting and, consequently, positive spiritual influences tend to predominate. This is progressively eroded, unless the influence of evil is counteracted, and children become increasingly responsive to spiritual evil in the setting.

To represent spiritual phenomena as unqualified good is irresponsible. Ed-carers need to appraise not just whether an aspect of their setting will have a spiritual impact but what spiritual influences children will encounter. While one cannot prevent children from encountering ‘obstacles’, Matthew* makes it clear that it is perilous to be responsible for placing them. (Matthew:18:7) It is not peculiarly a Christian concern to provide positive spiritual encounters for children and to avoid destructive influences. One would expect it to be the motive of all ed-caregivers, though this cannot be taken for granted in a community where some are consciously committed to spiritual evil. There are grounds for useful discussion about what constitutes positive spiritual encounter and how ed-care can best express the motivation to do ‘good’ for children. The biblical perspective, though having no privileged status in such discussions, does have a significant contribution to make as expressing one of the most enduring spiritual traditions and as identifying a particular interest in the involvement of children.

One may appropriately identify an ed-care system as secular if it does not promote any particular religious commitment. But the belief that any ed-care setting can be without spirit, or even spiritually neutral, is delusional. Wright is particularly critical of programs which fail to objectively evaluate the nature of the spirituality fostered:

In adopting such a programme, education perpetuates, by default, the dualisms inherent within modern culture and extended by post-modernism: the dualism of self and external reality, and of external fact and internal value. The result is that the spiritual realm of value floats free of any relationship with the facts of external reality. To discover one’s own hidden depths is in essence an isolated, subjective and autonomous process. There is here no criterion for truth beyond that which the individual chooses to adopt as an act of pure preference, no moral constraint beyond that of the uncritical and uninformed conscience. The key problem is the failure to accept that “such recognition of the spiritual in life necessarily involves
assessment of what is spiritually significant and pertinent and what is spiritually debasing” (Holley, 1978, p. 144).1399

Unless one is attentive to the spiritual in ed-care one denies the reality of oneself, of one’s situation, and of the children for whom ed-care exists. This is not without cost: “As a teacher, I have seen the price we pay for a system of education so fearful of things spiritual that it fails to address the real issues of our lives - dispensing facts in the place of meaning, information at the expense of wisdom.”1400

THE CHILDREN

The primary reason that consideration of spirituality is so important in ed-care is that children themselves are incarnate spirit. They bring spirit into the setting with them: “The greatest challenge we all face as spiritual nurturers is to become attuned to the young child’s authentic spirituality, which – unlike our own – is still an integrated part of life … A child shows us the extraordinary in the ordinary.”1401 Consequently:

We cannot separate what we see as religious experiences, somehow wrap them up, and put them on a shelf for children to take home at the end of the day, nor can we assume that faith is absent from the lives of children whose families are not associated with any formalised religion.1402

All children are a gift from God. Their very life depends on the gift of God’s Spirit. They are warmly welcomed by God; both their worship and service accepted by him. God’s kingdom is their’s now and they are assured a place in the apocalyptic kingdom. They have access to God in ways not available to adults and are open to his influence. Any ed-care setting which essays to influence their spirituality should recognise that they tread on holy ground. It is wiser to remove one’s sandals than to risk trampling these fragile blooms which are precious to the Gardener.

A secular system of ed-care is disbarred from promoting that profound identification of believer and Deity which the New Testament describes as made possible through the

1402 Myers, B. K. & Martin, M. P. (1993), op. cit., p.49. ‘Faith’ in their terminology is equivalent to ‘spirituality’ in this dissertation.
work of Jesus Christ and confined to the Christian community. However, how God encounters children cannot be understood if one only considers that type of encounter. Most children do not grow up in the Christian community and the Bible identifies many other transactions with God’s Spirit available to all children. Simply by living, children share the ‘breath’ of God. They live in a world that is ‘big with Spirit’,\textsuperscript{1403} where God’s Spirit works incessantly to bring about the good that God desires. That Spirit seeks to communicate with them constantly through indirect media and in some cases directly. Such encounters are not discriminatory. They are available to the baptised and the unbaptised; those raised in the Christian community, in other religious communities, or in secular communities. Neither gender, nor ethnicity, nor age, can disbar any child. These encounters require neither understanding, nor repentance, nor belief. They are also an inescapable feature of the ed-care setting.

Children are also vulnerable to spiritual evil, both as its victims and as its agents. They can encounter and be injured by mediated evil and they can be used to mediate destructive spiritual influences to others. There are a number of types of strategies which can be implemented to counteract such influences:

- avoidance or removal;
- counterbalancing with spiritual good;
- development of discernment.

The first strategy, avoidance or removal, is commonly advocated. One still hears inappropriate echoes of St Jerome’s advice on educating the daughter of a Christian family:

Thus must a soul be educated which is to be the temple of God. It must learn to hear nothing but what belongs to the fear of God. It must have no understanding of unclean words, and no knowledge of the world’s songs. Its tongue must be steeped while still tender in the sweetness of the Psalms. Boys with their wanton thoughts must be kept from Paula: even her maids and female attendants must be separated from worldly associates ... The very words which she tries bit by bit to put together and pronounce ought not to be chance ones, but names specifically fixed upon and heaped together for the purpose, those, for example, of the prophets or apostles or

the list of patriarchs from Adam downwards as it is given by Matthew and Luke... 1404

Evidently St Jerome did not have children if he thought they could be so ‘educated’.

The strategy assumes that children can be prevented from being exposed to spiritual evil or, if they are already exposed, be remove them from it. That worthy aspiration is unachievable. Evil is not just around children but also within them as a consequence of earlier exposure. Nevertheless, there are particular situations so destructive that the only appropriate response is to guide children away from them wherever possible. This may particularly apply when the danger is too subtle to make sense to the child. For instance, the distinction between the genuinely loving adult and the predatory paedophile may be too subtle for a child to comprehend.

Allowing children to be exposed to abusive personnel, whatever the nature of that abuse, is entirely unacceptable. It exacerbates the impact of abuse to make children responsible for recognising the precursors of abuse and acting to prevent or terminate its occurrence. A similar reaction to bullying is appropriate. Equally, if an ed-carer consistently espouses race hatred or religious bigotry, children should not be left under their influence. Each setting would need to negotiate with their community what matters call for this sort of response. It will mean dealing with important issues of human rights, but a community and ed-care setting may determine that where competing rights are involved, the right of children to protection from obvious spiritual harm is paramount.

The second strategy assumes the limitations of the first. Children will be exposed to all sorts of destructive spiritual influences no matter how scrupulous the protector is, if for no other reason than that the protectors are themselves a medium for spiritual evil. This inevitable exposure is counteracted by ensuring children are also exposed to parallel situations where spiritual good is at work. In part, this should be fulfilled if the ed-carer responds in general terms by sharing with children:

- appreciation of God’s creativity in nature, even if he is not specifically acknowledged;

• acquaintance with fine examples of human creation; those artefacts that breathe with
  divine inspiration;
• involvement in life affirming cultural events and social groups;
• personal interactions which express genuine care for them;
• words and ideas which manifest truth; and
• consistent attention to their everyday needs.

But there may be cause to be more deliberate. Knowing a child to have been exposed to
a particular source of evil influence, one can choose an experience which specifically
counteracts that. For instance, one may strive to find tasks at which children ostracised
for limited academic ability have an opportunity to experience success, or provide extra
opportunities for, and help to, play for children who are driven to single minded
orientation to work. Given the nature of the current television, video and video-game
inventory, one may use those technologies specifically to expose children to alternative
ideas and stories which are more positive in emphasis. A child suffering a particularly
insensitive teacher may need a special amount of value time with a ‘counsellor’ or
chaplain.

The third strategy is the most difficult, but important in the child’s growth to maturity.
This is to develop in children the discernment to recognise evil influences, understand
them, and act appropriately with respect to them. There is value in teaching children
how to recognise and counteract obvious evils like social discrimination and
environmental depredation, but it is not in itself enough. This strategy will require that,
if children do encounter evil influences, ed-carers are with them wherever possible and,
by their behaviour and words, demonstrate the nature of the situation and model ways to
respond in those circumstances. It may mean watching media children say they watch
and reflecting on it with them. It may mean foregoing time with one’s colleagues to
share, companionably, the isolation of the lonely child. It will mean building the sort of
relationships where children feel free to discuss with the ed-carer anything they
experience. This will require willingness of the adult to open their own success and
failure to children and to become vulnerable to them. In fact, ideally the ed-carer will
take the step of becoming as children themselves.

It is misplaced beneficence that decides to foster spirituality on the grounds that it is
something children lack. They don’t. What they need is adults who will monitor the
sources of spirituality to which they are already exposed and take a serious stand in favour of the positive life enhancing influences that flow from the Spirit of God, whether they acknowledge that source or not. Children directly reflect the spirituality with which they are involved. Spiritual nurture is not introducing children to something they will otherwise lack; it is about influencing the trajectory of their spiritual development towards spiritual good and away from spiritual evil.

The biblical concept of childhood is functional; childhood is the first part of a life journey conceived as a progression to spiritual maturity or ‘wisdom’. It is the period during which one is not fully competent to take responsibility for one’s relationships with God and others; when one was prone to misbehaviour because one does not know better or cannot do otherwise. Its limitations are revealed by children’s level of understanding and manner of moral choices. Initially children do not have the knowledge to identify what God wants from them, that is, to do what is good, and must depend on others to direct their spiritual behaviour, whether or not this has a religious focus. Even when the ability to discern appears, children do not usually have the freedom to exercise their understanding if that is opposed by others. Ed-care cannot afford to treat children as capable of mature spiritual discernment and action. It needs to reflect more than a general acknowledgment of spiritual development, but rather respond specifically to the characteristics of the stable period or transition each child is revealing. Spiritual nurture cannot be generalised; it must address children as individual spirits at different levels of formation.

Jesus’ teaching turns ed-carers’ attitudes on their heads as much as it did disciples’. ‘Children’ need not be young. The biblical term ‘little ones’ indicates both children and people with children’s characteristics regardless of age. What is said about children applies to all those who, for intellectual, emotional or other reasons, do not achieve or exercise spiritual competence. Statements about children may be true of mature persons who choose, while able to resist, to adopt this state of accessibility with respect to God’s Spirit. Disciples are directed to emulate the ‘humility’ of children; the humiliation of knowing that you do not understand as you should and cannot act as you would. (Romans 7:14-25; 1 Corinthians 1:17-25; 13:9-12) Children are not expected to learn the quality of spirituality God desires from the caregiver; their spirituality is what the caregiver has to emulate before they can help themselves, let alone the children in their charge. This applies equally to ed-carers.
As spirits, children are Integrative Dynamic Systems. This has significant implications for how they will develop and how others may contribute to that development. For example, there is no linear function relating attention given to spirituality in ed-care and how spiritual children will become. Children’s spirituality is sensitive to conditions: “Often a small change in some parameter results in a small change of the dynamics. However, at certain critical points, the dynamics may also change qualitatively, e.g., the stability of an attractor is lost.” One may labour fruitlessly with carefully planned activities for a long period only to see spirituality awakened by a momentary sunset, a reassuring touch or a turn of phrase. One cannot predictably shape spirit, only allow exposure to spiritual encounters likely to have positive effects. As Freeman says: “By definition, a self-organising system cannot be made, only facilitated”, even though his own “…recipe for encouraging the emergence of a self-organising system” is not adequate to cook up an IDS.

So conceived, children’s spirituality is by nature, “…context-dependent, ‘fuzzy’, idiosyncratic, and flexible”, despite “global similarities”. It is also auto-catalytic, engaged actively in its own development, as Gobbel & Gobbel indicate:

Children are necessarily and inextricably engaged in a process characteristic of all human beings - the process of interpretation, the process of constructing and creating for themselves understanding and meaning...

Children are searchers of meaning, active participants in a quest for meaning. They take up the quest of making sense of and of ‘figuring out’ the world for themselves. They are actively constructing ‘imaginative patterns’ of information possessed and experienced. Madge wrote:

“Young children will attempt to integrate whatever comes into their experiences into a meaningful pattern, be it angels and magnets, sun and rocks, seeds and babies, aeroplanes and heaven, God and shops, Jesus and baby-sitters”.

Moreover, children are active spiritual agents well capable of being directly addressed by God’s Spirit: “…Cyprian knows of children who are favoured with visions and

1406 Freeman, W. J. (1995), op. cit., p.27.
auditions sent by the Holy Spirit, not only in sleep but in waking states of *ekstasis*". Significant encounters are widely reported in popular Christian writing (see List of References and Bibliography), by Cavalletti (Appendix 4), and by respondents to academic surveys such as those conducted by Hardy, Hay and Nye. Such interventions are certainly not independent of the other sources of spiritual encounter. Rather, it seems that, in the rough and tumble of conflicting and contrasting influences, occasionally, there is a crystallisation; a time of enlightenment, or of darkening.

The other day, a boy asked me what is my religion. I said, "None". He said, "What, none!" Then I said, "Yes, that's right!" You would have thought I'd just gone and shot someone dead! He said, "If you don't believe in God, you're going straight to hell, and you'll stay there for ever." "Well, so what!" That's what I said...

I wasn't going to tell him about my ideas. He's not the only one who thinks about God! Just because you don't go to church and don't believe what they tell you (there) doesn't mean you don't think about God, and about how you should be good, and what are the really big things in life, and the things that don't make any difference. I can sit and look out the window, and I'll watch it snow; and I believe in God then. So does my mommy; she says each snowflake is different from every other snowflake that ever was and ever will be, and that shows you there's something out there that makes our world so special.

"What does he speak about?" I asked her...
She was ready with an answer. "He'll say something to me at odd times. When I leave ... to go on a walk and tell Him what's on my mind, He doesn't give me the time of day. If I shout, He shuts up. If I tell Him how much I love Him, He won't blink - no sounds. But if I'm really in low spirits and not thinking of Him - thinking of myself and worrying what will happen to us, what will happen next to us - it's then that He takes me by surprise, completely. I hear Him and He'll say: 'Margarita, you are looking too far ahead. First, try to get to the evening, the sunset; then try to get to the morning, the sunrise.' When I hear Him I feel calmer. Oh, I'm not totally persuaded ... But hearing Him gives me everything to hold on to. I think I go walking to try to find some strength, and just when I give up, He's there. He tells me to remember what He said, and I try to remember what His life was like: we used to hear about it in church, when mother took us. She stopped (going) a year or two ago. When I hear Jesus talking to me, I wish I knew more of Him..."

She did not take the priest's words and put them in her imagined Christ's mouth. Nor did she hear the priest's voice as that of Jesus. On the contrary, she tried hard -


1410 Coles, R. (1990), *op. cit.*, p.290. There are two interesting side issues in this account. That a child publicly denies Christian belief does not mean they are not engaged in a dialogue with God. And one must ask who is the better spokesperson for God, the believing boy or the unbelieving 'mommy'.
and ultimately in vain - to set the two against each other ... As Margarita once said angrily, he was not Jesus. She didn’t expect him to be Jesus, but she wanted Jesus badly in her life, knowing, I suspect, that only a miracle of the Lord would have a chance of reversing her fate and that of her family.\footnote{\textit{ibid}, p.94-95.}

“I was all alone, and those (segregationist) people were screaming, and suddenly I saw God smiling, and I smiled,” one North Carolina girl of eight told me in 1962. Then she continued, with these astonishing words: “A woman was standing there (near the school door), and she shouted at me, ‘Hey, you little Nigger, what you smiling at?’ I looked right at her face, and I said, ‘At God.’ Then she looked up at the sky, and then she looked at me, and she didn’t call me any more names.”\footnote{\textit{ibid}, p. 19-20.}

One child speaks from entirely beyond the church community, one child is part of a family which once attended church but now stands outside it, and one child is part of a pious churchgoing family. These are but three of many similar accounts by Coles, chosen for the diversity they represent. Not all children report such experiences, but many do. What they report reflects their religious background, but often transcends it. It is as though God is able to take that background and use it to create something new; and that children are open to such new thoughts and experiences. For instance, another child specifically rejects Coles’ implied suggestion that the voice of Jesus that she heard was really a projection of the pious adults she knew:

I asked about His voice. His way of speaking. She hadn’t thought about that. She looked down at the floor and thought - and thought and thought. I was ready to ask something else, just to break our silence. But at last Anne looked up, told me she’d been ‘eliminating’ people, one after the other, and she couldn’t come up with anyone, though maybe “there’s a little of my aunt in the way He talks, but it’s a man’s voice, so it’s not her all the way, no.” Her mother, her dad, her grandparents? No, not them, for sure. A teacher? A priest? “Maybe a little like our priest, but He wasn’t the priest mainly, no.” ... “Dr Coles, ... Jesus answers our prayers, if we keep praying and we deserve it. I’m not boasting. Maybe He’s not happy with me a lot of the time! But if I do pray and he does answer - then it’s Him. He’s the one I’m seeing, and He’s the one I’m hearing. Don’t you think?”\footnote{\textit{ibid}, p. 84-85.}

This child challenges her interviewer. She is not prepared to have her encounters demeaned to psychological projections. But she still wants help and affirmation from a
trusted adult. Children do not lightly share their inner life and meanings unless they are sure the listener will be sensitive to their desire to do so, either because of a shared religious context, or a relationship built on trust over time. Information about such encounters is usually anecdotal and second hand, stories told by religious parents or children’s workers. On analysis, most of these resolve into examples of indirect influence through relationships or artefacts.

Though less common, one also finds reports of what may be interpreted as direct experiences with spirits opposed to God. This is from one of Hardy’s respondents:

At the age of nine, at boarding school, I knelt one evening as usual to say my prayers, as I have always done, when suddenly, like a flash, came the question, as if asked from outside myself: “Is there anyone to pray to?” and the answer seemed to come: “No!” there was no God. This was followed by a great sense of relief, thankfulness, pleasure. I need never pray again. Why pray to nothing and no-one? I never did pray again.1415

Once again, most examples are anecdotal and often hard to interpret. For instance, after publishing some research on the effects of commercially available videos on 10-12 year olds,1416 I was rung by a mother who wanted to tell me how her daughter had seen a video about demonic possession at a party. On returning home she had refused to enter her bedroom, terrified because something evil waited for her in there. After three months of emotional refusals,1417 the parents had engaged an exorcist to conduct a rite in the bedroom after which the child re-entered without further concern. This could be seen as no more than an hysterical reaction to a fear provoking story terminated by an act which resolved the fear in its own terms. Or it could be inferred that an entity used either the artefact of the video and its story, or the gathered group of frightened

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1414 "In my childhood we daren’t let our elders know how mature we were. As for religious feelings and ideas - they’d been there all along.”
"This inner knowledge was exciting and absorbingly interesting, but it remained unsaid because, even if I could have expressed it, no-one would have understood. Once, when I tried, I was told I was morbid.” [Robinson, E.A. (1976). Experience and authority in religious education. Religious Education, 74, 451-463. Cited by Hardy, A. (1979). The spiritual nature of man: A study of contemporary religious experience. Oxford: Clarendon, p.108.]

1415 Hardy, (1979), op. cit., p.113.


1417 She slept elsewhere in the house and other family members had to fetch things from her room for her.
children, as a conduit to take hold of a vulnerable child, but was then driven away by the spiritual influence inherent in the person and rite of the exorcist.

Educative caregivers may hear stories of both positive and negative encounters from individual children from a range of backgrounds and need the skills to sensitively deal with the issues. Such experiences must be treated with respect whether or not the ed-carer is sympathetic to them. For the child they are both real and portentous, because they are valued or embarrassing or frightening. They are likely to want to share such experiences with important adults like ed-carers; seeking affirmation or reassurance. In the surveys, there are too many sad examples of children bruised by insensitive ed-carers not to note that this is an area where children are often let down by those who should be stirring such flames into further, if more reflective, warmth.

Cavalletti’s point should be taken: “Today we try to be so attentive to, so respectful of, the child’s needs; how serious it would be then to stop at the threshold of the child’s deepest exigence: the opening to the transcendent.”

Ed-care needs to be sensitive to the possible that the strictures of its programs may intrude into moments of intense spirituality: “So often when a child looks out the window, we say she’s off task. Well, she may be on the biggest task of her life.”

THE PERSONNEL

This section assumes that, to the extent that ed-carers undertake rôles and enter into relationships with children which in biblical times would have been the prerogative and responsibility of parents, the biblical passages originally addressed to the latter apply. This may seem to place an undue burden upon ed-carers and clearly the degree of applicability is contingent upon both the child’s age and many situational variables affecting the way the setting undertakes its task. However, to the extent one is charged with and accepts responsibility for children’s nurture and education one has to assume, as with slave owners, one pre-empts the rôle of biological parents and must expect to be subject to the same rewards and strictures.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIVE CAREGIVERS

There are no professional ed-carers in the biblical text as both care and education were the responsibility of parents who were intended to offer vocational and religious training, and cultural and social education, along with dispensation of traditional wisdom. Nevertheless, the changing rôle of parents since the industrial revolution means that Skillen's statement is anachronistic:

One writer has suggested that in broad historical perspective, two mainstreams of social theory have competed for supremacy in our understanding of who should control the education of the young. He describes them as, on the one hand, the Classical / Renaissance / Enlightenment assumption that the primary responsibility for educating citizens lies with the government, and, on the other, the Judaic / Christian affirmation that the primary responsibility and authority for educating children rests with parents.\textsuperscript{1420}

With first the father and more recently the mother working away from home, parenting has been increasingly 'out-sourced' to specialist providers who share both the joy of relationship and also the responsibility. At times, it can be an advantage that children have such alternative sources of caring:

Only a few weeks ago, the researcher approached a '7 year old' who was crying in class to be told that her uncle had died suddenly of a heart attack. The girl explained to the teacher what had happened, commenting that her mother had told her to forget all about it. She informed the teacher that she could not - it was on her mind, she missed him and she wanted to share it with someone. She had questions she wanted to ask, feelings she wanted to share.\textsuperscript{1421}

Genuine concern about confusion created by multiple caregivers has to be held in tension with the amazing adaptability of the child-system. Perhaps children can discern a generality, a parental spirit of nurturance, amongst the various local accidents of parental, ed-care and other nurture, just as they discern the 'cat' amongst the 'cats':

The problem of global structure and local variability is also present in cognitive phenomena. Each time we understand a single word such as cat, we perform the 'same' cognitive act. Yet, we might paraphrase Clark et al. as follows: "The cognitive system is never in the same state nor is the environment within which a word is uttered ever the same. Yet understanding the word cat in a sentence such as \textit{That is a strange-looking cat} is a rather simple intellectual act that is readily and


\textsuperscript{1421} Higgins, S. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.78-79.
reliably accomplished by speakers of the language.” There is something similar - what we call the meaning of the word - about each understanding of the word cat, yet each understanding must also be achieved in a singular way that fits the precise state of the individual and the specific context. How are we to explain the global order and this local variability?¹⁴²²

Whether they wish to concede it or not, every ed-carer is themselves a spirit and inescapably part of the system within which children’s spirituality develops. Palmer states the situation well: “When I hear teachers ask whether they can take their spirituality into the classroom with them, I wonder what the option is: As long as we take ourselves into the classroom, we take our spirituality with us.”¹⁴²³ Every lesson, mat time, field trip, or individual intervention is an encounter between the ed-carer’s spirit and the spirits of children. There is a persistent confusion at this point which stems from discounting unacknowledged spirit, ignoring spiritual evil and assuming that ‘spiritual people’ necessarily engender a positive quality referred to as ‘spirituality’.¹⁴²⁴ Montessori shares this confusion: “This does not mean either that teachers must belong to an organised religion or that they must not belong to one. It means that whether or not they adhere to a particular creed, they must have a sense of the transcendent - a sense that there is something more to life than what they perceive with their senses.”¹⁴²⁵

One does not have to be conscious of a spiritual realm for spiritual encounters to occur. The most radically materialist person is nevertheless a spirit and exerts spiritual influence on other spirits they encounter. Ed-carers influence each other as part of the heterarchical organisation of person-systems within the setting. Denial does not exempt a person from spiritual encounters; it only limits the person’s ability to understand and embrace their real nature and effect. The awareness Montessori refers to is what allows the spiritually sensitive person to act consciously to foster spirituality rather than to foster by inadvertence. The value of a creed is that it gives the person a way to understand and articulate what it is they are trying to foster and how. This is as true for the Satanist or the humanist as for the Christian.

Wolf comes close to identifying the rôle of the ed-carer: “Spiritual nurturing can never be reduced to a set of techniques of a routine curriculum. It can only flow freely from the teacher’s own inner essence and from his or her belief that each child is truly a spiritual being.” Spiritual nurturing does flow from each ed-carer’s inner essence but it does not require a belief that the child is a spirit. However, she retains the requirement that the ed-carer should hold certain attitudes to the nature of children’s spirituality. Wolf’s assertion could also be restated with ‘abuse’ replacing ‘nurture’.

It is important that ed-carers are spiritual people, but what is more important is that they are influenced by encounters with the Holy Spirit, even those who deny its existence. Not all spiritual people respond in the way Starratt & Guare represent them: ‘Spirituality is a way of living ... Spiritual persons tend to bring that depth and sensitivity and reverence to all or most of what they do ... respond[ing] to other people and to situations with an openness, acceptance, and reverence’ (p.193). Their ideal is the spiritually aware good person; but better the spiritually insensible ed-carer with a commitment to good than the spiritually aware ed-carer without that commitment. As Sister Magdalen says about parents, but with wider applicability: “A primary task of parents is to teach love, and love is learned more easily by those who have the experience of being loved. ‘Nothing so furthers teaching as this: loving and being loved’, said that wonderful páedagogical guide, St John Chrysostom.”

Ed-carers may argue they are only employed to teach their particular disciplinary area and not to dabble in what more properly is the rôle of parent, clergy or counsellor. They may profess incompetence in, or antagonism to, the spiritual area because they do not espouse a religious commitment. But such arguments would only hold if spirituality were avoidable, and it is not. Crompton’s argument to social workers is as relevant to ed-carers:

It would be easy for those not interested in, or hostile to, religion in general, or a particular religion, to dismiss these [children’s] questions [about spirituality] as difficult or of little relevance ... Yet both professional practice and everyday life

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require individuals to respond to many matters of which they have no direct experience, or about which they have personally strong feelings.\footnote{1429}

One may immerse oneself exclusively in transmitting a discipline, but the medium remains the message and one cannot help but transmit also what one is, modelling values and priorities. That is a significant spiritual act. The answer to incompetence is not to evade responsibility, but to gain competence. The answer to antagonism is not self-indulgence, but ethical professional practice.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHRISTIAN ED-CAREGIVERS

Christian ed-carers have a religious as well as a spiritual agenda; but the two are complementary not contradictory. Hill shows admirable transparency in acknowledging the evangelistic intent of Christian involvement in ed-care.\footnote{1430} He does not countenance ‘evangelism’ of the intrusive, judgmental and triumphalist kind which rightly stimulates the annoyance and contempt of non-Christians and many Christians alike. Rather, this understanding of evangelism is allowing the Spirit to do its work through a lifestyle, a way of relating and a way of approaching issues all of which demonstrate the quality of a life committed to following Jesus. That itself creates spiritual encounters with the Spirit of God in the person, creating the possibility of reorganisation of children’s spirits. God’s Spirit does not need words, which may be unloving even if true, to speak to the spirit of a child at a level that words seldom reach.

Christian ed-carers cannot limit their understanding of evangelism to the promotion of ‘saving faith’ without recognising that such faith is premised on a long history of the Spirit’s work in the person. As Bridger says:

(\textit{Faith} does not begin at the moment we accept Christ as Saviour, though in the work of salvation God takes the faith he has given us as part of his creation and by grace transforms it into saving faith in his Son. Saving faith arises out of the way God has made us in creation: it is all of a piece, the nature of which is gift.)\footnote{1431}

All goodness is a gift of God (\textit{James 1:16-17}) intended to draw people to share that goodness in relationship to him. (\textit{Acts 14:16-17}) Whatever children find of the goodness

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\item \footnote{1429} Crompton, M. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.86.
\item \footnote{1430} Hill, B. V. (1994), \textit{op. cit}.
\item \footnote{1431} Bridger, F. (1988), \textit{op. cit.}, p.15.
\end{enumerate}
Christian ed-carers offer them in their identification with the Holy Spirit forms a crucial rôle in God’s strategy to reconcile them to himself. Bridger asks:

Is there, then, any evangelism that is appropriate to young infants? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is ‘yes’. But it will consist entirely of a relationship of love. It will contain no intellectual message nor will it call for a response other than to trust in the human who shows love. It will be a gospel of cuddles and softly spoken words. These are the seeds out of which, by the grace of God, fuller faith may develop.\textsuperscript{1432}

Bridger demonstrates not only a clear understanding of how the Spirit works in the world but also of the nature of spiritual development in infancy. Richards also offers an important perspective by differentiating the ontological source of salvation and the phenomenology of the faith of a child of limited understanding:

...It is vitally important to make a distinction between the basis of which salvation is offered and the object of faith of believers across the ages. For all time the basis of salvation has been the substitutionary death of Jesus for the sin of all humankind. The Old Testament sacrifices prefigured Jesus’ work on the cross and prepared the Jewish people for the culminating sacrifice that would cleanse sins that were only covered by all earlier sacrifices...

But throughout the ages the object of faith, that which called out a faith response in those being saved, have varied. The faith of Abraham was not fixed in the distant coming of the Son of God, but in the God who promised that “a son coming from your own body will be your heir”. (Gen 15:4)... This theological distinction between the basis of salvation we are offered in Christ and the object of faith is significant primarily when we struggle with the question of child evangelism...

Perhaps ... we ought to consider the possible of children giving a true faith response to God without a formal understanding of what is involved in our formulations of the gospel. A child’s simple response to Jesus may be analogous to the faith response of so many through history who have not understood the cross, but who have met God in the more simple Word He spoke to them, and who have believed.\textsuperscript{1433}

There is neither pædagogy nor curriculum content that is uniquely Christian. It is noted above that the early church utilised the common education of the pagan world. Koulomzin identifies what he sees as the responsibility of the Christian ed-carer:

“A good Christian teacher should prepare himself to make use of all the material presented in the public school curriculum, to point out the kind of knowledge that is

\textsuperscript{1432} ibid, p.22.

\textsuperscript{1433} Richards, L. O. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.375.
given there, what this knowledge answers and what it cannot answer, and to relate it to our religious concept of life."1434

There is nothing there that contradicts the requirement of an ed-carer to educate without proselytisation. It is entirely appropriate for children to explore what perspective the Christian faith has on any matter within the curriculum, just as it is appropriate to explore other religious and secular perspectives. What is inappropriate is to use that proper educational process to advocate a system of belief about spiritual issues or impugn any child’s commitment to an alternative.

Occasionally a Christian ed-carer will find themselves in a setting whose spirit is both powerful and poisonous, requiring them to act in ways that contradict any sense of goodness. Myers & Martin address this with respect to early childhood ed-care:

When we find ourselves in a situation in which we are being asked to work with children in a way that conflicts with our own beliefs, we need to ask ourselves, "What is going on here? What are the conflicting areas? Can I work within the mental constructs of those with authority over me and maintain my integrity? Would my being confrontational be helpful in this situation? Are the persons for whom I work familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood care and education? If not, are there ways that I can help educate them? What are the possibilities for all of us here to grow?" If the possibilities seem nonexistent, then we might have to ask, "What do I need to do to find a position in which I can work with others for children?"1435

It helps in this situation to identify the setting and the ed-care bureaucracy as IDSs. One thus recognises the validity of Paul’s* claim that it is: "not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Sovereignties and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world..." (Ephesians 6:12) He indicates that Christians should be able to resist but not by employing the strategies of the system. Rather, they are to subvert it with truth, integrity, peacefulness, faith, confidence in God’s ability to save, apt use of God’s word and prayer. (Ephesians 6:13-18)1436 The assumption is that the Christian ed-carer brings the influence of the Holy Spirit into the situation with the possibility that, as a higher order IDS, it will entrain sub-systems over time and eventually lead to a

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1436 Paul’s* words are not reproduced exactly partly because they to some extent rely on an OT background and partly to shift the focus from his context to that of ed-care.
reorganisation of the setting and perhaps even the bureaucracy as a system. Paul does not countenance a retreat such as is envisaged as the last resort by Myers & Martin.

Cavalletti addresses catechists but her words apply to all Christian ed-carers: "‘God is love’ says Saint John; but love has many faces: What is the face of God the child needs?” 1437 Even if it requires one’s sacrifice of one’s career, one’s job satisfaction or, indeed, one’s own peace, the Christian ed-carer is to be led by God’s Spirit to be some of God’s many faces.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The ed-care environment consists of both natural and constructed elements all of which are expressive of the spirit of their creator(s). Because the environment is everywhere and experienced all the time, its influence is incessant and therefore likely to be least noticed despite its great potency.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN EDUCATIVE CARE

Nature is essential in shaping children’s spirituality. Ed-care cannot seriously engage in fostering spiritual development without considering the importance of the natural world to that process. Children’s spirituality is shaped in positive directions as they experience the creativity of God’s Spirit in the natural world and marred by isolation from God’s creation.

Fundamental to the biblical understanding of the development of a mature and positive spirituality is that children require a deep intuitive grasp of the awesomeness of God, and this is not restricted to those within the Covenant. 1438 Paul argued that God’s judgment on wrong-doing is justified because his real nature is evident to all in ‘the things he has made’. (Romans 1:18-32) Without recognition of God’s ‘everlasting power and deity’, the assertion of Divine authority leads to a spirituality of oppression, and children cannot sense the enormity of God’s condescension in sharing his Spirit in intimacy with rebellious humanity. Many writers from other perspectives also recognise the importance of ‘awe and wonder’ though these are usually to be directed to

the phenomena rather than their unacknowledged Creator. Because of children's openness to God's Spirit, the one will inevitably leave children attuned to the other.

God directly reveals his majesty in the created world. As children experience his self expression in nature, God's Spirit is able to communicate with them, not in words, but at a profound pre-verbal level. Consequently, the effect can occur at a very early age, as is perhaps indicated by the curiosity and delight of the very young. This also means that it is often hard to articulate what children take from such experiences, or to modify it. The same applies to the effects of destructive spirits. Forces of spiritual evil will try to prevent or mar these encounters. This could be by minimisation of the natural environment in the built environment. But it may also be reflected in attitudes dismissive of the value of nature. If children are brought up to ignore or be depressive of the natural world, that sentiment will tend to generalise to its Creator. At very least, an important aspect of God's desired relationship with them, and their understanding of him, will be missing and their spirituality will be consequently impoverished.

The more children are exposed to the wonders of God's creation and allowed to experience directly what he has made, the greater the opportunity they have to hear those soundless voices and speechless messages and, therefore, the more likely they are to develop the presumption that there are transcendent entities worthy of their awe and reverence. The more they are isolated from his works, the harder they will find this appreciation. With such encounters, teaching about divine creation has substance in lived experience; without, ideas about the Creator, and words used to describe his glory and transcendence, will lack an essential experiential level of meaning. The natural world may be seen to mediate to children encounters with the Spirit of God whenever it invites awe and wonder, sponsors humility and curiosity, and stimulates appreciation and positive stewardship.

Ed-care needs to assimilate this realisation. If children's spirituality is to develop in positive directions, they need to experience parks and creeks and trees and gardens and

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1439 This is not intended to imply creationist teaching.
flowerpots and animals; clean air and clear running water, and dirt and open smog-free skies; to see sun and moon and stars and clouds and waves and mountains; to feel wind and rain and spray and sun-heat and night-cold; to smell flowers and fur and leaves and soil; to taste fruit and nuts and seeds and herbs and spices; to hear thunder and surf and bird-song and rustling leaves and the noise-laden silence of being alone and away from human clamour. The great value of programs based on outdoor adventure lies not only in what they take children away from, but also in what they expose them to. No single ed-care setting can provide all of this; but all can provide at least some.

To provide nature books and documentaries for children moves in the right direction but falls far short of what the Bible requires. A two-dimensional picture can never communicate with children like the full multi-sensory impact of the created world itself. There is a Leunig cartoon which depicts a parent and child watching a sunset on television while through the window the real is ignored. At their best, media may stimulate desire to experience the reality, or serve to prompt memory, if the child has such memories; but they are a poor substitute. While words add interpretive meaning to the encounters, the spiritual transaction with God in nature does not need to be mediated by language.

The ideal of exposing children to the natural world is increasingly difficult to fulfil, as Wolf explains:

Taking a close look at nature is becoming more and more difficult in modern urban areas. Buildings and pavement have replaced woods and fields, fish cannot be seen in murky, polluted rivers and streams, while smog and city lights obscure the splendour of the night sky. Even in Montessori’s time, real encounters with nature were becoming infrequent. She laments, “In the civilised environment of our society, children live far from nature, and have few opportunities of entering into intimate contact with it.” Does anyone, she asks, “let them run out when it is raining, take off their shoes when they find pools of water, and let them run about with bare feet when the grass of the meadow is damp with dew?”

Today this deprivation has dramatically increased. Unstructured outdoor play where children climb trees and make mud pies has all but disappeared. One can walk the streets on weekend afternoons or early summer evenings and never hear

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1440 But not tailored or caged pets, unless the cage is sufficient in size to simulate the animal’s natural environment.

the joyous shouts of youngsters playing freely in the outdoors. Instead one finds the children at organised sports, indoor skating, ballet classes or most often in front of the television.\footnote{1442}

It is unrealistic to expect all children to be brought up 'in the arms of nature', but those most alienated from the natural world should at least have access to some aspects of the created world as an integral part of the city-scape, and ed-carers need to model its value to them. In the design of ed-care institutions, attention needs to be paid to ensure they allow children access to some reasonable aspects of the natural environment both within and beyond the classroom: "In an ideal world, every school would be located on several acres of ground with a stand of beautiful trees, a field to explore, a pond to observe, a sunny garden and even room to care for a few farm animals such as chicken or sheep."\footnote{1443} This is not an ideal world and increasingly children live in constructed deserts of concrete and brick. The biblical assertion becomes ever more pertinent with its emphasis not on wilderness, which few children will experience, but on gardens as bringing the world of nature into an infertile land. Noddings would apparently agree that: "Schools should have gardens."\footnote{1444}

If positive spiritual development is sought, in planning new ed-care settings real attention should be paid to provision of planned growing spaces for different sized plants, ideally with some rocks and water flow, which will also provide environments for insects, birds and, if possible, small animals. These do not just decorate but educate and should receive the same care as is lavished on Information Technology areas or specialist curriculum spaces. In established settings, some effort should be made to reclaim bitumen space, replace plastic climbing frames with organic climbable trees, and introduce tubs and window trays of plants wherever possible. Adoption of a local park as a caring focus for the setting, or reclamation of 'wasteland' as a planned 'ecology', are powerful sources of encounters with nature.

This has profound implications for ed-care personnel. If administrative decisions about the construction of schools are taken on criteria which exclude consideration of the

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\item \footnote{1442} Wolf, A. D. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.72.
\item \footnote{1443} \textit{ibid}, p.74.
\item \footnote{1444} Halford, J. M. (1998/9), \textit{op. cit.}, p.31.
\end{itemize}
spiritual influence of the natural world, settings will tend to be organically infertile and spiritually deleterious. Similar issues surround the administration of budgets. If ed-careers do not themselves understand and respect the natural world, they will tend to ignore it, misrepresent it, and fail to generate a sense of awe as to its intricate simplicities. In particular, ed-caregivers of young children need some significant and sensitive exposure to natural science as part of their training so that curriculum in this area is not mechanical but a genuine source of wonder.  

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONSTRUCTED ENVIRONMENT OF EDUCATIVE CARE

Ed-care systems have direct control over the constructed environments within which they operate and the other artefacts they employ. The spiritual potency of artefacts affirmed in the biblical record is also recognised by Wolf: "When a free spirit exists, it has to materialise itself in some form of work, and for this the hands are needed. Everywhere we find the traces of men's handiwork, and through these we catch a glimpse of his spirit." The biblical authors would go further. Artefacts can indicate recognition of a reality beyond the mundane, can point to the nature of that reality, and create delight and appreciation; in other words, they can reflect a transcendent set of values. In such situations children are encouraged to recognise that there is an 'other' that demands their attention:

Whilst doing my RE project [on York Minster] in Year 7 I thought that if all of these men had built this magnificent building with only simple tools, and risking their lives every day, that they must have known something that I don't about God and I wanted to know it too and that made me think about whether I believed in God or not and it also made me think a lot about life. (Year 8)

The less such opportunities are provided by the artefacts to which they are exposed, the harder children will find it to recognise in themselves such a desire for the transcendent. This is another area where apprehension relies on direct experience. Merely to tell children that people create great beauty and delight cannot compare with allowing them to sense that beauty and share that delight. Such exposure to creative beauty may be on a grand scale, as in a Beethoven symphony or a Taj Mahal, or at a domestic level, as in

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1445 This assumes an appropriate attitude to science and the natural world in the ed-care trainer.
a good meal\textsuperscript{1448} or the flax playthings Maori mothers of the Awhina Whanau make for their children. Regardless of whether assertions are approbative or antagonistic, whatever children may hear about God’s ‘otherness’, his perfection, purity, beauty and worthiness for worship, will partly be gauged against the way the environments with which children are provided reflect such characteristics. Once again, media representation of artefacts seldom compares with the experience of the reality.

The biblical ideal is that children encounter the work of God’s Spirit in response to the creative artefacts of faith. This point is a major focus of Orthodox thinking on the Christian upbringing of children. Taking a child into a church, or giving them a crucifix is not seen as, of itself, bringing them to faith. Nevertheless, such devices may serve as a focus for the Spirit’s work. While these would not be within the boundaries of secular ed-care, the spiritual influence of artefacts is wider in scope and may as well be alienating as edifying. Ed-carers have to be concerned for the quality of the cities, towns and suburbs, the buildings, houses and settings, to which children, and particularly the children of minority and marginalised groups, are exposed as directly relevant to their spiritual development. Also germane are the nature of the arts and crafts, and manufacturing design in the community. Ed-care concern for creative quality has to encompass the architecture, furnishings, artwork, books, music and activity materials provided for children. There is a need to encourage the positive expression of human creativity; not uncritically, but actively promoting that which enriches the human spirit.

Children ‘catch’ more than one may expect from the constructed environment. Artefacts manifest, or are used to declare, human values which are often otherwise inarticulate. Consequently, with the memories of the objects they know in childhood, people imbibe their most fundamental bases for evaluating the material world. What people make and choose to live amongst expresses what is important to them, and this can be at the level of the toy made in the shed, or the salads prepared for the barbecue. Just as significant is the way they undertake the act of creation and the presentation of what they have made. Children receive powerful unspoken messages about what is

\textsuperscript{1448} The life enhancing character of good cooking is portrayed in the film \textit{Babette’s Feast}. Even spirits gluttoned with solid Lutheran teaching and hymnody needs the expansion that comes from

398
worth valuing from what caregivers possess and how they possess. They also perceive their own value reflected in the quality of what is provided for them. This does not always require expenditure; an artefact made lovingly by an ed-carer for their children may offer more of spiritual worth than a more functional and expensive manufactured good purchased from a catalogue. This does not deny the value of excellence in creation; God was represented as making a positive evaluation of his own work. (Genesis 1:31) This is why Wolf is correct in saying:

When children come into contact with an art masterpiece (or reproduction thereof), it is a far deeper experience for them than looking at a cute little commercial image. In fine art they meet an expression of the artist’s spirit. Like Montessori, I believe that children can sense when something is more worthy of observation, “something more beautiful than that which they see in ordinary pictures.”

Where the human values expressed by artefacts are derived from transactions with the Holy Spirit, even if unrecognised, they allow children to experience, and be part of, an environment shaped by his influence. However, Scripture makes it clear that children live in a fallen world and not all that is made is beautiful or delightful. Where the values expressed have such another spiritual source, they isolate children from that exposure to God’s Spirit. The real spiritual power of the idol, to direct the person away from the nature of God, is not to be underestimated and encompasses far more than religious statuary.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

Of central importance in the developing spirituality of children in ed-care are their transactions with other people as expressed in cultural groups, social group environments and interpersonal relationships.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

In a very real sense a culture is a spiritual force. It seems to operate as an IDS in its own right. As such it is hierarchically ordered to constrain the subsidiary cultures of

1449 Wolf, A. D. (1996), op. cit., p.148. One may be permitted a degree of cynicism of the process which defines a ‘masterpiece’, and whether all art so designated would attract children’s approbation.
groups and institutions. Even individuals are entrained by their culture, a process usually termed cultural identity. Ed-care settings form such cultures. They seek to entrain children’s cultural identity. Yet they are themselves entrained by higher order systems, such as educational bureaucracy and politics. Nevertheless, their products reciprocally contribute to the nature of those higher systems.

Biblical teaching suggests that the degree to which children develop a mature and positive spirituality depends on the extent to which they identify with a culture which embodies the values of God’s Kingdom. While the OT saw the nation state of Israel as that culture, in the New Testament it is churches. Each is seen as the physical extension of the Spirit of God, though both were known to fall short of that calling. However, as Paul argued, (Acts 17:26-28) to the extent that other cultures transmit the same values, they too may contribute to developing a positively oriented spirituality. But any culture may fail to fulfil God’s intent and foster a destructive spirituality. Prophets railed against Israel’s failure to live as the bride or child of God. Paul’s letters and the Book of Revelation indicate that churches were not fully christened. The values of cultural groups and sub-groups which claimed to be Christian had to be continually subjected to evaluation of their congruity with their founding Spirit. The biblical authors were not squeamish about applying the same scrutiny to other cultures. Relativist arguments that exempt cultural practices, including those of minority religious and secular groups, from critique are disallowed by Scripture. However, that critique must be based on the nature and demands of God’s righteous Spirit and not on cultural assumptions which are not biblically substantiable. The OT prophets saw God’s requirements for righteous behaviour as absolutes which extended to the surrounding nations. They were fierce in their denunciations of destructive cultural practices. Even if it is an integral part of a people’s religion, the victimisation of children, such as child sacrifice, genital mutilation or ritual prostitution, is evil and was condemned as such. Any aspect of any culture which has destructive consequences in children’s lives is of genuine spiritual concern. The culture of ed-care has to be similarly interrogated if its spiritual task is to be fulfilled. Children’s emotional stability

1450 Or ‘subculture’ as they are embedded within and reflect a broader cultural environment.

1451 Though the discourse is cast in the language of ‘powers’, ‘angels’ and ‘gods’ rather than that of ‘culture’, they represent conceptual equivalents.
can be sacrificed to the gods of academic success, their bodies to the fires of sporting achievement, their playfulness to the prescriptions of organisational rigidity.

The spiritual aspects of a culture constitute its ‘ethos’. It is the corporate expression of the individuals who, through time, have been part of its collective life. It establishes the norms of behaviour and attitude within the culture. Children become enculturated primarily to the norms of the cultural groups within which they are raised. Such norms operate at an ethnic or national level but also at the level of various communities within that wider group down to the level of families. Enculturation starts too early to nominate, and is continually reinforced. It contributes radically to the way children identify their essential being. It is next to impossible to set aside. There are many second and third generation Australians who remain proudly Greek, Jewish or Chinese and have no desire to surrender that cultural heritage. However, many discover how ‘Australian’ they have also become on trips ‘home’. Children of minority groups whose culture is devalued by the dominant community feel that devaluation at a very personal level.

As cultures, ed-care settings also enculturate, primarily to the values of the dominant national culture but also to a set of norms derivative of the local community’s values, professional ethics, organisational pragmatics and the setting’s history through time. For children to identify with the setting implies comfort with its cultural norms and many find no difficulty in this. The difficulties some children have in ed-care may be sourced to spiritual conflict between the setting and ethnic or household culture. For instance, Chrysostom argues that:

If a child learns a trade, or is highly educated for a lucrative profession, all is nothing compared to the art of detachment from riches; if you want to make your child rich, teach him this. He is truly rich who does not desire great possessions, or surrounds himself with wealth, but who requires nothing... 1452

Children who are multiply spiritually entrained to discordant cultures will be in a state of conflict unless they can manage a phase transition which creates a partial insulation between the alternative systems which the child operates at home and in ed-care. Because they are spiritually open most children do adapt, but their facility to do so
depends on how consistent the ethos is and therefore how explicitly its norms are articulated.

In every culture one finds an admixture of good and evil. The closer the norms of cultures which include children are to biblical norms, the closer their identity will be to what God requires of them, and the converse applies. This says nothing about their standing with God. While they are children, all children remain acceptable to God, regardless of how destructively they behave in expressing cultural identity, as, for instance, a child encultured by a violent and criminal household. Where culture and belief are tightly bound together, God does not condemn children for sharing the beliefs of a culture alienated from him, even though they do bear the inescapable negative repercussions of that alienation. Rather, in drawing them to himself, his Spirit draws on whatever good to which they have been acculturated and helps them prune the evil that has been part of the same experience. This is often a long and painful process, and frequently unsuccessful unless an alternative independent system of identification with values closer to God’s intent can be established. This applies to acculturation to belief systems such as religions other than Christianity, spiritualism, secular humanism and materialism, as well as the culture of an ed-care environment. However, it is clear from Scripture that such cultures will usually act more strongly to alienate from God than to draw children to him. It may also apply to children from a ‘christian’ group or household which may enculturate intolerance, arrogance, fear of others, social isolation, hopelessness or even terror of the God who offers them nothing but loving acceptance. One has to sympathise with the inarticulate wisdom of the parents who drove Jonathon Edwards from his pulpit for terrorising their children.²⁴⁵³

The nature of the ethos of the ed-care to which they are exposed is vital for children’s spiritual development. It can reinforce the Godward aspects of other cultural identifications, and offer an alternative source of identification allowing children to experience, and for a time become part of, something different from a destructive and demeaning family or group culture. It may even allow them to free themselves from the

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deleterious aspects of that other culture. If the ed-care ethos is to act as a positive redemptive spiritual influence, ed-carers in the setting continually have to renew the culture by affirming those norms which are attuned to the Spirit of God\textsuperscript{1454} and challenging those which alienate children from that identity. Consequently, the setting’s ethos, the ‘school spirit’, cannot be accepted as a given. It must be open to rigorous examination if ed-carers are serious about fostering children’s spirituality and wish that spirituality to be following a trajectory towards spiritual maturity. One sound basis would be a checklist based on the Galatians catalogue of spiritual fruit, as below:

- Do those who are part of the setting sense that they are loved, or are they treated with contempt or indifference?
- Is the setting a place of joy or is the experience dreary or distressing?
- Is there a consciousness of peace or does stress or anger predominate?
- Do limitations generate patience or frustration and disdain?
- Are people treated with kindness or is there a harsh or unfeeling approach?
- Is integrity valued in both personal and scholastic dealings or does deceit and machination pass uncontested?
- Are members of the community trusted and trustworthy or must everything be secured and monitored?
- Are people gentle with one another or is abusive behaviour tolerated?
- Is there a quality of self-control or are people controlled and manipulated or exposed to tantrums and pretensions?

Even if aspects of this list are contested, the reasons for that can be discussed to provide insight into what it is which constitute the setting’s cultural norms.

Such self-evaluation requires confident and sensitive administrative leadership. The edition of \textit{Educational Administration Quarterly} which dealt with spirituality in leadership seems to have been stimulated by doubts as to the capacity of administrators to provide such leadership:

Bolman and Deal (1995) believe that “most management and leadership development programs ignore or demean spirit”\textsuperscript{p.167}. Starratt and Guare (1995) agree:

\textsuperscript{1454} Though they may not identify them as such, only recognising their essential goodness.
"The problem is that ... in administrator preparation programs, we find no mature handling of the spirituality of teaching or the spirituality of leadership. One of the main reasons, of course, is that education is considered an applied social science. The language of science does not admit, or at least was not used to admitting, the language of spirituality". (p.196)\(^{1455}\)

Obviously the personal qualities of the leadership in the setting is critical. Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell & Capper call for "spiritually guided leadership" signifying from the literature that this requires, "...self-study, including one's shadow side, which results in a respect and reverence for others, a belief and trust in human greatness and potential, and an ability to use life's wounds and fears to grow and lead".\(^{1456}\) The value of this secular Methodism can hardly be denied, but one has to suggest that it remains deficient without a focus on a goodness which transcends what one may find in oneself.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

In criticising the "OFSTED approach to spiritual development", Astley & Francis suggest it, "is gripped by the notion of individuality and the problem of the individual's reflexive relationship to herself ... there is a complete lack in Government literature of any mention of neighbour love, or (to use an equally biblical word) justice."\(^{1457}\) There is a corporate aspect to spirituality and one cannot consider it in the context of ed-care without considering the dynamics of group behaviour.

Biblical teaching suggests that, to develop a mature and positive spirituality, children require participation in those aspects of human social life which are both the outcome and evidence of the Spirit's presence and work amongst people. Only thus can they have direct experience of the qualities of the Person to whom they belong. Quintessentially that occurs in Christian assembly where Jesus' presence is promised. (Matthew 18:20) However, it is not enough that children be part of a church; the church has to be living out the work of God's Spirit. By extension, the Holy Spirit's work in other groups can allow them to have a positive spiritual impact. Jesus' fiery interaction with one group who, "believed in him", (John 8:30-59) is evidence enough that the nature


\(^{1456}\) ibid., p.231.

of the corporate spirit is more relevant than public affiliation.

Without such experiences, the joyful, hopeful and compassionate nature of God remains an abstraction, his essential goodness is disembodied, and children will find it harder to recognise his presence in their own lives. The greater the exposure children have to the Spirit of God at work in the groups to which they belong; in particular, the more they are exposed to the Spirit at work in a group of Christian believers; the more they are able to participate in a shared experience of the living activity of Christ. Without experiences of group spirituality which bears the fruit of God’s Spirit, whatever is taught about the immanence of God will have little grounding in the child’s experience of reality. The Spirit, working through children’s participation in particular social environments, gives substance to the promise of God’s intimate presence. This may occur in families, in congregations or their secular equivalents, even in informal and occasional groups. The distinctive importance of the Christian household or group lies in the particular nature of the post-Pentecost experience of the Holy Spirit.1458 This deepest level of spiritual encounter is not only beyond the purview of any secular ed-care setting but, being so intimately related to the specific claims of Christianity as a religion, it would be inappropriate in that context. But as argued earlier that does not exhaust the range of encounters with God’s Spirit nor discount the operation of spiritual evil in group situations.

The less the social environments encountered by children reflect the influence of God’s Spirit, the more difficult they will find it to be at ease in his presence. But spiritual evil can operate more directly through this medium. One has only to consider how many of the terms for groups have negative connotations.1459 Groups behave in destructive ways which their individual constituents would never independently contemplate but to which they become entrained by the spiritual forces which emerge in the group setting.

Children will be exposed both to spiritual good and spiritual evil in all groups to which they belong. Their household is most critical, but they will also experience the conflict in other gatherings with adults, as well as in ed-care classes, play groups, clubs, gangs

1458 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; Galatians 5:16-26.
1459 Bunfight, camp, clique, cohort, crowd, crush, front, gaggle, gang, horde, huddle, mob, outfit, pack, press, push, rabble, ruck, scrum, set, squeeze.
and cliques. Experiencing both the good and the evil gives substance to the choices of life direction children may make. Nevertheless, the stronger the positive spiritual influences in their group experiences, the better it is for children. Consequently, Jesus’ call for the Jewish people to recognise their rôles as ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in the world has been translated into a call to Christians to be so in all such environments. (Matthew 5:13-16)\textsuperscript{1460} The ‘goodness’ of those aspects of group life which are directed by God’s Spirit is contrasted with the other aspects of the life of those groups. All children need to experience the fruits of the Spirit in social relationships wherever possible because they will certainly also experience the fruits of ‘self-indulgence’.

Where children’s social groups are highly destructive in their spirituality, as in an abusive family constellation or acrimonious break-up, or a peer group based on power competition and bullying, the effect on their spirituality will be likely to be gravely negative. There are evident implications for ed-care. Effort put into social education has relevance beyond the development of social skill and understanding. If it can engender approaches to group behaviour within the setting which are positive and affirming of all group participants it affects not just social behaviour, but developing spirituality. Group behaviours like bullying, victimisation, exclusion, scapegoating, power assertion, etc, cannot be tolerated. A ‘win-at-all-costs’ mentality and intolerance of ‘losers’ has no place in a setting which is trying to foster a positive spirituality. In this, meetings of staff are just as relevant as playground and class groups as all feed into the wider system of the setting’s culture.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ed-care is based on relationships between individuals, primarily ed-carers and children. The nature and quality of those relationships is crucial to spiritual development. To be wholly understood, God’s Word has to become incarnate. It is in relationship with other people that principles of goodness and evil are given skin. To develop a mature and positive spirituality, children require relationships with individuals who treat them as God would. The mediation of caring individuals translates the kindness of God into living reality. It is through people that God appeals to people to be reconciled to him. (2

\textsuperscript{1460} It is instructive that Jesus refers to ‘salt of the earth’ and ‘light of the world’ rather than ‘salt of the synagogue’ and ‘light of the nation’.

406
Corinthians 5:20) Paul asks Timothy to remember not only what he has been taught but also, “who your teachers were.” The Bible consistently describes people’s relationships with God by analogies to human relationships, of which only conjugal love lies beyond the experience of children.\textsuperscript{1461}

So an important factor in children being able to find a personal foundation for their spirituality, is the quality of the relationships which children share. The orientation of their spirituality will be strongly shaped by those relationships. The more children are exposed to relationships which bear the fruit of the Spirit; the more they learn to value and desire those features of relationships; the easier they will find it to enter into their own acknowledged relationship with the Spirit. The less children’s relationships bear these marks, particularly their relationships with Christians, the harder they will find it to apprehend the Spirit as personal and form a personal identification with him. Working through the Godly aspects of children’s relationships to other individuals, the Spirit reveals the sort of relationship God desires to forge with them.

Most books on ministry to children cited earlier emphasise relationships, even if only to advise the worker to point children away from themselves and towards Jesus. While Scripture implies that it is ideal for children to share positive affirmative relationships with persons of genuine and conscious Christian spirituality, it is obvious that there are those at the heart of churches and fellowships who fail to express God’s Spirit in relationship, especially to children in their care. Equally, it can be argued that there are those who live far beyond the walls of the Christian community whose relationships are nevertheless ornamented with fruit indicative of the work of God’s Spirit. As the Consultative Group on Ministry among Children says:

For the fortunate children, however, from caring homes, whether their parents be Christian or not, it is true that in early childhood the grace of God can be known mainly through the mediation of parents.\textsuperscript{1462}

Though their focus is parents, the principle generalises to other relationships, as argued above, especially those with ed-carers.

\textsuperscript{1461} This is not to deny that some relational terms used in the Bible may become culturally alien in societies which differ significantly from Ancient Near Eastern societies.

\textsuperscript{1462} Consultative Group on Ministry among Children (1984), \textit{op. cit.}, p.17.
It is both necessary and inevitable that children share relationships which mirror characteristics of the divine relationship. To survive childhood, they must have been offered nurture, and they will have nurtured others; if only a doll, or a pet. They will have been forgiven and have forgiven. They will have been chosen, and have chosen others. These features of relationships define the child's understanding of how relationships work, including relationships to spirits. There is a difference between the experience of 'word', and the experience of 'word-become-flesh'. To really know divine love, to flesh out its meaning, children require the experience of human love. To know what God's trustworthiness means, children require relationships with trustworthy humans. Human forgiveness is a prerequisite to children really understanding divine forgiveness. Perhaps only the righteous anger of the betrayed person allows children to see the reality described as the 'wrath of God'.

On the other hand, relationships form a key area for evil spiritual influences to impact upon them. It is people who hate, who abuse, who ignore, who are cruel, unforgiving and rejecting. Children whose experience of humans, who are made in God's image, is negative and destructive, are not going to find it easy to believe that God is interested in them experiencing life in all its fullness. Children will occasionally encounter people who deliberately set out to destroy their openness to belief in God, but such attitudes are rare. More people are simply careless; the quality of their relationship with children thoughtlessly failing adequately to express the love God intends the young to experience. Too many children exit ed-care with memories of staff who left them emotionally bruised and abused.

The remedy for poor relationships lies essentially with the individual ed-carer but there are broader implications. Setting administrators need to be concerned not only for the quality of their own relationships but also for the relationships entered into between

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1463 The relationships many children experience are appalling. But if they know no relationships with Godlike characteristics, they could not survive. Of course, many do not; the ultimate expression of spiritual evil.

1464 This is particularly damaging if the people also claim to be followers of his Son. Children will not want to relate to God if they do not find joy and fulfilment in relating to those who claim his Spirit. Consequently the church must always act immediately and sternly when there is evidence of its members physically, sexually or emotionally abusing children for whom they are responsible.
staff and amongst children. Even relationships with and between parents need consideration.\textsuperscript{1465} While the difficulties are recognised, pre-service education and staff selection must recognise the importance of relational skills in ed-carers.

**THE PÆDAGOGY**

Many implications for a pædagogy which stimulates spiritual development have been drawn in previous sections and will not be reiterated. However, some other issues need to be highlighted.

The first is the relationship of spiritual development to space and time. As intimated earlier, the ed-carer is not in control of when or where a child's spirit will generate a question, receive an insight or even undergo a phase shift. Realisation of this undergirds the OT approach which, Richards notes, focussed on education by parents: "In the Old Testament ideal instruction is never isolated from life experience, either by time (to take place at a special hour) or by place (to take place in a special classroom)."\textsuperscript{1466} Wolf makes a parallel point: "This nurturing takes place, not every Tuesday at 10 o’clock, but whenever spiritual moments occur..."\textsuperscript{1467} When that moment occurs it should be unmistakable:

> It is the end of a long day - 5:15 P.M. One tired teacher is dragging two trikes to the toy shed. Kalitia is running by. “Look!” she suddenly screams. The teacher looks at her. Kalitia is turned straight west into a most incredibly glorious sunset. It is magnificent! She is speechless. She goes over to Kalitia. They just stand there ... very still ... in awe ... sharing a special moment together.\textsuperscript{1468}

No doubt there are ed-carers so dismissive of the spiritual that they would have continued to pack up, just as there are ed-carers who fail to understand a child being moved by sunlight on spider-webs, or oppressed by dehumanising images from a violent video.\textsuperscript{1469} That lack of response may still feed into the child’s spiritual development but it will be deleterious rather than enhancing.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1465] My son, a neophyte teacher, had to deal with a prolonged mutual physical assault by two mothers in front of his class.
\end{footnotes}
One does have to take issue with Richards implication that ed-care instructs in isolation from “life experience”. This is a blinkered adult view. For children ed-care is a significant element of their life experience. A pædagogy for spirituality needs to be lived out and articulated in the daily routines of ed-carers’ lives: arriving in the morning, walking the corridors, supervising unstructured time, conducting classes, coaching teams, socialising with colleagues; departing after a day’s work. Spiritual pædagogy is not constrainable to the walls of a classroom, the duration of a lesson or the parameters of a curriculum area. It consists of the studied determination of the ed-carer to live a public life ornamented by their own responsiveness to God’s Spirit. This should be expected of the Christian ed-carer, but there is no necessity to be committed to the person of Jesus to be used by the Spirit to bear his fruit.

There is a tendency, reflected again in Richards’ quote, to identify religious formation with ‘instruction’. This is certainly not the case with a pædagogy for spirituality and also misrepresents the biblical model he claims as authority. The key to biblical education was not learning of doctrine but experiencing, questioning and pondering symbolic narratives, many of which were doctrinally ambiguous and some of which bordered on the surreal. What it primarily engaged was the reflective imagination of the child. Parents were to respond to their children’s questions not with ‘answers’ but with accounts of God’s history with their people. Cavalletti understands the importance of narrative and symbol:

The Liturgy has always spoken through ‘signs’; and Jesus taught only ‘in parables’ (Mark 4:34). Biblical religion is the religion of the unknowable and transcendent God, Who reveals Himself; this apparent contradiction is resolved in the sign. It has been said that a sign is “a thing which indicates another thing different from itself”; Saint Augustine said of the sign: “you see one thing, you understand another from it”. This is so, not because of an ambiguity of logic or an incapacity for clarity, but because of the sign’s richness of meaning and ability to open ever wider horizons of the real. 1470

The human spirit certainly operates through conscious intellectual sub-systems, like logic. But it also operates through sub-conscious systems, some intellectual, like intuition, others emotional or even more basic. The frequent references to creativity and

the arts in the literature of spiritual education reflects not some mystical property inherent in them, but rather their ability to reach, disclose and allow scope to those less accessible or acceptable components of the human spirit. That is why, often to ed-carers’ distress, children frequently express the residue of destructive spiritual encounters. Unfortunately, the response is often to ban ‘those’ topics or suggest the child use brighter colours.

Part of the pedagogy has to be to allow children to employ their imagination so new information can be incorporated into subconscious systems. This should not just apply to ‘humanities’ but to other serious intellectual pursuits. The book from which the term ‘extelligence’ was earlier borrowed, is a good example, interweaving a materialist cosmology with an alternative based on the accidental creation of the universe in one of their laboratories by the Magicians of the Unseen University in a universe where magic rules, and scientists are considered dangerously occult. Sophie’s world offers a similarly imaginative study of the history of philosophy.

If ed-carers allow imaginative reflection on the world about which they teach they need to be prepared for the deep expressions of spirit which may be engendered and ready to engage both the light and darkness that contend for children’s spirits.

A related issue is the need for time free from task orientation where child may contemplate the meaning of what they are learning. The ed-carer may model such reflection in group settings, but to allow learning to become integrated with their spirit, children need opportunity for individual consideration. Wolf is moving in the right direction despite a limited romantic view of what constitute the ‘mysteries’ which may contribute to spirituality:

Because the spirits of children are not truly nourished by pre-packaged answers, cold facts or even routine presentations of materials, they need opportunities to ponder some of the mysteries.

1471 E.g., Willis, G. (2000), op. cit.
Real wisdom as to a pedagogy that will allow this to occur is offered by Erricker and is quoted at length with some editorial reflections inserted:

Our research (Erricker et al. 1997), viewed alongside that of David Hay and Rebecca Nye (1996), and Elaine McCreery (1996), over the last four years, emphasises the importance of listening to children’s narratives as the foundation for understanding their ‘spirituality’. [That is because it is how they formulate their spirituality.] The evidence suggests that narrative is composed on the basis of the imagination coupling with cognitive schematisation to produce ‘predictive assimilation’ or an intelligible explanation of events, drawn from the particular child’s experience, interpreted by means of metaphorical formulations. This, in turn, suggests that the way forward, in curriculum terms, is to encourage children to express, reflect on, and coherently organise an account of their experience such that it provides a meaningful account or ‘plot’. This will necessarily be informed by their enculturation or nurturing influences. This starting point in engaging with ‘spiritual’ development lays down no moral rules or credal formulas, delivered in the context of schooling, to which they must adhere, other than what pertains to the ethos the school seeks to develop. [By exempting the norms of the setting’s ethos or spirit this indicates that the spirit to be fostered has to be entrained to the school system, the appropriateness of which seems to be taken for granted.] In other words you start with the child and you develop a process that takes account of the responsibilities of citizenship. This is the reverse of a provision based upon devising a content driven curriculum structured upon either creedal [sic] formulas, secular or religious, or a notion of moral education that relates closely to the idea of moral instruction. It may be argued that the largess afforded by such a provision provides little guidance to the child. To this criticism we would respond that, in our experience, an injustice is done to the child’s sense of moral responsibility, provided that they are receiving adequate guidance from adults outside their schooling. If they are not, no amount of coercion [sic] will rectify established attitudes which are formed from a lack of positive relationships. 1475

The shift from ‘guidance’ to ‘coercion’ suggests an over-emphasis on the need to control those who bring to the ed-care system destructive behaviours developed elsewhere. The need to control behaviour is an institutional goal. Its only relevance to spiritual development lies in the spiritual encounter involved in the means of control. It misses the point that when narratives are mutually heard the opportunity for spiritual change occurs. Recounting narratives is in itself of limited value. It is as part of a recursive process where the child is encouraged to reflect on the narrative, to hear other narratives which suggest alternative realities and to explore those, allowing creation of a new cycle of narration that the opportunity for systemic change, for spiritual development occurs. Those other narratives may be religious, philosophical, social,

cultural, æsthetic or scientific. Children will use whatever narratives are available to assist them in meaning making. It is important, then, that the style of pedagogy is narrative rather than didactic; that educators present not barren facts and ideas, but facts and ideas contextualised in the story of how they were discovered and justified, and the story of how they impact on children’s worlds.

**THE CURRICULUM**

To develop a mature and positive spirituality, children must encounter words and ideas which make sense of, and give meaning to, other manifestations of his Spirit’s work. Otherwise, belief is divorced from truth, there can be no correction of error or fault, no advocacy of the genuine and the good, and they are deprived of the record of God’s self-revelation in the history and thinking of the Jewish people and the Church, and in other belief systems. In fact, it becomes impossible to communicate those beliefs which differentiate belief systems or which they hold in common.

The tension in the literature between providing a specific subject area dedicated to developing spirituality, usually termed religious education or similar, and insistence that spiritual matters need to be addressed across curriculum areas misconceives the issue. One may choose to do the former, but the latter is inevitable. The only question is whether they will be addressed well. As Hill says:

> The task addressed in this article is that of making connections between spirituality and religious education. Some might say the answer is obvious. Religious education is the way we cultivate spirituality. But that makes it look as if none of the other school subjects and activities have anything to do with spirituality. In fact, as will become clear, they are saturated with it.\(^{1476}\)

Palmer certainly agrees:

> Spiritual questions, rightly understood, are embedded in every discipline, from health to history, physics to psychology, entomology to English. ... Spirituality - the human quest for connectedness - is not something that needs to be ‘brought into’ or ‘added onto’ the curriculum. It is at the heart of every subject we teach, where it waits to be brought forth.\(^{1477}\)


Recognition of opportunities to enhance spiritual development can only occur if ed-
carers take the considerable pains necessary to reflect on their own areas:

...all teachers, regardless of their subject areas, can identify appropriate spiritual
experiences and consider components of the curriculum and conditions of
classroom instruction that are likely to evoke spiritual or transcendent
experiences.\textsuperscript{1478}

The experience of the Christian mathematics teachers described earlier\textsuperscript{1479} suggests that
this is not an easy task and it may truly test ed-carers for whom the language of
spirituality is foreign. It will be particularly difficult for science teachers committed to
a positivism which they wrongly assume is the defining feature of a scientific world
view. However, if spiritual development is to be nurtured, such difficulties must be
surmounted. Montessori offered a starting point with respect to natural science in early
childhood:

“If the idea of the universe would be presented to the child in the right way,”
Montessori wrote, “it will create in him admiration and wonder ... The stars, earth,
stones, life of all kinds form a whole in relation with each other, and so close is this
relation that we cannot understand a stone without some understanding of the great
sun! The child begins to ask, ‘How did it come into being, and how will it end?’
‘What am I?’ ‘What is our task in this wonderful universe?’ ‘Do we merely live
here for ourselves, or is there something more for us to do?’”\textsuperscript{1480}

At the risk of special pleading, the wider ed-care community might well consider
the early childhood field as offering some models for consideration. In particular, the spiral
pattern of exploration, reflection, narration, and group communication reiterating into a
new round of exploration, has much to offer. Preschool children think profoundly about
significant spiritual issues giving the lie to attitudes like that of Kao: “Preschool
children do comparatively little thinking for themselves about the nature of the world
because they rely on the authority of their elders.”\textsuperscript{1481} They do rely on their caregivers
for accurate information, but on that basis they think cogently in their own right. This is
often missed because adults fail to use the child’s perspective to gauge the significance
of their thoughts.

\textsuperscript{1479} Williamson, C. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{1480} Wolf, A. D. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.97.
\textsuperscript{1481} Kao C. C. L. (1981), \textit{op. cit.}, p.86.
Children are meaning makers and if the resources are available they will seek the spiritual meaning of the information with which they are provided. However, in essence, the issue comes down to the breadth of ed-carer’s own perspective; whether they can themselves see their disciplines in their wider context. They will not transmit a spiritual perspective in curriculum unless they have been encouraged and helped to develop their own understanding of its larger implications.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

The differences between jurisdictions in approaches to religious activities in ed-care is stark, ranging from the mandating of ‘worship’ in England to the Constitutional prohibition in the United States of America. Consequently, the former struggle with how to conduct assemblies for worship acceptable to a religiously diverse constituency and to a governmental inspectorate. In the latter, advocates of spirituality (or faith) have to argue that it is independent of religion and does not require religious activities in its expression.

If, as argued earlier religion is the “...system of doctrines, rituals and lifestyle developed by spiritual people in response to spiritual encounters to identify their meaning and guide their expression”, it is hard to see how spirituality and religion can be separated without doing violence to both. The issue is whether the nexus can be negotiated without offence to the children and families of local religious communities. From a biblical standpoint it is vitally important that children be exposed to words and ideas that express the gospel. Though these will be found in many sources, that means primarily that they must be given access to the Bible. This is an important issue that requires expansion, because it is not uncontested, even in Christian circles.

To inform children of the teachings which people have developed to explain spiritual encounters may be indoctrinatory, or it may be educational in the truest sense. In secular ed-care, to institute the first is unacceptable; to neglect the second is inexcusable. There are multiple systems of religious belief. To allow any one to exercise an exclusive right of access to children is a recipe for community unrest and for fostering dogmatic bigotry. This is a risk whether that monopoly is held by some variety of secular humanism, teaching exclusively that spirituality is no more than an expression of the nature of being human and that there is no higher order of existence with which to relate; or evangelical Christianity, teaching exclusively that spirituality is
to open one’s life to the ontological reality of the Holy Spirit and to abjure spiritual evil. Children have the right to critically explore the range of explanations extant in their community and beyond.\textsuperscript{1482} But it needs to be accomplished in a manner which recognises that the child’s spirit must be free to adopt, adapt or reject those explanations of what it has encountered. In this context, Cavalletti is right to suggest that children need hands-on experience of the formative narratives and texts of the traditions, or at least those that are publicly available.

On the basis of their significance, children’s exposure should include the Bible, the Koran, appropriate Buddhist and Hindu texts, and also key materialist texts like \textit{The origin of species}, and \textit{Das Kapital}.\textsuperscript{1483} Because of the numbers of Christians involved in ed-care and also their experience in spiritual nurture in other contexts most attention has been directed to the use of the Bible, and Christians would assert its pre-eminent value in spiritual development: “Bible stories are a reflection of ... the reality of an encounter with God. The stories are inspired, vivid, simple, having a real artistry of language. ... A well-told Bible story can become an experience introduced into the life of the child. It can produce an impression.”\textsuperscript{1484} Nevertheless, the principles involved in using the Bible with children extend to other texts. Cavalletti strikes the right note: “We present the good shepherd to children according to the method we usually use for parables, that is to say, with the greatest respect for the text, without adding anything other than what is found there.”\textsuperscript{1485}

For reasons that have little validity, some Christians object to allowing children to interact freely with Scripture, and sometimes to interact with it at all. The essence of their argument is that, without adult mediation of its message, children will misunderstand and, perhaps, be misled by the biblical text. It is feared that they will fail to grasp what its ‘real’ truth is. There are two main types of argument in support of this

\textsuperscript{1482} Departmental permission to implement in South Australia Christian Option programs, apologetic introductions to the Gospels, was met by a principal’s objection on the grounds that he would also have to let Buddhists and Muslims offer similar teaching to the children. Representatives of the sponsoring organisation, Scripture Union, argued that if they also applied an educational model and were transparent in their approach that he should. Permission was eventually granted.

\textsuperscript{1483} The need for developmental appropriateness is assumed.

\textsuperscript{1484} Kouلومzin, S. (1975), \textit{op. cit.}, p.48.

\textsuperscript{1485} Cavalletti, S. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.65.
The first is that children suffer from cognitive deficits which prevent them from fully understanding text intended for adults; that children think less effectively than adults and so cannot possibly develop appropriate understanding either at all, or, certainly, without adult intervention. The idea that they may be totally unable to comprehend adult concepts finds theoretical justification in the cognitive developmental theory of Jean Piaget. This highly influential theory took formal logic as its model of 'mature' thinking. Consequently, it consistently catalogues the ways that children's thinking falls short of that criterion. Amongst these deficits, Piaget identified such things as lack of abstract thinking, inability to reverse trains of thought, lack of conservation, egocentrism, centration, animism, and realism. Because of these deficits, and many similar, it is argued that all that children can gain from the Bible is a primitive and distorted understanding of its, supposedly, highly abstract and symbolic content.

The same conclusion is drawn on different premises by children's workers whose

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1487 Children can only think about concrete tangible things until late chronological childhood.

1488 For Piaget, the ability to reverse a thought sequence, and consequently to manipulate it, is the essential component of logicality. This is not held to appear until middle childhood.

1489 Conservation, another capacity appearing in middle childhood, is the ability to recognize that the essence of a phenomenon may remain constant though particular aspects of it change.

1490 By which Piaget meant the cognitive incapacity to take any perspective but one's own. It is seen as definitive of children's thinking until middle childhood but does not carry the popular connotation of selfishness.

1491 Yet another limitation of early childhood, this is inability to consider more than one aspect of a thing at a single time.

1492 This means attributing life, and such aspects of living beings as volition, to inanimate objects. Again this is held to persist throughout early childhood.

1493 This is the inability to see ideas as hypothetical or contingent. For example, the fact that there is a word 'god' means that there is a god-reality. Sky is called 'sky' because that is what it is. The 'wrongness' of murder, or lying, or driving on the wrong side of the road lies in inherent moral properties of the universe. Realism is escaped on entry into middle childhood.

1494 While not part of Piaget's own work, such thinking is most fully expressed in Goldman, R. (1964), *op. cit*. Long before Piaget the general position had been rebutted forcefully by Schleiermacher.
attitude emphasises correct adherence to a particular set of doctrinal formulations. They see the point of Bible reading as to lend authority to their teaching of those doctrines, and then to provide continual reaffirmation of them. Without adult guidance, either by direct explanation or by a written aid to interpreting the text, children may not acquire the sanctioned beliefs. For instance, at a conference discussion entitled ‘A biblical hermeneutic for children’ it was put to me that we should not be discussing how children may seek meaning in the text for themselves, but how to help adults discern what they should tell children that passages mean.

On either basis, this objection cannot be sustained. Piaget’s theory is increasingly subject to criticism and largely eclipsed by more sophisticated research methodologies which reveal children using intellectual strategies Piaget deemed impossible for them. It is not that children think as adults do, but concentrating on children’s failure to use abstract logic masks the understanding they can achieve through the abilities they do have. As previously argued, even children deficient in logic may have an intuitive grasp of the meaning of the teaching and events of the Bible. Indeed, so much of the Bible is narrative and poetry, rather than instruction and argument, intuition may be the more important capacity. The ‘false doctrine’ concern is also unsustainable outside a narrow parochialism that initially assumes that it has encapsulated the fullness of spiritual truth and then denies validity to all other insights. When authority is placed squarely in the Bible rather than its interpreters and it is recognised as the Spirit’s chosen vehicle, objections to children’s unmediated exposure to it evaporate. That is to not deny that there is value in adult assistance, nor a degree of sensitivity to developmental appropriateness, but children must be helped to interact


1496 It also ignores the reality that formal logic is little used in everyday life by adults who, apparently, have the ability to do so.

1497 In fact, on strictly logical grounds, some of the argument is better seen as appealing to intuition rather than formal reasoning.
directly with the text, rather than having preconceived meanings interposed between them and the text.

The second argument is that the cultural differences between the children of today and the context of the Bible will prevent them from understanding its ‘true’ meaning. It can reasonably be argued that without appropriate assistance to contextualise the material, children will necessarily interpret events and teaching in their own way and, consequently, misunderstand the meaning it had in the original cultural setting. This is equally true of adults. Recent scholarship has greatly enriched the understanding of the milieu out of which the Scriptures arose and to which they originally spoke. However, to conclude that children, lacking this contextual understanding, should not engage the Bible reflects a narrow historical perspective. If this assistance is necessary, rather than merely useful, questions are raised about the rôle of the Bible in the life of the church before the new scholarship became available. There have been mistakes, and the biblical text has been distorted by past failures to understand its background.¹⁴⁹⁸ Yet, for two millennia, Christians affirm that God has used the Bible to enliven his church and to call people, many of whom were children, to himself. If it were not the case that the Bible has this capacity to transcend human limitations, the church could have no confidence in any use of it. Tomorrow’s scholarship could demonstrate that today’s interpretations are as flawed as those of earlier times.

So, while children’s understanding of the Bible will benefit from being informed by increasing insight into the differences between its original cultural context and our own, the Spirit’s use of the Bible cannot be constrained by human scholarship. Children certainly appreciate adult help to understand material from unfamiliar contexts, including the Bible. However, that should not prevent them from being encouraged to read when such assistance is unavailable. Paul* said to Timothy, “...ever since you were a child you have known the holy scriptures...” (2 Timothy 3:15) While the world of today’s children is millennia away from that of the boy Timothy, the latter was still several centuries and numerous empires removed from the world of the OT. The urban racial and cultural melting pot of Asia Minor was far removed from the tribal clans fleeing from Egypt, from the rural villages of the hills of Israel and Judah during the

¹⁴⁹⁸ But far more often by the polemic need to justify a pre-existing belief not derived from the Bible.
kingdom period, and from the shattered remnant of the Babylonian captivity and exodus. While one should make every effort to help children with their understanding when they need it, it is essential that they be encouraged to hear God speak directly to them from the text, and not only through adult mediation.

The same process must apply to texts offering alternative explanations of spirituality. It is argued earlier that it is not only in the Bible that children can meet God’s Spirit in true words. The teachings of other religious traditions may convey truths important in drawing children towards a spirituality which bears the marks of God’s work in them for good. So may secular materials.

So a basic religious activity should be to hear narrative, where appropriate, and to read texts. Newby’s point is cogent, even though one may not share the emphasis given to text, particularly in dealing with younger children:

Children are not transformed through instruction, argument or any form of manipulation, but through their own engagement with powerful ideas and imagery. Only literature can mediate this, more so than film, or even drama. There has to be text, something to which one can return, out of which one can be free to picture for oneself, and free to create something of one’s own. Only text can generate imagery and concept in the mind. 1499

Oral narrative can do the all of this and has the additional characteristic that it may vary between tellings.

Such exploration needs to be based on having taught an appropriate hermeneutic allowing children to genuinely engage the content and to respond with a discriminating spirit once that capacity develops. This is similar to what Hill has proposed: “This calls for techniques of teaching and testing which enable students not only to learn about their own and other people’s beliefs, but also to evaluate the epistemological status of those beliefs and to seek the truth for themselves.” 1500 This is not always easy for the ed-carer as children may find in the material answers that the adult finds hard to recognise as inherently there. As Gobbel & Gobbel say:

Children can experience the Bible. They can think, feel, and wonder about it. They will come to their own understandings of biblical passages. There is no reason to expect or assume that children will or can achieve the same understandings that adults may. Rather, we would expect children's understandings to be very unlike those of adults. Instead of labelling children's understandings as 'misunderstandings', (as does Goldman) we need to recognize, first of all, that we are considering differences of understanding. Those differences result from a number of factors. If we can accept children's understandings of biblical material as belonging to the children, as being valid and adequate for them at the moment, and as being different from those which adults may have, rather than judging them as 'wrong' or as 'misunderstandings,' we can honour both the Bible as a book by and for adults and children's understandings of it.\textsuperscript{1501}

The Gobbels do not specify the nature of the difference except in cognitive developmental terms but a systems perspective would suggest that children interpret biblical material differently because they have not developed a 'religion' sub-system which insulates the biblical narrative from the child's other narratives. It is entirely in character for a child without a religious background, on hearing uninterpreted the story of the woman who washed Jesus feet with her tears, (Luke 7:36-50) to spontaneously ask "Can Jesus forgive me like the woman?"; just as it is for the younger child to tell his parents that Jesus was run over by a truck (the only cross he knew was a cross-road).\textsuperscript{1502} This is also one of the keys to children's spiritual openness; spiritual input is not segregated from their cognitive, affective or conative characteristics. It will affect unexpected areas of what they think, how they feel and what they will do. And if it strays from what adults consider acceptable thinking, it seldom matters:

For a three-year-old, who is exposed to such faith in his environment, ‘God is’ in as real a sense as a cat or a dog, or darkness, or light. God may be identified with physical objects - an icon, a picture, the sky, Holy Communion. It is not a rational concept of God, but it is a genuine experience of God. Such a ‘sensual’ concept of God is more real to a very young child than any abstract definitions, however simply they are put. Any ideas we try to teach about God will probably be understood in the child’s own imagery, very different from the adult one. If we teach a three-year-old that ‘God made the flowers’ and ‘God made animals and the sun and me and you...’ the child may easily imagine God as a big man sitting down and fashioned all these things one by one. It really does not matter that he imagines God that way. As he grows older he will forget this particular visual image. But it does matter to him that an adult whom he trusts expresses in words an association between the things the child knows, touches, smells, tastes, hears and

\textsuperscript{1501} Gobbel, R. & Gobbel, G. (1986), \textit{op. cit.}, p.7.

\textsuperscript{1502} I have seen both of these examples.
God. Physical expressions of the presence of God in his immediate environment - icons, pictures, vigil lights, gestures, words, tastes, sounds - become part of the child’s experience. And a very young child has an immediate and strong sense of reality about anything he experiences. This vividness of perception and imagery seems to fade later.\footnote{Koulozmiz, S. (1975), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.20-21.}

It is not the ed-carer’s rôle to ensure children accept as true any particular religious stance. Nor is it appropriate for them to use religious narrative as a moral bludgeon.\footnote{“We’d just begun a family Bible time, which was a more or less frequent evening event. Paul was in eighth grade at the time. That night he was also in rebellion. After a time of sullen noncommunication, he finally expressed his feelings about our times with the Bible. ‘You and mom are always taking aim at me’, he complained.” [Richards, L. O. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.267.]} What a biblical perspective would require is that they encourage children to seek for themselves what is true and what is good in all these traditions because that is where God’s Spirit will be found. Palmer is right to suggest we:

...shake off the narrow notion that spiritual questions are always about angels or others or must include the word \textit{God}. Spiritual questions are the kind that we and our students ask every day of our lives as we yearn to connect with the largeness of life. Does my life have meaning and purpose? Do I have gifts that the world wants and needs? Whom and what can I trust? How can I rise above my fears? How do I deal with suffering, my own and that of my family and friends? How does one maintain hope? What about death?\footnote{Palmer, P. J. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.6,8.}

However, they can rightly be about angels or æthers, and even God, as anyone who listens sensitively to children will testify. What is important is that children respond to the narratives and texts with their own questions, not that they learn to reproduce the ed-carer’s answers. As Hill says: “It is time to let the Bible speak for itself, identifying passages relevant to the questions the seeker is actually asking.”\footnote{Hill, B. V. (1987), p.37.} The same is true for all narratives and texts once one realises that children genuinely are seekers:

The first step is to recognise that the religious quest is driven by a very real hunger for truth. Our students should be encouraged to pursue the quest, not to regard it as unnecessary. We should acquaint them with the way in which great humans have sought in every age to obtain the pearl of great price, even while we encourage critique of the adequacy and outcomes of the thought-systems which have resulted; for the pearl is truth, not just the striving.\footnote{Hill, B. V. (1995a). Considerations of social context. In B. V. Hill (Ed.) \textit{Studying the religious quest: Unit materials for E403 Religious Education}. Perth: Murdoch University, p.26.}
The concerns of minority religious groups about their religion being taught by unbelievers was indicated earlier and one can sympathise with their dilemma which closely parallels the situation involved in the teaching of Aboriginal Studies by non-Aborigines. It can be difficult for parents who would like to ensure what never can be certain:

Some earnest Christians ... desire ... to see their children grow smoothly into the faith they themselves hold dear, even if it means shielding them as much as possible from exposure to the other persuasive belief systems which are contending in the middle ground of our pluralistic society. But there is a strong likelihood that such a policy of protectionism will prove counterproductive. When you live in a pluralistic society, free trade is the order of the day. Truth claims compete for customers.\textsuperscript{1508}

While one may suggest that the matter is down to the professionalism of the ed-care profession, that is idealistic. It is hard to imagine a person antagonistic to religion approaching the religious narratives with anything like enthusiasm. Of course, the obverse applies; it would be difficult for a creationist to fairly narrate an evolutionary account of life. But this is only part of the story and underestimates the child-spirit's ability to respond to the narrative itself. What Richards says of the Bible is likely to be true also of alternative narratives children encounter: "Some children have heard Bible stories in cold, impersonal settings, with none of the dynamics of the faith community. And some of these boys and girls have been awakened to faith anyway."\textsuperscript{1509}

Children's responses must be allowed to be authentically their own. The approach that flows from White's humanist perspective is entirely consistent with the biblical perspective in so far as it goes:

However, in many schools the form of words used is: 'I am going to read a prayer, or a thought, from the Christian (or Hindu or Humanist) tradition. When I have finished we shall have a quiet minute during which you can make the prayer your own, or respond to it in your own way by reflection or meditation.' A procedure of that kind allows for the individual responses of the diverse group a school collects together and is thus genuinely \textit{collective}.\textsuperscript{1510}

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\footnote{1508}{Hill, B. V. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.9.}
\footnote{1509}{Richards, L. O. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.385.}
\footnote{1510}{White, J. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.38.}
\end{footnotes}
But it does not go far enough. Spirit is not ‘collective’ but ‘corporate’. White’s position maintains the “paradigms of inner space, the inner self, inner feelings and inner meanings and ... introspective method” criticised by Thatcher.\textsuperscript{1511} To end where White does denies that emergent reality of shared spirituality. The necessary extra step has to be to allow the children to respond publicly. This could be by discussion, by creative acts shared with the group, or by being free to add what they want to say to the ‘prayer’. In this context a group spirituality can express itself.

The rôle of the ed-carer is to choose the narratives to which children are exposed and provide the structure which allows the cycle of exploration, reflection, narration, and group communication suggested above. While there is an argument for presenting only ‘wholesome’ narratives, especially in the early years before discrimination develops, if the process is appropriately established children can cope with meatier fare. Cavalletti would omit the ‘thief’ theme from earliest tellings of the Good Shepherd parable but introduce it once the children had spent time playing with the ideas of the shepherd, the sheep and the sheepfold. She warned repeatedly against underestimating the profundity of children’s spiritual capacities. One wonders whether any religion can be represented fairly without dealing with the reality of life, including violence, death and sacrifice.

It seems irrelevant whether religious activities occur in the context of a school assembly, a ‘religious education’ class, or other situation. Children need input which will allow them to provide a structure for understanding and expressing their spirituality. They also need opportunity to encounter other spirits involved in the same journey. To avoid religion does not prevent spirituality from developing but it does create a ‘dumb’ and frustrated spirit. Well done, religious education, ‘worship’ or the like can help develop spirits which are understanding of others, tolerant of difference, appreciative of the strengths of alternatives and yet secure in their own belief systems and able to articulate them.

THE NURTURE

The use of ‘educative care’ throughout this dissertation signalled not just that early childhood and out of school hours care were included in its scope but also that, with

\textsuperscript{1511} Thatcher, A. (1991), \textit{op. cit.}, p.226.
children, the educational process cannot be separated from the provision of care. Education always nurtures as well as instructs.

At a basic level God’s grace is expressed in everyday grace. Children share the essential goodness of God’s intentions towards humanity in receiving the gifts that he gives daily. (Matthew 6:11,25-34; Luke 11:3) These gifts are both given directly and through loving caregivers as intermediaries. Children encounter God in ongoing exposure to experiences which reflect the real nature of his caring: wholesome nourishment and warm comfort, shelter and security, and surprises and moments of delight. From a biblical viewpoint, it is ideal if these are associated with people identified with God but, regardless, they serve as a source of relationship with God. Children encounter his Spirit at work in the everyday good experiences of life.

Being available to all children, these encounters will act in the same way for all. The more children are raised in caring environments that meet their needs and the kinder the world proves itself to be to them, the better they are placed to recognise the essential goodness and grace of God. Children will find it hard to believe that the Creator is good and kind if his creation has not been. The Biblical material implies that the Spirit uses the experiences children have of loving care and provision to allow them to trust God to meet their needs.

An ed-carer does not have to be a Christian in order to offer the sort of providential care that accomplishes the will of God. In the same way, there are many parents without Christian conviction whose attention to their children’s needs is wholesome and attractive; just as there are parents in the church who fail their children in this:

My father took Matthew 5:48 literally and seriously - be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. To implement this requirement he made sure we never sinned and when we did he cleansed us with his belt or a stick or electric wires, an umbrella, his fist, his feet, whatever was close to him. We were beaten until his arm got tired and we were beaten daily in the name of God because we sinned daily. The words evildoer, carnal, daughter or son of the devil, were yelled at us along with stupid, idiot, good for nothing, dummy, empty brain and others. Very often we were beaten two or three times a day. I ran away twice when I was six.  

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Positive care and regard for children is a powerful spiritual force wherever it is found and however it is motivated; just as are neglect and abuse in all their forms from all their sources. Without providential care, life is robbed of joy and the assertion of God’s love for people rings hollow.

“What’s to become of Miss Hilary now, with her mother and father gone so quick, and her only fifteen, and nobody to keep her in check? I don’t hold with girls being left to look after themselves. They’re troublesome at the best and they didn’t ought to have their parents took away from them.”

“We mustn’t question the ways of Providence,” said the Rector.

“Providence?” said the old woman. “Don’t yew talk to me about Providence. I’ve had enough o’ Providence. First he took my husband, and then he took my ’taters, but there’s One above as’ll teach him to mend his manners, if he don’t look out.”1513

Dorothy Sayers’ humour relies on the realisation that ‘providence’, the word for God’s generous daily goodness to people, had come to be used as an excuse for life’s vicissitudes; a christian parallel to the Muslim ‘Imshi Allah!’1514 God’s goodness is often shrouded by experiences which seem inconsistent with that benevolence. The ‘problem of pain’ is not only an intellectual debate between Christian apologists and ‘agnostics’; it is a daily obstacle placed between many children and God.

That children go to bed hungry is not just a welfare issue. It is a spiritual issue. That children come to ed-care without having had breakfast is not just a social or political matter. It is a spiritual matter. Child abuse is not just a personal or legal offence. It is a spiritual offence. Behind each of these, and many similar, is a set of attitudes which devalues children and denies them the care and respect that the Bible indicates is their right. Such attitudes may be personal, social or systemic. In any event, they are a consequence and source of spiritual evil.

This is particularly serious when those who are party to such attitudes, and allow, or especially, commit, the offences that flow from them, are identified with God, or fulfil a rôle where they should represent his intent that children receive loving care. Most damage to children’s spirituality is done by parents and substitutes, and many children are left with a real struggle to accept the idea that God could care for them. If even your

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1514 It is the will of Allah.
caregivers do not love you enough to care for and protect you, how can you believe that God does, especially if, as seems clear from Scripture, it was he that placed you in their charge. Some children are left with such anger towards parents that to refer to God as ‘Father’ is a repulsive rather than attractive description of their relationship to him.

As ed-carers play an increasing rôle in children’s lives, with children spending increasing time with them, and with their function extending into personal, social, moral and spiritual spheres, these same issues arise for them. As God is Father, he is also Teacher. (Matthew 23:10)

**THE CONTEXT**

The ed-care system is a sub-system of broader societal systems. Children are also part of broader systems and are entrained by the attractors of those systems while under their influence. These are not necessarily conducive to positive spiritual growth. “Many people today, teachers as well as children, lack a social context which gives permission for a relaxed and easy acceptance of their spirituality.” Ed-care cannot ensure a healthy spiritual outcome for children. It can contribute by providing an environment conducive to encounters with God’s Spirit but it is only one of several systems by which children are influenced. Most critical is each child’s family system or systems, but other religious, social and political systems will also have an impact. And children will carry into their encounter with the ed-care system the residual effects of their engagement with those broader systems. That is, their behaviour will retain the features of the attractors of those alternative sources of spiritual influence until they shift phase into their ‘ed-care entrainment’. They may also revert to alternative attractors at various times depending on how powerfully the ed-care system entrains them. This may operate in two ways. Life-affirming outside counter-effects may ameliorate negative influences within the ed-care system, and destructive external attractors may make it hard for children to respond to positive influences within ed-care.

Crawford & Rossiter point to a nice irony in that the context renders irrelevant the arguments of those who wish to protect their children from what they identify as anti-Christian religious influences in state ed-care systems:
One response of parents and educators is to try to shield young people from these comparisons and relativism by opposing the study of world religions in religious education. However, any such shielding at school is likely to be ineffective if students have access to transport, cities, television, radio, newspapers and magazines, and to their own friends.  

Household and social system tend to have idiosyncratic influences on children and can only be addressed in an individual fashion. The ed-carer has to determine whether the contextual influences create difference or actual disruption. In the former case the external attractors do not strongly entrain, or are only marginally different from those of the ed-care system. Consequently, either the child will easily slip into the ed-care attractor, or its trajectory in the alternative attractor will be insufficiently different from the ed-care system attractor to cause concern. In the latter, the external context deeply entrains to behavioural patterns which significantly depart from the ed-care attractors. The child will find it harder to make the transfer and will experience conflict between the two attractor systems. The ed-care system will face the need to either enforce compliance or to accept some degree of internal reorganisation to allow it to accommodate the discordant behaviour or attitudes.

The one external system which is virtually ubiquitous and thus calls itself significantly to the attention of ed-carers, is the electronic media. McCreery says:

No study of children’s lives today can be complete without consideration of the impact of television and video. Even those children whose TV watching is closely vetted by parents will still be aware of popular culture through other children. Today’s children have access to worlds far-removed from their own in distance and in time. They also have access to fantasy worlds which go far beyond the fantasies of their story books. Through TV children will have encountered difference, especially of cultures, values and beliefs. They will have some knowledge about violence and death, social taboos, very noble behaviour and despicable behaviour, tremendous suffering and uplifting charity.

1517 They are multiple separate systems but they are normally conceived by ed-carers as a single influence.
Not only do the media offer encounters with alternative information to that provided by ed-care, but also with different values and attitudes. It is this latter that seems to cause most concern to ed-carers suggesting either that the value issues are more salient to children and create a deeper entrainment, or that the values are more discordant with those of the ed-carers than is the information. Many would share Dawn’s evaluation of the impact of contemporary media values on children:

We who care about children’s spirituality must recognize that children will be formed by the violence, greed, sexual immorality, and time wasting of our society’s media bombardment. Our best defence is to begin when they are very young to engage them instead in practices of peacemaking, generosity, resistance to instant gratification, and good use of time.

Her “best defence” recognises the inevitability that children will be exposed and advocates the second strategy described earlier. The third strategy, the development of discernment, is also an appropriate approach for an ed-care system.

**SUMMARY**

It has only been possible to indicate a small sample of implications of a biblical perspective on spiritual development across a range of the aspects of ed-care. Nevertheless, these are not inconsequential. To the extent that an ed-care system departs from the ideal of the model, it will mean the development of spirituality adapted to destructive personal and social systems. To the extent that it does fulfil the biblical pattern, children will be drawn into a healthy and life affirming spirituality marked by characteristics that will be affirmed not just by Christians but by all people of good will.

It is not that one would expect every ed-care setting to take these implications or implement the suggestions. Part of living in a multi-cultural society is recognition that while one may insist on a hearing, one cannot demand compliance. Rather, this study identifies what would be the consequence of fully implementing a model of spirituality, consistent with biblical principles in ed-care systems, one which develops children who

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1519 Needless to say the real impact of electronic media is more variable, yet another source of conflicting spiritualities.

1520 Dawn, M. J. (1999), op. cit., p.82.
retain their openness to the influence of the Holy Spirit and demonstrate evidence of its fruits.

This does not mean that such children will become Christians, however much the Christian ed-carer may desire that. Nor does it mean they will not, however much an ed-care system may be declared to be secular. Such outcomes cannot be ensured and should not be sought in a culturally diverse society’s ed-care. But neither can they, nor should they, be prevented. It does mean they will be attuned to identify with the loving Spirit they have encountered in that setting.
CHAPTER 7. EFFICACY OF THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATIVE CARE

This study was stimulated by two related concerns:

• neglect of spirituality in some areas of the public ed-care of children;
• where spirituality is given some credence, conceptual confusion about the nature and implications of spiritual development.

The explanatory models used or assumed in relevant literature were reviewed in the light of a set of logical criteria developed to identify the requirements for an approach to spiritual development in the context of public ed-care in multi-cultural societies. They were found to be deficient in fulfilling these criteria and it was hypothesised that a model derived from biblical understandings of spirituality and childhood, associated with the application of Dynamic Systems Theory to human development, would offer an alternative which would meet the requirements of the identified criteria.

DEVELOPING A MODEL

The following conclusions were reached.

**Criterion 1:** The model must specify the meaning of the term, and nature of the phenomenon, designated as ‘spirituality’.

By reference to the oldest continuing spiritual tradition, the meaning of the term was identified as grounded in the nature of the Deity as spirit, and in the encounters humans have with the Holy Spirit and with other spirits antagonistic to its goodness. By reference to the most recent of scientific approaches, Dynamic Systems Theory, spirit was identified as analogous in form to Integrative Dynamic Systems (or magician systems), an association which allows the latter to offer insights into the dynamics of spiritual interactions and development.

**Criterion 2:** The model must clarify the relationship of ‘spirituality’ to an underlying ontology, and the relationship of both to alternative understandings.

Spirituality is interpreted within the ontology defined by the biblical texts and identified with the Christian gospel. It was shown to be manifestly theist but not exclusive of the reality of experiences beyond its adherents. It holds that all people are spiritual in a real sense. God’s Spirit is encountered by each person and everyone responds to the
goodness which is the sign of his presence. The model acknowledges the influence of destructive spirits which are also encountered by all and which contest with God's Spirit for the adherence of people. It accepts the potential reality of encounters described by all people but insists that their accounts of the nature of the encounters is only so valid as is its consistency with biblical explanations. Spirits are seen as interacting as Integrative Dynamic Systems in an ecology of dynamic systems which integrate all human life and institutions.

**Criterion 3:** The model must identify in what sense spirituality is developmental and open to change through ed-care intervention, and it must indicate what specific developmental changes are to be seen as spiritual.

The biblical approach was shown to treat spiritual development as integrative of the human person. Changes which lead to greater integration and more effective entrainment of sub-systems to the human spirit, are developmental. However, these developments lead into alternative attractors some of which lead towards the fulfilled life God intends, others into more destructive trajectories. Spiritual development is driven by encounters with spiritual entities and the ed-care system provides constant opportunities for such encounters, for good or ill.

**Criterion 4:** The model must be consistent with an accepted paradigm for the understanding and study of human development.

Not only was the model seen to be 'consistent' with Dynamic Systems Theory but each informs the other in producing an articulable theory of spiritual development. The biblical material identifies what the higher order systems inherent in the principles of the theory are in phenomenological and ontological terms. In turn, Dynamic Systems Theory outlines how the development of spiritual human persons may occur using such higher order systems as a scientific metaphor for the spiritual reality.

**Criterion 5:** The model must be able to explain the rôle and status of spiritual development, so understood, within a secular system of ed-care.

By identifying the child as inherently spiritual, and as inestimably precious to God, the model gave spirituality a central rôle in ed-care. Its rôle is to integrate all those influences that constitute the ed-care system and ed-care settings. Everything that happens in ed-care is potentially relevant to the spiritual development of the child and spiritual development is the signal that genuine care and education is occurring.
Criterion 6: The model must specify practical implications flowing from these matters.

The practical implications flowed from recognition that every aspect of ed-care is potentially spiritually momentous but that the direction of their influence depends on the degree to which people in positions of responsibility in ed-care cooperate with entrainment by spiritual good or choose to act according to contending entrainments to spirits of self-indulgence, indifference or destructiveness.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

The implications of the conclusions outlined above go to more than demonstrating the conceptual force of the approach. Rather they propose an alternative framework for considering real issues in the ed-care of children. This framework follows the confirmation of the following assertions.

1. That the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures provide an understanding of the meaning and nature of spirituality which is developmental and incorporates spirituality related both to children of the Christian faith community and those outside that community.

2. That the Scriptural understanding of children validates the belief that all children are conceived into a relationship with God’s Spirit but also open to influence by destructive spirituality, and consequently, spirituality is a ubiquitous feature of children’s lives, and an inescapable aspect of the process of ed-care.

3. That Dynamic (or Complex) Systems Theory provides a model of development of human persons which is consistent with a biblical theology of spiritual development.

4. That it is possible to elucidate a model of spiritual development which incorporates biblical and contemporary psychological concepts.

5. That such a description of spiritual development provides a framework to consider how participating in a secular system of ed-care will influence children’s spirituality and how such systems can contribute to developing a positive spirituality acceptable to the broader community.

TASKS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has sought to break new ground in the conceptualisation of the ed-care of children by providing a framework which accords due weight to the rôle of spirituality in that process. Consequently, it has mapped the general contours of a research agenda for the field of ed-care, particularly, though not exclusively, in the secular domain. Of course, it can only be considered as the beginning of a much needed program of
enquiry. Issues that require further investigation range from the conceptual to the practical and include the following, none of which are, in any sense, simple to resolve.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

• Further hermeneutical study is required to more fully elucidate the nature of phenomena which mediate spirituality and how such mediation functions to influence people. In particular this must account for the dynamics of mediation in situations where conflicting spiritualities are encountered.

• The rôle of the Holy Spirit in the experience of those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ needs to be given attention, as does the rôle of spiritual evil in the experience of those who do. Without denying the value of soteriological considerations, there needs to be an enhanced focus on the phenomenology of encounters with spiritual realities including those which are at odds with the person’s ontological understanding.

• The sense in which children serve as models for acceptable spirituality requires further exposition. In particular, understandings of spirituality need to be tested to identify whether they are precluded by being developmentally inaccessible to the young.

• The area of the model requiring most conceptual clarification is detailing the parameters of Dynamic Systems Theory. As indicated, the basic terms of the theory are used divergently by different theorists, even while the general thrust is shared. Explication of these terms and their inter-relationships is essential before how they can serve as an effective metaphor for spirituality can be determined.

• It is important that alternative models also be more fully articulated in the light of the criteria to demonstrate whether they have strengths to offer to ed-care and what these may be.

EMPIRICAL ISSUES

• The first such issue is to name and classify the phenomena with which the research is concerned. There is need for a taxonomy of behaviours indicative of spirituality, and especially of children’s spirituality. This necessitates a recognition that, while spirituality is usually considered to be expressed in immaterial phenomena, these are
capable of operational definition as a consequence of their physical instantiation. This does not require agreement on a single set of definitions, which would be desirable but unlikely, but rather for conceptual and methodological transparency so the force of alternatives is assessable.

- While the popular literature is awash with relevant anecdotes, the closest to a systematic description of children involved in spiritual encounters, that of Cavalletti, is limited to a particular religious context and still falls far short of the rigour and objectivity required of scientific research. Anecdotes select for memorable phenomena and usually ignore situations where response is minimal or mundane. This is not to denigrate the value of anecdotal and second-hand accounts as they may represent a rich, and sometimes the only source of data. It is to suggest that a standardised and systematic process for collecting such narratives, and agreed canons for their interpretation would allow their rescue from folklore and polemic. The work of Coles and more recently the Errickers is encouraging but will remain incomplete without research which encompasses the early years and which allows descriptions of encounters which the children cannot articulate and of which they may have been scarcely aware. There is a further need to trial more formal approaches to data collection in this area.

- Despite some suggestions that human behaviour, especially so complex a human phenomenon as spirituality, is not capable of analysis using the simulations of dynamic systems theory, this is a criticism applicable to all research paradigms. It does not negate the value of what can be achieved using recognisably limited paradigms as humans gradually advance in understanding of their own nature. There is a need to identify and describe the control parameters which shape and energise the characteristics of spiritual development; to track and depict the trajectories which individual children trace through the spiritual phase space so defined, and to provide an observational description of its attractors by distinguishing common patterns. This may have to await fuller development of the theory in dealing with other areas of development.

PRACTICAL ISSUES
- The proposals outlined here are derived from a biblical understanding of spirituality, but they apply to a context which does not acknowledge that understanding as
normative. It becomes important, therefore, to identify which conclusions derived from the model are shared with other perspectives, which alternative conclusions can co-exist within the one context, and where differences are irreconcilable. This requires the better articulation of those other models, as suggested above, because it may well be that such an endeavour will clarify whether shared terminology disguises profound differences in conceptualisation, and equally it may identify unexpected common ground, at least at the level of practical outcomes.

- A protocol for the evaluation of the spiritual characteristics of ed-care settings would allow identification of aspects which may expose children unduly to spiritual evil and limit their exposure to spiritual good. Protocols would also be valuable for ed-carers wishing to consider spiritual aspects of their own work, whether this be in pædagogy, curriculum development or more general contribution to the setting.

Even this very limited and general research program is a daunting prospect. That should cause no surprise as in spiritual development one deals with not only the most complex of human phenomena, but also the most profound and intimate. The only prospect more daunting would be that the understanding of children’s development be allowed to continue to neglect that which integrates development and provides its very meaning.
LIST OF REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MANUALS

CONSULTED DEALING WITH CHILDREN FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

REFERENCES


1521 Hereafter ‘IVF’.

1522 Hereafter ‘OUP’.


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1523 Hereafter ‘SU’. 

439


1524 Hereafter ‘BCC’.


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1525 Hereafter ‘IVP’.


Prince, J. (1979). *Whose is the Kingdom?* London: SU.


**BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MANUALS CONSULTED**


Buckland, R. (1977), *op. cit.*


Cupit, Cecily. (1992), *op. cit.*


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1526 The preponderance of evangelical publishers and particularly publications by Scripture Union reflects their emphasis on involvement in and reflection on the practice of work with children.

Gobbel, R. & Gobbel, R (1986), *op. cit.*


Inchley, J. (1976), *op. cit.*

Inchley, J. (1986), *op. cit.*


Koulomzin, S. (1975), *op. cit.*


Pridmore, J. S. (1977), *op. cit.*

Prince, J. (1976), *op. cit.*

Prince, J. (1979), *op. cit.*


Scripture Union International Council (1979), *op. cit.*


Westerhoff, J. (1976), *op. cit.*


APPENDIX 1

REFERENCES TO CHILDREN EXCLUDED FROM ANALYSIS.


Genealogies, naming formulas, references to nationality, bare reports of a birth, statements of childlessness, references to people as sons or children of God or of the Devil; or similar, and other incidental references to childhood are also omitted.

1527 I share Pridmore’s belief that this and other references to eating children during food shortage are not indicative of an attitude, but of the extremity of the time.
APPENDIX 2

REFERENCES TO MATTERS OF SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE NATIONAL STATEMENTS AND PROFILES FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

DIRECT REFERENCES TO THE SPIRITUAL

This study provides valuable insights not only into the nature of the arts, but also into the importance of broader aesthetic considerations relating to our physical, cultural and spiritual environment.

It should be recognised that the arts are forms of communication and spiritual expression in both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary, and rural and urban cultures ... Teaching strategies in the arts need to provide for the cultural and spiritual experiences of Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students.

Students must be encouraged to see artistic experience as a way of finding personal, cultural or spiritual meaning and, though this, self-esteem.

Make art works that draw from an understanding of images which symbolise and portray the relationship between people and their physical or spiritual environment (those from Aboriginal, Asian, Aztec cultures).

Identify significant places with spiritual meaning for various groups.

Identify ways in which some material and spiritual needs are met at the same time (recognise the roles of parents, describe foods eaten and related ceremonies on special occasions, describe clothes for particular ceremonies).

Give examples of spiritual, social and environmental relationship of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people with their land, sea and water systems.

For instance, Aboriginal traditions and Torres Strait Islander traditions of knowledge production are less likely to be quantitatively based and less likely to separate the empirical from the aesthetic, spiritual and social. An understanding of these ways of knowing will help teachers to treat sensitively these aspects of Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the science curriculum.

An understanding of the beliefs, practices and policies in the area of health and physical education allows people to play an informed part in public debate and to take the individual and collective action necessary for emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing, both personal and social.

They consider the balance of physical, emotional, spiritual, social and mental aspects of health in effective functioning.

This component focuses upon the emotional, physical, cultural and spiritual relationship between people and their environment and the effect of the environment on people’s emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing.

Students consider what it means to be healthy and how this involves balancing physical, emotional, mental spiritual and social aspects of wellbeing.

They consider what it means to be fit, the relationship between fitness and health, and the balance between the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social aspects of wellbeing.
Explain physical, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions of health.

Describe interventions used to alter aspects of growth and development (growth-promoting drugs, physical manipulation, counselling, intensive education programs for young children, spiritual growth programs, gene therapy).

REFERENCES TO RELIGION

In powerful ways, the arts help to construct, reinforce, challenge and transform social, political and religious values.

Knowledge of the historical period of the dance helps the observer, the choreographer and the performer to understand what social, political or religious issues it embodies. Students of dance study the reasons why dances are made and performed, examine their intentions and purposes and come to appreciate dance genres such as ballet, ceremonial dance, and folk dance.

Describe the role (sic) of music in Australian society (celebrations, festivals, dance, entertainment, film, religion and advertising).

Visit a local church or temple and display an understanding of the ways religions and cultural groups use art forms such as architecture, sculpture, painting, mosaic, and embroidery.

Explore representations of religious belief in different cultures both past and present (compare images, symbols, colours and forms used in Russian icons or mosaics from Mesopotamia or Spain for use in their own work).

Through analysing the values of others and clarifying their own, students become aware of how values are formed and see how moral and ethical codes of conduct are shaped by many influences, including family, cultural and religious frameworks.

It studies cohesive elements such as language, religion, education, political and legal codes, the arts, initiation and other rites of passage, norms, kinship, rituals and customs.

...religious celebrations and observations of local children and families.

...role and importance of religions in the local community.

...influence of religion on cultural practices of community groups.

...the impact of heritage and tradition on Australian institutions and practices (government, law, religion, cultural practices).

...ways in which internal cohesion is maintained, such as language, education, the arts, media, religion.

...bases of laws of our society, including constitutions, common law, customary law, religions, political philosophies.

...multiple influences upon identity, including gender, socio-economic status, nationality, religious affiliation, sexual preference, physical characteristics, racial and ethnic heritage.

Identify the religious groups in the community.

Examine the roles of religious groups in maintaining cohesion or promoting diversity internally or within wider society.

Analyse the core values of an Australian religious group, political party, environmental group or social group.
Describe how values have been maintained (role (sic) of families, religions, media, political institutions).

Discuss the effect of the changing role of women in cultures and religions.

Assess the role of aid organisations and religious groups in dealing with human rights issues in developing countries.

Scientific information and methods are discussed in relation to environmental, religious, social, legal and economic viewpoints.

The practical implications of findings are examined not only from social, economic, religious and legal perspectives,...

They learn that each individual is unique, and identify themselves using personal and family names and characteristics such as age, size, cultural beliefs, country of birth or religion.

Describe themselves using categories such as age, physical characteristics, cultural beliefs, likes and dislikes, abilities, achievements, country of birth, language, religion.

Compare the advantages and disadvantages of defining people in terms of their observable features (physical features, age, gender, race, nationality, religion).

Discuss how they and others differ in significant ways from some of the stereotypes associated with particular age, gender, national or religious groups to which they belong.

REFERENCES TO THE SACRED
Most societies have evolved symbol systems to help them make sense of experience. People communicate experience and response to life through symbolic representation and many share sacred symbols. The arts have particular capacities to embody and evoke feelings and meanings and within each cultural context the arts hold special significance.

Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal management practices in caring for sacred, secret and significant places, procedures for determining these places.

REFERENCES TO LITERARY OR ORAL RELIGIOUS TEXTS
Read or view literature texts and discuss layers of meaning created by such things as allegory, parable, analogy (consider how parable is used in the Gospels or Bunyan's allegorical methods in The Pilgrim's Progress).

...myths, legends, fables, fairy tales, traditional tales, ... extracts from the Bible, Aboriginal Dreaming stories, legends of the Torres Strait.

Read for their own pleasure and interest novels and books of a series such as C. S. Lewis' Narnia stories and construct considered responses to them, justifying opinions with reference to the text.

...traditional stories, including Aboriginal Dreaming stories, Torres Strait Islander legends, stories from religious texts and stories from their own cultural groups.

...history of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people as told in the Dreaming or legends.

...guidelines from the Dreaming and how they relate to ways of life, kinship and relationship to the land.
Analyses the meaning of the **Dreaming** from a number of perspectives in Aboriginal societies.

Retell in their own words an Aboriginal Dreaming story or legend from the Torres Strait Islands.

Retell or act out a **traditional story about the origins of people or practices**.

Listen to and discuss **Dreaming stories, Aboriginal stories and the Legends of the Torres Strait Islands**...

Retell stories that illustrate a code of conduct for a group and suggest reasons for them (Aboriginal dreaming [sic] stories, Bible stories and stories from other religious groups, Aesop's Fables, Greek and Roman myths).

Examine and explain an Aboriginal Dreaming story or a Legend of the Torres Strait Islands and its meaning for a particular group.

Analyse traditional Aboriginal perspectives on the **Dreaming**.

Describe how the **Dreaming** is represented (oral stories, art, dance, song).

Analyse contemporary Aboriginal perspectives on the **Dreaming**.

Research and compare a range of contemporary Aboriginal artists' and writers' viewpoints about the land and the **Dreaming**.

Explain why the **Dreaming** is relevant for many urban Aboriginal people today.

Explain how the **Dreaming of Aboriginal people and the Legends of the Torres Strait Islander people** affect the ways they identify with and value significant sites.

Give examples of how the **Dreaming of Aboriginal people and Legends of the Torres Strait Islander people** describe their connection to land, sea and water systems.

**REFERENCES TO MATTERS WHICH, IN CONTEXT, HAVE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Understand that different forms of art can be made for different purposes and functions (Aboriginal people use body painting, carving and weaving for **special purposes and occasions**).

Demonstrate knowledge of how music functions in the lives of people (as a part of worship, ceremony, leisure, marketing, politics, dance, military events).

Compare two dances of **ritual significance** from different cultures and discuss their social importance.

Analyses some effects of major **ideologies** on world affairs.

Show awareness of special events, such as birthdays, **Easter, Christmas**.

Demonstrate awareness of special occasions (Happy Birthday to be sung to classmates, **Easter, Christmas**).

Recount special family occasions (draw and explain a picture of a birthday celebration, **baptism, Passover, Ramadan**).

Give examples of diverse ways in which groups or communities celebrate occasions (**Christmas, Chinese New Year, Australia Day, Greek Easter, National Aboriginal and Islander Week, Passover**).
Identify the common elements of celebrations and **affirmation of beliefs** (special food, clothing, Gift-giving, decorations, singing, dancing, ceremony).

Describe the **significance** of the land and the sea to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Show an understanding of the issues involved in describing, analysing and explaining complex historical situations (the **Reformation** in Europe).

Throughout human history, the Earth and the universe have both been a source of **inspiration**...

They find out about the **relationships** people of different cultures have with the Earth and with the worlds beyond.

They find out about ... theories of ... the **origin of the universe**.

Report on ways different cultures have explained and used **astronomical phenomena**.

Report on how scientific theories of scientists such as Galileo, Newton, Darwin and Einstein have influenced **philosophical thought**.

Report on instances where **astronomical discoveries** have changed prevailing views.

Investigate ways various cultures have described and interpreted **objects in the sky and their movements**.

Explains how personal and community practices reflect different **beliefs or values** about expressions of sexuality.

Identifies the **influences** that shape particular understandings of sex, sexuality and gender.

Explains why and how communities seek to **regulate sexual expression** and assesses the impact of particular forms of regulation on the health of individuals and groups.

Discusses **influences** on personal food intake.

Identifies **issues** related to why individuals and groups in the same community may have different eating and meal habits.

Researches the influence on relationships of different **understandings about human nature and beliefs about people**.

Discusses ideas, feelings and questions about activities regarded as **right or wrong, good or bad**.

Explains why there are particular **rules about what is right or wrong, good or bad** behaviour for different groups and situations.

Explains the personal and community factors involved in defining **beliefs about what is right or wrong, good or bad** behaviour.

Analyses how different contexts and situations influence **personal values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours**.

Critically analyses how groups justify particular actions and behaviours by linking them to **values they regard as universal**.

Analyses the ways in which people define their own and other people’s **identities**.

Discuss reasons for classifying certain activities, behaviours and attitudes as **right or wrong, good or bad**.

467
Identify changes in roles and responsibilities marked by transition ceremonies (Aboriginal initiation ceremonies, bar and bat mitzvahs, marriage).

Discuss why rules and customs related to food differ from one family to another.

Debate how much control terminally ill people should have in determining the circumstances and timing of their own deaths.

Debate ethical issues associated with the use of foetal tissue in treating disease.

Identify factors involved in the ability to talk about sexuality and ways of affirming personal values concerning sexual expression.

Discuss issues involved in the decision to terminate a pregnancy, and why this is so contentious in some societies.

Discuss the ethical implications of various methods of determining when life begins or ends.

Describe a range of approaches to disciplining children and relate these to views about human nature.

Discuss different understandings, beliefs and values about the nature, purpose and use of sexuality.

Describe a range of teachings that people use for guidance when seeking to define appropriate behaviour when giving expression to their sexuality.

Debate views on when life begins and ends and explore the consequences of decisions on this for health-care services (use of foetal tissues in medical research, community debate on active and passive euthanasia).

REFERENCES TO STUDENT RESPONSES LIKELY TO GENERATE SPIRITUAL QUESTIONING

Give to the whole class or a group, succinct accounts of important personal experiences or events and reflect on their significance.

Write about personal experiences (in letters, journals) with attention to detail, consciously using narrative structure to involve readers.

Explore personal beliefs and opinions about social and cultural issues to develop subject matter for art works which convey particular meanings and values.

Challenging their own beliefs and ways of doing things, questioning personal or received ideas and solutions...

Classify a range of activities, behaviours and attitudes according to their own ideas and feelings about right or wrong, good or bad.

Formulate questions about birth and death and explore answers to these questions.

Identify some of the problems of applying universal values to situations where a dilemma is involved.

REFERENCES TO BELIEFS

The English curriculum develops students’ knowledge and appreciation of ... the opportunity literature presents to discover a diverse range of socio-cultural values attitudes and beliefs.
influence of other societies and cultures on Australian peoples, cultures, beliefs and practices.

Students gain an accurate knowledge of the structure of Torres Strait Islander societies and Aboriginal societies, learning their diverse and complex cultures, languages, values, beliefs and kinship systems.

A range of beliefs - religious, economic, political, scientific and cultural - is explored.

belief systems amongst Torres Strait Islander people and Aboriginal people, including open aspects of “men’s business” and “women’s business” in particular areas, connection with land and land rights.

nature of belief systems (rules, structures, ceremonies, initiations, dogma).

force of belief systems (commitment of individuals, social groups and nation states to particular belief systems).

implications on behaviour of individuals, social groups and nation states of adherence to particular belief systems.

Examine conflicts between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander beliefs, customs and laws and those of non-Aboriginal society in Australia.

Identify some key values of some of the major belief systems of the world.

Analyses the interactions between scientific developments and the beliefs and values of society.

Advocates ways in which the growth and development of a population group can be optimised, taking account of theories of development, systems of belief, ethical principles and the use of technology.

Discuss various understandings of the role of personal conscience, community practices, peer pressure, family tradition and religious beliefs in shaping personal values and standards of behaviour.

Demonstrate ways of maintaining personal beliefs and standards when among people with different beliefs and standards.

Consider the significance of different beliefs about death as a stage in the life cycle (how different beliefs influence funeral practices, how beliefs in an afterlife influence the ways people cope with death and dying).

Discuss some beliefs involved in the affirmation of celibacy in some religious traditions.

Identify the beliefs and values expressed in different pre-marriage and marriage guidance programs.

Discuss how various beliefs about human origins and human destiny influence personal and community views about the growth and development of a population group.

REFERENCES TO PHILOSOPHY
Make some valid moral, psychological and philosophical generalisations about human behaviour based on evidence from texts read and viewed.

469
REFERENCES WHICH COMBINE SOME OF THESE

Students investigate how people's beliefs - ethical, spiritual or religious but also involving political, socio-economic and environmental perspectives - shape their cultural practices, symbols and ideas.

Belief is another important concept in this strand. Belief systems help people deal with the uncertain and unknown, provide moral, spiritual, religious, philosophical and ideological guidance, and can influence or determine the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups within cultures. Symbols, rituals, codes, ethics and values are associated with beliefs and may determine ways of living.

It also draws on a number of other disciplines, such as philosophy, ... and studies in religion.

...characteristics and beliefs of major world religions and the extent to which religious convictions have enhanced national cohesion and international cooperation and led to national and international conflicts.

...common features among present-day Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, whether urban or tradition-oriented, including feelings for land, spiritual beliefs, extended family.

...moral, spiritual, religious and philosophical dimensions of human life.

Describe important messages in traditional stories that depict the social and spiritual needs of groups being met.

Depict spiritual needs being met by Australians with diverse backgrounds (religions, arts organisations and services, counselling and support).

Identify groups (peer group, clubs, religious groups) to which they belong and the way these groups affect their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.

Examine an Asian-Pacific society, describing its customs, dominant beliefs, religions, institutions, values and education system.

They look at how beliefs about death as a stage in the life cycle are expressed in different funeral rites, and how religious and cultural beliefs influence the way people cope with dying and death.

Identify religious or other beliefs and teachings about what is considered right or wrong, good or bad.
APPENDIX 3

DEFINITIONS AND QUASI-DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY

INTRA-PERSONAL
Spirituality in education could promote the following qualities of spiritual maturity:

- love, compassion and service: Love and compassion are often associated with the beginning of a true spiritual life. Love dissolves confusion and fear and elicits kindness, openness and respect. Unless we love and trust ourselves, we cannot love others. Compassion goes beyond a personal form of love to a love of all creation.

- honesty and authenticity: No longer lying to ourselves and others about what we are doing or what the consequences are. To live as we really are without delusion about the reality of the past, the present, our selfhood and behaviours.

- physical, emotional, mental and spiritual clarity: Physical clarity has to do with attention to the body’s health and real needs. Mental and emotional clarity have to do with awareness, discernment and lucidity. Spiritual clarity has to do with wholeness, simplicity and sensitivity.

- responsibility and discipline: Becoming accountable for ourselves without feeling excessive responsibility for others. Dependable and creative completion of our responsibilities and a disciplined approach to personal growth.

- serenity: A state of equanimity, inner tranquillity and peacefulness in the face of challenge and change.

- personal freedom: Letting go of attachments and living questions and problems into answers and opportunities without drama, escape, or avoidance.

- tolerance and patience: The ability to embrace self and ‘the other’ in spite of perceived weakness or difference. To even move beyond tolerance to acceptance and celebration of difference and diversity. Patience means to take events and experiences as they come without complaint or expectation. It also means all things have a natural time and place to be.

- faith, trust, and inner security: The ability to live without anxiety or doubt. An inner security free of fear and deprivation.

- wisdom and understanding: Deep insight, possible at any age, expressed through everyday action.

- gratitude, humility and willingness: Gratitude is the recognition of the little miracles that occur everyday. Humility is the ability to move beyond arrogance and grandiosity toward an honest acceptance of ourselves with all our perceived limitations and faults.

- hope, happiness, joy, and humour: Hope and happiness are states of well-being and contentment emanating from a deep feeling of inner wealth irrespective of outer events or experiences. Joy and humour spring from a warm heart and a sense of the ‘cosmic game’.

- connection with the earth, nature and everyday life: Even though we may find great inspiration in sacred systems or transcendent experiences, we recognise the sacredness of daily activities, other people, other life forms, inanimate matter, and nature. ‘It’s no good being an angel if you’re no earthly use.’

- living in the present moment: The ability to live in the present rather escaping (sic) to the past or the future. The ability to constantly ‘let go’.

- a sense of wonder, mystery, and reverence: A direct experience of the cosmos which is unitive, inclusive, and expansive. A sense of being aware of the profound interconnectedness of all creation.
a sense of purpose and place in space and time: A sense of the unique and necessary place and personal contribution of each individual being in the world. ‘Where does my deep gladness meet the world’s deep need?’

To a greater or lesser extent, spiritual people are characterised by all or most of the following:

Awareness ...the attainment of a substantial level of insight and understanding is necessary for spirituality.

Breadth of outlook. Spiritual people take account of a wide range of relevant considerations and thus are able to make wise decisions ... it means that within one’s particular life situation, one should have a sense of context and perspective and be both sensitive to and take account of the range of considerations that bear on one’s thought and behaviour.

A holistic outlook. A spiritual person is aware of the interconnectedness of things, of the unity within the diversity, of patterns within the whole...

Integration. Spiritual people are integrated in body, mind, soul, and spirit, and in the various dimensions and commitments of their lives...

Wonder. The spiritual person has a due sense of awe, of mystery, of the transcendental in life ... one is aware that there is always “something more,” something beyond what we can at present achieve or explain...

Gratitude ...we can conceive of a “grateful” approach to life in terms of attitudes of gladness and humility with respect to the good things of life...

Hope ...Even without belief in the supernatural and in periodic divine intervention on our behalf, a certain degree of hopefulness or optimism would seem to be justified and indeed necessary for everyday living.

Courage ...Courage is as basic and important to life as hope.

Energy. Spiritual people, in order to fulfil their many life tasks, must be characterised by energy...

Detachment ...This does not imply passive acceptance of everything but rather a skilful working with the currents of life in order to achieve spiritual goals.

Acceptance ...is a spiritual virtue only in relation to the inevitable and not in situations where one could and should attempt to modify what takes place.

Love. To many, love is the characteristic par excellence of the spiritual person...

Gentleness ...It involves a sensitive, thoughtful, caring approach to other people, to one’s own needs, and to the cosmos in general...

In its broadest definition, spirituality is “a code word for the depth dimension of human existence”.

On [Mott-Thornton’s 1998] view, spirituality is that quality of being, holistically conceived, made up of insight, beliefs, values, attitudes, emotions and behavioural dispositions that informs and may be informed by lived experience.

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The ability to wonder about and to celebrate in the mystery of life, and the need to feel connected to something larger than ourselves.  

Despite these different interpretations, however, all can agree that the `spiritual' dimension comes from our deepest humanity. It finds expression in aspirations, moral sensibility, creativity, love and friendship, response to natural and human beauty, scientific and artistic endeavour, appreciation and wonder at the natural world, intellectual achievement and physical activity, surmounting suffering and persecution, selfless love, the quest for meaning and for values by which to live.

Spiritual refers to the universal personal concern for the questions.

Spirituality, therefore, can be understood as the pain-filled struggle with the contradictions between personal life-experience and received, authoritative wisdom. This is the place of real pain and growth.

He associated spirituality with “positive movement, light, involvement, emotional congruence”

He wondered “where do children get ‘golden moments’ and what happens if they don’t?”

The spiritual area is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs; they affect the way people see themselves and throw light on the purpose and meaning of life itself ... always they are concerned with matters at the heart and root of existence.

...feelings and convictions about the significance of human life and the world as a whole which pupils may experience within themselves and meet at second hand in their study of the works and the way of life of other people.

...‘spiritual’ refers to the inner motivations, feelings and beliefs that can raise questions about the mystery of life and evoke a sense of awe and wonder. An appreciation of the spiritual is integral to human life.

Individuals who, in their everyday lives, exemplify the highest of human qualities such as love, forgiveness, and generosity might also be said to be spiritual.

1533 British Humanist Association (1993), op. cit., p.34.
1537 ibid., p.31.
...Spirituality is often used to indicate a particular set of religious beliefs. A person who is devout in these beliefs might be said to be a spiritual person.\textsuperscript{1542}

Starkings wishes to retain the distinctiveness of the religious path but assert the authenticity of the secular with reference to the spiritual value of music, ballet, painting or drama. He suggests that through these and other human activities we reach out towards some wisdom, some humanity, some integration of our life’s experience ... Thus both the religious and secular use of the term refer to moving beyond the purely material and in neither case can spiritual development be gained solely on the basis of confessional attachment.\textsuperscript{1543}

Spirituality gives us depth. It’s where we sink our roots so we can grow. It’s what enables us to capture and hold a broad, clear picture of reality - where we can see that we are called to a higher purpose than self-service and self-satisfaction.\textsuperscript{1544}

We all have spiritual experiences such as the feeling of being uplifted, transported beyond ordinary sensory experiences ... the awesome sense of oneness with the universe that comes from contemplating the stars or from climbing a high mountain and surveying the vast panorama beneath us, or the ecstatic sense of wonder at the birth of a child ... The tendency to make peace rather than war, emphasis on collaborative rather than competitive efforts, and the recognition of common needs experienced by people of every culture and creed ... These are all aspects of spirituality.\textsuperscript{1545}

It is an experience of awe and wonder...\textsuperscript{1546}

Spirituality is the culturing of the heart. It is the purification of the heart, the cleansing of the ordinary turbid cup of the heart filled with lust, anger, greed, possessiveness, vanity, and egoistic consciousness.\textsuperscript{1547}

...It usually induces in the person concerned a conviction that the everyday world is not the whole of reality: that there is another dimension to life.\textsuperscript{1548}

The spiritual life is part of our biological life. It is the ‘highest’ part of it - but yet part of it. The spiritual life is part of the human essence. It is a defining-characteristic of human nature, without which human nature is not full human nature. It is part of the real self, of one’s identity, of one’s inner core, of one’s speciesshood, of full humanness.\textsuperscript{1549}

...When we speak of spirituality more often than not we revert to images of personal piety, inner reflection and solitude; images of withdrawal.\textsuperscript{1550}

\textsuperscript{1542} ibid, p.16.
\textsuperscript{1546} Gang, P. S., Lynn, N. M. & Maver, D. J. (1992), op. cit., p.9.
\textsuperscript{1547} Handa, M. (1982), op. cit., p.148.
\textsuperscript{1548} Hardy, A. (1979), op. cit., p.1.
\textsuperscript{1549} Hemming, J. (1970), op. cit., p.35.
\textsuperscript{1550} Holt, S. (1997), op. cit., p.4.
...The most distinctive and desirable capacities of the human person, i.e., those capacities that, above all, distinguish human beings from other living creatures.\(^{1551}\)

Marta defined spirituality as “what people believe about the human spirit and kinds of values that they have for people.”\(^{1552}\)

Education in spiritual growth is that which promotes apprehension of ultimate reality through fostering higher forms of human consciousness.\(^{1553}\)

...Spiritual sensitivity encompasses precocious questioning, unusual types of questions asked at an early age, and reported experiences of transcendent moments. It also encompasses areas of faith and compassion.\(^{1554}\)

...To do with becoming human in the fullest sense\(^{1555}\)

...The invisible ‘extra dimension’ [which] we know ... at first hand in our experience [and] attribute to other human beings as well.\(^{1556}\)

Fundamentally spirituality has to do with becoming a person in the fullest sense ... [and] ... this dynamic form ... can be described as a capacity for going out of oneself and beyond oneself; or again, as the capacity for transcending oneself\(^{1557}\)

...It is this openness, freedom, creativity, this capacity for going beyond any given state in which he finds himself, tht (sic) makes possible self-consciousness and self-criticism, understanding, responsibility, the pursuit of knowledge, the sense of beauty, the quest of the good, the formation of community, the outreach of love and whatever else belongs to the amazing richness of what we call ‘the life of the spirit’\(^{1558}\)

‘Spirit’ is that property of being fully and wholly human that fuels our predisposition to transcend each and every condition in our experience.\(^{1559}\)

...‘Spirit’ refers to a quality of being fully human that ignites our potential to transcend the conditions of our experience. To ‘transcend’ is to move beyond what is known to what we do not yet understand.\(^{1560}\)

Spiritual development is an important element of a child’s education and fundamental to other areas of learning. Without curiosity, without the inclination to question, and without the exercise of imagination, insight and intuition, young people would lack the motivation to learn, and their intellectual development would be impaired. Deprived of self understanding and, potentially of the ability to understand others, they may

\(^{1551}\) Kent SACRE. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.17.


\(^{1553}\) Lealman, B. (1985), \textit{op. cit.}, p.33.

\(^{1554}\) Lovecky, D. V. (1998), \textit{op. cit.}, p.179.

\(^{1555}\) Macquarrie, J. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.43.

\(^{1556}\) \textit{ibid}, pp.43-44.


\(^{1558}\) Macquarrie, J. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.44. Cited by \textit{ibid}, p.51.

\(^{1559}\) Myers, B. K. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.61.

experience difficulty in co-existing with neighbours and colleagues to the detriment of their social development. Were they not able to be moved by feelings of awe and wonder at the beauty of the world we live in, or the power of artists, musicians and writers to manipulate space, sound and language, they would live in an inner spiritual and cultural desert.\textsuperscript{1561}

The term needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition ... it has to do with the universal search for human identity ... with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live.\textsuperscript{1562}

The meaning of spirituality is here identified with the development of personal identity, and is distinguished from moral development by its focus upon the psyche as the developing self, which might not always sustain its own integrity by conforming to moral norms.\textsuperscript{1563}

...The human quest for connectedness\textsuperscript{1564}

...Property of limitless going beyond\textsuperscript{1565}

...The unconscious longing for insight into our existence and for wholeness, which is expressed in aesthetic and religious experience.\textsuperscript{1566}

...Spirituality ... is a positive concept. It is the longing for insight into what is true, just, good and beautiful.\textsuperscript{1567}

The nearest indication of its meaning is to say that it begins with self-knowing, with being aware of one’s thoughts, desires, fears, motivations; in short, the whole machinery of the mind.\textsuperscript{1568}

...fortitude, which enables us to overcome difficulties trust striving, to fulfil potential courage, to do what is right a desire to search for truth to life’s fundamental questions.\textsuperscript{1569}

Our spirit, then, whatever else it has to do with, relates to the basic orientation or disposition of our life: the way we are in the world, in terms of those things to which we

\textsuperscript{1561} NCC (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.3.

\textsuperscript{1562} ibid, p.34.

\textsuperscript{1563} Newby, M. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.93.

\textsuperscript{1564} Palmer, P. J. (1998/9), \textit{op. cit.}, p.8.


\textsuperscript{1566} Ploeger, A. (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p.122.

\textsuperscript{1567} ibid, p.122.

\textsuperscript{1568} Powell, R. (1995), \textit{op. cit.}, p.44.

are sensitive; of which we are aware; by which we are attracted; which we value; by which we can be moved to act; which shape and guide our lives.  

It is an awareness in which something of personal engagement with, and a sense of the personal significance of, what is in awareness, is present; together with a recognition of the real otherness of what is known in this way. It is an awareness in which fact and value merge. The reality which is encountered is perceived in a way which engages both cognition and affect, both thought and feeling. In fact, the person is involved with what is experienced. The person may sense that he or she is addressed by it in a new way; or recognizes something he or she knew before in a different way. The person, who may have been familiar with this object or this experience, suddenly realizes it.

Such experiences of awareness can lead to specific, short-term responses. Sometimes, however, they initiate a long-term commitment to action of a particular kind. Less often, but not infrequently, an experience of this kind can usher the person into an embracing and permanent commitment, in fact to a way of life. This is the implicit end-point of what begins in spirituality as awareness.

I suggest, by concentrating mainly on the development of spirituality as awareness and encouraging, but leaving open for personal decision, the matter of spirituality as response, both whether it will be made and, if so, in what form. Spirituality as way of life is fundamentally the kind of life choice which none of us can presume to make on behalf of others.

...Schools already emphasise a number of spiritual values if we would only recognize them as such. That is, we are all committed to truth. We're committed to accuracy, to students' taking responsibility for doing their own work and getting it in on time, for admitting that they may have been wrong or inadequately prepared, for coming to terms with limitations. Those are all spiritual values.

There would be wide agreement that the spiritual dimension of education may be conceived of as:

that context which reminds us of what we most deeply are as human beings;
that context which brings us to the outer edge of our understanding and leaves us with questions;
that context which suggests our ultimate values.

...The overall adaptability and functionality (i.e., wellness) of the individual.
INTER-PERSONAL DEFINITIONS
Bradford (1995) suggests that human spirituality consists of being loved, feeling secure, responding in wonder, being affirmed and sharing together - all essential experiences for the well-being of every child (indeed, every person) yet not necessarily associated with religion.\textsuperscript{1577}

A common thread can be traced throughout all the documentation discussed so far, and that relates to an aspect of spirituality which is developed and displayed in relationships humans have with one another, with their environment and possibly with ‘God’. This essence of the ‘communality’ of spirituality is explored in the work of Hull who rejects some of the more conventional understandings, such as spirituality being the “cultivation of the inward, ... the antithesis of materialism, ... and to be found in the ‘beautiful’ ” (Hull, 1995, p. 131). Instead he argues that “spirituality exists not inside people but between them” (op. cit.). In an unpublished paper presented in June 1997, Hull expanded on this to illustrate that spiritual development occurs in relationships, both positive and painful, and spiritual development in education ought to focus on this communal and public side of human nature.\textsuperscript{1578}

IMPERSONAL DEFINITIONS
Michael Beesley described spiritual development in schools, or spiritual education, as “a life-long process of encountering, responding to, and developing insight from what, through experience, we perceive to be ‘the beckoning transcendent truth and rightness’ and the sacred, mystical or numinous.”\textsuperscript{1579}

Spirituality is the essence of our lives. It’s what makes a tree grow and what makes a bird sing. What makes a human smile. Spirituality has its own force and has its own being, something you can’t see. It’s the power of the universe.\textsuperscript{1580}

Fully functioning persons have a deep sense of spirituality. They know that their personhood and the world in which they live cannot be explained or understood through human experience alone. They know that they must make the ‘mystical leap.’ They must go beyond themselves, beyond their limited reality. They have an inexplicable sense of something more. They feel a greater operative intellect than their own, even if they are at a loss to give it a name. They are aware of a great design, incessantly operative, in which all is compatible and in which there are no contradictions.\textsuperscript{1581}

This deep connection to creation evolves over our entire life. It may be experienced as special moments when one is alone in the forest, or when one stares into the heavens on a star-filled night, or observes cloud formations. It is an experience of awe and wonder and an awareness of the oneness of all. Spirituality is the recognition of the inherent beauty, truth and goodness in life. It calls forth such traits as compassion, joy and humility.\textsuperscript{1582}

\textsuperscript{1577} Crompton, M. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{1578} Kendall, S. (1999), \textit{op. cit.}, p.64.
\textsuperscript{1579} Beesley, M. (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.70.
\textsuperscript{1580} Burns, M. C. (1991), \textit{op. cit.}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{1581} Buscaglia, L. (1978), \textit{op. cit.}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{1582} Gang, P. S., Lynn, N. M. & Maver, D. J. (1992), \textit{op. cit.}, p.9.
Spirit in man ... is the point of his communion with the universal spirit which rules and penetrates the whole universe. This is the point of human transcendence, the point at which the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the many and the One meet and touch.\textsuperscript{1583}

At certain times in their lives many people have had specific, deeply felt, transcendental experiences which have made them all aware of the presence of this power. The experience when it comes has always been quite different from any other type of experience they have ever had. They do not necessarily call it a religious feeling, nor does it occur only to those who belong to an institutional religion or who indulge in corporate acts of worship.\textsuperscript{1584}

A life-long process of encountering, reflecting on, responding to, and developing insight from what, through experience, one perceives to be the trans-personal, transcendent, mystical or numinous. It does not necessarily involve the concept of God.\textsuperscript{1585}

...The way we ascribe meaning to the deeper level of existence that surrounds us and is in us and our relationships...\textsuperscript{1586}

It is not essential to believe in a god to be spiritual, but it is important to believe in something that the word God has historically signified. It has been called by a myriad of names - Allah, Tao, Goddess, the sacred, immanence, community, the ground of all being - and indicates an overarching reality, a oneness of all things. Whatever functions as the centring, unifying \textit{linchpin} of our pattern of meaning functions as God for us. What is crucial is that an individual believes that there is a unifying force to creation and acts in the world based on that sense of unity.\textsuperscript{1587}

Welcome to the gallery of Taha Wairua or the dimension of spirituality. Taha Wairua is: The timeless twinkle of celestial lace in a crystal-crisp night sky, the warm open smile of an innocent child, the calm caring touch of a faithful friend, the denial of pleasures to give to another, and the protection of basic principles for the families of Nature and Human-Kind. Taha Wairua is the unforgettable cry of birth, the magical moment of natural death and the sobering hallowed anguish from crucified Humanity. Everyone has some Taha Wairua, but rarely is it used all day and every day. Some people deny its existence and endure a life-time of spiritual emptiness. Taha Wairua is the God-force that transcends all man made boundaries.\textsuperscript{1588}

...The sense of the presence of a Being or Reality through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason. It is the sense or feeling of this presence, not the belief in it, and it is not the result of sight, or hearing, or touch. Nor is it a conclusion one reaches by thought. It is, instead, an immediate and intuitive experience. The words ‘Being’, ‘Reality’, as used in the definition, must also be taken in a very broad sense.

\begin{flushright}
1585 Kibble, D.G. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.70-71. This is clearly derivative of the previous.
1588 Potaka, H. Unpublished.
\end{flushright}
They may refer to a definite individual, but they must also be allowed to have all the vagueness of 'the Beyond'.  

What this does - for the spiritual dimension has a strange dynamism - is to drive people from the brightness of what they know into that mystery where they seem not to grasp but to be grasped, where they reach the limit of rationality and seem pressed to adoration. Though not necessarily before a God or gods, for there is a flourishing and securely-grounded secular spirituality in contemporary culture found in literature and art, poetry and mathematics, the sciences and architecture (e.g. Capra, 1975; Ozment, 1969; Pibram, 1971; Valle and von Ekartsberg, 1981).  

...Spirituality can be defined as awareness of one's relationship with the Infinite. Spirituality is rooted in the most profound depths of each human being, in all nature and in the universe that surrounds us. Even though it animates all of life, the essence of spirituality is hard to comprehend because it cannot be perceived by our physical senses or proven by our intellectual powers.  

THEO-PERSONAL DEFINITIONS  
For me [spirituality] is equivalent to the older term ‘piety’ that is less used today or to the term ‘godliness’ with which some have replaced it. I am using the word ‘spirituality’, then, to refer to the character and quality of our life with God, among fellow-Christians and in the world. This is primarily a work of the Spirit, though our own spirit is obviously drawn into it. But not only our spirit - also our minds, wills, imaginations, feelings and bodies.  

I will use the term spirituality to describe an internal, albeit universal, felt sense of God (as distinguished from a particular set of beliefs associated with a specific religion or philosophy).  

This is the basis of real faith, not a belief in the idea of God, but a direct and immediate experience of God that is beyond image, beyond language, beyond naming.  

[Bradford] regards ‘spirituality’ as a “tripartite concept, the three parts of which - human, devotional and practical - fit closely together and complement the whole ... totally multicultural and multifaith in its applicability” (p.1). He defines ‘spirituality’ as:  
a healthy attitude towards and a positive pattern of engagement  
i with ourselves and our family;  
ii with our God and our faith community; and  
iii with our day-to-day activities and involvement with others in the wider world. (p.35)  

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He defines ‘spirit development’ as: the ongoing and to some extent cylindrical process by which ... our human spirituality
  is established and grows in relationship with and concern for others;
  is extended into devotional spirituality, influenced by sound tradition and supported by membership of a faith community; and
  becomes integrated within a profile of practical spirituality - or day-to-day positive and interpersonal engagement in life - in a world for which we are both thankful, and also in which we are committed to contributing towards the struggle for the common good. (p.40)

Spirituality is essentially about “becoming in the sense of being ‘in process’: open to growth, open to response, open to renewal and open to hope. This is applicable to every stage in life” (Bradford 1995, p.39.). Growth and development are associated with ‘finding - or being found by God’, not necessarily “the discovery of Divine ‘power’ ... but rather some indication of ‘presence’, ‘providence’ or the sense of a companionship of a ‘hidden friend’.” (p.31).  

A third approach defines spirituality as the “exercises and beliefs which individuals or groups have with regard to their personal relationships with God.”

[Religious] experiences involve at least one of those ‘other-worldly’ factors which is missing in quasi-religions such as Marxism and humanism: the sense of the presence or activity of a non-physical holy being or power; apprehension of an ‘ultimate reality’ beyond the mundane world of physical bodies, physical processes and narrow centres of consciousness; and the sense of achievement of (or being on one’s way to) man’s summum bonum, an ultimate bliss, liberation, salvation, or ‘true self’ which is not attainable through the things of ‘this world’.

By seeking Christian wisdom ourselves and practicing it openly in the sight of our own children and those we serve, we thereby invite them into a spirituality that is “the world encompassing and life-transforming action of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ in the life of a person or community, and her / his / their experience of and response to that action of God.”

The spiritual area is concerned with everything in human knowledge or experience that is connected with or derives from a sense of God or Gods.

Meditation is spiritual work ... is almost all contained in this one idea: the idea of awakening our interior self and attuning ourselves inwardly to the Holy Spirit...

...The spiritual man (pneumatikos) is one whose whole life, in all its aspects and all its activities, has been spiritualised by the action of the Holy Spirit, whether through the

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1599  Dawn, M. J. (1999), op. cit., p.76.
1600  DES (1977), op. cit., p.8.
sacraments or by personal and interior inspirations ... The spiritual man is one who, "whether he eats or drinks or whatever else he does, does all for the glory of God."  

To understand us you have to understand our spirituality. It makes us unique. It shows respect for Mother Earth in thankfulness to God ... Our spirituality begins from the day we are born, and continues in how we live, how we care for our brothers and sisters, how we deal with our extended family, and how we care for God's creation. It is all balanced and cannot be divided.  

**INTRAPERSONAL + INTERPERSONAL DEFINITIONS**

I suggested that we could move towards an agreed meaning by asking which traits stood out as 'distinctively human.' They included:

- the persisting sense of personal identity;
- *transcendence* - that is, our capacity to reflect on the world and ourselves analytically and purposively;
- *creativity*;
- *the moral sense*;
- the ability to enter into *relationships* with other selves.  

The [NCC] document went on to identify eight aspects of spiritual development, namely: beliefs; a sense of awe, wonder and mystery; experiencing feelings of transcendence; search for meaning and purpose; self-knowledge; relationships; creativity; and feelings and emotions.  

**INTERPERSONAL + IMPERSONAL DEFINITIONS**

The word *spiritual* refers to an awareness of our sacred connection with all of life. Our spirituality is our opening to one another as whole human beings, each different and precious, and our exploring how we can truly learn to love. Day by day it is our learning reverence for our earth and its creatures.  

**INTERPERSONAL + THEOPERSONAL DEFINITIONS**

...the spiritual dimension of a person is that element of personal being which is open to others and to God.  

I am a spiritual being because I am constituted ontologically by my Maker to be open to and formed by others as others are open to and formed by me: in being constituted this way I am also open to and open to be formed by God.  

**INTRAPERSONAL + INTERPERSONAL + IMPERSONAL DEFINITIONS**

By 'spiritual' I do not mean the credal formulations of any faith tradition, as much as I respect those traditions and as helpful as their insights can be; I mean the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy.

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482
than our egos - with our own souls, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the mystery of being alive.  

**INTRAPERSONAL + INTERPERSONAL + THEOPERSONAL DEFINITIONS**

[Spiritual development] needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and / or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity - with our responses to challenging experiences such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil. It has to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live.  

**INTRAPERSONAL + IMPERSONAL + THEOPERSONAL DEFINITIONS**

Spirituality as a religious notion seems to be closely tied to the idea of transcendence. A person’s spirit is that aspect which transcends the empirical world, that aspect which cannot be reduced to material elements. This transcendence is grounded in partaking in some type of pervasive supernatural element, be it a supreme being or a cosmic consciousness. It is this metaphysical underpinning which supports the very idea of transcendence.  

We define spirituality to embrace the ways in which people look for and perceive meaning purpose and values as well as other personal aspects like beauty, appreciation of nature, fulfilment, happiness and community. Spirituality often, but not always, revolves around belief in God and the practice of religion. It includes abiding dispositions towards life and patterns of behaviour which are influenced by spiritual and/or religious beliefs. While spirituality may be regarded as the reflective and active expressions of religious beliefs, it is not limited to a necessary association with organised religion. It has to do with what people call the ‘beneath the surface’ or the ‘more than you see’ dimension to life: the meaning and value that lie beneath externals and perceptions.  

Spirit is the spark of life that resides within every human being; it is the connection to the fabric of all life and to the source of all creation, and it is the essence of what it means to be a human being. Spirit is a gift from the source, what some people might call the Creator.  

1. the development of the inner life including creativity and imagination  
2. an inclination to believe in ideals  
3. a propensity to foster particular attributes such as love and goodness  
4. the quest for meaning, truth and values  
5. a capacity to respond to the ‘ultimate’ or God. 

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483
INTRAPERSONAL + INTERPERSONAL + IMPERSONAL + THEOPERSONAL
DEFINITION

One of the earliest attempts at a definition of spiritual health or well-being was that proposed by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (1975), which suggested that 'spiritual well-being is the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community, and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness' (from Ellison, 1983, p. 331) [my emphasis]. From an analysis of recent literature, it was shown that these four sets of relationships are variously mentioned in discussions of spirituality, spirituality and health, and spiritual health (Fisher, 1998, p. 24). The four relationships are of a person with:

- self
- others
- environment
- something / some-One beyond the human level (Transcendent Other).^{1615}

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APPENDIX 4

SOME ADDITIONAL ANECDOTES IN CAVALLETTI

...This [example] involves a three-year-old girl who grew up without the slightest religious influence. The child did not go to nursery school; no one at home, not even her grandmother, who was herself an atheist, had ever spoken of God; the child had never gone to church. One day she questioned her father about the origin of the world: “Where does the world come from?” Her father replied, in a manner consistent with his ideas, with a discourse that was materialistic in nature; then he added: “However, there are those who say that all this comes from a very powerful being, and they call him God.” At this point the little girl began to run like a whirlwind around the room in a burst of joy, and exclaimed: “I knew what you told me wasn’t true; it is Him, it is Him!” We ask ourselves if it is possible to speak of a logical process in this instance (and three years of age!), or if this is not the expression of a different relationship of the child with God - a relationship that manifests itself not only in the enunciation of a truth, but also by means of a joy that appears to touch the deepest part of the child.\textsuperscript{1616}

Linda related an experience ... she remembers having happened at the beginning of her life - certainly before the age of six. One day she noticed a butterfly in flight and she felt drawn to it; she followed it and suddenly “everything seemed to open up around me.” It appeared that she was able to see everything more clearly, and she “felt filled with joy and warmth throughout my whole body” in a way she had never experienced before. The sensation was so strong that the little girl burst into tears of joy, ran to her mother, and said: “Mommy, I know God.” ... It was something that the child did not perceive with her mind; what she had said afterward to her mother “was not an explanation, it was an exclamation.”\textsuperscript{1617}

...Francesco (five year old) ... must have understood that his mother was not a believer, and asked her: “Whom do you love more, me or God?” The mother naturally replied that she loved him more and the child responded: “I think this is your big mistake.”\textsuperscript{1618}

Francesco was two years and two months old. As a Christmas present he received the first tricycle of his life; almost at the same time his mother spoke to him of the meaning of Christmas and gave him a manger scene. Francesco took it happily; completely forgetting his tricycle, he wandered around the house carrying the various pieces of the set, showing them again and again to his grandmother so that she would retell the story of Christmas.\textsuperscript{1619}

Still during the time before her conversion, Anne Marie van der Meer, at her friend’s insistence told her son that they would pray the Our Father together at night. “The child was strangely happy at those words,” she noticed; “...when I forgot the prayer on the evenings we were giving a reception, Pieterke never failed to remind me to say the Our

\textsuperscript{1616} Cavalletti, S. (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.32.
\textsuperscript{1617} \textit{ibid}, pp.35-36.
\textsuperscript{1618} \textit{ibid}, p.36.
\textsuperscript{1619} \textit{ibid}, p.37.
Father with him. I recited it every night. Meanwhile, even though I was praying this way, we were not believers. But the child was happy."  

Another noteworthy example is contained in the letter sent to a parish priest in Moscow regarding a little girl whose age was unspecified but who obviously had to have been quite young:  

...having rushed into my room and seen the icons, the little girl began asking me questions; ... with eyes wide open she fastened her gaze on the faces of Jesus and the Mother of God, which she was seeing for the first time in her life. Although with effort, I explained to the child, who is a young cousin of mine, the meaning of what had struck her in a way she could not understand. But my worries proved to be superfluous. "You know," she said to me, "I knew He existed and I have always talked with Him before going to sleep; I knew He was everywhere and that He sees me when I get into mischief, only sometimes I was afraid of Him. How can I speak with Him?" Moved by the child's words, I taught her the sign of the cross, and I experienced an extraordinary feeling watching those small hands make the sign of the cross on her slender little body. .... "And now can I kiss Him," she continued to my great surprise, "but not on His face or cheek, not the way I kiss Mommy? Because He is greater than my mother, He is better than my mother. He sees everything and He doesn't scold me. He is better than everyone, and He loves me. Give me the icon please, I want to see it always. I'll put it beside my bed, and the icon of His mother too. Give it to me as a gift!"

When her mother arrived the child said: "Mommy, quick, come here. Kiss Him. He loves you too. At last I've seen His face, but I've known Him for a long time." Before her mother's embarrassed silence the child continued: "Mommy, why don't you say anything? Mommy, tell me about Him; I need to hear about Him." But the icon was taken away from little Irina. Her mother described the child's reaction: "She cries, she asks to hang it above her bed, saying: 'I want to see Him, I need to talk to Him.'"  

A group of children between the ages of six and seven were meditating together with the catechist on Baptism as the participation in the life of the risen Christ. All the children were holding little candles in their hands that had been lit from the paschal candle, symbol of the risen Christ. The catechist wanted to help the children's meditation and spoke about the beauty of that 'light' they had received, but Agnes constantly corrected her, saying: "It isn't light; it's goodness," as if the goodness were more visible to her than the light itself.  

A three-and-a-half year old boy had already heard the Good Shepherd parable when someone spoke to him of the guardian angel, explaining that it is an angel that the Lord gives to protect us; the child (sit venia verbis) observed: "What do I need an angel for? I have the Good Shepherd."  

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1620 ibid, p.37.  
1621 ibid, pp.38-39.  
1622 ibid, p.43.  
1623 ibid, p.50.
Franca (six years old) wrote on the back of her drawing of the risen Christ: “The Holy Spirit made Jesus be born. When He rose the Holy Spirit gave Him more light. Good girls have gone to heaven and the Holy Spirit has given light to Jesus’ sheep too.”\footnote{1624}

A prayer of praise that was synthetically very powerful was recorded from the lips of a three-year-old boy:

Goodness, light. Amen.\footnote{1625}

Two children, both five years of age, were praying together; one prayed: “Thank you for coming into our hearts, because now we can pray to you inside us”; the other child continued: “Yes, He’s really great company and we will never be alone.”\footnote{1626}
APPENDIX 5

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Just as spirituality is very similar in religious and nonreligious contexts, so the approach to fostering spirituality is very similar in each case. Worldviews are explored, aspects of life are experienced, and tried paths are pursued in order to attain the awareness, integration, wonder, acceptance, love, gentleness, and so forth which are the hallmarks of spirituality. Boundaries between different aspects of self are overcome as much as possible so that inner impulses, desires, and feelings influence, (and are influenced by) the whole person and the synergistic energy of the spiritual person is released. 1627

1. to provide opportunities for the expression of imagination, inspiration, insight, empathy and understanding throughout the curriculum;
2. to encourage the setting aside of a time when pupils can reflect upon the inspiring quality of the world, whether it be a sense of the power of nature or the creative imagination of human beings;
3. to promote opportunities of stillness, silence and reflection 1628

Beesley suggests that spiritual development in school will involve three things: (1) helping children and young people to acknowledge the spiritual experience and learning which they already have; (2) offering them regularly a variety of ways to explore and develop this aspect of their being; (3) helping them to find a language, not necessarily in words, to express their spiritual experience, learning and insight. 1629

In school ... Events which might lead to reflection of the spiritual may include classroom activities, e.g. nature studies and stories, and situations in which the child may encounter danger, failure, reward, companionship and success, as well as many of the things first encountered at home. 1630

Silence often brings us the knowledge which we had not fully realised, that we possess within ourselves an interior life. The child by means of silence sometimes becomes aware of this for the first time. 1631

The spiritual and moral development of pupils implies the need for a variety of learning experiences which provide opportunities for pupils to:
1. discuss matters of personal concern;
2. develop relationships with adults and peers;
3. develop a sense of belonging to a community;

4. be challenged by exploring the beliefs and values of others while deepening their knowledge and understanding of their own faith or beliefs;
5. discuss religious and philosophical questions;
6. understand why people reach certain decisions on spiritual and moral issues, and how those decisions affect their lives;
7. experience what is aesthetically challenging;
8. experience silence and reflection.\textsuperscript{1632}

A growing body of empirical research also supports spiritually oriented teaching and learning by suggesting that methods like imaging and meditation are not inherently connected with organised religions, even though some techniques originated in religious traditions [Suhor, 1994] ... Inviting students to participate in a guided imagery exercise or asking them to open their minds and feelings to the invigorating emptiness of meditation must take place in an atmosphere of peaceful trust.\textsuperscript{1633}

Many teachers have planting activities for the children, but the spiritually aware teacher adds another dimension. He or she calls the children’s attention to the miracle of growth, asking them questions such as: What made the beautiful colour of this flower? Could you make a bulb that would grow into a flower? Can you make yourself grow five inches in two weeks? How did the little seed do that? Be careful not to overwhelm a spiritual moment with too many questions. Reserve some of them for later when the group is reflecting on the experience.\textsuperscript{1634}

Planting activities in the classroom can serve two purposes related to the child’s spirit. The actual sprouting of a seed can fill children with wonder, and caring for that seed and the plant that results can teach children a sense of responsibility toward the world of nature.\textsuperscript{1635}

Nurturing the spirit, we can explain to parents, will include experience of silence and reflection, a reverence for nature, an appreciation of the interconnectedness of all things, and the cultivation of peacefulness, compassion, generosity and love.\textsuperscript{1636}

GARTH’S MEDITATIONS

\textit{The star prelude}

I want you to see above your head a beautiful, beautiful star. The star is very special to you, as it is your very own star. It can be any colour you like - you might see it as being a purple star, or perhaps a pink one - or blue -or yellow - or is it a speckled star? Or a silver one? Because it is your very own star, it can be any colour or colours you choose.

This special star is filled with white light, lovely white light that shimmers and glows. I want you to see this light streaming down towards you until it reaches the very top of your head and take it right down your body until your whole body is filled with this glorious white light.

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\textsuperscript{1632} NCC (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{1634} Wolf, A. D. (1996), \textit{op. cit.}, p.77
\textsuperscript{1635} \textit{ibid}, p.83.
\textsuperscript{1636} \textit{ibid}, p.166.
\end{flushright}
I want you to feel the light going down your arms, right down, until you feel it reaching your hands and going into each and every finger.

Feel that light going down the trunk of your body, down until it reaches your legs, and when you feel it there, take it right down until it comes to your feet and then feel the light going through each toe.

I now want you to look into your heart and to fill your heart with love for all the people and animals in the world. They are your friends, be they small or large. Can you see your heart getting bigger and bigger? It’s expanding because you have so much love in your heart for all these people and the animals, and of course for yourself.

Now your guardian angel is waiting to wrap golden wings of protection around you before taking you into your garden. The angel’s wings are very large and very soft, just like down. Everyone has their own guardian angel and that guardian angel takes care of you and protects you always, so you are never alone. It’s important to remember this and to know that you have someone who looks after you with love and care.

Your guardian angel is now going to take you to a garden that is your own special place, but before you enter I want you to look at the large tree that is outside. This tree is called the Worry Tree. I want you to pin on this tree anything that might worry you - perhaps you have had some arguments at school or maybe you are having difficulty with your school work. This tree will take any worries at all, be it with your friends or with your family. This tree accepts anything that you would care to pin there.

Your guardian angel is now opening the gate for you to enter, and as you go in you find the colours are like nothing you have ever seen before. The beauty of the flowers, the colours, the textures, and the perfume - breathe them in. The grass is a vivid green and the sky a beautiful blue with little white fluffy clouds. It is very peaceful in your garden; it is full of love and harmony.

**The little white cloud**

Your guardian angel is closing the gate behind you, and your garden is beautiful. The colours are so rich and luxuriant, with that deep blue sky and the sun a radiant golden ball. And there are perky white clouds floating by.

As you go down your garden path, you will find that one of the white clouds has come down from the sky to take you for a ride. I want you to climb on to this cloud. It is lovely and fluffy - perhaps it’s made of cotton wool? Or is it made out of cotton candy? Look, there is a little seat with a set of leather reins. You don’t have to tell this cloud where to go as it floats off into the wide blue sky. Your cloud knows where it is going.

Now you are leaving the planet Earth behind. I want you to look below. You will see Earth like a gigantic ball with many different patterns. You can see that these are the forests, the rivers, and the mountains. The clusters of the buildings are the cities, and they are tightly packed in, but where the sheep, horses, and cattle graze, there are only a few buildings and barns. If you look VERY closely you can see your home way, way below you.

And off you go, up and up, floating very peacefully on your soft downy cloud. The higher you go, the smaller Earth will appear to you, until it becomes just a speck in the distance. Have a good look around. You will see other small clouds that have children just like you who have been brought from their gardens to feel the freedom of floating in the heavens.
These little clouds are now stopping at a very large cloud. You can step off now and go for a walk on this big cloud. The other children are getting off too. You will find there are people there who like living in the clouds. They are called the Cloud People, and they wear flowing white robes with fluffy shoes and hats. The Cloud People love showing off their land of clouds to children - grown-ups are only sometimes invited, and then only if they have the right kind of imagination.

There is so much to do on this cloud. You certainly won’t fall off, even if you hang over the side by the tips of your toes, because they have a different law of gravity in Cloudland. There are slippery dips and swings and roundabouts to ride. You can even go swimming in the cloud pool, which is all white and foamy.

What fun you can have here, so I think I will leave you now...

*Easter morning*
You can feel something quite exciting is going to happen in your garden tonight. There is a stillness in the air, a hushed feeling of expectancy as though no one were quite sure of what is coming.

Keep walking down your garden path, as you always do, stopping to talk to the trees and the animals on the way, until you come to a hillside where a huge brown rock appears to be blocking the entrance to a cave.

If you wait a little while, you will see other people coming to join you. You might not understand why their faces are sad as they look at the rock, which appears to be immovable. If you listen very quietly, you will hear the sound of the rock scraping on the ground - indeed, I think you will hear it way before the other people. Yes, the rock is moving. That huge, heavy rock that would take many people to shift is moving on its own.

As it moves, you can see the entrance to the cave, and you will notice that the inside is lit as if by magic lanterns. A slender man with flowing garments is coming out from this cave to where you are standing, and he is bringing the light with him.

As you look, you will see the light is coming from all over his body as he stands there with his arms outstretched. This is Jesus, who has risen from the dead. Jesus would like to embrace you and to bring his light around you. He wants you to understand that there is no death; that the spirit lives on, and that he is always with you. He is taking you by the hand and leading you and the others into the town so that the people there can see the beauty of his light and his being. Why don’t you go with him? He is smiling down at you. He is happy to have your hand in his and to take you with him...

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE KENT SACRE

*Directly related to spirituality or religion*
Appreciate the way that the spirit of an artist is given expression in works of art...; appreciate the religious impulse in some great works of art and the way that religious traditions have expressed themselves in painting, sculpture and architecture; develop their aesthetic and critical awareness through the study and analysis of styles and forms used within spiritual and religious traditions; reflect on the meaning of life...; consider

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alternative lifestyles... e.g. when a materially impoverished lifestyle may be
nevertheless spiritually rich; recognise the need for work to satisfy spiritual needs.;
understand the spiritual dimension in the non-profit making objectives of businesses;
appreciate the way a person’s spirit can be expressed through drama; understand the
different ways in which humans have given expression to their hopes and fears, e.g. in
myth and legend, parable, biography, poetry, song and hymn; engage with issues of
belief, value and truth...; consider questions of meaning in asking why things happened
and what might have happened; develop a critical awareness of different views about
the nature of humanity...; develop sensitivity to the views opinions and actions of
others, e.g. when addressing the religious dimensions of a topic such as the Crusades; be
aware of the influence of the Church on life, culture and the landscape...; reflect on the
‘darker side’ of human nature and its capacity for inhumanity...; reflect on the spiritual,
religious and moral issues which are implicit or explicit in topics...; appreciate the way
that a person’s spirit can be expressed in writing and performing music; appreciate that
a religious impulse has often been present in the creation of great works of music;
appreciate the way that religious and other traditions use music, e.g. in worship...;
appreciate... the capacity of different types of music to move the spirit in different
ways, e.g. to inspire, console, refresh and lift the human spirit; be moved by
experiencing a wide range of different types of music, e.g. religious music from the
Christian tradition such as Gregorian chant (plainsong), choral music, organ music,
gospel music, spirituals, hymns and carols, or ragas from the Sikh tradition; understand
that humans are a psychosomatic unity and that body, mind and spirit influence each
other; learn to cooperate with others and develop team spirit; develop an awareness of
the human quest to make sense of the world and the human predicament and seek an
ultimate meaning and purpose; become aware of ultimate questions and learn about and
be challenged by the different answers offered by Christianity and other major religions
to these questions; evaluate for themselves the various truth claims made by religious
and other spiritual traditions; develop their own beliefs and values; respond to religious
stories, artefacts and places of worship; reflect and wonder at the fact of order,
regularity and pattern in the natural and physical world, the vastness of the universe and
the variety of life and consider the question of the possible of a Creator; appreciate that
science and religion are not necessarily contradictory ways of understanding the world
and that, for many, scientific and religious views are complementary; consider topics
where science and religion both have something to say...; reflect on the relationship
between the human spirit and the earth on which it dwells; discuss the views of world
faiths about the natural and made world, the way they should be treated and their views
about creation.

Using spiritually relevant terms and/or concepts
Express their deepest concerns and feelings; reflect upon meaning issues and values...;
develop a sense of awe and wonder at the human ingenuity underlying the
sophistication and complexity of the process of production and distribution...; look at
stories which tell of human achievement, ‘against the odds’, which have the capacity to
inspire; experience and share a sense of wonder at the beauty of language expressed in
poetry, literature and the spoken word; experience awe and wonder at different aspects
of the natural world...; reflect on the power and implications of the workings of
nature...; experience awe and wonder at the best achievements of a built environment...;
consider the lives, writings and influence of inspirational figures from the past...;
experience awe at the potential of technology...; experience the wonder of achievement
with high quality presentation; reflect on the idea of truth in mathematics; consider the
concept of infinity in patterns and number; share a sense of wonder in the power and
beauty of mathematical reasoning and argument; wonder at the mathematical order of the world and the universe; enjoy and know the quality of stillness; experience awe and wonder, e.g. in looking at something through a microscope or telescope; reflect in silence watching the waves on a beach, staring at the sky at night or looking at a single celled organism through a microscope.

*Questioning*
Raise questions about the effects (good and bad) of technological changes on human and all life...; raise questions about the ambiguous nature of some achievements...; raise questions about a culture that can overvalue physical shape, size, appearance and physical fitness; raise questions about the view that science can provide a comprehensive and complete view of life...; raise questions about a narrow view of truth which requires proof of any belief...; develop enquiring minds which continue to ask, “why?”

*Values*
Respond to themes which reflect moral, social and personal issues; appreciate how values expressed in language and literature can change over time...; consider the moral and practical issues of pollution, conservation and sustainability of our environment; develop the awareness of the factors which shape and influence human lives for good and evil; reflect on goals and values...; consider the implications of considering people as numbers or percentages...; learn to respect and abide by the ‘rules of the game’; reflect on questions relating to cheating and fair play; reflect on the ethical implications of scientific discoveries and the potential uses for the advantage or to the detriment of humankind...; consider a range of issues such as the extent of world poverty, why litter offends many people, ways of achieving sustainable development, and the need to secure the environment for future generations.

*Tolerance of differences*
...Tolerance of differences in beliefs and values depicted within the art of different cultural traditions, develop tolerance and understanding towards different viewpoints...; develop a sensitivity and tolerance towards the views and values of others...; gain tolerance and appreciation of other beliefs and customs...; encourage an understanding and respect for those who hold views different from their own.

*Cross-cultural understanding*
Reflect on the amazing variety in environments and peoples across the globe; reflect on differences and similarities between peoples in near and distant parts of the world; explore and develop their personal attitudes and values and those of their own culture in relation to those of other cultures...; consider different lifestyles; reflect on the implications of the fact of different languages; learn about beliefs and values and different understandings of the spiritual life, spiritual develop and spiritual practices...

*Valued personal qualities*
Develop a reflective and self-disciplined approach to issues; promote discipline, inner strength and resilience...; develop the human qualities of self-discipline, commitment, perseverance and self confidence...; learn about discipline and perseverance ... and the need to be honest...
Feelings and emotions
Experience visual images that can evoke a range of emotions; appreciate that performance can evoke a rich variety of emotions...; handle artefacts from the past and reflect on feelings of empathy with the past; experience the physical and emotional sensations that music is capable of evoking; experience the joy of discovery; consider the way different environments can produce a range of responses such as like or dislike, appreciation or disgust, comfort or discomfort.

Self-expression
Express their own ideas...; give expression to personal thoughts, views, beliefs, opinions and feelings...; allow pupils to tell and reflect on their own stories.

Competence and achievement
Design and produce both functional and aesthetically pleasing items...; manipulate materials, change them and combine them for functional and aesthetic effect...; appreciate the human drive to create, innovate and advance in technological achievements...; experience the empowerment possible...; develop responsible use of ICT and the ability to know when and when not to use it; engage in increasingly challenging problem solving activities, persevere to overcome difficulties and experience the pleasure and satisfaction in reaching a solution; work with the discipline of mathematical rules and logic; ...developing physical skills and in achieving success; appreciate the continual and never ending striving for advance towards perfection in physical activities; experience the pleasure, exhilaration and aesthetics of mastering a skill, achieving and watching excellence; learn and achieve balance and control of the body; learn about their own strengths and limitations.

Communication
Communicate ideas and aspirations for the natural and made world...; consider the issue of communicating in different languages; consider ways of communicating with others...

Discipline related
Select a wide variety of texts which can both comfort and challenge; reflect on issues raised in texts...; visit historic sites; reflect what might be learned from the past; reflect on the way that using a computer can either isolate people from one another or bring people together...; consider the implications of greater access to information...; reflect on pattern, shape, sign and symbol; develop sensitivity and responsiveness to others, a sense of a shared commitment and group identity through the experience of live music making and participation in performances...; consider the fact of life, growth, decay and death and how different organisms are dependent upon each other; enable them to see the parameters [sic] of the subject and that it does not seek to answer all the questions that humans ask; consider that there can be different kinds of truth and that scientific truth is not necessarily a superior kind.
APPENDIX 6

EXEGESIS OF TEXTS REFERRING TO CHILDREN

THE INFANCY OF GOD

Detailed incarnation stories were told by Matthew* and Luke* who, though differing significantly in the events they recount, thematically have much in common. John* addressed the meaning of the event, as did Isaiah*.

John 1:1-18
At the centre of Christian belief is the claim that:

The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us... (1:14)

Many religions have stories of gods adopting physical form to intervene in the lives of humans. Such theophanies occurred in the OT. John* wanted to signal that his story was not of that kind. “The Word” who “was God” (1:1) shares human life from conception to death. That this was no post-resurrection theologising is demonstrated by Isaiah’s Messianic prophecy.

Isaiah 9:5-7
Isaiah* feels no incongruity in associating divinity with the state of being a child. In his prophecy people rejoice:

For there is a child born for us,
a son given to us
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;
and this is the name they gave him:
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,
Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace.

While Isaiah* wrote in a particular historico-political crisis, the perpetuation of the account indicate that his audiences through time believed he was caught up in a greater idea. Only a divine Messiah could bring in “a peace that knows no end”.

Matthew 1:18-2:5
Matthew* was at pains to ensure his audience* understood that Jesus the Messiah was unquestionably born both human and divine. Popular Jewish sentiment would readily have welcomed a warrior-king Messiah descending from the clouds as an adult. Some strands of prophecy emphasised such a concept. Conversely, Greek influences were more attuned to a Messiah born as an ordinary human child and ‘adopted’ as the Son of God on achieving maturity, as some early Christian heresies proposed. In response, Matthew* emphasised the special nature of this birth as an act of God’s Spirit:

...with child through the Holy Spirit; (1:18)

1638 As in the text, words marked with an asterisk refer to implied reporters, authors and audiences.
1639 The only details they have in common are the parents, the birthplace, and the involvement of God’s Spirit in the conception.
1640 E.g., Genesis 18:1-33; 32:23-33.
1641 E.g., Isaiah 11:1-4; 33:17-24; 59:15-20; Micah 5:1-5; Zephaniah 3:17; Zechariah 9:9-10
...she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit, (1:20)
...to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet. (1:22)

He used the biblical commonplace that a person’s name was a strong indicator of their nature and rôle. Before his birth this child was named ‘Jesus’ (1:21) and called ‘Immanuel’ (God with us) (1:23), recognisable to his audience* as Isaiah’s promised child.

Matthew’s* strong emphasis on the divinity of Jesus at birth is only the first of three important features of the incarnation in this passage. The second is what he told us about the household into which the divine child was born. It would provide a strong supportive environment for Jesus’ growing spirituality. Matthew* concentrated his account on Jesus’ father who would set the spiritual climate of the home and who is scanty personalised elsewhere. He demonstrated that, legally through Joseph, Jesus was descended from the Davidic kings, the focus of Messianic prophecies.*

Joseph was a man of honour, but also of sensitivity and compassion. His piety could encompass obedience to a vision which required of him courage not only to believe the apparently impossible, that Mary was pregnant without sex, but to face consequential public ridicule and shame. Matthew’s audience* would have understood what that meant to a pious Jew.

Finally, Matthew* saw no incongruity in a toddler being an appropriate subject for homage. A being whose birth was presaged in the skies and who shook political structures by his very birth was not easily to be ignored. The ‘wise men’ did not come to admire his adult potential. They interpreted the stars as signifying “the infant king of the Jews”. (2:2). He received their homage as such. Matthew’s* story was nothing like later iconic images of Eastern monarchs with the holy family in a sanitised stable.

In Matthew’s* world, Jesus was closer to two years of age and living in a house. The audience* was invited to imagine a real live toddler hanging on his mother’s dress wondering who these strange men were, and what was he going to do with the shiny, smelly and gooey stuff. Yet this child was “shepherd”, “leader”, “infant king”, “God is with us”, “Yahweh saves”. Matthew* wanted his audience to recognise, not the Christ in the child, but the Christ as a child.


Luke* shared Matthew’s* concern to assert the divine nature of Jesus from conception. He utilises a cumulative sequence of ‘hints’. First, “... the child will be holy” and will be called Son of God”. (1:35) Marshall suggests that the mention of divine sonship before Davidic Messiahship (1:32) indicates that Luke* wished it understood that the latter is predicated on the former and that more than adoption is implied. He also suggests that Zechariah’s reference to anatóle, (1:78) which can be translated as ‘shoot’

1642 Schweizer reasonably suggests that the choice of the very common name ‘Jesus’ emphasises the humanity of Jesus. [Schweizer, E. (1976), op. cit., p.31.] As such it neatly counterpoints the alternative name ‘Immanuel’ which emphasises Jesus’ divinity.


1644 “It appears from this that the wise men regarded Him already as a Divine Being.” [ibid, p.775.]

1645 Marshall indicates this is meant in the sense of divine rather than dedicated or legitimate. [Marshall, I. H. (1978), op. cit., p.71.]
as well as ‘rising sun’, is a Messianic allusion to Isaiah 11 and Numbers 24. The connotation of something new-born being the Messiah would not be missed. Elizabeth referred to him as kyrios, (1:43) a word Luke* uses for God slightly earlier. (1:15) To the shepherds, the angels declared that the new-born, “…is Christ the Lord.” (2:11) As no redemption price was mentioned, Marshall may be right that, as a first-born, he, “…was not redeemed but rather consecrated to the service of God”. Simeon had been promised that, “…he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord”. (2:26) Seeing Jesus was his sign that the promise was fulfilled. (2:29-32) Anna too affirmed the special nature of Jesus as a child. (2:38) Luke* also emphasised that the conception was an act of God’s Spirit, choosing the same term, eperchomai, as in Jesus’ prophecy of Pentecost. (Acts 1:8)

Nevertheless, Jesus is a real child, not a holy adult in miniature. He needed to grow to maturity. (2:40) He lived under his parents’ authority. (2:51) He “…increased in wisdom … and in favour with God…”. (2:52) Yet this was without compromising his divine nature. Luke* described him as “…filled with wisdom” and noted that “…God’s favour was with him”. (2:40)

Luke* concentrated on Mary and her side of the family. She was depicted as humbly obedient to the divine vision (1:38) with a cultivated spiritual imagination reflecting considerable education in God’s Law. (1:46-55) She came from a priestly family with relatives both remarkable and renowned for their piety. (1:5-25,57-66) Again there are clear implications that Jesus’ home climate, where he matured and his understanding of God was shaped, was one of sincere OT piety with strong commitment, not just to knowing, but to doing God’s will.

BIBLICAL STORIES ABOUT CHILDREN

See main text, pp.262-264,267.

The first child: Genesis 4:1
On the birth of her first child, Moses* represented Eve exclaiming, “I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh”. This theological assertion about the nature of children is based on the forced derivation of the name ‘Cain’, which means ‘spear’, from qānā,
‘to acquire.’ 1652 This first story about a child introduces the ongoing theme that children were a gift from God. Moses audience*, a refugee nation, would see this as confirming the value of their children, reflected in their aversion to infanticide.

Ishmael: Genesis 16:1-16 / 21:8-21 1653
The Ishmael stories are filled with unresolvable anomalies which the Jerusalem attributes to conflation of sources. 1654 Genesis 16 tells a tawdry story of the destructive emotions engendered by a woman’s inability to bear children, which would have been seen as an act of Yahweh. 1655 Sarah’s slave, Hagar, who conceived a child by Abraham at Sarah’s insistence, 1656 was then contemptuous1657 of her mistress. In response Sarah mistreated her so badly1658 she ran away. God intervened directly1659 to instruct her to return and promised he would make her child the ancestor of numberless people. He even named him, Ishmael, “God has heard”.

Genesis 21 documents Abraham’s dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael into the desert as a consequence of Sarah’s jealousy of the older boy once her own baby was born.1660

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1652 “With the help of” is an unusual rendering. von Rad says “et never means ‘with the help of’ ” but that rendering is supported by the Septuagint. The literal text is “even Yahweh” as rendered in the RV [Kevan, E. F. (1954). Genesis. In F. Davidson (Ed.), op. cit., p.81; von Rad, G. (1961). Genesis: A commentary. London: SCM, p.100.] Ramban indicates, “the correct interpretation appears to me to be that she said: ‘This son will be for me an acquisition for the Eternal, for when we shall die he will exist in our stead and worship his Creator.’ ” [Ramban (Nachmanides). (1971). Commentary on the Torah: Genesis. New York: Shiloh, p.87.]

1653 von Rad, with many others, treats these two passages as variants and there are obvious similarities. [von Rad, G. (1961), op. cit., pp.186, 229-230.] However, even if difficulties in treating them as separate are acknowledged, Moses* clearly intended his audience* to do so and distinct theological points are made. Consistent with the evangelical approach taken, the author’s* intent will be respected. In general on the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael see also Seters, J. V. (1975). Abraham in history and tradition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

1654 See notes on Genesis 21:10.


1656 This legitimate practice of the time is attested in other patriarchal stories. It is also included in Ancient Near Eastern law codes. See ibid, p.100; Herbert, A. S. (1962). Genesis 12-50: Introduction and commentary. London: SCM, p.39.

1657 von Rad notes the objective and legal element to this, [von Rad, G. (1961), op. cit., p.187] but the subjective element is also certainly authorial* intent and would be assumed by hearers*.

1658 Herbert suggests that it means she branded her as a slave which was within her right at law but which most commentators see as disapproved by the author. [Herbert, A. S. (1962), op. cit., p.39, see also von Rad, G. (1961), op. cit., p.187.] Some Jewish tradition concurs in this negative evaluation. “Our mother did transgress by this affliction and Abraham also by his permitting her to do so.” [Ramban (Nachmanides). (1971), op. cit., p.213.]

1659 In the OT the ‘angel of Yahweh’ is treated as Yahweh himself. See notes to the Jerusalem and von Rad, [von Rad, G. (1961), op. cit., p.187.], though the ease of transition from one to the other contradicts the latter’s assertion that reference to ‘angel’ is a result of later theological reflection on old cultic traditions of appearances of God in human form. Herbert notes that “in ancient thought forms” the agent was seen as an “extension” of the sender. [Herbert, A. S. (1962), op. cit., p.39.] ‘Expression’ may be more accurate, cf. ‘the churches’ (Revelation 1:4,11) and ‘the angel of the church’ (Revelation 2:1,8,12,18, etc.).

1660 Abraham is acting illegally. [ibid, p.50.] As reporter*, Abraham makes it clear that he only does so under direct divine instruction. (21:11-12)
Moses* tells us, "God was with the boy". (21:20) The statement is incidental to the main narrative, so he specifically intended his audience* to notice that God had an ongoing interest and involvement in Ishmael's life.\footnote{1661} His emphasis is upon Ishmael as an actual child, rather than on Ishmael as eponymous ancestor. The Ishmaelites were marginal figures in later narratives and of little interest to his audience*.

How old Ishmael was when this dismissal occurred is ambiguous because of problems in the sequence of the narrative. This story follows that of his circumcision at thirteen (Genesis 17) and Whitcomb confidently asserts he "...was about sixteen".\footnote{1662} However, an audience* would see that as inconsistent with his being carried on Hagar's shoulder (21:14) and being abandoned under a bush to weep and wail. (21:15-16)\footnote{1663} They would not expect that two children would play together with such a disparity in age. (21:9)\footnote{1664} Jewish tradition has compensated by manipulating the word indicating this "play". Ramban writes: "'Metzacheik' (Making Sport) This refers to worshipping idols, murder and sexual immorality. He (Ishmael) quarrelled with Isaac about inheritance, saying, 'I am the first-born and I will take a double portion'. Then they went into the field, and Ishmael took his bow and shot arrows at Isaac." Ramban then quotes Rabbi Shimon: "'Making sport' here is but a designation for the inheritance. When Isaac was born and everyone rejoiced, Ishmael said to them, 'Fools, I am the first-born, and I take a double portion.' "\footnote{1665}

Ishmael is older than Isaac and it is probable that Isaac was weaned later than usual in Western families today.\footnote{1666} Yet Moses* depicts Ishmael as little more than a toddler.\footnote{1667} God's presence with Ishmael owes nothing to conscious faith, nor to identification with the covenant community from which he has just been expelled through no fault of his own. The audience* would not assume either was needed. Nothing is known of Ishmael's later religious beliefs, only that, following the prophecy of Yahweh's angel (16:11-12), he "...set himself to defy his brothers". (Genesis 25:18) But the reporter* knew that, although he was not the child of the covenant promise, he would receive God's blessing and he was circumcised as part of the establishment of this rite. (Genesis 17:15-27) He fathered twelve tribal chiefs (as did Jacob) and lived a long life. (Genesis 25:12-17) Both would be interpreted as signs of God's ongoing blessing. Exclusion from the covenant did not mean rejection of the individual by God.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1661]Interesting given that his audience* were descendants of Isaac.
\item[1663]Such inconsistencies are to be expected in collections of stories from a culture less concerned than ours to maintain chronological sequence and harmonise discrepancies. It is not necessary to find forced explanations for the use of such language of a youth of at least seventeen years as e.g., Kevan, E. F. (1954), \textit{op. cit.}, p.93.
\item[1664]See footnote to this verse in Jones, A. (Ed.) (1974), \textit{op. cit.}, p.23.
\item[1665]Ramban (Nachmanides). (1971), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.269-270. Both stories are unconvincing, as are his similar explanations of other elements of the narrative.
\item[1666]Herbert says "at two years or older", von Rad "after about three years". [Herbert, A. S. (1962), \textit{op. cit.}, p.50; von Rad, G. (1961), \textit{op. cit.}, p.227.]
\item[1667]However, if the chronology is reversed the story of Ishmael's adolescent circumcision is hard to accommodate.
\end{footnotes}
Moses* indicates that God was involved in the life of Isaac, even before he was conceived, and had determined to accomplish his promises through him. This seems more in spite of, than because of, Isaac himself whose depiction is consistently less than flattering.1668 This suggests that God may work ‘through’ children even if he can do little ‘by’ them.

The passage includes the general instruction to circumcise boys on the eighth day after birth as a sign they share Abraham’s covenant with Yahweh. The inclusivity of the rite is important: “...all your male children ... generation after generation ... born within the household or brought from a foreigner not one of your descendants”. (17:12-13) The purchased child also becomes part of the covenant community from infancy.

Genesis 21 reports Isaac’s birth and circumcision but adds little to the biblical picture of childhood.

The third story says less about the child, Isaac, than the devotion of the reporter*, Abraham, to this God who had led him out of Aram-naharaim on the promise of making a great nation of his descendants. His devotion stretches even to the sacrifice of the very late born son who was the focus of those promises. The audience* never believed that God genuinely sought the sacrifice of Isaac.1669 Both Moses* and his audience* knew themselves as the descendants of Isaac; the former notes that this was in the nature of a test. (22:1). But Abraham, as reporter*, did not know this, and yet was obedient to God to the extent of relinquishing the very promises for which he had surrendered his previous life. While this may be interpreted as God teaching Abraham to reject child sacrifice or as evidence that Abraham felt ‘personal love’ for Isaac,1670 neither is required by the text. However, the story may explain why Yahweh is twice called “the Fear of Isaac”1671 by Isaac’s son.

Pridmore considers these stories as evidence of children’s total lack of rights,1672 but this is forced. Tamar is a widow, and the other girls are sufficiently mature that it is necessary to tell the mobs that they are virgins. The narratives reveal more about the sexual rights of young women at the time.

Esau and Jacob: Genesis 25:21-28
Moses* attributed the birth of these children to Yahweh, answering Isaac’s prayer for Rebekah. Even as a humorous retrojection of later events into the birth story, it only works by assuming the audience* shared a folk belief that temperament and the events of later life were presaged in the womb.

1671 The Hebrew text is difficult and the Jerusalem changes ‘fear’ to ‘Kinsman’. This is not supported by other translations and the phrase ‘kinsman of...’ is applied to no other patriarch.
The sons of Joseph: Genesis 41:50-52; 48:1-20
Manasseh and Ephraim had an Egyptian mother, the daughter of a pagan priest. They were not born into a Yahwist household but into one committed to the god On. Yet Jacob adopted them into the covenant relationship with El Shaddai, his preferred name for the God who appeared to him in Canaan. (48:3-5) Later children of Joseph would also be included by being ‘assigned’ to either Manasseh or Ephraim. The children’s age is not specified but they are young. No younger brothers were presented even though arrangements were made for subsequent children; and the blessing (48:20) was later used for young children. Young ‘outsiders’ could be accepted into the covenant community.

The children of a rebellion: Numbers 16:27-32
Moses* presumed a recognition of household spiritual unity. He called attention to wives and sons and “their young children” standing with Dathan and Abiram to confront Moses. (16:27) Children were so integrated with their family that they were implicated in the evil perpetrated by other members. They would share the fate of the rebel leaders.

The exempt children: Numbers 14:26-35 / Deuteronomy 1:34-40
These are parallel accounts of Yahweh’s judgment upon the Israelites in the wilderness. Fearing destruction by the inhabitants, they rejected Yahweh’s command to invade the land he had promised them. Consequently, they would die without entering that land. However, their children were exempted from that judgment: “But your little ones who, you said, would be seized as booty, these children of yours who do not yet know good from evil, these shall go in there; I will give it to them, and they shall possess it.” (Deuteronomy 1:39) The justification is that they “...do not yet know good from evil” which also offers a functional definition of childhood. Children were seen as helpless and the audience* is presumed to understand that this excused them from moral guilt though they shared some consequences of their parents’ judgment. Moses* described them as, “...your young children that you said would be seized as booty,” (Numbers 14:31) and their years as nomads as “...bearing the weight of your faithlessness”. (14:33) In retelling the story, Deuteronomy specifically adds the moral description of children and omits the indication that the exemption applied to everyone below twenty years. The author* wants to make a theological point. His audience* would have heard echoes of the first temptation of humanity: “...you will be like gods, knowing good and evil”. (Genesis 3:5) In being able to make clear moral choices people are able to reject the good. The author* implies that, because they are unable to understand right and wrong, children are not subject to judgment as were their parents. Mayes says: “...the children, having no moral discernment, cannot be judged faithless.” Deuteronomy also omits reference to the children’s nomad period as punishment. Pridmore writes:

1673 The word for ‘bless’, barak, is easily confused with berek, the word for taking a child on your knees, which was part of a formal act of adoption. While ‘bless’ makes sense, this is an adoption rite as it is subsequently noted that Joseph took them from Jacob’s lap.

1674 von Rad, from the perspective of the documentary hypothesis, indicates that the ‘Priestly chronology’ would make them about twenty years old. But the chronology of the later chapters of Genesis is very confused with questions as to whether Jacob died soon after entering Egypt, which fits this story best, or after a seventeen year residency.

They [Deuteronomy 1:39 / Isaiah 7:15-16] express awareness of the fact that the child, to this degree at least, is set in a category apart from that of the adult, in that he cannot be held morally responsible for his actions. Viewed objectively no doubt, the actions and attitudes of infancy, will demonstrate again and again his natural propensity towards what is wrong, but the Old Testament does not proceed from this fact to pass judgment on the guilt and culpability of infants.  

However, he argues that this is not the basis for their exemption from punishment. The reason is Yahweh’s concern for the honour of his name, based on Moses’ argument for forgiveness of the people. (Numbers 14: 10-19) Only contiguity sustains this argument. Moses argued that Yahweh’s honour demanded the continuation of the nation, not this particular group’s exemption from individual judgment.

This staying of God’s judgment on the young may underlie the use of “...refuse evil and choose good” by Isaiah. (Isaiah 7:4-16) The idea also has an important New Testament extension. (Hebrews 5:11-14)  

Achan’s children: Joshua 7:24-26; 22:20

Some translations suggest Achan’s children were burnt to death for his disobedience to Yahweh’s ban on looting Jericho. Were this so it would parallel Numbers 16:27-32. However, some commentaries suggest the plural refers to the goods he had stolen, not his family. However, the children, whose age is unstated, were amongst the list of belongings taken with him to his execution. Invoking Deuteronomy 14:6 to say that Joshua would not have killed children for their father’s sin is anachronistic if the book is from a later period and authorship. But a fair case can be made that it authentically represents Moses’ thinking shortly before his death and would be fresh in the memory of Joshua who, as Moses’ protégé, would be well aware of his thinking. The Jerusalem translates both passages to suggest punishment was only received by Achan.

Jephthah’s daughter: Judges 11:29-40

The author tracks the decline of the Mosaic nation into a rabble of individuals because of their neglect of Yahweh. The narrative moves from, “After the death of Joshua the Israelites consulted Yahweh,” (Judges 1:1) to “In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did as he pleased.” (21:25) That the author would fabricate this story to rationalise fertility rites is implausible given the normative Yahwism of the audience. It may have been later used as such a rationalisation or, more likely, used to transform a pre-existing fertility rite into a memorial to faith. After a military victory, Jephthah fulfilled his vow to sacrifice the first person to greet him, which turned out to be his daughter. It is barely possible that she was a young child, though that is unlikely given her request for a two month stay of execution to “...wander in the mountains, and with my companions bewail my virginity”. (11:37) Even if she was a child, that this


1677 See later discussion.


502
evidences a practice of child sacrifice to *Yahweh* is contradicted by the fact that in his vow, Jephthah specifically referred to the proposed sacrifice as “he”, yet she was his only child. The audience would recognise the contrast between the affirmation of the faithfulness of the daughter, honoured in an annual festival, and the negative evaluation of Jephthah whose attempt to manipulate *Yahweh* led to his family’s termination. Her act of faithful obedience (11:36) is the key centre to the story. It is not the author’s point, but the story indicates that *Yahwism* struggled to avoid the grosser elements of paganism during the period of the judges.

**Samson: Judges 13:2-24**

The great larrkin hero of the early skirmishes with the Philistines is born to a previously barren woman after a visit from an angel of *Yahweh* who also instructed the parents in the strict regime the mother was to follow during pregnancy and the child was to follow after birth. *Yahweh* was said to have blessed him as he grew.

**Samuel: 1 Samuel 1:1-4:1**

Samuel was probably between three and five when Hannah made him over to *Yahweh* for life. (1:24-28) She may have stayed with him for a time (2:11) though this is contradicted in the Septuagint. “Samuel was in the service of Yahweh” (2:18) his age no barrier to his service being acceptable. However, Pridmore’s assertion that his wearing of a “linen loincloth” (2:18) and a “little tunic” (2:19) indicated that he “...wears the priestly garment” and was, “...depicted virtually as a little priest” stretches the reading. Had that been the author’s intention he would have been aware of the audience’s expectation that the Covenant demanded priestly clothing be highly colourful. (Exodus 28:5) Loin-cloth and tunic comprised basic children’s attire and wearing linen meant that he was dressed appropriately to be in God’s presence. (28:40-43) There is no evidence of a priestly rôle.

However, “Samuel grew up in the presence of *Yahweh*”. (Samuel 2:21) Despite the impiety of the sons of Eli, (2:12-17) God’s presence continued to reside with the Ark of the Covenant. Samuel matured in this spiritually charged environment, daily reminded of *Yahweh*’s closeness. Consequently, “… the boy Samuel went on growing in stature and in favour with *Yahweh* and with men”. (2:26)

He still seems quite young when God’s call came to him. (3:1-18). He was old enough to understand that *Yahweh*’s message would not be welcome to Eli. Yet his behaviour appears preadolescent. Late childhood, perhaps between ten and twelve years, fits the story best. Henceforth, Samuel grows in personal relationship with *Yahweh* and he

\[1\] Much later Josephus noted: “...the sacrifice was neither sanctioned by the Mosaic ritual nor acceptable to God”. [Peloubet, F. N. & Adams, A. D. (1947), *op. cit.*, p.298. See also Butler, P. (1992), *op. cit.*, p.29.]

\[2\] Mauchline, J. (1971). 1 and 2 Samuel. London: Oliphants, p.49. Driver believes the Septuagint reading is correct given that Elkanah is not mentioned as bringing the child. [Driver, S. R. (1913), *op. cit.*, p.23.]


\[4\] This parallels the description of Jesus in Luke 2:52.

\[5\] It is risky to extrapolate from contemporary behavioural norms to those of children in another culture and era. In this case, the dramatic structure of the story supports the conclusion. One meets Samuel when conceived, as a toddler and as a young child. Then God’s call comes and one next
speaks as a prophet. (3:19-4:1) Consequently, arguments that children’s spirituality was always viewed as part of their family’s corporate spirituality are overstated, though the priestly household does provide an alternative and God intervenes with a child predisposed to respond.

See also main text, pp. 261, 264, 269, 273, 279-280.

David’s child: 2 Samuel 11:27-12:23
See main text, pp. 255-256.

Solomon: 1 Kings 3:7-9
“And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.” (NIV) This rhetorical flourish in Solomon’s prayer would not have been taken literally and some versions translate to avoid the metaphor. The NIV is used to retain the more literal renderings because the reference to ‘child’ is important.¹⁶⁸⁵ The relevant matter was not whether Solomon was a child (he wasn’t),¹⁶⁸⁶ but what he and the audience* believed it meant to be a child. Children do not know how to ‘go out’ (yatsa) or ‘come in’ (bo). This unflattering functional definition of childhood is a narrative device (Solomon as incompetent / numberless people / prayer for competence / great people). It is followed by a prayer for the ability to “…discern between good and evil” echoing other depictions of the nature of childhood.

Abijah: 1 Kings 14:1-18
See main text, pp.256-257.

The widow of Zarephath’s son: 1 Kings 17:17-24
The mother in the story recognises the existence of Yahweh and even obeys commands he gives, but she still refers to him specifically as “your God” suggesting she was a polytheist. (1 Kings 17:13)¹⁶⁸⁷ While the emphasis of this story is elsewhere, it indicates that even a pagan child’s life was in the hands of God.

The boys from Bethel: 2 Kings 2:23-35
See main text, pp. 258, 282-284.

The prophet’s widows children: 2 Kings 4:1-7
This is the first of three narratives in which children feature in chapters 4-5. Though the children play no active part in this first story, it reinforces the theme that the children, as part of the family, share its corporate fate. Whoever incurred the debt, forfeiture had consequences for the children who would be sold to redeem the pledge. This was not, of course, uniquely a penalty upon children, as the Law required that the debtor themselves be sold in the first instance. (Exodus 22:1)

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¹⁶⁸⁵ Other versions use terms like ‘lad’ or ‘very young man’ and ‘unskilled in leadership’ or ‘don’t know how to rule’.


¹⁶⁸⁷ As were most non-Israelites.

504
The Shunamite woman’s son: 2 Kings 4:8-37
Again the child has no active part but the story illustrates both the importance of having children and the belief that it was God who granted or refused them. The point is emphasised in both the birth narrative and the resurrection story which echoes an earlier account involving Elijah rather than Elisha. (1 Kings 17:17-24)

Naaman’s slave: 2 Kings 5:1-27
See main text, p. 261.

Children of the second exodus: Nehemiah 8:1-3
This event is taken as marking the establishment of Judaism, when the people of Israel became defined by adherence to the Torah, the Book of the Law of Moses. The assembly for the hearing of the Law includes some children and excludes others. The reason for the distinction is stated twice. (8:2,3) Those included were “old enough to understand”. Younger children were, sensibly, exempt. No age is indicated; it may well have been left to parental discretion. The issue was capacity, not chronology. Understanding was recognised as a relevant factor in spiritual responsibility.

Jeremiah: Jeremiah 1:1-7
The time sense of this passage is important. At face value, it can be read as evidence for the pre-conception existence of human beings. If so, it is anomalous in the overall context of Scripture. Rather, Jeremiah* wrote to assert Yahweh’s prescience of the person he was to become. However, the spiritual influence that creates this person-to-be was specifically identified as active in the prenatal period and earlier. (1:5) How Yahweh ‘consecrated’ this particular embryo is not explained, being beyond Jeremiah’s* understanding. Some form of special divine possession is not a necessary interpretation. A mundane process may underlie the words. The consecration could have consisted of God’s choice of the mother who would bear and nurture this child. Any answer is speculation unanswerable from the narrative.

Jeremiah was raised in a “...priestly family living at Anathoth”. (1:1) He was close enough to Jerusalem and the centre of cultic practice to observe the struggle of the young king Josiah with a corrupt religious establishment. The audience* would assume such matters occasioned ongoing family discussions. Jeremiah’s* first prophecy occurred just one year after Josiah launched his reforms. He was still young when called to intervene on Josiah’s side. He referred to himself as a child (1:6) and, while he overstated his youth, he believed that he could argue an exemption on that basis. Yahweh pointed out that his preparation for this responsibility began before he was born.

Jeremiah* used his self-description as a child to justify reticence in adopting the rôle of prophet. The audience* could only understand his claim if they accepted that children, being inarticulate, were incapable of fulfilling and, therefore, exempt from, such onerous spiritual responsibilities. Yahweh does not deny that assumption; only its application to Jeremiah.

1688 And probably stamina if “the Book of the Law of Moses” refers to the entire Pentateuch in “more or less” its current form as Clines cites Wellhausen, Schaefer, Rudolph and Eissfeldt as believing. [Clines, D. J. A. (1984). Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.182.]
The moonstruck child 1: Matthew 17:14-20

The identification of the child’s problem with epilepsy, and therefore the latter with demon possession, is a difficulty created by modernist thinking. For the contemporary audience there is a superficial similarity which leads the translation. Even the Jerusalem which properly avoids the term ‘epileptic’ in the text (unlike the RV, TEV and NIV), uses it in the heading to the story and commentators concur with this designation.\(^{1689}\) The Greek has seleniazoma\(i\), ‘moonstruck’,\(^{1690}\) which both the Jerusalem and AV appropriately render ‘lunatic’.\(^{1691}\) Even so, current popular medical connotations must not be read into that word.\(^{1692}\)

The author* asserted that this child was seized by an evil spiritual influence which threw him into the fire or into the water; in other words, which tried to destroy him. Epileptic ‘seizure’ is less purposeful. Butler recognises that the passage indicates that, “... children can be affected by the demonic and its manifestations can be very unpleasant.”\(^{1693}\) Jesus rebuked the ‘faithless and perverse generation’, (17:17) supporting Wink’s suggestion that he saw the demonic as an expression of the community.\(^{1694}\) The incapacity of Jesus’ disciples is puzzling as this was subsequent to his giving them “...authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out”. (10:1)\(^{1695}\)

See also main text, p. 284.

The moonstruck child 2: Mark 9:14-29

This expanded version of Matthew 17:14-20 would appear to be the source of the almost universal\(^{1696}\) ‘epileptic’ designation. Even here, however, the diagnosis leads the translation: “...It throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid...”, (9:18) could as well be translated, “...it tears him, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and wastes away...”\(^{1697}\) In the same way, “...threw the boy into convulsions” (9:20) is a translation of sunesparaz\(en\), which means to ‘throw violently’, ‘thrash’ or ‘lacerate’.\(^{1698}\) The description could equally describe an apoplectic rage, which fits the destructive intent of the attacks. More likely, there is no


\(^{1691}\) While ‘lunatic’ carries other meanings in contemporary English, it does retain the lunar reference.

\(^{1692}\) Schweizer rightly indicates that the original term, “...reflects the theories of ancient medicine”, without recognising that a parallel statement can be made about the modern rendering. [Schweizer, E. (1976), op. cit., p.352]

\(^{1693}\) Butler, P. (1992), op. cit., p.31. He also considers the accounts in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 to make the same point. These were excluded in this study as the age of the daughter is not clearly specified.


\(^{1695}\) However, cf. Mark 6:1-6.


\(^{1697}\) These changes use the root meanings of ressei and zerainet\(ia\) respectively.

\(^{1698}\) Plummer indicates that it is used of boxers and wrestlers knocking or throwing an opponent down. [Plummer, A. (1922), op. cit., p.255.]
contemporary category of illness that this behaviour exemplifies. Gould says the translation 'convulses' is "...not very well established". 1699 Bowman comments: "It is no real explanation to say the symptoms are those of epilepsy. One doubts if this would have satisfied the Gospel writers. In any case they believed that diseases were caused by demons, and demons were under the control of the Evil power that was opposed to God." 1700 The audience* would have no doubt that the child was under the control of a spiritual power distinct from himself.

Jesus’ explanation of why the disciples had failed is brief, incongruous, and inconsistent with Matthew*. It is possible Mark’s reporter* had forgotten the details but it remains an anomaly of the process of transmission.

See also main text, p.276.

Except for variations in symptomatology which removes malicious intent from the seizures, and omissions which centre attention on the power of Jesus rather than the faith of others, 1701 Luke’s account is similar to the others and adds no new ideas to the argument.

John’s birth and boyhood clearly indicates that God’s choice and presence is not age-dependent. The angel appeared to Zechariah even before John was conceived, indicating his calling and life rôle: "...he will bring back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord your God ... he will go before him to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children and the disobedient back to the wisdom that the virtuous have, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him." (1:16-17) To achieve this, "...from his mother’s womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:15) and will act "with the spirit and power of Elijah." (1:17) This is a poetic parallel and the reporter*, Zechariah at this point, would recognise the angel’s words referred to a presence of the Spirit as experienced by the OT resurrection prophet. The author* and audience* may well have conflated this with the post-resurrection presence. On either interpretation, it indicated that the Spirit can be with a child, even from the prenatal period.

Even so, as with Jesus, this God-inspired spirituality was not fully formed. Luke explained that John, "...grew up and his spirit matured". (1:80) This verse also implies the importance of the natural world for his spiritual development. While living "in the wilderness" helped establish his prophetic credentials, the audience* would attribute that to the rôle of wilderness in engendering the prophetic spirit.

Also see main text, pp.247, 267, 280-281.

Luke’s* description of the early days of the church indicated that while the conversions occurred among “devout men”, (2:5) the consequences were seen as involving their entire households, (2:44-47; 4:32-35) and children took part in the community activities of

the church. (21:5) This requires that spirituality was assumed to be corporate; that entire households shared a united spiritual commitment rather than pursuing individual directions. It is in the context of a discussion about spirituality that Jesus asserts the vulnerability of a divided household. Children were assumed to be part of the corporate spiritual life of their home which involved the church.

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING ABOUT CHILDREN

Jesus’ own teaching is central to interpretation of the Bible’s doctrinal perspective on children. Yet, Jesus calls upon a rich tradition from the OT. While Pridmore may overstate his conclusion, in approaching the OT material his description is apt:

Questions of the sin and responsibility of children are nowhere given special consideration in the Old Testament. For the Old Testament’s attitude to these questions we are dependent upon incidental indications, significant expressions and the like, which suggest the Old Testament’s view, though that view is not the result of sustained reflection on the state of childhood as such.

Genesis 3:16

To the woman he said:

I will multiply your pains in childbearing,

You shall give birth to your children in pain.

In contrast to many references to the joy of having children, here Moses* emphasised the pain of labour. The most positive of events was now marred by humanity’s disobedience to God.


These verses illustrate the ongoing belief across a range of audiences* that people’s life was the result of receiving the breath / spirit of Yahweh. The birth of every child was a consequence of an act of God.

Genesis 5:1-3

Moses* used the same terminology to describe the relationship between God and humanity and between Adam and his son. Just as humanity was in God’s likeness, demuth (5:1), so Seth was in Adam’s likeness, demuth. (5:3) Seth was also described as being in Adam’s image, tselem. (5:3) This joint use of likeness and image called the audiences* attention to the earlier description of humanity’s creation. (1:26) The exact meaning of those terms is of marginal concern here; the important matter is their parallel use about God and humanity and about parent and child. The audience* would appreciate that the act of birth transmitted the divine image to each subsequent generation. It did not end with Adam who was created by God. However, the image transmitted was the marred image of post-fall Adam.

Moses* implied first, that the divine image, however marred, was preserved in every child. Second, in relationship to their children, parents, and particularly the father, stood in the place of God. For parents there were clear implications for care and nurture, and for authority and discipline, and for children responsive respect and obedience. Some of startling early Israelite custom and laws about parent-child relationships reflect this relationship. A third implication was that the foundations for

1702 Or kingdom, or town. Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-22

children’s relationship to God were laid in relationship to their parents. How well parents acted would be an important determinant of that latter relationship. The parents’ status in loco dei conveyed a far higher level of responsibility than of privilege.

Genesis 8:21
“Never again will I curse the earth because of man, because his heart contrives evil from his infancy.” The audience* may not have read this as a claim that children were born plotting evil. By using adam, rather than ish, or enosh, the author* allows ‘man’ to be seen as eponymous. The text may refer to humanity’s fall in its infancy, rather than individual sinfulness. If the latter is intended, it contradicts Romantic ideas of childhood innocence, but they find few echoes in Scripture. Later Jewish tradition related to this verse, that evil is something one matures out of is without textual support.

Genesis 15:1-6
The importance of children in the OT narratives is underscored by the calamity of being childless. People without children had no future. God’s promise, “...your reward will be very great” (15:1) had no meaning if, “...I go childless”. (15:2) Yahweh recognised Abraham’s need for children: “Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants.” (15:5) It is on this point that Moses* stated: “Abram put his faith in Yahweh, who counted this as making him justified.” (15:6) Without children there was no covenant. It was they who would carry the promises to Abraham into the future.

Genesis 17:12
“When they are eight days old all your male children must be circumcised, generation after generation of them, no matter whether they be born within your household or bought from a foreigner not one of your descendants.” There are two matters to note here:
- acceptance was unconditional; at eight days infants received the sign that marked them as sharing the covenant with Yahweh;
- acceptance was inclusive; even purchased foreign children were marked as sharing the covenant relationship.

Genesis 29:31-30:24
Moses* asserted that Yahweh determined whether or not a woman bore children. He granted children to Leah as a recompense for being the unloved wife of Jacob. (29:31) Rachel expressed anguish at her childlessness, even though she knew her husband’s love was secure: (29:15-30; 30:15) “Give me children, or I shall die.” (30:1) The implication that Jacob was at fault for Rachel’s barren state, caused him to reply, “Am I in God’s place?” (30:2) Not bearing children is so grievous that both Rachel and Leah resort to surrogacy. 1707

1706 von Rad asserts “When one attempts to comprehend in any way - psychologically, for example, - what the narrator designates in sum as perfect ‘faith,’ the text refuses any concrete possibility.” [von Rad, G. (1961), op. cit., p.179] This seems to ignore the juxtaposition of this story of the promise of descendants with the formula about Abraham’s faith.
1707 This situation is, of course, coloured by the rivalry of the sisters.
Genesis 42:35-38
Within the ancient Semitic tribal structure fathers had absolute power of life and death over their children. Moses’ audience* would not have confused it with the Law to be exercised under the Covenant. This is part of an extended narrative marked by black humour. (42-45) It would be heard as a rhetorical retort to Jacob’s histronics over the loss of his own children. Such hyperbole were a commonplace in Ancient Near Eastern culture, best exemplified in the wish that a king would live forever.,

Exodus 12:21-28 / Joshua 4:6,21-22
Deuteronomy 6 develops more fully the idea presented in these passages that children’s learning would follow questioning their parents adherence to memorial rituals. Children’s questioning had a recognised rôle in community rites.

These are references to the consecration of the first-born child or son to God. This is consistent with God’s right to all kinds of first-fruit and while it has theological importance when considering children like Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist and Jesus, it does not really add to our understanding of childhood. There is no reason to see this as a reference to sacrifice of the first born as some commentators have.1709 Exodus 13:14-15 repeats an earlier allusion to children learning by questioning ritual.

Exodus 21:4-5
The wife and children of a released slave, where the wife had been provided by the master, belonged not to the husband and biological father, but to the slave-master. The rights of biological fatherhood were over-ridden by the function of ownership.

Exodus 22:21-24
This is an ambiguous passage; some commentators see it as limited to resident aliens, others as applying to all widows and orphans. Regardless of which, it strongly affirms Yahweh’s concern for these groups, “...they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry”, (22:23) and the warning that their abuse would result in a death penalty because of God’s anger. (22:24)

Leviticus 12:1-8
Though women were considered unclean after childbirth and had to undergo purification rites, this state was not attributed to the birth itself1710 but to “...her flow of blood”. (12:7)1711 There is no sense that the child was unclean. In fact, Milgrom affirms the opposite:

In other cultures, the newborn child was also impure, for instance, among the Hittites ... What of the Israelite child? Was he (or she) rendered impure by contact with the mother? The text is silent. Nor is there even a hint of an answer in Scripture.1712 Does the silence mean the newborn is exempt from the laws of

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1708 vs.29-31 in some translations.
1711 Milgrom argues parallel cases for other genital discharges and also across a wide range of cultures. [Milgrom, J. (1991), op. cit., pp.742-768.]
1712 Milgrom argues from a Jewish perspective and consequently ‘Scripture’ does not include Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 7: 14.

510
niddā, or must we assume that the child’s impurity was taken for granted ... “The Bible’s rite is simple, covering only the period of postparturition, and it regards only the mother as impure. The Hittites prescribe varied and complicated rites for the purification of both mother and child during the time before and after the delivery.”

The Bible’s positive regard for children stands out in its context.

*Leviticus 20:1-5 / Deuteronomy 12:29-31 / 18:10*

These laws underlie the later OT condemnations of child sacrifice. Even though it is not part of the life of Israel, but of other nations, Moses* tells the Israelites, “Yahweh detests all this and hates what they have done for their gods, even burning their sons and daughters in the fire for their gods.” (Leviticus 12:31) Many authors* record his special concern to protect children from such abuse. Children are not to be sacrificed as part of the spiritual life of his nation.

Child sacrifice must be included amongst those practices which the OT attests but which had no part in the religion of Yahweh. The practice is consistently denounced in the OT in all three strands of its literature, law, prophecy, and didactic historical narrative. But the condemnation has to be constantly reiterated, which itself testifies to the extent of the practice.

*Deuteronomy 1:31 / Psalm 103:13 / Hosea 11:1-4*  
In each of these passages the love of parent for child provides an appropriate image of the love of God for his people.

*Deuteronomy 6:1-25; 11:18-21*  
See main text, pp.243, 272-273.

*Deuteronomy 7:12-13*  
One of the promised consequence of obedience to the Deuteronomiac law was that God would bless, “...the fruit of your body.” This promise, that benefits of the faithfulness of parents would flow to children, was cast in terms of the numerical growth and prosperity of the nation.

*Deuteronomy 12:8-12; 16:13-15; 31:12-13*  
The author* directs that boys and girls participate in religious celebrations. Despite male dominance of the society, girls were to be included in the worship of the covenant community. Pridmore says:

...there is no trace in the Old Testament of the later Jewish attitude that confined the privilege of education to boys. So long as the responsibility for education, practical and religious, lay within the family, such a distinction between the sexes would not

1713  *ibid*, pp.746, 764.

1714  “Amongst the Phoenecians live infants were placed in the arms of an idol, and died in the flames burning inside it. Some equally horrible practice is in mind here.” [Alexander, D. & Alexander, P. (1973), *op. cit.* , pp.178-179.]

1715  2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Isaiah 57:5; Jeremiah 19:4; Ezekiel 16:20-21,36; 20:31; 23:37,39; and Micah 6:7

1716  Pridmore, J. S. (1977), *op. cit.*, p.14. Or perhaps the authors* sought to prevent it being borrowed from other peoples.
have been made. We have no evidence that participation by children in the festivals was confined to the boys.\textsuperscript{1717}

\textit{Deuteronomy 21:15-21}

A father’s power over his children was limited under the Deuteronomiaic code. Favouritism could not be shown in disbursement of property. Moreover, the death penalty could only be employed against a rebellious son\textsuperscript{1718} with the support of both the mother and the wider community.

\textit{Deuteronomy 24:16 / 2 Kings 14:6 / 2 Chronicles 25:3-4}

“Fathers may not be put to death for their sons, nor sons for fathers. Each is to be put to death for his own sin.” (Deuteronomy 24:16) The OT is not always consistent. Children did suffer for their parents’ acts and there was a clear recognition of corporate responsibility and fate. But this was tempered in Deuteronomy by a requirement that judgment did not extend beyond the individual. This formed part of a series of admonitions against excess in exercising rights or powers and so probably related to the excesses of blood feud. The right to revenge was recognised but was not to extend to other family members. The authors* of the other passages both recounted with approval how King Amaziah obeyed this law with respect to his father’s murderers.

\textit{Deuteronomy 28:53-57}

The grossest curse the author* could imagine was that people would withhold food from their own children and even eat them. This suggests the audience* presumed that parents would act well towards their children.

\textit{1 Samuel 15:1-3 / Psalm 137:7-9}

The specific inclusion of children under the instruction to destroy other nations sits ill with contemporary thinking. To the audience* it was justified by corporate thinking whereby the nation as a whole was targeted. A nation lived on in their children and the only way to extirpate a people was to include them in the slaughter.\textsuperscript{1719}

\textit{2 Chronicles 20:13}

“All the men of Judah even down to their youngest children and their wives, stood in the presence of Yahweh.” At a time of national prayer for deliverance in a time of war, children are included in the gathering, and the author* emphasises inclusion of even the smallest.

\textit{2 Chronicles 31:16-18}

See main text, p.264.

\textit{2 Chronicles 36:8-10}

See main text, p.251.

\textit{Ezra 9:1-10:44}

Children are caught up in a spontaneous outpouring of community repentance. (10:1) But some are “put away” with their foreign mothers. (10:44) It is unusual for the mother’s race to determine the status of children who were everywhere else seen as

\textsuperscript{1717} \textit{ibid}, p.31.

\textsuperscript{1718} The son had to be old enough to act consistently in despite of his parents. There was no provision for a death penalty for girls.

\textsuperscript{1719} Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, p.6.
‘belonging’ to the father. It is also strange that children are not mentioned until the last word in the book; all previous reference is to foreign wives. On the face of it, Ezra’s zealotry to purify the nation of foreign influences overwhelmed other considerations. But this may not be the case. Clines disputes the usual translation.

The second half of the verse reads literally "...and some of them had wives and their (masc.) children". Even if this could mean "Some of them had wives by whom they had children" (AV), that is an improbable note on which to conclude the story of Ezra’s reforms. RSV, following 1 Esd 9:36, amends to they put them away with their children (similarly, NEB), ... Perhaps a simpler solution is to reverse the order of two words that begin with the same three letters and read "and they put their wives from them, even if there were children." 1721

Nehemiah 5:1-13

Parents were selling their children into slavery to pay off interest exacted by their fellow Jews. It caused bitter complaint (5:5) and Nehemiah acted immediately to stop the practice.

Nehemiah 12:43

In this passage children are included in the religious celebration of the community. Tangentially, one may note that this was a very noisy community celebration.

Job 3:11-16

Because of its literary form, being both Wisdom and poetic in form, this passage should not be overextended but the fate of the newborn child who dies was expressed in positive terms, especially in contrast to the sorrows of the living. Such children were: "...lying in peace, wrapped in a restful slumber". (3:13) There is no sense that they suffer any form of judgment for being human.

Job 19:18

Even the children look down on me;
   ever ready with a jibe when I appear...
The point of this excerpt from Job’s complaint is the first word. He assumed that lack of love and acceptance from children was a matter of surprise.

Job 24

Job accused God of failure to bring the wicked to judgment. Exploitation of helpless children was one of his primary examples of what God should not permit: “There are those who snatch the orphan child from the breast, and take as a pledge the infant of the poor. They go about naked, without clothing; though hungry, they carry the sheaves; between their terraces they press out oil; they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst”. (24:9-11) 1722

Even God was called to account for allowing ill treatment of children.

Psalm 8:1-2

See main text, pp.225, 252.

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1722 See n.1065.
Psalm 22:9-10
David* attributed his birth to Yahweh, his God from the womb. He used expressions redolent of familial love, "...you drew me out of the womb", "...you entrusted me to my mother’s breasts", "...placed on your lap from my birth". This love as a child justified his current appeal for salvation from trouble.

Psalm 48:12-14
See main text, p.281.

Psalm 51:5; 58:3
See main text, p.258.

Psalm 68:5
As the Bible represented parental authority as a mirror of God’s authority, equally, a husband’s authority reflected divine authority. In both cases, ‘authority’ demanded one took responsibility for the other. The faith community was required to care for widows and orphans who lack such a person. The Psalmist* assumes that God himself resumed responsibility for vulnerable individuals, becoming the “father of orphans, defender of widows”. They suggest that God has a special concern for the parentless child. But it implies more. It gives the child isolated from usual familial ways of belonging to the faith community an assured status with God.

Psalm 71:5-6
I have relied on you since I was born,
you have been my portion from my mother’s womb,
and the constant theme of my praise. (71:6)
This is the direct counterpoint to Psalm 51. The Psalmist* felt that their relationship with God commenced before had been consistent since birth.

Psalm 72:4
Uprightly he will defend the poorest,
his will save the children of those in need,
and crush their oppressors.

Solomon’s* description of the promised king reads as Messianic prophecy. While the ‘imperial’ content suits Solomon himself, the expressions of social concern (72:12-14) sit ill with a king of whom it was said: “Your father [i.e., Solomon] gave us a heavy burden to bear; lighten your father’s harsh tyranny now, and the weight of the burden he laid upon us, and we will serve you.” (1 Kings 12:4) While such clauses as, “Like sun and moon he will endure age after age” (Psalm 72:5) and “...a universal peace till the moon is no more” (72:7) may have been allowable hyperbole, they certainly invite the audience* to see a reference to the Messiah.

The ‘upright’ nature of the promised king was evident in saving needy children. Later audiences* would see expectations of Messianic concern for children as fulfilled in Jesus’ behaviour and teaching. The verse also suggested that part of the Messiah’s work was ‘salvation’, yasha, of children. While it is not certain whether “their oppressors” refers to the children or the needy, if the former, this passage also presages Jesus’ condemnation of those who harm children.

Psalm 106:36-38
They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
offering them to the idols of Canaan,
they polluted the country with blood. (106:38)
One of few passage that identified ‘innocence’, *naqi*, as a feature of childhood, it would not have carried the connotations for the audience* of Romantic thinking about the ‘innocence of childhood’, but of legal acquittal. It is a poetic device emphasising the horror of the sacrifice. However, it does suggest audience* acceptance of such a sentiment even if not supported by OT theology.

*Psalm 113*:9  
He enthrones the barren woman in her house  
by making her the happy mother of sons.  

In a hymn of praise, the Psalmist* sees the gift of children to a barren woman as one of the great signs of *Yahweh*’s glory. 

*Psalm 131*  
See main text, p.241.  

*Psalm 139:13-17*  
This Psalm celebrates God’s complete knowledge of each person. Even prenatal life was a sphere of his formative involvement. David* emphasises physical development, yet God is still to be praised “...for the wonder of myself”. (139:14) The Psalm is about God’s knowledge, not his control. Despite God’s work ‘in utero’ and his knowledge, the audience* would not interpolate predetermination into verses 16-17 because David* recognised that his behaviour was dependent on his own choices and he needed to ask God for help. (139:23-24) His point is that each human life from conception is God’s personal creation, in full knowledge of the choices the person will make. God’s involvement with children is gracious and not contingent upon who they are, or what they will do.  

*Psalm 148*  
In summoning the cosmos to praise God, the Psalmist* included all people regardless of nationality or religious faith. Children also figured in the roster. (148:12) They had to if his call to praise was to be comprehensive. He did not expect natural phenomena to articulate covenant faith. Their praise consisted of being what God made them. He implied that all praise is of the same kind; just being what God has made. All children needed to do to offer praise was to be children.  

*Proverbs 8:30-31*  
Melchert & Proffitt claim that “master craftsman” can as well be translated as ‘little child’ but it is hard to imagine an audience* doing so in a passage about how personified Wisdom had co-existed with *Yahweh* throughout creation.  

*Proverbs 13:24; 22:6,15; 23:13-14*  
If Solomon authored chapters 10-22, as the text claims, (10:1) his own failures, demonstrated by the career of his son Rehoboam, provide ironic commentary upon his advice on child rearing. However, such contrasts are in the nature of the man and this collection provides a range of perspectives from piety (22:2,4,11) to deep cynicism (14:20;


1724 As Solomon was renowned as the author of three thousand proverbs (1 Kings 5:12), it is reasonable to assume that these are primarily his work even if collected somewhat later.
Often they contradict each other. Solomon’s audience* would have recognised these as a ‘street-wise’ reflections on life rather than authoritative instruction on righteous living.1725 trust God, but the smart cover their backs with bribes.1726 Richards indicates that:

“This compendium of maxims is not to be interpreted in the same way as the didactic portions of Scripture. Each generalisation in the Proverbs is understood to admit exceptions. Thus the nurture concepts found here are description rather than prescription. They reflect the notions that were accepted in Israel as generally true, but not as having the same force as law.”1727

Proverbs 13:24 asserts a relationship between love and physical punishment of one’s son. It has even been used as a justification for physical punishment of young children by interpreting “...is free with his correction” as ‘...seek to discipline early’. Pridmore’s rebuttal is cogent and he demonstrates that the proverb has no age relevance.1728

Proverbs 22:6 asserts the general truth that adults stick to what they were taught as children, but exceptions abound. Rehoboam clearly modelled himself on the worst of Solomon’s behaviour rather than the best of his instruction.1729

In 22:15, Solomon* asserts that children are bound to be foolish. To translate gashar as ‘innate’ (Jerusalem), is to interpolate a modern genetic concept into the text. Given the quite specific meaning ‘wisdom literature’ gives to the nature of folly and wisdom, it is self-evident that children will demonstrate the former. Wisdom was the ability to choose the correct course of action in all circumstances, a capacity children were known to lack. Solomon* was not making any statement about their spiritual state. Deuteronomy made clear that the inability to make proper moral choices was not seen as requiring God's judgment. The concern here is whether they will grow out of folly into mature moral judgment. His particular perspective was that that wisdom could be thrashed into children. The use of this proverb as a blanket justification of beating is less than convincing. Solomon* is specifically contradicted by the Sages* in Proverbs 27:22. It is generally true that appropriate corporal punishment at precisely the right time will help children learn to be streetwise, that is, to avoid action that leads to such punishment. Nevertheless, there is no biblical guarantee that severe corporal punishment will engender righteousness or faith. Similar comments apply to Proverbs 19:18, 29:15,17.

Proverb 23:13-14 specifically states that the use of the cane can save a child from ‘Sheol’, that is from death. It is not a sentiment echoed in any other passage and contradicted by many. The audience* would recognise the literary conceit in the parallelism, “it won’t kill,...it will save from death”. The Jerusalem’s ‘stroke’ is closer to the Hebrew meaning of ‘nakar’ than the alternative translation ‘beat’ with its connotation of repetitive striking. It emphasises the point by making it “a stroke of the

1726 There is a current Muslim proverb: ‘Trust Allah, but tether your camel.’
1729 It is hard for a person entirely to set aside what they are taught as a child, but that is not the same as positively embracing it. It may simply become the ghost that haunts their guilty moments.

516
cane". Severe beating is not envisaged, given the initial assertion that what is recommended won't kill the child.

Proverbs 17:6

The crown of the aged is their children's children;
the children's glory is their father.
This proverb identifies the sentiment of pride that occurred across generations.

Proverbs 20:11

The translation of this verse is disputable. The Jerusalem renders it:

Even at play a child reveals
whether his actions will be pure and right.

Pridmore asserts that the translation of this verse as 'play' is "very dubious", and the NIV offers: "Even children make themselves known by their acts, by whether what they do is pure and right."

If the former is right, Solomon* saw play, which has no 'moral' intent, as a feature of childhood and believed that in their play, children reveal whether they will behave well when moral categories are able to be applied to them. If the latter, he believed that children's inner moral nature can be recognised from their behaviour. However, his use of "even" would alert his audience* that this is an 'extreme case argument' and his real focus is on how adults reveal themselves by what they do.

Ecclesiastes 7:1

Better a good name than costly oil,
the day of death than the day of birth.

Qoheleth's* negative evaluation of being born is hyperbole about the vanity of life rather than an actual statement about the neonate\textsuperscript{1730} and is only included for completeness. This is born out by the author's earlier comparison of the long-lived with the still-born. (6:3-6)

Ecclesiastes 11:10

This passage is considered because some translations find a reference to childhood. While the Jerusalem, "...youth, the age of dark hair" makes best sense of the preceding and following argument, the AV translates "childhood and the prime of life", and the NIV "youth and the dawn of life". Apart from indicating the diversity of translations, this passage has little to contribute, even if young children are the focus, beyond the indication that childhood is another of the sources of personal meaning Qoheleth* dismisses as "vanity".

Isaiah 1:2

I reared sons, I brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.

This metaphor of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel gains its force from the understanding that children's rebellion against their parents was both unexpected and unacceptable.

\textsuperscript{1730} Fuerst agrees that it is metaphorical but relates it to certainty and uncertainty. [Fuerst, W. J. (1975). The books of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Lamentations: The five scrolls. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.129.]
Isaiah 3:1-5
I will give them boys for princes,
raw lads to rule over them. (3:4)

Pridmore finds in this a representation of children as “capricious and selfish”. This is fanciful. Previous verses declare that Yahweh was to remove from Jerusalem all those capable of wise and strong leadership. The remnant are callow youths incapable of providing the ‘support’ the nation needs. As 31:12 uses ‘lad’ in the singular to describe the oppressor of God’s people, the reference may be literal rather than metaphorical and mean the young king Ahaz who came to the throne at twenty. (2 Kings 16:2-4).

Isaiah 7:14-16
While it is incidental to his argument, Isaiah* recognises childhood as a time when children cannot choose good from evil. One cannot ascertain what he considered the end of this period because Ahaz paid tribute to Assyria to rescue him, rather than trusting Isaiah’s* prophecy. (2 Kings 16:5-18)

Isaiah 8:18
Isaiah* reiterates that children are given by Yahweh. Though he describes his children as “signs and portents in Israel”, he refers merely to the prophetic names they had been given, e.g., “Speedy-spoil-quick-booty”.

Isaiah 11:6-9
See main text p.148, 221.

Isaiah 13:16,18
Far from demonstrating pitiless unconcern for the fate of children,1731 Isaiah* used the destruction of infants and children to illustrate how terrible and final Babylon’s destruction will be.

Isaiah 38:19
This is a reference to fathers telling their sons about Yahweh’s faithfulness.

Isaiah 49:14-15
Isaiah* qualifies the representation of parental love as a model for divine love by the reminder that Yahweh’s love persists even when parental love fails.

Isaiah 50:1
Thus says Yahweh:
Where is your mother’s writ of divorce
by which I dismissed her?
Or to which of my creditors
have I sold you?
You were sold for your own crimes,
for your own faults your mother was dismissed.

Pridmore interprets Isaiah’s* reference to parents’ rights to sell their children to a creditor as demonstrating that this was ‘customary’, but it was not seen as acceptable parenting. Israel complained that Yahweh was ‘selling’ them. Isaiah* defends him on the grounds that they, not Yahweh, were the debtor.

Isaiah 65:17-25
See main text p.221.

Isaiah 66:7-13
Am I to open the womb and not bring to birth?
says Yahweh.
Or I, who bring to birth, am I to close it?
says your God. (7:9)
In a passage piling metaphor on metaphor Isaiah* parallels Jerusalem to a mother giving birth. The metaphors only makes sense if his audience* accepts that Yahweh was responsible for a child’s birth and their nurture.

Jeremiah* mentioned children in catalogues of age groups or paired with ‘parents’. As they were included with the nation’s times of rejoicing, they share the punishment for national faithlessness. Children were to be taught to share in the lamentation that would follow God’s just judgment of his people.

Jeremiah 7:17-18
Jeremiah* demonstrates the inevitability of children being caught up in the spirituality of the household. They cannot exempt themselves from the worship of Ishtar; they collect the wood for their mother to bake cakes for her rites.

Jeremiah 19:4-5
“They have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built high places for Baal to burn their sons there...” If the two sentences are linked, the most obvious reading, this was a reference to the judicial ‘innocence’ of children. As a prophetic expression it carried more force.

Jeremiah 20:14-18
This strangely echoes Job 3:11-16 though less clearly expressed. Jeremiah’s* point was the same, preferring the idea of pre-natal death to his current sorrows in life. While he did not describe his imagined state after that death, he contemplated it without apprehension.

Jeremiah 47:3-4
The extremity of the terror that was to fall upon the Philistines was such that “Fathers forget about their children”. (47:3) Failure of parental love was a sign that all normal relationships were ended.

Lamentations 4
The author* uses several vivid images of failure of care for children to describe the terrible state to which God’s punishment has reduced the people of Jerusalem:

The very jackals give the breast,
and suckle their young,

1732 vs.20-21 in some versions.

1733 The reference is almost certainly to a variation of the worship of fertility gods described by Diodorus in Carthage. The aristocracy had the divine privilege of presenting their two to three year olds before the bronze statue of Ba’al in a night-time ceremony. The child was taken, their throat slit and their body placed on the statues outstretched arms whence it was rolled into a sacrificial fire. [anon. (1996). The world’s most mysterious places. London: Reader’s Digest, pp.61-62.]
but the daughters of my people have grown cruel
like the ostriches of the desert. (4:3)
The tongue of the baby at the breast
sticks to his palate for thirst,
the children go begging for bread;
no one spares a scrap for them. (4:4)
With their own hands, tender-hearted women
have boiled their children;
these have been their food
in the disaster that fell on the daughter of my people. (4:10)
That parents should so treat their children was so awful it indicated how totally society
had disintegrated and presaged its total destruction. Life could not get worse.

Ezekiel 9:1-11
This reads as if children could exercise moral judgment, which is inconsistent with
other biblical material. They may be saved if they are marked by a man in white as
deploring and disapproving of the evil. This is part of a longer vision and was directed
to an adult audience*. All the people whose behaviour led to this envisioned massacre
were adults. Children were listed in a catalogue of groups to indicate how
implacable will be the destruction. The implication taken would be that there would be
almost no-one to be marked. Ezekiel asked, “Are you going to annihilate all that is left
of Israel...? Yahweh’s answer was ‘yes!’

Ezekiel 16:4-6; 16:20-21; 20:31; 23:37
Ezekiel 16:4-6 contains the only certain reference to child exposure in Israel. The
paucity of mention of this common Ancient Near East practice in the OT, and the
negative tone of this passage, argue strongly that Israel had a distinctive and positive
attitude to infants, and particularly, infant girls. This may follow from their recognition
as a gift from God. Yahweh rescued this exposed ‘child’.

The others passages are references to child sacrifice. Ezekiel* repeats the idea that
Yahweh was their Father: “…the sons and daughters you bore me”, “my children” and
“...the children they had borne me”. Parents had no right to act this way because
children did not belong exclusively to them but also to Yahweh. The reference to birth
suggests this was in their own right as children rather than as members of the covenant
community.

Ezekiel 36:12-15
Ezekiel* thrice repeats the promise that Israel will not fear to be robbed of their children
in the restored land. His audience* would recognise the loss of children to foreign
slavery as an ongoing source of pain and why children are essential to God’s
restoration.

Hosea 9:11-14
Hosea’s* prophecy of doom exemplifies one aspect of the importance of children in the
OT. Behind it lay the idea that children carried one’s ‘name’ into the future. Israel
would be totally destroyed, there would be no future generation.

1734 “Seventy elders” worshipping idols, “women” weeping for Tammuz, “twenty-five men”
worshipping the sun.
Hosea 11:4
Hosea* equates divine love with parental love, using the image of a parent holding an infant to their cheek.

Joel 1:3
Tell it to your sons,
let your sons tell it to their sons,
and their sons to a generation after them.

While it is possible that this refers to children of any age, the audience* would hear a call for each generation of adults to tell their own young. It depicts the OT ideal for transmission of spiritual truth. People’s living experience of God at work is transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Joel 2:15-17
For Joel*, children were automatically part of the faith community. He specifically included the children in a call to repentance, “...even the infants at the breast”. (2:16) Joel* was not requiring individual penitence from infants. Rather, children would share the common penitence of the assembly.

Zechariah 8:4-5
A vision of the messianic kingdom parallel to Isaiah 11, Zechariah’s* depicted the restored Jerusalem as full of children playing.

Malachi 3:17
In a delightful simile Malachi* compared God’s behaviour to a human father, “I will make allowances for them as a man makes allowances for the son who obeys him.”

JESUS’ TEACHING ABOUT CHILDREN

Jesus took various OT strands and wove them into a strong affirmation of childhood, adding his own unique design to the tradition. The content of his teaching was clearly reflected in his behaviour towards children. While different authors* received different reports of his teaching and behaviour, interpreted reports differently, or used them to make different points, each is assumed to have transmitted the received narrative faithfully.1735

See main text, pp.195, 206, 219.

Matthew 11:25-27
See main text, pp. 265-266.

Matthew 14:21; 15:38
Contrary to common rabbinic practice, children were frequently reported to be present when Jesus was teaching.

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1735 Through the synoptics the same words of Jesus are repeated in different contexts. There can be many different explanations of this [Cf., Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., pp.120ff]. There is no compelling reason to believe that Jesus never used the same teaching point more than once, though clearly with the passage of time narratives of the same event do become clouded and events conflated. Observed variations may have less to do with subtle theologising than with the limitations of human memories. Arguments made in relation to elements of any passage apply to parallels unless otherwise indicated.
Matthew 18:1-14

Matthew 19:13-15
See main text, pp.227-232.

Matthew 21:1-17
See main text, pp.252-254.

Mark 9:32-50
See main text, pp.226, 242-243.

Mark 10:13-16
See main text, pp.227-236.

Luke 9:46-48\textsuperscript{1736}

Luke 18:15-17
See main text, p.236.

John 9:1-41
The question posed by the disciples, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?” (9:2) reflected a rabbinic debate over whether children handicapped from birth were punished for their parents’ sin or for their own future sinfulness. Jesus brushed the question aside to orientate his disciples to what he saw as the real issue, his nature as “the light of the world”. (9:3-5) He used the situation to illustrate the guilty blindness of the religious leaders who argued the latter, as opposed to the guiltless blindness of the man who recognised the true light. (9:24-41) The blind man clearly sees the Kingdom of God at work in Jesus; the clear sighted Pharisees are trapped because they cannot recognise their own spiritual blindness. It was not John’s\textsuperscript{*} main intent but implicit in his narrative was a rejection of any correlation between innate handicap and sinfulness.

John 16:21
A woman in childbirth suffers
because her time has come;
But when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering
in her joy that a man has been born into the world.
Despite the pain, childbirth was a matter of such joy that it could serve as a metaphor for the joy of Jesus’ promised return ameliorating the pain of the present.

THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING ABOUT CHILDREN
Almost all NT teaching about children outside the Gospels is in Paul’s letters. There is one reference in John’s second general epistle and another relevant passage in Hebrews.

Romans 5:12-21
See main text, pp244-246.

Romans 7:9-11
See main text, p.240.

\textsuperscript{1736} See Pridmore, J. S. (1977), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.158-160 for a fuller discussion.
The Romans verses are part of a very difficult passage and have to be read in the light of Paul’s broader argument. His premiss was that children of God are those moved by the Spirit of God. (Romans 8:1-17) It is these who were to be glorified by God. (8:18-39) He then addressed the concerns of Jewish converts who felt this was a bit hard on the Jews who could claim the promises of Abraham to his descendants. Paul* confirms their claim but qualified it radically: “Not all who descend from Israel are Israel; not all the descendants of Abraham are his true children.” (9:6-7) He then used Isaac and Ishmael (implied), and Esau and Jacob to illustrate that God’s promise did not come to all Abraham’s descendants: “The apostle makes his point by distinguishing between spiritual and carnal sonship with illustrations from the patriarchal history.”

He made the same point in Galatians 4. God freely chose to favour certain lines of Abraham’s descendants over others. Now he chooses to show favour to those children of Abraham moved to faith by God’s Spirit as opposed to those who are not. And as he earlier promised, he extended this grace to anyone moved by faith to become Abraham’s true progeny. (9:25-33)

Thomson & Davidson argue that, “...foreordination to glory is stated with no uncertainty” but that “...there appears here no warrant for any dogma of predestination to damnation.” This seems forced and it is more in keeping with Paul’s* thrust to read him as saying that even pagans moved by God’s Spirit to faith are predestined to glory and that even Jews who are unmoved by his Spirit and trust to their own righteousness under the Law are predestined to fail. The children in these passages are ‘types’ used to illustrate an argument about the Law and the Spirit which continues in chapters 10-11. While it can be interpreted as implying individual pre-natal predestination of children, that is neither a necessary interpretation, nor the most obvious, and intrudes into the overall flow of Paul’s* argument. Thomson & Davidson point out that the quotation refers to the nations of Israel and Edom, not the individuals, and should be so interpreted here. The Roman audience* would have recognised this as an argument about peoples rather than about people.

While the details differ, the same reasoning applies to the parallel passage in the letter sent to the Galatian church.

1 Corinthians 3:1; 13:11; 14:20

In each of these verses the child’s limited competence compared to the adult provided the context. In 3:1 Paul* stated that he could not treat his audience as adults because they are not ready for mature teaching. In 13:11 he used the child-adult comparison to contrast the Corinthians’ present knowledge with perfection. This was not a negative evaluation of childhood, for Paul* is not denigrating the current state of the Christian. It realistically identified the cognitive limitations of children and the superior reasoning of the mature. In 14:20 he tells Christians that, “...mentally they must be adults”. But this

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1737 In particular, his defence of God’s justice by asserting that God can do whatever he likes (9:14-21) does not fully address the complaint.


1739 *ibid*, p.957.
is based on an interesting qualification; they are to be “babies” as far as wickedness is concerned”. Paul did not see early childhood as a time of sinfulness.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16
See main text, pp.24, 189-190, 276-277.

1 Corinthians 12-14
This passage is only included to rebut Bridger’s argument that children did not exercise spiritual gifts because of Paul’s silence on the matter. Bridger states, inter alia: “Rules are apparently necessary for the use of gifts by adults but not by children despite all that he says about their natural immaturity.” This is an invalid argument from silence. One could as easily twist the passage to argue that rules are not necessary for children because being children prevents them from using the gifts for wrong purposes. It is worth noting that “...all that he says” consists of the three verses (7:12-15) referred to above. These are exhortations to adults behaving inappropriately, not theology about children. Bridger’s subsequent rejection of the ‘hosepipe’ view of inspiration, as allowing God to directly speak through immature children, on the grounds that it could be extended to animals “...on the precedent of Balaam’s ass” fails on its own example. Its invalidity as an argument is signified by Bridger’s subsequent concession that: “...there may be exceptions as God chooses to fill a child with the Spirit for a particular purpose.”

Galatians 4:1-9
This is a very important passage as it gives an incidental but apposite commentary on the meaning of powerlessness in children when the NT was written. Even as the heir to the property, they have the status of a slave because they are children. Other people make all decisions for them. And this will continue until their father determines they are no longer a child. While Paul uses it to contrast the person’s, or the human race’s, state before and after the revelation of Christ, the use of the child as the metaphor for that state attests strongly to the inability of the child to act independently of “...the elemental principles of this world”. (4:3) The meaning of this phrase is not uncontested but Guthrie’s explanation parallels the argument developed in this dissertation. “Paul’s words would be a reference to the widespread beliefs, which he himself seems to have shared, that spiritual agencies, some good, some evil, affected man’s destinies.”

Ephesians 5:1
“Try, then, to imitate God, as children that he loves.” Paul used the image of children modelling themselves on the behaviour of their parents to illustrate how people were to imitate God, sustaining an OT theme into the NT period.

Ephesians 6:1-4 / Colossians 3:20-21
Children were so much part of the early church community, sharing its commitment to Jesus, and participating in its activities, that Paul addressed them directly in general

1740 The word used is nepiazete, for which ‘babies’ is an extreme translation.
1742 ibid, p.186.
letters to the churches.  However Banks overstates the matter in claiming: "That Paul included children...makes apparent that children in the early churches 'were regarded as responsible agents who could be addressed and encouraged' (Banks, 1993, 24) in their interactions with others in the community. Responsibility is a relative matter and they were 'addressed and encouraged' to accept a limited level of obligation.

See also main text, pp.211, 243-245, 274-275.

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12
In arguing that his treatment of the Thessalonians had been "impeccably right and fair", (2:10) Paul* compared it to that of a father for his children. (2:11) He identified a father's appropriate rôle: "...teaching you what is right, encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God". (2:12)

1 Timothy 3:1-5,12 / Titus 1:6
Paul* urged his protégés to use parenting effectiveness as a measure of fitness for Christian leadership. This could be a general suggestions that a person's private life was relevant as a basis to judge their potential public life, but the detail suggests a more specific argument. Paul's advice only makes sense if parenting is seen as a reflection of the ability to establish a spiritual climate in the household, as is suggested by some criteria he gives Timothy. The home a person establishes models the spiritual climate they would bring to the household of faith.

While a child raised in the household of consistent Christian spirituality may finally reject that, during their childhood its influence should be such as to create in them both respect and obedience. Failure to achieve that with their children is a sign of spiritual immaturity in the Christian indicating their inappropriateness for a leadership rôle.

See also main text, p.275.

2 Timothy 3:12-15
See main text, pp.197, 270, 281, 403.

Hebrews 5:11-14
While the author* is addressing adults, they share assumptions about the nature of children. Consistent with OT usage, they are functionally defined as unable to "...distinguish between good and evil". (5:14) Children are not required to learn more than "elementary principles" (5:12) and are fed doctrinal "milk". (5:13-14) This principle is so firmly established that it can be used caustically of adults. By failing to master the discrimination of good and evil they identify themselves as children unready for "solid food".

Hebrews 12:5-11
This passage may not refer to the young, especially as the quoted proverb (Proverbs 3:11-12) does not. (12:5-6) But this reads as though children are the focus once the reference

\[\text{1745 Pridmore, J. S. (1977), op. cit., p.185.}\]
\[\text{1746 Harkness, A. (1996), op. cit., p214.}\]
\[\text{1747 No multiple marriages, "temperate, discrete and courteous", hospitable, not a drunkard, not bad-tempered, kind, peaceable.}\]
\[\text{1748 See Chrysostom, J. (1986), op. cit., p.57.}\]
moves to human relationships. The author uses the training (paideia)\textsuperscript{1749} through punishment that children receive from their human fathers for “this short life” to explain why God is training them through suffering so that “…we may share his own holiness”. (12:10)

1 Peter 2:2

“Like new born babes, long for the pure spiritual milk,”\textsuperscript{1750} The newborn’s urgent demand for its mother’s breast is seen as an appropriate image of the desire the Christian should have for spiritual sustenance.

1 John 2:1-29

See main text, p.266.

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1749} The word carries the connotation of stringency and is better expressed as ‘discipline’ as in other translations.
\item \textsuperscript{1750} This is the RSV text. The Jerusalem was not used as it interpolates ‘spiritual honesty’ into the text without justification as the text does not specify the nature of this spiritual milk.
\end{itemize}
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