

# The Development of Children's Concept of God

## *by Ted Slater*

### *Introduction*

Scripture indicates that people are made in the image of God. And people make images of God, as they pass from early childhood to adulthood. Sometimes these images accurately reflect the character of God. Factors such as a poor home environment, original sin, and poor education, however, often keep children from developing an accurate understanding of God.

Many people make the common-sense assumption that children do not “develop” in terms of morality and religion — after all, they might argue, the same Holy Spirit who inhabits adult Christians inhabits young Christians. But research indicates that, just as children develop cognitively, physiologically, and emotionally, children do develop spiritually. By understanding how children perceive God, and how they develop these perceptions, godly adults can come to better understand how to communicate divine truth to these children. And they can come to know best how to bring the children up to be godly adults themselves.

This study dealt with the religious development of children — the way that their understanding of God changes between the ages of 3 and 11, since that is a crucial way to determine the development of their personal religiousness (Tamminen, K., 1991, p. 160). Through the developmentally appropriate means of having children draw pictures, it was determined how concepts of God tend to change from early childhood until the beginning of adolescence. While the convenience sample selected for this study is not generalizable to the entire population, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the way children's concept of God changes during early childhood.

This study is unusual in that the subjects (n=31) are from a relatively homogeneous group. Each of the children comes from an evangelical Christian family, and most of them are either home schooled or attend Christian schools. Confounding variables which might skew the results of a study which included children from a variety of religious traditions are absent from this study. Instead, there are very few variables; they include age and the sex of the child.

### *Literature Review*

#### *The Existence of a God-Concept*

Research indicates that children form mental representations of God by the age of six, whether or not they have been exposed to the concept of the existence of God

(Fowler, 1989, p. 29; Heller, 1986, p. 9). The researchers noted, however, that while the child may have formed an idea of God, that child does not necessarily believe that such a being exists.

The animated television series *Davy and Goliath*, produced by the Lutheran Church in America, was mentioned several times in the literature as a source for children's gaining a concept of God (Fowler, 1989, p. 30; Fowler, 1981, p. 129). It follows that other animated programs which include references to God, such as the Family Channel's *Superbook* or *Flying House*, will impact children's understanding of the nature of God.

Many factors are responsible for children's understanding of God, including external influences (e.g., family, culture) and internal influences (e.g., innate understanding, Holy Spirit). Children raised in Mormon families tended to have very anthropomorphic God-concepts, while Children in Jewish homes tended to have non-anthropomorphic God-concepts (Tamminen, 1991, p. 161). An anthropomorphic God is one who is manlike, with human actions and physical limitations; he lives in a definite, though usually distant, place called heaven (Tamminen, Vianello, Jaspard, and Ratcliff, 1988, p. 61). Children in Roman Catholic families tended to include a relatively large number of symbols in their drawings. These facts support the proposition that children's concept of God is influenced greatly by their family's faith.

Some researchers challenge Freud's claim that children's representations of God arise primarily from their "resolution of the Oedipal struggle and castration anxiety through the projection of a benign but stern father image onto the universe" (Fowler, 1989, p. 30). While children's concept of God may be influenced to a degree by such conflicts, this proposition does not satisfactorily account for girl's construction of God-representations. Furthermore, since children begin constructing ideas of God before they reach Freud's Oedipal stage, it follows that their God-concepts don't spring from struggles associated with it. Finally, researchers argue that concepts of God are influenced not only from one parent, but from both mother and father (Fowler, 1989, p. 30).

So, while familial and parental influences no doubt affect children's understanding of God, other factors play a significant role as well.

### *The Instrument to Measure Children's God-Concept: Picture Drawing*

Play is natural for children, and drawing is a part of playing from the time they are very young. While younger children (and boys) lack the fine motor skills necessary to accurately draw the images pictured in their minds, with developmentally appropriate tools they are able to include elements which bear some resemblance to these mental images. Drawing, furthermore, is not such a foreign and sterile activity for children as other data collection methods; children should feel very free to express themselves through this familiar activity.

Researchers concur. Drawings “have proved quite useful in clinical settings as a means of rapidly and graphically analyzing major conflictual themes” (Heller, 1986, p. 13). Unstructured testing methods such as drawing, more so than structured tests, have illuminated the stages of children’s God-concept development (Tamminen, 1991, p. 160). In fact, drawings often provide excellent indications of children’s values and preferences. It has been called “a remarkably rich research technique” to discern religious differences between children of different ages (Pitts, 1977, p. 3). Klepsch and Logie (1982) went on to emphasize that “of all the projective techniques, drawings dig deeper into the person, into his being” (p. 36).

For these reasons — simplicity, familiarity, and accuracy — picture drawing was selected as the means to determine children’s ideas about God.

### *Stages of Spiritual Growth*

In general, children’s images of God change from a physical, anthropomorphic one to a semi-physical one to a non-physical one. By the time children are in the midst of adolescence, their God-concept has pretty much lost its human-only qualities and limitations and takes on supernatural ones. Other, more subtle, changes take place during a child’s growth, and these are described below. The piagetian shift from a preoperational stage to an operational stage of formal thinking is quite evident in children’s drawings of God (Pitts, 1977, p. 7).

Researchers have broken this shift into various stages. F. Oser, for example, proposed five stages through which children progress as they form mature understandings of God. During the first stage, God is seen as physically powerful. During the second stage, God is seen as one who grants benefits. During the next stage, God is seen as a personal friend. During the fourth stage, God is a law-giver. And during the fifth and final stage, God is seen as an “energizer” who supports autonomous moral action (Straughan, 1990, p. 979).

Other researchers have broken children’s development of a mature God-concept into three five- or six-year stages, drawing heavily from Piaget’s stages of cognitive development. For this study, it seems appropriate to distinguish four basic stages corresponding to infancy, young childhood, pre-adolescence, and adolescence. Of course, some children’s chronological age will not correspond with their spiritual age; the suggested phases are not rigid expectations for all children.

**First Stage:** The First Two Years. During this time children’s understanding of God is quite vague, and is loosely associated with their parents. They tend to show reference and awe at the thought of God, even at this age (Hyde, 1990, p. 82). Some of them may show an interest in objects that represent the cross and call them “Jesus” (Tamminen, Vianello, Jaspard, and Ratcliff, 1988, p. 67). If they live in a house where pictures of Jesus are present, and then visit a place where there are no pictures of Jesus, the children may become disturbed. During this phase of a child’s

life, prayer can act as a bonding agent between parents, the child, and God (Shelley, 1982, p. 22). In fact, children may tearfully request a prayer ritual prior to their going to sleep for the night (p. 29).

This stage corresponds to Piaget's sensorimotor stage.

**Second Stage:** Children's First Decade. When children reach about 30 months, they typically begin to discern cause-effect types of relationships. They ask their parents, "What is this? Who made this? Why? Where did it come from?" Their parents might finally respond, exasperated, "God made it. God is the Creator." God then becomes seen by the child as the Creator, the Prime Mover of creation (Tamminen, Vianello, Jaspard, and Ratcliff, 1988, p. 64).

Children, when in the process of forming concepts of God, often think of Him first in physical terms, since a non-physical being is naturally difficult for them to visualize. Children have no problem conceiving of other unusual beings, such as monsters, dragons, and super heroes, because they are conceived of as physical creatures. By association, many children see God as a type of superhero.

When children near six or seven years of age, they tend to be in the midst of the "pre-religious" stage, where God-concepts are crudely anthropomorphic (Goldman, 1964, p. 92). This roughly corresponds with Piaget's pre-operational stage. They tend to see God as dressed in Palestinian garments, and with a beard, long hair, and sandals. The young child tends to see God and Jesus as identical. God is in heaven, a physically tangible place somewhere above the earth. God may possess human features, such as gentleness or kindness.

Sometimes Jesus is seen as an apprentice to God the Magician. And God is magical: if prayers are delivered to Him in the correct form and manner, as a ritual, those prayers will be effective. This magical thinking is due partly to children's precausal thinking limitations, but also due to their environment (Tamminen, Vianello, Jaspard, and Ratcliff, 1988, p. 65). It is only later that children are able to come to understand that it is God, not the prayers themselves, who performs supernatural feats. Religious observances, such as Easter, Christmas, and prayers before meals and before bed, greatly influence children during these years.

Younger children, more than older ones, tend to have a positive — even playful — impression of God (Heller, 1986, p. 40-41). God smiles and plays with animals. In one case, a researcher found that a child substituted Bugs Bunny for Jesus on the cross (Heller, 1986, p. 42). It seems that a dying man was too negative a concept for the little boy.

Younger children tend to have an egocentric view of God (Heller, 1986, p. 42). When asked why they believe God exists, they might reply, "Because He made me." When they are asked why they think God is good, they might reply, "Because he

gives me things.” This researcher expects to see children include representations of themselves in their drawings of God.

**Intermediate Stage:** Pre-Adolescence. During this stage, children tend to be “sub-religious,” and their God-concept becomes less concrete (Goldman, 1964, p. 92). Things which they had previously assumed now come into question. This roughly corresponds with the latter part of Piaget’s concrete operational stage.

Children in this category tend to be more inquisitive about their faith, and have gained more knowledge about God and spiritual things than their younger counterparts (Heller, 1986, p. 44-45). During this stage, children try to break away from the limited view of God they had developed. And they begin to distinguish between God and their parents (Shelley, 1982, p. 23).

These children may visualize God doing something “holy” or peculiarly religious, such as praying. God may have a halo above His head, and may be floating above the ground, or walking on clouds. They may have a mental picture of God as being very old.

God and Jesus tend to become seen as separate persons. God is translucent, semi-physical. God is described according to actions such as “God loves,” “God helps,” “God watches over us” (Shelley, 1982, p. 22). Children’s relationship with God tends to become less mechanical and more personal.

**Adolescence and Beyond.** Children during their second decade tend to be in the “personal religious” stage, where a “more abstract, spiritual level of understanding involving non-literal interpretations becomes possible” (Straughan, 1990, p. 979). This corresponds roughly to Piaget’s formal abstract operational stage. God is seen first in semi-physical terms, and as they grow older, children tend to see Him as less and less physical. When asked to draw a picture of God, for example, they might say such things as, “That’s dumb. Who can draw a Spirit?” (Shelley, 1982, p. 45). During their teens, the children’s God-concept begins to lose its material aspects, and is seen more in invisible and spiritual terms.

Adolescents begin to think of symbolic practices in less literal terms, seeing them as less concrete and more abstract (Shelley, 1982, p. 65). A preadolescent, for example, might think of communion taken from plastic cups as “drinking blood from toy cups.” Adolescents, on the other hand, would tend to begin seeing this rite as a more mystical ceremony.

Adolescents see God as (from most popular response to least popular): friend, lover, a father, helper, savior, approachable, caring/comforting, counselor/teacher/guide, and merciful/forgiving (Shelley, 1982, p. 67). The relationship between God and Jesus becomes more clear. Adolescents tend to reject institutionalized religion. Adolescents tend to think of the afterlife and the nature of existence more than younger children. (Heller, 1986, p. 54).

## *Gender Themes*

Boys tend to think of God as a rational being, actively involved with His creation, distant, and masculine (Heller, 1986, pp. 57-66). God's omnipotence seems to nourish boys' self-image and identification (Tamminen, Vianello, Jaspard, and Ratcliff, 1988, p. 70). They tend to be fascinated by Jesus performing astounding feats, such as driving fast or walking on water.

Girls, on the other hand, tend to think of God as one who is interested in aesthetics, who is relatively passive and observant, intimate, and androgynous — even feminine (Heller, 1986, pp. 66-74). Girls tend to perceive God to be closer than boys do (Tamminen, 1991, p. 195) and girls tend to be more committed in their faith (Hyde, 1990, p. 65). Furthermore, since girls' fine motor skills tend to be more developed than those of boys, their drawings should appear more artistic and may include more aesthetic elements. It is expected that these distinctions will be evidenced in the children's drawings.

## *The Theme of Light*

Researchers find that children include references to light when they talk about or draw God. God may give off light, or he may be surrounded by light, or may be a type of glow within a child. Light may even be the means with which God communicates to or heals people (Heller, 1986, p. 126-127).

Scripture contains many references to light (e.g., Gen. 1:3, Ex. 13:21, Esth. 8:16, Job 12:22, Job 24:13, Ps. 27:1, Ps. 104:2, Is. 9:2, Matt. 4:16, Matt. 5:14, Matt. 17:2, John 1:4, John 1:9, John 8:12, 2 Cor. 11:14). God said, "Let there be light." Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" and "A light on a hill cannot be hidden." There is an angel of light, and supernatural beings appeared to give off light. Children may include the element of light in their concepts of the supernatural because of its being so prevalent in Scripture. On the other hand, light may actually be a central element of creation — something with which other things are truly composed and exposed (e.g., Eph. 5:13: "But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light").

## *Ethical Dilemmas Inherent in Forming Representations of God*

Scripture seems to indicate that there is something wrong with fashioning representations of heavenly things (e.g., Lev. 26:1, Deut. 4:15-23, Is. 44:9, and Rom. 1:22f — see appendix A for a more complete list of such Scriptures). One of the Ten Commandments says, in part, "You shall not make for yourself ... any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth" (Ex. 20:4).

It could even be argued that drawings of God would prove of no use to those who analyze them for their research: “Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame” (Is. 44:9). Attempts at collecting such God-concept data might be done in vain, since it is impossible to describe God pictorially: “... we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image (charagma “a stamp, impress”) formed by the art (techne\_ “art, craft, trade”) and thought (enthume\_sis “deliberation, pondering, plural thoughts”) of man” (Acts 17:29). Of course, divine things, including God, are unseeable, but having the children draw pictures of God might actually encourage them to think of God in purely visible terms. If an adult asks them to draw God, they might get the false idea that God can be drawn.

The context of these verses, however, implies that such immoral representations are those created as idols to replace God as the object of worship. The data collected for this study are in no way to be mistaken as such. The purpose of this study, anyway, is not to determine how God truly appears, but to better understand how children’s concepts of God change over time, in order to better understand their religious development. The drawings are not representations of God, per se, but of children’s God-concept.

### *Subjects*

The sample consisted of 31 children from Evangelical Christian families who lived in an apartment complex (The Regent Village in Virginia Beach, Virginia), the majority of which were either home schooled or enrolled in private Christian schools. The participants were between 3 and 11 years old, and consisted of 18 boys and 13 girls. The majority of the participants appeared to be Caucasian, although there were a few African American children taking part. One girl’s drawing and one boy’s drawing were collected apart from the main session.

The children were recruited personally and through fliers posted throughout the apartment complex’s community building. As a further incentive, each child received 50c to complete his or her drawing. The fliers were addressed primarily to the parents, and parental permission for each child’s taking part in this study was requested.

Only a few young girls that the researcher approached refused to take part in the project, even though they saw several of their friends participating. It is not clear why they were reluctant to participate.

Because this is a small convenience sample, results of this experiment are not generalizable to the population of all children. One benefit of this sample, however, is its relative homogeneity. Differences between children’s concepts of God are likely not due to differences in religious training. For this reason, in part, any differences noted in the children’s drawings cannot be attributed to dramatic differences in

theological upbringing, but to their gender and age. In other words, significant independent variables include age and gender, and not cultural context; this sample has relatively few confounding variables.

### *Method*

There was one research leader and four assistants conducting the study, managing the young participants. The children were gathered together in one room. They were provided two rules: No looking at others' papers, and no talking. They were reminded that they were being paid and that the researcher expected them to follow directions carefully.

All of the materials were provided for the children, including paper and writing instrument. Children were provided their choice of either a thick-barrelled marker or a wide carpenter's pencil; these were chosen due to their being developmentally appropriate for the young participants. Several children were seated at each table.

The children were instructed to close their eyes and imagine what God looks like. The researcher and his assistants were careful not to use pronouns such as "He" when referring to God, since the literature indicated that some girls might draw feminine pictures of God. There were also no references made to Jesus by the research team, except by one mother who was offering suggestions to her puzzled son; the data collected from the boy was discarded. The children were next told to go ahead and draw the image that they had imagined. They were given a full ten minutes to complete their drawings, although some were done before five minutes had passed. Many of the children shielded their drawings from each other with their left arms, writing with their right.

The research team walked from table to table, reassuring the participants that their drawings were looking good when they appeared insecure about them. They also noted the participants' comments. Some of the older children remarked that God could not be drawn since they reported that He is invisible, which is consistent with what the literature stated.

When ten minutes had passed, the researcher began to collect the drawings. The age and sex of each subject was noted on each drawing. As each child turned in a drawing, he or she was asked to explain the elements of the drawing, and given their monetary compensation. Brief notes from post-drawing interviews were written on the back of each drawing. A few asked to keep their pen or pencil; they were allowed to keep their writing instrument.

Most of the children appeared to be in good spirits about the experience.

## *Findings*

The researcher chose mainly to analyze the data in a qualitative manner, since quantifying the elements of the drawings would be very difficult and, with such a small sample, pretentious. Two simple graphs are included, however, on pages 21 and 22 of the summary section. Aspects of conceptual development examined in the children's drawings include the following: the degree of anthropomorphism evident in each drawing, supernatural elements, mood, and amount of egocentrism.

### *Summary*

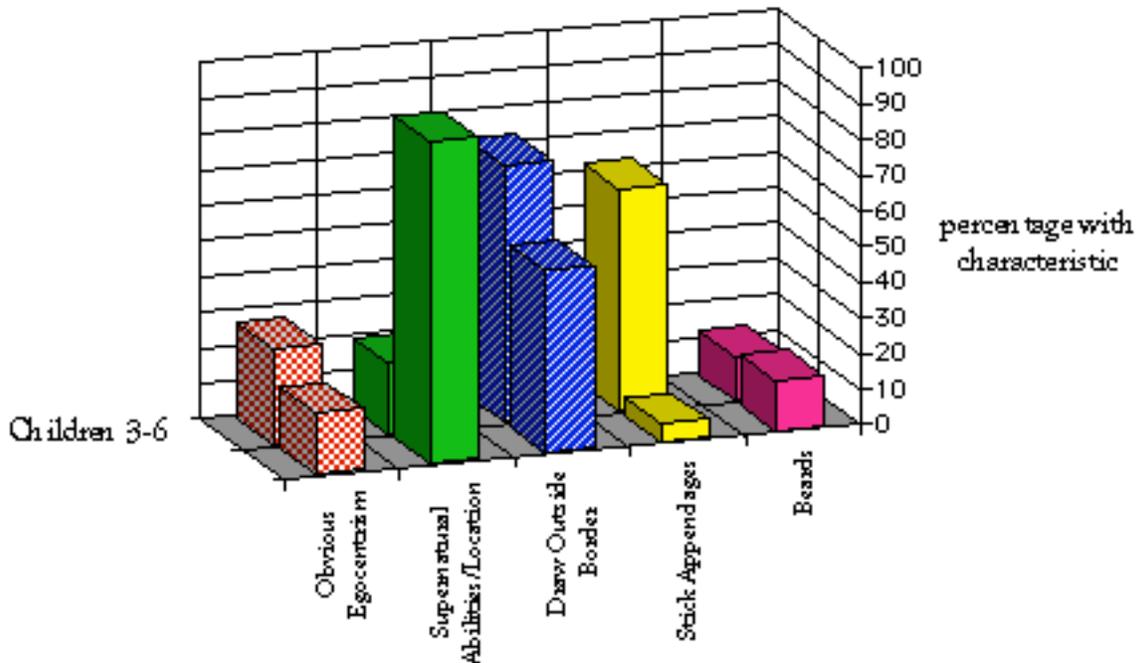
A God with human physical and emotional qualities is evident in all of the drawings, except those completed by the youngest children. Many researchers indicate that this anthropomorphism is an indication of children's undeveloped concept of God — in their research many of the older children saw God as a sort of cloud or spirit. Some researchers rashly conclude, "Before the age of eight ideas of God remain unsatisfactory" (Hyde, 1990, p. 67). This view is unscriptural, however: Jesus told his disciples that whoever has seen him "has seen the Father" (John 14:9). God, throughout Scripture is described in anthropomorphic terms. God is truly a person with whom one can have a close relationship. It follows that drawings of God incarnate, Jesus, are true representations of the invisible God. Those children who drew pictures of God with human characteristics are not spiritually underdeveloped.

Although the degree of anthropomorphism in these drawings does not change significantly from early childhood to adolescence, certain elements of the younger children's drawings are different from those of older children, including amount of egocentrism and supernaturalism. There are also significant differences between boys' drawings and girls' drawings.

### *Stages of Spiritual Growth*

It was found, consistent with the literature, that in their younger years, some children egocentrically include themselves along with God (drawings 4, 5, and 7); in their older years, they imbue God with supernatural abilities and place him in supernatural locations.

The younger children tended to draw outside of the border provided for their picture of God, something the researcher had not anticipated. In reflection, however, this phenomenon should have been expected.

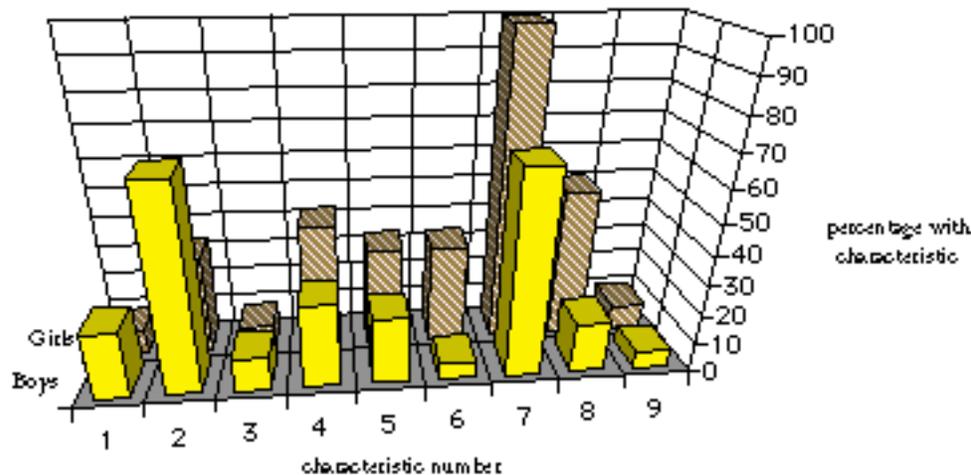


As expected, the boys were clearly behind the girls in the development of their fine-motor skills. The boys' drawings consisted of stick figures until age 7. Six girls under 7 years old drew God with non-stick appendages. The oldest girl to draw stick appendages was 6, while the oldest boy to draw stick appendages was 8 years old.

An older, 11 year old, boy (drawing number 30) was the only child to distinguish between God the Father and Jesus. God was on a cloud just outside heaven, and Jesus is on the earth. The 8 year old boy (drawing number 27) had a similar picture, but the bald, bearded, robed person on the cloud in space is saying, "im Jesus."

### *Gender Themes*

Boys and girls conceive of God in very different ways. In fact, sex seems to be a more salient variable than age in terms of God-concept differences. Listed below are some of the differences noted between the boys' and girls' drawings of God.



1. Levitation: There was only one girl — the 4-year-old — who drew God levitating; four boys drew God levitating.
2. Supernatural Elements: Four girls included elements that were clearly of a supernatural nature; twelve boys included elements of a supernatural nature.
3. Wings: There was one girl who drew God with wings. Two of the boys drew God with wings.
4. Clouds: Five girls included clouds; five boys included clouds.
5. Sun: Four girls included a sun; four boys included a sun.
6. “Glory” Rays: Four girls drew rays emanating from God; only 1 boy drew rays around God. (The boy’s father said his son drew his picture at the same table as his sister. He may have copied her rays.)
7. Happy God: All of the girls’ representations of God are happy; twelve of the boys’ representations of God are happy.
8. Long Hair: Three boys drew God with relatively long hair (just past the ears); six girls drew long-haired Gods — four with hair past their chins.
9. Casual God: Four of the girls’ drawings had God’s arms in casual, at-ease positions (not stretched straight out to the side); one or two of the boys’ drawings had God’s arms in casual positions.

The girls’ God-concepts were more feminine than those of boys. In drawing 6, for example, he is enjoying furry animals who are singing in the woods. In Drawings 4 and 5 he is smiling with the subjects who drew the pictures. The boys included themselves in 2 drawings as well, but God was doing something, not merely enjoying

their company. Girls may just be accustomed to drawing more feminine pictures than boys, or perhaps the girls really do see God as less masculine than boys do.

### *Discussion*

The researcher had expected to find the degree of anthropomorphism and age negatively correlated. As the children grow older, their concept of God was to have become less human. Instead, the God-concepts among those in this sample were all humanesque, except for those of the very youngest children. It is assumed that as children in Christian families grow older, their concepts of God become more mature. Furthermore, the literature even stresses that developmentally the children are enabled, even encouraged, to think of God in less physical ways.

Either the older children in this sample were at the same spiritual stage as the younger children, or the amount of anthropomorphism in children's God-concept is not a significant variable with which to determine their spiritual development. The results of this study indicate that anthropomorphism in one's God-concept is not a significant indicator of spiritual development or maturity. Instead, sex appears to be a more salient factor in children's understanding of God.

The religious concepts of the children in this sample do change, however, as they grow older. They tend to see God in less egocentric terms and as more of a supernatural being.

Perhaps for evangelical Christian children an anthropomorphic concept of God is appropriate; these children should not be discouraged from thinking of God in somewhat human terms. On the other hand, perhaps Christian children are not as introspective as their peers. Some might argue that their spiritual growth is stunted by their simple faith. In any case, more study is necessary, with larger samples, to determine whether or not Christian children tend to hold onto an anthropomorphic concept of God, and whether this characteristic is a valid measure of one's spiritual maturity.

These results are meaningful for teachers of religion for at least two reasons. By understanding the degree of understanding children are able to have of God, teachers can develop realistic expectations. They shouldn't expect young children to show too much concern about a supernatural God, for example. They should not be too impatient with those young children when they want to hear instead about God as their close friend. A second reason teachers of religion might consider children's spiritual development: by understanding what children are capable of learning during the different stages of their growth, teachers should be able to present materials and concepts which are developmentally appropriate. Older children, for example, might be taught about God's supernatural nature.

### *Conclusion*

The precise nature of the limitations of children's religious concepts is still somewhat unclear. Additional study of children's religious concepts is needed, particularly research which includes a diversity of methods and instruments, so that the effects of differing approaches may be compared. Children, for example, should thoroughly explain their drawings to the researchers, in order to diminish researcher uncertainty. Once these effects are better understood, researchers will be better able to separate the influence of various environmental influences on the result.

By understanding how children perceive God, and how they develop these perceptions, godly adults can come to better understand how to communicate divine truth to these children. And they can come to know best how to bring the children up to be godly adults themselves. Additional studies of this sort should enable religious educators to more wisely decide which materials and concepts are most appropriate for their students.

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## *Appendix A: Verses Supporting the Idea that Drawing God is Wrong*

You shall not make for yourself an idol (Strong's concordance number 6459h. *pesel* "an idol, image"), or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth (Ex. 20:4).

You shall not make for yourselves idols (Strong's concordance number 6459h. *pesel* "an idol, image"), nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the Lord your God (Lev. 26:1).

So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form (Strong's concordance number 8403h. *tabnith* "construction, pattern, figure") of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. And beware, lest you lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven (Deut. 4:15-19).

So watch yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image (Strong's concordance number 8544h. *temunah* "likeness, form") in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you (Deut. 4:23).

Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame (Is. 44:9).

Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image (Strong's concordance number 5480g. *charagma* "a stamp, impress") formed by the art (Strong's concordance number 5078g. *techne* "art, craft, trade") and thought (Strong's concordance number 1761g. *enthume\_sis* "deliberation, pondering, plural thoughts") of man (Acts 17:29).

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image (Strong's concordance number 1504g. *eiko\_n* "an image, i.e. literal, literally statue, figurative, figuratively representation") in the form (Strong's concordance number 3667g. *homoio\_ma* "that which is made like something") of corruptible (Strong's concordance number 5349g. *phthartos* "perishable, corruptible") man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (Rom. 1:22f).

And He is the image (Strong's concordance number 1504g. *eiko\_n* "an image, i.e. literal, literally statue, figurative, figuratively representation") of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation (Col. 1:15).