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LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS THINKING IN YOUNG CHILDREN AND  
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THEIR FAMILIES

by

Ruth Faye Davis

A Dissertation Submitted to  
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Approved by

  
Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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The purpose of the present study was to assess the levels of religious thinking of young children and to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the religious practices of the children and their families and the religious thinking levels of the children.

The subjects included in the study were 60 children four, five, and six years of age and their parents selected randomly from the list of children attending three Seventh-day Adventist Churches and one large Baptist Church Kindergarten Day Care Center. Thirty children and their parents were selected from the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and 30 children and their parents were selected from the three Seventh-day Adventist Churches. A stratified random sample was selected from each group so that there were 20 children in each age group.

Each child in the study was tested individually utilizing a modification of Goldman's (1964) Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test to assess the levels of religious thinking. A Religious Practices Questionnaire was given to the parents of each child to determine the religious practices of the children and their families.

Correlation coefficients were computed to determine the extent of agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses. The results of the data analysis showed a high level of agreement between mothers' and

fathers' responses. A multiple regression analysis was executed to determine if a significant relationship existed between the religious practices of the families and the levels of religious thinking of the children. Religious thinking levels of the children and the religious practices of their parents were not related when the data from both groups of subjects were analyzed together; however, religious thinking levels and religious family practices were related in the Seventh-day Adventist sample.

A two-factor analysis of variance was utilized to determine the differences between the religious thinking levels and the religious practices of the children from both groups. Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that:

1. The chronological age differences of children four through six years was a factor affecting their religious thinking levels. The four-year-olds scored significantly lower than the five- and six-year-olds in both groups.

2. The religious practices for the parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten were significantly different. The Seventh-day Adventist parents scored significantly higher than the parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

The study substantiated that children's religious concepts develop in stages, and the relationship between religious thinking levels and religious practices depended upon the demographic characteristics of the samples involved in the study.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The study of children's thinking in terms of religious phenomena is inextricably bound with environmental factors. Even if no formal religious instruction occurs, the child is influenced indirectly by religious precepts from all aspects of his environment (Ausubel, 1958; Barber, 1971; Braverman, 1956; White, 1954).

According to Rogers (1969), the age-stage hypothesis has been proposed by several researchers in child development. Erikson (1963) has researched the psychosocial stages of ego development, Kohlberg (1964) constructed a developmental system of moral development, and Piaget (1929, 1932) perceived children as progressing through sequential stages of cognitive development.

The basic objectives of the present study were to assess the levels of religious thinking of children four, five, and six years of age and to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children and the religious practices of their families.

#### Background of the Study

Christian educators have differed in their opinions of when children begin to internalize religious concepts. Krahn's (1975) research referred

to Bushnell's (1947) statement that it is easier to introduce children to religious phenomena during the early years. Richards (1970) pointed out the importance of beginning religious instruction early in the following passage:

Trust in God and personal experience with Him do not suddenly come into style when a person reaches his teens. . . . Since God's point of communication with us all is the Word, it's clear that the Bible must be for children too. It's through the Bible that children come to know the person of God, to understand His love and steadfastness, to discern His character and care, and to know His will that they might be guided in their responses to Him in daily life. Through the Bible children, too, can become aware of the God who reveals Himself there (p. 181).

Beginning religious teaching early in the child's development was further supported by White (1943, 1954). She noted that from the earliest times the faithful in Israel had given much attention to the religious education of children from babyhood through maturity.

Few parents begin early enough to teach their children to obey. The child is usually allowed to get two or three years the start of its parents, who forbear to discipline it, thinking it too young to learn to obey. . . . The children are to be taught that their capabilities were given them for the honor and glory of God. To this end they must learn the lesson of obedience, for only by lives of willing obedience can they render to God the service He requires. Before the child is old enough to reason, he must be taught to obey. By gentle, persistent effort the habit should be established. . . . At a very early age children can comprehend what is plainly and simply told them, and by kind and judicious management can be taught to obey. . . . Parents are to teach their children lessons from the Bible, making them so simple that they can readily be understood (White, 1943 pp. 110-112; 1954, p. 43).

In studying the religious thinking of children, Wakefield (1975) cautioned researchers to respect the inner supernatural working of God's spirit in the life of the child and to refrain from limiting the child to what they think he can understand based on empirical research by behavioral scientists. He further discussed the relationship of Piaget's cognitive stages to the development of religious thinking in children. In spite of the child's limited capacity to understand time, distance, numbers, and reversibility during the preconceptual period, Wakefield (1975), Beers (1975), and Richards (1970) advocated that educators and parents should explore meaningful methods of presenting Biblical truths to him at his cognitive level of development. They indicated that the preconceptual period was an excellent time to create an awareness of God.

Beers (1975) further pointed out that the child in the preoperational stage of development has the ability to learn certain theological concepts such as the following:

1. God loves him.
2. God provides sun and rain.
3. God made the world.
4. God made him.
5. He should please and obey God.

Religious concepts must be related to all aspects of the child's world and presented in a personal and immediate level of his experience (Ballard & Fleck, 1975).

### Justification for the Study

Although several studies (Deconchy, 1965; Elkind, 1961; Goldman, 1964; Harms, 1944) have investigated the development of religious ideas and attitudes of young children, very few have been focused on children under the age of five years. The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates numerous preschool programs nationwide and in many foreign countries. The materials used by the various churches are prepared and distributed under the supervision of the General Conference which is the church world headquarters located in Washington, D. C. Workshops and seminars are sponsored every three months in many conferences throughout the nation for promoting better methods and practices of presenting religious education to the children and adult divisions in the churches and schools.

The present study was concerned with the effects of religious family practices on the religious thinking levels of young children. According to Johnson (1973), the American middle-class widely accepts the belief that religion strengthens the family; however, he indicated that there is little empirical evidence to support these ideas. Bell's (1971) research further suggested a positive relationship between religiosity and church participation, but his research was limited to older adults. Because research studies have not focused on the relationship between the religious thinking levels of young children and the religious practices of their families, the present study was undertaken. Specifically this study sought to answer the following research questions:



1. Is there an agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to four variables: Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, family worship, worship service attendance, and other activities measured on the Religious Practices Questionnaire?

2. Is there a significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and the religious practices of their families as measured by three variables: Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, family worship, worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children four, five, and six years, and the religious practices of their families as measured by the three variables: Sabbath School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six years attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families as measured by the three variables: Sunday School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance?

5. Is there a significant difference between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten?

6. Is there a significant difference between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten?

### Hypotheses

The hypotheses set forth for the present study were the following:

1. There will be no agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, worship service attendance, other activities, and family worship as measured by the

#### Religious Practices Questionnaire.

2. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and the religious practices of their families as measured by three variables: Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, family worship, worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

3. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children four, five, and six years, and the religious practices of their families as measured by the three variables: Sabbath School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

4. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six years attending the Whitesburg

Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families as measured by the three variables: Sunday School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

5. There will be no significant differences between the religious thinking levels of children four, five and six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

6. There will be no significant differences between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

### Assumptions

The major assumptions of the present study are the following:

The development of religious thinking levels in young children is related to religious practices of their families.

Children who have a high level of religious commitment are likely to follow the religious practices of their families (Braverman, 1956).

Religious thinking can be measured in young children (Goldman, 1964; Peatling, 1968).

### Definition of Terms

For the present research the following definitions are applicable:

Concept formation - refers to generalization learning, understanding or a process whereby children develop a response to a certain class

of stimulus patterns, but not to other stimuli (Kohlberg, 1968; Mann, 1973; Spitzer, 1977).

Religious thinking --refers to thinking directed toward religious phenomena. The structure of religious thinking involves the process of generalizing from various experiences to aspects of religion and the nature of divinity.

Religious practices-- refers to those things parents do in the external expression of their religion and the private devotional practices, family religion, church participation, and variations of trends in religious activities (Moberg, 1971). The religious practices were measured on the Religious Practices Questionnaire (Evans, 1964). The number of times parents and children attended church and Sunday or Sabbath School were scored. (See Appendix B for scoring procedures for religious practices). Also the frequency that parents and children engaged in family worship which involved singing or listening to religious songs, family prayer, reading religious books and materials, and listening to religious radio and television programs were scored (See Appendix B).

Religious thinking levels-- refers to the children's understanding of two religious stories, Moses and the Burning Bush, Crossing the Red Sea, and their understanding of the concepts of church and prayer. The religious thinking levels were measured on the Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test utilizing the following method to assess the religious thinking levels of the children. Scores of 25 - 50 indicated Level I, which is intuitive or

preoperational thinking -- unsystematic and fragmentary forming inconsistent and illogical conclusions. Scores of 75 - 100 indicated Level II, which is concrete thinking with successful inductive and deductive logic employed but the scope limited to concrete situations, visual experience and sensory data. Scores of 125 - 150 indicated Level III -- abstract thinking or formal operations in which the capacity to think hypothetically and deductively is apparent (Goldman, 1964).

Worship service attendance-- refers to church attendance at the regular preaching services on Sabbath or Sunday for the two groups of subjects involved in the study.

Whitesburg Kindergarten-- refers to the parents in the study who had their children enrolled in the preschool program and the after school program at the Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. The Church operates a kindergarten day-care program which is open to people of all races and faiths. The parents participating in this study represented eight different denominations (See Appendix F).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are few empirical studies that relate to the religious development of young children. Most of the research is focused on the school-age child from six through adolescence. The purpose of the following review is to highlight the research and has been influential at some stage in the developmental history of religious education. The studies include cross-sectional descriptions of children's religious development.

Many studies (Deconchy, 1965; Evans, 1964; Frost, 1975; Graebner, 1964; Harms, 1944) in religious development have dealt with the meanings that "God" has for children. Elkind (1971) cited Barnes' 1892 research as being one of the earliest studies on the God concept. Barnes concluded that children generally thought of God as a man with a long white beard and flowing white garments. Few children in his study were able to conceptualize God's omnipresence.

#### The Child's Concept of God

Harms (1944) has postulated the most compelling evidence for the God concept. He disliked the verbal method used to study religious development and had children from three to eighteen years draw pictures of their concepts of God or what religion meant to them. The results of

Harms' study indicated that there were three different stages of religious experience in children. They were identified as follows:

(1) the first stage, ages 3 - 6, the fairy-tale stage-- children's drawings pictured God as a king or daddy to all children, or someone who lived above the clouds.

(2) the second stage, ages 7 - 11, the realistic stage-- children used symbols like the Jewish star, priest-like persons and human figures who were depicted as helping, assisting, and supervising individuals.

(3) the third stage, ages twelve through adolescence, the individualistic stage-- there was a great diversity of religious expressions (Harms, 1944).

Children's concepts of God were investigated by Graebner (1964) who combined the features of a projective device and a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The purpose of the research was to study the relationship between children's thinking about God and God-involvement in the affairs of man. The population of the study involved 977 Lutheran School children who attended grades four through eight. Some of the pertinent findings are related in the following statements:

1. God was portrayed as the all-knowing, all-powerful one, who forgives repentant sinners, but was vaguely engaged in direct personal relationships.

2. There was a tendency to confuse the "omni-qualities" of God.

3. Children identified the creative ability of God clearly and most frequently first, his powerfulness second, and His mercy and kindness third (Graebner, 1964).

Evans (1964) concluded that positive feelings were expressed toward a loving, helpful God who resembled man and who resided away from the earth. The five-year-old children identified God as having unusual power, being the creator, and associated Him with parents, Jesus, the minister, and aspects of nature. They stated that God had more power than Jesus.

The word association procedure was employed by Deconchy (1965, 1967) to investigate the development of ideas about God and Christ in children from eight to sixteen years of age. There were 2,316 boys and 2,344 girls attending Catholic parochial schools in northern France who were subjects for the study. Deconchy's findings corresponded with Harms' (1944) and Elkind's (1961, 1962, 1963) by suggesting that children's ideas of God developed in stages.

Frost (1975) investigated the relationships between the self-concepts of children and their concepts of God. The California Test of Personality (CTP) and the Child's Concepts of God Test (CCGT) revised by Graebner (1964) were administered to 306 subjects ages 4 - 17 with three types of religious educational backgrounds. Frost's findings suggested that the level of age had a statistically significant effect on the relationship between the self-concepts of children and their concepts of God.



### The Child's Concept of Prayer

Prayer has received very little systematic investigation in the past. A new interest in prayer has developed in the last decade (Elkind, 1971).

Evans (1964) defined prayer as talking to God. Her research implied that prayers come from both original and memorized sources. Children asked God for help and protection and thanked Him for what they felt He had given them.

Brown (1966) utilized Piaget's method of assessing moral judgment to study the appropriateness and efficacy of prayer. He analyzed his results in terms of his subjects' judgments regarding the appropriateness of prayer in various situations. According to Brown, there were no age changes and differences between the 1,100 boys and girls ages 12 - 17 living in different cultures (United States, New Zealand, and Australia) in terms of appropriateness of prayer. However, there was an indication of a gradual decrease with age in the belief that prayer had material consequences.

The prayer concept according to Long, Elkind, and Spilka (1967) was divided into three stages which are related to age. A global conception of prayer was the first stage identified. Children ages five to seven conveyed a vague and fragmentary comprehension of the term. Concrete differentiated was the second stage identified. During this stage children ages seven to nine expressed prayer in a routine form. Abstract prayer conception was the third stage. Children ages nine to twelve expressed

a true internal communication with the Divine. Long, et al., concluded that with increasing age, the content of prayer changed from egocentric wish fulfillment to altruistic moral and ethical desires. It appeared to Long, et al., that prayer followed a developmental course parallel to that followed by the comprehension of religious identity. This research was based on interviews individually given to boys and girls between the ages of five and twelve.

### The Child's Concept of His Religious Identity

According to Elkind (1971), religious identity could be defined in terms of meanings that children attach to their religious denominations. He conducted three studies to investigate the growth of religious identity with more than 700 children ages five to twelve. Piaget's (1929) semi-clinical interview method was used to ask six questions individually to Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic children (Elkind, 1961, 1962, 1963).

I. Jewish child--The results from the first study showed that there was an agreement with Piaget's hypothesis that conceptions develop in a regular, age-related sequence of stages. The first stage was characterized by a general undifferentiated impression of Jews. At the second stage children ages seven to nine expressed a concrete conception of Jews. The third stage involved children ages ten to twelve who displayed an abstract conception of Jews as a sub-class of people who believed in God (Elkind, 1961).

II. Catholic child - The second study of two hundred and eighty children individually interviewed regarding their conception of Catholicism indicated that the children's conception of Catholicism also developed in three age-related stages. Stage one - children had a global undifferentiated conception of Catholicism. Stage two - children had a differentiated but concrete understanding of Catholicism. Stage three - children had an abstract conception of Catholicism (Elkind, 1962).

III. The Protestant - Congregational child - The third study also indicated that conceptualization of the property common to all Protestants and the compatibility of multiple-class memberships developed in three stages. The three stages that were identified were the same as those mentioned in Elkind's prior studies (Elkind, 1963).

### Pedagogical Studies

Elkind (1971) has credited Goldman (1964) with the most sophisticated investigation into the pedagogical aspects of religious thinking. The present study utilized a modification of Goldman's (1964) Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test in assessing levels of religious thinking in young children. Goldman's test was constructed after considerable pretesting, and consisted of three pictures, a family entering church, a boy or girl at prayer and a boy or girl looking at a mutilated Bible. Only two of the pictures were used in the present research, the boy or girl looking at the mutilated Bible was omitted to shorten the test to

adapt it to the age span. The three stories utilized in Goldman's research were Moses and the Burning Bush, The Crossing of the Red Sea, and The Temptations of Jesus (See Appendix A). The Temptations of Jesus was also omitted from the present research; Moses and the Burning Bush and The Crossing of the Red Sea were included in the present research.

Goldman (1964) investigated the religious understanding of 200 Protestant children who were attending public schools in England. He obtained a stratified random sample which included 10 boys and 10 girls at every age level from six through 16. The groups were matched for IQ with good success, and the range of age within each age group was quite similar across groups. Goldman administered the Picture and Story Religious Test individually to each child in one or two sessions. His findings clearly indicated that the developmental stages of thinking described by Piaget applied in the field of religious thought. He concluded that religious thinking developed in three stages: the pre-religious stage, a sub-religious stage, and a truly religious stage (Cox, 1968). Hyde's (1968) critique of Goldman's research pointed out that religious thinking does in fact develop in stages or levels as postulated by Piaget's (1932) theory of moral judgment.

Hyde (1968) further stated that instead of Goldman identifying the three stages as pre-religious, sub-religious, and the fully religious, it would have been better to relate the labels of pre-theological, sub-theological, and fully theological since few people consider children to

be knowledgeable about theological thinking. Goldman's research on developmental levels in religious thinking has had no serious challenges based on similar research studies, and there seems to be substantial support for it (Godin, 1968; Alves, 1968; Peatling, 1968).

Goldman's (1964) research aroused considerable interest in Britain and other countries. Religious educators have expressed a need for information concerning children's readiness for religion at different cognitive levels. The Readiness for Religion series devised by Goldman, et al., (1966) contributed to revitalizing Christian education. Cliff (1968) also supported Goldman's findings, in that he attributed the revolution in Christian education to Goldman's research. He pinpointed the fact that religious educators could now adapt religious educational materials to the thinking levels of children.

In Cox's (1968) assessment of Goldman's research, he concluded that the findings supported the fact that the developmental stages of thinking described by Piaget applied to the field of religious thought. He further noted that Goldman was careful to emphasize that stages of religious thinking varied within children and involved many factors such as environment, chronological age, and mental age.

Ballard and Fleck (1975) proposed a three-stage teaching model based on the cognitive characteristics of Piaget's developmental stages. Their teaching model supported the relevance of Piaget's cognitive developmental model to religious conceptual development. They compared

Piaget's (Maier, 1969; Phillips, 1975; Furth, 1969) cognitive developmental stages to salient ideas for developing religious thinking.

Pre-operational stage ( 2 - 7 years) -- During this stage the religious information given to children must be presented on their level of comprehension. Ballard and Fleck cited Joy's (1975) statement concerning the pre-operational child in the following passage:

During this time, children have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy. They are creative and imaginative and indulge in magical explanations, inventing a wide range of super-natural persons and events. This capacity makes them highly susceptible to belief both in Santa Claus and in God. We cannot unravel the mystery of this particular stage of development nor can we separate the child's orthodox religious belief from his unbridled fantasy. It will be important that his religious environment be stable during these years and that he has wide exposure to authentic adult faith. Where these conditions exist, he will separate fantasy from faith naturally and easily as his mind grows (p. 17).

During the pre-operational stage Ballard and Fleck (1975) and Beers (1975) supported the fact that preschool children have the ability to learn concepts which deal with God, Jesus, the Bible, home, and church. These concepts were labeled as theological concepts.

Concrete operations stage (7 - 11 years) -- Children these ages are beginning to develop the ability to classify and demonstrate reversibility. The implications for religious instruction during this period involved children doing things, finding out, experimenting, and thinking creatively with facts pertaining to the sources and people of Christian faith. Several

Bible stories were given as examples of appropriate stories that would be comprehensible during this period.

Formal operational stage (11 years and above) -- Since mature conceptual thinking occurs during this time, according to Piaget (1932), Ballard and Fleck (1975) suggested that religious content be linked with real life experiences and needs of the children. Several themes were proposed for exploration during this period. Some of them were the inspiration of the Bible, parables, the attributes of God, and the second coming of Christ.

#### Parental Influence on Children

According to Caillon (1968), the first seven years are the most important in children's religious development. Braverman (1956) suggested that long before exposure to religion at school, the family scene with its emotional climate and its ideas and attitudes shapes children's religious thinking and values. A number of studies have dealt with the importance of early religious training (Barber, 1974; Goodenough, 1961; Jones, 1956). Barber (1974) pointed out that half of children's cognitive development has occurred within the first three years of life. She strongly suggested a program for training parents to work with infants and preschool children because she indicated that children's religious education begins at birth whether or not the parents realized it. Parents are the conveyors of love, patience, and understanding for growing children.

White (1923, 1952, 1954) emphasized the importance of the home school for early religious education of young children and stated that parents should not shift their responsibilities upon others. Finally, White pointed out that only by the father and mother working in unison could they accomplish the task of rearing their children with a minimum of problems.

The effect of preschool religious education on early personality adjustment was researched by Wingert (1973). She compared the personal, social, and total adjustment of children having weekly preschool religious education before entering kindergarten, and those not having the same experience. Wingert's (1973) conclusions clearly pointed out that the children who had experienced preschool religious education scored significantly higher on the components of self-reliance, sense of self worth, feeling of belonging, freedom from nervous symptoms, and a total personal adjustment score. From this study Wingert (1973) recommended the following:

1. more comprehensive teacher training programs for preschool teachers in Christian education,
2. more extensive cooperative efforts among the institutional forces of the home, school, and church in promoting maximum child development,
3. closer relationships between the various fields of education and the behavioral sciences in planning and evaluating of early childhood programs (p. 6471-A).



Parents not only influence children, but children in return have an effect upon parents and their religious practices. Nash and Berger (1962) investigated the reasons members of the three Congregational Christian Churches committed themselves to an organized religion. Husbands and wives were interviewed separately where possible. The interview consisted of a series of questions designed to secure simple facts about the respondent and his religious attitudes concerning the church and religion. The findings from the research indicated that most of the decisions to join the church were prompted by the prospect or presence of children in the family.

It was further purported by Anders (1955) that children influence family church participation. Church families were classified into five participation levels. The levels were based on amount and kind of participation. Level I indicated the largest amount of church participation and attendance. Level V reflected the least amount. There were 417 church families included in the study. Interviews and questionnaires were utilized to collect the data from the families. Anders concluded from the results of the study that 75 per cent of the families were in the lower participation levels (Levels IV and V). She further pointed out that families with children were generally more active than childless families. The results of the study strongly suggested that different types of families tended to manifest different degrees of church participation with split families participating less than unbroken families. It was found that church attendance

was less among the intermarried because friction could occur concerning the child in terms of which parent's religion to follow. Other problems that confronted the intermarried were observance of religious customs and family size.

Parents have a definite role to play in the development of their children's moral and religious growth (Hoffman, 1962; Haystead, 1971). Haystead expressed parental influence as:

The importance of the parents consistently doing "what is right and good in the sight of the Lord," reflects the powerful effect of parental example. The emphasis is on giving the child a model to observe rather than commands to obey. The verbal explanations are left to the child's initiative, stimulated by a consistent parental pattern of life (p. 12).

### Summary

The review of literature has dealt with some of the research studies and writings concerned with growth in young children's understanding of religious concepts, practices, and experiences. Elkind's three-part developmental study substantiated that religious thinking or conceptual development occurs in stages and is associated with Piaget's stages of cognitive development (Elkind, 1971; Phillips, 1975; Maier, 1969).

Still another investigation by Harms (1944) concluded that religious thought or development proceeded through stages of development. The three-stage model proposed by Ballard and Fleck (1975) also based the teaching of religious concepts on Piaget's cognitive developmental theory.

Goldman's classic research also supported the developmental stage theory of religious thinking. His research has focused attention on presenting religious curriculum materials to children that are relevant to their cognitive level of development (Goldman, 1964, 1966).

Hyde (1971) stressed the fact that Piaget's theory of cognitive development was related to religious thinking. He concluded that children's thinking developed from fanciful and illogical ideas to logical concrete ideas in middle childhood and progressed to mature religious thinking in adolescence and adulthood.

Finally, the influence of parents on children's religious development was researched by Nash and Berger (1962), and Anders (1955). The studies consistently indicated that religious practices are related to the presence of children in the home, and children are influenced by parental models (Nash & Berger, 1962; Anders, 1955; Wingert, 1973).

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study was to assess the levels of religious thinking of young children and to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the religious practices of the children and their families and the religious thinking levels of the children. The study involved 60 children who were four, five, and six years of age and their parents. Each of the 20 children in the three age groups was administered individually the Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test (Goldman, 1964) in an attempt to assess his or her religious thinking level (See Appendix A).

The Religious Practices Questionnaire was given to the parents of the children to determine the religious practices of the families. The questionnaire was in a two-page short answer structured form (See Appendix B).

#### Hypotheses

The hypotheses set forth for the present study were the following:

1. There will be no agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, worship service attendance, other activities, and family worship as measured by the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

2. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and the religious practices of their families as measured by Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance.

3. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children four, five, and six years, and the religious practices of their families as measured by the three variables: Sabbath School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

4. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six years attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families as measured by the three variables: Sunday School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

5. There will be no significant differences between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

6. There will be no significant differences between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

## Subjects

The subjects included in the study were 60 children four, five, and six years of age and their parents selected randomly from the list of children attending three Seventh-day Adventist Churches and one large Baptist Church Kindergarten Day Care Center. Thirty children and their parents were selected from the Whitesburg Baptist Church Kindergarten, and 30 children and their parents were selected from the three Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The churches included in the study were The First Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Oakwood College Church, the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Whitesburg Baptist Kindergarten Day Care Center. All of the churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten were located in Huntsville, Alabama. Note the denominational affiliation of the parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten (See Appendix F).

A list of the children and their parents was secured from the directors of the children's programs from each church and the kindergarten. A stratified random sample was selected from the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the Adventist Churches so that an equal number of children ages four through six were in each of the three groups. The lists from the three churches and the kindergarten were arranged alphabetically according to the children's last names and by age groups. Twenty to 25 children were randomly selected from each age group by the use of a table of random numbers (Roscoe, 1975).

Parents of the subjects from the three churches were asked by telephone to participate in the study; those who could not be contacted by telephone were asked in person to participate in the study. Letters were written to the parents of the children who attended the Whitesburg Kindergarten; each family was requested to fill out a form granting permission for his child to participate in the research. Those not responding to the letters were contacted by telephone. The parents were informed concerning the nature of the study as well as the procedures that would be followed during the study (See Appendix C).

### Instruments

The instruments used in the study were a modification of Goldman's (1964) Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test and a modified form of Evans' (1964) Religious Practices Questionnaire. As a result of the equivocal findings reported in the review of literature on measurement in the field of religious education, it was evident that a need existed to investigate religious measurement with young children. Goldman's test according to Peatling (1968) does not measure faith or the Spirit, but the way children and youth think about Bible stories and religious practices.

The Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test was developed by Goldman (1964). His test was modified for the present study because of the uniqueness of the population. Goldman's population included subjects

between six and 17 years of age whereas in the present study, the subjects were ages four, five, and six years. It was imperative that the investigator adapt the test to the chronological ages of the children since it was originally designed for children six through 17 years.

The test was modified in the following ways:

1. Two pictures were used instead of three, The Family Going to Church and the Child Praying Alone. The last picture, Child and the Mutilated Bible, was excluded to shorten the test for the age span involved.

2. Only questions that could be scored according to the three religious thinking levels were included in the scoring.

3. Only two of the three stories were included, Moses and the Burning Bush and Crossing the Red Sea. The third story, The Temptation of Jesus, was omitted to shorten the test for children four through six years.

4. Flannelgraph illustrations depicted scenes from each story. The Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has recommended that pictures to represent Bible scenes should be clear in outline, for they cut a faithful stencil on the mind. The greater the story element in a picture, the greater are its possibilities with children. The Kindergarten Program Helps (1977) further pointed out that flannelgraph illustrations should consist of attractive scenes that are pleasing to the eyes. Well planned visual aids



will arouse interest and hold the attention of the children longer than those that are poorly done. Bible stories should be presented with a variety of visual aids utilizing the best professionally painted representations of Divinity and nature. They should be secured for the children from the Book and Bible Houses in the various conferences. Meyer (1967) also emphasized the importance of selecting pictures for children that are in color because they are more appealing than those in black and white. Special consideration should also be given to selecting large illustrations for small children.

Two flannelgraph scenes and two stories illustrated with flannelgraph scenes were presented to children ages four through six utilizing the interview method and the tape recorder (Borg, Gall, 1976; Kerlinger, 1973; Yarrow, 1960) (See Appendix A). Children's answers to the interview questions were recorded on tape during the interview and scored after the sessions were over by the investigator and Dr. Nell Anthony, Chairman of the Elementary Education Department at Alabama A & M University, Huntsville, Alabama. The reliability coefficient was .95 which shows a high level of scoring agreement between the two scorers.

The tests were scored using the following method recommended by Goldman (1965, p. 261).

Score 1 - Very inadequate, very incorrect or irrelevant answers

Score 2 - Inadequate answers

Score 3 - Fair answers

Score 4 - Fairly good answers

Score 5 - Good answers

Score 6 - Very good answers

The religious thinking levels were determined by combining the scores in the following ways (Goldman, 1965, p. 261):

Scores 1 and 2 form Level I -- intuitive or preoperational thinking -- unsystematic and fragmentary thinking which leads to illogical and inconsistent conclusions.

Scores 3 and 4 form Level II -- concrete thinking -- successful inductive and deductive logic are employed. Scope is limited to concrete situations, visual, and sensory data.

Scores 5 and 6 form Level III -- This level involves the final stage of thinking hypothetically and deductively without the impediment of concrete elements (See Appendix A for more scoring details).

A Religious Practices Questionnaire was given to the parents of each child to determine the religious practices of the children and their families. The questionnaire was modified from the one used in Evans' (1964) research on Religious Ideas and Attitudes of the Young Child. Ary et al. (1972) indicated that questionnaires should be as brief as possible so that respondents would return them. Only the data needed to test the hypotheses or answer the research questions should be included. The questionnaire used by the researcher was modified in the following ways:

1. The terminology was changed to be appropriate for the two denominations.
2. The coding system was changed from alphabetic to numeric in order to facilitate scoring.
3. The open-ended questions were eliminated, and all closed questions were included to shorten the questionnaire and to simplify the scoring procedures.

#### Procedures to Control Variables

Levels of religious thinking, the dependent variable, were scored by two scorers on the Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test (Goldman, 1964, 1965). The independent variables were the children from the Whitesburg Kindergarten, the children from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and the Religious Practices of their families. By confining the study to one community, the Huntsville, Alabama area, the environmental variables were controlled. The effects of age were controlled by selecting a stratified random sample so that an equal number of children ages four, five, and six were in each of the three groups.

By selecting the parents and children randomly from the same community, the Huntsville, Alabama area, most of the extraneous variables were controlled (Kerlinger, 1973; Roscoe, 1975).

### Collecting and Recording Data

The Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test (Goldman, 1964) was administered to each child who was interviewed individually by the investigator. Parents were contacted by the investigator by letter, telephone, or in person to secure permission for the children's and their participation in the study. The children who attended the Oakwood College Child Development Center were interviewed in the Child Development Center because the church facilities were under construction at the time of the study. Other children not attending the center were interviewed in their homes in a room provided by their parents. Provisions were made to conduct the interviews in the Oakwood College Child Development Center for all of the children whose parents could not provide privacy during the interview. The children from the Whitesburg Kindergarten were tested in a room provided by the Directors of the Whitesburg Child Development Center sponsored by the church.

The investigator and each child sat at a table where pictures and religious children's books were provided. When the investigator had established social rapport with the child, she said, "I have some flannelboard pictures that you might like to see and later some stories you can hear from this tape recorder. First, I'll show you two flannelboard pictures, and we will talk about them."

An excerpt of Goldman's (1964, p. 248) Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test follows:

Picture 1. Family going to Church

The first picture here shows a mother and a father going to Church with their son (daughter). The son looks as though he might be about your age.

Look carefully at the picture. Now, can you tell me . . . . (Follow question sheet) (See Appendix A).

Picture 2. Boy or girl at Prayer

Look carefully at the picture. Now, can you tell me . . . . (Follow question sheet) (See Appendix A).

The interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes or as long as the children seemed interested and cooperative, but no longer than 30 minutes. Each child's responses were taped during the interview (Borg & Gall, 1976; Kerlinger, 1973; Yarrow, 1960). When the interview was over, the investigator thanked the children and their parents for their cooperation.

The tests were scored after the investigator listened to the tapes and read the answers recorded on the prepared test forms (See Appendix A). Goldman's (1965) scoring method was utilized in scoring the test and assessing the religious thinking levels of the children.

Scores of 25 - 50 were given for Level I which is intuitive or pre-operational thinking. This level is characterized by unsystematic and fragmentary conclusions. Scores of 75 - 100 were given for Level II which is concrete thinking that is characterized by successful inductive and deductive logic that is limited to concrete situations, visual experiences, and sensory data. Scores of 125 - 150 were given to indicate

Level III which is abstract thinking or formal operations. During this stage, the capacity to think hypothetically and deductively is apparent (Goldman, 1964).

The Religious Practices Questionnaires were mailed to the parents of the children who were not available during the interview. Parents who were present during the interview filled out the questionnaires in another room.

The Religious Practices Questionnaire yielded four scores. Worship Service Attendance was scored by determining the mean number of times parents and children attended the preaching services each month. The Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance was ascertained by determining the mean number of times parents and children attended Sabbath School or Sunday School per month, and Other Activities was scored by determining the mean number of times parents and children participated in other religious church activities each month. The scores ranged from 4 representing four or more times a month to 0 which indicated less than once a month. The frequency of family worship was ascertained by combining and averaging scores on section three of the questionnaire which indicated how many times a week the child participated in nine different activities. The scores ranged from 3 which indicated five to seven days a week to 0 which represented less than once a week. The scores on the four sections of the questionnaire were averaged to obtain a mean score for religious practices (See Table 4 and Appendix B).

### Analysis of the Data

Correlation coefficients for the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the Seventh-day Adventist Churches were computed to determine the agreement between mothers' and fathers' scores on the Religious Practices Questionnaire. The four variables were Worship Service Attendance, Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance, Other Activities, and Family Worship.

Multiple regression analyses were utilized to test hypotheses 2, 3, and 4. Specifically the multiple regression analyses were utilized to determine the relationship between the scores on each of the three types of practices: Sunday School or Sabbath School Attendance, Worship Service Attendance, and Family Worship of the families, and the scores on the Religious Thinking Levels Test for children four, five, and six years of age.

A two-factor analysis of variance was applied to test hypotheses 5 and 6. The analysis of variance was utilized to determine the differences among the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six as indicated by their scores on the Religious Thinking Test and to determine the differences among the religious practices of young children's parents which were indicated by their scores on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The results of the study are reported in four parts: correlation coefficients between parents' responses; multiple regression analyses of family practices and religious thinking levels; analyses of variance for children's religious thinking levels and religious practices of their parents; and the mean scores for the religious thinking levels of children and religious practices of their parents from the three Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

#### Correlation Coefficients for Parents' Responses

It was hypothesized that there would be no agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to religious practices measured on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

Hypothesis 1 -- Correlation coefficients for the parents of the children from the three Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten were computed to determine the extent of agreement between mothers' and fathers' scores on the four sections of the Religious Practices Questionnaire. These sections were Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance, Worship Service Attendance, Other Activities, and Family Worship. The correlations ranging from .99 to .84 are presented in Table 1.



Table 1  
 Correlation Coefficients between Fathers' and Mothers'  
 Scores on Religious Activities

<u>Mothers' Religious Activities</u>	<u>Fathers' Religious Activities</u>			
	Worship Service Attendance	Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance	Other Activities	Family Worship
Worship Service Attendance	.98			
Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance		.99		
Other Activities			.84	
Family Worship				.97

Multiple Regression Analysis of Religious Practices and Religious Thinking Levels

A multiple regression analysis was executed to determine if a significant relationship existed between the religious practices of the families and the levels of religious thinking for children four, five, and six years of age. The religious thinking levels were measured by the Religious Thinking Levels Test, the dependent variable (Goldman, 1964). The Religious Practices Questionnaire was utilized to measure the independent variables which were Family Worship, Worship Service Attendance, and Sabbath or Sunday School Attendance (Evans, 1964).

The analyses were as follows:

Hypotheses 2.

1. The religious practices for the combined churches explained only 9.8 per cent of the variability in religious thinking levels of the children. This was indicated by an R - square of .098. A significant relationship did not exist between the religious practices of the families and religious thinking levels of the children from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten when the data from the two samples were combined. This was substantiated by an F value of 1.96 and p = .13.

2. When the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten were analyzed separately, the following results were found:

Hypothesis 3. Whitesburg Kindergarten -- The religious practices of the families explained only 3 per cent of the variability in religious thinking levels of the children. The results of this analysis was not significant as indicated by the  $F$  value of .25;  $p = .85$ .

Hypothesis 4. Seventh-day Adventist Churches -- Results from the multiple regression analysis indicated that religious practices explained 31 per cent of the variability in religious thinking levels. The  $F$  value was 3.85 and  $p = .02$  indicating a significant relationship between religious thinking levels and family practices. When the religious family practices were assessed separately, the results were the following: Family Worship --  $F = 9.54$ ;  $p = .005$ ; Worship Service Attendance --  $F = 6.16$ ;  $p = .02$ ; Sabbath School Attendance --  $F = 3.20$ ;  $p = .08$ . Family Worship and Worship Service Attendance explained a significant amount of variability in religious thinking levels of the children; however, Sabbath School Attendance did not explain a significant amount of the variability in religious thinking levels of children.

The three variables that entered into the equation were Family Worship ( $p = .08$ ), Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance ( $p = .37$ ), and Worship Service Attendance ( $p = .30$ ). Even though Family Worship was not significant at the .08 level, it is important to consider that it contributed more to the explained variability than the other two variables.

### Analyses of Variance

It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between the two groups in religious thinking levels of the children and religious practices of their parents. Hypotheses 5 and 6 were tested by analyses of variance.

Hypothesis 5. -- A two-factor analysis of variance (2 x 3) was utilized to determine if significant differences existed between the religious thinking levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School children and the Whitesburg Kindergarten children who were four through six years of age. The results of the analysis are reported in Table 2. The differences that exist between the two groups according to the religious thinking scores and age levels are indicated in Figure 6 (See Appendix D).

Hypothesis 6. -- The results of the two-factor analysis of variance (2 x 3) that was executed to determine the differences between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath Schools and the Whitesburg Kindergarten are presented in Table 3. The differences are also shown in Figure 7 which shows the profile of the mean scores on the Religious Practices Questionnaire for the parents according to their children's age levels (See Appendix D).

Table 2  
Analysis of Variance for Religious  
Thinking Levels

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>F</u>
Church	1	1106.70	1.91
Age	2	7493.63	6.48 *
Church X Age	2	494.49	.43
Error	52	30063.50	
Total	57	39310.91	

\* Significant at  $p = .003$

The results in Table 2 indicate that age is highly significant at  $p = .003$ . The Four-year olds scored significantly lower than the five and six year olds in both groups on the Religious Thinking Levels Test. The mean scores are shown in Table 4 and Figure 6 in Appendix D. The mean scores for the various age groups are 54.05 for four-year olds, 79 for five-year olds, and 77.3 for six-year olds.

The analysis of variance for religious practices is shown in Table 3. Age did not affect the religious practices of the family ( $F = .33$ ;  $p = .72$ ). However, the results indicate a significant difference between

Table 3  
 Analysis of Variance for Religious  
 Practices

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>F</u>
Church	1	46.42	50.87*
Age	2	.59	.33
Church X Age	2	.29	.16
Error	52	47.45	
Total	57	94.85	

\*Significant at  $p = .0001$

the religious practices of the two churches ( $F = 50.87$ ;  $p = .0001$ ). The mean scores on religious practices and religious thinking levels presented in Table 4 indicate that the two groups differ significantly.

Table 4  
The Mean Scores for the Religious Thinking  
Levels and Religious Practices

Subjects	<u>N</u>	Religious Thinking	Religious Practices
Whitesburg Kindergarten	28	64.89	1.09
Seventh-day Adventist	30	74.40	2.88

Age	<u>N</u>	Religious Thinking	Religious Practices
4	20	54.05	1.91
5	18	79.00	2.01
6	20	77.30	2.12

Subjects	Age	<u>N</u>	Religious Thinking	Religious Practices
Whitesburg Kindergarten	4	10	45.60	1.08
	5	8	76.00	1.03
	6	10	75.30	1.13
Seventh-day Adventist	4	10	62.50	2.73
	5	10	81.40	2.80
	6	10	79.30	3.11

## CHAPTER V

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to assess the religious thinking levels of young children who were four, five, and six years of age, and to compare their religious thinking levels with the religious practices of their families. The thinking levels were assessed by utilizing a modified version of Goldman's (1964) Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test. The religious practices were measured on a modified form of Evans' (1964) Religious Practices Questionnaire. The findings from the two instruments will be discussed in the same order as the results were presented in Chapter IV.

Hypothesis 1. It was hypothesized that there would be no agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, worship service attendance, other activities, and family worship as measured by the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

Correlation coefficients were computed to determine the agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses, and the results of the analysis indicated that the correlations ranged from .99 to .84. Moberg (1971) suggested that people have a tendency to report a higher degree of conformity to ideals than is actually practiced by them. An inspection of the questionnaires revealed that in some instances the



same parent had filled out both questionnaires because the handwriting or typing was identical. A general trend was also evident in terms of responses according to religious commitment. Parents who indicated no church affiliation responded generally with low scores on religious practices whereas parents who were active members of churches responded with high scores on religious practices. Agreement of parental responses was also substantiated by the responses to church attendance. A survey of the questionnaires showed that in seven families where parental denominations differed, parents attended the same church. This finding concurs with Anders (1955) who suggested that children influence parental church attendance.

Hypothesis 2. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and the religious practices of their families as measured by three variables: Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, family worship, worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

One of the major assumptions of the study was that the development of religious thinking levels in young children related to the religious practices of their families (Breitigam, 1950; Heynen, 1965; Spock, 1962; Watson, 1961). It was apparent from the results of the multiple regression analysis that significant relationships did not exist between the

religious practices of the families and the religious thinking levels of the children when the data from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten were analyzed together. This was concluded because of the low per cent of explained variability indicated by an  $R^2$  of .098 ( $F = 1.96$ ;  $p = .13$ ). The importance of this finding concurs with Ausubel (1958) who suggested that children were indirectly influenced by religious precepts in their homes even if religious practices were not taught or encouraged.

In view of the lower religious practices indicated by the subjects from the Whitesburg Kindergarten (1.09), one might anticipate lower religious thinking levels; however, the children's mean score of 64.89 indicated that their performances on the Religious Thinking Test were above that which could be expected of children in that cognitive developmental stage and age levels. Since the scores of 25 - 50 indicated Level I, it is evident that the Whitesburg Kindergarten children scored above that range. It should also be noted that these children were exposed to some religious teaching while attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten. It can be assumed that the comprehensive development program provided by the staff contributed to the children's performances on the Religious Thinking Test (Wakefield, 1975).

Ausubel (1958) and Kohlberg (1964) suggested that religion was interwoven with other environmental factors which made it difficult to separate the child's moral reasoning from his religious values. It may

be concluded, therefore, that the religious thinking levels of the children in this study were influenced by many facets of their environment and not by religious family practices alone.

Hypothesis 3. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children ages four through six and the religious practices of their families.

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated a significant relationship between the religious practices of the families in the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the religious thinking levels of the children. The religious practices explained 31 per cent of the variability in religious thinking. The  $F$  value was 3.85 with  $p = .02$  substantiating a significant finding.

The two variables that were found to be highly significant were Family Worship ( $F = 9.54$ ;  $p = .005$ ), and Worship Service Attendance ( $F = 6.16$ ;  $p = .02$ ). Denton (1952), Watson (1961), and White (1952) have emphasized the importance of family worship in helping the child to internalize religious concepts. Denton further pointed out that parents were the most potent force in molding the attitudes of their children. He cited the findings of Teeters and Reineman (1950) who conducted research of moral attitudes of children as they compared with various other significant persons in their lives. Among the correlations they found, the Parent and Child had a correlation of .55 whereas the Sunday

School Teacher and Child's correlation was .002. The results of this study revealed that parents in the home have more influence on the child's attitude than the church.

The homogeneous population in relation to church affiliation was an important factor that influenced the significant relationship between the religious practices of the families and the religious thinking levels of the children. With the exception of three fathers, all of the parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches were members of the church. The religious practices mean score for the Seventh-day Adventist parents was 2.88 which indicated a high level of religious commitment. Another factor that influenced the significant relationship was the high scores on church and Sabbath School attendance. In scoring the questionnaires numbers 0 to 4 represented the times the subjects attended church or Sabbath School. The Seventh-day Adventist subjects scored 3.70 and 3.61 on church and Sabbath School attendance respectively. These findings suggested a high level of homogeneity in this sample of Seventh-day Adventist families (See Appendix B).

A second influential factor that supported the results of the multiple regression analysis was that Family Worship and Worship Service Attendance are integral parts of the doctrinal beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Families are encouraged to participate in all facets of the church program which includes an integrated program that extends from preschool through higher education. Special emphasis is placed on child

evangelism through the Sabbath School Program, Vacation Bible Schools, Branch Sabbath Schools, and other child-centered programs (White, 1943, 1952, 1954).

Hypothesis 4. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families as measured by three variables: Sunday School attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance on the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

The results of the multiple regression analysis that was executed to test hypothesis four showed that the religious practices only explained 3 per cent of the variability in religious thinking levels of the Whitesburg Kindergarten children. An analysis of the three variables: Family Worship ( $p = .85$ ;  $F = .03$ ), Worship Service Attendance ( $p = .85$ ;  $F = .04$ ), and Sunday School Attendance ( $p = .94$ ;  $F = .01$ ) that were entered into the equation showed that these variables did not contribute significantly to the variability in religious thinking levels. The religious practices mean score for the Whitesburg Kindergarten parents was 1.09 which suggested a low level of religious commitment (See Appendix B).

Another factor that influenced the results of the multiple regression analysis was the denominational affiliation of the parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten. There were eight denominations represented in the 28 families included in the study with eight parents indicating no church

preference (See Table 6). The results presented in Table 4 showed a mean score of 64.89 for the religious thinking level of these children which is above the 25 - 50 range expected for their age level of cognitive development. Since these children scored above Level I (25 - 50), it is evident that other factors besides religious family practices influenced their religious thinking levels since their families scored low (1.09) on religious practices. Several of these factors were pointed out earlier in this chapter. According to Wakefield (1975) the significant persons that influence the child's understanding of spiritual concepts include not only the parents but the child's Sunday School teachers and other persons in the child's environment who actively interact with the child. He further pointed out the child's awarenesses, intellectual development and level of language development, and enrichment all influence the development of theological concepts within young children.

Hypothesis 5. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant differences between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

The results of the analysis of variance showed that age was highly significant at  $p = .003$ ;  $F = 6.48$ . These results are reported in Table 3. The four-year-olds scored significantly lower than the five and six-year-olds in both groups of subjects (See Figure 6, Appendix D).

Several researchers (Ballard and Fleck, 1975; Deconchy, 1965; Elkind, 1963; Goldman, 1964; Harms, 1944) have suggested that children's religious concepts developed in stages concurrently with their intellectual levels. This line of reasoning was supported by the children's performances on the Religious Thinking Levels Test. The results shown in Table 4 indicated that the religious thinking levels of children four through six in this study ranged from 45.6 for four-year-olds to 75.3 for six-year-olds. The significant differences between the scores of the four-year-olds and the five and six-year-olds clearly suggested that the younger children's lower scores were due partially to their unsystematic and fragmentary responses on the Religious Thinking Levels Test.

The wide variation of scores that are shown in Appendix E clearly pointed out that children in both groups scored in Levels I and II in all age groups. This finding clearly supported the research studies that religious thinking developed within each child according to his unique patterns of development (Elkind, 1963; Goldman, 1964). Although all of the children in the study were from the Huntsville area, there was a wide variation of family patterns, religious and ethnic backgrounds. The children from the Whitesburg Kindergarten were all Caucasian except one six-year-old of Indian descent. The Seventh-day Adventist sample represented four ethnic backgrounds. There were

three from the British West Indies, four Caucasians, one African, and 22 American Blacks included in this sample.

Randomization of subjects was another factor that attributed to the variation of scores in the three age groups. If intelligence test scores had been available for these children, the investigator hypothesizes that there would have been a wide variation across all age levels because of the varied backgrounds. Goldman (1964) utilized intelligence test scores in his study of religious thinking levels and correlated these with the religious thinking levels of the children. His findings supported the fact that mental age is more important than chronological age in religious thinking. From his research, he concluded that children with low intelligence quotients may score higher on the Religious Thinking Test than children with high intelligence quotients because of the motivation factor. He further emphasized that excessive pressures may cause children to become bored or antagonistic to religion.

Although there was a wide variation of scores, the results of this study clearly indicate that the four-year-olds scored significantly lower than the five and six-year-olds. The mean Religious Thinking scores were shown in Table 4 for each group. The length of the test was approximately 20 to 30 minutes which attributed partially to the lower scores of the four-year-olds. According to Mussen, Conger, and Kagan (1974), older children have the ability to focus their attention in a systematic



way for longer periods of time, whereas children under five years appeared easily distracted and had difficulty maintaining attention for long periods of time on problems or communication from others. Research studies of Pick, Frankel, and Hess (1975) also substantiated the fact that as children grew older, they exhibited greater efficiency in directing their attention. These research studies were also confirmed by the investigator during the process of the individual interviews.

The analysis of variance for Religious Practices was presented in Table 3. It was noted that Age did not affect the religious practices of the family ( $F = .33$ ;  $p = .72$ ). There was an indication, however, according to Anders (1955), and Nash and Berger (1962) that the presence of children generally influenced church membership and participation. Their studies concluded that families with children participated more in church activities than childless families, and degrees of participation depended upon the type of families involved whether they were one-parent or two-parent families.

It was difficult for the investigator to ascertain the nature of the family types represented by parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten because 10 of the parents did not return their questionnaires; however, all of the families in this sample were represented except two who did not respond. Five of the one-parent responses indicated that they were divorced or separated from their spouses. There were only two families

in the Seventh-day Adventist sample that were one-parent families. From the basis of these findings, it can be concluded that the Seventh-day Adventist subjects had more two-parent families and a higher mean score (2.88) on the Religious Practices Questionnaire than the subjects from the Whitesburg Kindergarten who had a mean score of (1.09) on the questionnaire and 10 one-parent families. These findings also agree with Ander's (1955) and Berger's (1962) study concerning family types and church participation.

Hypothesis 6. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant differences between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

The results of the analysis of variance showed that a significant difference existed between the religious practices of the two groups ( $F = 50.87$ ;  $p = .0001$ ). These results that were presented in Table 3 can be attributed to several factors. One has been discussed in the previous paragraph in relation to one and two-parent families. It has also been noted earlier in this study that the Seventh-day Adventist subjects exhibited more homogeneity in relation to denominational affiliation than the subjects from the Whitesburg Kindergarten who represented eight denominational affiliations with eight indicating no church preference (See Appendix F).

Goode's (1966) study on Social Class and Church Participation suggested that individuals of the middle status levels seemed to be more active in the church than those of lower status. The subjects in this study from the Whitesburg Kindergarten tended to represent the middle status in their occupations whereas those from the Seventh-day Adventist Church were from the lower and middle status in relation to their occupations. Goode further commented that individuals of manual status or working class church members tended to display a considerably higher level of religious response. Even though the subjects from the Adventist Church were from a wider social class span, they scored higher on the Religious Practices Questionnaire. This significant difference in religious practices can further be explained by the unique characteristics of the Seventh-day Adventist denominational beliefs which are not relevant to this research.

The results for the mean scores for Religious Practices illustrated in Table 4 clearly indicated a significant difference between the means of the two samples. The diversity of denominations has already been indicated as a possible factor contributing to the low mean score of 1.09 for Religious Practices for subjects from the Whitesburg Kindergarten. If the sample had included only Baptist parents, the mean score for Religious Practices might have been higher. To investigate this point, the researcher averaged the Worship Service Attendance, Sunday School Attendance, Other Activities, and Family Worship

from 15 Religious Practices Questionnaires of Baptist parents who were included in the study. The new mean score for these 15 subjects was 1.87 which was a gain of .78. With a larger randomly selected sample, it could be hypothesized that the mean score might be even higher.

Finally, Piaget's stages of cognitive development were utilized by several researchers in the field of religious development. This study involved Goldman's (1964) Religious Thinking Test which was based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development. He purported that the child's religious concepts developed in stages according to Piaget's cognitive developmental stages: preoperational stage, concrete operations and formal operations. These ideas were also researched by Elkind (1961, 1962, 1963) in his classic studies of Prayer Concept and Religious Identity. He pointed out that there were three developmental stages in religious concept development: global or undifferentiated conceptions, concrete conceptions, and abstract conceptions. Wakefield (1975), and Ballard and Fleck (1975) have proposed salient ideas for introducing religious concepts to young children. They emphasized the necessity for teachers and parents to recognize the cognitive developmental levels of young children. According to Wakefield, overstimulation to facilitate a more rapid intellectual development is not profitable and amounts to pouring in data more rapidly than the computer is programmed to assimilate. Overstimulation is likely to lead

to confusion and distortion. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers and parents must follow the fundamental principles of learning set forth in educational psychology in presenting religious concepts.

The children in this study performed at Level I ( 25 - 50 ) and above this level which would indicate the Intermediate Level according to Goldman (1964). The mean scores of the two groups of children, 64.89 for the Whitesburg Kindergarten children and 74.40 for the Seventh-day Adventist children, show that these children are performing at and above the expected cognitive developmental level in religious thinking.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Research studies have indicated that religious thinking develops in stages (Ballard and Fleck, 1975; Deconchy, 1965; Elkind, 1963; Goldman, 1964; Harms, 1944). Although very few studies have been done in the realm of religious thinking of children under five years of age, the present study included the four-year-olds. Child evangelism begins with infancy and progresses to adolescence; therefore, it is essential that parents, teachers, and leaders of young children's programs become familiar with age-level capabilities of children. Self (1975) further pointed out that church educators should not be concerned about children's religious development only, but must consider the physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects of the total personality of children individually.

The knowledge of children's developmental levels encourages better planning of children's activities in the home and church. The purpose of this study was to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the religious practices of children and their families and religious thinking levels of the children.

Two instruments were utilized to collect data from the parents and the children. A modification of Goldman's (1964) Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test and a modified form of Evans' (1964) Religious Practices Questionnaire were utilized for the measurement of religious thinking levels and religious practices. The subjects in the study were 60 children four, five, and six years of age and their parents selected randomly from three Seventh-day Adventist Churches and one large Baptist Church Kindergarten -- Day Care Center. The churches were the First Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Oakwood College Church. The Whitesburg Baptist Church Kindergarten -- Day Care Center and all of the churches were located in Huntsville, Alabama. Only 58 children and their parents were included in the final analysis of the data even though 60 children were tested, because two of the families failed to return their questionnaires.

Each child was interviewed individually by the investigator utilizing the tape recorder and note taking to record the responses. The data were collected during the months of July through November, 1977. The interviews lasted from 20 to 30 minutes per child. The test was scored utilizing Goldman's (1965) method of assessing religious thinking levels. A reliability check on the scoring was done for 16 randomly selected children. The results of the reliability coefficient was .95.

The Religious Practices Questionnaire was sent to the mothers and fathers of each child in the study. Worship Service Attendance, Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance, Other Activities, and Family Worship were the variables scored on the Religious Practices Questionnaire. The scores for each variable were totaled and averaged to secure the religious practices score.

The hypotheses set forth for the present study were the following:

1. There will be no agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to Sabbath School or Sunday School attendance, worship service attendance, other activities, and family worship as measured by the Religious Practices Questionnaire.
2. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and the religious practices of their families.
3. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children four through six years, and the religious practices of their families.
4. There will be no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families.



5. There will be no significant differences between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

6. There will be no significant differences between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

The analysis of the data involved the following statistical procedures:

(1) Correlation coefficients were computed to determine the agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses on the four sections of the Religious Practices Questionnaire.

(2) A multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten, and the religious practices of their families as measured by three variables: Sabbath School or Sunday School Attendance, family worship, and worship service attendance.

(3) A multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children four through six years and the religious practices of their families.

(4) A multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four

through six years attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families.

(5) An analysis of variance was utilized to determine the difference between the religious thinking levels of children four through six from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

(6) An analysis of variance was utilized to determine the differences between the religious practices of young children's parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten.

An examination of the results revealed the following findings:

1. The null hypothesis of no agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses to religious practices was rejected. The results of the data showed a high level of agreement between mothers' and fathers' responses. The correlation coefficients ranged from .99 to .84.

2. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children from the two sample groups and the religious practices of their families was retained. The results of the data analysis indicated that a significant relationship did not exist ( $F = 1.96$ ;  $p = .13$ ;  $R$ -square = .098).

3. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of Seventh-day Adventist children four through six years, and the religious practices of their families was rejected.

The results from the analysis indicated that there was a significant relationship between religious thinking levels and religious family practices ( $R$ -square = .31;  $F$  = 3.85;  $p$  = .02).

4. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four through six attending the Whitesburg Kindergarten and the religious practices of their families was retained. The results of the data analysis showed that a significant relationship did not exist ( $F$  = .25;  $p$  = .85;  $R$ -square = .03).

5. The null hypothesis of no differences between the religious thinking levels of children four through six years from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten was rejected. The four-year-olds scored significantly lower than the five and six-year-olds in both groups ( $F$  = 6.48;  $p$  = .003).

6. The null hypothesis of no differences between the religious practices of the two groups was rejected. The results of the data analysis indicated that there was a significant difference between the religious practices of the parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the Whitesburg Kindergarten ( $F$  = 50.87;  $p$  = .0001).

### Conclusions

The conclusions of the study were drawn from the data analyzed in the preceding chapter. Generalizations may only apply to those populations that exhibit the same properties that were present in the samples utilized in this study. The following conclusions were drawn:

1. Parents from both sample groups showed a high level of agreement in relation to religious practices.
2. Religious thinking levels of children four through six years and the religious practices of their parents were not related when the data from both groups of subjects were analyzed together; however, religious thinking levels and religious family practices were related in the Seventh-day Adventist sample. The two variables that contributed significantly to the explained variability in religious thinking were Family Worship and Worship Service Attendance.
3. The chronological age differences of children four through six years was a factor affecting their religious thinking levels. The four-year-old children scored significantly lower than the five and six-year-olds in both groups.
4. The religious practices for the parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and the parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten were significantly different. The parents from the Seventh-day Adventist Churches scored significantly higher than the parents from the Whitesburg Kindergarten.
5. Teachers and parents of young children must understand the limited levels of religious thinking in terms of cognitive developmental levels and refrain from pressuring children to understand concepts beyond their developmental levels.

It is evident from the results of the research that the religious concepts of children in this study developed in stages and involved multidimensional aspects of the total environment (Ausubel, 1958; Deconchy, 1965; Elkind, 1953; Goldman, 1964).

In answer to the research question, "Is there a significant relationship between the religious thinking levels of children four, five, and six years, and the religious practices of their families?" the researcher must consider the populations involved in the study before this question can be answered adequately. The results of this study revealed that there were no significant differences when the results of the two samples, Whitesburg Kindergarten and Seventh-day Adventist Churches, were analyzed; however, when the analysis was executed separately, there was a significant relationship between religious practices and religious thinking levels in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Therefore, it can be concluded that the demographic characteristics of the samples involved in the study will determine the results of the data analysis.

Finally, the results of this study suggested that religious family practices influenced the religious thinking levels of children within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This fact further points out that in-service educational seminars for families and teachers would be beneficial in helping them understand the limited levels of religious thinking in young children so that more denominational materials and cognitive

programs in the church can be geared to the developmental levels of the children (Wakefield, 1975).

### Recommendations

The findings from this study suggest more extensive research in the area of religious thinking in children throughout their developmental age span. The following suggestions are offered for future research studies:

1. Extending the sample to include adolescents as Goldman (1964) did in Britain would permit ascertaining religious thinking levels throughout the child's developmental age span.

2. Examination of two homogeneous groups that are different from each other would provide valuable information on religious thinking.

3. In-service educational seminars for families and teachers on cognitive developmental levels would help in understanding of young children's limited levels of religious thinking.

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APPENDIX A  
THE PICTURE AND STORY RELIGIOUS  
THINKING TEST



III. 1. Why do you think the father and mother go to church?

---

IV. 1. Does the son/daughter believe in God?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

---

V. 1. Does going to Sabbath School/Sunday School help the child?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

2. How does going to SS help the child?

3. Does it help him in his everyday life?

4. Does going on Sabbath or Sunday help him on Monday?

---

VI. 1. Is there anything special about a church?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

2. What?

3. How is a church different from other places?

---

Picture II -- CHILD PRAYING ALONE

I. 1. How often do you think the boy/girl prays alone?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Every day?                      \_\_\_\_\_ 2. At least every week?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Occasionally?                      \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Hardly ever?



- 
- II. 1. To whom is the boy/girl praying?
2. What does the boy/girl pray about?
3. For himself? What does he pray for himself?
4. For others? What does he pray for others?
5. Does he have any special prayer he prays each time he prays?
- 

- III. 1. Why do you think the boy/girl prays?
- 

- IV. 1. You say the boy/girl is praying to God/Jesus/Spirit?

What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is like?

2. How does he look?
- 

Story I -- MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

- I. 1. Have you heard this story before?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

---

II. It says at the end of the story that Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

1. Why do you think Moses was afraid to look at God?

Any other reasons?

2. Should he have been afraid to look at God?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

Why or why not?

3. Would you have been afraid?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

Why or why not?

III. 1. If Moses had gotten over his fear and looked at God, what type of man do you think he would have seen?

IV. 1. Why do you think the ground that Moses stood on was holy?

2. Is God everywhere?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

Why or why not?

3. Is this ground holy?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

Why or why not?

4. How would you explain the bush burning, and yet not being burnt?

5. How do you think such a thing could happen?

Story II -- CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

I. 1. Have you heard this story before?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

2. Have you seen it in a film or on TV?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

II. 1. Does God love everyone in the world?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

2. Did God love the men in the Egyptian army?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

3. Why? or why not?

4. Why was it that God allowed all the men in the Egyptian army to be drowned?

5. How could He love them and let them drown?

III. 1. Was it fair (right) that all the men in the Egyptian army should be drowned?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

2. Why do you think it fair/unfair?

3. Were all the Egyptians soldiers bad?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

What makes you think so?

4. Were the slaves -- the Israelites good?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

What makes you think so?

5. Can God treat people unfairly (badly)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Dk      \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

What makes you think so?

- IV. 1. Why did God want to save the Israelites?
2. How would you explain the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea?
3. How do you think such a thing could happen?
-

PLEASE NOTE:

This dissertation contains  
color photographs which will  
not reproduce well.

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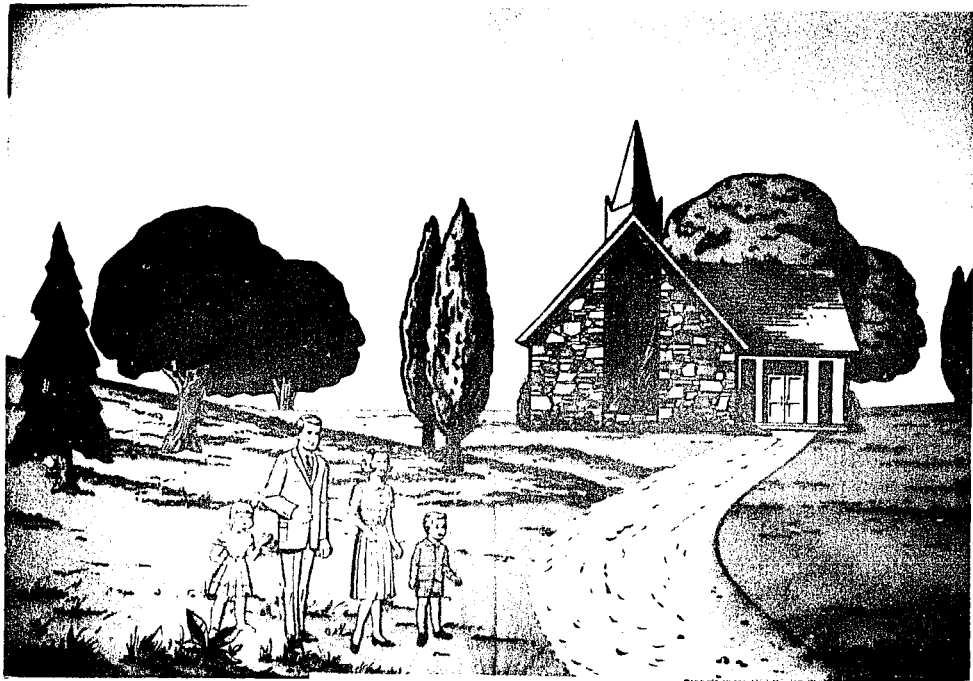


Figure 1

Family Going to Church

(The illustration chosen was based on the child's nationality)

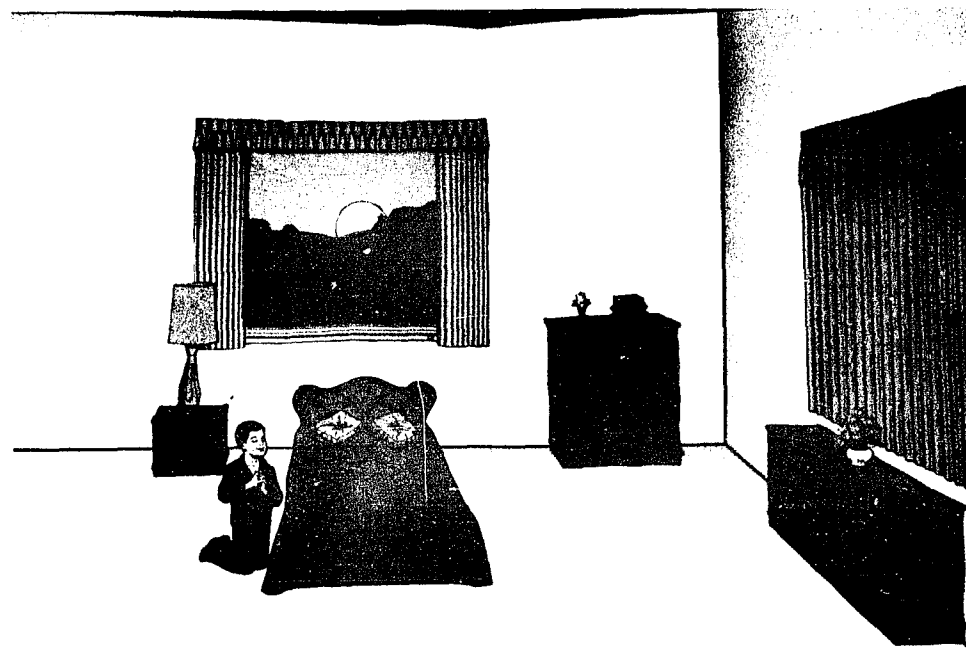
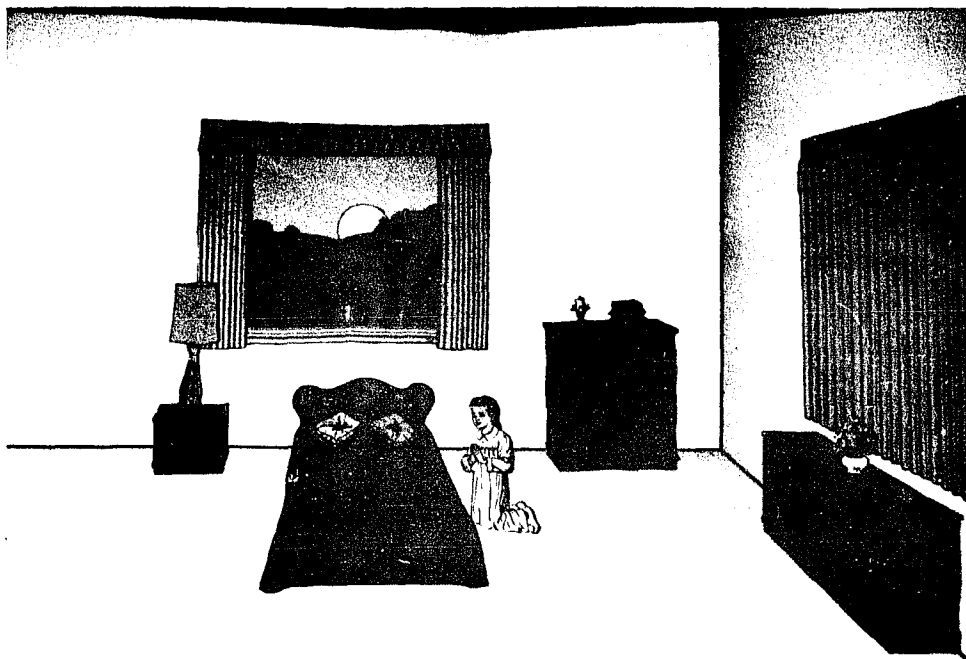


Figure 2

Child Praying Alone

(The illustration chosen was based on the child's nationality)





Figure 2

Child Praying Alone

(The illustration chosen was based on the child's nationality)



Figure 3

Moses and the Burning Bush

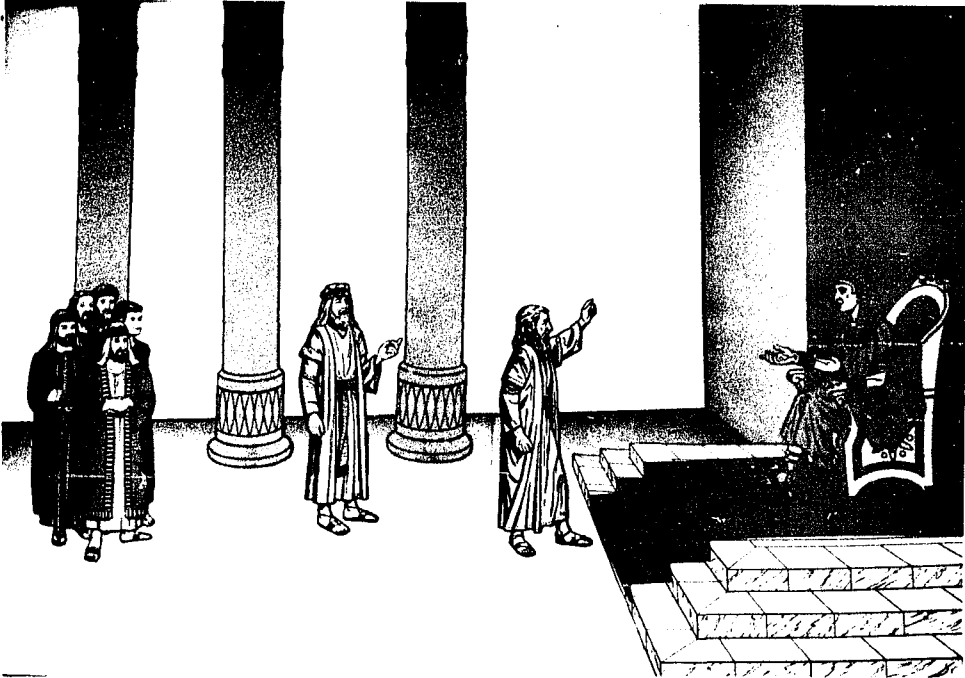


Figure 4

Moses before Pharaoh



Figure 5  
Crossing the Red Sea

## THE STORY TEXTS

(Heard by each pupil on a tape recording)

Story I: Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus iii, 1-6)

A man called Moses was one day looking after a flock of sheep in a rather lonely place, close to a mountain.

Suddenly an angel appeared to Moses in a flame of fire, out of the middle of a bush. The curious thing was that the fire was burning away, but the bush itself wasn't burnt.

Moses said to himself: 'I must go and look at it closer, to see why the bush isn't burned.' Now when God saw Moses come nearer to the bush, God called out from the middle of the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And Moses, not knowing who it was calling, said, 'Here I am.'

And God said: 'Come no closer and take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.' Then God spoke again and said, 'I am your father's God, and the God of great men like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.'

Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Story II: Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus xiv)

Once, long ago, there lived in Egypt a people who were called Israelites, and they were made to work as slaves by the Egyptians. The

Israelites were treated very cruelly, until their leader -- Moses -- persuaded the Egyptian King to let the slaves go free.

Then Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, across the desert for many miles, until at last they camped on the shore of the Red Sea.

Meanwhile the king of Egypt had changed his mind, and was very angry that he had let the slaves go free. So he came after them with his army of six hundred chariots. Now when the Israelites saw the army coming after them they were afraid, but Moses said that God would save them.

Then God told Moses to stretch his hand over the sea. And at that very moment the waters parted, and the Israelites went across the sea on dry land to the other side.

When they were safely across, the Egyptian chariots started to come after them, but God told Moses to stretch his hand over the sea again. And at that moment the waters came together and the entire Egyptian army was drowned. And when the Israelites saw that they were saved, they feared God and believed in Him and in Moses His servant.

## GUIDELINES FOR SCORING TEST

1. Level I -- Scores 1 and 2 form Level I -- Unsystematic and fragmentary thinking which leads to illogical and inconsistent conclusions.

Question: Why do you think the ground was holy?

Answer: Because there was grass on it. (1-2)

Question: Why was Moses afraid to look at God?

Answer: God had a funny face. (1-2)

Question: How do you explain the dividing of the Red Sea?

Answer: The man ran past the blue sea and the white. (1)

2. Level II -- Scores 3 and 4 form Level II -- The scope is limited to concrete situations, visual and sensory data.

Question: Why was Moses afraid to look at God?

Answers: Moses thought God would chase him out of the holy ground because he had not taken off his shoes.

Moses hadn't prayed.

Moses thought the fire was coming nearer.

It was the bright light, and to look at it might blind him.

Question: Why was the ground holy?

Answers: It was where God was standing

It was like a church: you've got to be quiet.

3. Level III -- Abstract thinking without the impediment of concrete elements.

Question: Why was Moses afraid to look at God?

Answers: Moses felt a general sense of sin or unworthiness, which made him hesitant to look at God.

Moses might be frightened because God was great.

Question: Why was the ground holy?

Answer: Everywhere is holy where people believe and worship God.

Question: How do you explain the dividing of the Red Sea?

Answers: All things are possible with God, it is simple for him to do.

God made it happen.

The seas opened and there was a big path.

(Goldman, 1964)



APPENDIX B  
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

## RELIGIOUS PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of child \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Month, Day, Year

Number of children in family \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate the ordinal position of the child by checking one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ Youngest                      \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhere between oldest and youngest  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Oldest                      \_\_\_\_\_ Only

Names of parents:

(Father) \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

(Mother) \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Church attended by family \_\_\_\_\_ Years attended \_\_\_\_\_

Church membership of Father \_\_\_\_\_ No. of years \_\_\_\_\_

Church membership of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ No. of years \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe church responsibilities other than just attending church assumed by family members:

Father \_\_\_\_\_

Mother \_\_\_\_\_

Child \_\_\_\_\_

2. Show church attendance by placing the correct number matching your answer in the blank to the right of Sabbath School or Sunday School, church, or other activities.

4 -- FOUR OR MORE TIMES A MONTH

3 -- THREE TIMES A MONTH

2 -- TWO TIMES A MONTH

1 -- ONCE A MONTH

0 -- LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH

Father: Sabbath School or Sunday School             
(Number)

Mother: Sabbath School or Sunday School             
(Number)

Child: Sabbath School or Sunday School             
(Number)

Father: Church            Other Activities             
(Number) (Number)

Mother: Church            Other Activities             
(Number) (Number)

Child: Church            Other Activities             
(Number) (Number)

3. Please indicate the approximate frequency your child has participated in the following activities by placing the correct number matching your answer in the blank to the left of the statements.

3 -- FIVE TO SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

2 -- THREE TO FOUR DAYS A WEEK

1 -- ONE TO TWO DAYS A WEEK

0 -- LESS THAN ONCE A WEEK

       1. Listens to stories from religious books.

       2. Sings or listens to religious songs.

       3. Listens to or engages in family prayer.

       4. Listens to or engages in saying Grace at the table.

       5. Studies the Sabbath School or Sunday School lesson with parent.

       6. Participates with the family in ministry to someone outside the family circle.

       7. Uses religious books, materials, and pictures.

       8. Listens to religious radio and television programs.

       9. Listens to Bible stories on tape or records.

APPENDIX C  
CORRESPONDENCE INITIATING RESEARCH



*Oakwood College*  
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35806

96

September 12, 1977

Parents of the Whitesburg Baptist Church Kindergarten  
6806 Whitesburg Drive S  
Huntsville, AL 35801

Dear Parents:

I am presently a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and I am also on the faculty of Oakwood College here in Huntsville, Alabama. Research indicates that the child is influenced indirectly by religious aspects from all segments of his environment even if no formal instruction occurs. Therefore, I am undertaking a study of children's religious thinking as it relates to religious practices of the family.

In order to conduct this study, a minimum of sixty children ages, four, five, and six years will be given a twenty-minute oral Religious Thinking Test that will be illustrated by beautiful colorful flannelgraph pictures. Two Bible stories will be played to each child individually on a tape recorder, and then each child will be asked questions concerning his or her ideas about the stories and pictures. Each child's parents will be given a two-page questionnaire to complete which will relate to the religious practices of the family. Names will not be used in the final analyses of the information; the study will mainly focus on the statistical relationship between the family practices and the religious thinking levels of the children generally.

If it is possible for you and your child to participate in the study, please indicate your willingness to cooperate by returning the form enclosed in the envelope to Mrs. Bridges, Director of the Kindergarten. Thank you for your kind consideration.

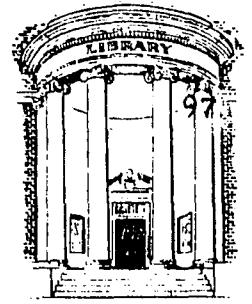
Sincerely yours,

Ruth Faye Davis

rd

Enc.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
AT GREENSBORO  
July 11, 1977



*School of Home Economics*

Parents of the Whitesburg  
Baptist Church Kindergarten  
6808 Whitesburg Drive  
Huntsville, AL 35801

Dear Parents:

I am presently a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and I am also on the faculty of Oakwood College here in Huntsville, Alabama. In order to complete my requirements for the Ph. D. degree, I am undertaking a study of children's religious thinking as it relates to religious practices of the family. Research indicates that even if no formal religious instruction occurs, the child is influenced indirectly by religious aspects from all areas of his environment.

In order to conduct this study, a minimum of sixty children ages four, five, and six will be given a twenty-minute oral Religious Thinking Test that will be illustrated by beautiful colorful flannelgraph pictures. Two Bible stories will be played to each child individually on a tape recorder, and the investigator will ask questions concerning the stories. Each child's parents will be asked to fill out a two-page questionnaire relating the religious practices of the family. Since the purpose of the research is to determine if there is a relationship between the religious thinking levels of the children and the religious practices of their families, no names will be used in the final analyses of the information; the investigator is mainly interested in knowing generally what the group statistical relationship is concerning religious thinking levels and religious family practices.

If it is possible for you and your child to participate in the study, please indicate your willingness to cooperate by returning the form enclosed in the envelope to Mrs. Joyce White or Mr. Johnny Henderson at the Baptist Church Kindergarten. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth Faye Davis  
Doctoral Student

rd

Enc.

Dr. Helen Canaday  
Advisor

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA/27412

PERMISSION FOR MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE  
RELIGIOUS THINKING RESEARCH STUDY

We hereby consent for \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Child)

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the Religious Thinking Levels and Religious  
(Age)

Family Practices Research. We understand that our names will not be  
used in the research study or the final statistical analyses of the data.

Parents names:

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Attended by:

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone Henley (04912) 3701 London calls 01-753 0591

FR/VN

20th July, 1977

Ruth Faye Davis,  
Oakwood College,  
Huntsville,  
Alabama 35806,  
U.S.A.

Dear Ms. Davis,

Thank you for your letter of 11th July regarding your research into religious thinking levels of young children.

We shall be pleased to give you permission to use Dr. Ronald Goldman's Religious test, The Picture and Story Religious Thinking Test in your dissertation provided full acknowledgment is made. If published, however, would you please apply again.

Yours sincerely,

  
Pamela Ridgwell  
Permissions



APPENDIX D

PROFILES OF THE MEAN SCORES ON THE RELIGIOUS  
THINKING TEST AND THE RELIGIOUS  
PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

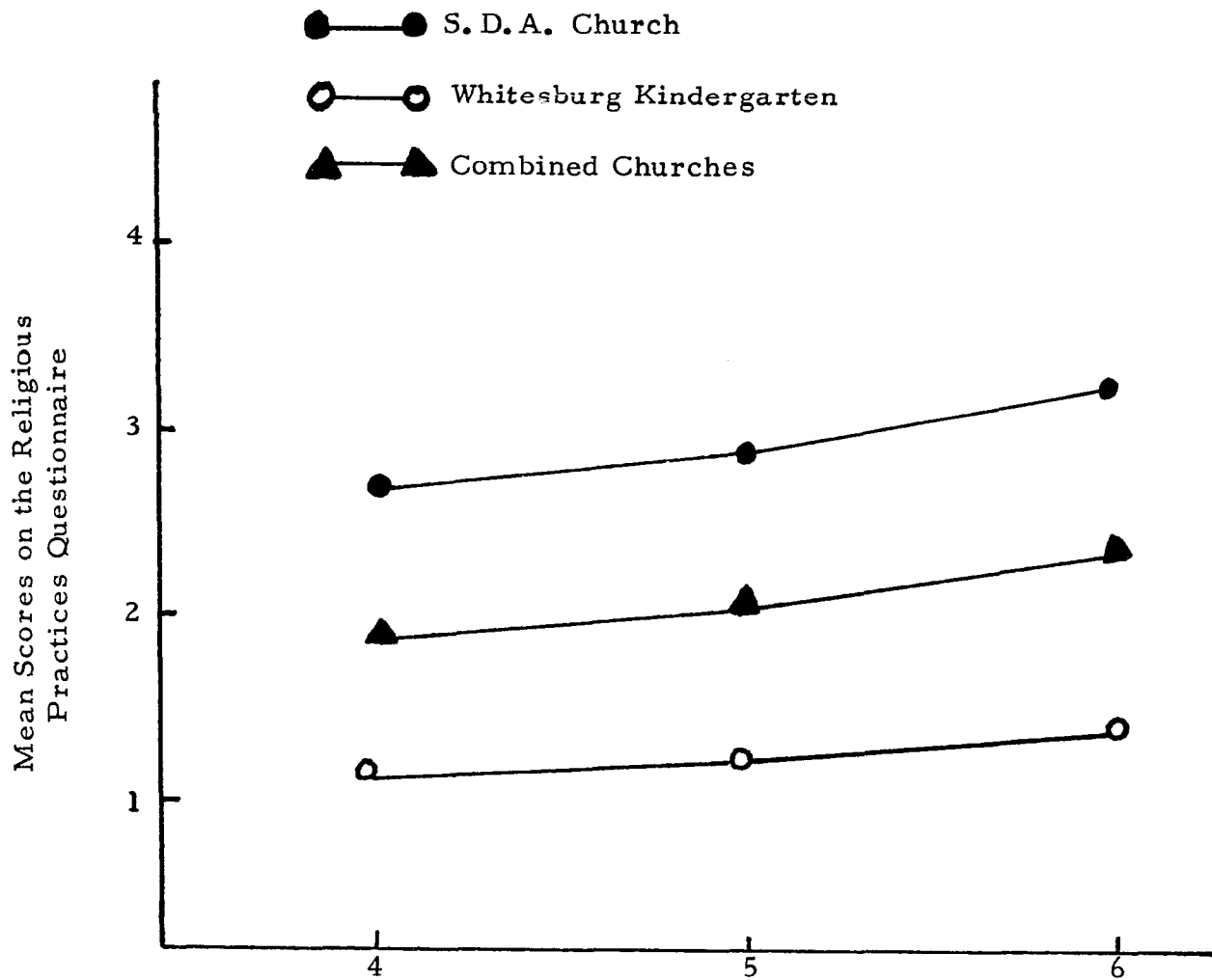


Figure 6. Profiles of the mean scores on the Religious Practices Questionnaire for the parents from the three age groups according to churches.

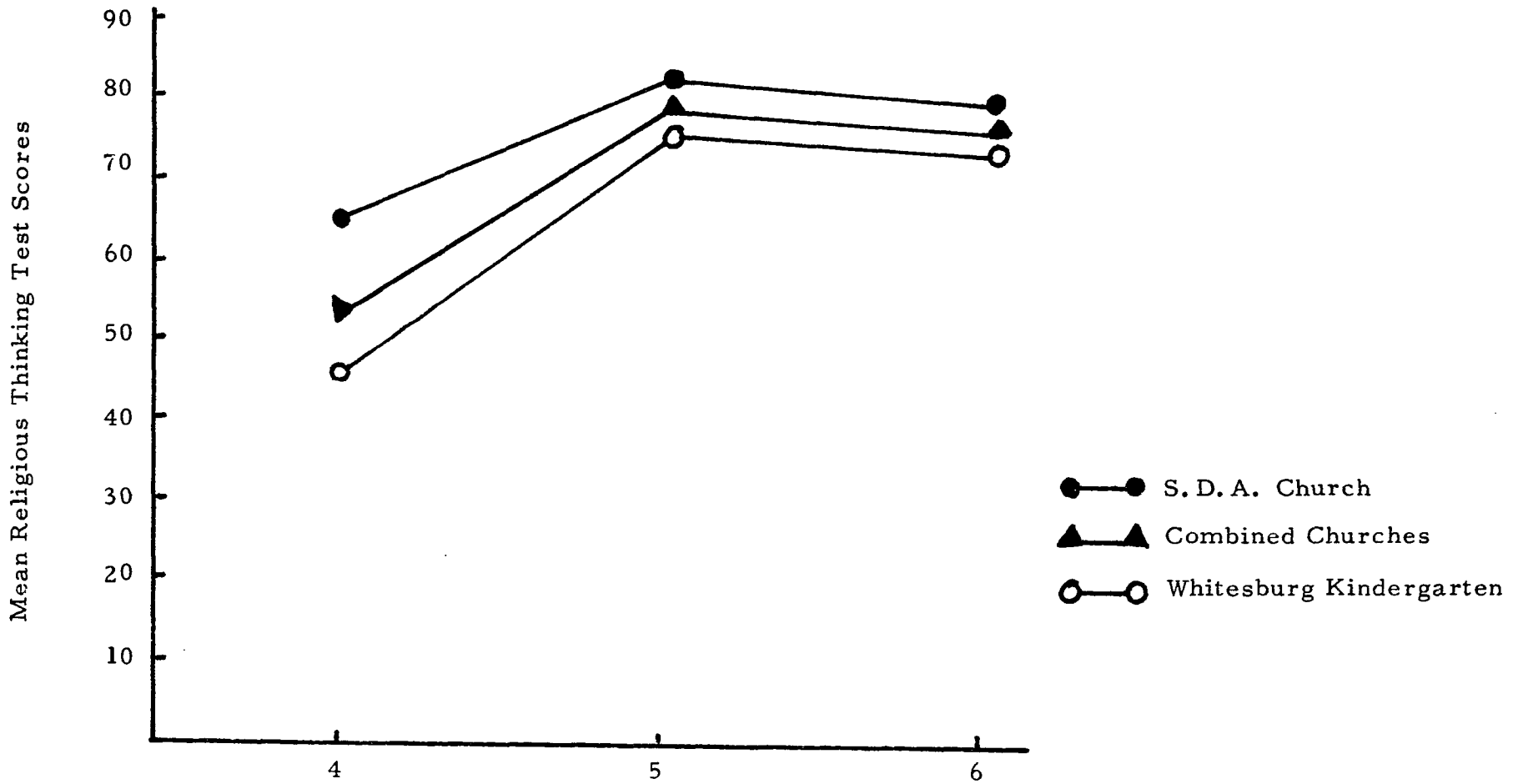


Figure 7. Profiles of the mean scores on the Religious Thinking Test for the three age groups according to churches.

APPENDIX E  
SCORES FROM THE PICTURE AND STORY RELIGIOUS  
THINKING TEST

Table 5  
Scores from the Picture and Story Religious  
Thinking Test

Whitesburg Kindergarten		Seventh-day Adventist Churches	
Four-Year-Olds			
1.	66	1.	65
2.	35	2.	66
3.	47	3.	76
4.	43	4.	84
5.	35	5.	29
6.	65	6.	65
7.	10	7.	54
8.	53	8.	20
9.	52	9.	43
10.	50	10.	123
Five-Year-Olds			
1.	55	1.	63
2.	80	2.	43
3.	61	3.	115
4.	92	4.	100
5.	77	5.	89
6.	77	6.	127
7.	37	7.	91
8.	99	8.	40
9.	73	9.	82
10.	71	10.	64
Six-Year-Olds			
1.	98	1.	123
2.	55	2.	102
3.	59	3.	90
4.	102	4.	39
5.	86	5.	61
6.	32	6.	76
7.	57	7.	101
8.	92	8.	55
9.	84	9.	57
10.	88	10.	89

APPENDIX F

DENOMINATIONAL MEMBERSHIP OF PARENTS FROM THE  
WHITESBURG KINDERGARTEN

Table 6  
 Denominational Membership of Parents from the  
 Whitesburg Kindergarten

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Protestants:		
Methodist	9	
Presbyterian	4	
Church of Christ	3	
Episcopal	5	
Baptist	17	
Mormon	2	
Lutheran	1	
Total Protestants	41	
Catholics	<u>6</u>	
Total Church Members		47
Total Nonmembers		<u>8</u>
Total Population		<u><u>55</u></u>

---