

Children and Holiness

An exploration of holiness experiences and
behaviours in Christian children

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Abstract

An exploration of holiness experiences and behaviours in Christian children

This thesis is an exploration of whether 'holy' is a word that can be used about children who identify as Christian, and if so how that can be described, understood and nurtured. A practical theology research project which sets out to explore the concept of 'holiness' in children as a way of deepening understandings of children's spirituality and faith development.

The intention was to 'hear the voice of the child' and so an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach was taken to primary research with five children aged between seven and eleven. The data from a range of creative interviews with the children was compiled into five definitions of holiness according to the children, and six narrative accounts of the emergent themes which illustrated the different emphases of the children's spirituality, faith development and holiness.

These emergent themes were then examined in the light of understandings of holiness in adults that reflected a range of theological perspectives. It was concluded that children can and do have 'holiness experiences' and engage in 'holiness behaviours' but that this is not necessarily recognized or nurtured by the church.

Implications for the Academy and recommendations for the church were therefore made that can be summarised under three headings:

- A change in the theology and attitude of the faith community to the holiness of children, that starts with an examination of the faith community's attitude to, and experience of holiness, and an appreciation of what it looks like in children and how this can be nurtured.
- A comprehensive consideration of catechesis including understanding the importance of story and digital media engagement and using an adaptation of Egan's framework for learning.
- An intentional encouragement of actively engaged discipleship in children, which harnesses the energy of their passionate appreciation of the Creator God and facilitates and is facilitated by relationship with all three persons of the Trinity.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Dedication and Acknowledgement

It has been an utter joy and privilege to listen to the voices of the five children who took part in this research, and my thanks go to them for their openness and honesty. I hope I have done you justice. I also wish to thank their parents as they made the time for the children to take part.

My family have been an ongoing source of encouragement throughout the years of this study, and my particular thanks go to my husband, Mum and Dad, for being prepared to listen to my verbal processing and proofreading the written outcomes.

I have had a number of supervisors throughout this project, but Steve Emery-Wright has been with me for the whole journey, and I thank him for his patience, enthusiasm and insights.

I dedicate this work to all the volunteers and paid workers who serve children in their churches and communities. It is the most important job in the kingdom, and I hope that the insights from this work will help make what you do even better

1. Introduction

Over the last twenty years, there has been a growing concern that children have been marginalised in theological consideration.¹ For instance, at a 'Society of Christian Ethics' conference in 2000, Cristina Traina's observation of recent and distant Christian history was that the moral agency of children is often just an afterthought, 'a topic introduced to complete a theological system', that must be 'forced into a script written for a universal history of salvation, usually with adults in mind'. She wonders, as I do, what theological insights we might have if 'reflection on sin, salvation, and moral agency began rather than ended with childhood' (Traina, 2000).²

The purpose of this research project, therefore, is to put children's moral agency in the foreground and explore the concept of 'holiness' in children. It seeks to identify if 'holy' is a word that can be used about children who 'self-describe' as Christian, and if so why, and it looks for ways of describing that holiness and its changes from the perspective of both the child and the academy, whilst simultaneously respecting the nature of childhood and appreciating the impact of twenty-first century Western society on that childhood. Miller McLemore states that children are not only able to evoke and appreciate mystery, miracle and magic, they are also able to see the extraordinary in the ordinary and vice versa (2006, pp. 391, 401-402). It is therefore the intention to explore children's ability to comprehend and participate in the Christian faith, act as moral agents, and express and engage with their spirituality.

Writers like Fowler (1981; 1995; 1996) and Westerhoff (2000; 2012) were both key contributors to the understanding that faith changes shape and style as individuals grow and mature from infancy to adulthood. One of the motivations for this research project is the sense that more culturally relevant ways of exploring and describing that process are needed, based on research into human psychology and neuroscience. There is now an abundance of information available about what it means to be a child, how children understand the world and how they relate to it. Much of the secular research into children's cognitive processes and spirituality informs an understanding of the faith of a child, and the practice of evangelism

¹ For instance, Mercer suggests that children often get 'lost in the system' and although present, are 'relatively small areas of concern within the entire and vast universe of theological thought' (2005, p. 6).

² cited in Miller-McLemore (2006, p. 392).

and discipleship in the Christian faith, as does our knowledge of 'faithing'³ in adolescents and adults in different cultures around the world.

To provide a framework for an empirical research methodology on children's holiness, the following areas have therefore been considered:

- the latest thinking on children's spirituality and faith development
- the debate concerning the word 'development' when discussing children's spirituality and faith
- A critique of key faith development models
- An exploration of what 'holiness' is, as described in historical and contemporary literature
- The current cultural context for children, and what impact this may or may not be having on their spirituality, faith development and holiness
- Studies of cognitive and emotional development in children and young people, and the impact technology is having on this, and the implications for holiness

There is substantive literature on the sociology of children that regards children as 'active agents who construct their own cultures' and childhood as a 'structural form or part of society' (Corsaro, 2005, p. 4) whilst recognising that children's perspectives differ from adults (Corsaro, 2005a). Since the intention is to 'hear the voice of the child', primary research with children therefore forms the foundation of this work, with secondary research providing resources for insight and comparison.

This introduction will give an overview of this thesis and present the rationale for choosing holiness in children as a subject for research. Section 1.1 introduces the perceived tension between understandings of spirituality and faith development in children, and Section 1.2 commences the discussion about why holiness might be a helpful perspective. Section 1.3 explores why Practical Theology is an appropriate framework for this work, and 1.4 explains the presentation of the thesis in this paper.

³ This term is being used as 'Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process than as a possession' (Buechner, 1973, p. 25).

1.1. Children's Spirituality versus Faith Development models

In 1981, James Fowler published his seminal work *Stages of Faith*. His model, based essentially on a Piagetian paradigm of development (Moseley, 1991), is still considered an informative contribution to the understanding of how faith grows and changes in humans, but his model has been increasingly critiqued in the light of our developing comprehension of children's spirituality.⁴ Since the publication of books like *Spirit of the Child* (Hay & Nye, 1998), children's spirituality⁵ has become a subject for academic investigation. There is now agreement that children's spirituality exists and that it is important to their well-being and development,⁶ although definitions and understandings cover a range of theoretical and theological perspectives. Ratcliff and May assert that 'Children are just as much spiritual beings as are the adults in their lives' (2004, p. 7). They go on to suggest that much of our understanding of children's spirituality is based on the concept of 'relational consciousness'. This is a phrase devised by Hay and Nye (1998, pp. 112-137) to draw together three categories of children's spiritual experience: Awareness sensing, Mystery sensing and Value Sensing.⁷

There is still, however, some tension surrounding the subject of children's spirituality and faith development. At a consultation in 2012 for an 'online children's Bible engagement project',⁸ there was some rigorous discussion about the word 'development'. Scholars and practitioners present, advocating children's spirituality, argued strongly that this word, and its associated expectations of measurement and success, could not be used when talking about something as 'ethereal' and 'fragile' as children's spirituality. On the other hand, those involved in the discipleship of children, or the creation of 'product' to serve that discipleship, were concerned that without some sort of goal or expected outcome there was no way of seeing whether the needs of the children as Christian disciples, of the present and future, are being met. For some, looking at the subject from a Conservative Evangelical perspective, there is a concern that by

⁴ For instance, Nye's keynote presentation at the *Children's Spirituality Conference*, Winchester, 2002, described developmental models as too linear, and urged us to consider more 'feminine' metaphors to describe faith development like 'journey' and 'conversation'.

⁵ Understood to incorporate 'a whole spectrum of activities, experiences and encounters that enable us to make connections and relationships, feel awe and wonder, identify meaning and purpose and get a sense of 'other', as well as connect with God (Edwards, 2011, p. 22).

⁶ For instance, a school's ability to facilitate spiritual development has been assessed by OFSTED since 1994.

⁷ Hay and Nye (1998) base much of their description of 'Awareness sensing' on the work of psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1975) (1990) and his work on flow. Mystery sensing is constructed around the work of Rahner (1984) and Otto (1958). The term 'value-sensing' was initially used by Donaldson (1992).

⁸ Project Cube, an online Bible engagement project by Scripture Union and The American Bible Society which led to the development of the *Guardians of Ancora* gaming platform.

concentrating on spirituality and not faith, we are being too 'broad and floppy' and not actually ensuring that children are 'convicted of their sin', converted and disciplined effectively.⁹

Spirituality is a human capacity that needs protecting and enhancing for the well-being of the child and successful maturation into adulthood (Nye, 2011). For Christians the belief is that this spirituality reaches its pinnacle in relationship with Christ. Schneiders, taking both Roman Catholic and Protestant perspectives, defines Christian spirituality as 'a self-transcending faith in which union with God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit expresses itself in service of the neighbour and participation in the realization of the reign of God in this world' (2002, p. 133). In her article 'Biblical Spirituality', she goes on to assert the importance of a consensual understanding and development of faith, based on an integration of experience and knowledge, ultimate horizons and practical patterns.

For the purposes of this research project faith is considered to have three components: affective, cognitive and volitional (or practical).¹⁰ There is a growing concern amongst those researching and working in the area of children's and youth ministry that too often children have been 'educated' in the Christian faith, rather than disciplined. Findings of the Fuller Youth Institute (Powell & Clark, 2011)¹¹ suggest that if faith is only taught and not caught, when the child is removed from the faith community for positive as well as negative reasons, they do not take their faith with them.

In addition, in a materialistic, consumer culture¹² 'faith' may be considered to be yet another commodity. In a context where 'faith' is seen as something that is owned or requires return on investment, the word 'development' might take on negative connotations and lose its value as a way of describing something that is organic and involves the wonder of what Christians understand to be a relationship with the Almighty Creator. May, however, argues that the last twenty years has seen a change in attitudes to children's spiritual formation towards a more process-centred model (2020, p. 25) which might mitigate this.

Very little is said in the Bible of Jesus as a child, but Luke 2:52 states that 'Jesus grew in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor' (NRSV). This statement is made between Luke's description of the incident at the Temple, where all who heard what the adolescent Jesus had to say were 'amazed at his understanding and his answers' (2:47), and his baptism

⁹ Phrases used in a review of *'Slugs and Snails'* (Edwards, 2011) by Benton in *'Evangelicals Now'*, September 2011.

¹⁰ The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy suggests that these are the components that are variously recognised and emphasised in different models of faith, depending on the preferred meta-theory of value. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/faith/> accessed 26/9/20.

¹¹ The writer is aware that the methodology of the Fuller Youth Institute has been critiqued but the issues raised appear to reflect concerns voiced by the Diocesan Children and Youth Advisers Network that I am part of.

¹² See Section 2.2.4, p.39, for an exploration of what impact materialism is having on children.

at what is considered to be the start of his adult ministry (3:21-22). The wording is like that of 1 Samuel 2:21 and 26, where Samuel is also described as growing 'in the presence of God', 'in stature' and 'in favour with the Lord and with people' (NRSV). Bock argues that the mention of God and humans is important in demonstrating that this growth was perceived by all, with particular reference to his insight and wisdom demonstrated at the Temple (1994, p. 274). Whilst Nolland suggests that this very natural description by Luke might be taken to challenge the conviction that Jesus was always without flaw, he does also contend that Luke was emphasising that even in 'perfect form' human maturation involves growth and development in capacity (1989, p. 133). So, when alluding to the changing nature of faith, perhaps it is the understanding of the word 'development' that is flawed, based as it often is on a Piagetian paradigm used widely to assess child development within the educational setting. Indeed, Heywood (2008) proposes a fundamental reappraisal of Fowler's theory, arguing that the structural model of human development does not respond appropriately to the challenge of post-modern thought.

As an adult Christian who was a child of faith and as a practitioner and academic in the field of children's and youth ministry for over thirty years, this debate has been both helpful and unhelpful. Through the desire to maintain a position that honours the integrity of those who emphasise spirituality and openness, and those who emphasise conversion and discipleship, it has become apparent that the notion of holiness as an overarching construct may be a way of holding both perspectives in tension. The examination of what this looks like in children could therefore be a means of identifying factors that can be witnessed, encouraged and facilitated as a child grows in faith in and relationship with God. In addition, if Jesus' comment that we are to become like a child (Matthew 18:3) is to be taken seriously then a close scrutiny of what holiness in children is like may give helpful insights to those seeking to become more holy themselves, as well as inspiring and nurturing this holiness in children as they grow and develop.

1.2. Holiness as a possible framework for understanding children's spiritual life and faith

In 2007, the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project recorded that 'the essence of holiness is that God is holy and calls us to be a holy people' (Mannoia & Thorsen, 2008, p. 19). Those involved

in the study¹³ go on to suggest that the challenge of being holy is reflecting Jesus Christ in a way that transcends social location and diversity but is relevant and contextual (Mannoia & Thorsen, 2008, pp. 22-25). Whilst their report talks about 'people' and 'community', it does not specifically refer to children or youth. This oversight is reflected in other writings, for instance in the in nine issues of the *Methodist Journal Holiness*, published between January 2015 and the latest Volume 5 Issue 1 published January 2019, not one mention is made of children as people of faith. Indeed, where children are mentioned it is only in relation to their adults or in tones that appear derisory e.g. 'we cannot allow the Church to settle for Sunday school understandings of the Lord (or allow preachers to get away with children's addresses for sermons)' (Greggs, 2015).¹⁴

In the Old Testament children were part of the community that God called to be a holy people¹⁵ and the instructions to the community of faith to pass it on to the children and young people were clearly laid out in Deuteronomy 6. It can therefore be assumed that because holiness is not limited to social location or context, children and young people are included in the continuing call to the church to be a holy people.

If Wesley is correct and 'Nothing is more sure than that without holiness no man [sic] shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)' (1988, p. 26) then it appears to be of paramount importance that what holiness can and perhaps should look like in children is understood. Throughout the Gospels there is evidence of a positive attitude to children¹⁶ and early Celtic Christian communities reflected in their practice the children's 'personal worth, acceptance of self and connectedness to the family unit' (Crabtree M. , 2008, p. 90). The absence of children in many congregations across the country¹⁷ indicates that a positive attitude to children and their families might have been forgotten by the Church. Berryman argues that we 'greatly underestimate children's experience of God and the kind of theological thought they are capable of' (2009, p. 5) and argues instead that 'children know God in their nonspecific way and they need to be respected for that' (2009, p. 7).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore children's experiences, understandings and perceptions of holiness and the impact it has on their relationship with God, what various

¹³ Church of the Nazarene, Free Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, Church of God - Anderson, Shield of Faith, Brethren in Christ, Evangelical Friends, Church of God in Christ, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Christian and Missionary Alliance, International Pentecostal Holiness.

¹⁴ Whilst this comment is predominantly about the poor quality of children's addresses, it does suggest that this is ok for children, but not ok for adults.

¹⁵ This inclusion that often goes unmentioned is recognised in Bunge's work *The Child in Christian Thought* (2001) and *The Child in the Bible* (2008).

¹⁶ See for instance Matthew 18:5-7 & 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16.

¹⁷ Scripture Union suggest that the Church – covering all denominations - is only in touch with 5% of the children and young people in this country (<https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/95-campaign>) accessed 26/10/2020.

writers believe 'holiness' is, and to see how they compare. We know that God calls children in to relationship, and uses them as an example of how one should enter the kingdom.¹⁸ There are also numerous demonstrations of God's call to obedience and service to children and young people.¹⁹ Crozier argues that Jesus therefore elevated children to a status not common previously, and asserted their place in his kingdom despite their lowly social standing (2008, p. 349). This thesis therefore explores questions about when children are accountable for their obedience, or lack of it, and are responsible for their own faith, or lack of it. These questions that are complicated by Jesus' own insistence that as adults we need to become as children to enter the kingdom of God.²⁰

1.3. Practical Theology as a framework for this research

This research project is an exercise in practical theology regarding children's faith. According to Mercer and Miller-McLemore,²¹ practical theology 'happens in everyday life among the faithful' (2016, p. 1). Yet, at the same time, or perhaps because of this, practical theology is also 'articulating the novel' (Beaudoin, 2016, p. 15). This thesis seeks to explore what holiness looks like in the everyday lives of children; therefore the primary theological framework is going to be practical theology. In addition, using the work of Michel de Certeau (1984), Mercer argues that practical theology involves the 'strategies and tactics of transformation' (2005, p. 12). The intention is therefore that this project becomes a resource for the church in the UK to think through not only its attitude towards children and their lived faith, but also their methods for nurturing this faith.

Practical theology does not however come without its subtexts and nuances. Indeed, in *Conundrums in Practical Theology* (Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016) there is a wide-ranging recognition of the challenges²² of working within a field that has such a varied range of source materials and ideologies, and which relies very heavily on the reported thoughts and feelings of its subjects. These writers do not see these conundrums as totally negative though, arguing that, although they often create an 'intractable morass of personal, professional and vocational problems' (Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016, p. 2), they also offer opportunities for

¹⁸ Matthew 18:3-4, Mark 10:14-15.

¹⁹ See Josiah - 2 Kings 22, Samuel - 1 Samuel 3, Naaman's servant - 2 Kings 5.

²⁰ Matthew 18:3-4, Mark 10:14-15.

²¹ Both considered leading thinkers in the areas of children's theology and ministry.

²² Kaufman suggests that practical theology researchers are criticised by systematic theologians for not including enough normative assumptions or being 'sufficiently theological', and by social scientists for being 'too normative' (2016, p. 134). Graham highlights the tension between deductive and inductive methods as being the key controversy (2017, p. 174).

creativity and growth (Wolfeich, 2016, pp. 278-279). In addition, conundrums found in practical theology refuse easy answers and throw a spotlight on 'deeply felt and lived quagmires, reflecting social inequalities and political injustices that reverberate across academia and the marginalized publics to whom we hold ourselves accountable' (Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016, p. 3). It is my sense, corroborated by Trainee's statement cited earlier, that children have been a 'marginalized public' in theological discourse for a long time. Practical theology, despite its potentially 'conflictual position with scholars' (Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016, p. 3), is therefore the best stable for this work.

Kaufman provides a helpful grid of practical theological positions whereby well-known practical theology proponents are placed on a matrix provided by crossing the continuum of theological tradition and divine action, to human experience, on the y axis; with the continuum of 'correlation' to 'interwoven'²³, on the x axis (2016, p. 139). This work is situated close to the crossover but in the 'practice-oriented approach' quadrant. This is not just because of the paucity of theological writing regarding children's faith and spirituality, and the ambiguity of church tradition,²⁴ but also because the 'phenomenological' nature of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis research methodology used means that great attention will be paid to the children's experience. The 'interpretative' element does however mean that there is an intention to understand the experience of the children in the light of specified theologies of holiness although it is accepted that there will inevitably be dialogue with the author's own religious convictions.²⁵

Whilst Practical Theology is dextrous at heeding voices from a number of academic disciplines,²⁶ it starts with 'practice' and assumes that this has theological significance (Beaudoin, 2016, p. 9). In this research project, Stoddart's definition of practice as the 'embodied expression of particular kinds of knowledge' (2014, p. 3) is used, alongside Beaudoin's understanding that 'practice' represents a 'complex matrix of overlapping concepts used in the field: practice, praxis, action, performance, experience' (2016, p. 9). This is in order not to obviate insights from the children about their lived experience of the Christian faith. The academic debate that critiques the assumptions of practical theologians that practice 'signifies'²⁷ as divine material is brought into sharp focus in this work, because much of the language of the children interviewed does not technically sound theological even when

²³ 'Correlation' being where empirical data and the normative theological tradition bear some correlation but remain separate identities. 'Interwoven' being where 'normative dimensions are inherent in the entire practical theological process or enterprise' Kaufman (2016, p. 139).

²⁴ Mercer suggests that the church sends 'double messages' to children that 'seem to welcome them, but only if they do not act like the children they are' (2005, p. 2).

²⁵ Couture states that practical theology as the more formalized version of 'practical knowing' will 'bring social science, cultural traditions and religious convictions into dialogue with one another' (1991, p. 23).

²⁶ See for instance: Ballard & Pritchard (1996), Graham (2002), Forrester (2000).

²⁷ that it 'bears/carries or indicates/points to some essential relation to theos' Beaudoin (2016, p. 9).

they are directly talking of God, and God's interaction with their lives. This means an interpretivist epistemology is prevalent whereby much of the dialogue reveals, in the view of the researcher, deep and rich theological insights.

The rigorous research methodology and data analysis seeks to minimise accusations of valorisation. The use of narrative accounts means that the work is more idiographic than nomothetic, and it sits on the dividing line between etic and emic approaches because although the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology means that the lived experience of the researched (the child) is 'interpreted' by the outsider (the researcher) there is a subjective element to it. The 'Insider/Outsider' debate is discussed in more detail in Section 4.4.1. (p.70).

Beaudoin's discussion of the principles of 'predication'²⁸ and 'affordance'²⁹ within practical theology is helpful in that it accepts that in order to 'see' holiness in children you have to believe that it might be present; and that there is a 'range of affective spaces' whereby holiness may be experienced, understood and articulated by those children (2016, pp. 15-17). Interpretivism has by its very nature a biased axiology, and this is why this thesis includes a reflexive discussion³⁰ on the author's own remembered experience and adult understanding of being a child of faith.

Practical theologians are not the only theologians that view themselves on the outside speaking towards the centre. Feminist, black and liberation Theology all started from this perspective and child theology³¹ has yet to be taken seriously in many mainstream theological institutions. Mercer chose to use a feminist theology to help her development of a theology of childhood because of its critical principles of liberation and well-being (2005, p. 5). In *Welcoming Children*, she uses this lens to reflect on the 'Children in Congregations Project', amongst other sources, to create a practical theology of childhood. She argues that a feminist practical theology of childhood is 'based on the conviction that in Christ, God already is at work on behalf of children to bring about transformation toward the reign of God' (p. 10).

Black theologians like Reddie have also provided a helpful perspective. Not only because Reddie's (2003; 2011) research includes children and education, but also, writing from a

²⁸ 'the fiction of predication is crucial for the curation of action, which is ingredient to practical theology's self-understanding' Beaudoin (2016, p. 16).

²⁹ Beaudoin borrows the term 'affordance' from music criticism and suggests that it 'implies that encounter with music is fundamentally a matter of feelingly imaginative landscapes' (2016, p. 17).

³⁰ Dreyer's discussion on the conundrum of reflexivity was particularly helpful in understanding the complexities of reflexivity and giving the writer permission not to have them all sorted, in that a researcher's reflexive endeavours will inevitably reflect their experiences and ideologies (2016, p. 107).

³¹ see <http://www.childtheology.org/>

Black³² theology perspective, he suggests the people on the edge and the oppressed need to be heard to improve our theological understanding. Without wishing to diminish the reality of the terrible injustice and suffering of slavery or suggest that the children who took part in this research project are oppressed, Reddie's perspective provides many helpful insights.

In her work on the *Faith of Girls* Phillips suggests that children, and particularly girls are not afforded the respect, dignity and protection which is their right to expect under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011, p. 4). I concur with her citing of Jensen (2005), Moltmann (2004) and Rahner³³ (1984) as theologians who have done something to address this exclusion but suggest that children can still be considered a people on the edge, whose theological understanding is often despised, yet which may be used by God.

A key theological influence is the ongoing work of the holiness movement described in *The Holiness Manifesto* (Mannoia & Thorsen, 2008). My own descriptions of spirituality (Edwards, 2011, p. 20) corresponds with Wesley's understanding of the key elements of holiness and this therefore provides a natural symbiosis for the research base, along with the correlation of the principles of practical theology with what has been described as the Methodist Quadrilateral of revelation, tradition, reason and experience.³⁴

Given that the 'practice' source is children, who were born in the 21st Century it is also necessary to refer to post-modern theologians. Snyder's work on holiness (2001; 2007; 2008; Biblical Metaphors for Holiness, 2015) is a significant dialogue partner in addition to his work on sin and grace in *Salvation Means Creation Healed* (Snyder & Scandrett, 2011). Whilst this is not a thesis on ethics, two particular works of the prolific Stanley Hauerwas have also been useful as resource texts. *Character and the Christian Life* (the revised edition) and *The Peaceable Kingdom* are both works that reflect his understanding that 'there is no more fundamental way to talk of God than in a story' (Hauerwas, 1983, p. 25) and that meaning and truth require coherency that is delivered by narrative communicated effectively through community. In addition, he stresses that Christian convictions are 'by nature meant to form and illumine lives' (1984, p. xvii) and challenges theology that does not have an impact on how Christians live their lives (1984, p. xx).

One of the dilemmas of practical theology is how much weighting to give to different sources of information in the conversations (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996, p. 123). The process within this project has been cyclical (as per a classic practical theology model). Firstly, some work was

³² The term "Black" 'represents God's symbolic and actual solidarity with oppressed people, the majority of whom have been consigned to the marginal social spaces solely on the grounds of their blackness' Cone (1986) cited in Reddie (2011, p. 171).

³³ Mercer argues he was instrumental in bringing a positive understanding of children to the Roman Catholic Church (2005, p. 25).

³⁴ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/what-is-distinctive-about-methodism/the-methodist-quadrilateral/> accessed 24/10/20.

done around the theme of holiness, gathering definitions and starting to explore the overlaps. This work was then left to one side whilst the voices of the children were listened to. The next step was to compare the two and see what insights and challenges they raise for each other.

1.4. Outline of thesis

This research project seeks to listen to the voices of children to discover if holiness is a helpful concept for understanding and nurturing their spirituality and faith development. The intention is to discover if holiness is an appropriate means of describing the experiences and behaviours of children of faith, and what their own descriptions of that holiness might be.

Following the illustration of the tension between proponents of children's spirituality and proponents of a more conversional model of faith development above, Chapter Two introduces the literature already written on these subjects. Whilst there will be some critique of prevalent faith development models, this is not detailed as the purpose of this dissertation is instead to explore the space between these models and understandings of spirituality. In addition, Chapter Two outlines some elements of the cultural context in which the children in this research project find themselves, in order to ascertain impacts they might have on the spirituality and faith of those children.

Whilst this is not a paper about Christian ethics, Black or Wesleyan Theology, it has already been recognised that a practical theology exercise of this nature benefits from an eclectic mix of voices from the margins. Chapter Three therefore identifies these voices and provides the rationale for the range of theological resources used in this project. It then goes on to explore theories and definitions of holiness from a range of theological perspectives to reveal what we might be looking for in a child of faith.

Chapter Four presents a justification of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach to the research methodology followed by details of the research design and its effectiveness. As an adult of faith, who was a child of faith, the importance of reflexivity is also recognised and addressed in this chapter. Research with children has its own challenges, and so there is much to be said on why particular tools were used. The voices of five children are heard in this project, three boys and two girls. Whilst their gender may have some impact on their enculturated worldview, an examination of the issues of gender was considered outside the remit of this work. Previous research that I have undertaken has shown that it is not the natural style or shape of children's spirituality that is gender biased but the methods used by the church (Edwards, 2011). The intention of this thesis is not to ignore Mercer's underpinning framework for 'Welcoming Children', that sees gender norms and practices as socially and historically constructed around power (2005, p. 20), or to emphasise it. Instead the reliance

will be on the integrity of the idiographic methodology, illustrated in the construction of six narrative accounts in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five gives an overview of the findings from the data and constructs five definitions of holiness according to the children in this research project. The emergent themes from this data are then explored in more detail as narrative accounts of 'the holy child as...' in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven uses the perspectives of the essential elements of faith laid out in Chapter Three - intellect, emotion and will - to evaluate the narrative accounts in more detail. Attention is paid in this chapter to both theological and theoretical resources that give insights into what may or may not be happening in the children. Chapter Eight takes the dimensions of holiness outlined by the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (2007) and explores their contrasting realities in the light of the children's data. In response, Chapter Nine asks 'So what?' in terms of the impact of the findings on mission and ministry to and with children, and highlights implications for the Academy and the church, before the thesis is concluded in Chapter Ten.

1.5. Conclusion

Holiness has been identified as a possible way of holding the tension between understandings of children's spirituality and faith development. The purpose of this project is to explore whether there is evidence of holiness in children, and if so, identify ways that it is manifested and can be described. The next chapter considers the literature that already exists on children's spirituality, faith development and ministry, and the cultural context of the children involved in this research.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

Having established in Chapter One the research question for this project, this chapter provides a context for that research, starting with the development of writing about children's faith and spirituality (Section 2.1), and ending with potential impacts that the phenomena of consumerism and digital engagement can have on the faith and spirituality of children living in the UK in the twenty first century. Section 2.2 explores the current UK cultural context of the children in this research project and outlines some of the key elements of culture, which writers consider may have a positive and negative impact on childhood.

2.1. Development of writing on children's faith and spirituality

Whilst the area of children's spirituality and faith development is considered to have been largely ignored by the church and theologians,³⁵ there has nevertheless been an increasing number of books written on the subject in the last fifty years. This expansion echoes the growth of academic interest in the sociology of childhood and debates about the 'crisis of modern childhood' (Mayall, 2002, pp. 2-3). During the 1980s and 1990s many of the books published in the UK on children's faith and spirituality were written from an evangelical perspective³⁶ and had a practical 'how to' focus, although many contained accessible theology about the place of the child in the kingdom³⁷ and some were written for more academic and social science audiences.³⁸

The Church of England also published several reports in an attempt to make clergy and church members take the issue of children in their congregations seriously.³⁹ Perhaps it is an indication of the rate of change within the church, and the previous lack of priority given to this agenda that the understandings and imperatives that were raised in these publications have only now been brought together and updated in the 'Growing Faith' agenda approved by General Synod in 2019. A development that has taken nearly thirty years.

Since the publication of *Spirit of the Child* (Hay & Nye, 1998) more interest in children's spirituality in its widest sense has been shown with the publication of secular books like *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* (Hart, 2003) and Nye's more detailed account in *Children's*

³⁵ Although in his overview of *Children and the Theologians* (2009) Berryman points to perspectives on children and childhood from a wide range of theologians and Bunge provides similar evidence in *The Child in Christian Thought* (2001), Jensen argues that 'children have rarely captured the sustained attention of Christian theologians' (2005, p. 1) - the emphasis being 'sustained'.

³⁶ See for instance Inchley (1986), Butler, (1992) Cray (1995) and Frank (2002).

³⁷ See for instance Copsey (1994) and Cray (1995).

³⁸ See for instance Coles (1991).

³⁹ *All God's Children*, 1991; *Unfinished Business*, 1991; *How Faith Grows*, 1994; *On the Way*, 1995.

Spirituality: What it is and Why it matters (2011). This book summarises the development of her thinking and practice in this area since then, and is now widely used in children's ministry training. In addition, since 2000 there has been development in thinking regarding the theology of the Child - which is 'committed to reform all theological reflection and enquiry 'with a child in the midst'⁴⁰ - and Theologies of Childhood. For instance, Jensen (2005) explores how vulnerability is a dimension of the Imago Dei and argues that childhood provides a perspective for developing an understanding of grace.

Over the last twenty years, a greater range of accessible books has been written from a wider doctrinal base that explore both a theology of childhood and practical ideas for engaging with children and nurturing their faith.⁴¹ Csinos (2011; 2019; Beckwith & Csinos, 2013) is considered a leading thinker in the field,⁴² particularly because of his founding of the 'Faith Forward' conference in the States.⁴³ A significant development in the field of children's ministry has been the work of Berryman.⁴⁴ Not only because of his creation of materials for Godly Play and founding of the Godly Play foundation, but also in the publication of books that expand on the understandings of Calvaletti and Montessori, which changed the way that many people think about the nurture of children's faith and spirituality. A notable recent edition to the field is Pridmore's (2017) work *Playing with Icons* in which he explores published autobiographies of childhood for evidence of children's spirituality, and suggests that it has been present, just unnoticed, for many centuries.

Other writers from America have also made a significant contribution in developing deeper and, wider thinking about the theology of childhood, including Beckwith (2004; 2010), Catterton Allen (2008);⁴⁵ Stonehouse (1998; Stonehouse, May, & Posterski, 2005; Stonehouse & May, 2010); May (2006; Stonehouse, May, & Posterski, 2005; Stonehouse & May, 2010; Anthony, 2006); Miller-McLemore (2003; Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016); and Mercer (2005; 2008; Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016) and Ratcliff (2004).⁴⁶ Both Mercer and Miller-McLemore have written widely about practical theology and Mercer's book *Welcoming Children* has

⁴⁰ <https://childtheologymovement.org/about-ctm/>

⁴¹ See for instance Frank (2002), Beckwith (2004), Lamont (2007) and Carter (2007).

⁴² His framework for facilitating children's connection with God outlined in *Children's Ministry that Fits* has become a foundation for the resources published by Roots, but is more basic and less nuanced than the 'Spiritual Connections' outlined in *Slugs and Snails* Edwards (2011).

⁴³ There is now an event based in the UK which uses a similar methodology of dialogue called 'The Conversation'.

⁴⁴ See for instance Berryman (1991; 1995; 1998; 2017). *Become Like a Child* (2017) in particular has some very helpful resonances with this project.

⁴⁵ Catterton Allen's work has been particularly helpful in addressing the place of children in the early church and Celtic Christianity.

⁴⁶ Ratcliff was arrested in 2012 for child pornography offences, sentenced in 2014 and again in 2017 after reoffending. He was registered as a sex offender in Florida in 2016. Whilst his work is referred to widely in American texts, many of which were published before these dates, his behaviour does not honour the subject, and the decision has been taken not to refer to his work where possible in this text.

been a key influence on this work. Bunge's work (2001; 2008) has also been instrumental, particularly in academic circles. In the UK, perhaps because of a lack of demand and/or a lack of funding there have been fewer publications, although Lamont (2007; 2020), Edwards (2011), Edwards, Hancock and Nash (2019) have all published work in the last ten years. Pritchard Houston's (2020) new book *Beyond the Children's Corner* raises a particular challenge to the church to re-think how it welcomes children and their families. McNeill's (2017) scholarly work on biblical themes in the works of Calvin and Edwards (Johnathan) has been a helpful addition to theological perspectives on children and grace. Although not mentioned directly as holiness, he does come close to exploring holiness in children when he engages with Edwards' theological understanding of 'beauty' (2017, pp. 134-152). During the time that this thesis has been researched expert practitioners in children's ministry and para-church agencies have begun to focus more on 'parenting for faith'⁴⁷ with work published both in this country⁴⁸ and the USA⁴⁹ and programs developed by Care for the Family⁵⁰ and BRF.⁵¹

2.1.1. Faith Development Theories

During the mid and late twentieth century, structuralist approaches to religious and moral development were favoured, with theorists basing their ideas on Piagetian models of cognitive development and maintaining that faith develops in a series of hierarchical and irreversible stages.⁵² The premise that a human proceeds from heteronomy to autonomy in a linear direction has however become increasingly critiqued, and later works have suggested the process is much more complex (Day, 2001).

The table in Appendix One (p.225) demonstrates that there is a great deal of variety in the expectation of what faith looks in a child and when it changes style. Although Rizzuto's (1980) model does not discuss 'faith' she does claim that by the age of six virtually all children have constructed an image or representation of God regardless of whether they believe in this deity or have a relationship with it. Peck's (1993) psychiatric model takes a very low view of the faith and spirituality of anyone who is not an adult, suggesting that there is an absence of spirituality in the pre-school years and interpreting the behaviour of pre-school children as

⁴⁷ This is the name of the suite of resources developed by Turner and published by BRF and sums up the belief that parents are responsible for disciplining their own children.

⁴⁸ See for instance Turner (2018) and Harding (2020).

⁴⁹ See for Instance Catterton Allen & Lawton Ross (2012) and Catterton Allen (2018).

⁵⁰ Based on a large research project in which they discovered that the majority of Christian parents do not feel confident, equipped or supported in disciplining their children (Care for the Family, 2018) . They subsequently brought out the Raising Faith Resources.

⁵¹ BRF formerly known as the Bible Reading Fellowship.

⁵² See for instance *Faith Development* (Fowler, 1995) and *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages* (Kohlberg, 1984).

anti-social (manipulative) and chaotic (unprincipled). He argues there is an over-reliance on the institution of religion and a punitive God in childhood, followed by scepticism and disinterest in adolescence. Wilcox's (1979) theory echoes Kohlberg's (1978) moral development theory and centres on how the child interprets their relationships with others. Stephens (1996) suggests that in the first four stages there could be a 'failure' resulting in a style of faith that does not lead to spiritual identity. All of these models take a 'low view of children'⁵³ and give no indication of an understanding of children as 'holy' before adulthood. Westerhoff (2000) is more positive about the nature of faith in childhood. He uses the analogy of rings in a tree to describe faith development. Each ring remains, even as another ring develops around it. He defines faith as 'action, which includes thinking, feeling and willing. It is sustained, transmitted and expanded through our interaction with 'faithing' selves in a community of faith' (2000, pp. 89-91).

Writing over 30 years ago, Fowler urges for consideration of faith as a verb rather than a noun (1995, pp. 10-19). Wangerin (1986). His fascinating narrative on faith development emphasises this active, organic approach by talking readily about 'faithing'. What is particularly interesting is that whilst Fowler has been heavily critiqued by those who propose a more fluid approach to children's spirituality and faith, his description of 'faith' as a human capacity resonates with many of the ways spirituality is described now, particularly in terms of connection with: the transcendent Other (i.e. God); others; and the world around us; and how we experience awe and wonder and meaning-making and purpose through those connections (1995, pp. 1-36). The tangibility and multiplicity of those connections is reflected in the thinking of writers like Catholic theologian Stephen Bevans (2011), and Professor Paul Knitter (2009), who have explored the constant movement and action of God in terms of 'God as a verb'.

Although critiques will be made of Fowler's developmental model, particularly in the light of the criticisms of Piaget's model that he used as a developmental framework,⁵⁴ his discourse on the nature of faith, which is, he says, based on the thinking of theologians writing in the 1950s to 1970s, is helpful.⁵⁵ What is especially pertinent, for this research project, are the seven 'aspects' or 'constitutive elements of a stage of faith' that Fowler, Moseley and Jarvis (1986) used when considering what constitutes a stage of faith. These are: form of logic; social perspective taking; form of moral judgement; bounds of social awareness; locus of authority; form of world coherence; and symbolic function.

⁵³ See Berryman's description of three theological approaches to children and childhood: low, high and ambivalent (2009).

⁵⁴ See for instance *Christian Perspectives on Faith Development* (Astley & Francis, 1992) which is a reader on the subject but also in particular Broughton (1986), Boyatzis (2005) and Heywood (2008).

⁵⁵ Fowler cites, Niebuhr's 'Faith on Earth' unpublished manuscript of seven chapters, intended originally for publication with what became Niebuhr's *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (Niebuhr, 1960).

Moseley, who was part of Fowler's research project, wrote that he would 'gladly dispense with the concept of a stage of faith since it is heavily laden with elitist images of faithful human beings'. Whilst he believes that describing the cognitive and affective elements and their relationship present in a particular kind of faith has merit, he thinks that framing them in a 'logically' ordered configuration of psychological processes' does not give sufficient depth of understanding of the process of change and transformation and 'self that is being formed' (1991, p. 150). Advocates of dispensing with the word 'development' in relation to children's spirituality and faith object to the 'elitism' that this infers, and the associated sense of failure and lack of achievement. Feminist theologians have also critiqued Fowler, in the same way that feminist social scientists have critiqued theorists like Piaget and Kohlberg, as purveying models that are androcentric in their approach. They suggest that the consequence of this is that the models are therefore linear and achievement/crisis based (Slee, 2004).

For Christians, the word 'faith' primarily concerns a relationship with a transcendent God, whose nature is described by the Trinity, and the transformation of self through that relationship. One critique of Fowler's stages is that he does not elucidate on the nature of the transcendent, or develop a theoretical clarification of what formation and transformation takes place as faith develops (Moseley, 1991, p. 144). Fowler was, however, attempting to describe faith as a human capacity unrelated to any particular religious framework, and any attempt to describe the transcendent is in danger of becoming either biased towards a particular religious conviction, or so generic as to be unhelpful. Fowler's Stage Six - 'Universalising Faith' does list three particular examples: Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa and Mahatma Gandhi, of people whose centring is 'located in the Ultimate' (1995, p. 201). It would be possible to extrapolate from these examples qualities that are evidence of transformation which include: passion for justice and peace, and self-sacrificing service and humility. Nevertheless, as Moseley points out, they were not subjected to clinical interviews or scientific coding and therefore the evidence is flimsy (1992, p. 169). This research project is considering the Christian faith and so is explicitly looking for evidence of encounter or relationship with the Christian God.

In his model of Faith Development, Powers (2003) suggests children up to the age of six experience the faith of 'nurture'. Those between the ages of 7 and 18 are in the stage of 'indoctrination', where they are 'busy mastering the content of their faith' (p. 15), i.e. hearing and learning about Scripture and Christian doctrine and the impact this has on Christian behaviour and lifestyle. His model implicitly suggests that people under the age of 18 are not able to fully understand, and therefore own, their faith without input from adults.

Westerhoff's concentric ring theory of faith development has found more favour with children's ministry practitioners and educators over the years because it is regarded as more flexible.⁵⁶ In 2000 a second edition of Bridger's work *Children Finding Faith* (2000) was published with revised chapters and the inclusion of a completely new chapter on the importance of imagination. Part One of this book is an accessible unpacking of what faith development might look like in a child broadly based on Westerhoff's stages of faith development. With a view to the declining attendance of children in church, Bridger also restates the urgency of getting a grasp on the importance of effective mission and ministry.

Westerhoff's work emphasises the community of faith and is used to justify much of the thinking on intergenerational worship that is prevalent at present.⁵⁷ In his book, *Think Orange*⁵⁸ Joiner underlines the importance of the partnership between church and parents. He argues that 'faith development' can be reduced to developing a sense of 'wonder' in pre-school children, a desire for 'discovery' in children, and a 'passion to serve God' in adolescence (2009, p. 154). Whilst this resonates with some of the other models, it does not demonstrate a nuanced understanding of children's spirituality.⁵⁹ He does, however, provide lots of evidence for why working with parents is a good model for discipling children and young people as 'what happens at home is as important as what happens in church' (2009, p. 168).

In conclusion, the concept of faith development theory has contributed to raising awareness that children can and do have faith. Critiques of other areas of developmental theory that have come about because of our increased knowledge of neurology and sociology have, however, meant that it is possible to see the flaws in models that are androcentric and do not integrate new understandings. Nevertheless, the importance of the faith community as a means of enculturating spirituality and faith in children is reflected in all the models of faith development.

2.1.2. Writing from different Perspectives

Infants and Children in the Church: Five Views on Theology and Ministry (Harwood & Lawson, 2017) was published as a consequence of a project to explore the major theological traditions about children's relationship with God, and the subsequent ministry that developed from these perspectives. It demonstrates that there are some significant differences between the traditions in the attitude to sin and responsibility and the age of accountability, and the fate

⁵⁶ For instance it is used in Butler (1992), Bridger (2000) and Lamont (2007).

⁵⁷ See for instance Catterton Allen (2008).

⁵⁸ He uses the colour yellow to denote the church because it is the light of the world, and red to denote the child's family because they have 'warm hearts'. Combined they make 'orange' the premise of his book being that 'the parents' potential to nurture a child's faith dramatically increases when they partner with the church' (Joiner, 2009, p. 82).

⁵⁹ See for instance Csinos (2011) and Edwards (2011).

of children outside the community of faith. There are, however, more similarities and ideas that are held in common. These are:

1. God loves children and desires for them to know him.
2. Children are negatively impacted by sin.
3. God has made provision for addressing the impact of sin.
4. Children are capable of a genuine spiritual walk with God.
5. In children, God sees qualities of faith that should characterize adults who would be part of his kingdom.
6. Parents should be equipped and supported in their critical role as children's primary instructors and models of the Christian faith.
7. The church as a whole has a responsibility to help in the spiritual nurture and instruction of children.
8. We need to include children in beneficial ways in the life and practice of the church as they grow.
9. Children are to grow to own their faith, not simply rest on the faith of their parents.

It is these similarities which are assumed as the basis of this work.

Jesuit Priest and theologian Rahner distinguishes between 'the catechism of head and heart' and 'the printed catechism' (1970, p. 11). He is reported to be wary of catechesis at a young age, suggesting that either: children and young people will get bored and blasé about the fundamentals of the Christian faith as they get older; or that they will continue a childish view of theology into adulthood (Lehmann & Rafflet, 1982, p. 104). This is in contrast to Van Dyken's (2000) work which seeks to revive the practice of catechism from a Reformed perspective and is recommended by Sisemore in his chapter on theological perspectives on children in the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality* (Catterton Allen, 2008).

Elsewhere in his writings, Rahner discusses the experience of the numinous, and the mystery of encountering 'truth' (1970), but his commentators, Lehmann and Rafflet (1982), suggest that he appears not to believe that this is something that can happen in childhood. His concern that we do not create a dogmatic theology for adults that is only couched in child-friendly language rather than driven by a child's perspective, is worthy of note in this research project. Despite his acceptance of the need for metaphysical experience, he does appear, however, to under-estimate both the power of story, and in particular Biblical narrative, and children's ability to discern and understand experience (Lehmann & Rafflet, 1982, pp. 46-63).

In his book *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation*, Professor of Christian Education, Anthony (2006) explores how different models of children's ministry can enhance children's spiritual and faith development by using a matrix. He introduces a model based on Kolb's learning cycle (1984) and Holme's (1980) typology for the spiritual life, which gives a continuum between 'doing' and 'watching' on the horizontal axis, and 'feeling' and 'thinking' on the vertical axis. In this way, argues Anthony, 'the two elements of experiencing and knowing God can be displayed as a matrix. We come to experience God and we come to know God in dynamic interface' (2006, p. 34). Taking this matrix, he then suggests four paradigms that typify the spiritual engagement in each quadrant and represent different models of children's ministry. He asks experts in these ministries to suggest why they are successful and propose theological, ethical and psychological reasons for their use. Beneficially to the process of understanding, proponents from each quadrant then review the others, creating an interesting and thought-provoking dialogue. The evidence from my MA research on children's spirituality and gender,⁶⁰ however, was that each paradigm had strengths and weaknesses and that an effective model of children's ministry would need to combine all four elements of 'seeing, doing, thinking and feeling'⁶¹, notions that are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Worsley's work, *A Child Sees God* (2009) described his research which gave children and young people the task of reading and discussing scripture with their families. His conclusions demonstrate how children's original and often engaging insights can be illuminating for parents, teachers and ministers and how we have much to learn from children.⁶² In the same year, he was a contributor to *Through the eyes of a child* (Richards & Privett, 2009) which took theological themes like grace and play and asked writers to explore them from a child's perspective.⁶³ This book successfully brought together writers from different ends of the theological spectrum and has been cited in many bibliographies in children's ministry studies.

Phillips (2011) used a feminist theology perspective⁶⁴ on the faith of adolescent girls and, although her work is with children beyond the age range of this project, her insights were particularly helpful in developing the critique of developmental theory discussed above and in Sections 8.8 and 9.2. Miller's work *The Spiritual Child* (2015) corroborated much of my own research and writing on children's spirituality, referred to throughout this thesis, and is a helpful handbook for parents who wish to nurture their child's spirituality, making it a potential resource for recommendations in Section 9.4..

⁶⁰ Later published in Edwards (2011).

⁶¹ See Edwards (2011) for a summary of the research findings, and the proposal for a new model.

⁶² See Section 9.5.3. p175.

⁶³ Worsley also contributed to *Re-thinking children's work in churches* (Edwards, Hancock, & Nash, 2019)

⁶⁴ As did Mercer in *Welcoming Children* (2005).

Root's material is useful because of his critique of some of the models of ministry with young people, and, more recently, what he describes as the obsession with youthfulness which is 'the late twentieth century's core strategy for denying external authority (even divine action) to follow the new purpose of 'what speaks to me' (2017, p. 17). Although it is written about young people rather than children and is set in the American rather than UK context, it does provide insights into cultural milieus which have an impact on the way that the church and the children within and without it will understand their relationship with the divine.

One of the latest publications from the USA attempts to bridge theory and practice on Children's Spirituality (Larson & Keeley, 2020). May, in the opening chapter, recognises that much of children's ministry theory has been influenced by an Anglo-American evangelical perspective (2020, p. 22) but helpfully demonstrates how the emphasis of this ministry has changed from a preposition of ministry 'to', through ministry 'for', to ministry 'with'.⁶⁵ The book reflects this movement and pulls together many of the lessons learned from the study of children's spirituality and faith development during that period, including the issues of inclusivity for people of colour⁶⁶ and those with additional needs.⁶⁷ Interestingly although many of the principles discussed in this thesis are covered, holiness is not mentioned at all as something that is present in children or should be explored with them.

In other areas of child development, research has demonstrated the importance of parental input (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000-01). Root issues a word of warning however to the church, suggesting that parents are enculturated in the social milieu of authenticity.⁶⁸ This means that they are unable to act on their anxieties about failing their children, expecting too little duty, and do not manage to exert influence that encourages them to be dutiful citizens or church members (2017, p. 21). This perspective that parents are struggling to disciple their children is corroborated by the *Faith in our Families* research (Care for the Family, 2018). This highlighted that 95% of the Christian parents involved acknowledged that it was largely their responsibility to disciple their children, but that only 36% of them felt very confident in doing this, and around 25% of them never share Bible stories with their children. In addition the *Faith in the Nexus* report (Casson, Hulbert, Woolley, & Bowie, 2020) testified that although 'children are often the dynamic initiators of conversations about faith or spirituality' their parents often

⁶⁵ Her summary table of Primary Characteristics of Three Recent 25-Year Periods in the History of Children's Spiritual Formation is particularly helpful in outlining the different approaches that these three frameworks have perpetuated (May, 2020, p. 38).

⁶⁶ See Chapter 3 – 'Colouring Outside the Lines' by Williams, and Chapter 13 – 'Normalizing White Spirituality in Children's Sunday School Curricula' by Zonio.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 4 – 'Believing and Belonging: Embracing Children with Disabilities' by Carter.

⁶⁸ By this he means the cultural reaction to the perceived inauthenticity of the church and its dogma and piety that suppressed natural desires. In the Nineteenth Century 'experiencing the genuine, in opposition to the fake, replaced the previous driving desire to encounter the holy' and, he says, in the twenty first century 'this has become full blown' (Root, 2017, pp. 5-6).

avoid or close down these conversations due to 'lack of knowledge, confidence or fear of indoctrination' (2020, p. 11).

Children's spirituality and ministry to and with children has been an area of increased interest and study particularly under the influence of the Center for the Theology of Childhood of the Godly Play Foundation (See Section 2.1.3.). In the late twentieth century, material was predominantly from the evangelical tradition, but in the last two decades, a wider doctrinal foundation has been seen, even though most of the publications have come from North America where the cultural context is different. Whilst faith development models have been widely critiqued in academic children's ministerial training, there have not been many alternative offerings based on the lived experience of children in the twenty first century. For this to happen, it is important to understand this lived experience, explored further in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

2.1.3. Story and Godly Play

For adults and children alike, it is through story that we often do the 'mystery and value sensing' identified by Hay and Nye (1998) as a key element of 'relational consciousness'. Fowler sees stories as a prominent part of his 'mythic-literal' stage of faith (7-12), as they can either 'liberate' or 'trap' meaning (1995, p. 148-150). Ferder's belief that 'Myth is not an untruth – in fact, myth can be regarded as more than true, as a belief so profound that it cannot be bound by time or limited to data' (2010, p. 2)⁶⁹ may go some way towards explaining why stories are so important in helping children to understand God and the part that God plays in their lives.⁷⁰ Appreciation of Piaget's construct of accommodation is useful here. As children 'learn' and 'sort' the content of faith, the experience of faith, and the intervention of the Holy Spirit, a process of adaptation and growth takes place, i.e. we use what we already know to make 'judgements'.⁷¹ Stories provide children with 'building blocks' for accommodation with which to do this.

One Children's Ministry methodology with storytelling at the heart, that has become popular in the UK as well as North America, is Godly Play devised by Berryman (1995). In Godly Play when the children have entered the 'sacred space' and settled, they are told a stylised Bible story, which finishes with 'I wonder...' statements designed to encourage the children to think about the story and the possibilities that it has brought to mind. When the wondering is

⁶⁹ This is also a major theme of *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* (Anderson & Foley, 2001).

⁷⁰ Egan's (2005; 2002; 1988) educational model harnesses what he believes is the power of story and children's imagination that helps them to learn in new and profound ways.

⁷¹ This resonates with Damasio's (2006) theory that our 'gut reaction' is normally a good one because it refers to 'layers of experience' and the physiological proximity of the higher level thinking and emotional areas of the brain.

finished, the children are then given the opportunity to reflect on the story through various activities including arts and crafts, playing with the story props, or quiet reading, before everyone joins together for a 'feast' snack and drink. Much of the theoretical understanding is based on the work of Montessori but has been developed theologically by writers like Berryman (1995), and Stonehouse (1998). Their belief is that Christian spiritual formation must go beyond the transmission of biblical information and include an opportunity to encounter God in ways that 'result in a sense of awe and wonder' and must help participants to 'consider things of God with continued attention' (May, 2006, p. 45). Activities are characterised by dialogue and periods of quiet reflection, introspective prayer, ritual and storytelling.

This time for reflection is designed to help the children to access the thoughts and feelings that have emerged during the story telling. Fowler illustrates his argument that much of our knowing remains inaccessible to our consciousness and our ability to verbalise it by quoting the pithy summary by Polanyi that 'we know more than we can tell' (1996, p. 40). This may be particularly so for children who do not yet have a full range of vocabulary or experience to compare and contrast, and who perhaps need longer to access this 'knowledge' and interpret it. The concern with this experiential approach is that it does not often give the child the opportunity to demonstrate the 'service of the neighbor [sic] and participation in the realization [sic] of the reign of God in this world' that Schneider (2002) states is an important outcome of Christian spirituality. The question is whether the experience, and/or encounter with God is making a difference to the way a child is thinking and living, can be tested.

Interestingly Hauerwas tried to ignore the influence of story in his philosophy and theology of character formation, although he acknowledges that inevitably he was not only 'forced' but also 'drawn' to 'see the importance of narrative for developing the significance of character' (1985, p. xx). Narrative has increasingly become an important means of not just understanding children's worldview but also relaying God's story to them, and thereby encouraging holiness experiences and behaviours. This is one of the reasons why the Godly Play methodology has become popular. It does, however, require participants to undertake expensive training, and therefore other methodologies, that embrace both the importance of story and the children's cultural context that is sketched in Section 2.2, need to be explored to complement this approach.

2.2. Twenty First Century Context for children

Reports like *Faith in our Families* (Care for the Family, 2018) and *Faith in the Nexus* (Casson, Hulbert, Woolley, & Bowie, 2020) demonstrate the impact that context has on how children's spirituality and faith development is understood and nurtured. Owen argues that the construction of childhood is changing at an unprecedented rate (2017, p. 2) and brought

together experts in childhood studies to explore the labels⁷² that are being used by policy creators and intervention developers in the UK in *Childhood Today*. She argues that as we understand the label we can challenge it so that children are not limited by the parameters that label sets, and their well-being is therefore enhanced (2017, p. 3). This section therefore introduces different elements of twenty first century childhood in the UK, that may have an impact on the way that children learn, communicate and experience life, so that they can be understood and challenged where appropriate.

The children in this research are all influenced by the UK culture that, according to Hofstede (2020), ranks high on individualism and is highly success oriented and driven. Ofcom reckon that children in the UK spend about four hours a day in front of a screen (Jary, 2020), and Mercer suggests that children are 'schooled in the pedagogy of consumption in virtually every sphere of their lives' (2005, p. 72). In addition there is evidence that in Western cultures children are protected in ways that are not always healthy (Nikiforidou, 2017, pp. 12-13). The four elements chosen to explore the cultural context for the children in this research project are therefore: multimedia and online engagement;⁷³ risk aversion and lack of freedom to play; individualism and social connectivity; consumerism. There will be consideration of the positive and negative impacts they have on children and childhood and some exploration of the effect they might have on faith and spirituality.

2.2.1. Multi-media and online engagement

Gardner and Davies use three terms to categorise young people's engagement with digital technology: app-mentality, app-enablement and app-dependence. They use these terms to explore the question of whether children growing up in the digital era will recognise that technology is a tool that can be used to enhance their lives and their connection with the world or whether they will become controlled by the devices that they carry in their hand. 'Every technology is an expression of human will. Through our tools, we seek to expand our power and control over our circumstances – over nature, over time and distance, over one another' (Carr, 2010, p. 44) The Christian faith teaches submission to the will of Christ who is obedient to the will of God (1 Peter, 5:6, 1 Corinthians 15:28). At what point does using technology to express human will tip over into something that is not compatible with the Christian faith? In *iGods*, Detweiler, a proponent of digital technology, warns that whilst it is good to be

⁷² These labels are: the Cotton Wool Child; the Selfish Child; the Universal Child; the SEN/D Child; the Regulated Child; the Stressed Child; The Political Child; the Natural Child; the Poor Child; and the Fat Child.

⁷³ Recognising the rate of change in our culture, and adoption of multimedia technology, and the delay between research and publishing, it was considered appropriate to look at published material from the USA about teenagers' engagement with technology as an indication of future developments for children in the UK.

connected to friends and family, when someone cannot resist the urge to check updates or upload photos, etc., then they are veering towards idolatry (2013, p. 3).

Children are 'digital natives' because they have grown-up immersed in digital technology, and have come to think of the world as an ensemble of apps (Gardner, & Davies, 2013, pp. 1-7). The positive or negative impact of this remains ambiguous. The OECD⁷⁴ working paper on the impact of technology use on children states that the evidence from research is still inconclusive with some research highlighting ill-effects like reduced sleep (2019, p. 23) and others suggesting that playing active video games can enhance spatial skills (2019, p. 17). Although the OECD identify 'an emerging body of work linking certain elements of ill-being to technology use' they point to concerns about the quality of the research in this body of work and suggest that the results must be interpreted with caution (2019, p. 11). Leading thinkers like Professor of Social Studies and Technology Turkle, have moved from a positive to a negative attitude about technology, expressing concern in *Alone Together* that 'digital natives' now 'bend to the inanimate with new solicitude' (2011, p. xii).

Cognitivism or constructivism argues that skills and knowledge are accrued because of the active exploration by the individual, which is intrinsically rewarded. Therefore, although imitation and modelling have their place, unless one makes the knowledge one's own, it remains fragile and uncertain (Gardner, 1985). Giving children the opportunity to engage with online content in ways that are rewarding for them could therefore be a part of healthy faith engagement for children, as they discover 'knowledge' of God for themselves. In addition, studies into neural activity have revealed that significantly more of the brain is stimulated when interpreting logograms or pictorial symbols than when reading words (Wolf, 2008). Online engagement with visual and text-low material about the Christian faith, and how to live it out, could therefore be more stimulating and therefore more rewarding and more likely to be retained.

Whilst gaming may improve hand-eye co-ordination, etc. many believe that gaming encourages aggression and violence in children and young people. A longitudinal study carried out in Singapore (Gentile, Dongdong, Khoo, Prot, & Anderson, 2014), suggested that video games that portray violence as fun, justified or without negative consequences have the potential to change a child's views on empathy and aggression. They also asserted their results demonstrated that violent video game play does increase a child's long-term aggressive behaviour – although again those who carried out the study did warn that their conclusions should be read with caution. Robertson (2019), however, believes that video games can be a healthy part of children's lives (p. 91) and faith development as they provide a 'rich cocktail of potential for finding meaning in new ways' (p. 92).

⁷⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The psychological theory of flow and the educational theory of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2020) offer two different explanations for how players learn from digital games. Game flow theory suggests that when players enjoy deep concentration on a game they will be more motivated to play and will learn more (Kiili, 2005; Fu, Su, & Yu, 2009). Cooperative learning theory suggests that positive social interaction during game play is the key to increasing players' motivation and learning (Zea, Sanchez, & Gutierrez, 2009). Raphael et al (2012) discovered, however, that it is more likely to be a combination of the two that encourages effective learning of knowledge and skills and empathy.

2.2.2. Risk aversion and lack of freedom to play

There has been evidence across multiple disciplines that links diminishing time engaged in free play and outdoor play to negative outcomes for children. These negative outcomes include: impaired social competence; increased incidence of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, child fragility, anxiety and depression (Marano, 2008) (Panksepp, 2008); the childhood obesity epidemic (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014); a decrease in creativity and imagination (Marano 2008); and adversity to risk (Gill, 2007). Standardisation in education has also been blamed, along with more stringent health and safety requirements, for promoting a risk averse culture in schools (Gill, 2007, p. 64). Coupled with what has been dubbed 'Helicopter Parenting', where parents over-protect their offspring right through to adulthood, and 'solve' all their problems for them, this means that children appear to be less resilient. According to one study, helicopter parenting was associated with poorer emotional, academic and decision making functioning (Leubbe, et al., 2018) and this coupled with a cultural emphasis on 'happiness', could be a contributing factor in the increased levels of depression and associated mental health issues in children and young people.⁷⁵ Nikiforidou suggests that being encouraged to experiment and try out new things in a familiar context can increase the 'risk literacy' that she argues many children in the UK lack (2017, pp. 14-16). This means that as the community of faith encourages children to 'step out in faith' and trust God, not only will their faith grow but there is potential that it will also have a positive impact on their emotional well-being.

2.2.3. Individualism and social connectivity

Several times in *Alone Together*, Turkle (2011) uses the metaphor of a tether when discussing the relationship between a young person and their digital device and the people they can access through it. The positive aspect being deep connection and security, the negative being

⁷⁵ One in eight five to nineteen year olds had at least one mental health disorder when assessed (NHS Digital, 2017).

control and captivity. One phenomenon being discussed is 'presence' with Watkins suggesting that, for teenagers, social media offers opportunities for 'presence-in-absence' i.e. being with friends whilst not there and 'absence-in-presence', being where you must be but absenting yourself via technology (2009, p. 48). Boyd (2014) argues that this behaviour is exacerbated by over-protective parenting, which reduces the likelihood of young people being given the opportunities for real time social interaction, because they are not allowed out of the house unsupervised. Hence, they can be 'present' with friends despite geographical separation. 'Connected presence' (Christensen, 2009) is also becoming a feature of family life, where mobile phone use maintains intimate relationships and contact and allows women, in particular, to show affection to their families whilst managing a busy life (Wei & Lo, 2006) (Baym, Zhang, & Lin, 2004). Christensen does, however, question whether the use of a mobile phone to create connected presence intensifies the same conditions of family life to which it is a response.⁷⁶

Digital media does therefore have a positive aspect for social connectivity, particularly in our risk averse culture where parents are not allowing children and young people to play outside or meet up and 'hang out'. Ethnographer Mimi Ito (2009) says that electronic devices are an important part of the social life of most young people in the USA, as it is through these that they get to 'hang out'. Other research reports that a large proportion of teenage digital communication is concerned with making arrangements to meet up with friends in person (Gardner, & Davies, 2013, p. 94). Thus, argues Boyd (2014), social and digital media augment social connectivity rather than limit it; it is just doing it in a way that few adults understand. For children, games like Minecraft have created community and the opportunity for social interaction in an environment that is simple and lacks the need to interpret and communicate with intricate social cues. It has been argued that parents do not need to worry that their children are spending hours absorbed in the game as not only is it engaging their imaginations but also giving them opportunities to develop off-line social skills on-line.⁷⁷

Focus group participants in Gardner and Davies research believed that the 'App Generation' do form their identities with a higher external orientation than pre-digital youth (2013, p. 66). My concern is that a highly sensitive external locus of evaluation that constantly looks outside for reassurance (Hofer & Moore, 2011) means that healthy identity formation could be severely inhibited. If this is true, it has significant implications for the identity formation of children within and without the church as well as their spirituality, because their sense of belonging and connectedness might be skewed.

⁷⁶ See also Watkins (2009, pp. 53-55) for a debate about the depth of online community and relationships.

⁷⁷ See Jenkins (2015) and Ward (2013).

In *Bowling Alone* (2001), Putnam describes a growing individualism, citing a declining membership of organizations like churches and social clubs. Religious leaders interviewed by Gardner and Davies suggested that young people's spiritual engagement no longer relies on familial traditions, but instead is based on limited or no faith-specific information (2013, p. 87). Wolfe (2001) suggests that these community ties are then replaced with a 'moral freedom' which enables people (and therefore presumably children and young people) to define their own meaning for a virtuous life without having to sacrifice their personal desires or needs. This is something that I think is particularly pertinent to this research as more 'app-directed' children are left to find their own 'moral compass' in an increasingly complex environment.

Westerhoff critiques what he described as 'intentional socialization' in *Generation to Generation* (1979), suggesting that we need to think about 'enculturation' and how to be Christian together. He contends that children's ministry has for too long been 'overly concerned with the goals of knowing about the Bible, and church history than with sharing, experiencing and acting together in faith' (2012, p. 86). What impact does the excessive individualism discussed previously have on the likelihood of children being able to access and sustain membership of communities of faith that enable this kind of sharing and experience for children and young people?

For many years, proponents of children's spirituality and child theology⁷⁸ have argued that Jesus explicitly gave us the opportunity to learn from children by putting the child in the midst (Matthew 18:2-5, Mark 9:36). Now that the notion of what comprises an 'expert' has changed from 'somebody with access to special information' to 'somebody with a better way of interpreting' (Eno, 2010), there seems to be a greater acceptance that children may have something to teach adults. Children have been identified as playing an important role in enculturating their parents in the digital environment (Correa, Staubhaar, Chen, & Spence, 2015) and the industry is now beginning to focus on the role of youth in the transmission process (Manning, 2011). What might the church look like if the same principle was applied to the Christian faith?

2.2.4. Consumerism

The 2020 Good Childhood Report states that the UK has had the largest increase in relative child poverty in Europe⁷⁹ and suggest that this might, along with the second largest socio-economic inequality indicator, be a reason why UK children also indicated a drop in 'life satisfaction' (p. 47). It therefore appears that is not just poverty that is the issue for the children,

⁷⁸ See <http://www.childtheology.org/>

⁷⁹ An increase of 4% between 2015 and 2018 compared with a decrease of 2% across 20 other European countries.

but the ability to make comparisons through advertising or social media posts which breed dis-satisfaction.

Another concern is the impact digital media has on the increasingly consumerist and transient nature of relationships. Levine and Dean (2011) have linked youth consumption of online pornography with a burgeoning 'hook up' sub-culture in the USA and related this to the 'risk averse' ethos discussed earlier. They infer that young people consider a series of isolated hook ups as less risky than a sustained emotional attachment to another person. This disquiet is echoed in Turkle's *Alone Together* where she critiques Levy's belief that robots will replace humans in many relationships (Levy, 2007) but also concludes that many people are already reliant on multimedia technology to provide relationships that, because they lack the complexities of human partnerships, could be considered to be 'emotionally dumbed down' (2011, p. 6). This 'disposable love' phenomena⁸⁰ is not limited to adults and teenagers, and Mercer argues that this is just another consequence of the 'habitus' of our consumer culture (2005, pp. 94-99).

Children can be understood as passive or active in consumerism. Socialisation in consumerism is seen as moving from ignorance to knowledge, incompetence to competence. Buckingham argues that whilst campaigners conceive of children's as victims of consumerism, marketers see them as active and competent and therefore not in need of the level of protection we think they need (2011, p. 19). Mercer (2005), writing from a perspective of faith, believes that the destruction is much more pervasive and long lasting than that and although she recognises that children are actors and agents, she suggests that they are also victims and acted upon. What implications does this have for consumption of faith? Do children see it as another product or brand? Do they feel that they have agency in it or are acted upon? Should children's ministry practitioners and the churches they are part of give children the same level of respect as the marketing industry appears to do?

Exploration of these four issues affecting children in the UK demonstrates that they can have both a positive and a negative influence. It also highlighted that multi-media engagement is pervasive and has an impact on all areas of a child's life. Whilst the research remains inconclusive, it is worth bearing in mind the concerns of policy makers and researchers that are yet to be corroborated or disproved. Insights into how children are viewed by the marketing industry raise questions about how the church considers and provides agency in children, as people of faith.

⁸⁰ A phrase coined by researchers on virtual pets (Renee-Bloch & Lemish, 1999).

2.3. Conclusion

Spirituality and intergenerational ministry have been topics of wider discussion in the last few years but none of the literature on children's spirituality, faith or ministry reviewed in this chapter directly discusses holiness in children. This chapter has identified that whilst the body of literature to help practitioners in children's ministry has grown, this is deeply influenced by North American writers and therefore not always entirely relevant to the UK context. This is because, as well as the language and cultural differences, many of the books make assumptions about the religiosity of culture that does not reflect what is happening the UK.⁸¹ As an American who has lived and ministered in the UK for some time, Pritchard Houston highlights the importance of really understanding our own culture (2020, p. xi) and therefore insights in books from North America need to be read with a UK interpretation.

As part of the literature review, a variety of faith development models were explored, and the conclusion was drawn that these models are based on outdated understandings of child development and do not integrate new understandings. Although they highlight the importance of the faith community for children's holiness, they also prompt consideration of how new ways of describing this holiness can be envisaged.

Section 2.1.2. surveyed different perspectives on children in the church and this highlighted the benefits of using a range of writers from theological perspectives to inform the discussion on children and holiness. Although Godly Play is only one model of children's ministry, it is focussed on storytelling, and so was a significant element in the discussion on story where it was concluded that narrative is an important element of enabling children to know and live out their faith.

The consideration of the national cultural context of the children in this research project identified four factors that could have an impact on their life experience and therefore their lived faith - the potential impact on children's spirituality and faith development of: multimedia engagement, risk aversion, individualism and consumerism were explored and positive and negative influences identified.

Significant themes have emerged from this cultural overview that can be related to how children understand and engage with their spirituality and Christian faith. These include relationship, presence, active exploration and intrinsic reward, positive social interaction, encouragement to experiment and take risks, and the role of children in the transmission of knowledge and understanding. In terms of the impact on spirituality and faith it is not just the

⁸¹ For instance evidence of the decline in Christian affiliation in the UK was being presented two decades ago (Bruce, 2001), but research from the United States indicates that Americans adults are still more religious than those in other wealthy nations (Fahmy, 2018) and the decline there started much later (Pew Research Center, 2019).

relationship with friends which is important, but also relationships with their faith community. The positive and negative ways in which digital media engagement influences the way that relationships are formed and sustained and how a 'moral compass' develops. This has implications for how a relationship with the Christian deity is formed and sustained.

Since the commencement of this research project the worldview and experience of children in the UK has been rocked by Brexit and Covid-19. The Children and Young People Well-being Research Report (October 2020) suggests that although there are indications of challenges to mental well-being in general, children and young people between the ages of five and twenty-four have responded with resilience to the changes brought about by the pandemic. The children were all interviewed before these two phenomena, so there is no evidence of their impact in the dialogue. Although interpretations of the implications for the academy and church in Chapter Nine will be made with both these factors as a backdrop, they are irrelevant to the data in this study and the context in which it was generated. Therefore the pandemic will not be referred to in any detail.

3. Theological Influences

3.1. Introduction

Having identified 'holiness' as a possible way of exploring children's spirituality and faith development, and established the paucity of writing about holiness in children, the next stage is to develop an understanding of what theologians understand about holiness.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, Paul assumes that children are helpless and need care, implying that, because they are dependants and require adult assistance in some areas, they are unable to be independent members of the kingdom. This view was perpetuated by many early theologians who came to believe that childhood was a null period.⁸² Throughout history, theologians have held a variety of perspectives on the nature of children and their relationship with sin (Bunge, 2001, p. 13). Whilst some of these perspectives have been explored in books like *The Child in Christian Thought* (Bunge, 2001), little attention has been paid to a child's relationship with holiness. This chapter will look at a selection of definitions and theories of holiness that have been written with adults in mind and explore their relevance to holiness in children.

Although Wesleyan thinking is a significant influence, this project is not an exegesis of Wesleyan scholarship. In the same way that Barton (2003) brought together writers from different theological perspectives to explore *Holiness: Past and Present*, and Richards and Privett (2009) did the same to explore theological themes from a child's perspective, this work uses a range of appropriate lenses in order to identify if holiness is present in children and what it might look like. The intention of this chapter is to establish the theological roots of this practical theology exercise and create a space to examine holiness in children. The notion of neutral space is envisaged in Andrew's teaching on a Trinitarian model of community – gracious inclusivity.⁸³ By drawing insights from a wide range of sources and placing different theological perspectives on holiness 'around the edge' we are inviting the child to stand in the midst and show us what holiness looks like from their perspective. For this reason, this work sees Gerard Hughes the Jesuit, next to Evangelical theologians like Ryle and Packer; Bonhoeffer the Lutheran amongst a range of Wesleyan and Methodist scholars, and Hauerwas the Christian ethicist.

Although, as already stated, the Holiness Movement appears to have neglected the voice of children, 'the Holiness Manifesto' has been a primary source for this exploration as its intention

⁸² For instance Origen believed that without adult thought and discipline, children remained in a transitory world (Menziez, 1965), and Chrysostom concluded that although they had inherited physical death through Adam's fall, they had not inherited sin (Berryman, 2009, pp. 47-51).

⁸³ See for instance Andrews (2006, 2012).

was to give a broad ecumenical context to 20th century Holiness churches.⁸⁴ In 2004, the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project worked across denominational lines to explore the mission of the church. The 'Holiness Manifesto' was released in 2007. Despite these endeavours, Packer observes that historic Christian teaching on holiness has been largely forgotten and holiness is no longer emphasised in churches regardless of denomination (2009, pp. 12-13). This might be due to the false association holiness has in the minds of many with legalism, perfectionism and judgmentalism (Raymond, 2008, p. 166). Mannoia argues, however, that the claim that the Holiness movement has lost its ability to renew itself, and the churches' engagement with holiness, is unfounded (2008, p. 3). Hence, The Holiness Manifesto which mandates a Christianity that is 'not sectarian, not isolationist, not enclavist, not dogmatic, but integrative, personal, social, apostolic and missional' (Mannoia & Thorsen, 2008, p. 4) and advocates that the way forward is through a greater understanding of, and desire for, holiness. What is significant, however, is that children are not mentioned specifically in this work; an oversight that perhaps not only belies its integrity for the work of God's people but also puts the future of holiness in question. The purpose of this chapter however is not to argue the success or not of Wesley's principles or the Holiness movement, but to see what insights historical and contemporary understandings of holiness can have on the nature of holiness in children.

Statistically, the priestly writing contained between Exodus 25 and Numbers includes most of the references of the holiness root (Jenson, 2003, p. 93).⁸⁵ Jenson argues that these have often been marginalised in the Protestant tradition, but that their study is important. This is presumably because they strengthen understandings of holiness in the New Testament. This chapter therefore starts with an examination of Leviticus 19 which Green suggests give suitable measurements of success in holiness (2007, p. 31). From this examination three themes of holiness emerge: conformity to the character of God, purity and social justice⁸⁶ which will be explored in more detail in Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

Section 3.3 discusses the 'now' and 'not yet' nature of holiness, and conceptions of the process of sanctification and the implication these might have when referring to children who have not had much life experience. Section 3.4 examines some definitions of holiness and compares these with understandings of spirituality. Firstly, this ensures that this work maintains the balance required to hold the opposing understandings of children's spirituality, and faith

⁸⁴ In the second half of the twentieth century more than one hundred and fifty denominations and other groups were members of the Christian Holiness Association, the largest being The Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Church and the Free Methodist Church but this number has been dwindling steadily (Langford, 1983, pp. 132-33).

⁸⁵ By this he means the Hebrew root qds which is often translated into English as 'holy' or 'holiness' (Jenson, 2003, p. 94).

⁸⁶ Brueggemann argues that the book of Deuteronomy also includes a holiness mandate for social justice (1997, pp. 191-192).

development in tension. Secondly, this surveys what emphases in descriptions of adult holiness can be compared with holiness in children. Section 3.5 suggests what we might be looking for in a child of faith before Section 3.6 explores this in terms of both their experiences and their behaviours.

3.2. Leviticus 19 - laws for living as God's holy people

To be holy is often understood as being 'set apart'. In the same way that God sets apart places or objects (Exodus 29:36, 37; Leviticus 8:15), he also sets apart people through a special relationship (Leviticus 11:44-45; 20:7-8, 24-26) or a ritual (Leviticus 8:12, 30) (Sklar, 2014, p. 226). Chapters 18-20 of Leviticus are the laws for living as God's holy people with particular emphasis on Chapter 19 as the practices, not only to avoid but also to perform, as a demonstration of 'set apartness' and righteousness (Sklar, 2014, pp. 226-227, 242).

God's desire is that God's people reflect God's holy character (Hartley, 2015, p. 383). Throughout Chapter 19 there are references to the phrase 'I am the Lord (your God)' evoking the sense that 'obedience was to be a loving and reverential response of worship to their holy King who had called them to be a community that embodied his holy kingdom' (Sklar, 2014, p. 242). This response required three aspects of holiness. Firstly, God's people are to live holy lives by imitating him (v2), an instruction that Peter appropriates for the early church in Peter 1:15-16. Secondly, holiness requires obedience to God's laws (v37), and thirdly that these commands cover all aspects of life, with a special focus on interpersonal relationships (Sklar, 2014, pp. 253-254).

The laws stated in Leviticus 19 have been demonstrated to reflect closely the ten commandments and fall into three categories: faithfulness in worship; expressions of love and respect in interpersonal relationships; and practices of justice (Hartley, 2015, pp. 383, 385). The laws cover family and community respect (vv3,32), religious loyalty (vv3b, 4-8,12,26-31), economic relationships (vv9-10), workers' rights (v13), social compassion (v14), judicial integrity (v15), neighbourly attitudes and conduct (vv11,16-18), distinctiveness (v19), sexual integrity (vv20-22, 29), exclusion of the idolatrous and occult (vv4,26-31), racial equality (vv33-34) and commercial honesty (vv35-36). What is interesting about these is that whilst their effects can be clearly identified most of them can only take place in community. For a child, with little autonomy and agency in a community, it could be argued that their ability to bring about these characteristics on a corporate level is limited. However, if we consider the playground to be a micro community, we can begin to identify ways in which children can affect their group and bring about some of the measures of holiness outlined in Leviticus 19.

In addition, if, as commentators on Leviticus, like Gorman and Hartley, suggest, holiness is not just associated with the divine being, but is also manifest in relationships (Gorman, 1997, pp. 111-112) and intertwined with love (Hartley, 2015, p. 398), then it appears that this makes it accessible to children who are hardwired for relationship⁸⁷ and are normally naturally loving. Sklar states that 'holiness becomes real as we live out the Lord's love to others' (2014, p. 254), identifying then 'loving behaviours' as a key element of holiness. This underlying precept, Hartley argues, is affirmed by the New Testament, when Jesus identifies love of God as the primary commandment and love of neighbour in its widest sense as the second (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:20-31; Luke 20:27-28). Paul picks up Jesus' intent to bring out the full meaning of the Levitical law by reminding congregations that love is the fulfilment of the law (Romans 13:9-10, Galatians 5:14) (Hartley, 2015, p. 400).

3.2.1. Conforming to the character of God

A key biblical meta-narrative is that holiness is the distinctive characteristic of God (Jenson, 2003, p. 104) and that God wishes to form a people who become holy, as he is.⁸⁸ The fundamental essence of holiness is therefore to be found in imitating the character of God. The question for this research is how that imitation occurs and develops. For Paul, holiness is not something that an individual has to create, neither is it a reward for virtue. Instead, it is a gift, one that the Christian can choose to accept or reject. Hughes, using Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 3:16-19 as his basis, suggests that spirituality therefore 'is the process by which we become more aware of this gift of holiness and increasingly conformed to it' (2003, p. 18). The question is at what stage do children become aware of this gift, and their ability to 'make a decision' for or against it? Hughes goes on to suggest that holiness can never be adequately described, it is about not only searching for God, but also for the meaning and value of our own lives. As we come to know God, we come to know ourselves 'because it is in God that we live and move and have our being' (p. 19). As we conform to and reflect the innermost nature of God in our lives we are conforming to and reflecting holiness (Tidball, 2010, p. 21). When a child is observed who looks pure and innocent, it may be easy to believe that children naturally reflect the innermost nature of God. When a child is seen being spiteful or annoying, it is perhaps less easy! Tidball describes this as the image of God in which we were formed becoming marred and corrupted (2010, p. 21).

To conform to the character of God requires knowledge of that character. Callen asserts it is 'the work of the Holy Spirit within us that helps us to conform to the likeness of Christ'. He

⁸⁷ A baby's brain is neurologically wired during infancy through connection with parents and caregivers: 'Human connections create neuronal connections' (Siegel D. , 1999, p. 85). This is discussed in more detail in Section 7.4.

⁸⁸ Exemplified by Leviticus 11:44 'I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy'. See also Exodus 3:5, 19:5-6 and Leviticus 19:2, 20:26, 1 Peter 1:16.

argues that it is a symbiotic relationship; it is 'the Holy Spirit's abiding presence that creates in us a habitual state of the soul which resembles Christ, and it is having the mind of Christ which makes us open to the work of the Holy Spirit' (2006, p. 148). According to Callen, holiness is not just the remit of those who are particularly emotional or hoping to disconnect from the world. He says it is for 'all who believe in the biblical God made known through Jesus Christ and who are willing to be part of what God intends' (2008, p. 9). This 'all' appears not to exclude children. Wesley's sermon 69 'The Imperfections of Human Knowledge' (1999, p. Part I Section 4) however, implies that he believes that children do not have an innate knowledge of God. He argues, alongside other 18th century empiricists, that our understanding of God is limited to 'what He has written in all his works, not from what He has written in our hearts' (p. 19). He suggests that the notion that God has 'stamped... an idea of himself on every human soul' is unfounded because we learn about God from experience of the world. Therefore, a child who has limited experience of creation and God's revelation through his works, will, in his opinion, have a limited experience of God. Although these two perspectives do not necessarily contrast, when placed alongside Hughes view, they illustrate a spectrum of experiences which extends from awareness of the gift, through preparedness to believe and be willing, to a requirement for both experience and understanding.

From a Puritan perspective, this spectrum might not have been considered sufficient evidence of the sovereignty and precedence of God's call on one's whole life (Wakefield, 1986, p. 597). For Puritan writer John Bunyan, transformation by Christ was 'to make us partakers of that which is in him' (1988, p. 297). A process wrought by the Holy Spirit that enables us to 'imbibe' the essence of Jesus, often brought about by intense agony or struggle.⁸⁹ But, our understanding of the essence of Jesus is based on descriptions of him as a first century man of about thirty years of age as given in the gospels. Does this mean that children must be 'partakers of that which is in him' as an adult or can they be partakers of that which is in him that resonates with them - the childlike nature of Christ? So that they are not holy as a transformed adult is holy in Christ, but holy as a transformed child is holy in the childlike Christ. The problem is that the gospels do not give us very much indication at all of what the Christ child was like. Victorian sentimentality may have painted him as meek and mild, but we have no real examples of how Jesus stood out from his friends when he was 3, 7 or 10. For adults, the model of Jesus illustrates what it is to be a holy adult, how can this be interpreted for children, that makes sense in the world and lives that they live in?

⁸⁹ Wakefield uses Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* as evidence of this puritan perspective (1986, p. 597).

3.2.2. Purity and social justice

If God is the primary source of all holiness, and the holiness of people, places or objects is derived from that primary source, then a separateness is required in order to make a distinction between what is holy and what is not. In the Old Testament, this was understood in terms of purity. Jenson (2003) offers a comparison of perspectives on this issue from Knohl, Brueggemann and Douglas in his discussion on holiness, but essentially the purity/impurity distinction can be summarised as

the human response made necessary by the fascinating but threatening character of divine holiness; the awareness of holiness brings consciousness of impurity, as classically in the vision of Isaiah ('Woe is me ... for I am a man of unclean lips' - 6.5). *(Dunn, 2003, p. 172)*

Some writers are careful to make a distinction between impurity and sin. Sanders suggests that impurity was an inevitable consequence of daily living. This meant that it only required cleansing, not forgiveness, like sin. The only problem with impurity is that it prevented access to 'the holy' and therefore made participation in the Temple services impossible (Sanders, 1985, pp. 182-192). Matthew and Mark cite Isaiah 29:13 as an example of God's dissatisfaction with a superficial rather than heartfelt act of worship and Jesus' 'breaking' of the Sabbath rules (Matthew 12:1-14, Mark 2:23-28) demonstrate his concern that the Pharisees were focusing on the rules of rituals rather than the purpose which was worship.⁹⁰

Jesus' healing of the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-5) also gives an example of how Jesus' priority was people more than purity (Dunn, 2003, p. 189). For Borg, this demonstrates how Jesus counters 'the disabling effects of uncleanness' with 'the positive transforming power of holiness' (1998, pp. 134-136). This resonates with Callen's definition of what holiness is - being transformed by Christ - and raises the issue that holiness is not simply the lack of impurity, but also the enactment of 'goodness'.

The exploration of Leviticus 19 concluded that holiness is about living a life of love, exemplified by the loving behaviours that bring righteousness and justice to both the individual and the community that they live in. It was identified that without agency this could be difficult for a child to achieve. For Packer, holiness begins with four reactions to God's plan for salvation: 'adoration of God for his greatness, gratitude for the grace that saves. Zeal to exalt Jesus... and wholehearted pursuit of God and godliness according to the natural desire of the regenerate heart' (2009, p. 82). If holiness is then both outward and inward aspects of 'faith working through love' (Galatians 5:6), lack of agency becomes less significant, as what is happening in the child's heart and mind are also important. The suggestion that it is

⁹⁰ See for instance Dunn (2003) and Borg (1998).

a matter of both action and motivation, conduct and character, divine grace and human effort, obedience and creativity, submission and initiative, consecration to God and commitment to people, self-discipline and self-giving, righteousness and love (Packer, 2009, p. 30)

means that it can be understood as a complex process that is constantly dynamic. This gives scope for the nature and enactment of holiness to be constantly changing in the child as they grow and develop.

Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Systems Theory* (1992) offers a framework through which community psychologists examine individuals' relationships within communities and the wider society. It puts the child at the centre of concentric rings of influence from their immediate environment outwards towards wider society (See Appendix Two). This model gives insights into a child's agency and therefore the potential impact of a child's holiness. Although without agency, it would appear that a 'holy' child is only able to impact their microsystem. The implication however from the imperative of the laws in Leviticus 19 was that God's desire was to bless the nations through the people of Israel (Sklar, 2014, p. 220) – their fulfilment of the laws meant that their society and those surrounding them would be blessed. In addition, if the understanding is that love is the fulfilment of the law, then a child who then aims to fulfil the law through loving behaviour in their microsystem can then become an agent for change and a means of blessing in their mesosystem if not the exosystem.

Levitical laws illustrate therefore the requirement of God's people to conform to the character of God and live lives that honour his purity and his heart for social justice. Elements of this are hard for a child to achieve if they lack agency, but they are also hard for adults to achieve. This 'achievement' or process of change is explored in the discussion below about sanctification.

3.3. Sanctification and holiness

One of the reasons why children might be regarded as incapable of holiness is because of the difference between their understanding of the world, and adult 'reason'. For Snyder, however, holiness is narrative, in that it is about the story of what God has done for us and how our story finds meaning in God's story (2007, pp. 81-82). If, as Wesley (amongst others) suggests, faith is the only instrument of salvation, it can be argued that this 'sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins' (Wesley, 'Justification by Faith', pp. Part iv, Section 5), can easily happen in a small child, but also that this requires some cognitive development and therefore perhaps couldn't happen in an infant. I am however, inclined to agree with Wesley's theological perspective that there is no 'self-salvation' and that

justification is a free gift (Langford, 1983, p. 32). It is God who bestows, not humans who determine. Prevenient grace is the gift that enables, equips and empowers humans to initiate movement towards God (Davies & Rupp, 1965, p. 158; Lee, 1936, p. 110). This is a view that would concur with a belief that infants and children can have a response to God in whatever capacity they can understand it. Whilst writers like Cushman (1947, pp. 42-43) might hold a more negative perspective of prevenient grace as only the means to cease to resist, perhaps this view also enables an infant or child, without the cognitive development required to resist, open access to God's grace.

For most Christians, the understanding is that it is necessary to be both 'justified' and 'sanctified'. 'Justification' is the process of God declaring justice satisfied as far as the believing sinner is concerned, through Christ (Lints, 2014, p. 38), and 'sanctification' is the ongoing process wrought by the Holy Spirit that gives a Christian a new way of life, and in which every grace of character is strengthened, enlarged and deepened (Ryle, 2014, pp. 28-38). There are however differences on how these terms are understood and how they are perceived to take place in the life of a Christian. There are two perspectives on sanctification which can be held in tension. The 'positional' or 'definitive' view that it is a 'completed state' because of the work of Christ,⁹¹ and the view that sees sanctification as 'the believers' progressive ability to recognize God's will and command' and live accordingly (O'Brien, 1982, pp. 192-193). In the Reformed tradition, sanctification or holiness is a both 'now' *and* 'not yet' phenomena. Packer argues that salvation has three tenses: salvation from sin's guilt (past); from its power (present) and from its presence (future). This implies that it is an ongoing process which is complete and yet also to be completed (2009, pp. 43-44). Christians are at the same time both 'saved' and 'sinners' (Mursell, 2003, p. 283), in that God sees both the redeemed and the fallen nature at the same time. A 'double grace'⁹² in that we are reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness – the now – and being purified by Christ's Spirit – the not yet.

Holiness has been described as a lifelong process; 'our holiness must persevere to the end. But... it must also be growing all the way' (Taylor, 1989, p. 39). Ryle suggests that there is a need to 'climb' towards holiness (2014, p. 54), as old motives are transformed and new habits formed. Others have challenged this common assumption and argued for the 'definitive' or 'positional' nature of sanctification and its implication for the pursuit of practical holiness (Peterson, 2001).

The inference being that if holiness is perpetually growing, it starts at zero in infancy. If, however holiness is not what brings us to salvation in Christ, but the result of it (Mursell, 2003, p. 289), then the implication is that a child that has not been converted, or 'saved', or

⁹¹ Based on verses like Colossians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 1:2,4-9,18; 3:21-22; 6:11.

⁹² The phrase used by McNeil (2001) in his translation of Calvin's Institutes of Religion Book III, Chapter XI, paragraph 1.

'redeemed' or whatever terminology a particular type of Christian churchmanship might use, cannot be holy. To be holy, means to respond through faith to what Christ has done, and derives from committing one's soul unconditionally into God's hands (Bunyan, 1988, pp. 32-3). These are choices which, whilst having emotional and volitional elements still maintain a heavy intellectual emphasis. Many understandings of holiness have therefore become rooted in the insistence on conversion as the start of Christian life. Whether it is instant or gradual, sanctification (the process of becoming holy) is therefore the result of an expression of gratitude for atonement, which must result in concrete deeds (Bebbington, 2003, pp. 299-301). The question is whether this excludes children who do not fully understand atonement or are unable to perform identifiable concrete deeds of holiness. The understanding of baptism as the entry into the Christian community addresses this issue for some believers and allows for the possibility of holiness.⁹³

If there is not absolute agreement about what happens as a person is conformed to the likeness of Christ and 'sanctified', could it be argued then that children can be considered holy at birth and undergoing a process of de-sanctification until they are old enough to make a cognitive decision and thereby start re-sanctification? The trouble with the different perspectives on the process of sanctification is the under-estimation of the power of the Holy Spirit to intervene in the hearts and minds of humanity at whatever stage of development they are in. Perhaps the Wesleyan understanding of 'full sanctification' or 'perfect love' (Tidball, 2010, p. 24) experienced through God's grace is helpful here. The Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification differs in suggesting that because of the Holy Spirit, true believers will be 'enabled to live in righteousness and true holiness all their lives' as both the means and outcome of this process is love (Dieter, 1987, p. 29).

Wesleyan theologian Matthews (1995) suggests that Wesley's theology of faith underwent an evolution from considering faith as an assent to truth claims, through faith as trust in God's love, to faith as an actual spiritual experience of God's love - which he argues became the foundational principle of Wesley's thinking. A natural consequence of the experience of love is some kind of response. We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). For poet and Church of England priest, Herbert, holiness of life was not about personal piety, or even knowledge of scripture, but about demonstrating love (1941, p. 234). This resonates with the identification of the importance of love in holiness outlined in the discussions about Leviticus 19 and the fruit of the Spirit in Section 3.4. In that love is not just about emotion, it is also about action. In 1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13 Paul 'rehearses critical characteristics of love and states in practical terms what love is and isn't or does and doesn't do' (Soards, 1999, p. 271),

⁹³ A discussion on infant baptism is beyond the remit of this thesis but the children in this project worship in Anglican churches so it has been assumed that the understanding of their family and faith community is that they are members of the Christian community through this sacrament.

suggesting that human lives and achievements are 'ultimately judged by the presence or absence of love' (Soards, 1999, p. 273) and that 'only those things done from a heart of love are virtuous' (Swindoll, 2017, p. 191).

The distinction that Paul makes in verse 11 of this passage between the ways of the child and the ways of the adult are not an indication that children are incapable of this kind of love. Instead, Swindoll argues, that Paul is using this metaphor to illustrate how our understanding of what is important will be so different when we are resurrected with Christ: 'the opinions we held, the things we fought about, the issues on which we were once so dogmatic – these things will be replaced with a full knowledge and understanding that can come only when Christ returns' (2017, p. 195). So, it is not necessarily that a child does not 'know' God or is unable to act in love, but all human knowledge of God and enactment of love 'is of limited importance in comparison with the full knowledge imparted by God in an eschatological form' (Soards, 1999, p. 275). To use a more child-like metaphor – a beetle is indeed bigger than an ant, but they are both miniscule compared to an elephant. One of the key components then of holiness – love – manifested in response to God's love and fuelled by it – can therefore be attributed to children, even though this manifestation might appear different to that of an adult.

Children grow and change as they age, but the twentieth century theoretical perspective that this progresses in a linear way has now been augmented by deeper understandings of the complexity and cyclical nature of development, including motivation, behavioural choices and faith (Day, 2001). Children are not one hundred percent pure and innocent, neither are they purely evil. Whilst we might now understand the cry of a baby demanding food is more about survival than sin,⁹⁴ the tantrums of a toddler are not just about the frustration of not being able to communicate or have autonomy over their surroundings. They also have an element of desire to control the adults who care for them to meet their wants as well as their needs. As the child grows both positive and negative 'habits' are formed depending on the outcomes and responses from those around them.

Understandings of the process of sanctification might intimate a descent from innocence to depravity as an infant becomes a child, an adolescent and then an adult, with a reversal of the process on conversion (justification) and an 'upward trajectory' as the individual is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The implication being an image of a straight line down to a point and a straight line back up again. The progressive view of sanctification, does however, imply the active engagement of the individual whereby the transformation of character involves setting the goal of conforming to God's character and practicing the steps towards that until

⁹⁴ Augustine used his own infancy to argue that infants are wilful and their cries are due to original sin (Wills, 2011, p. 30).

they become second nature (Wright, 2010, p. 27). An appreciation, however, of the non-linear nature of development and the complexity of the biological and psychological changes that take place between infancy and adulthood suggests that the process of sanctification, when reliant on the will and action of the individual as well as the Holy Spirit, is more likely to be at least undulating if not actually spiral.

For many, the quest for holiness is seen as a spiritual battle (Bebbington, 2003, p. 304), something to be strived for, an attainment, and ambition. Snyder and Scandrett (2011) expound the theology that 'Salvation means creation healed'. By this they seek to address 'the divorce between heaven and earth that has developed in Christian theology over the course of history' (2011, p. 16) and to use the metaphor of healing to examine sin as disease. In this way, they offer a response to dualism as well as providing resources for the church to consider its role as a healing community.⁹⁵ If the reality of sanctification is less linear and more cyclical or abstract than first thought then metaphors of battle and disease are helpful in that battles are not often linear or straight forward, in the same way that recovery from a disease has good days and bad days.

3.4. Characteristics of holiness

Whilst different theological perspectives might not agree about the timing or nature of the process of becoming holy (sanctification) there is much agreement on the impact it must have on the life of the believer. Starting with God and dependent on a response it must affect the way a person thinks, feels and acts in relation to God, others, themselves and the world God created.⁹⁶ As holiness is an abstract term in the sense of being an idea framework, it will not only take on the colour of whatever system of theology it is in, but also 'yield its autonomy to the whole complex of living relationships' (Bangs Wynkoop, 1972, p. 15). This argument highlights the difficulty of pinpointing a definition, and the danger of creating a set of measurements by which it can be tested. This is particularly so in the case of children who are in the process of growing and changing physically, emotionally and cognitively as well as spiritually.

Table 3.1 compares the balance of definitions of holiness from various theological perspectives in terms of relationship with: God, others, self and the world (by this I mean the

⁹⁵ Based on Irenaeus' view of the redemptive plan as 'creation-incarnation-re-creation' (2011, p. 26) they argue that the early church was 'the living body of Christ, the actual visible embodiment of the good news' (2011, p. 27). Although they describe the creeds as important 'points of consensus' and 'signposts of key confessional truths' (2011, p. 28), they express concern that the creeds alongside neo-platonic conceptions of spirituality and doctrine, diminish God's story to the detriment of discipleship and mission (2011, pp. 28-30).

⁹⁶ See for instance Matthew 22:37-39, Luke 10:27 and Mark 12:29-31.

physical environment).⁹⁷ This is to ascertain where the emphasis is for descriptions of adult holiness and how this might differ from the emphasis in the data revealed by the children in Chapters Five and Six. It appears from this comparison that whilst most writers focus on the working out of holiness in relationship with God and others, there is little emphasis on a holy approach to the created world. This is particularly true of the more reformed definitions and perhaps reflects Snyder and Scandrett's (2011) argument that Christianity has separated the sacred and the secular in an unhelpful way. What is interesting is that the predominant theme of Leviticus 19 is relationship with others, worked out in a just society. This is, however, written within the context of the 'priestly writings' where the assumption is that there is already an awe inspired relationship with God.

The conclusion of the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project⁹⁸ explicitly includes three of these four key relationships. A participatory relationship with the Trinitarian God; living as a covenant people, bringing justice and reconciliation where needed; and caring for the earth God has gifted to us (Mannoia & Thorsen, 2008, p. 20). What it does not mention explicitly in its 'manifesto' is the relationship with self, although this is implicit in the call to live lives that are 'devout, pure and reconciled' and exercise 'an affective array of ministries and callings' (Mannoia & Thorsen, 2008, p. 20). Whilst it is interesting to pursue exploration of these different elements in isolation, it is important to remember that holiness is about wholeness, 'the integrity of heart and life' (Snyder, 2007, pp. 61-62), and therefore it is anticipated that the data from the children might demonstrate all four.

In terms of 'characteristics' of holiness, my starting point has been Paul's list of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, evidence of the 'character of the Spirit of God's son living in us' (Keener, 2019, p. 478).⁹⁹ Couatts believed that holy life was evidenced by the emergence of the fruit of the Spirit that define Christ-likeness (1983) and Harper described it as the 'primary bridge over which the message of grace travels' (2007, p. 58). The list starts with 'love' not only because of the 'centrality of love within new-covenant ethics' but also because it is an antidote to the factional infighting Paul was also writing about (Moo, 2013, p. 364). Ryle suggests that true holiness seeks after 'meekness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and forbearance' arguing that, holiness is 'not just an outward show', but instead it is the 'continual performance of right actions in all conduct'. His list of ten visible elements of sanctification comprise both positive and negative actions but his summary is that a holy person seeks to 'lessen the

⁹⁷ Schaeffer uses these four categories in his identification of the four alienations that affect humanity because of sin: separation from God; separation from self; separation from others; and separation from nature (1970, p. 67). Hughes threads God through them all when creating a set of questions to help his readers distinguish true from false spirituality, but makes a distinction between personal relationships and societal responsibilities See Appendix Three, p.191.

⁹⁸ Azusa, California, February 2006.

⁹⁹ For a more detailed discussion on the 'fruit' see Section 5.6. p.102.

sorrow and increase the happiness' (2014, pp. 38-46). This is something that children are not only capable of, but also inclined to do.¹⁰⁰

For Packer holiness begins with four reactions to God's plan for salvation and claims the four foundations of holy living are 'adoration of God for his greatness, gratitude for the grace that saves. Zeal to exalt Jesus... and wholehearted pursuit of God and godliness according to the natural desire of the regenerate heart' (2009, p. 82). Packer's definition is comprehensive as he seeks to demonstrate that it has 'both outward and inward aspects' of 'faith working by love' (p. 36). Sections 3.5. and 3.6. explore in more detail what those outward and inward aspects might be in a child of faith

¹⁰⁰ See for instance the discussion on altruism in Section 7.5.2. p.141.

Table 3.1 Comparison of definitions of holiness

Key

Elements of the definition associated with relating to God directly

Elements of the definition associated with relating to others

Elements of the definition associated with relating to self

Elements of the definition associated with relating to the world



Leviticus 19 (interpreted by Green (Greenway & Green, 2007, pp. 31-32))				
	God	Others	Self	World
Religious loyalty (v3b,4-8,12,26-31)	Yellow			
Exclusion of the idolatrous and occult (v4,26-31)	Yellow			
Family and community respect (v3,32)		Red		
Generosity with spare harvest (v9-10)		Red		Green
Neighbourly attitudes and conduct (v11,16-18)		Red		
Sexual integrity (v20-22)		Red	Blue	
Racial equality (v33-34)		Red	Blue	
Workers' rights (v13)		Red		
Social compassion (v14)		Red		
Judicial integrity (v15)		Red		
Distinctiveness (v19)	Yellow			
Commercial honesty (v35-36)		Red		
Howard A. Synder's five calls of God (Greenway & Green, 2007, pp. 62-84)				
The Call to Creation Care	Yellow			Green
The Call to Covenant Peoplehood: Repentance, Faith, Obedience, Community	Yellow	Red	Blue	
The Call to God's Reign: Allegiance and Loyalty	Yellow			
The Call to Specific Ministry: Gifts and Particular Vocations Earth Stewardship	Yellow		Blue	
The Call to Holiness: so that we may fulfil the other four calls	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green
Wesley				
'What is holiness? Is it not, essentially love? The love of God and of all mankind? Love producing "bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long suffering"? . . . Love is holiness wherever it exists.' <i>The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason and Experience</i> , (2012, p. 277)	Yellow	Red	Blue	
Hence Christian perfection is nothing higher and nothing lower than this the pure love of God and man – the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. It is love governing the heart and the life, running through all our tempers, words and actions. <i>Thoughts on Christian Perfection</i> (2013, p. 63) ¹⁰¹	Yellow	Red	Blue	
The proper relationship to God is knowing, loving and enjoying God eternally (i.e. participation) (Maddox, 1994, p. 68)	Yellow			
When each of these relationships is properly expressed, we will also have a proper relationship to ourselves with self-acceptance (Dieter, 1987)			Blue	
The proper relationship to all other animals is loving protection (Wesley, Sermon 60 'The General Deliverance' 1.6)				Green

¹⁰¹ This sentiment also appears previously in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (Wesley, 1987, pp. 67-68).

Callen (2008, pp. 8-17)				
	God	Others	Self	World
Elevated to true Christlikeness and oneness with God	Yellow			
God wants all people to be in wholesome relationship with the divine and also to be faithful and effective people in this world	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green
Universal in scope and missionary in nature... for the sake of the salvation of a lost world to be active citizens of a holy church		Red		Green
To be separate from evil, cleansed from fallen-ness Those committed to holiness are to conduct themselves in a way that commends faith in the Holy One	Yellow		Blue	
Ryle (2014, pp. 78-83)				
Being of one mind with God, according as we find his mind in Scripture	Yellow		Blue	
Endeavouring to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment, with a hearty desire to do God's will	Yellow		Blue	
Striving to be like our Lord Jesus Christ and conformed to His image	Yellow	Red		
Aim to bear with and forgive others.. to be unselfish... to walk in love...		Red		
to be lowly-minded and humble...follow temperance, self-denial and humility, mortifying the desires of the body... follow after charity and brotherly kindness, abhorring lying and slander		Red	Blue	
Follow a spirit of mercy and benevolence towards others. Strive to be good relations and neighbours in private and in public		Red	Blue	
Packer (2009, pp. 24-37)				
Holiness has to do with my heart, with my temperament, my humanness, my relationships		Red	Blue	
The nature of holiness is transformation through consecration	Yellow	Red	Blue	
The context of holiness is justification through Jesus Christ	Yellow			
The root of holiness is co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with JC.	Yellow		Blue	
The agent of holiness is the Holy Spirit	Yellow			
The experience of holiness is one of conflict	Yellow		Blue	
The rule of holiness is God's law	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green
The heart of holiness is the spirit of love	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green
Hughes (2003)				
'[Holiness is] a gift freely given, indestructible and always accessible [...]. Spirituality is the process by which we become more aware of this gift of holiness and increasingly conformed to it. To the extent that we acknowledge the gift, our life will be transformed, as we allow God to be the God of love and compassion to us and through us' (p. 18)	Yellow	Red	Blue	
'Transformation does not begin and end in us; in some way it influences the whole of creation. God's gifts are never given simply for the good of the individual: they are given for the wellbeing of all humankind, including the good estate of our enemies' (p. 50)	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green
God is our ultimate identity, there must therefore be signs in us, now, both of God's immanence and transcendence Signs of God's transcendence in us include: Human love and Human Desire Our longing to be free Awareness of our own ignorance and of the limitation of the human mind Awareness of our inability to know God adequately, while trusting God absolutely Our sense of awe and wonder (pp. 22-26)	Yellow	Red	Blue	
God's immanence or down-to-earth nature in us is evidenced in compassion and inclusivity towards others in all areas of our lives. God's relationship to creation is a relationship of love and compassion, so must ours be (pp. 35-38)	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green

3.5. What are we looking for in a 'faithing' child?

If one were to ask children what they want to be when they grow up, 'holy' is not likely to be the answer! There are, however, many children who, due to their faith and spirituality, may want to 'save the world', 'be soft and kind' or 'be able to make new words up that tell God how fab he is'. Section 3.4 explored some of the biblical and traditional descriptions of holiness to identify what is expected in an adult. It was identified that holiness based on love and right relationships could be possible for a child, particularly when they have agency. This section explores understandings of 'faith' to see what insights this can bring to a description of holiness in children.

Children often have a more open and transparent response to the world around them, which runs alongside a natural sense of awe and wonder at the mystery that surrounds them.¹⁰² This means that it is more likely that children can 'bear the mystery of God' as described by Rohr (2003, p. 17). Growing in holiness then becomes not about 'trying to be God' or even 'trying to be good', but instead it is about walking alongside God prepared to see the world with his eyes, wearing 'God Goggles'.¹⁰³

Williams argues that discipleship – the living out of the Christian faith - is about making what we say credible (2016, p. 5). He suggests that in its simplest form, being a disciple is about discerning whether what we think, speak and do reflects Christ's Spirit; and how we grow in depth of relationship with others and God. Whilst this may seem to be a simplistic notion, it encompasses a complexity of processes required to think and speak and act. Children are still engaged in the process of developing the neurology that governs linguistic communication. This means that thinking, speaking and acting in a way that reflects Christ's Spirit might be challenging, not because they don't want to but because they physically can't.

There are many instances in the gospels and epistles that Christians use to consider how their lives should be transformed if they want to be described as people of faith, but most of these are framed in adult terms, and often remain nebulous. Many faith development models, whilst describing the 'self' to 'transcendent' relationship as an ontological matrix, fall short of providing an exposition of the nature of transcendence and an explicit theory of the formation of this relationship.¹⁰⁴ Shults and Sandage attempt to simplify faith to 'becoming wise, just and free' (2006, pp. 67-152). Nevertheless, even these three words create tensions and paradoxes in understanding the transformational process, and in terms of how we relate

¹⁰² See for instance Nye (2011).

¹⁰³ A metaphor used in *Slugs and Snails* (Edwards, 2011) to illustrate how when we are in tune with God the world looks like a 3D movie does when you are wearing the right 3D glasses. The premise is that children are born wearing God Goggles, but the world and its ways soon knocks them off, scratches them or gets them dirty, so it is harder for them to tune into God's ways of seeing and being.

¹⁰⁴ See Moseley's critic of Fowler's theory in (1992, p. 144).

them to children. For instance: wisdom could be the knowledge that under God's justice humans are condemned, and yet at the same time, because of his mercy, they are free (Romans 6:23); and knowledge of God brings freedom to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10), and at the same time the responsibility to bring about justice on this earth (Micah 6:8). Whilst the temptation therefore is to simplify, effective descriptions of faith and holiness in children should not lose the attendant complexity and mystery.

The Old Testament's priestly traditions that focused on cleanness and separation of the pure and profane testify to the 'mystery and unapproachability of God' yet at the same time, the prophetic traditions illuminate 'justice and social caring as the substance of God's holiness' (Brueggemann in (Gammie, 1989, p. xi)). We cannot choose between these two elements of God. The role of the human then as worshipper of the God of Israel is to dwell in both elements of God, whether that human is 7, 17 or 70 years of age. Egan's Mythic Framework (2005) approach to education argues that children's imaginations enable them to hold binary opposites contained in traditional stories, presumably the same could be true for their engagement with biblical narrative.

According to both the Pattaya Scale¹⁰⁵ and Engel Scale¹⁰⁶, the epitome of Christian faith is the ability to tell others about your faith.¹⁰⁷ Whilst a declaration of faith and the ability to communicate it to others may be a measure of how deep the level of understanding and commitment is, it may not actually be a fair measure when we consider those who are lacking in confidence or linguistic ability. Furthermore, if faith is considered believing and trusting even when we do understand, it seems unreasonable that the only measure of that is a clear verbal expression. In fact, Ryle argues that true sanctification is not empty talk but instead the continual performance of right actions (2014, pp. 38-46) which takes the emphasis away from verbal expression.

In addition to being a list of holiness characteristics, the presence of fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in an individual's life is also considered to be a demonstration of faith (Coutts, 1983; Harper, 2007, p. 58). Whilst this has been a frequent sermon topic for adults, the question is how much consideration has been given to what they look like in children. For instance, what does 'self-control' look like for a two-year-old who is striving for autonomy whilst still very dependent on adult carers? What does forbearance look like for an eleven-year-old making

¹⁰⁵ The Pattaya Scale was developed as a tool to help understand some of the steps involved in reaching and discipling children. It can be looked at from a local church perspective, a city-wide perspective or a global perspective. The complete explanation of the Pattaya Scale can be found in the 2nd chapter in a document written for the Lausanne Forum by the Children's Issue Group - https://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/LOP47_IG18.pdf accessed 24/10/2020.

¹⁰⁶ A scale developed by Engel and used to offer insights for evangelism (Engel, 1975).

¹⁰⁷ It is important to remember that both scales were designed as tools for evangelism and therefore come from an evangelistic perspective.

the transition from primary to secondary education? These kinds of questions therefore require those discipling children to consider what they need to 'know' about Christian dogma and doctrine to enable them to do this.

Obedience to the will of God is recognised by Christians to be an element of the demonstration of faith.¹⁰⁸ When discussing obedience and holiness, however, it is important that obedience to God's will and not necessarily compliance and conformity to a certain genre of civilisation that is considered.¹⁰⁹ When does what children do naturally that we consider to be 'good' become holy, and when do their actions that do not comply with cultural expectations become 'unholy'? For instance, a child might run around in a church building because the size and beauty inspires the awe and excitement that they want to show God in their physicality. This might be considered 'naughty' by an adult who believes that church buildings are places of quiet and respect. A child who doesn't want to join in action songs because they are naturally shy and uncoordinated, is not being disobedient if they are joyfully worshipping inside.

Bonhoeffer tries to unpack the issue of what it means to be good for adults by reversing the question from 'How can I be good?' to 'How can I do good?' (1955, p. 188). Straughan argues that teaching children to do as they are told is not the same as teaching them to be good, in that obedience to authority is not necessarily about making moral decisions (2000, p. 7). Piaget's theory suggests, however, that even at the formal operations stage, although able to reason from particular facts and events, a child is unable to operate 'anticipatory schemata', i.e. produce a moral framework from abstract processes (Moseley, Jarvis & Fowler, 1986, p. 108). This is an understanding echoed in Kohlberg's theory of moral development (1978), and the inductive rather than deductive nature of Stage 3 of Fowler's model (1995). If children are less able to employ the cognitive processes to deduce obedience to God's law, then the inference must be that it must be patterned for and directed in them, through instruction and modelling.¹¹⁰

3.6. Holiness Experiences and Holiness Behaviours

It could be argued that identifying holiness in children is not about the 'big' events or manifestations, but instead about the little, ordinary things. Nye asserts that understanding the 'everyday quality' of spirituality, particularly in children, is key to nurturing it and encourages

¹⁰⁸ See for instance: Genesis 3:5, Matthew 1:24, 1 John 2:6 and Romans 6:17.

¹⁰⁹ Beaver (1992) describes the assumption that Christian mission is about 'evangelising' and 'civilising' as the 'oldest and most perennial issue in the history of Christianity's world mission' cited in (Hunter III, 2010, p. 4).

¹¹⁰ The concept of instruction and modelling to children is explored by Miller (2008) through an examination of the book of Deuteronomy in *The Child in the Bible*.

practitioners to pay attention to what the children are doing in the ordinary and every day in order to be able to do this (2011, p. 22). Hauerwas is also a proponent of lived out faith and morality in the everyday and has, according to Burrell, 'long challenged our propensity to link ethics with 'difficult decisions'' (1983, p. ix). If, as Packer has done, it is possible to delineate Christian existence into two related but distinct aspects: spirituality and ethics, then it is possible to combine Hauerwas's attitude to ethics and Nye's understanding of spirituality. In this way, spirituality is about fellowship with God and ethics is about bearing God's image in the world (Packer, 2009, pp. 85-86) but both occur in the ordinary, everyday.

When exploring the holiness of children in the ordinary, everyday, it is important therefore to consider both experiences and behaviours, reflecting Schneider's (2002) assertion that Biblical spirituality is an integration of experience, knowledge, ultimate horizons and practical patterns. In their exploration of the impact of religion on family relationships Mahoney et al. (2003) used the word 'sanctification' to mean 'a psychological process through which aspects of life are perceived by people as having spiritual character and significance' (2003, p. 221). This they propose can occur in two ways. Firstly, by a process of 'Manifestation of God' and secondly through 'Sacred Qualities' (pp. 221-222). Although their premise is different, it demonstrates the validity of using slightly overlapping and yet different lenses to explore the subject of holiness. One lens related to encounter with God and the other lens to do with response. Section 3.6.1 therefore discusses 'holiness experiences' – that could include feelings of love, connection and belonging, awe and wonder, contrition and repentance and transcendence, and may be verbalised as an encounter with God. Section 1.6.2 explores 'holiness behaviours' – a response, an action or a decision to act that reflects the fruit of the Spirit and/or Christian practice.

3.6.1. Holiness Experiences

There is evidence from Christian and secular researchers that children with limited language and social organisation, and in particular religious vocabulary, still show understanding and are conversant with rituals around the sacred (Hay & Nye, 1998; Hart, 2003). Roberson cites Solderblom's exploration of holiness as an anthropological phenomenon – an inchoate reaction to what is unknown, startling or terrifying, where language and social organisation are used to separate what is considered holy from the ordinary, and to protect the ordinary from the danger of what is holy (2003, p. 7). Otto maintains that humans can perceive divine holiness in both fear and fascination and uses the term 'numinous' to try to explain that encounter, which creates 'the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures' (1958, p. 10). He suggests that this is slightly different from being 'rapt in worship' (1958, p. 8) and as the 'mysterious object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension' (1958, p. 28) does not

require a particular level of cognitive development in order to be experienced deeply. For Rappaport, holiness is an ontological, although perhaps latent, reality. One that is 'rooted in the organic depths of human being' (1999, p. 230). If Hughes is right and the human ability to laugh is another sign of the transcendent within, (2003, p. 24) then children, who according to research laugh ten times more times a day than the average adult, may be more likely to connect with the transcendent, even though they may not have the religious language to describe it.

Separation of the sacred and secular has been a keen matter for discussion and theological differences over the centuries. Perspectives have varied from Platonic philosophical separation of the spiritual from the physical, through Luther's belief that holiness was not found in separation from the world, but in separation from evil (Mursell, 2003, p. 281), and Bonhoeffer's belief that faith, and thereby holiness, only comes through living in the world (1971, p. 369). Nye's argument that children's spirituality is entwined with their daily existence, and present in the ordinary and every day, leads her to suggest that children are unable to separate the secular from the sacred in the same way as adults (2011, p. 6). In addition, children often react in different ways to adults. We know that children can easily be terrified by things that seem irrational to the adult mind like monsters under the bed;¹¹¹ does this also mean though that they can approach what we perhaps find terrifying, the utter holiness of God, with an ease beyond an adult understanding?

According to Nye, one of the key elements of children's spirituality is that they are present in the here and now (2011, p. 6).¹¹² This understanding of childhood spirituality resonates with Bonhoeffer's view that the only way to learn faith is by living completely in the world (1971, p. 369). In this case holiness can be found in the mundane as well as the extraordinary, in the darkness as well as the light. Rohr states 'Reality itself, our reality, my limited and sometimes misinterpreted experience, still becomes the revelatory place for God' (2003, p. 15). Hughes also warns against the separation of the sacred and the secular, suggesting that our spirituality has become split, something that then divides God and the things of God from ordinary, everyday life (2003, p. 3).¹¹³ For Hughes 'openness to truth, suppleness of mind, love of learning and the confidence to question' (p. 23) are indications of true holiness that should be seen in Christians. Anyone who has spent any time with someone between the ages of three and seven, may well have witnessed these 'indications of true holiness' in minds that have not become set or cynical. He goes on to say that it is our ability to be awe-struck and feel wonder that allow us glimpses of the transcendent (p. 23). Another reason, perhaps why

¹¹¹ See for example *The Bear under the Stairs* by Helen Cooper for insights into how children's imagination creates fear.

¹¹² This was corroborated by my MA research that demonstrated that children experience and express their spirituality and faith through the physical as well as emotional and cognitive domains.

¹¹³ Resonating with Snyder and Scandrett's *Theology of Salvation as Creation healed* (2011).

it has been argued that Jesus suggested that children, for whom these capacities are more readily available, be used as role models in faith and worship (Matthew 18:2-5, Mark 9:36).

Holiness experiences, therefore, include fear, fascination, the numinous and embodied awareness, do not necessarily require cognitive understanding, and can be manifest in the ordinary. This means that identification of these experiences could be difficult as children might not be able to verbalise the experience or identify it as extra-ordinary.

3.6.2. Holiness Behaviours

It could be argued that holiness can only really be understood in terms of what the outcomes of our holiness are: 'how we lived and what we did' (Ryle, 2014, pp. 28-38). Snyder uses the Old Testament command that Jesus cited in Luke 10:27, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself', as the root of holiness, thus that holiness is about our relationship with God, and other people. The metaphors found in the Bible then become a means for interpreting what this means, although he is keen to point out that it is dangerous to interpret holiness in terms of one metaphor only (Snyder, 2015).

The danger is that an individual striving for holiness then becomes more concerned with busyness than contemplation and forgets Taylor's third basic principle for holy living 'the practise [sic] of the presence of God' (1989, pp. 35-42). Most small children are naturally busy; how can what they are doing be observed as holy? In addition, how is it possible to nurture their natural stillness when it happens too? One of the real dangers in looking for 'clues' as to a person's holiness, is that these become a 'laundry list of behaviours' (Greenway, 2007, p. 12) rather than a response to grace. Kendall suggests that this can lead to a doctrine which can become formulaic and dangerous (2008, p. 67). Helpfully, Bridges Johns argues that personal holiness is not a legal code of ethics, but instead describes personal holiness as a journey 'fuelled by love' (2008, p. 153), 'with God and in God' (p. 152). An enhanced understanding of holiness, according to Raymond, not only looks at what is distinctive about a person's behaviour, but also the context that it takes place in, and the developmental process in which it unfolds (2008, pp. 176-7). As the holiness of children is explored in the following pages attention will be paid to all three.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter sought to identify some of the key themes of holiness through an exploration of Scripture and theology. It was identified that much has been written about how holiness could or should be manifested in an adult, but that little attention has been paid to what this could or should look like in a child.

Whilst comparisons have been made between different definitions of holiness and overlapping themes detected, it was not the intention of this chapter to provide a list of attributes to 'check' in the research with the children. The exploration of these theories of holiness has however revealed some of the challenges to identifying holiness in children and perhaps reasons why it is an under-explored subject. The importance of relationship and connection with God, others, self and the world has been recognised as a helpful framework for exploration of the research data. In particular, the recurring theme of love was acknowledged as an attribute of holiness that could readily be expressed in children. In addition, 'holiness experiences' and 'holiness behaviours' have been discussed as potential categories for recognising holiness in the children interviewed with the recognition that these might be observed in the ordinary, everyday of their lives rather than only in unusual manifestations or occasions.

The intention of exploring holiness from a variety of theological perspectives was to create a space whereby the voice of the child in the midst is heard. The next chapter gives details of how the process of listening was undertaken.

4. Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology carried out and justifies reasons for research design decisions. It then describes the process used to acquire the data and analyse it. This includes identification of factors that could have had a positive or negative impact on the validity or quality of the data.

In any research, reflexivity¹¹⁴ is an important part of the process, but when working with children it is particularly important because we bring not only our own experience of childhood into the encounter, but also the perspectives on childhood and child history that we have drawn from prevailing ideologies (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 8). Ethical researchers are 'obligated to examine their reasons for carrying out research and the ends that their research might serve' (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 18). This Chapter therefore includes a reflexive section, which discusses the 'Insider/Outsider' debate and my reflections on myself as a child of faith.

4.1. Purpose and aims of the research

In line with the developing interest in listening to children's perspectives on their experiences,¹¹⁵ the intention of this research is to 'hear' the children's voice not represented in much of the literature on holiness reviewed so far. It might appear, at first glance, that a quantitative research methodology is required to demonstrate a 'volume' that will be heard. This research, however, intends to move away from what has been evaluated as an emphasis on children as objects rather than subjects of research, where attention has been paid to outcomes rather than process, and child variables, rather than children as persons (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 1). For this reason, qualitative research is more appropriate as it: is more able to 'capture the full richness of experience' (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 13); describes and interprets individual experiences (Smith, 2008); and aims to understand how they are made sense of (Fiese & Bickman, 1997).

Greene and Hill (2005) suggest that research with children is of interest in terms of developmental analysis: for instance, how do children view and understand the world and at what point, if at all, do they recognise that their internal representation of the world might be

¹¹⁴ A mode of self-analysis and radical consciousness of self (Callaway, 1992) that 'through detachment, internal dialogue and constant (and intensive) scrutiny' (Hertz, 1997) allows the researcher to be aware of their own values and prejudices prior to and during the research.

¹¹⁵ James and Prout (1990) indicate that this interest has been increasing since the 1980s and were instrumental in raising awareness for a new paradigm for the study of childhood where children moved from being viewed as 'objects of concern' to 'active participants'. A view that was corroborated in 2002 by the Children's Research Bureau (Harker, 2002).

different from another's? In addition, they argue that this interest in children's experience and the implication that they are sentient beings therefore has a 'moral perspective on the role and status of children which respects and promotes their entitlement to being considered as persons of value and persons with rights' (p. 3). It can therefore be inferred that what is discovered about children from research with children should then affect interaction with children and provision, not just for their care and well-being, but also for how they interpret and understand the world. The conclusions drawn from the data presented in this project are intended to inform and challenge the practice of disciplining children in the Christian faith in this country.

4.2. Challenges of research with children

James (1995) has identified a four-fold typology of perspectives for research with children. Her model suggests that the 'developing child' is seen as incomplete and incompetent, whilst the 'adult child' has comparable competency to an adult. One perspective fails to take the child's spirituality seriously, whilst the other fails to allow for uniqueness. This research project, therefore, is using her typology of the 'social child', where it is understood that children are social actors in their own right and constructors of their own culture and understandings of the world.¹¹⁶ This means that it is assumed they are not only able to have a faith, but can also 'manage' it and describe it. In addition, James' fourth perspective, the 'tribal child' - where the child is viewed as competent, but not in the same communicative world of the researcher - is also held, because it is possible that children's understanding of holiness and related behaviour might be completely different from adults.

One of the prevalent debates in the field of psychological, sociological and anthropological research with children is the view of children as 'beings' and 'becomings'.¹¹⁷ This reflects the 'now and not yet' notion of holiness referred to in Chapter Three. The challenge for the researcher was therefore how to hear and understand what the child was saying about who they are, who they were, and who they want to be, without dismissal or judgement; and allowing the 'gaps' to remain spaces which the 'becomer' has yet to fill.

Hogan argues that childhood sociologists criticise psychology for 'focusing on documenting age-related competences at the expense of investigating what it means to be a child' (Hogan, 2005, p. 23). In the same way this research takes the perspective of reviewing theologians and faith development theorists for focusing on perceived age-related competences, or more likely incompetences, and instead wants to find out what being a child of faith means to a

¹¹⁶ See Wartofsky (1983) for a fuller description of this concept.

¹¹⁷ As described by Morss (1996). Bae cites Lee (2001) and KjØrholt (2008) as evidence for the need to realise children's rights as participants now (2009, p. 395).

child of faith. An emic perspective therefore needs to be taken to fully understand and articulate the understandings and experience of the children taking part in the research. Fetterman (2010, p. 20) argues that although these perceptions might not conform to an 'objective' reality, they are essential to understanding why the participants behave in the way that they do, and therefore suggested an approach that is oriented towards phenomenology.

Some writers have suggested that believing it is possible to know what is in a child's mind is ridiculous (Rogers, Casey, Ekert, & Holland, 2005, p. 162). Social scientists Christensen and James (2000, p. 2), although not necessarily disagreeing with this, and whilst arguing that methodologies need to be examined, suggest that research with children does not necessarily require the adoption of particular methods because children are in fact able to respond in similar ways to adults to surveys and observations. This view is corroborated by other experts in the field of children's research,¹¹⁸ although with the proviso that methods are developmentally appropriate (Greene & Hill, 2005, pp. 8-9). What is particularly important is that 'age' does not become the limiting factor but rather the researcher understands the diversity of experience and ability that children of a particular age might exhibit. To this end, research with children requires a 'multiplicity of methodological approaches' that should 'fit the question that is being asked' (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 4). It was therefore important to produce a methodology for this project that fits the question being asked and the children being interviewed.

Mayall reflects previous concerns about the disparity of power between children and adults¹¹⁹ arguing that for children a 'central characteristic of adults is that they have power over children' (2000, p. 110). She therefore intimates that the researcher may have to modify her research agenda as she encounters the child's understanding of the world (2000, p. 121). What is also important is that the researcher endeavours to avoid using language and metaphorical expressions that the children do not understand (thereby giving the adult power and disempowering the child) and ensures that the child feels that they are given enough opportunity to explore and explain the metaphorical expressions that they use. This includes facilitating a safe space to use different language for different contexts and understandings.¹²⁰ This is particularly important in this case, as the children may have been trying to express notions that they have not verbalised before.

¹¹⁸ Hogan argues that recent research supports the view that children are more competent at understanding adults than expected. She also cites Ceci & Bruck (1993) and Steward & Steward (1996) as evidence of where young children have given accurate accounts of their own experience (Hogan, 2005, p. 34).

¹¹⁹ See for instance Morrow & Richards (1996).

¹²⁰ An interesting insight from Reddie's piloting of his *Growing into Hope* materials was that the children/young people's unwillingness to engage with a session conducted in patois was a sense of displacement. 'The words and phrases used in the session were not the ones he associated with being in church' (Reddie, 2003, p. 97).

A key challenge to the veracity of results from research with children is the factor that children are more likely to give answers from a desire to please than a desire to be accurate (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 9). Whilst from an early age most children are taught not to tell antisocial lies (Wilson, Smith, & Ross, 2003), and an understanding of this has been discovered as early as three years of age (Talwar, Lee, Bala, & Lindsay, 2002), evidence from research into the relationship between moral knowledge and truth telling, with children between the ages of 7 and 11, discovered that the older the child, the more likely they are to evaluate other's lying for the sake of politeness, and do it themselves in a similar situation, suggesting that children become enculturated into lying behaviours in politeness situations (Xu, Bao, Fu, Talwar, & Lee, 2010). It was therefore important in this research that the child did not pick up any indication from the researcher that 'politeness' or 'giving the right answer' was required in the conversation. This was an interesting dichotomy as some of the content of the conversation (holiness behaviours) included references to both politeness and lying. The researcher needed to pay particular attention to any masking of nonverbal signals of intent to deceive (Peskin, 1992). It was felt that the method of using three interviews allowed for triangulation and did bring to the surface any intentional or unintentional inaccuracies or misrepresentations.¹²¹

The challenges of conducting research with children were present but felt not to be insurmountable. The constructivist approach taken for this project posits that the researcher's decades of experience of communicating with children meant that potential challenges of cognitive competency and verbal accuracy in the subjects were naturally overcome and 'affective spaces' (Beaudoin, 2016, pp. 15-17) were created that enabled the children to discuss their thoughts and feelings about their Christian faith. The research instruments discussed in the following sections were also designed to mitigate issues of power imbalance described above and give space for the children to express both their 'being' and their 'becoming'. Following Fetterman's (2010) assertion that understanding the children's experiences is best done through a phenomenological approach, the chosen research approach of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is discussed in more detail below.

4.3. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research process which examines how people 'make sense' of major life experiences. It was developed in the field of psychology but is now increasingly used in human, social and health sciences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 1). Its development was informed by: phenomenology and the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre; hermeneutics as extolled by Schleiermacher,

¹²¹ Research by Talwar and Lee (2008) indicates that children often subsequently 'leak critical information revealing their deceit'.

Heidegger and Gadamer; ideography and the role of the narrative account a key proponent of which is Bromley (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, pp. 11-38). Unlike Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which produces a theoretical account of a particular phenomenon, IPA sets out to identify, describe and understand both the 'objects of concern' and the 'experiential claims' of the participant (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, pp. 43-46).

In this research project the intention is to discover what children believe and understand holiness is in their own lives and how they live this out. What makes IPA more appropriate, as a research methodology for this project, than ethnography or narrative inquiry (although there will be flavour of both in the process) is the notion that the IPA researcher is 'engaged in a double hermeneutic ... trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, pp. 3,35-36). Hermeneutic Phenomenology has already been used in the field of children's spirituality by Hyde (2008, p. 84). In addition, Masterson, in his discussion on phenomenology as a discourse on religion, asserts that it is indeed 'apt for the investigation of all given religious phenomena... such as the experience of the holy' and can illumine more problematic ways of describing God as well as provide 'richer insight into the essential nature' of religious experiences than other more reductive approaches (2013, p. 19).

IPA concerns 'an experience', and the respondent's interpretation of it. In this case, the 'experience' is holiness and faith, both of which are nebulous concepts. There is therefore potential for the research process to either become resistant to interpretation (not wanting to categorise something that is ethereal) or become overinvolved in semantics. According to Husserl, however, 'every experience can be subject to reflection' and in his opinion it is the process of reflection on the 'phenomena' that brings forth the understanding of the more nebulous qualities behind the experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 13). This is one of the reasons why the research methods listed in Section 4.5. (p.72) were chosen. To not only give the respondents and the researcher enough of a framework to hang these nebulous concepts on, but also to give the flexibility and freedom of language and metaphor required for a true exploration of the individual's experience.

Although Schleiermacher's assertion that detailed and holistic analysis enables us to understand our participant better than they understand themselves (1998, p. 266) may appear somewhat arrogant, it is helpful that Smith et al. (2009) believe that IPA analysis can give insights 'which exceed and subsume the explicit claims of our participants' (p. 23). Moran argues that in the process of linking phenomenology and hermeneutics, that which was self-concealing is revealed (2000, p. 229). It is therefore possible that this methodology has enabled the researcher to identify aspects of an experience and understanding of holiness

that the children themselves were unaware of.¹²² It should be remembered however, that the researcher's interpretation is only 'second-order'; it is the participant's meaning-making which is first-order (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, pp. 35-36).

Greene and Hill (2005, pp. 6-7) suggest that some of the rhetoric surrounding research with children resonates with the history of feminist research and invites a 'valorisation' of experience over other sources of information, instead of one source among many.¹²³ This is certainly a limitation of IPA that is reliant on the participant's own account of their experience, and therefore vulnerable to denial, dissociation and post event reinterpretation. Smith et al. (2009) admit that 'pure experience is never accessible' and therefore suggest that IPA research is 'experience close' (p. 33). What is key is that children are given the opportunities to verbalise their experience in ways that help them as well as inform those prepared to listen.

As an idiographic process, IPA requires detailed examination of a relatively small sample size. This means that generalisations and extrapolations cannot be made. Yin, however, argues that case studies whilst not necessarily demonstrating incidence can demonstrate existence (Yin, 1989) and at this stage of research in the subject of children and holiness, that will probably have to suffice. It has been suggested that rich IPA research data can offer theoretical transferability if not empirical generalisability (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 51) and this is why narrative accounts were produced from the data in Chapter Five.¹²⁴

IPA gives the opportunity for the researcher to listen carefully to what the child has to say without necessarily having to use specific tactics¹²⁵ to 'enter' the world of the child, i.e. pretend to be child-like or undertake an ethnographic observation. Although the mannerisms and behaviours of the children will be observed during the research process to authenticate or question what the child is actually saying, observation alone was not selected as a research method because it 'necessitates a level of inference beyond that which is required when the child is in some way reporting directly on his or her experience' (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 13). To make sense of the research subjects making sense of their Christian faith, this hermeneutic process requires a range of skills including intuition (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 22). This is one of the reasons why an element of 'Insider' as detailed in Section 4.4.1. is important.

In trying to interpret the phenomenology of faith in the child participants, the researcher was engaged in a process similar to that described by Wagner (1981) in his discussion on culture. In the same way that the anthropologist identifies the 'points of embarrassment', where there

¹²² This appears to be the case with Star and the Beanie Boos (See 'holy child as philanthropist' narrative account, p. 112) as her motive for the narrative was to moan about walking to church, not to give insight into her philanthropy.

¹²³ A similar argument to the critique of practical theology mentioned in Section 1.3. p.17.

¹²⁴ See Chapter Six, p.105.

¹²⁵ For instance puppets have been used as interviewers with 4 to 7 year olds with the Berkeley Puppet Interview (Ablow & Measelle, 1993).

is a difference between the researcher and the habits of those they are researching, this process identified those ways of experiencing and describing holiness behaviours and experiences that are different from those usually expressed by adults, and more often written about. It was, however, important not to fall prey to the issue outlined by Wagner whereby a culture is defined by its 'otherness'. This was achieved by continuing to pay attention to the 'ordinary' or 'expected' elements of the shared discourse, which might otherwise be overlooked, and pay attention to the power balance, so that the 'interpretation' does not become a taxonomy of my own making (Fabian, 1983).

IPA is a research methodology that fits well with a research subject that is experiential and ethereal. The fact that it has been used before in the field of children's spirituality and mental and emotional well-being is reassuring, and this is probably because of the opportunities it offers for researcher and researched to reflect on an experience. Whilst it is appreciated that the data can only ever be 'experience close' it is anticipated that the hermeneutic process will provide case studies that will usefully inform understanding and practice. The small sample size required and flexible range of research instruments that can be used for this methodology are discussed in Section 4.5. p.72.

4.4. Reflexivity

Like Mercer, my theology of children and holiness will be offered from a localised and not universal perspective (2005, p. 9) and is shaped by the lens of my own experience as a child of faith and an adult of faith, who has been involved in mission and ministry to and with children and young people for over thirty years. This section therefore explores the complexities of this and the challenges of researching a subject that has so many personal connections.

In particular, consideration needs to be given to my position as researcher when I self-identify as an adult of faith and did so as a child of faith. *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem and the Study of Ritual* (Arweck & Stringer, 2002) has been a useful resource for considering the effect that I as a Christian children's worker have on the nature and results of the research I am doing into children's faith.

4.4.1. The Insider/Outsider Debate

The 'insider/outsider' problem is not a new phenomenon, described as originating in the field of anthropology where the researcher desires to inhabit the neutral space between the two perspectives (Collins, 2002, p. 77). According to McCutcheon (1999), it has been of particular debate in the academic study of religion for almost two centuries, with some arguing that those with no experience of religion, or at least a religious perspective, could not understand

the 'real' nature of what it was they were researching. Those in opposition believing that religious membership deprived the researcher of the objectivity required for effective research.

Although a variety of criteria can be used, Cantwell Smith (1981) argues that it is the concept of 'faith' that creates the distinction between the 'insider' and 'outsider', in that a full understanding of what is happening can only be ascertained by someone who has 'faith'. Therefore, despite the difference in age, circumstance, and in some cases, gender, the fact that the children and I share the same faith makes me an 'insider' considered helpful by Cantwell Smith. This research, however, is using a phenomenological framework and there needs to be awareness that my age, gender, personality, past, and capacity mean that my own experience is going to be different from the participants' experience, even if we were to share the same 'experience' of a church service that we both attend. In addition, in trying to get the children to talk about their own relationship with God, inevitably their striving to articulate the nebulous will mean that they will stray into using descriptions and metaphors that I do not share or necessarily understand straight way.

4.4.2. The Researcher as Insider

My experience as a child of faith means that I have a natural empathy for the participants, which may be a way, Stringer argues to 'undermine or counteract the impenetrability of the boundary between insider and outsider' (2002, p. 16). What is important, however, is that my natural empathy and understanding does not mean that interpretation becomes based on nostalgia or what has been described as the 'fiction or fantasy of the outsider' (Sambur, 2002, p. 30). Equally, residuals of the language that I used to describe to myself my own experiences and choices as a child of faith will influence the phenomenological interpretation.

Gibbs argues that the researchers are themselves an important part of the research, not just because of the impact they have due to the research process, but also because of who they are and what they bring to the research process (2007, p. Location 165). He also suggests, however, that one of the dangers of the coding process is that the interpretation can be too heavily influenced by the 'motives, values and preoccupations' of the researcher, resulting in analysis that just reflects their preconceptions and prejudices (2007, p. 52). This is why it was important for me to spend some time reflecting on what those might be, based on my own experience of being a Christian child.¹²⁶ In this way, I can 'bracket' my own experience and 'go native' (Gibbs, 2007, p. 52), reflecting the worldview of the participants, rather than mine.

¹²⁶ See Appendix Four, page 225.

Based on this reflection, below is a list of what I might see if my childhood self was one of the participants, but must not read in to the data (unless of course it is there) because of my own experience:

- A sense of the numinous and a fascination with the unfathomable nature of God
- An identifiable moment, or moments when some kind of declaration of faith was made
- An easy ability to communicate with God, and a real desire to be a 'good' Christian
- A balance sheet mentality to sin and forgiveness, and a propensity to focus on 'sin' rather than grace
- Connection with God through a variety of means, particularly nature
- A reliance on God as the 'filler in' of the gaps left by the rest of life
- An awareness of the 'rules' of being a 'good Christian' in terms of Bible reading, daily prayer, church attendance, etc.
- An ability to make choices of attitude and behaviour based on Christian principles

For Smith et al. the essential qualities for an IPA researcher are 'open-mindedness; flexibility; patience; empathy; and the willingness to enter into, and respond to, the participant's world' (2009, p. 55), all qualities that I think I have, and have exhibited in research projects before. Nevertheless, it is important to externalise my own pre-conceptions and be aware of the impact they might have on my interpretations. The research methods outlined below are designed to give the children as much accessibility as possible and to mitigate any of the factors described above.

4.5. Research Methods

An IPA research project was therefore undertaken with five children between October 2016 and February 2017. The following sections describe and justify the selection process and the research techniques that were used to collate the required data.

4.5.1. Sample Group

There have been studies done of children's self-perception that have included larger numbers of participants. For instance Measelle et al. (1998) followed children from 97 families in their longitudinal study on the children's academic, social and emotional lives and Boivin et al (1994) had self-reports and peer assessments from 140 children when exploring depressed mood and peer rejection. The Children and Decision Making Study (O'Kane, 2000) , which has influenced this research methodology, involved 225 eight to eleven-year olds in the first stage,

although this was reduced to 45 children for the detailed study in which they used interviews and participatory activities. Smith and Osborn (2003) argue, however, that IPA research should be undertaken with small sample sizes because of the level of 'rich data' and subsequent detailed analysis (p. 57).

The primary concern of an IPA approach is that each participant's account is given full appreciation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 9) and, for this reason, sample sizes do tend to be small. Rivituso (2014) only used four subjects for his IPA research on cyberbullying, and Griffiths (2009) studied nine families in her study of the experience of childhood cancer. Initially the plan was to aim for the upper end of Smith et al.'s recommendation of between four and ten (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 52) and I attempted to enrol a minimum six children for the research. In the end, because of the difficulties in recruitment discussed below, there were five children.

It was anticipated that some families might withdraw after expressing an initial interest in the study once they understood the level of commitment required. What was not anticipated was the lack of families who expressed an interest in the first place. The Children and Family workers at two large low evangelical Church of England churches¹²⁷ were recruited to approach families with children of a suitable age, as it was felt that personal invitation would be more successful than public announcements; it was not. On reflection, a public announcement by myself, as the researcher, might have done something to allay potential fears that parents were going to be judged on their children's faith, and this might have made recruitment easier.

Each child received an information pack that outlined the research process and included information and permission forms for themselves and their parents/carers.¹²⁸ In this way, the child was able to make an informed choice whether to participate or not and thereby afforded agency. The children were given the opportunity to withdraw throughout the process up until the date that data analysis began,¹²⁹ and this was made clear to them and their parents/carers.

¹²⁷ For IPA samples are selected purposively and tend to be fairly homogenous (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, pp. 48-9).

¹²⁸ See Appendix Six p.234.

¹²⁹ This approach is recommended by Smith et al. (2009, p. 54).

The two key requirements of the sample profile were that the children were attending Junior School,¹³⁰ and were therefore between the ages of 7 and 11,¹³¹ they also needed to have attended the church for a minimum of one year.¹³² James et al. (1998, p. 174) accuse researchers of selecting a particular age group because they think that the children will be 'old enough' to engage with their methodology, rather than because of what they want to know about that particular age group. In this case, there are pragmatic reasons for choosing children attending Junior School in terms of accessibility, likelihood of parental permission, and verbal reasoning ability.¹³³ The primary reason however is because many people still believe this age group to be below 'the age of accountability' and the ability to own a 'thought through' faith.¹³⁴

Unfortunately, all the children who participated were white; colluding with what Beaudoin and Turpin (2014) call 'White Practical Theology'. There were, however, two girls and three boys, and the ages ranged from seven to almost eleven years of age.

4.5.2. Data Collection

It is important for interviewers to mould the interview to the level of knowledge, reasoning, experience and emotional maturity of the child, and 'interpret their responses from a developmental perspective' (Saywitz & Camparo, 1998). This can be achieved through familiarity and dialogue. The intention was therefore to hold three interviews with each child, in order to foster a productive relationship and enable triangulation. Unfortunately, one child became seriously ill during the research process, and was only able to attend Interview One. He did turn up for Interview Two, but I felt, in conversation with him and his parents, that it was unfair to expect him to go through the process of an interview, when he was clearly not well enough.

The research was planned to take place over several weeks as it might have taken time for the children to feel relaxed enough to share their thoughts and feelings with a stranger (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 17). In the end, most of the time lapses were due to the children's

¹³⁰ Children who are home-schooled may exhibit different worldviews and religious behaviours that mean they are not homogenous enough with the rest of the sample (Carper, 2000).

¹³¹ Up until the late 1990s most research concerning children's self-perceptions was done with children who were over eight years old (Measelle, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 1998, p. 1556). This remains largely the case although there are more resources available now than previously (See for instance the increase in pages of the *Journal of Early Child Development and Care* published by Routledge from an average of 100 pages in 1999 to 1356 pages in 2016) and the Mosaic Model (Clark & Moss, 2001) used with pre-school children has strongly influenced the choice of research methods for this project

¹³² This is so that their church experience is reasonably homogenous.

¹³³ Garbarino & Stott (1992) argue that school-aged children have greater recall and are less suggestible than pre-schoolers.

¹³⁴ See Section 7.3. p.126 for a discussion on this.

schedules (particularly in December). It was also important that there was time between each interview for the data acquired from the previous interview to be checked to ensure the researcher could clarify any areas of ambiguity and identify areas for further exploration.

The original plan was that the children would be interviewed in their own home so that they would feel more relaxed and comfortable, and there would be a greater likelihood of valid results than an artificial research context (Ceci & Brofenbrenner, 1991). Scott argues that interviewing children in the home runs the risk of the child being influenced by the parents or siblings. She does, however, suggest that this risk is mitigated by the ability to use visual aids, and route the interview more successfully, noticing cues from the respondent and ensuring that questions are appropriate to the respondent (Scott, 1997, p. 338). For a variety of reasons, two of the children had to undergo the interview process in the office of their church. This did not seem to have any impact at all on their engagement.

The decision to include a variety of data collection methods in this research project was made based on the success of two relevant projects in particular: firstly the exploration of primary-aged children's emotions and well-being undertaken by Hill et al (1996); and secondly the Mosaic project done in 2001 (Clark & Moss). Because the area of spirituality and faith is complex and abstract, it is important to give the children as many ways as possible to communicate their thoughts and feelings on it. Research has indicated that children are more suggestible than adults are, particularly if the information comes from an adult (Ceci, Ross, & Tolia, 1987). One of the intentions of this research is to explore what information about holiness children have absorbed, but it was also important that the researcher did not unduly influence the child, so researcher responses in the dialogue are generally affirming, whatever the child has said.

Rose argues that 'the visual is central to the culture construction of social life in contemporary Western societies' (2012, p. 2). It is therefore essential for children who are living in the visual 21st century culture,¹³⁵ that the data collection methods used visual media. By asking the children to respond to pictures and take part in a bricolage activity¹³⁶ during the research period, the intention was to create a space that allowed dialogue about more complex and abstract matters.¹³⁷ These methodologies facilitated engagement that is more productive by reducing the power imbalance discussed earlier, by offering the participants the opportunity to explain the meanings they themselves attribute to the visual stimuli and their bricolage.

¹³⁵ The term 'ocular centrism' has been used to describe how the visual is fundamentally central to the experience and communication of contemporary Western culture (Jay, 1993) (Mirzoeff, 1998).

¹³⁶ A term used to describe a construction or creation from a diverse range of available things.

¹³⁷ Scott suggests this is particularly important for children under the age of eleven because 'pictures make the issue far more concrete than verbal representation alone' (1997, p. 335).

Using participative techniques as part of an interview process created a symbiosis that contributed to the gathering of the 'rich data' required for IPA.

4.5.3. Research packs

Research packs (see Appendix Six p.235) were given to each child that fulfilled the sample group requirement and expressed an interest in the research process. The research pack was designed to be attractive and produced from good quality material¹³⁸ and contained:

- A letter to the child explaining the purpose and intent of the research and the process it entails
- A letter for the child to give to their parent/carer explaining the process (and how not to interfere!)
- A permission form for the child to complete including their chosen research name, and sign
- A permission form for the parent/carer to complete and sign
- A calendar page for the family to record interview dates and 'Bricolage' periods
- A questionnaire for the child to complete about themselves
- A questionnaire for the parent/carer to complete about the child

The research pack included a questionnaire for the parents to provide information on the child's general behaviour and well-being: for instance, eating habits, favourite activities; and their own perceptions of their child's faith and spiritual life. This was not to 'test' what the child reveals themselves,¹³⁹ but because the more sources of information there are, the more likely the researcher is to 'receive the child's messages properly' (Garbarino & Stott, 1992, p. 15) and background information on the child's experiences and preferences can help the researcher to understand what the child is trying to communicate more effectively. In their research concerning children's health-related quality of life, Eiser and Morse argue that 'there remains strong arguments for obtaining information from both parents and children where possible' (2001, p. abstract). In addition, personality has been found to affect responses to stimuli,¹⁴⁰ and for the data analysis, it was helpful to compare the parent's perceptions of the children's

¹³⁸ The sample group represent an affluent part of the community in Sheffield and Aylesbury, it is therefore important that the research material reflects what is 'normal' for the children, plus good quality materials reflect the importance of God and the children (see Godly Play (Berryman, 1995) for a deeper discussion of the theological aspects of this notion).

¹³⁹ Although this does provide some triangulation, the researcher does not concur with the view of some developmental psychologists that children are to be viewed as 'unreliable informants' (Hogan, 2005, p. 27).

¹⁴⁰ Not only do personality traits affect responses, they also affect choices that an individual makes, and therefore can affect experiences (Berenbaum & Williams, 1995). In particular optimism and pessimism have also been identified as significant factors in affect and response (Norem & Illingworth, 2004).

personality types with their responses. Although this research is not a personality test, the list of characteristics for the parents to select from was substantiated with reference to the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and the briefer Five Item Personality Inventory described by Gosling et al. (2003).

The desire to give the child as much agency as possible from the beginning of the process meant that little attention was paid to the parents (apart from what was required by safeguarding and courtesy). On reflection, more information about their profession, faith, attitudes, etc. might have been helpful in analysing the data of their children.

4.5.4. Interview One – semi-structured interview with visual stimuli

Informal interviews are the most common form of interview in ethnographic work (Fetterman, 2010, p. 41). Although this research is not strictly ethnographic, informal interviews were used as a research tool because they provide a more natural format for eliciting data. The use of visual media in social research is now a recognized method of engaging effectively with children (Christensen & James, 2000, p. 164), therefore in the first interview the children were shown a number of images: half of which were photos of everyday things, half were paintings or art of more abstract concepts.¹⁴¹ This was so that the more concrete thinkers had stimuli that relates directly to their everyday experience, but there was also scope for the more imaginative children to use abstract and whimsy to help them explore their thoughts and feelings. It was anticipated that the children would respond to the images in different ways, which they did,¹⁴² as the purpose of the research was not to discover which pictures work best, but to hear what forms of signification the children are using, and therefore what meanings they are producing (Hall, 1997, p. 9). As with previous use of visual methods in social research, the photographs were simply a means to an end (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004).

The selection of pictures was achieved by asking some adults to suggest pictures or objects that they remember having significance for them as a child in their relationship with God. This meant that the range of pictures was less biased towards the researcher's own preferences and experience. As adult culture (even based on childhood memory) is different from current childhood culture,¹⁴³ the large number of pictures selected based on the adult recommendations was then 'filtered' with the help of friends' children.

¹⁴¹ See Appendix Five, p.229, for a catalogue of the images and the children's responses to them.

¹⁴² For instance, the most pragmatic child rejected any picture that looked cartoony, whilst some of these were a source of interesting dialogue from the other children.

¹⁴³ Culture in this context is taken to mean 'participants interpreting meaningfully what is around them... in broadly similar ways' (Hall, 1997, p. 2).

In the first stage of the interview, the children were asked to put the pictures into three piles: one that included those that have something to do with how they think and feel about God and their faith; one, which included those pictures that do not; and one that they were unsure about. The subsequent interview discussion focused on the pictures, usually starting with those that they had a positive response to. Children are apparently more likely to answer 'no' to a question they don't understand, or simply answer 'yes' or 'no' to a closed question with not as much accuracy as an adult (Waterman, Blades, & Spencer, 2001). It was therefore important that open questions were used as much as possible and that the discussion was predominantly led by the child.

4.5.5. Bricolage Activity and Interview Two

Although it was considered important to offer a means of 'concretising' the abstract nature of the subject, using diaries¹⁴⁴ was excluded, as writing might have been an obstacle to expression for some of the children. Instead, it was decided to give the children the opportunity to 'Bricolage' - collect random pictures, objects, notes, etc. which have relevance to them and their experience and through which they can explain their faith experience. Not only did this Bricolage approach give the child some autonomy in the process, by using the child's own visual clues and references, it was easier to check back with the child that the researcher's attempts at understanding the child's perspectives were accurate.

The Bricolage activity was designed to cover two weeks. The intention being that although the two weeks did not have to be consecutive, one was to be a normal school week and one was to be a holiday week¹⁴⁵. The children were invited to 'gather' evidence of their relationship with God, self, others and the world around them through a variety of media and methods. This activity did not have to be done every day, but as and when they thought about it. Each child was given a box in which to gather their resources. The reason for offering the children a variety of ways to record their 'God experience' during the week/fortnight was not only to accommodate the variety of learning styles (Gardner, 2006), and spiritual connections (Edwards, 2011), but also because children are more likely to talk openly about their experiences when they are engaged in age-appropriate activities (Ceci & Bruck, 1993).

At the end of Interview One, the researcher explained that the child could put whatever they liked in the box and gave some suggestions.¹⁴⁶ Whilst it was probable, it could not be assumed that all the children in the sample group will have access to a mobile phone. The intention was therefore to offer the children a variety of options, although it is anticipated that

¹⁴⁴ See for example (Smith, 1999).

¹⁴⁵ The family does not have to 'go on holiday' but will be taking a break from the usual weekly routine.

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix Seven, p.241.

a child with a mobile phone could create and record their whole Bricolage digitally. Photo-elicitation is a commonly used research method in social science disciplines (Rose, 2012, p. 304). The list was intended to be illustrative and not prescriptive, and it was made clear to the children that it was entirely up to them how many of what kind of items they put in the box. Drawing was particularly encouraged, as it facilitates abstract communication (Crilly, Blackwell, & Clarkson, 2006) and there is evidence to suggest that children see drawing as a 'non-specialist' skill and therefore feel it is less open to critique or judgement than writing, which carries the criteria of correct spelling and neat hand-writing (Christensen & James, 2000, p. 168). In addition, inclusion of electronic media was encouraged as children already use them to readily communicate with others about their lives (Holloway & Valentine, 2001). What the children were collecting are icons, indexes and symbols of their relationship with God, their holiness experience and their holiness behaviours.

Parents were required not to suggest items for the box, but to make a note of any conversations had about the box and its' contents as a triangulation of Interview Two. Evidence suggests that boys in particular want to know that they will get things 'right' before they make an attempt, but that girls will also want to be seen as 'good'¹⁴⁷ so the researcher stressed that in this exercise there was no 'right' or 'wrong'. It was clear however from the interview transcripts that there was some unrecorded parental discussion about what could go in the box, particularly with Star and Storm, and Charlie Bucket admitted that his box was only put together the day of the interview.

The intention was that the dialogue about the items in the box in Interview Two facilitated deeper exploration of issues, and concentrated focus. The items that were included that were drawn or made certainly provided an opportunity for the children to comment on the process of production (Christensen & James, 2000, p. 165) and articulate things that might normally remain implicit in their experience (Rose, 2012, p. 306). This was particularly pertinent for a phenomenological approach to research in that it is not what the object is that is significant, but what it represents or manifests to the individual (Masterson, 2013, p. 9) and it was very interesting and insightful to see the variety of metaphors the children included in their boxes.

4.5.6. Interview Three and Decision-Making Chart exercise

Interview Three was scheduled to take place after the transcription of the Bricolage exercise, and was intended for use as a clarification and or revisiting of data the participants shared in Interview One and Two. As part of this clarification a decision-making chart was used to help the child express what had already been discussed but with a particular emphasis on who influences their holiness experiences and behaviours. This decision-making chart was

¹⁴⁷ See for instance Walkerdine's classroom research (1985).

amended from one used by O’Kane in her research on children in care (2000, p. 144) and required the children to consider who has influence over the way they live out their faith and express and experience holiness. The list of elements was drawn from data collated in Interview One and Two and then the children were asked to decide what influence they and other people had on them.

The particular strength of participatory techniques is that they do not rely heavily on high levels of literacy but instead are more likely to engage the children more effectively because they emphasise visual impression and active representation of ideas (O’Kane, 2000, pp. 138-139). The children’s engagement was complete, with one minor exception,¹⁴⁸ throughout all three techniques used demonstrating the veracity of this choice of research instruments.

4.5.7. Data Recording

Permission was given by the children and their parents for every interview to be recorded by Dictaphone. It was surprising how little attention the children paid to the Dictaphone once they got over their initial delight at being significant enough to be recorded. There were a couple of technical issues. One where the power ran out, close to the end of Mel’s¹⁴⁹ second interview; and another where Star’s decision to circumnavigate the room on the furniture, whilst eating an apple in Interview Three meant that there were some passages where it was very difficult to distinguish what she was saying. Brief notes were also made of the pictures choices in Interview One and were used to corroborate data from the recording where it was not clear. Permission was also given for photos to be taken of the contents of the Bricolage boxes in Interview Two and the decision-making table used as part of Interview Three.

The decision was made to transcribe the recorded interviews manually as Bailey (2008) argues that the written representation of audio and visual material is the first step in analysing data. It also meant that in listening to the text repeatedly to transcribe it accurately, I was able to ‘savour’ the words and expressions of each child,¹⁵⁰ including their moods and physical activity during each interview. Rehearsing their non-verbal communication also enabled better interpretation and representation. A system was developed to denote the length of pauses by the number of dots, and differentiate between hesitation markers that indicated uncertainty, consideration or conflict.

¹⁴⁸ In her third session Star became distracted and moved around the room quite a bit for part of it.

¹⁴⁹ The children are all referred to by their chosen research name.

¹⁵⁰ Ethnographer Fetterman describes the importance of understanding words and expressions when working in different cultures, suggesting that one ‘quickly learns to savor [sic] the informant’s every word for its cultural or subcultural connotations as well as for its denotative meaning’ (2010, p. 40).

4.6. Data Analysis

Gathered data was analysed by means of an 'iterative and inductive cycle' (Smith, 2007). By its very nature, IPA is flexible and reactive as the text is analysed in isolation with a view to identifying themes; in comparison with the other case studies; *and* in dialogue with psychological and theoretical knowledge. Although Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) assert that IPA analysis is not about following a set of steps, the framework (pp. 82-107) that they provide was a helpful starting point for the process.

Layder (1998) suggests that pre-coding is helpful. For Interview One a simple table¹⁵¹ was drawn up that indicated whether the children felt that the picture was a 'Yes', this is related to my friendship with God; 'No', it has nothing to do with it; or 'Maybe', I am not sure. In this way, it was easy to quickly identify which pictures caused mainly positive or negative reactions, or which created ambiguity. It was also easy to see whether an individual child's approach was mainly positive, negative or ambiguous. Dialogue passages from the transcripts that related to the different pictures were collated for each of the pictures.¹⁵² Fetterman argues that this kind of pattern identification is a form of analysis (2010, p. 97). Although the intention was not to directly compare the children's responses, if a particular picture elicited a strong response from one child, it could easily be seen whether it had created the same response in the others, enabling a greater discernment about whether it was the picture that was a strong influence or the subject the child was discussing.

Passages of dialogue from Interview Two were also categorised and collated. This was firstly just getting a feel for what the children were talking about, but also meant that if a particular theme/category became prominent through coding, this could then be compared with what the other children had said.

Coding is the 'critical link' between collecting the data and explaining its meaning (Charmaz, 2001). Getting the coding right is probably the most important part of the analysis. In fact, Strauss suggests that the quality of the research rests on the quality of the coding (1987, p. 27). The transcripts were coded manually, as it was felt that some of the language used by the children might create errors in a computerised system, and, more importantly, I wanted to 'dwell' in the data to ensure an effective interpretative process.

Some of the coding is single words; some of it is longer phrases. What was important was that it summed up the 'primary content and essence' (Saldana, 2013, p. 4) of what the children were trying to communicate. Despite the belief of many research writers that only the most salient parts of the data related to the research question require examination,¹⁵³ I decided to

¹⁵¹ See Appendix Five, p.229.

¹⁵² See Appendix Eight, p.242.

¹⁵³ See for instance Guest, MacQueen, & Namey (2012) and Morse (2007).

code every part of the text, and to use the data from the questionnaires the participants, and their parents, completed, so that I could build up a comprehensive picture of what was going on for the child, and not miss the 'significant social insights' generated by the 'minutiae of daily, mundane life' (Saldana, 2013, p. 16).

The open coding process was carried out on all three interviews, to identify the themes pertinent to each child. The codes were categorised under the following headings: behaviours and actions; events; strategies and tactics; states and feelings; meanings; relationships and interactions; constraints, consequences and limitations; Christian metaphors and symbols; other. In some cases, it was appropriate to use 'Simultaneous coding'¹⁵⁴ because the coding framework that explored things like behaviours *and* feelings means that some data is 'both descriptively and inferentially meaningful' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 66) and justifies more than one code. A process of refining then took place, during second cycle coding, before an annotated profile of each child was written and a definition of holiness derived from their data was composed for each child (See Chapter Five). The data was then used to draw up case studies for the main themes that emerged from the children's voices and are presented in Chapter Six.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter establishes why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was an effective methodology for this research and outlines how the data was obtained using research tools that were designed to suit the needs of the respondents. It also describes how the data has been analysed and ordered for presentation in Chapters Five and Six.

Over and above the challenges explored in Section 4.2., my experience with this research methodology was that the children were both engaged and able to effectively articulate their experience. Therefore, Scott's assertion that children are 'good respondents' if they are asked about things that are meaningful to them (1997, pp. 332-3) appears valid.

It was disappointing that Max Stone had to drop out due to health reasons, but this does not negate the effectiveness of the chosen methodology, and the decision was made to present his data even though it is limited as it gives interesting insights into the impact of ill health.

¹⁵⁴ Also called 'double coding', 'co-occurrence coding', 'multiple coding', 'overlap coding', 'sub coding', 'embedded coding' or 'nested coding' (Saldana, 2013, p. 80).

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1. Introduction to participants

All of the children were between the ages of seven and eleven when they were interviewed. There are two girls and three boys. They can all be described as 'middle class' and at the time of the interview lived at home with both their parents. In terms of the faith development models,¹⁵⁵ Fowler would argue that they are in the Mythic-literal stage, leaving or having left the 'Intuitive-Projective' stage. Westerhoff thinks they are in the 'Affiliate' stage, and Powers thinks they are in need of Indoctrination.¹⁵⁶ The descriptions below are presented in the present tense to demonstrate that the data is a 'snapshot' of the children at the age they were during the interview process, and does not reflect what has transpired since. The children are referred to throughout the text by the 'research name' that they chose for themselves or an abbreviation of it.

5.1.1. Charlie Bucket¹⁵⁷

Charlie Bucket (CB) is a nine-year-old boy who lives with his mum, dad and thirteen-year-old sister. They live in a large detached house in Sheffield¹⁵⁸ and attend an active low Evangelical church nearby. His parents describe him as: extravert, outgoing, talkative, exuberant, caring, loyal, risk taker, happy, loving, mischievous, trusting, creative and confident (PQCB)¹⁵⁹ and nothing in the interview process indicated otherwise. They believe his faith to be strong, but wonder if the recent death of his maternal grandparents has had an impact on him. On his participant questionnaire, CB indicated that the only thing he really did not like doing was tidying his room, and he was ambiguous about going to school (CQCB). His parents said that he likes playing games on a tablet, making things, karate and bottle flipping (PQCB).

According to the interview data CB is a child that likes to get things right, (although methodical, meticulous and logical or anxious were not ticked by his parents) (PQCB). This means that checking the process and understanding the rules are important parts of his interaction with others. He particularly likes solving puzzles and using logic to sort problems; his hobbies, like programming and the Rubik's cube, reflect this.

¹⁵⁵ See Appendix One, p.224.

¹⁵⁶ In this case 'Indoctrination' is understood to be 'mastering the content of faith'.

¹⁵⁷ For CB's full annotated profile see Appendix Nine, p.243.

¹⁵⁸ This is all that is known about the parents.

¹⁵⁹ Information given in the returned questionnaires from the Research pack are denoted with PQ for the ones completed by the parents, and CQ for those completed by the child. This is then followed by the child's research name initials.

He enjoys going to Church and being part of the children's choir there, but seems to have an ambiguous relationship with the Bible, and prayer. In our first two conversations, he used a strategy of linking what was discussed with well-known biblical material, but neglected to do this in the third interview. Occasionally CB reverted to whispering when he was unsure about what he was saying or thought it might be considered naughty.

The interviews were carried out in CB's home, usually on a Sunday afternoon, in the lounge whilst the family pottered elsewhere in the house. Interaction with his parents and sister was witnessed before and after all three interviews and considered 'normal' by the researcher.

5.1.2. Max Stone¹⁶⁰

Max Stone (MS) is an eight-year-old boy who lives with his mum, dad, two brothers (twelve and fourteen years old), adopted sister (three years old) and dog in a vicarage in Buckinghamshire. At the time of the first interview, MS's health had stabilised and made a bit of an improvement after over three months of blood tests and time off school. His parents were obviously concerned that this had an impact on him but were less concerned of the impact that the arrival of his adopted sister had been (PQMS). She is five years younger than he is and has additional needs.

According to his parents he is curious, honest, imaginative, hard-working, funny, obedient, talkative, shy, open minded, introvert, self-controlled, quiet, compliant, caring, loyal, crazy, idealistic, gentle, methodical, generous, faithful, cheeky, happy, cuddly, kind, sensible, loving, anxious, clever, thoughtful, trusting, creative and self-disciplined. They describe his faith as deep and thoughtful but are not sure whether this is more 'head knowledge' than personal relationship even though he definitely believes in God and is encouraged by testimonies (PQMS). MS loves being at school, watching television, reading books, making new friends and playing outside (CQMS) although these are all things that his illness had severely reduced his ability to do prior to the interview. He hates eating vegetables! His parents say that he likes reading, Lego, TV, and chatting on his bed, and these were activities that he described in his interview.

There is only one interview with MS as the ill health that he refers to in Interview One became worse and although he turned up for Interview Two, he was very tearful, and the researcher decided that it was not in his best interests to continue. MS lives in the detached vicarage next to the low Evangelical church where his father is a Minister. The Interview was carried out in the Vestry of the Church, as this was identified as somewhere that MS would feel comfortable. His mother 'hovered' throughout the interview, coming into the room a couple of

¹⁶⁰ For MS's full annotated profile see Appendix Nine, p.250.

times to check that he was ok. What is clear from the interview is that the child that the parents describe has been severely inhibited by what has now been diagnosed as a chronic fatigue condition and that this condition has affected his whole outlook, worldview, therefore faith, and spirituality. It was, however, decided that although there was less data from MS than the other participants its contribution was significant and should be included.

5.1.3. Mel¹⁶¹

Mel is a ten-year-old boy who lives with his Mum and Dad and five-year-old brother in a modest semi-detached house in Buckinghamshire. His parents say that he is: honest, imaginative, hard-working, funny, talkative, shy, open minded, quiet, caring, noisy, moany, gentle, generous, competent, naïve, moody, cheeky, happy, cuddly, kind, sensible, playful, loving, anxious, clever, thoughtful and creative (PQMel). Although there was evidence in the interviews that Mel is a shy and slightly fearful child, he was an absolute delight to interview in that he was animated and generous in our conversations.

For Mel, family and relationships are key and his faith reflects this. His family appear to be very close and do many things together including eating home cooked food, taking walks, playing games, going on holiday and day trips. Normally meals are taken in front of the TV, but Mel particularly likes it when they have guests and they eat at the table and chat and one of the key things he was looking forward to about Christmas is a big family meal. What is particularly significant about Mel's questionnaire is that he says that the thing he really does not like is 'unkind attitudes'.

Mel was interviewed in the vestry of the low Evangelical church that he attends on a Wednesday. He really enjoys going to church with his family (PQMel) (CQMel), and the children's worker he knows well was present in the vestibule, so it was felt that this would be a comfortable environment for the interviews. His Mum said that he does not talk much about his faith at home but seems curious about God and how we came to be on earth (PQMel).

He has lots of hobbies, in one interview he came straight from a piano lesson, and he has tried to teach himself a number of things too. They have guinea pigs and birds at home, but Mel desperately wants a pug (CQMel). He talks a lot about school, and in Interview Three he shared a great deal about his fears and hopes of leaving primary school and heading to secondary school, particularly the rites of passage he was facing.

¹⁶¹ For Mel's full annotated profile see Appendix Nine, p.253.

5.1.4. Star¹⁶²

Star (Sta) is a seven-year-old girl who lives with her parents and nine-year-old sister in a large detached house in Sheffield. She could best be described as a fairy; in fact, one of her Interviews was carried out with her in a fairy costume. She chose her research name 'because they're really bright and they guided the kings...¹⁶³ and I really like them cos they're pretty' (Int2:71-73)¹⁶⁴. The thing she wants most is a King Cobra, and she really does not like being told off (CQSta).

Her parents describe her as: curious, honest, imaginative, joyful, hard-working, funny, obedient, easy going, open minded, introverted, self-controlled, caring, loyal, noisy, risk-taker, gentle, excitable, generous, competent, faithful, logical, meticulous, physical, spiritual, happy, cuddly, kind, sensible, playful, loving, compassionate, creative, self-disciplined, confident and charming (PQSta). They also suggest that she is a deep thinker who has deep and existential questions related to her faith.

Star hates eating vegetables but loves tidying her room (CQSta). She has an extensive collection of Beanies – 17 in total, which she started collecting when she was five. She is clearly a gregarious child and playing is one of Star's favourite activities (CQSta) (PQSta) and she talks about instances where she resents Christian faith disciplines, like going to church, because they get in the way of play. She also has two rabbits, which the family care for collectively.

She enjoys going to Sunday School but mainly because she gets to do fun things and eat biscuits and sweets which may be why her parents say she 'doesn't always want to go to church but enjoys it when she gets there' (PQSta). She thinks 'it's ok' being a Christian (Int2:176). She says that her faith is strong, and in Interview Two when pressed, does not think she will ever stop being a friend of God.

Star was interviewed in her home before or after her sister Storm, depending on their timetables. Interview Three was not particularly successful in that she was very restless and moved around the room a lot, eating an apple, so what she said was not always clear.

¹⁶² For Star's annotated profile see Appendix Nine, p.262.

¹⁶³ Dots denote a pause, roughly one second per dot.

¹⁶⁴ This denotes a reference to interview data. Here this is Interview Two, lines seventy-one to seventy-three. Where it is unclear initials are used to indicate which child is being referred to: CB – Charlie Bucket, MS – Max Stone, MI – Mel, Sta – Star, and Stm – Storm.

5.1.5. Storm¹⁶⁵

Storm (Stm) is the older of the two girls that I interviewed in their family home. She is nine years old and very much the older sister to Star. She appears to be a secure and confident child, who has made the most of the wide range of opportunities she has been given including rock climbing and cheerleading and clearly enjoys a loving family life where good manners and Christian practices are encouraged. She plays the saxophone and sings in the choir at church (PQStm).

She enjoys most things apart from Christmas pudding, but is ambiguous about going to bed and tidying her room (CQStm). Her parents describe her as: curious, extravert, honest, outgoing, imaginative, joyful, hard-working, funny, obedient, easy going, talkative, open minded, self-controlled, exuberant, caring, loyal, noisy, bossy, optimistic, risk taker, gentle, excitable, astute, generous, competent, faithful, logical, physical, spiritual, a leader, happy, cuddly, kind, sensible, playful, loving, clever, positive, trusting, compassionate, creative, confident, and charming.

She is still very much a concrete thinker, and most of her responses were pragmatic rather than imaginative or whimsical. Her parents describe her faith as strong and say that she is very open about it even when it means she has to stand out from her friends (PQStm). She says she likes going to church, particularly doing all the activities in Sunday school. During all three interviews she was animated and engaged, although at the beginning of Interview Three she did appear a little stressed by not understanding exactly what she was supposed to be doing with the cards.

She is confident and easy going and enjoys comedic moments. In each interview she used humour effectively to entertain herself and me. The things she wants most is a puppy but does appear to enjoy looking after their two rabbits.

5.2. Overview of data processing and emerging themes

As discussed in the research methodology chapter, it was important to provide research encounters with the children that enabled them to express themselves as freely as possible in order to provide rich data for the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis process. In all of the interviews conversation with the children felt easy and natural, and the interactive methodologies provided a framework for discussion without restricting subject matter.

¹⁶⁵ For Storm's full annotated profile see Appendix Nine, p.269.

5.2.1. Interview One

The table in Appendix Five (p.230) demonstrates that the selection of pictures used offered the children a good balance of opportunities to describe their friendship with God. It is also worth noting that even those pictures that the children chose to put in their 'No' pile provided data as they gave their rationale for their decision. Dialogue concerning each picture from the transcripts was collated to enable greater contrast and comparison. Most of the positive responses were related somehow to God as creator, but Appendix Ten (page 277) shows the children's dialogue for pictures that elicited direct responses about God, Jesus and/or the Bible that did not refer to his creative power. They demonstrate that there is a range of responses from the children - from a deep conviction, to an ambiguous uncertainty.

5.2.2. Interview Two

Table 5.1 shows that the bricolage activity in Interview Two enabled the children to cover a wide range of discussion topics including, but not restricted to, key theological themes. Each annotated profile was then examined for significant statements from the children, or understandings from the researcher's interpretation of their stated experience and lifestyle choices, that evidenced 'holiness behaviours' or 'holiness experiences'. The term 'holiness behaviour' is used to describe actions or choices described by the child that reflect faith behaviours. Sometimes the children do specifically use Christian terminology or refer to known Christian faith tradition practices, but sometimes the behavior is there by inference. The term 'holiness experiences' is used to describe actual or aspirational experiences related to encountering God or exercising faith. These include instances, which may be referred to by Hay and Nye as 'relational consciousness'. Sometimes a description from a child included material that could be classified as both a 'holiness behaviour' and a 'holiness experience' but as the evidence is not reliant on quantitative analysis it was at the researcher's discretion as to whether they were counted as either or both. These passages were then summarized, using where possible wording from the child's own description. The summaries were then gathered into a narrative description of holiness for each child.

Table 5.1 Discussion Themes precipitated by the Bricolage box activity

Achievement	Activity	Appearance	Being ill	Being naughty
Being nice	Bible	Church	Creation	Creativity
Cross ¹⁶⁶	Cuddly toys	Family	Feelings	Film
Food	Friends	Generosity	God's love	Gratitude
Hope	Jesus	Light	Making good choices	Prayer
Rules and instructions	Self esteem	Singing	Space and distance	Sunday School
Supernatural	Time	Trust	Worship	

5.2.3. Interview Three

In Interview Three, the children were asked to select some aspects of living a Christian life, identify whether they thought they were easy or hard to do, and then explore the impact that others had on whether they did them or not. In each interview, the children were encouraged to choose their preferred elements of living out their faith,¹⁶⁷ and people of influence, from a set of cards produced in response to Interviews One and Two. They were also given blank cards to add any activities or people.¹⁶⁸ The tables they created showing what influence they felt others had on their holiness experiences and behaviours are in Appendix Twelve (p.287). Their responses are summarised in Table 5.2 and displayed in the same order for ease of comparison.

For Charlie Bucket who is obsessed with rules, doing things that he believes live out his Christian faith is easy. With a little digging in the Interview, he did admit that doing the right thing and not doing the wrong thing can be difficult, but essentially what his data shows is that it is easy because it is heavily influenced by the people around him. He can follow the rules if they maintain them for him.

¹⁶⁶ As in the cross that Jesus died on.

¹⁶⁷ This is why some of the columns in Table 5.2 are blank.

¹⁶⁸ Star was the only child who recognized that the conversations she was having with me were having an impact on the way she was living her faith.

Table 5.2 Impact of others on holiness experiences and behaviours identified in Interview Three¹⁶⁹

Key	The colour of the outline of the element and the label shows whether the child found this easy or hard or weren't sure									
	Easy			Hard			Don't know or mixed			
	The colour of the box shows what level of influence the child thought this person had on this element									
	Lots of influence				No influence				Mixed	
	The column is left blank if the child did not choose this element to explore their Christian living									
Charlie Bucket										
	Helping others	Telling the truth	Doing the right thing	Not doing the wrong thing	Giving and sharing	Telling others about God	Worshipping	Going to church	Reading the Bible	Praying
Me										
My grown-ups										
Grandparents										
Sunday School										
God										
Sister										
Friends										
Mel										
	Helping others	Telling the truth	Doing the right thing	Not doing the wrong thing	Giving and sharing	Telling others about God	Worshipping	Going to church	Reading the Bible	Praying
Me										
My grown-ups										
Grandparents										
Sunday School										
God										
Brother										
Friends										

¹⁶⁹ There are only four sets of data because Max Stone's health meant he couldn't do Interview Three.

Star										
	Helping others	Telling the truth	Doing the right thing	Not doing the wrong thing	Giving and sharing	Telling others about God	Worshipping	Going to church	Reading the Bible	Praying
Me	Green	Red	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
My grown-ups	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow	Red
Grandparents	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Sunday School	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
God	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Sister	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Red
Friends	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Red
Carolyn	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green
Storm										
	Helping others	Telling the truth	Doing the right thing	Not doing the wrong thing	Giving and sharing	Telling others about God	Worshipping	Going to church	Reading the Bible	Praying
Me	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
My grown-ups	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
Grandparents	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Sunday School	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
God	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
Sister	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Friends	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red

For Mel, the picture is more complex. His interview suggests that he is aware of the complexities of choices that he is making, and spends some time considering them. Again, he thinks that the experiences and behaviours he has chosen are easy, although he has forborne what could be perceived as the trickier ones. What is interesting is, in direct contrast to Charlie Bucket, his ambivalence about the influence of God on his behavior and attitudes. Although in Interview Three he talks about his enjoyment of worshipping in church as part of a community, he also talks about his own discipline of prayer and Bible reading.

In this Interview Star was distracted and fidgety (spending most of her time moving around the room on the furniture) so I do not feel that her answers are as comprehensive as they could have been. The variety in the table demonstrates her independent thinking, and the wrestling with her conscience about making good choices that she describes - 'My heart is saying I know it's the right thing to do, my head is going I really want it back' (Stalnt3:77-78) - and her belief that whilst others can tell her what to do, she still has a choice.

Storm, the most pragmatic of the children, struggled with this exercise, and there is evidence in the Interview of some anxiety about 'getting it right'. Storm's subsequent decision to use multiple cards to demonstrate her thinking is evidence that this method of data recording was flexible enough to give the children an effective means of communicating some of the ambiguity of their experience, thoughts and feelings. Her response is very straightforward with a blanket approach to the experiences and behaviours and the belief that the two biggest external influences are God and her grown-ups but they work in partnership with her own responsibility.

5.2.4. Coding

When all the transcripts were complete they were coded (again, manually to enable the best interpretative process), before an annotated profile was written for each child (see Appendix Nine, p.244). In the case of MS, this was significantly shorter than the others because the deterioration in his health meant that there was only one Interview. Table 5.4 gives an overview of the key themes, which emerged from the coding of the transcripts for each child.

Table 5.3 shows the emergent themes from the transcripts. Family and friends were recurring themes for three of the children, but not really a major part of the discussion for the other two. Imagination and creativity were obviously present in Star, the youngest child's interviews, but harder to spot in the others, particularly as they repeatedly attributed any creative energy to God. None of the children spent much time talking about their online engagement, and when CB did mention computers, it was in relation to programming. It would appear from these interviews that the internet had, at this stage, had very little impact on the lives and therefore spirituality and faith development of these children. It would be very interesting to see if that is still the case sometime in the future. Agency, or lack of it, did emerge and is discussed in more detail in Section 7.2.2. (on page 129). Three of the children used humour as a means of engagement, with only CB relating it to God 'I think he makes people laugh in heaven' (Int2:207).

All seven 'aspects of faith' described by Moseley et al (1992, pp. 42-45)¹⁷⁰ were identifiable in the data of the children, suggesting that the concept of 'holiness' does encompass both spirituality and faith development. They are, however, described as 'complex clusters of cognitive skills' (1992, p. 42) and therefore it is important to pay attention to other details in the data as well.

¹⁷⁰ See Section 2.1.1, p.25.

Table 5.3 Emergent themes from transcripts

	CB	MS	Mel	Star	Storm
Achievement and Accomplishment	X	X	X		X
Beauty				X	X
Being Ill		X			
Being Light	X				
Belonging			X		
Church	X	X	X	X	
Creation and the Creator God	X	X	X	X	X
Creativity				X	
Faith		X	X		X
Family			X	X	X
Feelings			X	X	
Friends			X	X	X
Getting it right	X		X		X
Hobbies	X		X		X
Humour	X		X		X
Imagination	X			X	
Nature	X		X	X	
Nature of God	X	X	X	X	X
Perseverance, confidence and risk	X		X		X
Play	X			X	
Pragmatism and concrete thinking				X	X
Prayer	X	X	X	X	X
Reading the Bible	X	X	X	X	X
Rules	X				
Singing and worship	X		X	X	X
Solving puzzles	X				
Trust					X
Worrying, decision making and choices		X	X	X	

5.3. The children's own understanding of holiness

At the end of Interview One, each child was asked three questions: What is holiness? Can people/you be holy? Is it easier for children or grown-ups to be holy? Their answers are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Responses to direct questions about holiness

What is holiness? ¹⁷¹	
Charlie Bucket	There are two meanings. There's either like a meaning of cheese, cos there is something like holey cheese, and I love it, I eat it. And, erm the other is one is like, holy, the Holy Spirit and stuff like that? What do you know about the Holy Spirit? That he made. That he loves everyone and he's a bit like God and Jesus. He's the same as God? Yeah. And have you heard God described as holy? Nahh. No? Ok If being part of being a Christian, being a friend of Jesus was to be holy, and not like the cheeses [they laugh] what do you think that might actually mean? It might mean that you love God and things like that. How would you show that you love God? Going to church, and singing about him, and writing about him. What kind of things might you do, outside of church to show that you love him? Pray for him, pray, erm, [long pause] maybe on Christmas have friends over and worship Jesus' birthday. Yeah, celebrate Jesus birthday, yeah ok Do you think there are things you can do that are unholy? Yea. What might they be? Rob a church. Oh yes, ok. Drop keys down or flowers. Ok
Max Stone	..Erm... yeah.. Can you describe it to me? It's being different and believing and its partly like self-respect because you have faith in yourself and in God
Mel	Erm holiness, erm.. sort of means like.. holiness is a word that I would use to describe God, it's almost like, it's almost like another word, for saying greatness, but it's better than greatness, it's more than greatness.
Star	Well, it's hard to describe but like, holy is like it's hard to describe holy, holy is lovely, and like praying things like that, and what's the word again? Holiness. Is like basically holy, but it's made as a it makes it more special. Ok
Storm	Erm, like, erm the really holy, they're really nice to you and they'll look after you, they'll watch over you and check you're ok.

Can people/you be holy?	
Charlie Bucket	And do you think you are holy? Aha Why do you think you are holy? Because I go to church and C zone, and pray for him, and on Christmas day celebrate.
Max Stone	Sometimes, but sometimes when you are really sad and suffering in your life it is quite hard
Mel	Erm, not really, no. I think God and Jesus and prophets, people like them, they're holy people. We could be, I feel like we could be holy if we erm, if we were, erm, almost if we were, really, if we were kind, and nice to people, if we were, really good people. Because, some people are naughty, very naughty, but if weren't naughty then you could almost be people, if you were really good and you had done good deeds, if you done good deeds every day and you help people and stuff like that.
Star	Yes
Storm	Yep

¹⁷¹text in bold is spoken by the researcher.

Is it easier for children or grown-ups to be holy?	
Charlie Bucket	Do you think grown-ups can be holy? Ahem [positive] Who do you think is more holy, children or grown-ups? Grown-ups. Why do you think that? Because children, at church they go to groups instead of going, listening to the sermon and erm they might go to like home groups and stuff like that.
Max Stone	..erm.. I don't particularly that they might compare, but I think, no I don't think they compare Ok, so when you say they don't compare, what do you mean? .. its people and they're the same. Ok so there's no difference between being a grown-up or a child when it comes to being holy? Well, sometimes, erm, if someone's if because sometimes it is a little bit harder when you're a child, it's like if, when you moved school, if when your grandad has died or something. Then it's quite hard
Mel	I don't think there is a difference really between a child and a grown-up to be holy, because erm, grown-ups can do a lot of things that children can't, but children can still help do those things, it's not just adults that can do stuff like that, children can also help and because some children, even if you donate 2p to a charity every day, that could still help. Small amounts of money can still help. Picking pieces of litter up that can still help. Children can do that, not just adults.
Star	I think it's more. What did you say? Is it easier for a child or a grown-up? A grown-up because grown-ups understand more and children find it a bit boring. I don't find it boring though. Why don't you find it boring? If you don't listen. God actually sacrificed his life for us, and I won't be alive if he hadn't made the sacrifice, because some people find it a bit boring because they don't actually realise that it was God that helped them be alive, they won't be sitting there, they won't have been able to have done things, if it wasn't for God.
Storm	It's probably easier for a grown-up cos they've been doing things for longer and they've learnt erm like they've learnt all the ways how you can help someone else, whilst a child hasn't really.

It is clear, as anticipated, that holiness is not a word that is particularly familiar to the children, and their understanding of it is limited (although I would question whether it is any more limited than an average adult congregation member). They identify the sense of otherness, and the strong correlation with the nature of God, but are unable to relate their own experience. There is some understanding of 'behaviours' which might be required of a person who chooses to be holy, but three of the five children seem to think that this requires a higher degree of knowledge and practice than they have and therefore is something more readily accessible to adults.

5.4. Interpreted phenomenological depictions of holiness

The data provided by the children enabled the researcher to draw up depictions of holiness – based on their experiences and behaviours – for each child which show a more complex and nuanced understanding than their answers to the direct questions about holiness. Sections 5.4.1. to 5.4.5. are written as if the child was speaking and use as many of their own words as possible.

5.4.1. Charlie Bucket

God made everything and you can connect with him through his creation. It is important to acknowledge God's part in everything even inanimate manufactured items. Having fun is a gift from God to be enjoyed and you can feel close to him through worship and prayer and activities and games – connect him with the things around you, the things you do and the things you accomplish. You need to use the ideas and creativity that God gives you. Sung worship makes God happy.

Children need to learn about God but in a different way from adults. Reading the Bible is important but not always easy to remember to do. Ritual and knowing what to do makes connecting with God easier. You can experience God's grace and mercy through communion and prayers of blessing, and sometimes this is more important than following the rules.

Living out faith is doing your best to get things right, and it is important to follow the rules. Doing the wrong thing can sometimes make you feel sad but sometimes it is hard not to. God gets sad when people are sad and expects us to do something about it, but also forgives us when we make mistakes. We need to be light like Jesus by helping others and telling them about God

5.4.2. Max Stone

Being ill means you have no energy for anything, and this can stop you having any feeling about God, but you can still pray to him and worship him and make good choices.

Holiness is about having faith in God and respect of him and self. It is hard to be holy when you are a child or suffering, although sometimes it feels like God is like a mother bear and hugs you and says 'don't worry' because where God is it is peaceful and there are not bad things happening, and he sends someone to help you when you need it.

Church gives you time to pray to God and worship him and find out about what Jesus teaches us about how to make good choices.

5.4.3. Mel

Connection with God often comes through the warmth of close and positive relationships. When you feel close to God, you feel nice and warm inside, and vice versa. Feeling happy makes you feel closer to God, but God is with you when you are nervous too. Sometimes inanimate objects can remind us of being loved and help us remember this feeling (like Duckie and the baptism candle). Being outside can bring you closer to God, although sometimes things get in the way (like trees), thankfully God will find a way to break through (like twigs). He provides for us through our family and friends.

Doing what your Mum asks, to make it easier for her, is a way of showing God how much you love him. He gifts you with talents and abilities and helps you do the things you need to when you ask for them. It is also important that we are kind and tell the truth, but sometimes it is kinder not to tell the whole truth so that you do not hurt someone's feelings. You should tell others about God, but you have to be sensitive because they might not want to hear.

Reading the Bible is important but not always easy. Being part of God's community is helpful though because going to church is fun and shows the relationship between us and God. Being part of a worshipping community makes you feel happy and closer to God. Worshipping God and praying to him on your own is good and sometimes helped by symbols. Praying is important enough to get into trouble for. Although sometimes he does not answer prayers in the way you had hoped, you have to keep trusting.

God's love is unconditional. He is involved in the everyday things and will help you as you face everyday challenges. You need to be honest and generous and not steal or be unkind. Sometimes this is hard, but it is better to do it and avoid feelings of guilt. God is not happy when he sees injustice and exclusion, so you need to be good, and do what God says. He is more likely to help you if you try and will forgive you if you get it wrong, but he does expect you to persevere and keep practising.

5.4.4. Star

Having faith is about being God's friend and making him part of your everyday. You can talk to him when you want, especially when you are frightened, although sometimes it is easy to forget to talk to him.

God made everything and it is awesome, and it is beautiful because he likes things to be beautiful. God's creation inspires us to worship him in wonder and this can help us to think about other people and their needs. It is important to help others because God wants everyone to be happy and peaceful. God loves everyone, even bad people, and he is always watching over us.

Everyone should know what God has done for us even though knowing that Jesus sacrificed his life for us can make us feel sad as well as happy. The Bible, and praying, helps us to understand this and how to be holy. Raising hands and singing in worship help you to connect with God, although sometimes it is easy to be distracted.

Being faithful is about sacrificial sharing because of compassion and empathy. Sometimes it is hard to do but we can encounter God when we take risks and are brave.

Your family can have a strong influence on your holiness behavior, even when you think they do not but ultimately it is up to you

5.4.5. Storm

God is all the happiness and goodness in the world, and you can feel that when you are outside, especially when you look at the size of the night sky. God loves you no matter what you look like and is always watching over us. Sometimes, especially when you are poorly it is hard to feel that, but then you have to remember that nothing you can do will stop God loving you. The Bible tells us about God and we should read it.

To show God that you love him you need to trust him like Jesus and other characters from the Bible did, and be good and not let your friends influence you to do wrong things. You need to control your temper and not retaliate when somebody is mean to you, and God gives you friends to help you do this. He also gives you family to help you grow in your faith

Singing worship to God is important and fun. It is easier and more fulfilling to do it outside when you can see his creation, and when you are in church with lots of other people. You need to pray too and that is easier when you have someone to help you do it, because sometimes you forget to think about God or thank him for things because you are too busy.

Being holy is about looking after other people and telling them about your friendship with God by inviting them to things at church.

5.5. Holiness Experiences and Behaviours

The annotated profiles and transcripts were examined for evidence of holiness experiences and behaviours and these were recorded and summarized.¹⁷² As this was done for each child, it became clear that there were some similarities and differences between the data from the five children. The holiness experiences and behaviours for the all of the children were therefore collated side by side to enable some kind of comparison. The data was reviewed

¹⁷² See Appendix Twelve, p.286.

and categorized as to whether the summary statement demonstrated one of the four elements of holiness discussed in Section 3.4. (p.52). Table 5.5 therefore shows where the holiness experiences and behaviours described by the children are: directly related to God; reflect relationships with others; to do with nature and wider society. Or how their friendship with God impacts their relationship with themselves and how they operate. Not surprisingly, there was a great deal of overlap. For instance, the following summary statement about Mel

God's love is unconditional. He is involved in the everyday things and will help you as you face everyday challenges

indicates that he has experienced God's love in the ordinary every day (relationship with God) and that it impacts how he chooses to face challenges (relationship with self). Two summary statements made about two different pieces of data in Storm's transcripts

Connection with the creator God through the awe and wonder of the night sky

It is easier to worship the Creator God when outside,

show how she not only encounters God through nature (holiness experience), but also finds it easier to respond to him in worship (holiness behaviour) when in nature too.

Table 5.5 below shows the frequency of summary statements that relate to the different categories chosen. It would be wrong to use this data for any quantitative assertion - because some of the statements fall into two or three different categories - or to assume that because Mel has more statements he is 'holier' than the others are. Instead, the intention of this chart is to illustrate the complexity of the statements from the children, and how although some subjects are universal the personality and worldview of the child has an impact on how their faith is encountered and expressed. The significance is the proportion of the summary statements relating to each category. For CB, his faith is more likely to be experienced through relating directly to God or through nature, and his evidence includes a great deal of introspection concerning rules and wise choices. For Mel, both his experiences of God and the living out of his faith occur in relationship with others, particularly family and friends. For Storm, as somebody clearly in the concrete stage of cognitive development, her holiness experiences are more direct, but her behaviors demonstrate that she is aware of the consequences of faith choices she makes on those around her and the world she lives in. Star's summary statements tend not to overlap in the same way as the others, but she appears to be a naturally spiritual child whose assertion at the end of one of the Interviews was that nothing would change her strong friendship with God. Her most striking 'holiness behaviour' was unwittingly disclosed whilst she was moaning about something else, and the proportion of summary statements that relate to others demonstrates that even as the

5.6. Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23 appear to be the basis of the definitions of holiness outlined in Chapter Three, and would be assumed by most Christians to be a fair measure of evidence of becoming more Christ-like. It was therefore decided to examine the data for evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the children's dialogue. Although it was possible to do some observation of non-verbal behaviour in the interviews, the research methodology did not include observation of the children in their 'normal' lives. This means that any 'evidence' is based on their own accounts or on their statements about what they believe to be true that is anticipated will affect their attitudes and actions.¹⁷³

Table 5.6 shows where evidence of the fruit of the Spirit was believed to be found in the data, but this is tentative and open to much interpretation. For instance, 'joy' is not a word common in contemporary parlance so instances where the children have experienced 'happiness' have been included despite the theological differences.¹⁷⁴ The table shows insights from commentators about what is understood to be the meaning of the words and how much they overlap. A summary of evidence from the children given in more detail in Appendix Thirteen is then given with recognition that some of the evidence could be transferable between categories. In addition, there is the challenge of identifying the motivating source of the anecdotes and behaviours used in evidence, to discern whether they are fruit of the Spirit. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit cannot act in and through a variety of motivations, but inevitably some of the evidence cited is because of natural personality traits, and some behavioural choices will have been directed by adults. There is also the danger of believing that where there appears to be no evidence in the text, there is no evidence in the life of the child.

¹⁷³ See Section 7.4. p.136 for a more detailed discussion on the relationship between belief, attitude and action.

¹⁷⁴ The use of the word happiness also raises concerns of the 'midi-narrative of happiness' identified in *Making Sense of Generation Y* (Savage, Collins-Mayo, Mayo, & Cray, 2006, p. 164).

Table 5.6 Fruit of the Spirit

Love (<i>agape</i>): a noun not found in classical Greek but used 120 times in the New Testament. Argued to be foundational (Keener, 2019, p. 479) it denotes the love that God has for us, which we reciprocate, and our love for one another (Moo, 2013, p. 364) which includes mutual service (Keener, 2019, p. 479)	
Charlie Bucket	holiness is loving God
Max Stone	
Mel	Loves his family. Kindness and generosity from others make him feel warm inside and loved.
Star	God loves everything in the world and looks after you
Storm	God is love
Joy (<i>chara</i>): related to pleasure in the Greco-Roman world but understood to mean to Paul 'a settled state of mind... even in the face of difficulties and trials' (Moo, 2013, p. 364). Also associated with feelings in worship and the celebration of God's works (Keener, 2019, p. 479)	
Charlie Bucket	Dances to celebrate God. Feels happy out in nature and thinking about heaven
Max Stone	Being on a swing makes him very happy normally, but not at the moment. As an interviewer, my impression was of a boy who had had all the joy sucked out of him
Mel	Experiences joy when he feels God is close to him and thinks of the good things God has done for/given him including a sense of purpose
Star	
Storm	Knowing God's love never ends makes her happy, as does being out in nature and part of sung worship
Peace (<i>eirēnē</i>): often paired with joy, it can mean that state achieved by being made right with God that includes tranquillity, or the harmonious relationships with others because of the peace we have with God (Moo, 2013, pp. 364-365; Keener, 2019, p. 479)	
Charlie Bucket	Experiences peace when prayed for at communion, swinging outside and when he felt like he encountered God at The Oaks residential
Max Stone	Sometimes he feels like God is hugging him to help him feel better and managed to fall asleep straight after he prayed on a wakeful night
Mel	feels close to God when something makes him feel warm inside, especially when in church worshipping as part of a community of faith
Star	Believes that God makes things peaceful and doesn't like things to be stormy
Storm	Has a 'warm, happy feeling' in corporate sung worship
Forbearance/long-suffering/patience (<i>makrothymia</i>): is what God shows to us and therefore what we should show to others (Moo, 2013, p. 365). It involves calm endurance through waiting or provocation (Keener, 2019, pp. 479-480)	
Charlie Bucket	Doesn't like waiting, but he does persevere and believes that God helps him if he keeps trying
Max Stone	'Hard when you are ill, but that's just the way it is'
Mel	Believes God wants perseverance and tries to do it regularly
Star	
Storm	Puts up with being 'different' from her non-Christian friends

Kindness (<i>chrēstotēs</i>): a generic term for goodness often translated as thoughtfulness, kindness or generosity (Keener, 2019, p. 480). Used only by Paul in the New Testament, it often denotes God’s ‘gracious response to his rebellious creation’ but also the ‘kindness that humans show toward one another’ (Moo, 2013, p. 365)	
Charlie Bucket	‘Giving’ is easy. Helping others is important. Compassion can come from knowing someone’s story
Max Stone	
Mel	Jesus doesn’t want people left out. God influences kindness. He doesn’t like to hurt peoples’ feelings, reads to his little brother, shares things, gives pocket money to charity, and helped a girl in his class with a broken arm
Star	The Bible helps her to think about how to be fair to others. It is good to share your things, be kind, and make other people feel better. She takes an extra Beanie Boo to church to share with a crying baby
Storm	
Goodness (<i>agathōsyne</i>): a Greek word that is found only in the New Testament and not in secular Greek writing of the time. It includes what is ethically good and displaying special interest in other’s welfare (Keener, 2019, p. 480). The NRSV translates it as generosity ‘agreeing with BDAG 4.b.’ (Moo, 2013, p. 365)	
Charlie Bucket	Feels sad when tempted to do something wrong, and glad when he makes a good choice. Believes that following the rules is important, and good overcomes evil. God wants us to sort it out for sad people
Max Stone	
Mel	Gave a dropped coin back even though he really wanted to keep it. God helps you make wise choices. It is important to tell the truth and obey God
Star	It is good to do the right thing
Storm	Doing the right thing (being good) is important
Faithfulness (<i>pistis</i>): Can mean the act or state of believing, or the state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed (Moo, 2013, p. 366). Most commentators believe it is about being the second, but as it is the same word as used elsewhere in Galatians, it could involve a growing trust in God (Keener, 2019, p. 480)	
Charlie Bucket	Faithfully identifies God in nature and at work in everything, repeatedly. He trusts God
Max Stone	Striving to keep going despite his illness, something he thinks God wants him to do and is helping him with
Mel	Says he would continue to pray to God just like Daniel. Gives lots of instances of praying when needing courage and strength. Believes he is a faithful friend
Star	Believes that God helps you to be brave (trusting and having faith). Has a strong friendship with God and always will have
Storm	Says her trust in God has never really been tested so she doesn’t know how hard it might be to trust him in difficult circumstances

Gentleness/meekness (praytēs): ‘the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance’ BDAG (861) cited in (Moo, 2013, p. 366). Also translated as considerateness (Keener, 2019, p. 480)	
Charlie Bucket	
Max Stone	
Mel	When Mel uses the word ‘nervous’ about situations, he matches this with a reliance on God’s help. Trusting that God will help him, and not conceited in his own ability
Star	Star talks about Jesus teaching people to be brave. Whilst this might not seem to be directly associated with gentleness and meekness, I think what she is getting at is the meekness that realises it is fully reliant on God’s strength
Storm	
Self-control (enkrateia): mentioned rarely in both the Old and New Testaments but Paul probably intended it as a direct comparison to the ‘works of the flesh’ he writes about earlier in the chapter (Moo, 2013, p. 366) (Keener, 2019, p. 481)	
Charlie Bucket	Struggles with this. Dialogue about peeking, and how difficult it was not to try and find hidden Christmas presents, and concentrating in prayers at church
Max Stone	Talks about his internal struggle over keeping a £1 coin that an elderly man has dropped. He wants it to buy a Lego mini figure but gives it back because this is the right thing to do
Mel	
Star	Used self-control when her friend was using her new skateboard unfairly, overcoming her desire to have it all for herself. She identifies that her holiness behaviours are down to her, not other people
Storm	Uses a pragmatic approach to deal with temptation. When she wants to retaliate she distracts herself. When considering whether she could take a piece of her favourite cake without detection, she uses practical considerations to help her to do the right thing

6. Narrative Accounts of Emergent Themes

6.1. Introduction

As the data was interpreted, the different personalities of the children emerged and there was evidence of the impact that this, as well as their life experience and worldview, had on their understanding of faith, and the way they tried to live this out. This resonates with Hay & Nye's claim that individual children have 'spiritual signatures' (1998, pp. 93,94). From the holiness experience and behaviour tables and the children's interpreted definitions of holiness it was possible to discern six specific emphases which illustrate ways in which these children can and do exhibit holiness. I have chosen to narrate them as 'the holy child as...' to intimate that this is an expression of holiness for the child or children whose voices are heard in the narration. This chapter therefore includes six sections each of which focuses on one of the six emphases:

- the holy child as rule keeper
- the holy child as beloved
- the holy child as philanthropist
- the holy child as pragmatist
- the holy child as patient
- the holy child as one with nature

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, it envisages the possibility that if more children were interviewed and analysed using this methodology, there may be other versions of 'the holy child as. . .'. For instance, although justice and humour were evident in the interviews¹⁷⁵ they were not considered a strong enough theme for a narrative account. It would appear that the more children interviewed with this research process, the wider the range of emergent themes that could be used to create narrative accounts.

This chapter ends with a section that explores the holy child and scripture, as the children referred to Bible stories in the interviews and included them in their Bricolage boxes.

¹⁷⁵ CB refers to matters of justice in all three interviews. Mel and Star mention it in Interview One. CB, Mel and Storm use humour as a means of engaging in the interview process, but not in relationship to their friendship with God. CB does say when asked if he thinks God has a sense of humour, that he thinks God makes people laugh in heaven.

6.2. The holy child as rule keeper

For all of the children, there was a tension between doing what they had been told was the right thing to do and what they want to do. For Star, who is the youngest, 'correct' behaviour is often mediated by the likelihood of discovery. For instance when we discuss potentially stealing a piece of chocolate cake she says that the thing that would stop her from doing it would be the thought of 'someone, whilst I am eating it, walking in and seeing me eating it' (Stalnt3:67-68). For Storm, the pragmatist, the decision was framed by the size of the task in hand, and how easy it was to accomplish. Her answers indicate that she probably uses her head more than her heart. For instance, when she was asked about whether she would take a slice of her favourite cake if she knew she wouldn't get caught, her defence strategies were all based on logic and pragmatism rather than feeling. It would appear that she uses a lot of situational ethics, as when responding to the question about whether it is easy to tell the truth or not, she indicates that it depends on the magnitude of the circumstances.

CB frequently uses rules as a frame of reference for his worldview. CB wants to get things right. Throughout Interviews One and Three, he was checking processes and using questions to ensure that he was in the best position to get things right. The importance of this desire to get things right is indicated by his behaviours and activities: enjoying puzzles like the Rubik's cube, computer coding, orienteering and science experiments. It is also corroborated by his strategy of whispering or using a silly voice when he is feeling unsure of himself, giving an answer that he thinks might be wrong, or thinks might not conform to what he thinks my concept of lived out faith is.

This need to 'find the right path' is included in his theological reflection on the Rubik's cube in which he indicates that he thinks that God would be proud of his achievement, but also his fear that too many wrong choices can make it hard to find a way back to God.

erm, like you might do it again and then it will be hard to say sorry to God.

Ok. Do you think, if you say sorry, and then you do it again, what do you think God thinks of that? I think he feels that I erm... didn't do the promise.

Ok, ok. And if you say sorry, what does God do? He says ok that's fine, and then if you do it again he says.... I don't know (CBInt2:38-41).

When, however, he receives a prayer of blessing in communion, he not only feel's God's help but also a sense of security about the future that possibly relieves some of the pressure of getting it right and solving the problems all on his own. Interestingly, when talking about why the programming exercises had gone wrong, he was not cross or annoyed, but very pragmatic about it, in a sense giving himself a lot of grace.

Although he clearly loves playing games, and indeed wanted me to play games with him as part of our interview process, it is also important to CB that the rules are followed. In Interview Two CB took great lengths to go through the rules of one of the games in his games book. He was asked how he would feel if somebody cheated and did not follow the rules, he replied, 'Annoyed, because they're not really playing correctly, and breaking the rules' (CBInt2:209). When asked whether he was annoyed because this gave them an advantage, he was emphatic that it was because 'They haven't played by the rules' (CBInt2:212). When I wondered what he would do if I cheated if we played a game, he responded that he would reiterate the rules and that I would get one more chance before being told I could no longer play.

His desire to get things right means that sometimes there is some internal dialogue when faced with moral and ethical dilemmas. Although it appears that this is mainly intellectual, he is often 'annoyed' at the costliness of choosing to do the right thing, or not to do the wrong thing. He believes that there are consequences to making the wrong choices, and often it is the threat of these that motivates him not to do them. This is perhaps why he has some sense of God's mercy.

This rule-based worldview means that CB appears to see God as a big rule keeper in the sky. This perspective is however held in balance with other understandings of the nature of God. In Interview One the overwhelming character of God is creation and provision, but there is also a strong theme of love. For instance, when looking at the Picture 31, he equates the mother bear's hug to the welcoming, inclusive and loving nature of God. He goes further to emphasise the inclusive and merciful nature of God when he states that 'God loves everyone who is in prison, even if they've done something naughty, he still loves them' (CBInt1:183-184). What is interesting in this statement is not just the implication that you can be in prison even if you have not done something naughty, but also that God's love is regardless of whether you have been convicted of breaking the rules. This notion of mercy was reflected in the discussion about how we feel when we say something nasty to somebody, in that, although he would feel 'sad and annoyed' with himself, God would say, 'that's ok and try and stop it' - although grace and forgiveness is bestowed, there is a gentle reminder that there are still rules.

When questioned about God's rules in Interview Two, his first response is that they are easy to follow. He quickly realises however that it is more complicated than that. He also recognises that sometimes doing the right thing is costly. In both Interviews Two and Three CB indicates how at times he finds it hard to 'do the right thing' and talks about some of the feelings this evokes. In Interview Two, presumably because of its proximity to Christmas, he uses the illustration of looking for Christmas presents. He suggests that although the decision not to do the wrong thing is made by his head, it is based on feelings: sadness when he is tempted;

annoyance that he knows he should not do it; and finally happiness when he makes the right choice. If he is not able to stop himself from doing the wrong thing then he remains sad and annoyed with himself until he has spoken to Mum, Dad or God about it.

The 'holy child as rule keeper' therefore needs to know what the rules are, be able to understand why they are in place, and what strategies they can use to help them keep them. Yet what is also intriguing is a little event that he describes at church the morning before Interview One, where he persuaded his Dad to 'break the rules' and give him some communion bread. His desire to be part of something that enabled him to 'feel like God's with me and ... that... you know, he knows what will happen to me' (Int19Int1:151-152) was stronger than his desire that the rules are kept and his fear of the consequences when they are not, despite that being his overarching worldview.

Mel also describes a scenario where he too would break the rules and not behave with the honesty he elsewhere says is an important part of being a Christian, because of the stronger imperative not to hurt another person's feelings. The researcher concludes therefore that this is evidence of the children's ability to see beyond the 'rules' of doctrine and tradition to the essence of the Christian faith.

Therefore, the 'holy child as rule keeper' needs to know what the rules are, and is comfortable with the repetition of those rules. In addition, they need to know what the consequences might be if they are broken and might use the likelihood of detection as a means of sticking to the rules. This perspective, is not however, held in isolation. Instead, it is partnered with a deep sense of God's grace and mercy and the availability of forgiveness. In addition, the 'holy child as rule keeper' may well use situational ethics to determine whether an encounter with God or prevention of hurt to someone else supersedes the 'rules'. This resonates with Dunn's commentary on the gospel description of Jesus' breaking of the rules of the Sabbath as not sin.¹⁷⁶

6.3. The holy child as beloved

The themes of inclusion, belonging and relationships were identified in all the interviews with all the children, where God's love was discussed in a way that suggests that it is also experienced. Storm included in her bricolage box, a heart locket to represent God's love and a tape measure to help her illustrate her sense of God's love being never ending. The knowledge of this constancy made her happy and was part of her understanding of God's

¹⁷⁶ See Section 3.2.2, p.47.

grace and mercy, in that there is nothing that you can do to stop God loving you, and that he doesn't stop caring for people who commit deeds like murder.

All five children thought that the picture of the mother bear hugging her cub had, or might have, something to do with their friendship with God. CB equated it to the welcoming, inclusive and loving nature of God, believing that God is funny, 'I think he makes people laugh in heaven' (CBInt2:207). MS suggests that God is like the mother bear in the picture, holding him and helping him to feel better, and that God might be sad because he is ill. They were also all positive about Picture 40¹⁷⁷ (an image of paper people joined together with hearts) with Storm suggesting that it demonstrates that Jesus loves us and God loves us.

Mel makes many references to his family and often uses anecdotes about them as a means of communicating his sense of God. Recounting cottage holidays and snowball fights, he paints a lovely picture of a family happy together in the ordinary, everyday. In Interview One he relates both Picture 32,¹⁷⁸ Picture 40 and Picture 42¹⁷⁹ directly to love and family. Friends are also important to Mel. In the discussion about Picture 13 he talks about a time at school where he and his best friend were working hard together and says what a lovely feeling it was when they were sharing ideas with others, how great it felt to be included. He was heartbroken when his friend left the school.

Mel appears to have a warm and positive relationship with his mother, which often includes gentle teasing. For instance, he recounts as a time of happiness when they were playing with dandelion clocks, and she was pretending to disagree with his time keeping. He explains that he included 'Duckie'¹⁸⁰ in his bricolage box because it did once belong to his Mum, 'it makes me feel really comforted, and I feel really close to God' (MelInt1:10-11). Because of his other references to his family, love and belonging, it seems reasonable to assume that it is not only the physical comfort of Duckie, but the connection with his mother that brings an emotional comfort that he recognises and applies to God. The representation of relationship with an artefact is not just restricted to toys. He includes his baptism candle in his bricolage box because 'it's quite a significant thing about my life' and it seems to remind him that he is part of God's community (MelInt2:18-20,380).

Mel's mum also has an influence over his behaviour, for instance when talking about saving up for his next Lego set, he says that his Mum wants him to play with the Lego he got for Christmas first. Mel must do chores to get his pocket money but says he likes to keep his room tidy to make it easier for his Mum even though, on his questionnaire, he indicated that he was ambiguous about this. There are two instances given when Mel's nan buys him

¹⁷⁷ 'Kindness' google images.

¹⁷⁸ Heart IV copyright Ian Winstanley 2005 The Art Group Limited printed by Ikea.

¹⁷⁹ Toddler's Hands copyright J.N. Reichel – Getty Images printed by Ikea.

¹⁸⁰ A rather old looking soft toy duck.

things. He does not take either event for granted but instead relates it to God's provision. Perhaps it is this closeness to his family that is causing him to be so concerned about going away with the school and his reluctance to go to church without them.

This deep sense of belonging also relates to membership of the church family. Mel enjoys going to church believing that it 'shows the relationship between me and God' (MelInt3:13-14). He chose several pictures in Interview One because they reminded him of church and included a picture of the church his family attends every Wednesday in his bricolage.

I like to go to church a lot, it's not a thing like Mum drags me to, you have to go to church, and you're bored. It's one of them things I actually look forward to because get to do fun stuff at church basically get to make things like [...] and its really fun' (MelInt2:273-276). 'when we worship God in church as one big group and it feels like we are all thanking God for reasons, and we're just sort of like a big community, and I really like that feeling that we're all following God, and we're all erm, disciples, and we're all following God and that feeling just makes me quite happy (MelInt3:109-113)

Although Mel wasn't sure about including Picture 23¹⁸¹ in his 'Yes' pile, when we discussed it, he interpreted it with a strong theme of justice and inclusion. He suggested that the owl on the floor was deliberately being left out by the others, and that those in the tree were being 'very unkind and rude, and disgraceful' and that 'Jesus and God wouldn't be very happy with what they are seeing' (MelInt1:256-258). This scenario reflects his own sense of the importance of belonging and how he feels he gets that from God. It also may reflect his fear of being left out and bullied himself.

When talking about telling the truth in Interview Three, Mel suggests that it is important so that people trust you, and describes feeling guilty when he has not told the truth. His motivation to tell the truth is however also influenced by knowledge that you are likely to get a lighter punishment if you immediately tell the truth about a misdemeanour, rather than lie and compound the crime. So, like all the children, his motives for making 'holy choices' are complex. When pushed on whether he would tell the truth all the time, in Interview Three, his desire not to be hurtful appears to override the need to tell the truth. When asked what he would say to his mum if she was wearing an outfit that made her look awful, he said

I probably wouldn't want to make her feel bad about how she looks and [nervous laugh] it would be a bit unkind of [to] her to say 'that looks terrible,

¹⁸¹ Owl Nesting by Maddy McClellan (Oxfam card).

I don't like that'[...] it might like make her really upset [...] I might say 'that look's good' [voice is higher pitch] or something like that (MelInt3:91-99).

An interesting observation of the child whose holiness is experienced and expressed and in being 'beloved', in comparison to the others, is prayer. Whilst the other children all talk about prayer and how they do this with their parents, or as part of church, there is little reference to a deep communion with God through prayer. For instance, although CB acknowledges that praying is a sign of faith, he does not talk about communicating with God as part of everyday life, either when he needs physical help or help to make wise choices, even when questioned directly. He is aware that prayer is the way to communicate with God and that it is a place for interceding on behalf of oneself and others, but does not really talk to God about his feelings. Perhaps this is why, in Interview Three, he says that he does not feel any different after praying about doing something wrong, because he is not engaging his emotions in prayer. His statement that prayer is easy if you know what to do next, does rather suggest that he is using formulaic processes and corroborates the notion that he is not engaging in prayer on an emotional level.

In contrast, when discussing Mel's favourite Bible story - Daniel and the Lion's Den, he seemed convinced that he would make the same choice as Daniel,

I probably would keep praying cos God is my God and I should pray pretty much every day and if someone makes a rule to stop praying aloud, why should I stop believing in my religion, when I could keep doing what I'm supposed to be doing. (MelInt2:61-63).

He seems to have an active prayer life, believing that praying shows you are a Christian and is something that he engages in at least once a day. Sometimes he prays with others at church, and sometimes with his Mum but 'not as often as I pray on my own in my head' (MelInt3:77-78). Although he suggests that sometimes he does not know how to use the right words, he does find it 'fairly easy to tell God about it, and stuff' (MelInt3:60-61) and connect with God in a variety of situations. For instance, when he is feeling nervous or needs courage; or when he needs advice. Sometimes he finds it hard to stay focused in prayer, and finds tools helpful like the baptism candle and the prayer glitter bottle he made at church. He says he has had some prayers answered, and he was amazed by it, but he could not give an example.

In conclusion, the 'holy child as beloved' has a deep sense of emotional connection with God, much of which is experienced and expressed through loving relationships with family and friends. The 'holy child as beloved' believes that when family and friends are kind and give you things, this is evidence that God is looking after and providing for you. Their response therefore must also be kind, loving and generous. Belonging to a faith community is important

and it is helpful to have artefacts that remind you of this belonging and help you to communicate with God through prayer as a means of deepening the sense of being beloved. Telling the truth, and doing what is asked with no fuss, is a primary holiness behaviour for the 'holy child as beloved', as this provides a foundation of trust for a loving relationship. A contradiction occurs however when absolute honesty might involve hurting another person's feelings. In this case, it is likely that the delivery of the truth will be measured to avoid hurting other people. The 'holy child as beloved' therefore might indicate relationship overrides rules.

6.4. The holy child as philanthropist

All of the children, except MS, mention 'holiness behaviours' which include giving and sharing and being kind. Mel believes that both children and adults can be holy if they choose to be kind and nice to people, give to charity and look after the planet. In Interview Three he talks a lot about his own 'giving and sharing' not only money to charity, or the homeless, but also help to others at school. He likes helping others and believes that it comes naturally to him which is possibly because of the loving response to being beloved discussed above.

According to CB God is compassionate and empathetic, in that when he sees people who are sad (he gives the example of the homeless), then he too is sad and God wants us to do something about it. A strong theological theme for CB is light, not only stimulated by the pictures¹⁸² but also by song words, and presumably some kind of biblical teaching on Jesus as the light of the world. As we explored what this metaphor means he was keen to express that he reflects God's light.

No, I'm letting my light shine to God. It's like I'm a light bulb and he can see me from where he is (CBInt1:175-176).

He was able give examples of how he had or could be that light by helping others although he was not convinced that this was solely due to his friendship with God. Storm also illustrates her faith with several different references to Jesus as the light believing this to mean that he is all the happiness, love and goodness in the world. Like CB and Mel, she thinks that Jesus asks us to be part of the process of that happening 'we have to shine our light, be like him, like light' (StmInt2:200-205).

Despite being the youngest participant, Star's empathy appears throughout our conversations. For instance, her love of stars naturally leads her to thinking about God, and also to people who might not be able to see. She empathises with the duck in Picture 33 'Because it looks

¹⁸² Picture 29 has the Aurelia Borealis on it and Picture 27 is sunlight breaking through clouds. In Picture 19, he also argues that the orange on the tiger is redolent with light and Picture 14 is described as having the colour of light.

like it is lost' (Stalnt1:23), and thinks the baby bear in Picture 31 is being hugged by its mother because he feels scared. She is compassionate, suggesting that if someone fell over at school she would 'try and make them feel better' (Stalnt3:30). She thinks that helping people is important and 'really easy' (Stalnt3:25). Her reasoning is that if people do not help others then someone could end up dying. She does her bit to help because she thinks it is both a good idea, and because God wants her to. Although she does think it is easier to help friends rather than someone you do not like.

When talking about her Bible, Star says that she thinks it helps her focus more on other people than on herself which she believes is what God wants. She believes that Jesus sacrificed his life for us by dying on the cross.¹⁸³ This makes her feel both sad because Jesus died, and happy because 'he saved millions of people cos otherwise millions of people would have died if he had wanted to stay alive' (Stalnt2:28-30). She is able to understand the allegoric nature of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*¹⁸⁴ and feels sad, not only because of what happens to Aslan, but also because of how it reminds her that Jesus died too. It would appear that she is using her feelings and understandings of Jesus' act of salvation on the cross as an impetus to generosity and kindness. For instance, when we are discussing how it is important to help others, she argues that if we do not 'people will die' (Stalnt3:34).

In practice, the 'holy child as philanthropist' is engaged in what could be described as prosaic, but nevertheless significant, acts of generosity and care. In both Interview One and Interview Two Star mentions how her parents often make her walk to places, and how much she hates it. She also gives some detail about her extensive collection of Beanies – 17 in total. She enjoys cuddling them, taking them places and pretending to teach them. She also has a strict rota for taking them to church because she believes they all need to go regularly, but does not want to carry them on the walk to church. The choice she makes however, despite how much she hates carrying them on the walk, is to take two because, she says, there might be 'a baby who starts crying and I have to give it to them and they always cuddle it and cheer up' (Stalnt2:39-40). What is significant about this conversation is that Star was not giving this account to make herself look good – she was using it as an illustration of how unfair it was that she was made to walk to church.

The 'holy child as philanthropist' is moved by God's compassion and empathy to respond in kind. Sometimes this is not easy, sometimes because of internal struggles with motive, but also because of agency. Both CB and Mel offer anecdotes where their desire to help somebody begging on the streets was inhibited by not being an adult. What Star clearly

¹⁸³ One of the reasons why she included a jewelry cross and a palm cross in her bricolage box.

¹⁸⁴ It would appear from the way that she talks about this in the interview that this was explained to her by her mother.

demonstrates is that where there *is* agency, philanthropy is an instinctive ‘holiness behaviour’, despite not necessarily being recognised for what it is by the child or those around them.

6.5. The holy child as pragmatist

According to Piaget’s (1936) Theory of Cognitive Development all five of the children interviewed are in the Concrete Operational Stage of cognitive development simply because they are between the ages of 7 and 11. This stage is characterised by the development of logical thought, predominantly through inductive rather than deductive logic. This is evident in places in all the interviews, but most startling obvious with Storm who is right in the middle of this age range.

Interview One was where Storm’s pragmatism and unwillingness to engage with her imagination was most evident. She dismissed any picture that looked cartoony as having nothing to do with God or her. She did not seem to want to interpret the pictures beyond what she could see, even when she can make some kind of connection. For instance, when discussing Picture 35,¹⁸⁵ she identifies that the monkey is part of God’s creation but is unable to use deductive logic and says ‘but it doesn’t mention anything about him [God]’ (StmInt1:162-163). She recognises that the bears cuddling in Picture 31 are showing love to each other, and in particular that the parent bear is caring for and protecting the baby bear, and how much she benefits from cuddles herself, but appears to be unable to use inductive logic to relate this to her own faith.

It is unclear whether her deduction that, unlike fairy stories, Bible stories did happen is made from a ‘holiness experience’ or because her parents have told her so. Sometimes however, with a bit of encouragement, she was able to move beyond concrete, and possibly the need to get things right. So, for instance, Picture 20¹⁸⁶ is a photo of some swings in a playground. Her initial response is ‘it’s just a picture of some swings, so they don’t really have anything to do with any of the stories’. I think here she is trying to answer from a Biblical perspective, which she cannot do, but when prompted to describe the feelings she has when on a swing, she describes a number of reactions and talks about playing with her dad and sister. When discussing Picture 6¹⁸⁷ again she recognises that it is God’s creation but reveals her concrete thinking by saying ‘if you saw a man climbing a rock, you would think that’s a good climber, you wouldn’t think why he’s a good climber’ (StmInt1:194-196).

¹⁸⁵ Lowenzahn (*Iontodon hispidus* L.) Foto Bruno Blum – printed by natur-verlag.

¹⁸⁶ Swings in the park, photo sent by Amy Harbon in response to question about what connects you with God.

¹⁸⁷ A picture of a suspended rock climber in the sunset.

In Interview Two, Storm's pragmatism was less obvious, but she still used it as a means of making sense of things. For instance, when discussing whether it was easy to know that God loves you, she suggested that it was harder when you are poorly. When asked to explain this a bit more, she started to head into what appears for her to be risky territory¹⁸⁸ - expressing emotions and vulnerability

Erm...¹⁸⁹ just cos you're ill and erm.. you think.. erm would I always be, would I be ill if he loved me' but immediately goes on to use pragmatism that sounds very adult to make it ok 'well, he does, and it's just the way of life, you get ill sometimes (StmInt2:130-134).

When we were talking about whether it was hard or easy to tell the truth once again, her pragmatism is the driver for thinking and decision-making. There is little evidence of reference to feelings of fear or guilt, but she is looking for the easiest, quickest way to deal with the situation. When discussing motivation for not doing things that you know are wrong, I asked what would stop her taking a bit of her favourite Victoria sponge cake if she could do it with nobody knowing. Her response did not engage with the potential feelings but came up with a pragmatic solution

I would just get interested in something else. Well, I [gonna/could?]¹⁹⁰ save it for later' and then to 'it might be a bit hot, you never know, so I don't want to burn my tongue too (StmInt3:40-47).

It might appear at first that the *Child as Pragmatist* cannot be described as holy, because they are unable to have 'holiness experiences', and base their 'holiness behaviours' on likely or straight forward outcomes rather than guidance by the Holy Spirit or a desire to please God. Closer inspection, however, calls this assumption into question. Storm's parents describe her faith as strong, and there is much evidence of understanding and belief. In addition, of the five participants, she is the most willing to share her faith practices with her friends and invite them to church. The issue appears to be more about her ability to verbalise the integration between what she deducts and what she could induct. When discussing the pictures in Interview One, her pragmatism means that she is often unable to make the spiritual link. This does not mean that she does not have faith though, and in Interview Three she indicated that by and large she finds living out her faith easy.

Significantly, the 'holy child as pragmatist' demonstrates a lot of experiential understanding of trust. She often goes climbing with her Mum and Dad and recognises that she puts her trust

¹⁸⁸ Evidenced by the frequent pauses and repetition in this sentence as well as other instances in all three interviews.

¹⁸⁹ Dots denote a pause, roughly one second per dot.

¹⁹⁰ Not entirely sure which word she used here.

in them when they are betraying; she also says that she puts a lot of trust in herself which is related to her sense of accomplishment. Her experience of the importance of ropes in climbing helped her to understand the metaphor of the rope in Picture 41, as about putting your trust in God who is not going to drop you. This sense of safety is linked to her description of how she feels when she is walking in the woods in the dark, and how holding someone's hand makes you feel warm and cosy; and how when her father pushes her too high on the swing, she can ask him to stop and he does. Storm believes that God answers prayers when people are unwell and gives an account of how happy she was when God healed her leg from a bad sting. This is an interesting contrast to her statement that wishes never come true.

Storm 'knows' that God loves her because God has made her feel better when she has been unwell. Although sometimes it is hard to 'feel' this she recognises that she finds it easy to trust God, because she has not been in a situation where that might be difficult. She admires the courage and trust in God of Biblical characters like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Moses, Noah, Esther and Jesus, when faced with difficult situations, but is unsure of her own ability to stand those kinds of tests because she has not experienced anything like that.

She is starting to wrestle with the discrepancies that she sees between biblical narrative and science. For instance, in Interview Two she says that instead of believing in a creator God, people believe in the big bang theory and evolution, and then caveats, that perhaps God used these to do his creation. In Interview Two, she includes a lipstick in her bricolage box because 'we don't need to put things on like lipstick, cos God thinks we're beautiful anyway' (StmInt2:26-27). It would be interesting to know whether this was repeated from her mother or what she has worked out for herself although what she goes on to say indicates that she has thought this through to some extent.

The 'holy child as pragmatist' holds on tightly to truth they have deduced but can be perceived to lack the ability to induct what could and might be. Their faith is based on trusting what they know – biblical truths and lived Christian experience that have been shared with them. Their 'holiness experiences' are often vicarious in that they are not always able to make the connection between feeling safe, loved and cared for with God the provider, in the same way as the 'holy child as beloved'. The 'holiness behaviours' of the 'holy child as pragmatist' are chosen for sound, if prosaic, reasons and although they do not appear to carry the same level of costly risk as perhaps the 'holy child as philanthropist', should not be undervalued as acts of obedience and therefore evidence of holiness.

6.6. The holy child as patient¹⁹¹

Apart from the instance of Storm's insect sting, and Star's grazed knee, suffering is not really mentioned by four of the children. It was, however, threaded throughout almost every comment that MS made in his interview. The most common thing MS talked about was his ill health and the impact this has had on him. He only related six out of the potential forty-five pictures to his friendship with God, and said it was all for the same reason which appears to be trying to make sense of his illness. Picture 5¹⁹² is a drawing of two polar bears flying a constellation like a kite. Three of the other children did not chose this picture but for MS it immediately had a meaning relating to his condition

it's because I've been having something called anaemia, it's not really a disease but its where you can't really do anything and its really like sad and like flying a kite and when a kite drops (MSInt1:19-20).

He also uses the swing in Picture 20¹⁹³ as a metaphor for the feeling of overwhelming exhaustion that suddenly engulfs him and Picture 14 to relay his feeling of being 'feeble' (Int1:124-125). Picture 6 of the rock climber helped him to articulate the challenges he is facing with his illness:

he is climbing up, and it will be challenging for him, and it has been challenging for me, cos like, he is climbing up a mountain, but for me it is getting up the stairs (MSInt1:58-60).

The picture of the knot in the rope (Picture 41) indicates that he feels like his condition has put a 'stop' on things, although he is optimistic that things are going to get better.

There are occasions when MS shows a deep connection with God and other times when he seems to have little interest in, or connection with God. It is possible that his illness is so overwhelming (as demonstrated by his constant reference to it) that he is unable to get past it to God. When discussing the sea pictures¹⁹⁴ he uses the imagery to try to explain what life feels like for him, and compare this with what he thinks God thinks and feels about his situation.

I probably will end up like this with no crashed, but I think that that one's got the most to do with me [crashing seal] Which of these do you think would be God's favourite? Erm, I think that one [points to still sea Picture

¹⁹¹ As in someone who is ill.

¹⁹² Big Bear, Little Bear, by Kristiana Parn.

¹⁹³ Swings in the park.

¹⁹⁴ Pictures 10, 11 and 30.

30] Why? [...] Because it's peaceful and there's no bad things or anything happening (MSInt1:143-146).

He clearly believes that where God is there is peace and wellbeing, but when asked what he thinks God thinks about his illness, even after some thought, he is unable to give an answer.

When discussing one of his 'maybe' pictures, the drawing of Jesus teaching the crowds, he tries to make sense of his illness and his faith by suggesting that it might have something to do with him because Jesus is teaching, and 'it's like now he's like teaching me that I should always eat my vegetables'¹⁹⁵ (MSInt1:84-85). He suggests that it is easier to do what you are supposed to do when you know why but doesn't seem to want to, or be able to, engage with anything else that Jesus said about good choices and behaviours.

When questioned about his understanding of holiness, he suggests that not only is it about faith in God but also 'self-respect' (MSInt1:184-185). He refers once again to his illness, indicating that it is harder to be holy when you are suffering and even more so for children when they suffer.

Twice MS indicates that although, as observed, his illness is overwhelming, he does not really talk to God about it. Elsewhere, however, he answers that he 'sometimes' does and seems to indicate that this makes a difference

Ok, and do you talk to God when you get a bit worried? Sometimes. And what do you think God says back? Erm... I think he says don't worry because usually when I am a bit worried about something like that, my teacher helps me out. So God sends someone to help you so that you don't feel worried anymore [nods] (MSInt1:153-156).

It is difficult to tell whether MS's general ambivalence is a result of his exhausting illness, or the confusion of suffering, or his general personality. The description from his parent's questionnaire would suggest that this is not his normal personality, and therefore I think we can assume that his illness has had a significant impact on his personality as well as worldview. He often seems unwilling or unable to be definite and make a decision, but it would appear that before his illness he was capable 'Well people at school call me the time king' (Int1:33) and although he describes being 'fussy' as a negative thing, it indicates that he knew what he did or did not like.

So, the 'holy child as patient' appears to have limited opportunity for 'holiness behaviours'. They do, however, hold on to a deep sense of what these should be if their illness was not

¹⁹⁵ At the time of this interview MS had not had the diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome but was anaemic, hence the comment about the vegetables.

overwhelming them. The 'holiness experiences' of the 'holy child as patient' do however resonate with those described by the writers of the Psalms where knowledge of the character of God gives hope even though the lived experience feels different. Where sometimes a prayer is answered directly, and at other times there seems to be no response to the cries of despair.

6.7. The holy child as one with nature

Creation and God as creator was a very strong theme for CB, Star and Storm with numerous references made to this theme, particularly in Interview One. Mel mentions this a couple of times and MS does not refer to it at all, presumably because of the overwhelming state of his illness discussed above.

For CB, God as creator and provider is a strong narrative, and this is linked closely with his own love of nature and being outdoors

And how do you feel when you are walking in the woods? Happy.
Because... you're walking in something that God made.. and... you're seeing the wildlife (CBInt1:106-107).

When choosing the pictures, his standard response to why the pictures related to his friendship with God became 'It's because God made...'. This was true even when the creation was not directly related to nature, for instance 'Because God made all the kings and queens'; or more to do with God the relationship between God's creation and science 'God made things float, like a piece of paper' (CBInt1:187). Whilst this could be interpreted as a lazy, 'go-to' response, the nuances of his references to creation suggest three beliefs. Firstly, that God's creative energy is not only inventive and primary 'God came up with the idea to make waterfalls and lakes, and the rainforests' (CBInt1:215-216); it is also ongoing and in charge of a process of growth and change. Secondly that God's creative energy is reflected in humanity, 'God made birds and he gave people ideas to make cushions' (CBInt1:189-190), and 'God made the trees and he gave people ideas to make swings' (CBInt1:194-195). A creativity that is not just restricted to 'creatives' 'Because God made food and all the stuff like all these [pointing to pans] because he gave ideas to everyone else' (CBInt1:231-232). And thirdly CB believes that God enjoys and loves his creation.

God made the sea, and even if it is calm or if it is rough, he is still like it,¹⁹⁶
and even if the sand's messy, he will still like it (CBInt1:234-235).

¹⁹⁶ This is a literal transcription, but the sense I get from the recording is that this is not a reference to the nature of God – he is like the sea- but instead a grammatical error, the second 'he will still like it' is therefore a reiteration.

In the second interview the stimulus of pictures relating to nature was not there in the same way, but he chose to include an autumn leaf in his bricolage box and still referred to the impact of God's creative energy on everyday life. When he was trying to theologically justify his inclusion of the Rubik's cube in his 'bricolage box', he refers to God's gift to us of colours. Later he suggests that he included his *280 games to enjoy with family and friends* book to express the abundant and playful nature of God's creativity

it makes me think of God because there are loads of things that God created. He created like the slipper game or created the slippers (CBInt2:203-204).

One interesting outcome of this strength of conviction of God's creative power is CB's assertion that God made Jesus, but that the Holy Spirit is a creator.

CB's love of creation does not, however, always lead him to a worship of the Creator God. Picture 3 in Interview One shows a jetty jutting out over the water, when asked if he was standing on this jetty whether he would be thinking about God or just looking, his emphatic response was 'looking' (CBInt1:84). Later, although having said he felt closer to God when outside, when describing the free sensations of being on a swing, again there appeared to be no connection with God, faith or even spirituality.

Mel appears to have a sense of God's presence related to spatial dimensions. For him the trees get in the way of feeling God's closeness in the woods, but churches have high ceilings because 'it is almost like God coming down to you or is in the room with you' (MelInt1: 108-109). He also feels closer to God at the beach than in the woods, because in woods it 'almost feels like he's [God] on the outside of the trees' and the beach is open and therefore God is accessible (MelInt1:213-216). He has a twig collection. What is extraordinary is how he relates this to his faith, saying

I almost feel like when I'm in a forest I'm a very long way from God, cos the leaves are like a force field, and you are in your own world, and I feel like when that first twig dropped off that tree, I picked that up, and I almost feel like, I am revealing the way to God and letting God come closer to me, when I'm picking up twigs that have fell off trees, it's almost like making God being able to come through the trees closer to me (MelInt2:390-394).

Beauty is a strong theme in Star's interviews. Several times she connects God and beauty suggesting that not only is what God makes beautiful, but also God likes things to be beautiful. This means that she often dismisses things as bearing no relation to God because she does not consider them beautiful. For instance when discussing Picture 21 – the bare

church – despite the fact that she identifies the cross in the picture as being to do with Jesus’ death, she says

I don’t think this one’s related to God because it’s like just things that people have made and it doesn’t look very pretty, it’s just a bit boring (StaInt1:145-148).

Storm believes that God created everything, but it is often mentioned as a throw away comment and does not appear to be the most predominant theme in her thinking about him. In Interview Two, she reflects on the creation versus evolution debate and concludes that God may well have used a big bang.¹⁹⁷ She includes a star in her bricolage box which prompts a conversation about star gazing with her telescope, and her feelings of awe and wonder about how big God is to have made the whole universe.

Star, Storm and Mel recognise the responsibility of looking after pets, but there is little reference to looking after God’s creation in its widest sense.

The ‘holy child at one with nature’ experiences a great deal of awe and wonder in relation to God the creator and his creation. This does not appear to be diminished by growing scientific understanding, mainly because it is based on the experience rather than a theoretical understanding. Mostly the ‘holy child at one with nature’ finds this holiness experience of awe and wonder a stimulus to worship, or a deeper understanding of God, but sometimes they do not make a direct correlation between feelings of happiness, contentment, etc. caused by being out in nature, and their relationship with God.

6.8. The holy child and Scripture

All of the children read the Bible as part of their Sunday worship activities and, with the exception of MS, describe reading it at home either with their parents or on their own. For Star, the Bible is part of her regular life and she even reads it to her ‘Beanie Boos’.

Whilst he was happy reading his children’s Bible, Mel struggles reading the adult Bible even though he thinks that reading the Bible is important and that he should read this Bible more. He has not seen any of the online resources neither does he appear to have anything that helps him work through the Bible, like Bible-reading notes, ‘I just read it, I just read all the verses, and chapters and gospels, I just read through it’ (MelInt3:45). He does however enjoy engaging with Scripture through ‘Bible Detectives’ at church.

¹⁹⁷ Mel also talks about evolution when looking at Picture 2 ‘Orangutan by Tim Flach’ ‘because God created the earth, we transformed from monkeys we evolution from monkeys’ (Int1:151-152).

Star and Storm find it hard to read the Bible sometimes. Both include a Veggie tales DVD in their Bricolage box. Although she cannot remember much detail about the story Storm is able to demonstrate a better understanding of Christian discipleship learned from watching this. Star suggests 'Veggie tales' is easier to understand than the Bible in that

it tells you stories all about God' and 'when you watch one with the actual people it's a little bit boring... and it's a lot funnier and it's like for children to learn about God (Stalnt2:102-105).

In CB's second interview the children's Bible referred to in Interview One is in the Bricolage box.

[whispering] I like this book. So do you think you put that in the box because you thought you should? Yeah, because it's about God (CBInt2:254-255)

There seems to be an array of different emotions going on in this simple dialogue. The fact that he did the Bricolage activity at the last-minute means that it is likely that not much thought went into the inclusion of the Bible, except that other comments from CB indicate that he believes it is important to growing in knowledge of God. He clearly, however, feels emotional attachment to the book or perhaps the stories in it, although the use of the 'whispering strategy' implies that he is embarrassed by these feelings.

In Interview One CB selects Picture 17¹⁹⁸ as having something to do with his friendship with God but admits that he does not read the Bible himself very much, intimating that it is an activity for adults rather than children:

I have a children's Bible, but that's mostly stories, so probably when I am older I'll read it. So, yeah (CB Int1:209-11).

He thinks that learning about God and Christianity is important, but again thinks that this kind of intellectual activity is best left to adults. In Interview Three CB selects 'Reading the Bible' as an activity that is part of his friendship with God but feels that he has little influence over this. Even though, he will read it happily enough when instructed to by his Mum and Dad, he does not do so of his own volition. This may reflect the concern identified in Interview One that he is not ready yet although he does suggest that it is not the actual reading that is the issue 'it's kind of, its easy because you're just reading, it's a bit like a story book' (CBInt3:95-96).

MS's ambivalence also comes across in our discussions about the Bible. He says that he reads it in Sunday School and his favourite Bible stories are Moses and Noah. He thinks that it might have some relevance to his life as indicated by his belief that Jesus might have told

¹⁹⁸ A photograph of the first chapter of the gospel of John.

him to eat his vegetables to prevent his anaemia; he is unable to recall anything else that Jesus says or recall any of the stories Jesus told.

Storm's favourite story is Noah's ark, mainly because he saved the animals. She believes Bible stories to be true in comparison to other narratives, which is particularly interesting given her pragmatism and concrete thinking. When talking about Jesus, Star was unable to recall any of the stories that he told, although she was conversant with the Christmas narrative and when talking about the Veggie-tales she says her favourite stories are Esther and Daniel. Mel's favourite Bible story is Daniel and the lion's den. It is his favourite not only because God did a miracle but also because it has 'got a moral in it. Justice was served' (MelInt1:322).

In Interviews One and Two CB tries to give biblical examples when explaining things. For instance, he links Picture 28¹⁹⁹ with the story of Noah, and the discussion about God's instructions with the story of the people of Israel crossing the Red Sea. He puts an autumn leaf in his bricolage box, not only because it is part of God's creation but also because he is able to associate it with the palm leaves used when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. He is also able to make theological connections, for instance in Interview Two he links the colours of the Rubik's cube with theological themes 'This is for the blood, red' (CBInt2:22-23). In a couple of places Mel believes that the Bible is true 'because if it wasn't true then how would there be earth here' (MelInt1:315-318) and uses biblical knowledge to help with his theological reflection or to make sense of something. For instance, in Interview One he tries to make sense of an abstract picture (Picture 34) by using his knowledge of the creation account 'it makes me feel like God is has just created it and it is all resting' (MelInt1:126-134). Interestingly shortly after this he refers once again to God's creation when looking at Picture 2, but veers away from the biblical narrative 'because God created the earth, we transformed from monkeys we evolution from monkeys' (MelInt1:151-152).

When talking about her Bible, Star says that she thinks it helps her focus more on other people than on herself which she believes is what God wants. She includes her mother's childhood Bible in her Bricolage box because it reminds her that other people love God. Storm believes the Bible tells us all about God and it is important that her friend who is thinking about becoming a Christian reads the Bible to find out more. She decides at the end of Interview Two that the Bible is the most important thing she has put in her bricolage box that helps with her friendship with God, although she thinks she should probably read it more.

The 'holy child' therefore has an ambivalent relationship with scripture – knowing it to be important and wanting to use it more, but not entirely comfortable with engaging with it. Where 'child friendly' versions have been introduced they are well used but create a sense that it is not the 'real thing' that is available to adults. When Bible stories are known, they are

¹⁹⁹ Boat, Man & Dog by Ailsa Black (Oxfam card).

used for theological reflection but it would appear that this is an intuitive desire rather than something that has been nurtured.

6.9. Conclusion

The narrative accounts demonstrate that the children in this research project are living out their faith in different ways, not just because of the influence of their family and context, but because of their own personalities and worldviews. Whilst the assumption has been made that these are expressions of holiness, Chapters Seven and Eight test these expressions against theoretical and theological understandings.

7. The Holy Child and Intellect and Reason, Emotion and Feelings, and Will and Action

7.1. Introduction

Chapters One and Two identified the lack of discussion about children and holiness and Chapter Three sought to arrange a selection of theologians around ‘the child in the midst’ by exploring perspectives on and characteristics of holiness as described in adults. Chapters Five and Six provided the opportunity to ‘hear the voices’ of real children. This chapter will explore the narrative accounts in Chapter Six in more detail – thus beginning the discussion about children and holiness that has been identified as lacking. This will be done under the headings of ‘intellect and reason’, ‘emotion and feelings’, and ‘will and action’. The reasons for these headings are given in Section 7.2. where the perspectives of Berkhof, Packer and Hauerwas are used to justify a triumvirate approach to examining the narrative accounts.

Whilst it is appreciated that there are overlaps, the narrative accounts have been allocated to the heading that correlates most closely with their main emphases. The discussion on intellect and reason in Section 7.3. explores the question of reason and faith and includes the ‘holy child as rule keeper, and Pragmatist’. The discussion on the effect that emotion and relationships have on children’s ability to be holy in Section 7.4. includes the ‘holy child as beloved and as patient’. Section 7.5. explores volitional elements of faith, and the child’s ability to enact their holiness and discusses the ‘holy child as philanthropist’. The ‘holy child as one with nature’ is discussed in Chapter Eight and further reference to the ‘holy child and Scripture’ is made in Chapter Nine

7.2. Holiness as a triumvirate

Berkhof’s (1949) definition of faith as ‘a certain conviction wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the gospel, and a hearty reliance (trust) on the promises of God in Christ’ (p. 558), develops the notion that faith has an *intellectual* element based on a knowledge of God’s promises, and a change in belief or conviction; and an *emotional* element navigated by the heart. What appears to be missing from this definition is what he describes elsewhere as ‘the crowning element of faith’ (p. 561) – the *volitional* element and the matter of will.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Reflected by Westerhoff (2000, pp. 89-91).

Packer uses the illustration of a three-legged stool to suggest that without all three 'legs' of doctrine, experience and practice, the journey towards Christlikeness is impeded (2009, p. 57).²⁰¹ His definition of doctrine implies cerebral knowledge of God and his understanding of 'experience' includes a wide range of feelings of transcendence, empathy, longing and joy. He suggests that 'practice' is 'setting oneself to obey the truth and follow the path of wisdom' in a range of relationships and commitments (2009, p. 57).

This triumvirate approach is also reflected in Hauerwas' (1985) understanding of character in which he considers the three elements of intellect, emotion and will or action to be important in establishing a virtuous 'character'.²⁰² What one *does* is affected by what one *knows* to be true or good, i.e. what one *thinks*, and one's inclination, i.e. what one *feels* is a satisfactory outcome. In addition, Hauerwas's metaphor of character is helpful as it overcomes the dualism of the Lutheran perspective of a 'two-fold nature, a spiritual and a bodily one' (Luther, 1957, p. 278) and gives scope for growth. This is particularly relevant when considering children as much of their spirituality surpasses compartmentalization (Nye, 2011, p. 25) and is experienced and expressed through the body (Edwards, 2011, p. 27).

According to Estep 'intellect and reason', 'emotion and feeling', and 'will and action' were also the benchmarks used for establishing a child's growth in faith by the authorities in the church of the second and third centuries (2008, p. 74). They have therefore been chosen as a means of exploring what the children revealed in their interviews and the 'holy child as...' narrative accounts in more depth.

7.3. Intellect and Reason

7.3.1. Introduction

Despite the belief that children were valued in the early church as full members (Estep, 2008, p. 67), and holy in the Celtic Christian tradition²⁰³ much theological thinking about children takes the stance that below the age of reason²⁰⁴ children are unable to judge right from

²⁰¹ This resonates with what is called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral where Outler theorised that Wesley used the four sources of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience to draw his theological conclusions (Waltz, 1991).

²⁰² Here I am denoting Hauerwas's understanding of 'character' rather than the more widespread definitions based around trait, or temperament (Hauerwas, 1985, pp. 11-12).

²⁰³ Mitton (1996) argues that 'little ones' were considered holy, consecrated by God and not to be taken lightly or dishonoured. Cited in Crabtree (2008, p. 81).

²⁰⁴ Considered to be between three or thirty depending on doctrinal understandings and traditions (Catterton Allen, 2008, p. 119).

wrong. This means they could not have a faith because they lack the capacity to reason.²⁰⁵ We now know that the reality of childhood is far more complex than believed by many theologians and philosophers in previous centuries. They are now recognised as sexual beings from birth,²⁰⁶ and we have a far greater understanding of how they use reason to make sense of the world that they live in. For at least two decades, children have been viewed as politically and economically relevant, and experts in the field of research with children have raised questions as to the efficacy of the construction of childhood as a time of only innocence and purity (Scott, 1997).²⁰⁷

Study of 'religious cognition' has gained renewed interest in the last decade and there is academic thinking that suggests that religious cognition is a by-product of other cognitive functions, whereby beliefs and practices are entwined with existing cognitive architecture rather than resident in their own domain (Gervais, 2014, pp. 71-72). This means, a child's religious experience and narrative is likely to reflect their cognitive development, although, it can be argued, not limited by it. One of the reasons why cognitive development has been considered an inhibition of a child's faith and holy living, is the belief that a Christian comes to know God's law and gospel through Scripture.²⁰⁸ The children made many references to the Bible and their engagement with it in their interviews. Although this experience was varied and tended to be parent-led or using a Children's Bible, it was possible to see how this might have had an impact on their holiness experiences and behaviours.²⁰⁹

Rubio-Fernandez and Geurts (2013) demonstrated that although research during the previous three decades had shown that children under four years old lack reasoning because they fail various verbal versions of the 'false-belief' task, more recent studies indicate that if non-verbal methods of testing are used, three year olds are able to track someone else's perspective over a course of events.²¹⁰ In addition, Hudson et al. (1995) identified that by five years of age, children included a variety of 'preparation', 'decision making activities' and 'mishap prevention' elements in a pretend play scenario. 'Inability to reason' therefore appears to become less of a factor in whether a child has faith, particularly as researchers into early-developing conceptual structures in children concluded that 'children can have a more accurate understanding of God's agency than that of humans' (Barrett, Richert, & Driesenga, 2001, p.

²⁰⁵ For instance Origen argued that children could be understood as 'pure' because they had not had to wrestle with sexual passions or a corrupted will, but that their lack of intellect meant that they were unable to engage with the piety of faith Origen 3.3(6).(56-60) and 5.1.357-71 (Scheck, 2001).

²⁰⁶ See for instance: Coleman (2001), American Academy of Pediatrics (2005) and Friedrich, Fisher, Broughton, Houston, & Shafran (1998).

²⁰⁷ See also the discussion on consumerism in Section 2.2.4. p.39.

²⁰⁸ Packer, for instance argues that those 'who have been instructed in God's law and gospel, as found in the Bible, will ordinarily have a more vivid awareness of their sinfulness' (2009, p. 48).

²⁰⁹ See the 'holy child and Scripture', Section 6.8. p.121.

²¹⁰ This relates to the discussion on empathy in Section 7.4.2. p.136.

54), insinuating that children can 'understand' God better than they can understand their own species.

At seven to ten years old, the children interviewed in this research project are, according to Piaget (1954), in both the early and late concrete operations stage. This means that they should have developed, or are developing, conservation abilities and transitive inference, and therefore are better placed than the children in Rubio-Fernandez and Geurts' research to understand and relate narrative to concrete experiences. Certainly, the evidence from the interviews is that the children often demonstrate reasoning. For instance, their responses to the questions about holiness at the end of Table 5.4 (p.94) use logic and empathetic reasoning to decide if they believe adults can be holier than children. In addition, although by comparison, their definitions of holiness might appear limited, they are drawing on experience and logic to attempt to answer the question.

Advances in neuroscience mean that brain plasticity is understood much better and the brain is now believed to remain 'plastic' for much longer than previously thought (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2012, p. 7), it is still true that as particular neuro-circuits strengthen through repetition they transform activities into a habit. This, Doidge believes, can end up locking an individual into 'rigid behaviours' (2008, p. 317). In addition, unused circuitry is 'pruned away' so mental activities that are not 'practised' are not retained, instead that brain space is allocated to the skills we do practise (Doidge, 2008, p. 59). This could be both a positive and a negative factor for 'faithing' children in that as they practice 'holiness' it will become a habit. If, however, other activities and behaviours are 'practised' more these will have a greater influence on character formation.²¹¹

Furthermore, it is now known that the brain changes in response to imagination. Pascual-Leone (1995), and his fellow researchers recorded brain activity before, during and after a test where he asked half the participants to play a piano keyboard, and the other half to imagine it. They discovered that those who had imagined playing the notes exhibited the same changes in their brain as those who had actually played the piano, i.e. their brains had responded and exhibited changes purely on what the participant had imagined. This is a key concept for children exposed to and practising a faith that has many intangible elements. Bridger reminds us that imagination is a key part of faith development, devoting a whole chapter to the subject in the revised edition of his book *Children Finding Faith* (2000).

It would appear therefore that children's knowledge of God need not be restricted by differences in the ability to reason. The next two sections use the Holy Child as Pragmatist

²¹¹ Although this is a physiological process it can be linked with Berne's psychological understanding of 'Life Scripts' see (Berne, 1975).

and Rule Keeper to explore some of the more detailed theories and research insights of cognitive processing that are related to the evidence of holiness experiences and behaviours.

7.3.2. The Holy Child as Pragmatist²¹²

Storm says she sometimes finds it hard to follow God's rules, in particular, not reacting when someone is unkind. She says her response is to move away from the situation, but she is unable to identify whether this action is prompted by her head or heart - although it does appear to be motivated by logic and fear of getting into trouble. She uses the same pragmatic methodology when faced with the dilemma of taking a piece of her favourite cake when no one is looking, in contrast to Star who is motivated by the fear of getting caught.

Hauerwas cites Aristotle and Aquinas as proponents of the view that the act does not depict the character of a person. i.e. they may choose to do the right thing, but not necessarily for the right reasons, and it is only when the acts are due to a moral choice that the person's character can be judged 'moral' (1985, pp. 39-40). This suggests that attention should be paid to the intention behind the behaviour, the motivation. One criticism of Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development is that he did not fully explore moral motivation (Blasi, 1990, p. 51). Blasi argues that instead he was making a distinction between motive and understanding, believing that basic social motives may be present in early life, but only acquire 'moral meaning' when integrated with moral understanding (1990, pp. 52-53). Kohlberg's emphasis is therefore on the importance of cognitive development.

Furthermore, there is the 'rightness' of the rules. Jesus' breaking of the rules of the Sabbath was not sin because he gave humanity the Sabbath principle to protect it, not to bind it up (Dunn, 2003, p. 189). The question can be raised as to whether in asking his father to share communion with him, CB was breaking the rules. Evidence suggests that children and adults partook equally in the Eucharist in the early church²¹³ and many churches currently include children in the sacrament. The nonverbal evidence from the interview is that CB did think that he was 'breaking the rules' but that in this exceptional case, he was not only happy to do it, but also the instigator of the action. Agency is also significant, as there were many cases where the children demonstrated reasoned thought – wrestling their natural instincts to make a more moral choice – and indicated what they would do if they had more power in the situation, as in the discussion about homeless people with CB and Mel.

Hauerwas argues that understanding the nature of character requires analysis of the concept of self-agency. This is an important discussion in terms of children because there is some debate about how much agency children have, and evidence that this varies widely with

²¹² See Section 6.5 p.114.

²¹³ See for instance Strawbridge (2005) cited in Estrep (2008, p. 69).

context (James, 2009). For Hauerwas, character is not 'a shadow of some deeper but more hidden real self' instead it is the 'form of our agency acquired through our beliefs and actions' (1985, p. 21). If a child does indeed have self-agency, then it is reasonable to assume that their 'character', as displayed by their beliefs and actions, is evidence enough of their deeper self; i.e. what the children reveal in their interviews can therefore be assumed to be an accurate indication of their holiness experiences and behaviours and infers validity to the discernment of the fruit of the Spirit in Table 5.6.

Growing in Christian faith is about relating a re-telling of an event or experience to our own experience and behaviours.²¹⁴ Whether that re-telling be directly from an Apostle or from a reading of hand written scrolls or printed text, at some stage, our ability to have faith, has to involve memory, indeed God instructs his people to remember.²¹⁵ Human memory has been described as having two distinct systems; episodic and semantic (Tulving, 1984). Episodic involves the memory of personally experienced events, and semantic memory concerns our 'knowledge of the world' (Tulving, 2001). Our faith often requires the knowledge of what it is we believe in (semantic memory), as well as the (episodic) memory of how we felt when we heard that, or encountered God. As the children described their holiness experiences and behaviours, they regularly slipped between semantic and episodic memory to make sense of the situation and work out how to respond.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, research shows that the greater vocabulary and problem-solving input a child has at a younger age, the higher their reasoning skills are in adolescence and adulthood (Richland & Burchinal, 2013). If the aim is that children will remain people of faith, and committed to growing in holiness, then it appears that unpacking Christian vocabulary and facilitating 'problem solving' (Christian ethics) provides the 'affective spaces' identified by Beaudoin (2016, pp. 15-17) for them to do this. In addition, Gentner and Rattermann (1991) suggest that in terms of identifying similarity - which may have an impact when thinking about holiness - i.e. 'does my life look like Jesus's life?' - it is the accretion of knowledge, rather than intellectual competence, which is the key factor.

If the concrete thinking, pragmatic child is therefore making choices about holiness behaviours based on the information that they have readily available then it appears that discipleship of those children should include giving them a wide range of doctrinally rich semantic memory resources to draw on when making behavioural choices. These resources should include both information and personally experienced events that create semantic memories.

²¹⁴ See for instance references in Psalms, and instructions in Deuteronomy on re-telling the story.

²¹⁵ See for instance Deuteronomy 7:8.

7.3.3. The Holy Child as Rule Keeper²¹⁶

As a concrete thinker, the holy child as rule keeper needs to know what the rules are, and the consequences of breaking the rules. If the rules are unavailable, unclear or open to interpretation, then they will use reasoning and logic to 'keep' the rules, as they understand them. They are also using their feelings.

In a discussion about God's rules in Interview Two, although CB said that the motive for obedience came from his head the rest of his dialogue indicates that it is his feelings that guide his behaviour. Mel uses the analogy of having a conversation with an angel and devil when describing his wrestle about returning a dropped one-pound coin to its rightful owner. The wrestling involved the fact that he needed a pound to buy the Lego mini figure he wanted, but he was convinced by the logic that it was the right thing to do 'I could almost hear the angel louder than the devil' so he gave it back. Like CB, feelings play an important part in his decision making as he describes the fear of feeling guilty and naughty and the happiness of knowing that he did the right thing. Interestingly he also adds that his nan subsequently gave him a pound so that he could buy the Lego mini figure which links with his perception that God provides (or in this case rewards) through family.²¹⁷

Gilligan's extended critique of Kohlberg's moral development theory, *In a Different Voice* (1982), is reasoned from a perspective of gender²¹⁸ but argues for the importance of the traits of 'care for and sensitivity to the needs of others' as an assessment of morality rather than the ability to 'understand' the law (1982, pp. 98-105). These traits are required to fulfil the instruction from Jesus to love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:30-31) and were evidenced in the dialogue with the children; even CB, who appeared to be obsessed with a rigid external framework of moral reasoning. It can be concluded that there is a complex combination of motivation, reasoning, action and feeling in 'keeping the rules'.

Paul exhorts followers of Christ to live in truth²¹⁹ and Ryle argues that a holy person abhors all lying (2014, p. 80). Research indicates that the ability to lie starts from about 42 months (Evans & Lee, 2013) and develops with age and increasing cognitive sophistication (Talwar & Crossman, 2012). In research carried out with adults in 1998, it was discovered that participants tended to lie less to people they felt closer to, and that those lies told were more likely to be altruistic than self-serving (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998). This effect has also been seen more recently amongst children where researchers concluded that the older a child is the more likely they are to evaluate truth and deception in terms of whether they think it will be harmful to themselves or others (Talwar, Saykaly, Arruda, Renaud, & Williams, 2016). This

²¹⁶ See Section 6.2 p.106.

²¹⁷ See Section 6.3. p.108.

²¹⁸ Kohlberg's theory was based on an all-male sample.

²¹⁹ See for instance Ephesians 4:15 and 2 John 4.

means that by the time they are 10-12 years old (the upper end of my survey sample), they are less binary and more nuanced in their assessment of their own and other's behaviour, and more interested in the consequences of it.

The 'Holy Child as Rule Keeper' section (p.106) gives two examples where CB and Mel 'broke the rules' and lied even though they both said elsewhere in their interviews that lying is wrong. It was clear that the intention behind the 'wrong deed' was 'good' – CB wanted to encounter God, and Mel didn't want to hurt his mother's feelings. Gollwitzer (1999) suggests that people's past behaviour tends to be a better indicator of a variance in behaviour than a strong intention. Both boys gave numerous examples throughout their interviews of their desire to follow the rules and be honest so it can be deduced that their normative intention was for good, despite this particular action appearing to the contrary. The question arises about what for these children was 'more important' than the truth in this instance. The implication being that it was encountering God and being loving - demonstrating the complexity of understanding reasoning of motive and observable behaviour.

Gollwitzer argues that motive can be a strong influence in positive behaviour as pre-deciding how to implement one's goals in a given situation takes fewer cognitive resources, and the automation can help deter distractions, bad habits, or competing goals (1999, p. 494). If this is the case, then a child deciding to live their life in a holy manner, and specifically considering what this might look like, should find it easier to achieve, than one who sets vague targets. 'Goal intentions specify a certain end point that may be either a desired performance or an outcome' (Gollwitzer, 1999, p. 494). With implementation intention, it is not so much the goal as the way it is going to be achieved that the person commits to.

Star illustrates the complex dynamic of goal setting and implementation when talking about giving and sharing in Interview Three. She explains how hard it was to share her new skateboard with her friend on the way home from church 'My heart is saying I know it's the right thing to do, my head is going I really want it back' (Star3:72-78). She has the intention of sharing, as she believes her faith requires it and it is the right thing to do. She does this, even though her statement demonstrates the reality is harder than she expected when she set the intention.

Atance and O'Neill (2001) argue that thinking about the future is an integral component of human cognition. What they describe as 'episodic future thinking' - the ability to project the self into the future to pre-experience an event – could in its propensity to 'meaning making' be considered an integral element of spirituality. Research in the last twenty-five years provides evidence that children as young as two do reflect an awareness of the future and its uncertainty by the correct use of words like 'maybe' and 'probably' and the inclusion of

projection, prediction and hypothesis.²²⁰ It does not, however, appear to be until 4 or 5 years of age that children begin to demonstrate more sophisticated planning and anticipatory behaviours. The children in this research project demonstrated a high degree of future episodic thinking. Some of this was done in response to questions that directly test this ability like the questioning about whether they would be tempted to eat a piece of their favourite cake, but much of it was demonstrated by the children as they explained their thoughts and feelings about the stimuli that were part of the interview process.

When Mel was discussing giving and sharing in Interview Three, he talks about how he likes to give 50p of his pocket money to a charity. Despite his mother's argument that he does not have to 'waste' his money on a charity, he states, 'it's my money and I want to help the charity' (MelInt3:115-118). Despite lack of encouragement by his family in this instance, Mel can realise his decision to give and share. CB's example demonstrates other factors that influence episodic future thinking, as when asked whether it would be easy or hard to share his Christmas money, he says 'hard'. Then he is given the scenario of a refugee child just like him who joins his school but has nothing. In this case, he says it would be easy to share his Christmas money 'because you know what's happened to them and if you don't know what's happened to them, you don't really care about them' (CBInt3:66-74). It appears therefore, that one of the key drivers for reasoned good intentions is relationship.

Although there was evidence of an understanding of God's grace elsewhere in the interviews, it is interesting that the children appear unable to afford this grace to themselves as potentially holy people; they assert that it is easier for adults than children to be holy.²²¹ Research using theory-of-mind²²² tasks, among others, concluded that sociocultural input has a significant impact on a child's ability to attribute extraordinary qualities to the divine (Lane, Wellman, & Evans, 2012). It is possible to conclude therefore that the children's perception of themselves as people of faith has been shaped by the theological perspective discussed in Section 7.3.1.. They think that because they do not reason like adults they cannot have faith, and they find it hard to assume that the Holy Spirit has played and is playing a part in their own transformation.

Packer argues that a key element of growing in holiness is living a life of repentance (2009, pp. 109-143). This requires not only knowledge and understanding of the law and a conviction of the Holy Spirit, but also an emotional response and an element of agency to be able to make changes in behaviour. The children's understanding of repentance is mixed and

²²⁰ Preschool-aged children also reveal a growing ability to consider the future consequences of their current behaviour (Thompson & al, 1997) (Moore & al, 1998).

²²¹ See Section 5.3. p.93.

²²² Theory of mind is 'the ability to interpret and predict our own and others' behaviour in terms of mental states.' It comprises 'several cognitive skills employed in social interactions.' (Marchetti, Castelli, Sanvito, & Massaro, 2014).

appears to corroborate Packer's perspective that the discipline of regular repentance is no longer a key part of teaching in modern Christianity (2009, p. 112). The word sorry does not appear in any of the transcripts apart from one in CB's first interview, although all the children seem to understand right and wrong, and God's mercy and grace. CB is aware how hard it can be to say sorry to God, even though forgiveness is on offer (CBInt2:36-40). This lack of coverage of repentance could be, as Packer argues, due to the teaching that they are getting, although all three attend Anglican services where a collective prayer of confession and absolution is said every week. It could be a weakness in the interview process, in that, had the question been asked, the children might have responded with a great deal of information. This could be a cognitive development issue. Alternatively, one other possibility is that the children were very happy to accept the forgiveness they understood God to offer and move on, thereby reducing the need to talk about it.

Gunton asserts that, according to the Bible, even though 'one of the attributes of God has always been the unknowability' (2000, p. 48), aspects of the knowledge of God, can be taught (2000, p. 50). He cites Haymes who argues that the 'knowledge of God' was foundational for most of the people of Israel because it was taught as per God's commandment in Deuteronomy 6:4,6 not because it was necessarily experienced (Haymes, 1988, p. 89). He does however go on to explore the nature of 'revealed knowledge... knowledge that is guaranteed to – rather than in – the knower because it is given by God'. Using Ephesians 3:19 and Colossians 2:2 he emphasises that knowing Christ in the relational sense i.e. through his love, gives us access to the knowledge of God's mystery and the treasures of wisdom through the Spirit that according to John 16:13 'leads us into all truth' (Gunton, 2000, pp. 51-3). He describes this as 'knowledge of the heart',²²³ something that does not necessarily require intellectual maturity and can traverse conditions of age.

Our personal knowledge of God has two dimensions, the relational and the eschatological, which, although brought about by the Spirit, reflects all aspects of the Trinity (Gunton, 2000, p. 53). What is encouraging about Gunton's understanding of the kind of knowledge described by the term 'gnosis' is that he sees it as 'subordinated to verbal forms ... the result of a relation to God in Christ' which gives those in this relationship the confidence to claim 'a certain kind of knowledge because God has given it to them'²²⁴ (Gunton, 2000, p. 54). This means that this 'knowledge' is not out of the reach of a child who is at least able to experience relationship, particularly when corroborated by Rubio-Fernandez and Geurts' (2013) discovery about the importance of non-verbal communication.

²²³ This resonates with Hay & Nye's (1998) notion of 'relational consciousness' where a child displays spiritual insight and emotional intelligence beyond their expected cognitive development.

²²⁴ Similar to Wesley's understanding of Prevenient grace.

The eschatological element of Gunton's two-dimensional knowledge of God also bears significance for our understanding of children's connatural 'knowledge of God'²²⁵ in that he argues for Paul's perspective, that it is 'more important to be known than to know' (2000, p. 54). If this concept is applied to a child in relationship with God, then it negates use of the criteria of cognitive development as a barrier to their 'actual' knowledge about God. Kierkegaard's description of God as 'illusory' (1992, pp. 243, 244) and Barth's as one constantly 'veiling and unveiling' (Barth, 1975, p. 174) can help us to see that a comprehensive theoretical knowledge of God is impossible for adults, and therefore cannot be a barrier for a child to 'know' God. In Gunton's words 'we, finite and fallen human beings, know only contingencies, and only through contingencies' (2000, p. 60). In this way, a child shares the same possibilities and limitations as an adult when it comes to knowing God and whilst they do need to intellectually engage with and reason about their faith and what it means, it should not be the sole criteria on which their holiness is measured or enacted.

7.3.4. Conclusions on Intellect and Reason

Human beings exercising faith are engaged in a range of verbal and non-verbal cognitive activities. This involves relational and semantic understanding and reasoning and includes using information from the past to think about the future, i.e. what should I do in this situation? What is my response going to be to? Nye asserts that children's spirituality is based on a 'more holistic way of seeing things', using a more 'mystical' perception than adults and not analysing as much (2011, p. 26). The evidence from this research suggests that they are also able to use episodic and semantic future thinking as well as other complex cognitive processes in understanding and enacting their faith, and using reasoned strategies to make holiness behaviour choices.

The perception that children are not able to have faith or exercise holiness because of their lack of reasoning is therefore flawed. Indeed, McNeill argues that limiting God's grace to the cognitive development of a child, is in danger of doing 'damage both to the idea of God and to the idea of the child' (2017, p. 172). It also devalues the importance of being known by God. There is evidence, however, in this research of the complex relationship between cognitive development and what children know and experience of God, and how they behave in response.

²²⁵ See for instance: Edwards (2011, p. 94) and Nye (2011, p. 122). Westerhoff also argues that children's 'knowledge' of God is found in a consciousness that is 'intuitional... experiential, and is characterized by nonverbal, creative nonlinear, relational activities' (2000, p. 70). Writers like Renz (1998), Cavalletti (1983) and Lillig (1998) describe this 'connatural knowledge' as a 'loving response to God's first offer of love' (Renz p59).

One conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion is that effective catechetical processes that involve the accretion of knowledge about who God is and what a friendship with God looks like, as well as an experience of encounter with God, might be a way of ensuring that the child is provided with material that enhances their 'database' for reasoning and for episodic and semantic memory, particularly with regard to grace and forgiveness. Gunton's perspectives on knowledge of God indicate that intellect alone is not enough, and that the emotions are a strong component of faith and holiness. The following section therefore explores this in more detail.

7.4. Emotion and Feelings

7.4.1. Introduction

Babies are born with neurobiology that provides feelings of pleasure from engagement with others. They therefore have the innate capacity to 'notice, assess relations and undertake sympathetic intentions towards others' (Sajaniemi, 2017, p. 83). They are hardwired for relationship and 'knowing' through feelings in their pre-verbal world. Assuming a safe and secure situation, children grow in their ability to express and understand the world around them, and this pre-verbal knowledge is strengthened. As discussed above, Gunton argues that knowledge of God is relational – something which grows alongside the accretion of knowledge. The poetry of Psalm 139 indicates that 'from the beginning YHWH has known this person' (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014, p. 583) could it also be that because of their neurobiology the person in the womb is noticing and relating to God too?

The purpose of this section is to explore how children's feelings and emotions could be part of their holiness experiences and behaviours. Section 7.4.2. uses the narrative account of the 'holy child as beloved' as its basis. Section 7.4.3. looks at the impact of negative emotions using the 'holy child as patient' as an illustration.

7.4.2. The holy child as beloved²²⁶

In his discussion on 'moral character' Hauerwas highlights the debate between ethical theorists like Frankena (1963) and Murdoch (1966) about the relationship between, and judgement of, actions and personality, and concludes that 'the self that gives rise to agency is fundamentally a social self, not separable from its social and cultural environment' (1985, p. 33). This concept links with Westerhoff's (2012) understanding that faith development can

²²⁶ See Section 6.3. p.108.

only effectively take place in a community of faith. Research into parent-child communication about religion published in 2003, demonstrated that 'a bi-directional reciprocal style of communication seemed more typical than a unidirectional transmission style' leading the researchers to emphasise the need to 'view children as active participants in religious socialization rather than as more passive recipients of parental influences' (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003).

In 1974 Zimmerman concluded that, along with other main Eurasian religions, Christianity was primarily concerned with 'the sanctity of family relations' and 'being religious is tantamount to being a good husband, a good wife, a good parent, child or kinsman' (p. 6). Researchers into the field of religion and family systems are still affirming his argument and have concluded that 'people are able to experience God or nurture their sense of spirituality through participation in family relationships' (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003, p. 221). The 'holy child as beloved' narrative account demonstrates that children can translate their holiness experiences and behaviours through relationships with those around them.

The discussion on the laws of holiness in Leviticus 19 in Section 3.2 (p.44) concluded that most of them can only take place in community. For a child, with little autonomy and agency in a community, it could be argued that their ability to bring about these characteristics on a corporate level is limited. But consideration of the playground as a micro community, means it is possible to identify ways in which children can enact holiness in this context. When Mel shares a hoopla in the playground with someone he identifies as lonely he is demonstrating social compassion and neighbourly attitudes. When Storm tries to explain to her friends why she is not joining in with their Halloween activities she is excluding the idolatrous and occult and practicing distinctiveness, despite the risk that this might put her at odds with her friends. The question is whether, when they do have agency, they will exhibit the other qualities outlined in Leviticus 19. The children appear to believe that they do not have this agency; Storm suggests that holiness is easier for adults because 'they've learnt all the ways how you can help someone else, whilst a child hasn't really' (StmInt1:292-294).

Oettingen (1999) distinguishes between two forms of thinking about the future: 'expectations' – the judgement of the likelihood of a certain outcome or behaviour; and 'free fantasies' – future outcomes and behaviours envisaged regardless of likelihood of occurrence. His conclusion, drawn from research with children learning a second language, was that 'In line with fantasy realization theory, contrasting positive fantasies about the future with negative aspects of the impending reality turned out to be a prerequisite of high commitment to behavioural goals.' He goes on to suggest that indulgence on only positive fantasies or negative reality does not produce high levels of commitment, even when the expectations of success were high (p. 321). This implies that if a child believes that they can 'be holy' and is

encouraged in their belief by adults who also believe that, they are more likely to realise the potential of their 'fantasy'.

In addition to episodic and semantic memory, Kliegal et al (2000, p. 1041) discuss 'prospective memory', which is important in decision-making. They suggest that prospective memory involves three processes: 1) developing a plan, 2) remembering a plan, and 3) remembering at some future point to execute the plan. These processes are geared to one's own specific action rather than a more 'script-like routine'. If a child is required to use prospective memory to choose to enact 'holiness behaviours' then the question is whether the nurture of faith within the family and the church is giving them the tools to engage in all three processes that Kliegal et al. believe are part of that decision making. For instance, when a child is present in a worship service, is the liturgical dance they are watching and participating in geared towards specific actions or towards a more script-like routine?

For CB it appears to be the latter. In Interview Three he puts 'going to church' in his 'easy' pile alongside 'worshipping' because 'you don't really have to do much. You just read the words on the screen and then you don't have to do anything else' (CBInt3:93). The question is whether this almost disengaged participation contributes to prospective memory processes that enable future faithful discipleship or whether the apparent lack of emotional connection means that the child does not include this behaviour or understanding in future decision-making processes.

Evidence from the interviews suggests participation is a positive factor. CB believes it is an important way to show God you love him and enjoys singing as part of the children's choir at church. Singing makes him happy because it makes God happy. Storm likes going to church and being part of sung worship makes her feel happy and gives her a warm feeling inside. Mel says

when we worship God in church as one big group and it feels like we are thanking God for reasons, and we're just sort of like a big community, and I really like that feeling that we're all following God, and we're all erm, disciples, and we're all following God and that feeling just makes me quite happy (Mel Int3:109-113).

Being part of the worshipping community and joining in with sung worship, does therefore appear to have a significant impact on the children's holiness experiences and behaviours. What does appear to be limited, however, is experience of community beyond sung worship. Those that mention Sunday School do so for the activities and the treats, rather than the relationships it provides.

Research undertaken by Vaish et al (2010) demonstrated that children's prosocial behaviour is mediated by what they understand to be the intentions behind an adult's behaviour.²²⁷ The researchers concluded that 'children thus selectively avoid helping those who cause or even intend to cause – others harm'. This is particularly significant for children who are part of a worshipping community where what is said does not match what is done. Interestingly, there is little reference, if any, to other adults like Sunday School teachers or other members of the children's worshipping community, apart from a couple of indirect reference to activities they have organised.

For Kuhl (1984)²²⁸ goal-directed behaviours are subject to two controls: emotional and environmental. To control the environment, the person removes competing temptations from the situation, something that a child may not be physically able to achieve because of their size or cognitive ability, or because of the level of autonomy that they have in situations controlled by adults. Twice, however, Storm talked about using this technique when resisting temptation, which may be evidence of a Holy Spirit intervention complementing the combination of emotional and cognitive abilities.

The Holy Child as Beloved encounters God through positive relationships and uses this experience to work out how to engage in reciprocal relationships and actions, Section 7.4.3. explores what happens when a child's emotional experiences are not positive.

7.4.3. The holy child as patient²²⁹

The impact of ill health on children's spirituality is still a new and relatively unexplored area for academic research. Most of the relevant literature does not predate 1997. Predominantly, the articles explore the impact of the child's condition on the family. Some consider the role of religion in the care of the child from both the position of the carers and the position of the parents.²³⁰ A group of Finnish researchers have done work on the impact of stress, and therefore cortisol levels, on brain development.²³¹ But there is no exploration of the impact of a child's experience of ill health on their spirituality or faith. Cervantes and Arczynski (2015) argue that children's spirituality 'is a dimension of human function' that is not well addressed in their profession and therefore urge their fellow counsellors and psychologists to include

²²⁷ In the experiment actors were used to create different scenarios. When these adults deliberately harmed one of the other adults, the children were less likely to subsequently help that adult than someone who they perceived as a helpful or neutral adult, or even an adult that had accidentally harmed another.

²²⁸ Cited in Gollwitzer (1999, p. 494).

²²⁹ See Section 6.6. p.117.

²³⁰ See for instance Superdock, Barfield, Brandon, & Docherty (2018) and Malcolm, et al. (2019).

²³¹ See for instance Sajamiemi, et al. (2011) and Sajamiemi, Suhonen, Kintu, Lindholm, & Hirvonen (2012).

thinking from work by authors like Hay and Nye (1998) and Hart (2003) to enhance their practice. It would appear, however, from a report of a one-day workshop for healthcare professionals, that this is still in its early stages (Llewellyn, et al., 2012). This points to the need for further research to be done on the inter-relationship between health and spirituality in children.

It was clear from MS's experience that his physical well-being has an impact on his emotional and spiritual well-being. The kind of stress involved in having a chronic and undiagnosed condition that restricts your ability to live the life that you have lived before has been recognised as a negative influence, and the research into the impact of cortisol on brain development (Sajamiemi, et al., 2011) might explain why a normally articulate and engaged boy²³² cannot answer the questions in quite the same way as the others. In this case, the impact might be temporary, but it could be deduced that the inhibition of cognitive processes due to ill health, might sometimes inhibit both holiness experience and behaviours.²³³

7.4.4. Conclusions on Emotion

The 'holy child as beloved and patient' demonstrate the impact of both positive and negative emotions on the children's faith and spirituality, and evidence from the narrative accounts corroborates the importance of both emotion and cognition²³⁴ in facilitating holiness in children. Parental and family influences were found to be positive but contribution of the faith community appears to be mixed in that there was little testimony in the interviews of input from the faith community, apart from presence in sung worship which was identified as significant for the children. It does raise these questions: whether the relational work advocated in most youth ministry theory²³⁵ only becomes significant when children reach adolescence; and whether the churches that the children are attending are not offering an investment in each child or young person by at least five people.²³⁶

Packer warns against maximising or minimizing the place of feelings in holiness. He does suggest that they do motivate behaviour and the evidence of the impact of feelings is in the 'doing' in a holy life (2009, p. 95). Section 7.4 therefore considers how the thoughts and the feelings of the holy child might be seen in their actions.

²³² See Section 5.1.2. p.84.

²³³ There is a more detailed discussion on suffering in Section 8.6. p.155.

²³⁴ Research on altruism and lying would appear to suggest that cognition and emotion do in fact combine when children are assessing particular behavioural choices and that a number of skills are needed to be able to effectively solve interpersonal problems. (Elias, Beier, & Gara, 1989).

²³⁵ See for instance Root (2007).

²³⁶ A recommendation made in the *Sticky Faith* resources (Powell & Clark, 2011).

7.5. Will and action

7.5.1. Introduction

From a Lutheran perspective, to limit the definition of a person, and therefore their faith to the intellect and spirit only, was to ignore the incarnation itself (Berryman, 2009, p. 96). Body, spirit and mind all work together, however differentiation must be made between an inner tendency that is attitude and the evaluative responses by which these inner tendencies are expressed (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). It is erroneous to see only emotions and cognitions as part of an inner tendency, and behaviour just as the evaluative response. It is possible that all three might not necessarily be in accordance with each other. For instance, 'You might treat children with disabilities as any other child, think highly of them but still feel uncomfortable or embarrassed in their presence' (Laat, Freriksen, & Vervloed, 2013).

Hauerwas also highlights the issue of how the 'relationship between a person and his [sic] act is to be understood' (1985, p. 9), raising the question of whether a child will act in a certain way because of the kind of person they are, or whether their actions define them. Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that when a child is repeatedly referred to as 'the naughty one' or 'the clever one' they will endeavour to live up to that reputation.²³⁷ This is where Gustafson's advocacy of the exploration of 'conscious intention' is helpful. This research is seeking to discover what it is that shapes a life 'in accord with God's good will', and brings about a 'lasting disposition' that conforms to God's goodness (1971, p. 10). A concept subsumed within Hauerwas's notion of 'character' in which he means 'the qualification of man's²³⁸ self-agency through his beliefs, intentions, and actions, by which a man acquires a moral history befitting his nature as a self-determining being' (1985, p. 11). Section 7.5.2. considers the 'holy child as philanthropist' as a means of exploring the importance of will and action in the children's holiness.

7.5.2. The holy child as philanthropist²³⁹

One of the key elements in discussing children's faith formation is the question of accountability.²⁴⁰ When can a child be held responsible for their actions and their choices, particularly for or against the gospel? Stack argues that 'there are strong, social, moral, ethical and religious pressures to act in non-selfish ways' (2017, p. 23) but cultural influences can affect children's behaviour and research has demonstrated that children's sharing behaviours

²³⁷ See for instance: White & Jones (2000), Flanders & Havumaki (1960) and Hoover & Brady (1992).

²³⁸ Read human.

²³⁹ See Section 6.4. p.112.

²⁴⁰ The age of accountability is not clear from the Bible, but many assume that it is 13 based on the Jewish custom of Bar mitzvah and Bat mitzvah.

are more common and equitable in less individualised societies. The children in this research are all influenced by the UK culture that, according to Hofstede (2020), ranks high on individualism and is highly success oriented and driven. This could mean that their altruistic attitudes and behaviours can more readily be interpreted as the intervention of the Holy Spirit and signs of holiness learned from being part of a Christian community, because they are not reflective of the cultural norms.²⁴¹

Hoffman's theory, developed over three decades, which considers the 'synthesis of affect and cognition' and focus on the link between caring and justice (2000, p. 3) provides insight on how emotions play a part in holiness behaviours. Hoffman believes 'empathy is the spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible' (2000, p. 3), something that has endured evolution (Hoffman, 1981) and is an important contributory factor to moral motivation and behaviour. He explores human action in five different types of moral dilemma: innocent bystander; transgressor; virtual transgressor; multiple moral claimants; caring versus justice (2000, pp. 3-4). He concludes that as soon as a child is old enough to cognitively determine that someone else's pain is not their own, their empathic distress²⁴² is transformed in part into a feeling of sympathetic distress or compassion for the victim, and that from that time on when children observe someone in distress they feel both empathic and sympathetic distress (2000, p. 6). There was certainly evidence that the children experience empathic and sympathetic distress when recalling situations or had situations described to them where someone might be experiencing pain or loss.

For Hoffman (2000), however, empathy is not just an emotional response. Cognition is a key element in empathic distress and its development, and it is widely considered that affect and cognition have an influence on each other. It has also been argued that social cognition is an important aspect of this empathy as competence in social cognition – the understanding of relationships and social behaviour – is considered a key element of healthy development in a child (Branden-Muller, Elias, Gara, & Schneider, 1992, p. 272). This could mean that signs of empathy and resultant care in people with underdeveloped social cognition²⁴³ might be interpreted as not just evidence of intense social conditioning and training by parents and caregivers, but possibly evidence of relational consciousness as described by Hay and Nye (1998), or the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Intertemporal choice is the name given to the decision-making dilemma associated with having to make a choice between outcomes with different time periods (Berns, Laibson, & Loewenstein, 2007) i.e. would you like £10 now or £20 in a month. Research suggests that

²⁴¹ This does not mean that there is not evidence of altruism and generosity in the UK.

²⁴² Hoffman uses the term 'empathic distress' to refer to a combination of empathic and sympathetic distress (2000, p. 7).

²⁴³ This could be due to their age or conditions like Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

the ability to postpone gratification is something that develops across infancy and childhood into adulthood (Read & Read, 2004). It could be argued that the Christian faith is constructed around the notion of delayed gratification. When a Christian responds to the gospel by 'repenting and believing', the promise is not for an easy life²⁴⁴ but a future promise of eternal life. If the ability to postpone gratification only develops in later childhood and adulthood, then, despite the mitigation of episodic future thinking, it would appear that it is harder for a child to make behavioural decisions that are sacrificial and costly in the present²⁴⁵ with a view to the long-term reward of a place in heaven.

There is, however, evidence that children can make sacrificial decisions based on altruism. Experiments carried out with pre-schoolers by Thompson et al. (1997) and Moore (2009) explored delayed gratification and other-oriented preference through the sharing of stickers. Moore (2009) concluded that resource-allocation decisions made by young children are dependent on the recipient – there is equitable division of resources with friends, and prosocial moves with strangers when the cost to self is not high'.²⁴⁶ He argues that this is because human social organisation depends on cooperation and exchange, perhaps suggesting that there is a biological programming for this behaviour. i.e. it is good for society, so children conform.

Investigations into the link between attachment style²⁴⁷ and delay of gratification found that secure attachment is related to intertemporal choice and executive control i.e. the more secure a child is the more able they are to delay gratification and self-regulate.²⁴⁸ Research demonstrates that secure children 'are better able to delay gratification compared to insecure children' and that 'they also tolerate a long waiting time compared to insecure children' (Marchetti, Castelli, Sanvito, & Massaro, 2014, pp. 2-3), but also that the affective theory of mind, as well as the educational habits of the family 'i.e. is the child taught to wait', need further investigation. It could be that a secure child that is enculturated in the Christian faith, could demonstrate greater altruism than a secure child that has not been taught (whether intentionally or through modelling) to make sacrificial and costly behavioural choices. Here, the cases of altruism described by the children could be because they are secure children enculturated by Christian parents.

Jesus preached a step further than prosocial altruism. His instructions were to go beyond the expected norm. For instance, if someone requires one item of clothing from you, give them

²⁴⁴ Jesus states that if anyone wants to follow him it requires them to pick up their cross and follow him Matthew 16:24-26.

²⁴⁵ This is particularly true in the UK, where Hofstede (2020) rates Britain low in 'long term orientation'.

²⁴⁶ This resonates with the similar age stage in Kohlberg's moral development theory (1984).

²⁴⁷ Standard types secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent identified by Ainsworth et al. (1978) based on Attachment theory by Bowlby (1969).

²⁴⁸ See for instance: Jacobsen, Huss, Fendrich, Kruesi, & Ziegenhain (1997) and Moore & Symons (2005).

two (Luke 6:29 and Matthew 5:40) and in the parable of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) the 'good neighbour' not only tended the robbed man and took him to a place of safety, but continued to pay for his upkeep after his departure. Jesus is asking children to overcome their natural tendencies towards 'safe' altruism and give more. The key example of the Holy Child as Philanthropist – Star and the Beanie Boos – suggests an application of Jesus' teaching. Her altruism that came at a cost could be evidence of not only a divine programming of that neurobiology poetically described in Psalm 139 but also an intervention of the Holy Spirit that enabled holy behaviour.

7.5.3. Conclusions on Will and Action

Concerns have been raised by writers on youth ministry from the USA that young people have developed a Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.²⁴⁹ This research demonstrates, however, that these children believe God to be an active agent in their lives and are trying to work out what this means in terms of their behaviour.

In the 'holy child as philanthropist' narrative account, there is evidence that actions reflect Hoffman's theory of the synthesis of cognition and affect and are a manifestation of belief, intention and action. It appears though that the complexity and/or beauty of these actions are not always recognised by the children or the adults around them. Secure children, not surprisingly, appear to be more able to be philanthropic, which indicates that the church has a responsibility to 'scaffold'²⁵⁰ families where children are growing up so that they are able to form secure attachments and thus facilitates their holiness behaviours.

7.6. Conclusion

It was evidenced in this chapter through discussion of theory and the research data, that the assumption that children cannot have faith because they are unable to reason is deeply flawed. It is also suggested that this belief and the theological thinking that underpins it is still prevalent in churches, and the children have perhaps unknowingly absorbed it. This is verified by CB's exclusion from participation in Holy Communion, and the acceptance of the children that the 'adult' Bible was beyond them, despite having no issues with reading. CB thinks that learning about God and Christianity is important, but thinks that this kind of intellectual activity is best left to adults. This indicates that care and attention should be paid to how they are

²⁴⁹ See Section 3.5. p.57.

²⁵⁰ A phrase used to describe supported learning based on Vygotsky's theories of social learning (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

reasoning and what information and experiences they are supplied with that give them greater scope for that reasoning.

The children in this research project provided more evidence for 'Holiness Behaviours' than they did for 'Holiness Experiences' – some of this evidence was given directly and some was hidden in their narrative about another situation, e.g. Star and the Beanie Boos. In some cases, the child was able to identify the cognitive and emotional processes involved in the decision to behave in a particular way; in others, they were unable to identify them. It would appear, however, that the predominant driver for holiness behaviour was 'feelings' i.e. the desire to feel positive feelings and to avoid negative feelings like guilt. The children provided evidence that they are growing in their connatural knowledge of God through experiencing love and belonging, but there was little testimony that the community of faith was scaffolding this process and providing more opportunities for holiness experiences.

8. The Holy Child and the duality of holiness

8.1. Introduction to the duality of holiness

The children's ambivalence about the words 'holy' and 'holiness'²⁵¹ reflects the endemic ambiguity of what Christians believe them to mean. Typically, many think of righteousness and ethical purity, based on passages about righteous living and being cleansed from sin.²⁵² Nevertheless, holiness in scripture is not just about doing the right things, instead the emphasis is also about being set apart from what is common. Christians are called to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.²⁵³ The term holiness appears to encompass a wide range of virtues and characteristics²⁵⁴ whilst also being identified as one of those characteristics. Snyder illustrates this synecdoche in his description of the five calls of God, as a set of rings, one within the other. He describes holiness as the inner circle, and also the outer circle that includes all the calls (2008, p. 149).

These challenges raise what may be a key aspect of holiness - its duality. For Luther, writing in the 16th century, the complexity was that all people, including children were simultaneously both righteous and sinful (Strohl, 2001, p. 134). The notion of 'now' and 'not yet' is helpful in considering faith and spirituality in children. We know that they are in relationship with God now, as the people they are now, but that relationship will change as they change. The duality of holiness perspective was considered by Nicholas of Cusa in the 15th century in his book *De docta ignorantia* (On Learned Ignorance) where he identified the 'coincidence of opposites' which allows for the opposites in God without losing the compelling complexity of either. Cusa (1997) believed children to be especially capable of understanding this and gave particular consideration to their ability to wonder.

The Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (2007) concluded that holiness has several dimensions each with contrasting realities. In the light of Cusa's belief about children, their conclusion, that to experience and practice holiness in its completeness we must hold both contrasting elements in tension, appears to be a helpful framework for exploring children's holiness. The dimensions that the Holiness Study Project identified are: forms and essence; crisis and process; Individual and corporate; Christ-centred and Holy Spirit-centred; blessing and suffering; separation and incarnation; development and end. This chapter seeks to explore

²⁵¹ See Section 5.3. p.93.

²⁵² See for instance 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Peter 1:14-16.

²⁵³ See for instance Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 3:17, Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 1:22, 3:12-1.

²⁵⁴ See the list of virtues required for a bishop in Titus 1:8.

these dimensions in relation to the children's interviews and concludes with an exploration of 'The Holy Child as one with nature', which I consider to pull all the threads together.

8.2. Forms and Essence

Whilst 'form and essence' might appear to overlap with the categories of 'Holiness Experiences' and 'Holiness Behaviours' that have been identified in the children's dialogue, it is important to recognise the differences. Outler suggests that Wesley's distinction between what he describes as 'inward' and 'outward' holiness is helpful. Inward holiness being an 'immutable, invariable state' and outward holiness, visible in many degrees, but always with love as its foundation (Outler, 1964, pp. 160, 371, 372). The 'Holiness Behaviours' correlate with the visible evidence of love in action like the sharing of Beanie Boos²⁵⁵ but also extend to Christian disciplines like prayer and Bible reading. The 'Holiness Experiences' are harder to define but include feelings of connection and belonging, conviction, encounter with God and transcendence.

It could be argued that a concentration of 'Holiness Experiences' is the 'essence' of holiness, but I think it is dangerous to make this assumption. Members of a close group of friends or family might feel deeply connected without making any association with God or faith. Instead, the 'immutable, invariable state' is one wrought by the Holy Spirit, which changes the core of the person, embedding all their experiences and behaviours in the Holy love-filled character of God. As Wesley argues, reason cannot produce the love of God or neighbour (Wesley, 1988, p. 39), so forms of holiness like generosity and kindness can only be present because the essence of holiness is love.

Snyder argues that the problem with Western Christianity is that 'we have tended to reduce sin to matters of law that are disconnected from life' (2011, p. 15). Outler suggests that, although Wesley 'turned out 'rules' by the dozen' and created a small group structure that enabled accountability for Christian maturation, it was his belief that Christian life could only flourish if deeply entrenched in this essence - 'rooted in faith and fruiting in love' (Outler, 1976, p. 22). Thus, the 'essence' of holiness is not compliance to a set of rules, but rather a life that is embedded in and overflowing with love.

Augustine stated in a letter to Dardanus 'We affirm, therefore, that the Holy Spirit dwells in baptized children although they do not know this.'²⁵⁶ They are unconscious of Him although

²⁵⁵ See 'holy child as philanthropist' narrative account, Section 6.4. p.112.

²⁵⁶ This would appear to be in direct contrast to the opinion of Wesley, shaped by the writings of Peter Browne, that humans have no innate idea of God; that we can only form our understanding of God through our experience of human existence and the world in which is it placed (Maddox, 1994, p. 49).

He is in them... like a covered spark awaiting increased age to be kindled' (1984, p. 416). This might appear surprising given his belief that infants are evil (Wills, 2011, pp. 9, 30), but implies that the 'essence' of holiness is already present in children and reflects the understanding of children's connatural knowledge of God discussed in Section 7.3.1. (p.126). Maddox suggests that for Wesley 'Physician' and 'Provider' were the dimensions of God's work that Wesley valued most, and inclined more to a metaphor of God as a loving parent rather than a sovereign monarch (1994, p. 63). The Holy Child as beloved demonstrated this 'connatural knowledge' of God as loving parent, through loving relationships that create connection and belonging at home and in the worshipping community.

In terms of the 'essence' of holiness as experienced in transcendence, the children in this research were unable to give many examples and what is described tends to be translated through nature or wonder at creation; this will be explored in Section 8.9. (p.162). This could be due to the cultural milieu in the USA, described by Root, which might have a similar impact in the UK. Root perceives a 'youthfulness stance against transcendence' that makes 'divine action seem more and more implausible' (2017, p. 17). He goes on to argue that youth ministry still seems to be defined by institutional participation rather than an encounter with divine action (p. 30). He is, however, referring to teenagers. Rogers' (2014) research, on the other hand, among children who experienced childhood poverty and abuse, leads her to believe that children are searching for transcendence, and that it is important in helping them process who they are and what has happened to them. The question is why the children in this research do not appear to have experienced more transcendence. Is it because it is commonplace in their lives and therefore does not merit discussion in their minds? This seems unlikely, as their dialogue was open and wide-ranging. Is it because they do not have the vocabulary to explain what they have experienced? Nye believes that many children will not share their spirituality because they feel they do not have the religious vocabulary (2011, p. 63). Alternatively, is it that the church does not facilitate encounters with God or help them to encounter the divine in the moments that they identified? If so, this raises the further question of why? The answer to which might lie in the perspective discussed in Section 7.2. that does not believe children to be fully capable of faith and therefore holiness, because of their lack of reasoning.

In terms of 'form', throughout our dialogue the children used logic and reason to explain their behaviours or possible choices. There were many references to behavioural choices being made primarily to avoid punishment, but there was also evidence of spontaneous altruism.²⁵⁷ Epstein argues that previous conditioning is critically important in the emergence of problem-solving behaviour. It is therefore fair to conclude that when children chose to exhibit 'holiness

²⁵⁷ See Table 5.7, in Section 5.6.

behaviour' this can be influenced by a whole range of emotions and reasoning and a variety of positive and negative factors.

For Gustafson (1971) the form and essence of holiness is the 'significance of conscious intention, to shape a life in accord with God's good will, and of the practice it takes to become a fitting living person conforming to God's goodness' (p. 184). He contends that what is needed for understanding of how anyone grows in holiness is the exploration of 'what forms the conscience, what centres bring life to wholeness and integrity and 'style', what brings lasting dispositions into being that give order and direction to gesture, word and deed' (p. 184). In the previous chapter, the discussion on 'intention' demonstrated that children are capable of not only believing that they should conform to God's goodness, but they could, although this was limited by agency and the sometimes limited theological perspective of the faith community. The interviews with the children in this research project demonstrated evidence of the 'form' of holiness in the behavioural choices that they were making, not just the intention, but also in outcome.

8.3. Crisis and Process

The discussion on sanctification in Section 3.3 (p.48) illustrated that different perspectives are held on this phenomenon. Thorsen argues that in the twentieth century in places there was a tendency for holy living 'became identified with legalistic perfectionism and the eradication of sin' arguing that this created a 'preoccupation with instantaneous rather than gradual growth in holiness, and a privatized rather than a holistic and socially constructive understanding of holiness' (2008, p. 74). There are biblical examples where sanctification appears to be a completed process or present possession,²⁵⁸ and yet there are also instances where it is a 'work in progress' that will carry on until the coming of the Lord.²⁵⁹ The Johannine tradition certainly gives a credence to the notion that we cannot be completely like Jesus or completely pure, until he is revealed.²⁶⁰ This further suggests that those who 'purify themselves, just as he is pure' are involved in a process that prepares them for Christ's appearance' (Waters, 2008, p. 45) and avoids legalism by focusing on Jesus.

For many theologians, including Wesley, 'grace' is understood as God at work in our lives through his Spirit. For Wesley, this grace covers the entirety of life, taking the initiative without overpowering; enabling and empowering our response rather than coercing it. In this way, there is a process of change over time (Maddox, 1994, pp. 86-87). Or, as McNeill succinctly writes 'Grace is the condition by which the child grows and moves forward, rather than

²⁵⁸ See for instance 1 Corinthians 1:12, 30; 6:11, 7:14, 1 Peter 1:12, Hebrews 10:10,14.

²⁵⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24.

²⁶⁰ 1 John 3:2, 1 John 3:3.

something that kick-starts it instantaneously' (2017, p. 178). In his *Instructions for Children* Wesley defined grace simply as 'the power of the Holy Ghost enabling us to believe and love and serve God' (2012, p. 13). Researchers on altruism attribute this ontological reality to survival of the fittest²⁶¹ but if Augustine is right then it is rather a flame to be fanned. The evidence of the wrestling with doing the right thing - Mel and the coin, Star and the skateboard - suggests that this process is underway, although the children seemed to have little knowledge of this. Although they were able to identify that God helps you be brave or make wise choices, they did not attribute this to the Holy Spirit. This corroborates Harper's view that children 'will often (perhaps usually) experience grace before they are able to name it or understand it' (2007, p. 58).

Bridges Johns argues that crisis is a good and proper part of the process of becoming holy because it gives God the opportunity to work through the mess and pain and deepen our relationship with him (2008, pp. 162-3). Nikiforidou suggests that children are coping with uncertainty and small crises from infancy. As they learn to crawl, walk, ride a bicycle, etc. they are performing 'a balancing act between the expected rewards of their actions against the perceived costs of their failures' (2017, p. 13), growing and learning through these 'mini-crises'.

There is a sense in which children learn through a series of small crises. Indeed, Erikson and both Fowler and Westerhoff, in their theories of faith development, write about a crisis points that tip you into the next stage. It could be argued then that the risk averse attitude of many adults discussed in Section 2.2.2. (p.36) is not only having an impact on the physical and emotional well-being of children, but also on the spiritual and faith development of a child. The inhibition of imagination and initiative due to an over-protective environment may hinder the crisis and process that is required for the Holy Spirit's transformation. Facilitating children's 'risk literacy' (Gigerenzer, 2008) may well encourage children to develop a faith that not only gives them the opportunity to encounter God through the taking of 'leap of faith' risk, but also build a robust faith that copes with the realities of life. This may be one instance where the 'holy child as patient' has an advantage.

Whilst the crises that Bridget Johns and Nikiforidou refer to are different in nature, cause and motivation, they both infer a sense of decoupling and liminality as the individual moves from one state into another. In the research, aside from MS's example of the impact of his ill health, there appeared to be little evidence of significant crises, or experience of liminality, although there was evidence of the process of thinking through how to apply holiness both in terms of anecdote and in response to tricky questions.

²⁶¹ See the discussion on altruism in Section 7.4.2. p.136.

8.4. Individual and Corporate

Christians are called to be holy persons individually,²⁶² and to be a holy people corporately.²⁶³ Langford (1983) argues that these cannot happen in isolation. The biblical instruction to love God often comes with the instruction to 'love neighbour' (Langford, 1983, p. 42). Snyder takes this further, describing the second call of God, after the call to stewardship of the earth, to be 'a human community in solidarity internally and with God' (2008, p. 133). This community thereby displays the criteria laid out in Leviticus 19 that Green argues influenced the writer of Luke and Acts in his understanding of the comprehensive hospitality of a faithful Christian (2007, p. 31).

McMaster outlines a causal relationship between the holy individual and a holy community. He critiques the impact individualism has had on Methodist understanding of holiness, maintaining that the belief and practice of an individual approach to conversion and sanctification does not lead to the societal change required by the gospel (2002). An individual approach that, Hauerwas argues, does not bring about a peaceable kingdom because individual freedoms do not lead to community freedom (1983, p. 9). Root believes that this worldview was spawned in the 1960s by the arrival of authenticity 'the idea that your own path, your own desires and wishes, must lead you before any duty or obligation' (2017, p. 20). He suggests that this had an impact on the way that young people and a church emulating this youthfulness perceive their relationship with the divine and each other. The holy child as beloved who understands God's grace and love through relationship with others is therefore displaying countercultural tendencies, as is the holy child as philanthropist when their altruism is costly.

Raymond proposes the notion of a 'socio-spiritual ecology' (2008, p. 173) and offers the opinion that it is corporate holiness 'the nutrient-enriched environment of God's grace' that will mature individuals as they immerse themselves in it (2008, p. 174). 'Social holiness, then, is both process and crisis facilitated by the Holy Spirit working within a social context of others who instrumentally bring God's grace to the believer' (Raymond, 2008, p. 180), and I would argue to each other and the community. For Wesley, 'social holiness' was 'the whole world, created and recreated' (Jennings, 1990, p. 152).

When considering children who are being brought up within a Christian faith community, the notion of a socio-spiritual ecology is comforting, resonating with Westerhoff's (2014) emphasis on the importance of the community of faith in his explorations of faith development. Does

²⁶² See for instance 2 Timothy 2:20-22 that implies that the Church is holy because of its individual members.

²⁶³ See for instance Peter evoking Leviticus 11:44-45 'you shall be holy, for I am holy' in his call to the church to be holy 1 Peter 1:5-16, 2:9.

this mean, however, that a child that is not 'planted' in the 'nutrient-enriched environment' that Raymond describes is unable to grow in holiness? And to stretch the metaphor, what about faith communities that provide soil that is barren or even toxic where the child's innate spirituality is crushed through a lack of space, beauty, wondering and meaning making?²⁶⁴

There is evidence of individual holiness in the interviews. All the children talk about praying although this seems to be a more natural response for Mel who does it at least once a day. CB recalls a time on a residential when he felt really close to God, but admits that most of the time, although praying makes him happy, he finds it hard to concentrate. Both Star and Mel describe holiness behaviours that they choose to do on their own in private. Star reads the Bible to her Beanie Boos and talks to them about God. For Mel, worshipping is a natural response of gratitude

how I think of worshipping, is kind of exactly like praying, basically I talk to God and I thank him for everything that he's gave to me and I just do that now and then when I haven't really got anything else to do, I just think I'm gonna sit down and just worship God and I don't do that every day, but I do it most, once a week, at least, once or twice a week (MelInt3:100-103)

The children in this research project also demonstrate that belonging was an important factor in their spiritual well-being. Being part of a church community was something they talked about, particularly in relation to corporate worship. What was significant though from the data from the last interviews is that whilst close relations are perceived to have a some influence on their holiness behaviours and experiences, the wider church community is less influential. This is not to say that it was not present. Mel talks about his holiness experience of corporate worship, and Storm says that she learns about God at Sunday School, but this does not appear to be the nutrient-rich context described by Raymond.

This could be because worshipping is often seen as an activity for adults that children feel excluded from. It could reflect the 'excessive individualism' discussed in Section 2.2.1 (p.36) in that the children do not really consider themselves deeply connected to the worshipping community, because of their own individualism and that of the adults around them. It could also be the impact of technology and social media²⁶⁵ although there was scant evidence of this in the interviews. The discussion on social holiness above, and Westerhoff's perspective on 'acting together in faith' (2012, p. 86) does indicate, however, that if children are not part of an all-age community that engages in 'corporate holiness' it will be harder for each member to be 'holy individuals'.

²⁶⁴ See Nye's requirements for a healthy 'nutritional' faith community (2011, pp. 72-92).

²⁶⁵ See Section 2.2.1. p.34.

Obedience to the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself requires the Christian to love themselves too. The writers of *Sticky Faith* (Powell & Clark, 2011) use the phrase 'the gospel of sin management' as a means of describing some of the legalism and subsequent shame that has become part of Christianity, possibly as a result of not understanding the instruction to love yourself properly. Whilst there was evidence of soul searching and reflection, there did not appear to be the shame or guilt that has sometimes accompanied Roman Catholic and Conservative Evangelical ideology and it could be argued has prevented children in the past from growing up in faith.

Cameron et al.'s (2010) concept of theological voices demonstrates a potential mismatch between what we believe and how we act. Even churches where there is a vibrant ministry for children (their operant theology), can be operating from a theology that doesn't believe that the child can be, and is, a person of holiness in the same way that the adult members of the congregation are (their normative theology). It is certainly my experience of teaching and training children's and youth workers for twenty years that highly skilled and competent workers have not thought this through or discussed it with the leadership and membership of their church. It is my contention, that this 'mismatch' can potentially lead to the shame that tells us 'we don't belong, that we don't deserve anything, and we shouldn't even be' (Stockitt, 2012, p. 11) cited in (Nash, 2016). Nye challenges some churches attitudes too, suggesting that positive change doesn't always happen because asking questions about 'the spiritual qualities and intentions of our encounters with children may threaten to depose typical, sometimes 'child-friendly' church practices' (2011, p. 42).

8.5. Christ-centred and Holy Spirit-centred

Based on his understanding of the Gospels, Callen asserts that it is 'the work of the Holy Spirit within us that helps us to conform to the likeness of Christ'. He argues that it is a symbiotic relationship, in that it is 'the Holy Spirit's abiding presence that creates in us a habitual state of the soul which resembles Christ, and it is having the mind of Christ which makes us open to the work of the Holy Spirit' (2006, p. 148).

From the verbal descriptions of the children in this research, it would appear their holiness was more Jesus-centred than Holy Spirit-centred. Jesus was mentioned much more in the children's discourse than the Holy Spirit, and all of them displayed some ambiguity about the nature of the Trinity. Jesus was identified as somebody who shows them how to live a life that pleased God, and there was much evidence that they understood the metaphor of Jesus as the Light of the World and wanted to emulate it.²⁶⁶ Reference to the Holy Spirit was

²⁶⁶ See Section 5.4. p.96.

practically absent, but this could reflect the churchmanship of the congregations where they worship which could be considered 'low evangelical' and not very charismatic, rather than an absence of their engagement with its transforming power.

Kendall raises concerns that the holiness movement's focus on the Spirit's fullness has not consistently brought about a 'holy preoccupation with the person of Jesus' (2008, p. 58). He also suggests that Jesus himself was quiet about the notion of holiness, in the same way that he was often quiet about the idea of Messiah, because he was the redefinition of holiness. The Jews set themselves apart, marked themselves as holy, through land, temple, law. Jesus embodied a different understanding of holiness. He still advocated the three principles of holy living: Kingdom life, in the presence of the Holy One, distinctive from those outside the kingdom; complete surrender of self to the care of the King; re-birth and child-like acceptance of the gift of grace. He invited people to 'taste the fellowship of the Kingdom table' and receive forgiveness of sins. His quarrel with the religious leaders of the time was not their external markers of holiness, but their lack of integrity, in that the outside displays were not matched by 'hearts soft towards God, surrendered and submissive to God's ways' (Kendall, 2008, pp. 58-63).

It could be perceived that the children lacked some of what could be described as 'external markers of holiness' but the evidence suggests that their hearts were 'submissive to God's ways'. For instance, Star was moaning about being made to walk to church when she revealed her pastoral discipline of 'beanie-boo' sharing. Rule-obsessed CB appeared to understand what it means to 'taste the fellowship of the Kingdom table' by persuading his father to break the rules and give him the opportunity to 'experience' the grace and forgiveness of God that he understood but wanted to feel. In terms of 'knowing' Jesus, their responses demonstrated that they had a relationship with him, although they were unsure what they knew about him.

According to Kendall, what Jesus offers is an 'active, engaged holiness', which incorporates three basic components: the call to keep following; the willingness to bear the cross; and empowerment of the Spirit to affect the world (2008, pp. 66-68). Furthermore, because Jesus' model of holiness lacks prescriptive detail it does not need to be limited in interpretation, or necessitate a scale of measurement and subsequent failure. The Wesleyan Study Project argues that any teaching on development in the Christian life should keep the end of Christlikeness in view. If God's ultimate purpose for us is for us to be like Jesus, what does this actually look like for children? We have a limited snapshot of Jesus' humanity, with little detail about his holiness in childhood and adolescence. At what stage does being 'Christ-like' stop a child from being 'child-like'? Expecting a twenty-first century seven-year-old girl to emulate a thirty-year-old first century man is perhaps unreasonable – but this is the incarnate deity and therefore efforts should be made to ensure that she 'knows' the distilled qualities

of Jesus' being to copy, within the limitations and opportunities of her seven-year-old cognitive processing and patterns.

Ryle states that 'genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual attention to the active graces... a sanctified man will try to do good in the world and to lessen the sorrow and increase the happiness of all around him' (2014, p. 67). By active graces he means six of the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, faithfulness, kindness and goodness. He describes the other three – long suffering (forbearance/patience), gentleness and meekness – as passive graces and says these are harder to attain than the active ones (2014, p. 68). All five of the children did demonstrate what could be interpreted as the fruit of the Spirit,²⁶⁷ although it is difficult to tell how much of this was enhanced by their natural personality, or compliance with parental requirements rather than the result of individual or social holiness. Barrett (1988) suggests that the fruit of the Spirit is less about particular words and more about a 'self-forgetfulness' that concentrates on God rather than the individual's ego. Piaget (1954) believed that children were egocentric. Although later academic research and thought critiqued the use of this word and the ages he assigned to non-egocentric behaviours, there remains an understanding that children develop the ability to fully see things from someone else's perspective (Kesselring & Mueller, 2011). There, is however, much evidence in the interviews that the children were able to identify, and were developing their capacity for identifying, God's will and purpose in their lives and putting others before themselves. A longer study would be required to see whether the number of examples of the children exercising what could be identified as the fruit or gifts of the Spirit is growing, and how this counters or becomes their personality.

8.6. Blessings and Suffering

Full union with Jesus Christ brings many blessings but also a sharing of his sufferings. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis describes God as the only comfort and the supreme terror 'the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from' (1952, p. 46). He believes this is because we have made ourselves God's enemies and that we need to experience the dismay of meeting ultimate goodness in the shape we are in before we can experience the comfort of a relationship with God. Faith can therefore be understood in terms of blessing and suffering. Suffering because of our own sin, and in the cause of bringing Christ's kingdom on earth to pass, and blessing in a reconciled relationship with God²⁶⁸ and enjoyment of his providence on earth.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ See Table 5.5, in Section 5.6. p.101.

²⁶⁸ See for instance Ephesians 1:3.

²⁶⁹ See for instance Hebrews 6:7.

The Holy Child as Patient demonstrates the impact that suffering can have on personality and worldview, and therefore on holiness experiences and behaviours. Although there is a Western tendency to over protect children from suffering,²⁷⁰ for many children around the world, suffering is a daily part of existence. It is not surprising to them, and because many of them do not know that things could be different, they accept it with an almost sanguine pragmatism. The Iraqi children who gave up their lives rather than deny Jesus to their ISIS attackers (Baker, 2015) did not by all accounts think this a strange thing to do. Children, who have not perhaps been enculturated in a 'risk averse' society are not averse to suffering on behalf of their faith. The question is whether children who, through over-protection, have not been given the opportunities to experience normal levels of risk and suffering, still have the same capacity. Storm recognises the possibility of this in Interview Two. When asked about whether she has ever found it difficult to trust God she says 'Erm, no, because I have never really been in that much of a situation' (Stmlnt2:150-151).

Regarding Kendall's understanding of Jesus' holiness being the call to 'pick up your cross', it appears that the 'holy child as patient', and the 'holy child as philanthropist' go some way to demonstrating what the children understand of this principle: faithfulness, despite feelings of despair and sacrificial giving. Commentators on passages where Jesus states the cost of discipleship²⁷¹ argue that true discipleship is in the pattern of Christ's suffering (Berge, 1975, p. 287) and that 'picking up your cross' has an element of martyrdom. In fact, France is critical of the subsequent interpretation of the word as self-denial, arguing that 'discipleship is a life of at least potential martyrdom' (2007, p. 954). For Turner, the 'oxymoron of the crucified life' stands alongside the resurrection as the complete model of sacrificial life – 'genuinely abundant living occurs when one dies to self-interest' (Turner, 2008, p. 683).

MacArthur argues that the first requirement of discipleship is utter self-denial. Although he suggests that the self to which Jesus refers is not 'one's personal identity as a distinct individual', instead it is the old, unredeemed self, referred to in Ephesians 4:22. He goes on to assert that this requires a genuine conviction that there is nothing in humanness to commend before God (1988, p. 87). When discussing justice, Jacobsen explores the ambiguity of our language of self-denial and self-interest. He writes that 'church people, trained in the art of destructive self-denial, tend to identify self-interest with selfishness' (2017, p. 74). He argues instead for self-interest, 'Selfishness denies the 'other' in the relationship. Selflessness denies the 'self' in the relationship. Self-interest honors [sic] both the 'self' and the 'other' in the relationship.' (2017, p. 75). He continues that, on the surface, Jesus' call for self-denial seems diametrically opposed to self-interest, and that Christians therefore applaud lives that are one long sacrifice. However, he suggests that this is destructive and not what Jesus had intended.

²⁷⁰ See Section 2.2.2. p.36.

²⁷¹ Matthew 10:37-42, 16:24-25, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-27, 14:25-27, John 12:25.

Instead, Jesus' primary statements about self-denial are made in the context of predicting his own suffering and death, and therefore self-denial is to be understood as participation in the cross of Christ.

It would be untrue to say that there was no evidence in the interviews of the idolatry and materialism which Turner suggests inhibit an ability to 'pick up the cross' (2008, p. 470), but there were several instances where the children are clearly wrestling with their self-interest and striving towards altruism. Agency again is an issue, although Star indicates that nothing will destroy her strong friendship with God. Perhaps more discussion on this might have been helpful in the interviews to gain a better understanding of whether the children felt that martyrdom was something that they would countenance or not.

8.7. Separation and Incarnation

The themes of separation and incarnation reflect the understanding that holy people are in the world but not of the world (Wesleyan Holiness Study Project, 2007). Passages like 1 John 2:15-17 encourage followers of Christ to 'set their affection' only on him and separate themselves from the world. This exhortation has sometimes led to a dualism which separates the spiritual and the bodily but Yarbrough (2008) argues that shouldn't be the case.²⁷² It is not that creation, or humanity are to be reviled, instead, they are to be loved as this redemptive devotion leads back to God (2008, p. 127). What is key though is that we do not 'set our affection on, other objects or allurements of the world . . . that would detract from full engagement with what constitutes and mediates God's grace' (2008, p. 128). Separation for the Christian is therefore about creating a distance from all that is unclean or evil (Callen B. , 2008, p. 8) not from the material. The children's appreciation of God in and through nature, and in the ordinary of their lives, illustrated in this research, is therefore not counter to holiness. There is, however, evidence that they are drawn to love of 'things' like CB's 'need' to have two chocolate advent calendars, and Mel's dilemma about whether to give the pound coin back or buy a Lego figure with it. The question therefore remains as to how much a distraction to total devotion to God their attachment to the material is.

In addition, separation from the world, can lead to the expectation that Christians will be different from non-Christian friends. Storm talks about how they are not allowed to take part in certain activities like Halloween and thinks her friends do see the difference. Mel hopes that his honesty and fairness are noticeable, but CB thinks the only difference is that he goes to church on a Sunday morning. The need to belong has been described as a 'fundamental

²⁷² Wright (2008, p. 220) also warns of a dualism that makes the natural and the this-worldly largely irrelevant.

human motivation' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and is often used to explain conformity to behavioural norms within a social group. The children did not discuss how their behaviour was supposed to be different from their peers, instead there was an expectation that everyone was working out how to be a kinder and better person.

Since God is omnipotent and omnipresent and humanity is not, our understanding of God can only be limited, whether we are adult or child. The tension is that God is not a separated God, but is incarnate and active in both creation and humanity. The freeing of the Israelites from enslavement in Egypt, and leading them to the promised land,²⁷³ is an illustration of the holy nature of God in action, and, Moltman (1997, p. 46) argues, a process of sanctification for the people. Incarnate holiness is therefore 'in both action and attribute' (Gunton, 2003, pp. 24-25). For the people of God, 'good acts' made visible the hidden light of God's goodness (Heschel, 1976, p. 290) and made it known, not just in their own community, but outside it as well. For all the children in this research project there was evidence of both action and attribution when they had agency.

8.8. Development and End

Development and End refers to the 'now and not-yet' characteristic of holiness. The lag, perhaps, between justification and sanctification. If this process is difficult to demarcate in adults, then why do we assume that it has not, or indeed cannot, happen in children? If justification is a gift for all, and sanctification is an ongoing process, then children are entitled to justification, and can engage with sanctification even if it might look different and take a different pace from the process in an adult. If we argue that justification and sanctification is only available to someone who has achieved a particular cognitive understanding, we are in danger of excluding not only children but also vulnerable adults in a way that Jesus never did. People not able to cognitively understand the theology of justification can still benefit fully from the effects of justification i.e. God's forgiveness and establishment of a new relationship in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

One of the key challenges to identifying holiness in children is, as Nye argued, children do not separate the sacred and secular in the same way as adults (2011, pp. 40-42). Perhaps this is why at the end of Interview One most of the children thought that holiness was something that was easier for adults to achieve than children.²⁷⁴ For Wesley, his contemporaries like Knox²⁷⁵ and his scholars like Outler, the critical theological issue was the

²⁷³ Exodus 3:8, Deuteronomy 1:25, 3:25, 4:21-22, Psalm 85:12, Ezekiel 34:14,18.

²⁷⁴ See Section 5.3. p.93.

²⁷⁵ Knox (1759-1831) corresponded regularly with Wesley, and was instrumental in the resurgence of Anglo-Catholicism.

tension created by the belief in the free gift of prevenient grace, and the instruction from God for good works and a disciplined life (Langford, 1983, p. 21). If, however, we use the metaphor of healing for the process of justification and sanctification²⁷⁶ then Green argues there is 'an all-encompassing perspective on human health in the cosmos and in relation to God' and categorising salvation into 'parts' and separating the inner and outer life is prevented (2003, p. 52).

Three of the gospels give an account of Jesus drawing a child in to the midst of the disciples²⁷⁷ as a metaphor for the disciples on what it means to enter the kingdom, to be in the kingdom and to be the kingdom. One understanding of this passage is that it is a 'parable of action about where to look for spiritual maturity' (Berryman, 2009, p. 15). Carson, however, suggests that Matthew's version of this passage (18:1-4) is about establishing 'a radical set of values for greatness in the kingdom' where the child is not used as a model of innocence and purity, but of humility and the associated childlike trust (2010, p. V.b.). By inviting the disciples to look at the child, Jesus is indicating the process of change he is wanting them to engage in. As far as we know, the child is silent throughout this event. We do not know if they are looking at the floor, gazing around them with disinterest or watching Jesus intently. The child's silence, however, is in stark contrast to the dialogue of the disciples, which Jesus is challenging. France argues that the instruction to become like children is not about adopting the characteristics of children, instead it is about the status of children 'lowest in the hierarchy of authority and decision-making' (2007, p. 1009). He does go on to say, however, that the solemn warning in verse three, 'except ye be converted' (KJV) implies to start again as in rebirth. It could be inferred from France's interpretation that the metaphor of the child is used to convey the sense of a blank slate where all the 'sin' accrued during growing up is left behind in the process of conversion.

Once again, this raises the issue of cognition. The behaviourist concept of the blank slate²⁷⁸ advocates that the child knows nothing, is unable to cognitively discern between right and wrong, and does not 'know' sin i.e. is not making choices based on a cognitive process. This resonates with Wesley's epistemology. Later writers²⁷⁹ argue instead that human behaviour is shaped by evolutionary psychological adaptations. Children's spirituality writers argue that children have an 'innate understanding' of God.²⁸⁰ Indications that for centuries perceptions of what is really going on in the child have changed and continue to change. Ricoeur's theory

²⁷⁶ As described in Isaiah 53:4-5 and Revelation 22:2.

²⁷⁷ See Matthew 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9:46-48.

²⁷⁸ Psychologists like B.F. Skinner (1938, 1953) used John Locke's theory of knowledge and the philosophy of the 'tabula rasa' to argue that humans are born without built-in mental content – this is accrued through experience and perception.

²⁷⁹ See for instance cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker (2002).

²⁸⁰ See discussion on children's spirituality on p.12.

of hermeneutics helpfully holds some of these perceptions in tension as he describes two *naïvetés*. The 'first naïveté' is where meaning is made through 'an unquestioned dwelling in the world of symbol' and the 'second naïveté' comes through a philosophical analysis of symbolic and metaphoric language (1969, pp. 351-352), something which, he argues, can only be realised once the brain is biologically capable of that kind of cognitive processing, but does not invalidate the first naïveté.

Wesley's definition of Christian salvation as 'the renewal of our souls after the image of God' (Maddox, 1994, p. 67) is also helpful here. In concordance with early Greek theologians as well as later Western traditions, the focus is the third state of humanity,²⁸¹ a gradual restoration of *Imago Dei*. A process that may well take a lifetime! The children in this research have a profound sense of aspects of *Imago Dei*, of God's omnipotence and his love for all 'God loves everyone, even the robbers and child stealers who are horrible, he still loves them' (Staint2:87-88). This awareness that can be interpreted as the foundations of their soul's renewal.

For centuries, theological thinkers have seen growth in faith to be something to be strived for. In describing the process of sanctification, Ryle argues that there is such a thing as growth (2014, p. 132) and suggests that the graces a person shows – repentance, faith, hope, love, humility, zeal, and courage will grow, progress and increase

his sense of sin is becoming deeper, his faith is becoming stronger, his hope is becoming brighter, his love is becoming more extensive, his spiritual-mindedness is becoming more marked, he feels more of the power of godliness in his own heart – and he manifests more of it in his life (2014, p. 131).

Wesley, too, believed in successive development: 'He counted by degrees: degrees of enmity to God, degrees of self-denial, degrees of growth in holiness, degrees of faith, and degrees of contemplation of God' (Lindstrom, 1996, pp. 120-21). Yet, while growth in grace is by degrees, there is also the dynamic of God's interruptions or interventions.

The notion of both 'development' and 'end' offers an opportunity to hold in tension the lack of clarity about what is taking place within the child alongside the differences between operant and normative theologies in the worshipping community. It has been argued that whilst Augustinian views of sin pervade much of the church's theology, the prayer, pastoral care and hymns often used and endorsed by the church, have a Pelagian flavour, in that they are encouraging people to hope, to make wise choices and use their own willpower to live as God commanded (Rees, 1988). This could certainly be true of much of the work with children that is carried out in churches, even those that believe that children are outside the

²⁸¹ The first being before the fall and the second being after.

kingdom until they make a declaration of faith. Calvin settled his 'issues' with the sacrament of baptism. He believed that the whole nature of children is 'a seed of sin' making them 'hateful and abominable to God' (2006, pp. 1311, 4.15.10) but also believed that God loves children, and he admired their lack of guile (Bouwsmma, 1988, pp. 178-9). He suggested therefore that as infants they are incapable of repentance or faith, but through baptism they are covered for 'future repentance and faith' by the 'secret working of the Spirit' (Calvin, 2006, pp. 1343, 4.16.20). In this way, they illustrate the 'not yetness' of holiness in their sinfulness, but the 'nowness' of its promise in their future.

For this research, the 'promise in their future' is problematic, as there was evidence of holiness in these children's present. There was evidence however of both the 'now' and 'not-yetness' of the holiness of the children in this research project as they demonstrated both the fruit of the spirit and their flawed humanity. A more longitudinal study is required to see whether children are 'developing' in their holiness.

These children, although all deliberately close in age, do demonstrate some different developmental characteristics. For instance, Star, as the youngest, is more comfortable with a mythic parabolic worldview, whereas Storm, is deeply embedded in concrete thinking. What is interesting though is that it is Star, in Interview Three, appears to take a greater responsibility for her faith than the others do, when she indicates that the other people in her life had little influence over how she lived it out.²⁸² Perhaps the clue to why she is so adamant is because she understands her relationship with God as a strong friendship.

Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your friendship with God? It's strong. It's strong? Ok what makes it strong? Because I have a good friendship. What makes it a good friendship? I don't know. You don't know. What might make it a bad friendship do you think? If I started not liking him and calling him names. Yeah that wouldn't be good would it. No! And do you think, what do you think God thinks about your friendship with him? [sister's name] is here. Is she? [noise of sister arriving home in the background] So what does God think about your friendship? I think he feels the same as me. (Stalnt3:190-196)

The hope for a good friendship is that it does not end, but a strong friendship does change in shape and style as people grow and change. The evidence from the children is that whilst they might not fall outside 'normal parameters' developmentally, their faith and holiness could be described as patchy rather than developmentally linear, with each demonstrating a spectrum of experiences and behaviours to keep following Jesus, bear his cross willingly, and

²⁸² See Appendix Eleven p.283.

impact the world through the power of His Spirit. There is a sense of 'now' and 'not yet' in their holiness.

8.9. Holding the tension - the holy child as one with nature²⁸³

Snyder and Scandrett's theological exploration of salvation as creation healed is perhaps a useful way of binding the contrasting strands discussed above. Not only does the metaphor of healing help 'smooth over' the tension of justification and sanctification but it 'takes the earth seriously' which, they argue, has been 'largely ignored in our discipleship' (2011, p. 17). In addition, it prevents the separation of the body and the material from the process of salvation (2011, p. 22). In this way, the gift of sanctification and the essence of holiness is worked out in reconciliation and healing by God in the children, but also in form as they, inspired by the Holy Spirit, seek to become a healing presence in the world and for the world.

Gervais' assertions that teleological thinking appears to be an intuitive default stance, with children readily making teleological judgements about the natural world and ascribing intentional causes like supernatural creators (2014, p. 74) are corroborated by the children in this research. This was particularly evident in the first interviews where the children were deciding whether the pictures bore any relation to their friendship with God. In most cases (with the exception of MS) whenever the picture depicted nature, their reaction was affirmative, and their reason linked with the creator God. For CB the reasoning was extended to include articles made by humanity, because 'he gave people ideas to make' (CBInt1:190). Interestingly, Storm, the most concrete thinking of the children, appears unable to make the same leap of faith emotionally, whilst still being able to reason around it. For instance, when discussing whether Picture 33 has anything to do with her friendship with God she says 'Er, it may cos it's like some children and they're holding some animals but it's still not mentioning anything about it, although it is God's creation' (StmInt1:121-123).

Snyder and Scandrett outline four distortions of the biblical view of creation that they believe Christians hold: romanticism, commodification, worship of nature and the spiritualization of nature. Romanticism – which sees nature as the great source of all beauty and truth and neglects to see the biblical worldview of nature as fallen and transitory.²⁸⁴ Commodification - which sees nature as 'natural resources', raw materials for exploitation (including even the commodification of the romanticism of nature itself) and thereby exploits what belongs to God. The worship of nature - where instead of seeing nature as a gift from God through which we can worship him it is worshipped for itself. The spiritualization of nature - where creation

²⁸³ See Section 6.7. p.119.

²⁸⁴ See for instance Isaiah 40:8.

is just a vehicle for spiritual truth and the denial that God's creations have their own purpose and destiny (2011, pp. 99-105).

The children do appear to hold a positive view of nature, but essentially this is because God made it. Their inherent enjoyment of that nature, and the physicality of that enjoyment belies concerns that this might be an over spiritualization of nature, and indeed many of their references seem to infer an understanding that God's creation does have its own purpose and destiny. Although there is awe and wonder at things like stars, evidence of romanticism is balanced with both fantastical theology²⁸⁵ and pragmatism.²⁸⁶ They can recognize nature as both a form and essence of connection with the Almighty Creator and experience it both physically (or in an incarnational way), and spiritually (or separately). The children believe that nature is good because God wants peace and beauty,²⁸⁷ evidence perhaps of romanticism and lack of teaching on the ecology of sin, but also an indication of their desire to communicate an understanding of the nature of God as the essence of love and all that is good.

Evangelical Christianity has been criticized for not paying attention to the environmental crisis that the planet is facing, possibly because of the divorce of heaven and earth in Western theology described by Snyder and Scandrett (2011, p. 105). There was however, an expectation that the children in this research project would be more vocal about their concern for the environment as eco-anxiety has been identified as a common problem amongst children and young people (Young, 2020). Their quietness on this subject should not be interpreted as a lack of concern, however, as the interviews were conducted before children were afforded the increased agency on this matter fought for by young people like Greta Thunberg. Storm does say that she thinks that God wants us to stop global warming (StmInt2:79) however, and there was no evidence of conscious commodification of nature.

An interesting insight from Oswald Chamber's²⁸⁸ lecture on holiness entitled 'Our Brilliant Heritage (1965) indicates that the children's are engaged in holiness when they are interacting with nature. Although speaking early in the last century, he remarks that God uses pictures of creation not men. Arguing that by pointing to the marvels of creation, God's intention is to make 'His people forget the rush of business ideas that stamp the kingdoms of this world' (1965, p. 17). When Jesus, also provides lessons from nature 'He manifests in us the very mind that was in Christ Jesus, unhasting and unresting, calm, steady and strong' (1965, p. 17). The

²⁸⁵ See for instance Mel's belief that God supplies twigs to overcome the separation between him and Mel by tree branches (MelInt2:387-394).

²⁸⁶ See for instance CB's attempt at making a tree swing (CBInt1:194-201).

²⁸⁷ This is particularly noticeable in their response to the pictures of stormy seas (Picture 10).

²⁸⁸ Chambers was a Holiness Movement evangelist and teacher.

children's focus, therefore, on the wonder of God's creative energy is evidence that they are engaging with a key element of holiness described by Chambers.

The Holy Child as at one with nature demonstrates some of the challenges of the natural dichotomies of holiness. There is evidence of a deep physical encounter with the Creator God in and through nature, but also ambivalence relating to the theological understandings of why and how this can and does relate to their faith. There is also ambiguity about the actual impact of their experience of nature and encounter with God in nature on their discipleship.

8.10. Conclusion

One of the key challenges to identifying holiness in children is that they do not often separate the sacred and secular in the same way as adults (Nye, 2011, pp. 63-67). Perhaps this is why these children thought that holiness was something that was easier for adults to achieve than children. Nevertheless, the children in this research project demonstrated the complexity of the 'now' and 'not-yet-ness' of holiness, and the requirement to hold in tension many different elements that holiness is understood to exemplify.

Although described examples of transcendence were limited, it was concluded that the children did exhibit some of the essence of holiness in their connatural knowledge of God and lived out relationships, and the form of holiness in their behaviours. They also showed the 'conscious intention' of shaping their life in accord with God's will, through both crisis and process. There was evidence of individual holiness, but the question was raised about the efficacy of the impact of the corporate holiness they had experienced in providing the 'nutrient-rich environment' required for this to grow. These concerns were also reflected in the discussion about incarnation and separation. The 'holy child as beloved and philanthropist' did however indicate ability to counter the culture of individualism.

The children's holiness was found to be more Christocentric than Pneumatological, but this was possibly down to churchmanship. Concerns were shared about the depth of understanding of who the Christ was that the children were emulating, especially when it came to the notion of 'picking up your cross' and some commentators' views that this required sacrifice and martyrdom.

The chapter concluded by using the 'holy child at one with nature', and the theological perspective of salvation as creation healed (Snyder & Scandrett, 2011) to explore the reality of holding the dichotomies of holiness in tension and concluded that there was ambivalence in relating experience to theological understanding.

9. Implications from the research

9.1. Introduction

As a practical theology project, this work is required to consider the 'strategies and tactics of transformation' (Mercer, 2005, p. 12).²⁸⁹ The intention is that what was discovered in this research informs the academic study of theology relating to holiness, children and Christian education. It is also intended that the understanding and practice of the church regarding how it nurtures the spirituality and faith of children in the UK is impacted by this research. This chapter therefore asks 'so what?' of the data presented in Chapters Five and Six, and the discussion and conclusions drawn in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Section 9.2 explores the contribution that the methodology described in Chapter Four could make to the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a research methodology in qualitative research, and as a means of finding out more about the spirituality and faith of children. It addresses the effectiveness of the methodology and the insights that it can provide and makes suggestions on how this can be appropriated by the academy for further research and in a simplified form by practitioners in the church. In response to the critiques of faith development models discussed in Section 2.1.1. (p.25), and using insights from the data, Section 9.3. outlines some thoughts on what a more relevant model of faith development might look like.

Section 9.4 advocates for a change in attitude of the faith community to holiness before it can appreciate what it looks like in children and continue the work to nurture that. Section 9.5 recommends comprehensive consideration of catechesis in relation to the Holy Child and Scripture narrative account. It considers parents as catechists and the importance of story and digital media engagement, concluding with the suggestion that Egan's framework for learning might be a useful tool for Christian formation. Section 9.6 proposes methods for actively engaged discipleship, recognising the challenge of facilitating children's relationship with the entire Trinity, and considering the importance of nature and the children's understanding of the Creator God, that was such a strong theme in the data.

²⁸⁹ See Section 1.3. p.17.

9.2. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as an effective means of hearing the voice of children and exploring their holiness, faith and spirituality

9.2.1. A successful methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen as the research methodology for this project because it was considered to be an effective means for insight into religious experiences. To support this process three research instruments were designed to give both the children, and myself as the researcher, a flexible framework in which to explore their experience of faith.²⁹⁰ These methods all proved to be effective tools for encouraging the children to talk naturally about their lives and their experience of living out their faith. In addition, the interpretative element of the phenomenological hermeneutic meant that the researcher was able to identify 'holiness' and in particular holiness experiences and behaviours that the child was not necessarily aware of.

Much time and thought was given to the selection of the pictures used in Interview One, and the range of images and styles meant that they elicited a good variety of responses from the children. Even when they decided that a picture did not have anything to do with their friendship with God, their rationale for this gave helpful insights into the phenomenology of their faith. Whilst it was acknowledged that the bricolage process did not take place over several weeks as intended, and the children tended to fill their box at the last minute, the process of collecting objects and artefacts was helpful for articulation of their thoughts and feelings, and provided a useful basis for the conversation in our second interviews. For an academic research project using the three research methods, it might be appropriate to amend the timescale of the Bricolage activity as shortening it did not appear to inhibit the results. For a practitioner, asking the children in their group to bring in an object that represents their relationship with God, what they think about the character of God, or a challenge to their faith, might be an effective way of empowering the children to not only discuss their perceptions, but also believe that their perspectives are listened to and valued.

The implication for the academy is therefore that this methodology could be used with more children of different ages, and in different contexts, not only to build the body of knowledge on holiness styles (as per the narrative accounts), but also to see what impact age and context has on the lived holiness of children. For the church, practitioners could use the research instruments individually as part of their engagement with children as a means of enabling the church to 'hear' the voice of children in their congregation and deepen their understanding

²⁹⁰ See Section 4.5. p.72.

of their holiness.²⁹¹ In addition, the paucity of information about the impact of ill-health on children's spirituality and faith was revealed by this research, and this methodology could be part of addressing that issue.

9.2.2. Cumulative patterns and thematic clusters in the data

Pridmore's work demonstrated that 'we are spiritual before we are religious' (2017, p. 16). Using insights into centuries of children's spirituality he identifies that for some, formal religion is 'suffocating, threatening to stifle their spiritual growth', and for others it lends them 'a language with which to utter what lies beyond words' (2017, p. 18). This chapter seeks to offer insights to further the church's consideration of how it offers its children both freedom to breathe and grow, and to help the academy gain a deeper understanding of the language of spirituality and faith used by children. Based on his work on Psychological Type Theory and Religion, Francis argues that 'one of the recurrent dangers within religious and spiritual traditions is the tendency to assume that one form of religious expression or one form of spiritual practice should be regarded as appropriate for everyone' (2009, p. 140). One insight for both the academy and the church is drawn from the ability to create six distinct narrative accounts from data from five children. What this demonstrates is that holiness in children might exhibit a different style or emphasis dependent on the personality, worldview and life experience of the child. For the study of holiness this means that more research could be done using this methodology to identify what further thematic clusters can be identified with interpretive phenomenological analysis, that add to those already identified in Chapter Six. The different styles of holiness provide a way to both recognise and encourage holiness in children. This does mean, however, that practitioners should not be looking specifically for the 'types' described in the narrative accounts in this thesis, but instead seek to recognise the emphasis and 'style' that each child has,²⁹² celebrate and nurture it.

9.3. The need for a new model of faith development

Boyatzis amplified the critiques of current faith development theories mentioned in Section 2.1.1. p.25 by suggesting that 'our understanding of spiritual development has been impeded by a reliance on stage models' (2008, p. 53). Citing Overton (1998) he suggests that developmental psychology has outgrown stage theory. What is intriguing is his repeated use of the word 'development', indicating that he does not see it in the negative way some do,

²⁹¹ The importance of using creative ways to 'hear' the voices of children participating in church activities is stressed in Edwards (2011, pp. 33-47).

²⁹² This resonates with the concepts of 'Spiritual Connections' (Edwards, 2011), Spiritual Styles (Csinos, 2011), and Sacred Pathways (Thomas, 2010).

as outlined in Section 1.1. p.13. Instead, it is the stage theory that he sees as the problem. In terms of developmental theory, the children in this research project are relatively homogenous, but their holiness takes different shapes as described in Chapter Six. The implication is that a continuation of the discussion of faith development theories outlined in *Christian Perspectives on Faith Development* (Astley & Francis, 1992) is required and consideration given to a new way of describing and understanding faith.

The rejection of stage theory implies that it is unhelpful to be thinking of development in such a linear fashion. Packer writes about the 'dangers of backsliding' (2009, p. 80), perpetuating the notion that faith development is linear, as described by Fowler's model (1995), which implies that we move forward towards Christlikeness and therefore holiness, and that if we stop moving forward we are in danger of going backwards, rather as if we were on a treadmill. He does however also identify that the change brought about by sanctification might both be imperceptible at the time, and faster and more dramatic in some people rather than others (2009, p. 59). The combination of the discussion in Section 3.3 on a more cyclical notion of sanctification, and our understanding of 'theory of mind' and the spiral pathway of socio-cognitive development (Apperly, 2012), therefore indicates that we should be thinking about a more cyclical model of faith development.

The two most popular models of faith development used in the training of incumbents and lay workers by Fowler and Westerhoff are both linear in nature. Fowler's work has been critiqued by many²⁹³ although Westerhoff's has remained more acceptable because his analogy of faith as a tree which develops more rings as it grows removes some of the aspects of attainment and progression that are identified in Fowler's model. Westerhoff's model, however, implies a one-off process of change, and doesn't appear to consider the cyclical nature of change in the thinking, feeling and faithing of children, teenagers and adults considered above. Perhaps a more helpful model is the one that I developed for Scripture Union²⁹⁴ which suggests that an individual will cycle through Westerhoff's stages many times as they age.

Meilander suggests that the best metaphors to understand the Christian life are 'journey' and 'dialogue', with journey implying that an individual is transformed by the process of moving towards God, and dialogue illustrating the to-ing and fro-ing between a realisation of the burden of the law and the freedom of the gospel (1979, pp. 199-200). He goes on to suggest that journey is the more important of the two metaphors as it implies an order and design (and presumably a destination) rather than a backwards and forwards motion. In addition, whilst there can be an expectation that children can and should experience holiness and

²⁹³ See for instance the writings in Astley & Francis (1992).

²⁹⁴ See Appendix Fourteen, p.295.

choose holiness behaviours, this expectation must be expressed with grace and the understanding that the cyclical patterns of development will mean that children are likely to show both low and high amounts of holiness in turn. The evidence from the children in this research project was that they were doing just that with holiness behaviours that ranged from intuitive and sacrificial to externally motivated and begrudging. There were also indications that they were using a wide range of resources to help them live out their holiness, from internal dialogue with their conscience (or the Holy Spirit) to patterns and practices established by their parents, like nightly prayers.

Whilst conscious that there is evidence of the seven aspects of faith development used by Moseley et al (1986)²⁹⁵ in the children's dialogue, the reliance on cognitive skills and stage theory development models associated with Piaget and Kohlberg in these aspects means that they should be borne in mind but not necessarily relied upon. Instead, a more helpful model of faith development could be devised, taking into account the limitations of theory identified in this work, and the evidence of holiness in the children. A model which uses metaphors which imply change and movement, and that is not necessarily linear and progressive as discussed in Section 3.3 and Section 8.8. A model that encompasses all three elements of feeling, thinking *and* doing as discussed in Chapter Seven and includes both expected and unexpected understandings for the age of the child, whilst also reflecting their personality and worldview and the notion that holiness, and therefore faith, is a gift from God.

9.4. Change in the theology and attitude of the faith community and academy to the holiness of children

9.4.1. Attitude of the faith community to holiness

Packer (2009) vigorously argues that holiness is missing from the vocabulary, doctrine and practice of Christianity in the twenty first century, so it is hardly surprising that whilst I conclude there is evidence of holiness experiences and holiness behaviours in the children's interviews, their ability to describe holiness when asked directly was limited, as was evidence of holiness experiences. It would appear, however, that this is not because they are children, but instead, because they are not being enculturated in it because it is not part of the life of the worshipping community. As a result, it is not something they are led to believe that they can and should strive for.

²⁹⁵ See Section 2.1.1. p25.

In the 1985 revision of his work on Christian ethics, Hauerwas suggests that 'consciousness is not so much an awareness as it is a skill, that is, the ability to place our action within an intelligible narrative'. A skill that he argues is not an inherent quality, but one afforded to the individual by participation in a 'substantive community with an equally substantive history' (1985, p. xxii). If Packer is right, and holiness is 'actually the true health of the person' (2009, p. 34), and Hauerwas is right that a 'substantive community' is required, then the implication is that churches are encouraged to do some deep theological engagement not only about what it means to be holy, but who is called to be holy, and how this can be nurtured. Examination needs to be undertaken as to what structural changes need to be made in churches so that the 'brilliant heritage' (Chambers, 1965) is shared with people of all ages. The new vision for the Church of England, shared at General Synod in November 2020,²⁹⁶ indicates that they will be undertaking this structural change and there has already been discussion about how some of the findings of this research project will be part of that process.

As the theological reflection required for this change is undertaken, layering an adult concept of holiness on a child's behaviours and understandings should be avoided. Instead, recognition is needed that the child does not think in the same way as an adult or have the same level of agency that they do.²⁹⁷ Neither does it mean a list of rules and regulations. The holiness demonstrated by these children is in the everyday, and the Holy Child as rule keeper demonstrated that whilst rules were important, encounter with God and relationships with others take precedence over rules. Holiness and what it looks like in different circumstances needs to be thought about, talked about, and engaged in by all members of the congregation, regardless of their age as part of intergenerational activities and in smaller age specific groups.

9.4.2. Attitude of the faith community to holiness in children

Section 3.1. identified that although the Holiness Manifesto sought to increase the church's understanding of, and desire for holiness, it did not mention children at all. This research demonstrates that this is an oversight.

The discussion on intellect and holiness²⁹⁸ concluded that for centuries children have not been considered capable of the kind of reasoned thought required for faith. Even though contemporary academic thinking refutes this, organisations like Scripture Union have advocated for the faith of children, and researchers like Nye have demonstrated the

²⁹⁶ See <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/vision-church-england-2020s>

²⁹⁷ Work like McNeill's (2017) that explores Calvinistic theology in the light of the reality of childhood is a helpful tool in exploring where the points of tension could or should be.

²⁹⁸ See Section 7.3. p.126.

complexity of their spirituality, there appears to be a residual belief that children cannot be fully-fledged members of the community of faith in that they are not encouraged to be active participants in the life of the church. It has been demonstrated that the children of the age used in this research project are able to believe that they should conform to 'God's goodness' (Gustafson, 1971, p. 184) and have some understanding of what this is, even if they are not always able to articulate this with Christian religious language. Research also indicates that children have an ontological altruism. In addition, there is evidence that the children in this research project not only 'intended' to carry out 'good acts' or refrain from disobedience, but also put conscious effort into achieving this, not solely from the motive of fear of punishment. This research project demonstrates that children can and do have holiness experiences and behaviours, but the question remains whether the church is able to recognise this.

Reddie argues that one of the most important themes to emerge from the piloting of his black African Christian education programme was 'the identification of self'. Many of the young Black people he was working with were unable to 'construct positive, reflective images of self from what might be described as traditional, White-dominated Christian education material' (Reddie, 2003, p. 144). If children are not given positive role models that they are able to identify with and make sense to them, then it is harder for them to construct reflective images of self. It makes sense then that children that are growing up in a church where it is not believed that they are capable of holiness will not be able to construct positive, reflective images of themselves as holy. Perhaps one of the successes of Olly Goldenburg's ministry²⁹⁹ is that his theological framework is that children can and should have the same experience of the Holy Spirit as adults, and as a result will be motivated and equipped for great missional activity.

Section 8.4 discussed the need for holiness to be both individual and corporate, and the responsibility of the church to ensure that children know that they belong and are part of what is happening because their holiness is celebrated and nurtured. It also identified that the children in this research lacked holiness experiences, and there was little evidence that these were facilitated by their worshipping community. If a lack of theological understanding of children's spirituality and faith is coupled with what Packer describes as a lack of holiness practice, then it could be argued that it is much harder for a child to experience holiness and strive for holiness behaviours when the expectation is not there, and the model is not available to reflect on and imitate.

It appears from the discussion in Chapter Seven on emotion that one of the key drivers of development for children is relationship. There was however little evidence of relationships within the faith community in this research data. If children are to be encouraged to set goal

²⁹⁹ See www.childrencan.co.uk, for more information about their international ministry.

intentions³⁰⁰ of holiness then this not only requires secure and faith-filled parenting but also support from the wider faith community to which the children know that they belong and matter to. The importance of social and corporate holiness was discussed in Section 8.4 and the evidence in this research project led to the conclusion that although belonging to a worshipping faith community was important and facilitated some holiness experiences for the children, individuals within the church community were less significant than perhaps expected in comparison with the findings of the Fuller Youth Institute Research (Powell & Clark, 2011). The question is whether this was because there was not the investment in building relationships with the children from congregation members that warranted a mention from the children when asked who influences their life as a Christian.

Whatever the cause, if being part of a worshipping faith community does facilitate holiness experiences, and modelling by trusted adults does increase the likelihood of holiness behaviours, then there are implications for both the church and the academy. Work like the Holiness Manifesto which seeks to speak to the church about the importance of holiness should be revised with attention paid to the voices of children and young people so that it becomes a comprehensive resource for transforming the churches understanding and experience of holiness across all ages. In addition, the worshipping faith community needs to take responsibility for considering how it approaches its own attitude and striving for holiness³⁰¹ in a way that includes children as participants – both contributing and receiving.³⁰²

9.5. Creative and comprehensive considerations of catechesis

The discussion in Chapter One about the use of the word ‘development’ concluded that whilst it has limitations, if Jesus grew in wisdom and knowledge then so must all children.³⁰³ As this was not a longitudinal study, there is no way of determining the change in holiness of the children involved. There was, however, evidence of ‘gaps’ in the knowledge and experience of the children. The Holy Child and Scripture narrative account demonstrates that the children have an ambiguous relationship with Scripture, believing the Bible to be important, but seeing it more as an ‘adult’ tool for holiness. This is not to say that the children did not engage in theological reflection, but the conclusions in Section 7.3.4. (p.135) were that the holiness of children could be facilitated by providing doctrinally rich material that enhances their

³⁰⁰ See the discussion on Gollwitzer, Section 7.3.3. p.131.

³⁰¹ This needs to be considered creatively and with energy and commitment when gathering is restricted by limitations like rural location or COVID-19 restrictions.

³⁰² In this way the church can appropriate the cultural milieu of the levelling of expertise discussed by Eno (2010) – see Section 2.2.3. p.37.

³⁰³ See Section 1.1. p.12 for Bock and Nolland’s view on this verse.

'database' for episodic and semantic memory and 'fills in' some of the gaps in their understanding of and relationship with the Trinity.

Whilst I disagree with some of the perspectives on children held by the Reformed and Presbyterian church as outlined by Sisemore (2008), there is evidence in the narrative accounts to suggest that their belief in catechesis (2008, p. 107) mentioned in Section 2.1.2. (p.28) is helpful. It does, however, need to be held in tension with Rahner's concerns about catechesis. This section therefore explores the principles of catechesis and relates this to the Holy Child and Scripture narrative account before making recommendations for ways forward.

9.5.1. What is catechesis and how does it relate to holiness?

Whilst catechesis is often associated with the Roman Catholic tradition, as 'the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways' (Baumbach, 2017, p. 18) it should bear no denominational affiliation or prejudice. It can, however, be argued that methods like the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*,³⁰⁴ which included answers to questions for children to memorise, perpetuated practice that has stretched into the twentieth century where too much emphasis is placed on what children can recall about the Christian faith. A method, Berryman points out, that enabled children to 'understand, or at least parrot, their families' and religious leaders' interpretation of Christian theology, scripture, and worship' (2009, p. 91) but which did not, with the emphasis on getting the doctrinal words right, give the child the opportunity to encounter God and work out theology for themselves.

The discussion in Section 7.3. (p.126) suggested that children need semantic memory resources to draw on when making behavioural choices. This suggests that the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* approach might not have been completely in error, as children were encouraged to 'accrete' knowledge through question and answer. What is essential though is that children's knowledge is based on relationship rather than just facts, as this contributes to episodic memory and builds a 'reservoir' of resources for the child to draw on when needing to make wise choices. The implication is therefore the need for resources and methodology that enable discipleship of children in the home and church that is based on experience and relationship, and incorporates biblical and theological knowledge.

³⁰⁴ Compiled by a synod of English and Scottish theologians called the Westminster Assembly.

9.5.2. Parents as catechists

Although Joiner's (2009) ideas for faith development might appear to lack nuance,³⁰⁵ his argument for the partnership of church and parents in the nurturing of faith in children resonates with much of the latest thinking on children's ministry in the UK, from organisations like Care for the Family³⁰⁶ and BRF.³⁰⁷ In this research project, there was evidence that parents were involved in the discipleship of their children. Although this appeared to have a positive impact on the holiness of their children, there were variations in its nature and the apparent confidence it was done with.

This lack of consistency and confidence reflects the findings of the *Faith in our Families* Research and the *Faith in the Nexus report* and confirms the need for parents to be encouraged and equipped to disciple their own children effectively. The implication being from Section 9.5.1. that a church that is well resourced by the academy can then intentionally and effectively support and resource parents as the catechists of their own children. Sections 9.5.3. and 9.5.4. explore how insights from this research project can help with this

9.5.3. The Holy Child and Scripture³⁰⁸

Phillips argues that Jesus's followers in the twenty first century are spiritually malnourished because they are not engaging with the Bible effectively (2017).³⁰⁹ If this is true, then it will be harder for Christians to live the biblical spirituality Schneider describes.³¹⁰ The evidence from the 'holy child and scripture' narrative account³¹¹ is that the children in this research did engage with their children's Bibles and did feel it was an important element of their holiness behaviours, but that their engagement lacked depth.

The discussions on cognitive development in Chapter Seven that there is a need to be appropriate in what is communicated when and how, but there is also a danger that a 'kiddie gospel' (Pritchard Wolff, 1992) is perpetuated which does not equip the child to deal with the realities of life. It was interesting that the child who most consistently read his Bible on his own was the one who had been introduced to the notion of 'Bible Detectives' at church. In addition, Worsley's research (2009) demonstrated that when exposed to Scripture and given the opportunity to discuss it, 'the child's understanding offers insights that are hidden from adults, and perspectives that are not obvious to the wise' (2009, p. 12). The implication is that

³⁰⁵ See Section 2.1.1. p.25.

³⁰⁶ See for instance <https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop/faith-resources/raising-faith-book> and <https://kitchentable.org.uk/>

³⁰⁷ Based on resources written by Turner <https://parentingforfaith.org/>

³⁰⁸ See Section 6.8. p.121.

³⁰⁹ A possible cause of the data cited in Section 9.4.2. p.170.

³¹⁰ See Section 1.1. p.12.

³¹¹ See Section 6.8. p.121.

when encouraging children to engage with scripture a habit of discovery and wonder should be enculturated in both the children and the adults which in turn leads to a habit of discipline.

In addition, the conclusions drawn from writers on digital culture³¹² and the evidence that the girls in particular in this study remembered a bit more of the stories they had seen on video suggest that a further recommendation should be that children need other ways to engage with Scripture that complement text but are more visual and interactive.

9.5.4. Engaging methods

Hauerwas argues that 'there is no more fundamental way to talk of God than in a story' (1983, p. 25). Snyder and Scandrett concur, suggesting that when creed becomes more important than narrative, instead of living the good news of Jesus, our mission becomes the defence of doctrine' (2011, p. 28). The Bible is God's story. For children, therefore, to be able to exercise holiness as they face the real challenges in life, they need to be able to readily engage with this resource. Section 2.2.1. p.34 discusses the importance of imagination and the knowledge and skill accrued through active exploration that is intrinsically rewarded. According to Mel, engaging methods like Bible detectives encourage this. In addition, children love to be told the same story over and over again, repetition being an effective means of enhancing and harnessing the brain's plasticity.

It was mentioned in Section 1.1. p.13 that a consultation on online Bible media engagement was one of the catalysts for framing this research. That process culminated in the production of 'Guardians of Ancora' that was launched in July 2015. Appendix Fifteen (p.297) demonstrates the impact that this form of engagement is having on children's Bible knowledge and faith awareness. In a conversation with the Product Developer of Guardians of Ancora, Maggie Barfield on 22nd September 2020, about how they were measuring the impact of Guardians of Ancora on the children's faith, three factors were discussed that are particularly relevant to this research. Barfield (2020) reports

By monitoring overall game usage, we can show that, as a direct consequence of using the app, players experience and see more of God.
Their:

Bible knowledge and comprehension is growing

Attitudes to faith (God, Jesus, the Bible) are becoming more positive

Trust and dependence in God is deepening.

³¹² See Section 2.2.1. p.34.

Using in-game questions, Scripture Union are able to assert that 'God awareness is enhanced' with a 70% increase in the players' Bible knowledge. In the monitoring of 'faith awareness'³¹³ 85% of the players were responding more positively than when they first started playing. In addition, 50% of new players started playing because their friends invited them (Barfield, 2020). In Interview Three, the thing that the children were least confident about was telling others about God.³¹⁴ It appears that Guardians of Ancora is an appropriate means for this to change. Section 2.2.1. p.34 highlighted that some believe that multimedia technology and social media may be socialising children more than their parents. Whilst nothing can replace a truly 'connected presence' this creative use of technology is clearly having a positive impact on the children engaging with it, and therefore should be encouraged,³¹⁵ particularly where groups cannot meet because of limitations like lack of volunteers or limited transport in rural locations.

Although Egan did not intend to establish a theory of learning with his range of practical teaching frameworks, his work incorporates much of the critique of developmental theory and knowledge of the way children think discussed in this work. Designed to 'help teachers lay out a lesson plan or a unit of study for imaginatively engaging students' (2005, p. 39) his materials provide frameworks and planning tools that could really support effective communication of the Bible and how to live holy lives in our churches. He identifies three frameworks:³¹⁶ Mythic Understanding, typical between the ages of two and eight (1997, p. 42); Romantic Understanding including eight to fifteen year olds (1997, p. 85); and Philosophic Understanding, the framework for those over fifteen (1997, p. 118). An adapted version of Egan's basic framework that could be used to help volunteers, employed workers or incumbents think through how they approach the Bible and discipleship with children and young people is included in Appendix Sixteen (p.302). A development of this could be explored by the academy and used as part of resourcing for churches, particularly in the training of incumbents so that their engagement with children in their congregations, the community and schools is more effective.³¹⁷

³¹³ This was measured by the players answers to 24 questions derived from work done by Leslie Francis on faith and spiritual formation (see Appendix Fifteen, p.296).

³¹⁴ See for instance Table 5.2, p.90.

³¹⁵ Whilst also bearing in mind some of the negative impacts discussed in Section 2.2. p.33.

³¹⁶ Note the use of the word 'framework' rather than stage which overcomes Nye's critique of developmental theories (see Section 1.1. p.12).

³¹⁷ See for instance the recommendations about ministers in schools in the *Faith in the Nexus* report.

9.6. Actively engaged discipleship which is powered by the Holy Spirit and reflects the essence of Jesus

Rizzuto's (1980) work³¹⁸ illustrates that a child's conception of God may look and sound very different to that of an adult, and may or may not be reflected in what that child does or says. Analysing the data from the first interviews with the children raised the concern that their faith was heavily skewed towards an image of God as creator, although this was nuanced with understandings of him as provider and nurturer. Their knowledge about the nature of the Trinity was sketchy but this is a complex theological concept that many adults struggle to comprehend. The data from the children illustrated some evidence of discipleship but it appeared to be more Christocentric than Pneumatological. This does not mean that we can assume that their holiness is not powered by the Holy Spirit although the implication is that this can be enhanced.

9.6.1. Powered by the Holy Spirit

Section 8.3 (p.149) discussed the children's understanding and experience of grace and the 'wrestling' they did with their conscience that possibly demonstrated engagement with the (although not named) Holy Spirit. Olly Goldenburg's approach³¹⁹ that 'children can' based on a theological unpacking of Josiah's story, amongst others, illustrates how and when the Holy Spirit, its power and work is discussed with and experienced by children. His overtly Pentecostal approach might not, however, sit well with other traditions, and so the recommendation is that churches discuss and agree how a Holy Spirit powered holiness is communicated and facilitated in a way that complements - but is not inhibited by - their tradition with particular consideration of the fruit of the Spirit.³²⁰

9.6.2. Filled with the essence of Jesus

To the church that, he argues, is obsessed with youthfulness, Root offers a salutary warning: 'the future of the church is not youth itself but rather the Lord Jesus Christ' (2017, p. xix). This means that if children are to be both the present and the future of the church, they need to know who Jesus is so that they can 'become human as Jesus was human' imitating his 'character qualities' (Packer, 2009, p. 33). Star thinks Jesus is brilliant. MS thinks he would tell

³¹⁸ Summarised in the table in Appendix One, p.224.

³¹⁹ <https://www.childrencan.co.uk/>

³²⁰ See Table 5.6 in Section 5.6. p.101 and Section 8.5. p.153.

him to eat his vegetables so that he can get well. They understand that he has both a charismatic and pastoral personality but struggle to recall things that he said and did. Although there was little indication that the children believed that Jesus was only a 'good man' or a 'nice teacher', neither was there much suggestion from them, excepting perhaps Star, that they are intrigued and impassioned by him either.

Coupled with this is the point raised in Section 8.5 (p.153) that gender, age and cultural differences might make it hard for a child to identify with Jesus. Perhaps this is where the approach based on Egan's framework, discussed above, that provides the right cognitive tools to fire up the imagination can help those who are sharing the character of Jesus with children to do so in a way that really helps them to see who he is, and what characteristics they need to emulate. Mel's response to the owl picture³²¹ demonstrates that children can see situations from Jesus' perspective – 'what do you think Jesus thinks about this?' appears then to be a helpful question to ask them. Whilst the 'wondering' approach of Godly Play - where questions are asked to which there is no right or wrong answer - is a proven means of creating space for children to theologically reflect, if, however, children do not have enough reference points on who God is and how God works, then there might be a danger that their theological reflection ends up not satisfying their need or desire to grow in knowledge and love of God.

Jesus was a person of action. Citing Moltmann (1993b, p. 97) Creasy Dean (2004) argues that adolescents are invited to participate in the Passion of Christ wherever they take up their crosses. Children too are offered the same invitation as adults to participate in the Trinity and be incorporated into the life of God (Moltmann J. , 1993, p. 172), a participation that Root states moves us into action (2014, p. 183). Stearns (2009) decries *The Hole in Our Gospel* where he sees an emphasis on the afterlife, which reduces the importance of what God expects from his followers in this life. If children are not offered opportunities to *be* like Jesus, they are not going to try to be *like* Jesus.

The implication therefore for the church is that children should be given more agency to enact the essence of Jesus in their holiness as powered by the Holy Spirit. And this does not necessarily mean being 'good' as understood in terms of 'not naughty' and sitting still and listening, but being 'good' as understood in terms of Jesus purifying transformation of the Temple (Matthew 21:12-13) and being a blessing to the community as outlined in Leviticus 19.³²²

³²¹ See Appendix Ten p.276.

³²² See Section 3.2. p.44.

9.6.3. Lived experience

Section 5.5. highlights that in general, there was less evidence of holiness experiences than holiness behaviours and this was discussed in Section 8.2. (p.147). This is a concern if Packer's illustration of the three-legged stool of doctrine, experience and practice³²³ is a useful framework for facilitating holiness in children. Following the discussion of the different attitudes to transcendence identified in children by Rogers (2014), and teenagers by Root (2017) in Section 8.2, the suggestion was made that there was a lack of facilitation of transcendent encounters with God or opportunities to identify and reflect on these experiences. It is interesting that Star identified myself, as the researcher, as someone who had had an influence on her life and the choices that she makes simply because I had been talking to her about her faith.

Nye urges readers of *Children's Spirituality* to pay the attention to children's spirituality that it deserves, because it 'can make a vital and positive contribution to children's lives'. Writers on the spirituality of young people³²⁴ also argue that enabling them to explore their spirituality, can cultivate emotional resilience and serve as a protective factor in managing life. The next recommendation is, therefore, to pay attention to children's spirituality in the everyday, but also provide opportunities for children to experience and reflect on transcendence in its widest sense. Resources from the academy like Hughes' questions to help distinguish true from false spirituality³²⁵ can then be appropriated to help those working with children in the church in this process. This could be through the excitement of joining in a silly action song, but can also be found in seeing dust motes illuminated by sun through a window, or listening to choral music, etc.

In the Christian tradition, a significant opportunity for this is found in the sacraments, particularly Holy Communion. Churches therefore must be more active and intentional about applying the changes in their theology (see section 9.2.2). This means taking seriously the rule breaking of the Holy Child as Rule Keeper,³²⁶ and not only include children in the Communion service, but encourage them to participate in, and share their wonderings about, the Eucharist itself.

The bricolage activity, and in particular Mel's interview showed the importance of tangible items that he was able to link with his holiness experiences and behaviours.³²⁷ Moseley et

³²³ See Section 7.2. p.125.

³²⁴ See for instance Smith & Denton (2005) and Pearmain (2005).

³²⁵ See Appendix Three, p.226.

³²⁶ See Section 7.3.3. p.131.

³²⁷ For instance, the baptism candle and his prayer bottle.

al. describe this as 'symbolic functioning'³²⁸ and Groome argues that this process of expressing faith through 'symbols and modes' is 'transformational community' (1991, p. 153). This suggests therefore that tangible markers are a means of helping children to understand and remember what they believe and why. This is in both the theatre and elements of sacraments – visual actions to watch and physical objects to hold, taste or feel. It is also in the identification, or creation, of objects which the children can relate to their friendship with God. In its revision of writings on holiness which listens to the voice of the child, the academy can therefore explore more deeply the theology of the physicality of worship and sacraments in relation to what is shared with children, both verbally and physically.

According to Crabtree, faith was a lived reality in Celtic Christianity (2008, p. 83) where children are considered equal members of the faith community. The approach that assigns sacredness to all living things created by God (Crabtree., 2008, p. 80) reflects what Snyder and Scandrett describe as a 'lived eschatology' which does not split the material and spiritual dimensions of life and sees the 'sacramental life more ecologically'. Using understandings from Celtic Christianity as outlined by Crabtree embraces the 'holy child at one with nature', which demonstrated the importance of creation to the children in this research. In addition, according to Snyder and Scandrett 'Walking in the Spirit, the church will practice an earthed discipleship that makes God's narrative real and dynamic in fresh and comprehensive ways.' (2011, p. 270). The implication is therefore that children are encouraged in their love of nature, and care of God's planet, and offered space and silence to allow a child to discover and enjoy their inner life to reflect on and verbalise how this helps them 'know'³²⁹ God. The academy has already started to address theology through the lens of the environment and vice versa³³⁰ but if the inference is that this is something that enhances children's holiness experiences, more needs to be done on articulating this theology in a way that is accessible to them.

Section 8.3 (p.149) discusses how 'development' in childhood is achieved by a series of 'mini crises' and the question was raised as to whether our risk averse culture³³¹ is having, or will have, a negative impact on children's spirituality and faith development. Both Star and Storm believe that taking risks and trusting God are important elements of their holiness;³³² the

³²⁸ 'how the person understands, appropriates and utilizes symbols and other aspects of language in the process of meaning-making and locating his or her centres of value and images of power' (Moseley, Jarvis, & Fowler, 1986, p. 54).

³²⁹ See the discussion on 'connatural' knowledge, Section 8.2. p.147.

³³⁰ See for instance *Interpreting nature: the emerging field of environmental hermeneutics* by Clingerman (2014), *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* by Foltz (2013) and *Restored to earth: Christianity, environmental ethics, and ecological restoration* by Van Wieren (2013).

³³¹ See the discussion in Section 2.2.2. p.36.

³³² See Section 5.4.4. p.97 and Section 5.4.5, p.98.

implication being that children are encouraged to take risks both in terms of enacting their faith, and their engagement with the Holy Spirit, as discussed above. In addition, they need to be encouraged to take the risk of talking to God and the adults around them about all their experiences, both good and bad, positive and negative, faithful and doubtful. If they are not given this opportunity then not only is their 'lived experience' poorer, but there is a danger that things will become hidden and shame can develop because children experience judgement, both internal and external, but do not necessarily know what they are being judged for (Nash, 2017).

9.7. Conclusion

If holiness is an ontological reality that is rooted in being human³³³ then it could be argued that a child is closer to holiness than an adult because they do not have the same level of 'tarnish' associated with living in a fallen world. This chapter has sought to draw together the evidence from the research that children are and can be holy in the same way as adults. This raises implications for the way that that holiness is discussed and written about in the academy and nurtured in children in churches and homes.

Hauerwas's understanding of character as the form of our agency³³⁴ implies a recognition of children's holiness despite their lack of agency in the community or church life. The evidence from this research is that the children were involved in holiness behaviours that were sometimes unseen and unrecognised by the adults around them. Nevertheless, the importance of agency³³⁵ as well as community³³⁶, and narrative³³⁷ are key themes in the implications and for the academy and church that are made in this chapter and summarised below.

1. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology and research instruments designed for this project are used to gather data and insights on holiness styles in children of a wider range of ages and contexts, both in academic research and in a church context so that the 'voice of children' is heard and understanding of their holiness is deepened.

³³³ Rappaport (1999, p. 230) cited in Section 3.6.1. p.60

³³⁴ See Section 7.3.2. p.129.

³³⁵ See in particular Section 3.2.2. p.47.

³³⁶ See for instance Sections 7.3. p.126, 8.4. p.151 and 8.7. p.157.

³³⁷ See for instance Section 2.1.3. p.32.

2. The different styles of children's holiness are recognised and paid attention to.
3. The re-ignition of discussions about faith development models and the creation of a more helpful model of faith development that:
 - is not necessarily linear and progressive
 - Encompasses feeling, thinking *and* doing
 - Includes both expected and unexpected understandings for the age of the child
 - Reflects the influence of personality and worldview
 - Recognises that holiness, and therefore faith, is a gift from God.
4. Works like the Holiness Manifesto, which seeks to speak to the church about the importance of holiness, are revised with attention paid to holiness in children and young people so that they become comprehensive resources for transforming the churches' understanding and experience of holiness across the ages.
5. The worshipping faith community considers how it approaches its own attitude and striving for holiness in a way that includes children as participants – both contributing and receiving.
6. An increase in the library of resources available from different doctrinal traditions that facilitate methodologies of catechesis that are based on experience and relationship, but also incorporate biblical and theological knowledge.
7. An intentional effort by the church to equip and resource parents as the catechists of their own children.
8. A habit of discovery and wonder is enculturated in children as they engage with scripture, which leads to a habit of discipline. This can be achieved by providing children with varied ways to engage with Scripture, which complement text, but are more visual and interactive.
9. Develop an adaptation of Egan's basic framework to be used as part of training in theological institutions to improve incumbents' and lay workers' ability to enhance engagement with the Bible, holiness and discipleship in children and young people.
10. Churches are resourced to discuss and agree how a Holy Spirit powered holiness is communicated and facilitated in a way that complements but is not inhibited by their tradition.
11. Give children more agency to enact the essence of Jesus in their holiness as powered by the Holy Spirit.
12. Pay attention to children's spirituality in the everyday, but also provide opportunities for children to experience and reflect on transcendence in its widest sense, particularly through participation in the Sacraments and by providing tangible markers of faith.
13. Development of theological resources that encourage children in their love of nature, and care of God's planet, offering opportunities to reflect on and verbalise how this helps them 'know' God.

14. Encourage children to take risks both in terms of enacting their faith, and their engagement with the Holy Spirit, as discussed above. In addition, they need to be encouraged to take the risk of talking to God and the adults around them about all their experiences, both good and bad, positive and negative, faithful and doubtful.

10. Conclusion

The intention of this research project was to put children's moral agency in the foreground and explore the concept of 'holiness' in children. It was suggested that the notion of 'holiness' might be a way of resolving some of the tensions relating to understandings of faith development and spirituality. The aim was to ask whether 'holy' is a word that can be used about children who 'self-describe' as Christian, and how that holiness, and its changes, can be depicted. To fulfil the aim of describing the children's holiness from both the perspective of the child and the academy, primary research was done with children, and writing on children's spirituality and faith development was explored. It was discovered that whilst there have been an increasing number of publications on children's spirituality and intergenerational ministry, 'holiness' in children is not a subject represented widely, if at all, in theological works or practical ministry books. In addition, flaws in popular faith development models were revealed, particularly in the light of improved understandings of how children develop and learn. The research described in this thesis therefore offers a unique contribution to the study of both holiness and children's ministry.

Practical Theology was identified as an appropriate framework for this project and the work then sought to begin the dialogue between the 'lived experience' of children of faith and understandings of holiness drawing from several theological and theoretical perspectives, with particular emphasis on Leviticus 19. Various definitions and themes of holiness were explored revealing the lack of application to children by the theologians used, but also the possibilities of how the definitions and themes could be relevant to or challenged by the voices of the children in this project. Conclusions were drawn about the importance of 'love' as the fulfilment of the law, and how children were capable of this, especially if given agency.³³⁸

An Interpretative Phenomenological Approach to the primary research was taken for the reasons outlined in Section 3.3 and research tools were designed that proved to be an extremely effective means of ensuring a rich source of data from the five children involved. This data was coded manually using open and simultaneous coding to ensure that the content and essence of what the children said was fully understood and effectively interpreted. In addition, an overview of the cultural context of the children in the research project was done, to raise awareness of its impact on their spirituality and faith development. An understanding of 'holiness experiences' and 'holiness behaviours' was outlined in order to facilitate analysis of the data. It was discovered that the children in the research exhibited both, but that 'holiness behaviours' were more common than 'holiness experiences'.

³³⁸ See Section 3.2. p.44.

The intention was to 'hear the voice of the child' respecting children as 'active agents who construct their own cultures', and childhood as a 'structural form or part of society' (Corsaro W. A., 2005, p. 4). Section 5.4 p.96 therefore gives five definitions of holiness derived directly from what the children said in their interviews. From these, and the holiness experiences and behaviour data, six narrative accounts were developed. These illustrated the different emphases of the children's voices, which reflect the impact of their personalities and worldview on their spirituality and faith development, and subsequent holiness.

- the holy child as rule keeper
- the holy child as beloved
- the holy child as philanthropist
- the holy child as pragmatist
- the holy child as patient
- the holy child as one with nature

These narrative accounts were then examined in the light of understandings of holiness in adults that reflected a range of theological perspectives. The themes of intellect, emotion and will and action were chosen as a framework for the exploration of the narrative accounts in Chapter Seven because they are considered essential for 'faith' by Berkhoff, and 'a virtuous character' by Hauerwas. They also reflect Packer's 'three legged stool' of doctrine, experience and practice, and three of Wesley's four sources. The fourth source 'Scripture' was also explored as all the children made many references to it in their interviews. Chapter Seven concluded that the assumption that children cannot have faith because they are unable to reason like adults was deeply flawed. It was perceived, however, that this theological thinking was still prevalent in churches, and had impacted the children's perceptions of their ability to be holy. The assertion of this thesis is therefore that the concept of 'holiness styles' in children, as identified in this research could be part of an effective change in understanding and attitudes.

It was also revealed that 'knowledge' of God does not always require verbal communication and that the predominant driver for holiness behavior was 'feelings'. Whilst indications were that the children enjoyed being part of sung worship there was not much evidence of encouraged participation in the community of faith. This participation was identified as important to the process of nurturing the children's connatural knowledge of God - experienced through love and belonging - and facilitating the transcendent experiences and information gathering required to foster the complex interaction between thinking, feeling and doing that take place in holiness experiences and behaviours.

Chapter Eight used the 'contrasting realities' outlined by the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (2007) to explore the challenges of holiness. These are: forms and essence; crisis and process;

individual and corporate; Christ-centred and Holy Spirit-centred; blessing and suffering; separation and incarnation; development and end. The conclusion drawn was that the children in this research project demonstrated the complexity of the 'now' and 'not-yetness' of holiness, and the requirement to hold in tension many different elements that holiness is understood to exemplify. There were however gaps in their experience, particularly relating to transcendence, the essence of Jesus, pneumatology, and engagement with Scripture. It was suggested that the community of faith might not be providing the 'nutrient-rich environment' required for these to flourish.

As this is a practical theology project, Chapter Nine considered the implications the conclusions drawn from the data have on the understanding of the academy and the practice of the church in the UK regarding the spirituality and faith development of children. Fourteen specific implications are discussed that can be summarised under three headings:

- A change in the theology and attitude of the faith community to the holiness of children, that starts with an examination of the faith community's attitude to, and experience of holiness, and an appreciation of what it looks like in children and how this can be nurtured.
- A comprehensive consideration of catechesis including understanding the importance of story and digital media engagement, and using an adaptation of Egan's framework for learning.
- An intentional encouragement of actively engaged discipleship in children, which harnesses the energy of their passionate appreciation of the Creator God which facilitates, and is facilitated by, relationship with the entire Trinity.

During this research project areas for further research were identified, including the need for longitudinal studies to see how holiness behaviours and experiences change as children get older, one example being the exhibition of the fruit of the Spirit. The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and an innovative creative research methodology proved to be an effective way of collating rich data on the subject of children's faith and spirituality. Interviewing additional children using the effective research tools designed for this project are therefore likely to provide more examples of 'emphasis' and different 'narrative accounts' to explore, and continue to develop understanding of 'holiness styles' in children. It would also be interesting to pursue the impact that the perceived negative attitude of the church to children and holiness has had on the children and whether the potential 'shame' has affected adults who were Christian children.

In conclusion, it was discovered that holy is a word that can be used to describe children in the same way it can be used to describe adults as something that is 'now and not yet' perpetrated by the salvific action of Jesus and a work in progress of the Holy Spirit, but that

this has not been explored effectively by the academy. It was also revealed that children's definitions of holiness might be different from adults, but their dialogue signifies divine material³³⁹ and that their lived experience of it is impacted by their personality and circumstances. The 'holy child as. . .' narrative accounts were suggested as a means of developing understanding of this. Children's ability to act on their desire to be holy is also limited by their agency and the culture that does not expect holiness from them, although it is something that they understand and want to do.

In the words of one of the children:

He [Jesus] is like all the happiness in the world and all the good things in the world' 'And Jesus says, I'm the light of the world, and he says we have to shine our light, be like him, like light (StmInt2:195, 201-202)

By listening to the voices of children we can hear elements of holiness that may well challenge our own holiness experiences and behaviours and remind us of Jesus's comments in Matthew 11:16-19 and Luke 7:31-35 that suggest that children 'know' something that the adults do not.

³³⁹ See Section 1.3, p.17.

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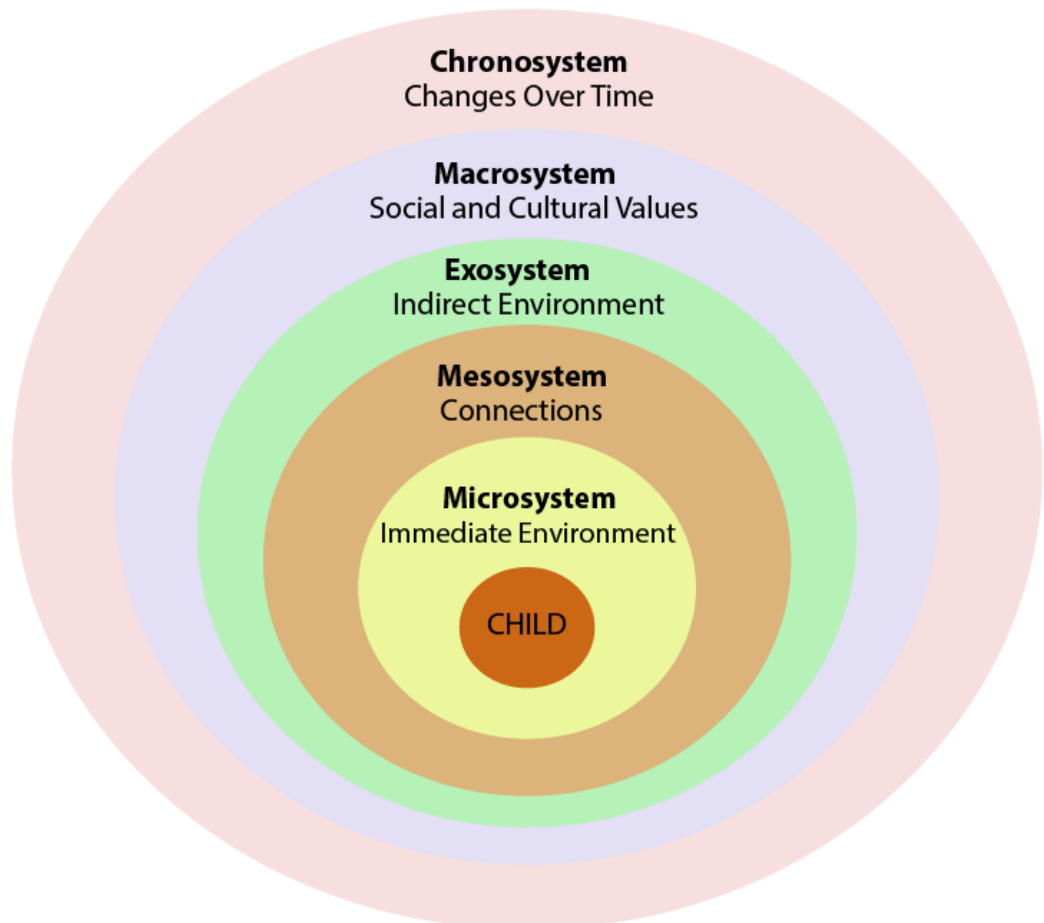
12. Appendices

11.1. Appendix One – Comparison of Faith Development Models

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Fowler (1995)	Primal faith			Intuitive-Projective faith			Mythic-literal faith			Synthetic-Conventional faith				
Stephens (1996)	Initial faith: Anaemic faith		Unconditional love: Conditional love			Healthy Image of God: Distorted Image of God			Spiritual Identity					
				Grace: Self Condemnation										
Peck (1993)	Chaotic/Antisocial			Formal/institutional			Sceptic/Individual							
Wilcox (1979)	Stage 1: Big people are good, little people are bad			Stage 2: Dyadic Instrumental			Stage 3 – Dyadic empathetic Stage 4 - Triadic							
	Preconventional Level						Conventional Level							
Powers (1982)	Nurture			Indoctrination										
Westerhoff (Will Our Children Have Faith?, 2000)	Experienced faith						Searching faith							
							Affiliative faith							
Rizzuto (1980)	God has some characteristics of parental figures		Objectification of God in symbolic representations that compensate for parental deficiencies			Realism about parents and self develops and God becomes less idealized								
Joiner (2009)	Wonder			Discovery			Passion							

11.2.Appendix Two – Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



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11.3. Appendix Three – Questions to help distinguish false from true spirituality

Taken from (Hughes, 2003, pp. 43-46)

The intra-personal:

- how do I relate to myself?
- To what extent does the reality I am living relate to my inner experience?
- How are my thoughts, feelings, prayers reflected in my actions?

The inter-personal:

- Am I letting God be God in personal relationships?
- Am I compassionate, loving and forgiving, however impossible other people may be?

The social:

- Are my attitudes and values compassionate and inclusive?
- Or do they reflect 'destructive defences' such as 'racism, sexism, militarism, consumerism and narrow nationalism'?

The environmental:

- Does my life-style reflect and awareness of God-in-all things – the inter-relatedness of all creation?
- Am I concerned for the well-being of the planet over and above personal greed and consumerism?

11.4. Appendix Four – Reflexivity: Myself as a child of faith

Brought up in what my parents would have described as an evangelical³⁴⁰ household, with both parents active in church and para-church leadership and ecumenical activity, it was inevitable that we were affected by the changes identified by Bebbington (1994, p. 371) as transforming British evangelicalism in the early 1980s, and which led to an adult church choice focused on 'two main sources of authority for the church: scripture and reason' (Guest, 2002, p. 45).

I became a Christian when I was four years old. My hugely anticipated younger brother died when he was just a few days old, and this led me to become quite frightened of dying. My mother told me that believing in Jesus meant that we would have eternal life, and I decided to take out that insurance policy! Shortly after, I distinctly remember watching a film of the life and death of Jesus on the television, and knowing for certain that he had done that for me. Whether this was a cognitive interpretation of the teaching I had heard at church and in Sunday School, or just a spiritual experience, I can no longer say, but I do remember being overwhelmed with emotion and certainty. As my childhood progressed and I encountered God in various ways and contexts, I wanted to respond and commit. Unfortunately at that time, there was very little real understanding of the nature of a child's faith, and so with no other language to describe what was happening for me, I 'became a Christian' several times, until I think my parents realised what was going on, and reinterpreted it for me.

As a family we moved regularly during my childhood and early teenage years which meant that I had to develop at least a veneer of confidence, and an ability to make friends quickly. I was an able child, both intellectually and physically, and this was both enhanced and inhibited by attendance at smaller schools where I quickly found myself in competition, and indeed sometimes conflict, with the playground leaders. As a result, God became a good 'fall back' companion, and I would naturally tell him of the ups and downs of my day. Quite often the downs were associated with lack of material possessions. As a 'mission' family our income was often very low. Although I would never describe my childhood as poor, I do remember having lists of the things that I wanted and had very little hope of getting. This had both a positive and a negative impact on my world view. One Christmas our Grandfather gave our family a model railway. From Mum and Dad, my brother and I got four pieces of additional track. After Christmas lunch the pair of us had a 'pow-wow' in my bedroom where we decided that we should be grateful 'plenty of children didn't even have food', unaware that this wasn't our 'main present' and that more was to come. I believe this remains a significant memory, because of the conviction that my brother and I shared that we needed

³⁴⁰ Christians who identify themselves as Protestant Evangelicals believe that: scripture is the inspired word of God; the cross is the basis of salvation; conversion is an integral part of actively living a life that reflects the Gospel (Bebbington, 1989, pp. 1-17)

to 'do the right thing' i.e. be grateful for something we didn't really want, despite the strength of disappointment.










Then, as now, my spirituality was particularly enhanced when in touch with nature, and I was very fortunate that one of our moves meant we lived on a disused farm in Sussex for four years, where I was able to commune with God regularly sitting on a gate watching the sunset, or surrounded by blossom in a cherry tree. I was fascinated by the notion of God's omnipotence and would spend what felt like a long time at night, checking through my day for things I had done wrong and needed forgiveness for. I was very able to entertain and dissemble, and was popular with my teachers, despite not always conforming to the rules, so I had plenty of food for thought! I would also try and imagine what it would be like if God did not exist and I was dead, i.e. extreme nihilism, but invariably my attempts failed.







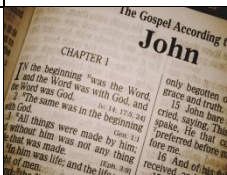
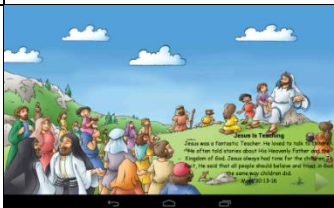


So in terms of what I might see if my childhood self was one of the participants, but must not read in to the data (unless of course it is there) because of my own experience:











- A sense of the numinous and a fascination with the unfathomable nature of God
- An identifiable moment, or moments when some kind of declaration of faith was made
- An easy ability to communicate with God, and a real desire to be a 'good' Christian
- A balance sheet mentality to sin and forgiveness, and a propensity to focus on 'sin' rather than grace
- Connection with God through a variety of means, particularly nature
- A reliance on God as the 'filler in' of the gaps left by the rest of life
- An awareness of the 'rules' of being a 'good Christian' in terms of Bible reading, daily prayer, church attendance, etc.
- An ability to make choices of attitude and behaviour based on Christian principles










11.5. Appendix Five – Response to pictures used in Interview One







Key: Green – Yes, Red – No, Yellow - Maybe

	Picture	Name and copyright	CB	Mel	Max	Star	Storm
1		Lavender Field, Provence by Olimpio Fantuz/SIME/4Corners (Oxfam card)	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow
2		Orangutan by Tim Flach/Getty Images (Oxfam card)	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow
3			Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow
4			Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow
5		Big Bear, Little Bear by Kristiana Parn (Oxfam card)	Green	Red	Green	Yellow	Red
6			Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow
7			Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
8			Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow
9			Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow

	Picture	Name and copyright	CB	Mel	Max	Star	Storm
11			Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow
12			Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow
13			Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow
14			Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
15			Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow
16		Bible as magic	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
17			Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green
18		Online Bible	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
19		Guy the Tiger by Victoria Allen (Oxfam card)	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow
20		Swings in the park, photo sent by Amy Harbon, a former student in response to question about what connects you with God	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Red

	Picture	Name and copyright	CB	Mel	Max	Star	Storm
21			Green	Green	Red	Red	Green
22			Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
23		Owl Nesting by Maddy McClellan (Oxfam card)	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
24			Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow
25			Green	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
26			Green	Green	Red	Green	Red
27		God are you really there? Google Images	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Green
28		Boat, Man & Dog by Ailsa Black (Oxfam card)	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow
		Magic of the plains by Schim Schimmel printed by Statics London	Green	Green	Red	Green	Yellow
30		Boat on a calm sea at sunset photographed by Carolyn Edwards	Green	Red	Red	Green	Yellow

	Picture	Name and copyright	CB	Mel	Max	Star	Storm
31							
32		Heart IV copyright Ian Winstanley 2005 The Art Group Limited printed by Ikea					
33		A Shared Moment by Caroline Arber, Printed by Athena International					
34		Living on the Edge by Schim Schimmel Printed by Statics London					
35		Lowenzahn (Lontodon hispidus L.) Foto Bruno Blum – printed by natur-verlag					
36		Midsummer Eve by Edwards Robert Hughes Beechwood Publications					
37		Four Season by Ben Blathwayt – Reproduced with the cooperation of the Nevill Gallery, Canterbury and Bath					
38		Snape Marshes photocopyright Trevor Wood published by Suffolk Preservation society & Chapter and verse					
39		Hamster image courtesy of Alamy, Gibson Hanson graphics					

	Picture	Name and copyright	CB	Mel	Max	Star	Storm
40		'kindness' google images					
41							
42		Toddler's Hands copyright J.N. Reichel – Getty Images printed by Ikea					
43							
44							
45							

11.6. Appendix Six – Research Pack Contents

Thank you for expressing an interest in this research project. In this pack you will find all the information you need to decide whether to take part and how to proceed. Please read through all the information carefully, and if you decide you do want to be involved complete the consent form and return it to me in the stamped addressed envelope by as soon as possible

This pack contains:

- A letter to the child who is potentially a participant in the research
- A letter to the parent(s) or carer(s) of that child
- Information about the 'Bricolage' activity
- A consent form to be completed and returned
- A questionnaire for the child
- A questionnaire for the grown-up
- A stamped addressed envelope for the completed forms

Dear [child's name],

Thank you for being interested in taking part in this research project. I am trying to find out what kind of things children think and feel about their friendship with God and how it affects how they live their lives. If you take part in this project, we will meet three times for about an hour, at your home, for you to tell me a bit about yourself and your friendship with God.

The first time we meet, we will look at some pictures and talk about them. I will also explain an activity, called 'Bricolage', that I would like you to do for a couple of weeks. When you have done that, I will come back and you can tell me all about what you have been collecting. After Christmas I will be back again, with a record of what you have said to me so that you can check that I have heard and understood you properly.

I will be recording our conversations and making notes, and I will be writing about what you have said. This means that you will need to choose a 'research name' for yourself. This is not because we will say or do anything that is a 'secret', but so that what you say is kept 'confidential'. This means you can be as honest as you like without worrying about what other people might think.

If you want to take part you will need to talk to your grown-ups and complete the consent form and questionnaires and return them to me. I will then arrange times and dates for our meetings with your grown-ups. If, at any point, over the next few weeks you think you don't want to carry on, tell me or your grown-ups and you can stop being part of the research. I do hope however, that you will enjoy being part of this project. If you have any questions, ask your grown-ups to email me, or speak to me in church, and I will do my best to answer them.

Kind regards

Carolyn Edwards

Carolyn Edwards, Cliff College, Cliff Lane, Calver, Derbyshire, S32 3XG

10th November 2016

Dear [parent's name],

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research, as you already aware my name is Carolyn Edwards and I am undertaking doctoral studies with Manchester University. I am a lecturer at Cliff College in Derbyshire and I have many years of experience as a children's and youth worker, and resource writer for Scripture Union. This research project is exploring children's spirituality and faith development, and in particular what they experience and understand of holiness.

I am looking for six participants who attend junior school (7-11 years old) and have been part of All Saints Eccleshall Church for over twelve months. I will meet with each participant 3 times for about an hour. The first time we will be looking at some pictures, and I will explain the 'Bricolage' activity that they will need to complete over a period of a couple of weeks. The second time will be to hear what they have to say about the activity, and the third time (after Christmas) will be to check back with them that I have correctly understood what they have said to me in the previous interviews.

I realise that this process requires a commitment from the whole family, but am hopeful that not only will what the children say become an important part of the growing body of knowledge in this area, it will also be enjoyable and interesting for you all too.

I am a member of All Saints Church, and live in Sheffield, but for the purposes of this research, I am using my work address. I would like to meet with the children in their own homes to make the process as easy and natural as possible for them, and therefore would be grateful if you could indicate on the consent form what times and dates work best for you, and provide your email address so that I can make arrangements with you.

Please be assured that this is not a test of your child's spirituality, your parenting, or the Church's junior church provision! I just want to hear what the children have to say about their relationship with God, so don't worry that they might say the wrong thing, or try to 'coach' them with some right answers. If your child decides to take part, they might, quite naturally talk about the process with you. If they do, please affirm their enthusiasm but don't ask too many questions, instead gently suggest they might want to talk to me about it next time they see me. If, however, they express any unhappiness about the process, please do contact me straight away. They are free to withdraw from the project at any point, although I am assuming that if I have not heard to the contrary before 10th February 2017 I still have permission to use the data they have shared with me in my thesis which will be completed by December 2019 or any further related publications. I have asked them to supply me with a research name which is how they will be identified in the text, providing complete anonymity.

Please can you ensure that your child understands what they are agreeing to and completes and signs the consent form. This form also needs to be signed by you along with an indication of preferred times and dates for the meetings. Once I have received the consent form and the completed questionnaires I will contact you by email to arrange the meetings.

The most important aspect of this project for me is that the children are heard, and that they are happy with the process. Please ensure they understand what is involved and are willing to take part. I have a current DBS enhanced disclosure, and this research process has been given ethical clearance by Manchester University. If you have any questions at all please email me on carolynsed@gmail.com or call me on 07917868111.

Kind regards

Carolyn Edwards



















My Real Name: _____

My Age: 7 8 9 10 11

I am: a girl a boy

I live at: _____

My Research Name: _____

	Yes	Not Sure	No
I agree that I want to take part in this research project			
I understand that I will talk to Carolyn three times over the next few weeks about how I think and feel about God and my life			
I understand that there are no 'wrong' or 'right' answers and I can be as truthful as I like about what I think and feel			
I give Carolyn permission to write about the things that I tell her for her project, and use the words that I say because she is not going to use my real name when talking or writing about me			
I give permission for my grown-ups at home to answer the question form given in my research pack			
I know that if I don't want to carry on with the research project I can stop at any time before 10 th February 2017			

My grown-up: _____

I confirm that we have read and understood the information in the research pack and are happy to support _____ (child's name) in their decision to take part in this research

Signature: _____ Email: _____

Date: _____

Our preferred time of day for interview: Weekday: 3-4pm, 4-5pm, 6-7pm
Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday afternoon

Dates we are available:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
October 2016						
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	Notes:				




























Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 2016						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	Notes:		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January 2017						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	Notes:			

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 2017						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	Notes:			

January 2017 Calendar Printable calendars from www.calendarcraze.com

February 2017 Calendar Printable calendars from www.calendarcraze.com

My Name is:						I am:	A girl	A boy
I am:	7	8	9	10	11	Years old		
In my family live: (tick or write the number of all the people that live in your home)	Mum		Dad		Brother		Sister	
	Grand parent		Other grown-up		Other child		Pet	
I am:	The oldest		The youngest		In the middle		Other:	
How I feel about...	Love it		Hate it		In between or not sure			
Being at school								
Eating vegetables								
Watching television								
Reading books								
Going to bed								
Making new friends								
Going to church								
Tidying my room								
Playing outside								
The thing I want most in the world is...								
I really don't like...								

Name of child				Name(s) of parent(s)/carer(s)			
Please give details of all the members of the household and family the child is part of							
What are your child's favourite activities?							
Please tick all of the words that you think help describe your child (please be as honest as you can)							
Curious	Dreamy	Tidy	Extravert	Honest	Outgoing	Imaginative	Joyful
Hard working	Funny	Obedient	Easy going	Transparent	Talkative	Picky	Shy
Open minded	Forceful	Introvert	Self-controlled	Exuberant	Quiet	Compliant	Opinionated
Caring	Manipulative	Loyal	Gregarious	Crazy	Noisy	Moany	Bossy
Idealistic	Optimistic	Risk taker	Gentle	Excitable	Astute	Methodical	Generous
Competent	Selfish	Faithful	Naive	Sneaky	Logical	Meticulous	Moody
Cheeky	Sensual	Physical	Distant	Spiritual	A leader	Fickle	Happy
Impulsive	Cuddly	Deceitful	Kind	Sensible	Negative	Playful	Loving
Anxious	Confident	Solemn	Pessimistic	Clever	Thoughtful	Positive	Mischievous
Trusting	A follower	Mean	Compassionate	Creative	Self-disciplined	Confident	Charming
How would you describe your child's faith?							
Please describe any life or family events that you think might have had an impact on your child							
Please indicate if your child has been involved in any other research projects						Yes	No


11.7. Appendix Seven - Suggested Items for Bricolage box

At the end of Interview One the researcher explained that the child could put whatever they liked in the box including things like:

- A picture drawn or photographed³⁴¹ of where they feel closest to God
- A construction made from lego, etc. that shows how they communicate with God
- A leaf, or a twig or something from nature that reminds them about living like Jesus
- A cartoon of a conversation with someone
- A DVD of a film or a game they thought helped or didn't help them know God and/or live for God
- An object that represents something they have found difficult. For instance, it could be a bottle of perfume because they hate being sat next to the 'smelly kid' at school and feel guilty for feeling that way
- A pictorial or written journal of their prayer
- A screenshot of a text conversation
- A picture of a Bible story they find helpful or difficult
- A doodle they did while they thinking and wondering

³⁴¹ Whilst it was probable, it could not be assumed that all the children in the sample group will have access to a mobile phone. The intention was therefore to offer the children a variety of options, although it is anticipated that a child with a mobile phone may well create and record their whole Bricolage digitally. Photo-elicitation is a commonly used research method in social science disciplines (Rose, 2012, p. 304)

11.8. Appendix Eight - Example of children's dialogue about pictures in Interview One

	<p style="text-align: center;">Picture 20</p>
<p>Charlie Bucket</p>	<p>[20] Erm, number 20. I think is a 'yes' because, God made the trees and he gave people ideas to make swings. Do you like swinging? Yeah. How do you feel when you are on a swing? Happy And? And cos the air goes in my face and makes me feel relaxed. Yeah, yeah, do you feel like you are flying? Yeah. Out there, once I got some rope and tied it to the thing that's round there [beckoned me to come and look out of the window] next to the tree, with the white mark on. There, I made a swing and I sat on it and it was like crrrkk, crrrkk [tree creaking noise] Oh right, the tree was making a noise? Yea, and I had to take it down, and to do that I had to climb up the tree and then attach it on.</p>
<p>Max Stone</p>	<p>[20] This is, they're all sort of the same thing cos it's a swing and it's been a bit like that for me because I've been like feeling good and then when I've been jumping around I suddenly feel a bit [indicates exhaustion] Do you like going on the swings? Yes When you do on a swing, what do you feel? Erm. I just feel happy. What is it about the feeling of being on a swing do you think that makes you feel happy? Erm.....I don't know. Just happy! [he nods] What number was that one? 20. Ok next one</p>
<p>Mel</p>	<p>[20] I remember this (20) this reminds me of when I went to the park with my brother and we laid across them, and we span it round and round and then we let go and kept spinning round. And it kept spinning. And what feelings were you feeling when you were doing that spinning? I was really happy and joy. So, that's a really good feeling. How have you related that to your friendship with God? Because erm .. sort of like, cos he plans everything and its almost like he planned me to have fun at that time and the way that that feels really makes me happy. Yeah, yeah.</p>
<p>Star</p>	<p>[20] Twenty. I'm not sure about this one, because it doesn't look that happy and it looks like everyone's just gone to the better parks and left this one. But helped make it all, and erm, that's basically it. Do you like going on the swings? Yeah. I quite like it, because it's like now if I swing, if this is the bar and I going swing, swing, swing I can swing up and then let go and then fly in the air and land on my feet. Ahh, so you are actually flying for a second or two [off chair acting it out] No, I'm swinging and when I'm really high I go weeeee and fly like and fall down like.. And in that moment what does it feel like what? What is happening here [points to heart] and here [points to head]? Erm, it feels quite fun, and I really, I'm thankful to God for helping make the swing, and helping me to be brave, because I used to be really scared, and when I had to let go, I used to be like ahhhh and my hands were too scared, so I kept hold, and yeah</p>
<p>Storm</p>	<p>[20] Erm [sneezes] Bless you It's just a picture of some swings, so they don't really have anything to do with any of the stories.. Do you like going on the swings? Yeah. But they don't have anything to do with... Ok. So when you are on a swing, what feelings do you have? I just like going high, but I don't like going too high, cos my sister really scares me cos she goes so high she almost flies backwards. Erm.. and when my Dad, cheekily pushes me really high, I don't like that. You don't like that no. And when you, when you don't like something like that, that's making you feel a bit scared do you scream or do you go quiet? I say, can you, I'm like 'stop, stop!'. Ok.</p>

11.9. Appendix Nine – Annotated Profiles

11.9.1. Charlie Bucket (CB) – Annotated Profile

Overview

Charlie Bucket³⁴² is a nine year old boy who lives with his mum, dad and thirteen year old sister. His parents describe him as: extravert, outgoing, talkative, exuberant, caring, loyal, risk taker, happy, loving, mischievous, trusting, creative and confident (PQCB2PQCB) and nothing in the interview process indicated otherwise. They believe his faith to be strong, but wonder if the recent death of his maternal grandparents has had an impact on him. On his participant questionnaire, CB indicated that the only thing he really didn't like doing was tidying his room, and he was ambiguous about going to school.

According to the interview data CB is a child that likes to get things right³⁴³. This means that checking the process and understanding the rules are important parts of interaction with others, but also infers a strong rhetoric of rules and getting things right when it comes to faith. He particularly likes solving puzzles and using logic to sort problems and his hobbies like programming and the Rubik's cube reflect this.

His desire to get things right means that sometimes there is some internal dialogue when faced moral and ethical dilemmas. Although it appears that this is mainly intellectual, he is often 'annoyed' at the costliness of choosing to do the right thing, or not to do the wrong thing. He believes that there are consequences to making the wrong choices, and often it is the threat of these that motivates him not to do them. This is perhaps why he has some sense of God's mercy.

He clearly enjoys going to Church and being part of the children's choir there, but seems to have an ambiguous relationship with the Bible, and prayer. In our first two conversations he used the strategy linking what was discussed with well known biblical material, but neglected to do this in the third interview.

Key themes

Creation and nature

For CB God as creator and provider is a strong narrative, and this is linked closely with his own love of nature and being outdoors "**And how do you feel when you are walking in the woods?**"³⁴⁴ Happy. Because... you're walking in something that God made...³⁴⁵ and... you're seeing the wildlife" (Int1:106-107). When choosing the pictures, his standard response to why the pictures related to his friendship God became "It's because God made..." (Int1:75,77,79,80,85,92,96,98,104,164,165,170-171,179,184,202-203,220,256) This was true even when the creation was not directly related to nature, for instance "Because God made all the kings and queens" (Int1:119), or more to do with God the relationship between God's creation and science "God made things float, like a piece of paper" (Int1:187). Whilst it could be interpreted as a lazy, 'go-to' response, the nuances of his reference to creation suggest belief that: God's creative energy is not only inventive "God came up with the idea to make waterfalls and lakes, and the rainforest" (Int1:215-216); it is also in charge of a process of growth and change (Int1:240-41,258); and is reflected in humanity "God made birds and he gave people ideas to make cushions" (Int1:189-190) and "God made the trees and he gave people ideas to make swings" (Int1:194-195). A creativity that is not just restricted to 'creatives' "Because God made food and all the stuff like all these [pointing to pans] because he gave ideas to everyone else" (Int1:231-232). In addition CB believes that God enjoys and loves his

³⁴²This is the research name chosen by this child

³⁴³ although methodical, meticulous and logical or anxious were not ticked by his parents

³⁴⁴ Bold typeface denote words spoken by the researcher

³⁴⁵ Dots are used to denote pauses, each one roughly representing a second

creation "God made the sea, and even if it is calm or if it is rough, he is still like it"³⁴⁶, and even if the sand's messy, he will still like it" (Int1:234-235).

In the second interview the stimulus of pictures relating to nature was not there in the same way, but he chose to include an autumn leaf (Int2:256-266) and still made reference to the impact of God's creative energy on everyday life (Int2:95-6). In the second interview the stimulus of pictures relating to nature was not present in the same way, but he chose to include an autumn leaf (Int2:256-266) in his bricolage box, and still made reference to the impact of God's creative energy on everyday life (Int2:95-6). When he was trying to theologially justify his inclusion of the Rubik's cube in his 'bricolage box', he refers to God's gift to us of colours (Int2:23), and later suggests that he included his '280 games to enjoy with family and friends book' to express the abundant and playful nature of God's creativity "it makes me think of God because there are loads of things that God created. He created like the slipper game or created the slippers" (Int2:203-204).

CB's love of creation does not, however, always lead him to a worship of the Creator God. Picture 3 in Interview One shows a jetty jutting out over the water, when asked if he was standing on this jetty whether he would be thinking about God or just looking, his emphatic response was "looking" (Int1:84). Later, although having said he felt closer to God when outside (Int1:192-193), when describing the free sensations of being on a swing, again there was no connection with God, faith or even spirituality (Int1:195-196).

One interesting outcome of this strength of conviction of God's creative power is CB's assertion that God made Jesus (Int1:181), but that the Holy Spirit is a creator (Int1:266-267)

Rules and getting it right

CB wants to get things right. Throughout Interviews One and Three, he was checking processes and using questions to ensure that he was in the best position to get things right (Int1:64-71,103; Int3:1,106-7,150). Perhaps he did not feel he needed to do this in Interview Two as the discussion was centred around his bricolage choices rather than a task he needed to accomplish. The importance of this desire to get things right is indicated by his behaviours and activities: enjoying puzzles like the Rubik's cube (Int2:16-21), computer coding (Int2:46-46), orienteering (Int1:109) and science experiments (Int2:174). It is also corroborated by his strategy of whispering or using a silly voice when he is feeling unsure of himself (Int1:10-11, Int2:255, Int3:24), giving an answer that he thinks might be wrong (Int2:71-73), or thinks might not conform to what he thinks my concept of lived out faith is (Int2:120,156). Throughout Interviews One and Three, he was checking processes and using questions to ensure that he was in the best position to get things right (Int1:64-71,103; Int3:1,106-7,150). Perhaps he did not feel he needed to do this in Interview Two as the discussion was centred around his bricolage choices rather than a task he needed to accomplish.).

In Interview One he tells the story of how he got lost whilst orienteering the previous day (Int1:108-116). When questioned, he did not affirm that he felt any anxiety or fear about getting lost, his main thought was about getting it wrong and how he therefore he needed to sort it out. Although he did eventually draw on the resource of others to help him, he indicates that at no point did he feel the need to pray or draw on God's help. This need to 'find the right path' is included in his theological reflection on the Rubik's cube (Int2:16-44) in which he indicates that he thinks that God would be proud of his achievement, but also his fear that too many wrong choices can make it hard to find a way back to God "erm, like you might do it again and then it will be hard to say sorry to God. Ok. Do you think, if you say sorry, and then you do it again, what do you think God thinks of that? I think he feels that I erm... didn't do the promise. Ok, ok. And if you say sorry, what does God do? He says ok that's fine, and then if you do it again he says.... I don't know" (Int2:38-41). When, however, he receives a prayer of blessing in communion, he not only feels God's help but also a sense of security

³⁴⁶ This is a literal transcription, but the sense I get from the recording is that this is not a reference to the nature of God – he is like the sea- but instead a grammatical error, the second 'he will still like it' is a reiteration

about the future that possibly relieves some of the pressure of getting it right and solving the problems all on his own (Int1:150-152). Interestingly, when talking about why the programming exercises had gone wrong (Int2:51-57), he was not cross or annoyed, but very pragmatic about it, in a sense giving himself a lot of grace.

Although he clearly loves playing games, and indeed wanted me to play games with him as part of our interview process (Int2:172-173), it is also important to CB that the rules are followed. In Interview Two CB took great lengths to go through the rules of one of the games in his games book (Int2:184-190). He was asked how he would feel if somebody cheated and didn't follow the rules, he replied "Annoyed, because they're not really playing correctly, and breaking the rules" (Int2:209). When asked whether he was annoyed because this gave them advantage, he was emphatic that it was because "They haven't played by the rules" (Int2:212). When I wondered what he would do if I cheated if we played a game, he responded that he would reiterate the rules and that I would get one more chance before being told I could no longer play (Int2:214-219). This is an interesting contrast to his ambiguity about telling the truth in Interview Three (Int3:147-148.)

When questioned about God's rules in Interview Two, his first response was that they are easy to follow (Int2:68-69). He quickly realised however that it is more complicated than that. He also recognises that sometimes doing the right thing is costly. In both Interviews Two and Three CB indicates how at times he finds it hard to 'do the right thing', and talks about some of the feelings this evokes. In Interview Two, presumably because of its proximity to Christmas, he uses the illustration of looking for Christmas presents (Int2:70-85). He suggests that although the decision not to do the wrong thing is made by his head, it is based on feelings: sadness when he is tempted; annoyance that he knows he shouldn't do it; and finally happiness when he makes the right choice. If he is not able to stop himself from doing the wrong thing then he remains sad and annoyed with himself until he has spoken to Mum, Dad or God about it (Int2:85-88).

In Interview Three we discuss the incident that had happened just before the interview when we had been getting drinks in the kitchen. His Mum had said no to his request for a J20, but he goes ahead and takes one, pretending to open it until his Dad snatches it out of his hand (Int3:33-42). He describes the cognitive dilemma of 'do it' versus 'don't do it' and asserts that he wouldn't have opened it even if his Dad had not taken it from his hand, because of his fear of getting told off. This fear is corroborated by his exploration of why someone might tell the truth (Int3:57-61) or what he sometimes prays for with his parents (Int3:52-54) and also perhaps his fascination with the cheating done by the pirates in the film 'Swiss Family Robinson' (Int1:130-137).

His attitude to having everything sorted and following the rules, seems to be reflected in the passage towards the end of Interview One where we are discussing what holiness is. CB lists a set of behaviours and activities that he believes exhibit holiness (Int1:271-281) they feel a little prescribed and like a set of rules. The preoccupation with having everything sorted is also perhaps the motivator for his belief that God expects us to be part of sorting out the problems in the world (Int2:299-301).

What is also intriguing is a little event that he describes at church the morning before Interview One, where he persuaded his Dad to 'break the rules' and give him some communion bread (Int1:147-151). His desire to be part of something that enabled him to "feel like God's with me and ... that... you know, he knows what will happen to me" (Int19Int1:151-152) was stronger than his desire that the rules are kept and his fear of the consequences when they are not.

Solving puzzles and sense of achievement

CB does like to solve a puzzle – one of the reasons he is so proud that he is now able to do the Rubik's cube (Int3:75-80). Perhaps this is why he likes the idea that God is like a game of hide and seek (Int2:196-205). He sometimes struggles with abstract concepts, like those in

Picture 34³⁴⁷, although he does use various techniques including pragmatism and theological reflection to get to grips with it (Int2:250-256). One interesting conversation occurred as part of Interview Three where out of the blue, he mentioned seeing me in church on Christmas Day with my three grown-up children (Int3:156-160). He wanted to understand why their father wasn't present as well, once he had 'solved the puzzle' we were able to move on and talk about something else.

In the first two interviews, there were examples of his pride in a recent achievement. In Interview One he describes the assembly, in which he made an announcement, and the bun sale to raise funds for Children in Need (Int1:23-31). In Interview Two it was the Rubik's cube referred to elsewhere. There was no sense that this was arrogance, but genuine pleasure in the accomplishment. In Interview Three the tone regarding achievement and accomplishment changes, in that he refers to the faith activities of worshipping and prayer as being 'easy'. Admittedly this was part of the language used by the researcher in framing the process, but what was intimated as CB spoke, was a sense that the 'easiness' meant that it could quickly become valueless. So for instance when asked why worshipping is easy he says "because all you do is sing songs, pray and read the Bible and do some other things and it's not really as hard as the Rubik's cube [...] cos, worshipping you don't have to think about anything whereas the Rubik's cube you do" (Int3:85-88). Going to church is easy too, because "you don't really have to do much. You just read the words on the screen and then you don't have to do anything else" (Int3:93-94). And praying also seems to have a formulaic process that makes it easy "because you don't need to think about anything and if you pray every night like me, you can know like what to do. So, pretend, its, you know what when you're praying I know what to do, it's a bit like solving a Rubik's cube, I know what to do next" (Int3:98-100).

The Nature of God

In general when referring to the divine, CB used the term 'God' rather than 'Jesus' and the 'Holy Spirit'. In Interview Three he describes God the Father as having a very long white beard and being somewhat like a magician "he's spinning the world fast, a bit like magic tricks, like if the volcano explodes, he's like sphew, sphew" (Int2:219-224). He believes that God is funny (Int3:223) and fun "I think he makes people laugh in heaven" (Int2:207). Jesus is also bearded (Int2:283-285) and "funny and sometimes serious" (Int3:232-233), although the Holy Spirit is only serious (Int3:235). His understanding of how the three elements of God relate to each other as the Trinity is sketchy as evidenced by his statement in Interview One "it looks a bit like Jesus, and God made Jesus" (Int1:181), but he recognises that the Holy Spirit is "a bit like God and Jesus" because "he made" and "he loves everyone" (Int1:267). He also says that he has not heard of God described as Holy (Int1:268).

In Interview One the overwhelming character of God is creation and provision, but there is also a strong thread of love (Int1:257-258). For instance when looking at the Picture 31, he equates the mother bear's hug to the welcoming, inclusive and loving nature of God (Int1:165-166). He goes further to emphasise the inclusive and merciful nature of God when he states that "God loves everyone who is in prison, even if they've done something naughty, he still loves them" (Int1:183-184). What is interesting in this statement is not just the implication that you can be in prison even if you haven't done something naughty, but also that God's love is regardless of whether you have been convicted of breaking the rules. This notion of mercy was reflected in the discussion about how we feel when we say something nasty to somebody (Int2:85-88), in that although he would feel "sad and annoyed" with himself, God would say "that's ok and try and stop it" - although grace and forgiveness is bestowed, there is a gentle reminder that there are still rules. In Interview Three he suggests that even though he might talk to God about these kind of things, prayer doesn't make much difference, in that he states that he does not feel shame or guilt prior to the prayer, or feel anything different following the prayer (Int3:51-56). Given his attitude to rules and his fear of getting told off, I

³⁴⁷ Living on the Edge by Schim Schimmel Printed by Statics London

was not convinced by this assertion, particularly as he is able to describe feelings of warmth and security during other encounters with God (Int2:160).

According to CB God is compassionate and empathetic, in that when he sees people who are sad (he gives the example of the homeless), then he too is sad (Int2:299-300) and what is more, wants us to do something about it (Int2:301). In Interview Three when discussing the idea of 'helping others' it appears that CB is prepared to do something in response to the needs of others (Int3:101-104) but in this instance he doesn't link this directly with faith, suggesting that he would do it even if he wasn't a friend of God.

Jesus is key to CB's relationship with God because he is the story teller (Int2:286; Int3:238) and he likes children as well as adults (Int1:205-206). It is, however, interesting that he is not readily able to recount any of those stories: "Do you like listening to stories Jesus told? Yeah. What's your favourite one? [Pause] ... Hmm?... hard cos there are so many. Probably the one where he gave food to everyone." (Int1:206-208). Here, CB is highlighting Jesus' part in the provider nature of God rather than a story Jesus told to help us understand God, but I wonder if this story about Jesus is rated by CB because Jesus solves a problem, something close to his heart. CB recognises that Jesus's sacrifice is linked with Communion when choosing Picture 37³⁴⁸ "I think this is a 'yes' because there is all these sheep, and a sheep is a bit like Jesus because he gets killed and eaten, a cow too. So, yeah." (Int1:246-7), but when referring to his feeling during Communion refers to God (Int1:150-152).

Interview Two took place just before Christmas, so there are numerous references to the Christmas story (Int2:103,130-135,234-241,266-280) and theological themes related to this (Int2:106). In a conversation about the song 'Away in a manger' (Int2:129-136) CB said that it made him feel happy. It was unclear whether this just because of his love of singing, or whether it was the words themselves, or the association with Christmas. He was, however, able to recognise the humanity of Jesus and the fact that "Jesus might have cried." (Int2:13-136).

Singing and worship

One of CB's favourite activities is singing, so much so that in both Interviews One and Three he voluntarily sings to me (Int1:172-173, 191), and he is a member of the Children's Choir at his church (Int2:126-127). He relates his faith strongly to singing, and vice versa (Int1:241-242; Int2:137-139) although sometimes he doesn't always understand what he is singing (Int2:144-147). For CB going to church to worship God is a strong indicator that you have a faith (Int3:10-11) and this links with his choice of Picture 21³⁴⁹ in Interview One. In Interview Three he identifies worship as one of the elements of how he lives out his faith and suggests that this is easy³⁵⁰ (Int3:85-94). Apart from the spontaneous singing in the Interviews, he does not, however, give any indication that nature and awe and wonder give him any reason to worship spontaneously (Int3:90-91), although he does believe that his sung worship makes God happy (Int3:152-153).

Reading the Bible

In Interviews One and Two CB tries to give biblical or examples when explaining things. For instance he links Picture 28³⁵¹ with the story of Noah (Int1:92-95), and the discussion about God's instructions with the story of the people of Israel crossing the red sea (Int2:64-68). He puts an Autumn leaf in his bricolage box, not only because it is part of God's creation but also because he is able to associate it with the palm leaves used when Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Int2:260-266). He is also able to make theological connections, for instance in Interview Two he links the colours of the Rubik's cube with theological themes "This is for the

³⁴⁸ Four Season by Ben Blathwayt – Reproduced with the cooperation of the Nevill Gallery, Canterbury and Bath

³⁴⁹ The inside of a church

³⁵⁰ See the discussion in 'Solving puzzles and sense of achievement' to see why this may not be a positive

³⁵¹ Boat, Man & Dog by Ailsa Black (Oxfam card)

blood, red" (Int2:22-23). In Interview One he selects the Picture 17³⁵² as having something to do with his friendship with God but admits that he doesn't read the Bible himself very much intimating that it is an activity for adults rather than children: "I have a children's Bible, but that's mostly stories, so probably when I am older I'll read it. So, yeah" (Int1:209-11). He thinks that learning about God and Christianity is important (Int1:221-222,241-242), but again thinks that this kind of intellectual activity is best left to adults "because children, at church they go to groups instead of going, listening to the sermon and erm they might go to like home groups and stuff like that" (Int1:280-281).

In Interview Two the children's Bible referred to in Interview One is in the Bricolage box (Int2:242) "[whispering] I like this book. So do you think you put that in the box because you thought you should? Yeah, because it's about God" (Int2:254-255). There seems to be an array of different emotions going on in this simple dialogue. The fact that he did the Bricolage activity at the last minute (Int2:309) means that it is likely that not much thought went in to the inclusion of the Bible, except that other comments from CB indicate that he believes it is important to growing in knowledge of God. He clearly, however, feels some kind of emotional attachment to the book or perhaps the stories in it, although the use of the 'whispering strategy' implies that he is embarrassed by these feelings. In Interview Three he selects 'Reading the Bible' as an activity that is part of his friendship with God, but feels that he has little influence over this. Even though, he will read it happily enough when instructed to by his Mum and Dad (Int3:168-172), it does not naturally occur to him to do so of his own volition. This may reflect the concern identified in Interview One that he is not ready yet although he does suggest that it is not the actual reading that is the issue "it's kind of, its easy because you're just reading, it's a bit like a story book" (Int3:95-96).

Play and Humour

There are several occasions in the interviews with CB where he makes me laugh, and I genuinely feel that humour is a natural part of his personality³⁵³. In Interview One when asked if he knew what holiness was he responded "There are two meanings. There's either like a meaning of cheese, cos there is something like a holey cheese [...]. And, erm the other is one is like, holy, the Holy Spirit and stuff like that?" (Int1:264-266). In Interview Two he deflected my question about what he was thinking and feeling when involved in sung worship by responding with a twinkle in his eye "I was hoping that I wouldn't set someone's hair on fire" because they were holding lit Christingles whilst singing (Int3:148-150).

For CB play is an important part of daily life, in fact in Interview One the thing he identified as making him the most cross was the injustice of a lunch time system at school which reduces time spent outside playing (Int1:46-50). It is also an important part of his enjoyment of Sunday School and the various clubs he is part of (Int1:222-228,140-144,160-165,192-196). His biggest fear of heaven is that it won't be fun until he realises "oh no, actually... because in heaven you make, you can do anything. You can play on the Xbox or something, play with someone random, you can't on earth" (Int2:116-118). This is corroborated by his notion of the playfulness of God and that God likes playing games "Cos its literally the only thing he can do" (Int2:205).

It is interesting that CB describes two different Christian holidays as having a significant impact on him, and to which he wants to return. One is the Oaks camp (Int2:160) and the other is Spring Harvest (Int3:198). Even though he describes a profound experience where he felt really close to God at the Oaks Camp (Int2:158-160,165-167), for both events it was the activities and games which get the most description and cause the greatest animation in him (Int2:161-164; Int3:198-201). It is tempting to suggest that CB is therefore less interested in the worship, prayer and encounter with God than he is the activities, but my previous research leads me to question that assumption and hold the whole experience as one which is what I believe CB is doing.

³⁵² A picture of Bible text from the beginning of John's gospel

³⁵³ Although his parents did not indicate this in their questionnaire (PQCB2)

Prayer

Although CB thinks praying is a sign of faith (Int3:11), and prays every night with a parent and therefore thinks it is easy (Int3:49-50), he does not talk about communicating with God as part of everyday life, either when he needs physical help or help to make wise choices, even when questioned (Int1:113-114; Int3:60-61). He is aware that prayer is the way to communicate with God and that it is a place for interceding on behalf of oneself and others, but does not really talk to God about his feelings (Int2:250-253). Perhaps this is why in Interview Three, he says that he does not feel any different after praying about doing something wrong, because he is not engaging his emotions in prayer (Int3:52-56). Although I think this response is more to do with shame and perhaps might have benefitted from a greater degree of exploration around the notion of forgiveness. His statement later in Interview Three that prayer is easy if you know what to do next (Int3:198-100), does rather suggest that he is using formulaic processes and corroborates the notion that he is not engaging in prayer on an emotional level.

Being Light

A strong theological theme for CB is light, not only stimulated by the pictures³⁵⁴ but also by song words (Int1:172-173), and presumably some kind of biblical teaching on Jesus as the light of the world (Int2:278-281). As we explored what this metaphor means he was keen to express that he reflects God's light "No, I'm letting my light shine to God. It's like I'm a light bulb and he can see me from where he is" (Int1:175-176). It appears that it is important to him that God can see him, that because he is 'seen' he matters, as well as the link with the sentiment that we are all called to 'sort out the problems' (Int2:301). Although in this instance he is unable to describe what being light might look like (Int1:177,) in Interview Two he is able to give more detail "tell people that God loves them if they are hurt, that God will heal them" (Int2:305-306). Practically, CB was able give examples of how we had or could be that light by helping others (Int2:96-8; Int3:64-67,101-105) although he was not convinced that this was solely due to his friendship with God (Int3:104-105).

He indicates in Interview Three that his parents have the most influence on him and his faith and he recounted a story where his Dad stopped to help a girl who had collapsed (Int3:120-123). This clearly had an impact on him, and perhaps is one of the reasons why he believes that it is easier for adults to be holy than children (Int1:279-281). It appears that he is conflating his belief that rules are important, and that it is important to learn about God, with his experience that grown-ups 'know more things' and that he gets told off a lot for doing the wrong things "So. Tell me why you think they've [parents, grandparents, Sunday School] got the most influence? Because they've been born doing the right thing, being told to do the right thing over many years, so they know. They don't do anything wrong. So your parents never doing anything wrong? No. Don't think so [laughs] they might do at work, but I don't know about that" (Int3:130-133)

³⁵⁴ Picture 29 has the Aurelia Boreolis on it and Picture 27 is sunlight breaking through clouds. In Picture 19, he also argues that the orange on the tiger is redolent with light (Int1:203-204) and Picture 14 is described as having the colour of light (Int1:219)

11.9.2. Max Stone – Annotated Profile

Overview

Max Stone (MS)³⁵⁵ is an eight year old boy who lives with his mum, dad, two brothers, adopted sister and dog. At the time of the first interview MS's health had stabilised and made a bit of an improvement after over three months of blood tests and time off school. His parents were concerned that this had obviously had an impact on him, but were less concerned of the impact that the arrival of his adopted sister had been. She is five years younger than him and has additional needs. His two older brothers are four and six years older than him (PQMS2).

According to his parents he is; curious, honest, imaginative, hard working, funny, obedient, talkative, shy, open minded, introvert, self-controlled, quiet, compliant, caring, loyal, crazy, idealistic, gentle, methodical, generous, faithful, cheeky, happy, cuddly, kind, sensible, loving, anxious, clever, thoughtful, trusting, creative and self disciplined. They describe his faith as deep and thoughtful, but are not sure whether is more head knowledge than personal relationship even though he definitely believes in God and is encouraged by testimonies (PQMS2).

There is only one interview with MS as the ill health that he refers to in Interview One became worse and although he turned up for Interview Two, he was very tearful and the researcher decided that it was not in his best interests to continue. With only one interview at what is thought to be the end of a prolonged illness it is difficult to get a full picture of MS's life. What is clear from the interview is that the child that the parents describe has been severely inhibited by what has now been diagnosed as a chronic fatigue condition and that this condition has affected his whole outlook and worldview and therefore faith and spirituality.

His parents cite his favourite activities as reading, lego, TV and chatting on his bed (PQMS2) which he corroborates with his questionnaire, although he ranks actually going to bed along with going to church and tidying his room as 'in between or not sure' (PQMS1). Max wants most in the world to be famous, and hates feeling ill (PQMS1), he also thinks he is good at maths and likes dancing (Int1:35-36). Although he has missed quite a lot of school he still plays with his friends "but just not as much as jumping around and stuff" (Int1:41). He watches a lot of films (Int1:173) but has ended up also watching a lot of TV with his younger sister as well as *Spongebob Squarepants*³⁵⁶. (Int1:174-176).

Key themes

Being Ill

By far the most common thing MS talked about was his ill health and the impact this has had on him. In Interview One he only related six out of the potential forty five pictures to his friendship with God, and said it was all for the same reason (Int1:29) which appears to be trying to make sense of his illness. Picture 5³⁵⁷ is a drawing of two polar bears flying a constellation like a kite. Three of the other children did not chose this picture but for MS it immediately had a meaning relating to his condition "it's because I've been having something called anaemia, it's not really a disease but its where you can't really do anything and its really like sad and like flying a kit and when a kite drops" (Int1:19-20). He also uses the swing in Picture 20³⁵⁸ as a metaphor for the feeling of overwhelming exhaustion that suddenly engulfs him (Int1:23-25) and Picture 14 to relay his feeling of being 'feeble' (Int1:124-125).

Picture 6 of the rock climber helped him to articulate the challenges he is facing with his illness "he is climbing up, and it will be challenging for him, and it has been challenging for

³⁵⁵ This is the research name chosen by this child

³⁵⁶ A cartoon on Nickelodeon

³⁵⁷ Big Bear, Little Bear, by Kristiana Parn

³⁵⁸ Swings in the park, photo sent by Amy Harbon, a former student in response to question about what connects you with God

me, cos like, he is climbing up a mountain, but for me it is getting up the stairs" (Int1:58-60). The picture of the knot in the rope (Picture 41) indicates that he feels like his condition has put a 'stop' on things, although he is optimistic that things are going to get better. He does a similar thing when talking about the pictures of the sea (Pictures 10, 11 and 30³⁵⁹), using the imagery to explain what life feels like for him and comparing this with what he thinks God thinks and feels about his situation: "I probably will end up like this with no crashed, but I think that that one's got the most to do with me [crashing sea] **Which³⁶⁰ of these do you think would be God's favourite?** Erm, I think that one [points to still sea Picture 30] **Why [...³⁶¹]** Because it's peaceful and there's no bad things or anything happening" (Int1:143-146).

Nature of God and Faith

There are occasions when MS shows a deep connection with God and other times when he seems to have very little interest in or connection with him (Int1:130-133). It is possible that his illness is so overwhelming (as demonstrated by his constant reference to it) that he is unable to get past it to God. When discussing the sea pictures as described above, he clearly believes that where God is there are "no bad things or anything happening" (Int1:146) but when asked what he thinks God thinks about his illness, even after some thought, he is unable to give an answer (Int1:21).

This is in stark contrast to his interpretation of Picture 31 where he suggests that God is like the mother bear in the picture, holding him and helping him to feel better (Int1:45-46), and that God might be sad because MS is ill (Int1:48). He indicates belief that God can help and change things when questioned about the man who was rock climbing in Picture 6 (Int1:66-68) but goes further in relation to Picture 34³⁶², suggesting that God says 'don't worry' when he becomes anxious about falling behind at school (Int1:153-155). This is potentially related to an understanding of God as love, but again MS is ambivalent. When answering whether the heart shape in Picture 32 has anything to do with God he says "erm. I think it might..." (Int1:80)

When discussing one of his 'maybe' pictures, number 18³⁶³, the drawing of Jesus teaching the crowds, he tries to make sense of his illness and his faith by suggesting that it might have something to do with him because Jesus is teaching, and "it's like now he's like teaching me that I should always eat my vegetables" (Int1:84-85). He suggests that it is easier to do what you are supposed to do when you know why but doesn't seem to want to, or be able to, engage with anything else that Jesus said about good choices and behaviours (Int1:86-92).

When questioned about his understanding of holiness, he suggests that not only is it about faith in God but also 'self respect' (Int1:184-185). He refers once again to his illness, indicating that it is harder to be holy when you are suffering and even more so for children when they suffer (Int1:186-187, 191-193).

Church, prayer and Bible

Although MS states that Picture 7 'obviously' linked with God because it is a church, he did not put it in his 'yes' pile because "I can't really find anything else about what I have in a relationship though" (Int1:104-105). Again, there is a certain amount of ambivalence because when questioned he does say that he feels 'closer' to God in a church because "at church you're like there to worship and not do anything else and you can just pray whenever you want and just like, cos it's a church so you have time to pray to him and worship him" (Int1:107-110).

Twice MS indicates that although, as observed, his illness is overwhelming, he doesn't really talk to God about it (Int1:21, 103), elsewhere however he answers that he 'sometimes' does

³⁵⁹ Boat on a calm sea at sunset photographed by Carolyn Edwards

³⁶⁰ Bold typeface denotes words spoken by the researcher

³⁶¹ Dots are used to denote pauses, each one roughly representing a second

³⁶² Living on the Edge by Schim Schimmel Printed by Statics London

³⁶³ Online Bible

(Int1:153) and seems to indicate that this makes a difference "Ok, and do you talk to God when you get a bit worried? Sometimes. And what do you think God says back? Erm.... I think he says don't worry because usually when I am a bit worried about something like that, my teacher helps me out. So God sends someone to help you so that you don't feel worried anymore [nods]" (Int1:153-156).

MS's ambivalence also comes across in our discussions about the Bible. He says that he reads it in Sunday School (Int1:116-117) and his favourite Bible stories are Moses and Noah (Int1:120). He thinks that it might have some relevance to his life as indicated by his belief that Jesus might have told him to eat his vegetables to prevent his anemia he is unable to recall anything else that Jesus says (Int1:83-92) or recall any of the stories Jesus told (Int1:122-123).

Achievement, accomplishment and decision making

It is difficult to tell whether MS's general ambivalence is a result of his exhausting illness, or the confusion of suffering and related anxiety (Int1:62-63), or his general personality. The description from his parent's questionnaire would suggest that this is not his normal personality, and therefore I think we can assume that his illness has had a significant impact on his personality as well as worldview. He often seems unwilling unable to be definite and make a decision (Int1:81-82,95-96,125,135,150) but it would appear that before his illness he was capable "Well people at school call me the time king" (Int1:33) and although he describes being 'fussy' as a negative thing, it indicates that he definitely knew what he did or did not like (Int1:85-86).

11.9.3. Mel – Annotated Profile

Overview

Mel³⁶⁴ is a shy and slightly fearful child (Int2:225), but was an absolute delight to interview in that he was animated and generous in our conversations. For Mel, family and relationships are key and his faith reflects this. One of Mel's key strategies is 'remembering happy', particularly in Interview One (Int1:40).

He has a lots of hobbies, in one interview he came straight from a piano lesson, and he has tried to teach himself a number of things too. He talks a lot about school, and in Interview Three he shared a great deal about his fears and hopes of leaving primary school and heading to secondary school, particularly the number of rites of passage he was facing. He really enjoys going to church with his family, and has clearly learnt a lot from there.

Key Themes

Family

For Mel, family is very important for instance early on in Interview One he relates both Picture 32³⁶⁵ and Picture 40³⁶⁶ to love and family (Int1:36-37). This importance is not only emotional but also spiritual and he is able to articulate this connection. Mel has a strong relationship with his younger brother playing with him (Int1:50-53, Int2:385) on his own and with his Mum and Dad. He is able to use his brother as a spiritual inspiration. For instance in Interview One he relates Picture 42³⁶⁷ (which he says has something to do with his faith) to when his brother went out in the rain and raised his hands (Int1:34-35). He also refers to a photo his Mum took of him and his brother while they were on a walk "And it makes me feel like me and my brother have a good relationship" (Int1:74-75). Perhaps, his 'it makes me feel' is reference to the reality of any sibling relationship which has its ups and downs as earlier when asked whether is little brother is lovely or annoying he says "Erm, can be annoying, but not often. He's lovely now" (Int1:12).

His family do a lot of things together including eating home cooked food (Int1:57), taking walks (Int1:71-72), playing games (Int1:177-183), going on holiday (Int1:238-245, Int2:290) and day trips (Int1:307-309; Int2:110). Normally meals are taken in front of the TV (Int1:82-83) but Mel particularly likes it when they have guests, like at Christmas, and they eat at the table and chat (Int1:80-83) and this was one of the key things he was looking forward to about Christmas, was a big family meal (Int1:84-86). His account of the holiday in Interview One where they stay in a cottage is very prosaic, but paints a lovely picture of a family happy together.

Another example of the family working well together is the story Mel tells of the snowball fight (Int2:311-316). He describes the teams and some of the action but I think the key line is "all of us had a good time and it was nice to see us all enjoying ourselves" (Int2:314) as it shows how important being together is for this child. Then, his Dad accidentally gets snow in his little brother's eye. What is interesting is not only does Mel say that this "was upsetting to see" (Int2:315) but also that his Dad said sorry. Perhaps it is this closeness that is causing him to be so concerned about going away with the school "I am a bit nervous, because this is my first time away from home without Mum and Dad and my brother and everything and my guinea pigs, and I am just a bit nervous, cos what if I miss them half way through the trip?" (Int2:325-327), although he is actually looking forward to it "I'm quite excited about the River Dart trip as well because, well yeah, it's a new thing, and it's just different and I've never been away from home so it will be a new experience to see, but I'm still a bit nervous" (Int2:338-340).

³⁶⁴ This is the research name chosen by this child

³⁶⁵ Heart IV copyright Ian Winstanley 2005 The Art Group Limited printed by Ikea

³⁶⁶ 'kindness' google images

³⁶⁷ Toddler's Hands copyright J.N. Reichel – Getty Images printed by Ikea

This need to be with his family is reflected in his church attendance. They attend regularly on a Wednesday as a family, but when questioned, Mel was unsure whether he would go without them "I might, but I might not, because I don't really like walking on my own, I only really like walking from school back home on my own, but because I, we only go on Wednesdays, and because we go on Wednesday, its normally dark really, so I might not" (Int3:54-57).

Mel appears to have a warm and positive relationship with his Mother, which often includes gentle teasing. For instance he recounts a time when they were playing with dandelion clocks, and she was pretending to disagree with his time keeping (Int1:61-64), as time of happiness and this was the reason why he included Picture 35³⁶⁸ in his 'yes' pile. He also describes how his Mother uses his friends names when reading him stories, to make him laugh and how he used the same technique on his brother "and that was really fun" (Int2:192-199). In Interview Two he explains that he included 'Duckie'³⁶⁹ in his bricolage box because it did once belong to his Mum, "it makes me feel really comforted, and I feel really close to God"(Int1:10-11). Because of his other references to his family, love and belonging, it seems reasonable to assume that it is not only the physical comfort of Duckie, but the connection with his Mother that brings an emotional comfort too.

Mel's mum also has an influence over his behaviour, for instance in Interview Two when talking about saving up for his next lego set, he says that his Mum wants him to play with the lego he got for Christmas first (Int2:337). This demonstrates a sensibleness that perhaps is reflected in her comment that "you don't need to waste that [50p of his pocket money] on a charity" (Int3:116-118), although it seems important to him that when he did give indeed give the money, she thought that what he had done was nice (Int3:118-119). Mel has to do chores to get his pocket money (Int3:138-141). In Interview Three he says he likes to keep his room tidy to make it easier for his Mum (Int3:136-137) although on his questionnaire he indicated that he was ambiguous about this (PQMel).

Mel's Nan is also a strong influence on him, and there are two instances given when she buys him things (Int2:290-295; Int3:159-160). He doesn't take either event for granted but instead relates it to God's provision (Int2:294-296).

Friends

Mel likes making new friends (Int1:4) and has friends at church (Int1:43). In Interview One he talks about his best friend at school and describes what a lovely feeling it is to sit next to someone you like when you are both working really hard together (Int1:93-95). He was heartbroken when his friend left the school (Int1:95-102). This happened before his family started coming to church, so he was unable to talk to God about these feelings (Int1:103-104).

In his bricolage box was a Mr Man book – Mr Strong (Int2:200), which he uses to explore the nature of change and God's role in it (Int2:206-211). He spends some time exploring what 'strength' means and suggests that he is 'strong' in his thoughts although not "bossy and strong [...] in words" like other members of this class (Int2:213-215). He also believes that he is 'strong at friendship' because "pretty much everyone in my class is my friend because I'm very kind and tell the truth"(Int2:220-221). He explains how he tries to play with everyone during the course of the week, although he does have friends that ask him to play a lot, so he does tend to play with them more (Int2:221-223).

He recognises that his shyness and timidity (Int2:225) inhibits him standing up for himself if somebody is unkind or mean, but this means he has developed a strategy of just walking away and leaving the situation "to be sorted out another day" (Int2:226), even though he does not think this is always the best course of action because he feels "you should sort it out then

³⁶⁸ Lowenzahn (*Lontodon hispidus* L.) Foto Bruno Blum – printed by natur-verlag

³⁶⁹ A rather old looking soft toy duck

and then. [...] and then it would be sorted and you wouldn't have to worry about it" (Int2:227-228).

Mel is not convinced that his friends notice that he is a Christian (Int 3:15-16), although he has spoken about his faith at school once or twice (Int3:20-21). Given that he is by nature shy, it might therefore not be surprising that he is not confident about telling others about God, and worried that "there could be them people that might just be nasty to me because I'm religious to God" (Int3:185-186). What is interesting in this section of dialogue though, is that another key motive for not telling others about his faith is that "not everybody wants to be a Christian" (Int3:180) and he describes a girl at school who really didn't like God although she likes Christmas and Easter (Int3:181-184). He then goes on to say however that when he moves up to secondary school "it will be fine to tell others about God" (Int3:188). The implication from what he says is that this is because the school will be different, but perhaps this statement is more influenced by his belief that this is something he should be doing, and that when he is older he will have more confidence to do it.

Hobbies

Mel is a busy boy, with a range of hobbies and activities including playing the saxophone and the piano (Int2:94-95), which means he does not watch much television because he is too busy playing with lego or reading (Int1:8-9). He does a variety of activities with his family (like playing games – Int1:176-190), but he particularly likes going to the woods with his family, and making dens with his brother (Int1:75-77).

His favourite films are the Night at the Museum One and Two because "I like the way that it is making a museum more fun" (Int1:199) implying that he finds visiting museums boring. He tries to acquire new skills and does magic every now and then (Int2:240).

He has a lot of cuddly toys (Int1:206) and Duckie, a slightly worn and well loved soft toy duck, is one of his most special items in his bricolage box (Int2:375-376). He also has a guinea pig that he looks after, and the family are about to get a dog (Int1:279). What he really wants is a pug (Int2:281) but he does have four pug toys and a pug mug to compensate (Int2:287).

He enjoys making things and a couple of items in his bricolage box were things that he had made as part of the craft time at church (Int2:75-76,258-259). Every Christmas (not sure what age he was when he started) Mel creates a quiz book for the family, putting a lot of effort into creating it related to things they have done as a family throughout the year (Int2:100-117).

He reads and even has a Kindle (Int2:189), and indeed three of his bricolage items were books. His "most favourite book in the world" is Diary of a Minecraft Zombie (Int2:160-162) and he now has all six books in the series, which he explains the plot of and even attempts some theological reflection on (Int2:184-187). What is interesting is how he relates reading a book that he enjoys and is familiar with, even though the content is slightly unsavoury, with feeling close to God "it is the first book I got, and I started reading it and it made me feel all nice and warm inside and really close to God, and when I started using it in my work I kept thinking back to the time I felt close to God and nice, and yeah, that made me feel really happy" (Int2:198-191).

He has a twig collection (Int2:382). What is extraordinary is how he relates this to his faith. In Interview One he says that although he likes playing in the woods, and he knows God is near, he doesn't think he is really close (Int1:78-79) then in Interview Two he says "I almost feel like when I'm in a forest I'm a very long way from God, cos the leaves are like a force field, and you are in your own world, and I feel like when that first twig dropped off that tree, I picked that up, and I almost feel like, I am revealing the way to God and letting God come closer to me, when I'm picking up twigs that have fell off trees, it's almost like making God being able to come through the trees closer to me" (Int2:390-394).

Bible

Mel enjoys engaging with the Bible at Church particularly through 'Bible Detectives' (Int1:41-42,45). He has a Bible at home which he tries to read once a week (Int1:46-4; Int2:49-50). He believes that the Bible is true "because if it wasn't true then how would there be earth here" (Int1:315-318).

Whilst he was really happy reading his children's Bible, Mel struggles reading the adult Bible (Int2:66-67; Int3:40-42). The subsequent dialogue does rather indicate that he thinks that reading the Bible is important and that he should read this Bible more (Int2:70-74). He has not seen any of the online resources (Int1:49) neither does he appear to have anything that helps him work through the Bible like Bible-reading notes "I just read it, I just read all the verses, and chapters and gospels, I just read through it" (Int3:45).

Mel's favourite Bible story is Daniel and the lion's den (Int1:30; Int2:55). It is his favourite not only because God did a miracle but also because it has "got a moral in it. Justice was served" (Int1:322). In a couple of places Mel uses biblical knowledge to help with his theological reflection or to make sense of something. For instance in Interview One he tries to make sense of an abstract picture (Picture 34³⁷⁰) by using his knowledge of the creation account "it makes me feel like God is has just created it and it is all resting" (Int1:126-134). Interestingly shortly after this he refers once again to God's creation when looking at Picture 2³⁷¹, but veers away from the biblical narrative "because God created the earth, we transformed from monkeys we evolution from monkeys" (Int1:151-152).

Picture 27³⁷² does not make it to Mel's yes pile because it doesn't really remind him of anything (a common refrain from Mel) he does however relate the image of the clouds and sun breaking through with the incarnation, ascension and the second coming, once again using biblical knowledge to make sense of something, but in this case not being able to relate it to his own experience (Int1:166-170).

Church and Belonging

Mel enjoys going to church (PQMel, Int1:40; Int2:75-77; Int3:273-280). He chose several pictures in Interview One because they reminded him of church, and included a picture of the church he attends in his bricolage. I like to go to church a lot, it's not a thing like Mum drags me to, you have to go to church, and you're bored. It's one of them things I actually look forward to because get to do fun stuff at church basically get to make things like [...] and its really fun" (Int2:273-276). The whole family go to a family service every Wednesday (Int2:279-280, int3:52) and, according to Mel, attend regularly (Int3:48-50). He believes that going to church "shows the relationship between me and God" (Int3:13-14).

Inclusion and belonging is a strong theme in Mel's narrative. In the discussion about Picture 13 he talks about a time at school where he and his best friend were working hard together and what a lovely feeling it was when they were sharing ideas with others, how it felt to be included (Int1:92-98). He describes a similar sensation when talking about corporate worship in church in Interview Three "when we worship God in church as one big group and it feels like we are all thanking God for reasons, and we're just sort of like a big community, and I really like that feeling that we're all following God, and we're all erm, disciples, and we're all following God and that feeling just makes me quite happy" (Int3:109-113). In two of the interviews he talks about his own, and his brother's, baptisms (Int1:105, 110-114; Int2:18-20,380). He includes his baptism candle in his bricolage box because "it's quite a significant thing about my life" and it seems to remind him that he is part of God's community.

³⁷⁰ Living on the Edge by Schim Schimmel Printed by Statics London

³⁷¹ Orangutan by Tim Flach/Getty Images (Oxfam card)

³⁷² God are you really there? Google Images

Nature of God

Mel believes that "God made the earth at the start of time [...] it was actually made in seven days" (Int1:69-70), and although God's creation is not a strong theme in his dialogue he does mention it a couple of times (Int1:151-152), and does suggest that God's creation is a wonderful idea (Int1:133-134, 160-162). He didn't think Picture 36³⁷³ had anything to do with God because "it looks like something that has been completely made up" (Int1:311), the same was true of Picture 5³⁷⁴ (Int1:331).

He appears to have a sense of God's presence related to spatial dimensions. For him the trees get in the way of feeling God's closeness in the woods (Int2:390) but churches have high ceilings because "it is almost like God coming down to you, or is in the room with you" (Int1: 108-109). He also feels closer to God at the beach than in the woods, because in woods it "almost feels like he's [God] on the outside of the trees" and the beach is open and therefore God is accessible (Int1:213-216).

In Interview One Mel chose Picture 26 because it is close to what he pictures when he thinks of Jesus (Int1:38-39). Mel was unsure about Picture 29³⁷⁵ because although it did not remind him of anything, he thought perhaps he should include it because it looks like the night that Jesus was born in a barn or stable (Int1:235-236). He related his excitement to Christmas to Advent and the return of Jesus, perhaps the subject of recent teaching at church, but perhaps what is more interesting through is that he linked this with Jesus watching over us (Int1:88).

When we were talking about Picture 20³⁷⁶ and the feelings of happiness and joy that come from spinning round and round in the playground, Mel related this to how God plans everything, and plans for us to have fun, and that the knowledge of this makes him happy (Int1:50-55). He believes that God cares for him specifically (Int3:106-108) but also provides food for 'us' to keep 'us' alive (Int1:59-60). Mel cannot tell the time properly, something that he mentioned in Interview Two, and described with some anxiety in Interview Three. He is however able to use this to identify that these kind of things do not matter to God "Erm, I don't think he would really care whether I could tell the time or I couldn't tell the time" and that he can rely on God to help him change things (Int2:145-148). His reflections on this and God's provision indicate that he has a sense of God's unconditional love and that God is involved in the ordinary every day things (Int2:250) and will help him as he faces everyday challenges (Int2:317-318).

This understanding of God's providence is reflected in his belief that God has given him abilities and talents as well as specific things and events. For instance when talking about learning in Interview one he concludes "it was gifted that I love learning" (Int1:124-125) and in Interview Two he suggests that God has chosen the position of vice head boy for him because he thinks he is suited for it (Int2:34-36). It appears to be this belief that gives him some of the confidence to do it that he is naturally lacking "And do you think God helps you to be vice head boy? Yes I do, cos I had once, where I had to talk a bit in class about stuff that we're going to be doing later on in the school and I'm not a person that likes to talk in front of people, I'm quite shy at school, and when I did do it, I was actually quite brave and I stood up and I did it fine" (Int2:40-44). Interestingly, Mel seems to think that you cannot test and stretch God's ability to change you in that although he can help him to learn how to tell the time (Int2:148-149) asking him to give you super powers is not a good idea (Int2:206-211).

Although Mel thinks that God can and does save people, and that this can be in an incredible way like God saving Daniel from the lions (Int1:320-324; Int2:55-58) and the ravens feeding Elijah (Int2:84-85), he doesn't however believe that having a faith means that life is easy.

³⁷³ *Midsummer Eve* by Edwards Robert Hughes Beechwood Publications

³⁷⁴ *Big Bear, Little Bear* by Kristiana Parn (Oxfam card)

³⁷⁵ *Magic of the plains* by Schim Schimmel printed by Statics London

³⁷⁶ *Swings in the park*, photo sent by Amy Harbon, a former student in response to question about what connects you with God

Picture 6 of a climber on a particularly remote rock-face reminds him of a poster about trying on the wall at school. He thinks this relates to his friendship with God because "Well, if we try, I think he will try to help us, if we try, but if we don't try he won't try to help us as much" (Int1:230-231). He refers to this theme again in Interview Two. He believes that God guides him to make wise choices (Int1:299-301) and In Interview Three he describes how God helps him to make good choices in terms of a battle between good and evil, the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other ³⁷⁷(Int3:165-169). This sense of the need to make good choices and the need to try is however balanced with his understanding of God's mercy "everybody someday will do something naughty and they will, and God will forgive us for that" (Int3:173-174).

Although Mel wasn't sure about including Picture 23³⁷⁸ in his 'Yes' pile, when we discussed it, he interpreted it with a strong theme of justice and inclusion, suggesting that the owl on the floor was deliberately being left out by the others, and that those in the tree were being "very unkind and rude, and disgraceful" and that "Jesus and God wouldn't be very happy with what they are seeing" (Int1:256-258). This sense of God's justice is also explored in his discussion about Daniel and the lion's den (Int1:320-324). This scenario reflects his own sense of the importance of belonging and how he feels he gets that from God. It also may reflect his of being left out and bullied himself. What is also interesting is that he identifies God and Jesus as two separate entities.

Mel seemed to have a clear understanding of the metaphor of God as the light of the world. He included his baptism candle not only because it reminded him of a significant event, and his 'membership' of the church family but also because "like in the Bible it says God is the light, or the light of the world" (Int2:24). When questioned further on what this meant he appeared to make reference to the passage in Isaiah by suggesting that God leads people from doing bad things to doing good things, which means being good and doing what God says (Int2:26-28).

Thinking, worrying and making choices

Mel enjoys being at school (PQMel) and learning (Int1:124) most of the time (Int1:121-122) and is clearly conscientious³⁷⁹. He particularly likes activities where he has to work things out (Int1:41-43,122-123; Int2:276-277) and although he is better at literacy, he is also reasonably good at maths (Int2:140-144; Int2:17-219). The amount of time and effort he puts into creating his quiz book every Christmas is evidence of this (Int2:100-118). When discussing his favourite book, he suggests that not only has this been entertaining, it has also had an impact on his vocabulary as he has used words that he has read in his writing at school (Int2:162-167). He thinks that he is 'strong' in his thoughts in that when he thinks about something and writes it down "I don't tend to think 'oh no, that's wrong' I'm not wobbly about thinking about work, I feel like I've got it and I understand it (Int2:215-217).

In Interview Two he puts his first watch in the bricolage box because "it's something I really struggle with and I'd like God to help me with it"(Int2:122). This demonstrates that not only does he listen to instructions³⁸⁰ but that he is able to talk about his feelings and recognises the ups and downs of faith. He goes on to describe his frustration that his inability to tell the time well could have an impact on his performance in his SATS tests (Int2:128-148), and whether he will be in the right place at the right time on the River Dart trip (Int2:148-161). He wonders "If God helps then I might be able to tell the time a bit more" (Int:148-149). It is clear that he has spent some time thinking this through and worrying about what the impact could be, particularly when he goes away with the school (Int2:149-161).

³⁷⁷ Although Mel says that he doesn't like Disney, this notion is one that appears in Disney cartoons and probably in a number of other cartoons

³⁷⁸ Owl Nesting by Maddy McClellan (Oxfam card)

³⁷⁹ He is vice head boy and on the pupil parliament (Int2:32-34) he does chores for his pocket money (Int3:137-138) and is saving money to buy his next lego set (Int2:334)

³⁸⁰ See the instructions for the bricolage activity

He is a details person³⁸¹ and thinks things through, even down to how he shares his play time fairly amongst his friends (Int2:221-222). Sometimes he sits on the fence (Int1:147-148) but I think this is because he is weighing things up. For instance when talking about monopoly he seems to indicate a belief that impatience and imprudence could be costly³⁸² (Int1:185-186); and when thinking about whether he would help a stranger he immediately refers to assessing the risk (Int3:144-146). He does then go on to give an account of when an old man in the queue in front of him inadvertently drops a pound coin. He goes in to great detail about the internal battle of whether to pick the coin up and keep it or give it back to the old man (Int:147-161). He demonstrates that he really has to think through the choice to do the right thing, because he really wanted to keep the money to buy a lego mini-figure, but he uses empathy (Int3:152) and logic to do what is right "that would have been unkind and it would be stealing" (Int3:150), and his own feelings of wanting to avoid guilt and feel nice (Int3:162-165), but is also very grateful when his Nan affirms his righteousness by giving him a pound afterwards.

Mel often uses his imagination to come up with creative possibilities (Int2:202-206) like when we are talking about the Night at the Museum films and what it would feel like if his own cuddly toys came alive at night (Int1:203-206). He uses logic and pragmatism to help him make sense of the world and overcome his fears and potential disappointments (Int2:282-283; Int3:186-190). For instance when talking about the imminent transition to secondary school he says "it's just another school to go to basically. It's basically like going from the infant school to the junior school, it's just a more higher school" (Int2:267-268) even though later on in the Interview he admits that he is nervous about it (Int2:263,318-319).

He has a strong sense of right and wrong and an understanding that you need to do what your parents say (Int1:303-304; Int2:186-187), although I do wonder whether this is also tied up with his natural risk aversion. There are consequences to making wrong choices including going to prison, although he doesn't think anyone in his family will ever go to court or prison (Int1:263-268). He readily describes the cheating in his zombie books and seems rather relieved that in book two the zombie gets his comeuppance "it's basically got a bit of a moral in that, that you shouldn't cheat, otherwise you will get found out and you will get told off" (Int2:186-187).

When talking about telling the truth in Interview Three, he suggests that it is important so that people trust you, but also describes feeling guilty when he has not told the truth (Int3:83-89). His motivation to tell the truth is however also influenced by knowledge that you are likely to get a lighter punishment if you immediately tell the truth about a misdemeanour, rather than lie and compound the crime (Int3:90-91). He also does not want to appear rude. For instance when discussing Picture 24 although he has "a little bit of curiosity" he thinks he tends not to explore "because it is a bit rude [...] it is not your business" (Int1:290-292). This need to not appear rude, or perhaps more importantly not be hurtful appears to override the need to tell the truth, as when asked what he would say to his mum if she was wearing an outfit that made her look awful, he said "I probably wouldn't want to make her feel bad about how she looks and [nervous laugh] it would be a bit unkind of [to] her to say 'that looks terrible, I don't like that' [...] it might like make her really upset [...] I might say 'that look's good' [voice is higher pitch] or something like that" (Int3:91-99). Relationship overrules rules.

Faith, worship and prayer

Mel and his family have not been Christians for all that long, it was difficult to ascertain how long, but he does remember instances before his friendship with God. When asked whether he talked to God about his feelings about his best friend leaving primary school he says "I wasn't really thinking about God at that time, I didn't really know what God was really, who God was" (Int1:103-104). In Interview Two he indicates that he thinks that having faith (being light) mean "be good and behave and obey God and do as he says" and that sometimes

³⁸¹ For instance the level of careful detail he puts into creating his annual Christmas quiz book (Int2:100-118)

³⁸² Earlier on he talks about how you need to use money wisely (Int1:180-181)

this is easy and sometimes it is hard (Int2:27-30). This is reflected not only in his sense of purpose as vice head boy (Int2:35) but also in the way he thinks about doing what is fair and right (Int2:37-38). In Interview Three he puts 'not doing things wrong things', and 'doing the right thing' in the pile denoting nothing to do with his own friendship with God. In the discussion about this, his emphasis was on the inevitability of sin, and the nature of God's mercy (Int3:170-179). Perhaps this is because he sees himself in relationship with God, rather than engaged in what Clark and Powell describe as a 'sin management' process.

When discussing his favourite Bible story, Daniel and the Lion's Den, he seemed pretty convinced that he would make the same choice as Daniel, "I probably would keep praying cos God is my God and I should pray pretty much every day and if someone makes a rule to stop praying aloud, why should I stop believing in my religion, when I could keep doing what I'm supposed to be doing." (Int2:61-63). Although this fervour is in contrast to his attitude in Interview Three about telling others about God in which he demonstrates a great deal of reticence (Int3:184-190).

As well as going to church very regularly and enjoying corporate worship (Int3:110-113) Mel engages in worship of God at least once or twice a week on his own at home (Int3:103). This seems to be mainly triggered by gratefulness for God's providence rather than a deep understanding of who God is (Int3:101,105-108). He does seem to have an active prayer life, believing that praying shows you are a Christian (Int3:13-14) and is something that he engages in at least once a day (Int3:58). Sometimes he prays with others at church, and sometimes with his Mum but "not as often as I pray on my own in my head" (Int3:77-78). Although he suggests that sometimes he doesn't know how to use the right words (Int3:60,69-76), he does find it "fairly easy to tell God about it, and stuff" (Int3:60-61) and connect with God in a variety of situations like: when he is feeling nervous or needs courage (Int1:294-297; Int2:41-46,265-6); or when he needs advice (Int1:209-301). Sometimes he finds it hard to stay focused in prayer (Int3:66-67). He finds tools helpful like the baptism candle and the prayer glitter bottle he made a church (Int3:62-63). He says he has had some prayers answered, and he was amazed by it, but he couldn't give an example (Int3:79-82).

When asked what holiness means, Mel directly attributed this to God suggesting that it is better than greatness (Int1:338-339). He believes that both children and adults can be holy if they choose to be kind and nice to people, give to charity and look after the planet (Int1:341-351). It is interesting how in Interview Two he puts all these things together when he describes how his Nan bought him the soft pug toy that he really wanted in relation to God's providence and his Nan's kindness (Int2:290-299). In Interview Three he talks a lot about his own 'giving and sharing' not only money to charity or the homeless but also help to others at school (Int3:114-130). He likes helping others and believes that 'helping others' comes naturally to him (Int3:131-132) and again, he is able to give examples of this (Int3:133-141) even when it was hard³⁸³.

Feelings and feeling close to God

Mel clearly feels things strongly, and is able to articulate this. For instance in Interview Two he spends some time sharing about the things he is both nervous and excited about coming up in his final year at school (Int2:317-352), and demonstrates empathy in the account of his brother getting hurt in the family snowball fight (Int2:315). In Interview One, he describes the positive feelings associated with working well with his best friend at school and then the 'heartbreak' of him leaving to go to another school (Int1:92-102).

One of the predominant strategies Mel used in Interview One was 'remembering happy' and somehow making a connection between a happy memory and his relationship with God (Int1:45,50-55). Conversely if the picture did not evoke any memories then he decided that it didn't really have anything to do with his faith (Int1:139-140,144,150,153,171,176).

³⁸³ See the dilemma discussed elsewhere about the old man's pound coin (Int3:147-165)

There seems to be a strong correlation between feeling happy and feeling close to God (Int1:50-55,64-65; Int2:364-365; Int3:105-113) and feeling comfort and feeling close to God (Int2:10,189-190,376-378). For instance Picture 12 reminds him of eating meals at home with his family which is why it is in his 'yes' pile (Int1:57-59). Although he later indicates that he connects with God when he is nervous or unhappy about something too (Int2:369). For instance in Interview Two he describes his struggles with telling the time and how he wants God to help him with it (Int2:120-123) and he says that he thinks God "is more with me when I'm nervous, cos he's trying to help me with conquering over the things that I'm a bit nervous about and he will be always with me when I'm nervous. But when I'm excited I think he might lean back a bit and rest from me and go to somebody else" (Int2:354-358).

Perseverance, confidence and risk

Mel appears to be quite a cautious and risk averse child (Int1:289), although there are several instances across all three interviews where Mel describes persevering and overcoming (Int2:41-44). In Interview One he links Picture 9 with his faith, mainly because it reminds him of being happy in the school playground. He does however also talk about how it reminds him of how he overcame his fear of the monkey bars (Int1:114-119)

He enjoys a sense of achievement (Int1:184) and perhaps this is why he practices something new until he is able to feel that accomplishment (Int2:88-98). He even states "in my eyes one of the things that God expects us to do is persevere and keep practicing" (Int2:93-94) and perhaps this is why his anxiety about telling the time is heightened, (Int2:119-138) because he has been persevering and nothing has changed.

11.9.4. Star Annotated Profile

Overview

Star³⁸⁴ could best be described as a fairy, in fact one of her Interviews was carried out with her in a fairy costume. She chose her research name “because they’re really bright and they guided the kings...³⁸⁵ and I really like them cos they’re pretty” (Int2:71-73). Interview Three was not particularly successful in that she was very restless and moved around the room a lot, eating an apple, so what she said was not always clear.

She has an extensive collection of Beanies – 17 in total which she started collecting when she was five. She enjoys cuddling them, taking them places and pretending to teach them (Int2:30-35). Playing is one of Star’s favourite activities (Questionnaire???) and she talks about instances where she resents Christian faith disciplines, like going to church, because they get in the way of play (Int3:93-94).

She enjoys going to Sunday School but mainly because she gets to do fun things (Int3:94) and eat biscuits and sweets (Int2:64-66). She thinks it is ok being a Christian (Int2:176). She says that her faith is strong (Int3:190), and in Interview Two when pressed, doesn’t think she will ever stop being a friend of God (Int2: 144-145).

Key themes

Family and friends

Star’s family normally eat around the table, although occasionally they eat their tea in the lounge in front of Strictly (Int1:200-201). Interestingly though she chooses not to include Picture 8, a photo of an empty dining table similar to the one we were sat at for the interview, because “it doesn’t look very peaceful, and it doesn’t look like lots of people like it, so they’ve leff” (Int1:195-196). Her sister refers to the difficulty of when Star’s friends come to tea and don’t abide by the family rules, so it appears that the table is a place of training which offers Star both discomfort and comfort.

Her parents make her walk to church (Int1:287-288, Int2:45), and prior to Interview One she had walked to and from the cinema (Int1:121-122). She does not enjoy walking, mainly, because she gets cold, although she does enjoy outdoor and sometimes risky physical activity like going on the swing and jumping off, which she enthusiastically re-enacts in Interview One (Int1:232-235) and skateboarding (Int3:72-75).

She is ambiguous about school (Int1:102) but especially enjoys play time (Questionnaire?). The family goes to see films, but she is not particularly enamored with the Disney princesses, preferring instead the films that help her engage in more active and creative play (Int1:163-165). In terms of hobbies, she has two rabbits, although the whole family is involved in looking after them (Int1:64-65). She gets pocket money, although she doesn’t think it is much (Int3:81-82). Her Dad does rock climbing (Int1:244) and it would appear that this is also a family activity.

Her parents were brought up as Christians (Int2:10) and she includes two items from their past in her box – her Dad’s cross (Int2:10) and her Mum’s Bible (Int2:126-134). They have a strong influence on Star’s Christian activities, with both of them reading the Bible and praying with her at bed time (Int2:17) from a very young age (Int2:119-124). In fact her Mum was the one that suggested putting The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe in her box (Int2:147). When she is discussing making wise choices, it would therefore appear that her family does have a strong influence on her decisions, despite her statements that they don’t (Int3:111-112,144-145,148).

My impression is that she has a positive and close relationship with her sister who does appear to hold the balance of power as eldest sibling – for instance in Interview 2 she has

³⁸⁴ This is the research name chosen by this child

³⁸⁵ Dots denote a pause, roughly one second per dot

included a star in her box, but says that her sister's star is bigger and better (Int2:67), but she is quite adept at subversive attention seeking (see Storm's Interview).

She has a close relationship with her cousin (it is unclear which side of the family) sharing a 'best friends' necklace with her (Int 2:88-93).

She appears to have friends at church, because they distract her from worship (Int2:161). She is compassionate, suggesting that if someone fell over at school she would 'try and make them feel better' (Int3:30). She finds it easier to help her friends than strangers (Int3:31) and she thinks that they do have an influence on her making wise choices (Int3:163). It is important for Star to know that other people share her faith (Int1:131, 135-136).

Nature of God

The nature of God is the subject that Star appears to speak about the most. She makes a number of references to the fact that God made everything and everyone particularly in reference to pictures of nature (Int1:16-17,19,20-21,30-31,41,43-44,51-53,60,70-72,76,87-88,114-116,119,176-177,195,218,227-228,264,266,271, Int2:174-175) "he helped make it grow and he made sure that everything was in the right spot" (Int1:77) and including brightness (Int1:260) and electricity (Int1:42) in his creational prowess. Her belief in God's presence in the creative process stretches into all sorts of creativity, including films, so that she says that she enjoys watching the Lego film because it helps her think about what she could make with her Lego and 'seeing what God created' (Int1:165). Although there is a limit, for instance: Picture 21, although it is a church, holds no relation to God because "it just looks like things that people have made and it doesn't look very pretty, it's just a bit boring" (Int1:145-146)

She believes that God lives in the sky (Int1:18,209) and is stimulated by the night sky to "think about the angels, God and ... how other people don't have light and might not be able to see" (Int1:55-56)

She chose to put Picture 42³⁸⁶ in her yes pile because "it's like raising hands and God likes raises his hands above the earth" (Int1:24-25) and believes that God loves everything (Int1:184,Int2:77) displaying a sense not only of God's omnipotence but also his benevolence stating that "God loves the world, and he loves everyone, every person, even bad people" (Int1:90-91, Int2:98) even though this might not be easy to understand (Int1:93-94,286-287,Int2:87-88). This means that he cares and is always watching over us and making sure we are safe (Int1:36-37,269) even keeping an eye on her rabbits for her (Int1:64-65) and making sure wild animals are safe (Int1:82-83). She illustrates her belief in this character of God with her inclusion of a love heart that she has made in her bricolage box (Int2:95-100) which she says demonstrates not only her belief that God made us "if God didn't make the world I wouldn't be alive right now" but also that "God is really good and he puts smiles on our faces".

She thinks that God can control how other people behave (Int1:112-113) and can help people (Int1:100-101,160,207) and wants to keep everyone happy (Int1:157,169-170,230) and peaceful (Int1:135-137,154-155,196,212) which is why she didn't choose Picture 10 – a stormy sea (Int1:135-137) or Picture 8 (Int1:195-196) or the knot in Picture 41 "I don't think this is related to God because God tries make all your problems loose and this is a knot that won't break and that won't make it really loose, and that's not related to God" (Int1:140-141) . God likes everyone to be safe (Int1:241) and people not to be scared (Int1:97,222) and I think this is why she asserts in Interview Two that there is a lot of hope in the world because "God is there to look after us" (Int2:83). In Interview Three this care extends to a requirement that we care for others (Int3:34-36).

She understands that Jesus is God's son (Int2:60) and thinks he is brilliant (Int1:29). She thinks that he has got "brown hair curls and he's quite young and he's got a smiley face" (Int3:188-189). Jesus taught people to be brave not scared (Int1:95-97) and sacrificed his life for us

³⁸⁶ Toddler's Hands copyright J.N. Reichel – Getty Images printed by Ikea

(Int1:284) by dying on the cross – one of the reasons why she included a jewelry cross and a palm cross in her bricolage box (Int2:11,20-22). When asked what she feels when she thinks about this, she responded that it makes her both sad because Jesus died, and happy because “he saved millions of people cos otherwise millions of people would have died if he had wanted to stay alive” (Int2:28-30). She later refers to this feeling of sadness when discussing her inclusion of the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe in her bricolage box, but it is unclear whether she had worked out the allegory of Aslan herself, and appears more likely that this was learned from her mother (Int2:146-154).

When asked in Interview Three, she says she has never heard God described as the trinity, although she had heard of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and believed that she prayed to all of them because “It’s all the same God” (Int3:178-187)

Admittedly Interview Two was very close to Christmas, but she was very conversant with the Christmas biblical narrative, and that Jesus’ birth was special (Int2:70-72).

Bible and Prayer

Star first mentions prayer in a discussion about her frustrations with other people being naughty in the line at school. She is asked whether she thinks about God at all at these points, and she says that she tells God “I really want him to help everyone else not be silly. Because I really want to do fun things” (Int1:111-113). It would appear from this that she sees God as a genie figure, that can magic things ok, but some of her later responses make this less clear. She prays when she feels nervous, asking God to make everything ok (Int1:246,269) but also describes how when her father is climbing and she is scared for him, she doesn’t move herself because “I don’t want to move because I’m going to shake the earth and make him fall” (Int1:247). This reflects her assertion later in the Interview that “your prayers don’t come true” (Int1:270) but also conflicts with her belief that God is always watch over us and caring for us (Int1:36-37). In Interview Two, she seems able to readily believe that it was prayer that saved Daniel (Int2:115-117 and she recalls an incident where her cousin prayed for wind to fly there kite and it came (Int2:79-80). What is also interesting about this anecdote is that she wishes that she had thought of praying and seems to really regret that she hadn’t done so with a reiteration “I couldn’t think of it, I didn’t think of it” (Int2:80).

She prays in bed regularly (presumably this is part of the Bible reading bed time activity with her parents) but she also prays when she is frightened. When she is responding to the question about why she thinks prayer is easy she indicates that for her, prayer has a more conversational rather than formal nature (Int3:39-41) she later suggests that her prayer life is completely up to her in that she decides whether she prays or not (Int3:169)

When talking about her Bible she says that she thinks it helps her focus more on other people than on herself which she believes is what God wants (Int1:189-190). What is interesting is that in discussing Picture 17, she appears not to have realised that it is a picture of the Bible. The reason that she says that it has nothing to do with her friendship with God is because the pages are thin and to her represent “tearing something apart that you love”. Clearly there is a dichotomy going on here.

Star includes a book of Bible stories and prayers in her bricolage book which she says she usually reads at bed time with her Mum or Dad (Int2:13-19) and a ‘VeggieTales’ DVD because ‘it tells you stories all about God’ and ‘when you watch one with the actual people it’s a little bit boring... and it’s a lot funnier and it’s like for children to learn about God’ (Int2:102-105). In Interview Three she re-affirms her opinion that she thinks ‘reading the Bible’ is easy (Int1:189) and intimates that she does do this on her own sometimes when no one else is around (Int3:16-19). When talking about Jesus however she was unable to recall any of the stories that he told (Int1:95-99) although she was conversant with the Christmas narrative (Int2:50-54) and when talking about the Veggie tales she says her favourite stories are Esther and Daniel (Int2:107-108). The Bible is clearly part of her regular life though as in Interview One she says that she reads it to her ‘Beanie Boos’ (Int2:37) and she includes her Mother’s childhood Bible because it reminds her that other people love God (Int2:130-131).

She thinks that holiness is related to praying (Int1:277), and that it is easier for grown-ups to be holy because they “understand more and children find it a bit boring” (Int1:282-283). She also thinks this is because they don’t understand what it is that God has done for them (Int1:285-287).

Imagination and concrete thinking

Star has a vivid imagination and uses it to envisage her relationship with God. When discussing Picture 9 which is a photo of a school playground she says she believes that God is there with her in the playground because “God’s always watching over you... it’s like he’s got loads and loads and [sic] eyes, cos really he’s looking” (Int1:36-37). She is able to use nature to aid her imagination or possibly be a springboard for it, in that looking at the night sky causes her to think about angels, and how other people might not be able to see (Int1:55-56). When looking at Picture 4 which is of a staircase winding up to the sky, she uses her imagination to try to explain her initial positive reaction to the picture. Suggesting that God is in the sky (Int1:123-124) and that therefore it might be a nice place to visit. As she starts to try to concretise this notion though she brings in other ideas she has of heaven – it is the place where people go when they die – and decides that she “might see lots of kind, dead people and erm well basically” which means she would probably go back down the staircase again (Int1:129-130).

There are times however, where her imagination lets her down. For instance she interprets Picture 16 as being of God because of the brightness, but is stumped by her concrete thinking about the actual manufacture of the book (Int1:260-261). When faced with a picture that looks very much like the kitchen diner that she was being interviewed in, Star sighs (Int1:195). She feels that she cannot relate this to her friendship with God because the photo is devoid of people and apparent care “there’s no one there looking after the house” (Int1:199). It is interesting that with a more concrete picture she is less able to take a flight of fancy than with the more abstract ones. The same is true of Picture 22 – the feather. She wants to believe that it has something to do with God because it is in the sky and God is in the sky (Int1:209) but she can’t quite make the leap from the concrete image to what it might represent. This could be because of what Piaget describes as the concrete stage of thinking. In Interview 3 our discussion about helping people in the playground is concretised by the plaster on her own knee, which I suspect was one of the sources of the notion that it was important, and easy to help others (Int3:25-30).

Her imagination often takes her very quickly to death as being the outcome of various scenarios (Int1:125-126). For instance when we are discussing how it is important to help others. Her outcome if we don’t is that “ people will die” (Int3:34). She refers to God’s power over life and death in Interview 1 (Int1:285-286) and twice in Interview 2, firstly when discussing the palm cross and secondly when she is explaining the heart that she has made (Int2:25-27, 95-96). Elsewhere, however she is able to make her imagination work for her. For instance, when her Dad is rock climbing, and she is frightened for him, she imagines that she can put an invisible blanket underneath him to catch him if he should fall (Int1:245-252). She is able to understand the allegoric nature of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and feels sad, not only because of what happens to Aslan, but also to how it reminds her that Jesus died too (Int2:150-154).

Creativity and Beauty

Beauty is a strong theme in Star’s interviews. Several times she relates God and beauty suggesting that not only is what God makes beautiful, but God likes things to be beautiful (Int1:123-124,143,155-156,175-177, 212) This means that she often dismisses things as having no relation to God because she does not consider them beautiful (Int1:217-219). For instance when discussing Picture 21 – the bare church – despite the fact that she identifies the cross in the picture as being to do with Jesus’ death, she says “I don’t think this one’s related to God because it’s like just things that people have made and it doesn’t look very pretty, it’s just a bit boring” (Int1:145-148).

She believes that God gives people creativity, but is not convinced that 'made up things' have much to do with him (Int1:160-161). She does however like making things (Int2:100) and uses her own creativity for items she puts in her bricolage box (Int2:94-95,74-75).

Choices

When asked whether she would venture through the open door in Picture 24, she thinks she might but demonstrates empathy, by suggesting she wouldn't want others to have to search for her (Int1:172), and moderate fear of disobeying (Int1:171) and the unknown (Int1:173).

Her choices are sometimes both passionately and pragmatically made. For instance, when discussing who she supported in Strictly, when her favourite Daisy, was voted off, she moved her allegiance several times, but is eloquent about why Daisy was her favourite (Int1:203-207).

Star seemingly unwittingly demonstrates how her faith affects her decision making. She had already mentioned that she doesn't like walking to church, but when we were discussing her beanies she said that she tells them things about God and takes them to church (Int2:37). What is significant is that she always takes two even though she hates carrying them on the walk because there might be " a baby who starts crying and I have to give it to them and they always cuddle it and cheer up" (Int2:39-40).

She has taken notice of the essence of quite a few Bible stories, so that, although she was unable to give too many details about the story of Esther for instance, she is able to identify that she is kind and brave (Int2:107-109) (although she does not identify her as a role model (Int2:111)). In her account of the Daniel narrative she indicates that she thinks that what Daniel did was the right thing, and that God answers prayers (Int2:111-118).

She has a friend in her class who also goes to church, but was unable to identify what made them different to their class mates apart from the fact that they talked about church (Int2:172). She appears to think that the lack of belief in God from her other classmates is naive, and that it is ok being a Christian as she doesn't get teased (Int2:174-176). She does, however, seem to not be confident about telling others about her faith saying "Well sometimes it's quite awkward" (Int3:97). Her subsequent comments suggest, however, that this is more to do with how to segue a conversation about God into other conversations whilst playing, etc. On the surface, this feels like a perfectly natural issue, but I wonder too, if this is an indication that she is separating the sacred from the secular, in a way that she doesn't in other areas of her life.

At the beginning of Interview Three, she demonstrates a desire to get things right and understand the process fully before she starts (Int3:1-10), although there is no such hesitancy with the pictures in Interview One. She is fascinated with the icons for the matrix before the explanation (Int3:115) but asks for reassurance for the process she is undertaking several times as she illustrates who is influencing her choices (Int3:130-141).

She thinks that helping people is important and really easy (Int3:25). Her reasoning is that if people don't help others then someone could end up dying (Int3:35). She does her bit to help because she thinks it is both a good idea, and because God wants her to do it (Int3:37-38). Although she does think it is easier to help friends rather than someone you don't like (Int3:31), she also thinks she has helped someone she doesn't like, but can't remember the details (Int3:32-33).

She believes that 'not doing the wrong thing' is sometimes hard and sometimes easy (Int3:55). Although she is aware of the potential cost of 'doing the right thing' she thinks this too is easy, suggesting that if it is a small thing it is easy, but even if it is a more difficult think like giving away your teddy, "If it is the right thing I might just have to do it" (Int3:47-48). She wrestles with making wise choices, and it would seem that fear of getting caught is a strong motivation. For instance when we discuss potentially stealing a piece of chocolate cake she says that the thing that would stop her from doing it would be the thought of "someone, whilst I am eating it, walking in and seeing me eating it." (Int3:67-68). She demonstrates this later when

talking about giving and sharing when she relates an instance where she let her friend have a go on her skateboard which turned into lots of gos, and she found that really hard (Int3:72-75) "my heart is saying I know it's the right thing to do, my head is going I really want it back" (Int3:77-78).

She thinks that she has a lot of control over her choices. When creating her matrix in Interview Three her opening premise is "Basically I have all the control over myself so I'm putting all green there" (Int3:141-142) and later "No one has full control over me" (Int3:147) and "No many people have the green over me" (Int3:153) although she accepts that it is her parents who also have a significant influence particularly in regard to going to church and 'doing the right thing' (Int3:144-145,148-149, 166-168) because they can tell her what to do (Int3:167-168), but she makes the point, that they cannot *make* her pray or worship, this needs to be something that she decides for herself (Int3:168-169). Interestingly though, in Interview Two she also suggests that she is easily distracted from sung worship in church (Int2:162)

Another interesting point that she makes is that I have had an impact on her praying, but when questioned, isn't able to really come up with her own reason why and accepts my suggestion that this is probably because we have been talking about it more (Int3:169-171).

Feelings

Star is able to articulate a whole range of feelings, and appreciates their complexity. Picture 33³⁸⁷ makes her feel both "happy and sad" (Int1:22) and she is ambivalent about whether she likes school "Sometimes and sometimes not" (Int1:101). This helps her to understand the complexity of feelings associated with Christian faith. In Interview Two when discussing the palm cross she put in her bricolage box, she says that thinking about Jesus on the cross makes her feel both happy and sad: sad because Jesus died; and happy "cos he saved millions of people" (Int2:20-27). She refers to this again when discussing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Int2:145-149). She mentions feeling scared quite a bit (Int1:47, 248) but thinks that praying helps (Int3:39-44) and believes that God helps her to be brave (Int1:237-238). For instance, she suggests that her joy of swinging high and jumping off was not always the case, and that it was God that helped her to be brave (Int1:238-239).

Her empathy appears throughout our conversations (Int1:55-56,171-173,179-180; Int2:38-42; Int3:80-82). For instance her love of stars naturally leads her to thinking about God but also to people who might not be able to see (Int1:55-56). She empathises with the duck in Picture 33 "Because it looks like it is lost" (Int1:23), and thinks the baby bear in Picture 31 is being hugged by its mother because he feels scared (Int1:84-85).

She has a strong sense of justice and is frustrated when her enjoyment is curtailed as a consequence of the behaviour of others (Int1:101-114). It is perhaps evidence of her age that she asks God to help everyone not be silly (Int1:112) but is unaware that her behaviour might have an impact on others (Int1:108-109).

She buys into the narrative that God wants everyone to be happy, partly, I think because she herself finds this attractive (Int1:205-206). In our discussion about Picture 11³⁸⁸ she is not sure that it has anything to do with her friendship with God because on the one hand it shows his creation, but "I don't think, the no side, is because it looks like, it doesn't look very beautiful. It does look quite beautiful, but it doesn't look very happy. It's sad, and God wants to keep everyone happy" (Int1:155-157). The same is true for her interpretation of Picture 28 (Int1:178-180).

Church and Worship

Raising hands in worship means trying to talk to God (Int1:27-28). She enjoys singing along to worship songs, although if she had to choose she would probably rather sing a pop song (Int2:159). They do, however, help her to connect with God (Int2:165). When deciding if worship

³⁸⁷ A Shared Moment by Caroline Arber, Printed by Athena International

³⁸⁸ Boat, Man & Dog by Ailsa Black (Oxfam card)

was an easy or hard part of her friendship with God, she left it in the middle (Int3: 105-108) as she was unsure which reflects I think her enjoyment of it, as well as the ease of distraction

She finds holiness hard to describe, but suggests that "holy is lovely, and like praying things like that" and "holiness is like basically holy but it's made as a it makes it more special" (Int1:277-278).

11.9.5. Storm - Annotated Profile

Overview

Storm³⁸⁹ is the older of the two sisters that I interviewed in their family home. She appears to be a secure and confident child, who has made the most of the wide range of opportunities she has been given including rock climbing and cheerleading and clearly enjoys a loving family life where good manners (Int1:84-86) and Christian practices are encouraged.

She is still very much a concrete thinker, and most of her responses were pragmatic rather than imaginative or whimsical. Her parents describe her faith as strong. She says she likes going to church, particularly doing all the activities in Sunday school (Int1:31-34; Int2:120-121). During all three interviews she was animated and engaged, although at the beginning of Interview Three she did appear a little stressed by not understanding exactly what she was supposed to be doing with the cards (Int3:7-19).

She is confident and easy going, and enjoys comedic moments (Int2:138-142) In each interview used humour effectively to entertain herself and me (Int1:160-161,255-259; Int2:251-254; Int3:57,86,149-150,160-161)

Key themes

Family and Friends

Storm and her family usually eat around the table in their large kitchen/diner (Int1:81-82). She enjoys this apart from when her sister has friends to visit that she thinks don't behave well (Int1:84-85). They do a lot of fun activities together including climbing (Int1:197-199); walking and playing games in the wood (Int1:230-233). The whole family shares the load in looking after her sister's two rabbits (Int1:150-157). She likes cuddles, believing that they make her feel better, especially those from her Mum and Dad (Int1:168-172)

One of her favourite parts of the school day is play time because of the opportunity to spend time playing with her friends (Int1:132-133). In Interview Two she indicates that sometimes she can lose her temper with others who are mean, but that it is her friends who help her to keep her feelings under control (Int2:64-67). She also has lots of friends at church which is one of the reasons she enjoys Sunday School so much (Int2:126-127). Her friends at school are aware of her faith, and she gives no indication that this is a source of conflict or teasing from them (Int3:66-70)

Her parents appear to be a very strong influence on Storm's discipleship activities, having exposed her to Christian narrative in a variety of forms at an early age (Int2:160,246-7,256), and encouraging her to pray and read the Bible regularly (Int3:54), taking her to church, and also not allowing her to do the things that they think don't reflect the Christian faith like participating in trick or treating at Halloween (Int2:53-59). She gives examples of both parents sharing their faith experiences with her on a regular basis (Int2:215, 240-245)"so my Mum told me this, that when she was little she was afraid of the dark, and she had this passage from the Bible stuck by the side of her bed, I can't remember exactly what it was about but it said that God watches over you" (Int2:196-198).

Her grandparents get mentioned as key influencers in Interview Three, but as motivators rather than dictators (Int3:145-150)

She has a close relationship with her sister, and they appear to have the normal level of sibling rivalry and affection – for instance Storm seems to take some pleasure in relaying how her sister was upset that the Storm put the polar bear in her box, and telling on her about the theft of another Christmas decoration (Int2:75-83)

³⁸⁹ This is the research name chosen by this child

Pragmatism and concrete thinking

Interview One was where Storm's pragmatism and unwillingness to engage with her imagination was most evident. She dismissed any picture that looked cartoony as having nothing to do with God or her (Int1:47,52,53,88,136=137,158-159,211-212), and did not seem to want to interpret the pictures beyond what she could see (Int1:48,79-80,113-115,121-123,145-148,214-215,240-241). In fact Picture 23³⁹⁰, she goes as far as unpicking each piece of the drawing piece by piece (Int1:263-265). Even when she can make some kind of connection, like when discussing Picture 35³⁹¹, the monkey she identifies that it is part of God's creation but still says "but it doesn't mention anything about him" (Int1:162-163) the same is true for the picture of the bears (Int1:166-167) and Picture 38³⁹² (Int1:260-262). So for instance, of Picture 36³⁹³ she says "like fairy tales never actually existed. Compared to stories in the Bible which did happen. They're just made up stories" (Int1:49-51). Sometimes however, with a bit of encouragement she was able to move beyond concrete, and possibly the need to get things right. So for instance, Picture 20³⁹⁴ is a photo of some swings in playground. Her initial response is "it's just a picture of some swings, so they don't really have anything to do with any of the stories". I think here she is trying to answer from a biblical perspective, which she cannot do, but when prompted to describe the feelings she has when on a swing, she describes a number of reactions and talks about playing with her Dad and sister (Int1:73-79). When discussing Picture 6 again she recognises that it is God's creation but reveals her concrete thinking by saying "if you saw a man climbing a rock, you would think that's a good climber, you wouldn't think why he's a good climber (Int1:194-196)".

In Interview Two, Storm's pragmatism was less obvious, but she still used it as a means of making sense of things (Int2:110-115) although sometimes it was possible to hear what could possibly be the influence of parents, for instance when discussing whether it was easy to know that God loves you she suggested that it was harder when you are poorly. When asked to explain this a bit more, she started to head into what appears for her to be risky territory³⁹⁵, expressing emotions and vulnerability "Erm...³⁹⁶ just cos you're ill and erm.. you think.. erm would I always be, would I be ill if he loved me" but immediately goes on to use pragmatism that sounds very adult to make it ok "well, he does, and its just the way of life, you get ill sometimes" (Int2:130-134).

When we were talking about whether it was hard or easy to tell the truth, it would appear that once again it is her pragmatism that is the driver for her thinking and decision making, in that there is little evidence of reference to feelings of fear or guilt, but she is looking for the easiest, quickest way to deal with the situation (Int3:29-32). Again, when discussing motivation for not doing things that you know that are wrong, I asked what would stop her taking a bit of her favourite Victoria sponge cake if she could do it with nobody knowing. Her response did not engage with the potential feelings but came up with a pragmatic solution "I would just get interested in something else. Well, I [gonna/could?] save it for later" and then to "it might be a bit hot, you never know, so I don't want to burn my tongue too" (Int3:40-47). When it appeared that she was becoming anxious about the activity in Interview Three she made it easier for herself by choosing a straight forward solution "I'm starting with the shortest word" (Int3:105).

³⁹⁰ Owl Nesting by Maddy McClellan (Oxfam card)

³⁹¹ Lowenzahn (*Lionodon hispidus* L.) Foto Bruno Blum – printed by natur-verlag

³⁹² Snape Marshes photocopyright Trevor Wood published by Suffolk Preservation society & Chapter and verse

³⁹³ Midsummer Eve by Edwards Robert Hughes Beechwood Publications

³⁹⁴ Swings in the park, photo sent by Amy Harbon, a former student in response to question about what connects you with God

³⁹⁵ Evidenced by the frequent pauses and repetition in this sentence as well as other instances in all three interviews

³⁹⁶ Dots denote a pause, roughly one second per dot

Activities and hobbies

She likes adventure films as these reflect her own sense of adventure and willingness to take safe risks (Int1:57-69). She enjoys climbing and things with her parents, but has a strong fear of jellyfish, and therefore will only swim in water where she can see the bottom and doesn't like spiders (Int1:139-143). And although she likes going high on the swings, she also recounts strong feelings of fear about her and her sister being pushed too high on the swing (Int1:74-78), so she is able to imagine possible negative outcomes to risk taking (Int1:101-105,110-111,141-142).

She really enjoys playing games and taking walks in the woods that are just behind her house (Int1:229-231) and running out in the Peak District (Int2:156-157), playing on the beach and body-boarding in the sea (Int1:245-247). She also enjoys school, particularly the active parts (Int1:273-275). She went on a Christian activity holiday at the Oaks centre (Int3:51-53).

Storm is part of a cheerleading team and trains twice a week. She particularly enjoys taking part in the many competitions (Int1:281-286). In Interview Two she says that she is the captain of the team (Int2:92) and it is clear that she likes the sense of accomplishment that this gives her (Int1:286; Int2:97-100)

Prior to Interview Two she had made a lego giraffe, which she used to demonstrate her understanding that God loves you no matter how odd you look (Int2:44-45)

She likes animals (Int2:175) and is aware of global warming (Int2:78). Her friends appear to be an important part of her life, and she finds it difficult sometimes that her faith means she can't always join in with the same things as them (Int2:204-205).

Her favourite kind of cake is Victoria Sponge (Int3:41)

Nature of God

In Interview One and Two Storm revealed a great deal about her understanding of God, less so in Interview Three which was shorter and where the discussion was more about how she lives out her faith and who influences it. She believes that God created everything (Int1:94,114,122,124, 144,149,160,187,188-189,195,240,248-249,252-254,270-271, Int2:74-76,154) but it is often mentioned as a throw away comment and does not appear to be the most predominant theme in her thinking about him. Instead, she makes a number of references to his omnipresence and care (Int1:183-184; Int2:10-17,116,198; Int3:124-126). For instance although she says she doesn't think about God when she is enjoying playing with her friends in the playground, she does say "I always think he is watching over us" (Int1:134). She 'knows' that God loves her because he has made her feel better when she has been unwell (Int1:185-186; Int2:265-276), although sometimes it is hard to 'feel' this (Int2:130-135) she recognises that she finds it easy to trust him, because she has not been in a situation where that might be difficult (Int2: 150-151) and appears to do most of her thinking about him when she is relaxed and does not have much to do (Int1:277-278). She included in her bricolage box, a heart locket to represent God's love (Int2:128) and a tape measure to help her illustrate her sense of God's love being never ending (Int2:18-20). The knowledge of this constancy made her happy (Int2:23) and was part of her understanding of God's grace and mercy in that there is nothing that you can do to stop God loving you, and that he doesn't stop caring for people who commit deeds like murder (Int2:24-25)

In Interview Two, she reflects on the creation versus evolution debate and concludes that God may well have used a big bang (Int2:35-37). She includes a star in her bricolage box which prompts a conversation about star gazing with her telescope, and her feelings about how big God is to have made the whole universe (Int2:229-239).

She chose Picture 40³⁹⁷ as having something to do with her relationship with God because "its people joined together with hearts" which for her demonstrates that Jesus loves us and

³⁹⁷ 'kindness' google images

God loves us (Int1:15). This theme continues with her description of Picture 32³⁹⁸ where she wrestles with her pragmatism "It's God creation cos they're some leaves and they're in a love heart, but it still doesn't mean anything about him" (Int1:178-179) with her belief that God "loves everyone... and erm.. and he helps everyone out" (Int1:183-184).

A number of the pictures fall into the 'maybe' category for Storm because she recognises their link with creation, but they are either too abstract or 'too cartoony' to bear any resemblance to her relationship with God (Int1:211-212,216-220,260-262). For instance, she recognises that the bears cuddling in Picture 31 are showing love to each other, and in particular that the parent bear is caring for and protecting the baby bear, and how much she benefits from cuddles herself, she cannot readily relate that to her faith (Int1:166-170).

She identified Jesus as a teacher (Int1:17) using Picture 18, but at this point was unable to remember any of the stories he told (Int1:18).

Her understanding that Jesus looks after people (Int1:19) was either borne out of or augmented by her understanding of Jesus as the light of the world. Perhaps unusually for her she had chosen the slightly abstract Picture 16 because "it's a Bible and it's got light glowing out of it[...] Jesus is the light and it is shining out of the Bible" (Int1:26-27). When questioned about what that actually meant she said "He's all the happiness and love in the world" (Int1:29-30). On this theme, she decides to change her mind about Picture 27³⁹⁹ moving it from the 'maybe' to the 'yes' pile, because "it's like God and Jesus is the light shining through" (Int1:18). Although she doesn't choose Picture 4 it is interesting that she correlates the light shining through the clouds with God as 'the big light' (Int1:234-235). She also believes that God wants to give us peace (Int1:105-110 although she has yet to experience this in relations to jelly fish! (Int1:105-110). She returns to the theme of light in Interview Two when she discusses the candle she has put in her bricolage box to represent that "God is the light of the world" (Int2:193). Her definition of this is "he's all the happiness in the world and all the goodness in the world" (Int2:195) and believes that Jesus asks us to be part of the process of that happening "we have to shine our light, be like him, like light" by being good and trusting in him, showing that we believe in him, and not letting our friends influence us to do wrong things (Int2:200-205).

She is also aware that Jesus died on the cross. She chose Picture 21 because "there's some crosses and Jesus dies on the cross [...] we celebrate Jesus dying on the cross to take away our sin" (Int1:37-38) indicating later when comparing this picture with Picture 7, that the cross tells us about God (Int1:40-43). She includes a palm cross in her bricolage box "cos Jesus died on the cross" (Int2:208) saying that thinking about that makes her a bit sad, but adding that Jesus was brave and he trusted in God which is what we are supposed to do (Int2:211-212). It is difficult to know whether this is learned or experienced understanding, but it was delivered with emphasis that implied belief.

Worship and Singing

Being out in nature makes Storm feel happy and so she thinks that it is probably easier to worship God outside rather than inside (Int2:157-159). Her analysis of how she feels when she is using her telescope also indicates holiness experiences and she considers the vastness of space, and therefore the omnipotence of God (Int2:229-239). She likes singing songs in church (Int2:266) and included a worship CD in her bricolage box because she likes having worship songs on in the background (Int2:214-215). When questioned it appeared that watching and hearing others worship was a strong holiness experience for Storm. Not only does she think that the words remind her of who God is (Int2:222) she enjoys listening to the passion that worship singers on CDs put into what they are doing, but being part of a worship in church "just makes me feel happy, it actually, it makes the whole church feel like, quite a warm feeling" (Int2:225-226). Her parents are clearly influential in her love of and experience of worship, with her Mum regularly playing worship songs in the house (Int2:215)

³⁹⁸ Heart IV copyright Ian Winstanley 2005 The Art Group Limited printed by Ikea

³⁹⁹ God are you really there? Google Images

and her Dad sometimes singing (Int2:243-244). She included a plaque with the words from a song that she thought was important in her bricolage box, stating that she included it because "it's like all the family, everyone in the house, erm... all the people in their family will pray to him and serve him (Int2:241-242).

In Interview Three she identified worship as something as easy and enjoyable (Int3:55-56), stating that she not only enjoys singing songs at church, but also sings worship songs at home (Int3:56-57). At the end of the Interview she decides that singing is her favourite way of thinking about God "cos it's fun and you're worshipping God. Yay! Everybody wins [laughs]" (Int3:165-166).

Prayer

Although Storm prays every day with her parents (Int2:263-264) and she appreciates the routine of that (Int3:58-59), dialogue with God is a not an integral part of her day mainly because she is "always too busy" (Int1:135; Int2:289-291). She does sometimes pray when she is faced with a challenging or scary situation (Int1:209-210) or in 'down-time' (Int1:276-278) but this is not a default even when she is enjoying herself (Int2:90-91). She included 'the child's first book of prayers' in her bricolage box, because she has "fond memories" of it (Int2:256) although they now use extemporaneous prayers which normally include thankfulness at meal times and cover things that are difficult or hard at bed time (Int2:259-265; Int3:60-65).

She believes that God answers prayers when people are unwell and gives an account of how happy she was when God healed her leg from a bad sting (Int2:265-279). This is in contrast to her statement that wishes never come true (Int1:164-165) When questioned she reflected that sometimes when you are really happy about something you can forget to thank God for it "you get carried away and you, it's good to be really happy about it but you forget" (Int2:278-279). When praying she says that she makes no distinction between the elements of the trinity "cos each bit, cos each three bit makes God" (Int3:159), she does sometimes picture Jesus using "old fashioned like pictures as a frame of reference, but not when she is praying (Int3:162-164).

Bible

Storm has read lots of stories from the Bible (Int2:250), at home, and as part of Sunday school, sometimes finding it hard and sometimes not (Int1:20-22; Int3:48-50). She believes the Bible tells us all about God (Int2:249) and decides at the end of Interview Two that the Bible is the most important thing she has put in her bricolage box that helps with her friendship with God (Int2:281), although she thinks she should probably read it more (Int2:287). Her favourite story is Noah's ark, mainly because he saved the animals (Int1:24-25). She believes Bible stories to be true in comparison to other narratives (Int1:49-51), which is particularly interesting given her pragmatism and concrete thinking.

She appears quite knowledgeable about the Christmas narrative (Int2:108-115, 229-230) and the Prince of Egypt film is one of her favourites (Int2:137). She includes a DVD of Bible stories, but is unable to give much detail about it, as she hasn't watched it for some time so ends up defaulting to Noah as a favourite again (Int2:160-175). She also includes a Veggie tales DVD (Int2:176) and although she cannot remember much detail about the story she is able to demonstrate a better understanding of Christian discipleship learned from watching this (Int2:180-182). It is interesting to consider what or how this was communicated in veggie tales that 'stuck'.

She doesn't relate the Bible directly to rules, but when discussing the lego model she had made just prior to Interview Two, she indicates that she didn't quite follow the instructions because there are some bits left over (Int2:48-49) and reveals that sometimes she finds following 'God's instructions' quite difficult, because sometimes it is hard not to retaliate when someone is being mean to you (Int2:64-65) and sometimes her friends are allowed to do things she isn't (Int2:50-54). She believes it is important that her friend who is thinking about becoming a Christian reads the Bible to find out more (Int3:74-78).

Trust and Faith

Unlike her sister, it appears that for Storm spirituality and faith, are not a natural part of daily existence. Her parents describe her faith as strong, and there is evidence of understanding and belief, but she does not often demonstrate full integration. For instance when discussing the pictures in Interview One, her pragmatism means that she is unable to make the spiritual link (Int1:123,129-130,180-182,272-273). This doesn't mean that she does not have faith though, and in Interview Three she indicated that by and large she finds living out her faith easy (Int3:20-21).

She often goes climbing with her Mum and Dad, and recognises that she puts her trust in them when they are belaying (Int1:198-199) she also says that she puts a lot of trust in herself (Int1:200-201) which is related to her sense of accomplishment. Her experience of the importance of ropes in climbing helped her to understand the metaphor of the rope in Picture 41, as about putting your trust in God who is not going to drop you (Int1:221-225). This sense of safety is linked to her description of how she feels when she is walking in the woods in the dark and how holding someone's hand makes you feel warm and cosy (Int1:230-233) and how when her father pushes her too high on the swing, she can ask him to stop and he does (Int1:75-78). It is interesting then, that in the discussion about Picture 4 which could be interpreted as a stairway to heaven, she says she would be nervous as well as excited about climbing them (Int1:238-239).

She is starting to wrestle with the discrepancies that she sees between biblical narrative and science. For instance in Interview Two she says that instead of believing in a creator God, people believe in the big bang theory and evolution, and then caveats, that perhaps God used these to do his creation (Int2:35-37). In Interview Two she includes a lipstick in her bricolage box because "we don't need to put things on like lipstick, cos God thinks we're beautiful anyway" (Int2:26-27). It would be interesting to know whether this was repeated from her Mother or what she has worked out for herself although what she goes on to say indicates that she has thought this through to some extent (Int2:30-32)

Storm indicates that she believes that a community of faith is an important way of keeping a healthy relationship with God. When discussing one of her favourite films, Prince of Egypt, she argues that Moses must have found it hard to keep his friendship with God because he was bought up by who didn't love God (Int2:143-144). This belief that faith is caught by being in the presence of Christians (Int3:69-70) probably stems from the influence her parents and grandparents have on her discipleship (Int3:145-150). She appears to share her faith practices easily with her friends, who have accompanied her to church (Int3:67-68), although talking about it seem harder




She suggests that it is harder to know that God loves you when things are not going so well, like when you are ill, because you question why he allows you to be ill if he loves you (Int2:131-134) but again seems to make some programmatic statements of faith about this "Well he does, and it's just the way of life, you get ill sometimes" (Int2:134). She appears to admire the courage and trust in God of Biblical characters like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Int2:180-181), Moses (Int2:148-149), Noah (Int2:175), Esther (Int2:254) and Jesus (Int2:211-212), when faced with difficult situations, but is unsure of her own ability to stand those kind of tests because she has not experienced anything like that (Int2:150-151). Although she believes that children can have that kind of faith, she thinks it is easier for an adult to have it, but does not elucidate on why (Int2:188-189). It may be linked with her feelings about not being able to do what her friends are allowed to do, as when questioned how she could 'be light' at school, in addition to showing that you believe, she said "not letting things that your friends do make you want to do it" (Int2:204-205).




She was unable to really articulate whether it was a 'head' or 'heart' decision to not do something wrong, or to do something right, suggesting that it really depending on the circumstances as to whether it was easy to 'hear that little voice' (Int2:70-73). Her answers do however indicate that she probably uses her head more than her heart (Int3:30-31) for instance when asked about whether she would take a slice of her favourite cake if she knew

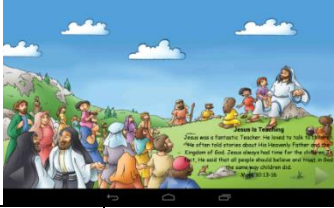

she wouldn't get caught, her defence strategies were all based on logic and pragmatism rather than feeling (Int3:40-47). It would appear that she uses a lot of situational ethics, for instance when responding to the question about whether it is easy to tell the truth or not, she indicates that it depends on the magnitude of the circumstances (Int3:22-29).

In terms of keeping rules herself she seems quite conformist in that: she keeps her cheerleading shoes spotlessly white (Int:85-86); she judges her sister's friends for their bad manners at meal times (Int1:84-86); and when looking at Picture 24, believes that she wouldn't go through the gate to explore because that would be trespassing (Int1:190-193). She also displays a relatively high degree of anxiety not observed in the other interviews about getting things right with the cards in Interview Three (Int3:91-98,132-133). Although she is unhappy that she is not allowed to go trick or treating with her friends, she believes that Halloween is "celebrating [what] we pray not to happen" (Int2:55-56). She appears willing to help others, but this seems to be easier for her when she is confident that she is in a better place than them and/or can form some kind of relationship with them (Int3:79-85). She believes that holiness is evidenced by action in that holy people will "look after you, they'll watch over you and check you're ok." (Int1:289-290), and that it is easier for grown-ups than children to be holy because they have had more time to learn all the ways to do it than children (Int1:292-294)

11.10.Appendix Ten – Interview One - Table of direct responses about Jesus and the Bible

	
Star	<p>I think is related to God cos it's got a lot of flowers and the sky and God's in the sky, and it's really beautiful, and God tries to make the world beautiful. So if you imagine that you are going up that path, do you think it is easy or hard? I think it will be a little bit scary cos if you tip over the edge you might drown, but it might be a little bit fun going up and a bit beautiful and peaceful, with all the flowers. Do you think, if you think God is at the top. What do you think is going to happen when you get to the top? Err, umm I might see God I probably would, and then I'll see lots of dead, I might see lots of kind, dead people and erm well basically, and there might erm and then I might go back down again.</p>
Storm	<p>It kinda is cos its some steps and they're going up to the cloud, and there's like a big light, there, like it's like God's the big light, but then, it's like it's some steps, and it's really cartoony, and it's just some steps basically, going up to the clouds, with some flowers on, it doesn't really mention it at all. Where do you think the steps might be going? Erm. Up to heaven. Ok. So if you were walking up those steps, how do you think you would be feeling? Erm, excited. Nervous, cos like .. I feel a bit nervous, I don't know why I'd feel a bit nervous, but I would feel a bit nervous. Ok.</p>
	
Mel:	<p>This reminds me of when my brother, no, when I was baptised at this church, sort of reminds me, I also went to a wedding I think, at a church far away, and it reminds me of that, the scenery, it looks exactly like that church, almost. It is very beautiful isn't it. Why do you think they made churches like that? Erm, because erm God is up in heaven and if you make the roof higher it is almost like God coming down to you, or is in the room with you. And some of the stained glass windows would have pictures of God or Jesus, or something like that. The Bible Stories, stories from the Bible. And you got baptised in this church? Yes. And how old were you when you got baptised? I'm not sure. I was either two or three. Ok. But you can remember bits of it? Yeah, and my brother was baptised when he was about two or three. Yeah, so you can remember his baptism? [nods] Fantastic.</p>
	
Mel	<p>Erm this one, it just reminds me when I went to the beach first time, doesn't remind me of anything else, just going to the beach. So when you are at the beach, again, like in the woods, do you feel like you are close to God, or do you feel far away, or I feel, at the beach, I feel more closer to God because in a forest you are sort of enclosed by trees, and it almost feels like he's on the outside of the trees, and we are on the inside of the trees, inside the wood.</p>
Star	<p>I think it is related to God because it looks quite peaceful and he made the oceans but I don't think, the no side, is because it looks like, it doesn't look very beautiful. It does look quite beautiful, but it doesn't look very happy. It's sad, and God wants to keep everyone</p>

	happy, and that's why I've put it in the don't know because it looks nice beautiful peaceful for yes, but it doesn't look happy and God tries to make it happy. Ok
	
Mel	Erm, it reminds me of some of the meals that my mum and dad cook, and it reminds me of the ones that I really enjoy. Yeah. So do you like food then? Yeah. And, erm, again, how does that relate to your friendship with God? Erm, it's like he is actually providing food for us and helping us live, basically. Yeah. Just makes me feel like he actually cares about me. Yeah
Star	I think is, I'm not quite sure about this one, because it has got food and things God made but it doesn't look that beautiful and it looks quite boring, and God likes to make it lovely. Ok.
	
CB	I think this is a yes because erm the Bible is all about God and Jesus, and, erm, Do you read the Bible? Ermm, no. not really. Sometimes I do. It's quite hard to read isn't it. I have a children's Bible, but that's mostly stories, so probably when I am older I'll read it. So, yeah
Mel	That's the Bible, 17, the Bible sort of reminds me of when we do Bible Detectives as well. Do you erm have a Bible at home? Yes I do. And do you read it? I read it now and then, I don't read it like every day, I read it at least once a week, I try to. Ok. And do you read it like that or has it got pictures or? It's a big book, it's got pictures in it. It hasn't got as many words as in the ones in church. And have you ever looked at any Bible stuff online? Erm no.
Star	Do you read the Bible? Er yeah. I put it in the not sure, because I wasn't sure, because I didn't have to read this bit [pointing to the John's gospel bit] So do you have a Bible with pictures in or has it got thin pages like that one? I've got a proper one with quite thick pages, normal pages, with pictures in, and it got pictures of what the story on that page is about. Ok. And is it easy to read, or is it hard to read? It's quite easy, there are some hard words in it. And do you think it helps you, or not? Erm, it helps me think more about God because focusing on what I like, and not what other people want, god likes to have everyone have it fair
Storm	it's .. the gospel of John, and that's in the Bible Ok, so do you read the Bible? I read it every Sunday at Sunday School. Ok, and do you think it is easy to read, or hard to read? It depends. Ok. So what does it depend on? Right sometimes you've got harder words and easier words. Ok. What's your favourite story from the Bible? Probably Noah's ark. Ok. Why's that your favourite one? Probably because I really like the story, Noah's ark, that he went on a boat, and went and saved the animals.
	
CB	I think this is a 'yes' because erm, if it's the Bible you could read it and it's all about God, and if it isn't a Bible, it's something, it's a book so people could get better at reading
MS	This is a Bible and erm it's a story about God but I'm not sure if it has anything to with me again. It might. So do you read the Bible? Yes. What kind of Bible do you read? Erm, in well some people call it Sunday School, we search up things from the Bible and our old Bibles were more for adults but now we've got new Bibles for our children groups and they're more our age. Mmm. And do you find it easy reading the Bible or hard? Erm sometimes hard because usually it's quite complicated, but usually I get it. Ok.

	<p>And what's your favourite story from the Bible? Erm.. Probably or Moses or Noah's ark Ok. And why are they your favourite do you think? I think they are most interesting for me. And what about stories that Jesus told? Cos Jesus told lots of stories didn't he, do you have a favourite one of those? Sometimes they are called parables. Erm... no</p>
Storm	<p>[16] It's a Bible and it's got light glowing out of it. Yeah. And, er, it's like, Jesus is the light and it is shining out of the Bible. Mhmm. And why do you think the person who drew that might have put the light shining out of the Bible? Because Jesus is the light of the world. Ok. And what do you think that actually means, that Jesus is the light of the world? Why do we use those words? He's all the happiness and love in the world. mm. ok.</p>
	
CB	<p>I think this is a yes because Jesus is there telling everyone else stories about God and erm, he likes children.. and adults. Do you like listening to stories Jesus told? Yeah. What's your favourite one? [Pause]... hmm?... hard cos there are so many. Probably the one where he gave food to everyone</p>
MS	<p>This one is probably a more yes than no, because in anaemia there is a lot of causes, and one of them is not eating enough iron and it's like now he's like teaching me that I should always eat my vegetables [they laugh] So do you have to eat more vegetables than you've eaten before? Yeah. It's just before I didn't eat any of them, and I was a little bit fussy and now I know why..</p>
Star	<p>I think it's related to God because it's part of the Jesus story. Its Jesus was teaching, and it was very important when Jesus was teaching because he helped teach people how to be brave not to be scared, and it's a very important story. What's your favourite story that Jesus told? Ermmm, I think, erm the one – this one – where he was teaching. Ok. Can you remember any of the parables, the stories? No. No. You can't remember any of those</p>
Storm	<p>Is Jesus teaching everybody. And what do you think he is actually teaching in that picture? Does it say? It says 'Jesus was a fantastic teacher' so can you remember any of the stories Jesus told? Yeah. Erm, and he also looks after people</p>
	
CB	<p>I think this is a 'yes' because, it is where people come and celebrate God, and erm, Yeah. And do you, do you feel closer to God in a place like that, or at home, or outside or at school, or somewhere else. Outside. Outside</p>
Mel	<p>it's a church and I go to church, and I enjoy going to church. What is it you enjoy about going to church? I enjoy if we do something, we do something called Bible Detectives. Oh yes? We search in different gospels and different chapters, and verses. I like doing that. And do you have friends at church? Yeah. And do you do Bible Detectives with them then? Yes. Great. Excellent.</p>
Star	<p>I don't think this one's related to God because it's like just things that people have made and it doesn't look very pretty, it's just a bit boring. It's a tiny bit related to God because Jesus was dead on the cross and God really cares about it because Jesus is God's son, or was it God who died on the cross. I can't really remember. And that's why</p>
Storm	<p>there's some crosses and Jesus died on the cross and there's loads of crosses in the church. Mhmm. And we celebrating Jesus dying on the cross to take away our sin.</p>



Mel I think all the owls are having fun and they are just leaving that one out. And they're not letting him join in with whatever they are doing, the game or in the chat or in the party or something. **So how do you think he is feeling then?** I think he is feeling very upset and he's feeling like, they were my friends a second ago and then now they've turned their back on me, and they've been nasty to me and it's because it is not very nice to leave somebody out of a group or a party or anything **And if Jesus was looking at that picture, what do you think Jesus would say about it?** Erm that [pause] that all the owls in the tree are being very unkind and rude, and disgraceful and that owl should be allowed to join in the game or the fun. And Jesus and God wouldn't be very happy with what they are seeing.



CB I think this is a 'yes' because, because God loves everyone who is in prison, even if they've done something naughty, he still loves them. **Yeah**



CB I think this is a yes because it looks a bit like Jesus, and God made Jesus

Mel this one reminds me this is what I picture when I think of Jesus. **Ok**




Star I think it is related because it is a picture from the Jesus story, and it, he looks like he is Jesus, so, and Jesus is God's son, and I think he is very brilliant.




Storm it's just a statue so...**Who do you think it's a statue of?** I don't really know. **No. ok**



CB I think is a yes because there is, that's the sky and God made the sky and that's like a light, so it's a bit like a light shining. Yeah. So, yeah.

Mel Erm it doesn't really remind me of anything. When you look at it. But if you look at it in depth, it almost reminds me of God pulling apart the clouds and sending down Jesus, or bringing Jesus back up to heaven. **Yes, yeah. So Jesus going back up to heaven, is that a**

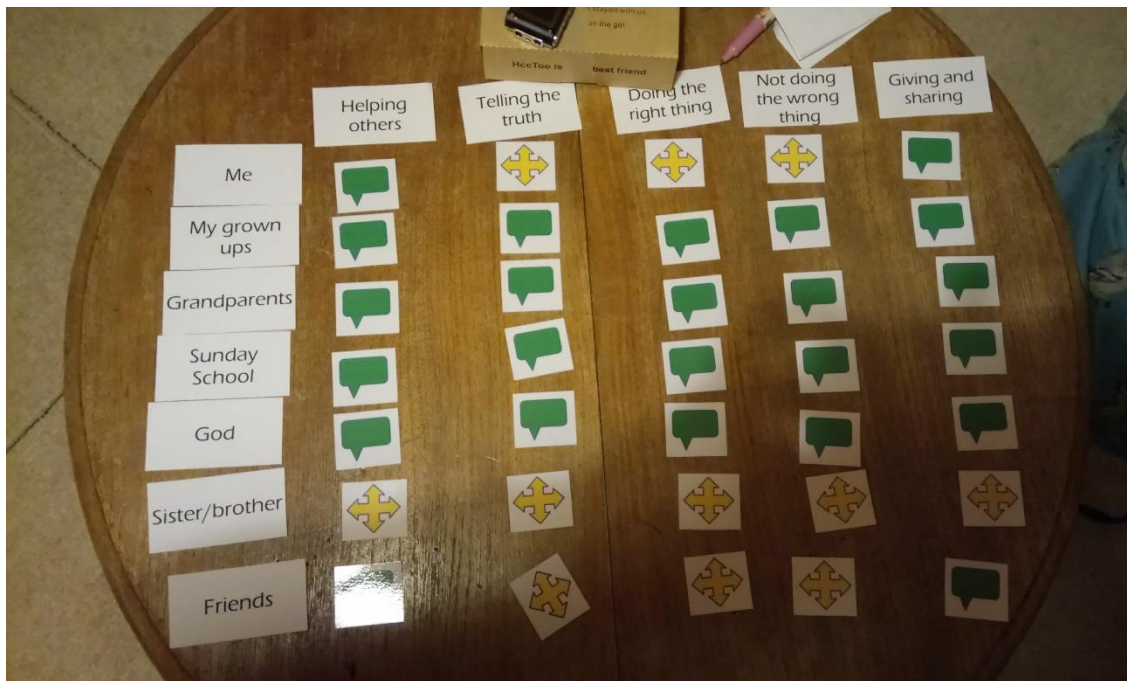
	story that you have heard from the Bible? Yes, he made a promise that he would come back some-day
Star	I think it is because the picture is the sky and God lives in the sky, and he helps makes all the cloud come. Yeah
Storm	there's light shining through the cloud and it looks like there's a bright angel there or erm or the light's just shining through and it looks really, yeah. But it's like God and Jesus is the light shining through.
	
CB	I think it is this one because God made sheep, or whatever they are, and what are they called again? The Northern lights, or Aurelia Boreolis is their proper name. Made the light come on and shine, a bit like [singing] this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine' and that's the light. So in that song, when you sing 'this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine' does that mean you are gonna be like a candle? [he nods] What literally? I could turn the light off here, and see you glowing in the dark [they laugh] No, I'm letting my light shine to God. It's like I'm a light bulb and he can see me from where he is. So what do you think are the things that shine like light? What things might you be doing or saying that shine like light? [long pause] erm maybe something about God.. or maybe turn the light on. So, yeah..
	
CB	I think it is this one because God made bears and God puts his arms out to everyone, and welcomes everyone in. Yeah. A bit like the dad's hugging the baby.
Max Stone	This one is like a bit of a personification because I feel like that's God and that's me because I haven't been feeling well and he has been like helping me and... [he hugs himself] Giving you a big cuddle do you think? Yes. So what do think, so you're saying this little bear is like you, what do you think this little bear is feeling that you might feel? Erm, feeling a bit tired. He might be sad. Yeah. And how does the cuddle help? Erm, makes it feel a bit better, and helps him, cos in the night, I did this when I first had it, and I just kept getting up because I couldn't breath very well, and I couldn't move much, and I couldn't get to sleep. So did you, in the night when you were feeling like that, did you ask God for help? Did you feel God helping you? Erm, I prayed, and erm a few minutes later, I was fast asleep. Oh. So do you think that God answered your prayer then? [he nods]
Star	I think its related to God because it's a picture of erm a lovely, green, grass, and plants and God made them. And it's also a picture of living things, and God helped make the mummy bear stay alive long enough so that she could give birth to the baby bear. And what is actually happening in that picture? The baby bear is cuddling Mummy. And how do you think the baby bear feels? Scared. Ok. Or cold. Cos he has just been born and he looks like he has [big fur, food? Not sure what she says here]
	
Mel	Why did you say no to that one? It looks like a fairy-tale never ever seen before. It looks like something that has been completely made up. The scenery looks proper but it almost looks like they've cropped the picture of the people, and yeah. It also looks she is trying to teach them something, like teach them how to fly. Yeah, she could be. So do you think then that there is a difference between made up fairy stories and the Bible? Yes

	<p>definitely, there is definitely a difference, because the Bible, I think the Bible is true, because if it wasn't true then how would there be earth here, because God's created the earth and stories in the Bible have to be true because otherwise if the stories in the Bible weren't true, there would be no earth, no moon, no sun, anything like that. There would be no animals, no nothing. And what is your favourite story from the Bible? Erm... I like the one... ah... I don't know whether it is from the Bible or from something else, erm, Daniel and the Lion's Den? Yes, that is from the Bible and why do you like that one in particular? Erm, because it's such a miracle that God saved him from the lion's eating him. And it's also got a moral in it. Justice was served, because the people that told the king, kind Darius I think it was, to make up the rule, they were thrown into the lion's pit and they weren't saved by God, so justice was served.</p>
	
CB	I think it is this one because it is people standing in a circle and holding hands. They're holding hands with love hearts so maybe they're giving their hand to God, and saying, come on, and come and love me, and stuff like that
Storm	It's in my 'yes' pile because its people joined together with hearts. Aha, and why is that significant then? Because Jesus loves us and God loves us
	
CB	I think this one was a yes because if someone was rope climbing a cliff that God had made and they didn't tighten the knot they would..... die, if they fell off. If they didn't do a tight enough knot [yeah] they would die. They are like having faith in the rope and then they are hoping that the rope won't snap. And what do you have faith in? Hmm....[long pause] God.. and.. Do you think God would ever snap? No. Why do you think he would never snap? Because he made everything.
Max Stone	Well it's basically just like a knot in a rope because like there's been like the knot is like a stop a bad thing or something, and that's happened to me but I think it's probably going, but it feels like if I was a rope, I would have a knot.
Star	Erm I don't think this is very related to God because God tries make all your problems loose and this is a knot that won't break and that won't make it really loose, and that's not related to God
Storm	Like, it could be cos it's a rope tied in a knot and you're putting your trust in the rope, like you're putting your trust in God, but it may not be cos it's just a rope, it's basically a rope with a knot in it and you wouldn't really put anything to do with that. What do you think it could symbolise though? What could it represent? You put your trust in God. Yep. It's like you're putting your trust on that rope it's not going to drop you
	
CB	I think this was a yes, because it's a bit like when you get Holy Communion. Oh yes. And you're holding hands out to get the bread. And how long have you been taking Holy

	<p>Communion then? [pause] none. Oh ok. I have seen my parents do it. I did it once, and I got hold of some bread. So how do you feel then, when you go up to the rail with Mum and Dad, and you don't get any? Well today, cos I went, I asked Dad, 'can I have some' in his ear and he said 'yeah' and snapped it off and handed it over' and I was just [acts eating] So when you are standing there, and somebody places their hand on your head, and prays for you, how do you feel then? I feel like God's with me and ... that... you know, he knows what will happen to me.</p>
Star	<p>I think it is related to God because it's like raising hands and God like raises his hands above the earth. Oh yes. And when you are in church. Do you see people raising their hands? Yeah. And what do you think that means, when they do that? It means like they're trying to ... talk to God</p>

11.11. Appendix Eleven – Interview Three - Pictures of the influence charts created by the children

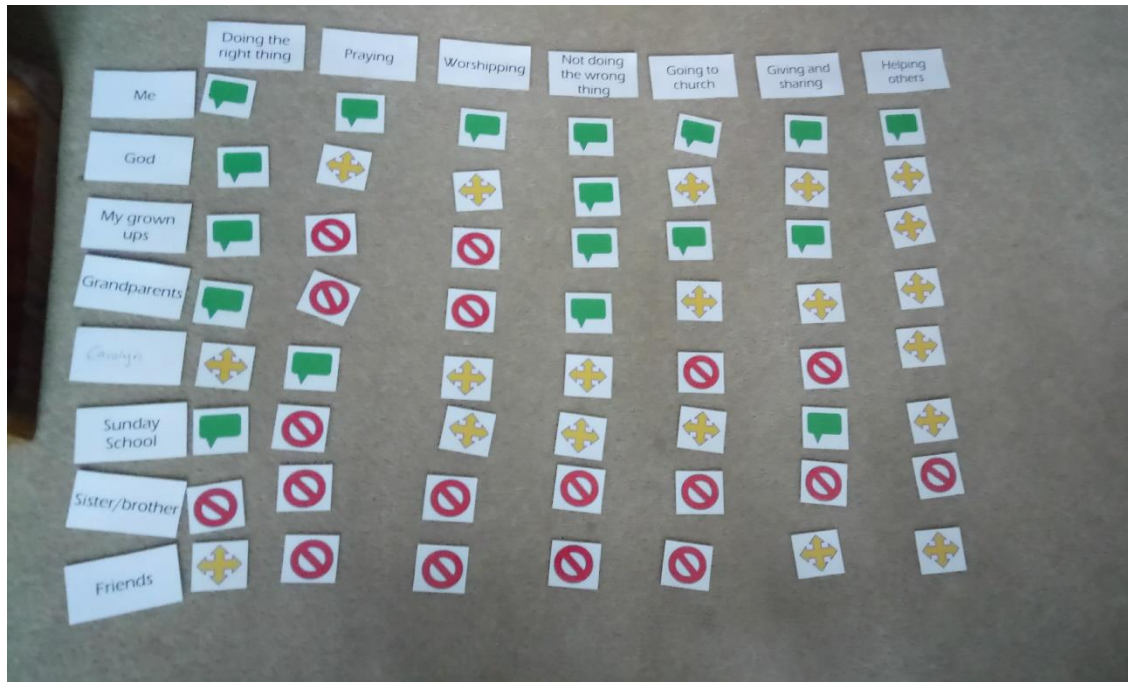
Charlie Bucket



Mel



Star



Storm



11.12. Appendix Twelve - Holiness Experiences and Behaviours

Holiness Experiences and Behaviours associated with relating to God

Charlie Bucket	Max Stone	Mel	Star	Storm
<i>Connection with the creator God through his creation</i>	<i>God sends someone to help you when you need it</i>	God provides for us through our family and friends	Faith is about being God's friend	<i>Hard to know God loves you when you are poorly</i>
Connection with the creator God does not always need to be framed with reference to worship	God hugs like a mother bear and says 'don't worry'	Inanimate objects can bring us physical comfort because of the reminder of being loved	You can encounter God when you are taking risks, and he helps you to be brave	God loves you no matter what you look like
Connection with God's grace and mercy through communion and prayer of blessing	<i>Having no energy can stop you having any feeling about God or anything</i>	<i>Connection with God is through the warmth of close and positive relationships with others</i>	God's made everything and it is awesome	<i>There is nothing that you can do to stop God loving you but sometimes it is hard to feel that</i>
<i>Connection with God through communion more important than keeping the rules</i>	Jesus teaches us and help us make good choices	<i>When you feel close to God you feel nice and warm inside, and vice versa</i>	Praying is something we should do but it isn't always easy to think of it	Thinks about God when is not too busy
<i>Sometimes prayer does not change how you feel</i>	<i>Where God it is peaceful and there are not bad things happening</i>	<i>Reading the Bible is important but not always easy</i>	God's creation inspires worship and reflection	<i>God is watching over us</i>
<i>Connecting with God through accomplishment</i>	<i>Church gives you time to pray to God and worship him</i>	<i>God is more likely to help you if you try, and will forgive you if you get it wrong</i>	Praying is conversation and you are in charge of when it happens. Praying can help when you are frightened	It is easy to trust when you haven't been tested
Ritual and knowing what to do next makes connecting with God easier		<i>Churches and big open spaces are great places to feel close to God because he is accessible</i>	God loves everyone even bad people, and he is always watching over us	Connection with the creator God through the awe and wonder of the night sky

Charlie Bucket	Max Stone	Mel	Star	Storm
Having fun is a gift from God to be enjoyed		<i>God's love is unconditional. He is involved in the every day things and will help you as you face everyday challenges</i>		We have to be good and trust Jesus and not let our friends influence us to do wrong things
<i>God forgives us</i>		<i>You need to be good and do what God says</i>		<i>God is all the happiness and goodness in the world</i>
<i>Sung worship makes God happy</i>		<i>Praying is an important connection with God important enough to get into trouble for</i>		<i>We have to trust God like Jesus did</i>
<i>You can feel close to God through worship and prayer <u>and</u> activities and games</i>		<i>Sometimes God doesn't answer your prayers in the way that you had hoped but you have to keep trusting</i>		It is easier to worship the Creator God when outside
<i>Children need to learn about God, but in different ways from adults</i>		<i>Sometimes God does answer your prayers and it is amazing</i>		<i>Singing worship songs at home and at church is a favourite way of thinking about God</i>
<i>Reading the Bible is important but not always easy to remember to do</i>		Worshipping God and praying to him on your own is good, and sometimes helped by symbols		Connection with God through worshipping community
<i>Prayer is important regardless of whether you feel anything about it</i>		Feeling happy makes you feel closer to God, but God is with you when you are nervous too		Prayer is important but ritualistic and accompanied rather than extemporary
		Being light is being good and obeying God		Connection with the healing God through prayer
		<i>God expects us to persevere and keep practicing</i>		<i>Bible is true and tells us about God and we should read it</i>

Holiness Experiences and Behaviours associated with relating to others

Charlie Bucket	Max Stone	Mel	Star	Storm
<i>Doing the wrong thing can make you feel sad but sometimes it is hard</i>	<i>God sends someone to help you when you need it</i>	<i>Connection with God is through the warmth of close and positive relationships with others</i>	Your family can have a strong influence on your holiness behavior, even when you think they don't	<i>Need to control your temper. God gives you friends to help you do this</i>
Having fun is a gift from God to be enjoyed	<i>Church gives you time to pray to God and worship him</i>	<i>Doing what your Mum asks to make it easier for her is a way of showing God how much you love him</i>	It is important to help others and make them feel better	<i>Use pragmatism to help you make good choices</i>
God gets sad when people are sad and expects us to do something about it		Inanimate objects can bring us physical comfort because of the reminder of being loved		We have to be good and trust Jesus and not let our friends influence us to do wrong things
<i>We need to be light by helping others and telling them about God</i>		Being kind and telling the truth is important		Connection with God through worshipping community
		God provides for us through our family and friends		Prayer is important but ritualistic and accompanied rather than extemporary
		<i>You should tell others about God but you have to be sensitive because they might not want to hear</i>		<i>When someone is mean to you you have to choose not to retaliate</i>
		Being part of God's community is important, and baptism is a helpful symbol to remind you of that		<i>Faith is nurtured by others and needs to be shared</i>
		Going to church is fun and shows the relationship between us and God		

Charlie Bucket	Max Stone	Mel	Star	Storm
		Being part of a big community worshipping God makes you feel happy and closer to God		<i>Being holy is about looking after other people</i>
		God is not happy when he sees injustice and exclusion		
		You need to be fair		
		<i>You need to be honest and generous and not steal or be unkind. Sometimes this is hard but better to do it and avoid feelings of guilt</i>		
		Telling the truth is important, but it is more important not to hurt other people's feelings		
		Helping others is important		

Holiness Experiences and Behaviours associated with relating to self

Charlie Bucket	Max Stone	Mel	Star	Storm
<i>Need to use the ideas and creativity that God gives you</i>	<i>Having no energy can stop you having any feeling about God or anything</i>	<i>God's love is unconditional. He is involved in the every day things and will help you as you face everyday challenges</i>	Praying is conversation and you are in charge of when it happens. Praying can help when you are frightened	God loves you no matter what you look like
<i>Living out faith is doing your best to get things right</i>	Jesus teaches us and help us make good choices	<i>God is more likely to help you if you try, and will forgive you if you get it wrong</i>		<i>Use pragmatism to help you make good choices</i>
<i>Doing the wrong thing can make you feel sad but sometimes it is hard</i>	<i>Holiness is about having self respect. It is hard to be holy when you are a child or suffering</i>	<i>God gifts you with talents and abilities and helps you do the things you need to when you ask for them</i>		<i>There is nothing that you can do to stop God loving you but sometimes it is hard to feel that</i>
<i>Sometimes prayer does not change how you feel</i>		<i>You need to be good and do what God says and what is right</i>		Faith is based on understanding and belief not necessarily feelings
<i>Connecting with God through accomplishment</i>		Feeling happy makes you feel closer to God, but God is with you when you are nervous too		<i>When someone is mean to you you have to choose not to retaliate</i>
Having fun is a gift from God to be enjoyed		<i>God expects us to persevere and keep practicing</i>		
<i>Prayer is important regardless of whether you feel anything about it</i>		<i>You need to be honest and generous and not steal or be unkind. Sometimes this is hard but better to do it and avoid feelings of guilt</i>		
<i>Children need to learn about God, but in different ways from adults</i>				

Holiness Experiences and Behaviours associated with relating to the world

Charlie Bucket	Max Stone	Mel	Star	Storm
<i>Need to use the ideas and creativity that God gives you</i>	Where God is it is peaceful (like a calm sea) and there are not bad things happening	Being outside can bring you closer to God, but sometimes things get in the way (like trees) but God will find a way to break through (like twigs)	God's made everything and it is awesome	<i>Use pragmatism to help you make good choices</i>
Connection with the creator God does not always need to be framed with reference to worship		<i>Churches and big open spaces are great places to feel close to God because he is accessible</i>	God's creation inspires worship and reflection	Connection with the creator God through the awe and wonder of the night sky
<i>Need to acknowledge God's part in everything even inanimate manufactured items</i>		God is not happy when he sees injustice and exclusion		It is easier to worship the Creator God when outside
<i>Living out faith is doing your best to get things right</i>		Being light is being good and obeying God		
<i>Important to connect what you know about God with the things around you and the things you do</i>				

11.13. Appendix Thirteen – Fruit of the Spirit

Love	
Charlie Bucket	Believes that holiness is loving God (Int1:270-1)
Max Stone	
Mel	Loves his family (Int1:36,37). Kindness and generosity from others makes him feel warm inside and loved (Int2:294-298)
Star	God loves the world, everyone and everything and looks after you and the things that matter to you (Int1:64-65, 90-94, 184, 246, 269; Int2:77-78, 83-85)
Storm	God is love (Int1:15,166,183; Int2:128-129)
Joy	
Charlie Bucket	Dances to celebrate God (Int1:184-186, 191-2, 273-4, 278). He feels happy when he is out walking in nature (Int1:106-107). The thought of heaven makes him happy (Int2:113-114)
Max Stone	His joy is deeply affected by his illness. He says normally being on a swing makes him very happy normally, but not at the moment (Int1:23-27). As an interviewer, my impression of MS was a boy who had had all the joy sucked out of him
Mel	Experiences joy when he cuddles ‘duckie’ and feels that God is really close to him (Int2:10). He feels happy when he thinks of the good things God has done for him (Int1:54-55; Int3:105-113). Feeling happy makes him feel closer to God (Int1:64-65). His sense of God’s purpose in his role in the school parliament also gives him joy (Int2:34-36)
Star	
Storm	Knowing God’s love never ends makes Storm happy (Int2:22-23). So does being out in nature (Int2:156-158) and part of a worship service (Int2:225-226).
Peace	
Charlie Bucket	Experiences peace from God when he is prayed for at communion (Int1:150-152); is swinging outside (Int1:194-196); and when he felt like he encountered God at The Oaks residential (Int2:165)
Max Stone	Believes that God wants things to be peaceful (Int1:148-150) and used the picture of the bears (Picture 31) to express how sometimes he feels like God is hugging him to help him feel better and how he fell asleep straight after he prayed on a wakeful night when he had difficulty breathing (Int1:45-55)
Mel	Talks about feeling close to God when something makes him feel warm inside (Int2:189-191) especially when in church worshipping as part of a community of faith (Int3:110-114). ⁴⁰⁰ Reading makes him feel He walks away from conflict (Int2:223-226)
Star	Believes that God makes things peaceful and doesn’t like things to be stormy (Int1:135-137, 154, 169, 196, 212, 220-222, 271-273; Int3:43-44)
Storm	Has a ‘warm, happy feeling’ in corporate sung worship (Int2:224-226)
Forbearance/long-suffering/patience⁴⁰¹	
Charlie Bucket	CB doesn’t like waiting (Int1:45-51, 229), but he does persevere and believes that God helps him if he keeps trying (Int2:16-31)
Max Stone	“Hard when you are ill, but that’s just the way it is” (Int2:130-134)

⁴⁰⁰ What he describes here could also be interpreted as ‘joy’

⁴⁰¹ Forbearance is the NIV translation, but Ryle uses the word long-suffering. He describes it as a ‘passive grace’ (Ryle, 2014, p. 68)

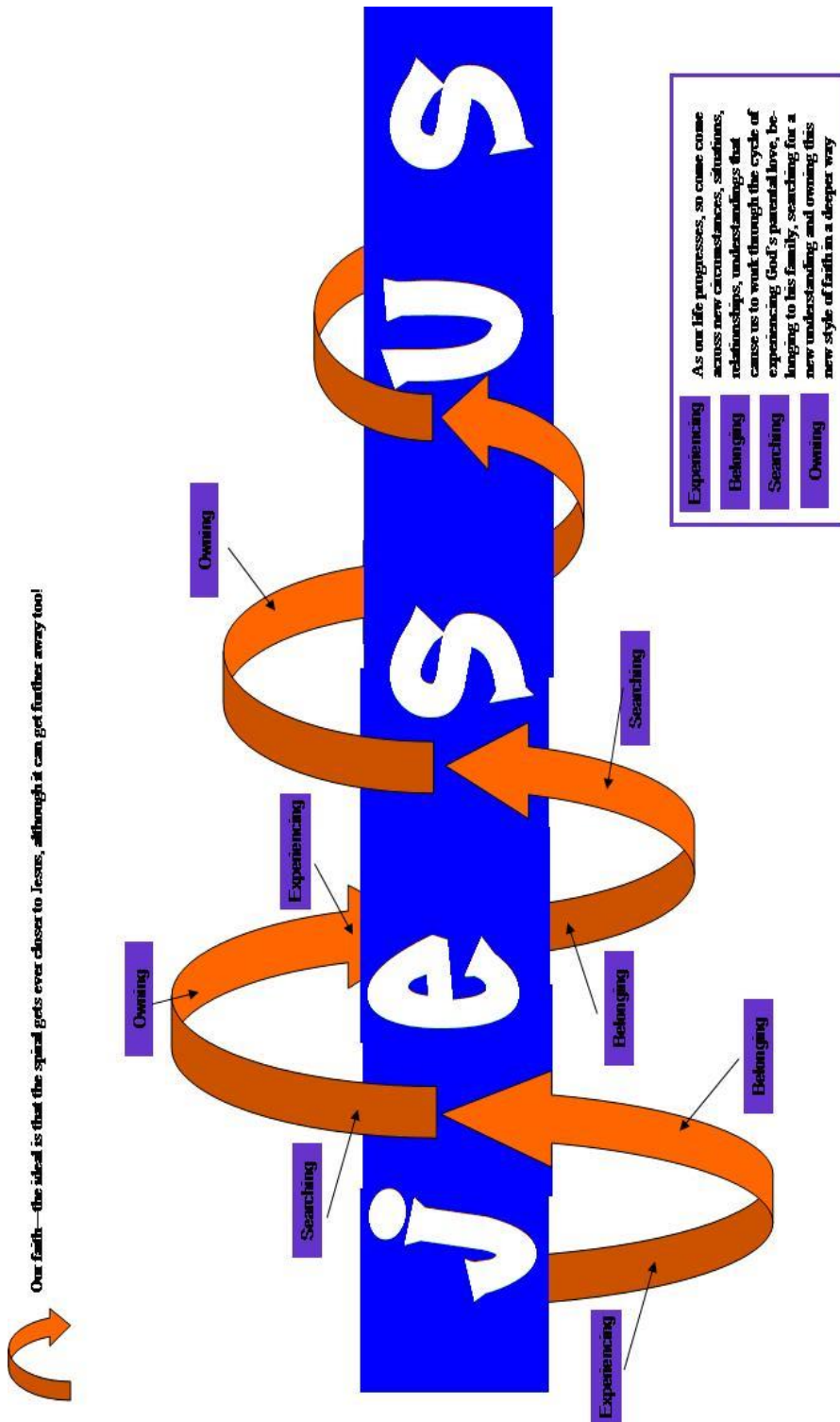
Mel	Believes perseverance is a quality that God wants in his children and that he tries to exercise regularly (Int1:226-228, 230-235, Int2:89-99)
Star	
Storm	Although she finds it difficult, Storm is prepared to be 'different' from her non-Christian friends (PQSm) (Int2:52-58)
Kindness⁴⁰²	
Charlie Bucket	CB thinks 'giving' is easy (Int3:44-45) especially if you know the person but also wants to give homeless people food (Int2:295-303). Helping others is important (Int3:120-123). He does, however, think that he would help someone who had fallen over in the playground even if he wasn't a friend of God (Int3:101-104). Compassion can come from knowing someone's story (Int3:74)
Max Stone	
Mel	Mel is concerned that the owl is being left out in Picture 23 and that Jesus would not like this (Int1:250-260). He believes that God influences kindness (Int2:295) and doesn't like to hurt peoples' feelings (Int3:94-99). He reads to his little brother (Int2:195-199); share his time with his friends fairly (Int2:220-223); shares things in the playground (Int3:119-121); gives his pocket money to charity (Int3:115-119) and the homeless (Int3:126-130); and helped a girl in his class with a broken arm (Int3:131-136)
Star	Star says the Bible helps her to think about how to be fair to others (Int1:189-190). She believes it is good to share you things, be kind, and make other people feel better (Int2:39-41, 109; Int3:28-29). She takes an extra Beanie Boo to church in order to share with a crying baby (Int2:38-41)
Storm	
Goodness⁴⁰³	
Charlie Bucket	CB feels sad when tempted to do something wrong, and glad when he makes a good choice (Int2:77-81, 86-7; Int3:30-4). He believes that following the rules is important, and good overcomes evil (Int1:131-7). God wants us to sort it out for sad people. Faith is not just passive, even children have to do something (Int2:299-303)
Max Stone	
Mel	Mel gave an old man back his dropped coin even though he really wanted to keep it (Int3:146-151). God helps you make wise choices ((Int1:299-301; Int3:165-169)). It is important to tell the truth (Int3:85-85) and obey God (Int2:26-28) and behave according to the rules ((Int2:149-150, 183, 186-187)
Star	It is good to do the right thing (Int2:115)
Storm	Doing the right thing (being good) is important (Int2:85-86, 203)
Faithfulness	
Charlie Bucket	CB faithfully identifies God in nature and at work in everything over and over again, particularly in Interview One. He trusts God (Int1:155-158)
Max Stone	MS equates Picture 6 with the striving to keep going despite his illness. This is something he thinks God wants him to do and is helping him with (Int1:58-69)

⁴⁰² Kindness is 'chrestotes' – does include understanding of goodness and integrity but the main emphasis of usage is the willingness to serve others and help them (Barclay, 1976)

⁴⁰³ Goodness is 'agathosune' a Greek word that is only found only in the New Testament and not in secular Greek writing of the time. It includes integrity, righteous living and principle-centred behaviour. (Barclay, 1976)

Mel	In Interview Two Mel says he would continue to pray to God just like Daniel (Int2:60-63) and gives lots of instances of praying when needing courage and strength (Int1:297; Int2:42-45,238,266,355). He believes he is a faithful friend (Int2:212-215, 321-322)
Star	Star believes that God helps you to be brave which appears to be her vocabulary for trusting and having faith (Int1:95-98). She says she has a strong friendship with God and always will have (Int3:190-195)
Storm	It is difficult to tell how much Storm's compliance with have different values and behavioural norms than her friends is her desire or obedience to her parent's wishes. Either way, she complies even though sometimes she finds it difficult (Int2:51-60, 204-205). She says her trust in God has never really been tested so she doesn't know how hard it might be to trust him in difficult circumstances (Int2:149-150)
Gentleness/meekness	
Charlie Bucket	
Max Stone	
Mel	When Mel uses the word 'nervous' about situations, he matches this with a reliance on God's help. Trusting that God will help him and not conceited in his own ability (Int2:317-318, 354-356)
Star	Twice in Interview One, Star talks about Jesus teaching people to be brave (Int1:95-97,237-8). Whilst this might not seem to be directly associated with gentleness and meekness, I think what she is getting at is the meekness that realises it is fully reliant on God's strength
Storm	
Self-control	
Charlie Bucket	CB struggled with this. Dialogue about peeking at how difficult it was not to try and find hidden Christmas presents (Int2:70-88), and concentrating in prayers at church (Int2:154-159)
Max Stone	Mel talks about his internal struggle over keeping a £1 coin that an elderly man has dropped. He wants it to buy a lego mini-figure but gives it back because this is the right thing to do (Int3:147-169)
Mel	
Star	Star used self-control when her friend was using her new skateboard unfairly. She describes overcoming her desire to have it all for herself (Int3:72-75). In Interview Three she identifies that her holiness behaviours are down to her, not other people (Int3:146-147)
Storm	Storm uses a pragmatic approach to deal with temptation. When she wants to retaliate she distracts herself by going to see other friends (2:64-68). When considering whether she could take a piece of her favourite cake without detection, she uses practical considerations to help her to do the right thing (3:40-47)

11.14. Appendix Fourteen - Faith Development model developed for Scripture Union



11.15. Appendix Fifteen – Information about Guardians of Ancora from Maggie Barfield

FAITH FORMATION in *GUARDIANS OF ANCORA*

Scripture Union is using a digital game to invite children to explore the difference Jesus can make to the challenges and adventures of life. With over 1 million game plays, *Guardians of Ancora* is one of the most successful Bible apps of all time⁴⁰⁴. Children spend an increasing amount of time in digital spaces, so we take the Bible and Christian faith to where they are, on their mobile devices (tablets and phones).

By monitoring overall game usage, we are able to show that, as a direct consequence of using the app, players experience and see more of God. Their:

- **Bible** knowledge and comprehension is growing
- **Attitudes** to faith (God, Jesus, the Bible) are becoming more positive
- **Trust** and dependence in God is deepening.

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/if.kids.wont.go.to.the.bible.how.can.we.make.the.bible.go.to.them/110667.htm>

WORKING DEFINITION of FAITH FORMATION

Faith formation is a day-to-day and lifelong, current state and continuous process of thinking, feeling, doing and being. Through Christian faith formation, people explore, discover and recognise their identity as children of God and followers of Jesus.

People on their lifelong journey of faith formation will be ‘moving in a positive direction’ with regard to faith in God, in one or more of these areas:

Bible knowledge and comprehension
attitudes and values towards the Bible, God, Jesus
involvement and participation
trust and dependence.

Guardians of Ancora generates data that tracks players’ activity in the app. The play environment and game features have been designed to create opportunities for faith to form and thrive. As players choose to take these opportunities, data is collected and used to analyse the faith-impact of a person’s involvement and participation in the game. This is showing that, as a direct consequence of playing *Guardians of Ancora*, players’ Bible knowledge and comprehension is growing [insert key metric data here]; players’ attitude to faith is being enhanced [insert key metric data here]; and that players are actively experiencing and practising trust and dependence [insert key metric data here].

Revised list of daily 'welcome questions', to be delivered in this order:

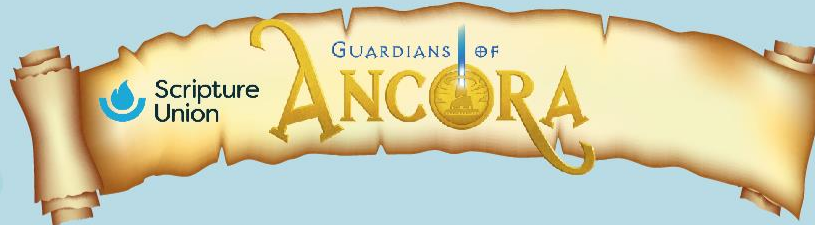
Would you say you are a follower of Jesus?
Do you know that Jesus helps you?
Would going to church be a good use of your time?
Would you say that God helps you to lead a better life?
Does God mean a lot to you?
Would things change if you talked to Jesus?
Do you know that Jesus is close to you?
Do you think the Bible is worth reading?
Are you a friend of Jesus?
Would you ever ask Jesus to help you?
Do you think going to church is important?
Does God have a plan for you and for your life?
Is God an important part of your life?
Do you like to talk with God?
Do you sometimes feel that Jesus is close to you?
Does the Bible help you get to know Jesus?
Would you say Jesus is your friend?
Do you think about Jesus?
Do you think it's worth going to church?
Are there times when God tells you something?
Do you like knowing God is there?
Has God ever answered your prayers?
Do you think Jesus would be interesting to hang out with?
Is it important to understand what the Bible says?

Revised set of possible answers:

Definitely
Probably
Probably not
Definitely not

[Questions derived from work done by Professor Leslie Francis on faith and spiritual formation and development

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ces/research/wreru/aboutus/staff/lf/>]



Guardians of Ancora key metrics overview



THE AVERAGE PLAY TIME HAS INCREASED BY **72%**



THE TOTAL NUMBER OF AMASSED UNIQUE PLAYS HAS INCREASED



FAITH FORMATION (SEPTEMBER 2018)

72%* of new users who completed a quiz on their first visit and then returned to complete a quiz **improved** their score.

*DATA IS FROM MARCH 2018, MORE RECENT DATA IS UNAVAILABLE

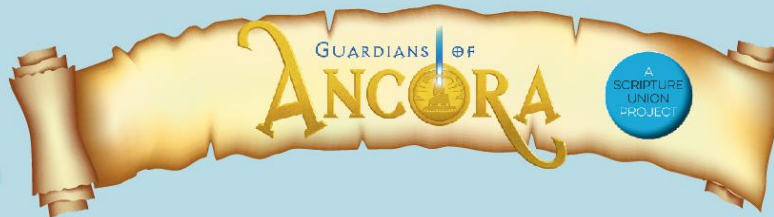


50% of users that created a prayer posts return to create another.

25% of users in August who gave a cold response to the first daily question and returned to do another daily question gave a **warmer** response



800 - 1300 PLAYERS PER MONTH ARE INVITING A FRIEND TO GUARDIANS OF ANCORA, PARTICIPATING IN THE MISSION



Scripture Union created Guardians of Ancora with the aim of helping children to engage with the gospel message in this digital age. Since its launch in July 2015, this ground-breaking game has already made a huge impact...

 GUARDIANS OF ANCORA LAUNCHED IN JULY 2015 WITH **2 BIBLE QUESTS**



NOW THE GAME HAS



26% of the new users that joined in september are not Christians



Children have shown a strong desire to pray. More than **95,000 PRAYER POSTS** have been created in the creative hub.



AFTER PLAYING FOR 2 WEEKS:



GUARDIANS OF ANCORA **KEEPS PLAYERS ENGAGED.**

AFTER 2 WEEKS OF PLAYING, **11% MORE PLAYERS*** COME BACK TO PLAY AGAIN THAN AVERAGE FOR MOBILE GAMES.

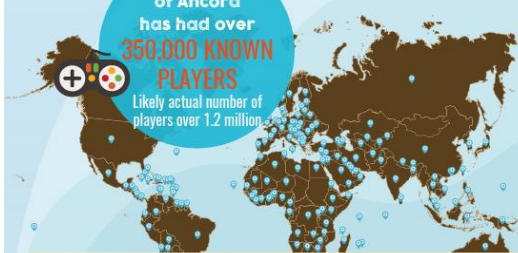
Source: localytics 2018 report: <http://bit.ly/mabm2018>

INDUSTRY AVERAGE **11%**

ANCORA **22%**



Guardians of Ancora has had over **350,000 KNOWN PLAYERS**. Likely actual number of players over 1.2 million.



IT'S BEING PLAYED IN OVER **180 COUNTRIES** AROUND THE WORLD AND IS NOW AVAILABLE IN **WELSH, SERBIAN AND ALBANIAN** WITH **PORTUGUESE** IN DEVELOPMENT



Since May 2016, children and families have completed **44,894** Guardians of Ancora Bible reading plans on the YouVersion platform. There are currently **120 new daily subscribers** to plans each day.

It's a multi-award winning game

WINNER OF THREE PREMIER DIGITAL AWARDS:

- TWO TIMES APP OF THE YEAR and
- INNOVATIVE USE OF MEDIA IN OUTREACH

WINNER OF CHRISTIAN FUNDER'S FORUM GOLD AWARD FOR:

- BEST CHILDREN'S PROJECT



IF YOU HAVEN'T TRIED GUARDIANS OF ANCORA YET, DOWNLOAD IT TODAY FOR FREE.



11.16. Appendix Sixteen – Adaptation of Egan’s Framework

Adapted version of Egan’s framework – Mythic (2-8 years of age)

- 1) Identify importance in a topic, why it should matter to the children and what is emotionally engaging about it
- 2) Find binary opposites to best show the importance of the topic
- 3) Organise the content in story form including the binary opposites in a coherent story
- 4) Provide opportunities for organizing and thinking in a more literary way in preparation for the next stage
- 5) Conclude by resolving the dramatic conflict inherent in the binary opposites in an appropriate way
- 6) Evaluate the impact of the planning on children’s knowledge of and relationship with God

Adapted version of Egan’s Framework – Romantic (8-15 years of age)

- 1) Identify heroic qualities of the topic along with emotional images
- 2) Organise the content into a narrative structure which defines the heroic qualities central to the topic articulates some of the extremes and more bizarre attributes and defines attendant human hopes and fears
- 3) Focus on aspects which inspire awe and wonder
- 4) Provide opportunities for children or young people to pursue some aspect of the topic in exhaustive detail
- 5) Provide opportunities to develop logical and rational thought in preparation for the next stage
- 6) Conclude by bringing the topic to a satisfactory closure while pointing to further dimensions or other topics
- 7) Evaluate the impact of the work on children or young people’s learning and ability to operate with the cognitive tools i.e. apply their understanding of God to their life

Adapted version of Egan’s framework – Theoretic (15+ years of age)

- 1) Identify powerful underlying ideas including theories and meta-narratives
- 2) Organise the content into a theoretic structure to make the theories vivid and show their power in a way that engages young people in them
- 3) Introduce anomalies to the theories above. Sensitively challenge young people’s understanding so that they are forced to develop more sophisticated understanding
- 4) Present alternative grand theories, other ways of explaining the ideas along with the limitations of these theories
- 5) Encourage young person’s sense of agency and personal involvement in the ideas
- 6) Conclusion: ensure that alternative views are preserved and acknowledged along with their limitations
- 7) Evaluate the impact on young people’s grasp of theories and ideas and knowledge of their limitations