

# The Bible and Children

## Introduction

Study of the Bible and children has been a growing area within research, and it has flourished particularly since the 1990s. During this period, research has developed and gone through certain stages; however, these stages do not replace but rather complement each other. To simplify, an early stage focused on aspects of children's formation (common and religious upbringing), a second stage stressed children's social relations and networks (belonging and dependence), and then—more recently—a stage appeared in which children are seen as active subjects (agents in their own lives and in the lives of others). Attention has also grown to matters such as gender, life stages, social class, ethnic diversity, and disability and illnesses. Research is now characterized by interdisciplinarity, particularly with the social sciences (e.g., social history, cultural anthropology, sociology), but also with fields within the humanities (e.g., art, classics, history, archaeology, literature) and more recently also with medicine (children's diseases). In research on the Bible and children, it is important to distinguish between the study of children and the study of childhood, with the former referring to the living conditions, social functions, activities, etc. of children and the latter, *inter alia*, to conceptions of children as human beings and ideas about childhood as a stage of life. Whereas the former focuses chiefly on the children themselves, the latter usually reflects the viewpoints of adults. These perspectives are of course not mutually exclusive but rather complement and inform one another, which makes the relationship between the two—between “reality” and “idea(l)s”—a matter of interest in itself. The two main parts of the Bible are termed in this article “Hebrew Bible” (which, considering its central place within both Judaism and Christianity, is less biased than the Christian “Old Testament”) and “New Testament” (which is the firmly established terminology within Christianity). Research on children in the Bible and its individual parts is presently carried on unevenly. Comparatively, far more research has been done on the New Testament than on the Hebrew Bible, but within both some areas are more thinly covered than others; this is evident in comparing various subsections in this article. Moreover, the topic “Bible and children” must be approached in at least two ways, namely, to study children *in* the Bible and to study the impact of the Bible *on* children. To date, much more research has been done on the former than on the latter; this is clearly reflected in the present article. This incongruity does not correspond to their importance, however, considering the enormous impact of the Bible on history, cultures, and societies, and consequently also on children and their lives. The latter approach is most clearly foregrounded under the last three headings (see [Reception History: Children's Bibles, Books, Other Media](#), [Theology of Childhood](#), and [Childist Interpretation](#)).

## Bible: General Overviews

The Bible is a collection of writings with different social, cultural, and ideological origins and with a history spanning more than a millennium, and the place of children and conceptions of childhood varies correspondingly. Scholarship on children in the Bible is still at a stage at which it is difficult to synthesize research findings meaningfully. General overviews are thus mostly tentative and piecemeal. Bunge [2008](#), Parker, et al. [2012](#), and O'Brien [2014](#) give brief surveys

as does to an extent King [2013](#) (cited under [Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Overviews](#)). Larsson and Stenström [2013](#) gives the broadest and most comprehensive overview; it is scholarly based yet accessible. Two important anthologies deal with central writings and topics: Bunge, et al. [2008](#) is the more comprehensive, and more popularly and hermeneutically oriented; Ebner, et al. [2002](#) is somewhat more specialized and scholarly oriented. Lockyer [1970](#), Voeltzel [1973](#), and Zuck [1996](#) are useful for their surveys and lists of passages on children and childhood, but they represent earlier stages of research and can primarily serve as reference tools. For other overviews that cover parts of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, see citations under [Hebrew Bible: Overviews](#) and [New Testament: Overviews](#).

Bunge, Marcia J. "Introduction." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, xiv–xxvi. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The brief introduction presents examples of the growing attention to children/childhood in biblical studies and the Academy, sketches the volume's aim, significance, and guiding questions (e.g., nature and status of children, adult responsibilities, adult/child relationships, formation, children's agency), and briefly summarizes the main topics and findings.

Bunge, Marcia J., Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, eds. *The Child in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

A major contribution to the study of children in the Bible, this work consists of eighteen chapters by established scholars and covers central writings in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as well as some thematic essays. Presents overviews but also has substantial scholarly discussions and hermeneutical reflections. Suitable for advanced undergraduates and graduates as well as general readers. All individual chapters are annotated in this article.

Ebner, Martin, Paul D. Hansen, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, eds. *Gottes Kinder. Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie 17*. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

An important collection of contributions (in German) dealing with a variety of ancient and modern perspectives on children and childhood, with sections on social context, identity formation, children's education, childhood metaphors in the Bible, children's rights, and theology of childhood. Suitable for postgraduate students and above, but varying in level of difficulty. Several individual chapters are annotated in this article.

Larsson, Mikael, and Hanna Stenström. *Ett myller av liv: Om barn i Bibelns texter*. Uppsala, Sweden: Svenska kyrkan, 2013.

The book provides a systematic and easily accessible presentation of the place of children in the various groups of writings in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, respectively. Contains

also theoretical and hermeneutical reflections on various aspects of children and childhood in the Bible and its relevance for today. Suitable for scholars, students, and general readers.

Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Children of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.

The book lists and names all the children in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Its value is primarily as a reference tool.

O'Brien, Julia M., ed. in chief, "Children." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Gender Studies*. Vol. 1, *ASI-MUJ*, 25–60. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Brief introductions to children and childhood in the Bible and the ancient world, informed by gender studies, and with select bibliographies. Contains seven subentries: Ancient Near East (Erin E. Fleming); Hebrew Bible (Jennifer L. Koosed); Greek World (Pierre Brulé); Roman World (Christian Laes); New Testament (Chris Frilingos); Early Judaism (Karina Martin Hogan); Early Church (John W. Martens and Melvin G. Miller). Suitable for scholars, students, and general readers.

Parker, Julie Faith, Marcia J. Bunge, David Kreaemer, et al. "Child, Children." In *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Vol. 5, *Charisma—Czaczkes*. Edited by Dale C. Allison, Jr., Hans-Joseph Klauck, Volker Leppin, and Choon Leong Seow, column 83–118. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012.

Useful and readable introductory surveys of various aspects of childhood in the Bible and its reception, with select bibliographies. Areas dealt with are: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Greco-Roman Antiquity and New Testament, Judaism (rabbinic, medieval, modern), Christianity, other religions, literature, visual arts, music, film.

Voeltzel, René. *L'enfant et son éducation dans la Bible*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1973.

A seminal survey of children and childhood in the Bible. Deals with a broad range of aspects of ancient childhood (stages of childhood, the childhood of Jesus, etc.), not only with education and pedagogy. A general sketch with limited nuances; holds an optimistic view about the high valuation of children both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament.

Zuck, Roy B. *Precious in His Sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible*. Cedar Rapids, IA: Baker, 1996.

The book contains a useful survey of passages and material on children in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, but it is of limited value for research due to its conservative-biased ethics on matters such as corporal punishment.

## **Bible: Overviews, Special Topics**

Publications on special topics related to children in the Bible as a whole are limited, and most of them are brief overviews. Crüsemann [2002](#) and Towner [2008](#) deal with ideological matters, such as children's rights and children as the image of God, whereas Bartlett [2008](#) focuses on social practice, and Koskenniemi [2009](#) and Sigismund [2009](#) on social threats against children, such as exposure and abandonment. For other citations that deal with similar or related topics, see Michel [2003](#), Michel [2006](#) (cited under [Hebrew Bible: Overviews](#)), Scott [1992](#) (cited under [Pauline Letters](#)), and Yamauchi and Wilson [2014–2016](#).

Bartlett, David L. "Adoption in the Bible." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 375–398. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

Readable survey of adoption in the Hebrew Bible, Greco-Roman world, and the New Testament, with brief analyses of central passages. Underscores differences in the practice between ancient times and today. Pays attention to metaphorical usage in the Bible and reflects on implications for modern times. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Crüsemann, Frank. "Gott als Anwalt der Kinder? Zur Frage von Kinderrechten in der Bibel." In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 183–198. Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

This accessible article reflects on the idea of children's rights and explores to what extent it is justified or possible to speak of such rights in the world of the Hebrew Bible (main examples being Deuteronomy 24:16–17; 21:18–21; Genesis 22; Leviticus 20:2–5), and observes that several passages prescribe reciprocal limitations in the use of power between parents and children.

Koskenniemi, Erkki. *The Exposure of Infants among Jews and Christians in Antiquity*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009.

This readable book deals with the praxis of abandonment of infants (up to ten days of age) in the Greco-Roman world and surveys all evidence found in Jewish and Christian sources until the 5th century. It discusses the attitudes to and argumentation against the praxis and gives an account of social and medical causes for exposure. Suitable for scholars, students, and a general audience.

Sigismund, Markus. “‘Without Father, without Mother, without Genealogy’ (Heb 7:3): Fatherlessness in (Old and) New Testament.” In *Growing up Fatherless in Antiquity*. Edited by Sabine R. Hübner and David M. Ratzan, 83–102. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

The article contains an overview of fatherlessness and its implications in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Suitable for scholars, students, and a general audience.

Towner, W. Sibley. “Children and the Image of God.” In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 307–321. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The essay offers an introduction to a biblical understanding of the image of God and how it is to be applied to children, presenting central interpretations and meanings of the concept of “image.” Using the child as a lens, Towner aims at highlighting neglected aspects of the concept and at showing that children are made in the image of God. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Yamauchi, Edwin M., and Marvin R. Wilson. *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity* (4 Vols.). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2014–2016.

The volumes contain introductory surveys of a broad variety of subjects related to everyday life in the contexts of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and Greco-Roman Antiquity in general. Many entries deal with or touch on matters of gender, family, and children. Each entry includes a bibliography.

## **Textbook**

The only textbook in English to date is Bunge and Browning [2009](#), which contains only a limited number of texts. For more extensive surveys of references, see Larsson and Stenström [2013](#), Lockyer [1970](#), and Zuck [1996](#), all cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#).

Bunge, Marcia J., and Don S. Browning, eds. *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009.

This book brings together a unique selection of classic and formative texts on children/childhood from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, respectively, organized mainly by topic and with brief introductions by leading scholars from each field. The volume focuses on central aspects of children/childhood and aims at interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural comparison, and interreligious dialogue. Easily accessible for both academics and general readers.

## Bibliographies

Scholarly contributions on the Bible and children are steadily growing. Aasgaard [2006](#) surveys some central areas of research, with a selection of important contributions, but it is, with respect to bibliographies, now relatively dated. Vuolanto and Aasgaard [2014](#) is a short, introductory bibliography; it covers the ancient world more generally and is updated irregularly. Vuolanto, et al. [2018](#) is a very extensive bibliography, which is updated annually/biannually. Research on the Bible is only one area covered by this bibliography, but many of the other entries listed are relevant also to the Bible. The clearly most comprehensive bibliography of the Hebrew Bible is Parker [2016](#). For other brief bibliographies, see Bunge, et al. [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)), King [2013](#) (cited under [Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Overviews](#)), and O'Brien [2014](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Aasgaard, Reidar. "Children in Antiquity and Early Christianity: Research History and Central Issues." *Familia* 33 (2006): 23–46.

A brief introduction to research history on ancient childhood and central research areas (basic living conditions of children, formation, family roles, societal roles, cultural roles, historical change), with examples (attitudes to children, parent-child relations, methodological matters), and a select bibliography. Somewhat dated, but still of use.

Parker, Julie Faith. "Children in the Hebrew Bible". In *Oxford Bibliographies* (sub-section: Biblical Studies). Edited by Christopher R. Matthews. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

An extensive annotated bibliography which presents a broad range of scholarly works on the Hebrew Bible and its religious, historical, and social context (occasionally also the New Testament). Contains the sections General Overviews, Children in Families; Children and Parents; Siblings; Babies, Children, and Youth; Children and Daily Life; Children and Archaeology; Children and Sacrifice; Religious and Theological Approaches to Children in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; Children and Metaphors. Suitable for undergraduates and above.

Vuolanto, Ville, and Reidar Aasgaard, eds. [An Introductory Bibliography for Studying Children and Childhood in Antiquity and the Middle Ages](#). Oslo: Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo, 2014.

A brief introductory bibliography which contains some central publications and overviews of the history of childhood. Covers general history, Greco-Roman Antiquity, early Christianity, Bible and early Judaism, the Middle Ages and Byzantium, apocryphal infancy gospels; some entries in Nordic languages. Suitable for undergraduate students and the general public.

Vuolanto, Ville, Reidar Aasgaard, Oana Maria Cojocaru, Camilla Christensen, Cecilie Krohn, and Camilla Roll, eds. [Children in the Ancient World and the Early Middle Ages: A](#)

[Bibliography for Scholars and Students \(Eighth Century BC–Eighth Century AD\). 9<sup>th</sup> Edition.](#)  
Oslo: Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo, 2018.

This searchable bibliography with 2,351 entries covers scientific publications dealing with the period 8th century BCE to the 8th century CE. Includes a broad range of areas: history, classics, history of ideas, archaeology, religion, theology, and (some) art history. Contains entries in English (mainly), but also French, German, Italian, Spanish, and (occasionally) other languages. Suitable mainly for scholars, graduate students, and above. Updated annually/biannually.

## **Hebrew Bible: Overviews**

As with the Bible in general, the Hebrew Bible contains relatively few comprehensive overviews of children and childhood; see, however, several of the citations under [Bible: General Overviews](#). The citations listed here are thus partly very general surveys, but for the most part they deal with specific topics that are traced throughout the whole or main parts of the Hebrew Bible. Garroway [2014](#) and Steinberg [2013](#) give the most comprehensive surveys; both focus on conceptions of the child and childhood, the former with a focus on children’s varying roles within the household, the latter with a focus on parent-child relations. For a detailed survey of the terminology of “child” in the Hebrew Bible, see also Parker [2013](#) (cited under [Historical Writings](#)). Kunz-Lübcke and Lux [2006](#) is a scholarly advanced anthology with contributions that cover various central matters related to children and childhood. Eng [2011](#) is a systematic analysis of Hebrew terms denoting children and childhood. Michel [2003](#) and Michel [2006](#) systematically traces and discusses the Hebrew Bible passages that deal with violence against children, as does Dewrell [2017](#) as concerns child sacrifice, whereas Koepf-Taylor [2013](#) focuses on children’s functions within the ancient agrarian society, and particularly on children’s work and agency. Marsman [2003](#) compares depictions of women in Ugarit and Hebrew Bible sources, including also children/girls. Stiebert [2013](#) (cited under [Hebrew Bible: Children/Childhood as Source of Metaphor](#)) focuses on father–daughter relations. Fischer [2002](#) presents very brief surveys of perceptions of childhood in the Hebrew Bible, and with a view to modern research. See Cooper [1996](#) for a survey of children and childhood in Jewish history until the present (cited under [Reception History: Children’s Bibles, Books, Other Media](#)). The subdivisions [Torah](#); [Historical Writings](#), and [Prophets and Wisdom Literature](#) are somewhat artificial but reflect texts and topics that have de facto received emphasis in modern research on the Hebrew Bible.

Dewrell, Heath D. *Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017.

Takes up a recurring and much debated topic within research; see Parker [2016](#) (cited under [Bibliographies](#)) for references to earlier studies of the topic (cited there under [Children and Sacrifice](#)). Inquires in detail into the biblical, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence, indicating three types of Israelite child sacrifice, and discusses the differing rhetorical and theological strategies applied in the biblical condemnation of this practice. Suitable for graduate students and scholars.

Eng, Milton. *The Days of Our Years: A Lexical Semantic Study of the Life Cycle in Biblical Hebrew*. New York: T&T Clark, 2011.

A linguistic and semantic study of terms in the Hebrew Bible that refer to the life cycle in ancient Israel, grouped into three main semantic domains: young (pp. 58–94), mature, and aged. Valuable tool for the more advanced research.

Fischer, Irmtraud. “Über Lust und Last, Kinder zu haben: Soziale, genealogische und theologische Aspekte in der Literatur Alt-Israels.” In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 55–82. *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

In a critique of modern sentimental and uncritical depictions of children in the Bible, the article describes aspects of children’s living conditions, social roles, and status in ancient Israel (e.g., children’s obligations, childlessness, theological reflection) as well as the influence of the commonly used parent-child metaphor on the concept of God itself.

Garroway, Kristine Henriksen. *Children in the Ancient Near Eastern Household*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014.

Through analyses of texts and archaeological material, this book explores various understandings of “child” in the Hebrew Bible and its social setting. It discusses the place and functions of children within the household and argues that the ways in which children’s gender and social status affect their place in the household are vital to an adequate understanding of the Near Eastern society. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Koepf-Taylor, Laurel W. *Give Me Children or I Shall Die: Children and Communal Survival in Biblical Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.

Through a child-centered interpretation of biblical passages, this book shows that in the agricultural social setting of the Hebrew Bible children’s labor was needed for the family’s subsistence. In contrast to modern societies, work was not only an exercise for adult life; rather, children contributed actively from an early age. The biblical focus on infertility also reflects the economic value of children. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Kunz-Lübcke, Andreas, and Rüdiger Lux, eds. “*Schaffe mir Kinder . . .*”: *Beiträge zur Kindheit im alten Israel und in seinen Nachbarkulturen*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006.

This volume, which is mainly aimed at classical and biblical scholars, first discusses the concept of “child” and the problems of sources. The next part deals with the ancient Mediterranean cultures in general and the final part with ancient Israel. Several contributions focus on problematic aspects of children’s lives, such as violence, child work, street children, and



foundlings. The most relevant chapters are annotated in this article. Contains a brief survey (by Lux and Kunz-Lübcke, pp. 11–17) of research, mainly German, in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient world until c. 2005.

Marsman, Hennie J. *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003.

On the basis of mainly literary evidence, this volume compares the social and religious position of women in Ugarit to that of women in Israel. Discusses the roles of women in the family and in society from a feminist-exegetical perspective, with chapters that also deal with children and their lives (birth; siblings; daughters; orphans).

Michel, Andreas. *Gott und Gewalt gegen Kinder im Alten Testament*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

This is a detailed study of Hebrew Bible texts dealing with violence against children. Discusses violence as a concept and systematizes the material according to types of violence and the role of God. Chapters on the killing, eating, and sacrifice of children, with hermeneutical reflection. Focuses on text and theology, not on social or historical aspects. Suitable primarily for specialists.

Michel, Andreas. “Gewalt gegen Kinder im alten Israel: Eine sozialgeschichtliche Perspektive.” In *“Schaffe mir Kinder . . .”*: Beiträge zur Kindheit im alten Israel und in seinen Nachbarkulturen. Edited by Andreas Kunz-Lübcke and Rüdiger Lux, 137–163. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006.

The article summarizes central points in Michel [2003](#) but with more attention to social history. Focuses particularly on passages on wartime violence against children and on child sacrifice, with a valuable survey of the modern scholarly debate on the matter (cf. Genesis 22). See also Kunz-Lübcke and Lux [2006](#).

Steinberg, Naomi. *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013.

The book explores social constructions of childhood in the Hebrew Bible. On the basis of interpretations of Genesis 21, 1 Samuel 1, and Exodus 21:22–25, and cross-cultural comparisons, the book argues that children’s obligations toward parents were emphasized, not vice versa. And although there were differences depending on gender, age, and social level, the role of children was to fulfill parents’ needs and desires. Suitable for late undergraduate students and above.

## Torah

Research has dealt more with children in the Torah than in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, but more by means of general surveys than extensive analyses. Focus has particularly been on Genesis, see Fretheim [2008](#) and Rogers [2002](#); Exodus, see Larsson [2012](#) and McGinnis [2008](#); and especially Deuteronomy, see Finsterbusch [2002](#), Miller [2008](#), and Murphy [2012](#). Leviticus and Numeri have received only slight attention. Finsterbusch [2002](#) and Miller [2008](#) focuses particularly on aspects of children's formation, Larsson [2012](#) on children's agency, and Fleishman [2011](#) on daughters' relations to their fathers. Fretheim [2008](#), McGinnis [2008](#), and Murphy [2012](#) address matters of violence against children. Rogers [2002](#) and Larsson [2012](#) apply elements from modern psychological theory on the biblical material. See also Sivan [2018](#) on Exodus 2:1–10 (cited under [Reception History: Children's Bibles; Books; Other Media](#)).

Finsterbusch, Irmtraud. "Die kollektive Identität und die Kinder: Bemerkungen zu einem Programm im Buch Deuteronomium." In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 99–120. *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

By means of analyses of select passages in Deuteronomy (4:9–10; 6:7; 6:20–25; 31:12–13; 32:46), the article discusses the relationship between the collective identity of the people of Israel and ideas on the education of children and their role in intergenerational cultural transmission and argues that this takes on a programmatic form in the book. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Fleishman, Joseph. *Father–Daughter Relations in Biblical Law*. Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2011.

The volume analyzes three biblical texts that address the legal and social status of daughters (Exodus 21:7–11, sale of daughter as slave; Leviticus 19:29, a father's power to prostitute his daughter; Leviticus 21:9, prohibition of a priest's daughter to become a prostitute). Holds that Israelite law more than other neighboring laws aimed at giving daughters a secure position in society. A very thorough study, primarily suitable for post-graduate students and scholars.

Fretheim, Terence E. "'God Was with the Boy' (Genesis 21:20): Children in the Book of Genesis." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 3–23. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The chapter presents the place of children in Genesis in three parts: chapters 1–11 (children created in the image of God), chapters 12–50 (children as promise, having Abraham as teacher, and as vulnerable), and two specific stories about children (Ishmael, Isaac), and discusses problematic aspects of treatment of and violence against children. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Larsson, Mikael. "In Search of Children's Agency: Reading Exodus from Sweden." In *Exodus and Deuteronomy*. Edited by Athalya Brenner, 79–94. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

The article is a brief reading of Exodus with an emphasis on children as subjects, particularly the rights and duties ascribed to children, and with a view to present-day concerns (Sweden being the main example) and to modern child psychology. Both then and now, children are regarded as a gift but seem to be given next to no status or function as agents in themselves.

McGinnis, Claire R. Mathews. "Exodus as a 'Text of Terror' for Children." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 24–44. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The article directs attention to the place of children in the book of Exodus, particularly in its first part (genealogy, Pharaoh's killing of infants, rescue of Moses, the death of the Egyptian firstborn), arguing that children are viewed not only as vulnerable, but also as an integral element of the social and religious communities to which they belong. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Miller, Patrick D. "That the Children May Know: Children in Deuteronomy." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 45–62. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The chapter argues that Deuteronomy, being a book of teaching on faith and how to live, gives prominent attention to children and their education, and then develops on what, why, how, and by whom children should be taught, underscoring the importance of the family and faith community then and now. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Murphy, A. James. "Children in Deuteronomy: The Partisan Nature of Divine Justice." *Biblical Interpretation* 20 (2012): 1–15.

The article argues that whereas God in Deuteronomy is portrayed as protecting and sustaining Israelite children, he appears at the same time as a source of terror and death for others. Interpreted from the perspective of children, Deuteronomy cannot be read as having a universal and humanitarian concern for children. Contains a critique of Towner [2008](#) (cited under [Theology of Childhood](#)).

Rogers, Steven A. "The Parent-Child Relationship as an Archetype for the Relationship between God and Humanity in Genesis." *Pastoral Psychology* 50 (2002): 377–385.

This methodologically experimental article presents God's relationship to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, respectively, as reflecting successive early stages of human psychological development (symbiosis, separation, individuation, reintegration). Read in this way, the narrative

structure of Genesis can be seen as portraying a relationship between God and humanity/his people as similar to the development of a relationship between parents and children.

### **Historical Writings**

The historical writings have received very little scholarly attention as concerns children and childhood, with Parker [2009](#) and Parker [2013](#) being the main exceptions. Parker [2009](#) focuses on 2 Kings 2–8; this volume and Parker [2013](#) and Parker and Elkins [2016](#) (cited under [Childist Interpretation](#)) develop a groundbreaking methodology for a “childist interpretation” of biblical texts. The works by Parker as well as Menn [2008](#) make use of literary approaches and, in particular, character analyses.

Menn, Esther M. “Child Characters in Biblical Narratives: The Young David (1 Samuel 16–17) and the Little Israelite Servant Girl (2 Kings 5:1–19).” In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 324–352. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

Close readings of passages on two child characters who are representative of many other children described in the Hebrew Bible. Aims at foregrounding children in the biblical narratives, thus also uncovering neglected aspects of these stories, such as children’s insight, agency, and even leadership. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Parker, Julie Faith. “You Are a Bible Child: Exploring the Lives of Children and Mothers through the Elisha Cycle.” In *Women in the Biblical World*. Edited by Elizabeth A. McCabe, 59–70. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009.

The article, which is historical in approach and focuses on 2 Kings 2–8, describes an ordinary day in the life of an eleven-year-old girl in the highlands of Israel in the 8th century BCE. This is done by means of textual and archaeological evidence and aims at visualizing everyday aspects of children’s life conditions at the time. Suitable for students, scholars, and a general audience.

Parker, Julie Faith. *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in the Hebrew Bible, Especially the Elisha Cycle*. Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2013.

The book contains a thorough survey of the terminology of “the child” in the Hebrew Bible and close readings of passages in 2 Kings 2–8. Brings attention to the place of children in the Hebrew Bible and shows that they were recognized as different from adults. Offers and demonstrates a new interpretive approach (childist interpretation) to biblical stories involving child characters. Suitable for biblical scholars and scholars generally interested in new methodologies.

## Prophets and Wisdom Literature

As with the historical writings, the prophets and the wisdom literature have received very little scholarly attention, and in English only in article format. In the prophets, Lux [2006](#) makes an analysis of a recurring childhood motif, with a view to violence against children; such violence is also the topic of Heard [1997](#), a brief study of Habbakuk, but now with attention to violence on the part of God. Lapsley [2008](#), which deals with Isaiah, focuses mostly on metaphorical and rhetorical use of childhood language. As for wisdom literature, Brown [2008](#) and Delkurt [2002](#) deal with Proverbs. Both focus on matters of formation and find that Proverbs reflects a nuanced understanding of children and pedagogy. In a similar way, Kaiser [2006](#) presents conceptions of children in Sirach, with attention to social context. Next to nothing of specialized studies is done in the other prophets, in the Psalms, or in other poetic writings, such as Lamentations and Job.

Brown, William P. "To Discipline without Destruction: The Multifaceted Profile of the Child in Proverbs." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 63–81. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The chapter argues that Proverbs has much to say not only about children, but also to children, at the same time reflecting a variety of attitudes toward children. It treats topics such as the value and status of children, instruction and discipline, the child as being representative of every person, and wisdom and the child. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Delkurt, Holger. "Erziehung nach dem alten Testament." In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 227–253. Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

Contrary to a traditional view within research that upbringing in ancient Israel was very strict and aimed mainly at reproducing established knowledge, the author seeks to nuance this belief in studying the contents and setting of the book of Proverbs. The article also briefly reflects on similarities in father/teacher-child and God-people relations. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Heard, Chris. "Hearing the Children's Cries: Commentary, Deconstruction, Ethics and the Book of Habakkuk." In *Bible and Ethics of Reading*. Edited by Danna Nolan Fewell and Gary A. Phillips, 75–90. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997.

The article offers a deconstructive reading of Habakkuk, and in a way that draws attention to the implicit victims of God's "justice": the Judahite and Chaldean children who suffer and die as a consequence of his punishment. In giving voice to these children, this reading draws an ethical lesson, warning against similar sacrifices of children on the pretext of justice. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Kaiser, Otto. "Erziehung und Bildung in der Weisheit des Jesus Sirach." In *"Schaffe mir Kinder . . .": Beiträge zur Kindheit im alten Israel und in seinen Nachbarkulturen*. Edited by Andreas Kunz-Lübcke and Rüdiger Lux, 223–251. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006.

The article explores perceptions of the formation and education of children in Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, with attention to the sociohistorical and political setting, and briefly to gender. It discusses its emphasis on the commandment to honor parents and elaborates on the aim, contents, and pedagogical strategies reflected in the book. See also Kunz-Lübcke and Lux [2006](#) (cited under [Hebrew Bible: Overviews](#)).

Lapsley, Jacqueline E. "'Look! The Children and I Are as Signs and Portents in Israel': Children in Isaiah." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 82–102. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

Making use of a literary-theological approach, the author shows the central and varied role of children in Isaiah: his children receive symbolic names; rulers are criticized for maltreatment of children; Israel/Judah are metaphorically termed "children of God"; children serve as signals of eschatological restoration. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Lux, Rüdiger. "Die Kinder auf der Gasse: Ein Kindheitsmotiv in der prophetischen Gerichts- und Heilsverkündigung." In *"Schaffe mir Kinder . . .": Beiträge zur Kindheit im alten Israel und in seinen Nachbarkulturen*. Edited by Andreas Kunz-Lübcke and Rüdiger Lux, 197–221. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006.

The article discusses a number of passages referring to children on the streets in prophetic sayings on judgment and redemption and traces their development into a standard motif, a topos that also reflects that children on the streets were particularly exposed to violence. See also Kunz-Lübcke and Lux [2006](#) (cited under [Hebrew Bible: Overviews](#)).

## **Hebrew Bible: Children/Childhood as Source of Metaphor**

In contrast to the New Testament, little research has been done on children/childhood metaphors in the Hebrew Bible. Partly this can be due to the comparatively less common use of such language. Indeed, some research has been done on parent-child relations, but usually with a focus on the parent aspect, particularly on God as father or mother, see Stiebert [2013](#). Still, much ground here remains unexplored. Strawn [2008](#) surveys some of this material, with several references to relevant secondary literature. Children/childhood metaphors in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism are also dealt with, to some extent, in Francis [2006](#) (chapter 2, cited under [New Testament Metaphors](#), Thompson [2000](#) (3–13, 40–55, cited under [New Testament Metaphors: Overviews](#)), Chen [2006](#) (73–101, cited under [New Testament Metaphors: Gospels, Acts, and Catholic Letters](#)), more briefly in Bartlett [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: Overviews, Special Topics](#)).

Stiebert, Johanna. *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Studies father–daughter relations from various perspectives (historical, metaphorical, narrative), employing a variety of modern methodologies to the material. Analyzes passages from a broad range of biblical writings, and develops on topics such as the social role of daughters, sacrifice, incest, and God and his “daughters”. Suitable for graduates and above.

Strawn, Brent A. “‘Israel, My Child’: The Ethics of a Biblical Metaphor.” In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 103–140. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The article briefly sketches the use of father-child metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, emphasizes their rhetorical power, and argues that the usage had impact both on Israel’s concept of God (theology) and on the relations of Israelite parents to their children (ethics). It also holds that the metaphors, adequately interpreted, are of value for modern faith communities. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

## **Qumran**

The Dead Sea Scrolls have been little studied with attention to children, and even less as regards childhood metaphors. The most substantial and detailed analysis is Wassen [2012](#), whereas Bernstein [2004](#) is very brief. Both focus primarily on the education of children.

Bernstein, Moshe J. “Women and Children in Legal and Liturgical Texts from Qumran.” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 11 (2004): 191–211.

The article focuses on women mostly but discusses some passages (particularly in the Damascus Document and the Rule of the Congregation) in which children are mentioned alongside women and also as a separate category, especially in connection with their education.

Wassen, Cecilia. “On the Education of Children in the Dead Sea Scrolls.” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 41 (2012): 350–363.

The article analyzes three passages in the Rule of the Congregation and the Damascus Document on the education of children and argues that children within the Dead Sea movement, both boys and girls, received a thorough training in both reading and writing (and more thorough than other Jewish children), and with emphasis on the Torah.

## **Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Overviews**

Compared to some other fields within biblical studies, considerable research has been done on early Judaism and Christianity, but more on Christianity than on Judaism, with Cohen [1993](#) the only work focusing exclusively on Judaism. Several of the contributions, such as Bakke [2005](#) and Osiek, et al. [2006](#), aim at placing the material within a broader sociohistorical context, particularly a Greco-Roman setting; the latter work has a special emphasis on gender (female). Bakke [2005](#) has limited material on the New Testament but focuses on its reception in the patristic period, whereas Horn and Martens [2009](#) includes material from a broad range of early Christian traditions, also eastern. Strange [1996](#) presents a popular overview of the New Testament and early Christianity in context, and King [2013](#) briefly surveys the same period, together with a backward glance at the Hebrew Bible. For the Greco-Roman context of early Judaism and early Christianity, see also Laes and Vuolanto [2017](#) (cited under [Childist Interpretation](#)).

Bakke, Odd Magne. *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

Central contribution on children in the ancient world/early church. Deals primarily with childhood from the 2nd century on, thus reflecting early Christian reception of the Bible, and focuses on central topics: patristic conceptions of children, violence against children, formation, children's roles in worship, and conflicts between family life and the ascetic life. Suitable for a general audience, advanced undergraduates, and above.

Cohen, Shaye J. D., ed. *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*. Atlanta: Scholars, 1993.

Collection of early and valuable studies on various issues related to family, with emphasis particularly on parent-child relations (mutual obligations and rights), and with a view to the sociohistorical and cultural setting (Greco-Roman world) and to gender and social status (slavery). Suitable mainly for graduate students and above.

Horn, Cornelia B., and John W. Martens. *"Let the Little Children Come to Me": Childhood and Children in Early Christianity*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009.

An informative study joining together insights from biblical studies, patristics, and early church history, spanning the first six centuries CE. Methodologically conscious, discusses concepts of the "child," and focuses on central aspects of the life, experience, and perceptions of children within early Christianity, with analyses of a broad range of material (canonical, non- and post-canonical). Suitable for advanced undergraduates, graduates, and above.

King, Margaret. "Children in Judaism and Christianity." In *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*. Edited by Paula S. Fass, 39–60. London: Routledge, 2013.



The chapter surveys a considerable amount of material on children in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and early Judaism and Christianity and holds that the growth of Christianity led to a higher valuation of children. Mostly reads the texts at face value with limited attention to nuances and as to whether the material reflects social realities. Contains a brief annotated bibliography.

Osiek, Carolyn A., Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch. *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.

This readable book deals with the role of women in early Christianity (1st–3rd centuries) within a Greco-Roman context, and with focus on social organization and relations. Chapter 3 (birth, infant care) and chapter 4 (growing up) present useful surveys and discussions of the place of children, particularly girls, within the earliest Christian communities.

Strange, William. *Children in the Early Church: Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament, and the Early Church*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996.

Concise and readable presentation of children's life and status and of ideas of childhood in the ancient world, in the Gospels (with emphasis on Jesus' attitudes and his preaching of the kingdom of God), and in the life and ritual praxis of the early church. Discusses also the contemporary relevance of the material. Suitable for undergraduates and the general public.

### **Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Special Topics**

Several more specific topics have received particular attention in research. Aland [1967](#) deals with infant baptism, Lindemann [1995](#) with abortion, and Kartzow [2018](#) with slavery. In addition, Koskenniemi [2009](#) (cited under [Bible: Overviews, Special Topics](#)) examines the abandonment of children, with special emphasis on early Judaism and Christianity.

Aland, Kurt. *Die Stellung der Kinder in den frühen christlichen Gemeinden—und ihre Taufe*. Munich: C. Kaiser, 1967.

Summarizes an important discussion in the 1960s on the historical roots of infant baptism, particularly whether its origins can be traced to New Testament times. Aland argued against this, whereas Joachim Jeremias was a main advocate for the opposite view. The discussion is also dealt with in Bakke [2005](#) (chapter 6, "Children's Participation in Worship," esp. pp. 223–230, with references also to later contributions to the debate [cited under [Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Overviews](#)]).

Kartzow, Marianne Bjelland. "Slave children in the first-century Jesus movement." In *Childhood in History: Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. Edited by

Reidar Aasgaard, Cornelia Horn, and Oana Maria Cojocaru, 111–126. London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

The chapter analyzes texts (Luke 12:41–48; Gal 4:21–31; Rom 9:6–10; Col 3–4) that in various ways deal with slaves, and reflects on the impact slavery would have on children. Makes active use of intersectionality, and can serve as an introduction to this kind of approach. Suitable for graduate and postgraduate students as well as general readers.

Lindemann, Andreas. “‘Do Not Let a Woman Destroy the Unborn Babe in Her Belly’: Abortion in Ancient Judaism and Christianity.” *Studia Theologica* 49 (1995): 253–271.

This readable article presents views on abortion in Greco-Roman thought, early Judaism, and early Christian literature and reflects on the reasons for the restrictive view held in the early Jewish and Christian sources. Has numerous references to primary and secondary literature. The issue is also discussed in Bakke [2005](#) (chapter 4, “Abortion, Infanticide and *Expositio*, and Sexual Relations between Children and Adults,” esp. pp. 110–128, with references [cited under [Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Overviews](#)]).

## Historical Jesus/Jesus as a Child

The topic of the attitudes of the historical Jesus to children has received limited attention in research, in spite of the traditional and public interest in the New Testament passages that deal with Jesus and children. Clearly, this has to do with the difficulty of tracing the “real” Jesus behind the narratives of the Gospels. Instead, the focus has been on the ideas reflected in the individual Gospels or in a combination of them. Barton [1992](#) and Gundry-Volf [2000](#) present brief overviews and some reflection on methodological challenges. The childhood of the historical Jesus has also received little attention; this too is due to the scarcity of reliable sources. A main exception is van Aarde [2001](#), which combines sociohistorical and psychological analyses in this examination of Jesus as a child. For this section, see also citations under [Gospels and Acts of the Apostles: General](#), [Gospel of Matthew](#), and [Gospel of Luke/Acts of the Apostles](#).

Barton, Stephen C. “Jesus: Friend of Little Children?” In *The Contours of Christian Education*. Edited by Jeff Astley and David Day, 30–40. Great Wakering, UK: McCrimmons, 1992.

Succinct and balanced, but somewhat old, presentation of the attitudes of the historical Jesus and the four evangelists toward children, arguing that the New Testament material and theology can be read as supporting the modern idea of Jesus as “friend of little children.” Readable for scholars, students, and a general audience.

Gundry-Volf, Judith M. “‘To Such as These Belongs the Reign of God’: Jesus and Children.” *Theology Today* 56 (2000): 469–480.

This readable, introductory article surveys material on children in the New Testament and presents the main ways in which the significance of children is emphasized in Jesus' teaching and actions: children as recipients of the kingdom of God, as models of entering the kingdom, as models of humility, as human beings to be served, as representing God in the world.

Van Aarde, Andries. *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus as a Child of God*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 2001.

The book argues that historical research should focus also on the early years of Jesus. Holds that he grew up fatherless and considers Joseph to be a fictional father figure. Argues that Jesus instead called upon God as his father, and that Jesus' experience as fatherless provided the basis for his compassion for society's marginalized. Suitable for scholars and graduate students.

### **New Testament: Overviews**

All the contributions in this section pay considerable attention to the sociohistorical context of the New Testament material. Eltrop [2002](#), Francis [1996](#), and Gundry-Volf [2001](#) present brief overviews; in addition, Eltrop [2002](#) offers some hermeneutical and research-critical reflections. Balla [2003](#) and Müller [1992](#) are the only book-length analyses of the material; the former focuses particularly on parent-child relations, the latter on the concept of the child and on children's status in the first Christian communities. See also the citations under [Bible: General Overviews](#). Next to nothing seems to be written on the Book of Revelation/the Apocalypse.

Balla, Peter. *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and Its Environment*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

A thorough and balanced study of child-parent relations in the New Testament in the context of Greco-Roman (classical and Hellenistic) and Jewish traditions, with a "from below" perspective, mainly focusing on the rights and obligations of children, in particular the seeming tension between the call to leave parents and to honor them. Suitable for scholars and graduate students.

Eltrop, Bettina. "Kinder im Neuen Testament: Eine sozialgeschichtliche Nachfrage." In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 83–96. *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

This accessible article presents a critique of ancient and modern male and adult-centered language and readings of the New Testament, which reflect, partly, the hierarchical structures of antique society and, partly, blind spots in modern scholarship. Holds that the example of Jesus means that Christians should then and now always take sides with children and defend them.

Francis, James M. M. "Children and Childhood in the New Testament." In *The Family in Theological Perspective*. Edited by Stephen C. Barton, 65–85. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.

The article presents attitudes toward children and the metaphorical use of childhood in the New Testament as seen from a sociohistorical point of view. Discusses ideas of obedience, the teaching of Jesus, and the relations between childhood and discipleship and between childhood and patriarchy. Accessible for scholars, students, and general readers.

Gundry-Volf, Judith M. "The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament." In *The Child in Christian Thought*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 29–60. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

The chapter surveys the material on children in the New Testament, with a focus on main motifs but also differing traditions. Treats, in particular, the relations between Jesus' teaching of children in the kingdom of God and his healings of children and the more ordinary dealings with children in the letters of the apostles. Suitable for students, scholars, and general readers.

Müller, Peter. *In der Mitte der Gemeinde: Kinder im Neuen Testament*. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 1992.

A central early contribution. Focuses on the sociohistorical context (especially children's formation) and sketches in detail the New Testament word field of "child" (also metaphorical). Discusses the place of children in the synoptic tradition (with a separate chapter on Mark 10:13–16) and in the letters. Pays attention to hermeneutical and contemporary perspectives. Contains useful tables and figures. Suitable for graduate students and above.

## **Gospels and Acts of the Apostles: General**

Research on the gospels has primarily centered on the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke); the Gospel of John has very little on children. Most of the studies are relatively old; however, see Krause [1973](#), Légasse [1969](#), and Weber [1979](#). Most studies do not include the Acts of the Apostles. Légasse [1969](#) has detailed analyses of the Synoptic Gospels, whereas Krause [1973](#) and Weber [1979](#) focus on reception history and hermeneutical concerns. Later research has become more specialized, and either examines the Gospels individually or more specific topics across the Gospels. Main examples of this are Betsworth [2015](#), who analyzes each of the Gospels, and Murphy [2013](#), who deals with social tensions in earliest Christianity that would strongly affect the lives of children.

Betsworth, Sharon. *Children in Early Christian Narratives*. London, New Dehli, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015.

An important and thorough yet readable study of children in each of the canonical gospels, as well as in the second century *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and *Protevangelium of James*. Attentive to the Greco-Roman social and cultural contexts. Makes close readings of the texts particularly from redaction critical, literary, and gender study perspectives, and within the framework of childist interpretation. Suitable for graduate students and above, scholars, Christian educators, and general readers.

Krause, Gerhard, ed. *Die Kinder im Evangelium*. Stuttgart, Göttingen, Germany: Ehrenfried Klotz, 1973.

A seminal and readable popular study, with a focus on reception and on historical, hermeneutical, and practical aspects. Takes its point of departure in an analysis of the Gospel of Mark 10:13–16 (“Jesus blesses little children”) with chapters on later interpretations of the passages in texts and visual art, and with final reflections on present-day perceptions of Jesus as the “friend of children.”

Légasse, Simon. *Jésus et l'enfant: “enfants,” “petits” et “simples” dans la tradition synoptique*. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969.

A seminal scholarly study. Detailed analyses of “Jesus and children” stories and passages on “little ones” and “simple ones.” Discusses the relationship between the kingdom of God and children, sketches the status of children in the Jewish and Greco-Roman context, and elaborates on the attitudes of the historical Jesus to children. Suitable primarily for biblical scholars.

Murphy, A. James. *Kids and Kingdom: The Precarious Presence of Children in the Synoptic Gospels*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013.

A study of children and discipleship. Applies a deconstructive literary approach to the Synoptic Gospels. Discusses the tension between stories about Jesus and children and sayings relativizing family and argues that the eschatological Jesus movement brought about household disruption and alienation of children. Holds that concern for real children in the ancient world and today should replace traditional embellishing. Suitable for graduate students, scholars, and general readers.

Weber, Hans-Ruedi. *Jesus and the Children: Biblical Resources for Study and Preaching*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1979.

A seminal popular study, slightly outdated, but interesting for its survey and discussion of “Jesus and children” passages and for its hermeneutical orientation. Contains useful appendixes on New Testament terms for “child,” an annotated bibliography of pre-1979 research, and brief excerpts of Greco-Roman and Jewish texts on children and education.

## Gospel of Matthew

The main in-depth study of Matthew is the methodologically conscious Eltrop [1996](#). Like Eltrop [1996](#), Betsworth [2013](#) also approaches the Gospel from feminist and hermeneutical perspectives, whereas White [2008](#) is more general, with a focus on the relationship between children and the kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels.

Betsworth, Sharon. "What Child Is This? A Contextual Feminist Literary Analysis of the Child in Matthew 2." In *Matthew*. Edited by Nicole Wilkinson Duran and James P. Grimshaw, 49–64. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.

The article analyzes Matthew 2 (Jesus' infancy) and 18:1–5 (children and the kingdom of God) from a feminist perspective and within the context of a group of women involved in children's ministries. After presenting traditional interpretations, it rereads and recontextualizes the texts to the present setting and briefly concludes in considering similarities then/now and on the relevance of the texts to present-day concerns. Suitable for scholars, students, and general readers.

Eltrop, Bettina. *Denn Solchen gehört das Himmelreich: Kinder im Matthäus-evangelium: Eine feministisch-sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Stuttgart: Ulrich E. Grauer, 1996.

The book discusses the place of children in the Gospel of Matthew from a feminist and sociohistorical perspective and with hermeneutical reflections. After a presentation of all passages dealing with children, the book analyzes in detail Matthew 18:1–5 (children and the kingdom of God) and 19:13–15 (Jesus and the children). Suitable for scholars and graduate students.

White, Keith J. "'He Placed a Little Child in the Midst': Jesus, the Kingdom, and Children." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 353–374. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

Explores the relationship between children and the kingdom of God in Jesus' sayings and actions, with emphasis on the Gospel of Matthew. Makes a narrative analysis, with the aim of foregrounding children and thus illustrating core themes in Matthew as a whole. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

## Gospel of Mark

The main in-depth study of Mark is Betsworth [2010](#), which pays particular attention to gender and sociohistorical context. Gundry [2008](#) presents a general survey of material on children in Mark; Howard [2013](#) is a brief analysis informed by recent interest in disability studies, as is the more thorough study in Solevåg [2017](#); and Ebner [2002](#) criticizes traditional interpretations of

Mark 10 and emphasizes the broader social concerns implicit in the text. See also Mercer [2005](#) (cited under [Theology of Childhood](#)) and Parker and Elkins [2016](#) (cited under [Childist Interpretation](#)).

Betsworth, Sharon. *The Reign of God Is Such as These: A Socio-literary Analysis of Daughters in the Gospel of Mark*. London: T&T Clark, 2010.

An analysis of passages in Mark involving daughters, seen in the light of attitudes to daughters in the Greco-Roman world and in Greek literature and the Septuagint. Demonstrates that Mark's depiction of daughters both conforms to and deviates from traditional ideals, thus illuminating Mark's concept of the reign of God. Suitable for postgraduate students, New Testament teachers, and scholars.

Ebner, Martin. "‘Kinderevangelium’ oder markinische Sozialkritik? Mk 10,13–16 im Kontext." In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 315–336. *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

In a detailed and distinctive interpretation of Mark 10:13–16 (Jesus' Blessing of the Children), the article holds that the main focus of the passage for Mark is not on children but rather on the inclusion of all those who are socially marginalized into the Christian community and the household of God. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Gundry, Judith M. "Children in the Gospel of Mark, with Special Attention to Jesus' Blessing of the Children (Mark 10:13–16) and the Purpose of Mark." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 143–176. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The article presents and analyzes texts in Mark in which children appear as characters or as subjects of Jesus' teaching and argues that Mark portrays Jesus as overcoming cultural and religious impediments regarding children and promoting their equal participation with adults in the coming kingdom of God. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Howard, Melanie A. "Jesus Loves the Little Children: A Theological Reading of Mark 9:14–29 for Children with Serious Illnesses or Disabilities and Their Caregivers." *Word and World* 33 (2013): 275–283.

This brief and readable article gives an interpretation of Mark 9:14–29 (the healing of a boy who has been mute since childhood) from the perspective of disability studies (a recent approach within biblical research), and reflects on whether and how this and other similar ancient texts can serve as positive resources for children with serious illnesses or disabilities and their caregivers.

Solevåg, Anna Rebecca. "Listening for the Voices of Two Disabled Girls in Early Christian Literature." In *Children and Everyday Life in the Roman and Late Antique World*. Edited by Christian Laes and Ville Vuolanto, 290–302. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

The chapter deals with two texts, one from the New Testament (Mark 7:24–30, the Syrophenician girl) and the other from the apocryphal Act of Peter (Cod. Berol. 8502.4, Peter's daughter). Analyzes the texts from the perspectives of gender, disability, and intersectionality. Suitable for graduate and postgraduate students as well as general readers.

### **Gospel of Luke/Acts of the Apostles**

No book-length study in English of children in the Gospel of Luke, nor in the Acts of the Apostles, is available. This is somewhat surprising since children play a prominent role in the Gospel; this is shown in Carroll [2008](#), which presents a general survey of Luke. Billings [2009](#) and Krückemeier [2004](#) focus on Jesus in the temple as a twelve-year-old boy, with attention to sociohistorical and literary context, respectively; see also [Historical Jesus/Jesus as a Child](#). Green [2008](#) constitutes the only contribution in English to focus exclusively on the Acts of the Apostles; but see also Osiek, et al. [2006](#) (cited under [Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Overviews](#)).

Billings, Bradly S. "'At the Age of 12': The Boy Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52), the Emperor Augustus, and the Social Setting of the Third Gospel." *Journal of Theological Studies* 60 (2009): 70–89.

The article holds that Luke's story about Jesus in the temple primarily reflects a Gentile setting (in Asia Minor), not a Jewish, and should be read with a view to Roman imperial cult, with the boy Jesus portrayed as a historically significant figure in ways similar to that of Greco-Roman biographies.

Carroll, John T. "'What Then Will This Child Become': Perspectives on Children in the Gospel of Luke." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 177–194. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The article holds that children play a surprisingly prominent role throughout Luke and that the Gospel both reflects intrafamilial (parent-child) conflicts and portrays children as agents by themselves, with obligations toward their family and with a central place in the kingdom of God. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Green, Joel B. "'Tell Me a Story': Perspectives on Children from the Acts of the Apostles." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 215–232. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

In comparison to the Gospel of Luke, his second volume, Acts of the Apostles, has very little material on children. After an analysis of the relevant passages, the author discusses the



theological implications of this relative shortage, concluding that Acts nevertheless prompts the development of a theology of children. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Krückemeier, Nils. “Der zwölfjährige Jesus im Tempel (Lk 2.40–52) und die biografische Literatur der hellenistischen Antike.” *New Testament Studies* 50 (2004): 307–319.

The article argues that the story about Jesus in the temple tradition-historically has its roots in both Hellenistic (biographical works) and Jewish literature (Hebrew Bible). Luke’s depiction of Jesus as a child with an extraordinary wisdom parallels a number of passages in contemporary writings.

## **New Testament Letters**

The letters of the apostle Paul and the letters belonging to the Pauline tradition (the so-called deutero-Pauline letters and Pastoral Epistles) have been relatively extensively studied, from theological, ideological, and sociohistorical points of view. Aasgaard [2008](#) and Gaventa [2008](#) present overviews, with special attention to rhetorical function and modern relevance, respectively, whereas Yarbrough [1995](#) particularly focuses on parent-child relations. MacDonald [2008](#) and MacDonald [2012](#) both focus on the household codes in letters from the early post-Pauline tradition (Colossians and Ephesians), with some attention paid to children’s roles within the family and the pedagogical function of the household, respectively. MacDonald [2014](#), which consciously applies approaches from sociohistorical, gender, and life course studies, is the first book-length analysis of children in the deutero-Pauline letters and the Pastoral Epistles. In contrast to the letters in the Pauline tradition, little research has been done on the Catholic letters; to a degree, this is due to the limited place children have in these writings.

Aasgaard, Reidar. “Like a Child: Paul’s Rhetorical Uses of Childhood.” In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 249–277. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The article analyzes the literal and metaphorical language of children and childhood in Paul’s letters and aims at depicting his views on actual children and parent-child relations. Discusses whether Paul conforms to or deviates from Greco-Roman attitudes and pays attention to his rhetorical use of the childhood language. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. “Finding a Place for Children in the Letters of Paul.” In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 233–248. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The chapter surveys Paul's references to actual children and examines the ways in which he refers to children metaphorically. It then considers the manner in which his theology can contribute to contemporary reflection about children, arguing that it calls for a radical rethinking of children, their value, and roles. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

MacDonald, Margaret Y. "A Place of Belonging: Perspectives of Children from Colossians and Ephesians." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 278–304. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The article focuses on the advice to parents and children in the household codes in two letters of the early tradition after Paul. It discusses children's place in society and the Christian community, power structures and parenting practices among early Christians, and the function of families and house churches in their neighborhoods. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

MacDonald, Margaret Y. "Reading the New Testament Household Codes in Light of New Research on Children and Childhood in the Roman World." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 41 (2012): 376–387.

The article argues that recent, cross-disciplinary research on children and childhood can throw new light on the advice to children and parents in Colossians 3:20–21 and Ephesians 6:1–4, first by uncovering the complex and broad range of identities (socially, etc.) of the household members, children included, and second by a greater awareness of the ancient household as a place for education throughout the life course. Suitable for graduate students and above.

MacDonald, Margaret Y. *The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014.

This well-informed and readable book studies Christian teaching about children in the context of family life in the ancient world, with particular attention to the New Testament household codes (Colossians 3:18–4:1, Ephesians 5:21–6:9, Pastoral Epistles) and their understanding of the place of children in Christian households and house churches. Demonstrates the complexity of the familial and societal relationships within which children lived.

Yarbrough, O. Larry. "Parents and Children in the Letters of Paul." In *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*. Edited by L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough, 126–141. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

Readable essay on the apostle Paul's use of parent-child terminology. Surveys the instances in which Paul mentions concrete parents and children and then goes on to discuss Paul's ethical use of parent-child imagery and its background in Greco-Roman attitudes, as evidenced in the historians of Antiquity.

## New Testament: Children/Childhood as Source of Metaphor

Like the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament also makes use of metaphors taken from the field of childhood but comparatively more frequently and in ways that are more varied. This is particularly the case in the letters of Paul, but also in the gospels and the letters in the Pauline tradition, less so in the other letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation.

### New Testament Metaphors: Overviews

Müller [2002](#) provides an introductory survey of the sources and some useful metaphor-theoretical reflection. Francis [2006](#) is by far the most detailed study of childhood metaphors in the New Testament and also takes parallel, contemporary material into consideration, whereas Thompson [2000](#) is a readable and well-reflected presentation of the God as father metaphor. See also Müller [1992](#) (cited under [New Testament: Overviews](#)).

Francis, James. *Adults as Children: Images of Childhood in the Ancient World and the New Testament*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006.

The volume presents and discusses metaphorical usage of “children”/“childhood” and metaphors taken from the domain of childhood in Greco-Roman and Jewish sources and in the New Testament (Gospels, Paul, Hebrews, 1 Peter), with a view to rhetorical function. Large collection of material and useful indexes but somewhat disorganized and methodically confusing.

Müller, Peter. “Gottes Kinder: Zur Metaphorik der Gotteskindschaft im Neuen Testament.” In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 141–162. *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

This readable but brief sketch of the “children of God” metaphor in the New Testament begins with an accessible metaphor-theoretical discussion and then goes on to survey the use and impact of the metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Suitable for students and a general audience (in spite of some expressions in Greek).

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000.

Analyzes from a feministic perspective perceptions of God as father in the biblical tradition, with chapters on the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, the historical Jesus, the synoptic gospels, Paul, and John, and with concluding reflections on developments in the understanding of God as

father and on matters related to gender. Occasionally deals with parent–child relations. Accessible for undergraduates and above, also for general readers.

### **Gospels, Acts, and Catholic Letters**

Even though metaphors related to childhood are not uncommon in the Synoptic Gospels, they seem to have received limited scholarly attention. Some attention, but not a great deal, has been paid to the Gospel of John and the letters of John; here, the parent-child metaphor is applied particularly frequently to the relations between God and Jesus and God and the believer, occasionally also between Jesus and the disciples/believers. Kügler [2002](#) and Thompson [2008](#) present surveys and brief analyses, the former with attention to some central theological motifs, the latter to ecclesiology. Chen [2006](#) analyzes the God as father image in Luke-Acts but only with occasional attention to children. Little systematic research has been done on the Catholic letters apart from the First Letter of John.

Chen, Diane G. *God as Father in Luke-Acts*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.

The volume presents perceptions of God as father in the biblical tradition, with main emphasis on Luke-Acts, but also with attention to father roles in the Greco-Roman world, the Hebrew Bible, and early Judaism. Argues that father is the central image for God in Luke-Acts, and emphasizes similarities with earlier biblical tradition and the idea of the Roman emperor as a father. Occasionally deal with children (metaphorically or other). Accessible for graduate students and above.

Kügler, Joachim. “‘Denen aber, die ihn aufnahmen . . .’ (Joh 1,12): Die Würde der Gotteskinder in der johanneischen Theologie.” In *Gottes Kinder*. Edited by Martin Ebner, Paul D. Hanson, Marie-Theres Wacker, and Rudolf Weth, 83–96. *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 17. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 2002.

See also pp. 163–179. The chapter surveys the use of the “children of God” metaphor in the Gospel of John and First Letter of John and focuses on some main motifs (the role of the logos, the concept of faith, the place of love), also paying attention to the religious context and the polemical function of these writings. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. “Children in the Gospel of John.” In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 195–214. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

Since actual children, differently from the other gospels, are absent from the Gospel of John, the article explores its “children of God” and “Son of God” metaphors as an indirect way of accessing the Gospel’s ideas on childhood, considering this language to reflect a situation in which the Johannine community is seen as a “new family of Jesus.” See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

## Pauline Letters

The frequent and varied use of metaphors related to childhood (and family) is a characteristic feature of the letters of Paul, in particular the seven generally accepted authentic letters, but partly also of the deutero-Pauline letters (but less so with the Pastoral Epistles). For this reason, a number of monographs have been devoted to the study of aspects of this kind of usage in Paul's authentic letters. All (but one: Scott) of these relate closely to the parent-child relationship (as a template for the relationship between Paul and his Christian addressees), and several of them also apply metaphor theory to the material. Gerber [2005](#) covers all the authentic letters, as does Aasgaard [2004](#), which, however, has its main emphasis on the sibling relationship. Gaventa [2007](#) deals with the metaphors mainly from the point of view of the parent (mother), whereas McNeel [2014](#), a specialized study of a single letter (1 Thessalonians), addresses both the parent and the child perspective. Burke [2003](#) is also devoted to 1 Thessalonians but takes a somewhat broader sociohistorical approach to the letter (see also entries cited under [New Testament Letters](#)). Scott [1992](#) focuses on the motif of adoption in the apostle's letters; see also Bartlett [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: Overviews, Special Topics](#)).

Aasgaard, Reidar. *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!": Christian Siblingship in Paul*. London: T&T Clark International, 2004.

A study dealing with siblingship (young and adult siblings), with a focus on sociohistorical setting and family patterns (Greco-Roman and Jewish). Discusses how general conceptions of siblingship are reflected and rhetorically applied on Christians in the apostle Paul's letters. Contains detailed textual analyses and "maps" of family language in each letter. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Burke, Trevor J. *Family Matters: A Socio-historical Study of Fictive Kinship Metaphors in 1 Thessalonians*. London: T&T Clark International, 2003.

A specialized study dealing with children in the context of the family; focuses on the sociohistorical setting (Jewish and Greco-Roman) and on parent-child and sibling relations. Discusses the apostle Paul's application of conceptions of family to the Christian community in Thessalonica. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *Our Mother Saint Paul*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007.

The book is a collection of revised articles and new chapters on mother-child imagery in the letters of the apostle Paul. Gaventa analyzes Paul's frequent use of such imagery (with emphasis on "mother") and with a view to its function in his theology. Suitable for advanced undergraduates and above, biblical scholars, and general readers.

Gerber, Christine. *Paulus and seine "Kinder": Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005.

Detailed, well-informed, and methodologically advanced study of Paul's use of parent-child metaphors. Has an analysis of Paul's social/relational metaphors and close readings of 1 Thessalonians 2, 1 Corinthians 1–4, and Galatians 4. Underscores the centrality of parent-child metaphors in Paul, their background in the Greco-Roman social world, and Paul's conscious use of them to strengthen his relations with his addressees. Suitable primarily for biblical scholars.

McNeel, Jennifer Houston. *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother: Metaphor, Rhetoric, and Identity in 1 Thessalonians 2:5–8*. Williston, VT: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014.

The book analyzes Paul's recurring metaphors of childbirth and breastfeeding by means of cognitive metaphor theory and social identity analysis, with a view to the meaning and function of the metaphors. It argues that the metaphors carry cognitive content and contribute to the construction of reality and the shaping of group identity of Paul and his addressees.

Scott, James M. *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of *Huiiothesia* in the Pauline Corpus*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1992.

Detailed study of the ideas and praxis of adoption in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian tradition, with exegetical emphasis on the concept of divine adoption (Greek *huiiothesia*) in Galatians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 6:18, and Romans 8:15, 23, and arguing that the apostle Paul's concept of adoption relies heavily on the Hebrew Bible. The book is aimed at biblical scholars.

## **Reception History: Children's Bibles, Books, Other Media**

The Bible has made an enormous impact on posterity until present-day times, and it has also heavily influenced children's lives, both through the reading or hearing of the text itself and through the preaching of its message. The Bible is and has very often and in various ways been adapted with a view to children, particularly through children's Bibles, books, and also other media, such as pictures, films, and music. In fact, for many or most children such adaptations have been or are their main way of getting access to the Bible and its message. Bottigheimer [1996](#) is a groundbreaking monograph on the history of children's Bibles; Bottigheimer [2012](#) is a very brief introduction to children's Bibles as a field of study; and Dalton [2016](#) is an important study of American children's Bibles with implications also for other regions of the world. Stichele and Pyper [2012](#) deals with a variety of aspects, with main emphasis on textual adaptations of the Bible but also on paratextual and visual matters, and with methodological and hermeneutical reflections. Sivan [2018](#) is a reception historical study of Miriam, the biblical sister of Moses. Brenner [2006](#) focuses on films adapting the creation stories to children, with brief discussions of theology, methodology, and hermeneutics. Cooper [1996](#) traces children and childhood in Jewish history from ancient Israel until the present. See also Landy [1997](#) (cited under [Theology of Childhood](#)) and Fewell [2003](#) (cited under [Childist Interpretation](#)).

Bottigheimer, Ruth. *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

A landmark book on children's Bibles, suitable for most audiences. Part 1 presents a survey of children's Bibles since the first printed editions of the Bible with emphasis on the United States and various parts of Europe. Part 2 (the longer part) analyzes the material from a variety of perspectives, such as views of God, parent/child relations, class differences, gender, the miraculous, and violence.

Bottigheimer, Ruth. "Children's Bibles." In *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Vol. 5, *Charisma—Czaczkes*. Edited by Dale C. Allison, Hans-Joseph Klauck, Volker Leppin, and Choon Leong Seow, column 123–126. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012.

Brief survey (from the Middle Ages to the present) of children's Bibles as a genre, with attention to gender, social context, and historical trends. Includes a very brief bibliography.

Brenner, Athalya. "Recreating the Biblical Creation for Western Children: Provisional Reflection on Some Case Studies." In *Creation and Creativity: From Genesis to Genetics and Back*. Edited by Caroline Vander Stichele and Alastair G. Hunter, 11–34. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006.

This readable and easily intelligible article deals with how Genesis 1–3 is interpreted in Bible films for children. Five films in various languages are analyzed with special attention to plot, relation to/interpretation of biblical text, and gender/stereotyping, and with reflections on methodology and similarities and differences across the films.

Cooper, John. *The Child in Jewish History*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996.

The volume surveys the history of children and childhood from ancient Israel until the present, with chapters on biblical and talmudic times, the Middle Ages, the early modern period, modern European regions, and America. Deals with a broad range of topics related to family and childhood, to education and to social life, with a consistent focus on Jewish childhood through the ages. Accessible to all readers interested in the topic.

Dalton, Russell W. *Children's Bibles in America: A Reception History of the Story of Noah's Ark in US Children's Bibles*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016.

Thorough and well-argued study of about 400 children's Bibles (English-American), from colonial times until the present, showing how the story of the Ark is adapted differently in different social and historical contexts. Makes active use of insights from literature, pedagogy,

religious studies, ethics, and childhood studies. An important contribution with relevance also for the study of children's Bibles in other languages and cultures.

Sivan, Hagith. "Ancient Jewish traditions: Moses' infancy and the remaking of biblical Miriam in Antiquity." In *Childhood in History: Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. Edited by Reidar Aasgaard, Cornelia Horn, and Oana Maria Cojocaru, 94–110. London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

The chapter traces the historical transformations Miriam, Moses' sister, undergoes from Exodus 2:1–10 on, with adaptations to new cultural and theological contexts. Focuses on examples from postbiblical Hellenistic settings, art in the Dura Europos synagogue, and rabbinic material from the Babylonian Talmud to medieval midrash. Important reception historical contribution. Accessible for students, scholars, and general readers.

Stichele, Caroline Vander, and Hugh S. Pyper, eds. *Text, Image & Otherness in Children's Bibles: What Is in the Picture?* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012.

A central contribution to research on children's Bibles (including books and visual media), with chapters covering different topics, periods, and continents, and with numerous examples. Focuses particularly on how "the other" (e.g., outsiders, enemies) is characterized and treated. Suitable for advanced undergraduates and above, scholars, teachers, religious professionals, and general readers.

## **Theology of Childhood**

Modern research on "the Bible and children" has been accompanied by systematic and critical reflection on the place of children in the Bible and its world, on the historical impact of the Bible on children's life, and on the meaning and value of the Bible for children. In dialogue with systematic theology, scholars have over the years developed ideas about a "theology of childhood." This concept is, however, also closely related to a "childist interpretation" (see [Childist Interpretation](#) below). "Theology of childhood" and "childist interpretation" do not refer to specific, clearly defined concepts, however; rather, they serve as umbrella terms for approaches that in various ways have, as their main focus of study, children and their living conditions, roles, functions, and agency. Balthasar [1991](#) is primarily of historical interest as a work that served as an impetus for interest in the study of children in the Bible. Brueggemann [2008](#) has a similar aim, serving as an inspiration to base the concern for children on a biblical understanding of God. Bunge [2012](#) gives a popular introduction to central issues and approaches within research. Jensen [2005](#) and Towner [2008](#) develop a theology of childhood on the basis of the child as created "in the image of God," in monograph and article format, respectively. These contributions to a large degree approach the biblical material from the perspective of adults. In contrast, Landy [1997](#), Fewell [2003](#) (cited under [Childist Interpretation](#)), and Herzog [2005](#) address the sources critically from the perspective of modern children and their needs and



interests. Mercer [2005](#) combines a theology of childhood with biblical exegesis and applies this within a modern social and religious context.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Unless You Become Like This Child*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991.

Early contribution on the role and status of children in the Bible and in Christianity. Contains brief meditations on matters such as God's kingdom is for children, the human child, the child of God and man, becoming and living as God's children, and to be a child above all. A scholarly work primarily of historical interest, but it has served to strengthen interest in childhood and children in the Bible.

Brueggemann, Walter. "Vulnerable Children, Divine Passion, and Human Obligation." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 399–422. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

An engaged description of "God's passionate commitment to children" in the Bible, considered to be reflected in Israel's concern not only for their own offspring (Exodus 12–13, Deuteronomy 6, Joshua), but also for the offspring of others (e.g., orphans; Deuteronomy 10; Hosea 14; Psalms 10, 68, and 146). See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

Bunge, Marcia J. "Christian Understandings of Children: Central Biblical themes and Resources." In *Children, Adults, and Shared Responsibilities: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, 59–78. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

This readable article presents an overview of the nature and status of children in the Bible and its depiction of adult responsibilities and of children's duties and responsibilities. Briefly reflects on problematic as well as beneficial reception-historical approaches and present-day applications of the biblical material, with a final appeal for a consciously developed theology of childhood.

Herzog, Kristin. *Children and Our Global Future: Theological and Social Challenges*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2005.

The volume presents, criticizes, and discusses various attitudes toward children in Christian, but also other religious traditions. Focuses in chapter 2 on biblical resources for theological reflection on children and childhood (Hebrew Bible, pp. 21–34; New Testament, pp. 34–50). Addresses social and environmental issues such as child work and soldiery, violence, role of the churches, and children as (God's) agents of global change. Well-suited for general readers.

Jensen, David Hadley. *Graced Vulnerability: A Theology of Childhood*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2005.

On the basis of the Bible, particularly the creation of human beings in the image of God (the Hebrew Bible) and the incarnation of God in the child Jesus (the New Testament), the book holds that children's vulnerability displays our common basic humanity and God's own nature. This has important implications for modern theology, church practice, and Christian attitudes toward a world in which children's lives are often threatened. Suitable for scholars, students, and general readers.

Landy, Francis. "Do We Want Our Children to Read This Book?" In *Bible and Ethics of Reading*. Edited by Danna Nolan Fewell and Gary A. Phillips, 157–176. Atlanta: Scholars, 1997.

The article presents three theoretical approaches to the ethics of children's reading of the Bible, one ideology-critical and very reserved, one culturally oriented and positive, and one of a mixed, contradictory kind involving critique, fantasy, and subversion. This third approach is favored by the author. Suitable for graduate students and above.

Mercer, Joyce. *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*. Saint Louis, MO: Chalice, 2005.

Central and readable contribution to the development of a theology of childhood. Contains methodological reflection (informed by feminist theology), insightful analysis of the Gospel of Mark, and chapters on children and consumerism, conflicting attitudes to children, Christian formation of children, and children and liturgy. Integrates history, theology, and present-day religious and social concerns. Suitable for general readers, advanced undergraduates, and above.

Towner, W. Sibley. "Children and the Image of God." In *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia J. Bunge, Terence E. Fretheim, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 307–321. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

The essay offers an introduction to a biblical understanding of the image of God and how it is to be applied to children, presenting central interpretations and meanings of the concept of "image." Using the child as a lens, the author aims at highlighting neglected aspects of the concept and at showing that children are made in the image of God. See also Bunge [2008](#) (cited under [Bible: General Overviews](#)).

## **Childist Interpretation**

Whereas reflections on a "theology of childhood" have been developed from at least the early 1990ies on, a "childist interpretation" in readings of biblical and other ancient material has particularly gained ground during the last decade. This development is a result of impulses particularly from general childhood studies and feminist studies, but has also been furthered by various approaches within biblical studies, such as redaction criticism. To a considerable degree, a "childist interpretation" supplements and overlaps with a "theology of childhood" (see

Theology of Childhood). However, whereas childist interpretation tends to focus more on exegesis and be more attentive to viewing the world from children's own perspective, theology of childhood appears more strongly informed by systematic theology and concerned with – often adult – conceptions of childhood as a life stage. Grassi [1991](#) is an early contribution, with traits of a childist interpretation. Particularly Parker [2013](#) (cited under [Historical Writings](#)), but also Betsworth [2015](#) (cited under [Gospels and Acts of the Apostles](#)), develop exegetical methodologies for practicing a childist interpretation of biblical passages. Parker and Elkins [2016](#) gives a brief introduction with exegetical examples. Fewell [2003](#) approaches the biblical material from the perspective of children's agency, and Aasgaard [2017](#) discusses criteria for a quest for ancient children's life and culture. Berquist [2009](#) adds perspectives from psychology, and Solevåg [2017](#) (cited under [Gospel of Mark](#)) and Kartzow [2018](#) (cited under [Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Special Topics](#)) introduce intersectionality as an element of childist interpretation. Several of the chapters in Laes and Vuolanto [2017](#) also have approaches that contribute to the development of a childist interpretation.

Aasgaard, Reidar. "How Close Can We Get to the Roman Child? Reflections on Methodological Achievements and New Advances." In *Children and Everyday Life in the Roman and Late Antique World*. Edited by Christian Laes and Ville Vuolanto, 321–334. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

The chapter sums up central results in Laes and Vuolanto [2017](#) and develops on the potential and value of a variety of established and new methodologies in the study of children and childhood in the past. Applies some of the criteria of the historical Jesus quest on the search for children's life and culture. Accessible for students, scholars, and general readers.

Berquist, Jon L. "Childhood and Age in the Bible." *Pastoral Psychology* 58 (2009): 521–530.

This brief and readable article sees the topic of childhood in the Bible as an opportunity for an exchange between biblical studies, psychology of religion, and pastoral psychology. With childhood as a lens on three biblical stories (Adam and Eve, David, and Jesus), Berquist reflects creatively on matters of age, interpretative presuppositions in biblical studies, and the value of psychological insights for exegesis.

Fewell, Danna Nolan. *The Children of Israel: Reading the Bible for the Sake of Our Children*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.

Accessible and engaged treatment of Hebrew Bible passages related to children. Part 1 discusses the relevance of the Bible for today's children and directs attention to the present-day maltreatment of children as well as similar stories in the Bible. Part 2 offers examples of children being active agents in their own lives (and those of others). An experimental yet scholarly book that makes use of a variety of genres. Suitable for students, scholars, and general readers.

Grassi, Joseph Colle. *Children's Liberation: A Biblical Perspective*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991.

A popularly written book which in brief chapters deals with children in the Hebrew Bible and in each of the four canonical gospels, and with an epilogue on "Finding the Divine Child". Arguing for taking a children's perspective on the biblical material and on life in our times. Suitable for general readers and religious educators.

Laes, Christian and Ville Vuolanto, eds. *Children and Everyday Life in the Roman and Late Antique World*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

This edited volume explores what it meant to be a child in the ancient world and whether it is possible to find traces of children's own cultures. Combines a broad variety of approaches and materials (literature, art, graffiti, archaeology, history, medicine, religion, etc.), and with a focus on children's experience and agency. Even though only a couple of chapters address biblical material, the volume is a key contribution for the study of children in the Bible. Contains extensive bibliography. Useful for scholars, graduate students, and above. See also Solevåg [2017](#) (cited under [Gospel of Mark](#)) and Aasgaard [2017](#).

Parker, Julie Faith, and Kathleen Gallagher Elkins. "Children in Biblical Narrative and Childist Biblical Interpretation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*. Edited by Danna Nolan Fewell, 422–33. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

The chapter briefly presents recent scholarship and discusses the biblical terminology related to children and youth. In analyses of 2 Kings 5:1–14 and Mark 16:7–29, it presents in a six-step process a childist interpretation of these passages. Methodologically very significant, and contains select bibliography of central works. Useful for students, scholars, and general readers.