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TO TRAIN UP A CHILD: AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM AND THE
LITERATURES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, 1745-1920

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

To Train Up a Child: American Protestantism and the Literatures of Religious Education,
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To Train Up a Child explores the many ways that Protestant educators attempted to foster in children a deeper commitment to the Bible and a closer connection to Christ. This study shows how the emergence and proliferation of children's literature broadened the scope of religious instruction by providing educators with resources that their predecessors had lacked. Featuring a wide range of genres—catechisms, picture books, histories, geographies, biographies, children's sermons, and Sunday-school curricula—it looks at the educational practices and pedagogical heuristics that were developed to lead children into biblical literacy and to instill in them the principles of Christianity. Concerned for those who could not grasp the Bible's complexities, and for the many who seemed unwilling to try, religious educators turned to books that would, the hoped, bring the Bible to life and instill in young readers a lasting interest in its stories. As adults

worked to make scripture real and relevant, they paid greater attention to childhood development, sought out texts that illuminated sacred history, and worked to make Bible study as effectual and entertaining as possible.

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Introduction

Children's Literature and the Making of Religious Experience

[T]o secure the ultimate object of your exertions, you must labor to produce *religious impression*, as well as communicate religious instruction. I know it is God only who can reach the heart, but then he does it generally by pouring out his spirit on judicious and well adapted means. Here then direct all your efforts, to awaken the conscience, to interest the feelings, and to engage the whole soul in the pursuit of salvation, and the business of religion.

—John James, *The Sunday School Teacher's Guide* (1818)

The aim in the making of this book has been to arrange a series of lessons which shall make real the Jesus of the gospels, and which shall help to stimulate in the younger student a desire for a personal comradeship with Jesus.... One who teaches, needs but to show them how to take our Lord out from the pages of a book and to make him live before them.

—Elvira Slack, *Jesus, the Man of Galilee* (1912)

In 1808, the English vicar Joshua Gilpin published *A Monument of Parental Affection to a Dear and Only Son*, a book that chronicled the life and death of his son Joshua. According to Gilpin, the boy had excelled in his studies from an early age. He

had mastered Greek and Latin and had grown to love the writings of Pindar, Sophocles, Demosthenes, and Cicero. He was especially fond of Euclid and often spent his evenings studying the Greek mathematician's work. But he had contracted tuberculosis in his adolescent years, and as his health declined, Joshua had turned to weightier matters. Gilpin explained that his son soon "aspired to the knowledge of divine things, and often raised his thoughts to the contemplation of God, still regularly advancing his preparation for that eternal world, to which he was making so speedy an approach."¹ He put aside the Greek and Roman classics and instead "sat daily at the feet of some master in Israel, from whose piety and experience he might hope for a large encrease [sic] of divine wisdom."² Inspired by Joseph Alleine's *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners* (1672), he "laid aside every other author" and prepared himself for death. Gilpin had not recommended Alleine's book to his son because he worried that "the severity and vehemence of its style might render it less useful to a youth of his character" and believed that it could not communicate "any thing absolutely new on the grand subject of conversion."³ But unbeknownst to Gilpin, Joshua had found it on his father's desk one day and had begun to read it with great pleasure. When the father discovered his son's newest reading preference, he was surprised at first but welcomed the conversations that resulted from its study. The boy died a short time afterward, but Gilpin took comfort in Joshua's "happy acquaintance with divine things" and believed that, from infancy onward, he had used all necessary means to secure his son's salvation.⁴

The *Monument* struck a chord with American readers. The book was published in Philadelphia in 1811 and 1830, New Haven in 1814, Boston in 1822, and New York in 1828 and 1837. The Protestant Episcopal Church released an edition in 1821, the

Methodist Episcopal Church followed suit in 1828, and the American Sunday-School Association issued several editions between 1827 and 1857.⁵ Throughout the book, Gilpin lauded his son's intellectual achievements, but as a Christian parent, he cared much more for Joshua's spiritual development: "My most anxious thought...related less to the *literary*, than to the *religious*, part of my son's education."⁶ Afraid that he might bore the boy with tedious lectures, he developed rudimentary lessons tailored to his son's intellectual and spiritual maturity, and he framed his and Joshua's experiences as a perpetual climb from simpler to more complex material along a "sacred ladder" that marked each Christian's rise from infancy to adulthood. A familiar medieval trope (adapted from Genesis 28:12), the ladder served two primary purposes. First, it helped Gilpin to envision life in terms of a sacramental ascent from ignorance and apathy to spiritual maturity and to track the developmental milestones and spiritual signposts that he and his son passed along the way. As Edward Cahill, Scott Casper, and Gregory Jackson have noted, such heuristic devices helped readers to think of life in terms of distinct, recognizable templates that measured proper moral and spiritual growth.⁷ On the other hand, the ladder in Gilpin's narrative implied that upward progress was not necessarily a given. Without adult assistance, Joshua might have remained at the foot of the ladder, uninterested in such a precipitous climb, or he might have stopped along the way, growing discouraged from the downward slips. The *Monument* suggested that Joshua's progress depended on early and frequent interventions that took into account the child's psychological and spiritual development, making each rung a solid foundation for the next step.

Gilpin used the trope of the sacred ladder as a recurring metaphor that emphasized the relationship between parent and child, dependency and meditation. Yet it also points to the educational practices designed to introduce children to scripture and lead them to Christ. At each stage of Joshua's life, Gilpin had to adopt an age appropriate strategy in order to help his son climb higher, which meant that he had to adjust his methods at each step along the way. Although religious educators took comfort in Proverbs 22:6—"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"—they recognized that religious instruction did not necessarily guarantee children a place in God's kingdom. If not guided by a sure, firm hand, they claimed, the young would turn from Christ and experience eternal suffering. The key lay in discerning what methods were most effective at instilling religious principles in children, from infancy to young adulthood, and adapting religious instruction to address the spiritual inexperience of those who were spread across the lower rungs of the sacred ladder.

To Train Up a Child explores the pedagogical strategies, domestic activities, and classroom curricula that Protestant educators developed and deployed to help children understand the Bible, participate in church affairs, and develop spiritual aptitude. This study pays particular attention to the ways that religious instruction evolved over the long nineteenth century and the manner whereby educators adapted their teaching strategies to meet the changing needs of American children. It explores the biblical and parabiblical texts that helped believers—among them ministers, theologians, catechizers, Sunday-school teachers, and parents—translate the Bible into a vernacular that children could readily understand and internalize. In other words, religious educators were embracing a theological paradox out of necessity. They were quick to admit that the Bible was

sufficient in and of itself for salvation—and that children needed no other book to teach them about redemption—but they were also aware that, because the young could not grasp scripture's complexities, they were unable to achieve their full spiritual potential. This meant that those entrusted with religious instruction had to adapt biblical teachings to the capacities of young readers. They had to condense and revise the Bible's passages, simplify its doctrines, cut its irrelevant and unsuitable elements, and reduce its size. The difficulty lay in navigating between two extremes. They needed to translate the Bible into a language that children could grasp while also maintaining as much of the original text as possible to avoid damaging God's divinely inspired message. What they hoped to produce were Bible-like books that were simple enough to be useful yet authentic enough to stand in for the Bible itself.

Much has been written about how cultural perceptions of childhood changed across the long nineteenth century.⁸ *To Train Up a Child* surveys a wide range of genres—from sermons, catechisms, primers, and devotional manuals to histories, geographies, and biographies—in order to explore the ways that religious educators theorized *Christian* childhood. The category known as "childhood" can be somewhat ambiguous, given the vast disparities between infancy and adolescence. Remarkably, religious educators were often prone to group children together under this catch-all term and to suggest that their teaching techniques were beneficial for all involved, whether those techniques were eighteenth-century catechisms or twentieth-century children's sermons. Even though girls and boys received markedly different educations in American homes and classrooms—and the disparities in literacy between the sexes would only grow as children entered into adolescence and early adulthood and as each sex gravitated

to its own "sphere"—religious educators did not often distinguish between the genders.⁹ They trusted instead that each child had equal need of proper spiritual training.¹⁰

What drastically changed religious instruction over course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the birth of children's literature as a genre and the modernization of the American literary marketplace. On the heels of the First Great Awakening, the burgeoning market for children's literature provided colonial educators with alternatives to standard religious texts (catechisms, primers, sermons, devotional manuals, and songbooks). These did not immediately vanish—the nineteenth century witnessed the slow but steady disappearance of catechisms and primers while sermons, devotional manuals, and songbooks remained popular—but they were now in competition with a growing catalogue of texts designed to appeal to Christian parents and their children. Scholars have long noted that the production, distribution, and circulation of "children's literature"—a genre that is, as Kimberly Reynolds argues, "fraught with complication"—represents an act of mediation in which one generation transmits to the next its social customs and cultural practices via generic conventions that are thought to be fit for such purpose.¹¹ But this process of cultural transmission does not always work as specified. Children are, as M. O. Grenby notes, not merely readers but "users" who both do and do not read books according to the terms established by parents and educators.¹²

The children's book occupies a liminal space between child and adult. It indicates purposeful intellectual condescension, since children's literature is practically never written by children, but it is at best an imperfect medium for the transmission of faith-based ideas, assumptions, and values. Adults write and purchase books based on cultural

conceptions of children's intellectual abilities and literary taste; children consume these books according to both the patterns established by adults and their own personal predilections and inclinations (which are often subject to but not controlled by adult oversight). To think of children not as readers but as users helps explain the genre's continued evolution. As children grow up, start families, and purchase books for their own children, they seek out texts that are both familiar and novel. Children's literature reflects widespread assumptions about childhood, but it also shapes those assumptions by introducing adults to books that both do and do not hew to previously established norms.

The story of children's literature is wrapped up in the story of American book markets. As the "reading revolution" led to increased literacy rates in colonial America and as printers realized that markets existed for pirated British children's books and their own inexpensive texts, the genre experienced a surge of interest. The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed the sharp rise in the production and distribution of children's literature as new networks created avenues for reaching a scattered American populace. The rise of voluntary societies in the first few decades of the nineteenth century and the design and importation of new printing technologies combined to fuel the rapid growth in religious children's literature from the 1820s onward. Protestants who came of age during this period were no longer content with a few select genres nor dependent on the catechistic training that they had received as children. The American literary marketplace was instead flooded with countless texts published and distributed by the American Sunday School Association, the American Bible Society, and the American Tract Society—not to mention the many denominational societies—and children were

given greater access to such texts via the introduction of children's libraries into the nation's expanding Sunday-school system.

But while devout parents and educators had more resources at their disposal, they struggled with many of the same concerns that had gripped their colonial predecessors. Which books were the best books? What parts of the Bible should children read first? Why did some children remain devout while others turned to more worldly affairs? These questions prompted religious educators to look for ways to bring the Bible to life and keep its stories relevant so as to save young readers from spiritual destruction. As *To Train Up a Child* demonstrates, they embraced new methods of instruction because they wanted children to do more than merely read scripture. They believed that children who read the right kinds of books and who were taught the right kinds of lessons would see in the Bible not a loose collection of historical narratives but evidence of God's continued care. What they wanted was nothing less than to help children develop a lasting faith in the tenets of Christianity and experience a meaningful connection to Jesus himself.

Incarnational Aesthetics

In order to accomplish these objectives, religious educators looked for ways to lift scriptural stories from the pages of the Bible, to render them more realistic and lifelike, and to help young readers feel that they had not merely read a book but had communed with Christ. To explore the mechanisms designed to aid children as they studied scripture—the narrative and devotional heuristics that transfigured Bible stories and that made religious instruction a more hands-on, interactive, and affective enterprise—I begin with an advertisement for Olive Miller's children's book *Heroes of the Bible* (1940) since



A Thrilling Soul-Stirring Book of Bible Stories!

IT'S DIFFERENT! . . . ENTERTAINS, INSPIRES, and gives New IDEAS!

JUST MAIL COUPON
Examine FREE for One Week

"Heroes of the Bible" is fascinating and understandable to children of 10 and over because the "Heroes" are so lifelike, and their lives and deeds so exciting. To adults, the appeal is equally great, because it gives a fuller and richer understanding of the Bible.

Opens up new avenues of thinking! Throws new light on old passages! Stimulates ideas—hence of great value to Ministers, Sunday School Teachers and other Church Workers.

Praised by Noted Leaders.

Dr. Daniel A. Poling: "Equally attractive to young and old. Can be used by parents and Sunday School teachers to develop children's interest in the Bible and enrich their Sunday School Lessons. The illustrations are beautiful and help make this volume first in its field." *Dr. William Hiram Foulkes:* "A classic for children and not without charm for adults, especially parents and teachers."

FREE: 10 Bible Pictures in Colors! Suitable for Framing

Full book size (7" x 9 1/4"). Exactly as they appear in "Heroes of the Bible" with titles. A gift that you'll greatly appreciate. An added value for prompt action in mailing coupon now.

Here is truly a remarkable book—written by Olive Beaupré Miller, well known author, Christian woman and Bible student. Famous for such books as "My Book House," "A Picturesque Tale of Progress," "My Travelship," etc. It's for adults and children over 10—and will awaken or rekindle interest in the Bible as a living Book. When you *feel* the very presence of the Bible "Heroes" as you *read* this book, it is because Mrs. Miller *felt* their very presence as she *wrote* it. She visited practically every locality mentioned . . . traveled Egypt, Arabia, Syria, Italy, Greece, Crete . . . trod the highways and byways of Palestine . . . followed the "Road to Damascus," and stood on Mars Hill.

Fig. 1. From Oliver Miller, *Heroes of the Bible* (1940).

it epitomizes the pedagogical concerns with scripture's lifelikeness that emerged out of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century educational praxis (fig. 1).¹³ In the advertisement, the picture at left presents viewers with an odd scene. Miller's book appears upturned, and the banner at top advertises its "thrilling soul-stirring" stories even as the arrow seems to prop its cover open. At its current angle, the book cannot be read, but the advertisement suggests that this is a secondary concern. The stories in Miller's book are no longer held in check by print but transfigured. The slight opening allows the "lifelike" characters to escape the text, walking out of the book and into the world. These same characters appear in scripture, but the advertisement suggests that the Bible's familiarity had rendered them lifeless. Miller's book will instead "awaken or rekindle interest in the Bible as a living book," it explains, helping readers to feel a sense of close proximity to its central figures.¹⁴

The advertisement also promises readers that the book will radically alter their understanding of scripture. It will entertain and inspire, fascinate and excite: "Opens up new avenues of thinking! Throws new light on old passages!" The ad copy suggests that the Good Book had become an old book and that what was needed was a newness that revitalized its teachings and animated its stories. The advertisers do not disclose how exactly Miller's book achieves these results, but they do provide one possible explanation: "[Miller] visited practically every locality mentioned...traveled Egypt, Arabia, Syria, Italy, Greece, Crete...trod the highways and byways of Palestine...followed the 'Road to Damascus,' and stood on Mars Hill."¹⁵ What makes this book so different from the Bible is, the ad makers imply, the author's knowledge of the Holy Land and her ability to translate personal experience into a narrative realism that would revivify old,

familiar stories. The ancient authors had provided all of the necessary material. What Miller did was to augment their narratives—to include historical and geographic context, to clarify unfamiliar passages, to explain obscure rituals and traditions, and to add depth, complexity, and personality to the Bible's characters—in order to bring scripture to life.

These attempts to establish biblical lifelikeness are what I term incarnational aesthetics, modes of religious instruction aimed at fostering in young readers an understanding of and appreciation for scripture and a deeper, more personal investment in Christ's life and ministry. Religious educators who developed these heuristics did so for several reasons. First, they wanted children to internalize scripture so as to recall it with ease whenever asked to do so. Literacy was an important part of this process in that it allowed children to play an active role in family devotions and Sunday services, but reading was merely a means to an end because it alone did nothing to improve children's spiritual health. In this context, adults prioritized memorization, repetition, and recitation. Those who read the Bible without understanding or remembering what they had read were merely aping true devotion. Religious educators who longed for ways to gauge children's spiritual development decided that it was not what children read but what they *said* that mattered. Anyone who had entered into literacy could read scripture; those who had memorized the Bible could prove that they had expended effort toward a specific spiritual goal. Educators trusted that scripture, once memorized, would not only move children one step closer to Christ; it would also form a part of each child's mental furnishings and would inevitably influence children's behavioral patterns. As one educational committee put it in 1816, children often memorized scripture out of obedience to their teachers but after they did so, the Bible was soon "fastened on the

heart" and "riveted in the affections."¹⁶ The acts of memorization and recitation helped educators distinguish between children who were progressing up the spiritual ladder and those who were not, making it possible for adults to track each child's spiritual development and to devote extra time and attention to those who were not moving at a proper pace. As children internalized religious instruction and repeated their lessons in front of their peers, parents, and educators, they provided adults with tangible evidence of spiritual growth while simultaneously adding to their store of knowledge a trove of biblical material that would allow them, in future years, to read the Bible with increased clarity and to participate more fully in the life of the church.

Second, religious educators were keen on these processes because they knew that children who did not internalize scripture would be unable to form the kinds of spiritual associations that served as prerequisites to faith in Christ. For children to take on a Christian identity, they had to look to the Bible for stories that modeled good and bad behavior as well as authentic piety, detect in those passages lessons that were universally applicable, apply those lessons to their own particular circumstances, and strive to live accordingly. When, for example, colonial clergy divided their sermons into three sections—Text, Doctrine, and Application—they reinforced the fact that the Bible was designed by God to be personally applicable. Religious educators wanted children to notice a resonance between scripture and their own lives so as to model their behavior after God's established patterns. The Bible's stories were "true" not just because they had literally happened but also because, as educators often claimed, they were inherently useful and eminently practical.¹⁷ What religious educators hoped to do was to maximize the perceived correspondences between the Bible and daily life in order to teach children

to recognize their moral and spiritual failings and to trust that scripture contained answers to their most important inquiries.

Third, as children's literature grew in popularity and as book production increased exponentially in the early nineteenth century, religious educators began to place their trust in parabiblical books—primarily historical catechisms, children's bibles, histories, geographies, and biographies—that were designed to help children read scripture anew. On the one hand, these books threw new light onto old stories. They were filled with information about the ancient world that could not be found in scripture, facts that were thought to clear up confusion, resolve disagreements, and unlock the Bible's mysteries. On the other hands, educators trusted that this information needed to be dressed up in descriptive prose so as to take hold of the imagination. "Narrative appears a pleasing and engaging way of communicating divine truth to young persons," one author explained.¹⁸ Another claimed, in Lockean fashion, that the Bible's words were of little value if they were not "connected with ideas."¹⁹ Religious educators trusted that the narrative realism and historical verisimilitude of parabiblical literature would enhance Bible study, believing that children who read such books would be able to access a storehouse of concrete images and memorable impressions once they returned to scripture. For them, the Bible was authentic because its stories were told in unadorned prose, but the lack of descriptive detail made it difficult for children to comprehend and imagine its historical realities. Parabiblical literature would not replace scripture. It would instead be read alongside it, illuminating Bible stories with historical insights, religious impressions, and evocative details that would, they hoped, "strike forcibly" on children's imaginations and "awaken some pure and pleasant feelings."²⁰

Finally, and most importantly, incarnational aesthetics emphasizes the measures taken by religious educators to introduce children to Christ and to lead them into a deeper friendship with him. "Wherever you go, he follows you. He shields you from harm He supplies all your wants," the educator John Abbott declared. "Oh, go to him at once, and pray that he will receive you, and write your name among the number of his friends."²¹ Children were taught to go to Jesus, to address him, to love him, and to remain by his side (among many other injunctions). Educators hoped that, through steadfast devotion and divine intervention, the young would experience Christ's presence in their lives, but they were also aware that God had called them to participate in this process and to use, as Philip Doddridge suggested, all "proper Means" at their disposal to direct children to Jesus.²² What Protestant educational literature reveals is an ardent attempt by parents and teachers to develop devotional texts, domestic exercises, and classroom curricula that personalized Christ. Theirs was a two-fold strategy. Staunchly committed to the Word of God—and opposed to the purportedly idolatrous trappings of Catholicism—religious educators grew surprisingly fond of pedagogies that personified Jesus and acculturated generations of Protestants to devotional exercises centered on religious imagery. As David Morgan explains, they began to believe that images "shaped behavior by shaping feeling," and it was this interest in the affective nature of religious experience that led, across the long nineteenth century, to the production and consumption of Christic imagery by members of practically all Protestant denominations.²³ When, in 1913, the W. A. Wilde Company of Boston released *Wilde's Bible Pictures* (fig. 2)—a catalog marketed to parents and educators featuring color prints drawn from every phase of Jesus's life and sold for 1 ½ cents apiece—they were merely capitalizing on longstanding



Fig. 2. From *Wilde's Bible Pictures* (1913).

devotional practices and market demand, catering to Protestants who had grown accustomed to responding in all manner of affective ways to images of Christ.

But personalization refers to more than the mere personification of Christ or the somatic responses brought on by the circulation of Christic imagery. It highlights the fact that, at its fundamental level, religious experience is personal experience and that communion with Christ stems from all manner of highly individualized devotional exercises. Colonial educators like Doddridge believed that God had "stated Rules of Operation in the World of Grace" that to some extent standardized the child's entrance into faith.²⁴ But so many educators—both Doddridge's contemporaries and those that came after him—thought differently. For them, God worked in all manner of ways through all sorts of means. Some educational methods were thought to be more effectual and lasting, but in terms of religious instruction, whatever produced in children a sincere desire to seek after Christ, to ask for forgiveness, and to strive after godliness was valued and put into practice. As American Protestantism developed, as conceptions of childhood evolved, and as new educational pedagogies grew in popularity and acceptance—occurring as this did against a backdrop of dramatic national expansion, political upheaval, and sociocultural change—religious educators took great pains to introduce children to a Jesus that understood their ways, which meant that parents and teachers were constantly looking to translate the Word of God into a language that spoke to American children and to make Jesus as recognizable and enticing a figure as possible.

To Train Up a Child examines the instructional activities and heuristic strategies that Protestant educators developed to bring the Bible to life for American children, helping them feel that scripture was relevant and that Jesus was both familiar and close at

hand. Chapter 1 looks at the ways that eighteenth-century cultural concerns gave birth to new theories of childhood development and new modes of religious instruction. As American colonials grappled with Calvinist orthodoxy and as newly emergent Enlightenment notions challenged these tenets, religious educators began to reexamine their methodologies and to search for ways to instill in children a lasting faith in Christ. They believed that the Bible provided solutions to all of life's problems, but they also were worried that the Bible might itself be a problem. If they were going to get children interested in scripture—and help them develop into biblically literate members of the church—they needed to find ways to make its teachings more accessible and applicable. What they hoped to do was to transform children's devotional labors into enjoyable activities, not a weekly chore but pious play. Looking at one book in particular—a steady seller titled *The History of the Holy Jesus* that remained in print from 1745 to 1814—I argue that "picture books" (as they would later be called) altered domestic devotions by transforming the act of reading. As children were introduced to reading experiences that were also *seeing* experiences, they were taught to see in pictures an accurate representation of historical reality, to feel that their lives were part of an unfolding biblical drama, and to take a more personal interest in the Bible's stories.

Chapter 2 examines the ways that biblical historiography altered children's devotional practices. As religious educators slowly embraced historicist hermeneutics in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, they began to rethink the educational methods that had shaped colonial Protestant education. They trusted that the Bible was a simple book, but they were also increasingly aware that many of the Bible's passages were written in a language that made little to no sense to young American readers. If

children were to comprehend scripture, they had to develop some familiarity with the ancient world; absent historical context, they would be unable to understand the idiomatic expressions, social practices, and religious traditions mentioned throughout the Bible. Looking at two particular genres that flourished in the nineteenth century—natural history and geography—I discuss the educational activities and reading exercises that were developed to cultivate in children an appreciation of biblical history and to help them recognize and comprehend the truths that lay beneath the Bible's simple stories. When it came to natural history, educators hoped to harness children's interest in plants and animals and direct it to scripture and were convinced that those who took part in such lessons would develop a more acute awareness of biblical truth. The same could be said for geographic study. As maps and atlases became increasingly popular and affordable, educators hoped to make religious instruction more lively and interactive. These genres represented a coordinated effort to interest children in ancient history, to get them involved in classroom activities, and to help them think of Christ in more concrete terms, providing young readers with a historical foundation on which to build lives of personal faith.

Because religious educators were keen on making Jesus more personal—so as to help students forge a closer connection to their savior—they were interested in educational practices that made him recognizable, relatable, and imitable. Chapter 3 examines a particular strategy embraced by Protestants across the sectarian spectrum in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Believing that children learned best from other children and looking for ways to teach students how to live Christ-like lives, religious educators turned their attention to the childhood of Jesus. Because the Bible said very

little about the Christ child, adults began to look for ways to construct a viable outline of what that childhood might have entailed. Some opted for a scholarly approach, searching the historical record for clues regarding childhood development in first-century Palestine. Others preferred to think in terms of ideals and to overlay onto the young Jesus a set of characteristics that were deemed godly and thus befitting the Christ child. In either case, religious educators were careful to depict the childhood of Jesus in terms that American children could readily grasp and thereby emulate. This required them to downplay or outright ignore those aspects of Jewish childhood that could potentially disrupt the process of recognition and identification. Even though Jesus was a first-century Jew, they thought that he could not appear *too* Jewish if Protestant children were to model their lives after his. Once adults had invented the probable outlines of Jesus's childhood, they repackaged it in ways that made the Christ child a generic exemplar of Christian values. By whitewashing the ethnic and sociocultural markers that rooted Jesus to a specific time and place in world history, they created a cadre of young Christs that served as models of pious Protestant childhood.

To Train Up a Child draws attention to the literatures of religious education in order to chart the nuances associated with lived religion. Since children are both the subjects of adult discourse and the objects of adult concern—and because most American believers often began believing at an early age—the books published by Christian adults for young readers shed light on the anxieties that shaped American Protestantism and the educational strategies that were developed to alleviate these concerns. To introduce children to greater degrees of biblical literacy and to help them climb the spiritual ladder toward salvation, religious educators sought to teach them the most amount of

information in the least amount of time, trusting that effective instruction would help children to internalize scripture and to think of Jesus as both a savior and friend. As educators historicized the Bible, they began to humanize Christ as well. According to Stephen Prothero, nineteenth-century Protestants "disentangled Jesus from the Bible, replacing the *sola scriptura*...rallying cry of the Reformation with *solus Jesus*: Jesus alone."²⁵ Prothero underestimates the place of Christ in Reformed theology, but he nonetheless recognizes a marked shift in Protestantism that occurred over the course of the long nineteenth century. *To Train Up a Child* explores this phenomenon through the lens of religious instruction. As one generation gave way to the next and as new practices replaced old ones, American educators looked for ways to make their lessons as instructive and entertaining as possible. Because children are agents of change—and because childhood is a category that reflects the evolution of cultural norms—the books written for children and about children shed light on the concerns of Protestant parents, the challenges faced by Christian educators, and the shifting terrain of American religious experience.

¹ Joshua Gilpin, *A Monument of Parental Affection for a Dear and Only Son* (London: Hatchard, Piccadilly, and Robinson, 1808), 114.

² Ibid., 124.

³ Ibid., 125-126. Gilpin refers to Alleine's work as *An Alarm to the Unconverted* and published a new edition in 1824 using that title. See Henry Alleine, *An Alarm to the Unconverted*, ed. Joshua Gilpin (Wellington: F. Houlston and Son, 1812).

⁴ Ibid., 9-10.

⁵ The story of young Joshua Gilpin lived on in other books as well. For example, the minister David Barker excised some material from the *Monument* and included it in his popular 1827 book *The Parent's Monitor* (New York: Samuel Wood & Co., 1829).

⁶ Gilpin, 33.

⁷ See Edward Cahill, "The English Origins of American Upward Mobility; Or, The Invention of Benjamin Franklin." N.d. TS. According to Scott Casper, nineteenth-century biographers frequently borrowed this motif to depict personal achievement. In William Thayer's *The Bobbin Boy*, for example, the "ladder of success" charts Nathaniel Banks's

rise from boyhood to Massachusetts's governor. Similarly, James Brisbin's *From the Tow-Path to the White House*, a campaign biography of James Garfield, illustrates the young boy's journey from "Canal Hand" to "Candidate for President." See Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 120, 266-267. As Gregory Jackson has shown, Charles Sheldon used such imagery on the cover of the novel *In His Steps* to represent both Christ's journey from Bethlehem to Calvary as well as the reader's spiritual growth. See Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 193-194.

⁸ For a brief survey of the field, see the edited collections *Child-Reading Concepts, 1628-1861: Historical Sources*, ed. Philip Greven (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1973), *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, eds. Joseph Hawes and N. Ray Hiner (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), and *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities*, ed. Anna Mae Duane (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2013). See also Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), Harvey Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), Howard Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), Patricia Crain, *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from The New England Primer to The Scarlet Letter* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), and Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

⁹ For more on the separate "spheres" for men and women, see early works by Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977) and Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1977). See also Carl Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*, eds. Dale Bauer and Philip Gould (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). As the collection *No More Separate Spheres!* makes clear, however, the term "sphere" carried with it a host of problematic connotations and was never a completely accurate reflection of historical reality. See *No More Separate Spheres!: A Next Wave American Studies Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ The issue of race complicates matters, given the fact that the children of American slaves were often kept purposefully ignorant (even of spiritual matters) or were only introduced to those parts of the Bible that seemed to endorse chattel slavery. Because many educators were primarily writing for white readers, the children that their texts referred to were often assumed to be white as well. If nineteenth-century Sunday-school reports are to be believed, however, the children of free blacks in Northern states were often invited to participate in religious instruction alongside their white peers. In a representative example, according to the *Proceedings at the First Quarterly Meeting of the New-York Sunday School Union Society* (1816), fourteen newly established Sunday schools had successfully enrolled 1,800 students, of which 400-500 were black. This

would seem to suggest a certain egalitarianism in Sunday-school classrooms throughout the free states, but as these children grew into adolescence and adulthood, they often left white assemblies and joined primarily black churches (such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church) in order to avoid both overt and coded racism. This meant that many black children in the North were for a time exposed to the same teaching techniques that their white counterparts enjoyed, but as they matured, their exposure was more infrequent, their Sunday-school libraries were much smaller (if their churches had any libraries at all), and their access to new classroom technologies was most likely curtailed. Perhaps not surprisingly, when religious educators (i.e. non-slaveholding educators) discussed proper child-training techniques, they very rarely parsed the terms "children" or "childhood" by gender or race and thus implicitly collected all children under these categories. Unfortunately, there is very little scholarship examining the religious education of black children in colonial New England, the formation and operation of black Sunday schools, or the experiences of black children in predominantly white Sunday schools. For some insight into the subject, Sally McMillen, *To Raise Up the South: Sunday Schools in Black and White Churches, 1865-1915* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2001). See also *Proceedings at the First Quarterly Meeting of the New-York Sunday School Union Society* (New York: J. Seymour, 1816), 5.

¹¹ Kimberly Reynolds, *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

¹² See the introduction to M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader: 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-35.

¹³ The advertisement appeared in Volume 19 of the *International Journal of Religious Education* (1940-1941). This was the official publication of the International Council of Religious Education, an ecumenical organization representing over forty Protestant denominations. See "Guide to the International Council of Religious Education Records," Presbyterian Historical Society, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/research-tools/guides-archival-collections/ncc-rg-19>.

¹⁴ *International Journal of Religious Education* 19 (Oct. 1940-Sept. 1941), n.p.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *The Second Annual Report of the New-York Sunday School Union Society* (New York: J. Seymour, 1818).

¹⁷ As one educator put it: "What advantage can be derived from the Stories of Hobgoblins, Enchanted Castles, Faires, Sylphs, Magical Wands, Wishing Caps, &c. &c. &c.? But though Children are fond of Stories, yet their value is enhanced in their view, by knowing them to be authentic. How common is it, for them to inquire, on hearing one told, Is it true? and on being answered in the affirmative, they evidently value it much higher." See *True Stories Related* (New York: S. Wood, 1812), 3.

¹⁸ John Campbell, *Worlds Displayed; for the Benefit of Young People* (Andover, MA: Mark Newman, 1814), n.p.

¹⁹ *Hints on the Establishment and Regulation of Sunday Schools* (New York: J. Seymour, 1816), 6.

²⁰ See Sarah Trimmer, *An Essay on Christian Education* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1812), 236; also Henry Harbaugh, *The Birds of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1854), viii.

²¹ John S. C. Abbott, *The Child at Home* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871), 176.

²² Philip Doddridge, *Sermons on the Religious Education of Children* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1763), 14.

²³ David Morgan, *Protestants & Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.

²⁴ Doddridge, 14.

²⁵ Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 13-14, 79-80. In his discussion of colonial Calvinism, for example, Prothero rightly suggests that ministers and parishioners "emphasized the absolute sovereignty of God and the total depravity of human beings," but he oversimplifies Reformed theology immediately thereafter: "In their religious training, the Old Testament trumped the New, and Jesus the Son cowered in the shadow of God the Father. True, Jesus was the mediator who died on the cross to pay for human sins and satisfy the righteous judgment of his angry Father. Yet he functioned more as a principle than a person.... In Puritan theology, Christ had a limited role to play; Jesus had almost none" (10). In colonial America, however, neither Testament "trumped" the other. The two were instead viewed as a harmonic whole. To claim that Christ's role was "limited" is also problematic in that it overlooks the vast amount of literature devoted to Jesus's birth, death, and resurrection. For more on Christ's place in colonial American theology, see the first three chapters of Richard W. Fox, *Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2005); see also Stephen J. Nichols, *Jesus, Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to The Passion of the Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 2008), 19-45.

Chapter 1

The School of Christ: Epistemologies of Biblical Literacy

BETIMES! BETIMES! Let the Children have the *Early Knowledge* of the *Holy Scriptures*. That Princely Preacher, the Prince of *Anbalt*, would say; *The Holy Scriptures, what are they but the swadling Clothes of the Holy Child Jesus?* HE is to be found in every Chapter. I will then say, Let us Teach our Children the *Holy Scriptures*, as soon as we can after they come out of their *Swadling Cloaths*.

—Cotton Mather, *Corderius Americanus* (1708)

We should lead them into the Knowledge of those Circumstances of the *History* of JESUS, which may have the greatest Tendency to strike their Minds, and to impress them with an early Sense of *Gratitude* and *Love* to him.

—Philip Doddridge, *Sermons on the Religious Education of Children* (1763)

In 1739, a few years after his conversion and shortly before his first trip to the American colonies, George Whitefield published *The Knowledge of Jesus Christ, the best Knowledge*. The sermon was drawn from 1 Corinthians 2:2—in which Paul wrote, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"—and in it Whitefield framed salvation in epistemological terms, juxtaposing the "Wisdom of this World" with the "Simplicity of the Gospel."²⁶ He explained that the world was awash in things to be known and argued that those who pursued knowledge for its own sake

were wasting precious time. Only God's precepts were worthwhile; the rest was foolishness. Those who prized worldly knowledge overestimated its value. Theirs was not a redemptive knowledge but a mastery of information that, in the end, would do nothing to save them from destruction. The sermon's seeming anti-intellectualism served a teleological purpose in that it cautioned readers to reevaluate their priorities in light of the eventual, if not immanent, Day of Judgment. Yet what appears at first glance to be a rejection of the intellect is actually the foundation of an elaborate epistemological hierarchy in which certain types of knowledge maintain value if they remain subordinate to other more important forms. It is not knowledge qua knowledge that earns Whitefield's scorn. It is the mistaken materialism that elevates purely intellectual pursuits above spiritual ones, upsetting the natural order that God had established. What was needed was an epistemological re-ordering that returned the right kind of knowledge to its proper place.

Whitefield's interest in the subject stemmed from personal experience. His mother had taken great care with his early instruction, but as he grew older, his education had had, as he later recalled, a "natural Tendency to debauch the Mind, to raise ill Passions, and to stuff the Memory with Things as contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as Light to Darkness, Heaven to Hell."²⁷ As an adolescent, he was particularly fond of romances and plays, stealing books on occasion to satisfy his whims. When he enrolled at Oxford in 1732, he made great progress in his studies but also began to associate with a group of "debauched, abandoned, atheistical Youths." Although he continued to participate in the public life of the church, he felt an increasing antipathy for its teachings and began to adopt his companions' opinions on religious matters. He was no longer a mere Oxford

student. He was also enrolled in the "School of the Devil."²⁸ A timely reading of Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677) convinced Whitefield that he had never known "true" religion, and following his conversion, he began his studies anew. Gone were plays and romances, the "Dry Sciences" and those books that "went no farther than the Surface." In their place was an entirely new curriculum: "I now resolved to read only such as entered into the Heart of Religion, and which led me directly into an experimental Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, and him crucified."²⁹

For Whitefield, this "experimental" knowledge was at once a spiritual and intellectual cornerstone, the crux of salvation as well as the apex of human reason. It was also experiential, a "new birth" occasioned by an influx of grace that redeemed the sinner's soul and signaled the believer's willingness to submit to God and the church. Conversion was not the product of rational thought—he insisted that "[l]earning without piety" was instead closely associated with the "Kingdom of the Devil"³⁰—but it was indebted to an epistemological process. This became evident when Whitefield provided his readers with a lengthy definition of the word "know":

By which word *know*, we are not to understand a bare historical knowledge; for to know that Christ was crucified by his enemies at Jerusalem, in this manner only, will do us no more service, than to know that Caesar was butchered by his friends at Rome: but the word *know*, means to know, so as to approve of him; as when Christ says, "Verily I know you not;" I know you not, so as to approve of you. It signifies to know him, so as to embrace him in all his offices; to take him to be our prophet, priest, and king; so as to give up ourselves wholly to be instructed, saved, and governed by him. I implies an experimental knowledge of his crucifixion, so as to feel the power of it, and to be crucified unto the world, as the apostle explains himself in the epistle to the Philippians, where he says, "I count all things but dung and dross, that I might know him, and the power of his resurrection."³¹

Unlike experimental knowledge, the historical variety did not "do" anything. Facts of history were, apart from God's grace, mere facts regardless of the subject matter. Those

who knew *about* Jesus (without knowing Jesus) were in no way protected from God's wrath; they were, like the proverbial Pharisees, liable to vanity and overconfidence. Their knowledge was not knowledge at all but "mere nonsense," a trifle compared to what was known by even the "meanest Christian."³² For the devout, historical knowledge was a prelude to something more substantial; their Christ was not relegated to history but was a living presence at work in the world. To elevate the historical alongside or above the experimental was to diminish the crucifixion and make Jesus a mere mortal.

This stratification had its roots in the seventeenth century moral philosophy as Puritan clergymen distinguished between a "head-centered" intellectual tradition and a "heart-centered" experiential one.³³ Thomas Shepard referred to the culprit as "historical faith." Increase Mather called it "doctrinal historical knowledge."³⁴ These fears stemmed from a growing conviction that churchgoers were mistaking substance for form, that they were more interested in ceremony and ritual than in personal conviction and sincere repentance. What made this heart-versus-head dichotomy so difficult for colonial clergymen was the fact that the two were symbiotically linked. Historical knowledge did not necessarily beget experimental faith, but experimental faith was to a large degree dependent upon historical knowledge. As Whitefield's autobiographical recollections suggest, the soul-searching brought on by eighteenth-century revivalism led to an increased attention to the processes whereby speculative knowledge was converted into the experiential sort. In an effort to limit the effects of Enlightenment rationalism and reign in those itinerant ministers and lay exhorters who had taken upon themselves the authority to speak in God's name, the clergy became increasingly interested in measuring and recording the unknown and seemingly unknowable operations of the soul. This

interest in "soul science," as Sarah Rivett calls it, was at its heart an endeavor to identify and understand the workings of God's spirit in the material world, to subject the soul to empirical study in order to determine whether or not those who professed faith in Christ had acquired the right kinds of knowledge.³⁵ Jonathan Edwards warned his parishioners not to confuse historical knowledge with true piety. He noted that the devil himself had attended "the best divinity school in the universe" and was damned in spite of it. Those who knew more than "hundreds of true saints of an ordinary education" were not necessarily members of the elect. If anything, he thought that they were liable to place too much faith in themselves, mistaking their rational powers for evidence of God's grace.³⁶ The problem lay in discerning what exactly differentiated head-centered religiosity from heart-centered piety and determining what it took to bridge the gap between the two.

These tensions were exacerbated when ministers and churchgoers turned to the subject of religious education. Children were particularly problematic, especially young children who were not yet literate or who had just learned their letters. They needed experiential piety as much as their elders, but they lacked most, if not all, of the historical knowledge that preceded and paved the way for personal faith. What made matters worse was that they were corrupted by sin, held hostage by a nature that would, if left to its own devices, thwart their spiritual pilgrimage. Particularly susceptible to the devil's snares, they were in need of careful parental guidance and bold clerical suasion if they were to possess that so-called "best" knowledge. But for them to know Jesus, they had to be *led* to him because they were temporarily unable and inherently unwilling to come to Christ on their own.

This chapter charts the pedagogical heuristics and reading rituals that were developed and adopted in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America to lead children from naïveté and ignorance to spiritual aptitude. At the heart of this endeavor was the cultivation of biblical literacy, that historical knowledge that served as the bedrock of experiential faith. Following a diverse group of scholars who have examined colonial education—among them James Axtell, Howard Chudacoff, Philip Greven, Charles Hambrick-Stowe, Carl Kaestle, Barbara Lacey, and Edmund Morgan—I am interested in the devotional exercises that enabled children to comprehend and internalize scripture (whether or not they knew how to read).³⁷ But unlike these scholars, I pay particular attention to educational strategies that were coming into vogue among colonial churchgoers in order to determine how exactly children came to know Jesus as both a historic person and a personal savior. This conjunction of historical and experiential knowledge was key to childhood education—which may help explain why it generated so much anxiety among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestants—in that children needed to understand the outlines of biblical history before they could begin to comprehend the doctrines of the church. To know Jesus experientially, they had to grasp his place in human history. The personalization of Jesus resulted when he transcended that historical framework, becoming something more substantial to those who took conversion seriously.

What this suggests is that biblical literacy is often more complex than it seems. Before moving to a discussion of the devotional practices and narrative genres that facilitated the child's acquisition of historical knowledge, let me briefly explain three of its key characteristics. First, biblical literacy depended upon an individual's familiarity

with a base set of scriptural stories that served to bookend world history (from the origin of the universe to its final apocalyptic dénouement) and the gradual acquirement of a specific language that was necessary for full participation in the life of the church. Citing as evidence 2 Timothy 3:16—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"—colonial Protestants were adamant that the Bible was in its entirety a divinely inspired book, but they were just as likely to elevate certain passages of scripture above others, creating uneven, shifting scriptural hierarchies in which a select group of books, chapters, and verses were read, re-read, studied, and memorized more frequently than the rest. This tendency to prioritize the contents of the Bible—to sift through its pages for those passages that were historically important, culturally relevant, and theologically significant—meant that the devout were making pragmatic decisions about scripture's use value. They were unintentionally and unwittingly grading biblical inspiration along a sliding scale defined by tradition and practicality. In theory, they believed that all scripture was equal. In practice, they were interested in determining which parts of the Bible were the *most* inspired, not because they thought that such distinctions existed but because, in both private devotion and public worship, they valued some texts more than others. As we will see in the pages that follow, the anxieties associated with religious education exaggerated this tendency to think of biblical knowledge in hierarchical terms and to read and study the Bible selectively.

Second, biblical literacy was defined by a growing familiarity with a set of theological precepts that were drawn from the prioritized portions of scripture and then condensed into liturgical, homiletic, and catechistic texts that made it possible to

comprehend and internalize the Bible's most salient passages. The theological divisions spurred on by the Reformation meant that Protestant sects collected and maintained sets of individuated creeds and doctrines that were paramount to sectarian affiliation and religious instruction. In the eighteenth century, Episcopalians and Presbyterians held the Westminster Confession of Faith and some version of the *Book of Common Prayer* in high esteem, Methodists had the *Book of Discipline* and the *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, Lutherans had the Augsburg Confession and the *Book of Concord*, Congregationalists had the Cambridge and Saybrook platforms, and each sect had its preferred catechisms. To be biblically literate, children had to develop over time a working knowledge of the beliefs codified by their particular sect and had to demonstrate through both private and public performances a mastery of that material. If they were to avoid appearing as if they had learned their lessons "as a Parrot, by rote without understanding what [they] said," as the author of *A Little Book for Little Children* put it in 1702, they also had to give some account of the relationship between church teachings and biblical precepts. In other words, they had to make "sense & meaning" of creedal formulations (which had been excised from the Bible and codified by clerical assemblies) by recalling the intertextual connections that bound said doctrines to scripture, which meant that they needed to understand to some extent the Bible's physical format, its chronological sequences, its narrative continuities, and its theological prescriptions.³⁸

Third, the entrance into biblical literacy for so many colonial children depended upon an acculturation to hermeneutic practices that were largely typological in nature. Those raised in the church were nurtured on what Hans Frei refers to as "precritical realistic reading," a belief that the Bible was not a miscellany of loosely related historical

material but a single coherent narrative that indexed all of human history. The stories found in scripture were significant in that they represented actual events that had occurred at specific times and specific places, but they were also figural in that God had woven each historical event into one cosmic plot line centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament foreshadowed the New; the New Testament fulfilled the Old. As Frei explains, the two testaments were "a common narrative referring to a single history and its patterns of meaning."³⁹ It was necessary for children of the church to learn how to recognize these patterns and to develop some proficiency when it came to interpreting scripture in both literal and figural registers. They had to familiarize themselves with the Bible's narratives, but they also had to see *through* those narratives, to glimpse the Christocentric story that undergird historical causality. To be biblically literate was to trust that Jesus could be found "in every Chapter" of scripture, as Cotton Mather and his ministerial cohort explained, and to understand the symmetric relationship that bound Old Testaments types to New Testament antitypes.⁴⁰

In other words, biblical literacy was no simple matter. It resulted from weekly routines in which children were introduced to Bible history and habituated to a wide range of devotional exercises. It was characterized by instances of formal and informal instruction, both at home and in the church. It depended upon the incremental acquisition of certain foundational narratives that undergird Christian identity and sectarian allegiance. And it was incentivized in that biblical knowledge (or the lack thereof) was grounds for ministerial approval or admonishment, praise or censure. Historical faith was not, as so many clergy warned, an end in itself but a means to an end, the foundation for future spiritual growth.

This issue was just as important to eighteenth-century evangelicals as it was to seventeenth-century moral philosophers. What differentiated religious instruction in the eighteenth century from its Puritan antecedents, though, had little to do with form—at least until mid century, given the predominance of catechismal instruction—and more to do with method. When it came to education, there was a new urgency to "make a *business* of it," as the Presbyterian minister Josiah Smith urged, to understand how the child's mind operated in order to develop pedagogical practices that would help children acquire historical knowledge as a necessary prelude to experimental faith.⁴¹ The colonial Enlightenment gave added impetus to this endeavor as some of the period's most famous pedagogues—from John Locke and Isaac Watts to Philip Doddridge and Sarah Trimmer—challenged conceptions of childhood rooted in Calvinist orthodoxy. The result was not an upending of the status quo but a subtle shift in public perception as adults on both sides of the Atlantic began to take to heart the sensation psychology propounded by Locke and his successors and to rethink the heuristics that had once served their predecessors so well. The emergence of the genre known as "children's literature" during this time—including the production and proliferation of devotional books designed specifically for young readers—was, to a large degree, indebted to this growing interest in studying the child's intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. As the mechanics of childhood development began to be discussed with increasing regularity, the conversations that ensued reflected a sense of unease and anticipation, a fear that colonial piety was in a state of decline coupled with faith in the redemptive possibilities of early religious training.

Spurred on by the waxing and waning of revival fervor, colonial ministers regularly implored children to "come to Christ." A shorthand reference to conversion and regeneration, this popular homiletic catchphrase appeared in scores of sermons on religious instruction, usually in reference to a particularly well-known story found in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In it, a group of parents asks Jesus to pray over their children; despite his disciples' protestations, he welcomes the little ones and insists that they are especially valued members of God's kingdom. Because three iterations existed, the story was all the more compelling:

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence. (Matthew 19:13-15)

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked him. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein. (Luke 18:15-17)

These verses, though sparse in historical context and narrative detail, were held in high regard by spiritual educators because they were thought to provide clear biblical evidence of the special status accorded to children and of the value of religious instruction. A paean to Jesus's kindness and affection as well as a warning to those who would impede or otherwise deter the young from coming to Christ, this story functioned as the pedagogical archetype from which so much advice and admonition stemmed. Cited

regularly by clergy and catechizers, reproduced time and again by artists and illustrators, it captured the Protestant imagination in ways that so many other stories did not because it was one of the few instances in the Gospels where children were the primary concern, both as central characters in a historical narrative and as metaphors for Christian devotion.

There was, of course, one problem that ministers had to mitigate if their exhortations to follow Christ were to have any practical value. They had to convince children to overlook the obvious—that the Jesus of history had been dead for some 1700 years—and to trust that, like those fortunate children of old, they could approach Christ in a meaningful way. For Jesus to be as real to eighteenth-century audiences as he was to first-century ones, spiritual educators had to stress that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith were not two distinct figures but one and the same. To do so, they taught children to extrapolate from scripture a set of experiences that were universally applicable since, as David Hall notes, historical plot and personal circumstance were often thought to be intricately interwoven.⁴² Colonial readers were conditioned to think figurally from an early age, to see in otherwise unique historical narratives a series of cyclical patterns that were especially relevant because they were regularly recurring. This meant that children who could not go to Christ in any literal sense of the word were taught that they could in fact go to him, given that they first acquired biblical literacy in order to see Jesus through the eyes of faith. As the Congregationalist minister Samuel Checkley explained, "We cannot indeed come to Christ now, as they could in the Days of his Flesh, nor see him with our bodily Eyes as they could; for he is ascended up to Heaven and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens; but we may come to him

with our Prayers and Cries, and he is ready to hear and answer us."⁴³ If children were to "eye Christ" in all that they did—for the clergyman Samuel Phillips, this meant that they had to "choose and embrace Him," acknowledge him as Lord, and "resolve to lye at his Foot"⁴⁴—they needed to learn how to translate the historical Jesus into more relevant terms by treating him as if he were not bound by history but set apart from it, a savior who remained unchanged from ancient times to the present.

The homiletic injunctions of Checkley and Phillips—the admonitions to see Jesus, to approach him and pray to him, to embrace him and lie at his feet—hint at a set of epistemological assumptions that undergird personal piety. Christians could do these things without actually doing them because Christ was as real to contemporary believers as he was to those who knew him in the flesh, a paradox that made it possible for Jesus to be both a historical person and a personal savior. What this means is that the call to "come to Christ" was just that, a *call*. There was no literal way to follow this advice so educators had to find means to circumvent such restrictions. If children were to sense Jesus's presence, adults thought it best if they presented Jesus to the senses. As we will see, this meant that educators incorporated a series of increasingly autoptic exercises into their weekly routines, believing that children learned best if Bible history were recounted in a "sensible pleasing manner," as one popular pedagogue put it.⁴⁵ To make their lessons as effective as possible, they turned their attention to two related pursuits. First, they devoted more time and energy to methodology in order to determine the qualities and characteristics that were unique to childhood and to adapt their lessons to suit the changing needs of children. Second, they trusted that the act of reading was more than the sum of its parts, a mechanism that made it possible for children to make sense of Bible

history even though they were far removed from the biblical world. As the eighteenth century progressed, the "best" knowledge retained its place in the epistemological hierarchy as spiritual educators regularly and earnestly implored children to come to Christ. What changed were the pedagogical conventions and material apparatuses employed to make the child's turn to Jesus as likely and as authentic as possible.

Handling Childhood

In *Corderius Americanus*, Cotton Mather asked his readers to consider an important question: "*How shall we order the Child, and what shall we do unto him?*" This subject was of "inexpressible Consequences" and "unparalleled Importance," he explained. Those who failed to instruct their children were not parents but "*Monsters*" who had abused a God-given responsibility.⁴⁶ What Mather wanted was for adults to formalize religious instruction as soon as possible and to make what he elsewhere termed "family religion" part and parcel of everyday life.⁴⁷ Although "Infant-Children" had not yet arrived at reason and were thus unable to "make themselves the *Children of Satan*," they were, like older children, liable to spiritual destruction should parents fail to countermand the influence of inherited sin and provide their progeny with bulwarks against future temptation. Innocent, impressionable, and malleable, the young needed dedicated adult supervision since they lacked spiritual backbone and would, if pressed, stray from God's path due to deficiencies in their moral nature. If children were not properly educated, Mather explained, the rising generation would "miss of *Salvation*, and be *Destroy'd for the lack of Knowledge*."⁴⁸

In his insistence that adults "order" children, Mather recognized an uncomfortable fact that even the staunches Calvinists did not deny—that parents bore some (if not much) of the responsibility for the child's eternal fate. Touting the importance of religious education, hundreds of colonial ministers pointed to Proverbs 22:6 as evidence: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Whether Calvinist or not, ministers were often quick to assure their congregants that piety would likely be transmitted from one generation to the next if parents took their job seriously. "And will not Families that issue from godly Families, retain at least a Form of Godliness?" Mather asked.⁴⁹ The Andover minister Samuel Phillips thought that the sight of children "*religiously disposed*" meant that there was a "*fair Prospect of Religion's being transmitted and propagated to those, who are yet to be born; and that they also, shall be to the Lord, for a Name and a Praise.*"⁵⁰ What these men had in mind was an inter-generational Christianity that branched out along family trees. Those who had grown up in Christ would grow old in him, and the ones who followed would keep in step, inheriting from their elders a covenant of grace and handing down the same to successive generations. Religious education was the crux of this model. If parents were to transmit their beliefs, they had to begin the process as soon as possible. Simply put, the clergy reasoned that the most effective way to bolster the practice of piety was to make sure that piety was practiced early and often.

Not surprisingly, this insistence on the efficacy of religious education ran up against a stubborn reality. As the first wave of colonial Puritans bequeathed their legacy to a second and the second to a third, many thought that the successors to the New England Way were not as attentive to the covenant as their forefathers had been. They

were a degenerate bunch, the clergy intoned, a citizenry unwilling or unable to commit themselves to godliness, to be in the world but not of it. Such families were "nurseries of ignorance" and hotbeds of incipient infidelity, according to Mather.⁵¹ If parents did not repent, ask God's forgiveness, strive to live sanctified lives, and pass on those strivings to their offspring, they, their children, and their children's children—indeed the colonies writ large—would merit God's displeasure. The city on a hill was believed to suffer from two related problems: adults who were not properly educating their children and children who were not taking their education to heart. Despite their best efforts, it seemed to some ministers that parents who failed to indoctrinate their children in the ways of God and the church were primarily responsible for disrupting the transmission of piety. By 1763, the famed educator Phillip Doddridge voiced a refrain that had become overly familiar to colonial ears: "The Neglect of the Rising Generation, which so generally prevails, ought, surely, to awaken our serious Concern for it."⁵²

In their attempts to counteract spiritual degeneracy, clergymen like Doddridge turned to its source, believing that the solution to so many colonial problems lay in a thorough understanding of childhood. They were interested in answering several pertinent questions: How did children acquire an interest in godliness? Why did the children of pious parents sometimes stray from the church? What methods were the most effectual when it came to religious instruction? If, as so many ministers argued, the primary goal of education was to lead children to Christ, then adults had to figure out how to offset the influence of original sin, nip childish rebellion in the nub, protect children from spiritual snares, teach them the foundational principles of religion, and instill in them a respect for ministerial and parental authority. To do so, they had to

understand the epistemological hurdles that stood between the child and Christ and to develop pedagogical heuristics that would produce the desired results. Their conclusions were largely determined by hypotheses, inferences, and guesswork that were themselves the product of religious belief and social convention. As such, they provide a glimpse into the cultural construction of colonial children and shed light on how devotional practices and reading rituals—and to a large degree the acquisition of biblical literacy and the realization of experimental faith—were shaped by both established and emergent theories of childhood development.

When it came to the child, early colonials were trying to reconcile Calvinist metaphysics with an emergent sense-based empiricism. These tensions were made manifest in hundreds of sermons as the clergy clung to their belief in original sin while also paying heed to the Lockean notion that children were essentially *tabulae rasae*. It was important for them to parse these doctrines in order to establish a set of guidelines for spiritual educators to follow. First, they had to mitigate what were understood as the child's deviant inclinations by accounting for the natural depravity from which all sin flowed. That is, they believed that children were infected at birth by a spiritual disease that had been passed down from generation to generation, one that made it impossible for them to come to Christ without God's direct intervention. Theologians had for centuries debated whether the transmission of original sin lay in the male reproductive organs—which meant that Jesus was sinless because his conception had occurred without semen—or whether Adam was more of a spiritual fountainhead, transmitting corruption to all those who shared his nature. Colonial ministers did not generally dwell on matters related to human reproduction. For them, sin was not so much a sexually transmitted disease as it

was an inheritance bequeathed by the father of humanity to all his progeny. When students recited the words "In Adam's Fall, / We sinned all" as found in the *New-England Primer*, they located the origin of sin not merely in their own proclivities but in an act of complicity best understood in figural terms. To live godly lives, educators had to account for sin in its two primary manifestations: the plural sense (those individual "sins" that represented unique violations of God's will and that required individual acts of repentance) and the singular (the "sin nature" that rendered all human strivings null and void if not for Jesus's redemptive sacrifice). This interest in sin, understood in both concrete and abstract terms, fueled eighteenth-century pedagogical praxis, which means that children's literature must be understood first and foremost as a disciplinary exercise designed to mitigate sin's short- and long-term effects.

Second, parents and ministers alike were convinced that children were passive receptors of external stimuli, a preconception that became all the more ingrained as Locke's theories of sensation psychology took hold and that remained dominant despite the insistence from some quarters (most notably the Scottish Common Sense philosophers) that children were born with a "moral" sense that contributed to the acquisition of knowledge. However, such arguments failed to displace the sentiment that children entered the world with nothing to their names, save sin itself. Protestants believed that certain latent natural impulses developed with time—and that these had to be addressed if the young were to grow in godliness—but they were just as convinced (if not more so) that children were largely shaped by adult action and inaction. Proverbs 22:6 provided the theological grounds, however shaky, for an epistemological project built upon an incipient faith in the child's passivity. This assumption influenced, either in

whole or in part, the period's most popular pedagogical practices. It also reflected a burgeoning investment in adult agency as parents began to take more responsibility for their children's future successes and failures, a shift in public perception that portended future challenges to the tenets of colonial Calvinism.⁵³ What emerged from these discussions and debates—and what was overshadowed by theological and denominational discord throughout the eighteenth century—was a set of assumptions about children's faculties that were endorsed to some extent by Protestants across the sectarian spectrum, unifying a diverse body of believers who were otherwise divided by religious disestablishment, doctrinal preference, and disciplinary temperament.

Colonial educators were adamant that religious instruction begin as soon as possible so as to take advantage of a narrow window of time in which children were thought to be utterly pliable and easily managed. To highlight children's plasticity, adults commonly distinguished younger children from older ones by referring to the former as nonhuman persons. Possessing "tender" minds and "impressionable" hearts, they were believed to be as tractable as hot wax, as ductile as wet clay, as supple as seedlings. In his popular book *Sermons on the Religious Education of Children*, Doddridge used such terms in reference to childhood: "The *soft Clay* is easily fashioned into what Form you please: The *young plant* may be bent with a gentle Hand; and the *Characters*, engraved on the *tender Bark*, grown deeper and larger on the advancing Tree."⁵⁴ These were some of the most common descriptors found in eighteenth-century pedagogical literature, metaphors that bracketed off early childhood as a time when children were particularly open to (if not entirely unconscious of) adult manipulation. The parental "hand" was key to this rhetorical construction, both because it was rooted in Christian theology—in that

the devout thought of themselves as clay in the hands of a divine potter—and because it emphasized the child's essential passivity from birth to the onset of rational thought. Reducing children to these liminal categories made it possible to think of them in generalized terms and to rest assured that what worked for one child would work for all of them.⁵⁵

But these calls to manage children—to mold and fashion them, to bend and form them, to write upon and impress them—were reminders that time was short when it came to the child's plasticity. The general consensus was that children grew less pliable with each passing year, a hardening that occurred for two reasons. The first was welcomed as a natural result of religious instruction and parental discipline. Children who were raised in the church and who continued in its ways were thought to have been fired in a spiritual kiln, a process that reinforced their pious leanings. As those who read and memorized Isaac Watt's song "The Advantages of Early Religion" would have learned: "'Twill save us from a thousand Snares / to mind Religion Young; / Grace will preserve our following Years / And make our Virtue strong."⁵⁶ Theirs would be a firm and unwavering faith in Christ, unaffected by life's blows because forged at a young age. This type of hardening was desired in that it equipped the child to survive in a world filled with sin and temptation. Whatever shape they were in when this took place would be the shape they retained as they grew into adulthood.

The second type of hardening was believed to be unavoidable if children did not experience the first. Lacking spiritual fortitude, they would succumb to the pull of inherited sin and would begin to stray from Christ, one sinful step at a time. These were not relatively minor infractions of God's law. As Samuel Phillips explained, "We may *not*

account the *Sins of Childhood* to be *little* sins, or not worth taking Notice of" because "repeated Acts strengthen the Habits of Sin daily, more and more: It will *never* be *so easy* to repent and turn to the Lord, *as now*."⁵⁷ The individual acts would accumulate, and their combined pressure would habituate children to sin, rendering them less malleable and thus less open to spiritual influence. They would become "Veterans in Sin, confirmed and hardened in Wickedness by long Practice," children who were "hardened by Age, and by a long Habit of Sinning."⁵⁸ Many ministers theorized childhood development as a dual maturation that took place in both body and spirit. Children physically matured at roughly the same pace, but their spiritual selves were thought to develop at widely differing rates. Those who grew old but did not also grow in grace were considered "babes in Christ" despite their age or intellectual abilities. They were, in terms of the spirit, no more mature than infants (although they could catch up quickly if and when they recognized their spiritual shortcomings). Far worse were those who started on sound spiritual footing but degenerated as they grew older. These began as "young Saints" but later became "old Devils," as Josiah Smith explained, and were thus "doubly guilty" if they strayed from righteousness.⁵⁹ Then there were those who had grown overly familiar with sin in childhood. These were thought to be "young in years but old in sin," a paradoxically old youngster whose faults were blamed on errant parenting and natural depravity.⁶⁰ Once the child had been hardened by sin, it was thought to be difficult—if not (in some cases) entirely impossible—to recast the mold and start again.⁶¹

What this meant was that religious educators were extremely sensitive to the onset of rational thought—the period of time in which infants grew into childhood and experienced the dawning sense of their place in the family and the church—because they

were convinced that the child's entrance into reason was accompanied by an increased awareness of and susceptibility to the allurements of sin. According to Mather, "A Child no sooner begins to do any thing *Rational*, but *Satan* begins to show it, how to do something that is *Criminal*."⁶² The criminal acts were often organized under two categories—sins of "commission" (those things that were done but should not have been done) and sins of "omission" (those things that should have been done but were not done). Ministers maintained that all sin was equally blameworthy, but they paid particular attention to sins of commission because these were recognizable violations of God's law. Time and again, they focused their attention on six specific sins commonly linked to childhood: lying, cursing, stealing, disobeying adults, associating with wicked companions, and breaking the Sabbath. When it came to children, these were the most censored acts in colonial America, a set of foundational sins that were thought to give rise to greater degrees of depravity as time progressed.

Because sin was thought of as a disease that festered if it remained unchecked, spiritual educators hoped to contain it by giving children a taste of sin's deleterious effects without actually subjecting them to the thing itself, a negative reinforcement against future temptations that Gregory Jackson terms "inoculation theology." The key to these pedagogical heuristics was, as Jackson explains, a "controlled exposure to sin" that made it possible to glimpse the consequences of wickedness from a safe distance.⁶³ Early in the eighteenth century, these pedagogical strategies were most pronounced when it came to visions of death and damnation as Protestants sought to "simulate lived experience" in order to help children "anticipate the moral snares around them or learn to recognize evil cloaked within the seductive guise of beauty."⁶⁴ The six sins noted above

provided the narrative framework for sermons built upon a particularly effective exercise: asking children to visualize the sinful lives of wicked girls and boys and to imagine for themselves what it might feel like to reside in hell, denounced by pious parents and condemned by an angry God. The goal was to make hell a somatic reality, to help children experience the sensations associated with eternal torment at an uncomfortably close remove. Most ministers preferred to draw their analogies from family life because they were convinced that children would best understand the spiritual world if it were described in recognizably domestic terms. In *A Token for Children*—a devotional book centered on the lives of pious children that went through dozens of editions between its first publication in 1671 and its last in 1849—the clergyman James Janeway made it clear to his young readers that the pain of hell was far worse than any imaginable corporal punishment. "Would you be in the same condition as naughty children?" he asked. "O! hell is a terrible place; that is worse a thousand times than whipping. God's anger is worse than your father's anger; and are you willing to anger God?"⁶⁵ Samuel Phillips preferred a more literal analogy: "And into *this Place, naughty Children*, they remaining such, *must* be cast: For, all the wicked, *younger* as well as elder, shall be turned into Hell.... Now, consider seriously with yourselves, can you bear your Finger, one Quarter of an Hour, in our *common* Fire? How then, can you dwell in everlasting Burnings, and endure the Wrath of God to all Eternity?"⁶⁶ Describing the diabolic landscape in material terms meant that religious educators could make their comparisons more concrete for those who might have otherwise failed to appreciate the magnitude of seemingly innocuous moral failings.

Inoculation theology succeeded when religious educators felt that they had successfully bridged the gap between personal and virtual experience and had convinced children that homiletic depictions of sin and its consequences were accurate approximations of spiritual reality. However, some ministers were uncomfortable with this approach. They feared that any exposure to sin—whether actual or virtual—could result not in inoculation but in full-blown infection. If not administered carefully, the corrective could backfire, giving children a tempting taste of those things that would overwhelm the spirit in later years and heavier doses. Although he was not entirely averse to spiritual inoculation, Doddridge worried about the allurements of sin (in any form) as well as the temptations brought on by the child's proximity to its gravitational pull:

You must be solicitous [sic] to *keep your children out of the Way of Temptation*, if you would see the *Success of your Care* in their *Education*.... An *early Care* must be taken to *keep them* from the *Occasions*, and the very *Appearances of Evil*. We would not venture *their Infant-Steps* on the Brink of a *Precipice* on which *grown Persons*, who know how to adjust the Poise of their Bodies, *may walk* without extreme Danger. *More hazardous* might it be, to allow them to *trifle with Temptations*, and boldly to *venture* to the *utmost Limits* of that which is *lawful*. And *early Tenderness of Conscience* may be a *great Preservative*; and the *Excess of Strictness*, (though no Excess be desirable,) may prove *much safer* than *Excess of Liberty*.⁶⁷

Doddridge preferred to distance children from sin, maintaining as much separation as possible as a strictly preventative measure. He hoped to shield children from wickedness in their early years by promoting the positive sort of spiritual hardening and by admonishing them to react in certain specific ways to rebellious internal inclinations and tempting external stimuli. This was widely understood as an epistemological project premised upon equipping children with the knowledge they needed to avoid spiritual distractions and entanglements altogether. In other words, the young needed to develop a familiarity, rooted in biblical literacy, with those principles that undergird Christian

identity and to cultivate habits that reinforced what was learned week by week. With Proverbs 22:6 in mind, colonial educators wrestled with an important question: what were the most effective ways to "train up" children? If, as Doddridge suggested, adults were to "prevent the Prevalency of irregular Habits, by endeavouring from the first Dawning of Reason to direct it aright, and to infuse into the tender unpractised Mind, the important Maxims of Wisdom and Goodness," they had to understand both the enormity of the task and the measures by which they could make religious instruction effectual and lasting. Over time, colonial ministers made much of method, constructing for themselves and their congregations pedagogical systems that were drawn from (and that contributed to) popular conceptions of childhood development across the eighteenth century.⁶⁸

The most familiar of these assumptions was also one of the most paradoxical. Although infected by inborn, inherited sin, the newborn child also was thought by many to be an empty vessel or repository, and some of the period's most popular descriptors emphasized this sense of incompleteness—children were blank slates on which to write and "precious cabinets" in which to put things. The notion of the empty child was compelling for two reasons. It mitigated, to some degree, the anxieties associated with original sin in that parents who made religious education a priority could rest assured that they had done God's will and were thus freed from blame if their children did not remain faithful. Yet it also intensified these same anxieties in that ministers tended to blame children's spiritual shortcomings on parental lassitude or neglect. In other words, parents were caught in a double bind. On the one hand, their children were predisposed to reject God's grace. "My Body weak, and dark my Mind, / To Good averse, to Sin inclin'd," as Doddridge put it in his popular children's book *The Principles of the Christian Religion*.⁶⁹

On the other hand, parents were held accountable if they let their children act as inherently sinful children had been hardwired to act. To offset the pull of natural depravity, they had in some way to "infuse" religious instruction into children, to render them spiritually *unnatural* in order to save them from themselves.

Not surprisingly, this sense of the child's double nature—the incipient waywardness alongside the inherent emptiness—meant that colonial educators were worried about the processes whereby children gained knowledge of the world, that slow, inevitable filling of once empty vessels. Like their Puritan predecessors, they thought of children as highly permeable and open to external influence, and they hoped to fortify them against spiritual assault. They were particularly worried that those who came into contact with illicit forms of knowledge—whether inadvertently or not—might be overrun if their defenses were not hardened against such attacks (through inoculation theology or moral reinforcement), and they pinpointed two particularly vulnerable points in the child's defenses: the ears and eyes. To understand the insistence with which ministers and parents paid attention to and policed the child's sense receptors—a commitment to shielding children from evil that continues today, reappearing whenever adults discuss children's exposure to profanity, violence, and human sexuality—consider John Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682), an allegory that synthesizes and redacts a number of issues that troubled so many believers, then as now. The plot centers on a battle for the town of Mansoul and pits the forces of Diabolus against those of Shaddai. Because its walls are practically impenetrable, Mansoul can only be accessed through five gates: Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feel-gate. Of these, Bunyan notes that Ear-gate and Eye-gate are both the most important and the most prone to attack. In the two-page

illustration that accompanied early editions of the book, the town flanks an image of the author even as it bleeds into him, a spiritual palimpsest that situates the body at the center of a great cosmic struggle between good and evil (fig. 3). The opposing armies cannot conquer Mansoul unless its citizens, of their own accord, open the gates for them, and the plot revolves around the taking and re-taking of the town as each side attempts to enter in through the gated ears and eyes.

What makes this allegory relevant to a discussion of colonial pedagogy is that it highlights the primacy of sound and sight in Protestant educational literature as well as the particular attention paid to regulating these two avenues of communication between the outer world and the inner one. Religious educators feared that the town of Childsoul was even more vulnerable than its adult equivalent because children's ear and eye gates did not have much of a guard (if they were guarded at all). The child was unfortunately open to all sorts of traffic, liable to ignore or overlook the maneuvers of Diabolus—or even welcome him in with open arms—due to inexperience and immaturity. These vulnerabilities prompted parents to monitor closely the gates associated with sense and sensation and to be wary of the information that crossed these two particular thresholds. They feared that that which had been heard or seen could not be unheard or unseen; if children witnessed sinful behavior (whether or not they participated in it), they were exposed to a small dose of a potentially fatal virus. "Nothing but what is chaste, pure, and innocent, should come within the reach of their eyes and ears," Isaac Watts explained in his popular treatise *The Improvement of the Mind*:



Fig. 3. John Bunyan, *The Holy War* (1682).

Let their ears be ever kept from all immodest stories, and from wanton songs; from riddles and puns with double meanings and foul intentions. Let them not be suffered to read wanton jests or amorous romances; and due care should be taken to remove all books out of their way that may defile their imagination, or teach them the language or the sentiments of impurity. Nor let their eyes be entertained with lewd and unclean pictures, and images of things and actions that are not fit to be exposed. These things have too often an unhappy influence to corrupt the fancy and the manners, and in riper years have been the occasion of numberless mischiefs; but especially they should be kept far away from the sight or hearing of children, lest too deep and dangerous impressions be made in those early years of life.⁷⁰

This advice was emblematic of an entire strain of educational theory in which adults sought to protect the child's mind from evil influences until the latter had experienced that spiritual hardening that made exposure to sin less affecting. When it came to stories and songs, riddles and puns, jests, romances, books, and pictures, these mediums—indeed most media, to some extent—were considered dangerous because they cloaked information deemed improper or immoral in forms that were attractive to children. As Doddridge noted, the things learned in childhood were "most *easily admitted*" and "most firmly *retained*."⁷¹ Adults worried that if Diabolus could not gain entrance to Childsoul through a recognizable frontal attack, he would array his forces in innocent attire to trick artless and relatively defenseless children into welcoming him in with open arms.

The child's susceptibility to sin troubled educators because they recognized, despite idealistic claims to the contrary, that they could not shield children from *all* dangerous influences no matter how hard they tried. With this in mind, they hoped to fill children with spiritual knowledge so that there would be little to no room for the lesser sort. Watts thought that the young were "*never satisfied with seeing, nor their ears with hearing*," and he sought to channel that childish exuberance toward the Bible in particular.⁷² But he also believed, as did many of his contemporaries, that scripture

required careful handling lest it do inadvertent harm. The Bible was large, complicated, and antiquated. It was filled with archaic laws and customs, with perplexing genealogies and convoluted histories, with esoteric prophecies and lengthy catalogues of moral and spiritual dictums. Making matters worse, it teemed with stories of violence and depravity, lust and sexuality, with tales of murder and infanticide, human and animal sacrifice, adultery, rape, incest, lying, thieving, jealousy, witchcraft, idolatry, blasphemy, disobedience, envy, and greed. These were the *exact* things that children were taught to avoid, collected in the book that they were told mattered most to their spiritual well-being.

This paradox—the Bible as physic or *pharmakon* that remedied sin even as it showcased destructive, sinful behavior⁷³—meant that biblical literacy required intensive and ongoing adult mediation if children were to benefit from the drug without experiencing any harmful side effects. Mather thought that this issue was fairly self-explanatory: "Teach them, what shall be *Good* for *Them*; And Forbear the Rest, until they shall be more *Able to Bear it*."⁷⁴ He was convinced that children needed to turn away from "vain Fictions, and Filthy Stories" and become "acquainted with the Word of God," but what he failed to note was that the Bible itself was filled with stories that would have qualified at the time as "filthy" were they not embedded in holy writ. In the 1730s, Watts recognized this dilemma and broached the touchy subject with greater deliberation. "[T]here should be a wise conduct in showing children what parts of the bible they should read," he explained, citing two specific reasons for such care. First, he thought that children needed to be shielded from the Bible's more prurient passages, those stories that were "expressed too naturally" for young ears. More importantly, he argued that children

did not need to be familiar with each and every Bible story in order to acquire historical knowledge and to experience saving faith: there was simply "no necessity for children to read and hear" such things in order for them to know Christ.⁷⁵ The Reformation had put the Bible in its entirety into the hands of lay readers. What those like Watts concluded was that they had to practice a very subtle counter reform, taking control out of the hands of children when it came time to study scripture.⁷⁶ Colonial churchgoers considered the Bible to be a "plain" and "self-evident" book—one that required "no intermediaries, no gloss, no message that called for interpretation"—even as they treated textual mediations as "everyday affair[s]."⁷⁷ Adults took particular comfort in endless acts of truncation in order to reduce a graphic and archaic text into something more appropriate for children. What these alterations reveal is a widespread effort by early American educators to abridge scripture so as to render it plainer and more intelligible, to excise and sanitize its historical narratives to make its study as profitable and engaging as possible, and to enliven its most important stories—especially those dealing with the life and death of Jesus—by enticing children via their ears and eyes.

The Bible Epitomized; or, Reading as Recreation

Watts and other likeminded educators feared that children who read scripture without adult supervision might come across frightful and unexpected scenes of sin and wickedness. They would be confused by the Bible's legalities, startled by its violence, and shocked by its explicit sexual themes. But the most difficult and regularly recurring challenge that educators faced was also the most obvious: the Bible was for so many an unwieldy, often tedious book. Published abroad by the monarchy's select printers—until

the American Revolution sundered those commercial mandates in the 1780s—colonial Bibles ranged from 800 to 1200 pages. They were heavy books, sometimes weighing several pounds apiece, and they were typographically dense. Beyond the sixty-six books that made up the biblical canon (for Protestants), the king's printers commonly included some or all of the following material in each copy of the Bible that issued from their presses: textual marginalia, biblical commentary, and expository notes; the Apocrypha, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the metered psalms of David; almanacs, calendars, historical compendiums, numerical charts, genealogical tables, topical indexes, prologues, introductions, and dedications. In some Bibles—such as the enormously popular *Self-Interpreting Bible* (1782) by the Scottish clergyman John Brown, which went through dozens of editions and remained in print for over 125 years—the pages presented readers with a jumble of information that complemented (and sometimes even crowded out) scripture itself (fig. 4). Such books were too big in size and scope for children, a fact that educators recognized and sought to remedy. What I am most interested in is not primarily the proliferation of genres designed for young readers (catechisms, primers, hymn books, and thumb Bibles, to name a few) but the epistemological assumptions that undergird such genres and that fueled, as the years progressed, a deepening methodological preoccupation with children's reading habits and devotional practices and an interest in designing books that translated scripture's most important stories into an accessible, entertaining, and highly sanitized form, making it easier for children of the church to become children of God.

As many educators recognized, the problem with scripture proper was twofold. First, there was simply too much of it. Too many stories, too many people and places, too

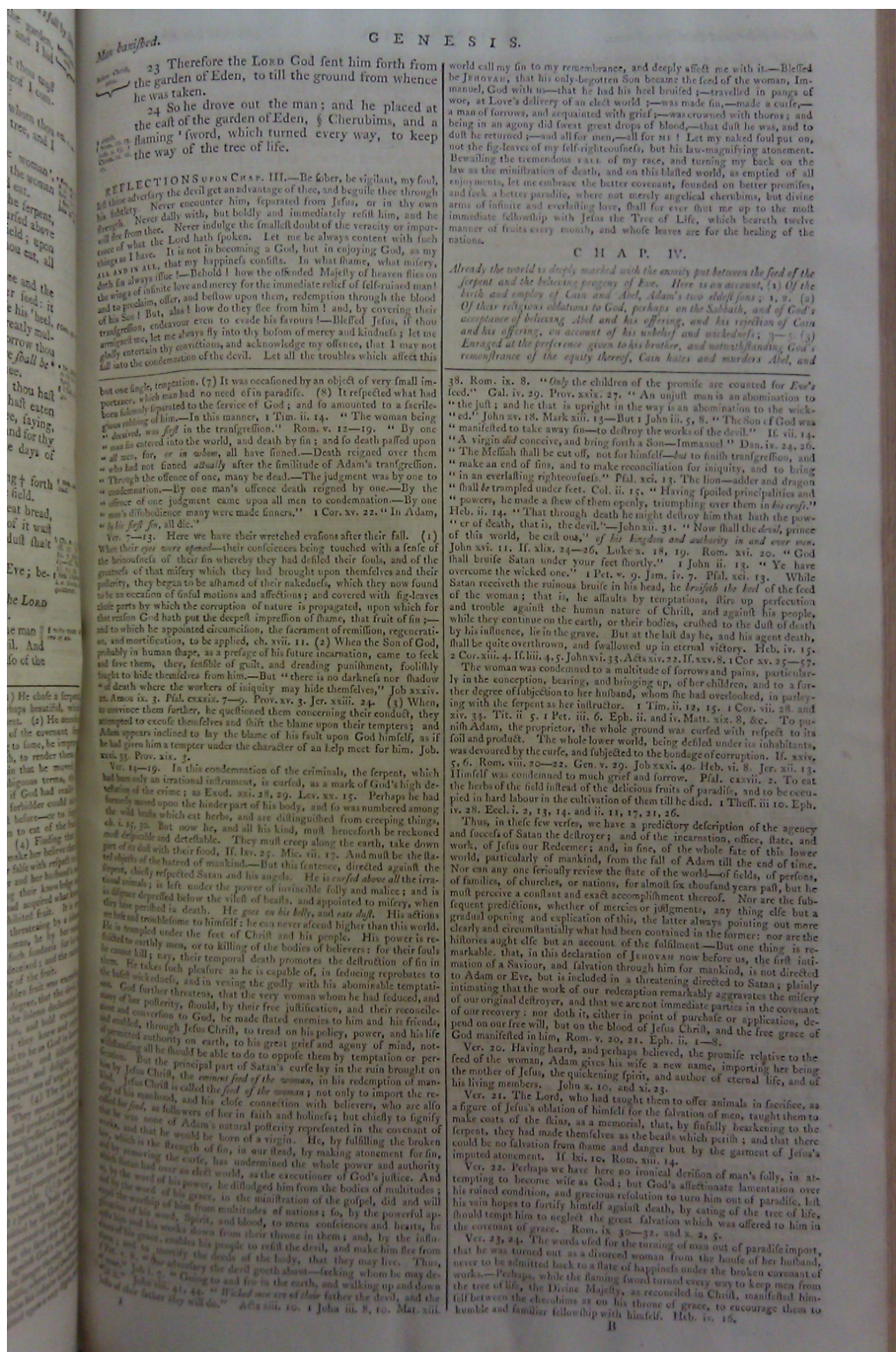


Fig. 4. John Brown, *Self-Interpreting Bible* (1782).

many rules and regulations. The Word of God teemed with words, which meant that children (both prior to and following their entrance into literacy) were hard pressed to read it from cover to cover, if they were encouraged to do so at all. Second, there was little hope that children would understand scripture unless adults translated it into a more intelligible vernacular language. If the young were to "come to Christ," they needed to be guided each step along the way in words they readily understood. Despite warnings from Watts and others, some parents made it a point to read through the entire Bible with their children—setting aside time in the mornings and evenings to cover successive chapters and verses from Genesis to Revelation and starting over at the beginning once they had reached the end⁷⁸—and some devotional books (most notably James Janeway's *Token for Children*) idealized children's ardent, persistent, and relatively unmediated handling of scripture. But spiritual educators wanted them to do more than merely *read* scripture. They wanted children to internalize it so that biblical literacy became part and parcel of everyday life, so deeply ingrained that it permeated the child's habits and routines, thoughts and speech patterns.

One of the most surprising shifts in eighteenth-century religious instruction occurred over time as educators increasingly sought to bind reading to recreation and study to play, to inject the spirit of *homo ludens* into routines that were for some children occasionally (if not regularly) dull and monotonous. Scholars typically trace the origins of modern children's literature to the books designed and distributed by the English publisher John Newberry and to the many pirated editions that thereafter circulated on both sides of the Atlantic.⁷⁹ Newberry's publications were popular because they were designed to instruct *and* amuse, hence the proliferation of eighteenth-century "toy" books

such as *A Pretty Little Pocket-Book* (1744), which was sold with a ball (for boys) or a pincushion (for girls). Although he profited from these commercial experiments, Newbery was hardly the first to have considered dressing up instruction in the garb of entertainment. What he and a host of religious educators had in common was a debt to the pedagogical theories of John Locke. In 1693, Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, a book that went through at least twenty-three editions and re-printings (not to mention foreign translations) by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The author clearly disagreed with a variety of educational practices then in vogue and hoped to stem the "early corruption of youth" that had purportedly shaken so many pious families. He claimed that those who were improperly educated would be burdened, if not altogether ruined, by an "afterwards-incorrigible taint" that had been allowed to fester in childhood. Locke's advice was wide-ranging—from the best type of clothing to the most appropriate meals, from household management to parental discipline—because he thought that good "breeding" depended upon close attention to children's physical and intellectual needs as well as their moral and spiritual development. Failure to do so was no small matter, he claimed. Those who neglected or undervalued early education were not merely poor parents. They were also poor citizens. Their offspring would carry an "early corruption...through all the parts and stations of life," passing along the "errors of education" to subsequent generations. If, as Locke explained, the future of the nation rested on the shoulders of its smallest citizens, then parents were vested with both a personal responsibility to their families and a social obligation to the nation.⁸⁰

Although he considered himself a "bookish" man, Locke was skeptical of the mania for "learning"—by which he meant the reading and writing of foreign languages,

specifically Latin and Greek—which had become *de rigueur* in so many well-to-do families. He endorsed instead a somewhat unorthodox approach to literacy, treating it not merely as something to master but as something to enjoy. The crux of Locke's pedagogical heuristic was a very particular form of parental subterfuge. That is, he wanted adults to convince children that the latter were playing when, in fact, they were studying. Ironically, around the same time that educators were striving to make a "business" of religious instruction, Locke was warning them not to do so, convinced that children who instinctively preferred autonomy—a sentiment that he believed all rational individuals held in common, "even from our cradles"—would develop a dislike for reading if it were foisted upon them as a duty.⁸¹

In particular, he advised his readers to stop thinking of literacy as a burdensome task that merited some form of reward, a claim that ran counter to common practices amongst seventeenth- and eighteenth-century educators. A wide range of ministers and parents in colonial America recognized, at some level, that they were asking children to participate in exercises that were considered unwelcome or uninteresting, and they felt the need to offset those labors with a system that rewarded proficiency and punished incompetence. The child's entrance into biblical literacy was thus subject to adult praise or censure as children repeated, in front of parents or church members, select passages from the Bible, catechisms, primers, and hymn books in order to demonstrate that they had mastered certain texts and were prepared for more advanced study. What began as a relatively haphazard practice of exchange—transactions in which the child traded the labor associated with biblical literacy for small trinkets or domestic privileges—evolved into an institutionalized barter system as educators felt it necessary to incentivize

religious instruction, assigning a market value to the memorization, retention, and delivery of spiritual knowledge.⁸² Such methods, in turn, reinforced the notion that education was a labor or chore, a relatively humdrum exercise that required some form of recompense if the child were to continue with any due diligence.

This was, Locke believed, the wrong way to educate children. As negative reinforcement, it stigmatized the act of reading and cultivated in the child an "aversion to learning," which for Locke explained why "a great many have hated books and learning all their lives after." He proposed a three-step solution to this problem. The first was to upend the formula by making reading itself the reward for "doing something else," an early form of reverse psychology in which children, seeing their siblings and peers reading books to which they did not have access, would desire the forbidden fruit and seek out that information for themselves. The second was to render education more interactive and engaging:

Thus children may be cozened into a knowledge of the letters; be taught to read, without perceiving it to be any thing but a sport, and play themselves into that which others are whipped for.... There may be dice and play-things, with the letters on them, to teach children the alphabet by playing; and twenty other ways may be found, suitable to their particular tempers, to make this kind of learning sport to them.

Locke's idea was to make literacy a somatic enterprise via games in which letters were pasted onto toys. When, for instance, children played with alphabetized lottery balls or wooden blocks, they would be introduced to their ABCs and would naturally attempt to create words and phrases out of the letters they had just learned. Such exercises required some degree of parental deceit, he warned. If children thought that they were being tricked into study, they would lose all interest in the activity. It was necessary to model proper play for children without them realizing that they were being played—or, as

Locke put it, to "cheat [them] into it"—so as to ensure that the "little apes" would respond in kind.⁸³

The third solution followed on the heels of the second and was the most important of the three in that it served as a direct link to the epistemological concerns that Locke first voiced in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) even as it portended a shift in educational praxis that would radically reconstitute religious instruction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Once children had entered into literacy, Locke thought that they needed illustrated books because these were closely associated with entertainment—as opposed to labor—and because they translated a vast three-dimensional world into a compact two-dimensional form, making immanent and concrete any number of objects that might have otherwise remained remote and intangible. Experience (via the senses) was one of the driving principles behind Locke's pedagogical advice because children could not understand ideas if those ideas were not yoked in some manner to tangible things. Words alone did not suffice: "Their Notions are few and narrow, borrowed only from those Objects, they have had most to do with, and which have made upon their Senses the frequentest and strongest Impressions."⁸⁴ Locke thus encouraged parents to buy illustrated books because these texts would help children derive palpable ideas from spoken or written words:

[F]or such visible objects children hear talked of in vain, and without any satisfaction, whilst they have no ideas of them; those ideas being not to be had from sounds, but from the things themselves, *or their pictures*. And therefore, I think, as soon as he begins to spell, as many pictures of animals should be got him as can be found, with the printed names to them, which at the same time will invite him to read, and afford him matter of inquiry and knowledge.⁸⁵

For Locke, effective instruction depended upon the coupling of signifier and signified, the world of words and the world of things. However, when he introduced the phrase "or

their pictures" into the discussion, he suggested that pictures of things were their optic equivalents. These interested Locke because they were readily accessible and because they masqueraded as reality incarnate. This meant that parents who wanted to teach children the meaning of the words "lion" or "tiger" did not have to travel abroad for sense experience. They could simply open a book and point to the pertinent pages, assuring children that the pictures of animals and the animals themselves were practically one and the same.

Spiritual educators warmed to these sentiments because they hoped to direct the energy associated with play to devotional ends. Unlike popular portrayals of early America—which cast the Puritans and their pious successors as a somber cast of doughty do-gooders—eighteenth-century colonials were quite comfortable with leisure and recreation.⁸⁶ What made them uncomfortable was the idea of leisure run amok, especially among churchgoing children who were naturally drawn to play whether or not the occasion called for it. Such acts were not necessarily sinful; they were instead thought of as fertile ground for sin. Unlike those who participated in measured "healthful Play" (as Isaac Watts termed it), children who were "too full of Play" were thus sowing seeds of future spiritual destruction much like those who lied and cheated, swore and stole.⁸⁷ For the many Sabbatarians who set Sunday aside as a time suited to domestic quietude and spiritual self-evaluation, play was especially troublesome in that children had to subdue their natural inclinations (or be subdued) in order to keep the day as holy as the fourth commandment intoned, a difficult, often irksome task for pious parents and educators.⁸⁸ But if children could be conditioned to think of their devotional duties as spiritual

entertainment, they would be much more likely to keep the Sabbath because keeping the Sabbath would register as merely another form of play.

To blur the distinctions between instruction and entertainment, religious educators sought to enliven the tasks associated with biblical literacy by trumpeting two literary genres that were considered particularly suited to children's mental capacities and latent desires: poetry and history. On the heels of Isaac Watts's wildly successful *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), educators extolled children's natural predilections for rhymed verse (compounding a pedagogical assumption that had already been in vogue for quite some time) even as they framed the subject in terms of amusement. Like other pedagogues, Watts believed that poetic verse was "longer retain'd in Memory, and sooner recollected" than prose since it was in some sense oddly alive, "running in the mind" long after the child had turned to other pastimes. Because he thought of children as "empty" repositories, he also trusted that verse was "constant Furniture" for otherwise unfurnished mental spaces, leaving little to no room for baser material (e.g. those "loose and dangerous Sonnets" that were so popular at the time). And indebted as he was to Lockean heuristics, he assured his readers that children would enjoy learning such songs, especially if they were allowed to read or own the book as a reward for good behavior:

There is a greater Delight in the very learning of Truths and Duties this way. There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rhymes and Metre, and that will incline Children to make this part of their Business a Diversion. And you may turn their very Duty into a Reward, by giving them the Priviledge [sic] of learning one of these Songs every Week, if they fulfill the Business of the Week well, and promising them the Book it self, when they have learnt ten or twenty songs out of it.

These premises owed their cultural standing not to neurological case studies or psychological inquiries but to popular conceptions of childhood development and to the practical realities of colonial education. As scholars of early American readerships have noted, children who entered into literacy often did so through mnemonic verbal regimes.⁸⁹ They listened as others read aloud, they read aloud to others, and they committed certain texts to memory in order to perform in front of interested parties. The "sensorium" of colonial America—what Walter Ong defines as the "entire sensory apparatus" that shapes culture even as it is shaped by culture⁹⁰—was thus characterized by routine oral-aural encounters that depended upon the internalization of the written word, a mastery made possible by the narrative simplifications and elementary rhyme schemes that served as the hallmark of colonial children's verse.

Those who hoped to make religious instruction more amusing via rhyme and meter were also keen to introduce children to biblical history because histories were thought to appeal to young readers in ways that other genres did not. Unlike stories associated with literary creativity—those fables, dramas, romances, and novels that were products of authorial invention—histories bore the imprimatur of reality because they reconstructed (whether accurately or not) events that had occurred at a given point in time. And since time itself was governed by divine causation, histories were considered inherently instructive in that they provided readers with teleological evidence of God's sovereignty wrapped in the alluring guise of narrative plot. Biblical history was especially valued because unlike secular authors—who were prone to overlook, ignore, or distort past events—God did not make mistakes. If religious educators could find a way to cull from the Bible its most important stories and repackage them so as to account

for children's mental and emotional constitution, they were convinced that that alone would inject new life into devotional duties. According to Cotton Mather, children were "naturally taken with *Histories*," but they were not necessarily able to glean the right lessons from those stories unless adults were to "Clench the *Histories*, with some *Admonitions* of Piety, which are to be gathered from them." The purpose of culling and "clenching" passages from scripture was not, as Samuel Phillips later put it, to "take you off from reading your Bible, as the stated Times, but, that you may the better understand, and take the more delight in, what you read."⁹¹ The widespread assumption that, due to children's inherent predispositions, historical narratives were equally instructive and amusing fostered an interest in the study of biblical history that presaged future changes to domestic devotions and classroom curricula (as discussed in chapters two and three). What mattered most to eighteenth-century educators, however, was not history as an emergent scholarly discipline but the processes whereby historical material was gleaned from the Bible and translated into a vernacular that children could understand and internalize. They trusted that readers who had mastered biblical history in its redacted, abridged form would read scripture anew and would no longer be confused by the Bible's tangled chronological skeins, its narrative disjunctions, or its sociohistorical archaisms.

Religious educators were heavily invested in these matters because they were convinced that children who were entering into biblical literacy needed to develop a "sensible" knowledge of spiritual subjects, as it was commonly called. That is, they wanted to transform information that was otherwise deemed immaterial—primarily related to supernatural realities (which were far removed because they were supersensual) and historical events (which were far removed because they had taken place

nearly two millennia before and half a world away)—into an affective register that would resonate with colonial children, awakening young sinners while strengthening new converts. "What is it to come to Christ?" Samuel Davies once asked. "[I]n what Sense are we to understand this Phrase, as it may be applied to us now, since he is removed from our World?"⁹² Because children could no longer literally come to Jesus, the answer for Davies hinged upon this notion of sensibility, a word that was understood at the time to suggest both a "power of sensation or perception" and a "quickness and acuteness of apprehension or feeling" (OED). If children were to bridge the divide between historical knowledge and experiential faith, they needed to have a "sight and sense" of themselves and their savior, some "realizing thoughts" that made that which was immaterial highly immanent.⁹³ What educators wanted was for children to experience what those fortunate children in the Bible had experienced—an intimate, personal encounter with Jesus—and they thought that, with God's help, their words could transport children into Christ's presence if those words were delicately formulated, carefully packaged, and tenderly conveyed. As Davies explained:

Come to Jesus as an *all-glorious, all-sufficient and willing Saviour*. Oh! that you did but see his infinite *Glory and Beauty!* Then I need speak no more to you. You would of yourselves give yourselves up to Him forever. Your Hearts would be instantaneously captivated by his irresistble [sic] Charms. Oh! that you were but sensible of his *All sufficiency!* then you would no more hesitate and doubt whether you might venture your eternal All into his Hands. You would be fully convinced, that you might most securely trust Him with Ten thousand Souls, if you had them. Oh! that you were sensible, how *willing* he is to save you! you would no longer doubt, whether he would receive such guilty Creatures as you. Can you hear Him declare over and over, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" Can you hear that Prayer for his Murderers, from his dying Lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing:" nay, Can you see Him agonizing on a Cross for you, and yet question, whether he is willing to save you?

By asking children if they could "hear" and "see" a suffering Christ (in both pulpit and print), Davies hoped to simulate the crucifixion and thus elicit an emotional response from his young audience akin to that which had been felt by those who had actually heard and seen the death of Jesus. This was no fleeting performance. As David Hall notes, these types of linguistic acts were common in colonial America, especially among those for whom literacy and religion were intimately intertwined. There was, he argues, a "mystical confounding of inward vision and the printed word" that convinced religious educators that they could bring Jesus back to life (so to speak) if they strove to render scripture as sensible as possible.

In the pages that follow, I explain how this interest in making religious instruction more entertaining and affective paralleled the development of devotional exercises that were more acutely autoptic by focusing on the widespread appeal of a literary genre designed entirely for young readers: the picture book. Following Matthew Brown—who sees in colonial readerships a predilection for nonlinear literacy wherein books were read selectively and discontinuously—I suggest that popular picture books added a new dimension to eighteenth-century familial devotions since picture-book literacy depends upon on a host of irregular, dissimilar, repetitive, polyvocal, and often disjointed engagements with the text. Pictures stage a material break in narrative momentum by crowding out or entirely displacing the written word. They prompt readers to postpone reading and compel them to dwell on a pictographic narrative that complements, parallels, supersedes, and even sometimes contradicts the book's plot structure. In the hands of different readers—parents, ministers, older literate children, younger pre-literate ones—they serve as nodes of exchange that, *pace* Brown, point to a

reading process characterized more by sociality and kinesis than mere discontinuity suggests.

These books were, to borrow from David Morgan, a "moral" technology that "supplemented the Protestant apparatus of conversion" by introducing children to a Bible that could be seen as well as read.⁹⁴ The picture-book format served parents well, as the popularity of these texts suggests. The juxtaposition of words and pictures forced readers to interact with the page and with each other in ways that non-illustrated texts did not because picture books were designed to be *looked at*, not merely listened to or read. In the context of domestic devotions—so often premised on communal engagements in which family members studied the Bible, sang hymns, and prayed together—the picture book would have required children to congregate around the reader in order to participate fully in the practice of piety, drawing families together while focusing their attention on scripture. Looking at one particularly popular picture book—a steady seller titled *The History of the Holy Jesus* that was published by thirteen different New England printers and went through more than forty editions and re-printings between 1745 and 1814—I argue that colonial children were freed from the confines of print and were thus encouraged to participate in devotional exchanges that were made possible by but not necessarily subject to the book's narrative plot. To a certain extent, picture books recast the "performance" of piety in New England, as Erik Seeman terms it, in that children became increasingly acclimated to devotional texts that aimed to blur the line between instruction and entertainment.⁹⁵

The Word Made Flesh: Seeing Scripture in *The History of the Holy Jesus*

In 1766, Job Orton, a minister and theologian, published *Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Reverend Philip Doddridge*, a biography of one of England's most celebrated educators. Orton had been both a student and lecturer at Doddridge's nonconformist academy in the mid eighteenth century. Although he resigned his lectureship to enter the ministry, he and Doddridge remained friends until the latter's death in 1751. Upon publication, Orton's *Memoirs* sold widely. It went through more than twenty English and German editions by 1830 and circulated on both sides of the Atlantic. As time passed, one particular episode achieved a cultural currency apart from the book itself, remaining popular long into the nineteenth century—the story of Doddridge's mother Monica and the family's Dutch tiles. According to Orton:

[Doddridge] was brought up in the early Knowledge of Religion by his pious Parents, who were, in their Character, very worthy their Birth and Education. I have heard him relate, that his mother taught him the History of the *Old and New Testament*, before he could read, by the Assistance of some *Dutch Tiles* in the Chimney of the Room, where they commonly sat: And her wise and pious Reflections upon the Stories there represented, were the means of making some good Impressions upon his Heart, which never wore out: And therefore this Method of Instruction he frequently recommended to Parents.⁹⁶

The Dutch tiles made it possible for the pre-literate Doddridge to know the Bible without reading the Bible. They bridged the gap between the Word of God, on the one hand, and the world of words, on the other, allowing the child to see (quite literally) the stories that his mother told. The chimney was a household fixture, yet the tiles were no mere decoration. They transformed a seemingly commonplace room into a narratological space that habituated the child to his mother's stories and to picture-based reading activities. Unless the young Doddridge had an *a priori* understanding of the pictured scenes—gleaned through church attendance, domestic devotion, or catechistic instruction—he

could not have interpreted the tiles for himself. They would have been meaningless vignettes that derived whatever meaning they had from the child's imaginative play. Monica's interventions precluded such semiotic slippage in that her stories imbued each individual tile with narrative content. The etched images were thus linked to specific biblical stories, sutured to scripture in an act that made religious education more substantive. For a child unfamiliar with the Bible's many passages, they translated the biblical text into a vernacular that the boy could understand despite his intellectual immaturity.

As scholars of "material" Christianity have long noted, lived religion is largely dependent upon everyday life. It is shaped as much by environmental cues as it is by inherited traditions, theological conclusions, and teleological assumptions. The form of devotion that takes hold in a particular place at a particular time is thus conditioned by a host of private and public factors that determine its inward bearing and outward manifestation. In other words, piety is implicitly marked by the social systems and cultural standards that regulate its practice.⁹⁷ As Matthew Brown, David Hall, Charles Hambrick-Stowe, and others have shown, those who lived in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century New England were familiar with a wide range of religious imagery found in illustrated Bibles, emblem books, prayer manuals, and other devotional texts.⁹⁸ The scarcity of religious pictures in early America was due not to the incipient distrust of the image qua image but to technological, geographic, and economic considerations. Until the latter half of the eighteenth century, there was no way to produce illustrated books at affordable prices, no substantial print networks for distributing colonial publications to the scattered populace of the American colonies, and no recognizable

market for children's literature. Nearly all attempts to introduce children to biblical literacy—to help them learn the Bible's most important stories, memorize church doctrine, and understand how to read scripture in both literal and figural registers—were thus centered on text-based educational practices.

In the 1710s, when Doddridge was first introduced to the Bible via Dutch tiles, his experiences would have been quite novel given that so many of his contemporaries (especially those living in the colonies) did not have ready access to those sorts of pictures. But as the century wore on—and as adults looked for ways to make the child's progress toward biblical literacy both easy and enjoyable—religious educators developed picture-based educational exercises and began to incorporate them into domestic and classroom curricula, making it possible for countless children to participate in the same sort of devotional activities that had so influenced young Doddridge. In colonial New England, young readers were already well acquainted with the *New-England Primer*, and well-to-do boys enrolled in Latin schools might have also studied Johann Comenius's *Orbis sensualium pictus* (1659) or Elisha Coles's *Nolens Volens* (1675). However, the pictures featured in these texts were largely subordinated to didactic moralisms and language acquisition, which meant that readers were prompted to value text over illustration. Colonial printers were comfortable with this arrangement, but from the 1740s onward, they were also quick to recognize that pictures were no longer thought of as mere paratextual supplements. Illustrated texts were instead becoming valuable commodities in the newly emergent and increasingly competitive market for children's literature. As time passed and as new generations of consumers grew acclimated to the generic conventions of heavily illustrated children's books, those once predominant

textual hierarchies—where words were numerous and pictures few—were transformed by basic economic considerations and shifting cultural values.

What differentiates the reading experiences associated with books from those of picture books is, as scholars of children's literature have long suggested, a reorientation of the relationship between book and reader and a reconsideration of what exactly reading entails. In practical terms, pictures are materially disruptive in that they interfere with the left-to-right, up-to-down eye movements that allow readers to make sense of a given story, forcing them to oscillate between a typographic system that is largely defined by temporal progression and a pictorial one that is typically atemporal, characterized not by forward momentum but by intermission, hesitation, and reflection. As Lawrence Sipe argues, pictures "seduce us into stopping to look," whereas text "drives us to read on in a linear way."⁹⁹ The stop-and-go nature of illustrated children's books has prompted scholars to analyze the complicated reading patterns that emerge when readers attempt to navigate, order, and synchronize two interconnected sign systems.¹⁰⁰ This has, in turn, resulted in the proliferation of elaborate metaphors to describe these processes. William Moebius uses the phrase "plate tectonics" in order to highlight the parallel yet convulsive relationship between words and pictures, that "semic slippage" characterized by complementarity and contradiction.¹⁰¹ Philip Pullman sees in illustrated books a form of cinematic simultaneity that he likens to "counterpoint," an interdependence of otherwise independent signs.¹⁰² And Perry Nodelman refers to the genre's conventions as "contrapuntal" in that words and pictures are often somewhat independent yet also inherently interwoven.¹⁰³ As Sipe has noted, these metaphors help scholars to identify the complexities involved in the production and reception of seemingly simplistic children's

books and to understand how these books shape (and are shaped by) the cultural assumptions and literary conventions that children unconsciously internalize as they enter into literacy.¹⁰⁴

Relying on a wide range of metaphors, literary critics and children's studies scholars have explored the nuanced nature of these reading practices even as they have subtly delimited what is, according to David Lewis, an inherently "flexible" Janus-faced genre characterized by a "perpetual open-endedness" and an omnivorous appropriation of literary style.¹⁰⁵ What makes the *History of the Holy Jesus* an important object of analysis is not only the stark juxtaposition between its popularity among contemporary readers and its total obscurity among present-day ones but the fact that the *History* was not one book but many, primarily for two different reasons (one generic, the other historical). First, picture books as a genre require readers to navigate complicated "networks of association" as they read—to work out the relationship between the words and pictures as they turn each page, to grasp the continuities that bind one illustrated page to the next, and to recognize some sort of correspondence between the pictures of things (on the page) and the things themselves (in the world)—and they prompt children to engage, at each new sitting, in reading patterns that are as familiar as they are singular.¹⁰⁶ Second, the high-risk nature of colonial printing ventures and the capital required for the design and production of illustrated books meant that the thirteen New England publishers who issued one or more editions of the *History* largely retained the book's typographical format even as they experimented widely with its pictorial layout based on whether or not individual printers had relevant woodcuts on hand or could easily acquire them, a process of "gradual appropriation" that would characterized the genre as it grew increasingly

popular.¹⁰⁷ The reactions of early American children to the pictures on each page have been lost to history, but the juxtapositions of words and pictures—and the marks made by children in nearly a dozen extant copies—shed light on how young readers were growing acclimated to devotional exercises that made biblical history more meaningful by making Bible stories more sensible.

If the immediacy of pictures is, as David Lewis suggests, key to the "impression of *unmediated* representation" that children often experience when reading picture books, then those who read and re-read the *History* might well have been convinced of the truthfulness of pictures and, like young Doddridge, might have felt some sort of imaginative proximity to Jesus as they looked at the book's illustrations, a process in which visibility preceded and paved the way for affinity.¹⁰⁸ Colonial ministers had gone to great lengths to dissuade children from thinking of God as a material form—cautioning them to "Represent Him by no Figure, and Worship Him by no Image"¹⁰⁹—even as young Protestants were growing accustomed to thinking of Jesus in just such terms. The *History* taught adults how to make the life of Christ intelligible to children while it conditioned children to see in pictures a mirroring of historical and spiritual realities and to think of their savior as a "dearest Friend" and not merely a divine one. Those who circulated the *History* were not sacralizing images (as Catholics were rumored to do), but they were beginning to think that images could serve as catalysts for true worship, prefiguring the rise of an incarnational aesthetics that would alter religious instruction over the course of the next century. By the time that an Exeter, New Hampshire, printer issued the final edition of the *History* in 1814, a wide range of Protestants had grown

assured that, when it came time to educate churchgoing children, they should "engage the attention, by striking the eye."¹¹⁰

The History of the Holy Jesus was first advertised in the January 31, 1745, edition of the *Boston News-Letter* and was most likely printed for the bookseller Benjamin Gray—who operated a small shop near the Massachusetts Town House—and illustrated by the colonial engraver James Turner.¹¹¹ By the early 1770s, the book had gone through nearly two dozen editions and reprintings; in 1771 alone, seven editions were published by five separate printers in Boston and New Haven. A small, relatively inexpensive text, the *History* catered to the intellectual limitations of young readers while satisfying the growing parental demand for books that simplified the Bible's complexities. In order to make the book "pleasant and profitable," the anonymous author—known only as "a Lover of their precious Souls"—translated the Gospels into the common meter, making the verses recognizable to those who were accustomed to the alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter found in metrical psalters or in Isaac Watt's *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language*. The author appended two short hymns and an alphabetized catechism to the end of the book, textual additions designed for parents (who read aloud to infants and young children) and children (who memorized and recited these texts for adults). As time passed, printers added children's prayers and an assortment of new hymns to the mix, making the book a useful script for a variety of domestic activities.

To understand how parents and children might have read the *History* and to analyze how the book might have shaped the devotional experiences of those who read

and re-read it, I look at three related phenomena: the text/picture relationship in several early editions, the text/picture realignment in several later editions, and the notations left by adults and children in a handful of extant books. In each edition, the text remained virtually unchanged (save the concluding miscellanies) even as numerous printers reformatted the book's spatial layout by modifying its illustrations, relocating them from one page to another, substituting new ones for old ones, or redesigning them altogether. Because the act of reading picture books forces the reader to navigate two interwoven semiotic systems—in that words and pictures vie for attention even as they work together to propel the reader forward—the seemingly simple decision to rearrange or redesign the book's illustrations, no matter how minor the change might be, alters the reading experience by reorganizing the book's polysemous scaffolding. The alterations made by eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century printers recalibrated the relationship between text and picture even as they transfigured the life of Jesus into something more material than words alone could convey. Paying close attention to the multimedial networks of the *History* demonstrates how picture books gave rise to new domestic reading activities and how this particular book made Jesus more lifelike for New England children, helping them see in imagination a protagonist whose life, death, resurrection, and return bookended human history and whose sacrifice was believed to be as profoundly inclusive as it was deeply personal.

The title page of the *History* is at first glance a typical specimen of the eighteenth-century book trade. The recto provides all relevant publication information while the verso features a portrait of the author, poised *in medias res* over a manuscript in progress (fig. 5). His gaze is not directed toward the page but outward while his pen remains

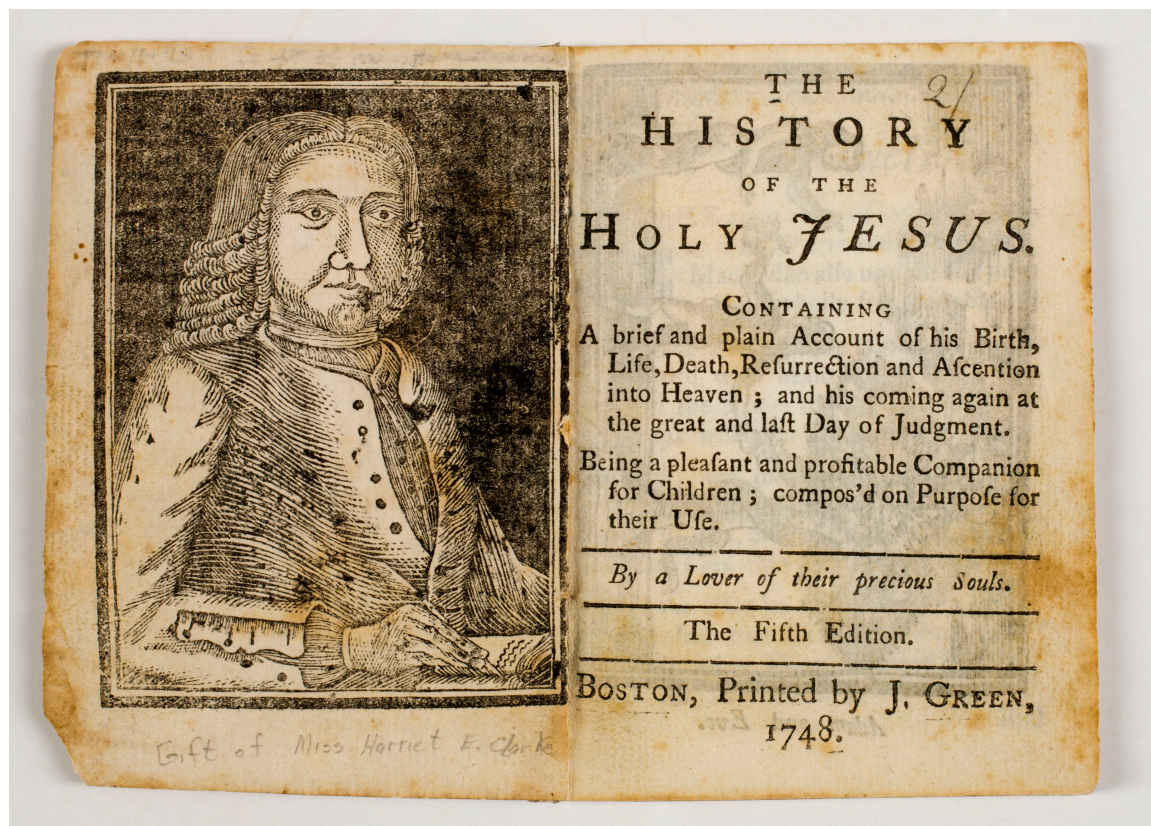


Fig. 5. *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1748).

firmly attached to the sheet; the act of writing seems more automatic than purposeful, as if the author continues to write even as he ignores the writing process. What makes this frontispiece noteworthy—beside the fact that the picture would have gauged children's acclimation to the literary conventions of the time—is not merely its standard format but its emblematic appeal. Unlike the author of the *New-England Primer*, who made sure to note that a half-page engraving featured a "Mr. John Rogers" who was burned at the stake for his religious convictions (fig. 6), the author of the *History* provides no explanatory details for this particular picture. As Philip Pullman notes, pictures that seem to "teem with all kinds of delirious meanings" are often anchored to one specific meaning by "a common culture of iconographic understanding" or by their "proximity to verse."¹¹² But what would happen if children who opened the *History* were yet unfamiliar with Anglo-American iconographic traditions and were unable to locate any explanatory verse? How would they have read this page?

On the one hand, young readers who were guided by their parents might have been told what to see when they looked at the picture, an inevitable conditioning that would have taken place as readers became acquainted with the rules that governed eighteenth-century book design.¹¹³ Older readers who were already familiar with frontispieces might have quickly formed on their own some sort of connection between the picture at left and the pseudonymous "Lover of their previous Souls" at right, seeing in the portrait an approximate representation of the author. On the other hand, young readers—especially those who knew little about books—might have inferred all manner of things from the picture if they were not guided by an older, more experienced hand. In 1818, a six-year-old named Austin Bacon was awarded an 1804 edition of the *History* by



MR. *John Rogers*, Minister of the Gospel in *London*, was the first Martyr in *Q. Mary's* Reign, and was burnt at *Smithfield*, *February* the fourteenth, 1554. His Wife, with nine small Children, and one at

Fig. 6. From *The New-England Primer* (1727).

his teacher—who wrote that he received it as "A Present for Improve / ment in the Sunday School"—but the book's frontispiece featured a picture situated above descriptive text, which meant that when readers of this particular edition looked at the frontispiece, they saw a scene featuring Rev. Mr. Instructwell teaching his students Learnwell and Goodwell (fig. 7).¹¹⁴ For the allegory to make sense, the text had to calcify the image and foreclose the semiotic gap between the two sign systems, narrowing the range of interpretive possibilities. Pullman suggests that words are often "so prescriptive" that they preclude "any interpretation but the 'correct' one."¹¹⁵ However, his argument applies only to older literate children who have been trained to see what adults want them to see (to some extent); the same cannot be said for children who are still too young or naïve to know any better. If the picture appears absent words, then it is free to represent whatever each child (regardless of age) thinks it represents. For readers of the *History*, the frontispiece might have been an author, a father, a minister, a catechizer, a teacher, even Christ himself. Since the picture lacked text, young readers who looked at it for the first time would have had no structural rubric to guide them as they attempted to identify what exactly it signified. It remained polymorphous, similar to what Robin Bernstein refers to as a "scriptive thing": that which "invite[s] behaviors that its maker did and did not envision." This free-floating signification bothered at least one publisher. In 1766, the Boston printer Zechariah Fowle included the words "The AUTHOR" below the portrait, assuring his readers that the man in in the picture and the man who wrote the book were one and the same (fig. 8).¹¹⁶ If, as Perry Nodelman suggests, the words and pictures in picture books operate by "limiting" the scope of signification and thus "take on a meaning

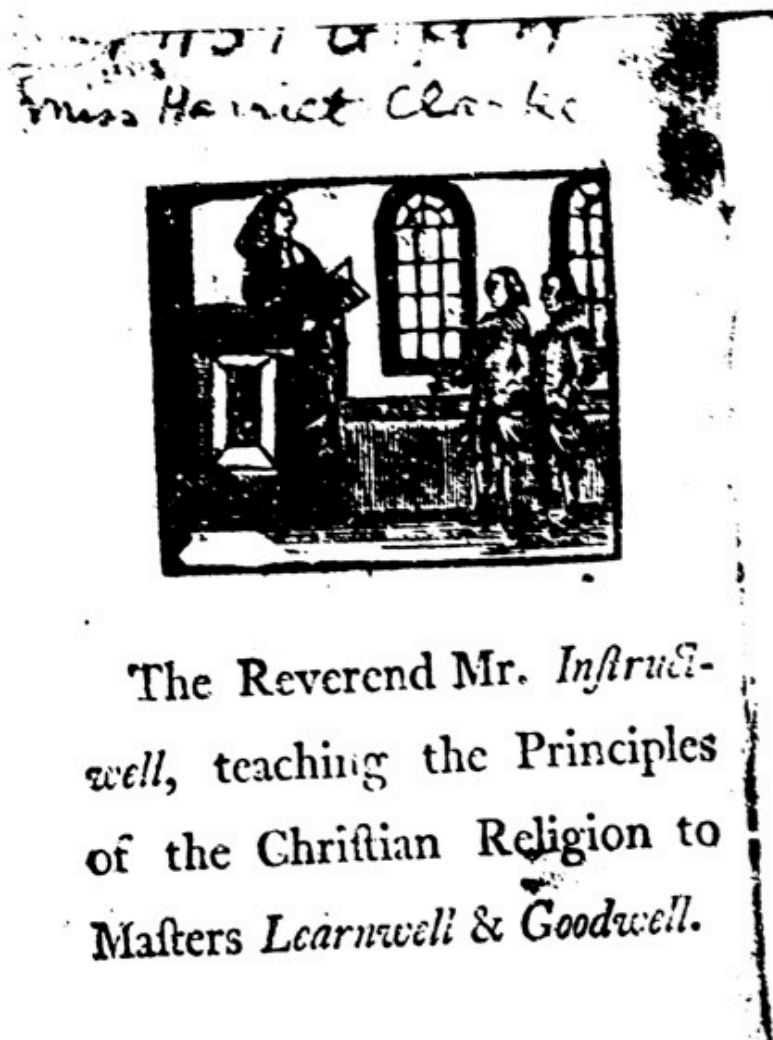


Fig. 7. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1804).



Fig. 8. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1766).

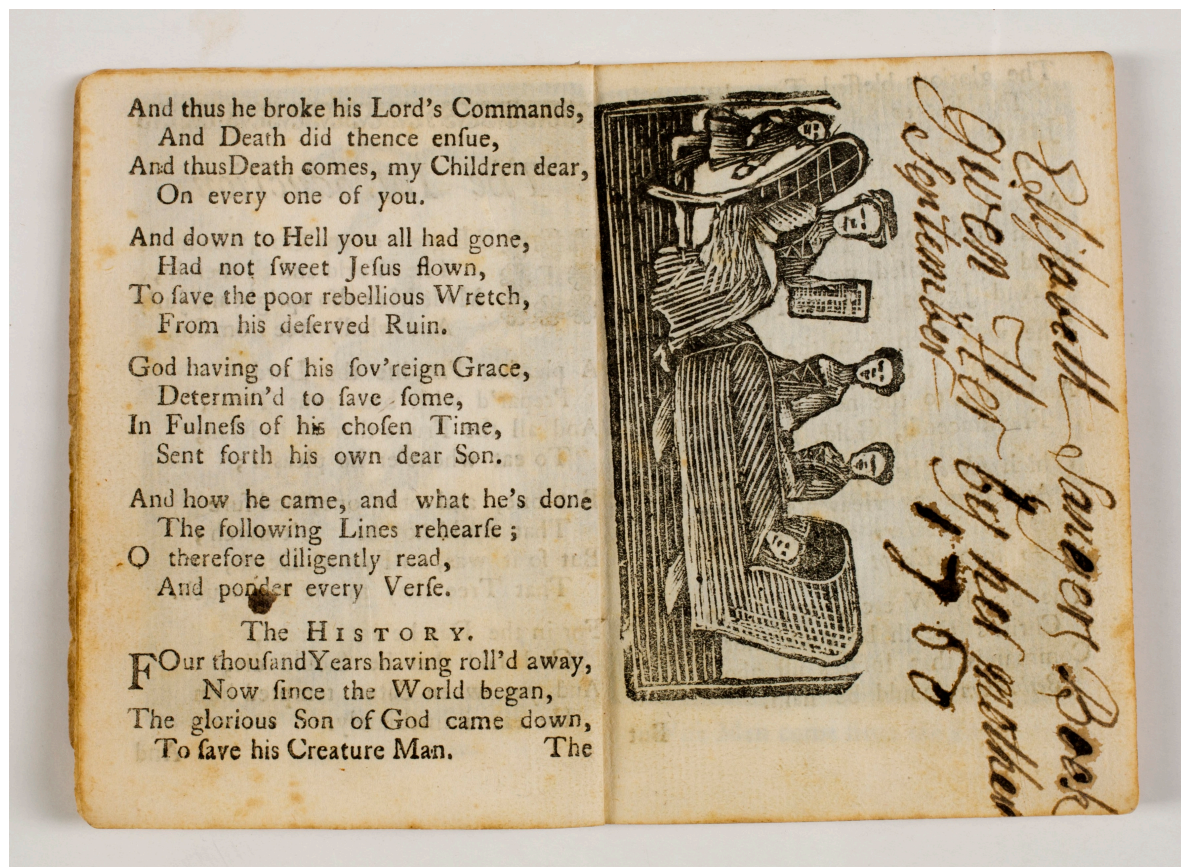
that neither possesses without the other,"¹¹⁷ then the absence of one sign system makes the remaining one much more dynamic, freeing it from a set of narrow constraints.

As readers navigate the pages of picture books, they alternate—often quickly and without conscious effort—between relatively rigid and fluid registers, making sense of one sign by recourse to the other (and vice versa). The multimedial layout of each page spread prompts readers to wander to and fro as they move from verso to recto and from page spread to page spread in an attempt to derive meaning from two different systems: print (which is sequential and linear) and pictures (which are often syncopated and discontinuous). In other words, picture books render the act of reading highly amorphous in that picture books encourage unique, extemporaneous performances by prompting readers (especially those who read aloud to others) to tell inter- and extra-textual stories as they read, scouring the page and drawing from the well of personal experience as they make connections between what is read, what is seen, and what is known. This means that picture books change with every new reader and every new reading (even if the books themselves remain unchanged) because picture-book readers are by nature something other than mere readers. They take on, as Kerry Mallan notes, the "various roles of reader, spectator, witness, social commentator, art critic, co-creator, and performer."¹¹⁸

To understand picture book literacy as a part scripted, part improvisational exercise, consider the *History's* introduction. On the book's second page spread, the verso depicts "Adam and Eve," the recto four introductory quatrains; on the third page spread, the verso features the introduction's final four quatrains while the recto shows an engraving of a family gathering (figs. 9 and 10). The first illustration is titled, the second



Fig. 9. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1748).



Figs. 10. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1748).

untitled; the first is intertextual and illustrative, the second extra-textual and highly personalized. For readers who were already familiar with such iconography, the picture of Adam and Eve might have seemed instantly recognizable and thus required little to no examination or exegesis. But for children who were biblically illiterate or who were just starting to master their catechisms, it offered food for thought in that it did not entirely parallel the introductory narrative. The author does not mention the two titular characters—preferring instead the generic term "Man"—nor does he make any reference to the snake entwined around the tree. The picture required a degree of biblical knowledge that could not be gained by reading the *History* alone, which meant that young readers who lacked the requisite information would have had to rely on older ones if they were to understand the details etched onto the engraving.

More importantly, those who were learning how to read the Bible were also learning to read figurally and were being conditioned by the *History* to trust that Jesus was a "second" or "last" Adam (whose death and resurrection rectified the sins of the first one) and to think of history not as linear, progressive, and homogenous but as cyclical, coterminous, and highly orchestrated.¹¹⁹ This meant that the book required children to look for signs of Jesus far beyond the temporal and textual parameters of the Gospels even as they were taught to bring the lessons of the prelapsarian world to bear on their own young lives and thus to contemplate their personal indebtedness to Christ. The engraving dismantles the temporal distance between Edenic characters and eighteenth-century readers in that Adam plays his part in the biblical drama (by reaching for the forbidden fruit) even as he draws attention to his sin (by gazing at the reader and

beckoning to the tree). The introduction naturalizes historical anachronism by implicating contemporary readers in Adam's fall from grace:

For in the Day he eat thereof,
 God said that he should die.
 And yet when Satan tempted him
 He eat immediately.
 And thus he broke his Lord's Command,
 And Death did thence ensue,
 And thus Death comes, my Children dear,
 On every one of you.
 And down to Hell you all had gone,
 Had not sweet Jesus flown,
 To save the poor rebellious Wretch,
 From his deserved ruin.¹²⁰

The first quatrain records God's warning and Adam's crime entirely in the past tense, recounting a series of historical events that ushered sin into the world. The second quatrain, however, shifts from the historical to the personal as past tense morphs into present tense and as the third person descriptive narrative gives way to an explicit authorial address to young readers. The repetition of the words "And thus" and "Death" underscores the inborn depravity that links present sinners to past ones; in this sense, Adam's uplifted finger suggests that readers are as complicit in his originary transgression as he is, an anachronism that children internalized when, for example, they committed to memory the *New-England Primer's* opening alphabetic couplet, "In *Adam's* Fall / We Sinned all." The third quatrain complicates further this already convoluted temporal paradox by introducing Jesus's pre-incarnational agency into the tale of humanity's fall. The second-person plural pronoun in the first tetrameter suggests that children's future eternal welfare depends on Christ's intervention at time's beginning. The "Wretch" that Jesus saves is surprisingly not the corporate "you" addressed by the author but Adam himself, suggesting that Christ's death and resurrection functioned as an ex

post facto absolution of events that occurred prior to his birth. In other words, Jesus's sacrifice resonated backward and forward in time, collapsing human history into a single transcendent moment of redemption.

This personalized story of transgression and forgiveness was designed to resonate with children as they moved from the introduction's first page spread to its second, turning from events that were far removed to ones that were intimately familiar. The final two introductory quatrains shift the narrative from the historical to the personal as the acts of God and the act of reading converge in print and picture. After the temporal paradoxes of the previous verses, the narrative voice returns to the third-person past tense—"God having of his sov'reign Grace, / Determin'd to save some, / In Fulness of his chosen Time, / Sent forth his own dear Son"—even as the introduction's historical arc ends abruptly, replaced by an authorial injunction to "diligently read, / And ponder every Verse." The image on the recto refers not to any biblical narrative as the one before it did but to a domestic scene in which a proportionally larger figure (presumably a mother) surrounded by proportionally smaller figures (presumably children) holds up an object for all to see (presumably a book). I say "presumably" because the nameless engraving—in its crude simplicity, its imprecision, and its anonymity—does not tell readers how to read it. Unlike the image on the preceding page, which was titled by either the author or engraver, this illustration required a priori knowledge of generic conventions that were recognizable and thus iterable, a *mise en scene* that made it possible for readers schooled in such conventions to project themselves onto the page (and the page onto themselves).¹²¹

Given the engraving's subject matter and the blank space that surrounds it, this picture served as a focal point for colonial inscriptions wherein children personalized the image and thus involved the *History* in those ties of kinship that were part and parcel of childhood literacy and early religious instruction, what one scholar refers to as the "affective relationship" that children have with texts closely linked to family and friends.¹²² This picture of a mother surrounded by children seems to have functioned as a sentimental locus for several young readers of the period, those who saw in its crude lines something akin to their own personal relationships and who transcribed onto the page words that invoked in some manner the other members of their family. On January 3, 1754, a child practiced penmanship in the margins of a 1749 edition, writing two names ("David James" and "Rachel James") in the space above the picture. In doing so, young David added a specific familial subtitle of sorts to the engraving by implicitly binding the family in the picture to the James family, recognizing in the engraving a symmetrical relationship between the pictured objects and everyday life and making that relationship concrete with a few flourishes of the pen (fig. 11).¹²³ In 1759, a girl named Mary Sweetser claimed the book as her own by adding a personalized inscription to the page: "mary Sweetser her Book 1759." It appears that a younger sibling inherited Mary's book and coopted it for himself, writing "Beniamen his [book]" over the girl's inscription (fig. 12).¹²⁴ Unlike the text mentioned above, these were two different readers claiming the same space of the same book as it was handed down from older children to younger ones. In 1760, a young girl left yet another type of inscription in the margins of her 1748 edition of the *History* because her book was a parental gift, not a hand-me-down from an older child: "Elizabeth Sangers Book given Her by her mother September 1760" (fig.

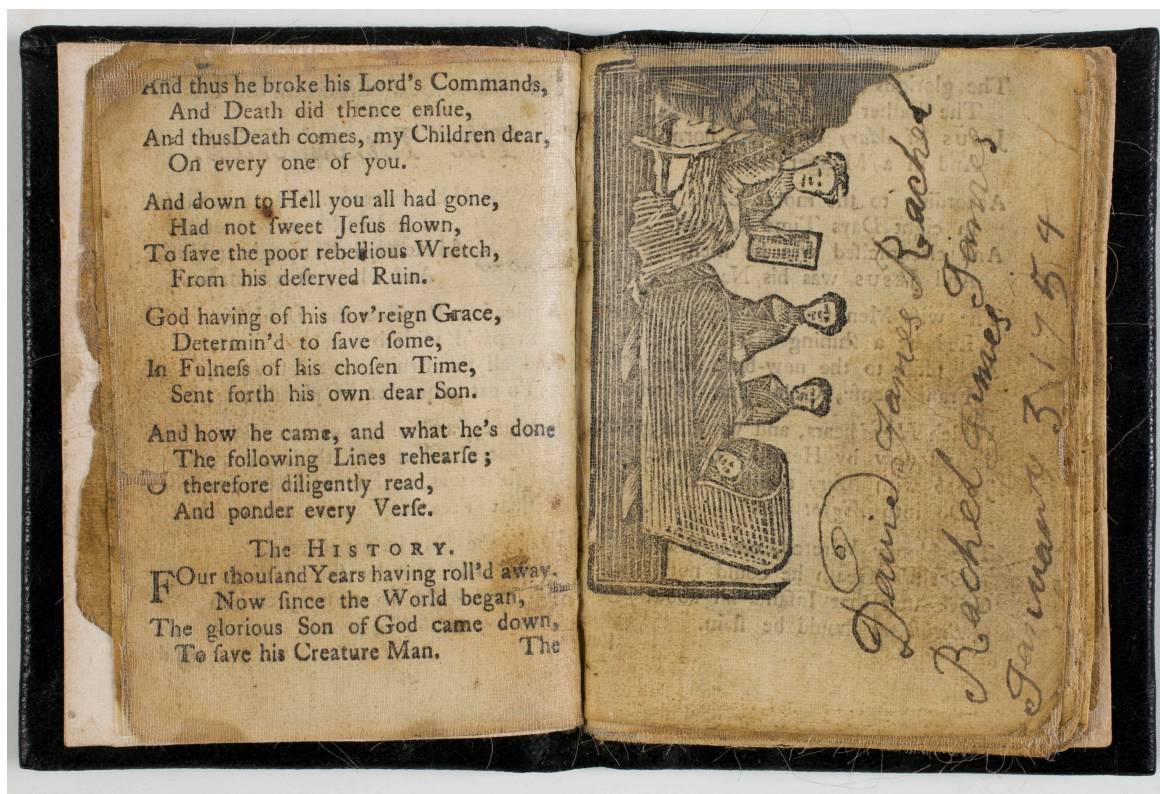


Fig. 11. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1754).



Fig. 12. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1759)

8).¹²⁵ The page served as a reminder—clearly visible whenever Elizabeth opened the *History*—that this was not just any book but a gift book. It bound mother to daughter and recorded an event that occurred at a specific time and that involved specific people placed above a picture that seemed to mirror that very relationship and thus merit careful personalization. This correspondence made it possible for children like Elizabeth to imagine that they and their families were depicted in the pages of the *History*, seeing in the engraving not a generic illustration but an emblem of everyday life.

As with the frontispiece, the picture was not regulated by any surrounding textual material. I was a relatively loose and free-floating addition to the book that made it possible for readers to move in and out of biblical history as they read and to see in the seated figure not only a mother but whoever approximated each particular child's domestic reality. Its very open-endedness would have encouraged reading exercises that were largely unregulated by print. When readers looked at early editions of the *History*—especially those who did so without parental assistance—they would have had no textual compass to guide their eyes, no words to tell them what to see when they saw this picture. They were not confined to one particular interpretation but were free to see what they wanted to see in the crude outlines of the engraving. This semiotic latitude would not last long. In 1754, John Green (who had been printing the book since at least 1748) issued the seventh edition of the *History* at his shop in New London, Connecticut, and decided to add a subtitle to the page, a seemingly minor alteration but one that would have altered the reading experience for some parents and children. In this and subsequent editions, the image was anchored to a line of text: "The careful *Mother* Instructing her Children" (fig. 13). These words were to some degree restrictive in that the text circumscribed the range

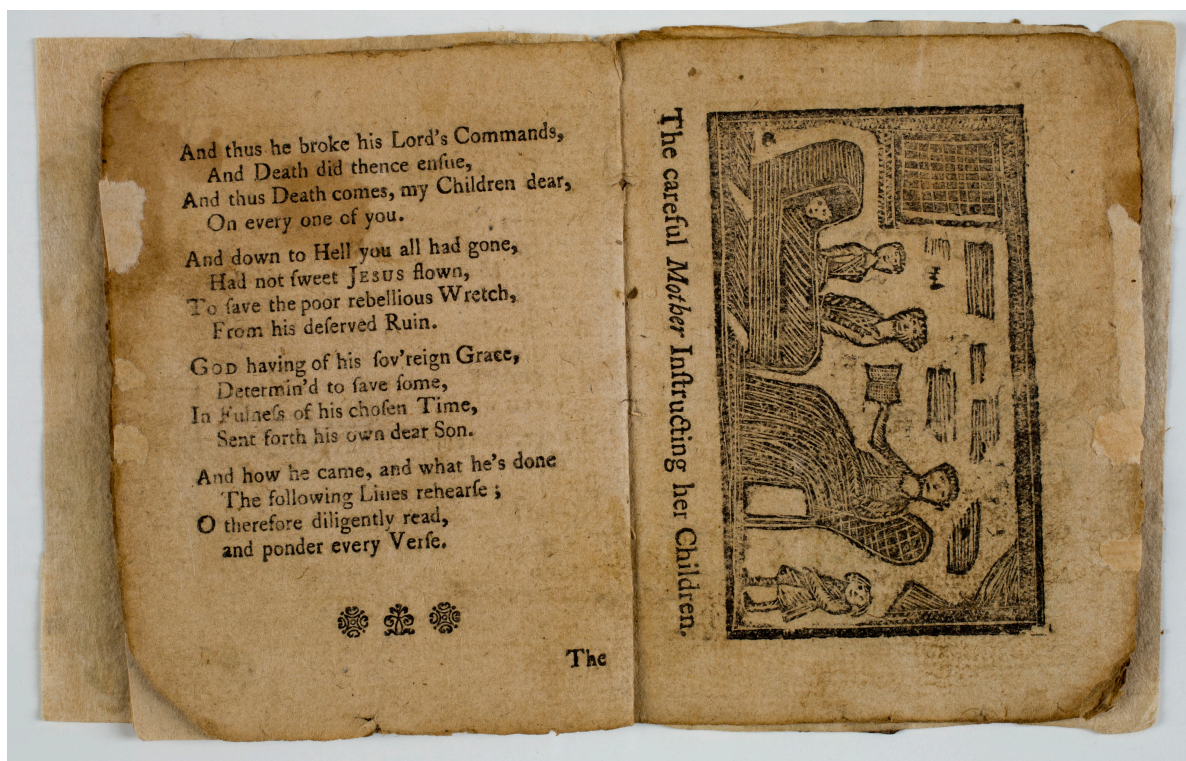


Fig. 13. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1754).

of interpretive possibilities. This does not mean that motherless children were now unable to see in the illustration a semblance of their own lives; it does, however, point to the fact that minor additions or subtractions inevitably transform the way that parents and children navigate picture books and thus reshape either in part or in whole the stories that are told as readers turn from page to page.

Whether titled or not, the engraving of mother and children did not correspond to the *History's* introductory narrative. Even the lines "O therefore diligently read / And ponder every Verse" only hinted at an implied reader; they neither paralleled nor mirrored the picture at right. Some scholars have thought of such disjunctions in negative terms, referring to them as incongruences characterized by dissociation, conflict, and dissonance.¹²⁶ According to Nodelman, however, a somewhat "combative relationship" exists between *all* words and pictures in picture books—as text and image vie for the reader's attention—but those instances in which they appear to tell conflicting stories are more accurately referred to as "ironic" in that each semiotic system conveys information that does not exist in the other: "[T]he words tells us what the pictures do not show, and the pictures show us what the words do not tell."¹²⁷ The juxtaposition of seemingly discordant material means that readers can choose from or invent a variety of narrative plots as they attempt to make sense of the apparent discrepancies between words and pictures.

Take, for example, a page spread that featured a picture of a central individual flanked by six figures (fig. 14). At left, the narrative recounts several well-known biblical stories drawn mostly from the book of Luke: the redemption of Zaccheus the tax collector (Luke 19:1-10), the healing of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), Jesus's triumphal entry

Zaccheus he now climbs a Tree,
 To see the blessed Lord,
 And instantly converted is
 By his most powerful Word.
 On *Bartimeus*, poor and blind,
 The Lord did Pity take,
 And did restore to him his Sight,
 For his great Mercy's Sake.
 And now behold triumphantly
 Christ to *Jerusalem* rides,
 Where Multitudes their Garments spread,
 And some *Hosanna* cry'd.
 And now being near the City come,
 He weeps, and sighs, and mourns,
 And tells the sore Destruction,
 That swiftly on them comes.
 And then into the Temple goes,
 And casts the Traders out,
 And cures the Blind, and heals the Lame,
 And makes the Dumb to shout.



Fig. 14. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1748).

into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40), his prophetic denunciation of the city (Luke 19:41-44), and his cleansing of the temple (Luke 19:45-46). At first glance, the picture reflected not a scene from biblical history but one drawn from colonial life. This disjunction might have encouraged some readers to follow two divergent narrative paths: a textual one (that roughly abridged Luke 19) and a visual one (that emphasized church attendance, hymnody, or liturgical ritual). For those readers who expected or even demanded a sense of "congruency" between the verso and the recto—what Schwarcz defines as a relationship wherein pictures and words parallel and complement each other—the page spread offered few narrative options and thus required readers to take a more active role in the interpretation if they were to harmonize the apparent discrepancies. This meant that the picture would have to undergo some kind of transformation if it were to mirror in any way the accompanying narrative.

The most obvious approach would have required an imaginative leap wherein the central figure morphed from a colonial minister into Christ himself. The surrounding space would no longer be a church but a "temple" wherein Jesus cast out merchants and performed all manner of miracles. Adult readers who knew the Bible well and who had it open to Luke 19 as they read to children from the *History* would have found no reference to miracles, but they would have had even more explicit encouragement to think of the ministerial figure as Jesus because the biblical text emphasized Christ's homiletic propensities: "Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words" (Luke 19:47-48). Once transformed, the picture would have prompted readers to see in its outlines something

other than a colonial congregation even as it added narrative details that the *History* lacked. But these semiotic discontinuities—and the imaginative effort required to render them more congruent—must have bothered some colonial readers because in 1774 the Boston printer John Boyle removed the engraving from its hitherto customary place, inserted it into an earlier section of the text, and added the subtitle "CHRIST teaching the Multitude" (fig. 15).¹²⁸ The realigned page spread made it easier for readers to locate concrete parallels because the picture appeared opposite a seemingly more congruent storyline. A particularly relevant portion of text appeared at top: "Away to Galilee he goes, / In Synagogue doth teach, / Both working mighty Miracles, / And wond'rously doth preach." At bottom, another parallel could be found: "And from among the Multitude / Of his Disciples there, / He Twelve did chuse, and sent them forth / To preach, to heal and cure." The "multitude" in particular functioned as a concrete link between the two semiotic registers, which meant that this page spread now demanded less of an imaginative leap from readers as they looked back and forth. In 1793, the printer and bookseller Ashbel Stoddard of Hudson, New York, emphasized this fact, positioning the latter verse across from a picture that had been modified to include not six but eight figures surrounding that of "Christ" in the elevated central pulpit (fig. 16). This engraving—as printers moved it from one page spread to another and added captions and details as they saw fit—rendered the reading process highly fluid. With each new juxtaposition, parents and children would have had to make sense of the picture in terms of the surrounding material (and vice versa), which suggests that congruence dictates to a large degree the stories that are told as pictures and text alternately converge and diverge



Fig. 15. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1774).

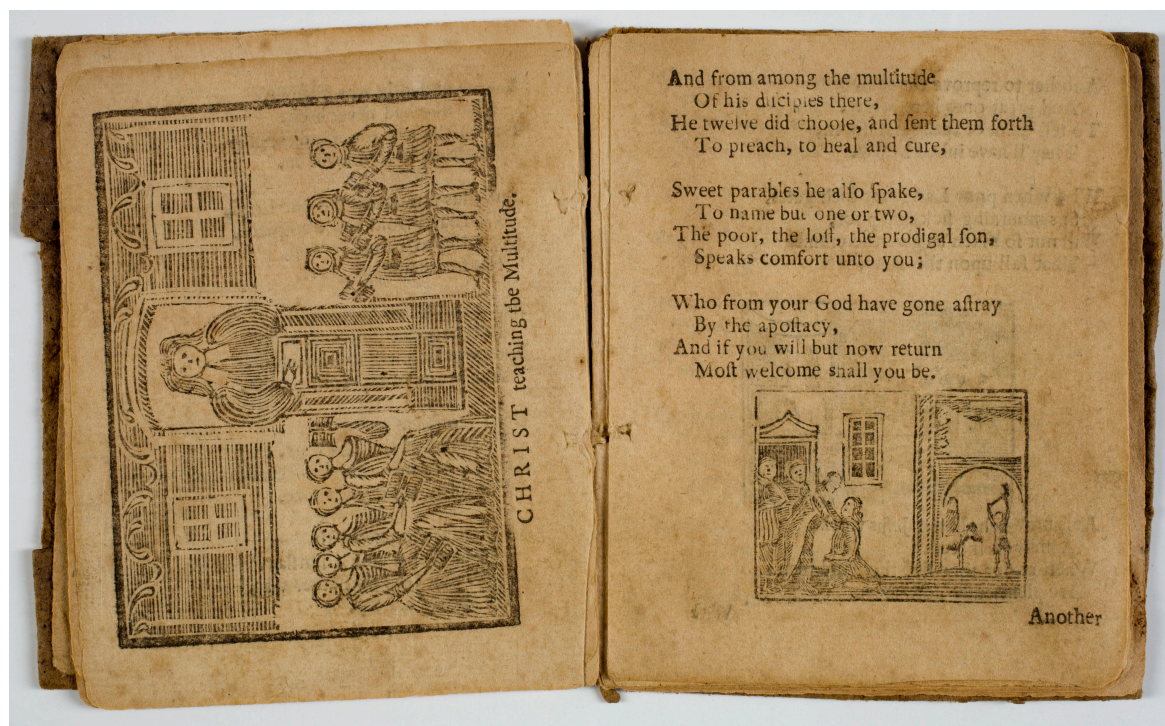


Fig. 16. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1793).

and as the semiotic verisimilitude or the lack thereof forces readers to engage in spontaneous and instantaneous acts of imaginative interpretation.

As the picture of "CHRIST teaching the Multitude" suggests, the *History* abounded in semiotic juxtapositions that were often acutely ahistorical, mosaics in which text from the Bible was situated alongside pictures drawn from colonial life. Such illustrations overlaid scenes from eighteenth-century New England onto ancient Palestine for children who were otherwise entirely unfamiliar with the sociocultural realities of the biblical world. These page spreads made it possible for young readers to imagine for themselves the landscapes of the Bible because those landscapes mirrored certain recognizable aspects of modern life. One of the most striking of these juxtapositions featured an account of Jesus and the disciples' miraculous fishing expedition flanked by two engravings, that of a ship and an open Bible (fig. 17).¹²⁹ The text read:

When have clos'd; launch out said he,
 To *Peter*, who obey'd,
 And for a Draught immediately,
 The Net it down was laid.
 Which presently was filled so,
 The like had never been,
 For all the Men on board the Ship
 Were call'd to draw it in.
 And thus unwearied did our Lord,
 Go round from Place to Place,
 Declaring to a sinful World,
 His free abundant Grace.

These pictures were an entirely congruent addition to the text because they mirrored the narrative of the *History* even though they warped the historical landscape. An intertemporal collage of complementary semiotic units, the page spread made it easy for children to imagine the Bible's historical realities in more concrete terms by fusing contemporary life to the biblical world. The ship was not an ancient vessel but a modern



Fig. 17. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1748).

one, which meant that children were encouraged to superimpose a familiar sight onto an unfamiliar scene. The lines "For all the Men on board the Ship / Were call'd to draw it in" conclude the tale of the miraculous fishing excursion; the remaining verses then condense an untold number of stories into a simple paraphrase: "And thus unwearied did our Lord, / Go round from Place to Place, / Declaring to a sinful World, / His free abundant Grace." At right, the open Bible dominates the page—a visual indicator of the book's outsized importance—even as it introduces a certain narrative indeterminacy into the storytelling process. Some readers might have interpreted this scene as an injunction of sorts. In order for children to know exactly what Jesus did as he moved "from Place to Place," they had to consult scripture itself, not merely the *History*. However, the picture was not anchored to any explanatory text, which meant that other readers might have entertained a narrative paradox for simplicity's sake (or out of sheer ignorance) and thus interpreted the page spread in more literal terms: when Jesus preached, he preached from the Bible. For parents who were interested in drawing parallels between Jesus's ministry and that of local clergy—or for readers who were too young or uneducated to know any better—the page spread made it possible to believe that the Bible was as familiar to Jesus as it was to colonial readers.

Given the fact that New England printers often recycled engravings that had been designed for other texts but that were still in usable condition, it is hardly surprising that they would insert pictures into the *History* that maintained some sense of narrative coherence even if they were not an accurate reflection of the ancient world. The most conspicuous instance of such recirculation involved the crucifixion. Between 1745 and

1766, the recto and verso were linked not by the image of Christ but by that of a colonial town (fig. 18). The text read:

Behold the Rocks in Pieces rend,
The Earth did quake likewise,
And Saints which slept beneath the Clods,
In Numbers did arise.
Amazing Sight! dear Lambs come see,
Your dearest Lord is slain,
And hanging on a cursed Tree,
His Body doth remain.

The picture featured frightened townspeople and lopsided buildings, an anachronistic transliteration of a colonial townscape for first-century Jerusalem. What contemporary readers probably did not know was that the selection and placement of this particular picture had less to do with narrative congruency than it did economic necessity. When he first published the *History* in 1745, Benjamin Gray reused an engraving that had appeared the year before in his broadside *Earthquakes, Tokens of God's Power and Wrath* (fig. 19). On a Sunday morning in June 1744, an earthquake had struck colonial Massachusetts as Sunday services were underway. From Boston to Newburyport, panicked churchgoers poured into the streets in order to avoid falling debris; the aftershocks that rocked the area for the next few weeks confirmed, for many devout colonials, a sense that God was in some way displeased with the present state of affairs. Published a week after the initial tremors, Gray's broadside reminded readers of the "vast agonies" that they had recently experienced and of the earthquakes that followed Jesus's crucifixion—"And when the Lord of Life did die / Upon the cursed Tree, / The Rocks, tho' obdurate and hard / Did break immediately"—even as he warned readers to "embrace" Christ in order to remain "for e'er secure."¹³⁰ The engraving in the upper right-hand corner mirrored the events of the previous Sunday even as Gray linked the quakes of the present to those of both past



Figs. 18. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1748).

Earthquakes.

Tokens of GOD's Power and Wrath. The Dissolution of the present World ; and the approaching Creation, when all Things shall be burnt up : With a Description of the drowning the old World, and Christ's coming to Judgment. Being a Warning to Sinners and Comfort to the Children of GOD



Second Epistle of Peter, iii. Chap. 10, & 11, Verses. But the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth also and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up. Ver. 11. Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what Manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness.

Fig. 19. Detail from Benjamin Gray, *Earthquakes, Tokens of God's Power and Wrath* (1745).

and future, the tremors that had once marked the most important event in human history and those that would someday signal the end of time itself as God unleashed his final judgment upon the world. These were "amazing" sights, Gray explained, because they revealed to a fallen world the depths of human depravity as well as the pardon offered by an angry yet merciful God.

When he published the *History* the following year, Gray positioned this engraving opposite the crucifixion, where it would remain for over twenty years even as the woodcuts changed hands and as new engravers were hired to replace old and outworn cuts. For readers who had lived through the quakes of 1744—or older readers who remembered the terrifying earthquake of 1727—the pages of the first Boston edition might have reminded them of past events because the picture reflected a scene of general upheaval and panic unanchored to any specific geologic event. Believed by many to be a universal manifestation of God's displeasure, the earthquake provided enough semiotic continuity for Gray and his successors to reissue it in order to avoid additional expense. No matter when colonial readers scanned this particular page spread, those who looked at the pictures were prompted to dwell on the *effects* of the crucifixion—the rumblings that shook the ground and the "saints" that rose from the dead—not the crucifixion itself, a tension which emerged as image and text pulled readers in different directions. Because picture books elicit improvisational performances from readers of all ages, the picture might have even prompted some older readers to depart from the historical arc of the *History* entirely in order to interject personal accounts of the New England earthquakes into the storytelling experience.

In 1766, however, the Boston printer Zechariah Fowle released an eleventh edition of the *History*, a book that no longer featured an engraving of a quake-ridden colonial town but that of the crucifixion itself (fig. 20). The new image was no longer set apart from the text—forcing readers to look back and forth or to focus their attention on either verso or recto—but wedged between it, a formatting change that likely transformed the reading experience as young readers were now prompted to set their sights on Jesus (and not some generic colonial townscape) and thus follow quite literally the authorial injunction that appeared below the picture:

Amazing Sight! dear Lambs come see,
 Your dearest Lord is slain,
 And hanging on a cursed Tree,
 His Body doth remain.
 The Blood stream'd down his precious Head,
 His lovely Hands and Feet,
 In one most pure and purple Gore,
 They altogether meet.
 Behold his dear and lovely Head
 Fall on his bleeding Breast;
 And all to bring his little Lambs
 To an eternal Rest.¹³¹

The new semiotic configuration resulted in a drastic Christ-centering of the page spread in that readers were now directed to focus their attention on Jesus. The man at left beckons to the reader much like Adam did at the outset of the *History*; the woman at right gestures toward Jesus as well, her bent arm and closed hand suggestive of penitence and prayer. But Christ dominates the page. The cross elevates him above the onlookers and stretches his figure vertically and horizontally, ensuring that he fills as much space as possible. His head is similar in size and shape to their own; however, his arms and legs are longer and his torso thicker than theirs. He literally towers over them, a head taller than each. The starkness and simplicity of the scene foregrounds the key central figure

But hear---- the Lord repeats his Cry,
 Jesus the Lord of Hosts ;
 And after having cry'd aloud,
 He yielded up the Ghost.
 Behold the Rocks in Pieces rend,
 The Earth did quake likewise,
 And Saints which slept beneath the Clods,
 In Numbers did arise.



Amazing Sight ! dear Lambs come see,
 Your dearest Lord is slain,
 And hanging on a cursed Tree,
 His Body doth remain.

The

The Blood stream'd down his precious Head,
 His lovely Hands and Feet,
 In one most pure and purple Gore,
 They altogether meet.

Behold his dear and lovely Head
 Fall on his bleeding Breast ;
 And all to bring his little Lambs
 To an eternal Rest.

Now *Joseph*, a great Man of Fame,
 His lovely Corps doth crave,
 And carefully interrs it in
 His own peculiar Grave.

Ye, come, dear Souls, behold the Place,
 Where *JESUS* lay when dead,
 A Sheet in-wrap'd the Son of God,
 A Napkin bound his Head.

A Watch is set, a Guard procur'd,
 To keep our Saviour there,
 Who lo, as dead Men they became,
 When *Gabriel* did appear.

Who

Fig. 20. From *The History of the Holy Jesus* (1766).

while the narrative encourages readers to regard his bodily features with tender appreciation—his "precious Head," his "lovely Hands and Feet," his "dear and lovely Head," his "bleeding Breast"—seeing in the image not the crude outline of a man but an accurate representation of a loving savior. Both picture and text prompt readers to dwell at length on Jesus, especially children who could fix their eyes on the image while an older sibling or an adult read the text aloud. Coupled with the personalized account found on the previous page—"Where all for you, my Children dear; / For you he wept and cry'd, / For you he sigh'd, for you he groan'd / For you he freely dy'd"—the page spread implies that Jesus's death was as meaningful for those who witnessed it in picture form as it was for those who saw it firsthand.

Years after the final print run of Job Orton's *Memoirs*, the story of young Doddridge, his mother Monica, and the Dutch tiles remained popular because it prefigured and thus corroborated picture-based methods of religious instruction and because it justified the prevailing sentimental opinion that mothers were uniquely suited and primarily responsible for training young children in the ways of God and the church. In 1837, the artist George Presbury memorialized the episode in a widely circulated steel engraving that graced the pages of Anglo-American publications well into the 1870s (fig. 21). In the image, Monica sits near the fireplace with an open Bible atop her lap, drawing the young boy's attention to a picture of the crucifixion. The position of both mother and son—her raised arm and downward glance, his forward posture and uplifted face—suggests that Monica has already read the Bible story to young Doddridge since she no



Fig. 21. G. N. Wright, *The Gallery of Engravings* (1845).

longer holds the book. Their shared gaze implies a dialogic event characterized by adult mediation and oral improvisation, an act of storytelling that alternated between the biblical text and the mother's commentary. The tile serves as the crux of the conversation in that it centers the boy's attention on an object that stands in for chapter and verse. It is a script that guides parental storytelling, but it is also a mnemonic device that helps the child track his growing knowledge of scripture along the chimney's horizontal and vertical axes.

Shortly after its production, the engraving inspired the English poet Bernard Barton to pen "The Mother of Dr. Doddridge Teaching Him Scripture History from the Dutch Tiles," a poem that circulated in tandem with the engraving, from the pages of the religious press to the embroidery on cotton handkerchiefs.¹³² The poem recounted for readers largely accustomed to illustrated books a period in time when such texts were still quite rare, demonstrating in the process an affinity for those modes of education made possible by the juxtaposition of picture and text:

Simple and rude the graphic art display'd
Upon those tiles antique, with history fraught,
Yet all-sufficient, with a Mother's aid,
To charm his fancy, and awaken thought!
The scenes depicted are from Scripture's page;
And he has been accustom'd oft to hear
The Holy Record of that earlier age,
From lips whose voice is music to his ear.
And here he *sees* the stories he has *heard*,
In portraiture embodied to his view;
The sight must bring relief—for GOD'S OWN WORD,
And a fond mother's—tell him "ALL IS TRUE!"
Here he beholds his blessed Saviour bear
The cross—*there* crucified—his eyes are dim
With childhood's tears: his silent thought is prayer,
As her loved, gentle voice says, "'T WAS FOR HIM!"¹³³

The poem suggests that the "simple and rude" images counter childish boredom and indecision, offering an "all-sufficient" panacea to the problems that plagued religious educators and Sabbatarians alike. Because Monica has created a material link between the Bible and the pictures and thus equated the written word with its illustrated equivalent, the boy views the Dutch tiles as evidence of divine truth drawn straight "from Scripture's page," an "embodiment" of biblical history that occludes the obvious artistry involved in their production. The italicized words "*here*" and "*there*" follow the boy's gaze as Monica directs it to specific tiles. Prompted by his mother, the child experiences a sense of divine immanence as he *sees* stories. The Dutch tiles transform the fireplace into a sacred space by opening a rift in which time itself recoils, carrying young Doddridge into Christ's presence. In this moment, the story of the crucifixion is no longer merely a story in that the boy now glimpses not a representative sacrifice but a strikingly individualized one: his tears are proof that he has internalized his mother's teachings and has experienced the pangs of true repentance. The tiles have served their purpose. They have personalized the Bible in ways that text alone could not.

In a culture awash in sentimentality, this story corroborated what many American had already come to believe: that children needed help when it came time to study scripture. In 1850, a writer for *The Mother's Magazine and Family Journal* told readers to imitate Monica: "Teach [children] by prints and pictures of Bible scenes, as Doddridge's mother taught him, by the pictures on the tiles around their fireplace. Captivate them by every device in your power, and fill their young imaginations with incidents and narratives, beautiful and impressive, from the Bible."¹³⁴ The Lockean notion that children were empty vessels in need of filling rang as true for nineteenth-century teachers as it had

for their eighteenth-century predecessors. What changed were the development and proliferation of "device[s]" that enhanced the study of scripture by making its stories as vivid and captivating as possible. Worried that "numberless passages, both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, abound with incidents and doctrines much beyond the comprehension of young persons," as the famed educator Sarah Trimmer put it, and fearful that chapter and verse would become "familiar to their ear, without having proper ideas annexed to them," Protestants turned en masse to institutionalized instruction—turning to newly-formed denominational societies and Sunday schools for instructional support and to religious publishers for educational resources to use in both homes and classrooms—and began to demand more books that would, they hoped, make Bible study more enjoyable by introducing young readers to the historical context of so many sacred stories.

This suggests that the historical Jesus, as he would later be called, was birthed as much by popular demand as he was by theological speculation and historical critique. Scholars interested in the emergence and popularity of biblical historiography have often referred to it as a type of trickle-down effect, suggesting that American interest in the historical Jesus owed its existence to the westward spread of German Higher Criticism and to scholarly debates that raged among nineteenth-century Protestant intellectuals. These accounts are accurate insofar as they point to what Hans Frei refers to as the "eclipse" of biblical narrative—the "breakdown of realistic and figural interpretation of biblical stories" and the rise of competing hermeneutics that took place across the long nineteenth century¹³⁵—but they fail to note that the impulse to historicize scripture simultaneously gripped American laity and that the efforts of local clergyman and religious educators heralded the advent of a populist strain of biblical historiography that

had as much to do with popularizing the Jesus of history as did the most eloquent arguments put forth by contemporary theologians and scholars. This particular branch of historicist thought grew in popularity once American educators began to think of the Bible as a "mine" of sorts: a book that revealed, to the experienced and educated reader, an endless trove of spiritual wealth.¹³⁶ As one writer explained, "The deeper you dig into Scripture, the more you find that it is a great abyss of truth."¹³⁷ Of course, the devout trusted that they could read the Bible without external assistance because its divine words were sufficient for experiential faith. But as we will see in the chapters that follow, those who studied and taught biblical history also believed that they were equipping young readers to push past scripture's surface in order to explore its depths. The historical Jesus emerged as generations of children grew acclimated to radically historicized Bible stories and to an increasingly personalized savior, a trend that would over time render the Son of God more human than ever.

²⁶ George Whitefield, *The Knowledge of Jesus Christ the best Knowledge* (1739; rpt. Providence, RI: John Carter, 1793), 3.

²⁷ Whitefield, *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (London: W. Strahan, 1740), 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁰ "Whitefield Responds: *Boston Gazette*, 1742," quoted in *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740-1745*, ed. Richard Bushman (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 38.

³¹ Whitefield, *The Knowledge of Jesus Christ the best Knowledge*, 6-7.

³² *Ibid.*, 8.

³³ Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981). Harry Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (1986; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 161-162, 333.

³⁴ Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), 43; Michael Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 181.

³⁵ Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

³⁶ Jonathan Edwards, "True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, A.M.*, Vol. 2 (London: William Ball, 1839), 43.

³⁷ What makes the study of biblical literacy especially complex is its relationship to literacy proper. Depending on the locale and the preferred methods of instructions—sermons, primers, catechisms, devotional manuals—children could enter into biblically literacy without knowing how to read or write because the information was transmitted orally by ministers, parents, and educators within the confines of both church and home. For more on the subject, see Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) and Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

³⁸ Thomas White, *A Little Book for Little Children* (Boston: Timothy Green, 1702), 74.

³⁹ Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 3.

⁴⁰ Cotton Mather, *Corderius Americanus* (Boston: John Allen, 1708), 7.

⁴¹ Josiah Smith, *The Duty of Parents, to Instruct their Children* (Boston: D. Henchman, 1730), 9. Italics in original.

⁴² David Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600-1850," *Printing and Society in Early America*, eds. William Joyce, David Hall, Richard Brown, and John Hench (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1983), 35.

⁴³ Samuel Checkley, *Little Children brought to Jesus Christ* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1741), 12.

⁴⁴ Samuel Phillips, *Children well employed, and, Jesus much delighted* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1739), 80.

⁴⁵ In 1812, a London printer released a posthumous collection of writings by the famed educator Sarah Trimmer titled *An Essay on Christian Education*. In a chapter on the "Expediency of making Children acquainted with Scripture History at an early Age," Trimmer quoted at length from François Fénelon's popular book *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, instructing her readers to disregard Fenelon's Catholicism and instead pay close attention to his educational strategies. See Trimmer, *An Essay on Christian Education* (London: Law and Gilbert, 1812), 236; also François Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, trans. George Hickes (London: Jonah Bowyer, 1707), 90-91.

⁴⁶ Cotton Mather, *Corderius Americanus*, 1.

⁴⁷ Cotton Mather, *Family-Religion Urged* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1709), 3.

⁴⁸ Mather, *Corderius Americanus*, 17, 6.

⁴⁹ Mather, *Family-Religion Urged*, 8.

⁵⁰ Phillips, 32.

⁵¹ Mather, *Family-Religion Urged*, 5.

⁵² Phillip Doddridge, *Sermons on the Religious Education of Children, Preached at Northampton* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1763), vii.

⁵³ Gregory Jackson suggests that colonists' response to illness, in particular, reflected these theological and cultural rifts. Once deemed "providential" and thus unavoidable—an "aspect of God's will to which individuals resigned themselves"—illness was eventually thought of as "something to oppose" with modern medicine. Nancy Dye and Daniel Smith recognize that such changes influenced family dynamics (but overstate the fact): "By 1800, and even earlier in some instances, one can trace an increasing focus on the individual mother as the most influential force in shaping and preserving a child's life. Reliance on God gradually gave way to a more secular belief that a child's welfare lay primarily in the hands of loving, watchful mothers" (330). While this "reliance" did not substantially decrease for pious parents, the nineteenth century witnessed a notable decline in providential rhetoric coupled with a growing sense of parental responsibility for children's welfare and culpability for those who went amiss. See Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness*, 53; Dye and Smith, "Mother Love and Infant Death, 1750-1920," *The Journal of American History*, 73.2 (Sept. 1986), 329-353.

⁵⁴ Doddridge, *Sermons*, 40.

⁵⁵ When it came to matters of gender, very young boys and girls were often treated equally, from their toys to their clothing to their rudimentary domestic lessons. As they grew older, young boys—especially those born into families of status—were exposed to more diverse educational materials while young girls were often trained in domestic duties, which resulted in much higher rates of literacy for men than for women. But biblical literacy did not operate in this manner because all children needed spiritual knowledge, regardless of age or gender. There is, however, very little scholarship on the subject of gender and biblical literacy. See, for example, chapters two and four of Anne Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) and chapters six and seven of Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

⁵⁶ Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1739), 13.

⁵⁷ Phillips, 35, 42.

⁵⁸ Davies, *Little Children Invited to Jesus Christ* (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1765), 3-4.

⁵⁹ Smith, 40, 44.

⁶⁰ The idea of the so-called bad "seed" was a product of these conversations. In order to account for the waywardness of children who had "sprung from Parents, of the most religious Principles, and sincerest morals," ministers who trusted that "the Power of natural Corruption is strong" believed that some children were simply unwilling to bend before adult authority, growing increasingly inflexible as the years progressed. See Smith, 40.

⁶¹ Protestants were worried that this type of hardening could render some people incapable of recovery and thus doomed to hell. For evidence, they cited the book of Exodus—in which the "hardened heart" of Pharaoh is mentioned fifteen times—seeing in the story of Pharaoh's destruction an implicit warning about the dangers of hard hearts.

⁶² Mather, *Corderius Americanus*, 8.

⁶³ Gregory Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 17-18.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵ James Janeway, *A Token for Children* (1671; rpt. New York: Whiting & Watson, 1811), xii.

⁶⁶ Phillips, 60-61.

⁶⁷ Doddridge, *Sermons*, 68.

⁶⁸ Doddridge, *Sermons*, 16-17.

⁶⁹ Doddridge, *The Principles of the Christian Religion* (Boston: J. Winter, 1754), 15.

⁷⁰ Isaac Watts, "A Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth," *The Improvement of the Mind: or a Supplement to the Art of Logic* (1754; rpt. Exeter, NH: J. Lamson and T. Odiorne, 1793), 95-96. The "Discourse" was added to *The Improvement of the Mind* when Watts enlarged the text in 1754.

⁷¹ Doddridge, *Sermons*, 39.

⁷² Quoted in Sarah Trimmer, *An Essay on Christian Education* (London: Law and Gilbert, 1812), 244.

⁷³ As one scholar (citing Derrida) puts it, the term *pharmakon* refers to a "pharmacological conundrum at least as old as Plato: what cures can also kill. Medicine as strong as storytelling can be misused, harmful." See David Cowart, "Passionate Pathography: Narrative as *Pharmakon* in Richard Powers's *Operation Wandering Soul*," in *Intersections: Essays on Richard Powers* (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008).

⁷⁴ Mather, *Corderius Americanus*, 9.

⁷⁵ Watts, "Discourse," 96.

⁷⁶ Although early American educators never explicitly ranked or catalogued Bible stories, these issues forced them to think of the Bible in terms of three general categories: stories that were entirely unsuitable for children (which were generally ignored or downplayed), stories that had both suitable and unsuitable elements (which adults sanitized and then freely shared), and stories that were wholly suitable for children's devotional labors (which were incorporated most often into sermons, primers, and catechisms).

⁷⁷ David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 27.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, the autobiographical reflections of Joseph Buckingham and Samuel Goodrich, as quoted in David Hall, "The Uses of Literacy," 21-22.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, M. O. Grenby, "The Origins of Children's Literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, eds. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3-18; Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1991); Joyce Whalley, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: Illustrated Books for the Nursery and Schoolroom 1700-1900* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975); and Samuel Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

⁸⁰ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693; rpt. Boston: Gray & Bowen, 1830), 30-31.

⁸¹ As Locke explained: "When he can talk, it is time he should begin to learn to read. But as to this, give me leave here to inculcate again what is very apt to be forgotten, viz. that

a great care is to be taken, that it be never made as a business to him, nor he look on it as a task" (186).

⁸² Mather suggested that children were to be "rewarded" for saying their catechisms, but he said nothing about the rewards themselves. See Mather, *Corderius Americanus*, 10. A century later, religious periodicals regularly publicized the mnemonic achievements of their scholars in order to demonstrative the system's educational efficacy and to laud the levels of biblical literacy attained by churchgoing schoolchildren. Take, for instance, a representative passage from the New York Sunday-School Union's *Sunday School Repository*:

During the past year 96 have been admitted [to Sunday school]; about 240 regularly attended. From the first section of the Bible class, we have the following specimens of improvement, since our last annual report. A little girl has committed to memory 50 chapters in the Bible, the Westminster and Emerson's Catechisms with proofs; another aged nine years, 109 chapters, 94 hymns, with the above catechisms; another, 60 chapters, and 3 catechisms; another, 72 chapters and the catechisms. In the third section, a little girl has committed the whole of St. John's Gospel, the Book of Proverbs, 41 Psalms, the proofs of the Westminster Catechism, the Heidleburg, and Helenbroeck Catechisms, Watts' Divine Songs, and 20 Psalms of his version; another, the Book of John, and 22 chapters in the Proverbs, with the catechisms above named. A little girl who commenced with spelling, has within the year, committed the whole Book of Proverbs, 37 Psalms, hymns, and catechisms; another only eight years of age, 50 chapters and 80 hymns. According to the statements of the Teachers, more than 1100 chapters have been committed to memory, beside catechisms and hymns innumerable.

See "Second Annual Report of the New-York 'Female Union Society for the Promotion of Sabbath Schools," *Sunday School Repository*, Vol. 2, No. 13 (April 1818), 34.

⁸³ Locke, *Thoughts*, 187-190.

⁸⁴ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (1689; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 64.

⁸⁵ Locke, *Thoughts*, 191. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁶ See Howard Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) and Bruce Daniels, *Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

⁸⁷ See Watts, *Divine Songs*, 21; Davies, 10-11.

⁸⁸ This meant, for a Calvinist like Samuel Phillips, that children who forsook play for religious instruction were guided by God's spirit: "So then, we may conclude, that whenever *Children* do freely and voluntarily engage in *religious* Exercises, that it is CHRIST, who, by the Operations of the *Holy Ghost*, inclines them thereunto. —Alas! How many *Children* are there, who are well instructed, and yet, don't incline to seek and serve the *Lord*!" (22).

⁸⁹ See Gillian Avery, *Behold the Child: American Children and Their Books, 1621-1922* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), and Joyce Whalley,

Cobwebs to Catch Flies: Illustrated Books for the Nursery and Schoolroom, 1700-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁹⁰ Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 6.

⁹¹ Samuel Phillips, *The History of Our Lord and Saviour Epitomiz'd: In a Catechetical Way* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1738), ii.

⁹² Davies, 7.

⁹³ See Smith, 5, 7.

⁹⁴ David Morgan, *Protestants & Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 3 of Erik Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁹⁶ Job Orton, *Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Reverend Philip Doddridge, D.D. of Northampton* (Boston: J. Mein, 1766), 6.

⁹⁷ For more on the subject, see Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986) and *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); see also Roger Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁹⁸ See Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), and Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

⁹⁹ Lawrence Sipe, "How Picture Books Work: A Semiotically Framed Theory of Text-Picture Relationships," *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1998), 101. According to Irving Massey, the picture "rescues us momentarily from time: it provides an exit through the walls of discourse, an escape into the realms of simultaneity: until the course of the sentence resumes (and syntax begins to dominate again) we are out of time." Irving Massey, "Words and Images: Harmony and Dissonance," *The Georgia Review* 34 (1980), 381. See also chapter eight of Perry Nodelman, *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), 222-241.

¹⁰⁰ There is a tendency among some scholars who study the semiotics of children's picture books to code their implied readers as literate. This subtle bias often obscures the diverse reading practices engaged in by pre- or semi-literate children who have not yet been acculturated to the act of reading or even the handling of a book. Perry Nodelman recognizes this fact and draws attention to the "viewing" practices that precede the child's entrance into literacy in chapter one of *Words About Pictures*.

¹⁰¹ William Moebius, "Introduction to Picturebook Codes," *Word & Image*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April-June 1986), 143.

¹⁰² Philip Pullman, "Invisible Pictures," *Signal: Approaches to Children's Books*, Vol. 60 (1989), 167-168.

¹⁰³ Perry Nodelman, "Picture Book Guy Looks at Comics: Structural Differences in Two Kinds of Visual Narratives," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter 2012), 442-443.

¹⁰⁴ Sipe's article summarizes at length many of these and other popular metaphors that critics have used in their analyses children's picture books (97-103).

¹⁰⁵ David Lewis, "Going Along with Mr. Grumpy: Polysystemy & Play in the Modern Picture Book," *Signal*, Vol. 80 (1996), 111-112.

¹⁰⁶ Moebius, 145.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, 109.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, 6.

¹¹⁰ *A New Hieroglyphic Bible for the Amusement and Instruction of Children* (New York: Samuel Wood & Sons, 1815), n. p.

¹¹¹ There are no extant copies of the 1745 edition. The 1746 edition was made for "B. Gray" by an unknown printer, and the 1747 edition—a near replica of the former book—was most likely printed by John Draper for Daniel Gookin. Some of the engravings in this and other subsequent editions were probably done by James Turner since one illustration was signed "J T." For the most comprehensive (albeit incomplete) bibliography of the *History*, see Albert Carlos Bates, *The History of the Holy Jesus: A list of editions of this once popular Children's Book* (Hartford, CT: The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1911).

¹¹² Pullman, 166.

¹¹³ Although the late eighteenth century witnessed a rise in literacy rates—especially among New England's educated classes—it is impossible to determine how many copies of the *History of the Holy Jesus* were printed, sold, and read. However, the book's cheap production cost would have made it an appealing option for printers who were wary of more substantial projects (especially if they could get their hands on a set of engravings). The *History* was nearly always bound with paper or thin cardboard, and it would have required far less ink than weightier books. And because it was often given away as a gift book, it might have made it into the hands of young readers whose parents could otherwise not afford such things. For more on literacy rates and book ownership in early America, see Kenneth Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974), E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), and Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

¹¹⁴ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: Hall & Hiller, 1804), n. p.

¹¹⁵ Pullman, 165.

¹¹⁶ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1766), n. p.

¹¹⁷ Nodelman, 221.

¹¹⁸ Kerry Mallan, "Picture Books as Performative Texts: Or How to Do Things with Words and Pictures," *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (August 2002), 28.

¹¹⁹ Although the phrase "second Adam" does not appear in scripture, countless ministers used it to describe the atonement made possible by Christ's death and resurrection, often citing Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 as evidence.

¹²⁰ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: B. Gray, 1746), n.p.

¹²¹ For more on how cultural conventions shape children's reading practices, see chapters one and two in Perry Nodelman, *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1988); see also chapter three in Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

¹²² See Annalisa Sezzi, "'And what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversation?': The Marginalized Centrality of Picture Books," *Textus*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Sept. 2009), 636.

¹²³ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: J. Bushell and J. Green, 1749), n.p. The handwriting is most likely David's (even though the book might have actually belonged to a sibling) because he wrote what appears to be an apology of sorts over three separate page spreads midway through the book: "David James" "will Return it" "with a willing."

¹²⁴ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: J. Green, 1748), n.p. This edition is referred to as "Copy 1" in the general catalog of the American Antiquarian Society.

¹²⁵ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: J. Green, 1748), n.p. This edition is "Copy 2" in the general catalog of the American Antiquarian Society. Most extant inscriptions follow three patterns and showcase the book's circulation in early American homes as it moved in and out of many different hands and as readers looked at, read from, turned over, and wrote upon its pages. First, children like David James used the margins to practice penmanship and to exhibit their fledgling steps toward literacy.

¹²⁶ Joseph Schwarcz, *Ways of the Illustrator: Visual Communication in Children's Literature* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982), 15.

¹²⁷ Nodelman, *Words About Pictures*, 222.

¹²⁸ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: John Boyle, 1774), n.p.

¹²⁹ For the original account, see Luke 5:1-11.

¹³⁰ Earthquakes, Tokens of God's Power and Wrath [Boston: Benjamin Gray, 1744].

¹³¹ *The History of the Holy Jesus* (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1766), n.p.

¹³² In an 1845 letter to the Anglican clergyman George Crabbe, Barton mentioned the receipt of a handkerchief bearing an image of the engraving and his poetry: "Many years ago I wrote some verses for a Child's Annual, to accompany a print of Doddridge's mother teaching him Bible History from the Dutch tiles round their fire-place. I had clean forgotten both the print and my verses; but some one has sent me a child's penny cotton handkerchief, on which I find a transcript of that identical print, and four of my stanzas printed under it. This handkerchief celebrity tickles me somewhat. Talk of fame! is not this a fame which comes home, not only to "*men's business and bosoms*," but to children's noses, into the bargain!" *Selections from the Poems and Letters of Bernard Barton* (London: Hall, Virtue, and Co., 1849), 91. Emphasis in original.

¹³³ Bernard Barton, "The Mother of Dr. Doddridge Teaching Him Scripture History from the Dutch Tiles," *Littell's Saturday Magazine, or, Spirits of the Magazines and Annuals*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: E. Littell & Co., 1837), 269.

¹³⁴ H. J. L., "The Bible and Mothers," *The Mother's Magazine and Family Journal*, Vol. XVIII (New York: Myron Finch, 1850), 56-57.

¹³⁵ Frei, 9.

¹³⁶ See B. E. Nicholls, *The Mine Explored; or, Help to the Reading of the Bible* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union), 10. The notion of the Bible as a "mine" of hidden truths remains popular to this day. For two representative examples, see the Sunday-school activity book *Dig Into the Bible: Fun Activities that Explore Bible Treasure* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004) and Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach's study guide *Dig Deeper: Tools for Understanding God's Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010).

¹³⁷ "How the Bible Grows on Us," *Bible Society Record*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (18 February 1875): 26.

Chapter 2

Supplementing Scripture: Religious Education and the Uses of Biblical Historiography

From what has been said of the nature and object of Sunday-schools, it may be inferred that whatever text books shall bring the teacher and pupil into the most direct, constant, and intelligent contact with the Bible, are the best.

—Frederick, Packard, *The Teacher Taught* (1839)

Most of Christ's words and deeds depend for their true significance very much more upon their surroundings, both of time and of place, than the generality of the readers of the Gospels are aware.

—James Cadman, circular for *Christ in the Gospels; or, A Life of Our Lord* (1885)

In 1802, Sarah Trimmer took to the pages of the *Guardian of Education*, her newly established literary periodical, to denounce a book that would, she claimed, "rob the Son of God of his Divinity and Messiahship," "hide from mankind the glorious light of the Gospel," and "deprive them of the hope of salvation and everlasting life, through the merits of a Redeemer." This book would embolden the "enemies of Religion" and prompt "wicked" readers to "go on in their sins without any fear of that eternal punishment which the Gospel threatens to the hardened and impenitent." Thinking the issue "a matter of the highest concern," Trimmer exclaimed: "That such a book as this

can be published in a CHRISTIAN Country is to us surprising!"¹³⁸ At nearly twenty pages, the critique was by far the longest book review to appear in the periodical during its four-year run. Both the review's length and the level of scorn must have surprised some readers since the "engine of mischief," as Trimmer called it, was not an atheistic treatise penned by godless French radicals but a children's Bible by William Scolfield titled *Bible Stories. Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges, and Kings: Extracted from Their Original Historians*.

The review catalogued Scolfield's liberties in detail. She reserved her harshest criticism for Scolfield's abridgment of the Word of God and his conflation of sacred and secular history. Scolfield had not merely edited the Bible, the review explained. He had mangled it. His book of "extracted" stories was all the more dangerous for what he had left out. The author did not, for example, begin *Bible Stories* with the creation, the temptation, and Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. He began instead with the story of Abraham and the turmoil surrounding the birth of his sons Ishmael and Isaac. Trimmer agreed with Scolfield that children should be "initiated by degrees, and by means of *selections* into the thorough knowledge of the Scriptures," but she claimed that the author's truncated revision had "obliterated" all that made the Bible a divinely inspired book.

Second, she took the author to task for likening scripture to works of human historians. "Is such a book as this then to be regarded merely as *historical*, as containing tales of *ancient times*?" she asked.¹³⁹ According to Trimmer, biblical narratives were more than mere stories. They were "Revealed" religion (as opposed to "Natural"), the category of theology that referred to all truths that God had revealed to humanity that

they could not have otherwise known. Without that distinction, how were children to distinguish spiritual truths from moral rules or human laws? "Though a principal part of the Holy Writings is in the *historic* form, as best adapted to the perceptions and feelings of mankind in general," Trimmer explained, "all the great truths of Divine Revelation are conveyed in them; and the doctrines of true Religion are so intimately connected and interwove with the *narrative*, that it is impossible to separate them, without breaking in upon the designs of the DIVINE AUTHOR—the presumption of such an attempt must surely appear to every one who believes that the HOLY SCRIPTURES were really written by the *inspiration of God*."¹⁴⁰ The form and substance of the Bible were thereby equally important and inherently indivisible because the Bible was the inspired word of God.

Some of Trimmer's readers might have recognized the double speak in the review or seen it as a self-interested attempt to critique a competitor. She had, after all, edited her own abridged Bible for young readers. While she believed that abridging scripture ran the risk of disrupting the cumulative impact of the Bible's transformative power, she also recognized that young readers needed a simplified guide to its most complex—and not always age-appropriate—content.¹⁴¹ What she faulted in Scolfield's edition was not abridgment per se, but his truncation of the material that both made the Bible a divine text and reading it a spiritually renewing process. Scolfield had crossed the line by reducing scripture to mere history.¹⁴²

Trimmer most likely did not know that "William Scolfield" was a pseudonym for the well-known William Godwin, who published the book under an assumed name to avoid public censure and perhaps to capitalize on the growing market for children's

Bibles. In the book's preface, Godwin explained the rationale for such a work. He thought that children should not read the Bible in its entirety since the book contained "many things dry and repulsive to the apprehensions of children" and an "abstruseness" that would "disgust" them and possibly dissuade them from reading scripture when they grew older.¹⁴³ But he was dismayed by the tenor of modern children's literature, particularly the characters represented as role models. These "impossible personages" were too pious, too moral, too blameless. Their stories were thus "artificial, repulsive and insipid." Godwin wished to strip those things from the Bible that would confuse children and "vex their little hearts." He felt the need to present young readers with Bible stories that had been rewritten as *stories*, as tales of ancient times "detached" from scripture and thus freed from the complexities of religious belief.¹⁴⁴ Like many eighteenth-century religious educators, he trusted that historical narratives were "exquisitely fitted to interest the youthful imagination," but unlike most of his counterparts, he thought that children should regard the Bible as a storybook until they were old enough to apprehend that the historical narratives compromising it were more than mere stories.¹⁴⁵

Trimmer's critique points to a concern among religious educators that churchgoing parents—especially those who were too busy to notice or too uninformed to know any better—might, through Godwin's book (and others like it), expose their children to a kind of secularization popularized by the "enemies of Religion": bible-like books that lacked the Bible's most important teachings and that made no distinction between divine and human writings.¹⁴⁶ What worried Trimmer was the widespread cultural assumption that children's bibles were harmless abridgments of scripture that would aid the young as they grew in spiritual literacy. As Ruth Bottigheimer has noted—

and as Trimmer's review of *Bible Stories* suggests—these books are instead key to understanding lived religion because they facilitate the "transmission of cultural norms and values from one generation to the next."¹⁴⁷ But as we saw in Chapter 1, they also contribute to the evolution of these norms and values as young readers grow into adulthood and introduce their own children to reading methods and educational practices that adhere to and break from established conventions. When authors abridge the Bible for children—when they abbreviate its passages, alter its sentences, delete its stories, rearrange its content, condense its language, and simplify its teachings—they create books that differ substantially from scripture yet still enjoy its sacred authority or aura, hence Trimmer's suggestion that the production of children's Bibles was an inherently presumptuous act.

The controversy surrounding *Bible Stories* also hints at a host of anxieties associated with both childhood literacy and children's reading habits. First, as scholars have long argued, the term "children's literature" refers to a rather "unruly" genre: too broad to be inclusive, too indefinite to delimit.¹⁴⁸ Yet as Perry Nodelman notes, the genre is often characterized by adult concern with three related issues: children's innocence, ignorance, and immaturity.¹⁴⁹ Ironically, children's literature exists to render itself obsolete by paving the way for young readers to mature and thus abandon their innocence and ignorance, a *felix culpa* that presages the child's entrance into literacy, adolescence, and adulthood. When it comes to *religious* children's literature, the stakes are even higher since these texts are not designed merely to entertain and instruct. They are instead perceived as a means to an end more important than literacy or intellectual development because they help children recognize sinful behavior, develop spiritual fortitude, cultivate

personal faith, participate in church affairs, and prepare for the future (both in this life and the next).

Second, the growing demand for children's literature—and the concurrent rush to print and distribute books that would meet that demand—prompted concerned adults to pay close attention to children's literary tastes without sacrificing religious substance. As we saw in Chapter 1, American educators were cognizant that the Bible was too complex for most young readers, especially the very young, but they were also adamant that children needed spiritual sustenance given their inherent moral depravity. Ironically, they turned to the Bible for proof that they needed to keep Bibles out of the hands of children (to some extent), trusting that children were "babes in Christ" who could not digest the "meat" of scripture (1 Corinthians 3:1-2). Paul's metaphors assured the faithful that their children would grow in Christ if suitably fed, but it also created some urgency to ensure that the young enjoyed a balanced spiritual diet.

Two competing trains of thought dominated conversations about what amounted to spiritual food. One was rooted in Calvinist conceptions of innate depravity, the other in Enlightenment ideas about children as blank slates (to use Locke's metaphor). Well into the nineteenth century, many clung to the belief that children had an inherent distaste for religious texts, an aversion rooted in original sin and amplified by their moral and intellectual shortcomings. As a representative for the American Sunday-School Union explained, "It should be borne in mind, that there is no such thing as a *natural taste* for religious reading. The child, in his natural state, receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."¹⁵⁰ Even though most Protestant denominations acknowledged that the young

were not born naturally depraved, many educators felt that children were innately uninterested in proper spiritual nourishment, which meant that adults had to account for children's warped sense of taste and ensure that religious truths were made as palatable as possible.

This theory of education was not without its detractors. Some educators argued that children entered the world without any aesthetic values. Children were not predisposed to reject spirituality. With the exception of sin itself, they were not predisposed in any way. This educational model suggested that those who disliked religious literature simply had not developed a taste for it early enough. The onus for this moral failing fell squarely on the parents' shoulders—those who had unwittingly "poison[ed] the infant and vacant mind, with not only false, but ridiculous and baneful Stories"—because they had not taken enough care to influence their children's spiritual palates. As the author of an 1812 devotional book put it, "What but a depraved taste, poisoned by habit, could make a blooming youth prefer Novels, Plays, and Romances, to the Sacred Records, and other useful writings."¹⁵¹ While this theory was more popular and traditional, it helped undermine nineteenth-century Calvinism because it tended to amplify human agency. Simply put, parents could play an active role in securing their children's eternal welfare by selecting the most nutritious parts of the Bible and portioning them out so as to entice those who were unaccustomed to such things. As John Newberry suggested in his popular *Holy Bible Abridged* (1757)—a book pirated frequently by American printers between the 1780s and the 1810s—children needed a "taste of the writings of the holy penmen."¹⁵² This "taste for useful knowledge," as another educator put it, had to be "confirmed into a habit" or else children would

naturally gravitate to unhealthy alternatives.¹⁵³ Such sentiments galvanized American educators around a principle of judicious extraction of Bible stories in an effort to foster appropriate reading habits early in life. If children came into the world with "very little idea of any other enjoyment but that of eating," as one author suggested, then adults had to take great care "lest, like thousands, they impart improper food, and in ignorance blame the nature of the children, instead of the food itself, because no good effects follow their labor."¹⁵⁴

The idea that children were "babes in Christ" and needed age-appropriate spiritual nourishing resonated with Christians who trusted that spiritual milk promoted the development of godly constitutions since the young could not digest weightier food.¹⁵⁵ But even with this conceit's popularity—often evoked even today in matters related to religious instruction—the notion of what exactly constituted "milk" began to shift as churchgoers were exposed to literary genres designed to appeal to the changing tastes of American readers. As nineteenth-century educators began to think of scripture in terms of its historical context and to produce children's literature that made that context as concrete and lifelike as possible, they started introducing American children to radically abridged Bibles, thoroughly historicized Bible stories, and an increasingly personalized Christ.

The Paradox of Simplicity; or, Degrees of Biblical Literacy

In 1841, the officers of the American Sunday School Union convened in Philadelphia to discuss the challenges facing American religious educators and children and detailed their findings in that year's *Annual Report*. The report frets over the state of

the nation—a country still reeling from the financial collapse of 1837—and warned that economic woes would have a debilitating effect on American families. Citing the "decline of business" and the "unprecedented lack of employment," the authors worried that children raised in such conditions would be exposed to an increasing "number and force of temptations to evil" and eventually feel compelled to turn to worldly pursuits, sacrificing their spiritual health at the altar of "ambition, selfishness, or gain." The report suggested measures to ward off such temptation: "The principles which will survive the shock of all change and revolution, are derivable only from the gospel of Jesus Christ; and these, it is the design of our Sunday-schools to incorporate with the earliest thoughts and habits of children."¹⁵⁶ But what exactly constituted the "gospel" of Jesus? And how were educators supposed to incorporate these moral habits into children's regular routines? The authors clearly were not talking about the New Testament Gospels; they were not even referring to the Bible. What they had in mind was something more abstract: the "simple truths of religion."¹⁵⁷

The first two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the creation of influential voluntary associations aimed at religious reform, the three largest being the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824), and the American Tract Society (1825). This period also saw the development of industrial printing technologies and distribution networks that made it possible for these organizations to issue and nationally disseminate millions of texts each year.¹⁵⁸ This meant that those religious "truths" were no longer confined to the Bible and the conventional genres familiar to colonial children (catechisms, primers, sermons, and devotional manuals) but were found in pamphlets, broadsides, readers, manuals, and a

range of narrative forms aimed at children. Equipped with "the Bible, a volume of Union Questions, and a copy of our Bible Dictionary and Sacred Geography," the *Report* claimed, "plain" congregants with little more than an "ordinary education" were capable of teaching Sunday-school children.¹⁵⁹ The officers of the ASSU prioritized Bible study and Bible ownership, but they remained adamant that children needed something other than the Bible if they were to understand its truths.

What makes this development intriguing is its occurrence against a backdrop of a broadly entrenched insistence on Bible-onlyism, an adherence to sola scriptura that gained traction among the most popular wings of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and other denominations that were emerging out of the Second Great Awakening. The history of sola scriptura is long and complex, but its prominent place in nineteenth-century American culture meant that educators had to grapple with multiple contradictory positions. First, leaders in the largest associations believed that children's moral well being depended on an intimate knowledge of scripture, and they were adamant that the Bible was filled with easily understandable truths. As Mark Noll notes, this tendency to highlight the Bible's clarity and candor—what he terms an "evangelical Enlightenment simplicity"—was a product of both Protestant biblicism (in that Christians held fast to scripture's divine authorship) and Lockean epistemology (in that "simple" ideas served as the foundation for "complex" subjects).¹⁶⁰ But this faith in the Bible's simplicity drew strength from a few other sources as well. As we saw in Chapter 1, the Bible seemed to suggest that the human intellect was inherently untrustworthy.¹⁶¹ Jesus himself testified to this fact by making the child a measure of natural faith, hiding spiritual truths from the "wise and prudent" and "reveal[ing] them

unto babes," a metaphor that the Gospels repeatedly attribute to Jesus (Matthew 11:25-26, Matthew 18:1-4, Luke 10:21). In such passages, children serve as models of humility, reminding readers that God placed little store in worldly knowledge. While established clergy often downplayed the sentiment—since they had gained social prominence through painstaking study—many educators and self-taught preachers understood it to mean that licensed preaching and even ministerial ordination were human rather than divine conventions and thus not compulsory.

Protestants had long subscribed to living-word theology, an ancient doctrine that taught that the Bible was keyed to the particular intellectual capacities of each reader. As such, scripture responded to the spiritual needs of individuals. Because it operated organically—as the Holy Spirit adapted the Bible's message in accordance with each reader's spiritual and mental capacity and faith-based needs—many religious educators deemed it suitable for children while also acknowledging its complexity for their simple apprehension, a theological paradox that powered the ongoing disagreements about when and how to cultivate biblical literacy.¹⁶² The Bible was a simple book not merely because it was written in a simple style but because it simplified itself to meet the spiritual maturation of its readers. Of course, those championing the inherent simplicity of scripture usually framed such discussions in terms of an implied *adult* reader. Working with children on a regular basis challenged this preconception because many educators had to admit that while some parts of the Bible were simple, most were not (and some were even morally questionable). They were thus reluctant to trust religious education to what amounted to a kind of faith in an enchanted book.

These interventions were frequent in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, especially as voluntary societies and Sunday schools increased in number and influence and as the volume of children's literature increased. The pages that follow trace some of these issues but focus primarily on the effects of biblical historiography, a dramatic development that gave rise to new literary genres and marked a decisive break with colonial precedent. As scholars have noted, the Enlightenment gave birth to a modern historical consciousness in continental Europe, but this consciousness did not gain much traction in the American colonies until after the Revolution, when former British colonists began to wonder what exactly made them "American."¹⁶³ While some scholars have suggested otherwise, historicism was not the harbinger of secularization.¹⁶⁴ It was instead coopted by religious educators and reformers alike. Its rise paralleled that of waxing nationalist fervor and religious awakening as Protestants raised in a post-revolutionary landscape were taught to think of their nation in terms of sacred history and to consider the divine causation that led to its emergence. The Revolution's success made national expansion possible and generated a new level of millennial optimism. According to Myra Jehlen, these circumstances gave added weight to a particularly American certainty that the fledgling country was a "new and culminating development in world history and thus the fulfillment of progress."¹⁶⁵ In this respect, as Protestants looked to the future, they also looked to the past, searching the nation's historical record for evidence of God's continuing favor and teaching their children to think of national history not as fortunate happenstance but as preordained pattern. They believed that historical causality existed but that it operated within a closely monitored and carefully regulated providential system. The Bible played a key role in this process in that it prompted the

devout to think of history in eschatological terms—to see in historical circumstances a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, to consider the ways that past and present fit in with God's overarching plan for humankind, and to view the contemporary world as a prelude to and preparation for an eternal existence outside of time.

The advent of biblical historiography magnified the tendency to contextualize world history within an overarching teleological framework even as it prompted religious educators to pay more attention to the realities of the biblical world. When Protestants began to think of scripture not merely as a "living" word, adapting itself to meet the spiritual needs of contemporary believers, but as a book that could not be fully understood apart from its historical context, they began to look for and produce texts that illuminated biblical history in ways that the Bible did not.¹⁶⁶ As a reviewer for the *American Biblical Repository* put it in 1838, "Neither teacher nor pupil now feels it to be enough merely to master the *letter* of the sacred volume, or to become familiar with the popular and common-place explanations of its text. The Scriptures are beginning to be *searched* and their hidden riches to be exposed." In other words, books that shed light on biblical history would "remove the obscurities of holy writ" and "make what is plain plainer."¹⁶⁷ Protestants believed that God had inspired the Bible—and that its spiritual truths transcended time—but some of them were beginning to think that scripture was also shaped by the time and place of its production. This meant that religious educators affiliated with many of the nation's prominent denominations were starting to chip away at sola scriptura, suggesting that the Bible could only reveal so much about itself to uninformed readers.

In the pages that follow, I explore two genres that gave rise to a particularly acute historicist sensibility in Protestant homes and classrooms: natural history and geography. The former focused on the Bible's animals, plants, and minerals; the latter directed children's attention to the Holy Land itself. These disciplines were valued precisely because they were thought to unfold the mysteries of scripture to young readers and thereby interest children in further Bible study. "It is by the discovery of such stores of excellence and beauty, that the taste for the study of the Bible will be cherished and increased," one educator explained.¹⁶⁸ In other words, to grasp the nuance and complexities of scripture, the devout needed more than scripture alone. At the very least, they had to develop a rudimentary knowledge of ancient Palestine—from its social traditions, religious rituals, and legal codes to its cultural norms, political institutions, and geographic locales—if they were to do more than merely skim the Bible's surface. The reading practices and educational exercises that emerged in the wake of scripture's historical contextualization shaped religious instruction and thereby transformed children's devotional duties. But what happened to biblical literacy when the Bible was thought of as both inherently "simple" and inordinately complex? How did educators make biblical history interesting, relevant, and revelatory? And in what ways did educational literature narrow the gap between the ancient world and the modern one and thereby help children to think of Jesus in both historical and personal terms? The pages that follow explore that ways that religious educators historicized the Bible in order to bring its stories to life and to help children develop historical knowledge as a waypoint toward greater biblical literacy and spiritual maturity.

Natural History and Associative Reading

In 1834, the American Sunday-School Union published *Hebrew Customs; or The Missionary's Return*, a book designed to introduce children to the study of natural history. In it, the recently returned missionary Mr. Lewis visits the Barker family in order to speak with Mr. Barker and his three children about the Holy Land. Explaining that he saw "a thousand things" in Palestine that helped him understand scripture more clearly, Mr. Lewis states, "When I used to see tribes of Arabs, living in tents, with camels, and oxen, and thousands of sheep and goats, and when I looked at their flowing garments, and the veils of the women, I could not help thinking of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob."¹⁶⁹ When he looked at the Holy Land's inhabitants, Mr. Lewis saw a pan-ethnic group of Arabs generic enough to serve as stand-ins for the characters found in the Bible. These were not unique individuals shaped by specific historical circumstances. They did not even remind Mr. Lewis of a particular biblical episode since he uses the generic phrase "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob" to catalogue a list of countless, unnamed associations that he made between these nomads and the Old Testament patriarchs. Yet what cements his associations are the countless animals that catch his attention and thus substantiate the typological framework that he has imagined. For Mr. Lewis, the camels, oxen, sheep, and goats form a concrete link between the present and the past and thereby stamp the scene as authentic, making it possible for him to imagine that he has seen the Bible come to life.

This particular episode hints at a shift in public perception that took place in the early nineteenth century as interest in biblical historiography began to reshape American educational standards. Believing that the Bible could not be entirely understood apart

from its historical context, educators began to search for subjects that would interest children while introducing them to the subtleties of scripture. According to Sarah Trimmer, parents who devoted too much time to "sacred subjects" risked their children's spiritual health. "[T]his would be the way to set them against Religion," she claimed, because it would soon bore them and thus deaden their interest in scripture. But children who spent too little time studying the Bible would not develop strong spiritual constitutions. What was needed was a balanced approach to religious instruction that introduced children to the "easy parts" of the Bible while also holding their interest.¹⁷⁰

For Trimmer, natural history—what she termed the "handmaid" of religion—was an ideal supplement: "No books are more interesting to children, than those which describe animals, plants, &c."¹⁷¹ In America, religious educators sought to channel children's interest into animals and plants associated with Bible history, an educational strategy that gave rise to the genre "Bible natural history." Thaddeus Harris's *Natural History of the Bible* initiated this popular trend in 1793. A Unitarian minister and a founding member of the American Antiquarian Society, Harris believed that the study of the Bible's natural objects would be a "source of interesting and instructive inquiry" and would "clear up many obscure passages, solve many difficulties, correct many wrong, or obscure interpretations, and open new beauties, in that sacred treasure."¹⁷² Believing that the Bible would reveal new truths as readers delved deeper into its historical context, Harris designed *Natural History* to assist the "less informed and the young" by arranging its content alphabetically so that readers could look up unfamiliar animals, plants, or minerals that they encountered while reading the Bible. Unfortunately for Harris, the book did not fare well in American markets due to its erudition and price. At nearly 300

pages—and filled with classical allusions; dense, descriptive passages; and Hebrew, Greek, and Latin terminology—the book was *too* comprehensive, making it largely inaccessible for all but the most committed scholars and educators. Years later, the well known educator Gorham Abbott credited Harris for having "early and ably *led the way*," but he largely dismissed the author's work: "It furnishes valuable materials to aid the student in his investigations, but to the unlearned reader it presents few attractions; while its frequent conjectural criticisms, and utter destitution of evangelical sentiment and feeling, render it by no means desirable as a medium of religious instruction."¹⁷³ For Abbott, the book might enlighten the mind, but it would do nothing to enliven the heart.

The drive to teach children biblical history while also awakening religious "feeling" contributed to the reemergence of Bible natural history in the 1820s, amidst a period characterized by revivalism and voluntarism. These books appeared on a regular basis for much of the century and remained simple in design and layout.¹⁷⁴ A catalogue of the natural world, they detailed the plant and animal kingdoms, coupling descriptions of nature with scriptural references. Most books were illustrated, a few elaborately so. Some engravings were relatively modest affairs, a single image sandwiched between descriptive material (fig. 22). Others were more evocative, prompting children to compare the pictured scene to its biblical equivalent (fig. 23).¹⁷⁵ Religious educators hoped that students' interest in the descriptions and illustrations would direct their attention to scripture itself and would prompt them to flip from their textbooks to their Bibles in order to locate the relevant passages and contextualize the biblical world. For serious students, this reading methodology aimed at a further goal. Because the problem with scripture lay in its remoteness and intangibility, these books encouraged the young

being dusky at the roots. A white line extends along the lateral ridge of the head, from the nose to the ears. The spalax measures eight or nine inches in length.

THE LION.

ORDER.—*Carnivora*, or Flesh eating Quadrupeds.



What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a *lion*?—Judges xiv. 18

A *lion* which is strongest among beasts,
And turneth not away from any.—Prov. xxx. 30.

Judah is a *lion's* whelp:
From the prey, my son, thou art gone up:
He stooped down, he couched as a *lion*,
And as an *old lion*; who shall rouse him up?—Gen. xlix. 9

Behold, the people shall rise up as a *great lion*,
And lift up himself as a *young lion*:
He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey,
And drink the blood of the slain.—Numbers xxiii. 24.

SUCH are some of the expressions in which the Holy Scriptures describe the power and majesty of the lion. The figurative language of the Bible, in its allusions to this animal, is easily understood. We read that "the king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion," Prov. xix. 12; xx. 2: of the teeth of the lion in Psa. lviii. 6; Joel i. 6. David says of Saul and Jonathan, "They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." 2 Sam. i. 23. In 1 Chron. xii. 8, it is said of David's soldiers that their "faces were

Fig. 22. From William Carpenter, *Scripture Natural History* (1833).



grapes, which they hung on a staff and carried between them. So much grass grew there that herds of cows and goats could have pasture, and give plenty of milk, so it was a land “flowing with milk.” Why was it called a land “flowing with honey?”

C. Because a great many flowers grew there from which bees could get honey.

T. They put so much in the hollows

Fig. 23. From *Natural History for Infant Schools* (1833).

to turn inward while looking outward: to see the world around them as tangible proof of God in his creation and to make connections between their world and biblical history. The books also aimed to engage children in devotional exercises that helped form strong personal attachments to scripture so that, as one educator explained, the young would subsequently "feel the full force, beauty and propriety" of the Bible's passages.¹⁷⁶

Protestants had long been accustomed to "natural theology," the belief that nature's complexities proved divine causation. The publication of William Paley's *Natural Theology* in 1802—a book that introduced the "watchmaker analogy" to a new generation—led to an increased interest in revealing how the natural world reflected God's handiwork and complemented biblical teaching.¹⁷⁷ The author of *Scripture Natural History of Quadrupeds* (1828), for example, enthused, "Let us admire the surprising wisdom, and adore the amazing power of the Great Creator of an animal so wonderfully formed and constituted as is the Lion," for it aptly displays his "divine character and glorious works."¹⁷⁸ In *Conversations on the Botany of the Scriptures* (1837), Margaret Coxe encouraged readers to "take up any plant, however humble a one, and examine its wonderful structure" in order to admire "a piece of machinery so nice and so intricate as would compel us to adore continually that gracious Being whose Spirit rules universal nature."¹⁷⁹ In *Birds of the Bible* (1854), Henry Harbaugh argued that God had "designedly caused a fitness to exist in the various objects of Nature, that they might become WORDS, by which he might illustrate and communicate truth." Echoing St. Francis, he encouraged readers to think of birds as "preacher[s]" who testified to God's authority and care.¹⁸⁰ These educational strategies translated the everyday world—animals, vegetables, and minerals alike—into a divine language legible to those taught to

read it. If habituated to this kind of sight, children would see God's immanence in their natural surroundings.

This educational practice trained young readers to cultivate and exercise what Gregory Jackson terms "second sight," the capacity and predilection to see through commonplace, everyday affairs to the spiritual realities that were otherwise hidden from view.¹⁸¹ Adults were particularly interested in the study of animals because they wanted the young to draw moral and spiritual lessons from the natural world. In a tradition that owed more to medieval bestiaries than to Linnaean taxonomies, colonial educators had employed nature in the service of religious education. In *Divine Songs*, for instance, Isaac Watts taught children about aggression, idleness, obedience, and godliness by directing their attention to a wide range of creatures—from dogs, bears, lions, and lambs to ducks, birds, butterflies, and worms. Not surprisingly, Watts and his contemporaries paid particular attention to bees because they were considered highly industrious and enterprising: "How doth the little busy Bee / Improve each shining Hour, / And gather Honey all the day / From every opening Flower!"¹⁸² Educators following Watts hoped that children would internalize such associations. As one writer put it, "Thus nature is to us a mirror, in which we may see our own virtues or follies; and, in our attempts to improve our character, we have all the advantage of 'practising before the glass.'"¹⁸³ Differing from their colonial counterparts, nineteenth-century religious educators defined with greater realism the apparent connections between the natural world and biblical history.

The use of nature as a vehicle for the conveyance of moral and spiritual lessons was part of educators' commitment to biblical literacy and went hand in hand with

training the young to read and think typologically. As we saw in Chapter 1, Protestants were conditioned from an early age to regard the Bible as a perfect tautological system: the Old Testament foreshadowed the New, the New Testament fulfilled the Old. If children were to understand and participate in this typological exercise, they had to know enough of both Testaments to discover concrete correspondences between the two. This required juxtaposing entirely unrelated biblical narratives, looking for textual and thematic similarities, and explaining how the one shed light on the other. For religious educators, natural history trained children to visualize links between biblical animals and Bible stories, strengthening and developing their ability to read scripture typologically. Comparative studies between the natural world and the Bible built skills in exploration and correlation, helped children "to read that best of books with a good understanding of its contents," and encouraged them to engage in "practical and useful meditations, which may meliorate both heart and life."¹⁸⁴ Such exercises in association transformed rote labor into engaging devotional activities that in turn deepened children's capacity to correlate Old and New Testament figures and events and to make connections between otherwise unrelated things. Natural histories, for example, compared the lion to Sampson (due to its boldness), to the tribe of Judah (due to its courage), and to a vengeful God (due to its anger). They linked serpents and wolves to Satan and his henchmen. The stately camel epitomized the prosperity of the patriarchs (since they were large and stately); bears were typologically linked to the Israelites (who "growled" when they wandered in the wilderness); and peacocks were representative of Solomon (due to their beauty and vanity).¹⁸⁵ These were just a few of the many associations that authors of biblical natural history hoped to instill in children. Once literate in typology, young readers would see in

the Bible not a collection of loosely related tales but a unified story that through typological correspondences demonstrated the completeness of God's grand design.

Not surprisingly, educators made an effort to demonstrate how biblical animals were types of Christ. For example, the swiftness of deer represented Jesus's timely response "to help and save his people." The strength and "kingly authority" of the lion symbolized Christ's majesty. The sacrificial use of goats, sheep, and doves "served as a type of the death of Christ." Even whales, hens, and fish brought Jesus to mind.¹⁸⁶ In each instance, natural history accounted for the shortcomings of natural theology. The latter evidenced God's existence and highlighted his divine craftsmanship, and it transformed the world into a text that all could read regardless of age or intellect. But apart from any biblical context, the natural world said nothing about Jesus, which meant that evidence of God's existence was in and of itself meaningless. As one author explained, "What a solemn thought, that you may live in this beautiful world which God has made, and see in it...so many proofs of his existence, of his wisdom, of his power, and of his goodness, and yet fail of having him for your eternal friend!"¹⁸⁷ Even if people studied "ever so much the wonderful works of God in the natural world," they could never discover "how our sins are to be forgiven, or whether *they could be forgiven at all*."¹⁸⁸ Like natural theology, natural histories helped children to see God's design in nature. But these books also introduced young readers to "revealed" religion and thereby helped them practice second sight. Religious educators hoped that with enough training children would begin to visualize Christ-like types scattered throughout their everyday lives.

Interested in guiding the young toward biblical literacy while also arousing feeling, religious educators were concerned with keeping scripture meaningful and

relevant. To make Bible study as engaging as possible, they had to narrow the gap between the modern and the ancient worlds by translating unfamiliar people, places, and things into more readily recognizable terms. In 1829, John Nevin summed up these sentiments in his preface to *A Summary of Biblical Antiquities*, a text that remained in print well until the 1860s and helped popularize Bible natural history as a literary genre. Worried that biblical historiography was not yet accessible to children—these books were "too large, and, of course, too expensive, to be generally procured"—Nevin wanted to provide Sunday-school teachers and students with something easily "procured and easy to be read."¹⁸⁹ For Nevin, scripture did not unfold its mysteries to the uninformed; readers first had to acquaint themselves with "the circumstances, natural and moral, of the time and country in which the Bible was written, in order to read it with understanding." Simply put, the message was timeless, the messengers were not:

Holy men of old space as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but they were suffered, at the same time, to speak and write in that style which the general usage of the age, modified by his own peculiar genius and taste, naturally led each one to adopt. Hence, the sacred books of Scripture, like other books, are stamped throughout with the lively impression of the place and period in which they were originally published.¹⁹⁰

This was a radical argument and a departure from the hermeneutic practices embraced by so many colonial Protestants. According to Nevin, God had overseen the Bible's composition, but his inspired agents been actively involved in the process and had thereby "modified" the divine message at the linguistic level. This meant that the Bible was shaped to some degree by those who had written it. Nevin felt that God's inspired writers had seen with shocking clarity, but he also recognized that these men were incapable of transmitting the Spirit's inspiration in a language that all people in all places could readily understand. For him, spiritual truths were eternally relevant, but the words

and expressions used to convey those truths were time bound. Scripture might speak to individual believers—as those who trusted in "living word theology" surmised—but language itself is a product of a historical culture, place, and time. As Nevin explained, the problems did not end there: "We are placed, therefore, under a double difficulty, when we come thus circumstanced to read the Bible." First, children knew little about the Holy Land and had to acquaint themselves with its particularities. Second, they tended to superimpose their limited historical knowledge and cultural assumptions onto Palestine, "affixing ideas to other images and terms, such as our habits of thought and speech may suggest, but which are foreign, in no small degree, from the usage of oriental antiquity."¹⁹¹ Nevin believed that natural history attenuated these difficulties by conditioning children to make imaginative connections between biblical realities and their own specific historical circumstances. These associative reading exercises—when paired with the typological training that children underwent as they entered into biblical literacy—were designed to increase the Bible's relevance for those who might otherwise wonder why the ancient world still mattered.

The natural world enabled children to bridge the divide between past and present and thus to see in their surroundings the logic of the Bible's layered history and to feel a closer connection to the events described in scripture. Religious educators fostered this type of thinking because it enabled them to then redirect children's attention from the natural world to the biblical one. This led children to freight commonplace objects in the world around them with sacred significance and to see in their everyday surroundings visions of the ancient world. Consider Gorham Abbott's 1833 edition of *Scripture Natural History*. In his introductory remarks, Abbott explains what most readers knew.

The events of the Bible had happened long ago and far away, leaving children to make connections between the stories they found in scripture and their daily lives: "We all of us are apt to think...that the places and occurrences of which we read in the Bible, are too remote in distance and time, to make any clear and vivid impressions upon the mind. But the great difficulty is, in regarding the scene, and the *natural objects* of Scripture History, as not susceptible of the same distinct and tangible apprehensions, as we may have of objects and scenes immediately around us, *here*."¹⁹² Abbott recounted an instance involving sheep, told by a local clergyman. The minister had glanced out of his window one morning and had noticed a flock of sheep following their owner, rather than being driven by him. This "illustration of Scripture" delighted the minister since it embodied biblical descriptions of shepherds "leading" their sheep—an important Christic metaphor. For a moment, scripture seemed to come to life, leaving the minister with a deeper connection to the Bible.¹⁹³ For Abbott, the practice of encouraging the young to focus on familiar objects from the natural world that were also found in the Bible helped children to compress time and thus revivify the otherwise remote biblical world.

Such teaching methods remained popular because religious educators wanted children far removed from Palestine to feel that they were actually in close proximity to biblical history, to "walk, in fancy's vivid vision, through the streets of Jerusalem," as Nevin explained.¹⁹⁴ Like his contemporaries, Abbott recognized that such visions were usually not vivid enough. Too often, the scene that children imagined lacked the requisite detail to bring it to life. What was needed was a firm commitment to pedagogies that would make the Holy Land more lifelike by introducing children to its historical contours and its most important features. In other words, children needed to know more than "the

beasts of the field and the birds of the air." They also had to be "conversant with the mountains, the plains, and the streams."¹⁹⁵ This meant that natural history had to be taught alongside disciplines such as geography and cartography since children needed to know the physical makeup of the land where so many consequential events had taken place. As one writer explained, religious educators had to embrace "various modes of teaching...to meet the changing circumstances of the class" and to generate both "effort and "self-exertion."¹⁹⁶ Geographic instruction was no simple task in the first decades of the nineteenth century, given the relative absence of effective teaching materials. But as the demand for geographic textbooks, Bible atlases, and historical maps increased, so too did the supply, which meant that children who came of age from the 1820s onward were exposed to a host of new teaching techniques designed to give them a fuller understanding of scripture, to help them organize and record their knowledge, and to make them feel as if they were transported to biblical lands and walking in the steps of Christ.

Biocartography and the "Historical" Jesus

In 1831, Lydia Maria Child published *The Mother's Book*, a volume "adapted to popular use" and designed to educate middle-class families, and in it, she covered a wide variety of subjects, from the affections and the intellect to politeness and dress."¹⁹⁷ But she was especially interested in improving children's reading habits and cultivating piety. Wanting to inculcate a "real love of knowledge" in children and to prevent an "exclusive and injurious taste for fiction," she encouraged parents to direct their children to "History, Voyages, Travels, Biography, &c." These books would interest the young in historical

realities and provide a hearty substitute to the "literary confectionary" that was novelistic prose.¹⁹⁸ Child particularly worried that children would develop a dislike for Sabbath reading exercises, and would associate the Bible with "gloom and privation," by demanding too much reading. What was needed was a way to spark their interest while simultaneously cultivating a heartfelt desire to read and study scripture.¹⁹⁹ Child advised a range of genres, from picture books to hymnals, but favored one genre above the others: "Maps, on which the travels of our Saviour and the Apostles may be traced are excellent for Sunday lessons."²⁰⁰ Child thought that maps provided a template for Bible stories, especially stories related to the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. For children confused by the Bible's complexities as well as those who struggled to make a coherent story out of the Gospels, the map transformed scripture into an accessible read by bridging its chronological and narrative gaps and discrepancies.

Nineteenth-century educators found that maps transformed complex landscapes into two-dimensional images, translating a slice of the material world into a visually conceptual reality. According to the historian Stephen Hall, these representations enable readers to see "the story line running through random pattern," yet as Denis Wood, John Fels, and William Boelhower note, there is "*nothing natural*" about them. They are not a "representation of space" but a "space of representation," value-laden sign systems that reveal "not geography *in se* but the eye of the cartographer."²⁰¹ Maps conceal the cultural values that behind their design and production. They remake the world in their own image and, in doing so, entice credulous viewers into believing that what they see is empirically trustworthy data.²⁰²

As religious educators looked for ways to bring the Bible to life, they turned to a form of mapmaking that I term "biocartography," thematic maps that traced the lives of Jesus and other important biblical figures as they journeyed to and fro across the Holy Land. These were no ordinary maps of Palestine. With the addition of spatial and temporal coordinates, they conflated two cartographic precursors, historical and route maps, and encouraged viewers to study historical networks that traced a lifetime of activity across the frame of an image (or a series of images). Maps of Christ's life emphasized the connections between time, space, and movement as they followed his travels across Palestine. Religious educators argued that biocartography made religious instruction more interactive by making history more visible, rendering literary narrative in spatiotemporal terms and spatiotemporal schema back into narrative. When shown a map of Jesus's life, children were taught to read it intensively, to trace its lines with their hands, to follow its narratives with their eyes, and to recount the journey as part of their verbal lesson.

Biocartography was a hybridized form of historiography that masked the hermeneutic difficulties involved in both the harmonization of the Gospels and the art of mapmaking. To translate the life of Jesus into a cartographic network, mapmakers blurred the distinction between fact and hypothesis since the Gospels provided no clear chronological guide. Bible harmonists had long grappled with such dilemmas, but for mapmakers, the task required a further step. They had to synchronize the Gospels to create a unified plot and to translate that narrative into a series of transversing lines that linked geographic sites to one another. Because the success of biocartography depended on an imprecise set of aesthetic and historiographic calculations, mapmakers had to

ensure that their maps appeared historically legitimate—that they had created a semblance of empirically factual data, even when their maps were neither factually accurate nor artistically precise. The linear mosaics had to be simple to ensure visual literacy and to assist the young in memorizing particularly important schema, but if they were *too* simple, the lines could be called into question by those who doubted the map's legitimacy. For biocartography to succeed, mapmakers had to maintain this balance between educational utility and historical probability.

Because children's eternal welfare was thought to hinge on effective religious instruction, educators held out hope that the combination of biography and cartography would bring the historical Jesus to life in ways that earlier pedagogies had not. Over time, this interest in making the Gospels more substantive contributed to a Christ-centered shift in Protestant piety as children raised in a culture of cartography began to see the Bible anew. These changes were sometimes subtle, sometimes straightforward. First, students grew accustomed to map-based pedagogies as illustrated Bibles, atlases, and wall maps were made more affordable by advances in printing technology and the expansion of publication and distribution networks. Second, educators gradually became convinced that the young needed to see scripture in order to comprehend it, and this view led to structural changes in Sunday-school curricula as teachers developed cartographic lessons designed to impress on children the Bible's authority and the map's. Third, biocartography further humanized Jesus even as mapmakers struggled to translate his "historical" experience into a coherent form. These maps rooted Christ in a specific historical time and place, making the study of first-century Palestine key to religious instruction. In transfixing his life to the landscape, mapmakers contributed to the final

stages of Christianity's humanist sensibility among educators who unconsciously sublimated Christ's divinity to his humanity. In the main, Protestants were Trinitarians and adamant about the God-man duality, but in Sunday-school classrooms, the complexities of incarnational theology were largely obviated. Biocartography thus depended on a subtle and often inconsistent decoupling of Jesus's humanity from his divinity, a tendency to highlight those human activities that could be compressed to fit the map's narrow geospatial parameters.

Such maps call attention to the mechanics of religious instruction, to those activities that were designed to introduce students to Bible history and to instill in the young a lasting faith in scripture's historicity. They point to the expansion of the Holy Land in the Protestant imagination and to the growing interest in the historical Jesus. They also highlight the shift in religious instruction from a home-centered, catechistic education to one that was increasingly institutional and standardized. What started out as a relatively simple exercise of comparative reading that involved the juxtaposition of maps and scripture became more interactive and kinesthetic as educators enlivened scriptural study with tactile, map-based exercises. Substituting spatiotemporal vectors for biblical narratives, biocartography brought the Jesus of history into stark relief, making his historical life a visible reality.

The Rise of Biocartography

In his popular textbook *An Introduction to the Geography of the New Testament* (1811), the Unitarian minister Lant Carpenter claimed that children suffered from an experiential crisis that made understanding the Bible nearly impossible. The events they

read about were beyond their imaginative capacity, which meant that they were unable to picture life in first-century Palestine with any semblance of reality. For Carpenter, geographic study transformed the indeterminate shape of ancient history into recognizable form:

[B]y forming a regular connected view of the transactions of Jesus, we must gain a more vivid impression of their reality. When they are bound together by the customary connexions of time and place, they are no longer loose and floating in the mind, but are brought into view, regularly and readily, like the passing events of life. It does not appear too much to assert, that a regular, consistent view of the transactions, recorded respecting our Saviour, impressed on the mind in the early periods of life...would produce a belief in the reality of the words and actions of the Friend of man, which more than all the external argument for the truth of his mission, would protect the mind from the doubts of vice and scepticism....²⁰³

Carpenter makes three noteworthy points. First, he suggests that young readers did not understand scripture, which stunted their spiritual development. Second, he argues that historical and geographic facts not found in the Bible would revitalize children's devotion by bringing scripture to life. Third, he claims that geographic study would empower readers by giving them spiritual knowledge to combat personal uncertainty and arguments against faith. Before children could understand biblical history, they had to grasp the relationship between sacred stories and sacred lands.

Carpenter repeats the word "view" three times in this introductory paragraph, drawing an implicit link between geographic instruction and visual education. As Martin Brückner and Susan Schulten have noted, the late eighteenth century witnessed a sharp increase in the production and circulation of national and regional maps, texts that reinforced a sense of shared identity for newly-minted American citizens. Spurred on by the likes of Jedidiah Morse, who wrote the best-selling schoolbook *Geography Made Easy* in 1784, educators mandated geographic study in classrooms across the nation,

making it "a basic and popular subject rather than the specialized domain of the cultured elite." But this growing interest in "geoliteracy," as Brückner calls it, soon led to clashes over methodology and classroom curricula.²⁰⁴ In the early nineteenth century, teachers were often torn between two competing schools of thought: "hard verbalism" (championed by Morse, who emphasized reading and rote memorization) and "soft visualism" (practiced by Emma Willard and William Woodbridge, who preferred map lessons and drawing exercises).²⁰⁵ For Willard and Woodbridge, language could not convey geographic information to the mind as effectively as images. If children did not have access to accurate maps, the material in their textbooks would remain, as Woodbridge once suggested, a "mass of insulated facts, scarcely connected by any association but that of locality." Although mapmakers were unable to develop a "perfect system of Geography"—because doing so would require "a complete sketch of a country, with its inhabitants, their institutions, employments, &c."—Woodbridge assured his readers that cartographic "approximation[s]" sufficed.²⁰⁶ As geographic study became more object-oriented, Morse's textbooks fell out of fashion, eclipsed by the visually focused pedagogies of Willard, Woodbridge, and their likeminded successors.²⁰⁷

Protestant educators were quick to channel this interest in geoliteracy toward more spiritual ends. Adherents of sola scriptura, they were ostensibly the most conservative of hard verbalists. As one American Sunday School Union representative put it: "We are willing to avow that our grand object is, with God's blessing, to make every child—while he is a child—a believer in the Bible, the whole Bible, and (so far as religion is concerned) *nothing but the Bible*."²⁰⁸ But for some, this ardent form of bibleonlyism was more of a catchphrase than a creed. Many Protestant educators—

particularly in more urban areas—actually had few qualms with biblical supplements so long as those texts did not supplant scripture itself.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the nation witnessed a surge of interest in the field of "sacred geography," and publishers responded to the growing demand by printing Holy Land atlases and gazetteers, inserting maps of Palestine into Bibles and Sunday-school textbooks, designing geographic primers and catechisms, and publishing large wall maps for public display. In colonial America, maps of Palestine were primarily status symbols since only a privileged few could afford to buy the imported productions of European mapmakers. By the late 1820s, they had become part and parcel of American mass culture—printed by New England publishing firms, voluntary societies, and religious organizations and sold or given away by publishers and booksellers, ministers and educators, colporteurs and circuit riders. When the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union advertised its 38 by 29 inch *Map of Palestine* in 1828, the going rate for Holy Land lithographs had fallen to as little as a dollar, a "very moderate price" (according to one reviewer) for such valuable educational tools.²⁰⁹

Prompted by changes in American print culture, religious educators began to incorporate map-reading exercises into their Sunday-school lessons plans. Holy Land maps framed the conversation, excluding from view all geographic regions not associated with biblical history. They also functioned as scripts that prompted teachers and students alike to practice both planned and extemporaneous recitals of biblical history. In 1833 the American Sunday School Union published Jarvis Gregg's *Selumiel, or A Visit to Jerusalem*, a popular didactic novel that modeled this process. The book's frontispiece depicts a group of students gathered around their teacher, who holds a map for all to see

(fig. 24). The small boy in front points to the map, indicating its centrality to the narrative. Yet the gesture also hints at the tactile responses provoked by maps, the hand and eye movements that occurred as viewers linked particular episodes from the Bible to particular places on the map. Most of the boys examine the map's features with rapt attention, yet two of them have open mouths, suggestive of the dialogic responses prompted by cartographic instruction and the awe experienced when these children saw the Bible come to life before their very eyes. The narrative of *Selumiel* attests to such excitement. When Mr. Andersen, the Sabbath instructor, reveals the map to his students, a young boy named George exclaims, "A map! a map of Jerusalem! You have brought it for us, have you not, Mr. Andersen? You are so good, and contrive so many ways to surprise us."²¹⁰ A young scholar named William then voices a sentiment that echoes the ideological impetus behind nineteenth-century cartographic study: "It makes the lessons so much more interesting to look out [sic] the places on a map, that I have almost worn out the little map of Palestine in my Union Questions, studying it so much. And I know almost all the places now, so that I shall not have to study very hard to get what you request us to learn."²¹¹ Importantly, the map reinforces the Bible's historical reality. When the class looks at the sight of Jesus's crucifixion, for instance, the children are convinced that they have seen "every thing we have read about in our lessons," allegedly because they have viewed the illustration of three crosses within a larger context of Christ's physical movement in the period before the crucifixion.²¹²

As J. B. Harley notes, maps come with "narrative qualities" despite the fact that they often pass as mute artifacts.²¹³ In antebellum America, educators thought that Holy Land maps made Bible stories more intelligible and assumed that such maps were



Fig. 24. Jarvis Gregg, *Selumiel, or A Visit to Jerusalem* (1833).

innocent approximations of three-dimensional space.²¹⁴ They generally did not think of them as narratological texts but as material objects that supplemented the act of reading other texts, primarily the Bible. Since mapmakers compress the world into a simulacrum of itself, they inevitably transmit to readers "semiotic information" in a "coded" language that presupposes cultural awareness, linguistic proficiency, and geoliteracy.²¹⁵ In the preface to *Selumiel*, Gregg explained that the book and the the American Sunday School Union's recently published *Map of the City of Jerusalem* were designed to be read concurrently (fig. 25).²¹⁶ The narratives involving Mr. Andersen and his young scholars were thus recursive episodes for readers who had already seen this map of Jerusalem. At first glance, the map appears to lack a plot in that it presents a seemingly non-narrative bird's-eye view of the city; its subtitle, however, suggests otherwise: "Exhibiting the locations of the most important places mentioned in the New Testament, as correctly as can be ascertained."²¹⁷ This was no mere city map since its illustrations were linked to specific moments in sacred history. It was instead a visual analogue of Jesus's public ministry, Passion, death, and resurrection to readers who had been trained to project biblical history onto its surface.

City maps do not "tell" anything, as Wood and Fels note.²¹⁸ They are neither self-explanatory nor self-evident since their iconic language always requires some form of translation. But this map, in its telescopic rendering of a very specific spatiotemporal landscape, overlays the Gospels onto the features of the city. The map is the life of Jesus in cartographic form. For religious viewers, the coordinates indexed on the map would represent more than place names, those proper nouns that denoted the city's architectural and environmental layout. They would instead be intertextual nodes in a narrative

network that encouraged readers to transpose New Testament stories onto the map's symbolic register. Its purported realism masked cartography's artifice, the mapmaker's limited representation of first-century Jerusalem or its impossible bird's-eye view, such that when the students in *Selumiel* (and presumably Gregg's imagined audience) turn from their lessons to the map, they do not see a sketch of Jerusalem. They see instead "every thing" from that day's lesson superimposed onto the map's semiotic system. This resonance was key to religious instruction since educators believed that geoliteracy was not an end in itself but a means toward a greater spiritual goal. They wanted their young scholars to see through the map to Jesus. The map thus served as the optic equivalent of Christ's life once students had learned how to superimpose the Gospels onto its surface. It thereby acquired a special aura as it entered into a symbiotic relationship with scripture. It was no longer the product of artistic invention. It was instead an analogue of divine truth.

The correlation between biblical events and cartographic conventions benefited from the production and circulation of thematic maps that were increasingly diachronic. Unlike the *Map of the City of Jerusalem*—a historical map with few explicit biblical reference points—these maps linked biblical events to contemporary landscapes, which meant that viewers could follow sacred history with or without biblical references. In 1835, the English architect Frederick Catherwood published the first edition of his map *Plan of Jerusalem* (fig. 26), a small lithograph that, according to his friend and fellow traveler John Lloyd Stephens, provided "a better guide to all the interesting localities than any [map] he could procure in Jerusalem."²¹⁹ Reprinted in Boston, New York, and London and translated into German, Russian, and Swedish, the map was referenced by



Fig. 26. Frederick Catherwood, *Plan of Jerusalem* (1835).

Holy Land explorers, researchers, and cartographers, and it also served as the template for Catherwood's enormously popular panorama *View of Jerusalem*, a 10,000-square-foot painting that attracted over 140,000 visitors in London and that became the United States' first permanent panoramic exhibition.²²⁰ In 1838, Catherwood partnered with a New York lithographer to reprint his original map in larger dimensions. The new 56-by-77-inch map was, as a reviewer for the *New-York Mirror* explained, an "invaluable" aid to Bible study: "All the localities made memorable by our Saviour and his disciples are minutely marked upon the map, so that it is interesting not only as a correct topographical plan, but as throwing light upon scriptural history."²²¹ The map directed readers to a series of "spots" that synchronized spatiotemporal phenomena—from the Tomb of the Kings in the map's upper-left corner to the Mosque of Omar at its center and from the "Spot Where Simon Assisted to Carry the Cross" to the "Spot Where Christ Appeared to the Women After His Resurrection."²²² In doing so, it translated the life of Jesus into a set of coordinates that linked the Bible to the Holy Land. The of Gospels became more palpable once cartographers took the next logical step and linked said spots to one another, translating sacred history into matrices of intersecting lines.

Ecce Homo: Mapping the "Historical" Jesus

In 1854, Lyman Coleman, a professor of ancient and modern languages at Princeton University, noted the significance of Holy Land cartography in his popular work *An Historical Text Book and Atlas of Biblical Geography*: "Read with careful reference to geographical and chronological data, locate in time as in history, and in space as in geography, the events of the past, trace upon chart and map the shifting scenes

of the narrative, and what was before insipid and profitless, becomes, like the 'expressive canvas' and the 'speaking marble,' alive with life and spirit."²²³ Coleman's book remained in print until 1893, a testament to the popularity of geographic education throughout the nineteenth century. Although he explicitly linked the terms "history" and "geography," he also alluded to the close relationship between two related disciplines: biography and cartography. In his thematic map titled *The Travels of Our Saviour* (fig. 27), the picture presents readers with a matrix of intersecting lines that represent Jesus's ministry. These circuits recreate both spatial trajectory and temporal progression and condense Jesus's life into a linear system. Coleman recognized the map's shortcomings, but he trusted that students who saw the mosaic would be awed by Jesus's labors: "The map may be more unsatisfactory and conjectural than the others. The travels of our Lord are seldom defined by localities sufficient to allow them to be sketched with any degree of certainty. Still, a view of them, even though the exact route may be altogether conjectural, serves to impress the mind with the extent of his travels and the wearisome life which he lived, in his labour of love, going about everywhere doing good."²²⁴

The maps that circulated in the latter half of the century reveal an increased effort to anchor every important moment in Jesus's life to specific geographic coordinates, demonstrating little of Coleman's reticence to embellish. In 1881, the Unitarian minister Andrew Stout completed *The Journeys, and Deeds of Jesus, and Scriptural Index, on a New Map of Palestine* (fig. 28), one of the period's most popular maps.²²⁵ The Indianapolis firm A. C. Shortridge & Company supplied it to regional booksellers and partnered with New York publishers and the Chautauqua Sunday-School Map Company to distribute it throughout the nation. On the heels of its success, Stout joined the lecture



Fig. 27. From Lyman Coleman, *Historical Text Book and Atlas of Biblical Geography* (1854).

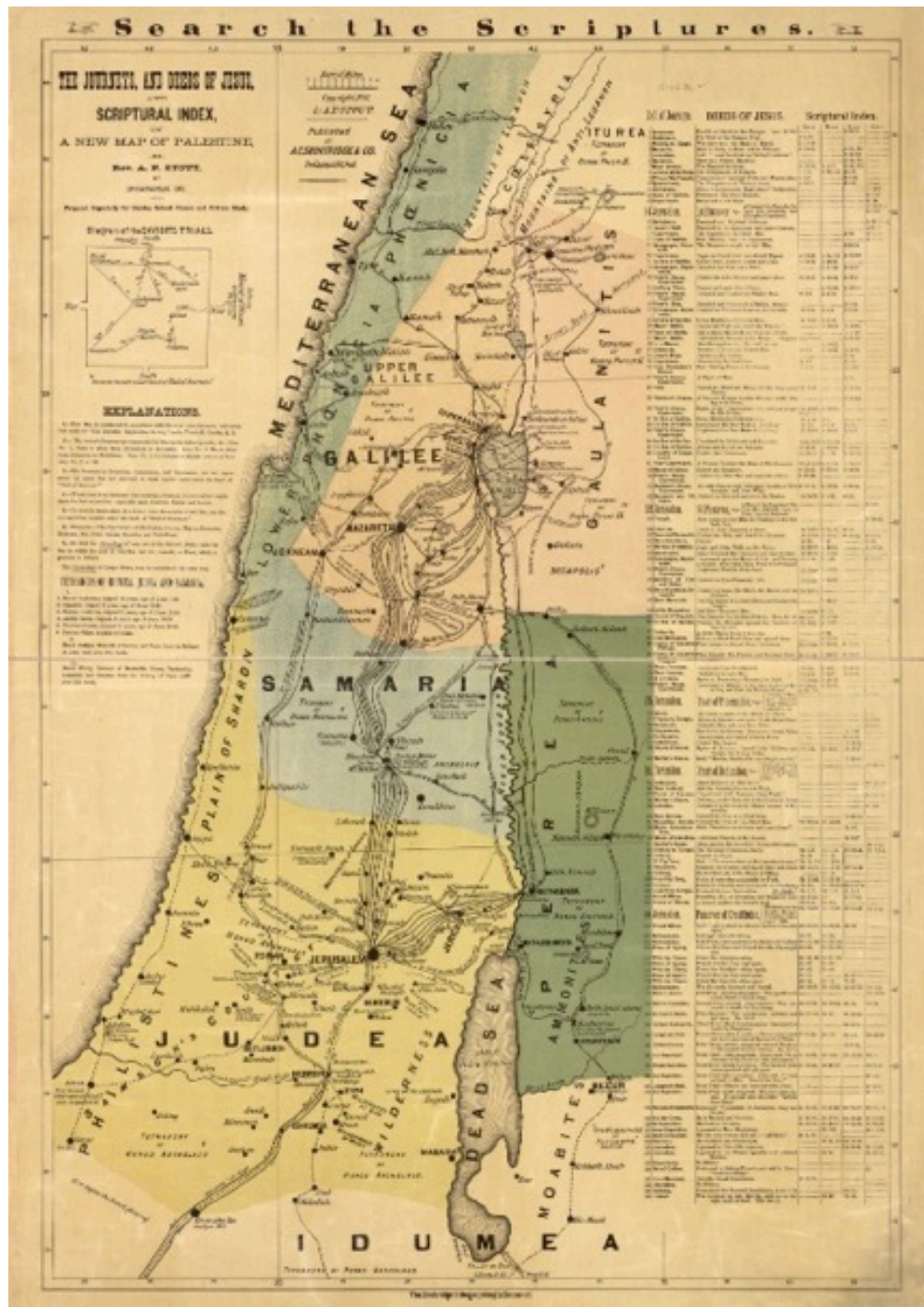


Fig. 28. Andrew Stout, *The Journeys, and Deeds of Jesus, and Scriptural Index* (1881).

circuit. Map in hand, he delivered some 300 talks on the subject from the Midwest to the Pacific coast. In addition to national distribution networks, the map remained popular because it offered affordable options for American consumers. Unlike earlier attempts at biocartography—for example, Griffith Morgan's 48 by 72 inch *Map of Bible History* (1865), which came with rollers and cost ten dollars—it appeared in three different formats and price points: \$1.00 for a folded "pocket style" edition (20 by 30 inches and bound in a hardback cover); \$2.00 for a "teacher's style" model (same size as above but varnished and mounted on wood); and \$5.00 for a "superintendent's style" map (36 by 72 inches; varnished, mounted on cloth, and bound with rollers; with multi-colored lines and accompanying reference book).²²⁶ By the end of the century, they sold for as little as fifty cents.²²⁷

According to the Methodist minister Isaac Joyce, Stout's map would "aid teachers in their work to an extent not possible through the agency of books."²²⁸ Designed to supplement the Gospels, the map instead called attention to its own textual authority. Flanked by two manicules, its banner read, "Search the Scriptures," an injunction that implicitly conflated map reading with Bible study. The manicules served as metonymic figures for the map's tactile prompts. Admonishing viewers to read with their hands, Stout created a system of visual and linguistic registers that made geoliteracy more tactile. The columns at right provided a key to these map exercises. The far-left column (entitled "End of Journeys") associated specific numbers with specific sites to help viewers trace Jesus's movements across the landscape of Palestine. Beginning with each line's final destination, they were instructed to work backward to reconstruct the given journey, from a particular city to an individual line to a geographic starting point, and

then move forward again, tracing the line from beginning to end. The column labeled "Deeds of Jesus" provided readers with narrative content that transformed the map's lines into a biographical matrix, an interconnected network of plots characterized by temporal succession and spatial proximity. The four columns at right were a "Scriptural Index" that harmonized the whole, a catalogue prompting readers to see in each of the map's lines an authoritative record of Jesus's life and ministry backed by verses drawn from all four Gospels.

Stout wanted viewers to move from text to image, to turn from the informational columns to the mapped landscape. His call to "search" scripture freed them to explore the map at random: to follow individual lines using arrows and numbers, to move from line to line with or without reference to the columns at right, to note geographic features or colored political regions, to see in the map's many Old Testament verses an alternate narrative, and to turn from map to Bible and Bible to map while examining the Scriptural Index. No record exists of *how* nineteenth-century teachers and students read Stout's map, but the map's layout suggests limitless possibilities. Depending on an inconstant set of variables—from the day's individual lesson to the age and maturity of the pupils to the layout of the Sunday-school classroom—viewers could have followed particular story arcs or looked for answers to particular questions. But they could have just as easily examined the map with no purpose in mind whatsoever, following its winding routes and textual notations out of curiosity or play.

Stout's map encouraged students to study it intensively if they were to make sense of its many layered narratives. In all, he superimposed roughly 150 unique events onto the Holy Land, an intertextual collage of biblical narratives made possible by the

map's scale and its individuated lines. Before Stout drew the map, he would have had to think through a knotty question: How does one map a life? Stout clearly recognized that he lacked accurate source material; the Gospels were fragmentary sketches of first-century life, not detailed biographies.²²⁹ Although the Bible provided few navigational markers, he collected and coordinated the narratives, disregarded disparities, and cited as evidence information he had gleaned from the "best authorities."

This mosaic of interconnected, overlapping lines calls attention to the elaborate artifice involved in biocartography. It structures and regulates the shape of historical reality, prompting viewers to trace a plot from point to point in order to follow individual storylines. It also links spatial movement to temporal progression, transforming a single lifespan into a set of linear figures that traverse the map's surface. The networks surrounding the Sea of Galilee illustrate these complexities (fig. 29). Small arrows serve as navigational guides, and curved lines wind from place to place, mimicking Jesus's wanderings. The ten lines that branch out from Capernaum to the Sea of Galilee mark overlapping plots while the small wriggling line that spans the sea simulates a storm that Jesus calmed during a crossing.²³⁰ These are seemingly transparent simulacra (not actual historical routes), yet they paradoxically legitimize the overall biographical portrait. For casual observers, the fiction of the represented routes could pass unquestioned because the irregular curvatures conveyed a sense of historical authenticity that masked biocartography's embellishments. The same could be said for lines 135 and 138, which illustrate Jesus's movements from Jerusalem to Capernaum and back again before his trial and crucifixion. Upon inspection, the index provides no biblical reference; it simply reads, "No History" (fig. 30). In other words, the lines originate not from the Bible but

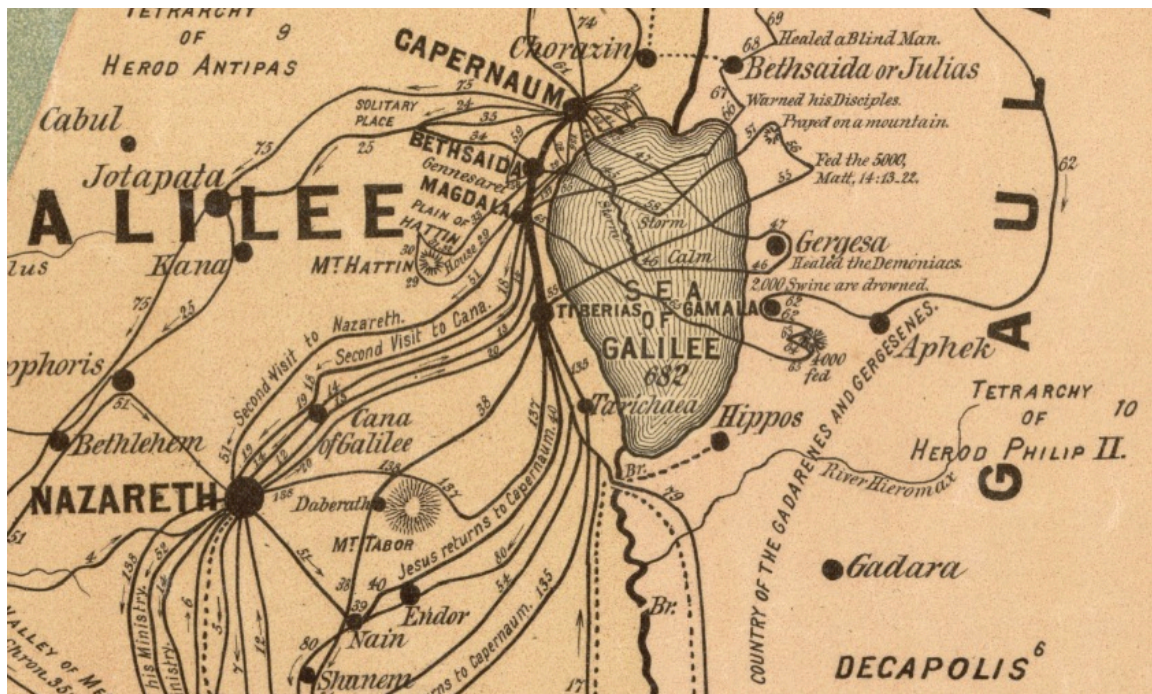


Fig. 29. Detail from Andrew Stout, *The Journeys, and Deeds of Jesus, and Scriptural Index* (1881).

132	Emmaus.	He vanished out of their sight.	.....	16: 12, 13.	24: 13-32.	.....
133	Jerusalem.	Appeared to Ten of the Apostles.	.....	.....	24: 33-48.	20: 19-25.
134	Jerusalem.	Appeared to the Eleven Apostles and rebuked Thomas.	.....	16: 14.	.....	20: 26-31.
135	Capernaum.	No History.	.....	.....	.....	.....
136	Sea of Galilee.	Performed a Fishing-Miracle, and said to Peter; "Feed My Sheep."	.....	.....	.....	21:
137	On a Mountain.	Gave the Great Commission.	28: 16-20.	.....	.....	.....
138	Jerusalem.	No History.	.....	.....	.....	.....
139	Bethany.	Pronounced the Farewell Benediction. Acts 1:1-12	.....	.....	24: 50.	.....
140	Heaven.	Was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Heb. 10: 12.	.....	16: 19.	24: 51.	.....

Fig. 30. Detail from Andrew Stout, *The Journeys, and Deeds of Jesus, and Scriptural Index* (1881).

from Stout himself. He consolidated and harmonized the Gospels, crafting a single coherent plot from multiple disjointed narratives. As a realistic, though not necessarily accurate, representation of Jesus's life, the map instructed students even as it conditioned them to suspend disbelief.

Since the figurations of biocartography succeed through dissemblance, viewers must believe what they see or else such maps lose their legitimacy. Perhaps this offers one explanation for why Jerome Travis's *Comprehensive Map of the Journeys of Christ* (1892) fared so poorly in American markets (fig. 31). Working with the prominent Chicago publisher Shober & Carqueville Lithograph Company, Travis designed a map for Sunday-school classrooms that would, he hoped, "lay hold upon the imagination and the memory" and make the Gospels "seem real" so that "even the child-reader may follow Jesus."²³¹ The colored lines represent the journeys undertaken by Jesus during four distinct periods of his life and public ministry—the "Preparatory" years (black), First Year (pink), Second Year (green), and Third Year (orange). They create an unbroken biographical circuit that could have been followed either in its entirety or piecemeal depending on the scope of the lesson or each viewer's personal preference. Instead of reference numbers, Travis linked biblical episodes to individual spots on the map via colored connective lines that branched out from the routes toward the map's margins. But in the marginalia, he did not include Bible verses and thus did little to help viewers "search the scriptures," as Stout had done. He also plotted Jesus's career using straight lines, symmetric curves, orthogonal angles, and sharp turns (fig. 32). Although his map was no less accurate than those that had come before, it might have seemed to some nineteenth-century viewers as if Jesus's life resembled a frenetic railway map, not an



Fig 31. Jerome Travis, *Comprehensive Map of the Journeys of Christ* (1893).

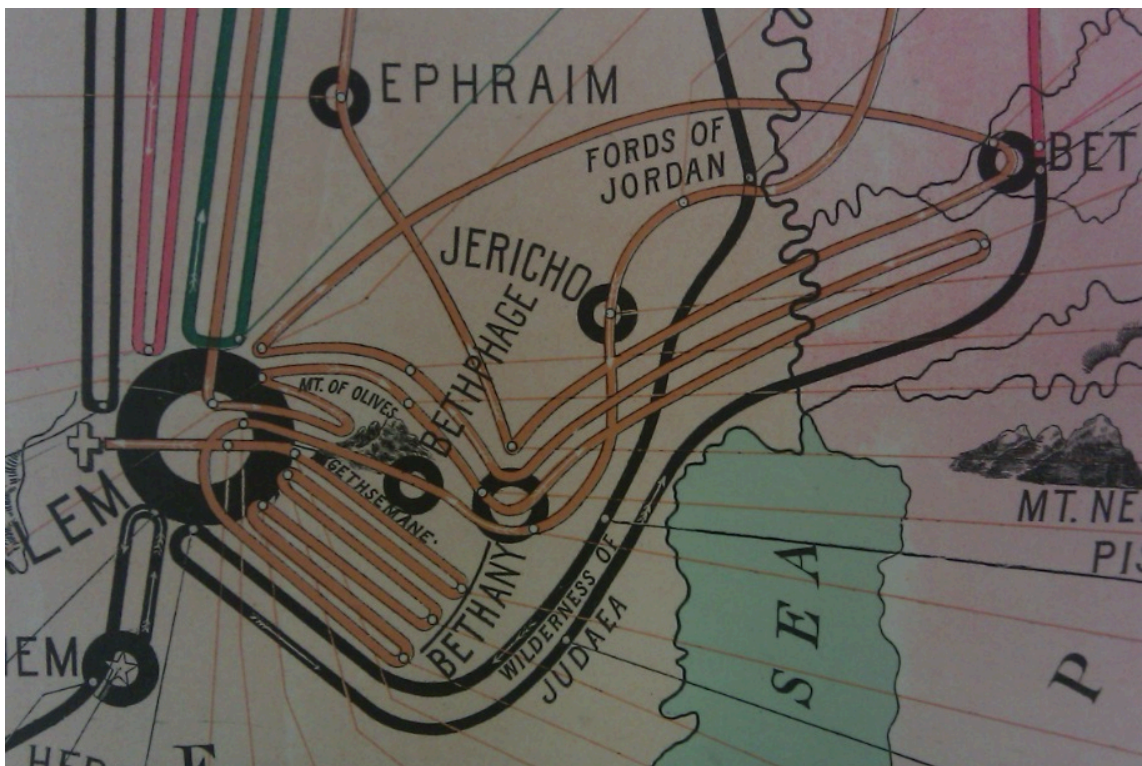


Fig. 32. Detail from Jerome Travis, *Comprehensive Map of the Journeys of Christ* (1893).

authentic illustration of biblical history. In fact, the *Comprehensive Map* seems to have disappeared from the market soon after it was published. Shober & Carqueville only printed it once, and they did not produce any advertisements for it. The map was quite possibly never mentioned in the popular press. There are surely many reasons for its failure as a commercial product, but if the success of biocartography depends on the mapmaker's artifice and the consumer's trust, then Travis's map failed because its fiction was too explicit to ignore.

According to Susan Schulten, the rise of thematic maps in the nineteenth century can be traced to several related phenomena: political independence, national historiography, population growth, westward migration, the rapid accumulation of socioeconomic data, and the emergence of new disciplines and bureaucracies.²³² The period's mapmakers were not usually professional cartographers, but they recognized the value of visual aids that compressed an unwieldy amount of information into an accessible, portable product. When religious educators began to draw lines onto Holy Land maps in order to simulate Jesus's life and ministry, they were not appropriating time-tested strategies. They were instead demanding from cartography more information, more narrative, and more utility. Biocartography remained popular as the century progressed, buoyed by ongoing anxieties about children's geoliteracy (or lack thereof). In the process, religious educators began to experiment further with map activities, to explore the possibilities of cartographic instruction as they sought to teach and amuse new generations of scholars. They were sometimes at odds when it came to questions of methodology, but they were united in the belief that maps translated the Bible into an

intuitive vernacular language, transformed abstract plots into meaningful stories, and made religious education more effectual and lasting.

Mnemonic Maps, Manual Methods

In his teacher-training manual *The Modern Sunday-School* (1887), John Heyl Vincent, the founder of the Chautauqua Institution, noted a vexing pedagogical problem: "The Scripture area is so vast, its sweep so far-reaching, its objects of search and thought so colossal, that children need an orrery to bring within their grasp the unity of plan, and the inter-relation of the various, vast, and remote objects in the Scripture heavens."²³³ Vincent hoped to replace the curricula of old with more systematic teaching and believed that children could with proper guidance "master the Word" by dividing it into thematically arranged fields, from history and archaeology to biography and theology. Hoping to promote greater coordination between Sunday-school teachers, church ministers, and Christian parents, he encouraged educators to introduce students to the "salient facts of the Bible, from the creation of man to the close of the New Testament history," yet throughout his distinguished career, he returned repeatedly to geographic study: "Bible geography should lie in the mind," a "living map" that would "form a part of the Bible student's mental furnishing." The Bible was, after all, a "book of geography from Eden to Ephesus."²³⁴ Vincent had long claimed that the "ordinary facilities and modes of teaching" made it "extremely difficult to render sacred history and geography other than uninteresting to young children, and indeed to those of larger growth."²³⁵ But if teachers would map the Bible's stories onto geographic templates, they would transform the Gospels into a more accessible, entertaining form.

This interest in developing lively curricula generated concern among educators who thought that cartographic study had become little more than a rote exercise. In a discussion related to Andrew Mitchell's *Picture Map of the Life of Christ*, one reviewer noted, "Of making many charts and pictorial helps toward Bible knowledge there seems to be no end."²³⁶ Even though directional lines, harmonic grids, scriptural indexes, and biographical notations differentiated biocartography from cartography, these maps did not guarantee greater results in religious instruction. Religious educators recognized that maps had to be internalized lest young scholars forget their lessons. The complex networks preferred by Stout, Petford, and Travis were not easy to read, much less to memorize, resulting in an education shift toward maps that were more portable and transparent. In 1898, the Church of the Brethren minister Charles Arnold published *Chart of Christ's Journeyings* (fig. 33), a small map on linen paper that was, as one reviewer noted, "handy for carrying in the pocket."²³⁷ Following the success of his earlier *Chart of Paul's Journeyings* and mimicking the format first popularized by Stout, Arnold copied the index from Matthew Riddle's *Outline Harmony of the Gospels* (1895) and situated it on the right side of the page opposite four simple maps that he had drawn for easy reference.²³⁸ He chose to transpose Jesus's life onto multiple templates (rather than one), which increased clarity. Arnold's work was likely popular among readers because it did *not* delineate every one of Jesus's routes. That year, reviewers for the *New-York Observer* and *Christian Work* praised the chart because Jesus's journeys could be "seen at a glance."²³⁹ The "whole complicated sequence of journeys, places, and events" had been packaged in "an attractively compact and comprehensive form," the *Observer* declared.²⁴⁰ These references to the glance are important because they indicate the desire for simpler

Chart of Christ's Journeyings		Prepared by C. E. Arnold, A.M.	
The Harmony is based upon Professor M. B. Riddle's Outline Harmony of the Gospels.			
Journey Maps	Outline Harmony	Periods	
MAP I PERIOD OF PREPARATION	Introductory	Period I A.D. 1-30	Period I A.D. 1-30
MAP II JUDAEAN MINISTRY	The Baptism of Jesus	Period II A.D. 30-33	Period II A.D. 30-33
MAP III GALILEAN MINISTRY	The Sermon on the Mount	Period III A.D. 33-36	Period III A.D. 33-36
MAP IV PERCEAN MINISTRY	The Last Supper	Period IV A.D. 36-39	Period IV A.D. 36-39
	The Resurrection	Period V A.D. 39-40	Period V A.D. 39-40
	The Ascension	Period VI A.D. 40-43	Period VI A.D. 40-43
	The Pentecost	Period VII A.D. 43-46	Period VII A.D. 43-46
	The Epistles	Period VIII A.D. 46-50	Period VIII A.D. 46-50
	The Revelation	Period IX A.D. 50-54	Period IX A.D. 50-54
	The Second Coming	Period X A.D. 54-57	Period X A.D. 54-57
	The Millennium	Period XI A.D. 57-60	Period XI A.D. 57-60
	The Final Judgment	Period XII A.D. 60-63	Period XII A.D. 60-63
	The New Heaven and Earth	Period XIII A.D. 63-66	Period XIII A.D. 63-66
	The New Jerusalem	Period XIV A.D. 66-69	Period XIV A.D. 66-69
	The New Creation	Period XV A.D. 69-72	Period XV A.D. 69-72
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XVI A.D. 72-75	Period XVI A.D. 72-75
	The New Jerusalem	Period XVII A.D. 75-78	Period XVII A.D. 75-78
	The New Creation	Period XVIII A.D. 78-81	Period XVIII A.D. 78-81
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XIX A.D. 81-84	Period XIX A.D. 81-84
	The New Jerusalem	Period XX A.D. 84-87	Period XX A.D. 84-87
	The New Creation	Period XXI A.D. 87-90	Period XXI A.D. 87-90
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XXII A.D. 90-93	Period XXII A.D. 90-93
	The New Jerusalem	Period XXIII A.D. 93-96	Period XXIII A.D. 93-96
	The New Creation	Period XXIV A.D. 96-99	Period XXIV A.D. 96-99
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XXV A.D. 99-102	Period XXV A.D. 99-102
	The New Jerusalem	Period XXVI A.D. 102-105	Period XXVI A.D. 102-105
	The New Creation	Period XXVII A.D. 105-108	Period XXVII A.D. 105-108
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XXVIII A.D. 108-111	Period XXVIII A.D. 108-111
	The New Jerusalem	Period XXIX A.D. 111-114	Period XXIX A.D. 111-114
	The New Creation	Period XXX A.D. 114-117	Period XXX A.D. 114-117
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XXXI A.D. 117-120	Period XXXI A.D. 117-120
	The New Jerusalem	Period XXXII A.D. 120-123	Period XXXII A.D. 120-123
	The New Creation	Period XXXIII A.D. 123-126	Period XXXIII A.D. 123-126
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XXXIV A.D. 126-129	Period XXXIV A.D. 126-129
	The New Jerusalem	Period XXXV A.D. 129-132	Period XXXV A.D. 129-132
	The New Creation	Period XXXVI A.D. 132-135	Period XXXVI A.D. 132-135
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XXXVII A.D. 135-138	Period XXXVII A.D. 135-138
	The New Jerusalem	Period XXXVIII A.D. 138-141	Period XXXVIII A.D. 138-141
	The New Creation	Period XXXIX A.D. 141-144	Period XXXIX A.D. 141-144
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XL A.D. 144-147	Period XL A.D. 144-147
	The New Jerusalem	Period XLI A.D. 147-150	Period XLI A.D. 147-150
	The New Creation	Period XLII A.D. 150-153	Period XLII A.D. 150-153
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XLIII A.D. 153-156	Period XLIII A.D. 153-156
	The New Jerusalem	Period XLIV A.D. 156-159	Period XLIV A.D. 156-159
	The New Creation	Period XLV A.D. 159-162	Period XLV A.D. 159-162
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XLVI A.D. 162-165	Period XLVI A.D. 162-165
	The New Jerusalem	Period XLVII A.D. 165-168	Period XLVII A.D. 165-168
	The New Creation	Period XLVIII A.D. 168-171	Period XLVIII A.D. 168-171
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period XLIX A.D. 171-174	Period XLIX A.D. 171-174
	The New Jerusalem	Period L A.D. 174-177	Period L A.D. 174-177
	The New Creation	Period LI A.D. 177-180	Period LI A.D. 177-180
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LII A.D. 180-183	Period LII A.D. 180-183
	The New Jerusalem	Period LIII A.D. 183-186	Period LIII A.D. 183-186
	The New Creation	Period LIV A.D. 186-189	Period LIV A.D. 186-189
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LV A.D. 189-192	Period LV A.D. 189-192
	The New Jerusalem	Period LVI A.D. 192-195	Period LVI A.D. 192-195
	The New Creation	Period LVII A.D. 195-198	Period LVII A.D. 195-198
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LVIII A.D. 198-201	Period LVIII A.D. 198-201
	The New Jerusalem	Period LIX A.D. 201-204	Period LIX A.D. 201-204
	The New Creation	Period LX A.D. 204-207	Period LX A.D. 204-207
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXI A.D. 207-210	Period LXI A.D. 207-210
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXII A.D. 210-213	Period LXII A.D. 210-213
	The New Creation	Period LXIII A.D. 213-216	Period LXIII A.D. 213-216
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXIV A.D. 216-219	Period LXIV A.D. 216-219
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXV A.D. 219-222	Period LXV A.D. 219-222
	The New Creation	Period LXVI A.D. 222-225	Period LXVI A.D. 222-225
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXVII A.D. 225-228	Period LXVII A.D. 225-228
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXVIII A.D. 228-231	Period LXVIII A.D. 228-231
	The New Creation	Period LXIX A.D. 231-234	Period LXIX A.D. 231-234
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXX A.D. 234-237	Period LXX A.D. 234-237
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXI A.D. 237-240	Period LXXI A.D. 237-240
	The New Creation	Period LXXII A.D. 240-243	Period LXXII A.D. 240-243
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXIII A.D. 243-246	Period LXXIII A.D. 243-246
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXIV A.D. 246-249	Period LXXIV A.D. 246-249
	The New Creation	Period LXXV A.D. 249-252	Period LXXV A.D. 249-252
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXVI A.D. 252-255	Period LXXVI A.D. 252-255
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXVII A.D. 255-258	Period LXXVII A.D. 255-258
	The New Creation	Period LXXVIII A.D. 258-261	Period LXXVIII A.D. 258-261
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXIX A.D. 261-264	Period LXXIX A.D. 261-264
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXX A.D. 264-267	Period LXXX A.D. 264-267
	The New Creation	Period LXXXI A.D. 267-270	Period LXXXI A.D. 267-270
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXII A.D. 270-273	Period LXXXII A.D. 270-273
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXIII A.D. 273-276	Period LXXXIII A.D. 273-276
	The New Creation	Period LXXXIV A.D. 276-279	Period LXXXIV A.D. 276-279
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXV A.D. 279-282	Period LXXXV A.D. 279-282
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXVI A.D. 282-285	Period LXXXVI A.D. 282-285
	The New Creation	Period LXXXVII A.D. 285-288	Period LXXXVII A.D. 285-288
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXVIII A.D. 288-291	Period LXXXVIII A.D. 288-291
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXIX A.D. 291-294	Period LXXXIX A.D. 291-294
	The New Creation	Period LXXXX A.D. 294-297	Period LXXXX A.D. 294-297
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXI A.D. 297-300	Period LXXXXI A.D. 297-300
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXII A.D. 300-303	Period LXXXXII A.D. 300-303
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXIII A.D. 303-306	Period LXXXXIII A.D. 303-306
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXIV A.D. 306-309	Period LXXXXIV A.D. 306-309
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXV A.D. 309-312	Period LXXXXV A.D. 309-312
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXVI A.D. 312-315	Period LXXXXVI A.D. 312-315
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXVII A.D. 315-318	Period LXXXXVII A.D. 315-318
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXVIII A.D. 318-321	Period LXXXXVIII A.D. 318-321
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXIX A.D. 321-324	Period LXXXXIX A.D. 321-324
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXX A.D. 324-327	Period LXXXXX A.D. 324-327
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXI A.D. 327-330	Period LXXXXXI A.D. 327-330
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXII A.D. 330-333	Period LXXXXXII A.D. 330-333
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXIII A.D. 333-336	Period LXXXXXIII A.D. 333-336
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXIV A.D. 336-339	Period LXXXXXIV A.D. 336-339
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXV A.D. 339-342	Period LXXXXXV A.D. 339-342
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXVI A.D. 342-345	Period LXXXXXVI A.D. 342-345
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXVII A.D. 345-348	Period LXXXXXVII A.D. 345-348
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXVIII A.D. 348-351	Period LXXXXXVIII A.D. 348-351
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXIX A.D. 351-354	Period LXXXXXIX A.D. 351-354
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXX A.D. 354-357	Period LXXXXXX A.D. 354-357
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXI A.D. 357-360	Period LXXXXXXI A.D. 357-360
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXII A.D. 360-363	Period LXXXXXXII A.D. 360-363
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXIII A.D. 363-366	Period LXXXXXXIII A.D. 363-366
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXIV A.D. 366-369	Period LXXXXXXIV A.D. 366-369
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXV A.D. 369-372	Period LXXXXXXV A.D. 369-372
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXVI A.D. 372-375	Period LXXXXXXVI A.D. 372-375
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXVII A.D. 375-378	Period LXXXXXXVII A.D. 375-378
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXVIII A.D. 378-381	Period LXXXXXXVIII A.D. 378-381
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXIX A.D. 381-384	Period LXXXXXXIX A.D. 381-384
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXX A.D. 384-387	Period LXXXXXXX A.D. 384-387
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXI A.D. 387-390	Period LXXXXXXXI A.D. 387-390
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 390-393	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 390-393
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 393-396	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 393-396
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 396-399	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 396-399
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 399-402	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 399-402
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 402-405	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 402-405
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 405-408	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 405-408
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 408-411	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 408-411
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 411-414	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 411-414
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 414-417	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 414-417
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 417-420	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 417-420
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 420-423	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 420-423
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 423-426	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 423-426
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 426-429	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 426-429
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 429-432	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 429-432
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 432-435	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 432-435
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 435-438	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 435-438
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 438-441	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 438-441
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 441-444	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 441-444
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 444-447	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 444-447
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 447-450	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 447-450
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 450-453	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 450-453
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 453-456	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 453-456
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 456-459	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 456-459
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 459-462	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 459-462
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 462-465	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 462-465
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 465-468	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 465-468
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 468-471	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 468-471
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 471-474	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 471-474
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 474-477	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 474-477
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 477-480	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 477-480
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 480-483	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 480-483
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 483-486	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 483-486
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 486-489	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 486-489
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 489-492	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 489-492
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 492-495	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 492-495
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 495-498	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 495-498
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 498-501	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 498-501
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 501-504	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 501-504
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 504-507	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 504-507
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 507-510	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 507-510
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 510-513	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 510-513
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 513-516	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 513-516
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 516-519	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 516-519
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 519-522	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 519-522
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 522-525	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 522-525
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 525-528	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 525-528
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 528-531	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 528-531
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 531-534	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 531-534
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 534-537	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 534-537
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 537-540	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 537-540
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 540-543	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 540-543
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 543-546	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 543-546
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 546-549	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 546-549
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 549-552	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 549-552
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 552-555	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 552-555
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 555-558	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 555-558
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 558-561	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 558-561
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 561-564	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 561-564
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 564-567	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 564-567
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 567-570	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 567-570
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 570-573	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 570-573
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 573-576	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 573-576
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 576-579	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 576-579
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 579-582	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 579-582
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 582-585	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 582-585
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 585-588	Period LXXXXXXXVII A.D. 585-588
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 588-591	Period LXXXXXXXVIII A.D. 588-591
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 591-594	Period LXXXXXXXIX A.D. 591-594
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 594-597	Period LXXXXXXXX A.D. 594-597
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 597-600	Period LXXXXXXXXI A.D. 597-600
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 600-603	Period LXXXXXXXII A.D. 600-603
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 603-606	Period LXXXXXXXIII A.D. 603-606
	The New Jerusalem	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 606-609	Period LXXXXXXXIV A.D. 606-609
	The New Creation	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 609-612	Period LXXXXXXXV A.D. 609-612
	The New Heavens and Earth	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 612-615	Period LXXXXXXXVI A.D. 612-615

forms of biocartography. Since wall maps could not be scaled down, their complex linear systems were less suited to personal study than the small maps on Arnold's chart. The smaller scale meant that Arnold had to overlook many important routes (and practically obviate the Passion), but it also meant that viewers could grasp the essence of Jesus's journeys without too much difficulty.²⁴¹

The following year, Richard Hodge, a professor of education at Columbia University's Teachers College and a frequent lecturer at the Chautauqua Institution, published an atlas that expanded on the multi-map model of previous biocartographers. In the *Historical Atlas and Chronology of the Life of Jesus Christ* (1899), Hodge divided Jesus's life into nine periods spread across thirteen identical maps of Palestine that he referred to as "memory pictures" since he encouraged students to study each one until they could reproduce its specific configuration.²⁴² To facilitate the rote process, he modified Palestine, excluding from view all sites unrelated to sacred history: "Only the towns, provinces, streams and mountains that are directly involved in the history of Jesus' life are represented."²⁴³ These were radically condensed landscapes. Though Hodge referred to them as "historical," they were acutely ahistorical in that they refracted the Holy Land through a narrow biographical prism, occluding most of the land's striking features. In the bottom right corner of each map, Hodge inserted a photograph of a relief map that he and his students had constructed, an image designed to give Palestine depth and dimension. On each map, he used red lines to simulate routes, arrows to delineate narrative progression, and numbered descriptors to mark important events. Because the maps were designed to be memorized or to be used in conjunction with popular Bible harmonies, they lacked the specificity of earlier productions. On "Palestine Map 6" (fig.

34), for instance, Hodge condensed a five-month period in Jesus's life into a cartographic snapshot. The red line begins at Cana and curves north to Gennesaret; a dotted line charts a conjectural trip through Galilee; and a solid line completes the route, moving from Galilee to Jerusalem, then from Jerusalem to the Mount of Beatitudes. Along the way, Hodge consolidated various New Testament narratives in order to simplify the map and make its landscapes memorable. At positions five and six (near Chorasin and Bethsaida), the red type reads "Many miracles," an explicit contraction of biblical content. Like the six curved arrows representing the gravitation of countless "sick people" to Jesus's side, these numbers epitomized sacred history, consolidating narrative threads into single representative system. Hodge's maps lacked detail and thus compressed Jesus's life and ministry into a series of simplified networks that made them easy to study and memorize.

Such schematics were thought to be effective mnemonic devices because children could comprehend and internalize the routes without much study. But Hodge was at the forefront of an educational shift toward more tactile, interactive lessons, and he was just as interested in producing maps that were no longer limited to two dimensions. At the turn of the century, religious educators were drawn to "manual methods," as they were called, a teaching strategy designed to make children more active participants in classroom instruction. "We learn by doing," one educator explained, a process referred to as "self-activity" or "self-expression" because these lessons required children to learn by using their hands.²⁴⁴ A precursor to "show-and-tell" activities, manual methods involved children in elementary forms of manual labor in which they worked by themselves or in small groups to produce objects that could be handled, studied, shared, and saved for future use. What religious educators did was to adapt manual methods for use in lessons

aimed at biocartography. In 1898, the Methodist minister and missionary A. E. Bishop created a double-sided map titled *Palestine: Showing the Journey of Jesus* (figs. 35 and 36). To use the map, children were instructed to memorize Palestine's most important towns, drive a wire nail into spots marked by stars or dots, and wind the string from nail to nail to simulate Jesus's travels, beginning with the nail at Bethlehem. To do so, they had to study the map's back matter (where Bishop had sketched out the journey), follow the steps provided in an accompanying textbook, and pretend that they were creating a realistic representation of Jesus's life and public ministry: "In order to avoid confusion we will separate the strings by placing nine posts at both Capernaum and Jerusalem, five at Nazareth, three at Bethany, and at Bethlehem, Bethabara and Cana two each, but you must always refer to them as **one** post and imagine that your strings runs directly to the center of the large round dot."²⁴⁵ The networks produced by nails and string would lack verisimilitude—as the author noted, the small stars scattered throughout Palestine were "imaginary places leading to cities or through the country"—but Bishop assured teachers that his map would help students memorize the makeup of the Holy Land in order to place their strings correctly. He urged the young to know the region "just as you would know the location of familiar streets or homes in your own city or neighborhood."²⁴⁶ This type of familiarity would alter study habits, Bishop promised, making children intimate with the Bible's historical reality.

Spurred on by their interest in manual methods, religious educators reasoned that children who made maps were more likely to remember them because they were directly involved in the mapmaking process. As Hodge explained, "[T]he best way to learn a map is to make it. Map-gazing will accomplish neither as thorough nor as quick results."²⁴⁷

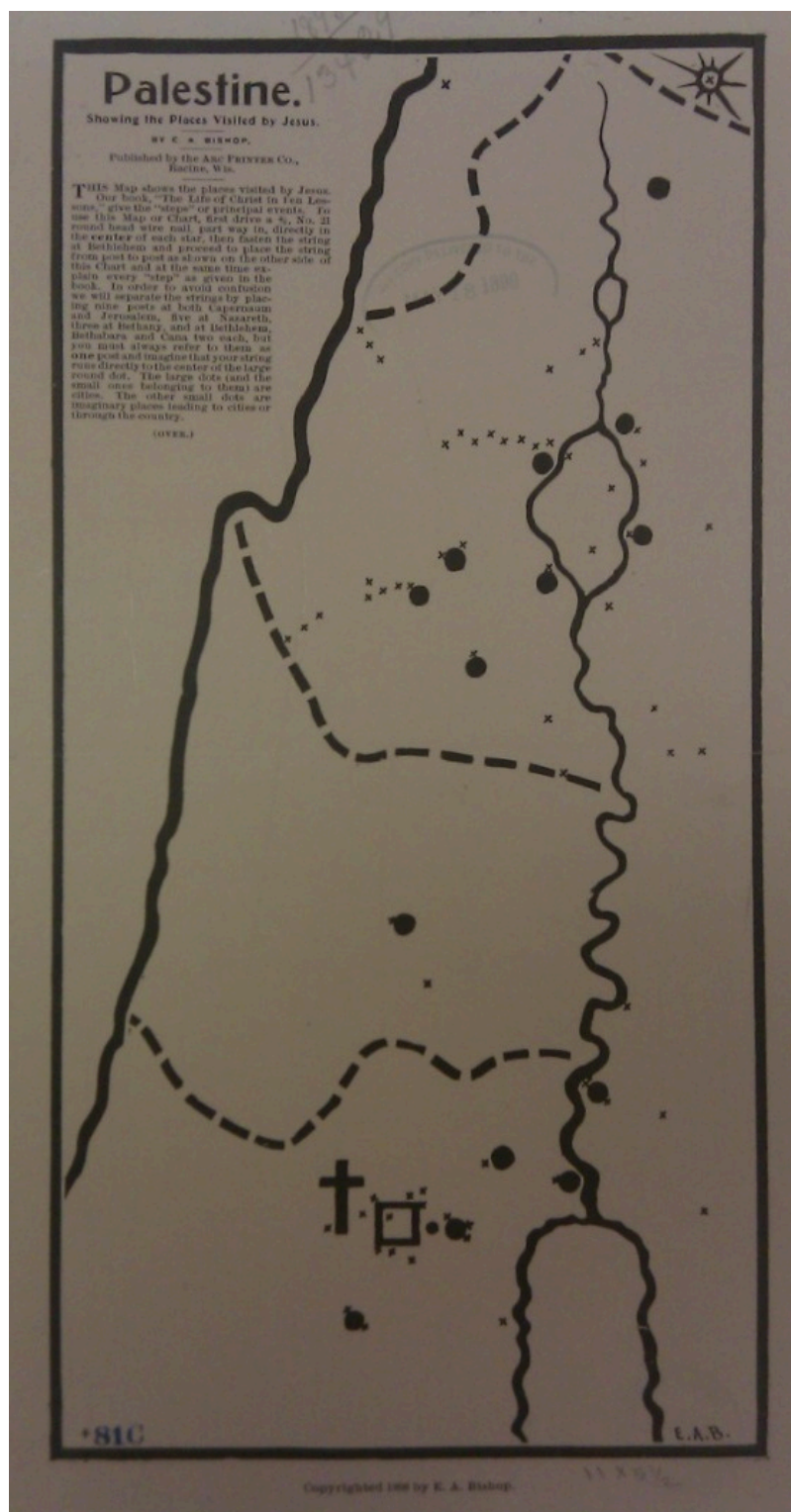


Fig. 35. E. A. Bishop, *Palestine. Showing the Places Visited by Jesus* (1898).

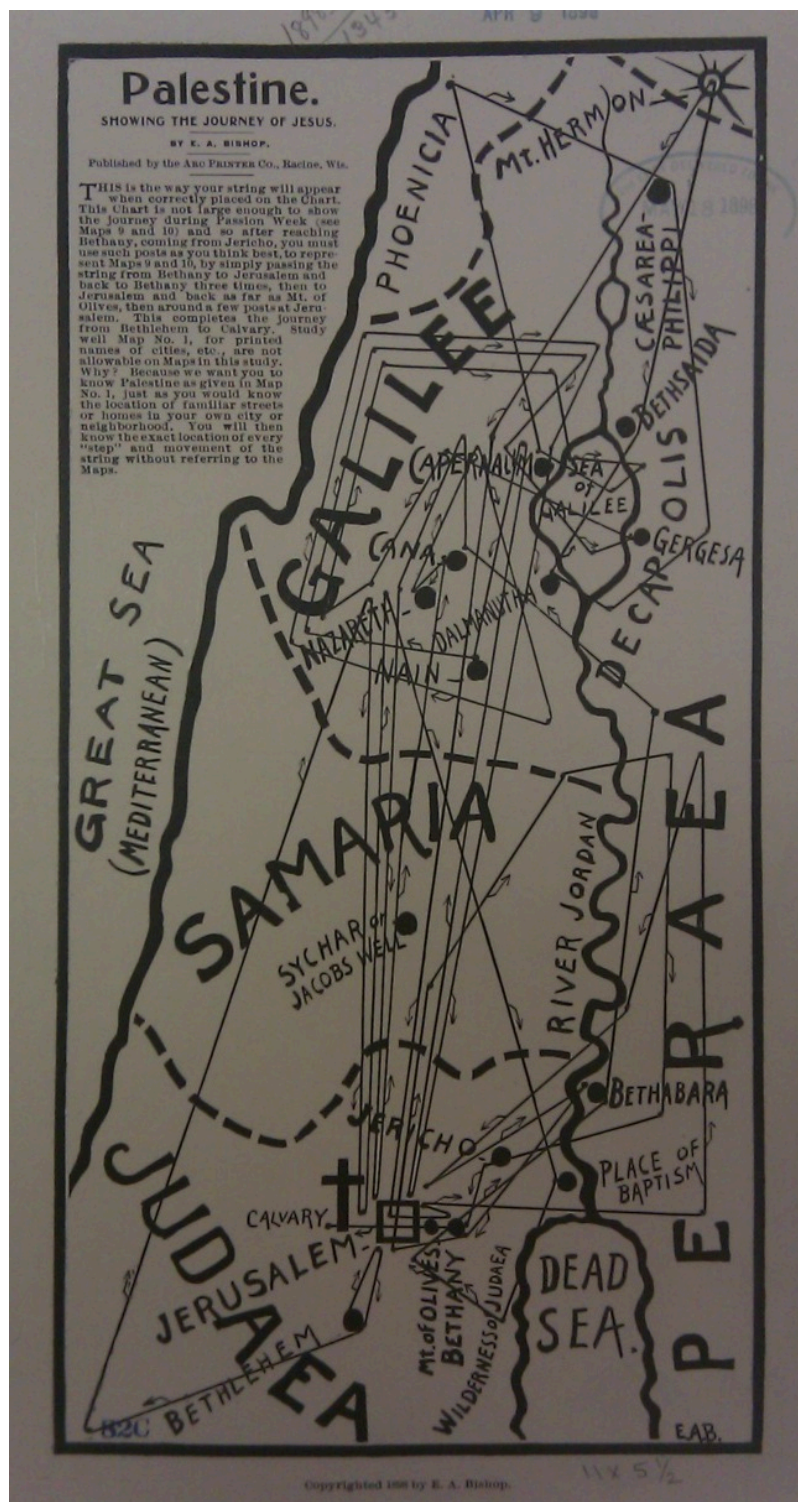
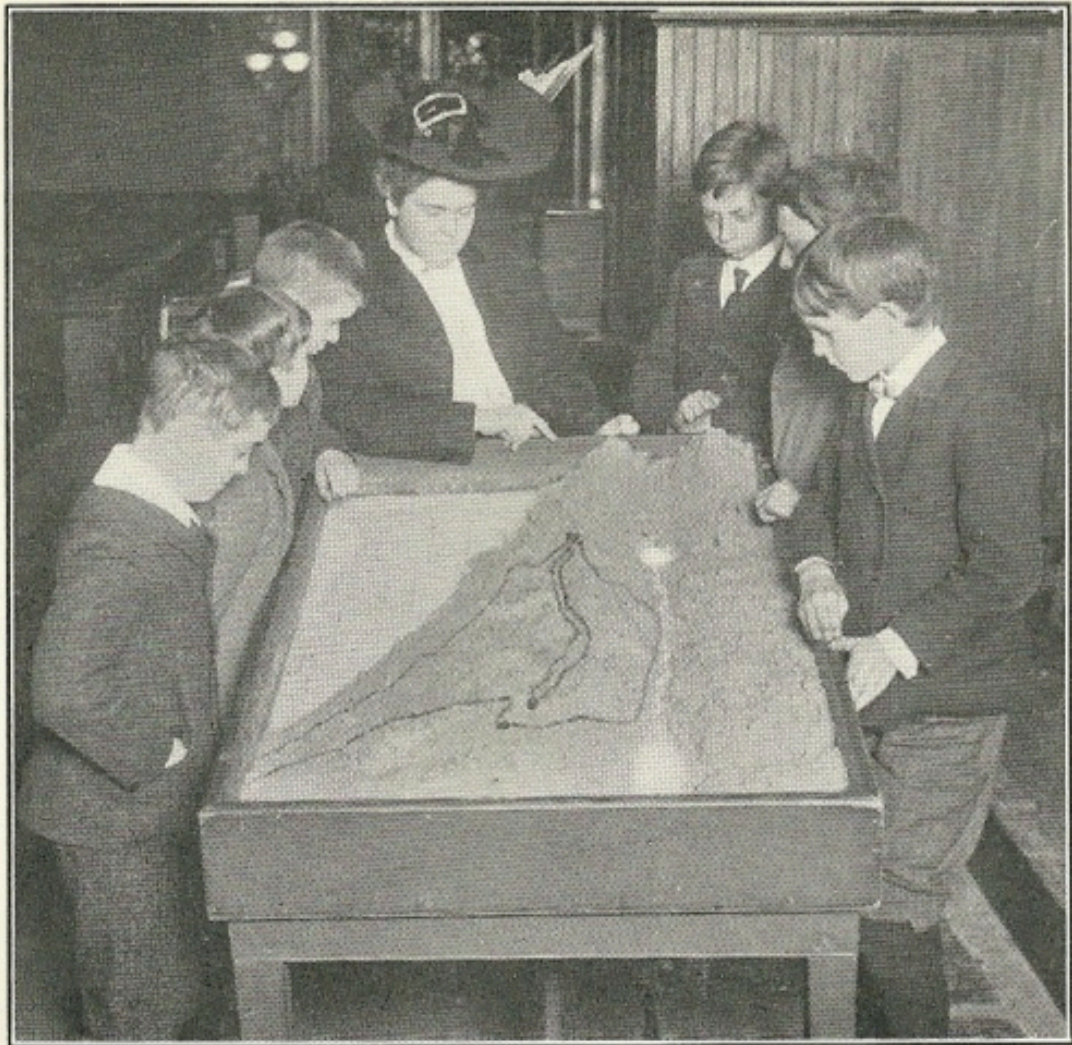


Fig. 36. A. E. Bishop, *Palestine. Showing the Journey of Jesus* (1898).

Even as teachers continued to purchase thematic maps, they looked for ways to make biocartography more realistic, wanting maps that moved beyond two dimensions. For this reason, they turned to sand tables for assistance, hoping to enliven Sunday-school lessons by teaching children how to make their own maps of Palestine. Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell had introduced sand tables into English and American common schools in the early nineteenth century, as did Freidrich Froebel in his German kindergartens. As the kindergarten system took hold in America, and as sand tables were introduced into countless classrooms, religious educators began incorporating them into Sunday-school classrooms, seeing in sand table creations limitless possibilities for religious instruction.²⁴⁸

Biocartography became three-dimensional once teachers and students began building relief maps atop sand tables, adding an even greater sense of realism to biblical history. Once built, children reenacted Bible stories across the maps using miniature handmade objects—from trees and stick figures to boats and animals—and they participated in the storytelling process by creating dramatic scripts to be used during sand table lessons. For Milton Littlefield, an officer of the Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society and a staunch proponent of manual methods, these exercises were "gateways to the mind and heart" that helped children form "a vivid mental picture" of biblical history: "By studying history with historical geography events become real and intelligible because seen in their setting and relationships."²⁴⁹ In his textbook *Hand-work in the Sunday School* (1908), Littlefield illustrated this process (fig. 37). The picture features a group of boys huddled around a sand table, looking at a string that represents the travels of Christ. The teacher does not read from the Bible; in fact, there are no books



Historical Geography

Tracing the Journeys of Jesus on a relief map

Fig. 37. From Milton Littlefield, *Hand-work in the Sunday-school* (1908).

pictured at all. The Gospels might have been consulted during the mapmaking process, but the image implies that the teacher and her students have put scripture away momentarily so as to focus on the map. Littlefield does not mention the map's creation—the manipulation of sand, the addition of water, and the construction of valleys and mountains—because he wants readers to pay close attention to the string that stands in for chapter and verse. Unlike earlier forms of biocartography, the relief map enables children to alter the linear matrix easily and as often as they pleased, replacing one string with another or layering strings on top of each other to create increasingly complex mosaics. The strings hew to the map's contoured surface, linking the dotted cities to each other. For Hodge, Littlefield, and so many others, relief maps brought the Bible to life in ways that two-dimensional maps could not. They evoked a realism that scripture lacked in the service of greater biblical literacy. What religious educators wanted was for children to read scripture equipped with three-dimensional knowledge of the Holy Land and to experience thereafter a deeper, more palpable interest in the Bible's stories.

Biocartography appealed to religious educators because maps translated the Bible into a more accessible language. It made Bible stories more tangible and Sunday-school lessons more enjoyable, a boon for educators who had struggled to interest students in Bible study. Like the Bible, the life of Jesus seemed daunting, its chronology fragmented, its order uncertain. If transferred to a map, it became instead an intelligible, visual reflection of historical reality. This method of instruction appealed to educators since maps compressed scripture into a single orderly plot. The popularity of biocartography

reflected its utility and pointed to the growth of a specifically American form of "geopieté," what Burke Long refers to as "that curious mix of romantic imagination, historical rectitude, and attachment to a physical place."²⁵⁰ The young were taught to prize biblical history, and they, in turn, transmitted that appreciation to their own children. As the nineteenth century progressed, religious instructors did not jettison *sola scriptura*. They simply enlarged its scope to include texts that illustrated scripture (albeit maintaining the Bible's preeminence).

However, biocartography failed to capture the life of Jesus in its entirety because mapmakers and educators alike were not quite sure what the entirety of that life looked like. These maps allowed readers to trace the travels of Jesus and to follow a linear mosaic that detailed his life on earth, yet they provided little to no information about his childhood and adolescence. This was unfortunate because, as many educators believed, children learned best from other children, which meant that the childhood of Jesus would be a valued aid to religious instruction if it could be recovered with some accuracy. While no foolproof solution presented itself, biblical historiography emerged as a field of inquiry that could discover more about Jesus's childhood by contextualizing first-century childhood in general. As we will see in Chapter 3, religious educators created a generic template of ancient Jewish childhood, superimposed that childhood onto the young Jesus, and then encouraged their students to see in their aesthetic collage an accurate representation of historical reality. Perhaps not surprisingly, they all too often struggled with the "double difficulty" that had once vexed John Nevin and found themselves unwittingly drawn into a paradoxical position for convenience sake. They were invested in creating a realistic Christ child, but they were even more concerned with making that

child as recognizable, relevant, and imitable as possible, which meant that they needed the life of the historical Jesus to resemble the lives of their students (at least to some degree) if the latter were to follow in his steps. What resulted was an uneven body of biblical historiography, informed hypothesis, reasonable inference, well-meaning assumption, reluctant guesswork, and personal bias. In other words, when Americans went in search of the Christ child, they tended to return with versions of Christ that mirrored their own ideas about the value and sanctity of childhood.

¹³⁸ Sarah Trimmer, "Examination of Books for Children," *The Guardian of Education*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (August 1802), 263-264. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 250-251.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁴¹ In the preface to *Sacred History*, Trimmer explained: "It is impossible to compose any *abridgement* of the Scripture, that can recompense the loss of that delightful entertainment which the *historical parts* of it, in the very words of the sacred writers, afford to young minds; but even in those, they have great need of a guide, as difficulties so frequently occur...." See *Sacred History: Selected from the Scriptures, with Annotations and Reflections, Suited to the Comprehension of Young Minds*, Vol. 1 (London: J. Dodsley, 1782), n.p.

¹⁴² Several contemporary reviewers agreed with Trimmer. A writer for the *Annual Review and History of Literature* thought that Scolfield's sentiments were not "founded on an accurate and extensive observation" of the literary marketplace. A reviewer for the *Monthly Mirror* was much more scathing: "It is a vulgar saying, that the devil can quote scripture to answer his purpose. And Mr. Scolfield can, it seems, form 'Bible stories' to answer his. This work should be consigned to oblivion." See "Bible Stories," *The Annual Review and History of Literature*, ed. Arthur Aikin (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1802), 588; "Bible Stories," *The Monthly Mirror* (London: J. Wright, 1804), 35. Unfortunately for those who shared Trimmer's opinion of the book, *Bible Stories* was a steady seller between 1802 and 1814. In America, it was imported and pirated by printers in New York, Delaware, and Pennsylvania who had few abridged Bibles to offer American readers.

¹⁴³ William Godwin, *Bible Stories. Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges, and Kings: Extracted from Their Original Historians* (Philadelphia: Thomas and William Bradford, 1803), iv.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁴⁶ Trimmer, 264.

¹⁴⁷ Ruth Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), xii.

¹⁴⁸ Marah Gubar, "On Not Defining Children's Literature," *PMLA*: 126.1 (Jan. 2011), 209. See also Roderick McGillis, "What Is Children's Literature?" *Children's Literature* (2009), 252-262.

¹⁴⁹ See Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

¹⁵⁰ "Report," *The Eleventh Annual Report of the American Sunday-School Union* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1845), 17.

¹⁵¹ *True Stories Related* (New York: S. Wood, 1812), 3-4.

¹⁵² [John Newberry], *The Holy Bible Abridged* (Boston: William Norman, 1802), n.p.

¹⁵³ T. H. Gallaudet, *The Youth's Book on Natural Theology* (New York: American Tract Society, 1832), 7.

¹⁵⁴ *Infancy* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1814), n.p.; "Feed My Lambs," *The Universalist and Ladies' Repository*, Vol. 8, No. 9 (February 1840), 322.

¹⁵⁵ As Gregory Jackson notes, these ideas were not confined solely to children: "[A]ll new Christians, regardless of age, were considered 'babes in Christ' (1 Corinthians 3:1), reflecting the Pauline trope of rebirth and regeneration in Christ's death." See Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness*, 20.

¹⁵⁶ *The Seventeenth Annual Report of the American Sunday-School Union* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1841), 27-28.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵⁸ See David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ *Annual Report*, 25, 39.

¹⁶⁰ Noll, *America's God*, 382.

¹⁶¹ For a few examples that were commonly cited by Protestant ministers, see Proverbs 3:5-6, Luke 18:17, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 1 Corinthians 2:1-4, and 1 Corinthians 2:13-14.

¹⁶² In his analysis of homiletic reading practices, Gregory Jackson defines living-word theology as follows: "According to this doctrine, the Spirit inhabits the word of God, preserving it against corruption through oral transmission and written translation and unfolding its meaning in proportion to the supplicant's understanding, his or her reservoir of knowledge—both received and experiential" (97). For more on the subject, see Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness*, 96-99.

¹⁶³ For a summary of these developments, see Dorothy Ross, "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *The American Historical Review* 89.4 (Oct. 1984), 909-928. For relevant secondary sources, see Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956) and *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation: The Individual, the Nation, and the Continent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and Daniel Walker Howe, *Making of the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁶⁴ Ross, 910.

¹⁶⁵ Jehlen, 20.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter 5 of Michael J. Lee, *The Erosion of Biblical Certainty: Battles over Authority and Interpretation in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁶⁷ "Critical Notices," *The American Biblical Repository*, No. XXIX (Jan. 1838), 245. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁸ Gorham Abbott, ed., "Introductory Remarks," *Scripture Natural History* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands & Co., 1833), 28.

¹⁶⁹ *Hebrew Customs; or The Missionary's Return* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1834), 6-8.

¹⁷⁰ Trimmer, *An Essay on Christian Education* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1812), 254.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 254-255.

¹⁷² Thaddeus Harris, *The Natural History of the Bible* (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1793), v.

¹⁷³ Gorham Abbott, ed., "Preface," *Scripture Natural History* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands & Co., 1833), 7.

¹⁷⁴ More than twenty such books appeared between 1827 and 1861. Some examples include: Henry Althaus's *Scripture Natural History of Bird, Insects, &c.* (1827), Joseph Martin's *Sacred Zoology* (1828), William Carpenter's *Scripture Natural History* (1833), Francis Ewing's *Bible Natural History* (1835), Harriet Cook's *The Scripture Alphabet of Animals* (1842), Daniel Kidder's *The Plants and Trees of Scripture* (1850), Henry Harbaugh's *The Birds of the Bible* (1854), William Bicknell's *Natural History of the Sacred Scriptures* (1855), and Henry Osborn's *Plants of the Holy Land, with Their Fruits and Flowers* (1861).

¹⁷⁵ Of course, these images were produced by artists, not scientists. As such, they regularly distorted the Holy Land and introduced children to scenes that were more romantic than realistic. In *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain noticed the disjunction between the popular images of Palestine and the land's actual appearance, between the "monstrous bunch" of grapes depicted in children's picture books and the bunches that are "not as large as those in the pictures." Twain concluded, "I must studiously and faithfully unlearn a great many things I have somehow absorbed concerning Palestine. I must begin a system of reduction. Like my grapes which the spies bore out of the Promised Land, I have got every thing in Palestine on too large a scale." See Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 324, 359.

¹⁷⁶ Francis Ewing, *Bible Natural History* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1835), 4.

¹⁷⁷ When it came to natural theology, the devout consistently turned to Psalm 19:1-3 for biblical justification: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

¹⁷⁸ Henry Althaus, *Scripture Natural History of Quadrupeds* (Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1828), 12-13.

¹⁷⁹ Margaret Coxe, *Conversations on the Botany of the Scriptures* (New York: General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School, [1837?]), 18.

¹⁸⁰ Henry Harbaugh, *The Birds of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1854), 21, 30. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸¹ According to Jackson, "second sight" was the "ability to see the immutable through empirical references in daily life," a "double vision" that "weakened the modern sense of anachronism, eliding the sense of temporality as a fixed, calendrical progression, and restoring a sense of layered sacramental or eschatological time." See Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness*, 218, 228.

¹⁸² Watts, 21.

¹⁸³ Harbaugh, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Jonathan Fisher, *Scripture Animals, or Natural History of the Living Creatures Named in the Bible, Written Especially for Youth* (Portland: William Hyde), iv.

¹⁸⁵ Such associations were relatively common. See Henry Althans, *Scripture Natural History of Quadrupeds* (Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1828), 11, 30, 58-59; Jonathan Fisher, *Scripture Animals, or Natural History of the Living Creatures Named in the Bible, Written Especially for Youth* (Portland: William Hyde, 1834), 162; Neville Johnson, *Bible Quadrupeds; The Natural History of the Animals Mentioned in Scripture* (New York: Robert Sears, 1842), 23; and Harriet Cook's *The Scripture Alphabet of Animals* (New York: American Tract Society, 1842), 50-51, 67-68.

¹⁸⁶ See Althans, *Scripture Natural History of Quadrupeds*, 101; Fisher, *Scripture Animals*, 162; Johnson, *Bible Quadrupeds*, 69; Cook, *Scripture Alphabet of Animals*, 85, 89.

¹⁸⁷ T. H. Gallaudet, *The Youth's Book on Natural Theology* (New York: American Tract Society, 1832), 230.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 229. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸⁹ John Nevin, *A Summary of Biblical Antiquities* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1829), vi.

¹⁹⁰ Nevin, vi-vii.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, vii.

¹⁹² Gorham Abbott, ed., "Introductory Remarks," *Scripture Natural History* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands & Co., 1833), 28. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁹⁴ Nevin, viii.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Fredrick Packard, *The Teacher Taught* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1839), 215.

¹⁹⁷ Lydia Maria Child, *The Mother's Book* (Boston: Carter, Hendee and Babcock, 1831), vii.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

²⁰¹ Stephen Hall, *Mapping the Next Millennium: The Discovery of New Geographies* (New York: Random House, 1992), 15; Denis Wood and John Fels, "Designs on Signs/Myth and Meaning in Maps," *Cartographica* 23, no. 3 (Autumn 1986), 65; William Boelhower, "Inventing America: A Model of Cartographic Semiosis," *Word & Image* 4, no. 2 (April-June 1988), 479. Emphasis in original.

²⁰² In *How to Lie with Maps*, Mark Monmonier suggests that those who trust in the accuracy of maps fall victim to a "widespread naïveté": "[T]hey understand the need to distort geometry and suppress features, and they believe the cartographer really does know where to draw the line, figuratively as well as literally.... Map users seldom, if ever, question these authorities, and they often fail to appreciate the map's power as a tool of deliberate falsification or subtle propaganda." See Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-2.

²⁰³ Lant Carpenter, *An Introduction to the Geography of the New Testament* (Cambridge: William Hilliard, 1811), vii-viii.

²⁰⁴ Martin Brückner, "Literacy for Empire: The ABCs of Geography and the Rule of Territoriality in Early-Nineteenth-Century America," *Nineteenth-Century Geographies: The Transformation of Space from the Victorian Age to the American Century*, eds. Helena Michie and Ronald R. Thomas (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 175. See also Susan Schulten, *Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

²⁰⁵ As Daniel Calhoun notes, Morse regarded verbalism as "the indispensable means of communication -- and this at a time when Isaac Watts had praised the eye, and the most ordinary textbook reformers insisted on the primacy of maps for teaching geography" (7). In his analysis of antebellum geoliteracy, Brückner includes a third model: the Lancasterian monitorial system. For a survey of these competing schools of thought, see Brückner's "Literacy for Empire," 175-177 and Chapter 7 of *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

²⁰⁶ William Woodbridge, "Preface by the Author," *A System of Universal Geography, on the Principles of Comparison and Classification* (Hartford, CT: Oliver D. Cooke & Sons, 1824), viii.

²⁰⁷ In *Willard's Historic Guide*, Emma Willard explained to her readers how the constraints of hard verbalism in the early nineteenth century had made geographic study problematic: "'When, in 1814, I commenced in Middlebury, Vermont, the school which by enlargement and removal became, in 1821, the Troy Female Seminary, the subjects of Geography and History were difficult of instruction; the books of Geography being closely confined to the order of place, and those of History, as closely to that of time; by which much repetition was made necessary, and comprehensive views of topics, by comparison and classification, were debarred. In Geography, the eye was not made the sole, or the chief medium of teaching the signs of external things, as the forms, proportion, and situation of countries, rivers, &., for though maps existed, yet they were not required to be used; but the boundary was learned by the words of the book, and the latitude by numbers there set down -- as historical dates are now commonly learned. Numbers thus represented, are hard to acquire, difficult to remember, and, standing by themselves, of little value when remembered.'" See Schulten, 19.

²⁰⁸ "Report," *The Seventh Annual Report of the American Sunday School Union* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1831), 22. Emphasis in original.

²⁰⁹ Works on the Geography of Palestine," *The Spirit of the Pilgrims*, 1, no. 11 (November 1828), 592. In today's currency, the *Map of Palestine* would cost roughly \$25.

²¹⁰ Jarvis Gregg, *Selumiel, or A Visit to Jerusalem* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1833), 9-10.

²¹¹ Ibid., 12.

²¹² Ibid., 10.

²¹³ J. B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," *Cartographica* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1989), 8.

²¹⁴ In the preface to his popular book *Scripture Geography; or, A Companion to the Bible* (1831), Thomas Smiley summed up these sentiments: "The importance of a proper acquaintance with the geography of countries and places mentioned in the Holy Bible, must be apparent to all who have 'diligently searched the scriptures,' with a view to a thorough and proper understanding of them. It is believed that many have neglected the sacred volume, and have never attained a necessary knowledge of its contents, not because they are infidels, or that they are abandoned to vice, nor indeed that they have any specific objections, but because the Scriptures appear unintelligible" (3).

²¹⁵ Boelhower, 486; Wood and Fels, 56. According to Wood and Fels: "Most readers make it through most essays (and maps) because as they grew up through their common culture (and *into* their common culture), they learned the significance of most of the words (and map symbols). Those they don't recognize they puzzle out through context, or simply skip, or ask somebody to explain.... It is not, then, that maps don't need to be *decoded*; but that they are by and large *encoded* in signs as readily interpreted by most map readers as the simple prose into which the marks are translated on the legends themselves" (56).

²¹⁶ Gregg, 3.

²¹⁷ *Map of the City of Jerusalem* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, n.d.).

²¹⁸ Even though Wood and Fels examine a state road map—the *Official State Highway Map of North Carolina*—their arguments apply to all non-thematic maps. Looking at the legend, Wood and Fels note how the map's semiotic system does not "say" anything although its iconography points to dialogic complexity: "It doesn't say so, of course, but it is all the same. What it says is, 'North Carolina Official Highway Map / 1978-79'" (54). Regarding the purportedly "self-explanatory" material surrounding the legend, they suggest that "NO symbol *explains* itself, stands up and says, 'Hi, I'm a lock,' or 'We're marsh,' anymore than the *words* of an essay bother to explain *themselves* to the reader" (56).

²¹⁹ John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petræa, and the Holy Land* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), iv.

²²⁰ See, for example, Edward Robinson and Eli Smith's *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petræa* (1841), Karl Ball's *Plan von Jerusalem* (1843), Heinrich Kiepert's *Plan von Jerusalem* (1845), Wilhelm Krafft's *Plan von Jerusalem* (1846), John Lloyd Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petræa, and the Holy Land* (1847), and C. W. M. van de Velde's *Narrative of a Journey Through Syria and Palestine in 1851 and 1852* (1854). For an early account of Catherwood's Jerusalem panorama, see Robert Burford's *Description of a View of the City of Jerusalem* (1837). For more on the subject, see Frederick Catherwood's biographical entry in *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West* (2000), Jason and Angela Thompson's article "Between Two Lost Worlds: Frederick Catherwood" (2001), chapter eight of Alan Balfour's *Solomon's Temple: Myth, Conflict,*

and Faith (2012), and chapter seven of Peter Koch's *John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood: Pioneers of Mayan Archaeology* (2013).

²²¹ Catherwood's plan of Jerusalem," *The New-York Mirror* (8 Dec. 1838), 191.

²²² Although relatively unknown to most American readers until the 1830s, "historical-imaginary maps," as the scholar Rehad Rubin calls them, had been published in Europe since at least the sixteenth century. The most prominent example is Christian van Adrichem's *Jerusalem, et suburbia eius* (1584), an elaborate, multi-temporal map that depicted some 280 events from the life of Jesus (Rubin 324-325). The one American exception was Thomas Duffield's *A New Map of the Land of Promise and the Holy City of Jerusalem* (1823), an America reprint of a London map drawn by Cluer Dicey in 1765. As far as I can tell, few contemporaries would have heard of Duffield's map, much less seen it, since it was not advertised in any popular religious periodicals. The only extant copy can be found in the Boston Public Library. For more on these maps, see Rubin's "Timing a Sacred Space: The Diachronic Concept in Early Maps of Jerusalem."

²²³ Lyman Coleman, *An Historical Text Book and Atlas of Biblical Geography* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1854), 3.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, n.p.

²²⁵ In one prominent 1882 circular, John Heyl Vincent, a Methodist minister and co-founder of the Chautauqua Institution, called it "invaluable to Bible students" and claimed that the map "should go into every minister's study and into the home of every Sunday-school teacher." The famed Jesse Lyman Hurlbut claimed: "I find it excellently adapted for Sunday-school teachers, being accurate and systematic." And Francis Peloubet, the author of the best-selling series *Select Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons*, explained how he had "traced out the journeys of Christ on the map, and find it very instructive and helpful, giving a clear and vivid comprehension of Christ's life in Palestine." See the circular entitled "New Map of Palestine" in the back of the *Sunday School Journal for Teachers and Young People* (1882). In 1905, Stout republished the map as *Students' Map of Palestine, For Tourists of Palestine, Adult Bible Classes, and All Bible Teachers*. In 1942, a publisher in Jerusalem, citing Stout's 1905 work, published a look-alike map entitled *Pilgrim's Map of the Holy Land for Biblical Research*. Travelers can apparently still purchase this map. See Paul Widowsky's self-published book *Pilgrimage in the Holy Land: Israel* (2013), in which the author mentions buying the map while touring Jerusalem (61).

²²⁶ Despite its price, the map was advertised for several years in various religious periodicals. See "Map of Bible History," *Minutes of the Twenty-Third Session of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (58); "Map of Bible History," *The Ladies' Repository* (236); "Masonic Geography," *The Voice of Masonry* (215).

²²⁷ See "New Map of Palestine," n.p. The A. C. Shortridge & Company advertisement can be found at the back of the *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Convention of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions*.

²²⁸ Isaac Joyce, "New Map of Palestine," *Sunday School Journal for Teachers and Young People* 14, no. 12 (December 1882), n.p.

²²⁹ Stout recognized that the Gospels were not biographies per se, but he argued that these "sketches" were biographical: "The Gospels are four inspired biographical sketches of the

wonderful life of Jesus the Christ. They were written by different persons, at different times, under different circumstances, and largely for different objects. Each Gospel is so omissionsal, fragmentary, and supplementary to the others, that it is impossible to obtain a full, clear, and connected knowledge of Christ's life by studying either one of them, or, by studying any chronological combination of either two of them" (*Chronology* 5). His map, he argued, harmonized *all* of them, making a composite whole out of each separate sketch.

²³⁰ See Mark 4:35-41.

²³¹ Jerome Travis, *Interspersed Harmony of the Life and Journeys of Christ* (Lansing, MI: Beacon Publishing Company, 1892), v-vi.

²³² Schulten, 3-4.

²³³ John H. Vincent, *The Modern Sunday-School* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1887), 243. An eighteenth-century English invention, modern orreries are mechanized models of the solar system that represent the relative positions of the planets as they rotate around the sun.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 243-245.

²³⁵ Thomas Eddy, "Introduction," in John Heyl Vincent, *Little Footprints in Bible Lands* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1861), 5.

²³⁶ "Our Book Table," *Record of Christian Work* 24, no. 12 (Dec. 1905), 1023.

²³⁷ "A Chart of Christ's Journeyings," *Christian Work* 64, no. 1620 (3 March 1898), 348.

²³⁸ He might have even inspired (or been inspired by) the nine maps found in the Brethren professor Emanuel Young's *Life of Christ* (1898), considering he praised the author's use of "journey lines" in a publisher's blurb. The advertisement can be found at the back of Emanuel Young's *The New Testament History* (1900).

²³⁹ "A Chart of Christ's Journeyings," 348.

²⁴⁰ "Literary Notes," *The New York Observer* 76, no. 36 (8 Sept. 1898), 327.

²⁴¹ The small maps were, for at least one reviewer, somewhat problematic. According to the *Biblical World*, "This volume may be of some value, but the maps are thoroughly incorrect in places, not only in that they take Jesus to such places as the cities of Tyre and Sidon, but also in that they entirely neglect the roads and paths over which Jesus went" ("Literary Notes" 287).

²⁴² Richard Hodge, *Historical Atlas and Chronology of the Life of Jesus Christ* (Wytheville, VA: D. A. St. Clair Press, 1899), 1.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Milton Littlefield, "Bible Study by Manual Methods," *Work with Boys* 6, no. 3 (July 1906), 123; Hodge, "National Conference," *The Christian Register* 84, no. 41 (12 Oct. 1905), 1134.

²⁴⁵ A. E. Bishop, *Palestine: Showing the Journey of Jesus* (Racine, WI: Arc Printer Co., 1898), n.p. Bold in original.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Hodge, "The Sunday-School Curriculum: III. Manual Methods of Sunday-School Instruction," *The Biblical World* 27, no. 6 (June 1906), 420.

²⁴⁸ As Barbara Beatty notes, the first Froebelian kindergarten opened in 1856 in Watertown, Wisconsin, but the kindergarten movement did not expand into nationwide public school systems until the 1870s. See Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The*

Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

²⁴⁹ Littlefield, "Bible Study," 124.

²⁵⁰ Burke Long, *Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1-2.

Chapter 3

"And a Little Child Shall Lead Them": The Childhood of Jesus, the Protestant Imagination, and the *Imitatio Christi Infanti*

What was His manner of life during those thirty years? It is a question which the Christian cannot help asking in deep reverence, and with yearning love; but the words in which the Gospels answer it are very calm and very few.

—Frederic Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1883)

The ideal Bible classes have the old Bible stories applied to our own lives and times.... Leave the Bible as it is and to the average boy it is just a story. Bring it down to date and it becomes real life.

—"A Boy's Idea of Bible Study," *Association Boys* (1908)

In December 1852, William Newell, the Unitarian minister of the First Parish in Cambridge, Massachusetts, delivered a children's sermon titled "Christmas Address to the Children of the Parish." He recounted the history of Christmas and suggested that his young listeners look to Jesus's life for examples of practical piety. "I say you will best honor Christ by making yourselves like him," he explained. Encouraging children to read the New Testament for themselves—for Newell, "[e]very part" was "instructive or may be made so to the youngest of you here"—he turned to Christ's childhood: "I supposed that the present occasion would naturally lead your thoughts back to his childhood and

youth, you would like to know what he was then, and to find in the record of his early years lessons that come home directly to yourselves."²⁵¹ Unfortunately, as Newell explained, the Bible said very little about Jesus's childhood and adolescence; it largely ignored those years even as it shed "just light enough to long for more." He recalled his own childish longings, explaining that he had once ardently wished to know more about the Christ child. He believed that the "mind's eye" could partially envision the young Jesus, but he refused to test that mental faculty. Instead, he encouraged his listeners to pattern their lives after Christ's even as he admitted that they were unable to do so fully due to their age and immaturity: "What he was, you, as his disciples, must aim as far as possible to be."²⁵² If children wanted to live godly lives, they would have to extrapolate moral and spiritual principles fit for childhood from Jesus's adult years because Newell and his counterparts were unwilling to speculate further.

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, Protestant educators paid little heed to the Christ child except as he figured in the Gospels. Even though they were willing to look beyond the Bible to books that shed light on biblical history—from picture books to natural histories to Sunday-school wall maps—they refused to speculate about Jesus's childhood because that involved hypothesis and guesswork, an unorthodox, if not illicit, circumvention of the Word of God. But as the century progressed, they grew increasingly comfortable with books that explored the sociocultural realities of first-century Palestine, and they began to trust that biblical historiography would give them insight into what scripture did and did not relate. In doing so, they tested the limits of historical probability in ways that earlier generations had not in order to make their lessons entertaining, instructive, and relevant. Concerned that the "sense of unreality clinging about Bible

characters and events" might deter children from studying scripture, as the famed educator William Byron Forbush suggested, they looked for ways to personalize Jesus for those who might otherwise avoid Bible study.²⁵³ Although they lacked evidence and certainty, they encouraged children to turn their attention to the Christ child so as to learn what a Christ-like childhood looked like. "He was the pattern Child," explained Alexander Macleod, a Presbyterian minister who often began Sunday services with children's sermons. "Do you want to know what kind of child God wishes you to be? I answer: He wishes you to become like Jesus—like the *Child* Jesus."²⁵⁴

Like their colonial counterparts—who were thought to be empty vessels and easily malleable—nineteenth-century children were believed to be in a "plastic state," as William James called it, and needed molding before they became "walking bundles of habits."²⁵⁵ According to A. H. McKinney, a superintendent of New York's Sunday-School Association, if the Christ child were presented in "concrete form," his life would serve as a perfect mold for those whose plasticity had not yet hardened.²⁵⁶ From the 1870s onward, educators began to recover, adapt, invent, and circulate stories about the young Jesus—through genres as varied as children's sermons, biographies, storybook bibles, histories, novels, short stories, and Sunday-school periodicals—because they believed the children would benefit from a savior who looked and acted like a model child. Many were adherents to sola scriptura and recognized that theirs was an unorthodox, if not impossible, task since the Gospels said little about the subject, but they were also convinced that biblical historiography had provided enough material to produce an accurate outline of Christ's childhood so as to mold students in that image.

In many ways, educators interested in recuperating Jesus's early years struggled with some of the same problems that had vexed mapmakers. They wanted their narratives to be as realistic as possible, but they did not have enough information at their disposal. There was a twofold dilemma. On the one hand, they were quick to condemn apocryphal stories about the Christ child as Catholic inventions and were concerned that Protestant children might take too great an interest in such fables. Even though they were willing to push the boundaries of *sola scriptura*—looking to biblical historiography for information not found in the Bible—they were worried that children might mistake fiction for fact and place too much trust in extra-biblical stories. On the other hand, the gaps in the Gospels frustrated those who wanted a coherent, uninterrupted narrative, yet they were tantalizing for this very reason. As interest in the life of Christ increased exponentially in the latter half of the nineteenth century—a period that witnessed the publication of at least 300 biographies of Jesus for young and old alike—religious educators were drawn to Jesus's unknown years and fascinated by what might have occurred as the Christ child grew into adulthood. Even as they denounced Catholic myth, they unwittingly invented their own apocryphal stories, trusting in empirical historiography to keep them free of Catholic superstition.

Religious educators who were otherwise keen on the study of biblical history were not interested in the childhood of Jesus for history's sake. They wanted to produce a coherent record of Christ's early years, but they were much more concerned with helping American children recognize, appreciate, sympathize with, and model their lives after the young Jesus. Adults had long trusted that children learned best from other children, and they reasoned that the most effective way to instill moral and spiritual principles in young

readers was to introduce them to stories in which children modeled good and bad behavior. The problem with the Bible was that there were so few child protagonists in it. Some stories introduced children only to parse over their childhoods. Many others featured children in minor subordinate roles. The child often functioned as an object of adult concern or served as a metaphor for innocence, helplessness, intransigence, and rebellion, but the ancient writers were mostly uninterested in recounting the lives of children with any detail. Since educators had a scant supply of Bible stories featuring children, they had to draw most of their spiritual lessons from passages that said little to nothing about childhood. When, for instance, they encouraged children to follow Christ's example, they had to collect relevant principles from Jesus's adulthood and translate them into practical advice that children could execute. This meant that the *imitatio Christi*—what Gregory Jackson refers to as a process "centered around meditation on, identification with, and imitation of the life of Christ"—was often an adult enterprise since children were hard pressed to identify with a man whose life differed so much from their own.²⁵⁷ Of course, religious educators were quick to suggest otherwise, confident that all Christians could practice the *imitatio Christi* in some form or fashion, but they were also convinced that children benefited most from role models whom they could sympathize with and emulate. They hoped to produce not merely an *imitatio Christi* but an *imitatio Christi infanti*. For them, it was easier for children to meditate on, identify with, and imitate the young Jesus because he was, in the form of a child, more readily imitable.

These attempts to personalize the young Jesus required careful handling, and even then, religious educators were often pulled in contradictory directions. First, they thought

that their methods might backfire if they veered too far from scripture. Without God's Word to guide them, they risked distorting the Bible and creating false Christs. They trusted that biblical historiography provided answers to their questions and claimed that their narratives were historically probable; their efforts, however, were admittedly dependent on assumption and invention given the Bible's reticence on the subject. Second, even as educators sought out historically accurate information, they were concerned that children might not sympathize with and emulate the Christ child because his life was so different from theirs. What they aimed to do was to minimize the apparent discrepancies so as to help children see in the young Jesus a representative figure of Christian perfection.

With this in mind, religious educators mapped American cultural norms onto the Christ child even as they whitewashed instances of cultural otherness that could potentially interrupt the *imitatio Christi infanti*. They wanted to reproduce a realistic portrait of first-century childhood, but they were also adamant that that portrait serve a singular purpose. This resulted in a certain tension between historical accuracy and instructional utility as religious educators sought to navigate between the two poles without sacrificing too much of one in service of the other. Along the way, they took certain liberties with sacred history, inventing a childhood for Jesus that in many ways mirrored that of their own students. Because of these contradictions, the Christ child sheds light on the morphology of religious instruction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as the educational strategies that were developed to bring the Bible to life and to teach children what it meant to be Christ-like.

This chapter traces the emergence of the Christ child in American devotional culture—from the theological shifts that led to his reappraisal and popularity to the cultural concerns that he brought to the forefront—in order to explore the ways that religious educators attempted to instill in children a lasting appreciation for scripture and an abiding faith in Christ. In order to "make the Bible real to the child-mind," as a reviewer for the *Hartford Seminary Record* put it, they introduced their students to a child who modeled perfect Christian discipleship and who served as both a timeless figure of Christian perfection and an exemplar of the nation's evolving moral and spiritual standards.²⁵⁸ Because childhood is, as numerous scholars have suggested, "not only a biological fact but a cultural construct," the many iterations of the Christ child shed on the changing shape of biblical historiography and the evolution of religious instruction in Protestant homes and classrooms.²⁵⁹

The Apocryphal Jesus and the Bible's "Blank" Years

In *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), Mark Twain invokes the figure of the Christ child to parody the exuberance found in so many nineteenth-century Holy Land narratives. Arriving in Nazareth with a group of pious American tourists, he writes that "the town has an air about it of being precisely as Jesus left it, and one finds himself saying, *all the time*, 'The boy Jesus has stood in this doorway—has played in that street—has touched these stones with his hands—has rambled over these chalky hills.'"²⁶⁰ Twain caricatures Orientalist depictions of Palestine, but he also notes the enthusiasm with which these unnamed tourists project biblical history onto Nazareth's environs. For these travelers, the past intrudes upon the present, bringing with it the specters of sacred

history. Like the children of *Selumiel*, who were taught to superimpose biblical history onto their maps, these tourists project the Christ child everywhere they look. Because the Bible provided very little information about the young Jesus, they can imagine freely the life he might have led and thereby visualize him in every house and around every corner.

"This" doorway, "that" street, "these" stones and hills—the deictic demonstrative pronouns point to the ease with which Twain's innocents revel in imagined, intimate encounters with the Christ child. The distance between the nineteenth century and the first recedes as the travelers stroll through Nazareth because, at each point along the way, they trust that they have come into contact with places and things sanctified by Jesus's presence. These exploits amuse Twain, but they also reinforce his belief that the childhood of Jesus is a subject of interest:

Whoever shall write the Boyhood of Jesus ingeniously, will make a book which will possess a vivid interest for young and old alike. I judge so from the greater interest we found in Nazareth than any of our speculations upon Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee gave rise to. It was not possible, standing by the Sea of Galilee, to frame more than a vague, far-away idea of the majestic Personage who walked upon the crested waves as if they had been solid earth, and who touched the dead and they rose up and spoke.²⁶¹

Since the "majestic" Jesus is more God than man, he eludes the travelers and remains a "vague, far-away idea," not a flesh and blood fact. For the tourists, the Sea of Galilee resists demonstrative pronouns; it is "not possible" to project their Christic fantasies onto its surface because the travelers can neither fully humanize Jesus nor follow in his footsteps (because he walked on water). For Twain, he is too fluid an abstraction, a ductile figure that never quite materializes despite the tourists' best efforts. Not so the Christ child. He seems to beckon from every corner of Nazareth, embedded in both the man-made and natural features of the land itself. As Twain notes, the travelers are

interested in the young Jesus because they *cannot* read about him in the Bible. In the minds of the tourists, the Christ child can roam freely because there is no sacred writ to tell them otherwise or to restrain their flights of fancy.

Twain quotes several passages from a "quaint volume of rejected gospels" in order to demonstrate that the Christ child has lasting appeal. The book he cites, William Hone's *Apocryphal New Testament*, had been published in London in 1820 and had gone through at least fourteen American editions and re-printings by 1870. The "Infancy Gospel of Thomas," as it came to be called, portrayed Jesus as a volatile young boy who used his miraculous powers for both private pleasure and public spectacle. Hone irritated contemporary readers by making the Infancy Gospel scripture-like, mimicking the Bible's typography and dividing the apocryphal books into chapter and verse (fig. 38).²⁶² His book was by turns attacked and dismissed by devout readers on both sides of the Atlantic, yet it remained popular well into the twentieth century as Americans pored over Jesus's apocryphal childhood, if only to disavow it. Such stories did not cause much anxiety among religious educators—they were considered too preposterous to be threatening, too comic to be taken seriously—but the book's commercial success meant that these narratives continued to circulate.

The ease with which American readers were both drawn to and entertained by the apocryphal Christ child can be seen in Lew Wallace's novella *The Boyhood of Christ* (1889), wherein the author ironically instructed readers to dispense altogether with the apocryphal stories even as he dwelt on the excitement generated by them for more than one quarter of the text. On a wintry Christmas Eve, Uncle Midas is asked by his

Jesus makes

I. INFANCY.

clay birds,

infant, the Lord Jesus, to play at a proper season with other children ; and when they went forth, they sat down, and the Lord Jesus with them.

5 Then Judas, who was possessed, came and sat down at the right hand of Jesus ;

6 When Satan was acting upon him as usual, he went about to bite the Lord Jesus,

7 And because he could not do it, he struck Jesus on his right side, so that he cried out,

8 And in the same moment Satan went out of the boy, and ran away like a mad dog.

9 This same boy who struck Jesus, and out of whom Satan went in the form of a dog, was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him to the Jews.

10 And that same side, on which Judas struck him, the Jews pierced with a spear.

CHAP. XV. ✓

1 *Jesus and other boys play together, and make clay figures of animals. 4 Jesus causes them to walk, 6 also makes clay and birds, which he causes to fly, eat and drink. 7 The children's parents alarmed, and take Jesus for a sorcerer. 8 He goes to a dyer's shop, and throws all the cloths into the furnace, and works a miracle there-with. 15 Whereupon the Jews praise God.*

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AND when the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys his companions about the same age,

2 Who, when they were at play, made clay into several shapes, namely, asses, oxen, birds, and other figures.

3 Each boasting of his work, and endeavouring to excel the rest.

4 Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, I will command those figures which I have made to walk.

5 And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return, they returned.

6 He had also made the figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly, and when he commanded to stand still, did stand still ; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink.

7 When at length the boys went away, and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them, Take heed, children, for the future of his company, for he is a sorcerer ; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him.

8 ¶ On a certain day also, when the Lord Jesus was playing with the boys, and running about, he passed by a dyer's shop, whose name was Salem ;

Fig. 38. From William Hone, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1820)

young nieces and nephews to tell them about Jesus's childhood. One of the boys mentions that he has "somewhere heard anecdotes of his infancy, if not his boyhood," and Midas pulls out a copy of Hone's book and recounts for them the life of the apocryphal Jesus—from the holy family's adventures in Egypt to the child's supernatural precocity. Listening to their uncle's story, the girls openly laugh at the book's absurdities while the boys refer to the stories as "awful." The frequent interruptions punctuate Midas's narrative—staged reminders that American readers should, like Wallace's characters, treat the Infancy Gospel as ridiculous and untrustworthy—yet these scenes also exemplify the seductive appeal of the apocryphal Christ child. As the tale continues, a young neighbor runs into the room to announce the start of Christmas festivities, but he is immediately drawn to the story and joins those seated before Midas, forgoing his errand. The storyteller then reads about how the young Jesus once scared off a band of highway robbers, at which the young people "clapped their hands, and pressed Uncle Midas to proceed." The next story, which told how a devil fled from Christ's presence, results in so much excitement that "it was difficult to suppress it." The tales that follow lead to even more laughter and levity. As Midas concludes his stories, he explains, "Enough! The book has a place on my shelf along with other religious literary curiosities, such as the Koran and the Mormon Bible. I do not read any of them now. They are only useful as instruments for the measurement of the capacity of faith." But Midas claims that he no longer reads the Infancy Gospel only *after* he has read it at length to his nieces and nephews. The book actually plays an important role in Midas's educational method. It entertains the children, but it also cultivates in them an interest in true tales of biblical history and a keen desire to see the Christ child precisely "as he was."²⁶³

The Infancy Gospel did not polarize nineteenth-century audiences as Hone might have hoped, given his penchant for parody and jest (many Protestants simply shrugged the book off as an amusing work of fiction), yet its cultural reception made manifest a latent yearning among Protestant readers for works that bridged the "chasms of history," as the German theologian August Neander once called them.²⁶⁴ For some Christians, the scant historical record served as reassuring evidence of scripture's inspiration. These believers often cited two reasons for such surety. First, the Bible was said to provide the devout with all that they needed to live pious, godly lives. According to the Philadelphia clergyman John Cumming, "If we have God's great word vouched to be sufficient—*a fortiori* sufficient because it has the evangelists and apostles, added to Moses and the prophets, then we need nothing more; we must ask for nothing more, we must look for nothing more."²⁶⁵ According to Cumming, the desire for more scripture, though understandable, had to be suppressed since it implied a lack of faith in the adequacy of God's revelation. Had Christians needed to know more about Jesus's life, the inspired authors would have filled in the gaps.²⁶⁶ As the apostle John famously suggested, they had more than enough source material (John 21:24-25). Second, many others maintained that the paucity of sacred writ bore witness to the Bible's historicity. The Unitarian minister William Henry Furness claimed that the evangelists "aimed only at relating things just as they took place.... There is a quiet, unobtrusive confidence in their mode of narration, which seems to me identical with a perfect conviction of truth—with a true spirit."²⁶⁷ The silent years were "eloquent," according to the Anglican clergyman Frederic Farrar, because they did not detail each and every moment of Jesus's life: "[W]e may see in their silence a signal and striking confirmation of their faithfulness. We may learn

from it that they desired to tell the simple truth, and not to construct an astonishing or plausible narrative."²⁶⁸ The chasms of history were not ancient oversights, these ministers explained. They were instead evidence of authorial honesty, proof that the writers were interested in nothing more than a truthful recounting of God's divine inspiration.

This interest in the "modes" of biblical narration suggests that the devout considered the distinction between biblical and literary narratives an important one, which meant that the distinction between scripture's canonical books and the counterfeit apocryphal stories was a question of style as much as content. For the Mercersburg theologian Philip Schaff, those who read the apocrypha would find the "falsehood and absurdity of *unnatural fiction*," not the "real" history contained in the Bible.²⁶⁹ In a long passage on scripture's "consistency," Furness compared the Gospels to the historical novel to show how the narrative qualities of the Bible distinguished revelation from fancy:

It will help us to estimate the characteristic of the New Testament histories, which I am now illustrating, to glance at the works of imagination abounding at the present day, and observe how striking is the contrast between them, and the writings under consideration.... I am reminded in this connexion by the force of the contrast of the well-known romance of 'the Pirate.' If so familiar an illustration may be allowed, we have only to observe the care which the novelist has taken to discriminate the characters of Minna and Brenda, to perceive how immeasurably more striking is the brief scriptural representation of Mary and Martha. In the novel, every thing is done to assist the conceptions of the reader by a minute personal description of the two heroines, and they are thrown into circumstances calculated to bring out their respective peculiarities in the most prominent manner. Whereas in those rapid sketches of the New Testament, the incidents which so consistently and admirably unfold the characters of Mary and Martha are told with the utmost brevity, and if for the sake of showing off any one, it is with a view to the character of Christ.... The occurrences related, with all the light they throw upon the moral features of the individuals concerned, seemed to be mentioned for no reason but their simple truth. They had taken place. They were real and therefore they were related.²⁷⁰

What differentiated fiction from divine inspiration—and what made the Christ child so appealing to modern readers—had to do with the issue of verisimilitude. In his novel *The Spy* (1821), Walter Scott had described his characters in precise, calculated terms, a novelistic realism that would, the author hoped, bring the story to life and thus entertain readers. Because his livelihood and reputation as a novelist were at stake, Scott took great care to fashion the world of the novel so as to add depth, complexity, local color, and character to the people and places described in the book. This desire to simulate lived experience—what Ian Watt considered "the particularization of character and background, of naming, temporality, causation, and physical environment" that characterized the modern English novel—distinguished the genre from its antecedents (biographies, histories, allegories, and romances) and introduced readers to characters who were by design carefully delineated and vested with the trappings of authenticity.²⁷¹ According to Furness, when Scott indulged in "minute personal description," his professional "calculations" became apparent to the careful reader, disclosing the novelist's elaborate masquerade.²⁷²

Ironically, the Bible was thought to be truthful because, unlike novelists, its authors were uninterested in mimetic transcriptions of historical reality. For Furness and other likeminded educators, the Christ child evidenced the Bible's divine inspiration precisely because the Gospels said so little about him. If the inspired authors had been motivated by something other than God's will, they would have crafted a more coherent account of Jesus's life on earth and introduced readers to the realities of his childhood, including all the wonderful lessons that Jesus must have learned as he grew into adulthood and realized his life's purpose. The nearly nonexistent childhood of Jesus

proved that the Bible was no fiction. Its authors could not be accused of artfulness because their work lacked artistry. They were simple men writing simple histories. As such, they were not concerned for personal recognition or literary fame and were thus freed from the temptation to exaggerate or inflate the historical record.

Trusting in the Bible's authority yet longing for more narrative substance, internal coherence, and historical context, Christians wanted what they could not have—a larger Bible and longer Gospels. The gaps in the historical record were provocative because Protestants were well aware that *something* had occurred during Jesus's childhood, although that something remained an intangible mystery. In this respect, biblical lacunae were more than mere gaps. They were potent psychological triggers that intensified a yearning to imagine and thereby complete the biblical narratives, to search for material that might fill in the gaps in order to produce an ordered, coherent plot. As literary scholars have demonstrated, this impulse to reconstruct missing stories and marginal characters is an act of revisionism that reflects the cultural concerns of those engaged in the reconstruction process.²⁷³ It implies that no story is final, that all books—even the Good Book itself—are to varying degrees incomplete. Religious educators believed that the Gospels provided everything that children needed to place their faith in Christ, but they were also well aware these were not biographies but fragments, sketches, or "memorabilia," to cite a few common descriptors.²⁷⁴ Ministers like John Cumming warned against such speculation and claimed that the desire for a more complete biblical record reflected a lack of faith in God's revelatory discretion. In response to such concerns, those who wished to know more about the Christ child claimed that they were not questioning divine judgment. They were simply voicing a familiar frustration. Like

the tourists in Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, the devout often could not help themselves. Wanting a closer connection to Christ, they were carried away by speculative fantasy and imaginative invention. They sought to create a "harmonious whole" from the "lineaments" of history, as one writer explained.²⁷⁵

Some resisted this impulse—out of faith in the Bible's inerrancy, an allegiance to sola scriptura, or fear of spiritual frailty—believing that they could not or should not give further thought to the Christ child's unknown childhood. "How often have we all, doubtless, with wondering curiosity, brooded over those hidden years of the incarnation," explained the clergyman Charles Beecher. Yet that wonder could go no further because God "hath not been pleased to speak thereof, and with sighing and sadness, therefore, we must leave blank in our minds these twelve years, save so far as they rise before us in our reverential musings."²⁷⁶ In an article written for *Harper's Young People*, the minister William Taylor concurred, invoking the "contrast" that Furness had noted years before: "This silence on the part of the sacred writers is remarkable, and in striking contrast to what is usual with the authors of the memoirs of the great and good. It is, besides, a warning to us not to allow our imagination to fill in what they have thus left vacant."²⁷⁷ These authors worried about several related issues: the mishandling of scripture, the naiveté of young believers, the allurements of apocryphal stories, and the fine line between inspiration and wishful thinking. If educators were not careful, they might unintentionally distort Christ's life by mixing fiction with fact. "No invention can honor him," explained Farrar. "[H]e who invents about Him degrades Him; he mixes the weak, imperfect, erring fancies of man with the unapproachable and awful purposes of God."²⁷⁸

But others disagreed and insisted that the devout could not avoid such speculation. The subject was simply too compelling. They argued that no harm could come from such experiments, provided believers controlled their imaginations. "Not a single fact is recorded of his appearance, his infantine ways," explained Charles Beecher's older brother Henry Ward. "[W]hether he was meditative and refined, standing apart from others, or robust, and addicted to sports among his young associates: no one knows, or can know, whatever may be inferred or suspected."²⁷⁹ The elder Beecher's insistence that no one could know anything about Jesus's childhood pointed to the epistemological limitations that bound historicist scholarship. The early years of Jesus life (excepting a few select scenes) could not be recuperated; they would remain "blank" forever, a tantalizing void in the ancient record. But Beecher also recognized that neither historical lacunae nor clerical injunctions would curb his readers' interest in stories about the young Jesus: "[I]t is impossible to restrain the imagination. There will always be a filling up of the vacant spaces." For Beecher, the childhood of Jesus was the *horror vacui* of Christian devotion. Even if believers trusted the more conservative clerical voices and avoided apocryphal stories altogether, they would still struggle to rein in those "free thoughts" that were inexorably drawn to Jesus's childhood.²⁸⁰ What educators wanted to do was to fill in the gaps of Christ's life with the kind of verisimilitude that readers enjoyed without treading on the Bible's inspiration or sacrificing its authority for the purpose of narrative realism. This was not a "mischievous" error, Beecher explained.²⁸¹ It was instead proof that biblical historiography had made the Jesus of history more meaningful to Protestants educators and their students.

It was also evidence of a growing trend in religious instruction to "hover over the probabilities" of biblical history until they became comparable to historical fact.²⁸² Even though some Protestants expressed concern about stories involving the Christ child, many others noticed a pragmatic historiographic loophole. Any attempt to return *ad fontes* would yield nothing given the Bible's omissions, but if the young Jesus had lived a truly human life, as so many believers claimed, then he would have shared certain experiences with fellow first-century children. In order to rediscover Jesus's childhood, the devout could study the customs of ancient Palestine—specifically those associated with family life, religious education, and vocational duty—then map that knowledge onto the Christ child, passing off the result as an authentic approximation of biblical history.

Religion educators were especially keen to develop these "blank" years. For them, Jesus's childhood was not only interesting; it was also eminently practical. To teach children how to live Christ-like lives, they had long looked more to Jesus's *spiritus* than to his *corpus*. They divorced his adult body from its spiritual substance and instructed children to see through the former in order to discover those divine attributes that were universal, imitable by all Christians regardless of age or intellect. The Christ child did not require such radical dissociations. He already resembled American children (in that he was, like them, a young child) and thus served as a greater source of spiritual identification than the adult Jesus. Physical similarities were pedagogically productive, to a certain extent, but teachers realized that they had to create more concrete correspondences between nineteenth-century schoolchildren and their first-century savior if the former were to answer an important question: "In what are you like the child Jesus?"²⁸³ Unlike childhood—which served as a natural link between the Christ child and

his American counterparts—sociocultural resemblances had to be manufactured lest young Sunday-school students see few similarities between themselves and Jesus. Bridging the temporal and cultural divide was key to helping American girls and boys practice the *imitatio Christi infanti*. Religious educators had to do more than merely "minify" the man, as the famed minister Thomas DeWitt Talmage suggested.²⁸⁴ They had to downplay the differences between modern children and their ancient equivalents in order to make the Christ child a timeless exemplar of Christian virtue.

The "Pious" Imagination and Historical Probability

In his 1869 biography *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life and Teachings*, the Congregational minister Lyman Abbott warned his readers to temper their expectations: "No one can hope to write a complete biography of Jesus of Nazareth.... No one can aspire to do more than illustrate some phases of his incomparable life and character." Having little more than the "threads" of history, Abbott hoped to weave them into a "connected narrative" even though the Gospels made provided little insight into much of Jesus's life. He believed that his book would prove especially valuable to readers who were interested in biblical history since, unlike the authors of the Gospels, he had filled its pages with the "minutest" references to first-century Palestine's sociocultural norms. He admitted that he had taken a few liberties with sacred history—on occasion, he had placed his faith in the "uncertain guidance of surmise" in order to create a seamless storyline—but he had studiously shunned the "language of imagination," as he called it. He had been careful to deploy fiction only in "the narration of well-authenticated facts" for fear that too many speculative departures from scripture might alienate his intended

audience or damage his reputation as a respected clergyman.²⁸⁵ The introduction to Abbott's biography is decidedly apologetic in that the author admitted (though downplayed) an important fact of biblical historiography—that any attempt to translate Jesus's life into a coherent, historical narrative depends upon authorial invention, the substitution of educated assumptions for primary source material.

This reality weighed heavily on some religious educators—those who believed, like Furness and Farrar, that additions to the gospel record inevitably distorted scripture—especially since these concerns were directly linked to disagreements over biblical inspiration. Protestants were uniformly convinced that God had, in some form or fashion, inspired the ancient authors, but they were divided when it came to how exactly that inspiration worked. A minority held that God had dictated the Bible word-by-word to his chosen amanuenses, men who recorded the divine language without mistake or mistranslation, but this view (known as "mechanical dictation" or "dictation theory") had a large number of critics who found it both unintelligent and indefensible. A far more popular doctrine went by the name of "verbal" inspiration. Its proponents claimed that God had inspired the language of the Bible even though human hands played a part in the writing process. Although they did not believe that scripture was a verbatim record derived from divine dictation, they held that the words of scripture were equally authoritative, citing 2 Timothy 3:16 as evidence. This same verse served as the foundation for yet another theory called "plenary" inspiration. According to its proponents, God had inspired the *authors* of scripture, not necessarily the words in and of themselves. This view took into account issues of translation and circulation; it was a recognition that the Bible had been translated and re-translated over the course of nearly

two millennia and that individual words had to be considered in their textual and historical context.²⁸⁶

But there was a fourth model of inspiration, one that was both more radical than its predecessors and more relevant to religious instruction, what nineteenth-century theologians referred to as "progressive" inspiration. This form of revelation was, Farrar argued, "not homogenous throughout in value and importance, but given fragmentarily and multifariously in many portions and many ways." Because fallible men had been tasked with translating divine ideas into human language, scripture was a compendium of historical and spiritual writings indebted to the time and place of their authorship: "The Bible forms an organic whole, but it is composed of many parts of unequal value. It consists of no less than sixty-six books in different languages, in different styles, of different ages. It is not a book but a library." Farrar concluded that some parts of scripture were thus more authoritative and culturally relevant (though no less inspired) than others, and he insisted that educators had to translate or "clothe" scripture in a way that would convey spiritual lessons to modern audiences. This was, he admitted, no easy task, especially when it came to the Gospels.²⁸⁷ Many Protestants were no longer willing to have a "vague image" of Jesus.²⁸⁸ They wanted something more substantive, a savior that spoke them in terms that were revelatory because they were relevant.

Historical "probability" became the catchword for religious educators who wanted to bring the Christ child to life without trampling sacred writ. Trusting in sola scriptura but taking progressive revelation into account, they believed that biblical historiography mitigated the problems linked to the Bible's lacunae. Theirs was a difficult task. As one author explained, "A profound mystery envelops the childhood of Jesus Christ. If it is

always difficult to represent to one's self the Son of God 'clothed with flesh like unto our sinful flesh,' it is doubly so to think of him as a child growing in body and mind like another child."²⁸⁹ But religious educators reasoned that, if they were careful, they could reconstruct an accurate portrait of first-century life in order to make the Christ child a more lifelike figure, using sociocultural and ethnographic information to bolster their educated guesses. They took comfort in historical probabilities because these seemed to protect them from charges that they had mishandled the Bible. They could rest assured that their efforts were diligent, their teachings trustworthy, and their methods both instructive and pleasing to God.

This confidence in the probable benefited from two key assumptions. First, religious educators took Palestine's timelessness for granted. They believed that the Holy Land had deteriorated since Bible times, but they concluded that its inhabitants had not.²⁹⁰ In this respect, they viewed past and present Jewish children as proxies for the Christ child since they were thought to resemble Jesus in some form or fashion. "He lived as lived the other children of peasants in that quiet town, and, in great measure, as they live now," one author explained.²⁹¹ Educators were able to make such claims because of another prevailing notion. They trusted that certain childhood experiences were universal and therefore timeless. This meant that the Christ child could be recuperated because he was a child before he was the Christ. As Henry Ward Beecher explained, "There are certain generic experiences which must have befallen Jesus, because they belong to all human life. He was a child. He was subject to parental authority. He lived among citizens and under the laws."²⁹² Even William Taylor, a minister who cautioned his readers not to "fill in" the Gospels with narratives of their own imagining, believed that the devout

could draw conclusions about Jesus's childhood by studying the lives of Jewish schoolchildren and paying close attention to the "hints" found in scripture.²⁹³ Protestants viewed with suspicion apocryphal tales of the Christ child, but they grew increasingly comfortable with narratives that stemmed from historical probabilities so long as those narratives were the product of a "pious imagination," as it was termed.²⁹⁴

More importantly, they were interested in the Christ child because, unlike the adult Jesus, he resembled their students and thus made it possible for children to imitate Christ without having to account for the disparities between childhood and adulthood. Once educators realized that they could invent a Christ child by making the generic, universal experiences of childhood historically authentic, they were free to recast the young Jesus in forms recognizable to modern children. From 1870 onward, there were no standardized, coordinated efforts to recuperate the Christ child for young readers. There were instead subtle shifts in public opinion, ones that played out in a wide range of genres over the course of many years. With time, religious educators grew accustomed to experimenting with historical probability and often treated their educated assumptions as veritable facts. When Frederic Farrar claimed that those who had "seen the children of Nazareth...may perhaps form some conception of how Jesus looked and played when He too was a child," he merely acknowledged what so many of his generation had already started to believe.²⁹⁵

Invention, Incarnation, *Imitatio*

In George Macdonald's 1868 novel *The Seaboard Parish*, the clergyman Harry Walton gathers his children together one Sunday evening to teach them spiritual lessons.

While recounting for them the birth of Jesus, he acknowledges that the historical record is "scanty," but he assures his children that spiritual knowledge can be gleamed from what the Bible does and does not say about the Christ child: "It is a small biography we have of a man who became—to say nothing more—the man of the World—the Son of Man. No doubt it is enough, or God would have told us more; but surely we are not to suppose that there was nothing significant, nothing of saving power in that which we are not told."²⁹⁶ Acknowledging that God has given believers "enough" information for spiritual health, Walton upholds sola scriptura as a key tenet of religious instruction. But he also suggests that there is lasting spiritual value in that which scripture did *not* reveal, suggesting that the Bible's missing narratives spoke to those who had been trained to listen.

Faith in the potency and utility of biblical lacunae is key to the ensuing discussion. Walton encourages his children to think about what they would have done had they lived with the Christ child, and the children respond in kind by imagining themselves transplanted into the first century:

"Charlie, wouldn't you have liked to see the little baby Jesus?"

"Yes, that I would. I would have given him my white rabbit with the pink eyes."

"That is what the great painter Titian must have thought, Charlie; for he has painted him playing with a white rabbit,—not such a pretty one as yours."

"I would have carried him about all day," said Dora, "as little Henny Parsons does her baby-brother."

"Did he have any brother or sister to carry him about, papa?" asked Harry.

"No, my boy; for he was the eldest. But you may be pretty sure he carried about his brothers and sisters that came after him."

"Wouldn't he take care of them, just!" said Charlie.

"I wish I had been one of them," said Constance.

"You are one of them, my Connie. Now he is so great and so strong that he can carry father and mother and all of us in his bosom."²⁹⁷

The scene showcases the temporal disjunctions that religious educators hoped to capitalize on, the fantasies that children had as they envisioned a savior much like themselves. Charlie, Dora, and Harry think of Jesus as a younger sibling to be coddled and cared for. The lesson encourages them to mimic actions made familiar by other children but to redirect that familial affection to the Christ child. Charlie and Constance then reconfigure Jesus as an older sibling—one who dutifully guards his brothers and sisters—even as the young girl infantilizes herself in order to imagine what it might have felt like to be carried about by the Christ child. Walton concludes the exercise by translating the literal scene into an allegorical one, suggesting that the young Jesus has grown up and is thus equipped to care for all of them equally.

The children are able to imagine and re-imagine their interactions with the Christ child for two reasons. First, he is almost entirely unmoored from scripture. Because the Bible says so little about his childhood, there are no limits to his form and function. He can change shape to suit each child's particular predilections because he has no shape to begin with. His amorphousness is his potentiality. Second, the young are asked to invent a generic first-century family so as to contemplate how they might have acted if they had been fortunate enough to be Jesus's siblings. To participate in this activity, they take the world that they know—from their family relationships to their personal pets—and superimpose it onto the world in which the Christ child lived. Once they overlay their modern lives onto Jesus's ancient one, they are able to imagine interacting with him on more intimate terms.

Religious educators wanted to draw concrete correspondences between their students and the Christ child in order to bring the Gospels to life and to help children

sympathize with and imitate the young Jesus. For this to work, they needed the Christ child to be an everychild, which meant that they had to mask to some degree his cultural otherness and divinity. To be an imitable exemplar, he had to appear both human and timeless because stark personal distinctions could disrupt children's ability to compare their lives to Christ's and to participate fully in the *imitatio Christi infanti*. This would seem to undercut the purpose of biblical historiography—specifically those lessons that grounded Jesus to a particular place and time in human history—but educators believed that they could have it both ways. They made it clear that Jesus was a young Jewish boy, and they introduced their students to the historical realities of first-century Palestine. But they carefully avoided language that might make the young Jesus seem too unlike their students, and they were quick to highlight the similarities between the Christ child and American children. Faced with a choice to ignore Jesus's childhood or to invent one that was both interesting and instructive, those who chose the latter preferred to clothe the Christ child in familiar garb. In fact, stories about the young Jesus proliferated precisely because adults vested him with a Christian identity. Hoping to make children Christ-like, they began by making Christ childlike.

They had to address one important complication, however, a dilemma that threatened to undermine the *imitatio Christi infanti*: the incarnation. Simply put, how could children possibly imitate someone who was both God and child? Someone who was God *before* he was a child?²⁹⁸ For those who adhered to Trinitarianism, the incarnation created a troublesome paradox. If Jesus were not wholly divine, he could not atone for human sin. But if he were not also wholly human, he could not be an exemplar of Christian piety. An illustration of the paradoxes that emerged when educators hewed

too close to Trinitarian orthodoxy can be seen in Sarah Stock's juvenile biography *The Child's Life of Our Lord* (1879): "Some stories are about people who never really lived, and whose lives are only made up. Some stories are about people who have died. But the story I have to tell you is about One who is living now.... And yet it was long ago that He was born, and that He died. And *before that* He had been living. There never was a time when He was not living, for He is the Son of God, and He was with God His Father before the world was made."²⁹⁹ In Stock's account, Jesus lived, then he was born, then he died, then he lived again. This odd biographical pedigree may have satisfied Trinitarian concerns, but it did little to advance the *imitatio Christi infanti*. Stock's Jesus enters the world vested with eternal experience, a God masquerading in childish form. Those who adhered to the "fully God, fully man" dictum yet preferred a more recognizably childlike savior had instead to find ways to accentuate Jesus's humanity. They remained committed to Trinitarianism, but their theological precepts gave way to everyday pressures once they confronted an uncomfortable fact: a God-child served few practical purposes.

The most common response to this conundrum was to suggest that the young Jesus was not entirely conscious of his divinity until a later age. The divine was there, but it was largely dormant. Proponents of this line of reasoning were many and varied, but they found common cause in their opposition to those who claimed, like the educator Louis Sweet, that there was an incontrovertible "uniqueness" about the Christ child. Unlike all others born into the world, Sweet argued, Jesus was not the "natural product" of his heredity, his environment, or his training. He lived in the world but was not of the world.³⁰⁰ Many agreed with Sweet that Jesus was unquestionably unique, but they argued that that uniqueness manifested itself later in life, which meant that in childhood he was

thoroughly human (albeit perfectly sinless). Those who suggested that the Christ child was some kind of beatific anomaly ignored the simple truth "that Jesus, like other children, grew up in gradual knowledge, consistently with the natural course of human development."³⁰¹ Citing a key biographical episode (Luke 2:41-52), many educators suggested that Jesus's consciousness of his divine mission began to emerge at age twelve when he explained to his anxious parents that he had remained in the temple to be about his "Father's business." Luke 2:52 provided the most compelling evidence for this argument: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." This "increase" was thought by many to encompass all aspects of his existence, both the divine and the human, and to last until his baptism by John roughly eighteen years later when, on the eve of his public ministry, the Holy Spirit descended on him.³⁰²

To make Jesus's childhood a truly human one, educators radically distended the incarnation, postponing the moment when its effects could be felt. They agreed that the Christ child was *sui generis*, but they also assumed that he was shaped by his environment. Though immune to sin, he enjoyed the common lot of children. He was an exemplary model because he was an ordinary one. "He grew as you are growing," Alexander Macleod explained to his young listeners, "and it is a very beautiful sight to see the baby growing into the child, and the child growing into the girl or boy." Farrar instructed children using the same appeal: "Now, whenever you are tempted to be rude or wilful [sic] or unloving, think that your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... was once a little child like you, and wants you to be good and holy as He was."³⁰³ These explicit parallels were made possible by the belief that childhood development—the physical processes that transformed the infant into the adolescent—was a universal experience. As William

Taylor explained: "From his birth, indeed, he was God as well as man, but however great the mystery, that did not interfere with his progressive human life. He had to learn to speak, like other children. He had to learn to think, like other children. He had to learn to read, like other children. None of these things came to him by virtue of his being divine."³⁰⁴ The insistence that the Christ child was "like" other children characterized this form of religious instruction. It made Jesus a more sympathetic savior, one that children could trust because he understood their particular trials. It also encouraged American students to see in themselves an outline of Christ incarnated and to imagine the shared experiences that bound them together.

In order to help students internalize these lessons, educators invented ever more tangible correspondences between American children and the Christ child, ones that would substantiate and solidify the resemblances that they had worked so hard to manufacture. Their efforts demonstrate that the *imitatio Christi infanti*—and indeed any conscious attempt to imitate Christ—is a subjective exercise wherein believers draw from scripture a set of social and spiritual conventions that are then used to regulate human behavior. Aspiring to be like Christ, the devout follow a formula that they have themselves authored, suggesting that Jesus can be imitated because he has been given an imitable form. Any perceived success or failure depends entirely upon how closely one's life corresponds (or does not correspond) to the established pattern. For children at this time, the process was closely monitored by adults who chose certain admirable traits, mapped them onto the Christ child, and then encouraged students to conform to the mold. Because the childhood of Jesus was largely lost to history, it could be whatever educators wanted it to be, provided it appeared probable enough to pass as historically accurate.

This meant that the Christ child was to some extent a *tabula rasa* that reflected adult concerns for children's spiritual welfare. As such, his life served an ongoing disciplinary function. When, for example, Farrar asked his students to be like the Christ child, he made his comparison concrete by linking the *imitatio Christi infanti* to the avoidance of specific behavioral traits. If children were to imitate Jesus, they had to do as they were told.

These lessons depended on subtle acts of deculturation. Because educators were interested in making the Christ child easily imitable, they often unwittingly vested Jesus with a Judeo-Christian identity by retroactively overlaying the everyday routines of Protestant schoolchildren onto the life of an ancient Jewish boy. Having been stripped of indicators that might have disrupted the desired cultural parallelisms, the young Jesus became a model of Protestant piety. American children could become like him because he had become like an American child.

The American Jesus

In his 1881 children's sermon "Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus," the Congregationalist educator Wilbur Crafts drew explicit links between Jesus's life and the lives of his young parishioners by asking children to author their own quasi-apocryphal tales. Crafts believed that the Christ child would be instantly recognizable if he were a product of childish invention because, in responding to such prompts, children would inevitably draw from their limited stock of personal experiences. The young were not allowed to invent *any* story they desired—to do so would violate historical probability—but they were free to experiment with narratives of their own making. Like the girls and

boys in *The Seaboard Parish*, they were prompted to see distinct correlations between their daily lives and biblical history. "Being like Him means a great deal for a child to-day," Crafts explained. He then asked his students a leading question ("What have you done to follow Jesus this week?") and overlaid their answers onto Jesus's childhood:

One said, "I have prayed." That was a right answer, for Jesus used to pray every day, and sometimes all night. Another answered, "I have read the Bible." That was a true answer also, for Jesus read the Bible so much that He could repeat a great many verses out of His memory. Another child answered the question "What have you done to follow Jesus this week?" "I have washed the dishes"; and another said, "I have been good in school"; and another said, "I have kept my ears clean." All these were right answers also; for Jesus, in his home, helped Joseph the carpenter about his work; and when He was in school at Nazareth, He did no wrong or mean thing; and we feel sure that He remembered that cleanliness is next to godliness.³⁰⁵

Crafts was able to argue that these anachronisms were all "right answers" because he had intentionally downplayed and even outright ignored the rituals and habits that distinguished the first-century world from the nineteenth-century one. His students and the Christ child are instead exactly alike: they pray the same prayers, read the same books, obey the same rules, and do the same chores. Because the answers conform to Crafts's disciplinary standards, they are projected onto the young Jesus and made an *a priori* index to personal piety. This exercise would have been unthinkable to early American Protestants who were conditioned by sola scriptura to hew to scripture as closely as possible and to regard any such detours as potentially dangerous lapses into Catholic myth and ritual. Biblical historiography altered public opinion by bringing the Bible to life in ways that earlier methods had not, and as religious educators injected greater degrees of narrative realism into their lessons, they often turned to plausible fictions to help children lead Christ-like lives.

Educators like Crafts believed that the young Jesus was shaped by the place and time of his birth, but they sought to minimize these social and environmental factors in order to promote cross-cultural semblances, a likeness that would help children see in the Christ child a familiar friend. As one author explained, "He was once a flesh and blood boy, just like the boys who read this, and the same world in which we now live was His home."³⁰⁶ To do so, they frequently discussed Jesus's religious education and family life because these were familiar subjects to American children, but they painted each in broad strokes so as to minimize the obvious cultural disparities. In a particularly characteristic passage, the educator Elvira Slack told students that the Christ child "met the average problems and pleasures of today." The similarities that she listed were explicitly generic—he grew up in a home, lived in a town, went to school, worked hard, kept the Sabbath, and loved God—which made it easier for children to sympathize with the young Jesus because Slack had rendered his life purposefully nondescript, stripping from the narrative those particular characteristics that might have made him seem unfamiliar or inimitable.³⁰⁷ Religious educators were aware that the lifelikeness of the Christ child was not a given, and they trusted that such anachronisms helped children develop a sense of kinship with the young Jesus, hoping that recognizable cultural analogues would draw them closer to Christ. The trick was to commingle the realities of first-century Palestine with those of nineteenth-century America to convince children that the ancient world and their own were two of the same kind.

It is hardly surprising that adults invested in these methods took care to note the importance of Jesus's childhood education. In doing so, they highlighted the Christ child's study habits so as to make religious instruction (whether at home or in Sunday schools) a

barometer of Christ-likeness. These lessons served a specific disciplinary function. To be like Jesus, children had to study hard. In many accounts of his childhood, the young Jesus does not acquire knowledge *ex nihilo*, despite being the Son of God.³⁰⁸ Though remarkably precocious, he instead develops an early interest in religious study as preparation for the future. In Josephine Pollard's popular *Young Folks' Bible in Words of Easy Reading* (1889), she claimed that Jesus "was at school then, just as boys and girls in these days go to school, and strive to grow wise and to fit them-selves for the work they are to do in the world."³⁰⁹ Pollard linked ancient history with "these days" through the generic "school" that the Christ child and his American counterparts have in common. The qualifying adverb "just" substantiated the correlation, prompting children to see in Jesus's education a mirror image of their own activities. Like Pollard, the Baptist minister Cortland Myers drew attention to the "sameness" of the Christ child: "He went to school and liked it about the same as most other boys like it. Some things about it were pleasant, and some other things did not please him so well. He liked the holiday and the vacation times too. He learned the same as other boys must learn.... Some things about his school were not the same as yours, but the study and work have always been the same and must always be."³¹⁰ Although Myers alluded to the fact that Jesus's school was different than American schools, he downplayed these differences.³¹¹ The Christ child of Myers's narrative is neither a God-child nor a saintly youngster. He is instead a facsimile of American childhood who becomes Christ-like through rigorous study, a role model for children interested in doing likewise.

At the most generic level, the "school" functioned as a concrete link between past and present. But those interested in making Jesus more recognizably American claimed

that he knew and studied the Bible, substantiating the imagined corresponded between the Christ child and Protestant children. "*Jesus loved the Bible*," explained Abbie Morrow, an editor of several Sunday-school magazines. "He read good books; I can not think of Jesus reading a dime novel, can you?" She then suggested that Jesus memorized the Old Testament—which was, she explained, "the only part of the Bible that was written before He came"—and she used the Christ child's example to admonish those who disliked doing so, believing that his childhood was "just like boy life now, that He might be able to sympathize with children at home and at school."³¹² Time and again, scripture served as the connective tissue that bound young readers to the Christ child. Many educators were quick to point out that Jesus could only read the Old Testament. He did not have access to "our larger Bible," as the minister James Stalker put it.³¹³ But many others were just as liable to leave out this important information and left open the possibility that Jesus studied the Bible just like his modern counterparts. "We may never visit Jacob's well, or rest under the shadow of Olivet, nor tread the wellworn path of Bethany," wrote Morrow, "but we may pore over the same Holy Scriptures which were Christ's constant companion. We may study the same prophecies, believe the same promises, obey the same precepts, and sing the same psalms."³¹⁴ These authors were not trying to doctor sacred history, but in opting for a "simplicity of style," they reconfigured the childhood of Jesus, placing their Bibles in the hands of the Christ child.³¹⁵

Much like childhood education, work and play were thought to bring the young Jesus to life because they were universal experiences, requiring little to no translation into modern parlance. When it came to work, the young Jesus provided plenty of scope for the imagination because, as so many educators claimed, he had participated in the "common

lot" of children.³¹⁶ Unlike the adult Jesus—who had to *stop* working before he could travel the country preaching and teaching—the Christ child was a carpenter's apprentice accustomed to the rigors of the workplace. Some authors used this period in Jesus's childhood to note the boy's submission to parental authority. "Would you not like to know if He like that irksome labor? Or if He ever rebelled against it?" asked one educator, before concluding that Jesus "never murmured" despite such drudgery.³¹⁷ Others used work to emphasize Jesus's industry and integrity. According to the Methodist educator Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, "Whatever Jesus did was done well, and we cannot doubt that in his trade he soon became a skilful [sic] worker. His ax-handles and plows were as good as the best; and if he made a bushel measure, it was a true one, for Jesus was a boy that could be trusted."³¹⁸ Still others suggested that the young Jesus ennobled the modern workplace: "He redeemed our common, every-day work from drudgery and disgrace, by making it a service of his Father in heaven. He was doing the will of his heavenly Father while working in the shop of his earthly father, no less than when working miracles of mercy, and preaching the gospel of salvation."³¹⁹ In each account, the Christ child sanctified labor, making it possible for those who worked hard to work for God's glory. What lessons like these had in common was a protagonist who was more emblematic than historical and whose life served as a vehicle for moral and spiritual suasion. Educators could map a wide spectrum of character traits onto his vocation because it was a product of their own creation, a tautology cloaked in historical probability.

His playful pastimes were as important as his work, not merely because they lent themselves to didacticism but because they were a universal experience. Lessons about the Christ child's labor depended on generic correspondences because few students were

presumed to know anything about carpentry as a trade, whereas lessons about play were inherently multicultural because educators thought of play as an integral part of childhood. They tended to approach this subject in one of three ways. First, they emphasized the Christ child's humanity by comparing his play to those of his peers. "He played as other boys did, and with them," the Presbyterian minister James Russell Miller explained. "The more we think of the youth of Jesus as in no marked way unlike that of those among whom he lived, the truer will our thought of him be."³²⁰ Those like Miller were uninterested in creating concrete links between past and present; they were instead focused on making Jesus's childhood as child-like as possible. Theirs was not as didactic an approach as it was educational since such lessons filled in historical gaps without reinforcing the likeness between ancient and modern children.

The second method was the most common of the three. In these instances, educators dwelt upon Jesus's playfulness because they thought that play was a convenient mechanism for moral instruction. They chose games that were not bound by first-century social norms—predominantly outdoor activities—believing that students were more likely to sympathize with a child who played as they did. In *Bible Object Lessons and Songs for Little Ones* (1892), the authors used play to introduce their students to a Jesus who was "once a little child like you": "Jesus played with other children, as you do; but he was never cross and selfish. He did not strike his little playmates. Sometimes, I suppose, some of them were naughty to him, and he was tempted to be naughty, too; but he asked God to give him strength to be good.... Remember that he knows all your joys, your sorrows, your temptations; and he loves and cares for each one of you."³²¹ In the span of two paragraphs, the authors use fourteen second-person plural pronouns to

underscore the fact that Jesus knows the trials experienced by American children. Their lesson suggests that children who are able to see their own likeness in that of the Christ child will be better equipped to practice the *imitatio Christi infanti*. They will be able to imagine what Jesus would do in their place because he had to some extent already done it.

The Congregational educator Herbert Wright Gates enlarged on this theme in his textbook *The Life of Christ: A Manual for Teachers* (1906). To enliven their Bible lessons, he instructed teachers to hold up a picture of Nazareth, convert Jesus's early years into "story form," use "vivid" details to make the story entertaining, and then ask leading questions to draw out "whatever the pupils can supply."³²² In his book, he provided a template for those interested in his methodology: "Here Jesus played with the blocks and shavings in his father's shop, or raced after the butterflies and shouted with delight over the gorgeous flowers and sweet bird-songs. He enjoyed himself just as any healthy, happy, innocent child would do in such a place. As he grew older he no doubt went fishing, or gathered nuts in the woods." These details were important to the arc of the lesson because Gates wanted to emphasize the fact that Jesus "played fair with his mates" in order to be "the best possible kind of boy."³²³ In Gates's classroom, play operated as a vernacular language. It translated the childhood of Jesus into a series of didactic maxims by masking obvious cultural discrepancies.³²⁴ These semblances mattered because they made the moral tenor of each lesson more self-evident. If the Christ child could play well with others, so too could young American children. In a world of play, all children were equal.

The third method was not as common as the first two because it was the riskiest. It threatened to undercut historical probability, making the life of Jesus more fiction than fact. But as time went on, it grew in popularity because it promised a radical restructuring of past and present. The Christ child that appeared in these lessons enjoys games that unite historically probable tableaux of first-century village life with explicitly anachronistic modes of modern play. This Jesus would look entirely familiar to American students because he was no longer a Jewish boy. He was an American one. A lesson by the Presbyterian educator Julia Johnston illustrates how this methodology evolved out of its popular predecessors. Johnston wanted to teach students about kindness and obedience so she began the lesson by asking general questions about Jesus's life. To make the material more applicable, she shifted her focus from the adult Jesus to the Christ child: "But Jesus did these things when he was a grown man. What do you think he did when he was a little boy living in Nazareth? Joseph had a carpenter shop: do you think that Jesus was ready to help when he could? Suppose his mother wanted an errand done? When Jesus played with the other children in Nazareth, what kind of a playmate do you think he was?"³²⁵ These questions were evocative. Some were designed to elicit straightforward responses. When asked about Jesus's helpfulness in Joseph's workshop, children would have been expected to answer with a simple "yes." But questions such as "[W]hat kind of a playmate do you think he was?" would have required more effort. Children would have had to cull their answers from personal experience, mapping onto the Christ child a set of values that they had already learned from their parents and teachers. As Johnston noted, these questions were not historically factual. They were instead designed to instill "in the minds of the children virtues which you see they need especially to cultivate."³²⁶

Prompted by such questions, the children invented Jesus's childhood, grafted it onto sacred history, and looked to it for principles that they could emulate, a tautology in which students vested the *imitatio Christi infanti* with their own moral and spiritual values. In their attempts to imitate the Christ child, they ended up emulating better versions of themselves.

This was a more conservative approach to the third method because it was an activity in which children, guided by a teacher, invented historical probabilities despite their inexperience. Others preferred more explicit cultural catachreses. Consider Lew Wallace's *The Boyhood of Christ*, which provides one of the earliest examples of this practice. Early in the story, Midas's young niece Puss complains that it is difficult to imagine the boyhood of Jesus: "[I]t is hard to think of him as a boy—I mean to think of him running, jumping, playing marbles, flying kites, spinning tops, and going about all day on mischiefs, such as throwing stones and robbing birds'-nests." Midas answers that he is "not sure" whether Jesus and his companions played with marbles, kites, or tops, but he admits that he "prefers" to believe that the Christ child "found enjoyment in them."³²⁷ The play that Puss imagines mirrors the likely responses fielded by educators (such as Julia Johnston) who asked students to imagine Jesus's childhood games. Puss cannot picture the Christ child without superimposing her own childish activities onto his childhood; she lacks the historical knowledge and intellectual maturity for such a task. Although Midas knows better—he is well aware that first-century children did not play with modern toys—he nevertheless encourages Puss to envision a juvenile savior engaged in familiar forms of play, hoping that the story will foster a closer bond between his niece and the Christ child.³²⁸

In *The Boy Jesus* (1908), Cortland Myers did what Lew Wallace hesitated to do. He converted the Christ child into distinctly American terms without reservation or qualification. When it came to childhood play, he suggested that Jewish children enjoyed games that were "something like ours, and some of them just the same."³²⁹ The phrase "something like ours" points to a degree of verisimilitude between ancient play and its modern equivalent (not a one-to-one correspondence), but the clause that follows suggests that some pastimes were actually coequal. This shift between difference and familiarity appears time and again. "They did not have books as we have them now," Myers explained, only to claim immediately thereafter that Jesus memorized his lessons and "carried [them] home with him the same as you do your home work."³³⁰ As the book progresses, the author invents increasingly anachronistic narratives that undermine historical probability. In a chapter titled "On the Playground," he describes a particularly popular game that Jesus and his friends often played: baseball. The Christ child is both an enthusiastic participant and a determined player so each child wants to play on his team: "He could throw the ball or strike the ball or catch the ball. He could throw a swift one and catch it when it was thrown to him. There was no half-way with Jesus. Every muscle and nerve and faculty had to be called into service just as much when he played as when he worked. He must have followed the motto 'Work when you work and play when you play.' He gave the whole self to that one thing."³³¹ In passages like these, Myers turned to fiction to teach children lessons about diligence, perseverance, companionship, and cooperation. Older, educated readers may have noticed the historical anachronisms and realized that the author had taken certain liberties with sacred history in order to prove a point. But many other readers—especially young, naïve, or less educated ones—might

have taken his work at face value, confident that the Christ child's life was no different from their own. Ironically, biblical historiography had made it possible for religious educators to imagine a historically probable Christ child even as it severely limited the scope of that imagination. Having passed off his stories as historically legitimate, Myers made it easier for children to practice the *imitatio Christi infanti* because he mitigated the variance between first- and nineteenth-century childhoods.

Not surprisingly, religious educators who experimented with historical anachronisms were convinced of their utility. They knew that they were stretching the limits of historical probability (sometimes to the breaking point), but they were more interested in the practical results that followed. Unlike Myers—who claimed that he wrote *The Boy Jesus* at his son's request but did not record the terms of the request nor the rationale behind the book's many anachronisms—the educator George H. Archibald outlined his methodology so that other teachers could follow suit. In a 1902 article in *The Record of Christian Work*, Archibald's methods were praised because he had avoided the "sophisticated intercourse of grown-up folks" for a "direct and simple" approach that spoke to children. "Christ Himself, and not the church, is the sure appeal, and the phase of Christ's character that will best do the work must be determined and used," the author explained. He then printed a section of Archibald's lecture in dialogic prose to showcase how the educator had adapted a "phase" of Jesus's life for the purpose of religious instruction. According to Archibald, he had been invited to an acquaintance's house and had struck up a conversation with the family's young son. After listening to the child's account of a hockey game—as a writer for the *Sunday-School World* told it, the boy had played for the winning team and had become "full of it at Sunday-school and full of it at

home"³³²—he feared that the boy had grown vain with personal success, and he decided to teach the child a lesson about fairness and humility:

"Did they play fair?" asked Mr. Archibald.

Carroll hesitated. "Not all, I think," answered the boy.

"It *is* a great game. I am very fond of it," continued Mr. Archibald. "It is interesting to see what games the boys play in different parts of the world. They are very different in hot countries and in Oriental countries, and yet some of them are like ours." He told the eager boy about some of the boyhood sports of the days when Jesus was a boy. Carroll listened closely.

"Do you think Jesus played hockey?" he inquired.

"If He did," came the answer, "I believe He must have played very well. Do you think He always played fair?"

"Yes," said the boy with emphasis, "I do. Of course He did."

And now Mr. Archibald thought he might draw nearer. "Carroll, do you always play fair?" he asked, smilingly.

The boy looked down, and then said very slowly, "I'm afraid I don't. Today I tripped another fellow with my stick, and it wasn't really an accident."

"Carroll, would Jesus have done that?"

"No, I don't believe He would."³³³

His is a roundabout approach. Archibald expresses interest in hockey to draw on Carroll's sympathy, refers to the sports played by boys in other parts of the world to shift the conversation from America to the Holy Land, mentions "Oriental" play to transition from contemporary games to ancient ones, then discusses the games that Jesus likely played to make the Christ child more recognizable. According to the *Record of Christian Work*, Carroll initiates the catachresis by asking whether or not Jesus played hockey.

Archibald's "if" is much like Midas's in that the educator does not deny the possibility that the Christ child played hockey; he recognizes the value of letting Carroll imagine a Jesus clad in pads and skates. In the account published in the *Sunday-School World*, however, the conversation is reversed. It is Archibald who instigates the cross-cultural fantasy by asking Carroll "if he thought Jesus ever played hockey." The boy admits that he had "never thought of Jesus as doing any of those things," and Archibald replies by

explaining that Jesus "was a real boy, and probably played games like other boys."³³⁴ It remains unclear which account accurately represents Archibald's methodology, but in each depiction, play serves a double purpose. It makes Jesus's life more substantive, but it also fosters a sense of intimacy between the boy and Jesus, enabling the former to see shadows of his own amusements in the Christ child's play. As the *Sunday-School World* put it: "If children think that Jesus, when he was a boy, played games like other boys, and knows exactly how a boy feels, he will come nearer them as an example and helper."³³⁵ To teach children how to live like Christ, educators like Myers and Archibald directed them to the young Jesus, a boy whom they had transformed into an all-American child.³³⁶

These strategies were popular (despite the potentially disruptive anachronisms) because they enabled young readers far removed from sacred history to experience a sense of divine immanence. As we have seen, religious educators came to believe that children who were introduced to child-like Christs would know what it meant to live Christ-like lives. The *imitatio Christi infanti* worked best if children could look past the historical Jesus to an exemplary everychild, seeing striking resemblances between his life and their own. But the approaches taken by Myers and Archibald were premised on a certain methodological narrowing occasioned by a shift from play (a universal pastime) to sport (a culture-specific affair). In their accounts, the young Jesus is not just a child. He is a *boy*. This change in tenor was to some degree the logical consequence of an educational policy that linked the *imitatio Christi infanti* to personal identity and of lessons that encouraged children to prize their physical resemblance to the Christ child. At the dawn of the twentieth century—as Protestantism grew more "muscular" with the rise of the Social Gospel, the draw of the Young Men's Christian Association, and the

allure of competitive sports—the Christ child began to reflect the cultural concerns of religious educators (usually male ones) who began to prioritize his boyhood over his childhood, assuming that young boys were liable to develop stronger ties with a Christ qua boy because, unlike girls, they did not have to bridge a gender divide.³³⁷ If, as Richard Rotundo suggests, "manhood has a history," then in order to understand the popularity of the Progressive Era's muscular Christ, we must take note of the growing interest in Jesus's boyhood that emerged at the turn of the century since the boy Jesus, situated between the child and the adult, became for so many believers an archetype of modern masculinity.³³⁸

The Manly Boy

In 1905, Edward Kaighn, a Sunday-school teacher from San Antonio, Texas, presented a paper titled "The Religious Education of Boys" at the third annual meeting of the Religious Education Association, an interdenominational organization formed in 1903 and devoted to the cause of religious instruction. He began his talk with a pointed question: "What *are* the characteristics of the adolescent boy differentiating him from the child and the adult?"³³⁹ On the heels of G. Stanley Hall's groundbreaking two-volume book *Adolescence* (1904), Kaighn insisted that important physiological changes had their corollary in equally important psychological ones. Religious educators had to understand the latter if they were to minister to the "whole boy," not merely his soul. A few facets of male adolescence stood out for Kaighn. Theirs was a gang mentality characterized by hero worship. They were drawn to prizefighters, military heroes, and athletes because they admired intelligence, strength, and courage. With proper adult oversight, that

admiration could be channeled to figures culled from the Bible and American history. "The heroes are not all dead," he claimed. "We can make more vivid the Josephs and Samuels, Joshuas and Daniels of ancient times by combining with their study their modern types from industrial, professional, or political life. The point is to take every advantage of the hero-loving instinct to bring to the boy the examples of the best sort of heroes.... Jesus Christ may be made the boys' Hero as well as the boys' Saviour."³⁴⁰ For Kaighn, typology was essential to adolescent education. It substantiated scared history by making Bible stories "vivid," prompting children to look to an American antitype for insight into a biblical type (and vice versa). The present needed the heroism of old, he warned, if only to offset the tedium of consumer culture and the listlessness of middle-class morality. Religious educators were asked to play an active role in this process. They were told to make Jesus relevant by making him heroic.

At the turn of the century, an ecumenical group of Christian men began to clamor for a more muscular Christ. They were convinced that the historical Jesus had been corrupted, that generations of artists (predominantly male) and educators (predominantly female) had unwittingly feminized him, and they sought to recover a Christ of "robust constitution, vigorous strength, and manly dignity" from the annals of sacred history.³⁴¹ As laborers struggled against an entrenched industrial system, as women entered the workforce in increasing numbers, and as consumer culture threatened to cripple the American male psyche, the image of a meek and mild Jesus—a "lamb of God" and silent sufferer, a man who turned the other cheek without question or hesitation, a docile savior who was victim of his own innocence—did not appeal to a growing number of male churchgoers. Fed up with the apparent feminization of American culture, they longed for

a Teddy Roosevelt-like savior, a Christ who epitomized modern masculinity. Most scholarly accounts of this shift in public opinion examine the ways that Progressive Era politics shaped the period's theological concerns, but they tend to ignore the contributions made by religious educators as well as the educational literature that, in its own way, contributed to changing conceptions of gender among American boys.³⁴² As the rugged, fearless Christ grew in popularity, the "manly boy" of Nazareth served as its adolescent equivalent.³⁴³

In his bestselling book *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), Bruce Barton sums up some of the frustrations that led him to embrace Protestant muscularity. In the quasi-autobiographical prologue "How It Came to Be Written," Barton recalls for readers an 1890s Sunday-school classroom in order to explain how he had developed an early disinterest in Christ. Every Sunday, he writes, the young Bruce Barton experiences a "weekly hour of revolt" when told by his teacher (a "kindly lady who could never seem to find her glasses") that he must love God.³⁴⁴ When he looks up at a picture of Christ, he experiences an immediate aversion to the "pale young man with no muscle and a sad expression." Turning from Jesus to Daniel, the boy recalls his favorite Bible characters (Moses, Samson, David, and Daniel). Compared to them, Jesus seems powerless and fragile like the "little lamb" of nursery lore. He is, for young Barton, a man who "went around for three years telling people not to do things," someone who made it wrong to "feel comfortable or laugh on a Sunday."³⁴⁵ The boy is thrilled when the class ends so that he can "le[ave] Jesus behind" for other activities. At this point in the prologue, the narrative shifts from past to present as the nineteenth-century boy grows into the twentieth-century man. As the adult Barton explains, he had to "wipe his mind clean of

books and sermons" in order to read about Jesus as if the latter were "a character in history, new to me, about whom I had not heard anything at all." What he found was not a "weak and unhappy, passive and resigned" man but a muscular figure who had mastered carpentry, walked the wilderness, stood firm in the face of ardent opposition, and died a heroic death.³⁴⁶ The prologue ends when Barton—grown frustrated by the seeming ignorance of his contemporaries—decides to write *The Man Nobody Knows* in order to reclaim for modern men a more muscular savior.

In this account, Sunday-school lessons are both antiquated and feminine. The teacher means well, but she is ill equipped for the task. She cannot see through the "mists of tradition"; at times, she cannot see at all. For Barton, hers is not an individual failure but a paradigmatic one. She is less an absent-minded individual and more a symbol of widespread educational malaise. This kind, presumably older woman does not understand the mind of an adolescent boy and "would have been terribly shocked" if she did, given her implied Victorian-era values. When she tells the young Barton to love God, for example, she does not realize that he rejects the implicit caveat "or else" that follows the injunction: "Love God! Who was always picking on people for having a good time and sending little boys to hell because they couldn't do better in a world which He had made so hard! Why didn't God pick on someone His own size?"³⁴⁷ The boy cannot picture God since the deity lacks physical form so he immediately turns to Jesus. From the delicate, wan features to the disconcerting submissiveness, Christ is "something for girls," the author explains, a neurasthenic son of God. Barton promises his readers something different, not the purportedly emasculated savior of Sunday-school literature but a

vigorous redeemer with muscles "hard as iron."³⁴⁸ What he failed to realize in 1925 was the extent to which religious educators had already taken up his central conceit.

The boyhood of Jesus—as it appears in the literatures of religious education published between 1900 and 1920—indexes the shifting terrain of American manhood as Victorian ideas of manliness came into contact with (as well as overlapped, collided into, and pushed against) Progressive Era notions of masculinity.³⁴⁹ Unlike the Christ child, that universal exemplar who made it easier to practice the *imitatio Christi infanti*, the boy Jesus also functions as a palimpsest of shifting moral and spiritual standards for male students. As educators grappled with modern notions of adolescence, they began to believe that boys needed something other than "old-time" religion. They needed a "boy's religion," a Christianity that was less about theology and exegesis and more about enterprise and activism. "[S]omething that gives me a chance to show what I can *do* for Jesus Christ right where I live," as one boy put it.³⁵⁰ The drive toward a more robust Protestantism coincided with a surge of interest in masculine-oriented religiosity and an increased demand for male-only curricula that would, educators believed, transform young impressionable boys into mature Christian men.

This enthusiasm for "boy's religion" was widespread, partly because classrooms were often segregated by gender (making it easier to develop curricula for male students) and partly because educators feared that gender-neutral instruction might do irreparable damage (making it difficult to interest boys in Bible study).³⁵¹ Although its advocates disagreed on many matters, they believed that adolescents shared a set of common experiences that were entirely unlike those of children and adults, and they thought that they could reconfigure Christianity to meet their students' needs if they subjected boy life

to empirical study. As a report commissioned by the YMCA explained, "The church must be interested in the spiritual, intellectual, physical, moral and social needs of the boy, and be thoroughly conversant with every agency in the community which touches the boy at any of these points."³⁵² Educators like Kaighn made it their mission to pinpoint the qualities that differentiated boy-centered Christianity from Christianity writ large. The former had several distinguishing features. It lacked didacticism and coercion. It had little to do with creeds or doctrines but focused instead on positive messages and pragmatic advice. It recognized and celebrated individuality while addressing the group mentality that undergirded adolescence. It spoke to the realities of the present yet encouraged boys to make plans for the future. It was above all characterized by energy and activity, sincerity and honor, idealism and hero worship.³⁵³ If teachers were to win over the nation's young Bruce Bartons, they had to adjust their methods to account for the changing opinions of adolescent boys. Those who did not would cripple the church, proponent of muscular Protestantism reasoned. Like the "kindly lady" of *The Man Nobody Knows*, they would disgust students by drawing their attention to an unmanly savior. "Permanent harm has been inflicted upon boys by well-meaning people who have tried to graft adult religion upon boy experience," the Congregationalist minister George Fiske warned. "The result is either a farce or a monstrosity."³⁵⁴

This consideration of adolescent experience led to inevitable interest in and disagreements over the role of the Bible in religious instruction, specifically what to teach and how to teach it. At a time when Bibles were being legislated out of public school curricula, religious educators were convinced that they had to make up lost ground by introducing boys to scripture before the latter were old enough to look elsewhere for

entertainment and instruction.³⁵⁵ "The question then really before us is, What parts of the Bible are really desirable for the boy, and how they are to be presented so as to be most useful?" explained Theodore Soares, a professor of religious education at the University of Chicago. The proposed methodologies varied, but educators agreed on one important point: boys needed stories. Soares thought that the Bible had to be broken down into literary "strata" so that educators could sift through scripture to discover which stories spoke to the modern boy. The particularly apt ones would "capture his imagination," "help him to see where greatness lies," and "stir him to feel that there have been mighty movements in the world...which still continue and of which he is to be a part."³⁵⁶ G. Stanley Hall praised the "art of the story-teller" and encouraged teachers to "tell plenty of stories," especially "carefully learned and graphic" ones.³⁵⁷ The didactic tales of old—which featured cavalcades of "good little boys...who always did right"—were no longer effective. They were not considered "real" enough for adolescents interested in realistic narratives and practical advice.³⁵⁸

Religious educators concluded that boys driven by a "hero-worshiping" impulse benefited most from stories about Bible heroes.³⁵⁹ As Barton noted, the Old Testament provided many obvious examples. Educators like Hall recognized the value of such stories but encouraged his counterparts to turn instead to the Gospels since he thought that Jesus "came particularly for the adolescent."³⁶⁰ The heroic Jesus of the Progressive Era grew into prominence because so many educators thought that a religion for boys and about boys needed, as its figurehead, a savior who knew what it meant to be a boy. "[T]he ideal must be personified, the Word must be made flesh, before it can be powerful," the commissioners of the Men and Religion Forward movement wrote: "Give

a boy the right hero, and you have done the greatest thing you can do for him.... Find a leader for the "gang" or club or class whom the boys can rightly admire and take as their hero, and the rest will take care of itself. Bring the boys into personal contact with Jesus as the great Hero, and the deepest forces in their lives will work to mould them into His likeness."³⁶¹ The authors saw in the heroic adult Jesus an ideal leader for those "marching manward," yet in their formulaic admonition that adolescents be brought into "personal contact" with Jesus, they overlooked a particularly pressing fact—an intervention was necessary to transform "Word" into "flesh."³⁶² If educators wanted the historical Jesus to be the adolescent's hero, they had to mitigate the factors that had, as Hall put it, "vaccinated" boys like Barton "against the influence of Christ."

Some believed that American anti-types would do the trick, that Bible stories worked best if they "paralleled and illustrated...modern stories of every-day life."³⁶³ Others took a different tack. They argued that boys learned best not from adult exemplars (as the Men and Religion Forward Movement had it) but from young ones. YMCA educators were the most vocal proponents of this policy, having at their disposal years of experience in training older boys to teach introductory Bible courses. "In many respects [boy teachers] can accomplish what a man cannot, because they are 'next' to the situation in a way that a man can never be," a contributor to the YMCA's journal *Association Boys* wrote. Those chosen for such positions were neither "phenomenal boys" nor "freaks of piety." They were instead "decidedly human" role models for their younger peers, "purposeful but not *over* pious."³⁶⁴ These accounts suggest two important things. First, YMCA leaders believed that boys who were largely driven by a gang mentality would flock to older adolescents because the latter were not far removed from boyhood, making

it possible for young boys to sympathize with and imitate the older boys who taught them. Adults were at a disadvantage, due mainly to their age and maturity. "Where we have used the older men as teacher, the classes, as a rule, have proved dismal failures," one educator complained.³⁶⁵ More importantly, these statements reflect a shift in public opinion as "piety" became for muscular Christians less an admirable quality and more a catchword for all things effeminate and unmanly. Visibly pious young men were considered ill suited for religious education. They were freakish, lacking the "intensely human" qualities that adolescents demanded.³⁶⁶

The growing disdain for those deemed too religious—which coded overt religiosity as expressly feminine—meant that educators had to reformulate the boyhood of Jesus in adolescent terms for the *imitatio Christi infanti* to have any lasting appeal. In 1904, a YMCA educator from Fall River, Massachusetts, defined the association's primary agenda in such terms: "Our purpose is to help boys to be like Jesus when He was a boy, waxing strong in spirit and body, and increasing in favor with God and men. Anything short of this is not the work the Young Men's Christian Association endeavors to do for the boy."³⁶⁷ The first step in this process involved stripping the adolescent Jesus of anything that resembled the "lifeless wishy washy jellyfish" piety that educators had so recently disavowed.³⁶⁸ For YMCA leaders, the Christ child of Heinrich Hoffman's *The Boy Jesus in the Temple* epitomized unmanly Christianity; he was emblematic of all that was wrong with religious instruction. One of the period's most popular religious prints, the central figure of Hoffman's painting was thought by many to reflect an "ideal" representation of devout childhood, but for those who wanted a more masculine savior, he was not a hero but a sickly hermaphrodite, a girlish boy with smooth skin and flowing

hair who preferred to stay indoors (figs. 39 and 40).³⁶⁹ One YMCA teacher was particularly galled by a stained-glass reproduction of Hoffman's Christ child:

Some time ago a gathering of boys met in a room facing a large stained glass window. The central figure in the window was supposed to be the Boy Christ. The window was beautifully colored and artistic in every way, but the central figure reminded one more of a twelve-year-old girl in the last stages of consumption than of a boy full of vigor, ability and determination. There was certainly nothing attractive to boys in the picture, but there was a danger of the impression being left that they had to become like the figure represented—weak, lifeless and effeminate—in order to be like Christ. Has not some of our Bible teaching emphasized the gentler qualities of the Master out of all proportion to His vigorous and virile qualities? Of course there is danger of going to the extreme in either direction, but is not some such course as the one here indicated desirable to help boys get a well-balanced conception of the man Christ Jesus?³⁷⁰

The author feared that boys might mistake the stained-glass Christ child for the real thing. They would treat the image as authoritative (since it was literally embedded in the church wall) and would turn in disgust from a Jesus that did not match their notion of heroic manliness. Proximity alone spelled disaster since even a cursory glance might leave a lasting impression on the young boys who had gathered for Bible study. The author foreswore extremism of any kind, but he believed that a counter balance was necessary to offset the damage already done by those who had feminized Jesus.

As early as 1902, YMCA educators began to experiment with courses designed to aid in this process by making Jesus a more "manly" messiah.³⁷¹ They were particularly interested in demonstrating for their students how that manliness manifested itself during Jesus's boyhood. One of the earliest examples was a course developed by a YMCA leader from Troy, New York, and titled "The Manly Side of the Life of Christ." For unknown reasons, Parker never published his lesson plans; he instead circulated them in manuscript among religious educators in the urban Northeast. But in 1903, the editors of *Association Boys* decided to print excerpts from his curriculum in order to popularize his methods.



THE BOY JESUS

Fig. 39. Frontispiece to *The Journal of Adolescence* (1900).

RUDY BROS.

Designers and Workers in Glass

Stained, Mosaic, and Leaded.

**Designs and Estimates Fur-
nished on Application. . . .**



The Boy Jesus in the Temple.

**Memorial Window Executed by RUDY BROS.,
and placed in the First Presbyterian
Church, Altoona, Pa.**



**RUDY BROS.,
Highland and Centre Avenues,
Pittsburgh, Pa.**

Fig. 40. Advertisement from *The Minutes of the Thirty-Third Session of the Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1901).

"This is done with the hope that other teachers of boys' Bible classes may develop a course from this view point," they explained.³⁷² The first lesson was titled "Physical Ability and Endurance," and it addressed Jesus boyhood. The author hoped to overturn the "old-time conception of Christ as a weak, dejected victim of circumstances" in order to make way for "the truer conception of a strong and manly Savior." The questions that accompanied the lesson offer a glimpse into how muscular Protestants turned the adolescent Jesus into a model of modern masculinity: "When a boy was he strong and healthy? How did he acquire his strength? Did he ever get tired or hungry? What do we know about his physical appearance? Give the most remarkable instances of his endurance. Would Jesus have joined the gymnasium had there been one in Nazareth? Why should boys exercise?"³⁷³ These were largely speculative queries because so little was known about Jesus's childhood; they were instead designed to elicit responses that corresponded to the YMCA's ideological imperatives. The first three questions required some sort of textual evidence (however scant), which meant that students would have had to search the Bible for possible clues to Jesus's health and vigor. The fourth question was problematic from a historical perspective—in that the Bible says nothing about Christ's physical features—but it made perfect sense for educators who wanted to rebut Heinrich Hoffman's "ideal" Jesus. The fifth and sixth questions were of an entirely different kind in that they foreshadowed the methodologies adopted by educators such as Cortland Myers and George Alexander. These questions used historical anachronisms to narrow the divide between the boy Jesus and American boys. Because the lessons had already established Jesus's adolescent vigor and virility, the answer to whether or not he would have joined a first-century gymnasium was clearly "yes." The final question made the

imitatio Christi infanti explicit. Given the lesson's trajectory, the logical response to "Why should boys exercise?" would have been straightforward: "To be like Jesus." What made the lesson so effective was that Parker had modernized the Gospels by overlaying the present onto the past. When YMCA boys looked to the adolescent Jesus, they were trained to see a manlier version of themselves.

In 1908, a sixteen-year-old Bible class teacher by the name of Harold Strong addressed the State Boys' Conference of Iowa, an annual gathering attended by representatives from YMCA branches scattered throughout the state. His speech, which was later excerpted and published in *Association Boys*, spelled out the difficulties that faced religious educators as they attempted to interest male adolescents in Bible study. Boys often involved themselves in the YMCA to gain access to its gymnasium and swimming pool, Strong claimed. They were less interested in Bible classes but accepted them as a means to an end because they wanted to participate in the YMCA's recreational activities. Strong believed that educators could make Bible study more compelling if they practiced a different tack: "If the Bible could be translated into twentieth century English we would get a great deal more of its real meaning. Jesus talked to the people in their own words. No one has ever failed by making a fact too clear and practical.... The Young Men's Christian Association classes are beginning to recognize this principle. Do not try 'to draw lessons,' but make the life of Jesus so real that to him and their lives changed."³⁷⁴ For Strong, the problem with the historical Jesus was that he was too historical; he did not move modern audiences because his words were not translated into modern parlance.

To rectify these errors, he called upon YMCA leaders to make Jesus's life relevant by making it applicable to "real life."³⁷⁵

The problem with Strong's speech had less to do with its content—his advice was hardly novel—and more to do with the complexities involved in religious instruction. Simply put, the children who attended Sunday schools and YMCA Bible classes were not a uniform mass. They were young and old children, urban and rural children; they were the children of the rich and children of the poor, children of immigrants and children of freed slaves; they were girls and boys, young women and young men. When these students studied the Bible, they were often divided into grades and classed by sex. Consequently, what worked for one class did not necessarily work for another. In order to make the Bible more "real and readable," as one teacher put it, religious educators had to take into account the age, gender, and intellectual maturity of their students and alter the historical record as they saw fit, juxtaposing modern America and ancient Palestine in order to explain (and explain away) the vast differences between the two worlds.³⁷⁶

Educators reasoned that an adult Jesus (even a Jesus who spoke "twentieth century English") would not appeal to some students because he was unlike them in so many ways. What children needed most was not one Jesus but many different ones. With historical probability as their guide, they began to grade Jesus as they had graded their classrooms and lesson plans. Infants and young children were exposed to a Christ child who played as they did while older children (especially boys) were introduced to an adolescent Jesus who was on the verge of adulthood. The Bible remained the same, but the childhood of Jesus evolved with time. It was protean because it was not strictly biblical, being composed of "probable" narratives that were then grafted onto scripture.

This meant that as students matured they grew into new conceptions of Christ that were designed for children their age. When, for instance, high school boys graduated from the YMCA's introductory classes, they put aside W. H. Davis's popular curriculum *Outline History of the Life of Christ for Boys' Bible Classes* (1903)—a textbook that turned Jesus's childhood into a lesson about his "[s]ympathy for human life"—and instead took up William Murray's *The Life and Works of Jesus According to St. Mark* (1900), a book that made no mention of the Christ child.³⁷⁷ The *imitatio Christi infanti* was simply no longer relevant for those who had left childhood behind. Once they matured, these students still pursued the *imitatio Christi*, but they dropped the *infanti* from the formulation as they had dropped other childish things.

Because he was adapted to suit the social and spiritual needs of children, the Christ child remained popular even as adult perceptions of American childhood evolved. He was an "ideal" child although the ideal was subject to change. He was a model child for adults interested in constructing model children. No longer held in check by anxieties related to sola scriptura, the young Jesus evolved with the times and thus served as a palimpsest of American childhood. He indexed the changing nature of religious instruction, the changing contours of biblical historiography, and the changing ways of modern children. For those who hoped to instill in young girls and boys a long lasting interest in Bible study, the Christ child was the link that brought scripture to life and made the person of Jesus much more personal.

²⁵¹ William Newell, "Christmas Address to the Children of the Parish, Dec. 25, 1852," in *Discourses and Poems of William Newell* (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1882): 175-176.

²⁵² Ibid., 175-176.

²⁵³ William B. Forbush, *The Travel Lessons on the life of Jesus* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1904): 8.

²⁵⁴ Alexander Macleod, *The Child Jesus and Other Talks to Children* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895): 1. Emphasis in original.

²⁵⁵ William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1914): 77. Horace Bushnell used the same terminology roughly fifty years earlier, referring to children as both "passive" and "plastic," especially when young. See Bushnell's *Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent Thereto* (Hartford: Edwin Hunt, 1847): 195, 208.

²⁵⁶ A. H. McKinney, *The Child for Christ: A Manual for Parents, Pastors and Sunday-School Workers, interested in the Spiritual Welfare of Children* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902): 38.

²⁵⁷ Jackson, 107.

²⁵⁸ "Book Reviews," *Hartford Seminary Record*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (May 1899), 244.

²⁵⁹ Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley, "Introduction," *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader*, eds. Levander and Singley (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 4.

²⁶⁰ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1869), 537. Emphasis mine.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 537.

²⁶² William Hone, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Buffalo, NY: H. A. Salisbury, 1824), x.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 35, 52-53, 62, 68, 90.

²⁶⁴ August Neander, *The Life of Jesus Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1856): 20.

²⁶⁵ John Cumming, *Lectures on Our Lord's Parables* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1854): 94. Emphasis in original.

²⁶⁶ This view remained popular throughout the century. For instance, in Austin Phelps's 1891 essay "Our Sacred Books," the author cited eight reasons for the Bible's narrative gaps: 1) events not discussed in scripture were unnecessary for Christian faith, 2) God did not intend to satisfy personal curiosity, 3) the Bible had to be a condensed, portable book comprehensible to both young and old, 4) God did not want to outpace "human development" since unfettered access to divine knowledge would overwhelm humanity with unbearable "mysteries," 5) God had provided his creations with reason, which would help them to discover biblical truth, 6) ignorance was a necessary component of personal faith, 7) spiritual realities could often not be understood, and 8) excessive knowledge (especially of the afterlife) might circumvent the otherwise "illimitable field of anticipation" in the heart of the believer. Austin Phelps, *My Note-Book: Fragmentary Studies in Theology and Subjects Adjacent Thereto* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891): 202-221. Those who, like Phelps, sought to justify a strict interpretation of sola Scriptura often cited John 14:2, a passage in which Jesus responded to his disciples' many questions with the answer, "If it were not so, I would have told you."

²⁶⁷ William H. Furness, *Jesus and His Biographers* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1838), 24.

²⁶⁸ Frederic Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1874; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1883), 25.

²⁶⁹ Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ: The Miracle of History* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1866), 33.

²⁷⁰ Furness, 76-77.

²⁷¹ Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 2.

²⁷² Furness, 77.

²⁷³ See Jeremy M. Rosen, "Minor Characters Have Their Day: The Imaginary and Actual Politics of a Contemporary Genre," *Contemporary Literature* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 173-174. See also David Cowart, *Literary Symbiosis: The Reconfigured Text in Twentieth Century Writing* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993).

²⁷⁴ According to Andrew Stout, the Gospels were "four inspired biographical sketches of the wonderful life of Jesus the Christ.... Each Gospel is so omissionsal, fragmentary, and supplementary to the others, that it is impossible to obtain a full, clear, and connected knowledge of Christ's life by studying either one of them, or, by studying any chronological combination of either two of them." *Chronology of Christ's Life* (Indianapolis, IN: Hiram Hadley, 1885), 5. For Lyman Abbott, the Gospels were "not biographies, but biographical memorabilia." *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life and Teachings* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1869), 3.

²⁷⁵ Neander, xxii.

²⁷⁶ Charles Beecher, *The Incarnation; or, Pictures of the Virgin and Her Son* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1849), 96, 156.

²⁷⁷ William Taylor, "The Boyhood of Jesus," *Harper's Young People*. Vol. 9 (1887), 102.

²⁷⁸ Farrar, 26.

²⁷⁹ Henry Ward Beecher, *The Life of Jesus, the Christ* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1896): 55.

²⁸⁰ Beecher, 56. This process can be seen in Richard Newton's *Leaves from the Tree of Life* (1874): "I wondered how Jesus played when he was a boy? and what the boys, who were his companions, thought of him? I wondered how he talked? and what he said? How he felt? and what he thought about himself, and about the world that he had come to save? I found it easy to ask myself these questions; but it was not so easy to answer them (42). After admitting that little could be known about the Christ child, Newton used Jesus's childhood experiences to supplement a sermon on obedience. See his *Leaves from the Tree of Life* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1874), 41-68.

²⁸¹ Beecher, 56.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ John Heyl Vincent, *Two Years with Jesus* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1867), 8.

From midcentury onward, this question was asked with increased regularity.

²⁸⁴ Thomas DeWitt Talmage, *From Manger to Throne* (1890; rpt., Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1893), 181.

²⁸⁵ Abbott, iii-v.

²⁸⁶ As D. A. Carson notes, "plenary" and "verbal" were often used interchangeably by those who saw no difference between the two terms. See his "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 64-66. For a general overview of biblical inspiration, see David R. Law's *Inspiration* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001).

²⁸⁷ Farrar, "Success and Failure of Exegesis," in *History of Interpretation* (London: Macmillan and Col. 1886), 4-6.

²⁸⁸ See James Stalker, *Imago Christi: The Example of Jesus Christ* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1889), 30.

²⁸⁹ Adolphe Monod, *The Childhood of Jesus*, trans. J. H. Myers (Chicago: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1889), 13.

²⁹⁰ A representative example is Edmond Stapfer's *Palestine in the Time of Christ* (1885), a passage that mirrors the sentiments shared by Twain's fellow travelers: "We walk through streets which can scarcely have altered in appearance since Jesus played in them as a child, or as a young man carried on His trade of carpenter. There is not a path in the neighbourhood which He must not often have trodden,—not a hill-top which He may not have climbed and made it a place of prayer." See *Palestine in the Time of Christ*. Trans. Annie Holmden (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1885), 36-37.

²⁹¹ Abbie Morrow, *The Old, Old Story of the Holy Child, Told Again for Children* (Cincinnati, OH: M. W. Knapp, 1900), 19.

²⁹² Beecher, 56.

²⁹³ Taylor, 102.

²⁹⁴ The educators Rush Rhees (a professor at Newton Theological Institution) and Charles Foster Kent (a Yale professor of biblical literature) both referred to the "pious imagination" in their writings. See Rush Rhees, *The Life of Jesus of Nazareth: A Study* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 57; Charles Kent, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 7, 9. In 1912, the educator Elvira J. Slack suggested something similar: "Now read John 1:35-39 very carefully and thoughtfully, *letting your imagination picture all that may lie behind the lines*, for it is the first day John and Jesus spent together." In lieu of historical surety, Slack encouraged children to imagine for themselves a quasi-historical narrative in order to make Jesus's life seem more "real." Elvira Slack, *Jesus: The Man of Galilee* (New York: National Board of the Young Womens Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1912), 32. Emphasis mine.

²⁹⁵ Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 28.

²⁹⁶ George Macdonald, *The Seaboard Parish* (1868; rpt. New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1876), 52-53.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

²⁹⁸ One minister encouraged parents and teachers to ignore Jesus's divinity until their children were older: "Let there be a little reticence about Christ's divinity before adolescence, otherwise the child thinks of Jesus as a monster, a sort of centaur, half-human and half-divine. Divinity to a child of 10 or 12 is an impossible conception. But bring in the divinity later." See Addison Foster, "Pedagogy in the Sunday-School," *The Christian Work and Evangelist*, Vol. 73, No. 1852 (August 1902), 227.

²⁹⁹ Sarah Stock, *The Child's Life of Our Lord* (London: Marcus Ward & Co., 1879), 8. Emphasis in original.

³⁰⁰ Louis Sweet, *The Birth and Infancy of Jesus Christ* (New York: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1907), 261. Sweet was a professor at the Bible Teachers' Training School of New York City, now New York Theological Seminary.

³⁰¹ Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 34.

³⁰² Louise Houghton outlined this argument in *The Life of Christ in Picture and Story* (1890):

How old was Jesus when he began to understand the difference between himself and other boys?.... We cannot tell. Only this we know: that all through his child-life he was constantly increasing in wisdom, and that this wisdom included not only a deep and ever-growing knowledge of God, but a wonderful understanding of human nature and of human events from what has been called the divine point of view. The more he knew God, the more he saw things as God sees them, but his knowledge of God was progressive and came to him as ours does by study, by prayer, by meditation, by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Only, as he always yielded to that influence, it came to him more rapidly and more perfectly than it does to us. But not for many years perhaps did he fully realize that he and his Father were one, any more than he realized that he was the representative man who should bear the sins of the whole world. (33-34)

³⁰³ Macleod, 2; Frederic Farrar, "Children, and the Child Christ," *The Sunday Magazine* (London: Isbister and Company, 1887), 114.

³⁰⁴ Taylor, 102.

³⁰⁵ Wilbur Crafts, "Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus," *The Preacher and Homiletic Monthly*, Vol. V, No. II (August 1881), 639-640.

³⁰⁶ Katharine Walker, *From the Crib to the Cross* (New York: Geo. A. Leavitt, 1869), 6.

³⁰⁷ Elvira Slack, *Jesus: The Man of Galilee* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 1911), 68-69. The educator Abbie Morrow used generic terms as well. In her book, Jesus was both "strong in spirit" and wise; he was loved by God; he loved "the house of God" and the Bible; and he was industrious, earnest, sorrowful, and obedient. See Abbie Morrow, *The Old, Old Story of the Holy Child, Told Again for Children* (Cincinnati, OH: M. W. Knapp, 1900), 24-30.

³⁰⁸ When it came to epistemological questions, educators who refused to extend the incarnation were more likely to argue that the young Jesus had wisdom beyond his years. In 1859, as stories about the Christ child were beginning to grow more common, the popular Victorian author Favell Mortimer imagined a Jesus who was more God-child than boy: "That dear child is ready to work whenever his parents command him. Yet it is HE by whom the heavens and the earth were made. When he looks at the wood and the nails in his parents' yard, does he think of the cross of *wood* on which he will one day be *nailed*?" (44). In later years, it became increasingly common to note such difference but not dwell on it. In Isabella Alden's *Stories and Pictures from the Life of Jesus*, for example, the author wrote: "[Jesus] was so unlike other children that he was 'filled with wisdom'" (11). See Favell Mortimer, *More About Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1859); Isabella Alden, *Stories and Pictures from the Life of Jesus* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886).

³⁰⁹ Josephine Pollard, *Young Folks' Bible in Words of Easy Reading* (New York: R. S. Peale & Company, 1889), 255.

³¹⁰ Cortland Myers, *The Boy Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Griffith & Rowland Press, 1908), 18.

³¹¹ The Methodist educator Edward Pell thought that "little children" needed stories that were even more simplistic. He believed that the facts of history—or "historical completeness," as he called it—would distract students and unnecessarily complicate classroom lessons. His desire was for children "to see Jesus as He appeared when He lived among men," and he was willing "to bend everything in my way to secure this end." Because he was writing for especially young scholars, he wanted his book to be a "picture of Jesus" that that they could grasp at a glance. This meant that he had to make his cultural correspondences as simple as possible in order to avoid confusion. To do so, he devised explicit parallelisms to highlight Jesus's interest in education: "When Jesus was six years old He began to go to school. The school was in the church or synagogue and the preacher was the teacher." Inventing two coequal binaries—church/synagogue and preacher/teacher—Pell likened a modern place of worship to an ancient Galilean to show how Jesus frequented the local "church" to learn from its "preacher," as did American girls and boys. See Edward Pell, *The Story of Jesus for Little People* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912), 5, 17.

³¹² Morrow, 24. Emphasis in original.

³¹³ James Stalker, *Imago Christi: The Example of Jesus Christ* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1889), 151. Stalker even argued that the Christ child studied his own life while he read scripture since the Old Testament provided a blueprint to his existence. He was, in this sense, an avid student of biocartography: "[I]t is easy in His words to see that He did follow His own course with intense interest in Old Testament prophecy, as in a chart" (161). The children's author George Weed suggested something similar, though he believed that Jesus was not conscious of his role as New Testament antitype: "When He was five years old He would begin, like other Jewish boys at that age, to read the Old Testament Scriptures—that part of the Bible which was written before He was born.... There he might read about Himself, without then understanding who was meant" (56). See George Weed, *A Life of Christ for the Young* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1898).

³¹⁴ Morrow, 26. Take this representative passage by Helen Hoyt: "Jesus probably went to school with the other Jewish boys, and studied Jewish history and law, from the books of the Bible." Or this one by Wilbur Crafts: "His mother taught him a great many things, especially about the Bible." See Helen Hoyt, *A Child's Story of the Life of Christ* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1902), 18.; Wilbur Crafts, "Boyhood of Jesus," *Talks to Boys and Girls about Jesus* (New York: I. K. Funk & Co., 1881), 85.

³¹⁵ Farrar, "Introduction" to *The Sweet Story of Old: A Life of Christ for Children*, by L. Haskell (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1904), xi.

³¹⁶ Hesba Stretton, *The Child's Life of Christ; or, The Wonderful Life* (1860; rpt. Philadelphia: John C. Winston & Co., 1896), 31.

³¹⁷ Annie White, *Talks About Jesus with Our Little Boys and Girls* (n.p.: Juvenile Publishing Co., 1897), 36. In *The Child's Life of Christ*, Hesba Stretton noted that Jesus remained "blameless" despite the "irksome" labor and "long, monotonous hours" (36). Abbie Morrow directed children's attention to the Christ child's work habits so as to teach obedience to parental authority: "The child who is obedient to his parents will quickly come when they call, unquestioningly go where they are sent, faithfully do as they are bid, and cheerfully fulfill all their parents' desire" (32). L. Haskell followed suit: "[W]e

know that all His work would be beautifully done; that He would never wated time in idle foolish talk, but listen to His father's teaching, and do His very bets to please him" (32-33).

³¹⁸ Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *Hurlbut's Life of Christ for Young and Old* (Chicago: National Educational Society, 1915), 93. According to Abbie Morrow, Jesus was an "industrious" lad who never "idle[d] away the hours" (28).

³¹⁹ Joseph Thompson, *Jesus of Nazareth, His Life for the Young* (), 80.

³²⁰ James R. Miller, *Personal Friendships of Jesus* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. Publishers, 1897), 3-4.

³²¹ Lillie E. Affolter and F. E. Belden, *Bible Object Lessons and Songs for Little Ones* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 36.

³²² Herbert W. Gates, *The Life of Jesus: A Manual for Teachers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 30.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 32.

³²⁴ Other examples show how easy it was to translate Jesus's childish activities into the generic equivalent of modern childhood. In *Mamma's Bible Stories* (1884), the children's author Lucy Wilson explained: "The Lord Jesus played on the green hills round His home, *as other children play*, and He learnt to read the Scriptures and very likely helped His mother Mary in her daiy work, or Joseph in his carpenter's shop." According to Charles Edwards Park, a Unitarian minister at Boston's First Church, Jesus and his friends played games that were "*not unlike our own*. They like to play with wet clay, making mud pies or birds and animals. They like to play wedding, when they would all form in a procession and go dancing and singing down the street, just as people did in real weddings." Lucy Wilson, *Mamma's Bible Stories* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1884), 153-154; Charles Edwards Park, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Boston: Unitarian Sunday-School Society, 1909), 7. Emphases mine.

³²⁵ Julia H. Johnston, "Lesson VII," *The Sunday School Journal and Bible Student's Magazine*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (May 1901), 367.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 368.

³²⁷ Wallace, *The Boyhood of Christ*, 24, 27.

³²⁸ Such methods remain common to this day. In the Sunday-school textbook *God's People & Me* (2008), for example, the author develops generic links between twenty-first-century children and the historical Jesus. One particular section—entitled "God Gives Me a Neighborhood to Live In"—encourages parents to read the following passage to their children: "Did you know that Jesus was a lot like you? He was your age once. He grew up in a family. He lived in a neighborhood. Let's talk about some ways that Jesus was just like you! After I say something about Jesus, say 'Just like me,' and follow my actions." Reprising a pedagogical methodology that came to prominence in the late nineteenth century, the text suggests that Jesus "was born," "grew big," "had friends," "could run," "was happy," "helped his mom," "helped his neighbors," "ate bread," "loves God," and "grew up." See Amy Houts, *God's People & Me: Boz's Big Book of Bible Fun* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008): 106. Interestingly, the phrases that relate to Jesus's physical body appear in the past tense; however, "loves God" remains in the present. Like so many earlier educators, Houts suggests that Jesus remains alive and well today (and continues to love), though he shed his human form long ago. For a book in

which the Christ child and his American counterpart are explicit doppelgangers, see Dandi Mackall and Jan Gilchrist, *A Friend from Galilee* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2004).

³²⁹ Cortland Myers, *The Boy Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Griffith & Rowland Press, 1908), 18-19.

³³⁰ Ibid., 19. In *The Boys' Life of Christ* (1905), William Forbush benefited from similar lexical inversions. Asking his readers if they would like to "to take a look into Jesus' schoolhouse," he wrote: "It looks like a country church in New England. It is a church, for the schools of these days were held in the meeting-houses, and, as I have said, the ministers were the school-teachers" (31; emphasis in original). Though he thereafter explained that this "church" would "not remind you much of an American schoolhouse" (and examined some of the cultural differences between the two), Forbush profited from this intertwining of similarity and difference, retaining historical probability yet veiling first-century cultural mores in nineteenth-century terms.

³³¹ Ibid., 25-26.

³³² "Editorial," *The Sunday-School World*, Vol. 41, No. 6 (June 1901), 183.

³³³ Philip E. Howard, "Working with Boys," *The Record of Christian Work*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Feb. 1902), 91.

³³⁴ While educational literature abounds with lessons based on Jesus's childhood, there are few recorded instances of children's responses to such lessons. One of the plainest comes from a biography of Frederic Farrar written by his son Reginald. In it, the young Farrar reproduced several "typical" letters that his father had received following the publication of his best-selling book *The Life of Christ*. A letter written in 1877 by an English physician demonstrates the extent to which adults manufactured resemblances between their children and the Christ child:

"A few months ago it pleased the Lord to take from our home a sweet little boy of five years. He was taken from us suddenly, and one of the comforts we had given to us in his removal was the interest he took in your 'Life.' It happened in this way. In the evening his mother read a portion of it, and the next morning after I left home to attend to my professional duties she took our little darling to her own room and reread to him in child's language the portion of the previous evening. It awakened in his young mind a remarkable interest for one so young, and questions like these were put by him to his mother: 'Then was Jesus once a little boy like me?' 'Did Jesus play with marbles as I do?' 'Was Jesus a real Falegname' (carpenter)? 'Why were the Jews so unkind to Jesus?'"

As the letter explains, the translation into "child's language" surprises the boy—by compelling him think of Jesus as a child—and makes these rejoinders possible. See Reginald Farrar, *The Life of Frederic William Farrar* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company Publishers, 1904), 205-206.

³³⁵ "Editorial," *The Sunday-School World*, 183-184.

³³⁶ Not surprisingly, books that sold well on both sides of the Atlantic introduced readers to Jesuses that were generic enough to resemble both American and British schoolchildren. See Josephine Pollard, *Young Folks' Bible* (Chicago: R. S. Peale & Company, 1890), 255; and Hesba Stretton, *Young People's Life of Christ* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1903), 40. There were, not surprisingly, instances in which

British educators transformed the Christ child into a young English boy. See *The Holy Childhood: Conversations on the Earliest Portion of the Gospel Narrative* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1877), 72-73; and Sarah Stock, *The Child's Life of Our Lord* (London: Marcus War & Co., 1879), 39-40.

³³⁷ As early as 1829, a German theologian made this exact argument, suggesting that the *imitatio* was more difficult for women because Jesus was a man: "His character is thoroughly manly, and therefore a model for the other sex only so far as a pure humanity belongs also to woman, and because she often possess the most uncorrupt feeling for genuine manliness." See Karl Hase, *The Life of Jesus. A Manual for Academic Study*, trans. James Freeman Clarke (Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, 1860), 58.

³³⁸ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 1.

³³⁹ Edward B. Kaighn, "The Religious Education of Boys," *The Aims of Religious Education: The Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Religious Education Association* (Chicago: Executive Office of the Association, 1905), 302. Emphasis in original.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 303-304.

³⁴¹ Walter Elliott, *The Life of Jesus Christ* (New York: The Columbus Press, 1908), 114.

³⁴² See chapter three of Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003); chapter four of Stephen Nichols, *Jesus: Made in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008); and chapter seven of Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

³⁴³ See Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 97. The phrase "the manly boy" appears frequently in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literatures of religious education.

³⁴⁴ Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1925), 11.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 11-12, 35.

³⁴⁹ For more on the subject of manliness and masculinity, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 19.

³⁵⁰ *Boys' Work in the Local Church* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 80-81.

³⁵¹ See Forbush, "A Preliminary Study of the Condition and Needs of Societies of Christian Endeavor," *Work with Boys*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (April 1904), 113-125.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵³ American educators took great pains to define "boy's religion" for their readers. As well as the sources listed below, see George E. Dawson, "A Boy's Religion," *The Jubilee of Work for Young Men in North America* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1901), 176-182; Forbush, "A Preliminary Study," *Work with Boys*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (April 1904), 121-123; Edward B. Kaighn, "The Religious

Education of Boys," *The Aims of Religious Education: The Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Religious Education Association* (Chicago: Executive Office of the Association, 1905), 302-304; *Boys' Work in the Local Church* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 6-162; 61-72; Norman E. Richardson and Ormond E. Loomis, *The Boy Scout Movement: Applied by the Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 374-388.

³⁵⁴ George W. Fiske, *Boy Life and Self-Government* (New York: Association Press, 1921), 242.

³⁵⁵ The commissioners for the Men and Religion Forward Movement reported: "Even the reading of a few verses of the Bible in schools seems to be a gradually passing custom.... [T]he whole range of religious education of the youth of the nation is specifically the task of the churches. Wherever the churches, working through the family or Sunday-school, do not do it, it does not get done." See *Boys' Work in the Local Church* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 105-106.

³⁵⁶ Theodore Soares, "Making the Bible Real to the Boy," *Boy Training*, ed. John Alexander (New York: Association Press, 1912), 118-119.

³⁵⁷ Quoted in Addison P. Foster, "Pedagogy in the Sunday School," *The Christian Work and Evangelist* (16 April 1902), 227.

³⁵⁸ J. Harry Miller, "A Boy's Religion," *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, School, Church and State*, ed. Mary H. Weeks (Washington, DC: The National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations, 1914), 65-66.

³⁵⁹ Charles Gilkey, "The Adolescent Boy and Religion," *Men and Religion* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1911), 64.

³⁶⁰ Foster, 227.

³⁶¹ Gilkey, 64-65.

³⁶² See Frank O. Beck, *Marching Manward: A Study of the Boy* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1913), 111-141.

³⁶³ Foster, 227.

³⁶⁴ "Boys as Bible Class Teachers," *Association Boys*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (February 1905), 39, 41; "Training Boys for Bible Class Teachers," *Association Boys*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (Dec. 1904), 235.

³⁶⁵ W. S. Hevenor, quoted in Edgar M. Robinson, "Some Bible Class Difficulties," *Association Boys*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Feb. 1904), 18.

³⁶⁶ "Boys as Bible Class Teachers," 41. For so many educators, the visible piety endorsed by nineteenth-century didactic literature was often deemed unnatural, unreal, and lifeless. Writing for the YMCA, George Fiske criticized those who used catechisms in their classrooms:

We today can see only a tragedy in the well-meant but cruel custom of forcing mere children to learn by rote the Westminster Catechism.... I happened to notice, recently, a young man of perhaps twenty-five studying this catechism, as he sat directly in front of me on the train. It was well adapted to his adult intelligence and probably did him good. But to give such spiritual food to small boys was as inappropriate as to feed lobster to babies; or possibly hardtack, to use a more accurate figure. (241-242)

³⁶⁷ Lloyd E. Harter, "Two View Points of Boys' Work," Vol. 3, No. 2 (April 1904), 65.

³⁶⁸ Robinson, 13.

³⁶⁹ The painting was also commonly referred to as *Christ Among the Doctors*. The "Head of Boy Christ" (as the detail from Hoffman's painting was sometimes called) graced the first issue of the *Journal of Adolescence*. In its opening column, the editor Albert Yoder claimed, "We have used as a frontispiece, the most ideal conception of early youth, Hofmann's painting of Christ at the time of his visit to the temple." See Albert Yoder, *Journal of Adolescence*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Sept. 1900), 1. "This is one of the most popular pictures ever painted, and deservedly so," explained the religious educator Albert Bailey. "It represents the boy Jesus at his most winsome age; it is dignified, referent, and the original is striking and harmonious in color. There is an earnestness and a spirituality in the face of this lad that marks him at once as an ideal creation. There is no other boy-Christ so beautiful as this." See Albert Bailey, *The Gospel in Art* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1916), 103. At the 1893 World's Fair, the Continental Stained Glass Company of Boston exhibited a four by eight foot stained-glass reproduction of Hoffman's painting that sold for \$1,000. See "Stained Glass Exhibit," *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition*, ed. John Flinn (Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893), 242.

³⁷⁰ "The Manly Side of the Life of Christ," *Association Boys*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (August 1903), 139-140.

³⁷¹ See "A Series of Practical Talks," *Association Boys*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (December 1902), 211.

³⁷² "The Manly Side of the Life of Christ," *Association Boys*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (August 1903), 138.

³⁷³ Pitt F. Parker, quoted in "The Manly Side of the Life of Christ," 138.

³⁷⁴ Harold Strong, "A Boy's Idea of Bible Study," *Association Boys*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April 1908), 93-94.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁷⁶ Forbush, *Boys' Life of Christ*, 14.

³⁷⁷ W. H. Davis, *Outline History of the Life of Christ for Boys' Bible Classes* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1903), 15. A writer for *Association Boys* explained the graded system: "For boys of twelve and thirteen years of age no more popular or suitable course on the Life of Christ has appeared than that by Davis, but for boys of the high school age the Life and Works of Jesus, by Murray, is more suitable, while for still more mature minds, still other treatments on the same theme are recommended." See Edgar Robinson, "Bible Study Examinations," *Association Boys*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (Dec. 1904), 201; see also William Murray, *The Life and Works of Jesus According to St. Mark* (1900; rpt. New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1906).

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