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Bridging the "Chasm of Doubt": Fictive Epistemological Strategies in Nineteenth-Century Children's Bibles

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Abstract

Bridging the "Chasm of Doubt": Fictive Epistemological Strategies in Nineteenth-Century Children's Bibles

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The "conflict thesis" that science and religious are inherently incompatible was by no means taken for granted by nineteenth-century scientists, religious thinkers, or cultural commentators. In fact, scientific exploration and religion happily coexisted for years, partially through the efforts of science writers who framed their potentially incendiary claims with narrative acknowledgements of a Great Creator. This paper examines the late-nineteenth century tension between scientific and religious epistemologies through the lens of children's religious education, claiming that children's Bible adaptations can be read as a lexicon of coping strategies through which religious adults attempted to gain control of the scientific threat to their faith. In short, by employing the techniques of fiction, writers of children's Bibles encouraged their child readers to engage with fiction in an imaginative register, diverting cosmological questions by encouraging children to see themselves and their relationship with God as porous, open, and accessible to a fantastical hyperreality.

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On February 4, 2014, science educator Bill Nye, of PBS Kids fame, debated the CEO of the Answers in Genesis Creation Museum, Ken Ham. The debate was spurred by a viral video produced by idea tank Big Think, in which Nye argues, per his title, that "Creationism Is Not Appropriate For Children" [*sic*]. Published on Big Think's website on March 2, 2012, the video was predictably adopted into a media frenzy, spurring popular coverage by news outlets CNN, ABC, *Slate*, and *The Huffington Post*, as well as commentary from journalists, educators, and others.[1] Surrounding the debate, hosted by the National Public Radio, countless media outlets have exploded, all subtitled, "Creation vs. Evolution."

It is an old debate—at least a century old, in fact, although the science has changed. Several commentators chastised Nye for getting involved in what they see as a futile enterprise, an argument in which the gladiators are fighting two different battles. Anyone watching the debate will notice Mr. Nye's obvious frustration with Ham's worldview, so incompatible as it is with his own. The religious Right, too, seems insistent on an adversarial approach to cosmology and science. Accustomed to studying the transmission of ideas over centuries, we may not be surprised that popular culture is reprising the exact same debates, using almost the same rhetoric, a full hundred and fifty-

[1] Examples include Peter Dykstra, Emmy-winning journalist of science and ecology; Ann Reid, executive direction of the National Center for Science Education; and Michael Weisberg, University of Pennsylvania philosophy professor and faculty affiliate of Cognitive Neuroscience (see Lombrozo).

four years, for example, after Huxley debated Wilberforce.[2] What is striking about the popular interest in the tension between creationism and evolutionary theory, both in the nineteenth century and the twenty-first, is the dichotomous language used to describe these issues. Are we still framing religion and science in the same terms? Has our conversation changed at all since the mid-nineteenth century? In his 1856 treatise *The Bible and Science,* "true conservative" and classicist Tayler Lewis writes, "The chasm of doubt is opening wider and wider. It must somehow be closed, and by materials, too, from the Scriptural side" (14).[3] The "chasm" to which Lewis refers is a nascent religious hesitance, a relatively new tension between alternative ways of understanding the world that had for years been united. His treatise aims to debunk the myth that science and religion might happily coexist, closing the chasm of doubt not by uniting scientific and religious epistemologies, but by eradicating science as a viable threat.

As Lewis's book and Bill Nye's video indicate, anxieties over the progression of science and the fate of faith have at their root an emphasis on the future. In fact, NPR's debate, before it became a "Creation vs. Evolutionism" standoff, actually began with Nye's video emphasizing which cosmology was appropriate *for children*:

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[2] Huxley's debate with Wilberforce, too, garnered this kind of phenomenal attention; it has become nearly mythic as one of the most public and sensational conflicts over evolution, although its legend as a scientific watershed has been reconsidered, for example, by John Hedley Brooke.

[3] For more information on Lewis's political and religious influence, see Blau, Joseph L.

> And I say to the grown-ups, if you want to deny evolution and live in your—in your—world that's completely inconsistent with everything we observe in the universe, that's fine. But don't make your kids do it, because we *need them*. We need scientifically literate voters and taxpayers for the future. ("Creationism is Not Appropriate For Children")

Ham's video, too, focused on the harmful effects of teaching children that "they came from slime" (Ham). The persistence not only of the issue of cosmology but of how competing cosmologies should be presented to the young is not surprising. Fear for the coexistence of these competing forms of knowledge stems from an underlying fear for the religious health of future generations. Thus, this epistemological friction finds a home in the writing for and education of children. The anxiety of the late-nineteenth-century religious practitioners shows up, for example, in the Bibles they wrote for their children. Just as science was "beginning to suggest systems of causality that had little to do with the Bible," children's Bibles became a viable outlet through which to ensure the survival of religious practices, reflecting pious adults' reactions to challenged and changing dogma (Rauch 14). In a sense, these Bibles become a lexicon of coping strategies through which adult Bible writers, claiming their texts as sacred, attempted to gain control over the "chasm of doubt."[4]

I.

[4] Bottigheimer explores the phenomenon of children's Bible authors presenting their work as translation rather than adaptation further (5).

Of course, to contemporary readers, this chasm is taken for granted. "In the modern period," writes psychological anthropologist T.M. Luhrmann, religious belief "comes to carry its referential sense from the possibility of nonbelief….People know that there are other people who do not believe or who believe differently" (377). In other words, religion has become dependent on the non-religious. Similarly, theorizing contemporary secularism, Charles Taylor explains:

> belief in God, or in the transcendent in any form, is contested; it is an option among many; it is therefore fragile; for some people in some milieus, it is very difficult, even 'weird'…What had to happen for this kind of secular climate to come about? First, there had to develop a culture that marks a clear division between the 'natural' and the 'supernatural,' and second, it had to come to seem possible to live entirely within the natural. (Taylor 49, 50)

This kind of binary—belief or nonbelief—is fairly arbitrary. As Taylor carefully notes, a distinction between the immanent (lower, 'secular') order and the transcendent (religious, supernatural) order is not only distinctly Western but also relatively new. Indeed, the contemporary distinction between forms of belief does not exist in nineteenth-century writing. As George Levine points out in his essay "Defining Knowledge," the division between science and religion in the Victorian era is a hazy one at best, subject to a rich cultural context that includes other factors: economic, sexual, gendered, empirical, and so on. Levine rejects the popular nostalgic representation of scientists as pure radicals upending religious dogma: "Allowing for the significance and power of the mystery while at the same time claiming imperial sway over all of 'nature,' scientists could

remain fairly comfortably within traditional social and spiritual organizations and at the same time employ the rationalist methods of revolutionaries dealing with stars or the ether or bacteria" (22).

In fact, scientific and religious epistemologies in both England and America happily coexisted for years—partially through the efforts of scientific writers of the early-nineteenth century, who, in order to soften the cosmological blow of their discoveries, mitigated their claims with what Alan Rauch, in a catalog of Victorian science books for children, calls "digressions on the glory of God" (14).[5] To justify introducing knowledge that challenged Judeo-Christian cosmology—the concept of deep time, a new understanding of Earth's geological foundation, species change—they used narrative interruptions to point to divine design as the source of scientific complexities. Consider, for example, Robert Chambers's wildly popular *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, published in 1844 to the chagrin of professional scientists.[6] Attempting to translate hard science into a popularly consumable form, Chambers bolsters his argument with an insistence on Providential design: "From the mandibles of insects to the hand of man, all is seen to be in the most harmonious relation to the things of the outward world, thus clearly proving that *design* presided in the creation of the whole—design again implying a designer, another word for a CREATOR" (324, emphasis original). These assertions characterize a trend in early scientific writing, an impulse to house science

[5] See also Bottigheimer 163.

[6] See Yeo for a further discussion of scientists' reactions to Chambers's treatise.

within religious epistemology as evidence of Providence, thus assuaging public anxieties over new knowledge.

Perhaps these reassuring gestures were a factor in the censure Chambers received from the professional scientific community.[7] Nonetheless, his example reflects the cultural position that insisted on unity between religious and scientific epistemologies and the mid-century impulse to defend that unity against increasing friction. Such tactics trickled down into other forms of consumable culture, even children's culture. Consider, for example, William D. Swan's *The Instructive Reader; or A Course of Reading in Natural History, Science and Literature*, published "For the Use of Schools" in 1848, just four years after *Vestiges*. The early textbook, only one of many in its class, gives credit to the London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for its inspiration, and begins with Lesson I, "The Universe": "We understand by the word Universe, the entire system of things which God has created" (iv, 9). Like Chambers, Swan insists on the harmony of the universe, and presents God as the ultimate Author:

> The more we examine [the earth, the air, and the waters], and the wider our knowledge of them extends, the more we learn of the wisdom, power, and providential care of our Maker and Preserver.
>
> The slightest attention will convince us that the same care has been bestowed on the structure of the most minute beings…We cannot look anywhere without

[7] See Yeo, 5-6.

> finding something to admire, something to astonish and delight us, and something to make us sensible of the goodness and bounty of God. (23)

While texts for adults, like Chambers', avoid naming the tension, here we have a children's text making explicit, even while explaining away, the difficulty of uniting these two worldviews. Unlike Chambers, Swan directly confronts the tension between his scientific lessons and his religious asides:

> As you [students] advance in years and understanding, you will be able to examine for yourself the evidences of the Christian religion, and be convinced, on rational grounds, of its divine authority. At present, such inquiries would demand more study, and greater powers of reasoning than your age admits. It is your part, therefore, till you are capable of understanding the proofs, to believe your parents and teachers, that the Holy Scriptures contain a true history of facts [...]. (222)[8]

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[8] Similarly, writing of the most popular textbook, the McGuffey readers, Gorn writes, "The students who read these pages a century ago were invited to engage in an act of faith that education would elevate them morally, refine them culturally, and advance them socially" (29). Gorn, like Swan, emphasizes that this pedagogy encouraged children to "trust the process," to table their questions and their intellectual resistance until their educations were complete. Further, that some evangelical families "still insist on using the readers today, especially the original edition" reflects the persistence of these religious-pedagogical issues (Gorn 32).

Aside from a scattering of statements such as this one, *The Instructive Reader* is primarily focused on science. Although it does not go into the thorny questions of evolution, it does emphasize that "fundamental element of Paleyan natural theology: the assumption that a scientific look at the material world will reveal its divine sources" (Levine 20-21). Thus, emphasizing "proofs" and "powers of reasoning," Swan promises that good students of science will, in time, accept the unity between science and faith.[9]

Of course, as the Nye/Ham debate proves, this "harmony" could not persist forever. With a growing popular awareness of basic scientific principles (and of the expansion of science as a field) came the need to either unify the discourses of science and faith or to embrace one and reject the other. The latter half of the nineteenth century, according to Rauch, dramatizes this struggle through what he terms "scientific didacticism," the "use of scientific subjects for moral and religious instruction of children" (14).[10] Like popular science writing for adults, these texts attempted to unite science and morality, making science friendly to Christian principles through instruction. Such efforts were met by the religious community with little enthusiasm, however, if not outright rejection.

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[9] Further, that the Philadelphia-based publishing house responsible for Swan's work credits the London Society reflects a clear transatlantic cooptation of these unifying tactics.

[10] See Rauch for specific examples of other science texts.

In fact, if the specter of religious backlash haunts scientific writing through narrative nods to God's glory, no reciprocal gesture appears in children's Bibles. Chambers and his contemporaries' attempts to "play nice" were not always met with approval. *The Bible and Science* author Tayler Lewis, among others, actively *disliked* such efforts, insisting that the claims of harmony "ought to satisfy no mind; for when examined closely, [they were] found to be but a string of empty truisms" whose false accords with Christian doctrine had been "made out almost wholly from the side of science" (14). That is, if "digressions on the glory of God" were science writers' attempts to bridge a forming epistemological gap, we seem to find no parallel narrative strategy in Biblical adaptations. Indeed, whether due to their reduced form or the assumption that their readers were ignorant naïfs, children's Bibles stoically ignore questions of *how*, and *why* until 1923, with Hendrik Willem Van Loon's highly controversial *The Story of the Bible*.[11]

[11] Van Loon's Bible was the first widely distributed Bible to explicitly acknowledge alternative worldviews. Although in 1922 Van Loon was awarded the very first Newbery Medal for *The Story of Mankind* (1921), the following year would see a massive negative response from religious circles after *The Story of the Bible* (1923), because it recognized "a bitter warfare between those who held the [Bible] to be of Divine origin, and those who regarded it merely as an account of certain historical events" without choosing a side (vii-viii). Van Loon also repeatedly situates his Biblical stories within their socio-historical context, often limiting his claims to what early Jews believed. The timing of

In her formative study on children's bibles, Ruth Bottigheimer explains why the eighteenth century saw no major changes in Bibles' treatments of sticky subjects like the Creation or the working of miracles: "Because the scientific revolution was one of method as well as one of concepts, some time would elapse before it gave birth to a new epistemology" (166). In other words, the methodological shifts of the eighteenth century delayed a widespread adoption of Enlightenment thought into children's religious texts. This conjecture is plausible enough; yet Bottigheimer largely overlooks the time at which this new epistemology *did* emerge. Despite the impressive scope of her study, she seems hesitant to discuss science and its impact on religious writing. Throughout her book, she minimizes its influence, claiming simultaneously that "children's Bible content remained unaffected by change and development in scientific thought until at least a century after the scientific revolution" (179) and that Bible writers changed miraculous content "not because of the scientific revolution, but because of the generalized shift away from the Old Testament at the time" (168). While these declarations about the relative obscurity of science in the eighteenth century are consistent with others' research, like Rauch's, Bottigheimer's study is silent on the nineteenth-century fascination with science. If it took a century for the scientific revolution to have an effect on popular epistemology, how did that effect operate when it did occur? By the mid-nineteenth century, as Rauch demonstrates, the large-scale effects of science can no longer be ignored.

Van Loon's Bible is also particularly significant because of its proximity to the Scopes Trial (1925), which orbited the issue of teaching evolution in public schools.

In the adult sphere, pressure from science manifested in the mostly German "higher criticism" of the early nineteenth century, in books such as David Strauss's *The Life of Jesus* and Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, famously translated by George Eliot in 1846 and 1854, respectively. Books like Strauss's submitted the spiritual and mystical elements of the Bible to historical research and rational explication—and, crucially, both did so by ultimately viewing faith through the imaginative register. For example, Feuerbach's book claims that religion is an external conception of humankind's internal nature—in other words, what we might consider an externalized manifestation of the imagination.[12] Strauss's three-volume book denies the divinity of Jesus by reading the biblical texts as *myths*. That is, he does the reverse of what children's Bible writers do: rather than approaching fiction for the use of religion, he urges his readers to consider religion *as* fiction—or rather, to embrace the fiction inherent in texts like the Bible for the purpose of a more pure spirituality that might be consistent with scientific understanding. Most importantly, Strauss's argument rests on the *language*—not simply the content, but the form—of the Bible; for example: "It is moreover inconsistent and arbitrary to refer the dress in which the events of the Old Testament are clothed to poetry, and to preserve the events themselves as historical;

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[12] See, for example, Feuerbach's chapters IV. And XII., "The Mystery of the Incarnation; or, God as Love, as a Being of the Heart" (43-48) and "The Omnipotence of Feeling, or the Mystery of Prayer" (119-124) Feuerbach also touches on the importance of Creation to Judaism (XI:111-118).

much rather do the particular details and the dress in which they appear, constitute a whole belonging to the province of poetry and mythus" (55). In other words, the form of the Bible—narrative poetry—implies a mythical function. By identifying poetry *with* myth, Strauss's book prefigures the narrative tools I will discuss further; we can see this same association between aesthetic narrative qualities and the imaginative register into which religious adults invite their children.

For Strauss, fiction does not necessarily invalidate the Bible; it simply invalidates the Bible's historical validity: "In every series of legends, especially if any patriotic or religious party interest is associated with them, as soon as they become the subject of free poetry or any other literary composition, some kind of fiction will be intentionally mixed up with them" (85). Nonetheless, *The Life of Jesus,* to no great surprise, led to a huge sensation, with reviews calling it "absolute blasphemy and infidelity"[13]. Further, the book split the community of higher critics into fundamentalists who maintained biblical inerrancy and historical accuracy and naturalists who sought to do forensic and archeological work to prove the existence of miracles and the precise chronology of biblical events, an endeavor that continues to this day. Although these thinkers were primarily German, just like the Bibles that Bottigheimer mentions, the hype surrounding Strauss's books and others' that came after it shows how obviously science *was* on the public mind across Europe and America.

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[13] See "VIII.-The life of Jesus, Critically Examined," which appeared in *The English Review* in 1846.

By the 1870s, the friction between religion and science was being explicitly acknowledged, at least on the side of science. American historians and scientists Andrew Dickson White and John William Draper, for example, directly voiced the increasing strain with their books *The Warfare of Science* (White) and *The History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (Draper), both published in 1874. Draper, who responded mostly to issues of Catholicism, spoke at the British Association meeting in 1860, to be followed so notoriously by the skirmish between Bishop Wilberforce and Huxley. His book describes the process by which religion and science became, according to him at least, distinct. Similarly, White's book argues for the so-called "conflict thesis" that there is an inherent incompatibility between the two fields of thought with such chapter titles as "From Magic to Chemistry and Physics" and "From Miracles to Medicine." Each of White's claims rests on the distinction between a pre-secular and a secular epistemology. The conflict thesis, which has clearly held sway long enough to dominate the debate between Bill Nye and Ken Ham, can be said to have begun with books like these.[14]

It is this crucial time period that so strongly reflects the epistemological tensions between scientific and religious worldviews. Before White and Draper would acknowledge an all-out "war" between the two, there had to be a transition. Between the

[14] Science historians Ronald Numbers and David Lindberg, in fact, credit mass-media sensation such as NPR's for perpetuating the conflict thesis. See "Beyond War and Peace: A Reappraisal of the Encounter between Christianity and Science". *Church History* (Cambridge University Press) **55** (3): 338–354.

nods to God we find throughout Chambers (1844) and the animosity of White's later work, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896) rests a cultural landscape through which religious and scientific adults attempted to cling to unity. Additionally, the 1860s and 1870s brought about massive changes in public education, complete with arguments about how children should be taught both religion and science. As always, the political and ideological conflicts of adults trickled down to their concerns for childhood.

The ways in which children's Bibles were reinterpreted, repackaged, and revised, then, can be read as Victorian Bible authors' attempts to cope with and compensate for the advances of science. In short, many of these Bibles invite children to engage with them *emotionally* rather than intellectually, both establishing the God of said Bibles as a friend and trustworthy confidant and encouraging an inviting, fantastical mode of religious engagement, ultimately becoming tools through which children can invest in the aesthetics of faith without questioning cosmology. This kind of emotional investment can be envisioned as an epistemology of the imagination, or what Luhrmann calls an "epistemological double-register" (372). Rather than confronting scientific epistemology by, for example, attempting to explain Biblical miracles *with* science,[15] these writers choose a deliberately fictive aesthetic. Considering an epistemology of the imagination,

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[15] Beginning in the twentieth century, religious authorities do attempt to use science to explain, for example, the Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17-14:29); overall, however, children's Bibles avoid such discussions. See Bottigheimer 169.

we might view the narrative techniques of these Bibles as a literary form of make-believe, an as-if epistemological tool through which multiple ways of knowing the world could coexist.

II.

In order to fully articulate the double purpose of these narrative strategies, I turn to an unlikely source. With her recent article "A Hyperreal God and Modern Belief: Toward an Anthropological Theory of Mind," T.M. Luhrmann touches on the matrix of reality, fantasy, and belief in a seemingly disparate context: current evangelical Christianity. Although Luhrmann focuses on the contemporary moment and on the faith practices of an *adult* religious group—not on historical questions of science, pedagogy, or childhood—her theory nonetheless resonates with any discussion asserting (or questioning) the distinctions between multiple epistemologies, particularly within the context of examining child readership. In summary, Luhrmann argues that because evangelical Christians live with a "public sense of doubt"—they are aware that much of the world subscribes to alternative ways of thinking—they use make-believe as a tool through which to enact their faiths. That is, they engage in faith practices that resemble make-believe in order the encourage the suspension of disbelief, both their own and others'. Examples include "date nights" with God, public and outspoken prayer, and theological writing that explicitly frames religious faith as a fairy tale that is "neither straightforwardly real and not transparently fictional" (381). Luhrmann calls this practice an "as-if engagement" that "encourage[s] a deliberately playful, imaginative, fantasy-filled experience of God" (372). The "self-conscious use of play to manage doubt," she

continues," allows people to straddle what they know to be competing epistemological commitments" (380, 383).

Because the traditional nineteenth-century religious mindset was under a series of threats, it called for techniques such as the one Luhrmann describes. To name a few of these threats: Chambers's book *Vestiges* (1844), as I have mentioned, popularized natural history and species transmutation; Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-1833) challenged the belief that the world is 6,000 years old, thus tampering with a literal interpretation of the Bible's creation story;[16] George Combe's *Constitution of Man* (1847) claimed that man was subject to the same natural laws as all of nature, challenging the orthodox belief that God ordained Adam above all flora and fauna; perhaps most dangerously, Herbert Spencer coined the expression "survival of the fittest," simultaneously threatening the idea of Providence, popularizing Darwinian evolution, and, in *The Principles of Psychology* (1855), presenting the human mind in biological framework rather than the house of a divine soul; lastly, of course, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) has come to be understood as the single most influential text

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[16] A few early Bibles, like Carey's, provide specific dating for their texts: "It was in the year of the world 1656 before Christ 2346 and the 600th of Noah's age, that he and his family, and several kinds of animals, as God had commanded, entered into the ark" (24). Almost no Bibles after this one give specific dates until Van Loon's Bible, which denies Biblical chronology.

that posed a threat to Christianity.[17] These "competing epistemological commitments" demanded response; in a sense, the contemporary evangelical double-register has a nascent ancestor in nineteenth-century children's Bibles. Secular children's texts over the latter half of the century were meant to turn children's minds "toward a contemplation and acceptance of material reality and away from the more abstract realm of theology"; at the same time, despite being nominally secular, newly compulsory public education utilized religious instruction, and Sunday Schools were pervasive. Because of this cultural fabric of religious influence, children's Bibles were in a unique position to, in Luhrmann's words, "allow people to straddle" alternative ways of thinking (Rauch 16).

What "alternatives," then, were Victorians facing in response to popular science texts like those above? Considering the widespread influence of popular-science texts, an educated American or English citizen interested in passing knowledge down to children would have had to confront the questions Chambers tries so hard to avoid, namely: If evolution is responsible for human development, what role does God play? Is he as omnipotent as Judeo-Christian tradition has always presented him? Is the biblical understanding of Creationism consistent with geological evidence? Considering the evolutionary links between species, are humans distinct from animals? Lastly, understanding advances in chemistry and meteorology, how do miracles occur? Of

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[17] Of course, Darwin's status in popular imagination as *the* voice of dissent against Christianity is largely inaccurate. In fact, many popular science texts sold far more copies than *Origin* did. See Tebbel 291-293.

course, many of these questions are linked to specific scientific branches or to specific works; taken together, however, they represent some broad areas of inquiry that hint at a tension between ways of knowing the world. A scientific approach to knowledge, by its very nature, challenges the traditional religious epistemology that children's Bibles—in fact, all Bibles—propagate. If children are to carry on the future, scientific and religious questions become particularly crucial for their instruction.

Following the tradition of German "higher criticism," some nineteenth-century Bibles attempted to confront potential questions, for example by providing "meteorological-geographical-geological explanations" for miracles, but these texts were primarily circulating in German and Swiss Protestant circles (Bottigheimer 169). What, then, of the most widely circulated Anglo-American religious texts for children? How did they attempt to cope with increasing cosmological conflict? Although miracles, through a connection to the mystical or magical, defy a scientific understanding of the world, they remain prevalent in mid-nineteenth-century children's Bibles. This does not necessarily suggest, as Bottigheimer argues, that Bible writers were not *aware* of scientific challenges to their stories; instead, these Bibles use fantastic language, a friendly, intimate God, and what I will call typological impositions of unity to invite children to think of them through an imaginative fictional register. This fictive engagement, however, much like make-believe, does not constitute simple fantasy. Instead, through the use of this "make-believe," the Bibles provide opportunities for child readers to engage in religious behavior without "choosing sides" between faith and science.

Although children's Bibles had circulated in both England and America beginning in the eighteenth century, the Bible storybooks of the mid-nineteenth century arrived amongst a publishing landscape rife with religious texts, especially ones written for children. Discussing Protestant publishing in America, for example, John Tebbel outlines the massive impact of children's religious literature on both sides of the Atlantic:

> Whatever evangelical effect the [American Tract] Society's publications may have had, they exercised influence on the book trade in a variety of ways. The children's books, which came in all shapes and sizes, virtually revolutionized that market. Illustrated with woodcuts and attractively packaged in bright paper wrappers, these books were extensions of the toy book trade established by Newbery and others. (1: 514-515)

Religious publishing was, very simply, a mammoth economic force. In 1855, American Sunday School Union alone generated $248, 604.75, the third most successful religious publisher, after The Bible Society, with an output of $346,811.57, and the American Tract Society, with $413,163 in receipts (Tebbel 1: 508). These figures reflect the religious tract societies' dominance of the publishing industry, a supremacy that only grew over the course of the nineteenth century.[18] Concurrent with the economic and

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[18] For further reading on Bible publishing in the United States, see Tebbel 1: 508-512. Additionally, as Tebbel's appendix in vol. 2 shows, the most prolific categories of publications from 1880-1918 were Fiction, Juveniles, and Theology and Religion—these Bibles are all three. Although science books are generally around sixth on the list of most

social success of religious texts for children was the rise of generic fiction. In England, of course, the so-called “Golden Age of Children’s Literature” ushered in the economic success that followed texts such as Carroll’s *Alice* books (1865, 1871), Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies* (1863) and Francis Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1885).

In religious circles, however, these “Golden Age” texts were the last to be received; for early nineteenth-century Protestants, at least, fiction was made of lies. In fact, as Gillian Avery notes, “most of the Protestant orthodox” “regarded [fiction] with the deepest suspicion…and the American Tract Society fought hard against it in their publications, averring in their report of 1836 that the moral effect could only be injurious” (98). Tebbel, too, supports Avery’s characterization of early religious-fictive relations: “Even so respectable and popular a figure as Scott was considered to be doing the Devil’s work. The Society complained in 1836 that most of the 8,000 volumes then on American trade lists were fiction and were likely to have an ‘injurious moral tendency’” (Tebbel 1: 516). These early views of fiction are particularly important because they foreground the epistemological shift I have been outlining. Protestants

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popular genres, variable by year, they consistently outstripped sales of books on philosophy, humor and satire, domestic and rural affairs; and by the beginning of the twentieth century, they would usurp agriculture, domestic economy, business, fine arts, music, games, drama, poetry, history, and geography (see Tebbel 2: 680-682, 694-703).

generally viewed fiction as a threat, not simply because it was not *factual*, but because the narrative of fiction threatens the narrative of Christianity. Not only does fiction tell us things that are not facts, but it also edges toward uncomfortable questions. What makes one story—the Bible—*true*, while others are not, for example? How does God's authorship differ from Lewis Carroll's?

By mid-century, fiction gradually became tolerable, or at least, "acceptable enough for there to be many examples among the sets of books marketed as the Sunday School and Family Library, the Juvenile Library, and the like…But it was only to be expected, given the Calvinist insistence that anything that was not a fact must be a lie, that the appearance of fiction in Sunday school libraries should give pain to many" (Avery 99). Of course, denominational nuances must be respected; an 1820s Calvinist's response to fiction would have differed radically from the more literarily liberal Presbyterian's; however, by and large the Protestant attitude toward fiction is reasonably standard: during the first half of the century, made-up stories were regarded with suspicion or with opportunism. Perhaps yielding to overwhelming demand for fiction, though, Protestants across the board and across the Atlantic began promoting religious fiction as a way to solidify children's faith.[19]

These decades reflect a shift in which different denominations all began to adopt fiction as a religious vehicle, publishing conversion narratives and realist children's

[19] See Avery 98-104.

parables, thereby appropriating the techniques of fiction to reify their faith.[20] Those at the American Tract society, for example, published such books as *The Child's Book on the Soul*, "a kindly work in which a five-year-old is taught to reason his way into Christian belief" (Avery 98). Presbyterians and Congregationalists, "diligently searching for material that would engage children's interest without telling them lies, while trying to counteract the prevailing thirst for fiction" sought to frame the dramas of the soul as fiction—in other words, to disguise instruction as delightful (Avery 98).[21]

Gradually, the fictional narrative became more acceptable. In fact, across the genres of children's publishing, we see a trend to revise out the rigidity of early-century didacticism and to add as much *fun* into children's books as possible. In England, science writers themselves began framing their technical instruction with imaginative narrative, especially in books such as Arabella Buckley's *The Fairy Land of Science* (1880) and

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[20] Examples include The Child's Cabinet Library (1849), an American set of volumes including biblical history, geography, and moral tales, My Own Library (1841), a collection of miniatures in which Isabella Child's *The Little Picture Bible* and *The Little Picture Testament* are paired with *Aesop's Fables* and *British Birds*. For additional examples, see Tebbel 1: 515.

[21] This debate can be seen to prefigure both the literary argument the 1860s, over sensationalism and realism, and the pedagogical argument of the early twentieth century over the use of fairy tales and fantasy as educational tools.

Lucy Rider Meyer's *Real Fairy Folks or Fairy Land of Chemistry* (1887)—both of which pay tribute to nature as "the voice of the Great Creator" (Buckley 237). Both books also emphasize the imagination:

> There is only one gift we must have before we can know [forces]—we must have *imagination*. I do not mean mere fancy, which creates unreal images and impossible monsters, but imagination, the power of making pictures or *images* in our minds, of that which *is*, though it is invisible to us. (Buckley 7)

Here, Buckley moves to separate image-making from the fantastical imagination of, for example, fairy tales; yet her distinction rings somewhat hollow in the light of her elaborate metaphor of comparing forces and molecules to fairies. In fact, distinctions such as these allow the invisible world of chemistry and physics to be *actualized* through the imagination—a rationalization that, for these writers at least, extends to God. Buckley's and Meyer's books offer a common ground between science and religion; the imagination is a mutual space in which both can exist.

Other genres, too, adopted fiction and fictional techniques to encourage a positive reception at the end of the century. For example, discussing the McGuffey readers, the most popular children's textbooks in America, Elliott J. Gorn notes, "Perhaps the most important change to occur by the 1879 edition was not the elimination of the older didactic material, but the addition of new passages. These selections leavened the readers with just a bit more humor and drama" (24). The McGuffey readers, which I will address in more detail, were secular in name, but deeply religious, "full of heavy-handed moral advice and religious instruction [and] oppressively didactic" (Gorn 1). Yet they, like

English writers' lighthearted fairy science, exhibit a trend toward optimism and humor in their stories and selections, a transition toward cheerfulness in many children's texts, and especially in those meant to educate children about God. Even centuries-old texts were not exempt from this aesthetic shift. Courtney Weikle-Mills, in an essay on *The New England Primer* in its many ideations, addresses the Victorian textual changes made to the *Primer*, highlighting the "tension between a desire to preserve the text for future readers and a newfound levity toward books, promoted by the expansion of the book market and new possibilities for extensive reading" (424). Weikle-Mills also addresses the need for religious texts like the *Primer*'s many redactions and reprintings to compete with secular children's books (424). Across genres and across the Atlantic, then, fiction came to dominate the economic sphere of children's publishing.

Crucial to our understanding of the intersections between religion and fiction, though, is a final phase in the gradual rise of children's fiction in the estimation of religious culture; from first rejecting and then grudgingly allowing fiction, Protestant adults gradually came, consciously or unconsciously, to encourage children to realize their faith *through* fiction, to envision their faith as simultaneously allegorical and physically accessible through the mechanism of the imagination. The threat to Biblical narrative posed by fiction gradually came to be replaced or reconsidered by children's Bibles that draw attention to themselves *as stories*. Thus, rather than posing a threat to the truth, fiction could potentially *embody* the truth—could be more the truthful than fact. That is, this earlier shift in the perception of fiction foregrounded a radical epistemological change, and it conveniently provided an "out" for the epistemological

tensions of the later decades. When Strauss, for example, dissected the historical improbability of miracles, religion remained safe through fiction. In fact, Strauss's emphasis on *myth*, despite causing a massive controversy, was actually more acute than his detractors realized. When he urged his readers to stop trying to prove the validity of the Bible forensically and to see it instead as a myth, he merely gave voice to what congregants had already begun doing through their religious-fictional work. I do not mean to suggest that fundamentalists followed Strauss in considering religion symbolic or mythical rather than physical fact; on the contrary, the uproar caused by *The Life of Jesus* reflects no small degree of hysteria where myth was concerned. It is possible, though, that without consciously or theologically acknowledging it, religious adults had already begun to engage with religion through the lens of fiction. In this sense, children's Bible stories become *the* site for such a radical mode; make-believe is safe for children, so this new form of engagement could pass as pedagogy. Obviously, religious adults did not categorize their Bibles as make-believe. Rather, the textual minutia of children's Bibles stories beginning in the latter half of the century show their authors strategically *embracing* the make-believe and imaginative elements of religious epistemology as a way of reifying the relevance of religious belief.

Of course, a full survey of nineteenth-century children's Bibles would require a tome. For the purpose of brevity, I have chosen to foreground a single Biblical adaptation: Alvan Bond's *Young People's Illustrated Bible History*, published by Henry Bill Publishing Company in 1871, with two following editions in 1878. Bill's publishing company, which he began in 1847, sold largely by subscription. In fact, as John Tebbel

reports in his *History of Book Publishing in the United States*, large numbers of religious books, Bibles, and popular science handbooks were all sold by subscription during the second half of the nineteenth century; it would not have been at all unlikely for a single delivery of books to contain both religious and scientific materials. Due to all-too-open copyright laws and the vast variations of this genre in particular, it is difficult to establish the provenance for this Bible in particular, and for others of its kind. A review from *The Christian Mirror* and reprinted in the front of the book claims that the volume was written by "an anonymous English author," but no firm record of authorship exists (Bond 3).[22] Considering the transatlantic fluidity of nineteenth-century texts, especially texts for children, it is possible that the text was printed in Britain and then adapted and published by Bill "with an Introduction by the American Editor Rev. Alvan Bond, D.D." Whether due to its editor, a popular Methodist pastor, or due to the ease of subscription, it appears that the text was quite popular; an advertisement for subscription agents claims to have sold over 100,000 copies within the first seven years of printing, and the two latter editions printed within one year of each other suggest a widespread American reception (Advertisement 77). Despite the unavailability of more specific data for British audiences, it seems likely that such a book, if not *read* in England, was at least textually similar to others of its genre that were. This particular adaptation is representative of its genre for several reasons, such as its framing of the Bible as history rather than doctrine,

[22] This review is located in a series of "Recommendations" at the end of the Bible, where page numbers restart.

its storybook format, and its narrative style. Of course, the epistemological strategies I will highlight are also consistent with the genre.

I should note, too, that I have selected Bond's Bible and my other examples with a fairly liberal view toward both genre and denominationality. Largely, this has been the result of a thorough integration in the Bibles and publishers themselves; for example, while they do make some distinction, children's Bibles, Bible histories, Bible picture books, and Bible story books all fall within the larger genre of children's biblical adaptations, and these adaptations are noticeably homogenous in doctrine. This may be due to their publishers; for example, the American Sunday School Union and American Tract Societies, responsible for dozens of biblical adaptations for children, were both interdenominational and effective across Evangelical, Methodist, Presbyterian, and other circles (Avery 98). The McGuffey readers used in schools were non-and-interdenominational (Gorn 19). In Britain, talk about the education of children tends to amalgamate, for example, Anglicans and Evangelicals while alienating Catholics.[23] Further:

> the various Protestant denominations (Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, and so forth) implicitly comprised a consensus. These groups sometimes disagreed among themselves, but they generally rejected the Catholic Church, with its Latin Mass, hierarchy of pope, cardinals, and bishops, and its belief that priests mediate between each individual and God. Protestants insisted

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[23] See Robert Gregory, "How are Children to Be Taught Religion."

> that salvation required each individual to confront the Word of God directly, so public education, then, took on special importance. (Gorn 114)

My own and Gorn's grouping of denominations no doubt does the theological nuances of each a disservice. I do not mean to suggest that the shades of doctrinal clarity were not significant to the authors of children's religious texts. We could, of course, trace each denomination's distinct attitude toward childhood and toward science; however, the fact remains that what circulated in popular culture through the McGuffey readers, through scientific didactic texts, and through mainstream children's Bibles was in fact an amalgamation of both English and American Protestant ideologies. Since so many of these Bibles are packaged as "Bible Histories" and "Bible Storybooks," they nearly always omit doctrinal discussions that would distinguish between denominational theologies, and can thus be considered to some extent unified.[24]

Additionally, I have focused largely on the first few chapters of Genesis, partially for the sake of conciseness, and partially because of the almost mythic status of the Creation story. A scientific epistemology threatens a religious one in a myriad of ways, but the most obvious, certainly, is found in the question of origins; in other words, nineteenth-century science that offered alternative ways of understanding how the world came into existence threatened to alter, rewrite, or eliminate the relationship between God and humankind defined in biblical Genesis. Moreover, the primal mythology of the Creation story offers a kind of cosmic fairy tale, a globally recognized story of origins.

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[24] For an overview of American publishing by denomination, see Tebbel 1: 513-530.

As a result, it remains in some way constant despite the variations in doctrines and denominations of Christianity. Although I do point out some trends in the way God is presented throughout the epic, I have found it prudent to narrow my consideration to this story for the purpose of explicating the way the religious epistemology is redefined as imaginary and magical at mid-century. The first chapter of Genesis can be seen as a piece of cosmic creation both literally and metaphorically. To Creationists, it is a factual account of the beginnings of our world; to the literary scholar, the story of God creating the universe can be read as a fantastical type of literary world-building: it sets up Eden as the paradigmatic paradise; it defines the laws of the land, introduces the enemy, and dictates the structure and themes of the rest of the epic.

One way to encourage an imaginative mode of religious practice, then, is to lead children to see their Bible as a fantastical place where positive emotions are engaged, beginning with Eden. In the early decades of the century, children's Bibles had presented Eden in straightforward terms, most often adhering roughly to an "original" account adapted from common English translations. Consider, for contrast, an earlier account of the Creation. In 1820, Thomas Carey published *The Holy Bible Abridged; or The History of the Old and New Testament. For the Use of Children,* in which he reports:

> In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth…And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (6, 15)

This familiar account is typical of early children's Bibles; they most often describe Eden following a translation.[25] When they do elaborate on Eden, they keep it simple, as Isabella Child does in her 1835 *Little Picture Bible*: "When God made this world, he first created all that could make it pleasant and suitable for man. In one part of it he placed the Garden of Eden—a delightful abode, where all was peace" (8). Child names the "delightful abode," but never describes it, assuming children are familiar with the concept of earthly Paradise. Similarly, in some supplementary biblical texts, we get the Creation story through catechism, as in *The Child's Scripture Question Book* (1836), which includes no narrative at all, but touches on Eden in purely "factual" terms: "Q. Where was Adam first placed? A. In the garden of Eden. *Gen*. ii. 15. Q. What was he forbidden to eat? A. Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *Gen*. ii. 17" (6). In each of these examples, among others, Eden is *named* perfect, but never characterized; that is, Eden has no detail for engaging a child's conception of it.

Gradually, the genre's introduction of Eden becomes more like a fictional description of a fantastical setting. For example, in a storybook Bible entitled *From the Creation of the World to the Death of Moses* (1880), the narrator frames God's relationship to his creation as interaction: "And God told the seas how far they were to come, and that they were not to come on the part of the land where He would have it dry" (7). This line makes explicit God's *desire* in creating Eden, both anthropomorphizing the

[25] See also Rev. T.H. Gallaudet's *The Child's Book of Bible Stories* (1835).

seas and underscoring God as a willful artist. Bond's Bible, most notably, transitions to a characterization of Eden not only as geographical perfection but as a kind of fantasyland:

> And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man' The garden was full of beautiful trees and flowers; the little birds sing sweetly, and the animals all played together upon the green grass; they did not fight, nor hurt one another; all was love and happiness, because there was no sin. It was warm and pleasant, there was no cold wind, no snow, no winter. (25)

This description is not unlike a description of Narnia or Neverland—Eden is anthropomorphic, exempt from seasonal shifts, and, obviously, utopian. That Eden is harmonic has come to be so basic an assumption as to beget the adjectival form, Edenic. In digressing on this description of Eden, the author encourages an imaginative addition, a creative filling-in of details within Old Testament gaps. His descriptions of animals, seasons, and landscape allow children to *imagine* this space, to expand upon the textual details with their own skills of world-building. Strangely, the author establishes the fantastical element of Eden using physical details. So, just after he separates the spiritual from the physical—the soul is divine, unlike animal instinct[26]—the spiritual perfection of prelapsarian Eden is defined as solidly material. It is perfect because of the birds, the animals, the seasons. In other words, Eden is Edenic because the material elements of

[26] "God gave to the animals beautiful and useful bodies; but to man He gave more: He gave him a soul also, which could never die. God gave wonderful instinct to the animals; but He gave reason to man, power to know and to love, and to worship God" (Bond 25).

nature are arranged in a spiritual, supernatural harmony—nature and the supernatural are cohesive.[27]

Again, this union between the natural and transcendent is consistent with the genre of late-century children's Bibles. For example, where early Bibles often name the four rivers flowing out of Eden (the Pison, Havilah, Gihon, and Euphrates listed in Genesis), Josephine Pollard's the *Young Folks' Bible* (1890) first addresses the rivers in transcendent terms of religious engagement:

> But there is another river more wonderful than the river of old Egypt. It flows down from God out of heaven, and flows over this world, and brings with it all that is beautiful and healthful and good. The waters of this river are carried off in

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[27] This union between nature and supernatural purpose shows up, too, in descriptions of Eden as created *for* man, rather than *before* man. For example, in *Stories for Sunday Afternoons. From the Creation to the Advent of the Messiah* (1862), Susan Fanny Crompton writes, "A great many years ago, God created the Sun and Moon, and Stars; and this beautiful world. That is, He made them. He filled the earth with Grass, and trees and flowers, and made all sorts of animals, and birds, and fishes, so that men might live comfortably on it…And God gave them a beautiful garden to live in. They were allowed to have any of the fruit that grew in it, as much as they pleased, except of one tree in the middle" (1-2). This description fits in with the shifting view of God as a benevolent Creator whose earthly purpose revolves around man—a step toward secularizing religion through the use of an androcentrism.

> little canals, and are brought into the homes and churches and Sunday-schools; and wherever they go tend to make lives good and happy. (19)

Here, as in Bond's Bible, the physical elements (animals, seasons, rivers) are already allegorized; they stand in for the imaginative spiritual engagement being asked of the child reader. In this way, the imaginative register evoked moves beyond allegory; this is not a platonic structure in which the Nile River simply represents a metaphysical one. Instead, the river that flows from heaven weaves together an unearthly, metaphorical interaction with God and a physical representation of the child's experience, creating an interlaced spiritual reality in which faith can and should exist. The narrator describes the river itself as "wonderful," a signal of its goodness, certainly, but also a hint at its fantastic quality. To invest in this river and its symbolism is to not only suspend disbelief but to effectively project belief and to allow it to become hyperreal through that projection. The natural image of the nourishing river—"beautiful and healthful and good"—is aligned with the institutions of education—"homes and churches and Sunday-schools." Thus the spiritual value of the river invades reality; faith can be realized and made effective through the simultaneous existence and *imaginary* hyperreality of the fictive register.

Similarly, and perhaps most strikingly, Pollard's *Young Folks' Bible* (1890) begins with an introduction of Eden as a heavenly conduit:

> I see, with my mind's eye, a garden, large, fair, with great trees and beautiful walks, pure, clear streams with lovely flowers, with animals playing about, with two trees that were set apart from the rest, one called the Tree of Life and the

> other the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I see a man in this garden, and animals passing before him and hear him giving them names. Now I see a city with twelve gates, each gate a pearl. The city has walls made of twelve kinds of jewels, and the streets are of pure gold, and there is no temple in the city and no sun, but it is very glorious and wonderful. I see a beautiful River and a glorious Sea, and a great multitude of shining ones with harps in their hands, and I see a throne and One that sits thereon, more lovely and beautiful and mighty and glorious than any words can say (21)

The mid-passage transition from Adam naming the animals to "a city with twelve gates," together with the repetition of the narrator's mind's eye ("I see…") indicates, just as in *The Young People's Illustrated Bible History*, a religious imperative to make explicit the allegorical nature of the physical world. The narrator "sees" the garden, a physical place that presumably *could* be seen, as well as the "city with twelve gates," a heaven that cannot be. Heaven comes to substitute for Eden with no narrative signaling that it will do so; instead, we are encouraged to relate Eden to heaven as a hyperreal reification of heaven's existence; Eden does not simply stand in for heaven, but is instead a geographical space through which heaven (and, by association, God and religious belief) can simultaneously exist despite their dislocation from the physical reality. The superlatives "more lovely and beautiful and mighty and glorious than any words can say" can be read as hyperbole, but they also place the narrator's mental vision outside the realm of language; heaven cannot be articulated because it is ungraspable. So, not only are the symbols of earthly paradise, Eden, made into a fusion between the natural and the

supernatural, but the ecstasy of religious engagement is also made untouchable through the narrator's evoking the imagination. Thus, these narrative additions of describing Eden through physical terms and distinguishing the soul as supernatural synthesize a sort of spiritual playground through which to enact this fictional kind of engagement with religion.

In addition to these geographically fantastic elements, the author of Bond's Bible gives Eden a doubled sense of time. Here, the author diverges from the traditional, "In the beginning…" Instead, he begins his version of the Genesis story by separating God from the physical by which one's senses define the world: "Many years ago, there was no earth, nor plants, nor sun, nor moon, nor people; but God was" (25). Thus, the narrator incorporates a sense of time—rather than the vague "beginning," we have "many years ago." Both of these phrases are nonspecific; however, this particular distinction places the timelessness within the child's concept of how chronology is measured. Further, this primordial dominance is defined *in opposition to* the temporal artifacts that are the focus of natural science—the earth, plants, sun, moon, and people; in other words, God is placed simultaneously within the child reader's sense of time (familiar divisions of years rather than a "beginning") and outside of everything that can be observed. God is relatable but remote, exempt from the logic of chronography and, by association, from a scientific materialist understanding of earthly paradise. Unlike some fringe religious groups, Bond and his peers would not go looking for Eden's archeological footprint. The paradise to be regained, here, is placed in the realm of imagination and metaphor.

In this way, *The Young People's Illustrated Bible History* sets itself in opposition to secularism. From the outset, Bond defines his Bible as anti-science: "It was no part in the design of God to make his word of truth a manual of science, or the source of such knowledge as can be acquired by observation and study. Higher end was embraced in his plan – *the establishment of the kingdom in the world*" (xix, emphasis original). In this way, the "kingdom in the world" becomes a magical space, one immune to the "manual of science." Put differently: by framing his introduction as anti-science and pairing that treatise with a characterization of Eden as a kind of other-world, Bond asks us to consider his book magical rather than rational, thus open to supernatural influence but not the criticisms of rational science.

Such a request lends itself to a brief discussion of the distinction between religiosity and secularism. Considering modern Western secularity, Charles Taylor writes:

> Everyone can agree that one of the big differences between us and our ancestors of 500 years ago is that they lived in an 'enchanted' world and we do not. I think of this as our having 'lost' a number of beliefs and the practices they made possible. Essentially, we become modern by breaking out of 'superstition' and becoming more scientific and technological in our stance toward our world. But I want to accentuate something different. The 'enchanted' world was one in which spirits and forces defined by their meanings (the kind of forces possessed by love potions or relics) played a big role. But more, the enchanted world was one in which these forces shape our lives, both psychical and physical. One of the big

> differences between our forerunners in us is that we live with a much firmer sense of the boundary between self and other. We are 'buffered' selves. *We* have changed. (38-39)

Taylor goes on to explore these "buffered selves" and what he calls "porous selves"—that is, concepts of identity that recognize the distinction between self and other (buffered) and that conceive of the self as open to extra-physical influence.[28] Although Taylor does not define them as such, these concepts of the buffered self and the porous self are portable to a consideration of the religious education of children. At a time when children's publishing widely encouraged the use of imagination, when the Romantic image of the vulnerable, spiritually transcendent child had been solidified in the popular imagination so that children were seen as somehow magical themselves, religious adults united these concepts with a Biblical emphasis on the inherent value of children. Jesus's oft-cited claim that "the kingdom of heaven belongs such as these [children]" became

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[28] We [secular Westerners] make a sharp distinction between the inner and outer, between what is in the 'mind' and what is out there in the world. Whatever has to do with thought, purpose, and human meanings has to be in the mind, rather than in the world. Some chemical can cause hormonal changes and thus alter the psyche. There can be an aphrodisiac but not a love potion, that is, a chemical that determines the human, or moral, meaning of the experience it enables" (Taylor 40).

Also, see distinction between porousness and buffered selves (41-42) as a way to describe the contemporary evangelical project—to recover porousness.

scriptural support for the supposedly innate, supernatural wisdom of porous childhood (*New American Standard Bible,* Matt. 19.14).

How, then, to foster porousness? In Luhrmann's work, the "as-if engagement" of make-believe is clear; her examples, drawn from interviews with congregants, demonstrate that the targets of her study deliberately involve themselves in a physical, play-like practice in order to feel connected with a God who is a "friend." This "friendship" is central to the kind of epistemological engagement I am proposing, because it allows a kin-like bond between child and God to override specific questions such as "How did God *create* man?" In other words, children's Bibles offer a textual counterpart to the kind of play-like practice of porous religious belief. By bringing God emotionally closer to the subject (contemporary Christian/Victorian child), the epistemological double-register constructs the God-figure as hyperreal and free from question and, by extension, the child-reader as porous and transcendently open to religious experience. Weikle-Mills, for example, highlights "the emerging notion that children should read to develop and nurture an interior realm of experience, sometimes figured as 'the closet of the heart.' This imperative stemmed from the Protestant idea that each believer should have unmediated contact with God and his word" (412). Intimacy is key to this dynamic between believer and Creator. For example, in our contemporary moment, evangelicals envision God as:

> someone you had to get to know the way you would get to know a friend. You had to spend time with him, hang out with him, get to know him. And to do that, you had to learn to talk to him as if you were chatting with an ordinary person

who was right there in front of you, as if you were sitting down in a bar with a couple of beers. (Luhrmann 379)

Indeed, this intimate perspective on the figure of God is the latest step in a long transition. Bottigheimer describes this shift: "God's anger was gradually edited out of children's Bibles all over Europe in the course of the eighteenth century…From a wise, paternal, kindly governor of the universe God slowly evolved into a fond and loving overseer of humanity, the most recent stage in a multistep process" (61, 64). Similarly, discussing the publications of the American Tract Society, Gorn writes, "God in the early readers did seem more judgmental, demanding, and ubiquitous than in later editions…evangelical Protestantism took on a rosier hue by the late nineteenth century" (12). Thus, if between the earliest fourteenth century children's Bibles and those of the late eighteenth century, the figure of God shifted from wrathful to friendly, the period beginning in the mid-nineteenth century began the shift from friend*ly* to friend.

Of course, in some ways, this transition is also a result of the changing view of infant damnation.[29] Perhaps the most famous line concerning infant damnation, "In Adam's Fall, We Sinned All" shows how important children's religious texts have been to theological dissemination. *The New England Primer,* despite its emphasis on original sin, also exhibits the textual shifts toward optimism and emotion that I have been describing. As Weikle-Mills writes in her essay, this seminal line articulates a relationship between children and their Bibles:

[29] See Weikle-Mills 417.

> As implied by another *Primer* line that rarely changed, 'In Adam's Fall, We Sinned All,' children were also thought to embody biblical books, most closely the book of Genesis and its tragic hero, Adam. These typological connections prompted children to see themselves as 'copies' of older events and persons, mirroring the reproductive similitude of print. (417)

Weikle-Mills elegantly shows how children's relationship to their religious belief came to be embodied through emotion. But in the nineteenth century, where the *Primer* was still circulated and adapted in both England and America, to view oneself as a copy would be to conceive of oneself as a part of a species, as a biologically-bound creature, certainly not an association religious purists—especially those still teaching infant damnation—would want to propagate. What mitigates this risk, as Weikle-Mills shows, are the love and positive emotions associated with learning the Bible through the line "My Book and Heart Shall Never Part." Although written far before the social shifts on which I am focused, the *Primer* is connected, at least as a precedent, to my argument. That is, as Weikle-Mills argues,

> The *Primer*'s connection between children's learning and the feelings of the heart anticipates John Locke's argument that children must be taught to read 'as a Thing of Delight' so as not to impinge upon their sense of liberty, a pedagogical technique that later appeared in John Newbery's books as a command to 'learn to love your book.'(412)

Both the Primer and Locke, then, anticipate a late-Victorian imperative to *revive* that love and Delight in the face of scientific threats. What I would like to emphasize, here, is how

Weikle-Mills uses the concept of religious love as a kind of epistemological double register with “the ability to liberate *and* constrain (413). Further:

> As an emotion that was considered at times compulsory, involuntary, and volitional, love unsettles the usual way of thinking about child readers, since its voluntary quality denies the complete domination of the reader by the text and its insistence on attachment complicates the reader’s freedom to diverge from its lessons. (416)

While Weikle-Mills emphasizes love between children and their primer, it should be clear that the primer, like other late-nineteenth-century religious texts for children, comes to stand in for the child’s relationship to God. Thus, emphasizing love between the child and God likewise has the potential to liberate and to constrain—it liberates the child’s imaginative engagement through fiction while containing any threats posed by competing epistemologies.

The ways in which other religious adaptations present God, then, reflect this revived need to emphasize love and understanding, although this time through fiction rather than through the *Primer*’s sing-song poetry. Indeed, although Bottigheimer places the shifting presentation of God in the eighteenth century, it is in the nineteenth that we see God becoming more of a character in biblical adaptations. While early Victorian Bibles have ceased to present God as angry, he is still remote and lacking in human characteristics until at least midcentury. *The Young People’s Illustrated Bible History*

epitomizes this shift, particularly by portraying God as "a barefoot, long-haired, bearded old man"—an image not unfamiliar to present-day audiences (Bottigheimer 69).[30]

In the fist half of the century, God is austere. Sarah Trimmer's famous *Series of Prints of Scripture History* and companion *Description* (1800-1804) illustrates visually God's inhumanness through his absence. Her images show several old men looking afraid of God, who is never incarnate but usually depicted as bad weather (iii-iv). The first image depicts dozens of people drowning, crying out to a thundering sky for help (iii-iv); the second image, a pillar of salt (v); the third image, Abraham about to slice Isaac's throat underneath a rolling sky (vi). In her descriptions, Trimmer echoes this remote characterization by emphasizing God's unknowable will:

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[30] Further, according to Bottigheimer, the nineteenth century saw a shift not just in the character of God from wrathful to gentle overseer, but also in the proportions of biblical stories that were presented (63). In other words, children's bibles focused largely on the New Testament, shortening Genesis-Kings narratives (64). Bottigheimer attributes this shift to "a growing conviction that the New Testament was the Christian Testament, the Old Testament the Jewish one" (64); however, we might also conceive of this alteration in terms of scientific discourses, against which the threatened epistemology of Creationism would benefit from the presentation of a benevolent God that could take on this role as friend.

> The world, or earth, is a very large globe, made at first out of nothing by the Almighty power of God, and preserved ever since by his Providence. It consists of land and water, and is divided into many different parts, called countries. In different ages of the world there have been a great many different nations in the several parts of it; for those people who at one time possessed a country, have been driven from it by nations more powerful than themselves, as it has pleased God, the Supreme Governor of all things, that one should rise, and another fall. (xi)

Here, Trimmer adheres to a Providential perspective on God, in which he cares little for the emotions of his creation. What he cares about, instead, is obedience.

Similarly, Bibles that follow in the decades after Trimmer's, emphasize God's emotional distance. Carey's Bible (1820) describes him as "in himself from eternity to eternity, without beginning and without end, the most perfect and blessed Being: In his substance, spiritual and eternal" (6). While both Bond and Carey classify God as omnipresent and omnipotent, Carey's Bible presents God as inaccessible. When Adam and Eve commit their "transgression of the law of God," against "divine command," they must face an "offended creator" (19). Likewise, Child's *Little Picture Bible* (1834) does include some friendly language of God, but it mostly emphasizes his disappointment and punishment through phrases like, "they disobeyed God, and were ruined (11), "they first learned was misery was, and never in this world were happy again" (15), and "God's all-seeing eye" "would no longer suffer them to remain in Paradise" (16). A Bible from the same year, *The Children's Book of Bible Stories* (1834), frames its chapters not as stories

but as “Permission,” “Prohibition,” and “The Penalty.” This Bible does frame the Fall in narrative terms, but it does so by emphasizing God’s supreme and inaccessible authority and Adam and Eve’s subjecthood: “It was a prohibition which they knew God had a perfect right to make” (22).

Conversely, although Bond’s text does describe the Fall, he buffers it with consolations, again focused on the soul:

> Must the souls of Adam and Eve, and all their children, go there [to hell]? No—God did not wish his sinful creatures to perish…In due time, Jesus would come into the world, and subdue Satan, and deliver all who should believe, from Satan’s power, from sin and death. If we, like Adam and Eve, have faith in Jesus, we shall be saved as they were, and made eternally happy when we die. (27)

As Bottigheimer notes, “Placing human beings in the foreground…distinctly secularizes the biblical message” (208). By presenting the story as if God created the world for man, rather than creating a law for Adam and Eve to transgress, Bond places humans—and thus child-readers—at the center of a mutually beneficial relationship with God. In other words, if God is more friendly, he is more approachable, more relatable, and thus, more easy to imagine as a felt presence in the child’s life. Humanizing God makes him familiar.

This emphasis on God’s kindness is made clear in Bottigheimer’s work (61). More than simply being kind, though, God is presented in Bond’s text in terms of intimacy. In a typical translation such as the New American Standard Bible, Genesis 2 ends with God creating Eve out of Adam’s rib and Adam taking Eve as his wife, with the

words: “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25); but this text ends, “Adam and Eve loved one another, and they loved God. They walked in the beautiful garden, and sang praise to God, without pain, or sorrow, or fear; and they loved to hear God speak to them, and to learn the wonderful things He taught them” (26). Although these textual details are sparse—indeed, reminiscent of an early fairy tale—the few additions to the structure of the Creation story almost always emphasize affection between humans and God. So our focus shifts from the external report of events in the source text to an internalized view of Adam and Eve, and a romanticized one. Rather than an observation of their nakedness, this narrator claims a privileged, psychological view into the relations between husband, wife, and creator. They redefine a pure, original relationship with God as one that closely resembles contemporary faith practices. In other words, foregrounding the affection between the trio rather than the external evidence of shamelessness makes their relationship more of an interaction, with God participating in an exchange rather than simply posing an injunction. Thus, Adam and Eve are more akin to Taylor’s porous selves than buffered selves. That is, the narrator has entrance into the psychic experience of unity felt between God and his first couple because these iterations of Adam and Eve are porous, open to influence of the supernatural, rather than buffered by narrative distance and by the laws of realism—the form of the fantastical register, then, supports the extratextual porousness being conjured. Considering Taylor’s concepts of the buffered self and the porous self, the vague “wonderful things” God teaches his creations are meant to establish him as a benevolent guide rather than an offended Dr. Frankenstein, and Adam and Eve as Wordsworthian children to God. This chapter

reflects a Miltonian emotional engagement with the God-figure, one in which "Paradise" included harmony with a benevolent Creator. Although Milton had conceived of God this way in the seventeenth century, this form of familiarity with God is not presented in children's Bibles until the late nineteenth.

Further, this language of friendship is echoed in other late-century children's Bibles. In *Stories for Sunday Afternoons* (1862) Susan Fanny Crompton provides a similar passage of consolation after the fall: "He did not take all his kindness away from then, though they had done this wrong thing. He clothed them with skins to keep them warm; and showed them how to get their food, in the country whither He sent them forth. And He always watched over them in mercy, as He does over us now" (3). She later goes on to frame sacrifices made to God in terms of friendship and intimacy: "When we love anybody very much, who is kind to us, we like to give them something that they want…if they gave up something that they liked best, something that they wanted most, and gave it up to Him, perhaps that would be the best way of showing that they loved Him" (4). Here, as elsewhere, religious interactions, even rituals such as sacrifice, are framed in terms of love; God is more tolerable but also more aesthetically familiar.[31] Thus, Bond's text and others like his reflect something of a midpoint between Bottigheimer's "angry

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[31] Also, language of pathos extends to the narrative qualities of later Bibles. In *From the Creation of the World to the Death of Moses* (1880), the narrator interjects at particularly emotional moments in her story, such as just before the story of Cain and Abel, which "next thing I have to tell you is so sad, it will grieve me to tell it and you to hear" (9).

God" and the "friend" described by Luhrmann's subjects. While Carey's earlier Bible presents them as more buffered than porous, Bond's depiction of the interconnectedness between creators and creation reflects a need to shift the text of the Bible toward a porous conception of the self, increasing the emotional power of familial bonds while minimizing the boundary between the physical and the supernatural.

III.

What I would like to emphasize within the context of the nineteenth century is that grouping the natural and the supernatural together reflects a cultural impulse toward unity. In a world increasingly fragmented by diverging sciences, technology, and class conflicts, religious adults strove to reclaim as much concord for their faith as possible. In other words, by downplaying the fragmented aspects of religion—the multitude of evil characters which we call singularly "Satan"; the distance between God and humankind; the numerous, uncountable authors; the conglomeration of at least sixty-six books; and the imprecise chronology of authorship—in favor of presenting the Bible as a single, albeit episodic, epic, Bible authors offered up their religion as a source of stability, a self-consistent arc of episodes. As a genre, children's Bibles present the Bible *only* as a story, omitting law, doctrine, and even most prophecy. The form of these books is important. Even in the beginning of the century, the Bibles are presented variously as translations, Bible stories, picture books, and catechisms. Where Trimmer's Bible storybook, however, divides "history" into the sacred and profane, emphasizing doctrine, later Bibles accentuate their narrative qualities. Rather than selecting "such portions of the Scripture [that] establish in the mind those unalterable laws of the DEITY, which leads us to the

knowledge of himself," as Carey does (1820, preface, n.p.), later children's Bibles draw attention to their narrative qualities by, for example, interjecting a first-person narrator who comments on the emotions, as in *From the Creation of the World to the Death of Moses* (1880), or combining Bible stories with poetry, as does *Sunshine at Home,* (1883).[32] Most strikingly, Carey Brock's *Sunday Echoes in Weekday Hours: a Tale Illustrative of Scripture Characters* (1873) relates the Bible as stories *within* the larger narrative frame of a domestic tale.[33] Following the arc of the Bible, as most children's Bibles do, this text embeds the major stories in terms of hyperfiction, commenting on the figures as characters, even classifying them as heroes and villains. We first meet Adam as an anti-hero scorned by the protagonist Archibald Wilverly; we don't hear about Adam or Eve until page 7, after we've met Archie, his sister Maggie, and their mother and

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[32] See *Sunshine at Home: Sparkling Pages for the Child, the Youth, the Parent: A Family Portfolio of Natural History, Biography, and Bible Scenes* (1883) and Mercie Sunshine's *Thee Child's Pretty Page Picture Book: A Fire-Side Volume for the Young* (1882), both of which combine the Bible with poetry and short stories. There are also examples of late nineteenth-century alphabet books such as *The Child's Colored Scripture Book*, published in both London and New York in 1866, which features distinctly emotive images of biblical figures, as well as pathetic adjectives throughout.

[33] Charles Dickens's *The Life of Our Lord*, which he wrote between 1846 and 1849 for his children, to some extent follows this pattern as well, particularly as it is framed as a reading exercise for Dickens to perform with his children.

governess. This example is particularly important because it epitomizes the as-if register of fictive make-believe I have described. By presenting these books as “Bible Histories” or “Bible Stories” rather than Biblical translations, nineteenth-century authors omit the disparities between stories, the generic differences between the books, and the imprecise timing of the origin story; Brock goes one metatextual step further by giving us fictional characters discussing the Bible as they would any other set of bedtime stories.

One of the reasons these narrative strategies are so important is that they are paired with an early apologetic argument for the validity of Christianity. That is, they do on a fictional level what religious adults were doing on a social one. For example, arguing for the absolute, unified inerrancy of the Bible in an introduction that seems to be aimed at both children and adults, Bond explores what he calls “some obvious *facts*, on which the evidence of the inspiration and authority of the revealed Scriptures rests” (x). In a brief survey of cosmological arguments, Bond catalogues the following as the primary support for the “superhuman origin” of the Bible (xi): the “*preservation* of the Sacred Writings amidst the changes and revolutions of ages” (x); their “*unaltered*” preservation (xi, emphasis original); the “uncompromising *truthfulness*…the conviction, that the sacred historians aimed to give a true and impartial record of the events and transactions which occurred in their times and their nations” (xi)—largely witnessed through the “humiliating…sins and errors” of Biblical patriarchs (xi); the prophetical writings and their fulfillment (xiv); and the “*moral influence* of the Scriptures” (xvi, emphasis original). Bond also insists that the Bible has had an exclusively positive effect on culture, asserting that “From the past, as well as the present history of the world, the

fact cannot be questioned, but Bible knowledge has exerted a marked influence for good on the governments, laws, civilizations, institutions, and social condition of states and communities, and on the character of individuals" (xvi). He also claims, conversely, that no secular society has done good.

Bond exhibits a streak of American exceptionalism here that is difficult to take seriously. Nonetheless, his attempts to approach the validity of the Bible as a rational subject juxtaposes the content of his edition; it is this pairing of the (attempted) logical defense of Biblical inerrancy with the fantastical elements within the text itself that I find so striking. It reflects an awareness of the social tensions between the Bible's account of the world—and, consequently, its epistemology—and emerging scientific narratives. Further, Bond's account is made explicitly Creationist: "the book of Genesis is the ground of all the authentic history in existence from the epoch of creation to the death of Joseph, a period of about 2369 years. …No other record furnishes any reliable account of the creation of the world, the creation of man, the apostasy, the state of the human race before the deluge…" (xviii). While he acknowledges that Bible history cannot substitute for global history, he does, in these lines, firmly oppose *natural* history. That is, he defines his text as purely Creationist but neatly avoids Creationism as a topic. Rather, the text takes God's spoken Authorship for granted and instead focuses on the mysticism of such power, bypassing the newly developing Creation-Evolution tension altogether.

This impulse to insist on consistency within the Bible shows up in what I will call typological impositions. Religious typology, or the "[association of] sinful biblical characters with their redeemed counterparts, such as Adam with Jesus, and Eve with

Mary," seeks to solidify the union of the Old Testament with the New by pointing out textual connections (Weikle Mills 418). A typological reading performed by contemporary evangelicals seeks to find evidence of a connection between the Old Testament and the New as a way of supporting Jesus' claim to the title Messiah. In other words, typological readings seek out connections between the radically different testaments, including prophecies and records of lineage, as a way of validating Christianity. This looks quite different, however, in narrative. By the nineteenth century, these textual links are not simply associations but are in fact explicit typological revisions, remolding Adam and Eve not as precursors or foils to Jesus and Mary, but as precedential *followers* of them. Rather than simply supporting a reading strategy, typological impositions make explicit Jesus' presence within the text and his connection to the foundation of the Earth. A few older Bibles do mention Jesus, but this is rare and usually minimized in light of God's punishments.[34] In general, Jesus does not make an appearance in the Old Testament until midcentury.

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[34] For example, Carey does mitigate the Fall by predicting that mankind should be delivered from sin, from death and the power of the devil, by JESUS CHRIST, who should be born of a virgin. For Eve's disobedience, God passed this sentence upon her, I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee…Then were the fallen pair driven from their seat of bliss, and exposed to hardships, sorrow, sickness, and death itself; which are likewise the just lot of all their sinful posterity" (19-21).

Some Bibles exhibit these typological connections by emphasizing the lineage between Old Testament and New Testament characters.[35] The primary way Bond makes these typological impositions, though, is by manipulating the grand tale of Christianity itself: Adam and Eve, along with numerous other Old Testament characters, "believe in Jesus" (27). In fact, another of Bond's primary typological strategies is defining "good" characters as those who are preternaturally Christian. Cain, the first murderer, is thus a heathen, while Abel has been somewhat mystically converted: "Cain, the eldest son of Adam and Eve, was very wicked; but his brother Abel loved and prayed to God, and believed in Jesus" (27). Pulling Jesus back into the Old Testament is more than a flashy strategy. Like the Creator and Satan, Jesus of Nazareth is treated here as an epic character, one who was/is actively involved in primordial events. Thus, not only does "believing in Jesus" allay any potential childish questions about the nature of salvation

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[35] See, for example, Sunshine's The Child's Pretty Page Picture Book (1882), which introduces Ruth as the first Biblical character because of her connection to the Messiah: "Ruth being poor had to glean in the fields, in those very same fields where, hundreds of years after, the shepherds were keeping watch over the flocks by night, when the angels came to tell them 'Christ is born in Bethlehem'…[Ruth's son] was the grandfather of King David, and thus from the tribe of Judah the Messiah came, as foretold by the prophets, from Bethlehem, where Ruth lived, and the family of David—to be born in Bethlehem years and years after Ruth died" (1).

BCE, it reinforces the intimacy established by viewing God as a friend; it underscores the family dynamic of the trinity, inviting children to consider Jesus not just a messiah but a brother.[36] Furthermore, it contributes to the fantastical world-building I have outlined. Consider the narrator's final explanation of God's faithfulness:

> God said, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. "What did this mean? Satan was the serpent; Jesus Christ was the Seed of the woman. In due time, Jesus would come into the world, and subdue Satan, and deliver all who should believe, from Satan's power, from sin and death. If we, like Adam and Eve, have faith in Jesus, we shall be saved as they were, and made eternally happy when we die. (27)

Bond is not alone in this strategy. For example, Pollard's *Young Folks' Bible* (1800) echoes this consolation and its emotive language:

> God told Ad-am and his wife that there was a way by which their souls might live on high when their flesh was laid in the ground. He said he would send One from the sky who would give his life for theirs: that is, he would be put to death for their sins. Then if they would turn from their sins, and give their hears to the One

[36] Of course, this invitation is also made explicit in Proverbs 18:24, "A man of *too many* friends *comes* to ruin, / But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

> who was to save them, God would not turn his face from them, but when they died they would have a home with him, and have no thought of sin. (39)[37]

This is a strange way to present a typological reading. Of course, Adam and Eve couldn't have believed in Jesus. No explicit messianic prophecy even appears until Genesis 49:10—and even this example is only a vague one.[38] Instead, it is as though time has bent—not simply prophetically, but metaphorically. Jesus is elevated to an Old Testament figure through the unity of the typological reading, but more than that, Adam and Eve are made mythical rather than original. While maintaining the Creationist perspective, the author here makes them into allegories, perhaps the first step in later trend to see Adam and Eve as metaphors rather than as actual ancestors of all living humans—an interpretive move that has recently gained popular ground through less-

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[37] Pollard also foregrounds her text in terms of the grand narrative: "This book is the story of God's love. It is the story of Jesus, our Savior" (26).

[38] "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, / Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, / Until Shiloh comes, / And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples" (Gen. 49:10). Of course, many Christian scholars interpret the first messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity / Between you and the woman, /And between your seed and her seed; / He shall bruise you on the head, / And you shall bruise him on the heel." However, the unspecific pronoun "he" here can also be read simply as a collective reference to the descendants of Eve; the first explicit reference to a singular messianic figure is the above quoted from Genesis 49:10.

dogmatic denominations. Additionally, by placing Jesus as an active figure in the Old Testament origin story, Bond makes the messiah seem more supernatural; in a child's experience of the religious world, that is, the question of when Jesus lived is irrelevant. Instead, he becomes a time-traveler, a flexible figure of benevolence who is equally applicable to Adam and Eve as to the child. In other words, returning to Taylor's theory of Western Secularity, we are encouraged to see Adam and Eve *not* as buffered characters but as in some way unified with us. The boundary between self (reader) and other (Adam and Eve) is dissolved through metaphor, Adam and Eve not simply being "types" or templates for Jesus and Mary, but for child readers. Altering rational conceptions of time, of Jesus' influence, and Biblical unity takes a step toward recovering porousness; just as this Bible encourages children to see themselves as porous rather than buffered, the physical and chronological foundations of the text are likewise open to supernatural influence.

A second major typological strategy is to downplay the Old Testament God's emotional volatility. Connecting Old Testament and New Testament threads, for example, the author smooths out the tension between God and Abraham in their struggle over Isaac: "The Lord Jesus Christ was the seed of Abraham, who came to save sinners, to be a blessing to all people. 'God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.' *John* iii. 17. Abraham gave his son to God; God gave His Son for us" (37). Although Jesus is not mentioned previously, here the author reframes the primal story of Abraham's near-

filicide as a good-natured trade between patriarchs. Further, he reassures child readers that Isaac was *never* in any danger:

> Did God wish to make Abraham unhappy, and to kill his son? No, God only wished to try Abraham's faith; to see if Abraham would be obedient, and if he loved God more than his dear child. Abraham obeyed directly; for he knew God's command must be right, and he believed that God had power even to raise Isaac to life again after he was dead. All God does is good and right. When he sends us pain, or sickness, or sorrow, he does it wisely, for good, not for evil; we cannot know why, but God knows; let us ask him to make us obedient to his will as Abraham was. (36)

Although "rais[ing] Isaac to life again" is never suggested in any direct translation, the author here underscores the connection between Jesus and Isaac, simultaneously omitting a negative presentation of God the Father and strengthening the unity between the Old and New Testament. Like an eager literary scholar, Bond has made a connection where there is none; he insists on metanarrative, thus cloaking the passage's final didacticism in a demonstration of the immutability of the Bible and of God.

IV.

Naturally, the question of what we teach our children is at the intersection of religion, science, and politics. In Britain, for example, education aimed to tame the lower classes, particularly to avoid revolt. For the first half of the nineteenth century, education focused on moral instruction. Giving a speech entitled "Recent Measures for the Promotion of Education in England" (1839), British politician and educationist Sir James

Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth emphasizes the connection between education, moral instruction, and social control:

> It is astonishing to us, that the party calling themselves conservative should not lead the van in promoting the diffusion of that knowledge among the working classes which tends beyond anything else to promote the security of property and the maintenance of public order. To restore the working classes to their former state of injurious and contented apathy is impossible, if it were desirable. If they are to have knowledge, surely it is the part of the wise and virtuous government to do all in its power to secure them useful knowledge, and to guard against pernicious opinions.[39]

These "pernicious opinions" remain unnamed. Instead, the religious chorus expresses a vague fear—in the 1830s, that the lower classes will remain ignorant and, perhaps, revolt; in the later decades that the mixed classes, educated together by the state, will instead become *too* educated and question the moral instruction that was the primary goal of education during the first half of the century.

To Bottigheimer, laymen were either unconcerned or unaware of the intellectual leaps toward scientific popularity. Yet a look at Bond's own introduction and at religious

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[39] Quoted in Sturt, *The Education of the People* (101), but Kay-Shuttleworth's speech was almost immediately converted into a monograph and published in book form repeatedly over the course of the nineteenth century. See Sturt for a more thorough background of the English education system, including the class politics of education reform.

voices from mid-century onward suggests that it was not simply the elite that knew or cared about explorations like Chambers's and Lyell's but rather that the reading public was particularly concerned with the effects of objective knowledge and materialism. In other words, while authors of children's Bibles were encouraging an epistemology of make-believe through which to achieve intimacy with the godhead, propagators of those same Bibles across denominations and on both sides of the Atlantic were using that imaginative epistemology to define their faith against scientific materialism. For example, in a public sermon given in 1879 on the subject of state-funded education, Robert Gregory addresses what he sees as the central dichotomy of thought:

> [W]e are now in condition not very unlike Israel in the days of Elijah: there are two gods contending for our worship now as there were two contending for their worship then. On the one side, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we have professed to worship all our life long, still just believe in him, love him, serve him, and honor him; And, on the other side, the material goods by which we are surrounded have been practically referenced as a God, and can certainly count on many worshipers. The spirit of the age would reject all thought of fashioning a molten or graven image and falling down and worshiping it, but it encourages the idea of looking upon wealth, temporal good and temporal power, as the governing and controlling influence in the world; and though it does not expend money and building temples to its honour, it yields to it whatever reverence and affection its heart can give to any service. ("God or Baal" 7)

At first look, Gregory seems to be condemning materialism as we might use the word colloquially—and there is certainly much in the sermon to indicate his distaste for commodities; however, as he goes on, it becomes clear that the "two gods contending for [his] worship" are not as clearly divided between religious belief and the desire for material objects; instead the division is between two opposing worldviews that will be imparted to children. In fact, as the sermon progresses, Gregory increasingly emphasizes the threat of materialism to the education of children. He describes secular knowledge as an attack on Christian principles that will inevitably corrupt public education:

> A variety of [education] proposals were made from time to time to weaken the religious element, to exalt secular knowledge, to magnify what the world believes in at the cost of positive Christianity. So the way was paid for the more direct assault upon teaching this week which we have to encounter.
>
> That assault is really upon our whole position. It propounds a different end, different principles, and a different mode of procedure from those for which we contend. We set before us as the end of the primary education we wish to impart–Jesus Christ. The rival proposal is to instill secular instruction without thought of Jesus Christ: the principles on which we wish to base education are those of the Gospel. (10)

In fact, the "rival proposal" of secular education had been gaining ground since Britain's Revised Code of 1862, which divided state funding for schools on the basis of standardized achievement tests; implementing these tests had been a significant step

toward shifting educational focus from moral instruction to skills- and knowledge-based learning in England.[40]

In the United States, standardized testing was a slower process, but the process of separating religious and secular instruction had certainly begun, particularly through the use of increasingly standardized textbooks. The McGuffey readers, "by far the most popular American schoolbooks, the ones that others imitated" were the most commonly used textbooks in the public education system (Gorn 2). Both commercially and pedagogically successful, these readers presented a nostalgic image for their readers, "an idealized version of mainstream, white, middle-class, Protestant American culture" that "[rarely portrayed] blacks or Native Americans, the rich or poor (who, if included, were on their way out of poverty), or non-Protestants (especially Catholics)" (Gorn 2). Despite their extremely limited socioeconomic representation, however, the textbooks do stand in as representative not of American values or Americans themselves, but as a reflection of the common school movement. In his introduction to the 1879 edition of the readers, Gorn writes that activists like William Holmes McGuffey himself and like Lyman Beecher—both Presbyterian ministers, Beecher the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe—advocated for locally-run primary schools, on the hopes that "such schools would not only educate children, they would also open up economic opportunities for the talented,

[40] The United States Federal Government did not establish standardized testing until World War I, but the process of separating religious and secular education had begun far earlier in America, as well. See Gorn 18-19.

they would teach moral lessons, piety, and a sense of community" (7). From its beginning, then, the public school system in America has been the hope of moralists and ministers. The McGuffey readers themselves, then, can be read as a reflection of these activists' Protestant evangelical goals (9).

The texts themselves, as I mentioned above, follow a similar revision pattern to the children's religious texts of the day—from their first ideation in 1836 to the major revisions of 1857 and 1859, the lessons become more lighthearted, with more fiction and less straightforward instruction—and astronomically more popular.[41] When the lessons do address cosmological questions, they almost invariably link those questions to a personal relationship with God. For example, in a poem entitled "Who Made the Stars?" from the 1879 edition, a child asks her mother the leading question; Mother replies that "'Twas God, my child, the Glorious One," and expands on all the other things God made. By the fifth and sixth stanzas, however, Mother transitions to a less direct focus: "He guides us every hour; / We're kept beneath his watchful eye, / And guarded by his power. / Then let your little heart, my love, / Its grateful homage pay / To that kind Friend, who, from above, / Thus guides you every day" (117). This diversion from the cosmological question about the stars to a repetition of the God-as-friend model I described in Bond's

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[41] Gorn claims that "outside of the King James Bible, the McGuffey readers were the most widely read books in nineteenth-century America," calculating the conservative estimate of 50 million copies sold (2). For a more thorough record of sales figure estimates, see Gorn 2. Tebbel also mentions the commercial success—see 2: 600.

Illustrated Bible History represents on a microcosmic level the ideological maneuver happening at the late nineteenth century.[42] The poem is a narrative one, framed as a fictional dialogue not unlike a catechism we would find at the end of an early-century children's Bible. The lesson's "catechism," however, is tweaked to encompass the most basic of scientific questions—the matter of creation. This is the closest we get to a direct address of science and religion, and it, like the other religious literature of the era, invites an imaginative epistemology. The child speaker is gently guided away from the first line, one that was certainly, by this point in the century, a loaded question, and toward a fictional engagement with the godhead.

Crucially, the fictional lesson replicates the as-if epistemological structure I have described. In nonfictional lessons, and especially ones that touch on any social or political conventions, the McGuffey readers perpetuate the conflict thesis. For example, a lesson by Gardiner Spring entitled, "Observance of the Sabbath" reads:

> If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures; to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undeciding, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there exists any such being as God, you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue, and

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[42] Certain Bibles, such as the *Young Folks' Bible* (1890), also make this direct connection between the cosmological question about the stars and God: "why do we need the Bible to know about God? Do not the stars and the sun and the earth tell us that there must be a God who made all these wonderful things and rules them?" (26).

> hoisted the flood-gates of immorality and crime. I need not say that when a people have once done this, they can no longer exist as a tranquil and happy people. Every bond that holds society together would be ruptured; fraud and treachery would take the place of confidence between man and man; the tribunals of justice would be scenes of bribery and injustice; avarice, perjury, ambition, and revenge would walk through the land, and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men. (122-123)

The extreme language of this passage needs no explication. Echoing Bond's introductory claim that no secular society has ever resulted in any good, Spring places God and any kind of scientific or cosmological questioning at impassable odds. In this way, the readers become more definitively political. On the one hand, they include the fictional engagement with religion we see in children's Bibles of this era; on the other, in the realm of nonfiction, they perpetuate the animosity of conflict theory between scientific and religious epistemologies.

It should be obvious, then, that the discord between science and religion goes beyond political conflict; indeed, by later in the century, it had become a clash not simply between fields but between worldviews. In his sermon entitled "How are Children to Be Taught Religion," preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1879, Gregory directly refutes what we might call a secular understanding of the world:

> Man's natural idea of morality is that of justice; of doing to others as they did to him, and so I'm returning good with good, evil with evil. His idea is that all should receive in accordance with what they give– that from those on whom love

> or regard is bestowed, should be obtained love or regard in return, that hatred might be justifiably returned by hatred" ("Gregory" 4).

Here, Gregory contrasts "Man's natural idea" with the Golden Rule. Itself a kind of magic, the precept to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" proposes that each moral action will *not* receive an equal and opposite reaction, but that a Christian justice will depend on an alternative logical system. Rather than following the principles of secular, or indeed pre-Christian justice, the Lord will "lift them out of the state natural to fallen man, and exalt them…" (5). Thus, Gregory sets up an opposition between the natural laws of Man and the supernatural or spiritual laws of God. The problem with secular justice, according to Gregory, is that it offers no transcendent inequality of "grace"—it is too much an equation of actions. What is striking about this distinction is the way the natural laws of man resemble basic laws of physics: 'every action has an equal and opposite reaction' might easily be conceived as Hammurabi's code, the retributive justice system which predated Christianity and seems to threaten it again; hence, when Gregory rejects secular justice, he simultaneously refutes the epistemology of balance governed by a scientific understanding of the world.

Of course, we would not necessarily link a scientific understanding of the world with an alternative moral schema; however, considering the attempts of natural theologians to fit their scientific theories within a Judeo-Christian worldview, we might read Gregory's sermon, an attempt to divert the secular principle of justice toward a supernatural one, as a rejection of the epistemological principles governing scientific inquiry. Natural laws of balance, for Gregory, are mundane and inadequate; rather than

relying on the “harmony” of the natural world, such as that defined by Chambers, we must reject this model. He continues, “It is idle for us to suppose that it is natural for men to love religion…It has not been by the light of nature that the people of this country have been preserved from many crimes and evils into which other nations have fallen” (Gregory 13). What natural scientists presented as the “harmony” of nature, then, is here made the enemy of religious truth. In other words, if the physical principle of Newton’s Third Law could be seen as dictating secular morality through its terms of balance, Gregory rejects that polarized balance in favor of the governance of a third party, God, who cannot be bound by this principle. Rather than balance, the reigning precept of justice is “to result from the heart accepting God’s law as its guiding principle, and having for its motive doing that what was pleasing in His sight” (Gregory 6).

Ultimately, what is distinct about such epistemological friction is that this discussion occurs specifically in the context of the religious teaching of children. Thus, although Gregory did not pen a children’s Bible himself, he advocates the use of these Bibles, with accompanying catechisms, in the school system. Through this advocacy, the Bibles come to reflect the friction between worldviews dramatized by these sermons and by Lewis’s treatise.

Although, in accordance with Gregory’s call-to-arms, Bond presents his Bible as a tool “for the instruction of an unfortunate young person, who was deprived of all opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge by his own unaided efforts,” and although he does present the material as a source of knowledge, an aesthetic reading of the *Young People’s Illustrated Bible History* reflects an emphasis not on the instruction, but on the

delight to be gained from the Bible (ix). Rather than focusing on the theological nuts and bolts of Creationism, Bond's Bible deliberately encourages entertainment over education. Bond's goal to "impart a value and *charm* to the book" follows a culture-wide shift, a trend in late-nineteenth-century religious material to present religion as emotionally satisfying, as entertaining, as *magical* (ix, emphasis mine). By incorporating subtle elements of fantasy, then, Bond and his author steer child readers away from a rational engagement with the text and toward an as-if epistemological frame, a mystical way of viewing religion that encourages porousness and discourages secular questioning. In other words, framing religion as a delightful fantasy rather than going head-to-head with scientific thinkers fosters a sense of religion as a relieving outlet from oppressive materialism. Just as Luhrmann's subjects transform their faith by constructing a hyperreal God through make-believe, Bond and his author encourage children to relate to God in a different *mode* of belief altogether. In fact, Bond seems to have preceded Bill Nye and others in both realizing and accepting that the worlds of religion and science are different worlds—overlapped, perhaps, but distinct nonetheless. Rather than fighting that divide, *The Young People's Illustrated Bible History* lays the groundwork for the Christian turn toward mysticism Luhrmann has observed. By investing in a patriarchal "friend," by viewing time and space as flexible and the self as porous, Bond suggests, the Bible is not only historical, but also fun.

It is important to note that Bond uses these strategies not simply to lure children into religion. Of course, we can see his attempts to catch more converts with honey; however, I would like to consider Bond's narrative strategies not simply as a way to

manipulate children into belief, but rather as a way to cling to porous meaning in a secular world. Indeed, Bond seems to fear not science but the *lack of meaning* implied by rationalism:

> What motive were there to worship at the altar of 'the unknown God,' or seek information about the unknown future by consulting the dumb oracle of uninspired reason? Why should not man, thus groping in the region and shadow of death, limit his aims and labors to what shall minister merely to present gratification, accepting as his creed the frigid philosophy of the atheistic stoic, – 'let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die.' (xix)

The problem between religion and science, then, is not simply that the epistemologies conflict, but that reason is "uninspired," that a scientific turn would rob children of the delightful and meaningful magic of religious practice.

Of course, studying works for children—especially religious ones—nearly always draws us back to politics. As the Ham/Nye debate shows, we have not, as a culture, decided how to approach the questions of epistemology and child-rearing. What I hope to offer with this project, however, is a contribution to Bottigheimer's work on children's Bibles, to suggest that Bible writers were not only *aware* of science, but that they consciously or unconsciously developed these narratological strategies for coping with the emerging threat of science to a purely Creationist, Judeo-Christian worldview. Further, considering these texts, which have been so long lost in an unexplored archive of nineteenth-century religious matter, revises our understanding of the process of secularization. For us to have ended up at this position, at which, as Luhrmann points out,

belief in God is *not* a given—in fact, as Taylor mentions, it is supernaturally difficult to maintain—required more than simply the fragmentation of culture by technology and by scientific discovery. Instead, examining this liminal space between Christian apologetics, scientific materialism, and child-raising with a multi-textual approach allows for a revision of our understanding of secularism, a reconsideration of both science and religion on either side of the epistemological "chasm."

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