'I Could Almost Believe in God': The Evolution of American Theology in American Literary Naturalism

Steven John Bembridge

100024928

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University of East Anglia

Department of Art, Media, and American Studies

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Abstract

This dissertation is about the prevalence of religious themes in American literary naturalism, which emerged in the late nineteenth century. The centrality of themes such as the indifference of nature and the struggle for survival are common to naturalism, owing to its close association with post-Enlightenment and post-Darwinian advances in science and philosophy. From a contemporary perspective, where science and religion often appear as oppositional explanations for life and its development, it becomes all too easy to assume that those authors associated with naturalism represented religion in limited ways, or with a spirit of antagonism. However, I demonstrate that religion occupies a central position in naturalism. I argue that the religious themes of Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Sinclair Lewis are reflections of nineteenth and early twentieth-century theological and cultural histories that saw American Protestantism adjusting to a post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment context through a process of liberalisation. Whilst I do not set out to form an overarching theory of religion in naturalism, I do argue that the naturalists consistently explore the veracity of the Bible, the humanity of Christ, the eschatological promise of life after death, the socio-economic and socio-political implications of Christ's teaching, and the concept of original sin. In conclusion, I note that both the Great Depression and post-9/11 America saw a return to naturalism as a mode of representation. I therefore also explore how twentieth- and twenty-first century naturalists continued to incorporate into their works the religious themes explored in the works of the earlier generation of naturalists. The naturalists were, and perhaps continue to be, scientists, philosophers, and non-conventional theologians. Religion and naturalism coexist in a complex relationship that ebbs and flows between orthodoxy and liberalism, but never do they deny the right for the other to exist.

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Introduction

American Literary Naturalism and the Evolution of American Theology

> 'The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long-continued culture.'[1]
>
> ***Charles Darwin - The Descent of Man***

American literary naturalism emerged in the late nineteenth century, which was a period of American history that saw the economy burgeoning and cities growing at an exponential rate. Electrification brought new light to New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, and the railroad began to spread across the entire nation. America was also coming to terms with Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin's work had profound effects upon understandings of the creation of life. It was no longer necessary for God to act as the grand designer; nature itself could select what lived and what died. Naturalism has a close association with a post-Darwinian context, or, more broadly, science, given the centrality of themes such as the indifference of nature and the struggle for survival in works associated with the movement.

Nature's usurpation of God can lead to an oppositional understanding of the relationship between naturalism and another vital cultural force in the late nineteenth century: religion.[2] It thus becomes all too easy to assume that those authors associated with naturalism interacted with religion in limited ways or with a spirit of antagonism towards all forms of theology, religious iconography, and the message that underpins the narrative of the Gospels. To the modern reader, an interpretation that highlights the perceived conflict between science and religion seems quite natural, but, as I demonstrate,

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[*] The title words of this dissertation—'I Could Almost Believe in God'—are spoken by Jack London's atheistic sea captain Wolf Larsen in *The Sea-Wolf* (1904) - Jack London, *The Sea-Wolf* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1904), 73.

[1] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1874), 612.

[2] Eric Carl Link, "Defining American Literary Naturalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 80. Joseph R. McElrath, ""'One Thing One Did Not Question': The Christian Perspective," *Literature and Belief* 21, nos. 1–2 (2001): 33. Charles Child Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream* (Minneapolis: University of Missouri Press, 1956), 28.

such a conception is a product of the nineteenth century. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that religion occupies a central position in the works of the naturalists that I explore. It extends beyond happenstance and is far more than a minor device used for narrative effect. For example, is there any need for Jack London in "The God of His Fathers" (1901) to refer to the Christ-like attributes of a frontier woodsman? Is it important that Maggie Johnson of Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) meets a pompous clergyman during her last hours of life? Does it really matter that Curtis Jadwin in Frank Norris's *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (1903) refers to Dwight L. Moody, the American evangelist? I argue that the answer is 'yes' to all.

Eric Carl Link rightly states that 'the American literary naturalists do not share a common worldview,' but this is not necessarily true in the context of religious representation.[3] In this dissertation, I demonstrate how the exploration of religious themes found in the work of the naturalists Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Sinclair Lewis is a direct reflection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century theological and cultural histories that saw American Protestantism adjusting to a post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment context. More specifically, I pay particular attention to the conflicts that occurred within and without American evangelicalism and argue that the naturalists explored the cultural presence of two processes that caused them.[4] The first conflict centred upon the process of theological liberalisation and the rise of fundamentalism in response to it; the second conflict concerned the developmental process of muscular Christianity as a reaction to an already established feminised Church.[5] I do not argue that all religious representations in naturalism reflect these contexts, but I do demonstrate that important theological debates influenced naturalism at the turn of the twentieth century and that naturalism actively stages its own interventions to them.[6]

My aim is not to address the personal beliefs of the naturalists *per se*, nor is it to attempt to measure just how evangelical or liberal the naturalists were—throughout the dissertation I also demonstrate how the naturalists relate to non-evangelical

[3] Link, "Defining American," 87.
[4] The term evangelicalism acts as a definitional canopy that covers a multitude of denominations. Where relevant, I do incorporate a finer-grained denominational context, but I predominantly use the broader term evangelicalism.
[5] Future work will be necessary to represent adequately all permutations at denominational and non-Protestants levels.
[6] America's religious diversity is far greater than the historical context explored throughout this dissertation. Mormonism and a growing immigrant Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim population created a multifarious religious society at the end of the nineteenth century.

denominations. Rather, my intention is to demonstrate how the changing face of the predominant mode of Protestant expression accounts for the ways in which religion becomes manifest in the works of naturalism explored. To provide a new definition of naturalism is not the aim of this dissertation. My work is primarily a sustained first step in beginning to understand how religion finds representation in naturalist texts and how those that I have chosen to include also relate to the wider context of nineteenth-century religious fiction. Consequently, when I refer to *naturalism* and *the naturalists* both here and in the following chapters, the context makes it clear whether I am referring to the texts chosen for inclusion or whether I am referring to naturalism at a broader level of genre. The texts considered in this dissertation all evince the author's clear knowledge of contemporary theological contexts alongside demonstrable engagement with controversies and questions driving the modernisation of the Protestant Church in America at the turn of the twentieth century. These texts are not exhaustive, but represent a significant corpus of naturalist writing that shows the deep engagement of their authors with important theological topics: higher biblical criticism, the role that the Church should play in an industrialised society, and the figure of the historical Christ. Of course, religious expression is just one part of human society that also interacts with the economic and social development of a nation. The relationships between the rise of capitalism, rising population figures, and the ability to make a living as a writer all contribute to the religious themes that appear in the texts explored.

The first half of this Introduction, then, turns to the very definition of naturalism and suggests how the legacy of nineteenth-century attitudes towards science and religion have informed contemporary understandings of the genre. The Introduction continues with an exploration of the critical relationship between naturalism and nineteenth-century Christology with an analysis of the figure of the historical Jesus in naturalist texts. The Introduction then expands the frame of reference for my readings of naturalist texts to include the larger context of America's economic history and its relationship to the process of secularisation. Finally, the Introduction turns its gaze to the intricate relationship that existed between the literary marketplace and the 'feminisation' (to use Ann Douglas's controversial phrase) of the nineteenth-century American Church. The naturalists, thus, exist in the overlapping space between secularity and religiosity, and, although secular authors, they display an intricate knowledge of the transformations affecting the American Protestant Church at the turn of the twentieth century. This

dissertation, then, is an intervention that demonstrates naturalism's inherent and enlightening relationship to America's religious history.

American Literary Naturalism and Its Historical Definitions

Before exploring those vital and unacknowledged issues, it is necessary to establish a broader sense of the context for my critical intervention. Donald Pizer regards naturalism as a genre that has never gone away; thus, in order to intervene in the body of naturalist criticism, it is useful to situate such an intervention within past and present definitional approaches to the genre.[7] Critics generally agree that naturalism came to prevalence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but since then its definitional status has not been static. The first attempts to define naturalism did so with a clear view that it was an extension of realism. In the 1930s, Vernon Louis Parrington (1930) defined naturalism as 'pessimistic realism with a philosophy that sets man in a mechanical world.'[8] Those who adopted Parrington's position included Oscar Cargill (1941) and Philip Rahv (1949).[9] During the 1950s and 1960s, approaches to naturalism began to change from the rigid interpretations that adhered to determinism and realism. Charles Child Walcutt (1956) preferred to see naturalism as an offshoot of Transcendentalism in which 'two rivers of thought'—spirit and nature—emerged.[10] Donald Pizer (1965 and 1966) also allowed naturalist texts to depart from absolute realism and the dogmatic restrictions of determinism.[11] He saw naturalism as similar to realism in that both drew characterisations from the 'everyday round of human experience.'[12] Pizer also regarded naturalism as different from realism because characterisations in the naturalist novel often departed from the realistic to illustrate 'the extraordinary and excessive in human nature.'[13] The decades after the 1970s saw approaches to naturalism looking to post-structuralist and

[7] Donald Pizer, *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 13.
[8] Vernon Louis Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. 3* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 325.
[9] Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America: Ideas on the March* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 92. Philip Rahv, *Image and Idea: Fourteen Essays on Literary Themes* (New York: New Directions, 1949), 132–33.
[10] Walcutt, *Divided Stream*, vii.
[11] Donald Pizer, "Nineteenth Century American Naturalism: An Essay in Definition," *The Bucknell Review* 13, no. 3 (1965): 2.
[12] Donald Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 13.
[13] Ibid.

new historic methodologies in order to capture the essence of the genre.[14] Critics turned to the society from which naturalism emerged.[15] Walter Benn Michaels (1987), for example, disassociated his work from the 'old debate' of how naturalism differed from realism and concentrated upon naturalism's emergence from 'within the culture.'[16] Mark Seltzer (1992), too, read naturalism against the backdrop of a cluster of cultural 'anxieties, at once sexual, economic, and aesthetic.'[17]

In the 2000s, critics continued to build upon these concerns derived from an understanding of culture, and it is from these that I derive my methodological foundation. Jennifer Fleissner (2004) explores the social life of women in the nineteenth century and challenges naturalism's association with masculinity.[18] John Dudley (2004), in contrast, regards naturalist writing as existing alongside 'a complex set of cultural tensions,' which he sees expressed in a 'discourse of masculinity.'[19] Eric Carl Link (2004) uses a cultural approach to explore the very definition of naturalism itself. Link's work emerges from the differentiation of two terms: philosophical naturalism and scientific naturalism.[20] The definition that Link develops and which I adopt throughout this dissertation is that naturalism is a thematic expression of both of these modes, without having to adhere strictly to either mode.[21] By demonstrating how the works of Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, and Jack London fall in and out of naturalism without a thematic interpretation, Link argues that naturalism emerged from the cultural context of the 'academic milieu of the day.'[22] This academic context was more specifically the 'post-Enlightenment developments in science and philosophy' that Link (2011) later argues gave birth to a

[14] Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). June Howard, *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Harold Kaplan, *Power and Order: Henry Adams and the Naturalist Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[15] Link, "Defining American," 84.
[16] Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 26.
[17] Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25.
[18] Jennifer L. Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, and Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 6.
[19] John Dudley, *A Man's Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 14.
[20] Philosophical naturalism encompasses the earlier definitions of the Parrington school; simply stated, it 'precludes the operation of supernatural forces,' or, in other words, event Y occurs only because event X caused it to happen materially. Scientific naturalism, on the other hand, is the means by which science, rather than the supernatural, explains empirical events - Eric Carl Link, *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 11.
[21] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 18.
[22] Ibid.

literature in which 'the tension between older, traditional belief systems and the new science of the post-Darwinian nineteenth century' played out.[23] For Link, naturalism spans the 1860s to the 1910s but then 'spins off in several different directions in the remainder of the twentieth century,' which Link sees as a reflection of 'twentieth-century science and culture.'[24] No matter the spectrum of opinions held of naturalism, its definitional status certainly continues to capture the imagination of critics. Donna Campbell's (2011) recent work, for example, concludes that the movement is not 'a monolithic whole' but a collection of 'naturalisms.'[25] These, she argues, emerge from 'theories of evolution, psychology, race, and Social Darwinism.'[26] What Campbell omits here, though, are theories of religion, or theologies. This oversight is one addressed by this dissertation. Pizer argues there is no reason to concentrate upon 'the conditions that contributed to the development of a new literary sensibility in the 1890s' because 'most students of American life' would already be familiar with the changes from the rural to the industrialised and from 'traditional religious faith and moral belief to skepticism and uncertainty.'[27] Yet I believe that herein lies one of the critical problems with naturalist studies; it is all too easy to see the naturalists as an endpoint of the transformation that Pizer describes and to treat scepticism as somehow synonymous with a vigorous denial of all metaphysical influences in the work of the naturalists.

Naturalism and the Legacy of the *Conflict Thesis*

Naturalism's close critical relationship with Darwin has done much, I believe, to lead to an assumption that the genre and religion are antithetical. In the secular mainstream, evolution is so empirically justifiable that the term "theory" is an unfortunate, historical nomenclature that seems to suggest uncertainty.[28] Darwin provided the naturalists with a

[23] Link, "Defining American," 2.
[24] Ibid., 74.
[25] Donna Campbell, "The Rise of Naturalism," in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 500.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Pizer, *The Theory and Practice*, 17.
[28] Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection states that a given environment selects which organisms are more likely to live long enough to reproduce. Reproductive success occurs for an organism because certain traits—which modern science reveals as random genetic variations in its DNA—give it a competitive advantage over others in the same environment. The organism is able to pass on its traits, which have proven advantageous. Adaptation is a consequence of this non-random natural selection; it does not refer to the ability of an organism to affect its own genetic response to the environment: that is, to change its traits. Darwin's theory is quite different from Jean Baptiste Lamarck's (1744–1829) theory of use and disuse. Lamarck believed that the physical structure of organisms had the potential to change

new way of viewing humanity's relationship to the divine. No longer was humanity the prized creation of a loving God, but simply another organism upon which the laws of natural selection continued to work. Darwin's work also refuted the necessity of a deity as the designer of life, thus calling into question notions of providence and the beneficent, guiding hand of God. Although Darwin's work did not attempt to explain the very conception of life, it did obviate the need of a deity to explain its complexity. Perhaps, then, it becomes easy to understand just why Stephen Crane would write his famous naturalist ode to the universe that certainly suggests the absence of the divine:

> A man said to the universe:
> "Sir, I exist!"
> "However," replied the universe,
> "The fact has not created in me
> A sense of obligation."[29]

However, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that science and religion began to take on an oppositional relationship. Before then, science revealed the glory of God, rather than necessarily challenging religious beliefs. Indeed, Colin Russell (2002) argues that 'for many scientific figures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Christianity played a central role in embracing and even shaping their scientific endeavours.'[30] José Casanova (2006) also states that 'there is little historical evidence of any tension between American Protestantism and capitalism and very little manifest tension between science and religion in the U.S. prior to the Darwinian crisis at the end of the nineteenth century.'[31] Emerging in the post-Darwinian nineteenth century, then, the *conflict thesis* or *warfare thesis* has done much to shape modern attitudes towards the relationship between science and religion.[32] It relates most closely to the work of the philosopher John William Draper (1811–1882) and the historian Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918).

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in a direct adaption to a particular environment. Offspring would then inherit any adaptations present in the parents - Jean Baptiste Lamarck, *Zoological Philosophy: An Exposition with Regard to the Natural History of Animals* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914).

[29] Stephen Crane, *War Is Kind* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1899), 56.

[30] Colin A. Russell, "The Conflict of Science and Religion," in *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, ed. Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 8.

[31] José Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective," *The Hedgehog Review* 8, nos. 1–2 (2006): 11.

[32] Ibid., 4.

In *History of the Conflict Between Science and Religion* (1874), Draper argued that the 'intelligent classes must have perceived that there is a great and rapidly-increasing departure from the public religious faith.'[33] He suggested that throughout the history of science there has been 'a narrative of two contending powers, the expansive force of the human intellect on one side, and the compression arising from traditional faith and human interests on the other.'[34] Draper certainly created an oppositional relationship between science and religion, but the opposition was, more specifically, between Catholicism and science.[35] Building upon Draper, White described in *A History of the Warfare of Science and Theology in Christendom* (1896) how he aimed to let in 'the light of historical truth into that decaying mass of outworn thought which attaches the modern world to mediaeval conceptions of Christianity.'[36] He described how Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) entered 'the theological world like a plough into an ant hill,' but White also made a distinction between his own work and Draper's.[37] White accepted that science had 'conquered Dogmatic Theology based on biblical texts,' but he saw science's relationship to 'Religion' in a much more positive light.[38] White suggested that religion, as expressed 'in the love of God and of our neighbour,' will continue to develop.[39] Draper and White, therefore, certainly do contrast a scientific explanation of the universe with religion, but their titles belie a sensitivity that is not necessarily oppositional to all forms of religious belief. Critics of naturalism have failed to account for this relationship, and—while the naturalists may well reject religious dogma and its human associations—they do embrace religion's ideals of human love, sacrifice, and socioeconomic equality.

The effect of secularisation through science was that both the miracles and the divinity of Christ—in addition to the very meaning of what it meant to be God—all came under fire. Science provided an alternative explanation to the Bible's account of existence based upon empiricism and not solely faith. In the light of such evidence, it is reasonable to assume, then, that the naturalists—who were all highly educated and, at the least, aware of current science—would tap into the scientific climate of their era and explore the

[33] John William Draper, *History of the Conflict Between Science and Religion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), v.
[34] Ibid., vi.
[35] Ibid., 327. See also Ronald L. Numbers, "Science and Religion," Osiris 1 (1985): 61.
[36] Andrew Dickson White, *A History of Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), v–vi.
[37] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection; or, The preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859).
[38] Ibid., xii.
[39] Ibid.

necessity of the divine in their works. Indeed, it would seem unusual if a generation of educated authors did not question the existence of God and attempt to understand the diminishment of humanity's place in the universe. However, it is not reasonable to expect that the naturalists approached the divine with contempt or ridicule. Russell, for example, suggests that 'only in the last thirty years of the twentieth century did historians of science mount a sustained attack on the [conflict] thesis.'[40] Consequently, I build upon this spirit of re-evaluation and argue that the time has come to begin the process of addressing religion in naturalism in a manner that does not assume *a priori* a confrontational relationship between the two. Mark Noll (1992) also understands the importance of this approach and explains that nineteenth-century Protestantism's own reaction to challenging scientific developments was not as egregious as expected if judged according to the 'stereotypes of the late twentieth century.'[41] He suggests that the more usual reactions—which also guide my reading of the naturalists—'were efforts to make minor adjustments to both received Christian thinking and popular conceptions of the cosmos.'[42]

Mark Knight (2009) addresses the same concept from the perspective of contemporary literature and argues that authors who are not commonly associated with religious themes are still capable of 'producing religious readings.'[43] I am also guided by Knight's contention in approaching the naturalists, as I, too, do not see their association with the secular precluding their engagement with the divine. Indeed, I do argue throughout this dissertation that the naturalists reflect and engage features of American religious fiction. Throughout their work, the naturalists attempt to make sense of the secular world—scientific, economic, and philosophical—and the role of the divine. The naturalists expose centuries of Christian tradition to the modern world and document their findings in works that reveal a deep-seated knowledge of a Christian faith that must respond to secularism. The evidence laid out above goes some way to explaining just why popular introductions to American literature—upon which undergraduates build their understandings of naturalism, fail to mention, or fail to appreciate, the complexities of the American religious context.[44]

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[40] Ibid., 4.
[41] Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 369.
[42] Ibid., 370.
[43] Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (London: Continuum, 2009), 5.
[44] For example, Richard Gray, *A Brief History of American Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 138–44. Malcolm Bradbury and Richard Ruland, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History*

Critical Approaches to Religion in Naturalism

Criticism exploring religion in naturalism does exist. Lars Åhnebrink (1950), for example, explored the cultural background of naturalism in social, philosophical, and literary contexts, and he described the 'stronghold' of the Church that was resistant to 'new trends of thought.'[45] Walcutt, too, touched upon the extent to which explicit determinism occurred in the naturalist novel in relation to the cultural 'tradition of Christian orthodoxy' from which naturalism emerged.[46] In recent years, a return to religion has begun to gather pace in naturalist studies, and, as such, I view my intervention to naturalism as continuing this trend. Pizer recognises the importance of religion and offers examples of religious manifestations in works like Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, but he does not explore the larger cultural context of theological change in the late nineteenth century.[47] Louis J. Budd (1995) highlights the 'anti-supernatural' mode of interpretation that permeated the nineteenth century.[48] He touches upon theological contrasts in citing the 'countercurrents' that flowed in response to societal changes and which drew upon 'a sturdy Christian religiosity.'[49] Link (2004) regularly explores religious themes in naturalism. He addresses the rise of millennialist movements at the end of the nineteenth century, and he identifies relationships between Christian socialism and elements of Christian doctrine.[50] In his reading of Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (1896), Link also highlights the importance of higher biblical criticism and Darwinism's effect upon religion.[51] Richard Lehan (2005) takes a broader view and sees naturalism as 'an expression of an era.'[52] He views naturalism as serving 'as a social corrective' which

of American Literature (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 225–33. James D. Hart, *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 461.

[45] Lars Åhnebrink, *The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction: A Study of the Works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris with Special Reference to Some European Influences, 1891–1903* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 9–10.

[46] Ibid., 18.

[47] Pizer, *Theory and Practice,* 129 and 161.

[48] Louis J. Budd, "The American Background," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: From Howells to London*, ed. Donald Pizer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24.

[49] Ibid., 23.

[50] Ibid., 81.

[51] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 97.

[52] Richard Lehan, *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 3.

forces 'a reevaluation of cultural truths.'[53] These include 'Puritanism with its God above,' and 'the Enlightenment with its belief in natural rights over birth rights.'[54]

The most comprehensive attempt to address religion in naturalism is certainly Steven Frye (2011). In an approach similar to the one that I adopt in this dissertation—and which also addresses the work of White and Draper—Frye argues for a re-evaluation of the 'perceived conflict' between science and religion in the work of the naturalists.[55] Frye's work is a wide-ranging exploration that encompasses elements of theology, social dynamics, and politics. Noting the significant impact that Church history had upon the naturalists, Frye explains that Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Jack London explore science in their works with an eye on 'a two-thousand-year theological and religious tradition.'[56] However, given the introductory nature of the text, it is unable to take up the much larger American theological and social contexts that I address in this dissertation.

The Cultural Importance of Christ and His Relationship to Naturalism

Stephen Prothero (2004) and Richard Fox (2005) merge both contexts in their exploration of the cultural importance of Jesus in American history. Indeed, the subtitles of both their works provide a clear sense of the place Jesus has historically held in the national consciousness—particularly in the nineteenth century. Fox's work describes Jesus as a 'Cultural Hero' and 'National Obsession,' and Prothero's refers to him as a 'National Icon.' Prothero states that 'Jesus became a major personality in the United States.'[57] He also makes the distinction between Christian 'insiders'—i.e. the Church—and those 'outsiders' who appropriated the image of such an important cultural figure.[58] I argue that the naturalists explored here were such outsiders to the orthodox evangelicalism against which they reacted—despite their intricate knowledge of the practices and beliefs of the movement. Fox, too, argues that Jesus is 'permanently layered into the American cultural soil' and sees this an an ongoing evolution of the figure of Jesus 'in response to social and religious developments.'[59] Edward Blum and Paul Harvey (2014) support Fox's claim and

[53] Ibid., 7.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Steven Frye, "Naturalism and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 154.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 16.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Richard Wightman Fox, Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession (New York, HarperOne, 2005), 24.

provide a critical intervention upon which I draw throughout the dissertation. They explore the shifting social conditions that produced Christ imagery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and provide a study of the racialisation of Christ that manifests the 'American obsession with race' and 'racial and religious power.'[60]

Prothero and Fox, though, make the claims they do about Jesus in part because of an increased interest in the historicity of Christ's life and times that occurred during the nineteenth century. An important catalyst in this growing interest was the work of the higher biblical critic David Friedrich Strauss—whose work I explore further in Chapter 1. Jennifer Stevens (2010) describes the nineteenth-century 'scholarly preoccupation' that resulted in the production of over sixty thousand historical accounts of Christ's life in Europe and the United States.[61] Critics like Stevens generally refer to these as the 'Lives of Jesus.'[62] When the naturalists included in this dissertation refer to Christ, I argue that they were responding to the legacy of late nineteenth-century quests for the historical figure of Christ. The work that I undertake throughout the dissertation, therefore, places a great deal of importance upon Christ because the naturalists were actively incorporating such an important cultural figure in American history into their work.[63] As I demonstrate throughout the dissertation, evangelicals and fundamentalists used the figure of Christ for their own theological and social purposes, but so, too, did the naturalists—who reflected a spirit of liberalism in their own understanding of Christ. They used the figure of Christ to make arguments about the society in which they lived and to explore the duality of the sacred and divine in post-Darwinian America. Christ for the naturalists is certainly an active figure, but he is not the divine, living Son of God who exists in commune with Father and Holy Spirit; the Christ that the naturalists accepted—and perhaps more accurately preached—died two-thousand years ago.[64] The naturalists certainly recognise the cultural importance of Christ, then, but he becomes both an idealised figure and a figure to which they attribute philosophical and sociological meaning. In the works of

[60] Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina), 7.
[61] Jennifer Stevens, *The Historical Jesus and the Literary Imagination, 1860–1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 34.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Christianity raises many theological questions that could form the themes of a dissertation about naturalism and religion. Eric Carl Link's (2006) exploration of good and evil in the work of Frank Norris, for example, is a good example of an alternative approach to how of religion and naturalism could be approached - Eric Carl Link, "The Theodicy Problem in the Works of Frank Norris," *Studies in American Literary Naturalism* 1, no.1–2 (2006): 90–108.
[64] Throughout the dissertation I use the term Jesus and Christ interchangeably to refer to the central figure of Christianity. The context makes it clear whether I am ascribing divinity or humanity to the term in use.

Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Sinclair Lewis, and Cormac McCarthy, I explore the figure of Christ through the lenses of philosophical and scientific naturalism. However, a significant feature of my exploration of Christ in naturalism centres upon the work of the 'reform naturalists,' Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Frank Conroy, and John Steinbeck.[65] Each was intimately associated with American socialism, which itself engaged the figure of Christ in order to highlight the perceived view that the Church was no longer acting out the message of social service that Christ preached in the Gospels.

David Burns (2013) describes how the historical study of the Bible grew in importance during the nineteenth century and how such study was of crucial importance in the development of the radical Christ. According to Burns, 'it was the volatile theological terrain created by biblical criticism that compelled radicals to train their focus on Christ.'[66] Citing Ernest Renan and Robert Ingersoll—two figures whom I explore throughout the dissertation—as instrumental in this process, Burns explains how 'freethinkers, socialists, and anarchists found a wealth of material in the Bible that they could use to present Jesus as a radical bent on overthrowing the prevailing order.'[67] Indeed, Burns argues that 'the radical Jesus became a source of inspiration among socialists and working-class activists dissatisfied with capitalism.'[68] In this dissertation, then, the representation of the human Christ binds the works of the naturalists together in a culture that placed a huge amount of importance on the central figure of Christianity. The notable—although of course not exclusive—presence of Christ throughout this dissertation, therefore, is a product of the cultural, the theological, and the literary contexts of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American society.

With this in mind, some of the most interesting work on religion and the figure of the literary Christ has come from others who refer to the same texts explored in this dissertation without necessarily considering them as naturalist works. For example, Alan Paton and Liston Pope (1954) reflect upon early twentieth-century literary representations of Christ and their relationship to the reception of 'modern culture.'[69] Paton and Pope's explicit aim is to catalogue Christ-novels that depict the physical return of Christ to the

[65] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 86.
[66] David Burns, *The Life and Death of the Radical Historical Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.
[67] Ibid., 12.
[68] Ibid., 47 .
[69] Alan Paton and Liston Pope, "The Novelist and Christ," *The Saturday Review* December 4 (1954): 15, 59.

twentieth century, but, unlike this dissertation, they do not seek to understand the place of the Christ-novels in the cultural and theological contexts from which they emerged. David S. Reynolds (1981) provides a detailed and seminal account of how religious fiction developed as a distinct genre of nineteenth-century American literature, which also includes Christ-novels that predate those introduced by Paton and Pope. Reynolds identifies late nineteenth-century religious novels as merging the sacred and secular, which is exactly the space in which I read the naturalists' work that extend into the twentieth century.[70] Theodore Ziolkowski (2002) provides another significant intervention to the literary Christ. He allows me to situate the naturalists' representations of Christ within a much larger fictional context.[71] Ziolkowski proposes the existence of four types of Christ-novel, all of which are evident in the naturalists' work. First, the 'fictionalising biography' takes the reader back to the first century and replays the Gospels from eyewitness accounts.[72] Second, the *Jesus redivivus* novel brings the Christ of the Gospels to contemporary society.[73] Third, *Imitatio Christi* refers to novels in which protagonists chose to live like Christ according to evidence derived from the Gospels.[74] Fourth, 'pseudonyms of Christ' are those works in which the author's own conception of Christ becomes manifest—this includes 'any novel in which the hero is felt to be somehow '"Christlike."'[75] With the exception of a brief reading of Upton Sinclair's *They Call Me Carpenter* (1922), which I explore in Chapter 4, the work of the naturalists does not feature in Ziolkowski's work, but his categories are certainly applicable to their work.

More recently, Gregory S. Jackson (2009) merges theological and literary history, and he makes a direct link between an increased historicism in the understanding of Christ and the rise of a social consciousness within Christianity. Jackson's overriding thesis is that these factors combined with American realism to create the homiletic novel, which embodied 'the fusion of religious practice and nineteenth-century reform.'[76] Jackson argues that the homiletic novel—his prototypical example being Charles Sheldon's *In His*

[70] David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 204.
[71] Ziolkowski's main argument is for the 'fictional transfiguration of Christ,' which, he argues, typically involves a modern protagonist whose life is a mirror of the Gospels' accounts - Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 6.
[72] Ibid., 13.
[73] Ibid., 17.
[74] Ibid., 23.
[75] Ibid., 26.
[76] Gregory S. Jackson "'What Would Jesus Do?': Practical Christianity, Social Gospel Realism, and the Homiletic Novel," *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006), 642.

Steps: "What Would Jesus Do?" (1896)—enabled readers to embrace a 'private devotion,' to 'strengthen moral autonomy,' and to 'foster social engagement through particular acts of reading.'[77] Jackson's work becomes relevant to naturalism through its argument that the homiletic 'trope passed between the religious and the secular.'[78] He cites Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903) as exemplars of this shift. Jackson's argument that the homiletic novel 'raises intriguing questions' about the development of religious thought in the late nineteenth century and that the homiletic novel offers 'a new context' for considering the works of the naturalists is pertinent to the work undertaken in this dissertation.[79]

The Historical Approach to American Literary Naturalism

Burns' exploration of the radical Jesus also relates to the much broader historical context in which the naturalists wrote and its relationship to religious thought. It is impossible to capture adequately the history of the late-nineteenth century in a few short pages, so I concentrate upon two features of nineteenth-century history that re-emerge in the works of the naturalists and which have a close associated with the religious themes the naturalists explore: economic power and population change. One word—transformation—best sums up the history of late nineteenth-century America, a period that saw fundamental changes in the American economy, its industry, and its societal relationships. The instigator of these changes was the Industrial Revolution.

Capitalism became the predominant economic mode, and the lure of increased prosperity lead to an economy based upon speculation and an increased sense of competition. Hugh Brogan (1999) refers to competition as the 'fiercely affirmed law' of capitalism.[80] Three important capitalist industrialists were Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), and John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913). They typified the extent to which an individual could rise to power and influence through the monopolisation of industry. Indeed, Frank Norris's *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901) charts the social impact of the Southern Pacific Railroad; Norris's title refers to the

[77] Gregory S. Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 158.
[78] Ibid., 182.
[79] Ibid., 158.
[80] Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States of America* (London: Penguin, 1999), 386.

strangling effects that monopolies like the Southern Pacific had upon farmers, bankers, international commerce, and communication networks (Figure 1).

America's growing industries attracted an increasing number of people to the industrialised North. In 1860, the American population was thirty-one million; in 1890, that number had more than doubled to sixty-three million.[81] America became an increasingly attractive prospect for many to begin a new life, and, between the years 1880 to 1920, just over twenty-three million immigrants arrived on America's shores.[82] The experience of immigrants and the conditions in which they lived fascinated the naturalists. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1892) and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) are two works that I explore in Chapters 2 and 4 respectively which ably demonstrate the naturalists' awareness of sociocultural change. Figure 2 shows Mulberry Street, a predominantly Italian-American area of New York that sits between Manhattan and the Bowery. Here the vitality of multiculturalism and the realities of crowded communities frame our understanding of the changing face of America's cities.

Figure 1. The Octopean Railroad
(Image not in copyright)

Figure 2. Mulberry Street, New York (circa 1900)
(Image not in copyright)

The unsatisfactory conditions in which many workers found themselves led to the rise of American socialism as a means by which to solve the problems of capitalism. Since the

[81] Ibid., 386.
[82] Michael Lemay and Elliott Robert Barkan, *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues: A Documentary History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), xxxi.

early nineteenth century, socialism has had an influence upon the history of the United States, and two variant socialist models existed: utopian socialism and revolutionary socialism.[83] Utopian socialism, so important to Upton Sinclair, emerged in the United States as early as 1825, and it looked to a vision of future equality. Experimental projects such as Brook Farm attempted to put into practice theoretical ideals of egalitarianism.[84] Revolutionary socialism, most associated with the work of Jack London, predominantly appeared through German immigrants. Its founding principle was to wrench the economic power from the ruling classes in order to establish a socialist society; Karl Marx (1818–1883) is perhaps the most widely known proponent of revolutionary thinking. For those working within the bounds of capitalism, however, the formation of labour unions was a means by which workers could improve the conditions in which they worked, the hours that they worked, and the salaries they received. Naturalists such as London and Sinclair are almost synonymous with the labour movement: the underlying principle of fair treatment for workers is an important theme throughout their work.

Secularisation and the Naturalists

The changing economic climate of the United States necessarily raised pressing theological questions. Christ's teaching of 'love your neighbour as yourself' was applicable for the capitalist magnate and the poor factory worker alike, but both obviously had to express the teaching in very different socioeconomic contexts.[85] Naturalists such as Jack London and Upton Sinclair regularly explored the relationship between both groups throughout their careers, but the work of Max Weber provides an explanation of the intimate relationship between capitalism and the Church. In *Die Protestantische Ethik und Der Geist Des Kaptialismus* (1904–1905), Weber suggested that capitalism's success derived from America's own Calvinist history, and he proposed the existence of what he referred to as the Protestant ethic. This, Weber argued, was an essential result of Calvinism's doctrines of predestination and election as manifest through Puritanism.[86] Weber believed that the Puritans associated 'continuous' and 'systematic' work in a

[83] Utopian socialism emerged from Comte de Saint Simon (1760–1825) and Charles Fourier (1772–1837). Revolutionary socialism emerged from Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881) and Karl Marx (1818–1883).
[84] The Unitarian minister George Ripley (1802–1880) and his wife Sophia Ripley (1803–1861) established The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education in the 1840s. It was a utopian communal living experiment.
[85] Mark 12:30–31.
[86] Predestination in Calvinism first relates to the notion that God has ordained every action in an individual's life; second, that God has decided who will receive eternal life and salvation (the elect).

'worldly calling' as evidence of divine election and faith.[87] Puritanism's ethic of hard work for the glory of God and worldly temperance—whilst not creating capitalism as an economic model—contributed to its spirit and 'the modern economic order.'[88] Weber, though, did not provide a solution to the inequalities that capitalism produced, which is where the work of the naturalists, I argue, intervenes through their expression of socialism.

The work of Weber also introduces a much larger sociological context—the theory of secularisation. Ernest Sandeen (1970) suggests that 'the history of modern Western civilization has been a history of secularization.'[89] George Marsden (2006) reiterates this point and argues that 'mid-nineteenth-century Western culture was in the midst of a process of secularization.'[90] David Hempton (2010) also suggests that 'the social significance of religion has inexorably declined in tandem with modernization.'[91] The work of Darwin undoubtedly provided secular answers to questions that were once the domain of the divine. The divinity of Christ also secularised during the nineteenth century, and I pick up each of these secular manifestations throughout the dissertation. Casanova states that 'the traditional theory of secularization works relatively well for Europe, but not for the United States.'[92] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (2005), in their cultural exploration of the American Church and cults, also refute American secularisation.[93] Charles Taylor (2007) provides a new paradigm of secularisation that fits well for an understanding of the naturalists. He recognises that whilst the United States was an early separator of Church and State, it has always displayed a significantly high statistical proportion of religiosity.[94] A cursory glance at the sheer number of new religions and spiritual practices that emerged in the nineteenth century again suggests that spirituality and the quest for access to the divine were far from defeated.[95] Indeed, Figure 3 seems to

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[87] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 116.
[88] Ibid., 123.
[89] Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 103.
[90] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49.
[91] David Hempton, "Protestant Migrations: Narratives of the Rise and Decline of Religion in the North Atlantic World c. 1650–1950," in *Secularization in the Christian World*, ed. Callum G. Brown and Michael Snape (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 41.
[92] Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization," 11.
[93] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 46.
[94] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.
[95] Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) published *Science and Health* (1875), which forms the cornerstone of Christian Science - Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health* (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Company, 1875). Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) began to publish *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of*

suggest that the rates of religious adherence in the United States from 1870 until 1926—the classic phase of American naturalism—actually increased rather decreased in post-Darwinian America. William McLoughlin (1978) also refers to the period 1890–1920 as the Third Great Awakening.[96] Neither the Enlightenment nor Darwinism—two key markers of secularity—could quell the rise of a religious instinct then.

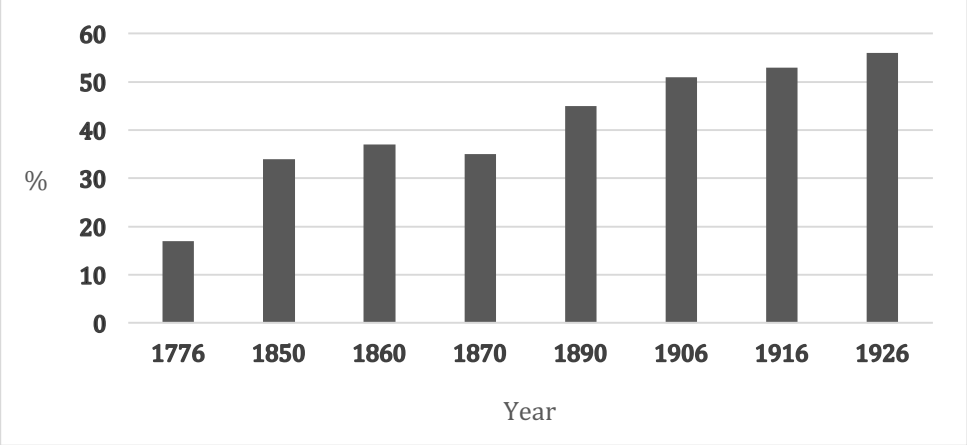

Figure 3. Rates of Religious Adherence, 1776–1926[97]

The period in which the naturalists wrote, therefore, was an especially transformative time in American history, and McLoughlin describes the 'enormous rescue operation' that ministers had to undertake in response to the post-Darwinian world.[98] The naturalists saw no such restorative mission as their aim, but their writing did reflect what David Hall (1997) suggests as the 'continually negotiated' divide between the religious and the secular.[99] Hall states that the process of accommodation between religion and secularity is a process that has defined America.[100] Marsden concurs and proposes that 'the characteristic response to secularization was to bless its manifestations—such as

Christ's Presence in 1879, which propounded the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Earlier in the century, in 1848, the Fox sisters, Kate (1837–1892) and Margaret (1833–1893), set in motion the Spiritualist movement, and Joseph Smith, in 1820, began receiving visions that would lead him to found The Latter Day Saint Movement.

[96] William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 152.

[97] Adapted from Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 23.

[98] Ibid., 152.

[99] David. D. Hall, "Religion and Secularization in American: A Cultural Approach," in *Säkularisierung, Dechristianisierung, Rechristianisierung im Neuzeitlichen Europa: Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 118.

[100] Ibid.

materialism, capitalism, and nationalism—with Christian symbolism.'[101] In other words, the naturalists lived in a society in which secularisation occurred, but it was also a society in which the effect of secularisation upon religion was far from eradicative. Taylor's view of secularisation as the transition of a society from one in which 'it was virtually impossible not to believe in God' to one in which God was just one possibility amongst many others is useful to understand the historical contexts in which the naturalists wrote.[102] Thus, nineteenth-century America was a cauldron of religious beliefs and practices that saw the collision of the sacred and secular. It is beyond the scope of my work to explore the intricacies of the relationship and its contemporary responses in more detail, but what is important is that the naturalists directly explore the secularisation of religion at a time in which it continued to be such a vital force in society. The veracity of the Bible, Christ and his teachings, the concept of original sin, and life after death all come under the lens of investigation and take on new meaning through Darwinism, socialism, historiography, science, and a modernising society. McLoughlin suggests that 'the new answers' to the questions raised in this environment 'were formulated as theistic evolution, Progressive Orthodoxy, and Christian sociology.'[103] The naturalists provided these same answers in the course of their literary careers.

Contemporary critical theory exploring the relationship between religion and literature is a burgeoning field of current inquiry. Despite its emphasis on English literature, Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman's (2006) exploration of religious faith in the novel supports the methodological approach adopted herein. They argue that even very secular novels 'may well address quite technical matters of religious doctrine' and that writers—apparently disassociated from religious themes—often 'explore the specifics of theology.'[104] Knight and Woodman make the insightful observation that the more a novel is an expression of its religious roots, 'the deeper its thrust towards secularity appears to be.'[105] In the context of the naturalists explored, this makes sense, as the extent to which the naturalists incorporate religious themes into their work is certainly an expression of the secularising forces of the post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment context in which

[101] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 49.
[102] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 3.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman, "*The Word in the World: An Introduction*," in *Biblical Religion and the Novel, 1700–2000*, ed. Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 3.
[105] Ibid, 5.

the natualists wrote. Knight and Woodman also address the religious beliefs of writers themselves, and they introduce the useful terms 'post-believers' and 'supposedly secular writers.'[106] They classify a post-believing writer as one who uses the imagery of faith with the intention of 'finding a different kind of meaning' or because they 'cannot rid themselves of it.'[107] A supposedly secular writer Knight and Woodman regard as one who makes continued use of religious imagery, without themselves being traditionally associated with religiosity. I believe that the naturalists occupy both these spaces in their exploration of the American religious context. The natualists explore secularity throughout their work, but they also frame secularity in the mode of religious language. In other words, they use religion as a means of 'reinscribing Christian ideas and doctrines to comment on contemporary issues.'[108]

Of course, naturalism was not only an American genre and neither were religious themes in naturalism a solely American phenomenon.[109] In Emile Zola's *Germinal* (1885), the socialist Étienne Lantier takes on the role of a proletarian Christ who challenges the powers of a mining company. Lantier certainly speaks to the Christs of Jack London and Upton Sinclair that I explore in Chapters 3 and 4. I suggest, though, that whilst thematic continuity may appear in both American and European naturalisms, the cultural context of American religious history is particularly constitutive of American naturalism. Laurence J. Marriott (2002)—writing of European Naturalism and its relationship to Zola—states that naturalism 'was subverting many of the fundamentals of Christian doctrine.'[110] I demonstrate quite the opposite: the American naturalists were not attempting to subvert the fundamentals of Christian doctrine; they were attempting to reconcile them with the post-Darwinian culture of their generation.

The Literary Marketplace, "Feminisation," and Clerical Masculinity

The cultural context of the United States, then, produces in naturalism a unique American experience, and, of course, the naturalists were writing for an American marketplace. The nature of pursuing a career in writing in the nineteenth century, as is today, meant that

[106] Ibid. 3.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8.
[109] For a discussion of the relationship between Zola and American naturalism see Link, "Defining American," 78.
[110] Laurence J. Marriott, "Literary Naturalism 1865–1940: Its History, Influences and Legacy" (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2002), 70–71.

sales and popularity were an absolute necessity. Charles Johanningsmeier (2001) provides an account of the literary marketplace from the 1880s to the early 1900s. He describes its perceived 'unlimited opportunity' and states that 'the demand for fiction was expanding exponentially.'[111] Publishers of novels increased in number, and 'omnipresent' newspaper and magazines were a receptive outlet for aspiring authors wanting to publish short stories.[112] In addition, America's religious literary canon continued to develop at the same time at which the naturalists were attempting to establish their own reputations. Carol S. Loranger (2011) explains that the naturalists wrote for a marketplace that saw readers actively seeking 'affirmation of democratic and progressive principles of self-worth,' but more importantly, she argues, the affirmation must come 'wrapped up in a sentimental package of holy motherhood and damsels who remain sexless.'[113] Indeed, Johanningsmeier cites the Norwegian-American novelist Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen—an influential realist exploring the immigrant experience—as one who 'protested mightily in 1887 against the power of the female reading public.'[114] Frank Norris wrote that 'the average man' is not troubled with emotions and has no overmastering desire to communicate his sensations to anybody.'[115] Norris also wrote that 'the average woman ... is impressionable, emotional, and communicative.'[116] A generation later, Sinclair Lewis declared that William Dean Howells 'has the code of a pious old maid whose greatest delight was to have tea at the vicarage.'[117] Here, then, exists a very real sense that both Norris and Lewis viewed the late nineteenth century as a society in which displays of masculinity were almost acts of rebellion against femininity.

Jack London offers a similar opposition between masculinity and femininity in *The Sea-Wolf* (1904). Wolf Larsen, the tyrannical captain of the ship *The Ghost*, equates femininity with the bookish Humphrey Van Weyden. Most interestingly for my purposes,

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[111] Charles Johanningsmeier, "Naturalist Authors and the American Literary Marketplace," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 357.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Carol S. Loranger, "Consolation, Affirmation, and Convention: The Popular Reception of American Literary Naturalist Texts," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 375.
[114] Johanningsmeier, "Naturalist Authors," 360.
[115] Frank Norris, "Why Women Should Write the Best Novels: And Why They Don't," *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 13, 1901, 20.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Sinclair Lewis, "The American Fear of Literature." Nobelprize.org, 1930, accessed March 31, 2016, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1930/lewis-lecture.html

Larsen equates Van Weyden's femininity with the clergy.[118] To understand why London associated the clergy with femininity and why Norris and Sinclair felt their work to be reactionary to it, I draw upon the foundational work of Ann Douglas (1977). Douglas explores how women and liberal Unitarian ministers in the nineteenth century found themselves in a relationship of mutual necessity that resulted in the emergence of a sentimental, feminised culture. She argues that American Calvinism exhibited 'a toughness, a sternness' and 'an intellectual rigor' that it lost during the nineteenth century.[119] Douglas explains that the liberal minister became 'cut off at every point from his masculine heritage, whether economic, political, or intellectual.'[120] She equates his plight with that of women because ministers, too, found themselves 'barred … from the larger world of masculine concerns' to such an extent that they found themselves in 'a position increasingly resembling the feminine one.'[121] The nineteenth-century minister preached to women who discovered in the Church 'new arenas of activity.'[122]

Douglas further proposes that 'the independent woman with a mind and a life of her own slowly ceased to be considered high value' in the increasingly industrialised north.[123] The role of such a woman, according to Douglas, was to 'preserve both the values and commodities' of her 'competitive husband, father, and son.'[124] Writing became a way in which women could address the world in which they found themselves, and it was also a way in which women could express their new found role as domestic 'saint' and 'consumer' of their husbands' capital.[125] An important consequence of this relationship to the written word was the rise of the sentimental domestic novel, which dominated America's literary marketplace between 1840 and 1880. It also reflected a literary liberalism that Douglas argues perpetuated American culture.[126] A number of scholars have revised and contested Douglas's work, but her concept of 'feminisation' does account for the naturalists' association of femininity with the Church and the clergy, and it provides an understanding of the feminised literary marketplace as the naturalists saw it. David S. Reynolds (1981) is one such critic who refutes Douglas's thesis that 'a

[118] London, *The Sea-Wolf*, 23.
[119] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 18.
[120] Ibid., 48
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., 116.
[123] Ibid., 59.
[124] Ibid., 70.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., 72.

shrinkingly feminine liberalism' usurped 'a strong, masculine Calvinism.'[127] He proposes that Douglas's position is 'almost a reversal of fact.'[128] Jane Tompkins (1985) reads Douglas's work as perpetuating a myth of 'self-deluded' women who were 'unable to face the harsh realities of a competitive society.'[129] Tompkins proposes that writers of domestic, sentimental fiction, in contrast, were actively perpetuating a 'monumental effort to reorganise culture from the woman's point of view' that inspired political action and reform.[130] Whilst I recognise a continuing critical debate around Douglas's work, what is significant to this project is the *perceived* femininity in American society against which the naturalists wrote, not necessarily the mechanisms that established it. As Philip Gould (1999) notes, even Tompkins 'accepts Douglas's gendered premises for understanding nineteenth-century sentimentalism.'[131]

Critics of naturalism have been keen to incorporate Douglas's work as a way of understanding the relationship between femininity and masculinity found in naturalist texts. Keith Gandal (1997) explores Stephen Crane's work in the slums of New York and argues that his interest in them was a direct response to the 'feminization and overcivilization of American life.'[132] Gandal's justification for his understanding of Crane's work comes from Douglas.[133] Donna Campbell (1997) incorporates Douglas's work into her own account of the relationship between naturalism and local colour regionalism. Campbell reads the aggressive masculinity often expressed in naturalism as a direct response to the femininity of local colourists. She argues that the naturalists were 'expressing their exasperation' at 'the feminine element that had at long last exceeded its bounds.'[134] Campbell describes Douglas's 'mid-nineteenth century coalition, occurring historically and reflected fictionally, between ministers and women.'[135] Jennifer Fleissner (2004) challenges the notion that the naturalists simply rejected femininity and argues that

[127] Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 109.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 124.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Philip Gould, "Revisiting the "Feminization" of American Culture. Introduction.," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Critical Studies* 11, no. 3 (1999): iii.
[132] Keith Gandal, *The Virtues of the Vicious: Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, and the Spectacle of the Slum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10.
[133] Ibid., 11.
[134] Donna M. Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885–1915* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 5.
[135] Ibid., 26.

their works express the 'inner lives' of women.[136] Fleissner refers to Douglas, whom she regards as providing a 'latent' analysis of the work she herself undertakes.[137] Finally, John Dudley (2004) reads the naturalists against Douglas's analysis of women's roles in the rise of publishing. He argues that 'by century's end, many critics, authors, and readers simply accepted the notion that popular "literature" had become a distinctly feminine realm.'[138] The work of Douglas, then, provides a common starting point from which to understand the relationship between masculinity and femininity in the naturalists' own society and in later critical accounts that explore naturalism's relationship to gender.

Whilst Douglas provides the necessary understanding of why feminisation occurred, she does not extensively discuss the response of the male clergy that occurred later in the century in figures such as Walter Rauschenbusch and Billy Sunday. The femininity against which the naturalists reacted was, as discussed above, a response to the literary marketplace, but it was equally a response to attempts to 'masculinise' religion. The work of Clifford Putney (2001) provides such an intervention through its exploration of the origins of muscular Christianity in the United States. He conflates realism and naturalism and cites Jack London, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris as authors who wrote novels that responded to a larger cultural call to manliness within American Protestantism.[139] Putney directly attributes the championing of femininity in Victorian churches to the same context that Douglas describes; he claims that the question of why the Church was feminised 'is best answered by Ann Douglas.'[140]

Exploring American Religious Naturalism

American literary naturalism, then, is a genre of literature that emerged out of the late nineteenth century, but whose genesis and legacy are visible both before and after this temporal marker. Naturalism's reception and its very identity belong to a wider critical history that continues to compel those who explore its works. This dissertation explores the representation of religion in examples of naturalism within the cultural context just described and against the context of late nineteenth-century religious transformations. The thematic approach adopted throughout means that religious concepts and tropes can

[136] Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, and Modernity*, 28.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Dudley, *A Man's Game*, 2.
[139] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 37.
[140] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 24.

appear in the naturalist novel symbolically, they can appear in characters that bring to the narrative post-Enlightenment interpretations of Christianity, they can create the deterministic basis of a plot, and they can explore the utopian.[141]

Chapter 1 provides an understanding of the theological and literary histories of the society in which the naturalists wrote. It explores the post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment society of the naturalists and its relationship to the key theological differences between evangelical, liberal, and fundamentalist Protestantism. These fundamental differences relate to understandings of the divinity of Christ, the historical inerrancy of the Bible, and the consequences of following the teachings of the Gospels in a society in which capitalism was the overriding economic model. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to establish a base from which to demonstrate how each of these questions emerge across the body of works selected herein and how American religious culture intimately informs the work of the naturalists.

Chapter 2 focuses upon Stephen Crane and Frank Norris within this historical context. It demonstrates how Stephen Crane, the son of a Methodist minister, explores the existence of God and the role of the feminised evangelical Church as a deterministic force in New York's Bowery in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and *George's Mother* (1896). The chapter then readdresses some of the critical disagreements that surround religious representation in *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War* (1895), and it proposes that literary and cultural contexts offer up a solution to debates surrounding the personification of Christ in the work. The chapter then explores how Frank Norris reinterprets the resurrection of the dead in "Lauth" (1893) through the legacy of higher biblical criticism and its mythic interpretation of the Gospels. It then demonstrates how Norris strikes at foundations of the Christian faith through the portrayal of the humanised Christ in "Miracle Joyeux" (1897–1898). I then provide a reading of *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (1899) that relates one of Norris's most influential works to nineteenth-century religious fiction and the idea of Christian charity.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how the historical Christ was a constant theme throughout Jack London's career. The chapter demonstrates that London's Christ was no longer the untouchable Son of God of traditional evangelical belief. He was an historical figure open to scientific scrutiny and a model of Darwinian, Nietzschean, and socialist world-views that London adopted throughout his life. I build my analysis of London's

[141] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 20.

exploration of Christ upon the short stories "The God of His Fathers" (1901) and "The Heathen" (1908), the reportage of *The People of the Abyss* (1903), and the novels *The Iron Heel* (1908), *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), and *The Star Rover* (1915),

Chapter 4 demonstrates how through the consecutive publication of *They Call Me Carpenter: A Tale of the Second Coming* (1922) and *The Millennium: A Comedy of the Year 2000* (1924), Upton Sinclair contributed to the theological and cultural struggle between fundamentalist and liberal expectations of how religion should feature in the future of America. The chapter reads both novels through the differing ways in which fundamentalists and liberals interpreted the two eschatological concepts of the second coming of Christ and the millennium. In both works, I argue that Sinclair reduces the supernatural to the natural. He humanises Christ, and the promised millennium of the book of Revelation becomes dependent on both the power of humanity and a rejection of a Church that the capitalist elite bolsters. I propose that Sinclair does not attack religion or religious belief overtly, but rather the fundamentalists' position that Sinclair believes has imposed an unhealthy power on this earth through otherworldly expectations.

Chapter 5 provides a new reading of Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* (1927). It reads the novel as a work of fictive religious history, and it argues that Lewis explores the cultural battle that played out between liberalism and fundamentalism in the first decades of the twentieth century. Rather than concentrating upon Elmer Gantry—as is common in the critical heritage of the novel—the chapter looks beyond Elmer to the liberal clergyman Frank Shallard. I build the chapter around two key themes: higher biblical criticism and muscular Christianity. I first demonstrate Lewis's satiric use of Robert Ingersoll as a representative of higher biblical criticism, and I then turn to the association between masculinity and the Christian faith common to groups like the YMCA. I demonstrate how Lewis distorts such associations to create in Elmer and Frank two characters that epitomise Lewis's satirical exposé of fundamentalism in an America that had just witnessed the culturally significant Scopes Trial of 1925.

Chapter 6 explores the work of twentieth-century naturalists who built upon the work of the earlier naturalists. It begins with an exploration of naturalism in the Great Depression and argues that Jack Conroy and John Steinbeck looked to their nineteenth-century forebears in their representation of religious themes. Through Conroy's *The Disinherited* (1933), the chapter demonstrates how the forces of economic uncertainty dominate the power of God. Through Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), the

chapter demonstrates how the figure of the socialist Christ re-emerges as a fallen preacher and prophet of the working classes. The chapter closes with an analysis of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). McCarthy's work is significant because it provides a sociocultural contrast and a new way to interpret religious themes in contemporary naturalism. *The Road* emerges not from the liberalisation of nineteenth-century evangelicalism, but from a post-secular, late twentieth-century, and post-9/11 context. The indifference of the naturalist universe collides with a searching for the divine, or perhaps even the Christ, in a dying world.

In the **Conclusion**, I propose a system of *five fundamentals* of religious themes that appear—to greater and lesser extents—throughout the work of the naturalists that I explore. I consider the implications of my analysis on the definitional status of naturalism and its relationship to American realism. I examine the impact of the naturalists explored upon a wider artistic culture, and I argue that they should be considered progenitors of artistic forms that merge the all too human with the divine. I also propose that critics need to regard the naturalists as authors of American religious fiction. Finally, the Conclusion evaluates the naturalists in the context of post-secular studies and suggests that their work continues to redefine the critical boundaries between the sacred and the secular.

Chapter 1

Genesis: Liberalisation and the Naturalists

> 'Science is but the deciphering of God's thought as revealed in the structure of this world; it is a mere translation of God's primitive revelation.'[1]
>
> ***Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887)***

The theological, cultural, and literary histories of the society in which the naturalists wrote were complex and rapidly evolving. In 1892, the 'Great Agnostic' of the nineteenth century, Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899), stated that 'the time has arrived when Jesus must become a myth or a man.'[2] Twenty years later, in 1910, the Presbyterian General Assembly created a five-point declaration of faith that included an acceptance of the inerrancy of the Bible, the truth of miracles, and the resurrection and return of Christ.[3] If Christ were at the least human, as Ingersoll suggested, then Christ must have had a physical appearance and a manner of behaviour. If science and reason shed new light upon the validity of miracles, then Christ's rising from the dead—the most important moment in the Christian faith—became increasingly tenuous. If Christ were a myth, then there must exist a means by which the myth came into being. Finally, if the doctrine of Christianity promoted the living Christ at its centre, then perhaps he would have something to say of how Christians should interact with the economic and political processes of the world.

This chapter demonstrates how liberal Protestantism explored just such theological and social concerns. The chapter first contextualises the emergence of liberal Protestantism from evangelicalism, and then the chapter explores the effect that higher biblical criticism had upon the inerrancy of the Bible. Running alongside higher biblical criticism—and also drawing from new understandings of the Bible and new comprehensions of the identity of Christ—was a thriving market of American religious fiction. I explore the impact of three best-selling works that directly endeavoured to

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[1] Henry Ward Beecher, *A Treasury of Illustration*, ed. John R. Howard and Truman J. Ellinwood (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1871), 473.
[2] Robert Ingersoll, "Ernest Renan," *The North American Review* 155, no. 432 (1892): 39.
[3] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117.

understand, to greater and lesser extents, the personhood of Christ: *Julian; or, Scenes in Judea* (1841), *The Prince of the House of David* (1855), and *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880). Next I turn to the physicality of Christ and demonstrate how the feminised Church of the nineteenth century faced active interventions from men to masculinise both the Church and the image of Christ. In addition, I explore how the ethnicity of Christ divided many between adopting an image of Christ that expressed historical veracity and one which expressed the racial norms of nineteenth-century society. The chapter then explores the politicisation of Christ through American socialism and the emergence of the Social Gospel movement. Here, Christ became a masculine workingman, whose teachings of love and charity had significant implications for a society's economic hierarchies. I explore the literary corollaries of this Christ in *In His Steps: "What Would Jesus Do?"* (1897). Finally, I provide readings of *Robert Elsmere* (1886) and *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (1896) in order to explicate the ways in which I approach the texts of the naturalists throughout this dissertation.

Religious Transformations within Evangelicalism

By the turn of the twentieth century, Christianity demanded a definition of God and an understanding of the Church that would reflect its modernising face. As demonstrated in the Introduction, adherence to religious practice and creed in the late nineteenth century did not concern only a minority of believers, as proportionally it may do today. Rather, expressions of religiosity were a crucial part of a changing society that was trying to look to the future without eschewing the past. Significant changes affected American Protestantism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These resulted in important cultural battles that swept through the major American denominations and wider American society. Many of these changes centred upon the extent to which the post-Darwinian world should encroach upon Christian beliefs.[4]

The dominant force in American Protestantism during the late nineteenth century was evangelicalism.[5] As a definitional canopy, the term covers a number of traditions and denominations, which include Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals. Evangelicalism

[4] 'In almost every major American denomination, sometime between the late 1870s and World War 1, serious disagreements broke out between conservatives and liberals' - Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 102.
[5] William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 140. Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 6.

saw the austere and distant God of Calvinism became much more personal, as the egalitarian tenets of the Enlightenment found voice in this new expression of Protestantism derived from the Second Great Awakening (1800–1830).[6] Evangelicalism declared salvation through the loving sacrifice of a God who had given to humanity the choice of whether to accept or decline the offer of salvation that Christ purchased through his death.[7] Evangelicals sought the moral perfection of the individual, and they accepted the Bible as the revealed word of God, but the nature of this revelation caused significant debate. During the second half of nineteenth century, there emerged within evangelicalism those who were willing to incorporate into their faith new scientific and historical methods of viewing the world and interpreting the Bible.[8] Within the Church, these became known as liberals, or modernists. Liberals, or more correctly liberal evangelicals, explored the humanity of Jesus and, as their theology developed, liberals began to question seriously the social implications of following Christ—rather than viewing social work as a manifestation of personal salvation and a method of conversion. William McLoughlin explains that 'churchgoing Americans of any sophistication' found liberalism 'a more helpful' way of understanding 'God's covenant with them and the path to the millennium.'[9] In contrast to evangelical eschatology, that saw heaven as a release from the ills of the world, liberals were more optimistic, and they preferred to see the Kingdom of Heaven as something that could be achieved here on Earth.[10]

These contrasting beliefs began to spark important cultural battles that continued well into the early twentieth century. Some evangelicals saw the liberalisation of faith as a threat, and they believed that evangelicalism had wandered too far from 'old-time' religion. These evangelicals worked hard to eradicate liberalism from America's churches, and they supported the notion that the Bible was the direct revelation of God.

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[6] McLoughlin, *Revivals,* 98.
[7] Arminianism—named after the Dutch theological Jacob Arminius (1560–1609)—was an important theological concept of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. It sat in opposition to Calvinism. Arminius believed that humanity had the freedom to choose whether to accept or reject God's offer of salvation (Human Ability); Calvinism did not (Total Depravity). For Arminians those who would inherit salvation were already known to God, but their choice to do so was entirely their own (Conditional Election). For Calvin, salvation was dependent upon the will of God (Unconditional Election) and not an individual's volition. Arminius also believed that Christ died for all, but only those who accepted Christ's offer of salvation would be saved (General Atonement); Calvinism, in contrast, argued that it was only those whom God had chosen for which Christ had died (Limited Atonement).
[8] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 783.
[9] McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 159.
[10] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 780.

These same evangelicals also rejected evolution, and the publication of *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* between 1910 and 1915 codified their position.[11] *The Fundamentals* was also responsible for Curtis Lee Laws' coining of the term 'fundamentalists'—Laws was editor of the Baptist *Watchman-Examiner* newspaper.[12]

Higher Biblical Criticism and a Reinterpretation of the Gospels

Ernest Sandeen explains that 'faith in an inerrant Bible has been the hallmark of Fundamentalism.'[13] However, the fundamentalists were reacting to a lengthy process of biblical interpretation that began in the Enlightenment. In *The Age of Reason* (1794) Thomas Paine (1737–1809) laid out what he believed to be the falsehoods of the established Church. He proposed that the Bible was 'not the word of God,' and he argued that 'Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists.'[14] Like Paine, Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) believed that the early Church and Jesus himself were misrepresented and that each should be freed from centuries of dogma.[15] Jefferson retold the Gospels in *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* (1813), or the Jefferson Bible. He removed all references to the supernatural aspects of the life of Jesus, and he closed the work with 'there laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed'—a human end for a human prophet.[16]

Paine and Jefferson were both deists who essentially rejected God's revelation to humanity in the Bible, whilst continuing to believe that evidence in nature pointed to the existence of a deity. Deism never became a unified religious movement, but it did find a natural home in American Unitarianism, which grew out of the Congregationalist Church of New England.[17] Within this community, there emerged those who began to question the austerity of Calvinism and its doctrines of total depravity, election to grace, and

[11] The pastors and evangelists A. C. Dixon (1854–1925) and Reuben Archer Torrey (1856–1928) edited *The Fundamentals*.
[12] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 107. The modern usage of "fundamentalism" is also directly linked to this collection of essays, so it is somewhat ironic when news corporations refer to non-Christian groups as fundamentalists.
[13] Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 103.
[14] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1880), 4–11.
[15] Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003) 22–32. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 75.
[16] Thomas Jefferson, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1941), 132.
[17] Gary J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805–1900* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 58.

double predestination. They referred to themselves as liberal Christians, or Arminians; those who opposed them referred to the liberals as Unitarians.[18] At the turn of the eighteenth century, William Ellery Channing (1780–1842) was the leading figure of the movement. Channing laid out in the "Baltimore Sermon" the cornerstones of Unitarian beliefs and practices. He protested 'against the irrational and unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity' and regarded the nontrinitarian viewpoint as a closer reflection of 'primitive Christianity.'[19] Arguing that 'there is one God, even the father,' Channing rejected the notion that Jesus was God and believed that 'the father alone is God.'[20] Channing also stressed the humanity of Jesus, and he stated that Jesus is just as 'equally distinct from the one God' as all other humans.[21]

Unitarianism also lead to the emergence of the Transcendentalist movement; indeed, Transcendentalism grew popular amongst dissatisfied Unitarians. Theodore Parker (1810–1860), Margaret Fuller (1810–1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), amongst others, all made significant contributions to the movement, but Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), a former Unitarian minister, was certainly its leading light. In *Nature* (1836), Emerson put forward the foundational beliefs of Transcendentalism. Emerson's later explication of the historical Christ in his address to the Harvard Divinity School is of most interest. Emerson described Christ as 'belong[ing] to the true race of prophets.'[22] He also saw Calvinism's interpretation of Christ and his message as a distortion of 'doctrine and memory.'[23] Emerson complained that this distortion had become so significant regarding Christ himself that there were those who cried out 'I will kill you, if you say he was a man.'[24] Here Emerson sums up the stakes of the Unitarian rejection of Christ's divinity: so serious was the offence of denying the divinity of Christ that the penalty of death was the only recourse.

Transcendentalism as it emerged from Unitarianism and the later liberal evangelicalism, then, shared commonalities. Both sought to reinterpret long-held beliefs

[18] Ibid., 26.
[19] William Ellery Channing, *A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks, to the Pastoral Care of the First Independent Church in Baltimore, May 5, 1819* (Boston, Mass.: American Unitarian Association, 1919), 9.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 12.
[22] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Divinity School Address. Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge, Sunday Evening, July 15 1838* (Boston, Mass.: American Unitarian Association, 1907), 5.
[23] Ibid., 7.
[24] Ibid., 8.

and both attempted to understand the relationship between Christ and humanity, even if this meant challenging the Bible. The history of the Bible's relationship to the American Church is too large a topic to address in this dissertation, but what I hope to achieve in the following paragraphs is to sketch out the broad trends against which to read the work of the naturalists. James Turner explains that at the start of the nineteenth century 'evangelicals in particular read the Bible with a flat-footed literalness unparalleled in the annals of Christianity.'[25] Sandeen also argues that churchgoers viewed the Bible as 'the main bulwark of Christianity' and that any challenge to the Bible was 'the equivalent of blasphemy and infidelity.'[26] However, variation did exist both across and within the denominations on the very nature of its inerrancy.[27] Regardless of these variations within the American Church, Ronald Satta highlights the 'unrelenting commitment to the authority of the text of the scripture … right down to the very words' that existed amongst evangelicals.[28] George Marsden suggests that by the late nineteenth century, the Bible was the ultimate source of authority and knowledge.[29] Charles Augustus Briggs (1841–1913), to whom I return in Chapter 5, provides a useful description of the relationship between evangelicalism and the notion of biblical inerrancy. He stated that 'the common opinion of modern evangelicalism' was that the Holy Spirit verbally inspired the will of God and guided the authors of the first autographs—the original documents from which copies were made—to an inerrant rendering of God's words.[30] Briggs, however, regarded this viewpoint as 'a ghost of modern evangelicalism' intended 'to frighten children.'[31]

To question the Bible, then, was to question God. One catalyst for attempts to defend the Bible's inerrancy was higher biblical criticism—which refers to the methods of viewing the Bible as an historical artefact in terms of its authorship, chronology, and origin. Higher biblical criticism also encompasses a focus on the historicity and humanity of Christ, known as Christology. Biblical criticism first began to appear in America during the early nineteenth century.[32] It became a key concept in the development of

[25] Turner, *Without God,* 144.
[26] Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 106.
[27] See Ronald F. Satta, *The Sacred Text: Biblical Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Eugene, OR.: Pickwick Publications, 2007).
[28] Ibid., 38.
[29] 'The Bible, it was constantly asserted, was the highest and all-sufficient source of authority. In America, the Bible was the primary source for many of the ideals that shaped the culture' - Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 16.
[30] Ibid., 31.
[31] Charles Augustus Briggs, *The Authority of the Holy Scriptures: An Inaugural Address* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 35.
[32] Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800–1870: The New England*

liberal evangelicalism after the mid nineteenth century.[33] Three individuals elevated its stakes culturally, and it is these thinkers to which the naturalists refer repeatedly in their works: David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874), Ernest Renan (1823–1892), and Robert Ingersoll. They mark the beginning, middle, and final stages of what Albert Schweitzer coined as the First Quest for the Historical Jesus.[34] The first work to address is David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), which was translated into English in 1842. George Eliot's translation of the fourth German edition, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1843), however, was most familiar to English language readers.[35]

Das Leben Jesu comprises three volumes, and it addresses the life of Christ as revealed in the Gospels. In each volume Strauss provides close readings of the Gospels' narratives. The work is innovative because it takes the middle ground between earlier rationalist explanations of the divine and an orthodox understanding of Christ.[36] Rationalists posited natural explanations of what would seem to be supernatural occurrences; orthodox interpretations fully accepted Christ as God's divine intervention in a world of materialism. Strauss manages to reconcile both approaches in his contention that all New Testament healings and even the resurrection of Jesus were myths that emerged from the consciousness of the early Christian Church.[37] Whilst Strauss does not explicitly deny the existence of Jesus, his work does demand the reader to re-evaluate what they think they know of Jesus from the centuries of tradition that surround his life and identity. Strauss's Jesus is certainly not God; he is a human being devoid of any divine support or supernatural mission. Strauss concludes that belief in the Gospels spoke more to humanity's own justification before God and its own desire to transcend to

Scholars (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 19.
[33] Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 154.
[34] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906) constitutes an evaluation of the previous century's lives of Jesus—including the work of Strauss and Renan—in order to create a fresh description of Jesus.
[35] Turner, *Without God*, 147.
[36] Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 35.
[37] David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892), 495.

divinity.[38] Upon its publication, *Das Leben Jesu* created both excitement and furore.[39] The overall excitement must be tempered with the reality that Strauss's work did not occupy the nightstands of the American reading population, and neither did it progress the cause of higher criticism at the levels expected of it.[40] Turner explains that 'most Americans appear to have remained unshaken in the conviction of the Bible's historical veracity,' but those who were open to alternative viewpoints ceased to view the Bible as 'an unquestioned source of religious authority.'[41] Strauss's work, in contrast, did impact on the lives of those within the academic community and theological colleges who would develop a more liberal face of Christianity with which the naturalists would engage throughout their careers.[42]

If *Das Leben Jesu* did not fly off the shelves, a quarter of a century later the French philosopher and historian Ernest Renan published *La Vie de Jésus* (1863), *The Life of Jesus*, which would capture the nation's imagination and ignite the public's interest in higher biblical criticism.[43] Strauss had a profound effect upon Renan's life and work, but whereas Strauss's work is somewhat inaccessible, *La Vie de Jésus* reads like the bestseller it became.[44] Renan's work was the first in a seven volume series of the origins of Christianity and early Church, which also included *The Apostles* (1866) and *The Antichrist* (1873). Renan believed that Strauss made the mistake of concentrating too little on the history of Judean society.[45] Throughout its twenty-eight chapters, *La Vie de Jésus* mirrors the chronology of Christ's life that the Gospels present, but Renan infuses the work with an immersive description of the cultural conditions from which Christ emerged. For example, Renan opens his work with 'Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town in Galilee.'[46] He explains that miracles 'were considered at this epoch the indispensable mark of the divine.'[47] Renan argues that Jesus 'accepted miracles exacted

[38] 'By faith in this Christ, especially in his death and resurrection, man is justified before God; that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity, the individualman participates in the divinely human life of the species' - Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 780.
[39] Stephen G. Bulfinch, "Strauss's Life of Jesus - The Mythic Theory," *Christian Examiner*, 39, no. 4 (1845): 145. Jennifer Stevens, *The Historical Jesus and the Literary Imagination, 1860–1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 37.
[40] Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism*, 148.
[41] Turner, *Without God*, 150.
[42] Lyman Abbott, *Reminiscences* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), 482.
[43] Ernest Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, trans. William G. Hutchinson (London: Walter Scott, 1897). Turner, *Without God*, 148.
[44] Abbott, Reminiscences, 482.
[45] Schweitzer, *Historical Jesus*, 180.
[46] Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, 14.
[47] Ibid., 162.

by public opinion rather than perform[ing] them.'[48] Most strikingly, though, Renan clearly states that Jesus is not God, writing that 'Jesus never dreamed of making himself pass an incarnation of God.'[49] For Renan, Jesus is a hero able to demonstrate the traits present in all of us that could be referred to as divine.[50]

Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) is a good example of the American response to both Strauss and Renan. Beecher represented the liberal wing of evangelicalism. His enormous popularity as an orator and writer propelled liberal Protestantism to new heights in its distinction from evangelicalism after the Civil War. Beecher established a theology that merged the scientific and supernatural into a 'New Theology.'[51] In the preface to Beecher's immensely popular *The Life of Jesus, the Christ* (1871), a sense of the middle ground that Beecher takes between the divine and the works of Strauss and Renan becomes apparent. Beecher uses the methods of historical criticism to view Jesus in the context of first-century Judea. Beecher argues that 'two thousand years of adoration' have formed a conception of Jesus that his disciples never had until a number of years later—when time had allowed the disciples to formulate their own accounts.[52] Unlike Strauss, Beecher freely accepts Jesus' miracles, and he argues that they were 'instruments of kindness,' 'gave emphasis to instruction,' and 'ratified his exhortations.'[53] Beecher's underlying message is the reconciliation of the contrast between the message of Christ and what the Church had made of that same message over centuries of development.[54] In writing of the Gospels, Beecher readily admits that 'they are children of the memory. They were vocally delivered hundreds of times before being written out at all; and they bear the marks of such origin, in the intensity and vividness of individual incidents.'[55] Marsden views the work of Beecher as foundational in the split between those evangelicals who adopted a more liberal interpretation of theology and those emerging fundamentalists who continued to hold to established standards.[56]

Strauss, Renan, and Beecher brought to the United States the scholarly arguments for a reappraisal of traditional belief. Robert Ingersoll popularised their work, and he took

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[48] Ibid., 169.
[49] Ibid., 154.
[50] Ibid., 239.
[51] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 26.
[52] Henry Ward Beecher, *The Life of Jesus, The Christ* (New York: J.B. Ford and Company, 1871), 136.
[53] Ibid., 302.
[54] Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh E. Schmidt, *The Religious History of America (Revised Edition)* (New York: HarperOne, 2004), 304.
[55] Beecher, *The Life of Jesus,* viii.
[56] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 29.

it to the American public (Figure 1). Ingersoll's moment in American history occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, when his reputation as an outspoken critic of the Church and Bible was at its highest power. Ingersoll's popularity cannot be overstated, and he toured America selling out at any venue at which he chose to speak.[57] Ingersoll was successful because of the empowerment that his lectures brought to an American population. He aimed to reconnect the American public with a Bible with which he felt they had lost touch and which academics and clerics jealously guarded.[58] Ingersoll praised Renan as a 'source of light' for Renan's argument that Jesus was just a man and for the cultural explanations that Renan provided for Jesus' miracles.[59]

Figure 1. Robert Ingersoll
(Image not in copyright)

That individuals should approach the Bible honestly and openly was of primary importance for Ingersoll. In *Some Mistakes of Moses* (1879), Ingersoll applies his theories of plain reading to the Torah, and he reveals what he believes to be contradictions in the accounts of Exodus and the morality of Moses. Unlike Strauss and Renan, who provided timeless and, to varying degrees, scholarly criticisms, Ingersoll incorporates attacks on contemporary society into his work. Ingersoll leaves the reader with the impression that biblical criticism is a foil with which he can attack his real target of the Church. For

[57] Paul Stob, "Religious Conflict and Intellectual Agency: Robert Ingersoll's Contributions to American Thought and Culture," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 16, no. 4 (2013): 720.
[58] Alan Richardson, "The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship and Recent Discussion of the Authority of the Bible," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. 3: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S.L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 301. Stob, "Religious Conflict and Intellectual Agency," 726.
[59] Ingersoll, "Ernest Renan," 612.

example, *Orthodoxy* (1884) sees Ingersoll attempting to destroy orthodox religion and to emancipate those under its power. He states that it gives him 'immense pleasure … that orthodox religion is dying out,' which he refers to as 'a sick man.'[60] Ingersoll also directly intervenes in the post-Darwinian context of the late nineteenth century and praises Darwin as 'one of the greatest men who ever touched the globe.'[61] He describes Darwin as a man who 'has explained more of the phenomena of life than all of the religious teachers.'[62] Ingersoll categorically regards Christ's resurrection as a 'myth,' but he does see Christ's teachings as worthy of 'their effect upon the human race.'[63] In *About the Holy Bible* (1894), Ingersoll turns his attention to the origin and interpretation of the Bible. He states that 'for centuries the Church has insisted that the Bible was absolutely true,' but 'now this has changed.'[64] He presents a series of Christological questions that read as the culmination of higher criticism, but there is also a sense of contemporary frustration. Ingersoll asks 'why did he [Jesus] not plainly say: "I am the Son of God," or, "I am God"? Why did he not explain the Trinity?'[65] Ingersoll concludes that 'the real Bible' should be regarded as the 'treasures of the human heart and brain—these are the Sacred Scriptures of the human race,' he states.[66]

The work of the higher critics and Robert Ingersoll, then, struck at the very heart of Christian belief. The work of the naturalists, I argue, particularly those who explicitly draw from Renan and Ingersoll, are attempts to reconcile their own religious upbringings with the growing uncertainty around former religious truths. For now, though, it suffices to say that liberalism embraced the work of higher biblical criticism as a way to increase the understanding of faith rather than simply threatening it.[67]

Biblical Fiction and the Legacy of Higher Biblical Criticism

America's market of religious fiction has a long history. In the nineteenth century, it was relatively diverse and included explorations of Islam, along with works that expounded

[60] Robert G. Ingersoll, "Orthodoxy: A Lecture," in *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll in Twelves Volumes*, *Vol. 2: Lectures*, ed. Robert G. Ingersoll (New York: The Dresden Publishing Co., C.P. Farrell, 1909), 341.
[61] Ibid., 356.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 400.
[64] Robert Ingersoll, *About the Holy Bible* (Washington, D.C.: C.P. Farrell, 1894), 13.
[65] Ibid., 65.
[66] Ibid., 73
[67] Prothero, *American Jesus*, 50. Turner, *Without God,* 76.

the virtues of the Calvinist life and visions of the afterlife.[68] Calvinists, for example, responded to the Enlightenment with satire, and works like *The Yankee Traveller; or, The Adventures of Hector Wigler* (1817)—which caricatured Enlightenment philosophers—and *The Life and Adventures of Obadiah Benjamin Franklin Bloomfield* (1818)—which exposed the life of an errant Methodist circuit-rider—became popular.[69] Things changed when authors began to see the Bible as 'a high example of such common genres of poetry, drama, and fiction.'[70] 'The Bible had become clay in the hands of the creative writer,' which Reynolds directly attributes to the work of the higher critics.[71] Emerging from this period, the first literary representations of Jesus in American fiction began to appear. Paul Gutjahr argues that Joseph Smith's The Book of Mormon (1830) should be considered the first in this field.[72] More conventionally, the first fictional account of Jesus appeared in the anonymously authored *Zerah: The Believing Jew* (1837).[73] At this early stage, representing Christ directly was still evidently unsettling for many, and so the novel includes only the spoken words of Christ. *Zerah's* introduction reads like a disclaimer: 'with sacred veneration the author quotes the sacred words of our Divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (3).

Yet as the century progressed, writers of religious fiction became more comfortable with exploring their faith and the Bible. Indeed, Reynolds argues that historical biblical criticism 'weakened traditional assumptions about the Bible as the word of God above human history.'[74] Authors were more willing to explore poetic and artistic readings of the Bible, and they began to create characters that lived alongside those in the Gospel narratives. Theodore Ziolkowski categorises these works as fictional

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[68] David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*: *The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 27–42.
[69] The complete title of this work is *The Life and Adventures of Obadiah Benjamin Franklin Bloomfield, M.D. A Native of the United States of America, Now on the Tour of Europe*.
[70] Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 129.
[71] Ibid.
[72] The Book of Mormon is the holy book for members of The Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints. It is an historical record of the relationship between God and two tribes, the Nephites and the Lamanites, who descend from the Hebrew prophet Lehi. In 600BC, under instruction from God, Lehi fled to what was later to be called the Americas and established a new community. In AD 322, the prophet Mormon recorded the history of the Nephites and Lamanites on a set of golden plates, thus creating the original Book of Mormon. In 1827, Joseph Smith found these plates, and he translated them into The Book of Mormon that is in current usage. He included the following account of Christ's visitation to the Americas: 'And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them' (3 Nephi 11:8).
[73] Anonymous, *Zerah, The Believing Jew* (New York: New York Protestant Episcopal Press, 1837).
[74] Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 129.

biographies.[75] The New England Unitarian minister William Ware was the first to represent fully the themes that had been emerging in the previous decades. Ware's *Julian; or, Scenes in Judea* (1841) takes the reader back to the time of Christ, and its combination of Gospel narrative and fictive history made it an instant bestseller.[76] The novel centres upon the story of a Roman Jew, Julian, who travels to his mother's Judean homeland. A third of the novel is a lengthy political account of first-century Judea that sees Julian become a political ally of King Herod. The final two-thirds of the novel concern Julian's attempts to understand the identity of Jesus. Ware's work is significant because it marks the first representation of the human Christ, thus revealing its Unitarian credentials.[77] Curtis Dahl cites that 'the concept of Jesus and his mission is specifically liberal' because Ware's Christ is certainly not God.[78] Ware argues that 'the whole manner of [Jesus'] life, as well as the strange events at his birth, convince us that he is highly favoured of God, and by him reserved to some mighty work' (149). Here Ware does not deny the elevated position of Jesus, but there is no sense of divinity either. When Julian finally encounters Jesus, Julian's conclusion is distinctly Unitarian: 'I looked upon one within whom were lodged the very power and wisdom of Jehovah … I saw that the language of his countenance was not of an angel, nor of a God, but of a man' (255). The novel closes with the conclusion that Jesus was 'a messenger and prophet of God' (270).

If Strauss's work mythologised the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith and William Ware's *Julian* introduced the reader to a Unitarian Jesus, Joseph Holt Ingraham's enormously successful *The Prince of the House of David* (1855) remained close to Christian orthodoxy.[79] The reader journeys through the ministerial years of Jesus' life as witnessed through the letters of Adina to her father. Adina is a Jewish woman from Alexandria who is visiting her family in Jerusalem at the time of Christ. The novel expands upon familiar events from the Gospels, but it runs the risk of being more engaging than the Gospels themselves.[80] Through his characterisations, Ingraham

[75] Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations*, 13.
[76] William Ware, *Julian; or, Scenes in Judea* (New York: Thomas R. Knox & Co., 1885). Robert Detweiler, "Christ in American Religious Fiction," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32, no. 1 (1964): 8.
[77] Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 137.
[78] Curtis Dahl, "New England Unitarianism in Fictional Antiquity: The Romances of William Ware," *The New England Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1975): 114.
[79] Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 159.
[80] Warren G. French cites Timothy Shay Arthur, a popular nineteenth-century author, who viewed the novel as a 'desecration of sacred things' - Warren G. French, "A Hundred Years of a Religious Bestseller," *Western Humanities Review* 10, no. 1 (1956): 47.

concentrates on delivering a proof of the divinity of Christ, Christ's message of salvation, his miracles, and his resurrection. *The Prince of the House of David* can be read as a direct reaction to higher biblical criticism, as it fleshes out the Gospel narratives to make certain of the proof of events and the apparent contradictions that the critics found.[81]

One of the best-selling novels in American history and during the nineteenth century was Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880).[82] The novel's time-of-Christ narrative follows the life of Judah Ben-Hur from his early life of privilege, through to a period of enslavement, and finally to Judah's reclamation of position and spiritual emancipation at Christ's crucifixion. Even in such an important work of religious fiction as this, the influence of biblical criticism is present. Wallace would never have written *Ben-Hur* if it were not for Robert Ingersoll. Upon taking a train to Indianapolis in 1876, Wallace, the commanding officer of Ingersoll during the Civil War, met the now well-known younger man. Wallace began to see that, unlike Ingersoll, he knew very little about the Christian faith, but Wallace was clever enough to realise that writing a religious novel like *Julian* and *The Prince of the House of David* would allow him to develop a career in writing.[83] Whilst subtitled, 'a tale of the Christ,' Jesus appears comparatively little in the novel. Aside from the opening Nativity and an early sequence in which the young Jesus offers water to an enslaved Judah, Jesus is absent for at least two thirds of the work. The climatic third of the novel, however, sees Wallace create a Jesus who is unquestionably God, a performer of miracles, and one who cared for individuals personally.

Femininity, Race, and the Christ of the Nineteenth-Century Church

Ware, Ingraham and Wallace's cultural response to higher biblical criticism varied according to their own Christological interpretation. Ware was a Unitarian, Ingraham an Episcopalian, and Wallace a non-denominational believer in Christ who was responding to the literary marketplace. One factor upon which the marketplace hinged was the

[81] Ingraham introduces Lazarus as a scribe who has significant interaction with Jesus before his own Biblical rising from the dead; Joseph of Arimathea becomes the travelling companion of Adina in an extended sequence with John the Baptist; and the crucifixion becomes a somewhat bloody and emotionally charged thriller that leaves the reader in no doubt of its validity.
[82] Lew Wallace, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1887). James Russell, "Exhilaration and Enlightenment in the Biblical Bestseller: Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur, A Tale of the Christ*," in *Must Read: Rediscovering American Bestsellers: From Charlotte Temple to the Da Vinci Code*, ed. Sarah Churchwell and Thomas Ruys Smith (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012): 153. Lee Scott Theisen, ""My God, Did I set all of this in Motion?" General Lew Wallace and *Ben-Hur*," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 18, no. 2 (2004): 35.
[83] Gutjahr, *American Bible*, 166.

Church's relationship with women. During the nineteenth century, women moved from a place of relative exclusion within the Church and from practising religion at home to becoming influential members of Christian society.[84] As the work of Ann Douglas has demonstrated, women constituted the majority of church attendees, and male ministers increasingly 'moved in a world of women.'[85] Ministers began to realise that they could no longer ignore those that the Church had once overlooked but whom society regarded as morally and spiritually superior. As a result, it has been argued that Christ himself became increasingly feminised and began to reflect the loving, the nurturing, and the socially conscious qualities that made women so influential in the Church and society.[86]

Ware's *Julian; or, Scenes in Judea* (1841) may represent the first literary incarnation of Christ, but the physicality that Ware attributes to him is also unusual in the emerging context of the feminised Church. Ware writes that 'strength and power were lodged in the lines and forms of the face' of Jesus (326). Here is a face hardened by the weather and work. Douglas attributes Ware's description of Christ to Ware's reluctance to accept feminised religion, but Christ's appearance also incorporates Ware's acceptance of the human Christ from a Unitarian perspective.[87] Ware expresses his masculine Jesus further through the absence of a crucifixion in the narrative—perhaps representing the suffering Christ was not sufficiently reverential for the reading public at this early stage in the development of the Christ-novel. More likely, the suffering Christ expresses a lack of masculinity, and naturalists such as Jack London certainly looked more to Ware's conception of Christ than to the feminised Christ that Ingraham and Wallace introduced.

The Christ that emerged from the feminising Church, then, is quite clearly visible in Ingraham's *The Prince of the House of David* (1855).[88] Ingraham's Jesus is a 'pale and sad' man with eyes 'richly brown in hue, and darkly shaded by sable lashes' (296). His hair that flows over a 'high forehead' (296) makes him 'unlike other men' (198). Gutjahr, whilst also referring to Douglas, argues that Ingraham chose to 'feminize Jesus in

[84] Susan Curtis, "The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity," in *Meaning for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 67.
[85] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 115.
[86] Prothero, *American Jesus*, 59.
[87] Douglas, *Feminization*, 116.
[88] Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The Prince of the House of David; or, Three Years in the Holy City* (New York: Pudney and Russell, 1858).

particular and emphasize the feminine in general.'[89] Figure 2 shows an illustration of Christ from an early copy of the work that clearly matches Ingraham's textual description.

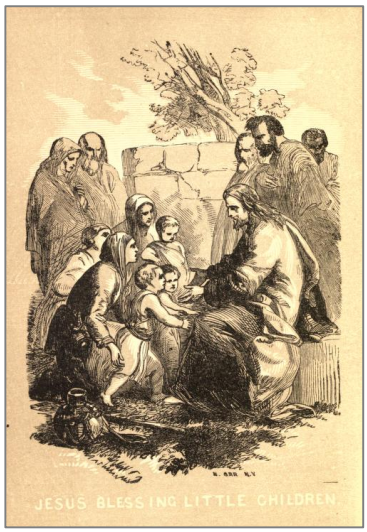

Figure 2. 'Jesus Blesses Little Children'[90]
(Image not in copyright)

Ingraham's Jesus also suffers headaches in a way that culturally feminises him.[91] Seen through the eyes of Pilate, Jesus possesses 'a form divine, and fit for Apollo, or any of the greater gods! His bearing is like a hero. Mehercule!' (363). Stephen Prothero refers to these contrasting views of Christ as the 'unyielding yang and yielding ying' of nineteenth-century Christs.[92] Prothero describes the apparent contradiction as symptomatic of male authors who not only contended with evolving Christological conceptions of Jesus, but who were also aware of the contrast between a culturally feminine Jesus and the fact that Jesus was male. For those occasions in *Ben-Hur* (1880) when Christ does appear, Wallace also represents the feminised Christ. The young Jesus that Judah momentarily meets has 'locks of yellowish bright chestnut hair' and 'a face lighted by dark-blue eyes, at the time so soft, so appealing, so full of love' (130). When Judah meets Christ in later life, he is struck by Christ's 'tearful' and 'woman-like face' (523) and his 'slender' and 'stooping' body (528). At Christ's crucifixion, Wallace

[89] Gutjahr, *An American Bible,* 163.
[90] Ingraham, *The Prince of the House of David*, 48.
[91] Gutjahr, *An American Bible*, 161.
[92] Prothero, *American Jesus*, 86.

somewhat revels in the 'the ghastly white' of a Jesus unwilling to fight back; Christ is the sacrificial Lamb of God (536).

Whilst Ware, Ingraham, and Wallace were male authors attempting to reconcile the concept of a male Christ with a feminised Church, authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Susan Warner, and Maria Cummins wrote as women from within it. They developed the fictional Jesus along another vital trajectory by projecting onto human beings the qualities of Christ. Their aim was to encourage readers to live more Christ-like lives and to respond to nationwide divisions by following Christ's example.[93] Whilst not quite bringing the historical Christ to the nineteenth century, Stowe, Warner, and Cummins did promote the idea that contemporaneous humans, exemplars familiar to all in everyday life, could partake in the divine. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), for example, sees Eva and Tom live morally perfect lives that lead them to die in ways that reflect the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Cummins' *The Lamplighter* (1854), through the characterisation of Gertie Flint, represents the virtues of patience in suffering and willingness to trust providence.[94] The ability for humans to take on the qualities of Jesus is not just an interesting historical aside; it is fundamental in understanding how the naturalists would also project onto humans their interpretations of what it meant to be Christ-like.

In contrast to the feminine tradition that authors like Ingraham and Stowe propagated, Rebecca Harding Davis rejects the feminised Christ in "Life in the Iron-Mills" (1861–1866). Davis's work first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1861), but the story that made it to publication had an important omission.[95] The omitted text sees Davis describing Christ in human terms, and she also renders his life as a piece of social criticism. Davis in particular draws a contrast between the Christ of first-century Palestine and America's contemporaneous Church—a step that was not fully embraced until a generation later. Eric Carl Link suggests that the story bears the characteristics of early naturalism, and I believe that Davis's use of Christ provides a further relationship between "Life in the Iron Mills" and the much later work of Jack London and Upton Sinclair.[96] James T. Field's edited collection, *Atlantic Tales* (1866), was the first to include the

[93] Gutjahr, *American Bible*, 159.
[94] Prothero, *American Jesus*, 67.
[95] Rebecca Harding, "Life in the Iron-Mills," *Atlantic Monthly* 7, no. 42 (April, 1861), 430–51. The omission occurs at page 445.
[96] Eric Carl Link, *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 11, 26.

omitted text, and the omission appears in some modern digital renderings.[97] It is, however, notably absent in popular reprints of the story.[98] The omission sees the story's working-class protagonist, Hugh Wolfe, enter an evangelical church and listen to a preacher addressing a congregation of middle-class respectability. The passage reads:

> Eighteen centuries ago, the Master of this man tried reform in the streets of a city as crowded and vile as this, and did not fail. His disciple, showing Him to-night to cultured hearers, showing the clearness of the God-power acting through Him shrank back from one coarse fact; that in birth and habit the man Christ was thrown up from the lowest of the people: his flesh, their flesh, the want of their hourly life, and the wine-press he trod along.
>
> Yet, is there no meaning in this perpetually covered truth? If the son of the carpenter had stood in the church that night, as he stood with the fishermen and harlots by the sea of Galilee, before His Father and their Father, despised and rejected of men, without a place to lay His head, wounded for their iniquities, bruised for their transgressions, would not that hungry mill-boy at least, in the back seat, have "known the man"? That Jesus did not stand there.[99]

The reprint in *Atlantic Tales*, however, was not Davis's original vision, although she may well have had a hand in the editorial process.[100] The original manuscript that Davis submitted to the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1861 is a far starker piece, and Gregory S. Jackson refers to it as a representation of an 'all-too-human Christ.'[101] Davis's original vision shows a far more contextualised rendering of the working Christ, and she draws the passage away from first-century Palestine to the mill towns of nineteenth-century

[97] Rebecca Harding Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills," Project Gutenberg, accessed February 7, 2017, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/876/876-h/876-h.htm.
[98] For example, *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States*, ed. Linda Wagner-Martin and Cathy N. Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and *Life in the Iron-Mills (Bedford Cultural Edition)*, ed. Cecelia Tichi (New York: Bedford, 1997).
[99] Rebecca Harding, "Life in the Iron-Mills," in *Atlantic Tales: A Collection of Stories from the Atlantic Monthly*, ed. James T. Fields (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 79–80.
[100] Janice Milner Lasseter, "The Censored and Uncensored Literary Lives of Life in the Iron-Mills," *Legacy* 20, nos. 1–2 (2003): 179.
[101] Gregory S. Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 183.

America. The original submission also reveals a fragility to Christ, which Davis uses to indict the failure of the Church in its social action. Davis's original vision was:

> Years ago, a mechanic tried reform in the alleys of a city as swarming and vile as this mill town, who did not fail. Could Wolfe have seen him as He was, that night, what then? A social Pariah, a man of the lowest caste, thrown up from among them, dying with their pain, starving with their hunger, tempted as they are to drink, to steal, to curse God and die. Theirs by blood, by birth. The son, they said, of Joseph the carpenter, his mother and sisters there among them. Terribly alone, one who loved and was not loved, and suffered from that pain; who dared to be pure and honest in that devil's den; who dared to die for us though he was a physical coward and feared death. If He had stood in the church that night, would not the wretch in the torn shirt there in the pew have "known the man"? His brother first. And then, unveiled his God. [102]

Davis's rendering of Christ as one who was 'by blood' and 'by birth' a human who lived in first-century Palestine would also have been controversial because it suggested that Christ was not a white European. The Gospels make no mention of Christ's ethnicity, but, for most Americans of the nineteenth century, Christ was understood to be a white man.[103] As already seen, Ingraham and Wallace allude to Jesus as the white saviour in their physical descriptions of him. Henry Ward Beecher also conspicuously avoids commenting upon Christ's ethnicity in *The Life of Jesus, the Christ*.[104] Beecher prefers to side-step all physical characteristics of Jesus and to state that no-one can know whether he 'was of moderate height or tall,' 'whether his hair was dark or light,' or 'whether his eyes were blue, or gray, or piercing black.'[105] Moreover, Stowe may have created in Tom a black man who takes on the role of Christ, but Figure 3—an illustration from the novel's

[102] Milner Lasseter, "The Censored and Uncensored," 175.
[103] Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 139. ***Note:*** I acknowledge my indebtedness to Bloom and Harvey for providing academic impetus and research direction for my own work in this chapter.
[104] Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 471.
[105] Beecher, *The Life of* Jesus, 138.

first edition—shows Tom kneeling before an image of the white Christ.[106] Stowe's work makes no mention of Tom kneeling or of Christ's race in the associated sequence of the novel, but authorial intent and editorial intent can often be very different.[107] As Chapter 2 demonstrates in the context of Frank Norris, this would not be the only time that the Christ of the text and the Christ of the illustration reflected conflicting agendas.

Figure 3. 'The Victory'[108]

(Image not in copyright)

As the century progressed two important circumstances continued the entrenchment of the white Christ and his associated femininity: first, the influx of Catholic immigrants brought with them images of Christ that were derived from the Renaissance; and second, the European marketplace fuelled a national appetite for images of Christ.[109] Herman Melville had alluded to the very Italianate influence of the artistic Christ in *Moby Dick* (1851). Melville wrote that whenever artists attempt to represent 'the divine love in the Son,' they naturally painted 'the soft, curled, hermaphroditical [Christ of] Italian pictures.'[110] For Melville, this Christ was 'destitute' of 'all brawniness.'[111] Joseph Tissot built upon the Italianate Christ in *The Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ* (1899), which

[106] Blum and Harvey, *Color of Christ*, 118 also provide evidence of plate from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that shows the white Jesus blessing a whipped Jim.
[107] 'When Tom stood face to face with his prosecutor, and heard his threats, and thought in his very soul that his hour was come, his heart swelled bravely in him, and he thought he could bear torture and fire, bear any thing, with the vision of Jesus and heaven just a step beyond' - Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852), 487.
[108] Ibid., 486.
[109] Blum and Harvey, *Color of Christ*, 139–41.
[110] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 418. Prothero, *American Jesus*, 91.
[111] Ibid.

became a national success owing to a promotional tour of the United States throughout 1897.[112] Tissot's work also clearly represented an Anglo-Saxon and feminised Christ. Additionally, Tissot's Christ bore no real resemblance to the realistic representations of other biblical figures, for example St. Matthew, whom Tissot represented as short-haired, masculine, and of more obviously Middle Eastern appearance (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Joseph Tissot 'The Baptism of Jesus' (Left) - 'St. Matthew' (Right)[113]
(Images not in copyright)

Tissot's art, then, not only ascribed femininity to Christ, but it also attempted to distance Christ from his own Jewish people. Contemporary commentators also noticed that Tissot's work was somewhat unrealistic. Kate P. Hampton, writing for *The Outlook*, recalled how she visited Tissot's exhibition at which her friend remarked 'I have never seen a face of Christ that was not a weak one.'[114] Hampton then surveyed the clergy in response to her question 'does the face of Christ, as depicted in ancient and modern art, realize your idea of a strong face?'[115] The responses were telling. The Rev. Charles Cuthbert Hall of the Union Theological Seminary stated that 'the great artistic types of the Christ face constantly disappoint me by the lines of weakness and morbid

[112] James Jacque Joseph Tissot, *The Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ: Three Hundred and Sixty-Five Compositions from the Four Gospels with Notes and Explanatory Drawings* (Toronto: George N. Morang & Company, 1899).
[113] 'The Baptism of Jesus' - Tissot, *The Life of our Saviour*, 62; 'Saint Matthew' - Ibid., 114.
[114] Kate P. Hampton, "The Face of Christ in Art: Is the Portraiture of Jesus Strong or Weak?," *The Outlook* 61, no. 13 (April 1, 1899): 735.
[115] Ibid.

emotionalism.'[116] The Unitarian minister, Rev. John W. Chadwick of Brooklyn, was far more adamant. He stated that 'I could answer the question in one word, "No".'[117] Chadwick even argued that the images of Christ he witnessed in Europe, like Tissot's, were 'almost as lackadaisical and gelatinous as the literary Christ in General Wallace's "Ben-Hur."'[118] However, Chadwick did regard the Italianate Christ as 'very beautiful.'[119] Hampton, though, did not ask whether the ethnicity of Christ was unrealistic, thus revealing either an unwillingness to question such a notion or an unconscious cultural stereotype that prevented Christ from being anything other than white.

Opposition to the white Christ finally began to gather pace from within America's churches.[120] The civil rights activist Albion Tourgée attacks the whiteness of Christ in *Pactolus Prime* (1890), writing that 'the 'white' Christ is man's distortion … I believe the 'white' Christ will continue to dominate the Christian thought, and consequently to mould the public sentiment, of this country.'[121] Henry Ossawa Tanner also depicted the non-white Christ in the painting "Nicodemus" (1899) (Figure 5).[122]

Figure 5. Henry Ossawa Tanner, "Nicodemus" (1899)
(Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Joseph E. Temple Fund)

[116] Ibid. 744.
[117] Ibid., 736.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Blum and Harvey, *Color of Christ*, 150.
[121] Albion W. Tourgée, *Pactolus Prime* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 297–98.
[122] John 3:1–21.

The naturalists would have been more than familiar with the historical legacy of the feminised and white Christ, and it became the model against which they wrote. When the naturalists represented the physical Christ or projected the qualities of Christ on to human protagonists, they were contributing to the cultural context of gender and race. The naturalists also responded to the image of an increasingly politicised Christ.

Evangelicalism, Capitalism, and the Religion of Radicalism

The Gilded Age, as I introduced in the previous chapter, saw America's economy growing at previously unseen levels. America's formally agrarian population began to move to cities in response to increasingly industrialised professions. Economic, as opposed to theological, liberalism began to prosper as private ownership and the market-driven economy transformed the wealth of industry and individuals. Even the instrumentally liberal Henry Ward Beecher was aware that he needed to assuage the fears of his wealthy Brooklyn congregation that personal gain was not necessarily the root of all evil.[123] Indeed, Clifford E. Clark argues that Beecher rationalised the 'habits and conspicuous consumption and feelings of elitism' of his 'well-to-do parishioners.'[124] An effect of this changing economic climate was that Christianity had to find new ways to be relevant in what has been called 'the spiritual crisis of the Gilded Age.'[125] A foundation of evangelicalism was its social conscience. Evangelicals accepted an individual's right to prosper as biblically mandated, and they embraced the capitalism of the Gilded Age. However, they were also socially aware and believed in their mission amongst the poor. Evangelicals taught that once an individual experienced salvation through the teaching of the Gospels then a transformation would manifest in all areas of their life.[126]

The most famous evangelist of the late nineteenth century was Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899), 'God's evangelist of The Gilded Age' (Figure 6).[127] At the beginning of his career, Moody created his own Sunday school amongst the poor, and he worked

[123] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 22–23.
[124] Clifford E. Clark, Jr. *Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman for a Middle-Class America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 113. Beecher also reacted against corporate wealth and devoted much of his work to 'overcoming hostility and class differences.' Ibid., 238.
[125] Paul Leloy Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971).
[126] Joseph Angus, "Duty of the Church in Relation to Missions," in *History, Essays, Orations, and Other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, Held in New York, October 2–12, 1873,* ed. Philip Schaff and Rev. S. Irenaeus Prime (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 583–87.
[127] Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 288. McLoughlin, *Revivals,* 142.

extensively with the YMCA developing the relationship between religion and sport.[128] Moody gradually began to change his views until he saw little benefit in focusing on the improvement of society when the coming kingdom of God would be perfect. Moody's change in focus brought him under fire from the emerging American socialist movement because, as McLoughlin argues, his 'audiences were essentially middle-class' who believed that God extolled 'hard work and free enterprise.'[129]

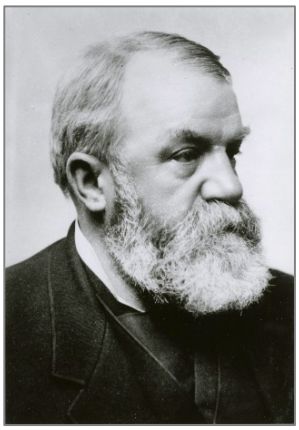

Figure 6. Dwight L. Moody
(With permission of the Moody Bible Institute Cromwell Library Archives)

Max Weber's contention that 'the providential interpretation of profit-making justified the activities of the business man' certainly captures Moody's position well.[130] McLoughlin even cites Moody's belief that those saved 'by the blood of Jesus … rarely remain subjects of charity.'[131] Socialists, therefore, believed that the capitalist elite charged Moody with turning the minds of workers from unemployment, unfair wages, and appalling conditions to a promised heaven that would see an end to all ills.[132] Some even went as far as describing Moody as looking, dressing, and acting like a

[128] Moody cannot be described as a muscular Christian because he saw no need to respond to the feminised Church *per se* - Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 23.
[129] McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 144.
[130] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 109.
[131] McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 144.
[132] Ibid., 152.

businessman.[133] Throughout his career Moody also attacked higher biblical criticism, and he accused the Jefferson Bible of being responsible for producing 'a crop of infidels.'[134] Moody is important because he represents the evangelical position of emerging fundamentalism that would be taken up by his successor Billy Sunday (1862–1935). Fundamentalism became a significant force in American theology during the first twenty years of the twentieth century, largely through the work of Sunday, the one-time baseball player and figure of national fame.

Sunday became known for extending the preaching style of Henry Ward Beecher to a unique format that included gyrations, poses, shouts, and dramatic effects that complemented his somewhat colourful language (Figure 7). McLoughlin argues that 'Sunday stands at the heart of the cultural confusion of the years 1890 to 1920,' and Sunday certainly reacted against the theological and social transformations that emerged from liberalism.[135] Most importantly, the period of Sunday's ministry also coincided with the 'classic' period of naturalism. McLoughlin suggests that Sunday was 'blatantly fundamentalist' and that when liberals were concerned with the rights of the working classes, 'the leading industrial exploiters' were financing Sunday's work.[136]

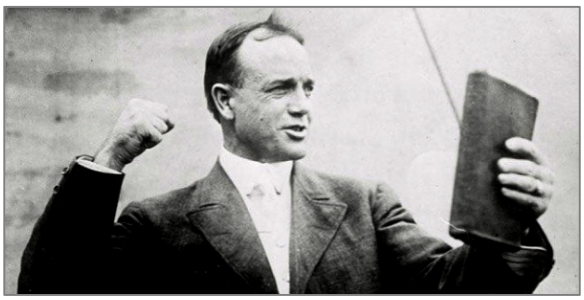

Figure 7. Billy Sunday

(Courtesy of the Kernersville Museum Foundation, Kernersville, North Carolina)

[133] Lyman Abbott (1835–1922), theologian and social reformer, wrote that '[Moody] stood on the platform [and] he looked like a business man; he dressed like a business man; he took the meeting in hand as a business man would' - Lyman Abbott, introduction to *Echoes from the Pulpit and Platform; or, Living Truths for Head and Heart, Illustrated by Upwards of Five Hundred Thrilling Anecdotes and Incidents, Personal Experiences, Touching Home Scenes, and Stories of Tender Pathos, Drawn from the Bright and Shady Sides of Life, as Related by Dwight L. Moody During his Forty Years' Experience as an Evangelist*, by Dwight Lyman Moody (Hartford, Conn.: A. D. Worthington & Co., Publishers, 1900), 31.
[134] A.F. Schauffler, *The Teacher, the Child, and the Bible; or, Practical Suggestions and Methods for Sunday-School Workers* (Chicago: W.A. Wilde Company, 1901), iii–iv.
[135] McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 146.
[136] Ibid., 147.

Sunday was undoubtedly a source of inspiration for many people during an often uncertain period, which included World War 1, but he also stoked anti-German fires in sermons that mixed religion and war.[137] Sunday levelled highly emotive charges against Germany, and he once said that 'if you turn hell upside down, you will find *Made in Germany* stamped on the bottom.'[138] Like Moody, Sunday's purported relationship to the ruling classes attracted sustained criticism from the Socialist Party of America (SPA). J. Stitt Wilson—editor of the *Christian Socialism* newspaper and member of the SPA—viewed men like Sunday as 'a sort of spiritual police force to guard in the name of Christ the ill-gotten gains of the profit-mongers.'[139] Three thematic expressions of the Christian faith, however, became common across American socialism.[140] The first of these stated that Jesus was a class-oriented worker whose revolutionary methods the Church had forgotten; the second saw socialism as a way of improving life upon earth; and the third saw socialism itself becoming a religion.[141]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the social implications of Christianity found a definitive mode in literature—just as "Life in the Iron-Mills" had presciently begun to explore a generation earlier. William Dean Howells, for example—who would sponsor the early careers of Frank Norris and Stephen Crane—explores the relationship of the Church and society in the utopian novel *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894).[142] Howells highlights the corruption that he believed existed in the United States by comparing it to the land of Altruria, a utopian world in a parallel existence that Howells describes as 'dat[ing] back to no earlier period than that of the first commune after Christ' (48). By equating Altruria with a period of Church history that capitalism was yet to taint, Howells taps into the wider concern of Christian socialism that looked to primitive

[137] David T. Morgan, "The Revivalist as Patriot: Billy Sunday and World War 1," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51, no. 2 (1973): 202.
[138] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 142.
[139] J. Stitt Wilson, *The Message of Socialism to the Church* (Berkeley: J. Stitt Wilson, 1911), 4.
[140] The term Christian socialism evolved throughout the nineteenth century. Earlier in the century, it was simply a way of describing how life would improve for all if society lived according to the teachings of Christ. Ziolkowski even suggests that 'Christian socialism was inspired by the new image of a humanised Jesus that emerged from the nineteenth-century lives of Jesus' - Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations*, 56.
[141] Dan McKanan, "The Implicit Religion of Radicalism: Socialist Party Theology, 1900–1934," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 3 (2010): 752.
[142] William Dean Howells, *A Traveler from Altruria: Romance* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1894).

Christianity as a closer reflection of Christ's teaching.[143] Mr. Homos, the Altrurian visitor, for example, states that 'I think it cannot be denied that among the first Christians, those who immediately followed Christ, … there was an altruism practiced as radical as that which we have organized into a national policy and working economy in Altruria' (160). Howells promotes social action through Mr. Homos, who asks 'do you really think Christ meant that you ought always to have the poor with you?' (151).

The most financially successful work to emerge from an increased sense of social awareness was Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps: "What Would Jesus Do?"* (1897).[144] It sold well over one hundred thousand copies in its first year of publication alone.[145] *In His Steps* is innovative for two reasons. First, rather than taking the reader back to the time of Christ, Sheldon brings Christ to the nineteenth century; second, Sheldon rejects the feminised, sanitised Christ of the nineteenth-century Church. He represents Jesus as the jobless, homeless, and entirely human, Jack Manning.[146] Gone is the freshly robed Christ of *The Prince of the House of David* and *Ben-Hur*, Manning is 'very dusty, shabby, and generally tramp-like' (7). To leave the reader in not doubt of Manning's association with Christ, Sheldon describes Manning as 'not more than thirty or thirty-three years old' (7). Manning presents himself before the middle-class congregation of the First Church of Raymond, and Sheldon writes that they were singing 'all for Jesus, all for Jesus … all my days and all my hours' (14). Manning challenges the members of the congregation that did not come to his aid earlier in the novel. He states that 'it seems to me there's an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn't exist if all the people who sing such songs went and lived them out' (15). Manning collapses and falls towards the communion table, leaving the congregation stunned. The Rev. Henry Maxwell leads his congregation's response in deciding that they should pledge a year of their lives during which, before each decision they make, the congregation should ask themselves 'what would Jesus do?' (20). The remainder of the novel follows twelve members of the

[143] Thomas Engeman also provides an account of Howell's interpretation of Christian themes and points to Marxian socialism - Thomas S. Engeman, "Religion and Politics the American Way: The Exemplary William Dean Howells," *The Review of Politics* 63, no. 1 (2001): 107–27.
[144] Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps: "What Would Jesus Do?"* (Chicago: Advance Publishing Co., 1897).
[145] Paul S. Boyer, "*In His Steps*: A Reappraisal," *American Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1971): 61.
[146] Evidence that Christ was a product of cultural context also emerges in the Glenn Clark's re-writing of Sheldon's work - Glenn Clark, *What Would Jesus Do: Wherein a New Generation Undertakes to Walk in His Steps* (St. Paul, Minn.: Macalester Park, 1950). Clark substitutes the itinerant John Manning with a Japanese man who commits suicide.

congregation who decide to accept Maxwell's challenge and live as they imagined Jesus would have done in their contemporary society.

The Social Gospel and the Masculine Christ

Sheldon's novel had a significant impact upon the burgeoning Social Gospel movement, and it is itself a novel that represents the Social Gospel's underlying tenets of positive social action.[147] The Social Gospel was most influential between 1880 and 1920, and it purported that the least able in society were becoming increasingly disempowered in the organism-like cities of Chicago and New York. The Social Gospel became known for its promotion of the 'Fatherhood of God' and the 'Brotherhood of Man,' which taught that humanity must abandon individualism and work together for the betterment of society.[148] The Social Gospel's two leading lights were Washington Gladden (1836–1918) and Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918), but Rauschenbusch is of most interest in terms of the naturalists explored throughout the dissertation (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Walter Rauschenbusch
(Fair usage applied)

Rauschenbusch began life preaching as an evangelist, and he looked to Moody's sermons as a model of how to bring sinners to heaven.[149] After spending time in Liverpool, Birmingham, and London, Rauschenbusch developed a more anti-capitalist Christianity, and he embraced a more liberal spirit.[150] Those who adhered to the Social Gospel's

[147] Dorrien, *The Making of American,* 187.
[148] McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 160.
[149] Dorrien, *The Making of American*, 81.
[150] McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 174.

message often incorporated socialism into both their theology and interpretation of the relationship between the individual and society.[151] Indeed, Rauschenbusch said that socialists are 'now religious in spite of themselves.'[152] The Social Gospel differed from mainstream evangelicalism because it viewed positive action as more important than individual salvation. Marsden even suggests that 'the Social Gospel emphasized social concern in an exclusivistic way' that appeared to nullify Christ's atoning sacrifice.[153]

The Social Gospel was intimately related to liberal evangelicalism, but not all liberals adhered to its approach. McLoughlin describes those liberals that did as 'social political activists' who had much in common with 'secular humanitarians of the Progressive political movement.'[154] With this in mind, in the early twentieth century, social gospelers formed a significant proportion of the SPA's membership. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, the work of Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair, certainly reflects the activism of the Social Gospel, as it, too, bridges the gap between Christ and the world. The Social Gospel also accepted a Darwinian explanation of the development of life on earth, and it fully embraced biblical criticism.[155] There was, however, a great deal of variation within its ranks. Most famously, William Jennings Bryan was a vigorous supporter of the Social Gospel, but he would also play a fundamental role in attacking the teaching of evolution, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5.

Broadly speaking, then, both socialists and members of the Social Gospel saw Jesus as an intensely religious man whose life and teachings, if emulated, would see the improvement of the lives of all at a societal level.[156] The Social Gospel positively greeted Edward Bellamy's utopian vision of a socialist future, *Looking Backwards: 2000–1887* (1887), and it quickly became a standard reference.[157] Bellamy also had a significant impact in bringing many Americans to socialism.[158] He used *Looking Backwards* to reprimand the nineteenth century as being 'in name Christian' with an 'anti-Christian spirit' and to explore an alternative way of living for those who wanted a credible

[151] McKanan, "The Implicit Religion," 752.
[152] Dorrien, *The Making of American*, 116.
[153] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 92.
[154] McLoughlin, *Revivals,* 160.
[155] Garry Wills, *Head and Heart: A History of Christianity in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 385.
[156] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), 48–49.
[157] Carl J. Guarneri, "An American Utopia and Its Global Audiences: Transnational Perspectives on *Looking Backward*," *Utopian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1990): 159.
[158] McKanan, "The Implicit Religion," 765.

response to the individualism of the Gilded Age.[159] The Social Gospel also produced its own distinct literature that built upon its concerns with social change. William Stead imagines the direct application of the teachings of Jesus in *If Christ Came to Chicago* (1894). Stead states that the aim of the novel is to 'attempt to illustrate how a living faith in the Citizen Christ would lead directly to the civic and social regeneration of Chicago.'[160] Other works that followed were Archibald McCowan's *Christ, the Socialist* (1894), Elisabeth Stuart Phelps' *A Singular Life* (1894), and Edward E. Hale's *If Jesus Came to Boston* (1895).

In addition to its socially conscious Christianity, the Social Gospel was instrumental in wrenching the image of Christ and his male followers away from the feminised Church. Clifford Putney argues that 'the issue of unmanliness in religion' was central to the Social Gospel in its adoption of muscular Christianity.[161] The work of Ingersoll demonstrates the prevailing attitude against which the Social Gospel worked, in addition to adding further weight to Douglas's theory of the feminised clergy. Ingersoll equated religious belief with femininity and even regarded certain emissaries of the Church as 'consumptive of body' and 'not quite sickly enough to die, nor healthy enough to be wicked.'[162] Young men found that the feminised version of Christianity in the churches that they attended and in the literature that they read was no longer viable for the demands of an industrialised and individualist society. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, the naturalists belonged to this group of young men who actively reacted against both the feminised Christ and the feminised literary marketplace.

Curtis singles out the 'sentimental' religious fiction of Ware and Wallace as exemplars of the confused Christ that was neither 'fully masculine nor fully feminine' and who represented the feminine virtues that the Social Gospel aimed to replace with a Jesus who was 'a man's man.'[163] Just as it had done with its socially focused Christianity, the Social Gospel inspired a generation of writers to represent the masculine Christ in expositions of his character. Thomas De Witt Talmage's *From Manger to Throne* (1890) highlights the workingman Jesus by drawing attention to 'The boy Carpenter! The boy

[159] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward; 2000–1887* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889), 395.
[160] William T. Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago!: A Plea for the Union of All Who Love in the Service of All Who Suffer* (London: The Review of Reviews, 1894), xiv.
[161] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 42.
[162] Robert Ingersoll, *Some Mistakes of Moses* (Washington, D.C.: C.P. Farrell Publisher, 1879), 20.
[163] Curtis, "The Son of Man," 72.

wagon maker! The boy housebuilder.'[164] Bouck White builds upon the working Christ in *The Call of the Carpenter* (1911), and he focuses on the social and economic message of Jesus in an age that saw 'industrialism and religion' become opposing forces (xxiv).[165] However, White is careful to distance the 'workingman of Nazareth' (68) from politics—White regards Jesus as 'too expert a social physician to advertise some economic programme' (317). White's Christ is no 'rabid leader of the mob' and 'no peasant reformer,' but an historical figure to bring about positive change for all (354). White's concern, therefore, is to reinstate the historic Jesus and to usurp the feminised Christ that was preached from America's pulpits. White describes the effect of this change in terms of the Gospels, and he sees the working classes 'thronging' back to the Church 'as they thronged her Founder from Galilee to Golgotha' (339). Figure 9, the novel's frontispiece illustration, clearly shows Christ as the worker.

Figure 9. The Carpenter of Nazareth
(Image not in copyright)

Harry Emerson Fosdick, in *The Manhood of the Master* (1913), also refers to Jesus as appealing to 'all that is strongest and most military in you,'[166] and Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925) reveals a muscle-bound Jesus whose 'muscles were so strong that when He drove the moneychangers out, nobody dared oppose Him!'[167] Moreover, it

[164] T. DeWitt Talmage, *From Manger to Throne: Embracing a New Life of Jesus the Christ and a History of Palestine and Its People* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1893), 190.
[165] Bouck White, *The Call of the Carpenter* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1914).
[166] Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Manhood of the Master* (New York: Association Press, 1919), 161.
[167] Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 12.

would be incorrect to view the masculinisation of Christ as solely the domain of the Social Gospel. Billy Sunday, for example, regarded Christ as 'the greatest scrapper who ever lived,'[168] though Sunday famously and vehemently railed against the Social Gospel. He claimed that it was 'godless social service nonsense.'[169]

While I do not propose that the naturalists were social gospelers in terms of a Christian faith, their work certainly shows a good deal of sympathy with Rauschenbusch's work and theology. Therefore, it seems logical that the naturalists' willingness to incorporate the Social Gospel's political themes would also extend to its promotion of the masculinity of Christ, and I demonstrate that this is, indeed, the case. The balance between the political and the masculine image of Christ does differ from naturalist to naturalist, but in all cases they expose Christ to the Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century. They create Christ-figures that owe much to the wider literary marketplace and theological climate but which also exhibit a distinctly naturalist voice.

Bringing It Together: Nineteenth-Century Theology and Naturalism

The naturalists, however, were not unique in their exploration of the figure of Christ and the fundamentals of belief in a post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment society. It is worth exploring two works that incorporate the legacy of some of the nineteenth-century theological transformations just discussed and which resonate with the work of the naturalists: Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* and Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware*—the latter is also a work that Link describes as 'a poster child for understanding the possibilities and complexities of American literary naturalism.'[170]

Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* sold in astonishing numbers, but its voluminous sales in the United States came mostly through pirated copies.[171] Charles Taylor argues that *Robert Elsmere* was successful because it tapped into the consciousness of the wider transformative theological context.[172] In other words, it allowed the reading public to explore the 'the inner conflict' and 'intense suffering' of

[168] Stephen J. Nichols, *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of the Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008), 107.
[169] Roger A. Bruns, *Preacher: Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelicalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 130.
[170] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 98.
[171] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888). Erin Smith, ""What Would Jesus Do?": The Social Gospel and the Literary Marketplace," *Book History* 10 (2007): 195.
[172] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 385.

Elsmere as a means by which to understand more fully their own faith.[173] Taylor rightly suggests that *Robert Elsmere* aimed to 'redefine' a Christianity which was 'free of its—now indefensible—supernatural myths.'[174] The novel centres upon the Oxford-educated vicar, Robert Elsmere, coming into contact with the work of the higher biblical criticism—Ward also met Renan in 1874—and developing his own Christianity of social action.[175] Upon receiving his first parish, Elsmere meets the overlord Squire Wendover, and the library and impoverished estates that Wendover owns become the catalyst for the transformations in Elsmere. He abandons his orthodox belief and decides to work in London's slums in the pursuit of Christianity built upon society.

Robert Elsmere, then, is an example of Ziolkowski's *imitatio Christi*; indeed, Ward writes that it is necessary 'to re-conceive the Christ, to bring him afresh into our lives, to make the life so freely given for man minister again in new ways to man's new needs' (496). In Squire Wendover's library, Elsmere discovers 'most of the early editions of the *'Leben Jesu,'* with some corrections from Strauss's hand' (196). When in London, he sees Ingersoll's works 'occupying the place of honour' in the window of a bookstore with a placard for the *Freethinker* at the door (476).[176] These appearances in the novel represent the theological culture in which Ward wrote, and they are also the same markers that I illustrate throughout the analysis of the naturalists. However, it is Elsmere's ultimate conception of Christ that is of most interest. In a sequence of self-interrogation, Elsmere asks himself if he believes in Christ, and he does. Christ for Elsmere is a 'teacher' and a 'martyr,' a symbol of spiritual life (342). When Elsmere asks himself if he believes Christ to be 'the Man-God, the Word from Eternity' who performs miracles and rose from the dead, Elsmere pauses for thought (342). Referring to 'Jesus of Nazareth,' rather than Christ, Elsmere reasons that Christ is human and that 'miracles do not happen' (342). Importantly, Elsmere's new conception of Christ and the message of Christianity does not lead him to deny the existence of God or to repudiate his faith. Elsmere reiterates his new-found belief to his wife and states that Christ is risen in our hearts, in the Christian life of charity' (364). He explains that God was manifest in Christ no differently from the way in which God is manifest in all humanity.

[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 384.
[175] Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations*, 40.
[176] G.W. Foote (1850–1915) founded the *Freethinker* in 1881 as an overtly anti-religious magazine.

Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* resembles *Robert Elsmere* because it, too, deals with the post-Darwinian response of a minister.[177] It differs in one important way: its protagonist disavows his faith in the post-Darwinian culture of nineteenth-century America. Frederic's work concerns the life of Theron Ware, an ambitious and naive Methodist preacher. Theron becomes the new minister at a poor church in Octavius, which Frederic bases upon Utica, New York. Here he comes into contact with three individuals who enlighten him through their greater learning, Father Forbes, a Catholic priest, Dr. Lesmar, a scientist, and Celia Madden, a bohemian woman of means, culture, and independence. Over a period of a little less than a year, Ware undergoes a transformation that sees him fall in love with Celia, lose the confidence of his wife, Alice, and renounce his calling as a minister.

Frederic reveals the cultural context of late nineteenth-century America throughout the novel. The reader learns of the history of United States Methodism (107), and the inclusion of Henry Ward Beecher's preaching style (120) situates the novel in a larger historical context. Theron basks in a public library, drunk with new knowledge of 'a dozen aspects of the case against revealed religion' (346). These include 'the rude Ingersoll's rollicking negation of God himself' (346). Renan's own account of his emancipation from religious orthodoxy, *Recollections of My Youth* (1897), acts as the catalyst in Theron's life (125). Theron reads the work 'with an excited interest which no book had ever stirred in him before' (189). Renan writes that 'belief in the eminent personality' of Christ was the spirit of *La Vie de Jésus*, but that same spirit, he writes, became the 'mainstay in my struggle against theology.'[178] Unlike Robert Elsmere and Renan, Theron cannot reconcile his new-found knowledge with his Christian faith. He longingly wonders how 'Father Forbes could talk coolly about the "Christ-myth" without even ceasing to be a priest' (198).

An important marker of cultural context emerges in the novel's relationship between femininity and the clergy. Dr. Ledsmar explains to Theron that 'your entire profession would have perished from the memory of mankind, if it hadn't been for women' (324). He continues to explain that women desire to see ministers 'surrounded by flower-pots and candles, to have [them] smelling of musk' (220). Women, according to Ledsmar, would like to 'weave garlands' in the hair of their ministers (220). Theron's

[177] Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware; or, Illumination* (New York: Stone & Kimball, 1896).
[178] Ernest Renan, *Recollections of My Youth* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), 274.

intellectual emancipation and falling in love with Celia disassociate him from femininity. Frederic writes that 'he bore himself more erectly … his shoulders were thrown back, and seemed thicker' (345). The 'lank, wistful, sallow juvenility' disappears from his face, and he takes on the appearance of a 'mature, well-fed, and confident man' (345). Theron takes on 'a masculine bulk' (345). Scott Donaldson, however, rejects Forbes, Ledsmar, and Celia as the primary cause of Theron's damnation and focuses upon the characterisation of Sister Soulsby—a charismatic debt-raiser. Donaldson describes her as 'the true villain of the piece,' and her material success and enigmatic manner certainly add to Theron's confusion.[179] Soulsby only appears twice in the novel for extended periods, but Luther Luedtke describes her as pervading it 'with a thematic significance disproportionate to her number of actual appearances.'[180] In her first appearance—midway through the novel—Soulsby represents a worldliness that Theron obviously lacks, but she also lifts the curtain upon the workings of her revival campaign to reveal their 'machinery, management, [and] organization' (264–65). The power of God becomes the machinations of a skilful show person. She councils Theron against leaving the Church because of his doubts and forcefully presses that 'you must n't breathe to any living soul the shadow of a hint of this nonsense about leaving the ministry' (263). Soulsby initially warmed to Theron because she spotted him reading the work of Renan, but she now feels disappointment for Theron's inability to differentiate 'worldly gumption' from the doubts that Renan has caused (263). For Soulsby, the material success that the ministry brings far outweighs any theological doubting—works like Renan are of no consequence to a successful ministry and must be treated as such. Perhaps echoing the spirit of Ingersoll, she disassociates morality from doctrine and the established Church: all can gain salvation through the living of a life full of human love (267). Theron is different from Soulsby because he is unable to mask his doubting behind the veil of theatre. Soulsby's recollection of a moment in which she visited a sick Theron earlier in the novel illustrates the point well; 'you kept your eyes shut, and all the while a blind horse could have told that you were wide awake,' she teases (269).

In choosing to close the chapter with *Robert Elsmere* and *Theron Ware*, I have attempted to merge the theological, the secular, and the literary contexts in which the naturalists wrote. *Robert Elsmere* and *Theron Ware* are two works in which their

[179] Scott Donaldson, "The Seduction of Theron Ware," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 29, no. 4 (1975): 441.
[180] Luther S. Luedtke, "Harold Frederic's Satanic Soulsby: Interpretation and Sources," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30, no. 1 (1975): 82.

characters came into contact with the forces of liberalisation, but they are also two works in which Elsmere and Theron responded quite differently after they left the Church: Elsmere turned to a social expression of Christianity, but Theron abandoned all religiosity and eventually worked in real estate. The works of the naturalists that I explore sometimes differ from *Robert Elsmere* and *Theron Ware* because neither Ward nor Frederic create Christ-like figures and neither do they explore the specific context of twentieth-century fundamentalism. However, Ward and Frederic do—to lesser or greater degrees—incorporate Darwin, higher criticism, and social activism into their work. As such, *Robert Elsmere* and *Theron Ware* are worthy examples of how the naturalists I explore contributed to a literary legacy that thrived in post-Darwinian America. The evolution of American theology was clear to see, and the naturalists created a variety of works that captured the spirit of an age and a transforming representation of Christ himself.

Conclusion

This chapter described the rich cultural backdrop against which the naturalists worked and which they actively incorporated into their work. It has explored the cultural manifestation of feminisation and liberalisation within the Church and provided an account of the key features and figures in the rise of fundamentalism and muscular Christianity. More specifically, the chapter has concentrated upon four elements that represent the lines along which evangelical and liberal expressions of Protestantism sometimes differed. First, the historical truth of the Bible, as manifest through higher biblical criticism, second, the response that the Church should have to society, as expressed through the Social Gospel, third, the interpretation of the historical Christ, as viewed from the perspective of race and gender, and fourth the arrival of a promised Kingdom of Heaven. As suggested above, the naturalists were not anti-religion nor do I believe they had a particular agenda to ridicule those for whom faith was a valued part of their lives. The naturalists were authors who had grown up with a religious tradition far more entrenched in the social consciousness than most would recognise today, but they also grew up in a society in which long-held beliefs were fundamentally challenged by science and a common sense philosophy that directly opposed long-held religious truths. The next chapter applies this historical context to the work of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris, and it provides a fresh analysis that can accommodate both the Darwinian and the divine in the work of these foundational figures of naturalism.

Chapter 2

Humanity and the Divine: Belief in the Works of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris

'All his ideas and beliefs that he had inherited in common with the world from thousands of past ages, and that were so firmly rooted in his conceptions as to have become a part and parcel of him, had been ruthlessly and suddenly torn up and cast to the winds.'[1]

***Frank Norris* - "Lauth"**

American literary naturalism could be said to be synonymous with the work of Stephen Crane (1871–1900) and Frank Norris (1870–1902). From the Bowery of New York to the San Joaquin Valley of California, their work spans the geography of the United States. It represents a country that was experiencing a shift from the agrarian to the urban and a country in which individuals could prosper to previously unimagined heights; they could also fall victim to the means by which others gained their fortunes. In the works of Crane and Norris, the tenement blocks of the Bowery and the economic power of the wheat market act as forces upon the human condition. They reveal a deterministic face to a naturalism in which characters often face uncertain futures, and even death.

This chapter argues that, alongside economics, the backdrop of American theology is also an important means through which to interpret and by which to understand Crane and Norris's works. Drawing from Crane's own poetry, a culture of nineteenth-century slum writing, and biographical evidence, the chapter demonstrates how Stephen Crane, the son of a Methodist minister, explores the relationship of God to society in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1892) and *George's Mother* (1896). The chapter then explores how, in both works, the Church's message of salvation loses all meaning when the culpability of sin is more about environmental conditions than individual waywardness. The exploration of Crane closes with a reading of *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War* (1895) that introduces to naturalism the figure of the humanised Christ. I then turn to the work of Frank Norris and explore how Norris reduces the divine to very human terms in "Lauth" (1893) and "Miracle Joyeux"

[1] Frank Norris, "Lauth," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 21, no. 123 (March, 1893): 256.

(1897–1898). Norris strikes at the foundations of the Christian faith through his portrayal of an all-too-human Christ. He offers a reinterpretation of the resurrection of the dead that is achieved not by the blood of a divine saviour but through the power of science and humanity's mastery over nature. The chapter closes with an analysis of Norris's *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (1899) that I read as a tale of Christian morality in which middle-class expectations of charity meet a naturalistic atavism common to Norris.

Stephen Crane and the Necessity of God

A useful entry point into Crane's representation of the divine is through his 'God poetry,' which he wrote throughout the course of his life. Crane's poetry predominantly appears in two collections *The Black Riders and Other Lines By Stephen Crane* (1896) and *War Is Kind* (1899). Everett Gillis describes Crane's God poetry as 'adolescent' with a 'superficiality of conventional religion,' but in actuality it demonstrates a complexity of viewpoints that express Crane's embededness in a theologically transformative culture.[2] His poems both refute the existence of God and allow for the possibility of differing understandings of God's existence in the post-Darwinian society in which Crane wrote.

"God Lay Dead in Heaven" (1896) relates this sense most clearly through the death of the divine in heaven itself—the very place where death should never have power. 'God lay dead in Heaven' expresses the Nietzschean idea that humanity no longer needs to appeal to the divine for an understanding of the world; humanity has the power to kill the idea of God.[3] The poem provides no optimistic emancipating alternative for humanity, only the realisation that death will come. 'Then from the far caverns … came monsters, livid with desire,' Crane writes, that fought over the face of the earth.[4] What remains for Crane is not humanity's mastery over death, but human love, as the final line of the poem sees a woman cradling the head of a sleeping man from 'the jaws of the final beast.'[5] "You Tell Me This is God" (1899) provides a far less pessimistic view of religion, despite its attack on the institutional Church. 'You tell me this is God?,' the speaker challenges the reader, 'I tell you this is a printed list, a burning candle and an ass.'[6] Crane establishes

[2] Everett A. Gillis, "A Glance at Stephen Crane's Poetry," *Prairie Schooner* 28, no. 1 (1954): 74.
[3] The idea of killing God was not new to Crane. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) explored the death of God in *The Gay Science* (1882) and *Thus Spoke Zarathrustra* (1883). Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) had also introduced a similar concept in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).
[4] Stephen Crane, *The Black Riders and Other Lines by Stephen Crane* (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1896), 74.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Stephen Crane, *War Is Kind* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1899), 35.

a contrast between the ceremonial performance of religion and a vision of God whose presence implicitly appears in the poem. Yes, Crane reacts against religious tradition, but the poem implicitly suggests that an ideal of God remains in Crane's consciousness. "In Heaven" (1896) accepts the eschatology of Christianity and is a retelling of Luke 10:18, The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector. The poem focuses the attention of the reader towards members of the Church in a somewhat veiled attack upon hypocrisy. Blades of grass stand before God in judgment to 'relate the merits of their lives.'[7] One blade of grass, though, cannot remember the good deeds it has performed, and it acts in a manner of humility, thus receiving praise for being the 'best little blade of grass.'[8] "Blustering God" (1895), on the other hand, reads like a declaration of war against a particular image of God. Crane portrays God as a marriage of the distant, angry God of Calvinism and a petulant child that is 'stamping across the sky' like a 'puffing braggart.'[9] Human power is the work's key theme; the reader learns that the speaker does not fear God but only the 'tears in those eyes of my soul.'[10] God is angry because in the post-Darwinian world of alternatives, He no longer has the monopoly upon being the instigator of the processes and forces that shape human life. Finally, "God Fashioned the World Carefully" (1896) describes the development of human free will and the folly of seeking providential interpretations for Chance. God holds the rudder of life, but He decides to let go and set humanity adrift. Metaphoric lives embark on 'ridiculous voyages,' and they twist and turn as if 'with serious purpose before stupid winds.'[11]

Crane's poetry, therefore, reveals an author unafraid to explore the implications of belief in post-Darwinian America. His poems express a multiplicity of viewpoints regarding God, but crucially Crane's poems do not deny God's existence. God is a character, alive or dead, upon which Crane's poetry relies, and this same relationship emerges in Crane's prose. Crane, however, is certainly the most pessimistic of the naturalists in his exploration of religious themes because he leaves humanity a victim to the naturalist universe: 'a man said to the universe, "Sir, I exist",' Crane writes; 'the fact has not created in me a sense of obligation,' the universe replies.[12]

[7] Crane, *The Black Riders*, 19.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 58.
[10] Ibid., 59.
[11] Ibid., 6.
[12] Crane, *War Is Kind*, 56.

The Bowery, Femininity, and the Social Gospel

Whilst Crane's poetic universe demonstrates indifference to a single man, the universe from which Crane's naturalism emerged certainly imposed upon men and women unequal obligations. As explored in the work of Ann Douglas, the economic and social factors of the nineteenth century saw married women attempting to maintain their own independence, whilst appropriating and preserving 'the values and the commodities' of the emerging capitalist, male society.[13] Churches became a domain in which women could thrive, and so male ministers found that 'religion was increasingly associated with feminine influence and disassociated from masculine activity.'[14]

In an analysis that opposes female domestic piety with male economic privilege, Douglas contrasts the Reverend Daniel Eddy's advice to women in *The Young Woman's Friend* (1857) to that which Eddy provided men in *The Young Man's Friend* (1854).[15] For the male reader, Eddy warned against becoming a 'fast young man.'[16] Some of the signs Eddy associated with being a fast man were 'getting away from home,' breaking away from 'church services, and the restraints of the house of God,' and taking up bad habits, which included smoking.[17] For women, Eddy measured their attributes against those of female characters from the Bible. Eve represented the 'fallen woman,' Rachel represented 'the married state,' and Delilah, 'the unfaithful woman.'[18] Douglas summarises these as 'sins against the soul' for women, but 'sins against the world' for men.[19] Eddy's willingness to treat men and women differently provides a useful context through which to interpret Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *George's Mother*. In both works Crane explores the legacy of the feminised Church through the relationship of mothers and children in the metaphoric battlefields of New York's tenement district, the Bowery. He also responds to sentimental fiction and—more importantly for the naturalist genre—feminised local colour regionalism. Before turning to *Maggie* and

[13] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1978), 70.
[14] Ibid., 105.
[15] Ibid., 66–67.
[16] Danny C. Eddy, *The Young Man's Friend; Containing Admonitions for the Erring, Counsel for the Tempted, Encouragement for the Desponding, and Hope for the Fallen* (Boston: Graves and Young, 1865), 126.
[17] Ibid., 129, 134, and 137.
[18] Danny C. Eddy, *The Young Woman's Friend; or, The Duties, Trials, Love, and Hopes of Woman* (Boston: Wentworth and Company, 1857), 11, 68, and 168.
[19] Douglas, *Feminization*, 67.

George's Mother, though, it is first necessary to understand the literary and cultural contexts from which they both emerged.

Horatio Alger Jr.'s *Ragged Dick* (1867) and Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (1890) are works against which to read Crane's exploration of the tenements, particularly in their treatment of religious themes and associated gender-based morality. *Ragged Dick* was a hugely successful sentimental novel, and it traces the life of the boot-black Ragged Dick from homelessness to his securing of a well-paid and respectable job in a counting room. Alger reveals a sense of the disparate worlds of organised religion and life on the streets. The reader learns that Dick was not 'naturally irreligious' and that his lack of knowledge of God was the result of someone who 'had been thrown upon his exertions for the means of living.'[20] Dick's lack of religious instruction does not make him immortal, far from it. He is 'scrupulously honest,' but he does exhibit the signs of waywardness that Eddy introduced in *The Young Man's Friend*.[21] Dick transcends his life on the streets through the influence of the wealthy Mr. Greyson, who begins to instruct him on 'religious subjects' derived from his own upper-class society.[22] Alger entitles the chapter in which Dick first attends Greyson's church as 'Dick's First Appearance in Society' and so actively associates religious belief with social status and capitalist advancement.[23] Indeed, Keith Gandal argues that the slums in works like *Ragged Dick* were merely a backdrop against which characters underwent moral reform or transcended their situation.[24] Religious teaching, then, is a transformative force for good in *Ragged Dick* that brings success and social acceptance.

In *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), Jacob Riis reacted to the sentimentality of Alger and his willingness to appropriate a middle-class moral ideal. Produced for the middle and upper classes as a piece of photojournalism, *How the Other Half Lives* crosses the 'boundary line' of the tenements, and it presents them as places where 'all the influences make for evil,' which include 'epidemics,' 'crime,' and 'moral contagion.'[25] Riis reappraises the culpability of guilt for those who 'have been nurtured in the sight

[20] Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick; or, Street Life with the Boot-Blacks* (Boston: Loring Publisher, 1868), 177.
[21] Ibid., 160.
[22] Ibid., 192.
[23] Ibid., 182.
[24] Keith Gandal, *The Virtues of the Vicious: Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, and the Spectacle of the Slum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 40.
[25] Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1890), 2–3.

only of the greed of man.'[26] He refutes notions that death and the promise of a metaphysical heaven are in any way curative because the 'unceasing battle' for the 'necessaries of life' prevents looking ahead; 'everything' discourages effort.[27] The reader meets children who have been put out upon the streets and who 'only knew the name of Jesus through hearing people swear by it.'[28] A comparison of an illustration that depicts boys in *Ragged Dick* to a representative photograph from *How the Other Half Lives* demonstrates the lack of sentimentality that Riis conveys, albeit in a somewhat staged manner (Figure 1). Riis reveals an inherent conflict between the performance of religion and its actual manifestation in a world in which sin is a consequence of environmental selection, not innate depravity. Seen through the wider context of culture, Riis's work makes him part of the processes of the liberalisation of Protestantism or, at the least, its reappraisal of who and who would not achieve salvation. Riis was also an advocate of the Social Gospel, and Crane was undoubtedly familiar with his work. Crane attended a lantern slide show of *How the Other Half Lives* that Riis himself presented, and he wrote a piece for the *New York Tribune* that included mention of Riis.[29]

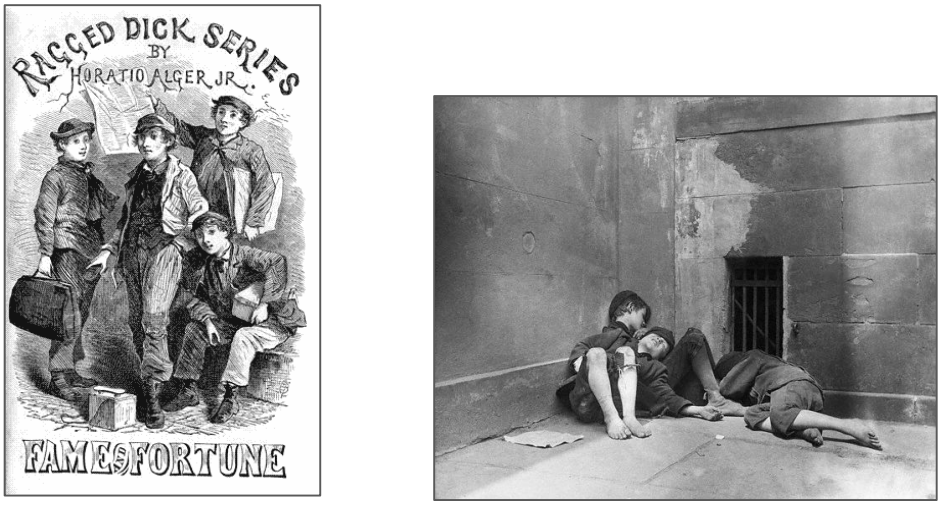

Figure 1. *Ragged Dick* illustration (left) and 'Street Arabs'- Jacob Riis (right)
(Courtesy of The Jacob A. Riis Collection at the Museum of the City of New York)

[26] Riis, *How the Other Half*, 5.
[27] Ibid., 174.
[28] Ibid., 184.
[29] Robert Wooster Stallman, *Stephen Crane: A Biography* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 49.

The emerging Social Gospel would also have cast its shadow upon Crane's early life through his father, the Reverend Johnathan Townley Crane (1819–1880).[30] Crane Sr. actively rejects the sentimentality of works like *Ragged Dick* and embraces the Social Gospel in "Christ and the Painters" (1877), which he wrote for *The Sunday-School Times*. He describes the moment that Christ took the little children into his arms as a staple of biblical artworks that appeared in 'almost every parlor.'[31] He argues that the artists do a great disservice to the message of the story in their depiction of children with 'blue eyes' and a 'fair complexion.'[32] Christ would have ministered not to 'rosy specimens of infantile innocence and grace,' Crane Sr. believes, but to the first-century equivalent of the children of the tenements who were 'dirty, unkempt, ragged, or without even a rag, to stare at him with their sore eyes.'[33] He argues that the lesson of love that Christ aimed to teach in his interaction with children is more noble if expressed to those who are 'repellent in outward appearance and manner' rather than to children of romantic imagery.[34] Crane Sr. did not mention Christ himself, but it is possible to infer from his description of the children that unrealistic depictions of Christ also came under the scope of his analysis. The article's title is also suggestive of a commentary upon the relationship between Christ and those that paint him—not necessarily the children who happen to be with Christ.

A central theological development that emerged from liberal Christianity was the denial of original sin. Liberals like Crane Sr. broadly believed that education, the example of Christ, and social reform could instil a sense of morality that would inspire humanity to altruism.[35] Like Riis, Walter Rauschenbusch, who did accept the doctrine of original sin, believed that sin was 'transmitted along the lines of social tradition'; it was 'absorbed by the individual from his social group.'[36] Rauschenbusch stood in contrast to evangelicals such as Dwight Moody, who promoted the idea that the poor existed because of the some flaw in their character. If poverty could be remedied, Moody believed, then

[30] Paul Sorrentino, *Stephen Crane: A Life of Fire* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 32.
[31] Thomas A. Gullason, *Stephen Crane's Literary Family: A Garland of Writings* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 133.
[32] Ibid., 134.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 135.
[35] Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 779.
[36] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 60.

the poor would surely rise to a position of societal comfort.[37] Look forward just over a decade, and Billy Sunday directly referred to arguments that began with Crane Sr.'s generation. Sunday argued that 'a man is not supposed to be the victim of his environment … I don't like to see you trying to put it all on the environment and take away responsibility from the individual whose got a rotten heart.'[38] The innovation of Crane's literary explorations of the Bowery was that he reacted against such conceptions and established an alternative morality to the Protestant middle-classes.[39]

Whilst Crane reacts against evangelicalism's promise of salvation and social remedy, the Social Gospel's conception of original sin is visible in the inscription of the copy of *Maggie* that Crane sent to Hamlin Garland. The aspiring Crane first met the successful realist in 1891 after Garland had delivered a lecture in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Crane even described Garland as resembling 'a nice Jesus Christ.'[40] Upon reading *Maggie*, Garland became 'very much excited' by the work.[41] *Maggie* was one of the first and most influential works of naturalism. In the hands of Crane, the Bowery's performance of religion—in conjunction with its debilitating economics—becomes an inescapable universe of discontent in the 'vast and terrible drama' of life.[42] Crane's inscription in the copy he presented to Garland read:

> It is inevitable that you be greatly shocked by this book but continue, please, with all possible courage to the end. For it tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. If one proves that theory one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls (notably an occasional street girl) who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people.[43]

[37] Quoted in William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 144.
[38] Ibid., 148.
[39] Gandal, *Virtues of the Vicious*, 56.
[40] Quoted in Stallman, *Stephen Crane*, 35.
[41] Ibid., 71.
[42] Frank Norris, "Zola as a Romantic Writer," in *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896–1898, Vol. 1*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath and Douglas K. Burgess (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1996), 86.
[43] Stephen Crane, "The *Maggie* Inscription to Hamlin Garland," in *The Portable Stephen Crane*, ed. Joseph Katz (New York: Penguin, 1969), 1.

Here Crane stresses the importance of the environment in shaping lives, but he also manifests what Gandal refers to as 'the outpouring of interest in the slums in the 1890s.'[44] Gandal argues that this outpouring from male authors was a direct response to the feminisation of American culture. Richard Stallman refers to Crane's description of works like *Ragged Dick* as 'pink valentines'—a term which Crane used to highlight their sentimentality.[45] Crane also used the term to refer to local colour regionalism and to what Donna Campbell refers to as the naturalists' 'backlash against what was perceived as feminine domination of audience and literature.'[46] More specifically, Crane was in the process of reappraising what makes and what does not make a woman virtuous.[47]

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1892)

Drawing from a heritage of slum novels, the Social Gospel, and a culture of femininity, then, *Maggie* explores the culpability of sin during the life of the eponymous Maggie Johnson, her mother Mary, and her brother Jimmie.[48] Opposing the virtuous mother common to local colour fiction and sentimental novels, Mary Johnson is a monstrous vision of violence and discontent whom the tenements have shaped. The reader first meets Mary washing, or perhaps baptising, a dirty and beaten Jimmie in 'an unholy sink' after which she casts him aside 'where he limply lay weeping' (13). Mary performs her duty as a mother, but she does so with contempt and discord. The baptism from 'an unholy sink' acts a metaphor for the lack of religious instruction that Mary provides both Jimmie and Maggie. St. Paul speaks of putting on the armour of God through faith, but faith does not exist for Jimmie who has been taught that the instinct of survival is more pressing than devotion to the dead God of Crane's poetry. The reader learns that Jimmie 'clad his soul in armor' of revolt against the Church (28).

Through Jimmie, Crane directly introduces into the narrative a tangible expression of evangelicalism in the form of the Bowery mission (Figure 2). The Mission promises a future heaven to Jimmie, but the promise of paradise is less important than the free soup the Mission supplies: 'you are damned,' declares the Mission preacher, but 'where's our soup?' is the only response that Jimmie and his companions can muster to 'things that did

[44] Gandal, *Virtues of the Vicious*, 11.
[45] Stallman, *Stephen Crane*, 73.
[46] Donna Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885–1915* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 47.
[47] Ibid., 111.
[48] Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896).

not concern them' (29). Gandal suggests that characters like Jimmie were well versed in the language of the missions; they knew, Gandal states, 'how to play the charity, religion, police games.'[49] Jimmie hates the mission staff for their 'obvious' Christianity and message of salvation. In addition, his friend states that if he himself met God 'he would ask for a million dollars and a bottle of beer' (30). Despite the positive impact of the Bowery Mission that historians such as Norris Magnuson have noted—I also, of course, do not refer to their continued work in New York today—Crane concentrates on the indifferent reactions that Jimmie and his friend have to its social work. The reactions reveal Crane's deep-seated pessimism towards charity.[50] George Monteiro argues that Crane rejected charity because he no longer believed that it reflected the ideal that Christ set out and that was expressed through St. Paul; for Crane, Monteiro suggests, the Church of the first century no longer existed.[51]

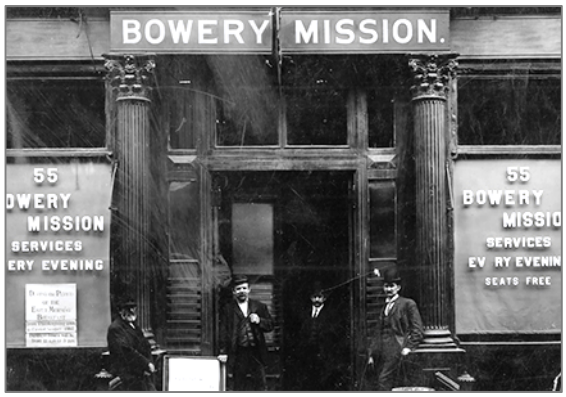

Figure 2. The Bowery Mission (circa 1900)
(Courtesy of The Bowery Mission, www.bowery.org)

With no sense of a greater divine presence, Jimmie himself adopts a godlike position aloft his lumbering teamster cart. He views his authority over others as an act of providence that only he can understand. Like a preacher who witnesses the protestations of the faithful, Jimmie denounces the 'frantic leaps, plunges, dives and straddles' of the street dwellers who attempt to avoid his god-like wrath (34). He may feel secure in his quasi-divine position above others, but *Maggie* is a naturalist novel—the supernatural cannot

[49] Gandal, *Virtues of the Vicious*, 14.
[50] Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865–1920* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1990), 50.
[51] George Monteiro, "Stephen Crane and the Antinomies of Christian Charity," *The Centennial Review* 16, no. 1 (1972): 97.

exist within the confines of the Bowery's deterministic world. Crane's authorial voice reminds the reader that if the 'god driver' stepped from the safety of his teamster, then he would have no doubt been 'opposed by a scowling mortal with two sets of hard knuckles' (35). Power is illusory, then, as humanity has the ability to destroy God once the armament of the protective church-like teamster no longer provides support. The only power that Jimmie fears is the fire truck that the rules of the Bowery dictate will not stop for him and his teamster cart.

Whereas Jimmie asserts himself as a god on earth and a respected fighter on the streets, Maggie, the daughter of Mary, initially manages to escape the squalor of the tenements. Crane writes that Maggie 'blossomed in a mud puddle' and that 'none of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins' (38). Throughout her early life, Maggie does not fall victim to the same forces that shaped Jimmie. She almost appears as a figure of high art transplanted into Jacob Riis's iconic photograph Bandit's Roost (Figure 3).[52] Maggie leaves the torturous family home that is filled with violence and discord through her relationship with Jimmie's friend, Pete. Maggie first meets him in the Johnson's squalid kitchen. He dangles 'his checked legs with an enticing nonchalance,' and 'his mannerism stamped him as a man who had a correct sense of his personal superiority' (40–41)—Maggie views him as a 'knight' (47).

Figure 3. Jacob Riis - 'Bandits' Roost'
(Courtesy of the Jacob A. Riis Collection at the Museum of the City of New York)

[52] Riis, *How the Other Half*, 63.

Pete eventually abandons Maggie. She attempts to return home, but Mary banishes her for the shame she has brought to the family. Mary acts as judge, and she believes that Maggie 'went teh deh devil first chance she got!' and 'may Heaven forgive her' (110). Mary judges Maggie against a Protestant morality that is familiar to works like *Ragged Dick*, but which is alien to the world of Maggie, Pete, and Jimmie. Donald Pizer argues that the morality against which Maggie is measured is 'drawn almost entirely from a middle class ethic.'[53] Crane writes that Maggie 'did not feel like a bad woman' (103), and, as Gandal argues, she is simply following the standards of the Bowery and not an imposed middle-class sense of what is and what is not socially acceptable.[54]

Jimmie, who is also familiar with the standards of the Bowery, appeals to Mary to forgive Maggie—'dere ain't nottin' teh make sech trouble about,' he reasons (108). Referring back to Douglas's summarisation that women must be protected from 'sins against the soul,' the treatment of Maggie is glaringly unfair.[55] Pete, too, should also be culpable, but Mary makes no mention of him. Jimmie thinks better of challenging Mary and apologetically states that he 'didn' mean none of dis prod'gal bus'ness anyway' (109). Besides, Mary argues, 'it wasn't no prod'gal dauter, yeh damn fool' (109). Here Crane attacks the extent to which dogmas and biblical lessons in the hands of humanity can be shaped into malevolent forces. Mary does not view The Parable of the Prodigal Son in its metaphoric sense as a lesson in forgiveness for all. She views it as a lesson that is only relevant for the forgiveness of male sin. Sally Mitchell's analysis of the preconceived notions of a woman's purity in the nineteenth century provides further evidence for the double-standard Crane creates. Mitchell argues that a hallmark of nineteenth-century 'thinking and writing about women' was inherently related to the 'idea of feminine purity.'[56] Mitchell cites William Starbuck's *A Woman Against the World* (1864)—in which Starbuck wrote that 'when a woman falls from her purity there is no return for her … the memory of a woman's guilt cannot be removed from the earth.'[57]

As such, Maggie becomes outcast because religion—as expressed through feminine virtue derived from the middle-classes—is the cause of her decline. Further

[53] Donald Pizer, *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 127.
[54] Gandal, *Virtues of Vicious*, 51
[55] Douglas, *Feminization*, 67.
[56] Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class, and Women's Reading, 1835–1880* (Bowling Green, OH.: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981), x.
[57] William Starbuck, *A Woman Against the World* (London: Richard Bentley, 1864), 100.

evidence for this reading can be found in Maggie's encounter with a clergyman shortly after she leaves home. Maggie searches for help and encounters a 'stout gentleman' who wears a silk hat and a chaste black coat' (137). She realises that the emissary of God may be able to provide her with the 'Grace of God' of which she had heard mention. The well-fed priest with a 'chubby face' and who is a 'picture of benevolence and kind-heartedness' merely side-steps Maggie (137). He is more concerned for his own respectability than Maggie's soul. Crane's positioning of Maggie's encounter with the clergy at the juncture of chapters is significant. The priest becomes the final contact that Maggie has before she turns to prostitution. 'How was he to know that there was a soul before him that needed saving?,' Crane writes (138). Perhaps more accurately, how was the priest to know that the very morality that he professes in the Mission ultimately leads to Maggie's demise?

The reader never sees the actual decline of Maggie, but they meet her two months later, now as a nameless individual who has turned to prostitution: 'a girl of the painted cohorts of the city went along the street,' and she walks towards her death (140). Gandal explains how clergy and charity workers—who were often members of higher social classes—would leave the Bowery and areas like it during the night so as to maintain 'the proper distance of authority.'[58] The Reverend Crane also personally 'admonished sentimental philanthropists who professed Christian love but avoided the tenements.'[59] Both sentiments appear in *Maggie*. Crane writes that Maggie meets 'a stout gentleman, with pompous philanthropic whiskers' who simply sneers and hurriedly walks on by (142). With no recourse available to her and abandoned by all society, Maggie gives up hope and commits suicide in the oily waters of the East River.

Pizer argues that Crane uses the 'idea of salvation and damnation' to attack 'smug, self-righteous moralism.'[60] Mary encapsulates the moralism against which Crane reacts in *Maggie* when salvation and damnation close the novel. Mary, whom Crane describes as a 'fat monk,' learns of Maggie's death and begins to weep, but only after she finishes her meal (154). Finally, Mary shows some sense of caring and tenderness for her lost daughter: 'I kin remember when she weared worsted boots,' she cries (155). The arrival of Mary's motherly instinct also signals the arrival of neighbours who display the feminine virtue against which Crane has been writing throughout his incarnation of Mary. The women—whom Crane described at the start of the novel as 'formidable women' who

[58] Gandal, *Virtues of the Vicious*, 14.
[59] Sorrentino, *Stephen Crane*, 32.
[60] Donald Pizer, "Stephen Crane's "*Maggie*" and American Naturalism," *Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1965): 174.

'screamed in frantic quarrels'—perform the social rites of death through their domestic piety (9). They clean and tidy the squalor of Mary's home, and Crane draws attention to one neighbour to manifest the religious virtue that has appeared throughout the novel tacitly. Crane describes how the neighbour uses language that is 'derived from the mission churches' to utter platitudes of care and support (155). She has a 'motherly face' which was 'wet with tears'; she trembles 'in eagerness to express her sympathy' (155).

Crane, therefore, conflates feminine virtue and active religious belief that has been lacking throughout his rendering of the Bowery. Whereas Crane argues that society is to blame for the perceived sins of Maggie, Mary's neighbours find Maggie, the individual, culpable. The women accuse her of being a 'poor misguided chil'' and view her behaviour as 'thankless … to her mudder,' which reveals Maggie's innate 'badness' (156). A woman, who raises 'her eyes to the sunbeams' like a visionary saint, declares that 'deh Lord gives and deh Lord takes away,' but she also asks Mary if she will forgive Maggie (158). The final words that close the novel, which Mary emits in a 'scream of pain,' are the ambiguous '"Oh, yes, I'll forgive her! I'll forgive her!"' (158). Here is the tragic irony of a woman pulled between the role of motherhood and the expectations of a morality derived from beyond the Bowery.[61] Ironic or not, the Church gets the last word in the novel. Henry Ward Beecher explained to his congregation that a mother's love is 'a revelation of the love of God.'[62] Mary Johnson fails in the role, despite her having access to the rhetoric of Christianity and its morality. She shows very little love at all to Maggie and Jimmie, but the reader cannot blame Mary for her treatment of them: Mary is also a victim of the Bowery and the religious forces that have ultimately failed her. Indeed, Crane's inscription to the novel that he presented to Hamlin Garland is equally applicable to Mary, for she, too, does the best she can with what little she has.

George's Mother (1896)

Four years later, Crane built upon the work of *Maggie* and concentrated upon the relationship between a mother and son, George Kelcey, in *George's Mother*.[63] The difference between Mary Johnson and George's mother is that the latter does provide access to morality and nurture derived from the Church. Crane appropriates virtuous

[61] Ibid., 172.
[62] Quoted in William G. McLoughlin, *The Meaning of Henry Ward Beecher: An Essay on the Shifting Values of Mid-Victorian America, 1840–1870* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 88.
[63] Stephen Crane, *George's Mother* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1896).

feminine stability through an evangelical morality that George's mother imposes. She is a member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and a church-going believer, but her belief contributes to the cultural determinism of the tenements, manifest through religion, that debase George's life.[64] Like Mary Johnson, George's mother also fails in her role, which Crane directly attributes to the femininity of the Church. Indeed, as Campbell suggests, Crane reacts against the image of the good woman and inverts her into the 'bad woman' in a direct response to the feminisation of local colour fiction.[65] Paul Sorrentino also suggests that *George's Mother* reveals in Crane's work a much larger theme of a naturalist author who was attempting to reassert his own masculinity against a feminine ecclesiastical context that was very close to home. Sorrentino writes that Crane confronts the 'anxieties about rebelling against his religious heritage' in the novel.[66]

Like the perceived femininity against which Crane reacts, the church George's mother attends is ineffectual. It sits in a 'dark street … between two towering apartment houses,' and its shadow falls upon the wet streets like the 'death-stain of a spirit' (121). It is far removed from 'the brilliant lights of the Avenue' off in the distance (122). Crane's naturalistic image of the church is quite different from the work of the sometime local colourist Brander Matthews. In *Outlines in Local Color* (1898), Matthews describes the 'steeple of a church on the corner, around which the mellow harvest moon peered down on the noisy streets.'[67] Matthew's church flourishes under a harvest moon that must peer around the church's physical importance. In contrast, Crane's church suffers domination from the city and is in the process of dying. In Crane's naturalist world, only 'an enormous brewery' takes on cathedral-like proportions that proclaims the message of alcohol to the city; its sign becomes 'a chain of gold hanging from its neck' (22–23).

George measures himself against the feminised church of his mother and finds no relevance for a young man who lives in the Bowery. 'Come t' prayer-meetin' with me t'-night,' George's mother asks (32). He responds with incredulity: 'say, you must be crazy!' (32); 'What would I do at a prayer-meetin'?,' he grumbles (33). For George, the violence of the Bowery and the masculine camaraderie of the saloon define his identity. When he consents to attend the church, he feels a threat to his masculinity. He becomes

[64] *George's Mother* contains elements of autobiography. Crane's own mother was a member of the Woman's Temperance Union, which was an evangelical organisation that warned of the dangers of alcohol consumption. It taught Christian virtues to those it saw as in need of salvation.
[65] Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism*, 111.
[66] Sorrentino, *Stephen Crane*, 141
[67] Brander Matthews, *Outlines in Local Color* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1898), 153.

a lumbering, embarrassed child who suffers from 'mists of his shame and humiliation' (125). The femininity against which Crane opposes George's masculinity appears most obviously in Crane's description of the preacher, himself not much older than George. Crane uses adjectives that reveal a nineteenth-century, stereotypical image of women, derived from their changed roles in industrialised America.[68] The preacher is 'pale-faced' and 'plump'; he is one who spends time indoors without exercise (125).[69]

Crane's description of the 'smiling saloon' stands in clear opposition to the dead church that George visits (36). In the saloon 'laughter arose like incense,' and it instilled upon the air 'a festival of religion' (93). 'Sentiment of brotherly regard' replaces the need for Holy Communion (93). The keg of beer behind the bar takes on the form of a 'portentous black figure'—like a preacher perhaps—that hovers over George and his companions with a 'spectral stature' (86). Their prayers to drunkenness rise not on billows of incense but on 'lazy cloud-banks' of tobacco (86).[70] The saloon does not judge George for his lifestyle, but the preacher of his mother's Church does. The preacher's words remind George that 'he was damned' (128). George hates him because he singles him out for apparent immorality, but in his own mind George 'was certain that he was as good as they' (34). George loses his job and so can no longer access the church of the Saloon; he begins to become involved in street-gang life. At this point, he receives word that his mother is dying and so returns home to watch and wait for the moment of her passing.

Crane's inclusion of a deathbed scene directly responds to the local colour fiction against which he has been writing throughout the novel. Douglas explores the changing Calvinist conception of the Atonement of Christ's sacrifice in relation to the work of female authors of the nineteenth century. She argues that women took on the role of the suffering saviour: it is their suffering that can atone for the sins of men, she claims.[71] Douglas provides the example of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island* (1861) and argues that the novel's Mara Lincoln 'converts' the wayward Moses Fennell through her death. As Moses watches Mara die, he feels both 'reproach and an inspiration.'[72] *George's Mother* actively resembles—but also distorts—nineteenth-century novels of feminine suffering. Douglas suggests, the 'saintly mother' often suffers

[68] Douglas, *Feminization*, 59.
[69] Ibid., 107.
[70] For a similar reading see Campbell, *Resisting Regionalism*, 64.
[71] Doulas, *Feminization*, 151.
[72] Ibid., 152.

and ultimately draws her son away 'from the saloon to the fireside.'[73] Both George and the pale, plump clergyman—whom George may have become if he had followed his mother's guidance—wait and watch the mother dying. George feels no responsibility for his mother's death or any guilt that will reveal to him the perceived error of his ways. Redemption cannot exist in Crane's naturalist world. Salvation implies an individual acceptance of sin and an agent of emancipation: George's mother has not convinced George of his sin, and neither she nor the clergyman are able to convince him that he needs saving. The normality of masculine life in the tenements continues as an 'endless roar, the eternal trample of the marching city' (183).

Taken together, then, *Maggie,* and *George's Mother* explore the cultural effects that religious belief, made manifest as a force, has upon those who live in the Bowery. In no sense can Crane be said to be sympathetic towards religious belief. He represents a Church—derived from the evangelicalism of the Bowery Mission—that imposes unrealistic expectations upon the victims of his deterministic world. In both works, religious belief is intimately related to gender performance and the historic legacy of an American evangelicalism that was in the process of generational transformation.

The Red Badge of Courage (1895) and the Fighting Christ of Liberalism

When Crane's work is read against the liberalisation of American Protestantism, a new intervention to *The Red Badge of Courage* also becomes possible.[74] Crane's novel focuses upon a period in the life of Henry Fleming, a Union soldier during the American Civil War. Crane builds the narrative around the desertion of Henry during a battle that Henry thinks is lost to the Confederates. Henry learns that his regiment did not lose the battle and so he flees. He confronts his shame and wonders if he will ever be brave enough to fight again. Sneaking back to his regiment, Henry discovers that he can perform in the machine of the army, and he ultimately serves with distinction as the flag-bearer. Many interpretations of the novel have been espoused over the past fifty years, but I want to concentrate on one particular relationship within the narrative: that between Jim Conklin and Henry.[75] Conklin, a member of Henry's regiment, and also referred to as 'the tall

[73] Ibid., 53.
[74] Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896).
[75] Donald Pizer, ed., *Critical Essays on Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage* (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1990). Eric Carl Link, ed., *Critical Insights: The Red Badge of Courage* (Pasadena, Calif.: Salem

soldier' (93) and the 'spectral soldier' (87), is known within the regiment as a rumour-monger, but he actually appears relatively little in the novel.

The sequence of narrative that has caused the most discussion surrounds Conklin's death after he receives a fatal wound. During Henry's surreptitious return to the regiment, Conklin reappears in the narrative as a member of the beleaguered injured. The narrative that surrounds the dying Conklin invites a reading of Christian imagery associated with Christ's passion. 'Sneaking as if whipped,' Henry follows Conklin, who is engaged in a mystical march to his death (97). Conklin pauses at his place of death, and he waits 'with patience for something that he had come to meet' (97). He resembles 'a devotee of a mad religion' with 'bloody hands' and a 'heaving chest' (97). At the moment of death, Conklin raises his voice 'in a last supreme call,' and he falls forward 'in the manner of a falling tree'; 'God!,' declares Henry's companion (98). Henry notices a wound in Conklin's side, and 'the red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer' (99).

The text certainly does suggest an image of Christ, and Robert Stallman was the first to argue that this was Crane's intention. For Stallman, Henry's regeneration is a direct consequence of Conklin's death, thus introducing the redemptive purchase of Christ's sacrifice. Stallman highlights the initials of Jim Conklin as J.C., Jesus Christ, and the 'unmistakable hints … of his wound in the side, his torn body and gory hand.'[76] He states that Crane's use of the wafer symbolises the 'sacrificial death celebrated in communion.'[77] Much criticism of Crane's possible representation of Christ exists, and much of it addresses, favourably and unfavourably, Stallman's original contention.[78] More recently, Steven Frye also recognises 'the wafer of the Eucharistic ritual,' and Susan Mizruchi reads Crane's image of the Eucharist as a symbol of 'what has become of religion in the modern age.'[79] Chester Wolford argues that those who deny Conklin as

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Press, 2010). Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*, ed. Donald Pizer and Eric Carl Link (New York: Norton, 2008).

[76] Robert Wooster Stallman, "Stephen Crane: A Revaluation," in *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction, 1920–1951*, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York: The Ronald Press Company,1952), 268.

[77] Ibid., 174.

[78] John J. McDermott, "Symbolism and Psychological Realism in *The Red Badge of Courage*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23, no. 3 (1968): 327. Stanley Greenfield, "The Unmistakable Stephen Crane," *PMLA* 73, no 5. (1958): 562. Donald Pizer, "Introduction," in *Critical Essays on Stephen Crane's* The Red Badge of Courage, ed. Donald Pizer (Boston, Mass: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990), 5. Edwin H. Cady, "The Red Badge of Courage," in *Critical Essays on Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage*, ed. Donald Pizer (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990), 92.

[79] Steven Frye, "Naturalism and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 165. Susan Mizruchi, *The Rise of Multicultural America: Economy and Print Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 18.

Christ do so because Conklin is 'a loud cracker-crunching, rumormonger.'[80] Wolford only accepts Stallman's reading of Conklin if the reader understands that it is 'Henry and not Crane who sees Conklin as Christ.'[81] I believe that Wolford's reading sidesteps the debate because it disassociates Crane's work from the cultural context and the literary heritage of the Christ-novel. The cultural context upon which this dissertation is based favours Stallman's interpretation that Jim Conklin is a figure of Christ, albeit not the divine Christ that critics of Stallman expected.[82]

Turing first to the literary context, Crane published *The Red Badge of Courage* less than a generation after *Ben-Hur* had taken America by storm, and so Crane's work emerged into a marketplace primed, as it were, for novels that featured the Christ. Moreover, less than a year after Crane's work was published, *In His Steps* reignited the imaginations of American believers with its interpretation of an itinerant Christ wounded by the battles of economic hardship. *The Red Badge of Courage* is a work of naturalism; it is not *Ben-Hur*, nor is it *The Prince of the House of David*. Crane's Christ is a human being and a member of the working classes; indeed, Mizruchi highlights the importance that Crane places upon the working classes who constituted the majority of the Union army.[83] For the son of devout parents, it does not seem so difficult to imagine that Crane would also represent the Christ through the lens of a masculinity that he also employed in both *Maggie* and *George's Mother*. Indeed, Crane's own father in "Christ and the Painters" wrote that the 'spirit of Christ' is most apparent 'under the dirt, and the disease, [and] all that is repellent in outward appearance and manner.'[84] To be guilty of too an elaborate reading, perhaps, three chapters later—thereby fitting the timeline of Christ's resurrection from the dead—Henry meets a mysterious 'cheery' solider who appears to possess an unearthly knowledge, as he guides Henry to safety. In accepting Stallman's reading, as I am inclined to do, the soldier could also be read as the resurrected Conklin.[85]

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[80] Chester L. Wolford "The Epic of Consciousness: The Anger of Henry Fleming," in *Modern Critical Interpretations: Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 104.
[81] Ibid., 104.
[82] Mark W. Evans also argues that Crane represented a figure of the Christ in "The Monster" (1898). Mark W. Evans, "Messianic Inversion in Stephen Crane's "The Monster"," *American Literary Realism, 1870–1910* 31, no. 3 (1999): 58.
[83] Mizruchi, *The Rise of Multicultural America*, 19.
[84] Gullason, *Stephen Crane's Literary Family*, 135.
[85] The Road to Emmaus refers to a post-resurrection appearance of Christ to two disciples as they walk to Emmaus. At first, neither recognise the resurrected Christ as he walks beside them - 'As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; **16** but they were kept from recognizing him' (Luke 24:15–16).

Eric Carl Link's identification of an Emmaus moment also fits with Crane's description of the conversation between Henry and the soldier.[86] Finally, and again drawing from the Emmaus story, Crane writes that 'as he who had befriended him was thus passing out of his life, it suddenly occurred to the youth that he had not once seen his face' (128). A further appendix to the reading of Conklin as Christ relates to Crane's publication of the short story "The Veteran" (1896). Published one year after *The Red Badge of Courage*, it revisits the life of Henry Fleming, who is now an old man. The reader learns that Henry fought in the Battle of Chancellorsville, which ran from April 30–May 6, 1863.[87] Henry admits his own lack of courage and remembers that 'young Jim Conklin' felt quite at home in the heat of battle.[88] "The Veteran" continues to endow Conklin with a masculinity that is consistent with *The Red Badge of Courage*, but Conklin's fleeting return provides no further evidence for his relationship to the Christ figure. Conklin was clearly important enough for Crane to revisit, and perhaps the sacrificial elements of his death were present in Crane's mind as he wrote "The Veteran." The story ends with Henry's death in a burning barn as he attempts to rescue livestock. Crane looked to nature in his description of Conklin's death with the image of a red sun, but in "The Veteran" the sun becomes smoke that 'was tinted rose-hue from the flames.'[89] Henry challenges Crane's ode to the naturalist universe in the story's closing lines: 'Perhaps the unutterable midnights of the universe will have no power to daunt the color of this [Henry's] soul.'[90]

Stephen Crane, then, whose work typifies the indifference of the naturalistic universe, unquestionably explored the relationship between the human and divine in his poetry and prose. Crane reacted to the evangelicalism that he had known since his childhood, and he exposed its tenet of personal salvation to the saloon and the crowded cityscapes of New York's Bowery. Although Crane most obviously rejected religious orthodoxy, the figure of the human Christ emerged in the dirt and horrors of the battlefield. Amidst the madness of war, perhaps Crane's recourse to the Bible and its central figure were the only antidotes to the confusion of an army on the move. The Bible

[86] Eric Carl Link, *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Tucaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 138.
[87] The Confederate General Robert Edward Lee (1807–1870) defeated the Unionist Major General Joseph Hooker (1814–1879) in one of the most significant victories of the Civil War.
[88] Stephen Crane, "The Veteran," *McClure's Magazine* 7, no. 3 (August, 1896): 223.
[89] Ibid., 224.
[90] Ibid.

and the figure of Christ provide a stability in the form of a transcendent, but all too human Christ, whose presence, albeit brief, reminds the reader of a greater hope for humanity.

Frank Norris: Myths, Miracles, and Humanity

Like Stephen Crane, Frank Norris grew up in a theological environment that evangelicalism and liberalism influenced. Norris's own father, for example, attended Dwight Moody's revivals.[91] Joseph McElrath and Jesse Crisler even establish a close connection between George Stebbins, Moody's associate, and Norris's early writing aspirations.[92] Norris's mother, though, was an Episcopalian, and her Church—in which Norris undertook confirmation—was 'measurably … liberal.'[93] If Crane rejected the influence of his mother's faith, Norris embraced the liberality of his mother's Episcopalianism throughout his life.[94] This contrast between the orthodox and liberal, I argue, plays out throughout the career of Norris and finds expression in the works that I explore. Evidence suggests that Norris was well acquainted with Moody owing to the evangelist's appearance in two texts, "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland" (1896) and the novel *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (1903). In the former, a short story that centres upon a Salvation Army missionary, Norris incorporates the music of Moody and his musical confederate, Ira Sankey.[95] In the latter, a novel that concentrates upon the financiers of Chicago's wheat markets, Norris incorporates into the narrative Moody's influential Sunday School at North Market Hall, Chicago. Norris, therefore, appropriates the relationship between capitalism and evangelicalism.[96]

Link states that Norris stands out among the naturalists for his 'relative (although *not complete*) silence on the topic of God.'[97] In the following section, I explore the '*not complete'* absence of God in two short stories, "Lauth" and "Miracle Joyeux." I provide a fresh intervention that reads both works against a liberalising Protestantism that reappraised the resurrection, the miracles, and the divinity of Christ himself. Evidence for

[91] Joseph R. McElrath and Jesse S. Crisler, *Frank Norris: A Life* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 55.
[92] Ibid., 73.
[93] Ibid., 56.
[94] Frye, though, does raise doubts over the sincerity of Norris's Episcopalianism - Frye, "Naturalism and Religion," 165–66.
[95] Frank Norris, "A Salvation Boom in Matabeleland," in *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896–1898, Vol. 1*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath and Douglas K. Burgess (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1996), 18–22.
[96] Frank Norris, *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1920), 123–24.
[97] Eric Carl Link, "The Theodicy Problem in the Works of Frank Norris," *Studies in American Naturalism* 1, nos. 1–2 (2006): 98.

why Norris represents religious themes in the way he does emerges from the education that he received from Professor Joseph Le Conte whilst at the University of California, Berkeley, between 1890 and 1894. Le Conte believed that there was 'little doubt' that society was on 'the eve of the greatest change in traditional views' since the beginnings of Christianity.[98] In his autobiography, Le Conte recalled his religious upbringing and charted his own developing theological liberalism.[99] In an attempt to consolidate Darwinism and religion, Le Conte posited that there was no conflict between traditional religious belief and evolution. He viewed evolution as equally applicable to both the body and the spirit, which for Le Conte were separate entities.[100] Le Conte regarded the human soul as the primary differentiate between human and animal life. He posited that former states of the evolved spirit or body, which he viewed as more base, had the potential to rise up and to dominate the present self.[101] For Le Conte, a person's 'mission' and 'life-work' was seeking 'the complete dominance' of the 'higher over the lower,' whether this was in the context of the spirit or the body.[102]

"Lauth" (1893)

The Le Contean battle between the lower self and the higher self constitutes the foundation of the short story "Lauth," which Norris wrote whilst at Berkeley.[103] Set in Mediaeval Paris, "Lauth" concerns the death and resurrection of the eponymous Lauth. After being wounded by a crossbow in the skirmishes that follow a long battle, Lauth suffers a protracted death during which he must come to terms with his impending demise. Watched by images of St. Julian and St. John Chrysostom, Lauth does not pray to God and neither does he give thought to dying without absolution; his body takes over as it tries desperately to hold on to life. Religion has no place at the moment of death when all the body is concerned with is life. Lauth feels the cold of death envelope his body, and he realises that he is about to 'see for himself the solution of that tremendous

[98] Joseph Le Conte, *Evolution: Its Nature, Its Evidences, and Its Relation to Religious Thought* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), 295.
[99] Joseph Le Conte, *The Autobiography of Joseph Le Conte*, ed. William Dallam Armes (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), 17.
[100] McElrath and Crisler rightly explain that Le Conte's separation of spirit and body was equally applicable to Emerson and to Norris's Episcopal upbringing as a child - McElrath and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 148.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Le Conte, *Evolution*, 330.
[103] Donald Pizer, "Evolutionary Ethical Dualism in Frank Norris' *Vandover and the Brute* and *McTeague*," *PMLA* 76, no. 5 (1961): 560.

mystery that for ages had baffled far greater intelligences than his' (250). The story then jumps to Dr. Chavannes who witnesses the body of Lauth which is lying in state. Chavannes decides to discover from where life comes, where life goes, and what the 'marvelous force' called life actually is. He plans to resurrect Lauth from the dead (251). Chavannes is opposed by his friend, Anselm, who views his plan as 'repulsive and wicked' (252). Norris's inclusion of Anselm is, I believe, significant. Historically, Anselm, or St. Anselm (1033–1109), was an Archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109). He developed the satisfaction theory of atonement, in which he argued that Christ died to repay the debt of honour that the sinner robbed from God. Christ, for Anselm, secured the possibility of life after death.[104] Chavannes and Anselm discuss the relationship between the body and soul in detail before Chavannes successfully revives the body of Lauth through the transfusion of sheep blood. Lauth returns to life slowly, and he begins to speak of past experiences. He eventually deteriorates to little more than a wild, animal-like creature that dies a suffering and lonesome death.

Pizer views "Lauth" as instrumental in the development of Norris's naturalism. He cites the direct influence of Le Conte upon Norris's exploration of the body and the soul and the 'wolfish state' to which Lauth descends.[105] More recently, Link has viewed "Lauth" in the context of bodily determinism and spiritual freedom.[106] Stephen Tatum, however, is most concerned with forming a relationship with Gustave Lemattre's "On the Transfusion of Blood."[107] Tatum's evidence relates to the fact that Norris includes a sheep as the vehicle of the transfused blood that Lauth receives, which Lemattre describes. Tatum also posits that Lemattre's work 'diffused the history' of blood transfusion 'into the intellectual atmosphere' that Norris no doubt encountered.[108] In contrast to Tatum, I propose that the story directly reflects those transformative elements of theology that were beginning to gather pace in Norris's culture as equally diffusing forces. Whilst the Le Contean reading makes absolute sense, themes of resurrection, the mythology of religion, and the necessity of God are clear in the text. Taken at face value, the themes are just expressions of the Gothic elementals common in Norris's work, but when viewed in the

[104] St. Anselm (1033–1109), *Cur Deus Homo* (London: Griffith Farran Okeden & Welsh, 1898), 24. Compare the satisfaction theory to the penal substitution theory of atonement—which states that Christ took on sin in place of humanity.
[105] Pizer, "Evolutionary Ethical Dualism," 554.
[106] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 146–50.
[107] Stephen Tatum, "Norris's Debt in "Lauth" to Lemattre's "On the Transfusion of Blood"," *American Literary Realism, 1870–1910*, 11, no. 2 (1978): 243.
[108] Tatum, "Norris's Debt," 247.

context of this dissertation, they take on a new significance. Norris explores the necessity of God in the context of a society that was in the course of responding not only to Darwin but also to the works of an increasingly liberal theology. As discussed in Chapter 1, mythological interpretation was one of the important ways in which the higher biblical critics interpreted the Bible, particularly Strauss. Upon the resurrection of Lauth's body, Anselm is so shocked that he begins to question his own beliefs and concludes that 'all his ideas and beliefs … had been a mistake' (256). He exhibits a Straussian position and laments that 'all [of them] were myths or founded upon falsity' (256). Here, the larger cultural context to which I believe Norris contributes becomes apparent through Anselm's questioning of himself: 'Where could he turn for anything certain? Where was there anything true? What could he now believe?,' he wonders (256).

"Lauth" is concerned with stripping away the divine. Rather than denying that bodies can resurrect, Norris sets agency in the hands of humanity. Chavannes recognises that on two occasions resurrection has occurred before—once with Lazarus and once with Christ. He believes that 'if man could end life,' then 'why could he not begin it afresh?' (252). Although veiled, the influence of higher criticism is still present here. Norris is exploring not so much the text of the Gospels, but their miraculous accounts from the perspective of modern science. Consequently, the opposition of the divine and human is played out in Lauth's resurrection. There was no need for Norris to allude to the Bible at all if the aim of the story was simply to demonstrate that science can resurrect a body, but Norris chooses the mode of religious expression to contribute to the wider context of liberalism. God breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam, but 'a large air pump … connected by a tube of light steel' provides Lauth with the necessary air (254). The death of Christ, the lamb of God, provides the necessary blood sacrifice to satisfy the debt of honour that humanity owes God, but through the incorporation of Lemattre—who cited Leviticus's 'the life of all flesh is in the blood'—Norris exposes how the blood of a lamb provides the jump start in the blood of Lauth's own body.[109] For Chavannes, the body, soul, and the very force of life constitute a 'trinity' (259): remove the soul and the life of the body will perish; remove life and the soul cannot exist.

Whilst "Lauth" is clearly a work that has a Le Contean philosophy at its core, the story's reference to the mythology of the Bible certainly speaks to higher biblical

[109] Gustave Lemattre, "On the Transfusion of Blood," *Popular Science Monthly* 2, no. 41 (1873): 679. Leviticus 17:11.

criticism and its contemporaneous effect upon the American Church. "Lauth," through its scientific naturalism, addresses the necessity of God and the religious traditions that surround God manifest in Christ. Humanity cannot quite achieve the power of God for Norris, but it can reduce the Bible's accounts of resurrections to mythical status.

"Miracle Joyeux" (1897–1898)

Four years later, Norris turned his attention to the instigator of miracles, Jesus Christ. In 1897, when the San Francisco *Examiner* asked him what the greatest piece of American fiction was, Norris wrote in response that he thought it was *Ben-Hur*.[110] Norris explained that most readers would cite the time-of-Christ narrative as its greatest asset, but he also clearly stated that 'there is nothing more unoriginal and hackneyed than the narrative of the New Testament.'[111] Norris despised novels of 'swords and cloaks' and those that trailed 'behind the clouds of Ben-Hur's glory.'[112] Why, then, that same year, did Norris chose to write a story entitled "Miracle Joyeux," which replicates the first-century narratives of not only *Ben-Hur* but contemporaneous works like Marie Corelli's *Barrabas* (1893) and Florence Morse Kingsley's *Titus: A True Comrade of the Cross* (1897)? The financial temptation of a receptive marketplace to the Christ-novel may account for Norris's choice of theme, but the theological context of liberalisation certainly accounts for his mode of representing Christ himself: Norris wanted to subvert the feminised and divine Christ of works like *Ben-Hur*.

In addition, perhaps Norris's relationship with the Reverend William Rainsford serves to elucidate Norris's own conception of Christ. In 1884, Rainsford arrived to become rector of St. George's Church, New York, and he worked closely with the communities in which Crane had situated *Maggie*. Rainsford wrote that the faith 'as demanded by Jesus Christ' was never about 'creedal statement' but 'vital obedience to, and trust in, a living man.'[113] Of the Bible, Rainsford accepted its 'misconceptions' because without them, it could not be 'a true history of man's reaching out' to understand the divine.[114] Evolutionist and proponent of the Social Gospel, Rainsford also ministered

[110] Frank Norris, "What Is Our Greatest Piece of Fiction?," in *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896–1898, Vol. 1*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath and Douglas K. Burgess (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1996), 230.
[111] Ibid.
[112] McElrath and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 336.
[113] William S. Rainsford, *The Reasonableness of Faith and Other Addresses* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1902), 2.
[114] Rainsford, *Reasonableness of Faith*, 21.

to Frank Norris when Norris joined his church in 1899.[115] True, Norris had already published "Miracle Joyeux" before he joined Rainsford's Church, but, in Rainsford, Norris found a compatriot. McElrath and Crisler even provide evidence for the close relationship between the two men and cite Rainsford's eulogy to Norris, in which Rainsford praised 'the honesty, the bravery, the faith of man' that 'all live in his works.'[116]

Just as Rebecca Harding Davis had come under censorial scrutiny for her representation of Christ in "Life in the Iron-Mills," so, too, did Norris. He wrote two different versions of "Miracle Joyeux." Link correctly argues that the two versions of the story 'bear witness to Norris's interest in orthodox religious themes,' but both versions approach orthodoxy quite differently.[117] One version was published in 1897, whilst Norris worked at the *San Francisco Wave*.[118] The other was published a year later in 1898, whilst Norris was at *McClure's Magazine*.[119] The second version at *McClure's* was a reworking of the original found in the *Wave*. *McClure's* would not publish the story in its original form because—as McElrath and Crisler suggest—it 'was not the kind of theologically probing short story *McClure's* published in its pages.'[120] For example, in its November 1898 issue, *McClure's* published Stephen Crane's sentimental novel "His New Mittens."[121] In December 1898, *McClure's* included John A. Hill's "An Engineer's Christmas Story," which told a story of love and redemption.[122] Moreover, McClure's—at this point in its history—had not yet developed its association with the muckraking movement and was unlikely to challenge cultural orthodoxy.[123] With this in mind, the earlier version in the *Wave* expresses more closely an emerging liberalism than that of *McClure's* for its willingness to ask serious questions about the divine nature of Christ. Norris's questioning, therefore, is what made it difficult for *McClure*'s to publish and

[115] McElrath and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 367–70. Frye, "Naturalism and Religion," 165.
[116] McElrath and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 369.
[117] Link, "The Theodicy Problem," 98.
[118] Frank Norris, "Miracle Joyeux," in *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896–1898, Vol. 1*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath and Douglas K. Burgess (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1996), 155–62.
[119] Frank Norris, "Miracle Joyeux," *McClure's Magazine* 12, no. 2 (December, 1898): 154–60. This version would itself be published again in 1906 as Frank Norris, *The Joyous Miracle* (New York: Doubleday & Page, 1906).
[120] McElrath and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 329.
[121] Stephen Crane, "His New Mittens," *McClure's Magazine* 12, no. 1 (November, 1898): 54–61.
[122] John A. Hill, "An Engineer's Christmas Story," *McClure's Magazine* 12, no. 2 (December, 1898): 129–35.
[123] Harold S. Wilson, *McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 81.

also what sets it apart from works like *Ben-Hur*: it does not edify the reader, but it contributes to Norris's exploration of religious truth in naturalism.

Both works open with a conversation between Mervius and Jerome in first-century Palestine. Jerome has a copy of a famous letter that he brings to Mervius for his wife to copy. The apostle Peter wrote the letter, and it recounts events in the life of 'the carpenter's son' who 'set the whole country by the ears' (*Wave* 156, *McClure's* 155). Norris explores the authenticity of religious texts by describing their social development and human origins. At the beginning of both stories, Norris describes how events in letters like Jerome's would be passed on and copied. The events would become folklore and then they 'would become so well know that [they] would be repeated orally' (*Wave* 155, *McClure's* 155). It is at this point that accounts in forgotten documents like Jerome's letter take on legendary connotations, or a 'mythos' which might 'gain credence and become even history' (*Wave* 155, *McClure's* 156).

The Straussian connotations are plain to see here, as Norris argues that what some may take as historically truthful religious texts could actually be mythologised works that emerged from the cultural consciousness of society. Norris stresses the origins of Christianity further by focusing the letter and its subject of Christ on daily human life. Mark Twain also used the technique in the *Innocents Abroad* (1869); he recognised that the people of Nazareth knew the family of Jesus and that 'his father was nothing but a carpenter.'[124] Indeed, the reader learns that Jerome remembers Peter for the excellent fresh fish he used to sell and that the father of Jesus built his new corn store. Norris, therefore, reduces the almost mythical status of two key figures in the Gospels to that of ordinary men. Jerome is adamant that Jesus was 'the son of a carpenter, nothing else' (*Wave* 156, *McClure's* 155). He 'was a dreamer,' 'a mild lunatic' who was destined to die in the end, Jerome states (*Wave* 156, *McClure's* 155). Mervius shocks Jerome by revealing that Peter had omitted one event that he himself had witnessed, the moment that Christ smiled. Twain wrote that 'whoever shall write the boyhood of Jesus ingeniously will make a book which will possess a vivid interest.'[125] Norris responds to Twain's

[124] Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad; or, The New Pilgrims Progress; Being Some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land; With Descriptions of Countries, Nations, Incidents, and Adventures, As They Appeared to the Author* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1899), 601.
[125] Ibid. 537.

cultural call and creates a new account of the early life of Jesus. Norris questions the very truth of the Gospels.

Christ's smile marks the point at which the "Miracle Joyeux" of the *Wave* and *McClure's* part company and become distinct vehicles of liberalism and orthodoxy. In the liberalised version of the *Wave*, Christ encounters two men, Simon and Septimus. The two men demand a miracle of Christ; Jesus responds and promises to give whatever they ask for themselves. The one who does not ask, Norris writes, will receive twice as much as the other. Septimus cannot bear the thought of Simon profiting from the promised miracle, and so Septimus asks Christ that he lose the sight in one of his eyes, thus Simon—who did not ask—loses the sight in both eyes. Norris then describes Christ who smiles a smile of 'pity, partly of contempt and partly of amusement' (161). The later version of *McClure's* is a saccharine-sweet story that sees Simon and Septimus as members of a group of playful children. The children make clay peacocks, and Christ materialises white doves from their models. Christ then smiles at the sight of the joyous children (159).[126]

In both versions, Norris does not deny the miracles of Christ's life. Norris is more concerned with the motivation behind the miracles and with the effects that they have upon how the reader interprets the nature of Christ. The evangelical view of him, derived from the Chalcedonian Creed (AD 451), stressed the unification of the divine and the human in the single figure of Christ. The Creed also states that Christ was 'in all things like unto us'; he was also 'without sin.'[127] McElrath and Crisler also suggest that Norris found inspiration for the *Wave* version in the Episcopalian refrain, 'god in man made manifest.'[128] Norris directly builds upon this seemingly contradictory belief, and he seems to be working through the duality of Christ's nature. If Christ had never sinned, then Christ's resistance of sin made him more inhuman than human. If Norris represented Christ as fully divine, then Norris would have betrayed his own naturalism and liberalism; if Norris represented Christ as fully human, then it would have been too controversial.

In the version from the *Wave*, then, the reader meets an impasse for which I believe Norris was aiming. Here Jesus seems to take pleasure in those weaker than himself who fall into physical harm. The notion of a sadistic God is undesirable, but

[126] In Christian tradition—dating back to Origen (184/185–253/254)—peacocks represent divinity and resurrection. Norris used the same symbolism in *The Octopus* (1901).
[127] Henry Bettenson, ed. *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 51.
[128] McElrath and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 329.

Norris's Christ certainly exhibits the sin of malice in his reaction to Simon and Septimus. Viewed from the Le Contean perspective things begin to make sense: the divine spirit of the Christ and his human body struggle for ascendency in the form of a smile. Jesus' smile of pity, contempt, and amusement seems to reveal a degeneration of the spirit through an act of physical pleasure. Le Conte suggests that the mastery of spirit over body must be ascribed 'supremely and perfectly to Jesus alone'; the revelations of God must pass through the 'imperfections characteristic of the man and the age.'[129]

Crucially, Norris's Jesus does not master the body, but he exists in a confused state. He is torn between the achievement of Le Conte's ultimate state of mastery and the human characteristic of finding mirth in the failure of others. Joseph McElrath explores the influence of Annie Besant (1847–1933) upon Norris and makes connections between Besant's theosophy and the work of Le Conte.[130] Besant argued that the soul passes through three stages of evolution: the young soul, the development of consciousness, and then the mature soul.[131] During the development of consciousness, the conflict between the animalist nature of humanity and the associated spirit rages; here is the stage that corresponds to the work of Le Conte. Indeed, of the higher states, Besant wrote that 'the soul has become the conqueror … having become master of the animal nature.'[132] Whether drawing from Le Conte or Besant, Norris rejects the notion of the divine, perfect Christ because Christ, too, is all too human in his struggle between body and spirit. No such problems occur in the later version of *McClure's*. Jesus is unquestionably the divine Son of God whose spirit already exists in a state of mastery over the body.

"Miracle Joyeux" is also important because Norris takes the significant step of representing Christ's physicality. Just as Norris's Christological interpretation reflects nineteenth-century theological culture, so, too, does his physical description of Christ. Both the versions in the *Wave* and *McClure's* represent the masculinised Christ, at least initially. Norris's Christ has spent time outdoors, and his body reflects the working life that he leads. Norris describes Christ as a 'peasant' who is 'sun-browned' and whose hands 'were those of a worker' (*Wave* 158, *McClure's* 158). Here is the workingman of

[129] Le Conte, *Evolution*, 333–34.
[130] Annie Besant was a British socialist and women's right activist. She achieved national fame in the United States for her theosophy: a discipline that aimed to discover the relationship between the human, the divine, and the natural world.
[131] Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. "Frank Norris' "The Puppets and the Puppy": Le Contean Idealism or Naturalistic Skepticism?," *American Literary Realism* 26, no. 1 (1993): 56.
[132] Quoted in Ibid.

muscular Christianity, but the *Wave* and *McClure's* part company over the matter of a beard. In the earlier *Wave* version, Norris writes that Christ 'had a fine brown beard … there was nothing extraordinary about the man' (158). In the later *McClure's* version, Jesus becomes the beardless Christ. 'Did he wear his beard?,' Septimus asks. 'No, that was afterward. He was younger when I saw him, about twenty-one maybe, and his face was smooth. There was nothing extraordinary about the man,' Mervius responds (159).

There may not be anything extraordinary about Christ's appearance, but there is certainly something extraordinary in Norris's softening of his Christ for *McClure's*. Norris's omission of Christ's beard reflects the feminised Christ against which the editors were measuring Norris's work. True, Christ could have a beard and still be feminine, but the editors of *McClure's* seem to be pushing for youthful femininity. Further evidence emerges in the illustration that accompanies the work—which also appears in the later *The Joyous Miracle*. The illustration bears no resemblance to the peasant that Norris describes in the text. Yes, he is beardless, but his obvious beauty and facial features are distinctly feminine. Christ is dressed in a long, white robe that forms a slender torso. Just as the illustration to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* distorted Harriet Beecher Stowe's conception of the ethnicity Christ, so, too, did *McClure's* distort Norris's rendering of Christ's masculinity. Figure 4 shows the image along with the front cover of the Christmas edition in which it appears; the editors also clearly highlight the white, divinity of Christ.

Figure 4. The Figure of Christ, *McClure's* cover (left) - "Miracle Joyeux" (right)[133]
(Images not in copyright)

[133] Norris, "Miracle Joyeux" (McClure's), 157. Norris, *The Joyous Miracle*, iv.

Taken together, then, Norris's publications in the *Wave* and *McClure's* transform two relatively little known works into important vehicles that represent late nineteenth-century religious transformation. *The Wave* sees Norris liberalise the divinity of Christ and reject established conceptions of Christ's femininity; *McClure's* sees Norris adopt the same Christological approach as novels like *The Prince of the House of David* and *Ben-Hur*. Despite there being no definitive 'God-novel' in his literary canon, Norris was not afraid to explore the theological context and expectations of his generation.

McTeague: A Story of San Francisco stands out as a work in which Norris explores themes of atavism common to naturalism.[134] It is also a work, I argue, that resonates with *In His Steps* and *Ben-Hur* for its inclusion of protagonists who rise and fall both materially and morally.[135] The story revolves around the relationship between McTeague, a self-made dentist, his friend Marcus Schouler, and Marcus's cousin Trina Sieppe. Trina and McTeague fall in love and marry. Trina wins five-thousand-dollars in the lottery, and the win transforms the material lives of McTeague and Trina. In one of the novel's few overt references to religious culture, Norris writes that they express their new-found social status through the attendance of church at Easter, Christmas, and New Year (191)—thereby linking *McTeague* to the Church's association with the middle-classes common to both *Ragged Dick* and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Indeed, the lottery becomes a secular source of material salvation. Norris writes that 'it was a great charity, the friend of the people, a vast beneficent machine that recognized neither rank nor wealth nor station' (114). Material rise signals moral decline in the novel. Trina fears spending her lottery winnings, and her relationship with McTeague begins to deteriorate. The situation becomes worse when McTeague is struck off as a practising dentist. He and Trina become bitter enemies, and he ultimately murders her. McTeague flees with a sack full of Trina's gold dollar pieces, and Marcus sets off in pursuit in order to exact his revenge. During his flight, McTeague meets a mute, destitute Native American named 'Big Jim' (393). He offers McTeague a letter in which he explains his own dire circumstances. Eric Gary Anderson argues that Norris's incorporation of Big Jim conforms to a common nineteenth-century practice of making Native Americans

[134] Frank Norris, *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (New York: Doubleday, 1899). Donald Pizer, "Evolutionary Ethical Dualism in Frank Norris' *Vandover and the Brute* and *McTeague*," *PMLA* 76, no. 5 (1961): 560.
[135] For another reading of *McTeague* as a morality tale see Nan Morelli-White, "The Damnation of *McTeague*: Frank Norris's Morality Play," *Frank Norris Studies* 13 (1992): 5-10.

'invisible' and 'animalistic.'[136] Viewed through the lens of *In His Steps* and the homiletic experiences of novels like *Ben-Hur*, though, I argue that the sequence takes on a new meaning. Circumstance has presented McTeague with the chance to offer an act of charity and to answer the question of "what Jesus would do?"—thus speaking to Matthew 25:45.[137] Despite having a sack full of gold dollar pieces, McTeague offers no charity to Big Jim even though Norris points out that he 'was a good Indian and deserving of Charity' (393). Indeed, James E. Caron, suggests that Big Jim is a reflection of McTeague himself, thus intervening with Christ's words 'love your neighbour as yourself.'[138]

The sack of money that once elevated McTeague to a church-going member of the middle-classes has become the symbol of his moral decline. *McTeague*'s full title—*McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*—also reflects Norris's application of its themes not only to McTeague as an individual but to larger humanity. Lew Wallace used this same technique in *Ben-Hur*. The subtitle *A Tale of the Christ* was used to symbolise Judah's parallel position to Jesus and the spiritual responses of those who read the novel.[139] Just as Messala and Judah Ben-Hur meet on the sandy floor of the charioteers' amphitheatre, Marcus and McTeague resolve their own differences on the sands of Death Valley. Critics such as G. R. Thompson also grasp the importance of this moment and label it 'a passion in the desert.'[140] Nature itself becomes the amphitheatre in which Marcus seeks his revenge. The close of the novel sees both men fight and die for their atavistic degeneration; there is no moment of redemption for either man.

Conclusion

From the streets of the Bowery to first-century Palestine, then, this chapter has argued that the work of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris is closely associated with the theological transformations that occurred within the nineteenth-century American Church. Both Crane and Norris were brought up with a significant knowledge of American evangelicalism, but they each reveal differing exponents of religious representation that

[136] Eric Gary Anderson, *American Indian Literature and the Southwest: Contexts and Dispositions* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1999), 94.
[137] 'He will reply, 'I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me'.'
[138] James E. Caron, "Grotesque Naturalism: The Significance of the Comic in McTeague," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31, no. 2 (1989); 308. Matthew 22:39.
[139] Gregory S. Jackson, *The Word and Its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 116.
[140] G.R. Thompson, *Reading the American Novel: 1865–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 105.

constituted the larger religious climate. Crane denied the existence of the divine, but he was also acutely aware of the role of the Church in society and its relationship to a feminised American culture against which he wrote. *Maggie* and *George's Mother* revealed how Crane combined the deterministic forces of the Bowery with middle-class expectations of morality derived from the evangelicalism of the Bowery Mission. Viewing Crane through the lens of cultural context has also enabled a new intervention to the debate of Jim Conklin as Christ in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Here, Crane built upon the legacy of the Christ-novel and the masculinisation of Christ that reflected the larger cultural shift from the feminine to the masculine within the American Church. Like Crane, Frank Norris explored the divine, but he did so with a more scientific eye. "Lauth"—which drew upon the Gothic Romance and which was replete with Christian imagery—explored the resurrection of the dead. Mythology was drawn out from Norris's work as an exemplar of the cultural effect of Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*. Building upon the mythology of Christ and the resurrection, "Miracle Joyeux" is a naturalistic Christ-novel. Here Christ himself was passed through the naturalist machinery to reveal a figure caught between the human and the divine. *McTeague*, in contrast, demonstrated the wider context of Norris's religious naturalism. Norris was well aware of the same middle-class morality that fascinated Crane in relation to charity, but Norris was also willing, I argued, to respond to popular religious fiction and to make its themes his own.

Stephen Crane and Frank Norris, therefore, grew up on opposite sides of the United States, but the religious themes that fascinated them were common to both. Franklin Walker and Jesse Crisler each explore the biographical similarities between Norris and another Californian naturalist, Jack London. Norris and London both entered college as 'special students,' both were members of San Francisco's Bohemian Club, both attempted to journey around the world, and both would have close relationships with *McClure's Magazine*.[141] Jack London, too, built upon his own understanding of late nineteenth-century theological transformations to create a definable Christ-theme throughout his work. The following chapter explores this theme, and it argues that through his representation of Christ, London contributed to the existing legacy of the Christ-novel.

[141] Jesse S. Crisler, "The "California Naturalists": Memory as Spiritual Renewal and Other Parallels in London, Norris, and Steinbeck," *Literature and Belief* 21, no. 1–2 (2001): 5. Franklin Walker, "Frank Norris and Jack London," *Mills College Magazine* 56 (1966): 15–23.

Chapter 3

'Praise Upon His Lips': Jesus in the Work of Jack London[1]

'There was nothing mushy, nothing sweetly effeminate about Jesus … [Jesus was] a man's man [who] turned again and again on the snarling pack of his pious enemies and made them slink away.'[2]

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918)

Jack London (1876–1916) was steeped in a variety of religious contexts from an early age: he was the child of a spiritualist mother and an itinerant, astrologer father; he attended Sunday school at an African American Episcopal church; and he would listen to sermons at the Salvation Army. Coupled with his often-brutal representation of the natural world and its indifference to those unable to survive in a given environment, London tends to be thought of as a writer antagonistic—or unconcerned—towards religion. However, in this chapter I challenge this notion and demonstrate how London explicitly engaged with the person of Jesus Christ throughout his career. London saw in Christ a figure whose influence upon human history was profound. As Charmian London writes in the biography of her husband, London held Christ to be a 'personal hero,' a sentiment that he also applied to Abraham Lincoln—in whom London saw similar qualities.[3] The ability for humans to be associated with Christ relates to the way in which London viewed Christ himself. Christ for London was the carpenter's son from Nazareth and not the divine, miracle-working Son of God who sacrificed himself for the salvation of mankind. I argue here that London developed his conception of Christ over the course of six works: "The God of His Fathers" (1901), *The People of the Abyss* (1903), "The

[1] A portion of this chapter appears as the peer-reviewed journal article: Steven Bembridge, "Jesus as a Cultural Weapon in the Work of Jack London," *Studies in American Naturalism* 10, no. 1 (2015): 22–40. The entitled 'Praise upon his lips' refers to London's reference to Christ as recalled by Charmian - Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London, Vol. 2.* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 219.

[2] Susan Curtis, "The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity," in *Meaning for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 72.

[3] London, *The Book of Jack London, Vol. 2.*, 219. Edward Blum and Paul Harvey also explain how Abraham Lincoln was often compared to Christ in post-Civil War America - Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 131.

Heathen" (1910),[4] *The Iron Heel* (1908), *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), and *The Star Rover* (1915). He would only represent the historical Christ once, in *The Star Rover*.[5]

In each of these works London constructs an image of Christ in the form of human protagonists who all display an overt physical masculinity, reject religious orthodoxy, and reflect relationships that privilege whiteness. Christ is an ideal that the believer and the non-believer can emulate. London's conception of Christ liberates Christ from centuries of religious dogma, and it allows humans to transcend the ordinary in worlds that philosophical and scientific naturalism govern. The characters who exhibit these core qualities demonstrate London's exploration of the Darwinian implications of Christ's self-sacrifice that London's reading of Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernst Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Huxley informs. London's exploration of what it means to be Christ progresses throughout his life, and his Christ figures take on a political meaning when read alongside the incorporation of socialism into his works. But more importantly for this dissertation, London's Christ emerges from the changes in American Protestantism against which I read the work of the naturalists. London's career spanned both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and his representation of Christ emerged from a society that was beginning to see the rise of fundamentalism as a significant response to liberalisation. London's work also appeared out of a context that saw the message of the Social Gospel making significant inroads in addressing the role that the Church should play in society and in addressing the masculinity associated with Christ and his followers.

In the larger cultural context, then, London's work demonstrates that Christ is no longer the incarnate God of traditional evangelical belief. He is an historical figure that can be developed textually to advance a variety of ideological positions. London uses him as a device—or even a weapon—to comment upon specific aspects of culture that London himself regarded as in need of remedy: the individualism of capitalism; the Church's unwillingness to act on behalf of the working class; the hold that religion has over individuals to prevent them from living empowered lives; and the idea that religion is necessary to live a moral life. The question for London ceases to be Charles Sheldon's imitative 'what would Jesus do?,' but—more accurately—'what would you like Jesus to

[4] London completed the heathen in 1908 - Clarice Stasz, "Social Darwinism, Gender, and Humor in 'Adventure'," in *Rereading Jack London*, ed. Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 132. It was first published in 1910.

[5] London's Christs interact with Ziolkowski's larger literary categories of the Christ. London's predominant Christological representation was the pseudonym of Christ, but he also explored what it meant to imitate Christ in life. *The Star Rover* is both a fictional biography and a pseudonym of Christ.

do?,' as London appropriates the image of Christ for cultural and political means throughout the course of his career.

Masculinity, a Rejection of Orthodoxy, and Whiteness

London's textual exploration of Christ begins on the extreme frontiers of the Klondike and the South Pacific in the short stories "The God of His Fathers" and "The Heathen" respectively. Both environments were important contexts from which London would draw inspiration throughout his career. Figure 1 shows London in a marketing pose as the Klondike adventurer, and it also shows London and Charmian aboard *The Snark*—the ship that London built and which took the Londons to the islands of the South Pacific.

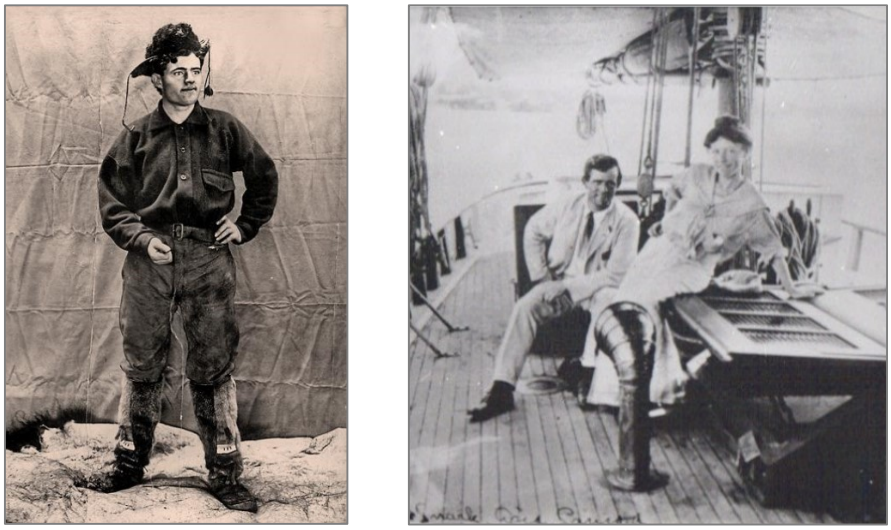

Figure 1. Marketing the young author (Left) and Jack and Charmian aboard *The Snark* (right) (Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

"The God of His Fathers" centres upon the relationship between the white frontier tradesman and trapper Hay Stockard, the mixed-race Native American chief Baptiste the Red, and the missionary Sturges Owen. [6] "The Heathen," on the other hand, concerns the life-long relationship between Otoo, a native of Bora Bora, an island in the South Pacific, and Charley, a white sailor.[7] After surviving a shipwreck, Otoo guides Charley throughout his life and becomes a model of how to live ethically. Both works contain characters that take on the qualities of London's Christ: Hay Stockard in "The God of His

[6] Jack London, "The God of His Fathers," *McClure's Magazine* 17, no. 1 (May, 1901): 44–53.
[7] Jack London, "The Heathen," *Everybody's Magazine* 23 (July to December, 1910): 193–204.

Fathers" and Otoo in "The Heathen." Hay Stockard and Otoo are direct reflections of London's exploration of muscular Christianity and the changing conceptions of what it meant to be a Christian man. Indeed, Clifford Putney argues that the Social Gospel 'eroded the boundaries between the sacred and the secular' through the equation of 'health and manliness with divinity.'[8] London's work performs the same function. Figure 2 shows the original illustrations to the stories. The light playing on the visage evokes the transfiguration and reveals a beatific face common to the nineteenth-century Christ.

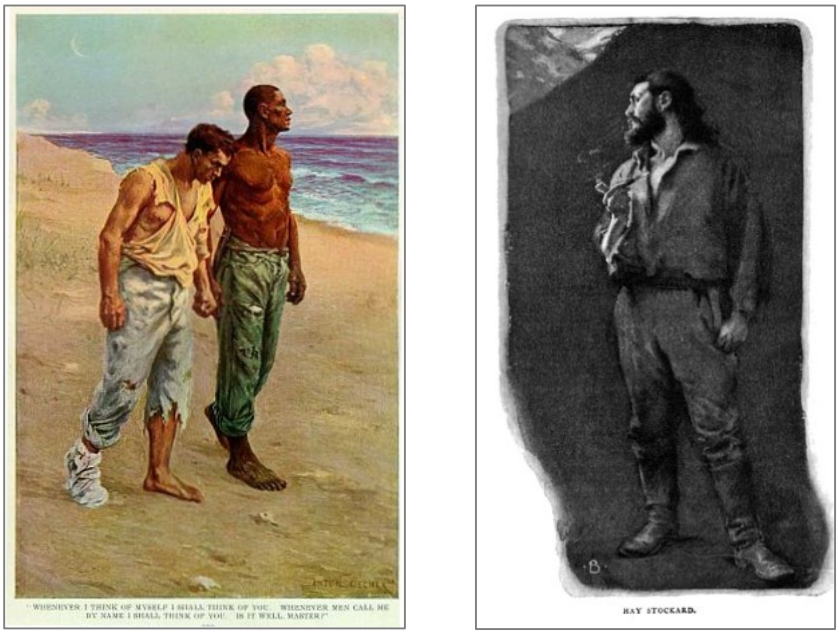

Figure 2. Otoo and Charley (Left) and Hay Stockard (right)[9]
(Images not in copyright)

Unlike *The Prince of the House of David* and *Ben-Hur*, which each represented a feminised and sanitised Christ, Hay Stockard emerges as a rifle-toting frontier trader. In a similar vein, Otoo exhibits an overtly masculine physicality and temperament: Otoo is 'six feet tall,' he is 'muscled like a gladiator,' and, while 'not a fighter,' he has 'the heart of a lion' (197). Both Stockard and Otoo would have pleased Billy Sunday as models of Christ's masculinity. Sunday stressed that the actions of individuals are crucial to their salvation. He claimed that 'a man will be Christian if he is decent,' and he asked if it is

[8] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 43.
[9] London, "The Heathen," 200. London, "The God of His Fathers," 47.

not 'right and manly to be a Christian?'[10] The irony is that neither Stockard nor Otoo are believers. A key point for London that appears time and again is that a lack of orthodox belief does not preclude moral deficiency—those without faith are far more laudable than those with faith in the work of Jack London. Despite their rejection of orthodoxy, London writes that Stockard has a heart 'clean of evil' (50) and that 'if Jehovah be from His high place watching every sparrow fall, not least in his Kingdom shall be Otoo, the one heathen of Bora Bora' (204). London opens the gates of heaven for Stockard and Otoo, just as Stephen Crane had written a generation earlier that 'one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls … who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people.'[11] In Stockard and Otoo, London challenges contemporary readers to re-evaluate their expectations of what a Christ figure should be: the feminised and divine Christ from European art or the human carpenter from an impoverished town called Nazareth.

The orthodoxy against which Stockard reacts emerges through a contrast with the frontier missionary and self-proclaimed St. Paul, Sturges Owen. London's choice of the Pauline Owen reflects the influence of liberalisation because some liberals regarded St. Paul as responsible for tainting the first message of Christ and for creating a Church at odds with Christ's original vision.[12] Owen's message is thus depicted as misguided or misplaced on the frontier. London described the narrative and his intentions for the work in a letter to Cloudesley John, a close friend and fellow writer. He referred to "The God of His Fathers" as the story of 'a minister who apostatizes … and the vile sinner who did not.'[13] The antagonism between Stockard and Owen is at once visible. Stockard greets the miracle-accepting evangelical work of Owen with the epithet 'that damned sky-pilot' (48), and Owen announces his arrival to the divinity-denying Stockard with 'blasphemer and Philistine' (48)—Owen knows that Stockard has married a Native American and that Stockard has rejected the Church.

The orthodoxy against which Otoo reacts is the Christianity to which his people have converted at the hands of men like Owen. 'I do not like Bora Bora Christians,' Otoo

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[10] William G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1959), 411. London described Sunday's techniques as 'wizardry' - Jack London, *On the Makaloa Mat* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), 80.
[11] Stephen Crane, "The *Maggie* Inscription to Hamlin Garland," in *The Portable Stephen Crane*, ed. Joseph Katz (New York: Penguin, 1969), 1.
[12] Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (London: Yale University Press, 1972), 780.
[13] Jack London, *The Letters of Jack London*, *Vol. 3: 1913–1916*, ed. Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 153.

states, and they 'do not like The Heathen' (203). Juniper Ellis argues that London categorised the cultures of the Pacific Islands as either "pure" or "impure."[14] Those pure cultures, London regarded as free from the modernity of white society and the imposition of other island cultures. Otoo is a heathen because he has not embraced the religion of white society. He is impure to his own people, but to London Otoo represents a purity that the inhabitants of the Bora Bora have lost to the force of Christianity. The purity of Otoo supports the Christ-like qualities that London reveals in him, but Otoo's blackness reveals a far more contentious cultural context that relates to Christ's race, which also appears in "The God of His Fathers." London was certainly familiar with the legacy of imagery that represented the figure of Christ as a white European. In an unpublished and typewritten manuscript, London provides a description of Christ that includes long, flowing hair and eyes that are 'blue and exceedingly bright.'[15] As characters, Stockard and Otoo both contribute to this larger cultural debate of Christ's race, but they also conflate masculinity and the sacrificial act of Christ.

The masculine and racialised Christ first appears in "The God of His Fathers." Sturges Owen shatters the tenuous peace between Stockard and Baptiste through his act of settling in Stockard's camp. All attempts at peace fail; Baptiste and his army attack, and they engage Stockard in battle. In an allusion to St. Sebastian, Owen sees Stockard in the midst of battle 'bristling with wounds and arrows' (53). Owen recognises his own fear, failure, and weakness all too readily, and he understands that Christ 'had been molded in such manner' that Stockard exhibits (53). Stockard thus becomes the fighting Christ of muscular Christianity. Significantly, only Stockard bears the qualities of London's Christ, when it could just as easily have been Baptiste; he, too, is also muscular and without religion owing to the failures that the Church has made throughout his life. That Stockard takes on this role reflects London's racialism. Stockard (with his name implying breeding) highlights the importance of the Anglo-Saxon identity in London's work and his whitening of Christ.[16] Baptiste finally overwhelms Stockard's camp, and he demands that both Owen and Stockard deny God in exchange for their lives. Owen has

[14] Juniper Ellis, ""A Wreckage of Races" in Jack London's South Pacific," *Arizona Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2001): 62–63.
[15] "Description of Christ." JL 591. Papers of Jack London, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. London rephrases the description of Christ found in "The Publius Lentulus letter." The purportedly authentic document describes in detail the physical Jesus. It became popular in the nineteenth century, but its origins are from the fifteenth century - Blum and Harvey, *Color of Chirst*, 20–21.
[16] Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London's Racial Lives: A Critical Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 45.

boasted of his willingness to be martyred for Christ, but he fails in his role. He disavows his faith and choses to save his own life. Baptiste then turns to Stockard and asks him, 'hast thou a god?' to which Stockard replies, 'ay, the god of my fathers' (53). Here, Stockard dies for the greater ideal of Anglo-Saxon culture and not some metaphysical salvation or the promise of a future heaven. Earlier in the novel, Stockard had already expressed the same viewpoint as he discussed the presence of Owen with Baptiste: 'being of my own people, I've got to stand by him' (50), he told Baptiste.

"The Heathen" also reveals an interpretation of the masculine, Christ that again looks to race and that usurps any notion of spiritual salvation. In a somewhat contrived final act, Charley, over whom Otoo has an accepted and active guardianship, falls from an overloaded canoe. A waiting shark sets upon him, but Otoo intervenes and sacrifices himself. Thomas Tietze and Gary Riedl argue that, through the relationship of Charley and Otoo, London was attempting to elicit in white, middle-class readers a response of admiration and respect for non-white characters.[17] Their analysis is convincing, particularly if, as I argue, London was deliberately subverting traditional nineteenth-century conceptions of who Christ should be. However, despite London's representation of the figure of the masculine, non-white Christ, the truth of the matter is that Otoo does die for a white man whom he has been serving throughout his life. I therefore disagree with Tietze and Riedl who suggest that London did not write Otoo's death as one of a 'racial inferior.'[18] Indeed, Jeanne Campbell Reesman suggests that Otoo 'comes uncomfortably close' to the stereotype of racial servitude.[19] London, therefore, explores a more liberal physicality of Christ, but he also enforces racial stereotypes by killing a black Christ in order to save the life of a white man. London exhibits attitudes held in common with the white supremacy movement.[20]

Both Stockard and Otoo, then, are the strongest and fittest, but they each choose to die for those weaker than themselves. These qualities emerge from London's incorporation of themes derived from Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). The sacrificial acts of both Stockard and Otoo see London favour Thomas Huxley's (1825–1895) promotion of ethical fitness over Herbert Spencer's (1820–1903)

[17] Thomas R. Tietze and Gary Riedl, ""Saints in the Slime": The Ironic Use of Racism in Jack London's *South Sea Tales*," *Thalia* 12, no. 1 (1992): 60.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Reesman, *Racial Lives*, 144.
[20] Blum and Harvey, *Color of Christ*, 141.

concentration upon reproductive fitness.[21] Darwin's original conception of evolution posited the importance of the environment in the selection of which organisms were able to reproduce. Organisms did not wilfully adapt to the environment but survived according to random variations that gave them a competitive advantage over other organisms to pass on their own offspring. Spencer incorporated his own existing conception of the survival of the fittest into Darwin's work through the development of Social Darwinism. Spencer interpreted evolution as a means by which the universe could be perfected through the active prevention of 'the bad' from reproducing.[22] He believed that society should actively imitate the natural process of evolution. Thomas Huxley, by contrast, believed that Darwinism was correct, but he disagreed with Spencer's Social Darwinism. Huxley argued that the developing ethics of society depended on 'combating' the notion that natural selection should be actively applied to society.[23] He argued that it was those who were 'ethically the best' who survived, not those who happened 'to be the fittest.'[24]

Stockard and Otoo, then, are not meek and mild Christ figures, but neither are they unethical brutes. They are fully aware of their own power, but they choose to deny their physical fitness. Their denial mirrors London's own growing frustrations with Spencer: London found Spencer's notion of the survival of the fittest troubling. Anthony Naso explains that 'deeply impressed as he was with Spencer, London found himself rejecting those aspects of Spencer's philosophy that went counter to his convictions that love and loyalty have a value in human relationships.'[25] Ellis's reading of London's tales of the South Pacific adds further weight to the analysis. She argues that 'the racial categories' that define London's Pacific 'address and challenge' Spencerian thinking.[26] Biblical mandate for the interpretation of Christ in this way occurs during Christ's Passion in Gethsemane; he rejects his own fitness to survive for a humanity that by definition is weaker than God.[27] London rejects Spencer's survival of the fittest, then, and represents a Huxleyan Christ who is willing to die, but only if that death benefits those who happen to be white. Stockard and Otoo, therefore, create a cultural significance that belies their fleeting appearance in the wider context of London's work. Both characters merge the

[21] Lawrence Berkove, "Jack London and Evolution: From Spencer to Huxley," *American Literary Realism* 36, no. 3 (2004): 246.
[22] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology* (New York: Appleton, 1871), 86.
[23] Thomas Huxley, *Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 83.
[24] Ibid., 81.
[25] Anthony J. Naso, "Jack London Herbert Spencer," *Jack London Newsletter* 14, no. 1 (1981): 29.
[26] Ellis, ""A Wreckage of Races"," 66.
[27] Matthew 6:53.

masculine, the white, and the sacrificial to form a complex of qualities that, I argue, begin the process of constructing the Christ of Jack London.

Emerging Socialism, Christ, and the Streets of London

In addition to his fictional explorations of the Klondike and the South Pacific, London's fiction demonstrates a distinctly political agenda through his own association with American socialism. London recollects the importance that socialism played in his young life in "How I Became a Socialist" (1903). He refers to his youth and his search for employment amongst the working-classes of Oakland. London writes that he found men 'all wrenched and distorted and twisted out of their shape by toil and hardship and accident.'[28] He describes a conversion to socialism as similar 'to the way in which Teutonic pagans became Christians.'[29] That London should describe his relationship to socialism in terms of conversion demonstrates his indebtedness to Christianity and an inability to describe his own condition without recourse to faith. Carolyn Willson even describes London as a 'socialist evangelist' and so continues to equate his socialist spirit with the language of a Church that London rejects in his renderings of Christ.[30]

London's conflation of socialism and Christ became a major theme in his writing. It first appears in *The People of the Abyss*—his journalistic account of life in the East End of London.[31] Figure 3 shows London suitably attired and posing with Bert, a cobbler, during his reportage. Gregory S. Jackson separates London's work from his own exploration of the homiletic novel because, he argues, London did not intend to create in the reader a response in the way the reader lived their own life.[32] I think that Jackson misreads *The People of the Abyss* here as London's reportage was inherently linked to socialism: the novel had at its core a political message that was intended to initiate change in the lives of its readers.

[28] Jack London, "How I Became a Socialist," *The Comrade* 2, no. 6 (1903): 122.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Carolyn Willson, ""Rattling the Bones": Jack London, Socialist Evangelist," *Western American Literature* 11, no. 2 (1976): 136.
[31] Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903).
[32] Ibid., 103.

Figure 3. Jack London and Bert the Cobbler
(Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

London situates the reportage in the larger literary context by looking back to Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*, but he also looks back to much earlier works such as Eliza Lynn Linton's *The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist* (1872). Written for the British marketplace, Linton revealed the image of the working-class Christ. She wrote that Christ 'would be a working man' who would 'live at the East End among the roughs and gaol-birds of Tiger Bay' and who 'would denounce the luxury and respectability of the West End.'[33]

Whilst London does not create an explicit Christ figure in *The People of the Abyss*, he does concentrate upon the social implications of Christ's teachings derived from a larger cultural context of evangelical and socialist attitudes towards charity. As explored in Chapter 1, socialists associated Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday with capitalist forces, and they believed that Moody and Sunday disempowered the working classes and distracted them with the promise of a future heaven. London incorporates these differing world-views as a means to comment upon the failings of the American Church ostensibly played out on the streets of London. He establishes throughout *The People of the Abyss* an inherently oppositional relationship between rich providers of charity and its poor recipients. He writes that those who live in the West End, whilst undoubtedly sincere, mistakenly 'come down to the East End as teachers and savants' (306). London writes

[33] E. Lynn Linton, *The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1874), xiv.

that 'these people who try to help' through their 'settlements, missions and charities … are failures' (306). He also highlighted passages of Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891) in which Wilde argued that 'Socialism … by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting cooperation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism.'[34] Wilde believed that socialism should be based upon an individual reaction to inequality, rather than a governmental economic system. Of charity, he suggested that 'the people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good … charity creates a multitude of sins.'[35] London highlighted Wilde's contention that 'the best among the poor are never grateful for charity.'[36] Wilde also used Christ as an example of pure individualism, and he argued that Christ taught against the notion that 'your perfection lies in accumulating or possessing external things … real riches cannot' die.[37]

Wilde's conflation of socialism and Christ's teachings may well have had a significant influence upon London's own conception of Christ. In *The People of the Abyss*, London first includes a brief description in which he equates socialism with religious fervour and sacrifice. He describes a companion as 'a hero' and 'a burning young socialist, in the first throes of enthusiasm and ripe for martyrdom' (54). However, the core passage upon which I want to concentrate centres upon the hypocrisy and ill treatment that London experiences at the hands of a Salvation Army officer, whom London refers to as 'the centurion' (131). London describes how he and his companions queue for a Salvation Army breakfast, and he wrote that 'we crushed through … and found ourselves packed in a courtyard like sardines' (124). For London, the officer who eventually appears to admit the men to the breakfast hall has none of the 'lowly Galilean' about him but revels in his ability to decide who will eat or not: 'you may eat or go hungry, as I elect,' he proudly boasts to London and his companions (130) (Figure 4).

[34] Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (New York: The Humboldt Publishing Company, 1892), 6. "The Soul of Man under Socialism by Wilde." JLE2203. Jack London Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 7.
[37] Ibid., 12.

Figure 4. A Salvation Army Breakfast - Jack London
(Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

Here the officer takes on the role of a Calvinist God in his power over the poor. His action is not a matter of salvation but the sociological expression of the power that the Church has over the poor. That London aimed to invest the sequence with a sense of sociological power becomes apparent in the words of Christ which the Army officer co-opts. Addressing London and his companions, the officer reassures them that 'no matter how you starve and suffer here, you will feast in Paradise, that is, if you will follow the directions.'[38] London, in contrast, believes that only when the stomach is full can an individual be in the right frame of mind to address the supernatural: we were 'yearning, not for salvation, but for grub' (132), he writes. London stresses that those who behave like the officer 'do not understand the sociology of Christ' (306) and that 'they will be in better shape to buckle down to the work they ought to be doing in the world' if they did (310).[39] Just what London had in mind is best explained with reference to the Social Gospel, which undoubtedly influenced London.[40] Its work informed the masculine quality of London's Christ, but the Social Gospel also informed the politics of who

[38] Luke 22:43.
[39] It should be stressed that one of the foundations of evangelicalism was its social conscience. The Salvation Army was, and is, an organisation dedicated to an individual's right to prosper, but not at the expense of personal salvation - Joseph Angus, "Duty of the Church in Relation to Missions." *History, Essays, Orations, and Other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, Held in New York, October 2–12, 1873,* ed. Philip Schaff and Rev. S. Irenaeus Prime (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 583.
[40] David Mike Hamilton, "*The Tools of My Trade": The Annotated Books in Jack London's Library* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 32.

London's Christ was. Here, then, London begins to incorporate into his conception of Christ a political meaning that was not previously present.

Before turning to the next incarnation of Christ in London's writing, though, it is worth taking some time to explore the short story "The Apostate" (1906)—the title of which thematically incorporates the apostasy that London had already explored in "The God of His Fathers."[41] London's work is the story of Johnny, Johnny's mother, and their struggle against starvation and exhaustion in America's workhouses. The relationship between a mother and a son that formed the basis of Crane's *George's Mother* remerges here, but in "The Apostate" London explores a mother's guidance of her son towards the workhouse. Work and capitalist production become the God that Johnny and his mother both worship, or—perhaps more accurately—serve. The opening of the story sees London distort Joseph Addison's (1672–1719) traditional prayer "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep" as a means to demonstrate the god-like proportions that work takes upon those who live in the abyss.[42] London writes that 'Now I wake me up to work; I pray the Lord I may not shirk. If I should die before the night, I pray the Lord my work's alright. Amen' (27). Both Johnny and his mother live a hopeless life in the shadow of the machines; the reader learns that 'there was no ambition in [their] leg muscles to swing [their] feet clear of the ground' (33). Johnny comes to realise that he is not experiencing life as it was intended to be lived. London refers to God only once directly in the story, and he writes that Johnny remembered fearing the 'closeness of an awful and wrathful God' after he steals a silver quarter as a boy (53). Johnny, however, no longer feels shame for the theft—he actually regrets not investing the quarter for his own benefit. The perceived wrath of the God of orthodoxy pales in comparison to escape from the dictatorial god of industry. Johnny ultimately rejects the mindless factory work that he and his mother endure, and he becomes the apostate of the story's title. 'I ain't never goin' to work again,' he says (63). The god of work is so ensuing that Johnny's mother wails and views Johnny's words as a 'blasphemy': 'my God, Johnny! … don't say that!' (63). London writes that 'as a mother who hears her child deny God, was Johnny's mother shocked by his words' (63). A common theme that emerged in Crane's *Maggie* and *George's Mother* was of mothers

[41] Jack London, "The Apostate," in *When God Laughs and Other Stories*, ed. Jack London (New York: The Regent Press, 1911), 27–68.
[42] Addison's work appeared anonymously in *The New England Primer* (Boston: Edward Draper, 1777), 35 - 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.'

doing the best they could when forces and odds were stacked against them. London resurrects this earlier exploration in naturalism through Johnny's mother's lamentation that 'I'm sure I done the best I knew how' (66). The conclusion of the story sees Johnny—a bruised and misshaped youth—resting in a pastoral landscape and sleeping in the womb-like protection of a railcar that takes him on to an unknown future; one that is free from the servitude of the workhouse and the capitalist mandate that drives it.

American Socialism and the Figure of Christ

The Iron Heel sees London conflate the themes of apostasy, socialism, and visions of a utopian-like future.[43] He incorporates them through the characterisation of his next Christ figure, Ernest Everhard, and Ernest's relationship to those who orbit him throughout the novel. Geoffrey Harpham suggests that London represents some of his own qualities in Ernest as a 'prophet of destruction, avenging angel and even Jesus Christ.'[44] Chapter headings such as 'Last Days,' 'The End,' and 'The Roaring Abysmal Beast' certainly have distinct prophetic qualities that almost reflect the Book of Revelation. London presents *The Iron Heel* as a late nineteenth-century manuscript that Avis Everhard writes about the life of her husband, Ernest. With reference to the fulfilment of the Social Gospel's aim of creating an egalitarian society, the historian Anthony Meredith finds the manuscript in the new age of the utopian Brotherhood of Man, the year 419 (B.O.M), about 2600 AD (xii). The Iron Heel refers to the power of a ruling capitalist class of the nineteenth century that banded together into an Oligarchy. Its sole aim was to crush the working class, the people of the abyss, into absolute submission.

Ernest Everhard fights to overthrow the Oligarchy and to establish a socialist future. Ernest's role as the Christ figure primarily emerges from London's reading of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who began to influence London's thinking and writing during this period—his early thirties.[45] Two fundamental Nietzschean concepts are the Übermensch and the blond beast. The terms are not synonymous. The Übermensch, or Superman, is an idealised individual who shows superior strength and vigour, who is not afraid to live in opposition to popular conceptions of correctness, and who represents the

[43] Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908).
[44] Geoffrey Harpham, "Jack London and the Tradition of the Socialist Superman," *American Studies* 16, no. 1 (1975): 29.
[45] Clarice Stasz, *American Dreamers: Charmian and Jack London* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 129.

potential state of improvement towards which humanity progresses.[46] Related to the Übermensch is the 'blond brute,' or blond beast, which represents the animalistic instinct of humanity for power. It refers to an earlier stage of humanity's appetite for conquest; Nietzsche includes Roman, Arabic, and Germanic peoples as examples of the blond beast.[47] Indeed, in "Why I Became a Socialist," London referred to himself as 'blond-beastly' and lamented that those with whom he once attempted to find work, and on whom life had taken its toll, began life in just the same manner.[48] Nietzsche argued that Christianity wages a war against the Übermensch because of the lies that Nietzsche believed Christianity expounded of a paradise in life after death. London, then, seems to equate the power of economic destitution with Christianity, as each reduce the strength and power of an individual. Despite Nietzsche's aversion to political movements, socialists like London saw Nietzschean elements in their own reaction against middle-class institutions. Harpham, for example, explores how a 'vulgarised Nietzscheanism' became extremely influential for some socialists, and he argues that—through his incorporation of Nietzsche—London was 'operating within a tradition' of the literary "superman socialism."[49] Eugene Debs, a leader of the Socialist Party of America, incorporated a similarly Nietzschean description of his Christ six years later in an article entitled 'Jesus, the Supreme Leader': 'Jesus was the grandest and loftiest of human souls,' Debs wrote, 'a full statured man, red-blooded and lion-hearted' (28).

London creates in Ernest his most complex Christ figure: the socialist superman. Avis's description of Ernest as a 'superman, a blond beast such as Nietzsche has described' (6) sees London again address the racialism that emerged in Hay Stockard and Otoo.[50] Indeed, Stasz describes how London confused the blond beast and the superman and how London 'imposed Spencer … to support the notion of white cultural superiority.'[51] Avis's description continues to describe a man whose clothes 'bulged with his muscles'; who had the 'neck of a prize-fighter' and a 'gladiator body' (182). Coupled

[46] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra (1883)*, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917), 6.
[47] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals (1887)* trans. Horace B. Samuel (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918), 23.
[48] London, "How I Became a Socialist," 122.
[49] Harpham, "Jack London," 23–24.
[50] Nietzsche referred to socialists as 'a rabble' that he 'hates most heartily' - Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist (1895)*, trans. H. L. Mencken (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920), 168. How Nietzsche would have responded to London's representation of Christ can perhaps be inferred.
[51] Stasz, *American Dreamers*, 129.

with Avis's later praise of her 'immortal materialist' (184), once again the common themes of masculinity and a positioning against religious orthodoxy emerge.

Frederik Byrn Køhlert suggests that London wrote *The Iron Heel* as a reaction to the failed response that Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) had upon the public's understanding of 'the bondage of the wage slaves.'[52] London referred to Sinclair's work, which I discuss in Chapter 4, as the '*Uncle Tom's Cabin* of wage-slavery.'[53] Stowe created in Tom a black man who took on the qualities of Christ, but—at least according to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s illustrations—worshipped the white Christ. In Ernest, London creates an unequivocal white Christ who himself becomes the object of adoration and the figure of myth. London uses Ernest to indict the contemporaneous Church for its support of the 'frightful brutality and savagery with which the capitalist class treats the working classes' (33). Ernest believes that 'the Church is not teaching Christ these days' (33). What angers Ernest most is the Church's unwillingness to protest against the exploitation of the working classes at the hands of capitalism (34). Ernest chastises those who call 'the name of the Prince of Peace' whilst they put 'rifles in the hands of Pinkertons with which to shoot down strikers' (80–81).

Avis witnesses a dream-like transfiguration of Ernest in which he becomes an 'apostle of truth, with shining brows and the fearlessness of one of God's angels' (61). As Avis's rapturous vision continues, Ernest transcends still further, and he becomes like Christ himself: 'there arose before me another figure, the Christ' (61). Avis recognises that Christ, like Ernest, 'had taken the part of the lowly and oppressed' and had fought 'against all the established power of priest and Pharisee' (61). Her enthusiasm is tempered by the realisation that Ernest must be 'destined for a cross' (61). Ernest sees no such end and declares that 'I may be executed, or assassinated, but I shall never be crucified. I am planted too solidly and stolidly upon the earth' (107). Crucifixion for Ernest becomes a sign of surrendering the will to fight and the status of the blond beast; it becomes a protracted act of humiliation to which he could never allow himself to be subjected. Unlike Stockard and Otoo, Ernest cannot become the Huxleyan Christ because he belongs to Nietzsche—who argued that to make Christ a hero would be 'a tremendous misunderstanding.'[54] Ernest certainly suffers execution, but London does not allow the

[52] Frederik Byrn Køhlert, *The Chicago Literary Experience: Writing the City, 1893–1953* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2011), 101–2.
[53] Jack London, "The Jungle," *Appeal to Reason*, (November, 18, 1905): 5.
[54] Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 42.

reader to experience this moment and neither does he relate it to the salvation of those who happen to be white: Ernest already represents the blond beast and its racial associations. Ernest, however, dies for the larger cause of his socialism and his attempt to bring salvation to the working classes—he frees them from the servitude of capitalism.

Theodore Ziolkowski writes that 'one of the stock types of late nineteenth-century literature' was the 'renegade clergyman who forsakes theology … for grand humanitarian goals.'[55] 'Cassocks and collars fall to the right and the left,' he explains.[56] Works like *The Damnation of Theron Ware* and *Robert Elsmere* demonstrate the same theme, but so, too, does London through the character Bishop Morehouse. London first describes the Bishop as possessing a 'gentle soul' (5). He has a 'pale, ascetic face,' and he is 'a sweet and serious man of middle age' (5). He is 'Christ-like in appearance' (5). The Bishop is a metonym for the established Church. The work of Ernest is to transform that representation into a reflection of what Ernest thinks Christ's vision of the Church was. In comparison to the brute physicality of the unbelieving Ernest, Bishop Morehouse is a leader of the Church who becomes a convert to Ernest's socialism. The catalyst for the Bishop's transformation arises through Ernest's accusation that the Church has 'wandered away from the Master's teaching' (114). To Ernest, the Church is powerless to act on behalf of the poor because of its association with the ruling elite. The inability and weakness of the Church, London personifies in the feminised Bishop. Ernest challenges the Bishop that he can provide evidence of the Church's failings. The Bishop accepts his challenge, and Ernest responds with the foreboding: 'I'll show you … I will take you on a journey through hell … you will be discharged' (37).[57]

Bishop Morehouse could well have emerged from *In His Steps*. In that novel the dying, itinerant worker Jack Manning convinces the Rev. Maxwell to follow the teachings of Jesus. London, in contrast, uses the vital, masculine, and materialist Ernest to elicit the same life-changing reaction. The Bishop's spiritual rise and physical fall reflect a homiletic experience as he attempts to live in imitation of the Christ—finally the Bishop becomes a manifestation of Jack Manning. He transforms physically and spiritually at the

[55] Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 55.
[56] Ibid.
[57] With the rise of the Social Gospel, preachers began to see the difficulty in living a life cloistered within the confines of the Church. Howard Zinn recounts the tale of a preacher clubbed by the police for daring to preach against capitalism outside the church where J.D. Rockefeller Jr. had just finished his own preaching - Howard Zinn, *The People's History of the United States* (London: Pearson Longman, 2003), 356.

truth of Ernest's words. 'What would the Master do?,' he asks of himself (112). 'We must do as Christ did; that is the message of the Church today' is his answer (114). Before the arrival of Ernest, the Bishop was the fittest to survive in his social context. He was well fed; he was in a position of power; he was respected; and the realities of life were unknown to him. After he witnesses the horrors of the abyss, the Bishop has no moral choice but to give up his fitness to survive. He makes the conscious decision to abandon the place that Social Darwinism has afforded him. The Bishop appears before his peers and, as Christ before the Sanhedrin, delivers the message of the new gospel of Ernest: 'I say to the rich among you, and to all the rich, that bitterly you oppress the Master's lambs … you have hardened your hearts. You have closed your ears to the voices that are crying in the land' (115).[58] Through the eyes of Avis, the Bishop becomes 'God's hero' (200). The qualifying term of the 'hero of God' brings to mind Renan: he, too, describes Jesus as 'the incomparable hero of the Passion.'[59] Ernest, the Nietzschean Christ, in contrast, sees the weakness of the Renanian Bishop exemplified in an exalted man that fails to 'keep his feet on the earth (107).'[60] Ernest, who rejected the fate of crucifixion for himself, believes the Bishop to be 'rushing on to his Gethsemane. And after this his crucifixion … for such high souls are made for crucifixion' (107). The Bishop suffers the metaphoric crucifixion of committal to a sanatorium. Upon release, after apparently seeing the error of his ways, he returns to preaching against the message of the capitalist Church. Then, the Bishop disappears, and he lives out the message of Jesus in secret. He feeds and clothes his own people of the abyss.

The Bishop becomes one of the 'unfrocked preachers too wide in their Christianity for any congregation of Mammon-worshippers' that London met in his youth.[61] He becomes one of London's people of the abyss and dresses 'in a workingman's cheap cotton suit … and in overalls' (197). In contrast to the well-fed and feminised figure at the beginning of his journey, the Bishop takes on a more masculine appearance. 'Coal dust' coats his face and 'the sweat from his exertions was running in streaks' (197). The Bishop has experienced a transition from 'theories of life to life itself' (199). Ernest has

[58] Matthew 26:57.
[59] Ernest Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, trans. William Hutchinson (London: Walter-Scott, 1897), 239.
[60] The notion of keeping one's feet on the earth emerges from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Nietzsche describes how remaining 'true to the earth' stands in contrast to those who, like the Bishop, look to the heavens for their hope—rather than the socialist vision of heaven on earth - Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 6.
[61] Jack London, *What Life Means to Me*: *Memorial Edition* (San Francisco: C.H. Kerr Company, 1916), 15.

pulled 'aside the veils from social shams' (199), rather like Christ's healing of the man born blind: 'I was blind, but now I see,' claims the recipient of Christ's healing.[62] 'I never did a bit of work in my life, except to appeal aesthetically to Pharisees,' the Bishop states (200). Of the food and clothes that he wore, the Bishop realises that 'some one else had worked and made them and been robbed of them' (201). Amongst the people of the abyss, the Bishop finally discovers 'those who had been robbed and who were hungry and wretched' because of it. (201). He achieves a 'consecrated spirit' and sacrifices his life during the novel's proletarian uprising and ensuing battle (199).

John J. Han argues that 'it is virtually impossible to have two or more Christ figures in the same novel.'[63] Han's position needs some clarification as elements of London's Christ-like attributes infuse the Bishop's characterisation. First, the Bishop has rejected orthodoxy, second, the Bishop exhibits overt masculinity, and third, London revisits the Huxleyan implications of Christ's sacrifice. I suggest, however, that the Bishop also exists in the novel as a figure of St. Paul. The Bishop refers to his transformative conversion to socialism as 'sun-clear, as Saul saw his on the way to Damascus' (112). The Bishop refers to Ernest as the 'light in my darkness' and expresses his relationship to him as a student to a teacher. The Bishop, then, should be read as a thematic character who encompasses certain qualities of London's Christs but is perhaps better regarded as a disciple of Ernest. Either way, through Ernest and the Bishop, London contributes to the wider social interpretation of the Gospels and explores what it means to be Christ physically, philosophically, and, most importantly, politically.

The Iron Heel is so much more than a political tract that happens to have Christ-like characters; it represents a significant turn in London's exploration of the historicity of Christ himself. The novel demonstrates London's clear knowledge of higher criticism and his attempts to understand the person of Christ. *The Iron Heel* opens and closes with Meredith's narrative voice that explains Ernest's life and its relationship to the manuscript that Avis wrote of her husband. Meredith editorialises the manuscript in ways that evoke Strauss and Renan. He writes that it 'bristles with errors—not errors of fact, but errors of interpretation' (ix). As Renan does Jesus, Meredith separates the historical Ernest from his myth and states that 'we know to-day that he was not so colossal, and that he loomed

[62] John 9:25.
[63] John J. Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero: Steinbeck's Use of the Christ Figure in "The Grapes of Wrath,"" *The Steinbeck Review* 2, no. 1 (2005): 29.

among the events of his times less largely than the Manuscript would lead us to believe' (ix). Ernest, Meredith writes, was also 'not so exceptional as his wife thought him to be' (ix). Meredith's conclusion to the narrative suggests further that London has turned to historicity. He writes that 'it is to be regretted that she [Avis] did not live to complete her narrative, for then, undoubtedly, would have been cleared away the mystery that has shrouded for centuries the execution of Ernest Everhard' (354). London establishes, therefore, a close associated with Renan, who explicitly refers to the 'origin of the legends relating to the resurrection.'[64] Renan suggests that, in the absence of 'contradictory documents,' it will always remain mysterious.[65] Strauss, too, regards the resurrection as a product of invention that Christ's followers created between his death and the writing of the Gospels. London, therefore, establishes a Gospel-like quality to the life of Ernest through the pen of Avis and her Gospel of Ernest Everhard. London obviously took an interest in the historicity of Christ, but he became aware, I argue, that, in making Christ a socialist, he was actually creating just as much a distortion of history as the image of a resurrected god.

Meeting the Historical Jesus

London first begins to disassociate Christ from socialism in *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), which was one of his most successful works.[66] The novel's protagonists Saxon Brown and Billy Roberts reflect qualities of London and Charmian in their flight from the economic desperation of Oakland to start a new, more prosperous life in the country. The novel's themes also correspond to London's troubled relationship with the Socialist Party, which he eventually left in 1916.[67] If the socialist implications of Christ's teachings played a central part in *The Iron Heel*, the socialism of Jesus in *The Valley of the Moon* is assigned to history in a small but telling passage. Suffering from economic hardship in Oakland, Saxon meets a socialist who assures her that 'Christ was a Socialist' (256). Saxon responds, though, with the loaded 'Christ died two thousand years ago' (256). The ardent socialist does not catch 'her implication' that using Christ for political gain has no

[64] Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, 271–72.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Jack London, *The Valley of the Moon* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913).
[67] Alex Kershaw, *Jack London: A Life* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 267.

profit centuries after his death (256). Saxon views Christ's death as the end of socialism, thus echoing Nietzsche's words that 'the Gospels died on the cross.'[68]

In *The Star Rover* London expands upon the death of the socialist Christ.[69] The novel concerns the imprisonment and hanging of the San Quentin Prison inmate Darrell Standing, a university professor convicted of murder. During his solitary confinement, Standing makes contact with the prisoner Edward Morrell by learning to tap out messages on the floor of his cell.[70] Morrell teaches him how to induce out-of-body experiences while in the straitjacket. Standing learns how to use these experiences to regress to former lives, and these constitute the overall structure of the narrative. The overarching Christological statement of *The Star Rover* is the humanity of Christ.

London first provides a glimpse of the human Christ in the novel's regression to an ascetic who describes his presence at The Council of Nicaea (120) and his adherence to his own 'beloved teacher,' Arius (119).[71] London writes that 'if human reason could determine anything at all, there must have been a time, in the very nature of sonship, when the Son did not exist' (119). The ascetic highlights the stakes for those who deny the divinity of Christ in recounting the assassination of Arius, which reflects Emerson's recognition of the cultural stakes of those who would still 'kill you, if you say he was a man.'[72] Taken without a cultural context, the regression makes no sense in the body of London's work, but things become clearer when considering London's claim that he wrote *The Star Rover* to 'rattle the slats of a few Christians.'[73] In addition, London's exploration of Church history is strikingly similar to John William Draper's account of Arius in *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, which he entitled 'The

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[68] Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 112.
[69] Jack London, *The Star Rover* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915).
[70] Morrell's inclusion is a marker of the socialist current that London weaved into the plot, but it also relates *The Star Rover* to the wider naturalist genre. Morrell was imprisoned for robbing the Southern Pacific Railroad in the San Joaquin Valley. He cited the poor treatment of ranch owners as a motive. This theme clearly resonates with Norris's *The Octopus* (1901), which itself concerned the Southern Pacific Railroad and its impact upon San Joaquin Valley's wheat farmers. London read it in 1901.
[71] The divinity of Christ has not always been accepted throughout Christian history, particularly in the centuries following Christ's death. Alexander (before 313–326), the archbishop of the Alexandrian Church, believed that Jesus was divine and equal with God. Arius (250–336), a priest of the Alexandrian Church, believed that Jesus was in some way created by God and had not always existed. Jesus, therefore, did not share the divinity of God in and of himself. Arius's understanding of Jesus was rejected, and the position of the Alexandrian Church formalised as the Nicene Creed (AD 325).
[72] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Divinity School Address. Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge, Sunday Evening, July 15 1838* (Boston, Mass.: American Unitarian Association, 1907), 8.
[73] London used this phrase to refer to the regression of Lodbrog, but the regression to the aesthetic is equally applicable to the larger cultural context. Charmian London, *The Book of Jack London, Vol. 1* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 305.

Trinitarian Dispute.'[74] London presents the ascetic as a fallen and weakened individual. 'My knees were calloused like my elbows. I was very dirty. My beard, evidently once blond, but now a dirt-stained and streaky brown, swept my midriff in a tangled mass,' recounts Standing (117). What drives the ascetic is waiting for the 'sublime event' when the world will pass away and the final judgment will occur (119). The ascetic has nothing but contempt for life on earth, and I read him as representation of London's reaction to those of the emerging fundamentalist movement who propagated a world-hating message with a promise of heaven. London's ascetic is the anti-socialist.

He acts as a warning to the reader that any attempt to understand the metaphysical Christ will not only drive an individual to distraction, but it will also strip a person of dignity and power if they cannot first find strength in their own humanity. The 'once blond' ascetic can be read as an image of the fallen Superman of *The Iron Heel*, a blond beast who got religion but lost so much more in the process. Indeed, London described himself as 'blond-beastly' before falling into economic depression; here religion strips the individual of power and reduces them madness.[75] In this regression, London is more concerned with demonstrating that the Christ that the twentieth century has created is really just the product of human agency and human tradition. Standing leaves the regression with a vision of the ascetic who writhes in madness and sickness as he waits for the Last Day that may never come through a Christ of uncertain divinity and existence.

London continues to question the historicity of Christ in the novel's more substantive regression that takes Standing to first-century Jerusalem as Ragnar Lodbrog, a Nordic freed slave. London first introduces Lodbrog during a scene in which Standing recounts a meeting with a missionary as a child. The missionary shows photographs of the Holy Land and becomes incredulous when Standing accurately describes the features of the village where Christ healed the ten lepers and the Tower of David in Jerusalem (41–43). Figure 5, taken from William Thomson's enormously successful *The Land and the Book* (1880), shows both corresponding images which appear on subsequent illustrated pages and which were perhaps an influence upon London's conception of the Holy Land. The reader meets Lodbrog again later in the novel when has risen to the rank

[74] John William Draper, *History of the Conflict Between Science and Religion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), 53–54.
[75] London, "How I Became a Socialist," 122.

of a Roman officer stationed in Jerusalem at the time of Christ.[76] This regression belongs to the larger literary heritage of works like *The Prince of the House of David* and *Ben-Hur* for its use of eyewitness accounts of Christ during his ministry and final hours. Unlike his literary antecedents, London's aim is not to defeat scepticism but to enhance it and to create a human record of Christ viewed through the eyes of Lodbrog and those associated with him: these include Miriam, a Jewish Princess, and Pontius Pilate and his wife. London seems to suggest a uniqueness to his work in a letter to Cloudesley Johns. He writes that 'I'm going to jump back to the time of Christ, and write one giving an entirely new interpretation of many things which occurred at that time.'[77]

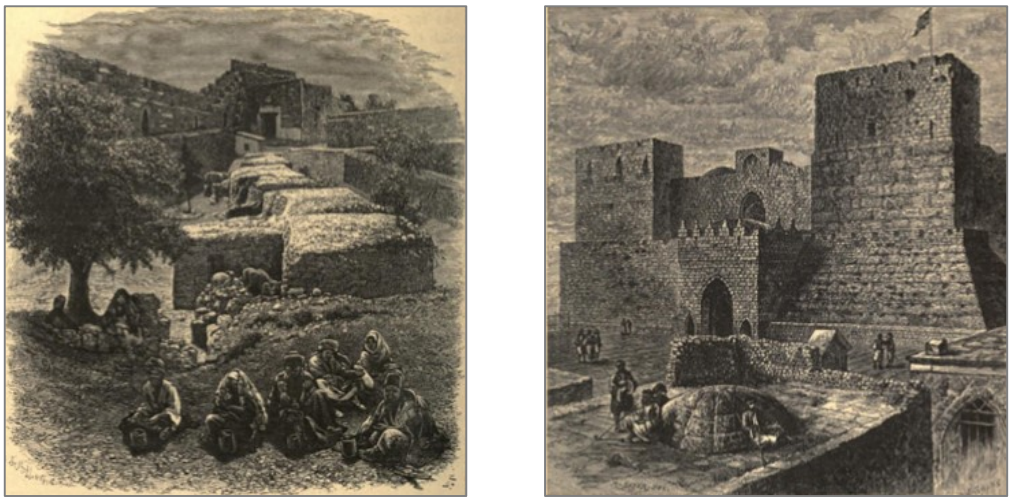

Figure 5. 'Village of the Lepers' (Left) and 'Tower of David' (right)[78]
(Images not in copyright)

Whilst *The Star Rover* is the only novel in which London represents the historical Christ, it does not represent a culmination of London's exploration of Christ in the form of an ultimate Christ figure. In terms of how far London would take his exploration of Christ, Ernest Everhard has already fulfilled this role. London's exploration of what is meant to be Christ-like, however, continues to live on in the characterisation of Lodbrog. He cannot

[76] London originally intended his exploration of Lodbrog to constitute a complete 'Christ Novel,' but it eventually became Chapter 17 of *The Star Rover* - Eric Carl Link, *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 194.
[77] London, *The Book of Jack London, Vol. 1.*, 305.
[78] William M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book; or, Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery, of the Holy Land: Southern Palestine and Jerusalem* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1880), 527, 530.

be Christ, though, because of the presence of the Jesus himself in the novel. Lodbrog and Christ, therefore, have a similar relationship to Ernest and the Bishop in *The Iron Heel*: the Bishop cannot be Christ because of Ernest, but the Bishop did take on qualities that London saw in the figure of Christ, thus becoming a St. Paul to Ernest. To make this clearer, it is helpful to think of London's qualities of Christ that have thus far been revealed in Hay Stockard, Otoo, and Ernest Everhard as a single element. London then combines it with the figure of the historical Christ from the narrative of the Gospels. *The Star Rover*, then, represents both a fictionalised biography in form of Christ himself and a pseudonym of the Christ-like through Lodbrog.[79] In a letter to Ralph Kasper written during this period, London wrote that he himself was a 'hopeless materialist,' and materialism certainly accounts for the way in which London conceives of Christ.[80] *The Star Rover* explores the creative act of the formation of the Christ through centuries of development. This is the Christ that London reacts against throughout his career. 'Who do you say I am?,' asked Christ of Peter; London finally responds with *The Star Rover*.[81]

The first result of the combination appears in Lodbrog's masculinity. Miriam refers to him as her 'yellow giant-thing of the frost!' thereby reimagining the Nietzschean conception of the blond-beast that Ernest Everhard encapsulated (225). Lodbrog also describes how the inhabitants of both Rome and Jerusalem 'gazed upon' his blonde hair so wondrously that surely only 'God knew' from where he came (220). Lodbrog's Nordic appearance, therefore, takes on a quality that somehow relates him to the divine. Similarly, London presents Lodbrog as unorthodox in the religious context of Jerusalem. Owing to the fact that Christianity had not yet emerged, Lodbrog's unorthodoxy emerges as a rejection of Miriam's Judaism. For Lodbrog, Miriam's idealistic heaven would be 'a sad place' and 'a place for weaklings' (225).

Christ first enters the narrative through a recollection that Lodbrog has of a trip to Syria, during which he 'crossed the track of the man Jesus' (228). London questions the certainty that contemporary groups like the fundamentalists had of Christ's divinity through Lodbrog's companions who hold a variety of opinions to Christ's identity. Some see Jesus as 'a carpenter,' some regard him as 'a prophet,' and others see him as 'a madman' (228). Some even refer to him as 'the king of the beggars' who preached that

[79] Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations*, 26.
[80] London, *The Letters of Jack London*, 1339.
[81] Matthew 16:15.

'only the poor should win to heaven, while the rich and powerful were to burn for ever in some lake of fire' (228). Lodbrog's opposing force in the novel, Miriam, however, at first fears that she and 'every Jew of place or wealth . . . are all fighting for very life' (231). Miriam refers to Jesus as 'a plague,' who should be stamped out'; 'He would destroy all things that are fixed. He is a revolutionist,' she claims (232).

London, though, no longer definitively claims socialism for Christ, but he projects it onto him as one of many interpretations. During a discussion with Miriam, Pontius Pilate refutes all claims that Jesus is political despite Miriam's claim that Jesus is 'a revolutionist' (232). London's historical Christ is able to affect the lives of others, but at the start of the novel, London is clear to state that Christ was 'an ordinary man' (2). Miriam undergoes conversion, and she believes Jesus to be 'the Prince of Light, the Son of God' (239). Lodbrog becomes incredulous that Jesus has 'charmed' Miriam (244). London's use of 'charm' is a direct borrowing from Renan's *La Vie de Jésus*, in which Renan argues that Jesus possessed 'an infinite charm' that 'breathed forth from his person.'[82] London explores this Renanian conception further through Pilate's wife, who has also seen Jesus. Yes, Jesus has a 'personal awareness of the indwelling God' (240), she admits, but 'he has not said' that he is God (241). London appears to be drawing from Renan's argument that 'Jesus never once gave the utterance to the sacrilegious idea that he was God.'[83] London's preparatory notes to *The Star Rover* highlight the importance of the human conception of Christ that London creates throughout the novel. London reminds himself not to capitalise pronouns and adjectives that relate to Christ because he needs to treat him 'just the same as with any ordinary mortal.'[84]

Even as close as Pilate and Miriam are to the person of Jesus, still both cannot decide who Jesus is, and they both saw him. It is as if London is again trying to reveal the folly of religious certainty of those like Billy Sunday when even witnesses to Christ himself cannot agree upon his identity. London presents Christ as an unknowable man and one to whom others ascribe meaning that Christ does not claim for himself. Christ also does not speak throughout the regression. The ultimate mystery of Christ owes much to Herbert Spencer's concept of the 'unknown and unknowable God,' which he reveals

[82] Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, 53. For the same observation see Donna M. Campbell, ""Have You Read My Christ Story?": Mary's Austin's *The Man Jesus* and London's *The Star Rover*," *The Call* 23, nos. 1–2 (2012): 11.
[83] Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, 50.
[84] Jacqueline Courbin-Tavernier, *Critical Essays on Jack London* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983), 260.

in *First Principles* (1860).[85] Spencer writes that 'in the worship of a God who cannot by any searching be found out' is a 'recognition of the inscrutableness of creation.'[86]

London brings together Lodbrog and Christ for a second time at Christ's trial before Pilate. The pivotal moment of the narrative arrives when Lodbrog also learns 'the charm of Jesus,' and he makes advances to save him from the angry crowd (242). Jesus looks at Lodbrog, and he commands him to stop. Lodbrog understands that things were 'occurring beyond my comprehension, and that they must occur' (243). Here again, London seems to be drawing from Spencer's concept of the unknowable god. Spencer suggests that 'a God understood would be no God at all' and 'to think that God is, as we can think him to be, is blasphemy.'[87] The result of Lodbrog's meeting with Christ is not conversion.[88] Even now Lodbrog does not see Jesus as divine; he regards him as a 'vagrant fisherman,' 'a wandering preacher,' and a 'piece of driftage from Galilee' (244). Lodbrog does not deny that Jesus reflects the Divine—thereby confirming a Renanian interpretation of Christ—but insists that the one doing the commanding is human: 'why all this fuss and fury for a mere man's life? All men must die. Simple and easy it is to die,' Lodbrog later explains to Miriam (247).

London does not describe the physical appearance of Christ at all, but he chooses instead to concentrate upon his internal qualities: Christ was 'regal' with 'serenity' in the face of 'tumult and pain' (243). These suggest an inner strength, but what about Christ's hair, skin, eyes, and physique? London's overlooking of the physical Jesus relates to the privileged state of whiteness and racialist views that he has attributed to his Christ-like characters thus far. Renan and Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919)—of whom London also certainly had knowledge—both deny the Jewishness of Christ, and London seems to adopt the same view in *The Star Rover*.[89] Renan claims that it was impossible 'to ascertain what blood flowed in the veins' of Christ.[90] Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe* (1901)

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[85] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (London: Watts & Co., 1946), 37.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Spencer, *First Principles*, 37.
[88] Link describes how London had planned an extensive post-crucifixion narrative, in which it is possible that Lodbrog—at this stage in development, the Goth—did actually convert - Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 105.
[89] London sent Haeckel a copy of *Before Adam* (1906), a work in which the main protagonist is an evolutionary ancestor of modern humanity. Even if London had not read Renan, London's familiarity with Haeckel would have achieved the same purpose—Haeckel also refers to the work of Strauss and Renan - Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe: At the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1905), 313.
[90] Renan, *Renan's Life of Jesus*, 15.

also includes the intriguing, illicit relationship between Mary—to whom Haeckel refers to as Miriam—and 'a Roman officer of a Calabrian legion' as evidence for the non-Jewish ancestry of Christ.[91] Haeckel's contention is strikingly similar to London's work—neither Lodbrog nor London's Miriam are the parents of Christ, but they each perform a similar role of guardianship over his identity and well-being throughout the regression.[92]

Christ's actual crucifixion is absent from the narrative, although London had written a crucifixion scene in which Lodbrog played an active role.[93] London's choice to merely refer to Christ's death and to prevent the reader from witnessing it is strange for an author who would have been well-aware of works like *Ben-Hur*. London prefers, though, to concentrate upon the affixation of 'The King of Jews' to Christ's cross, and I believe this is significant. 'Pilate executed an abstraction that had never existed in the real,' London writes (245). It was a 'lie manufactured in the priestly mind' (245). London removes meaning from the historical figure of Christ and reduces him to an unknowable abstraction. If 'The King of Jews' were an abstraction, why could not 'the Son of God' and 'Christ the socialist' also be abstractions? London's reading of Haeckel also points to his questioning of the origins of Christian belief. Haeckel claims that concepts like the Trinity are not 'original' elements of Christianity but developments added much later.[94] London's planned epigraph to his 'Christ novel' certainly chimes with the notion that contemporary Christianity is merely the product of humanity's own creative process. London explains that 'there is only one thing more wonderful than the reality of Christ, and that is, Christ never existing, that the imagination of man should have created him.'[95]

The sacrificial elements common to London's Christs naturally occur at the unseen death of Christ himself, but Miriam also begs Lodbrog to intervene and to save him from his impending crucifixion. Lodbrog refuses and argues that Miriam is attempting to make herself 'greater than God' (249), but she is adamant in turn that Jesus is immortal—'He is God … Truly I tell you He is God,' she implores (248). Lodbrog responds with logic, and he reasons that if Christ is an immortal, then 'to die to-day on Golgotha will not shorten his immortality … gods cannot die' (248). That Lodbrog understands that Christ is human and not divine upholds the privileged state of the Anglo-

[91] Haeckel, *Riddle*, 327.
[92] Ibid., 269.
[93] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 105.
[94] Haeckel, *Riddle*, 277.
[95] Link, *Vast and Terrible Drama*, 105.

Saxon that London has demonstrated throughout his rendering of the Christ-like. A blond, Nordic male, and not Miriam, ultimately narrates the life of Christ to the reader. At the close of the narrative, too, an apostolic Lodbrog recalls that 'I went away into Syria to report … the various matters that had been at issue in Jerusalem' (250). Lodbrog's story is displaced of supernatural meaning and Judaic significance. True, Lodbrog is not unique in reaching the conclusion that Jesus is not God—Pilate's wife and a number of others have also reached uncertain conclusions as to Christ's nature—but these characters do not share the elemental qualities of the Christ-like that Lodbrog possesses. The separation of the Nordic and Judaic most clearly occurs as Miriam offers an ultimatum to Lodbrog: save Christ or lose me. Echoing the words of Hay Stockard and his racialism, Lodbrog—as an elemental Christ-like character—sacrifices his love for Miriam and her devotion to Christ for his own devotion to Rome and his ancestry. 'Rome is my foster-mother,' (249) Lodbrog states; 'the Romans are the elder brothers of us younglings of the north' (247).

The Star Rover is a complex text, then, that expands upon the Christ novel through its innovative regressive narrative. It explores the identity of Christ through conflicting human perspectives, and it reflects the cultural crisis that was occurring in London's own society. Historical explanations of the Gospels challenged what was once the domain of the metaphysical, and the reader sees London put Christ to rest in his most natural home—first-century Palestine—thus leading to the conclusion that it is impossible to ever know the truth of Christ. The most logical truth for London is that Jesus, albeit a special man, lived and died a human. Jesus' identity—like the qualities that London created in his Christ-like characters—ultimately diffuses through history and out of London's fiction.

Conclusion

Conceptions of faith and understandings of the figure of Jesus changed rapidly at the turn of the twentieth century, and, with this in mind, this chapter has argued that London's Christ-like characters appear throughout a period marked by cultural change. Masculinity, a rejection of religious orthodoxy, and a privileged relationship to those who are white were demonstrated as fundamental qualities of London's Christ-like characters. These were not simply part of London's imagination but manifestations of a changing conception of who Christ was as America embraced a new century. London's unwillingness to commit to the physicality of the historic Christ demonstrates how Christ as an ideal was of much more importance to London. Christ-like characters allowed him

to explore the work of Nietzsche, Haeckel, and Darwin. Christ in the hands of London became a means through which to rage against institutions and political systems that would suppress the individual in worlds that the laws of naturalism governed. This Christ offers salvation not from original sin, but from the sins that humanity commits against itself. London's savior is not the metaphysical figure of history, but a living individual who was born of the abyss and was created in the mind of an author whose life and work inspired a generation of American writers.

Writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, Willard Huntington Wright referred to this generation of writers and their close connection with Carmel-by-the-sea, California: 'it has become the magnetizing center for writers, near writers, notsonear writers' and 'distant writers,' he described.[96] Figure 6 shows the accompanying illustration to the piece in which London shares the shade of the trees with another writer who built a career upon a strong social consciousness, Upton Sinclair. Socialism bound London and Sinclair together. Sinclair—in *The Jungle*—pays homage to his friend as the 'young author, who came from California,' who 'had lived in the Whitechapel slums,' and who 'preached the gospel of the poor.'[97] London also bolstered Sinclair's early career and was partly responsible for Sinclair's own conversion to socialism. To Upton Sinclair and his vision of Christ, the second coming, and the contemporaneous Church I now turn.

Figure 6. 'The Carmelites' Picnic on Point Lobos'[98]

(Image not in copyright)

[96] Willard Huntington Wright, "Hotbed of Soulful Culture, Vortex of Erotic Erudition," *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, May 22, 1910, 1.
[97] Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1906), 389.
[98] Ibid.

Chapter 4

Comrade Christ: Upton Sinclair and Socialist Premillennialism

'Pure communism was the economic and social gospel preached by Jesus Christ, and every act and utterance which may properly be ascribed to him conclusively affirms it.'[1]

Eugene V. Debs (1855–1926)

Upton Sinclair (1878–1968) referred to his fourteen year-old self as a 'devout Protestant Episcopal Boy' who taught Sunday school classes and who attended church every day during the forty days of Lent.[2] He left the Church at age sixteen after growing unease and undergoing struggles with Christological concepts that lead him to question Christian dogma,[3] and yet, in *A Personal Jesus* (1954), Sinclair states that 'I have never left Jesus.'[4] Sinclair wrote the work as an expression of his life-long devotion to the historical figure of Christ. Indeed, Sinclair explains that he 'cannot accept' those who deny the historicity of Christ.[5] In the same text, though, Sinclair treats claims of Christ's divinity as 'zealotry,' and he even doubts whether Jesus thought himself 'good' at all.[6] This text examines the Gospels as 'highly suspect,' and Sinclair argues that 'every statement must be critically examined.'[7] Like Strauss, he rejects the supernatural connotations of Christ's miracles and his prophecy of resurrection.[8] He sees in the Gospels 'the presence of a personality,' but he does not see a divine being.[9]

George Marsden explains that between 1920 and 1921, 'fundamentalists battled against those who denied, or would tolerate denials of, the fundamentals of the traditional faith.'[10] Sinclair's liberal conception of the human and potentially flawed Christ acts as

[1] Eugene V. Debs, *Labor and Freedom: The Voice and Pen of Eugene V. Debs* (St. Louis: Phil Wagner, 1916), 26.
[2] Upton Sinclair, *A Personal Jesus: Portrait and Interpretation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954), viii.
[3] Anthony Arthur, *Radical Innocent: Upton Sinclair* (New York: Random House, 2006), 10.
[4] Sinclair, *Personal Jesus*, viii.
[5] Ibid., vii.
[6] Ibid., 93.
[7] Ibid., 81.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., vii.
[10] George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 164.

window that reveals Sinclair's own developing relationship to orthodox Christianity and repudiation of fundamentalism. The tensions that existed between liberals and fundamentalists have come to be known as 'The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy.'[11] Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969), a prominent liberal minister, railed against fundamentalism in the now infamous sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?". Fosdick's sermon triggered the period of heightened tension, and he laid out the core beliefs that, he argued, fundamentalists forced others to believe. Two of these are the subject of this chapter. First, Fosdick wrote that 'we must believe in the second coming of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven to set up a millennium.'[12] Second, that this is 'the only way in which God can bring history to a worthy dénouement.'[13] This chapter argues that Sinclair reacted to these doctrines of fundamentalism through the consecutive publication of *They Call Me Carpenter: A Tale of the Second Coming* (1922) and *The Millennium: A Comedy of the Year 2000* (1924)—both of which have failed to receive significant critical attention in relation to America's religious history.[14] To create a comedic element common to both works, Sinclair merges fundamentalist eschatology with naturalistic themes that reduce the supernatural to the natural.

In *They Call Me Carpenter*, Sinclair explores the legacies of the nineteenth-century Christ-novel, ideals of the feminine Christ, and higher biblical criticism. He incorporates twentieth-century notions of the whiteness of Christ; he sexualises the appearance of Christ; and he interprets the teachings of Christ through the lens of the socialism that was so influential in Sinclair's own life. *The Millennium* is less overtly religious than *They Call Me Carpenter*, but I offer a reading of the work that directly addresses Sinclair's own response to fundamentalism and its chronological expectations of the return of Christ and his coming Kingdom. I argue that Sinclair rejects a future derived from the power of God, and, instead, posits one that is derived from the work of humanity and its social and economic evolution. With particular reference to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888), William Morris's *News from Nowhere*

[11] Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 381.
[12] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?: A Sermon Preached at the First Presbyterian Church, New York, May 21, 1922," in *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Michael Warner (New York: The Library of America, 1999), 777.
[13] Ibid., 778.
[14] Mostly recently, Mark Bould highlights the transformation from capitalism to socialism that underlays the plot to *The Millennium*. He does not, though, explore the theological implications of the novel - Mark Bould, "The Futures Market: American Utopias," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*, ed. Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 87.

(1890), and Byron A. Brooks' *Earth Revisited* (1894), I demonstrate how Sinclair's work was part of a much larger literary engagement with the promise of a millennium and naturalism's association with socialism. In both works, Sinclair frees the reader from religious and capitalist certitude. He provides an alternative vision of the present and the future derived from the language and the theology of a contemporaneous religious context. Sinclair's vision is one of hope and the possibility of the betterment of humanity.

Christ, the Millennium, and the Socialism of Upton Sinclair

Marsden argues that a close relationship existed between fundamentalism and 'the American social experience connected with World War I.'[15] Many fundamentalists viewed World War I as a fulfilment of end-times biblical prophecy.[16] Even before the War, fundamentalists saw the increasing secularisation of society through pessimistic eyes. For fundamentalists, humanity had not made a strong case for itself, and so fundamentalists put their hopes in a future metaphysical heaven that they eagerly anticipated.[17] Liberals were more optimistic, and they believed that humanity had the power to bring heaven to earth through human effort, even after the horrors of war.

Two key eschatological concepts of the moment, and which related to both viewpoints, were the second coming of Christ and the millennium. The second coming marks the occasion when Christ will return from heaven to earth; the millennium refers to a thousand years of earthly peace that will occur before the final judgment of humanity.[18] The sequence of these events marked two distinct theological positions known as postmillennialism and premillennialism. Postmillennialists believed that the second coming of Christ would occur after the millennium. Premillennialists regarded the second coming of Christ as occurring before the millennium, and this is the view that Fosdick attacked in his sermon.[19] Sinclair was well aware of the cultural stakes of

[15] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 141.
[16] Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 233.
[17] Fundamentalists were not alone in heightening expectations of the millennium. Joseph Smith (1805–1844), founder of the Latter-day Saints, received the prophetic word that he would live to see Christ's return; William Miller (1782–1849) calculated the return of Christ with anguished inaccuracy to his Millerite followers; and Charles Taze Russell's (1852–1916) Bible Student Movement also made a series of predictions as to Christ's return. See Jon R. Stone, "Nineteenth-and-Twentieth Century American Millennialisms," in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 492–514.
[18] Revelation 20:1–6.
[19] Theologians will be aware of a much more refined and a much more detailed relationship between these two concepts. This includes the concept of the tribulation, which refers to a seven-year period of

millennial thinking. In *The Profits of Religion: An Essay in Economic Interpretation* (1918), he presents an unveiled criticism upon a wide range of religious beliefs in America. Chapter title such as 'The Church of the Slavers' and 'The Church of the Merchants,' for example, provide a sense of the sustained effort that Sinclair makes in the work. In a chapter entitled 'The Church of the Quacks,' though, Sinclair refers to those who claim knowledge of the exact date of the second coming as 'fanatics,' and he describes his own despair when believers argue that the millennium would occur before any social revolution.[20]

Of all those who held the premillennial view, Billy Sunday was the target of much of Sinclair's ire. Sinclair describes Sunday as the 'most conspicuous phenomenon of Protestant Christianity at the beginning of the twentieth century.'[21] He also refers specifically to Sunday's 1917 Los Angeles revival campaign.[22] Sinclair retells the Parable of Rich Young Man, with Sunday as the rich man.[23] John D. Rockefeller acts as the capitalist deity who invites Sunday to his palace, at which he instructs Sunday to 'preach submission to [his] wage-slaves in the oil-factories at Bayonne and elsewhere.'[24] After Sunday leaves the palace, he warns Rockefeller's workers to 'beware the "stinking socialists."'[25] Opinions like these led some ministers around the country to come out in Sunday's defence.[26] Sunday himself raged that America's places of work, homes, and universities were 'filled with a Socialistic, IWW, Communistic, radical … gang.'[27] He even regarded Sinclair as a communist whose 'gang' intended to establish 'Soviet Rule.'[28] Fundamentalists saw biblical mandate for the 'right to property and inheritance,' and they believed that adherence to the Gospels would be a solution to the problems affecting the

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turmoil during which the Antichrist will take power. Pre-tribulationalists believe that Christ will return before the tribulation; post-tribulationalists expect Christ to return after the tribulation. Both, however, expect Christ to return before the millennium.

[20] Upton Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion: An Essay in Economic Interpretation* (Pasadena: Upton Sinclair, 1918), 245.

[21] Ibid., 207.

[22] Ibid., 208.

[23] Matthew 19:16–22.

[24] Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion*, 211.

[25] Ibid.

[26] The New York Times reported that the Rev. Christian F. Reisner preached a sermon 'How Billy Sunday Uses His Money' to deflect charges that Sunday was 'an evangelist for the money he makes out of it' (9) - Christian F. Reisner, "Billy Sunday Aids the Poor: Minister Answers Charge that the Evangelist is a Mercenary," *The New York Times*, December 11, 1916, accessed May 18, 2016, http://search.proquest.com/news/docview/97817726/322181B5F6C74CADPQ/1?accountid=14511.

[27] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 221.

[28] William G. McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 282.

working classes of the nation.[29] Socialism became the antithesis of all that was biblically mandated, and it also became a perceived threat to the morality of the nation itself.[30]

The Socialist Party of American (SPA) that Sinclair joined in 1904 was a hotbed of theological discussion; it almost became a religious movement in its own right.[31] The developmental of the SPA is complex, but, at the time of Sinclair's membership, its leading light was Eugene V. Debs—who helped found the Party in 1901 (Figure 1). Debs, a former leader of the railroad unions, ran for the SPA's presidential candidature and founded the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); or as they came to be known, "Wobblies."[32] Debs' socialism had a profound influence upon Sinclair, who would even play the role of Debs in his film of socialist propaganda, *The Appeal to Reason* (1914).[33]

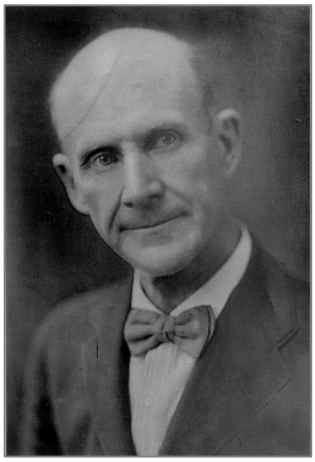


Figure 1. Eugene V. Debs
(Image not in copyright)

In *Labor and Freedom* (1916), a collection of Debs own writing, Debs himself revealed the close affinity between the SPA and a liberalised conception of Christ the human workingman. Debs claimed that 'Jesus was not divine because he was less than his fellowmen but for the opposite reason he was supremely human.'[34] In a suitably

[29] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 14.
[30] Ibid., 126.
[31] Dan McKanan, "The Implicit Religion of Radicalism: Socialist Party Theology, 1900–1934," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 3 (2010): 751.
[32] Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 206. The IWW continues to be a revolutionary industrial union. Upon its creation, the IWW drew members from across American society. It was the first union to welcome women, African Americans, and a burgeoning immigrant population.
[33] Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 75, 156.
[34] Debs, *Labor and Freedom*, 23.

millennial tone, Debs referred specifically to a 'two thousand years of theological emasculation' that has destroyed 'his revolutionary personality.'[35] Debs concluded that 'pure communism was the economic and social gospel preached by Jesus Christ.'[36] Eugene Debs, then, presents a Christ that has become familiar in the work of Jack London and which, I argue, Sinclair also incorporates into his own conception of Christ.

Whilst this chapter focuses on *They Call Me Carpenter* and *The Millennium*, the idea that socialism was a direct consequence of Christ's teaching pervades Sinclair's earlier work, most notably *Prince Hagen: A Phantasy* (1903), *The Jungle* (1906), and *Samuel the Seeker* (1910). Sinclair regarded *Prince Hagen* as his 'first work of social criticism.'[37] Prince Hagen, a deceiving prince of the underground world of the Nibelungen, arrives on earth to learn how to use his fabulous wealth wisely. He becomes a capitalist master and mandates his capitalist vision by threatening to 'call all the sanctity of religion' to his aid.[38] Prince Hagen equates the capitalist system to a barrel of rats: 'there is only a certain number that can keep on top,' he states; 'the rest must sweat for it till they die.'[39] In the 1909 dramatisation of the novel, the cultural effect of religious belief takes on a much more pronounced role. Prince Hagen explores the power of the clergy and the deleterious effect that the institutional Church has had upon Christ's message. 'Teach them heaven!,' he declares, 'blind them with visions of harps, crowns and milk and honey.'[40] In doing so, he believes that 'you can shut them up in slums and starve them.'[41] The conflict expressed here between the rights of the individual to prosper at the expense of others sits at the heart of a clear antagonism between fundamentalism and socialism that Sinclair would later explore.

Sinclair continued the work of *Prince Hagen* in *The Jungle* (1906). This, Sinclair's most famous work, came to notoriety for its depiction of Chicago's meatpacking district.[42] It charts the life of the Lithuanian immigrant Jurgis Rudkus and his family who fall victim to the forces of capitalism and corruption. Jurgis's brutal story sees him flee Chicago and his deteriorating family to become a drifter. His inability to

[35] Ibid., 24.
[36] Ibid., 26.
[37] Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 17.
[38] Upton Sinclair, *Prince Hagen: A Phantasy* (Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1903), 218.
[39] Ibid., 182.
[40] Upton Sinclair, *Plays of Protest: The Naturewoman, The Machine, The Second-Story Man, Prince Hagen* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1911), 188.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Sinclair told of his disappointment with the work's reception, citing that he intended to reach the public's heart but instead he hit its stomach - Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 114.

survive outside the city that has destroyed him leaves Jurgis no choice but to return. Frederik Byrn Køhlert explains that at this point *The Jungle* 'abandons its avowed realism' and becomes 'a vehicle for Sinclair's preaching of the benefit of socialism.'[43] It is here, though, that *The Jungle* represents the close association that naturalists like Sinclair had to the theological culture of America: Sinclair begins to preach the socialist and masculine Christ. Jurgis learns from a socialist party speaker, whom Sinclair models on Eugene Debs, of 'the stygian midnight of American evangelicalism' and the 'final death struggle' between socialism and the Church.[44] Christ becomes a 'class-conscious workingman,' a 'union carpenter,' an 'agitator,' a 'law-breaker,' and an 'anarchist.'[45] Jurgis's epiphany arrives with a 'crashing of thunder in his soul,' and he realises that socialism was 'the new religion of humanity' because it 'implied but the literal application of the teaching of Christ.'[46]

Samuel the Seeker (1910)—an allegory reminiscent of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) for its theme of wandering through an uncertain world—was an unsuccessful work commercially, but the novel did continue Sinclair's exploration of the relationship between politics and religion.[47] It concentrates upon Samuel's quest for happiness after leaving his family farm.[48] Samuel meets the kindly preacher Dr. Vince who promises to aide Samuel in his quest. Dr. Vince preaches against Herbert Spencer and introduces Samuel to the Huxleyan notion that a duty of humanity is to propagate the good of all. 'Do you read that Jesus went about, worrying about His own survival, and robbing others because they were less fit than He?,' Dr. Vince asks Samuel.[49] Dr. Vince releases in Samuel a socialist consciousness that challenges his own notions of piety and friendship with the wealthy, church financier Mr. Wygant—the owner of the local factory and captain of industry. [50] Samuel rages at Dr. Vince 'you permit them to stay in your

[43] Frederik Byrn Køhlert, *The Chicago Literary Experience: Writing the City, 1893–1953* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2011), 100.
[44] Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1906), 398. Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 51.
[45] Sinclair, *The Jungle*, 399.
[46] Ibid., 376.
[47] Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 118.
[48] Anthony Arthur suggests that Bunyan's device of 'the wilderness of the world' was a common theme that Sinclair actively incorporated into his own work - Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, xiii.
[49] Upton Sinclair, *Samuel the Seeker* (London: John Long Limited, 1910), 169.
[50] Compare Samuel's relationship to Dr. Vince with that of Ragged Dick's relationship to Mr. Greyson. Ragged Dick accepts Mr. Greyson's revelation of a society built upon Christian morality; Samuel rejects the Church that Dr. Vince reveals to him and shows it to be corrupt and without morality.

church, and that gives them your sanction!'[51] Samuel similarly challenges Mr. Wygant and asks him why he 'should belong to church?' because 'what has this money scramble to do with the teaching of Jesus?'[52] Dr. Vince, along with the church's financiers, order Samuel to leave the church, but Samuel counters with the words of Christ, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! … woe unto you also, you lawyers.'[53] Samuel argues that Christ 'was a man, like you and me! He was a poor man, who suffered and starved! And the rich men of His time despised Him and crucified Him!'[54] The novel closes with Samuel, beaten and bruised, after facing up to the 'ultimate horror of Capitalism.'[55] As he lies close to death, Samuel hears singing from his fellow socialists: 'yours is the power of club and jail, yours is the axe and fire, but ours is the hope of human hearts and the strength of the soul's desire.'[56]

Sinclair would ultimately lay out the conflicting cultural forces of capitalism and socialism in *The Cry For Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest* (1915), which Jack London edited. Chapter titles such as 'Toil,' 'Mammon,' and 'Socialism' define the tone of the collection.[57] Echoing the socialist message of *Samuel the Seeker* and its conception of Christ, Sinclair includes a chapter on 'Jesus,' in which he includes extracts from Renan's *La Vie de Jésus* and Ingersoll's *Some Mistakes of Moses*.[58] From Renan, Sinclair concentrates on the description of Jesus as a member of the working classes who held no sway with the political elite.[59] From Ingersoll, he chooses a passage that argues for the right of ownership to whatsoever an individual labours to produce.[60] Sinclair also explores the link between American socialism and the Social Gospel through the incorporation of Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907). Sinclair concentrates upon Rauschenbusch's analysis of the revolutionary teachings of Jesus that regarded service to others as being more important to God than service to oneself.[61] Rauschenbusch viewed the cooperative Commonwealth as a solution to the

[51] Sinclair, *Samuel*, 235.
[52] Ibid., 246–47.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 263.
[55] Ibid., 295.
[56] Ibid., 320.
[57] Upton Sinclair, *The Cry For Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest; The Writings of Philosophers, Poets, Novelists, Social Reformers, and Others Who Have Voiced the Struggle Against Social Injustice* (New York: Upton Sinclair, 1915), 27, 485, 783.
[58] Ibid., 345.
[59] Ibid., 350.
[60] Ibid., 264.
[61] Ibid., 346.

belief in 'world-flight' and 'faith in catastrophes' that he thought plagued fundamentalist premillennialism.[62] J. Stitt Wilson—Christian socialist and politician—took this idea a step further, and he regarded the cooperative Commonwealth as the second coming to which Christ referred.[63] Stitt Wilson also supported Sinclair's attempt to become California's SPA governor in 1930. Both men preferred to see the present not as beyond repair—and thereby heralding the second coming of Christ—but as an opportunity for human endeavour to fulfil biblical prophecy of the coming kingdom of God. Conversely, Billy Sunday preached that 'there can be no millennium until Jesus comes; it is His presence that makes the millennium.'[64] Sinclair responds to Sunday, I argue, with a secular representation of the second coming and its relationship to the millennium. The response is a naturalist eschatology that is stripped of all supernatural content and which emerges in *They Call Me Carpenter* and *The Millennium*.

They Call Me Carpenter: A Tale of the Second Coming

If Billy Sunday and the fundamentalists were waiting for the return of Christ, *They Call Me Carpenter* explores what would happen if they got their wish and the Christ of the Gospels actually did return.[65] In their 1954 review of the representation of Christ in early twentieth-century fiction, Alan Paton and Liston Pope argue that Sinclair lacked a 'deep understanding of the Christ of the Gospels.'[66] They highlight Sinclair's overlooking of Christ's concern with the individual and criticise his concentrating upon the social implications of Christ's teaching. Christ, for Paton and Pope, is not a 'whip' with which to 'chastise society.'[67] For Sinclair, just as for London, this is exactly what Christ is—a whip by which to castigate the individualism of capitalism.

They Call Me Carpenter first appeared in serialised form in *Hearst's International* from July to October 1922. It paid Sinclair $2,500 for the serialisation, and so Sinclair's work was certainly a commercial success in an America that was coming to terms with the aftermath of World War I. [68] No readily available sales figures exist for the work when

[62] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), 104. Walter Rauschenbusch, "Our Attitude Toward Millenarianism," in *Walter Rauschenbusch: Selected Writings*, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 79–94.
[63] J. Stitt Wilson, *The Message of Socialism to the Church* (Berkeley: J. Stitt Wilson, 1911), 25.
[64] Billy Sunday, "Implications of Christ's Imminent Coming," in *Great Preaching of the Second Coming*, *Vol. 11*, ed. Curtis Hutson (Murfreesboro, TN.: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), 137.
[65] Upton Sinclair, *The Call Me Carpenter* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922).
[66] Alan Paton and Liston Pope, "The Novelist and Christ," *The Saturday Review* December 4 (1954): 16.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 188.

it was published as a novel, but its original review in *The New York Times* was little more than a brief sketch of the plot.[69] Critical works of novel follow the same pattern: very little attention has been given to it outside of biographical works about Sinclair's life and career.[70] Most recently, Theodore Ziolkowski highlights *They Call Me Carpenter* as an American *Jesus redivivus* novel.[71] He recognises that 'it goes into more allegorical detail than most' other works of this type, but Ziolkowski's analysis is, like the review in *The New York Times*, largely descriptive.[72]

The novel begins in Western City, a thinly veiled Los Angeles. Billy, a member of high society and a war-hero, receives a beating at the hands of a mob of nationalists and ex-servicemen. They are protesting against the screening of the German film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and assume that Billy is a German sympathiser.[73] Billy seeks refugee in St. Bartholomew's Church, and, while he shelters there, Christ descends from a stained glass window to heal him and to seek Billy's assistance in the modern world. As Henry Ward Beecher made clear two generations earlier, the Gospels make no mention of the physical appearance of Christ, but Christ must have a form if he is to return and to function in a novel. Sinclair's solution is to use the Christ of the stained glass window as his model of physical appearance. This stained glass Christ—whom Sinclair refers to as Carpenter—is the iconographic product of the feminised Church; he is a Christ that would feel quite at home in works like *The Prince of the House of David* and *Ben-Hur*. Indeed, the film star Mary Magna, the novel's incarnation of Mary Magdalene, describes Carpenter as 'a close up from 'The Servant in the House' or 'Ben-Hur'' (34). Mary bases her image of Christ on Wallace's novel of 1880 because neither Sidney Olcott's (1907) cinematographic rendering of *Ben-Hur* nor Marc Klaw and Abraham Lincoln Erlanger's (1899) earlier stage production represented Christ.[74] Figure 2 shows

[69] "Latest Works of Fiction," *New York Times*, September 24, 1922, accessed May 5, 2016, http://search.proquest.com/news/docview/100067981/E345C2963E694949PQ/1?accountid=14511.
[70] Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 186–88; Lauren Coodley, *Upton Sinclair: California Socialist, Celebrity Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 82–83.
[71] Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 21.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Billy believes that the film is like Bellamy's *Looking Backward* because 'the hero wakes up in the end, and we realize we have been watching a dream' (7)–much like *They Call Me Carpenter* itself. Rudolf Meinert and Erich Pommer, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, dir. Robert Wiene (Postdam-Babelsberg: Decla-Bioscop, 1920).
[74] Fred Niblo directed the first full-length version of *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* in 1925 just three years after the publication of *They Call Me Carpenter*. See Howard Miller, "The Charioteer and the Christ: Ben-Hur in America from the Gilded Age to the Culture Wars," *Indiana Magazine of History* 104, no. 2 (2008): 153.

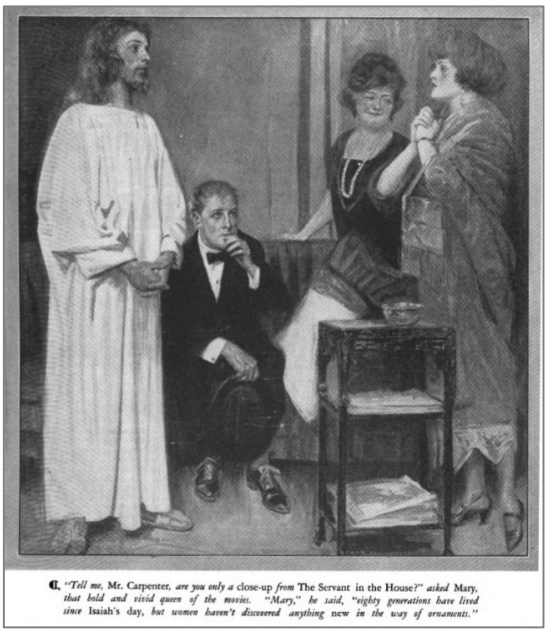
two images of the character Manson from Charles Rand Kennedy's stage play *The Servant in the House* (1908), to whom Mary has also compared Carpenter. Manson takes on the role of Christ and is perhaps Christ's reincarnation, whose presence leads others to better lives.[75] The left-hand image of Manson comes from the published stage play; the image on the right, taken for publicity purposes, appears to be of the same actor, Walter Hampden (1879–1955).[76]

Figure 2. Walter Hampden as Manson in *The Servant in the House*
(Images not in copyright)

Consequently, Sinclair presents Carpenter as 'a man in long robes, white, with purple and gold; with a brown beard, and a gentle, sad face' (10). Furthermore, Sinclair appears to provide Carpenter with a contemporary halo derived from the 'permanent wave' hairstyle that one character believes Carpenter wears (38)—in the 1920s the machine that produced the perm resembled a halo of metal placed above the head. Figure 3 also shows Lucius Wolcott Hitchcock's illustration to the associated sequence of the novel in the serialised form of *Hearst's International*. Unlike Frank Norris's "Miracle Joyeux" that appeared in *McClure's Magazine*, the Christ of the text and the illustration correspond in *Hearst's International*. However, the extent to which society has changed from *Ben-Hur*'s reverential treatment of Christ to Sinclair's rendering of him in the Jazz Age emerges in the responses of those with whom Carpenter interacts. Most notably, Sinclair has the feminised Carpenter take on a sexual allure: 'this man will make a hit with the ladies …

[75] Clayton Hamilton, "The Servant in the House," *The North America Review* 187, no. 21 (1908), 771.
[76] Charles Rann Kennedy, *The Servant in the House* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1908), 5.

like the swamis, with their soft brown skins and their large, dark, cow-like eyes!' (22).[77] Carpenter is an anachronism; the Social Gospel, the SPA, and fundamentalists like Sunday had left the feminine Christ in the previous century, but here Sinclair resurrects him. Whilst the feminised body of Sinclair's Christ would have baited men like Sunday, the true satiric element of the novel emerges in Carpenter's actions: Carpenter is unquestionably a liberal, and, worse still, a socialist.



¶ "*Tell me*, Mr. Carpenter, *are you only a* close-up *from* The Servant in the House?" *asked* Mary, *that bold and vivid queen of the movies.* "Mary," *he said*, "*eighty generations have lived since* Isaiah's *day, but women haven't discovered anything new in the way of ornaments.*"

Figure 3. Carpenter in *Hearst's International*[78]

(Image not in copyright)

Sinclair refers to *They Call Me Carpenter* as 'a literal translation of the life of the world's greatest revolutionary martyr, the founder of the world's first proletarian party' (224). The novel addresses many of the same concerns that Bouck White approached in *The Call of the Carpenter*, thus linking the works beyond their obvious titular similarity—White had argued that Pauline Christianity was responsible for diverting the gaze of the working class from their earthly needs to their 'crowns of righteousness reserved in

[77] Sinclair perhaps incorporates the legacy of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) into *They Call Me Carpenter*. Vivekananda visited Los Angeles during his tour of America. Sinclair may also reference him with 'we have Hindoo swamis in yellow silk' (15). William Dean Howells in *Traveler from Altruria* (1894) also sexualises Mr. Homos: 'I needn't tell you that there is a good deal of curiosity about you, especially among the ladies' - William Dean Howells, *A Traveler from Altruria* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1894), 23.

[78] Upton Sinclair, "They Call Me Carpenter by Upton Sinclair," *Hearst's International* 42, no. 1 (Jul-Dec, 1922): 13.

heaven.'[79] Sinclair is careful not to make of Carpenter more than the Gospels tell us—and so be guilty of the same errors as Pauline Christianity—but he does reinterpret Christ's story with a distinctly political agenda.[80]

Carpenter, therefore, does not claim himself to be a socialist because socialism did not exist in first-century Palestine. Through his actions, however, he manifests its political aims. Sinclair's dissociation of Carpenter from organised politics is clear during Carpenter's visit to the Western City Labor Council—he states that 'I do not know your organization' (122). He delivers a parable of Marx's Labour Theory of Value as a means by which to attack capitalism.[81] 'There was once a man who owned much land, and upon it he built great factories … and he grew fat upon the product of their labor,' Carpenter preaches (120). He continues to teach that 'it came to pass that [the] workers rebelled' and began to protest that they 'should work and [the land owner] take the fruit of [their] labor' (120). The Social Gospel's notion of the brotherhood of a society that lusts no longer after 'luxury and wantoness' is the solution that Carpenter sees (121). He preaches a socialist vision of the economy: 'I say to you: if a man will not work, let him be the one that hungers; if he will not serve, let him be your criminal' (123). Socialism becomes the mark of the true Christian, and those that subscribe to it shall dwell 'in the bosom of [God the] Father' (123). Sinclair channels *In His Steps*'s Jack Manning through the characterisation of James, the biblical brother of Jesus. For Sinclair, James becomes the card-carrying socialist that Carpenter cannot be. He bears 'a striking resemblance' to Carpenter, and he wears the 'clothes of a working-man … he was something of an agitator' (96). 'I am a Christian,' James states, 'one of the kind that speak out against injustice. And I can show you Bible texts for it … I can prove it by the word of God' (96).

Sinclair hangs on Carpenter the tensions and fears of a society suffering from a crisis of post-war xenophobia that targeted those deemed un-American.[82] Figure 4 shows a typical image that highlights common fears associated with an increasing number of immigrants. Carpenter also returns during The Red Scare of 1917–1924 that coincided

[79] Sinclair, *Cry For Justice,* 401.
[80] Sinclair, *Personal Jesus*, 131–210.
[81] Marx's theory of value used here attempts to explain the exploitation of the working classes under capitalism.
[82] Two years after the publication of *They Call Me Carpenter,* the Immigration Act came into effect.

with the Depression of 1920–21.[83] Those who feared a Bolshevik uprising in America often looked to the IWW as a portent of a coming revolution.[84]

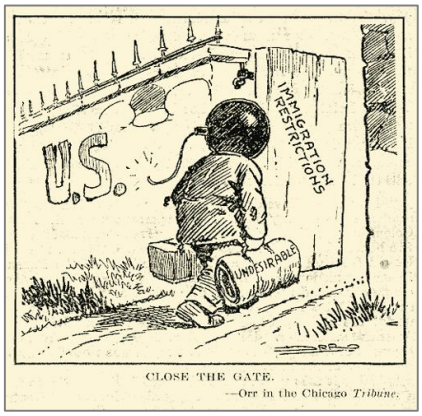


Figure 4. Typical 'Red Scare' propaganda from the *Chicago Tribune* 1919
(Image not in copyright)

The IWW became the scapegoat for collective fears and anti-Red feelings. The Rev. William E. Hammond, writing for *The Biblical World*, also suggested that German money actually financed the work of the IWW.[85] Hammond was responding to liberals at the University of Chicago who claimed that German money financed premillennialists and that the IWW was actually in league with the Kaiser himself.[86] There is no question that the IWW's constitution would threaten established capitalism. It stated that between the working and employing classes a struggle must occur in which 'the workers of the world

[83] The Red Scare saw an increase in nationalistic feelings by linking immigration to the recent Russian Revolution of 1917. Between the years 1917–1920, communists—and those deemed foreign and radicals—faced persecution and deportation - Patrick Renshaw, "The IWW and the Red Scare 1917–24," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 4 (1968): 63. Daniel Kuehn defines the 'proximate' cause of the depression as a 'deliberate fiscal and monetary retrenchment following World War I.' This had the effect of 'precipitous drops in employment and the price level' - Daniel Kuehn, "A Note on America's 1920–21 Depression as an Argument for Austerity," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36, no. 1 (2012): 156.
[84] Its founding members were socialists, anarchists, and members of radical trade unions. Renshaw, "The IWW," 63.
[85] William E. Hammond, "The End of the World," *The Biblical World* 51, no. 5 (1918): 272.
[86] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 147 and 206. Of course, anti-German sentiment was not limited to Christian groups but was part of a nationwide change in attitude at the turn of the twentieth century. Clara Eve Schieber, writing just before WW1, suggests that 'the majority of the people of the United States were opposed to German autocracy, in all its forms and modes of expression' - Clara Eve Schieber, "The Transformation of American Sentiment towards Germany, 1870–1914," *The Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 1 (1921): 69. Sandra Nicols also states that 'World War I would culminate in an anti-German hysteria that drove German American culture underground' - Sandra Nicols, "Why Was Humboldt Forgotten in the United States," *Geographical Review* 96, no. 3 (2006): 408.

organise as a class' and 'take possession of the earth … it is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism.'[87]

Sinclair's socialist second coming, therefore, sees Carpenter not associating with fishermen from Galilee but with a Russian union secretary, a Mexican cigar-maker, a socialist, an Irish war veteran, a pacifist, and a member of the IWW. Newspaper headlines interwoven into the narrative contribute to the sense that if Christ were to return, his teachings would be a reflection of theological liberalism and the aims of socialism. Carpenter's soap box orations also reveal this cause, as he becomes the 'Red Prophet' (205).[88] Sinclair brings Carpenter into direct conflict with his own contemporaneous society through Carpenter's address to the congregation of St. Bartholomew's. Here he attacks the congregation for its pursuit of wealth and lack of social consciousness. He accuses them of crucifying him in stained glass and for inviting the money changers back into the house of God (135). Moreover, in *The Profits of Religion*, Sinclair had already broached the idea of the stained-glass Christ, writing that 'ministers of religion are occupied to scrub and clean and dress up their disreputable Founder – to turn him from a proletarian rebel into a stained-glass-window divinity.'[89] In a satirical twist that conflates the Church with big business, a fictional version of Sinclair's nemesis, Billy Sunday, expels Carpenter from the church.[90] The assistant rector, Sidney Simpkinson—who extols 'muscular Christianity' and who '[keeps] himself trim playing on the parish basket-ball team'—is clearly a rendering of Sunday (136).

After Carpenter's expulsion from the church, he delivers perhaps the most important creedal statement of the novel's purpose and aims. Carpenter's words are actually a fairly brutal attack upon the association between capitalism and religion that Sinclair himself believed existed in society. Billy recognises that Carpenter's words are

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[87] Industrial Workers of the World, "Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World (1908)," in *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W Anthology*, ed. Joyce L. Kornbluh (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1998), 13.

[88] At other points in the novel, the headlines associated with Carpenter include WEALTHY CLUBMAN AIDS BOLSHEVIK PROPHET (91), MOB OF ANARCHISTS RAID ST. BARTHOLMEW'S (154) and PROPHET IN TOWN, HEALS SICK, RAVES AT RICH AMERICA IS MOBLAND, ALLEGED IN RED RIOT OF TALK (126).

[89] Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion*, 98.

[90] In his novel of 1927, *Oil!*—which would become Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood* (2007)—Sinclair revisits the prophets of the second coming in his characterisation of Eli. He gives himself the title 'the Messenger of the Second Coming'; he also believes that 'the hour of Christ's return to earth was to be made known through him' - Upton Sinclair, *Oil!: A Novel* (New York: Penguin, 1926), Kindle e-book, page 128, location 2266. Power and money corrupt Eli; perhaps this is why Anderson renamed Sinclair's Eli Watkins as Eli Sunday.

'a translation into modern American a portion of the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew; a free adaptation of those ancient words to present day practices and conditions' (140). Preaching in the street, Carpenter cries out 'Woe unto you, doctors of divinity' (141) as he attacks 'the leisure class churches' who should practice the teachings of Christ rather than loading 'the backs of the working-classes with crushing burdens' (140). The importance of this moment for Sinclair is evident because he had already written a similar incarnation of the piece in *The Profits of Religion* called "The Soap Box."[91] In this version, the Jesus of the Gospels mounts a soapbox and delivers a variation of Carpenter's incendiary speech to the congregation of St. Bartholomew's. If Billy Sunday had expelled Carpenter from the church, "The Soap Box" sees the pharasiacal Rev. Dr. Caiaphas and Magistrate Pilate indict Jesus and send him to the prison on Blackwell's Island, New York, thus reinforcing the contempt with which Sinclair held Sunday in *They Call Me Carpenter*.[92] Jesus is then charged with murder and involvement in the Preparedness Day bombing of 1916 in San Francisco—a crime for which two radical labour leaders with clear associations to the IWW, Thomas Mooney (1882–1942) and Warren K. Billings (1893–1972), faced life imprisonment.[93]

Carpenter's continued agitation eventually results in his arrest, which, in the Gospels, finally leads to crucifixion. Wallace's Judah Ben-Hur had the opportunity to intervene and save the life of Christ, but he eventually saw a much larger divine plan at work that he knew he could not disrupt—Christ had to die for the sins of humanity. Sinclair's Carpenter, though, is not in first-century Jerusalem but twentieth-century America. The intervening millennium has not only confined the historical Christ and his socialist message to the metaphoric tomb of a stained-glass window, but it has also seen humanity adopt a greater sense of agency—the plans of God pale in comparison to the achievements of the Gilded Age and the horrors of a recently passed War. Billy and Mary return agency to humanity and save Carpenter from death. 'I have only been playing the part of Providence. Let me play it just a few days longer, until this mob of crazy soldier-boys has got out of town again,' declares Billy to a bewildered Carpenter (202).

The manner in which Sinclair orchestrates this rescue raises the satirical tone of the novel further. It sees Sinclair claiming back from white supremacists a Christ that

[91] Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion*, 291.
[92] Caiaphas was a high priest who handed Christ over to the Roman governor Pilate during the final hours of Christ's life, Matthew (26:57–67).
[93] Preparedness Day (22nd July 1916) marked America's forthcoming entry into World War I.

they had made their own and which had found justification in D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*.[94] Despite its contributions to cinematic technique, the film often draws associations with the Ku Klux Klan. Tom Rice, for example, argues that the Klan 'utilized *The Birth of a Nation* … to define and promote itself within American society.'[95] The *Birth of a Nation* presented the Klan as saviours of American society: it portrayed the Klan overthrowing a black militia and the militia's white sympathisers in post-war South Carolina. The Klan also adopted the image of the white Christ to add legitimacy to their actions against non-whites, socialists, communists, and immigrants.[96] This Christ becomes manifest at the climax of *The Birth of a Nation* when, with a note of premillennialism, Christ returns to bless the Klan's victory. The image of a robed, bearded Christ with flowing brown hair parted in the middle materialises in a suitably beatific pose to bless the celebrating white crowd (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Christ blessing the victorious crowd - *The Birth of a Nation*
(Image not in copyright)

The Klan, then, saw itself as a protector of American values in its war against those elements that it deemed to be un-American.[97] Billy Sunday disassociated himself from the Klan, but Lyle W. Dorsett explains how 'many undiscerning observers associated

[94] The film's success was immediate, and it became one of the highest grossing in American cinematic history. *Gone with the Wind* would knock *Birth of a Nation* off the top spot in 1952.
[95] Tom Rice, *White Robes, Silver Screens: Movies and the Making of the Ku Klux Klan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 1–2.
[96] Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 141.
[97] Michael Lewis and Jacqueline Serbu, "Kommemorating the Ku Klux Klan," *The Sociological Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1999): 144.

Sunday' with both the Klan and anti-evolutionists, whom the Klan also supported.[98] W.A. Firstenberger provides solid evidence for the purported association of Sunday with the Klan. He explains that Klansmen, fully outfitted, would often arrive at Sunday's revivals to present him with cheques—which he did not refuse.[99] The Klan also used the image of Sunday to add legitimacy to their organisation (Figure 6).[100] In response to the Klan and its associations with fundamentalism, Sinclair writes that Billy, Mary, and the disciples dress up as members of the Klan to carry out their rescue of Carpenter.[101] The irony is doubly effective—the Klan is cleansing America of the very image of Christ that they used to justify their actions.[102] '"Death to all traitors!" … "Death to all agitators! Death to all enemies of the Ku Klux Klan!,"' cry Billy and Mary as they save Carpenter (198).

Figure 6. Billy Sunday appearing on a Ku Klux Klan advertisement
(Fair usage applied)

Carpenter still holds to his providential mission of sacrifice as told in the Gospels. He escapes the house arrest under which Mary and Billy have put him, and he incites a mob of ex-servicemen to seize him. Carpenter becomes the 'Red Prophet,' and the baying mob derides '"Hi!Hi! The Bolsheviki prophet' (214). The mob labels Carpenter a '"goddam Arnychist"' and brand him with the association '"I won't work! I won't work!"'—which

[98] Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 2004), 149.
[99] W.A. Firstenberger, *In Rare Form: A Pictorial History of the Baseball Evangelist Billy Sunday* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 30.
[100] Ibid., 31.
[101] Sinclair alludes to *The Birth of a* Nation in the sequence of narrative that sees Billy and Mary acquire their Klan costumes. Billy refers to the film as 'a very dull feature picture which the magnate had made, showing the salvation of our country by the Ku Klux Klan; and I knew enough about studio methods to be sure they had not thrown away the costumes, but would have them stored' (188).
[102] For an account of Billy Sunday's relationship to the Ku Klux Klan see McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, 274–76.

was a common insult for members of the IWW (214). Figure 7 shows a typical propaganda image of the IWW. The arm—which might as well belong to Sinclair's Carpenter—wields a knife with which to slay the octopus of capitalism.

Just as the IWW were associated with a coming social revolution, so, too, were they linked to premillennial expectations. Reuben Torrey, editor of 'The Fundamentals,' claimed that the emergence of the IWW provided positive evidence that the second coming would occur soon. 'I go down the Los Angeles streets and see the soap box orators of the IWW [and] my heart is not heavy, not a bit … the Lord is coming,' Torrey wrote.[103] Sinclair demonstrates the importance of cultural context here, as in labelling Carpenter a member of the IWW, he is directly responding to Torrey's prophecy with satiric effect: here is your second coming of Christ, Sinclair suggests, and Christ is in the IWW. Billy's intervention to save Christ from his first lynching, however, has changed the timeline of the Gospel narrative, and it has created a second arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Rather than dying upon a cross, Carpenter succumbs to the angry mob, who toss him in the air like a rag doll and eject him from the window of a church. Covered in red paint, Carpenter's white robe of divinity becomes the robe of a socialist martyr.

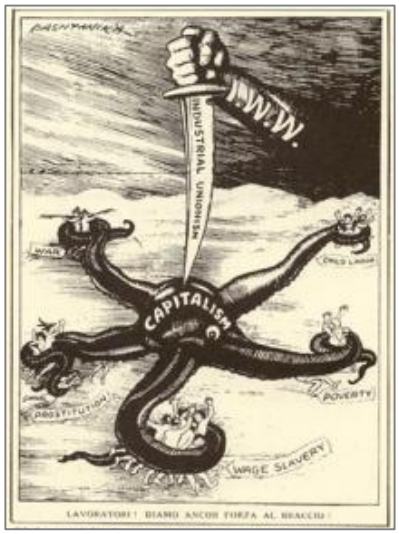

Figure 7. The IWW slaying the octopus of capitalism
(Courtesy of the Industrial Workers of the World)

[103] Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism,* 135.

The twentieth century has had such a profound effect on Carpenter that he, too, takes agency upon himself and abandons the redemptive death that sits at the core of Christianity: 'I meant to die for this people! But now - let them die for themselves!,' he derides (218).[104] Sinclair's conclusion is that if Christ were to return, the Church would reject even Christ himself.[105] Like Norris's Christ of "Miracle Joyeux," Carpenter exhibits human traits for a brief moment: his face becomes 'contorted with fury' (218). The novel closes with the image of Carpenter running back to the church screaming 'Let me go back where I was - where I do not see, where I do not hear, where I do not think! Let me go back to the church!' (218). Sinclair presents Carpenter 'hauling up his long robes' and leaving Billy to wonder that 'never would I have dreamed that a prophet's bare legs could flash so quickly, that he could cover the ground at such amazing speed!' (218).

Sinclair's Christ-novel, then, pushes the boundaries of its traditional nineteenth-century American form because it adapts the historic Christ to the domain of naturalism.[106] *They Call Me Carpenter* is not the 'transparent' and 'inept' work that Robert Detweiler claims it to be.[107] It culminates the socialist interpretation of Christ that persisted throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it also reduces the divine to human experience. Donald Pizer argues that the 'naturalistic tragic hero' is one whose 'potential for growth' the circumstances of life stifle.[108] Carpenter arrives in contemporary America unstained, and he is conscious of his mission on earth that is yet unfulfilled. The 'conditioning forces of life' that underpin naturalist texts, however, prevent him from fulfilling his mission of salvation.[109] Indeed, the miracles of Christ himself fall under the domain of scientific naturalism. Billy witness Carpenter's apparent healing of a child, but he reasons that 'I know that modern science vindicates these things' and that 'any powerful stimulus given to the unconscious can awaken new vital impulses'

[104] Sinclair was not the first to use the plot of Christ refusing to save humanity: Joseph Compton Rickett's *The Christ That Is To Be* (1891) also incorporates the idea that Christ would depart a world that abandons him.
[105] Sinclair includes Sigismund Goetze's 'Despised and Rejected of Men' (1904) in a plate included in *The Profits of Religion*. This work depicts a bound and tortured Christ amidst a mass of contemporaneous society who simply ignore his presence with a mixture of distain and disinterest.
[106] Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'The Grand Inquisitor,' contained within *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), addressed a similar theme.
[107] Robert Detweiler, "Christ in American Religious Fiction," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32, no. 1 (1964): 11.
[108] Donald Pizer, *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews* (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1993), 20.
[109] Ibid.

(73).[110] A photographer from the Independent Press Services also views the apparent miracle as nothing more than 'a fine piece of stage management' (111). *They Call Me Carpenter* is thus audacious enough to deny the miraculous staples that made works like *The Prince of the House of David* and *Ben-Hur* so successful. The divine becomes explicable; it is a product of human understanding and will. Carpenter wanted to achieve a brotherhood of humanity on earth with the intention of freeing the working classes from their capitalist masters. 'Make ready your hearts for brotherhood,' he proclaimed, but Carpenter failed in his mission (120). David Ketterer—who explores apocalyptic moments in science fiction—also suggests that 'the various [literary] J.C.s, ranging from Stephen Crane's Jim Conklin to Faulkner's Joe Christmas … do not effect any immediate change.'[111] He does suggest, though, that the 'Second Coming of Christ' has the potential to fulfil this role.[112] However, through Carpenter's second coming and fleeing from earth, Sinclair directly challenges the notion and removes the divine from humanity's destiny. The second coming failed, and only humanity can now save itself.

The Millennium: A Comedy of the Year 2000

If the second coming of Christ occurred in *They Call Me Carpenter*, then reading Sinclair's works through the lens of fundamentalist premillennialism, as I propose, we might well expect the arrival of the millennium. Sinclair's next work *The Millennium*—as the title most obviously suggests—meets this expectation through the direct manifestation of the human brotherhood that Carpenter preached before he fled back to the church.[113] Carpenter's flight was a necessary condition for Sinclair, as Sinclair's vision of the future is one free from a religious dogma and tradition that can all too easily become a force and a power with which to subject individuals to mastery. Sinclair transports the contemporaneous reader seventy-six years to a future in which humanity must learn to work together to survive a world-changing event. It transforms a capitalist dystopia into the beginnings of a socialist utopia on earth. Sinclair also severs the relationship between the Church and capitalism, and he charts the homiletic transformation of a capitalist society to one of socialism. The novel was an intensely

[110] Sinclair himself would also propose the same interpretation of miracles later in life – Upton Sinclair, *Personal Jesus*, 85.
[111] David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 4.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Upton Sinclair, *The Millennium: A Comedy of the Year 2000* (Pasadena: Upton Sinclair, 1924).

personal work for Sinclair, as it revisited his own early attempts to establish a society free from the bounds of capitalism. Helicon Hall was a commune in which Sinclair and likeminded associates could live in a spirit close to that of a socialist utopia (Figure 8).[114]

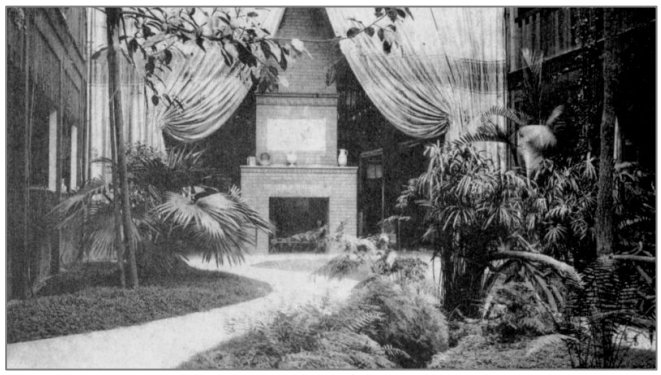

Figure 8. The fireplace and communal area of Helicon Hall
(Fair usage applied to image)

At Helicon Hall, Sinclair began work on the first incarnation of *The Millennium* as a series of scenes intended for a play, but these never saw publication.[115] He did, however, rewrite the work and publish it as *The Millennium*. Visions of utopia like he envisaged at Helicon Hall were important to Sinclair, as *The Cry For Justice* demonstrates. In a section entitled 'The New Day,' Sinclair sets out just what aim he has in mind for his vision of the future: a 'deliverance of humanity and the triumph of the labor enfranchised' that was predicted through the 'raptures of poets and prophets.'[116] *They Call Me Carpenter* revealed the most important of these prophets, Christ himself. *The Millennium* builds upon the socialism of *The Jungle* in which it was revealed to Jurgis as the 'new religion of humanity' and the 'fulfilment of the old religion' that had at its centre 'the literal application of all the teachings of Christ.'[117] This vision of Christ's teachings obviates the *a priori* need of organised religion made manifest in the Church.

[114] Sinclair founded the commune at Helicon Hall, a venture that ended in fire razing the building to ground. He drew inspiration for his commune from the writings of the American social reformer Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935). Sinclair never lost touch with the vision of humanity working to improve life here on earth. Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 87.
[115] For a reading of the novel that looks back to Sinclair's own utopian dreams see William A. Bloodworth, *Upton Sinclair* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 77–78.
[116] Sinclair, *The Cry For Justice*, 833.
[117] Sinclair, *The Jungle*, 376.

In *The Millennium*, Sinclair extends an already established genre of speculative and socialist fiction that was popular throughout the nineteenth century. Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1819) and Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) are both narratives that shift their protagonists through time, rather like Jack London does in *The Star Rover*. Owing to America's burgeoning economy and its progressing technological achievements, authors at the *fin de siècle* also began to look through 'millennial lenses,' and they imagined how the fate of humanity would develop.[118] A forward-looking America saw the rise of the science fiction novel, which often incorporated into its genre themes and visions of utopia and dystopia.[119] Sinclair was certainly aware of these trends. In *The Cry For Justice*, he included extracts from two of the most significant utopian texts of the nineteenth century that each see in the future a vision of utopia that is derived from human effort and a reappraisal of the divine; Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* and William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890).[120] I also include here Byron A. Brooks' *Earth Revisited* (1894).

Looking Backward: 2000–1887, perhaps the most famous utopian novel of the nineteenth century, took on great significance not only within the Social Gospel but also for American socialists.[121] Sinclair himself fell within this group, and it is easy to imagine that he identified with the novel's religious undertones.[122] In Bellamy's future, churches have become voluntary and the clergy have become unofficial provides of spiritual guidance. 'You were quite done with national religious establishments in the nineteenth century, and did you fancy we had gone back to them?,' Bellamy writes.[123] With their stomachs full and earthly needs met, all members of society now have the luxury of pursuing the metaphysical. Bellamy looks back to the foundations of the Christian Church and presents a future society that lives out the original message of brotherhood and equality that Christ taught to his disciples. The novel's Dr. Leete explains to the chief protagonist Julian West that the 'brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases,

[118] Kenneth Roemer, "American Utopian Literature (1888–1900): An Annotated Bibliography," *American Literary Realism, 1870–1910* 4, no. 3 (1971): 227.
[119] Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*, ed. Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 7.
[120] Sinclair, *The Cry For Justice*, (Bellamy) 861, (Morris) 855.
[121] Franklin Rosemont, "Bellamy's Radicalism Reclaimed," in *Looking Backward, 1988–1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy*, ed. Daphne Patai (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 162.
[122] Arthur, *Radical Innocent*, 21.
[123] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889), 380.

are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and as vital as physical fraternity.'[124] Bellamy's work, therefore, is postmillennial in its theology because the world that he creates is fit enough for the second coming to occur.[125]

If Bellamy permits the Church to survive in his vision of the new millennium, William Morris's *News from Nowhere* alludes to its absolute disestablishment.[126] In the larger context of both works, Morris regarded Bellamy's work as flawed because of the importance that *Looking Backward* placed upon the reduction of individual labour. Morris, in contrast, believed that it was not a reduction in labour that brought about the socialist utopia but 'the reduction in pain' when labouring.[127] Unlike Bellamy's work, religious themes occur very little in the novel. The key passage upon which I concentrate occurs at its close. Morris represents what has become of the Church through the introduction of a former place of worship into the novel's closing Feast of Haysel. Socialism has usurped religious iconography and even Christian theology itself becomes little more than a pre-capitalist folkloric ritual. No effort has been made to reinstate the 'mediæval saints and histories' that the Puritans had previously whitewashed in the church, the reader learns.[128] The only decorations are multitudes of flowers that fill the archways. Below the west window 'hung two cross [sic] scythes, their blades polished white, and gleaming from out of the flowers that wreathed them.'[129] Here is the religion of Morris's future—socialism's crossed symbols of the proletariat replace the cross of Christianity that died in the previous century.

Byron Alden Brooks' *Earth Revisited* is often cited as a work related to Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, and its exploration of spiritualism is a defining feature.[130] Like *Looking Backward* and *News from Nowhere*, *Earth Revisited* also images a future relationship between society and the Church. Brooks goes to great lengths to describe the way in which the performance of religion has changed in his vision of the future.

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[124] Ibid., 184.
[125] George E. Connor, "The Awakening of Edward Bellamy: Looking Backward at Religious Influence," *Utopian Studies* 11, no. 1 (2000): 42.
[126] For an account of *News from Nowhere*'s American reception see Anna Vaninskaya, *William Morris and the Idea of Community: Romance, History, and Propaganda, 1880–1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 43.
[127] William Morris, "Bellamy's *Looking Backward*," The William Morris Internet Archive, accessed May 3, 2016, https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1889/backward.htm.
[128] William Morris, *News From Nowhere; or, An Epoch of Rest* (London: Kelmscott Press, 1893), 302.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Everett F. Bleiler, *Science-Fiction, the Early Years: A Full Description of More Than 3,000 Science-Fiction Stories from Earliest Times to the Appearance of the Genre Magazines in 1930; With Author, Title, and Motif Indexes* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1990), 86.

Churches no longer exist, and all recognise that 'since the first century [the Church] has been the tomb of the founder.'[131] Brooks also frames his work in a distinctly American theological context. He directly refers to the theological disputes that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and which underpin this dissertation—'the character of Christ, the plan of salvation, the divine decrees, and the scriptures.'[132] Christianity has become 'the primitive faith that existed before the theological disputes.' [133] Brooks presents a postmillennial vision of the future with humanity at its heart: 'the millennium is here and now and always,' he writes.[134]

What sits at the centre of all these novels is an enormous sense of optimism that things will be better in the future. The world will be equal; it will be fair; and it will be free from entanglements of power, whether these are political or religious.[135] Unlike Bellamy and Brooks' vision of the future—in which the reader experiences a fully-formed future society—the reader of *The Millennium* experiences its rebirth first-hand. Sinclair's work, therefore, sits in the middle-ground between Bellamy's and Morris's. The new working class must work to once again bring life to the machines of the old epoch whilst returning to the more agrarian vision that Morris had established. Julian West, Bellamy's protagonist in *Looking Backward*, refers to the victims of capitalism as 'humanity hanging on a cross.'[136] Sinclair resurrects them in *The Millennium* through a society rebuilt upon the 'basis of reason, justice and love.'[137]

Upton Sinclair's Premillennial Vision

To progress from *They Call Me Carpenter* to Sinclair's millennial expectations, an important eschatological development that occurred in the late nineteenth century needs explaining: John Nelson Darby's (1800–1882) dispensational premillennialism.

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[131] Byron A. Brooks, *Earth Revisited* (Boston, Mass.: Arena Publishing Company, 1893), 140.
[132] Ibid., 145.
[133] Ibid., 140.
[134] Ibid., 317.
[135] Robert Hugh Benson's dystopian novel *Lord of the World* (1908)—itself a commercial hit in the United States—provides a stark contrast to the socialist utopian future that Sinclair imagines because it regards Sinclair's socialist utopia as dystopia. Benson rallies against higher biblical criticism that marked liberal Protestantism. The reader learns that 'the Bible was completely given up as an authority after the renewed German attacks in the twenties' (xiv) and that 'the Divinity of our Lord, some think, had gone all but in name by the beginning of the century' (xiv). Drawing from Catholic premillennial eschatology, the novel leads up to a final battle of Armageddon in which the antichrist attempts to destroy the faithful of earth - Robert Hugh Benson, *Lord of the World* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1908).
[136] Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 461.
[137] Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion*, 311.

Dispensationalism is a premillennial doctrine that divides the Bible's chronology into interpretive periods called dispensations. Darby's work became influential in the United States through the theologian Cyrus Scofield (1843–1921). His *Reference Bible* (1909) was enormously successful, and it sold over one million copies within twenty years of its publication.[138] Scofield's Bible also propagated much of the dispensational premillennial thinking throughout the 1910s and 1920s that would manifest in fundamentalism. Scofield, for example, believed that the second coming of Christ would occur after the tribulation—a period of prophesied heightened hardship and turmoil.[139] More importantly, his work popularised the importance of the rapture in fundamentalist eschatology.[140] The rapture, which is not synonymous with the second coming, refers to the moment when Christ will return in the air and call members of his Church to heaven. The earth will then suffer the tribulation, which will finally herald the second coming of Christ.[141] Billy Sunday also preached that there are 'two distinct phases' in the coming of Christ: 'the Rapture, or taking up into the air' and 'his coming … at the close of the Tribulation.'[142] Clarence Larkin (1850–1924), an influential dispensationalist, visualised dispensational, prophetic thinking into a number of charts. Figure 9 shows Larkin's account of biblical chronology, which includes the end-times.

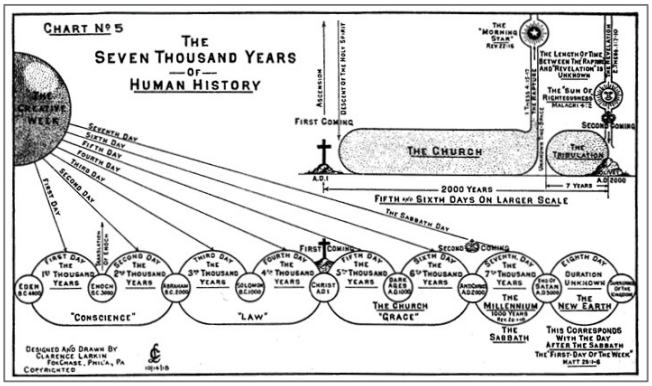

Figure 9. Premillennial dispensational chronology[143]

(Image not in copyright)

[138] R. Todd Mangum and Mark S. Sweetman, *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009), 7.
[139] Ibid., 83.
[140] Ibid., 72.
[141] The chronology of the tribulation and the rapture also produces significant debate, which is far beyond the scope and intent of this chapter.
[142] Billy Sunday, "Implications of Christ's Imminent Coming," 137.
[143] Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth; or, God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (Philadelphia: Clarence Larkin Estate, 1920), 16.

Sinclair used fundamentalism's expectation of Christ's return to create *They Call Me Carpenter*; in *The Millennium*, he uses its conception of the future with the same satiric effect, creating the subtitled *A Comedy of the Year 2000*. What is significant for this dissertation is not so much Sinclair's strict adherence to dispensational doctrine, but his representation of the cultural spirit of end-times prophecy. Standing in opposition to Bellamy's postmillennial utopia that was achieved through a peaceful transition, Sinclair views the year 2000 as a date that effectively amounts to Armageddon. *The Millennium* opens with the elite of society enjoying their status and position at a lavish party on the roof of the Pleasure Palace, a clubhouse in New York City. They are gathered to inaugurate a revolutionary new airplane, The Monarch of the Air—which travels at a suitably millennial thousand miles an hour and at two thousand feet. Sinclair's vision of the millennium at this point in the novel is a capitalist dystopia for the working classes.

Members of the elite dominate those beneath them through a caste system. The elite have become their own gods in this future. Building upon socialists' criticism of the Church's complicity in suppressing the working class, the characterisation of the Lord Bishop acts as a mandate for the actions of the elite. The Bishop has become fat on the profits of his Church, and his 'robes were jeweled with scarlet and purple' (19). Sinclair greatly increases the role of the Bishop in the published novel—as opposed to the play, in which the Bishop only plays a minor role. This allows for a greater sense of comedic effect throughout the work, and it demonstrates how *The Millennium* emerges from the same cultural space as *They Call Me Carpenter*. Echoing Calvinism, the elite refer to themselves as 'the chosen ones of the earth' (9). They are the ones 'to whom God in His infinite wisdom has entrusted the care of the property interests of the country,' but disaster falls upon them (33–34). Sinclair presents a prescient account of a radioactive accident that causes a toxic gas to wipe out all life on earth. In the spirit of Gregory Corso's *The Bomb* (1958), the power of radioactivity becomes an act of divinity—or divinity itself—with the power to end life on earth, a 'do-it-yourself apocalypse.'[144] Humanity no longer needs God to destroy itself but has gained sufficient technological knowledge to do this for itself. Indeed, the toxic gases and armaments of the First World War would have made Sinclair's fictional rendition all too familiar in the consciousness of society.

Therefore, it falls to humanity to establish the Rapture's agency. The elite escape into the air upon the Monarch of the Air, which they have symbolically described as

[144] Ketterer, *New Worlds*, 4.

setting them 'absolutely apart' from all others so that they, 'the chosen few,' 'might gather' in the sky (20). The chosen elite experience a rapture of human agency; they are the Church of capitalism called into the air to meet Christ. However, in Sinclair's eschatology, Christ has already returned in *They Call Me Carpenter* and so the elite must descend back to earth to face the consequences of a human-derived disaster. Standing in comedic contrast to Christ's platitude 'blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth,' it falls to the elite to inherit a new earth of Sinclair's making.[145] They are the ones who, like Christ and his saints, descend back to earth to usher in a new millennium.

Whereas science fiction often uses the destruction of the world to initiate dystopia, Sinclair already regards the world as dystopian, and so he sets out to create a utopia.[146] *The Millennium* offers a homiletic reading: a world that was dystopian becomes utopian only when the survivors live by socialism through their own personal transformations and by living out the message of *They Call Me Carpenter*. The story concentrates on the responses of eleven survivors. Here *The Millennium* takes on Darwinian implications that allow for a naturalistic thematic interpretation. Sinclair does not change the environment in which the inhabitants of New York live—the city remains and the natural world does not perish in the catastrophe—but he does alter the social structures of society. Viewed through the lens of Darwinism, then, *The Millennium* is really about the struggle between the Spencerian and Huxleyan modes. This battle plays out in a new creation that emerges from the ruins of the former capitalist world, and those surviving must consider which future they want: capitalist or socialist.

Sinclair's work also prefigures Philip Lamy's positing of '"secular" millennialists.'[147] Lamy suggests that secular millennialists adhere to the idea of a 'man-made' Apocalypse, which can include 'environmental degradation … or nuclear war.'[148] Like Sinclair, Lamy rejects the notion that the second coming has any part to play in the secular millennium, although Sinclair does appropriate Christ's return to establish his authorial millennial purpose.[149] Ketterer argues— with reference to Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950)—that the notion of a second Adam and Eve is also a popular

[145] Matthew 5:5.
[146] Ketterer, *New Worlds*, 102.
[147] Philip Lamy, "Secularizing the Millennium: Survivalists, Militias, and the New World Order," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 94.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid., 95.

theme in science fiction narratives with millennial connotations.[150] Ketterer states that it occurs more often than not as a result of a 'nuclear holocaust' that sees survivors colonise a new world.[151] Sinclair also creates his own Adam and Eve through the characters Billy and Helen, and they form the catalyst for the socialist utopia that becomes the new world. They decide to create a new colony where 'free institution will prevail' (126) and where 'the rights of the mind are recognised – a world whose laws are made by men!' (128). The Church has no place in their future, and their vision of utopia becomes a reaction against 'the darkness and misery' of the old world in which humanity was tangled in 'ignorance and superstition' (128). Billy and Helen represent a Huxleyan response to the changed circumstances of the future. They understand that egalitarianism and higher ethics are the basis upon which a society must exist. Those survivors who reject Billy and Helen's future suffer the wrath of the only surviving member of the lowest caste, Tuttle.

Tuttle takes on a distinctly Spencerian role of the fittest of the survivors: he is physically the strongest of all, fuelled by hatred, and he also possesses a cunning intelligence. Tuttle instigates his own dictatorship and enslaves the survivors. Tired of slavery, the survivors flee, but they fall by the wayside through an inadvertent creation of a feudal society that sees them survive on the canned food so maligned in *The Jungle*. This was 'the kind of food which had been canned in a capitalist civilization!,' Sinclair reminds the reader (135). Tuttle discovers the formula for a food tablet that will meet all nutritional needs. He becomes the leader of a new capitalist system that tempts back the once feudal elite to become workers in his food tablet factory.

Here, Sinclair uses the novel as an opportunity to attack leaders like Billy Sunday for their relationship to the capitalist elite. Tuttle offers the Bishop a deal that the Bishop will receive food tablets without labour just as long as he preaches of heaven and life after death; the Bishop must also preach biblical justification for slavery and capitalism: 'servants obey your masters' and 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.'[152] Perhaps referencing Sunday—in addition to offering further indictment of the capitalist system controlling even the leisure time of the working classes—the Bishop founds an Anti-Saloon League, for which Tuttle rewards him with additional food tablets.[153] 'I tell

[150] Ketterer, *New Worlds*, 34.
[151] Ibid., 108.
[152] Ephesians 6:5–8, Mark 12:27.
[153] Whilst Billy Sunday was never an official spokesperson of the Anti-Saloon League, he certainly supported its aims and objectives, particularly in his 'Booze Sermon.' Roger A. Bruns, *Preacher: Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 163.

you, you can't get along without the church,' the Bishop argues, 'without someone to teach obedience and respect for authority to your working class' (195).

The Millennium, though, is a novel of transformation, no less so for the Bishop. Sinclair uses Marx's Labour Theory of Value to reveal to the Bishop the failings of a capitalist system. Tuttle's factory begins to create a surplus of tablets, and he closes down production. He becomes a capitalist dictator so sure of his power over the working classes that he no longer needs the mandate of the Church. 'You've got to loaf round all day looking solemn and putting on fat,' Tuttle accuses the Bishop, 'well, let me tell you the day has passed when you can work that kind of racket!' (195). 'What is a man to do who is starving and can't find work?,' the Bishop asks, 'God knows,' responds Tuttle (197).

The Bishop becomes a member of the unfrocked clergy, preaches against capitalism and—along with others—establishes the IWW. He becomes a socialist and a "Wobbly" so maligned by the crowds in the pages of *They Call Me Carpenter*. The aim of Carpenter is complete: by experiencing life as a member of the working classes, the Church, through the characterisation of the Bishop, can see the ills of capitalism. The cooperative Commonwealth becomes the foundation upon which the Bishop and the elite now base their future. Indeed, the IWW constitution stated that 'by organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.'[154] Sinclair's *The Millennium* has achieved such a purpose from the shell of a formerly capitalist society. No longer does the Bishop claim 'in the name of the religion,' (121) but 'in the name of the Co-operative Commonwealth' (222). Socialism has become the new religion. It is an alternative that echoes Sinclair's contemporaries who saw socialism as the 'modern expression' of the 'same something' that Christ and the prophets preached.[155]

Tuttle's machines become the property of all, and the workers receive the value of what they produce—socialist rebirth has occurred. Sinclair's representation of capitalism as a deleterious force demonstrates the naturalist legacy of which the novel is a part: it was the 'forces that made us what we were, and we didn't understand,' the former elite realise (236). Darwinism, therefore, coexists with a socialist theology that taught that the environment of capitalism was the primary source of evil, not human nature.[156] The

[154] Industrial Workers of the World, "Preamable," 13.
[155] Everett Dean Martin, "Why I Am a Socialist," *Christian Socialist* 6, no. 3 (1909): 2.
[156] Jacob Dorn, "The Kingdom of God as Cooperative Commonwealth: Socialist Christians, the Millennial Ideal, and the State," in *Expectations for the Millennium: American Socialist Visions of the Future*, ed. Peter H. Buckingham (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 46.

Bishop and the surviving members of the elite move out of the city, and they are surprised to find Billy and Helen alive and well. They are prospering without food tablets in what is a literary representation of Sinclair's Helicon Hall. Its gates become the metaphoric pearly ones: its 'huge bronze gates' (227) open in greeting, and the members of the Commonwealth begin to wear heavenly garments that produce a 'Utopian effect' (231).

The millennium has begun, and Sinclair adds a final satiric nod to dispensationalism in writing that the inhabitants of earth began to live 'under the new dispensation' (232), and 'the Co-operative Commonwealth reigned for ever after!' (246). Like Bellamy and Brooks, Sinclair does not abandon the Church in the future, in the way that Morris had done. The Bishop continues to perform the celebratory works of his old office but only because the Church that he continues to represent has been 'redeemed by the spirit of Brotherhood,' and this is the Church that socialists will join.[157]

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Upton Sinclair reacted against fundamentalist expectations of Christ's second coming and his promised millennium in the two satirical works *They Call Me Carpenter* and *The Millennium*. Written in the midst of The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the 1920s, both novels present the argument that the Church no longer preaches the true message of Christ derived from the Gospels. Each work reflected Sinclair's conception of who Christ was and what Christ's teaching meant in the context of American socialism. Capitalism became the greatest enemy of Sinclair, and he created a present and a future that relied on humanity's own power of betterment, rather than external interventions from the power of God or the Church.

The Millennium crossed boundaries of genre, and it belongs in the realms of utopian science fiction. Indeed, Eric Carl Link argues that 'positive literary naturalism' began to include notions of the utopian as an extension of Bellamy's work.[158] *They Call Me Carpenter* owed much to the legacy of the nineteenth-century Christ-novel, and it is certainly an evolution of their theme. However, miracles were less certain in the novel, and even Christ himself was shaped by the forces of the city. Despite its comedy and obvious socialist implications, *They Call Me Carpenter* appears not to have caused much

[157] Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion*, 300.
[158] Eric Carl Link, *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 69.

controversy. Only one review hints that it could be blasphemous, but even this occurred outside the United States.[159] It is likely that the novel did not meet with violent criticism, I believe, because it did not threaten the foundations of the Bible. Indeed, *They Call Me Carpenter* relied upon the Bible for its narrative—Sinclair provides a comprehensive list of citations from the Gospels at the end of the novel.[160]

The next chapter explores a work that does question the historical inerrancy of the Bible. It refutes its miracles and denies its virgin birth. Most importantly, it strikes at the foundational notion of fundamentalism: that the Bible was the inerrant word of God. The novel is Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* (1927). Billy Sunday returns in caricature at the hands of Upton Sinclair's young protégé. Whilst working at Helicon Hall, Sinclair charged Lewis with the task of janitor, but Lewis used the opportunity to inherit the older man's sense of satire that he employs throughout *Elmer Gantry*. Writing to Lewis some years later, Sinclair complained that 'you write a lot of conversation … without any point or worth-whileness at all.' [161] The conversations in *Elmer Gantry*, though, are certainly worthy of study, and they become the basis upon which Lewis culminates the questing for God that has filled the pages of the naturalists introduced thus far.

[159] "They Call Me Carpenter," *The Observer*, April 22, 1923, accessed May 18, 2016, http://search.proquest.com/news/docview/480847144/66EBA54B18F645F9PQ/1?accountid=14511.
[160] Sinclair, *They Call Me Carpenter*, 224–25.
[161] Gore Vidal, "The Romance of Sinclair Lewis," in *George Babbitt*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 73–74.

Chapter 5

Landing the Liberal Haymaker: Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry

'If the Fundamentalists should succeed, then out of the Christian Church would go some of the best Christian life and consecration of this generation - multitudes of men and women, devout and reverent Christians.'[1]

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969)

Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951) grew up fascinated with the architecture, rites, and rituals of Minnesota's German Catholic cathedrals.[2] Embracing evangelical Christianity as a student at Oberlin College, Lewis vocally proclaimed the Gospels. He was a proponent of muscular Christianity and became an active member of the YMCA.[3] Lewis would later disavow the Church at Yale University, but the influence of faith and institutional religion did not fail to have an impact on his works. Lewis took a keen interest in the fundamentalist movement. He kept clippings of the fundamentalist campaigner John Roach Straton (1875–1929) and witnessed J. Frank Norris (1877–1952)—the 'Texas Tornado'— preaching. Lewis interviewed Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), and he even underwent a fake conversion at the hands of Billy Sunday just to experience what all the fuss was about.[4] Lewis's bestselling *Elmer Gantry* (1927) is a satirical attack upon the purported certainties and perceived hypocrisies of religious fundamentalism expressed through the eponymous preacher Elmer Gantry.[5] Although Lewis is sure to state at the beginning of the novel that 'no character in this book is the portrait of any actual person' (v), the reader is left in no doubt that Lewis's contemporaries Sunday, Straton, Norris, and McPherson certainly influence the spirit of the novel. *Elmer Gantry*

[1] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?: A Sermon Preached at the First Presbyterian Church, New York, May 21, 1922," in *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Michael Warner (New York: The Library of America, 1999), 780.
[2] George Killough, "German Catholicism, Sauk Centre, and Sinclair Lewis," *American Literary Realism* 39, no. 2 (2007):113.
[3] Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 50.
[4] John Franklyn Norris was a fundamentalist who converted to Christianity in a revival tent. He vocally attacked higher biblical criticism and was a well-known radio pastor. Aimee Semple McPherson was a hugely successful and influential evangelist. She also pioneered the use of radio to spread her message of the Gospels throughout the United States.
[5] Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927).

received widespread criticism from the clergy and the laity alike because it threatened the Bible and fundamentalist conceptions of biblical truth and morality. Sunday even said after its publication that 'if I'd been God, I sure would have landed a haymaker right on the old button [of Lewis].'[6] I propose, then, that Lewis's work is a manifesto of support for theological liberalism and an attack upon fundamentalist certitude. In *Seven Questions in Dispute* (1924), William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925)—a democrat leader and vehement believer in biblical inerrancy—accused modernism of attacking 'all that is vital in the Christian religion.'[7] Bryan's work sums up the fundamentalists' objections to liberalism, and I use the work throughout the chapter to demonstrate the cultural significance of *Elmer Gantry* as a response to such fundamentalism. Figure 1, entitled 'The Descent of the Modernists,' shows the frontispiece to *Seven Questions in Dispute*. In the image, modernists descend a staircase of theological criticisms; the staircase leads from the light of Christianity to the dark tomb of atheism.

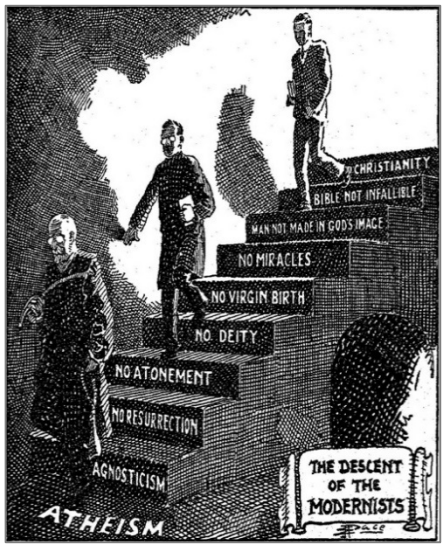

Figure 1. 'The Descent of the Modernists'[8]

(Image not in copyright)

Throughout *Elmer Gantry*, Lewis uses a clear chronology stretching between 1902 and 1928 that allows him to chart the evolving, antagonistic relationship between fundamentalism and liberalism that lead to Bryan's *Seven Questions in Dispute* and works

[6] Richard R. Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street* (New York: Random House, 2002), 302.
[7] William Jennings Bryan, *Seven Questions in Dispute* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), 10.
[8] Ibid., 2.

like it. I argue here that the religious naturalism explored in the preceding chapters culminates in *Elmer Gantry*, which sits at the cusp of naturalism and modernism. Moreover, whilst *Elmer Gantry* is unquestionably about the life of the preacher that gives the novel its name, I argue that Elmer's presence has dominated critical readings of the novel to the detriment of the novel's other characterisations and its indebtedness to the Church culture against which it reacted. I focus my reading upon the characterisation of Frank Shallard and Frank's oppositional relationship to Elmer. I build the opposition upon two key themes that emerged from: the effects of higher biblical criticism upon the clergy and laity and the expression of muscular Christianity through the work of the YMCA. Thus, largely by relocating the character of Frank Shallard from cast of supporting actors to antagonist, this chapter provides a new reading of *Elmer Gantry* that situates it as part of a much larger context of America's religious history.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the deleterious effects upon the career and reputation of the conservative preacher who embraced modernism. It then turns to the significant influence that Robert Ingersoll and higher biblical criticism have upon the lives of Elmer and Frank. Lewis creates a duality of worldly success and spiritual success through Elmer and Frank's reaction to theological modernism, and he reconstructs the roles played in 'The Descent of the Modernists." In terms of worldly success, Elmer becomes a successful preacher, but Frank descends to the status of a social outcast. However, in terms of spiritual success, fundamentalists like Elmer descend to the tomb of hypocrisy; liberals like Frank rise to the status of what Lewis describes—in his own advertising copy for *Elmer Gantry*—as 'the noblest and most inspiring of preachers in fiction.' [9] Interlaced with Lewis's exploration of theological modernism, I then demonstrate how Lewis uses Elmer to undermine the relationship between faith and masculinity common to muscular Christianity, and which found expression in the work of America's YMCA. My reading of Lewis culminates in an analysis of the Scopes Trial and the emancipation of Frank Shallard at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. George Marsden argues that the Scopes Trial was far greater than a work of fiction could have imagined 'in dramatizing the symbolic last stand of nineteenth-century America against the twentieth century.'[10] In *Elmer Gantry*, though, Lewis successfully imagines a moment

[9] Sinclair Lewis, *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis, 1919–1930*, ed. Alfred Harcourt (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952), 265.
[10] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 185.

of American history that was in a state of flux. Religious orthodoxy was desperately trying to hold back a wave of modernism that had been gathering momentum and magnitude throughout the preceding decades. *Elmer Gantry* is not an anti-religious novel, but one in which Lewis reveals the complex relationship between belief and unbelief—each needs the other to survive in a modernising America.[11]

Modernism and a Divided Clergy

To understand how Lewis uses the characters Elmer and Frank to challenge the fundamentalist conceptions of 'The Descent of the Modernists,' it is first necessary to understand the stakes of adopting theological liberalisation for the American preacher. As early as 1893, the Presbyterian Church convicted Charles Augustus Briggs—the new chair of Biblical Theology at Union Theological Seminary—of heresy, and it excommunicated him. Briggs' crime was embracing higher biblical criticism and daring to question the Bible's perceived inerrancy. Briggs stated that 'higher criticism has forced its way into the Bible itself and brought us face to face with the holy contents, so that we may see and know whether they are divine or not.'[12] Briggs recalls studying higher criticism in Berlin and argues that 'the issue of the science of Higher Criticism is so certain that I am not anxious to hasten its end.'[13] A generation later, Harry Emerson Fosdick defended men like Briggs. Fosdick argued that fundamentalists aimed to 'drive out of the evangelical churches' those who held liberal viewpoints.[14] For Fosdick, fundamentalism was 'essentially illiberal and intolerant.'[15] Consequently, in 1924, he resigned from the Presbyterian Church and became a Baptist minister.[16]

The higher criticism that Fosdick embraced was responsible for contributing to a perceived loss of morality because fundamentalists believed it to be un-American. Figure 2 shows the title image to the chapter 'The Inspiration of the Bible' from *Seven Questions in Dispute*. The hull of the menacing *Destructive Criticism* and its bow wave assail the

[11] Killough explains how American Catholicism receives a rather flattering interpretation from Lewis, who regarded it as one that is 'superior to the militant Protestant Church' - Killough, "German Catholicism," 119.
[12] Charles Augustus Briggs, *The Authority of the Holy Scriptures: An Inaugural Address* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891) 34.
[13] Ibid., 93.
[14] Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," 776.
[15] Ibid.
[16] The Presbyterian Church stood at the centre of fundamentalism's response to modernism - Bradley J. Longfield, "For the Church and Country: The Fundamentalist-Modernist Conflict in the Presbyterian Church," *The Journal of Presbyterian History (1997–)* 78, no. 1 (2002): 36.

Word of God upon the sea of 'Unbelief.' The caption reads 'never fear, brethren! She has weathered many a gale as rough as this; and besides, the Master is aboard.'[17] Bryan articulates the very real threat that biblical criticism posed to fundamentalists. 'Is the Bible true?,' Bryan writes, 'that is the great issue in the world to-day, surpassing in importance all national and international questions.' [18] Fosdick's position was so threatening to fundamentalists that Sunday even attributed pejorative stereotypes to him—Fosdick was a 'garlic-smelling, bomb throwing, unassimilated immigrant.'[19]

Figure 2. Unbelief batters the *Word of God*
(Image not in copyright)

Whilst Briggs and Fosdick were unquestionably important national figures, they were also members of a clergy and an institutional religion that Lewis had rejected. Lewis, therefore, needed a way to bring to *Elmer Gantry* the same ideas that Briggs and Fosdick contended but in a suitably populist and bold and brash way. The solution that Lewis found, I propose, was the work of Robert Ingersoll, 'The Great Agnostic.' Lewis prepared for *Elmer Gantry* by 'steeping himself in the so-called Higher Criticism of Ernest Renan and others,' but Ingersoll's expansion of nineteenth-century biblical criticism plays the starring role in the novel.[20] Figure 3 shows the only known surviving photograph of

[17] Bryan, *Seven Questions*, 14.
[18] Ibid., 15.
[19] William G. McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955) 281.
[20] Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 270.

Ingersoll lecturing to a crowd during one of his many national tours—in an average year, Ingersoll spoke between as many as one hundred to two hundred times.[21]

Figure 3. Robert Ingersoll addressing a crowd on the works of Thomas Paine
(Unable to find appropriate copyright owner)

Ingersoll described how a 'deadly conflict' was underway between those who sought the truth and 'the great ignorant religious mass,' and, as we shall see, sentiments like this inform my reading of Elmer and Frank.[22] Lewis clearly understood the importance of Ingersoll's work in America's religious history and its potentially fractious effects upon human relationships. Even before turning to higher biblical criticism in *Elmer Gantry*, Lewis had explored its cultural significance in *Main Street* (1920)—his satire of small-town, Minnesotan life. Carol Milford, later Kennicott, flees from the conservative Blodgett College, which Lewis describes as 'still combating the recent heresies of Voltaire, Darwin, and Robert Ingersoll.'[23] Later in the novel, the liberal freethinking Carol visits Mrs. Champ Perry, a member of society's church-going elite. Mrs. Champ Perry complains that 'we don't need all … this terrible Higher Criticism that's ruining our young men in college.'[24] She believes that 'what we need is to get back to the true Word of God, and a good sound belief in hell, like we used to have it preached to us.'[25]

[21] Paul Stob, "Religious Conflict and Intellectual Agency: Robert Ingersoll's Contributions to American Thought and Culture," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 16, no. 4 (2013): 723.
[22] Robert G. Ingersoll, *The Gods and Other Lectures* (Washington D.C.: C.P.Farrell, 1879), 80.
[23] Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1920), 1.
[24] Ibid., 152.
[25] Lewis, *Main Street*, 152. George Marsden also refers to *Main Street* as a work that highlights 'the dullness of smalltown America' and the larger battle between tradition and modernity in both religious and economic contexts - Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 185.

Lewis would returned to Ingersoll again in the short story "Onward Sons of Ingersoll" (1935). The story attacks religious certainty, but it also incorporates Harry Emerson Fosdick into the narrative, thus illustrating Lewis's awareness of his historical importance.[26] Lewis's authorial voice also describes Ingersoll as a 'rather sentimental agnostic.'[27] Couple this with the fact that Ingersoll's own father was a preacher, and a real sense of the conflicting account of religious experience that Ingersoll brings to *Elmer Gantry* begins to emerge.[28] Ingersoll was dangerous to fundamentalists, however, because he attacked the way in which orthodox religion 'destroys human love.'[29] He argued that the prospect of any heaven was utterly abhorrent if those that he loved were not there, writing: 'I would rather stand by the ones who have loved me and whom I know.'[30] For Ingersoll, spending eternity whilst knowing that others were perishing was unthinkable: 'I can conceive of no heaven without the loved of this earth … I will stay with my people.'[31] Ingersoll proclaimed the beauty of human love and its ability to transform earth to heaven. He wrote that 'love is the only bow on life's dark cloud'; 'it is the morning and the evening star … but with it, earth is heaven, and we are gods.'[32]

Elmer Gantry and the Spirit of Robert Ingersoll

Despite Lewis's creating in Elmer a caricature of Billy Sunday, Elmer's success equally predicates on the existence of Ingersoll. The work and life of Ingersoll become the pivot upon which Lewis balances the characterisations of Elmer and Frank—rather like the railroad hand-car that both men operate together at one point in the novel (94).[33] Elmer adopts Ingersoll's skilled oratory and finds success; Frank adopts Ingersoll's theology and becomes the novel's Harry Emerson Fosdick—like Ingersoll, the fictive Frank Shallard is also the son of a minister (118). Lewis introduces the Ingersollian satire at the outset of the novel during Elmer's education at the conservative Terwillinger College.

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[26] Sinclair Lewis, "Onward, Sons of Ingersoll!," *Scribner's Magazine* 98, no.2 (1935): 70.
[27] Ibid., 67.
[28] Mark A. Plummer, *Robert G. Ingersoll: Peoria's Pagan Politician* (Macomb, Ill.: Western Illinois University, 1984), 10.
[29] Robert G. Ingersoll, "Orthodoxy: A Lecture," in *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll in Twelves Volumes*, *Vol. 2: Lectures*, ed. Robert G. Ingersoll (New York: The Dresden Publishing Co., C.P. Farrell, 1909), 418.
[30] Ibid., 419.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 420.
[33] Everett Hamner reads the hand-car as metaphor for Lewis's own 'personal convictions' - Everett Hamner, "Damning Fundamentalism: Sinclair Lewis and the Trials of Fiction," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 55, no. 2 (2009): 282.

The reader first meets Elmer not in the Church, but in a saloon. 'Elmer Gantry was drunk. He was eloquently drunk, lovingly and pugnaciously drunk,' Lewis writes (1). Elmer is not alone but with Jim Lefferts—his college roommate. Jim is the 'college freethinker' and 'the only man … who doubted that Lot's wife had been changed into salt' (9). Jim's prize possessions were Ingersoll's *Some Mistakes of Moses* and Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*.[34] These works represent the 'contempt' that Jim himself has for the Church (20), but they also situate *Elmer Gantry* in the wider context of biblical criticism. Indeed, just like Jim, Ingersoll argued that 'Lot's wife was not changed into chloride of sodium.'[35] Ingersoll also argued that—like the naturalists—'we are moulded and fashioned by our surroundings.'[36] He provided a far from complimentary assessment of the revivalists that he encountered in his youth. Ingersoll claimed that 'they did not know much, but they believed a great deal.'[37] For Ingersoll, the environment in which they preached was invariably 'badly ventilated' and 'exceedingly warm'—just the right conditions, he argued, for 'hysterical amens' and a loss of sense.[38]

Lewis also provides an analysis of the revival experience that eventually leads to the satirical Ingersollean core of the novel. He explores the psychological factors of what he believes constitutes religious experience: mob mentality, peer pressure, and the effect that a preacher can have on the will of another. Elmer saves Eddie Fislinger, president of the YMCA, from an angry mob that the latter is attempting to convert. Elmer—who at this point in the novel has no interest in a career as a preacher—becomes the 'miserable sacrificial lamb' and the target of 'holy plotting' (23). Elmer falls victim to the charismatic Judson Roberts, who is the state secretary of the YMCA and a skilful revivalist. Unable to resist the mounting social pressure, Elmer converts in front of a mob-like crush of 'hysterical worshipers' (48). The environment forces his decision, and the religious heat of the revival tent becomes just as much a controlling force as the cauldron-like Bowery of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. *Elmer Gantry*, therefore, may not immediately stand out as an example of naturalism, but its exploration of the human

[34] E.P. Roe (1838–1888) was a pastor and novelist. His wrote works of morality with a distinct religious purpose.
[35] Robert G. Ingersoll, *Some Mistakes of Moses* (Washington, D.C.: C.P. Farrell Publisher, 1879), 265–66.
[36] Robert G. Ingersoll, "Why I am an Agnostic," in *Ingersoll's Greatest Lectures: Containing Speeches and Addresses Never Before Printed Outside of the Complete Works*, ed. The Freethought Press Association (New York: The Freethought Press Association, 1944), 5.
[37] Ibid., 14.
[38] Ibid., 11.

condition under pressure certainly bears a thematic resonance. Lewis's use of the words 'emotional,' 'hysterical,' 'noisy,' 'volitionless,' 'shrieking,' and 'rhapsodic mob' to describe the revival tent would not seem out of place in the street fight that begins *Maggie* (47–48). Crane describes the battle that a young Jimmie undertakes with the children of 'Devil's Row' with the similar words 'howling,' 'furious,' 'barbaric,' 'blasphemous chatter,' and 'whirling mob.'[39] For Lewis, then, the conversion experience becomes a physical battle, and he even describes worshippers as 'elbowing the standers in the aisles and pushing forward to kneel in agonized happiness' (46).

Lewis now provides the most significant stroke of Ingersollean satire, which becomes the catalyst for Elmer's own success throughout the novel (56). Newly converted and asked to address the members of Terwillinger, Elmer—who does not possess the rigor to write his own words—plagiarises Ingersoll from Jim's library. 'Love is the only bow on life's dark cloud. It is the Morning and the Evening Star. It shines upon the cradle of the babe, and sheds its radiance upon the quiet tomb,' Elmer copies into his notebook (57). Standing before the expectant congregation, Elmer appears the model of holiness. He explains how he allowed God to 'fill his heart with higher aspirations' and begins to preach that 'love is the one thing that can really sure-enough lighten all of life's dark cloud. Yes, sir, just Love! It's the morning and the evening star' (57). Elmer reasons, 'chances are nobody there tonight has ever read Ingersoll' (57). Elmer's use of Ingersoll calls into question the value of religious teaching, and it challenges notions of religious truth. Those who hear Elmer's plagiarism believe the words to be those of a preacher that God has inspired, but the reader knows the words belong to Ingersoll—whom Elmer has described as a 'rotten old atheist' (56). Elmer does not believe himself nor the Bible to be inspired by God, but he is just as effective as Sunday. Elmer is a man who has mastered the performance of religion, and the title of Doctor of Divinity is one that he coverts—and eventually achieves—in his quest to become the most successful preacher in American history. In a telling moment later in the novel, Andrew Pengilly—a laudable if somewhat naïve preacher—understands Elmer's deceptions and asks him: 'Mr. Gantry … why don't you believe in God?' (367).

Ingersoll's own attitude towards public speaking reveals the depth of Lewis's satirical rendering of Elmer. When asked what makes for a successful public speaker,

[39] Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), 1-3.

Ingersoll responded that 'without thoughts words are empty purses.'[40] He continued to explain that a successful oration is not simply a matter of a 'loud voice' and 'appropriate gestures.'[41] He advised rigorous study to approach a subject 'from all sides.'[42] Lewis, though, reminds the reader throughout *Elmer Gantry* that Elmer is 'booming and confident' and that he is 'big and handsome and glossy' (247). Elmer is a contradiction to Ingersoll's advice, but his success depends upon him. When asked from where he got his masterpiece sermon, Elmer cites praying. 'Some day he'll be one of our leading prophets,' Dr. Quarles states to all listening (60). So important for Elmer are the words of Ingersoll that they appear nine times throughout the novel when inspiration fails and when Elmer needs to appear as a sanctified preacher. At his first pastorate in Banjo Crossing, for example, Elmer preaches his opening sermon '"Love! Love! Love! … What is Love? Listen! It is the rainbow that stands out, in all its glorious many-colored hues, illuminating and making glad against the dark clouds of life' (275). In the much later work *Gideon Planish* (1943), Lewis resurrects Elmer, who has become 'the best known of the Manhattan radio pastors,' despite (or perhaps because of) continuing to rely upon the words of Ingersoll.[43] There is a 'folksy quality about his regular daily broadcast, "Love Is the Morning Star",' Lewis writes.[44]

Lewis's use of Ingersoll also relates directly to Billy Sunday, which is perhaps why he took such exception to the novel. In 1882, Ingersoll delivered a Decoration Day address to The Grand Army of the Republic.[45] In 1915, Sunday faced accusations from *The Truth Seeker* magazine for plagiarising Ingersoll's address in a sermon that he had preached three years earlier.[46] *The New York Times* printed parallel transcripts of Sunday's 1912 sermon and the words of Ingersoll from *The Truth Seeker*; the similarities are hard to deny.[47] Sunday, however, categorically denied borrowing from—let alone reading any of—Ingersoll's address. He explained that 'people … send him clippings'

[40] Robert Ingersoll, "How to Become an Orator," in *The Works of Robert Ingersoll, Vol. 8: Interviews*, ed. Robert G. Ingersoll (New York: The Dresden Publishing Co., C.P. Farrell, 1909), 594.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Sinclair Lewis, *Gideon Planish: A Novel*, (London: Cape, 1943), 169.
[44] Ibid.
[45] W. A. Firstenberger, *In Rare Form: A Pictorial History of Baseball Evangelist Billy Sunday* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005) 32.
[46] James M. Hutchisson, *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis 1920–1930* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 140.
[47] "Accuses Sunday of Cribbing Ingersoll," *New York Times*, January 31, 1915, accessed February 10, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/97684953?accountid=14511. *The Truth Seeker* was freethought publication; *The New York Times* referred to the January 26, 1917 issue.

and perhaps this was how the work of Ingersoll found its way into his sermon.[48] Sunday viewed magazines like *The Truth Seeker* as populated with 'the same old low down flock of booze-hoisting infidels.'[49] Evidence does suggest, though, that Sunday owned a copy of *Ingersollia: Gems of Thought from the Lectures, Speeches and Conversations of the Late Col. Robert G. Ingersoll*.[50] However, to be fair to Sunday, none of the plagiarised content listed in the *New York Times* appears in this work.[51] Whether one Powell Arnette knew this or not—in his scathing letter to the *The Sun* (Baltimore)—is unclear, but his summation of Sunday's apparent use of Ingersoll is a useful commentary upon my reading of Sunday's close relationship to Elmer. Arnette wrote that 'after vilifying Colonel Ingersoll in a scandalous manner [Sunday] finds the speeches of such an intellectual genius very useful in business.' [52] Unlike Sunday's, Elmer's plagiarism goes undiscovered, but Elmer's denial of Ingersoll throughout the novel is certainly reminiscent of Sunday's own defence.

Everett Hamner regards Elmer's obvious shortcomings as sufficient to see him as the 'anti-Christ' in the novel.[53] Hamner comes to his conclusion in the context of an analysis that compares elements of Lewis's *Arrowsmith* (1925) to *Elmer Gantry*.[54] Martin Arrowsmith, for Hamner, is 'a type of Christ Figure' because he embraces scepticism and scientific learning; science becomes a religion in which Martin actually believes and for which he becomes a national figurehead. Elmer, in contrast, does not believe, but he does achieve national success. For every anti-Christ, though, a balancing Christ-like figure tends to exits. I argue that Frank Shallard—although not a direct rendering of the naturalist Christ—certainly takes on a sacrificial role often associated with Christ and martyrs. In contrast to Elmer, Frank is a sincere preacher, and his struggles with

[48] ""Lies," Sunday Retorts: Says He Never Read Ingersoll, But Uses Clippings," *Special to the New York Times*, January 31, 1915, accessed February 10, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/97674021?accountid=14511.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Firstenberger, *In Rare Form*, 32. Thomas W. Handford, *Ingersollia: Gems of Thought from the Lectures, Speeches and Conversations of the Late Col. Robert G. Ingersoll* (Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Co., 1899).
[51] Sunday, however, did 'readily [admit] having read all Ingersoll's attacks on the validity of the Bible' - McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, 166.
[52] Powell Arnette, "Did Billy Sunday Steal The Oratorical Thunder Of That Arch-Sinner Ingersoll?," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 27, 1915, accessed February 16, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/534982084?accountid=14511.
[53] Hamner, "Damning Fundamentalism," 281.
[54] *Arrowsmith* (1925) charts the life of Martin Arrosmith from small-town America to a leader in America's scientific community - Sinclair Lewis, *Arrowsmith* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1925). Hamner, "Damning Fundamentalism," 281.

theological modernism form the basis of his role in *Elmer Gantry*. Much criticism of *Elmer Gantry* overlooks the presence of Frank. Hamner, for example, describes him as taking a supporting role in the novel; Mark Schorer views Frank as an exterior character 'hovering on the fringes of the plot'; Charles Genthe appraises him as a 'minor character'; and Douglas Walrath asserts that Frank is 'the most tragic pretender in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American fiction.'[55] As these critics have correctly identified, Frank as an individual character does not contribute extensively to *Elmer Gantry*—his story runs parallel to and overlaps Elmer's at three points only.

I, however, regard Frank as a major character in *Elmer Gantry*; he is just as significant in the life of Elmer as Sister Soulsby—another apparently minor character—was in the life of Theron Ware.[56] In the context of Homer's *Illiad*, Alex Woloch has argued that 'the absorption of secondary characters into Achilles' central situation and the framing of Achilles himself within a much larger narrative field is an animating tension of the entire epic.'[57] Where Woloch unfurls this analysis into an exploration of Victorian literature, I propose here that Elmer, Frank, and the context of theological change fulfil these roles within *Elmer Gantry*'s animating tension of the battle between modernism and fundamentalism. Through them Lewis directly challenges images like 'The Descent of the Modernists' and, in Frank, demonstrates a modernist worthy of esteem. If Jim Lefferts represents atheistic opposition to the Bible, then Frank represents the face of liberalism from within the clergy itself. Frank—whom Elmer meets at Mizpah Theological Seminary in the novel's timeline of 1905—becomes a character in the vein of the well-established literary tradition of the doubting preacher in works such as *Theron Ware* and *Robert Elsmere*. D. J. Dooley argues that 'Frank Shallard serves to illustrate Elmer's power and ruthlessness,' and there are certainly elements of this role.[58] Frank's life is a homiletic experience for the reader; they partake in the trials of faith that mark it life and that reflect the theological debates preoccupying a wider society. The character of Frank recapitulates the significance of higher biblical criticism in the novel. Lewis's

[55] Everett Hamner, "Damning Fundamentalism," 278. Charles V. Genthe, "*The Damnation of Theron Ware* and *Elmer Gantry*," *Research Studies* 32 (1964): 334. Douglas Alan Walrath, *Displacing the Divine: The Minister in the Mirror of American Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 228.

[56] Lewis was well aware of Frederic's novel. *Theron Ware* appears prior to *Elmer Gantry* in *Main Street*. Carol Kennicott—who clashes with the cultural conservativism of the town Gopher Prairie—boasts that 'I've been re-reading 'The Damnation of Theron Ware'' - Lewis, *Main Street*, 66.

[57] Alex Woloch, *The One VS. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3.

[58] D.J. Dooley, *The Art of Sinclair Lewis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 133.

rendering of biblical criticism in Elmer was an Ingersollean deception; Frank, in contrast, actually understands Ingersoll and his implications for the Christian faith.

Lewis was certainly aware of biblical criticism's cultural presence and threat to fundamentalists. In *Babbitt* (1922), Lewis's satire of 1920s business culture, Mike Monday—a thinly veiled Billy Sunday—refers to the higher critics as 'a gang of woolly-whiskered book-lice' that 'prefer a lot of Hun science and smutty German criticism to the straight and simple word of God.'[59] Indeed, Billy Sunday himself reacted against the impact of higher biblical criticism and fuelled his own criticism of it with German xenophobia common in the early twentieth century. He described higher criticism as 'rotten' and 'loathsome'; he also claimed that it emerged 'out of a beer-mug in Leipzig or Heidelberg!'[60] Lewis explores the conflation of xenophobia and anti-German feeling associated with modernism and higher criticism through the characterisation of Dr. Bruno Zechlin—a professor at Terwillinger College. Elmer attacks Zechlin and derides his 'heathenish tawny German beard' and his birthplace that is not in Kansas or Ohio but the 'ridiculously named Frankfort' (118). Elmer also takes a stand against higher criticism throughout the novel and refers to it as one of the 'world-menacing perils' (181). When a member of Elmer's congregation asks if Elmer does 'any monkeying around with this higher criticism,' He flatly denies such a possibility (262). Elmer ultimately orchestrates Zechlin's expulsion from Terwillinger, and Zechlin's fate is to become an instantiation of Briggs and Fosdick.

Zechlin's greater role in the novel is to provide Frank with illicit and 'bootlegged' works that provide an important theological and cultural window into the kinds of arguments that liberals were making against the established Church and men like Elmer (123). In addition to Renan's *La Vie de Jésus* and White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, the works are Frederick Morgan Davenport's *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals* (1917), Jabez Thomas Sunderland's *The Origin and Character of the Bible and Its Place Amongst Scared Books* (1893), and Nathaniel Schmidt's *The Prophet of Nazareth* (1907).[61] Davenport, for example, argued that those

[59] Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt*, (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), 76.
[60] Upton Sinclair, *The Profits of Religion: An Essay in Economic Interpretation* (Pasadena: Upton Sinclair, 1918), 208–9.
[61] Later in the novel (246), the reader learns that Zechlin also provided Frank with George Albert Coe, *The Religion of a Mature* Mind (1903); Marcus Dods, *The Bible: Its Origin and Nature* (1905); William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902); Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (1902); and James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1890).

who attend mass revivals all too easily fall victim to mob mentality—thus echoing *Theron Ware*'s Sister Soulsby, who also lifted the curtain upon revivals to reveal their machinery. Davenport explains that 'whole groups may be thrust into hypnotic trance with little difficulty'—just as Elmer himself was.[62] Sunderland's inclusion points to the biblical criticism that is so important in the novel. He argued that 'perhaps there is no subject of more living or more urgent interest now before the religious world than that of "Higher Biblical Criticism" and its consequences.'[63] Indeed, 'The Bible and Modern Criticism' and 'Inspiration for the Bible–Definition, Extent, and Proof' are two essays from *The Fundamentals* that stress the importance of an inerrant Bible.[64]

The extent to which biblical criticism permeates Lewis's characterisation of Frank occurs through his interaction with the Reverend Doctor Phillip McGarry. The sequence is the most detailed in terms of its theology, and it builds upon Frank's earlier contact with Zechlin. If Elmer used Ingersoll to find success, Frank *becomes* Ingersoll. A comparison of Frank's argumentation in the sequence of narrative and Ingersoll's own work makes the similarity between Frank and Ingersoll clear. Frank questions the 'personality and teachings of Jesus' (377); Ingersoll regarded Christ's 'character' as a product of the 'falsehoods' of 'zealous disciples.'[65] Ingersoll argued that 'had we been born in Turkey … most of us would have been Mohammedans and believed in the inspiration of the Koran.'[66] Frank believes that 'most people believe in a Church because they were *born* to it' (377). Frank asks 'what *did* he [Christ] teach?' (378); Ingersoll wondered why Christ did not elucidate upon elements of Christian doctrine that the later Pauline Church introduced, such as the 'scheme of salvation.'[67]

Rather like London had in *The Star Rover*, then, Lewis addresses the historical creation of Christianity's foundations and its historical figure of Christ. Frank's reading

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[62] Frederick Morgan Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 19.
[63] Jabez Thomas Sunderland, *The Origin and Character of the Bible and Its Place Among Sacred Books* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1924), v.
[64] Rev. F. Bettex, "The Bible and Modern Criticism," in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*, *Vol. 4*, ed. A.C. Dixon and Reuben Archer Torrey (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910), 73–90; Rev. James M. Gray, "The Inspiration of the Bible–Definition, Extent, and Proof," in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth, Vol. 3*, ed. A.C. Dixon and Reuben Archer Torrey (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910), 7–41.
[65] Robert Ingersoll, *About the Holy Bible* (Washington, D.C.: C.P. Farrell, 1894), 52.
[66] Ingersoll, *Some Mistakes of Moses*, 36.
[67] Robert G. Ingersoll, "The Talmagian Catechism," in *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 5: Discussions*, ed. Robert G. Ingersoll (New York: The Dresden Publishing Co., C.P. Farrell 1915), 427.

of Zechlin's books and his own friendship with McGarry are part of a spiritual journey that bring Frank in and out of Elmer's orbit throughout the novel. In the novel's timeline of 1922, Frank now rages that he now does not believe Christ to be divine and that heaven probably does not exist. The stakes are clear: 'then just why, Mr. Shallard, don't you get out of the ministry before you're kicked out?' (381). According to Bryan's *Seven Questions in Dispute*, the result of denying the divinity of Christ was a fall into the abyss, Figure 4. Bryan argues that the divinity of Christ 'has been the corner-stone of the Christian Church.'[68] He recognises that there are 'ministers … who openly reject orthodox teachings in regard to Christ's personality.'[69] Frank is one such minister.

Figure 4. 'If Christ is Not God'[70]
(Image not in copyright)

An anonymous believer accuses Frank that he is about to harm religion permanently, thus revealing the central fear of the fundamentalists who opposed liberals like Frank and who lauded men like Elmer (383). Figure 5 ably demonstrates the cultural context of Frank's threat to fundamentalism, and it encapsulates well the arguments that Lewis has been making—an acceptance of evolution and modernism must surely rest upon broken and corrupt foundations that deny the fundamentals of faith. Frank, however, demonstrates that such opinions are unfounded—his faith is not broken or corrupt but merely in the process of change. Frank even reasons to himself that he has 'preached imagination,

[68] Bryan, *Seven Questions*, 29.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 28.

happiness, justice, seeking for truth'; 'there are such things as ethnology and biology,' and 'there are books like … Renan's 'Jesus'' (382). More accurately, then, the image represents Elmer's own hypocrisy, which sees him receive praise and material success. The image has a satirical reading for my purposes because inside the whitewashed Elmer—himself the intact Educational Institution of the image—is a broken and corrupt figure. Frank on the other hand—for his genuine questioning of faith—becomes Lewis's rendering of Briggs and Fosdick. He imagines his own 'spectacular resignation' from a Church that no longer believes the 'Christian Religion' (385). His position as a preacher becomes untenable in his Church in which fundamentalism dominates.

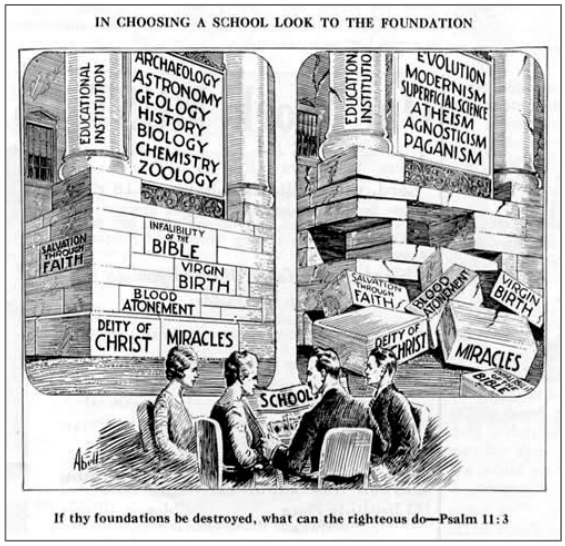

Figure 5. Choosing a school
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At this stage in the novel, though, Lewis stops short of implementing a coherent argument for the Church's failure to engage socially that such a literary context might predict if *Elmer Gantry* were the product of a reform naturalist such as Jack London or Upton Sinclair. Frank does, though, draw from the words of Christ himself to accuse that 'not one of us would sell all that he has and give to the poor … every one of us lays up all the treasure he can' (385).[71] However, Frank cannot quite muster the courage of his convictions and resigns in a far less dramatic fashion. He accuses 'good Christians' of making God into a 'menacing bully' (385), and he quietly leaves the Church.

[71] Matthew 19:21.

Masculinity and *Elmer Gantry*

Frank's ineffectual resignation relates to a much larger satirical distortion and second major theme that Lewis explores in the *Elmer Gantry*: the relationship between religion and masculinity. In the Epilogue to *The Feminization of American Culture*, Ann Douglas touches upon the expansion of muscular Christianity that occurred at the turn of the twentieth century. She writes that 'violent collegiate sports, outdoor camping, hunting, and fishing grew rapidly in favour.'[72] The YMCA was instrumental in promoting muscular Christianity at the turn of the century, and it, too, encouraged a vigorous, healthy lifestyle for young Christian men.[73] It was also an important influence upon the young Lewis, and he praised it for its 'positive earnest muscular Christianity.'[74] Figure 6 shows an American football player from the cover of the YMCA's magazine *Association Men* in which the equation of masculinity and faith is clear to see. The importance of this relationship in *Elmer Gantry* emerges early in the novel at Terwillinger College. Lewis contrasts Elmer with two supporting characters, Eddie Fislinger and Judson Roberts. The language that Lewis uses throughout this section of the narrative bristles with masculinity and vigorous, Rooseveltian bonhomie.

Figure 6. American football player - *Association Men* (1923)
(Courtesy of Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries)

[72] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 397.
[73] Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 16. Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), 7 and 205.
[74] Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 17.

As already seen, Eddie Fislinger is the president of the YMCA, but Lewis's rendering of him is certainly comedic: despite being the embodiment of piety and religious fervour—he believes 'the whole Bible' rather than a 'Bible full of holes' (32)—Eddie is far from the image of masculine virility that the YMCA hoped to portray in its members. Lewis perhaps models Eddie upon himself as a youth at Oberlin College. Lewis describes him as 'a meager and rusty-haired youth with protruding teeth and an uneasy twitter'; he is a 'rusty-haired gopher' (7). Compare Eddie to the description that Lewis's Oberlin roommate—John Olmstead—provided of Lewis. He described Lewis as a 'long, lank, red-headed, freckle faced chap.'[75] Later in the novel, Elmer and Eddie meet again, and Lewis reiterates the stereotypical relationship between faith and ineffectiveness that Douglas explored in her account of the feminised American clergy.[76] Lewis describes Eddie's wife as 'pitifully starved and home-tailored'; she resembles a 'preacher's wife' (154). Contrast Eddie's weakness with Elmer's obvious masculinity. Elmer is the captain of the college football team, and his nickname is 'Hell-Cat,' which was also a sobriquet for Ingersoll (2). Lewis describes Elmer as 'a huge young man … six foot one, thick, broad, big handed; a large face, handsome as a Great Dane is handsome' (8). In many respects, Eddie represents what Lewis thought he himself would have become if he had stayed in the Church and become a missionary, a wish that he did once hold.[77] Lewis does not attack Eddie *per se*, but he treats him as a curiosity, an idealist and a joyless figure—Eddie may be moral, but he is far from laudable. He represents the thematic merging of faith and femininity common to the work of the naturalists—for example, the preacher in Crane's *Georges's Mother* and Sturges Owen in Jack London's "The God of His Fathers."

Billy Sunday, writing as a muscular Christian, had threatened to land 'a haymaker' upon Lewis, but Elver Davis—in his review of *Elmer Gantry*—accused Lewis of landing a much less noble blow. Davis wrote that '[Lewis] deals a blow beneath the Bible Belt.'[78] Lewis's delivering of the illegal blow chimes with his own apostasy from YMCA muscular Christianity whilst at Yale University.[79] Lewis's blow also acts as an active distortion of the trope of unbelief and masculinity common to the earlier naturalists—for

[75] Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 16.
[76] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 115.
[77] Killough, "German Catholicism," 114.
[78] Elver Davis, "Mr. Lewis Attacks the Clergy in "*Elmer Gantry*" He Deals a Blow Beneath the "Bible Belt"," *New York Times*, March 13, 1927, accessed February 30, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/104234011?accountid=14511.
[79] Lingeman, *Rebel From Main Street*, 17.

example, London's Hay Stockard and Ernest Everhard. To achieve the distortion, Lewis creates the character Judson Roberts—the preacher responsible for Elmer's own conversion. Roberts challenges Elmer's own hulking presence and bravado, and Lewis describes him as a man 'big as a grizzly, jolly as a spaniel pup, radiant as ten suns' (38). Roberts is a 'big manly Christian' (38). Like Sunday—who threatened to land a knockout blow upon Lewis—Roberts threatens to 'knock the block off' anyone who attacks him with 'contemptible, quibbling, atheistic, smart-aleck doubts' (37). He preaches a muscular Christ who associated 'with common men, with reckless fishermen' and who dared to face death (45). Roberts immediately wins over Elmer with his overt expression of muscular Christianity. 'You think you're too husky, too good, to associate with the poor little sniveling gospel-mongers, don't you!,' Roberts accuses Elmer (39). 'You could knock out any of 'em, couldn't you! Well, I'm one of 'em. Want to knock me out?,' he challenges (39). Both Elmer and Roberts could give London's Hay Stockard a run for his money in the boxing ring and appear to be models of muscular Christianity. The problem for Roberts is that—mirroring the life of Elmer—he does not believe. Roberts becomes the symbolic representation of Elmer's deception and the chicanery that Lewis believed had the potential to rise in the religiously powerful.

Following the roar and drama of Elmer's sermon—in which Elmer first preaches the words of Ingersoll—Lewis turns to a solitary Roberts in a single, short, and jolting paragraph. Roberts hides in the vestibule of a train, quietly smoking an illegal cigarette. He tries to remember Elmer's name, but fails—he longs to believe the words that he preaches. 'I do wish I could get over this doubting … oh, Lordy, Lordy, Lordy, I wish I had a good job selling real estate!,' he sadly muses (61). Roberts' wish to gain employment in real estate perhaps relates to *Theron Ware*'s influence upon Lewis—real estate was also Theron's new calling.[80] Elmer, Eddie, and Judson, therefore, constitute a trinity of characters through which Lewis explores the relationship between faith and masculinity. Only Eddie actually believes that the Bible is the foundation of all life, and he exists as one possible expression of the clergy: pious, joyless, and conservative. Elmer and Judson are anomalies in the naturalist body of fiction because they combine the performance of religion with a clear overt masculinity. True, they are masculine unbelievers, but their unbelief is not associated with an active repudiation of the Church—

[80] Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware; or, Illumination* (New York: Stone & Kimball, 1896), 509–10.

which London, for example, represented in the characterisations of Hay Stockard and Ernest Everhard.

The Masculinisation of Frank Shallard and the Scopes Trial

Lewis *was*, however, probably aware of the cultural significance of London's Bishop Morehouse.[81] Like him, Frank also follows the trope of the defrocked preacher who develops greater masculinity and social purpose at the expense of his own material success. Lewis's exploration of Frank's masculinity begins earlier in the novel. Barely graduating from the seminary for his inability to accept the virgin birth, Frank receives his first parish in the novel's timeline of 1906 at Catawba.[82] He sublimates the 'controversial theology' that plagues him (237), and he chooses to deliver the feminised image of Christ common in the nineteenth century—Frank preaches a representation of Jesus as 'the kindly friend, the unfailing refuge, the gallant leader' (237) that became popular in songs like 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.'[83] Lewis again begins to weave into the narrative the theme of femininity and the clergy that Douglas explored in her foundational work. Frank longs 'to prove he was … "a real man",' and he understands that being a preacher adversely affects his manhood (239). He learns that the workers in Catawba's factories 'jeered' at Church leaders and 'officers of the A.F. and L., who played safe by adhering to a voluble Christianity' (240).[84] The physically powerful and unbelieving Elmer marks a stark contrast to the earnest and feminised Frank.

The highest profile and pivotal moment in the conflict between modernism and fundamentalism was the Scopes Trial of 1925.[85] Lewis incorporates it for two purposes: first, to culminate the conflict between the modernism of Frank and the fundamentalism

[81] Sinclair had a close relationship with Jack London, and he attended a lecture at Yale in which London urged for a revolution of the proletariat - Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 25.
[82] The Virgin Birth was a core of fundamentalist belief. Contrast this with Eddie who accepts the virgin birth with an unthinking 'you bet,' because it says so in the Bible (33).
[83] Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 55.
[84] The American Federation of Labor, or A.F.L., was an anticommunism organisation that reacted against radicalism and, whilst not repudiating the work of the Socialist Party of America, it did not adhere to the same political and social aims.
[85] In March 1925, the state of Tennessee made it illegal to teach in public schools anything other than a biblical account of humanity's origins—The Butler Act. John Scopes (1900–1970) responded to a call from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for a teacher who would be willing to face indictment and test the new mandate. Scopes proceeded to teach aspects of Evolution, and the State of Tennessee brought him to trial on 10th July 1925. Scopes lost the case and faced a fine of $100; textbooks in Tennessee could no longer refer to Evolution. The Butler Act was repealed in 1967 – Marvin Olasky and John Perry, *Monkey Business: The True Story of the Scopes Trial* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005).

of Elmer, and second, to complete Frank's homiletic journey—which sees Frank become a masculine figure of modernist sacrifice. The Scopes Trial ostensibly centred upon the teaching of Darwinism in high school, but it was really a culmination of the larger tensions between modernism and fundamentalism—just like *Elmer Gantry*. Figure 7 demonstrates the threat that the teaching of Evolution enacted for those who opposed it. Entitled 'Another Pied Piper' and taken from *Seven Questions in Dispute*, it shows the Pied-Piper leading American society to the tomb of disbelief. The Pied-Piper plays the tune 'Darwinian Hypothesis of Evolution.' The theological debates leading up to and during the Scopes Trial itself emerged in Lewis's rendering of the relationship between the theological positions of Elmer and Frank.[86] During the Scopes Trial itself, too, the same fractious relationship between modernism and orthodox belief occurred between its two key figures, William Jennings Bryan—the prosecutor of Scopes—and Clarence Darrow (1857–1938)—Scopes' defence lawyer.[87]

Figure 7. 'Another Pied Piper'[88]

(Image not in copyright)

[86] John Roach Straton—whom critics referred to as the fundamentalists' pope—and Charles Francis Potter (1885–1962)—modernist and Unitarian minister—debated the foundations of the Christian faith between December 1923 and May 1924. In their debate entitled *The Battle Over the Bible*, for example, Straton stated that 'I claim that I have demonstrated and proven, that this book is divine in its origin and infallible in its content' - John Roach Straton and Charles Francis Potter, "The Battle Over the Bible: First in the Series of Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates between John Roach Straton and Charles Francis Potter," in *Fundamentalist Versus Modernist: The Debates Between John Roach Straton and Charles Francis Potter*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 51.

[87] Darrow, for example, quizzed Bryan upon the literal interpretation of biblical stories such as Jonah and the Whale - "The Examination of William Jennings Bryan by Clarence Darrow," in *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*, comp. Melville House Publishing (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2009), 148–49.

[88] Bryan, *Seven Questions*, 124.

Ingersoll could only have dreamt that such a public conflict as the Scopes Trial would have occurred, but his spirit continues to be pervasive in the trial's legislative combatants. Both Bryan and Darrow were well versed in his work. In his youth, Bryan had questioned his own faith and corresponded with Ingersoll, but he eventually rejected Ingersoll's conclusions.[89] Darrow also studied the works of Ingersoll as a teenager, but he embraced his work.[90] Lewis creates in *Elmer Gantry*, then, a novel of contrasts and pivots. Frank and Elmer, Sunday and Ingersoll, and now Bryan and Darrow reveal not only the combative nature of the work, but its continued indebtedness to Ingersoll. Lewis only references the Scopes Trial twice in the narrative, but its cultural presence powered the writing of *Elmer Gantry*.[91] Lewis and Darrow form two members of an unholy Trinity; the third member was H. L. Mencken—to whom Lewis dedicated *Elmer Gantry* (viii). Writing just before the trial in 1924, Mencken—himself so influential in the reporting of the Scopes Trial and who was also a close friend of Lewis—argued that 'what this country lacks is obviously an Ingersoll.'[92] He wrote that 'Bob hurled his challenge at the whole hierarchy of heaven, and within a few short years he had the Babbitts all agog, and after them the city proletariat, and then finally the yokels on the farms.'[93] As we have seen, Frank—or perhaps Lewis himself—became the Ingersoll that Mencken wanted to see.[94] Indeed, Mencken praised *Elmer Gantry* as 'a true and palpable hit.'[95] 'All the Gantrys of the land rose up as one man to denounce the book,' Mencken wrote, but 'yet the book remains fundamentally true.'[96]

Lewis introduction of the Scopes Trial also marks the moment that Frank Shallard makes his final appearance in the novel. The reader meets an entirely new Frank. He has joined the Charity Organization Society and has become its 'assistant general secretary at

[89] Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 247.
[90] Ibid., 248.
[91] Darrow wrote to Lewis offering his support and assistance in the writing of *Elmer Gantry* - Clarence Darrow, "Darrow to Lewis April 15, 1926," The Clarence Darrow Digital Collection, accessed January 30, 2017, http://darrow.law.umn.edu/letters.php?pid=210&skey=Lewis,%20Sinclair. Lewis also lunched with Darrow before the Scopes Trial opened, and he offered his own thoughts upon how Darrow should conclude in the trial's summation - Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 266.
[92] H. L. Mencken, "America Needs a New Ingersoll," *The American Mercury* 3 no. 11, (1924): 290–92. Mencken reported the Scope's Trial for *The Baltimore Evening Sun, The Nation*, and *The American Mercury*.
[93] Ibid., 291. Mencken's use of 'Babbitts' relates to the title of Lewis's *Babbitt*.
[94] Lewis once emulated the theatrics of Ingersoll by recreating a stunt in which Ingersoll challenged God to strike him down within fifteen minutes - Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 277.
[95] H. L. Mencken, "The Rev. Clergy," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 24, 1927, accessed February 21, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/180796591?accountid=14511.
[96] Ibid.

the time of the Dayton evolution trial' (389). Although not part of the Social Gospel movement, the aim of the Charity Organization Society was to create an equal society through the eradication of poverty.[97] Frank boasts that 'I've found the religion that I've been looking for!' (390). Lewis now embarks on the most brutally realistic period of the novel that sees Frank become the defrocked, masculine preacher common to naturalism. Frank becomes the novel's Bishop Morehouse—he believes in a liberal interpretation of the Christian faith, but he also believes in a faith of social, worldly action. Mencken argued that fundamentalism had become synonymous with small-town America: it allowed rural America to mobilise against 'modern culture and intellect.'[98] Indeed, he wrote that 'it would be hard to imagine a more moral town than Dayton.'[99] Mencken accused fundamentalists of being 'everywhere where learning is too heavy a burden for mortal minds.'[100] Frank—playing the role of both Ingersoll and echoing Mencken's fractious headlines—embarks on a lecture tour of Southern America during which he delivers this same message. In the town of Western, he plans to deliver a lecture entitled 'Are the Fundamentalists Witch Hunters?' (390). Lewis describes Western as a town whose inhabitants—like certain fundamentalist clergy that Lewis attacks—are 'superbly trained to ignore contradictions' of the Bible (389). They are intelligent enough to realise that biology, astronomy, and psychology were not only 'dangerous to their positions, but also history--which gave no very sanctified reputation to the Christian church' (389).

Summing up at the conclusion of the Scopes Trial, Mencken argued that 'a superstitious man has certain inalienable rights' to believe what he wishes, but he has no right 'to try to inflict them upon other men by force.'[101] Mencken referred to fundamentalists as 'Ku Klux theologians' in their attempt to prevent freethinking.[102] He even raged against the American public more broadly—arguing that if an idea that challenged orthodox thinking emerged 'it would be put on trial before a jury of Ku Kluxers.'[103] The Ku Klux Klan were extremely influential in defending what they deemed

[97] Elizabeth A. Segal, Karen E. Gerdes, and Sue Steiner, *An Introduction to the Profession of Social Work: Becoming a Change Agent* (Belmont, CA.: Brooks/Cole, 2010), 4.
[98] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 188.
[99] Quoted in Marvin N. Olasky and John Perry, *Monkey Business,* 47.
[100] H.L. Mencken, "To Expose a Fool," in *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*, comp. Melville House Publishing (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2009), 132.
[101] H.L. Mencken, "Aftermath," in *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*, comp. Melville House Publishing (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2009), 118.
[102] H.L. Mencken, "The Tennessee Circus," in *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*, comp. Melville House Publishing (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2009), 3.
[103] H.L. Mencken, "Homo Neanderthalensis," in *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*, comp. Melville House Publishing (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2009), 15.

to be biblical truths. [104] Rory McVeigh, for example, cites one unknown member of the Klan who claimed that 'all true knowledge of consciousness' must come from the 'application of Truth as taught by the Bible.'[105] Leonard Moore also argues that those who identified with an agrarian and small-town past looked to the Ku Klux Klan 'to express their displeasure.'[106] Frank's social mission and liberalism put him on a collision course with them and the fundamentalism that they protected—they become a manifestation of the anger and rage against modernism that has simmered throughout the novel. Frank receives a warning from 'the Committee,' which the reader understands to be the Klan (390). They demand that he leave town because of his 'hellish atheism,' and they accuse him of being an 'imported liberal' (390). Rather like Upton Sinclair's Carpenter, Frank becomes a 'God damned atheist,' 'a damn' socialist,' and a member of the IWW (392). Lewis does not represent Frank as a Christ figure, *per se*, but the reader understands that he becomes a martyr for the cause of modernism. The committee decide to 'just hurt [Frank] enough so he'll remember, and then he can go back and tell his atheist friends it ain't healthy for 'em in real Christian parts' (393). They beat Frank to such an extent that he loses an eye. Lewis writes that 'the right eye was gone completely; he might not entirely lose the sight of the other for perhaps a year' (394).

Lewis's choice to blind rather than kill Frank speaks to a common appropriation of Samson's image to reflect the impending threat of modernism. Figure 8—taken from *The King's Business* of July, 1922—shows the blind and modernist Samson bringing down the structure of Christian society.[107] Lewis may very well have had no notion of the image's existence, but it does capture well Frank's life and place in *Elmer Gantry*. The denial of the Bible appears on Samson's right thigh and Darwinism appears on his left; the Church and America's school are the columns that support the entablature of Christian civilization. Those who assail Frank sincerely believe that he, like Samson, threatens to destroy their own society: 'you'd better be out of this decent Christian city before evening,' they menace (390). Like 'any crusader' of old (392), those who beat him do so because of a moral justification derived from a Bible that they believe to be true. Frank,

[104] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 900.
[105] Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 131.
[106] Leonard Moore, "Historical Interpretations of the 1920s Klan: The Traditional View and the Populist Revision," *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 2 (1990), 344.
[107] *The King's Business* was a mouthpiece of conservative Christianity and the fundamentalist movement.

for the fundamentalists, is an outsider who would threaten the foundations of a nation. Indeed, Billy Sunday argued that 'civilisation and society rests upon morals; morals upon religion; and religion upon the Bible.'[108]

Figure 8. A modernist Samson bringing down Christian civilization[109]
(Unable to find appropriate copyright owner)

Lewis understands, then, the implications of the fundamentalists for larger society. He argues that those who victimise and unfairly treat others based on belief are often those who claim to uphold the tenets that they themselves see as deficient in others. Frank for Lewis, therefore, looms large in the novel; he is no minor character but a voice of liberalism common to the naturalism. That Frank does not die in the novel—as opposed to Jack London's Bishop Morehouse—provides optimism for the remainder of his life, even it if it may turn out to be blind optimism.

"Onward Sons of Ingersoll" demonstrates this greater sense of optimism well and reveals a changed relationship between religious certainty and liberalism in the decades following the Scopes Trial. The liberal preacher David Ringside—himself embodying the spirit of Frank—preaches that 'a good Christian of today … can believe and disbelieve such ancient chronicles as those of Jonah and Noah and Adam just as his conscience dictates.'[110] Ringside continues to explain that 'to a good many of us, such ancient stories

[108] "Billy Sunday Warns America (1929)," YouTube video, 0:10–0:18, posted by "Aaron1912," January 31, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ykn8YcIbmfo.
[109] "Image of Samson," *The King's Business*, July 1922, 642.
[110] Lewis, "Onward, Sons of Ingersoll!," 72.

are really glorious symbols - universal tales like *Don Quixote* or *Hamlet*.'[111] In *Elmer Gantry*, Lewis created another glorious tale of religious transformation in the figure of Frank Shallard. The legacy of Lewis's work and characterization of Frank inspired a new generation of authors associated with naturalism. James T. Farrell (1904–1979) incorporated them into his *Studs Lonigan* cycle (1932–1935)—which reconstructs the middle-class, Irish-American Chicago neighborhoods of Farrell's youth around the central character William "Studs" Lonigan.[112] In *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* (1934), the second novel in the cycle, Farrell addresses the cultural threat of modernity to the Catholic faith through the characterization of Father Shannon—Farrell's own rendering of men like Billy Sunday and Elmer Gantry. In his inaugural sermon to an expectant congregation, Shannon refers to *Elmer Gantry* as 'a book that belongs in no decent household, a book no self-respecting Catholic can read under the pain of sin.'[113] Shannon does not read books by 'publicity-seekers like Sinclair Lewis.'[114] Lewis, Shannon argues, 'mocks the most sacred profession that man can enter … the cloth, the service of Almighty God.'[115]

Conclusion

Lewis's satirical work *Elmer Gantry*—which 'mocks' the clergy as far as Farrell's Shannon is concerned—emerged out of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy that played out in the first decades of the twentieth century. The novel's complexities could all too easily be masked by a critical focus on the enigmatic figure of its titular protagonist, but this chapter centred upon the significant role that Frank Shallard played in the novel—without Frank there would be no Elmer Gantry.[116] Throughout the novel, Lewis explores the dichotomy of religious belief and worldly success as expressed through Elmer and Frank in contemporary America. On the one hand, the post-Darwinian and post-war context of society rather than diminishing religious belief had ignited it

[111] Ibid.
[112] Farrell referred to Lewis as a 'much more important and influential writer than Ernest Hemingway or William Faulkner' - Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 553.
[113] James T. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan: A Triology Comprising Young Lonigan, the Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan, and Judgment day* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 438.
[114] Ibid., 440.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Wilifred Edener provides an occasionally similar reading of Frank to the one that I present here. Edener, in contrast, does not incorporate Frank into the larger context of American theological change - Wilifred Edener, "Die Religionskritik in den Romanen von Sinclair Lewis," *Beihefte zum Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 10, (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1963).

through fundamentalism. While, on the other hand, *Elmer Gantry* certainly chimes with Marsden's supposition that 'it became increasingly difficult to take fundamentalism seriously.'[117] *Elmer Gantry* is a novel about the history of ideas and the ways in which American understandings of the Bible—and the interpretation of its teachings—applied to a society that was propelling itself ever further into the twentieth century. Briggs, Fosdick, and Sunday were heroes and villains, depending from which side the viewer looked, and—by the same measure—so, too, were Elmer Gantry and Frank Shallard. And here is the point of *Elmer Gantry*: to express the cultural opinion that, in modern America, plurality of belief within and without the Church should be embraced, because, like it or not, progress has occurred—although some may try to prevent its march forward.

David Burns refers to Ingersoll as 'a militant secularist' who created a 'radical religious counterculture that included freethinkers, feminists, socialists, and anarchists.'[118] I conclude that the list should also include Sinclair Lewis himself—drawing as he was from an indebtedness to Robert Ingersoll. Two key themes emerge in *Elmer Gantry*. First, Lewis creates a satirical contrast between Elmer and Frank's response to higher biblical criticism. Frank, who accepts the liberalised Bible, represents spiritual success, but worldly failure—Elmer plays the opposite role. Second, Lewis satirically explores the legacy of the feminised Church through an exploration of muscular Christianity derived from the YMCA. The interplay between both themes informed my reading of Elmer and Frank as polar opposites throughout the novel and as characters who represent a fictive melodrama of Bryan's 'The Descent of the Modernists.'

Elmer Gantry sits at the departure point of nineteenth and early twentieth-century American religious naturalism explored throughout this dissertation. The following chapter, then, explores its legacy and demonstrates how the naturalists of the Great Depression, Jack Conroy and John Steinbeck, looked to their nineteenth-century forebears for their representations of the divine. The chapter concludes with an exploration of perhaps one of the newest practitioners of naturalism, Cormac McCarthy, who reimagines the place of religion—and the place of Christ—in the naturalist text.

[117] Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 191.
[118] David Burns, *The Life and Death of the Radical Historical Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 10.

Chapter 6

Walking the Naturalist Road: Looking Backwards to Move Forwards

'He knew only that his child was his warrant. He said:
If he is not the word of God, God never spoke.'[1]
Cormac McCarthy - The Road

The *fin de siècle* saw naturalism emerge as mode through which artists could explore the interaction between the post-Darwinian and the transforming face of American Protestantism. However, versions of naturalism continued to appear throughout the twentieth century.[2] Donald Pizer equates periods of recurring naturalism with periods of 'hard times.'[3] He also suggests that what varies in the history of naturalism is not so much the writers' commitments to the depiction of American life, but their 'particular social reality and intellectual preoccupations.'[4] I have posited that the naturalists responded to the hard times within American Protestantism—or more specifically evangelicalism—in a post-Darwinian world that posed a significant threat to long-held beliefs.

But what of the religious representations that occur within the works of the later twentieth-century naturalists? I have already demonstrated in the previous chapter how James T. Farrell incorporated the work of Sinclair Lewis into *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, but in this chapter I turn my attention to three twentieth-century authors commonly associated with naturalism. I argue that Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited* (1933) and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)—which both emerged from the "hard time" of the Great Depression (1929–1939)—and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006)—which emerged from a post-9/11 America that came face to face with its own vulnerability—continue to explore the same themes as their nineteenth-century forebears. Generations may have passed since the naturalists of the *fin de siècle*, but the naturalists

[1] Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2010), 3.
[2] For example, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951), Joyce Carol Oates's *them* (1969), and Don DeLillo's *Libra* (1988).
[3] Donald Pizer, *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 168.
[4] Ibid.

of the twentieth century cannot make their arguments about superstition, determinism, and the future of the human race without returning to the language of the Bible and its central figures. The humanity of Christ, the socialism of Christ, the promise of a heaven delivered through human effort, and a questioning of original sin all re-emerge in these works separated by generations of American religious history. Turning first to *The Disinherited* and then to *The Grapes of Wrath*, I demonstrate how the naturalists of the Great Depression reinvent the image of the fallen preacher common to the earlier naturalists. They explore the politics of religion, and they resurrect the historical Jesus. In other words, they reveal a second coming of the naturalist Christ. I then turn to contemporary society and explore the post-apocalyptic vision of McCarthy and *The Road*'s interaction with the figure of Christ and the eschatology of redemption.

The Disinherited: The Great Depression and the Poverty of Religion

Donna Campbell argues that the Great Depression saw naturalism return 'with a more overt and political agenda in the form of the proletarian novel.'[5] She claims that proletarian naturalism 'represented the power and abuses of capitalism from a working class perspective and proposed solutions through collective action.'[6] Jack Conroy's (1899–1990) *The Disinherited* is a sometimes forgotten work, but it was one of the first examples of proletarian naturalism to emerge.[7] It, too, explores the implications of political action and its relationship to religious belief. However, rather than acting as a polemical tract that borders on Christian socialism, *The Disinherited* explores the effects of economic uncertainty upon religion itself and is a harsh exploration of human fragility in an indifferent universe.

The worldwide Great Depression began with the New York stock market crash in October 1929. Consumers spent less, and investments began to fall. The result was a reduction in manufacturing and growing unemployment. The year 1933 marked the Depression's high point; thirteen to fifteen million Americans were unemployed, and approximately half of America's banks collapsed. Published at the Depression's height, *The Disinherited* is an autobiographical work that centres upon the life of Larry Donovan

[5] Donna Campbell, "American Literary Naturalism: Critical Perspectives," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 8 (2011): 503.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited: A Novel of the 1930s* (Colombia: University of Missouri Press, 1991).

from his early life at the Monkey Nest coal mine in Missouri through to his attempt to find work in America's cities as the Depression begins to bite (Figure 1).

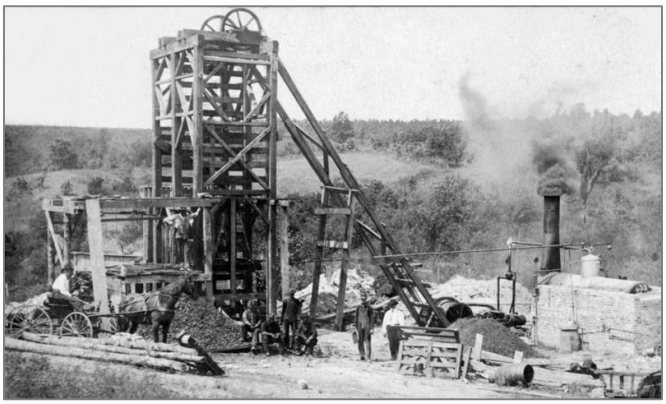

Figure 1. A typical coal mine, Missouri (circa 1910)
(Unable to find appropriate copyright owner)

Establishing the naturalist credentials of the novel, Larry's father explains that the mine is a tomb that traps the individual, rather like the cityscapes of New York and Chicago common to the earlier naturalists. Escape, he surmises, is just as 'doubtful as that story about the fellow in Palestine arising from the tomb' (41). It transpires that Larry's father, Tom—perhaps a doubting Thomas—was once a Catholic priest. The reader does not learn the motivation behind Tom's disavowing of the priestly role, but the process was life-changing. Larry discovers a rosary, a crucifix, and a 'faded velvet jewel-box' amongst his father's possessions (45). Tom snaps angrily that the rosary is 'Beads! Nothing but beads!' and that the crucifix is 'a bit of gold, nothing else' (45). Catholicism no longer plays a part in Tom's life, but the importance of faith continues to exist for others. Upon his deathbed, Tom's friend, Frenchy Barbour, cries out 'Tom Donovan! Tom Donovan! Where is he?' because he knows the secret of Tom's former life (54). Tom undertakes the last rites, but Frenchy dies before he can finish. Tom faces 'the astonished miners with a challenging look' no doubt because of their incredulity for his new-found role, but, more importantly, the very act of performing religion is so abhorrent to him; it is 'superstition' (54). However, unlike James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* cycle, Catholicism does not form a major theme in the novel. Religion, regardless of denomination or creed, becomes a victim of the Depression.

Tom Donovan ultimately dies in a mining accident, and Larry decides to leave his family and search for work as the economic portents of the Depression begin to surface. That religion is an alien presence in Larry's own life first emerges at the arrival of a group of camp Christians who visit Larry's mother 'to make some arrangement for the adoption of the children and for your own support and welfare' (82). 'You folks are mighty kind,' Larry's mother states, 'but I don't like to break up my home' (82). Her act of love 'the committee members' interpret as 'ingratitude,' and they abandon the family (82). Here, then, what passes for organised religion in the camp fails to meet the needs of the family; it seeks to undermine the love of a mother. Conroy rejects the sentimentality of the pious mother common in nineteenth-century fiction; Larry's mother is pragmatic and knows that 'these people will never offer to help us again' (83). She requires Larry not to find solace in otherworldly promises but recognises that 'you've got to be a man now' (83). For the naturalists of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dichotomy between the salvation of the individual and the salvation of society was, to a large extent, a theoretical exploration that centred upon a cultural response to the religious transformation of dogma. For Conroy, the Depression becomes an all-powerful force that directly challenges the power and usefulness of religious belief—a theme that Tom Donovan first introduced through his disavowal of faith.

Larry manages to secure a temporary position in a steel mill, and here he meets Robert Lee Grady, an old, itinerant worker, whose only possession is a suitcase filled with some clothing and a Bible (135). Grady, no matter what occurs here on earth, is secure in the knowledge of his heavenly reward. He may only be a relatively minor character in *The Disinherited*, but he becomes a manifestation of the greater theme of the deficiency of religion that emerges throughout the novel. Grady extols the virtues of the preacher, 'One-Round McKay'—another literary instantiation of Billy Sunday—that Conroy uses to explore the corrupt relationship between the Church and capitalism (151).[8] Conroy writes that 'One-Round staged a furious bout with 'Kid' Satan' in a sequence of narrative that sees One-Round box the devil (151). After the thrilling performance, One-Round asks the already destitute audience, which includes Larry, to 'give freely to the work of Christ' their money (152). The disparity that exists between Grady's heaven-

[8] John Steinbeck provides evidence for One-Round McKay as Sunday. Steinbeck relates a memory of a Sunday revival that he attended whilst living in Salinas: 'easily the most popular' form of entertainment in town was 'Billy Sunday in boxing gloves fighting the devil in a squared ring' - John Steinbeck, *Of Men and Their Making*, ed. Jackson J. Benson and Susan Shillinglaw (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 7.

looking interpretation of the world and the realities of the worsening economy Conroy reveals in the playful incorporation of Matthew 10:29–31.[9] The words of the Gospels lose all spiritual significance in *The Disinherited*, and they become as empty as the stomachs of the characters Conroy creates. Grady, taken by the power of One-Round, quotes the words of Christ that 'not a sparrow falleth but He know it' (153). Larry, in contrast, argues that the sparrow would be more appreciative if it had not fallen in the first place. A paragraph later, Conroy advances the chronology of the narrative and continues to press upon the reader that the metaphysical is unable to meet earthly needs. Grady becomes a figure of pathos for his unrelenting hope of a future heaven; he acts a metaphor for the worsening state of the American economy that affects even the mission churches. Larry narrates how, one Christmas, he encounters Grady, dressed as Santa Claus, collecting money for the Mission that is no longer able to support him. His robes are so worn and thin that 'you could read the Lord's prayer through' them (154). Grady's demise continues, and, later in the novel, Larry attempts to reconnect with him at the Rescue Mission. However, Larry learns that Grady volunteered to leave because 'the United Charities cut down' on appropriations (174). In Crane's *Maggie* the Mission was a force of determinism exterior to the Bowery that Crane's characters rejected. For Larry the Mission is just as ineffectual for a genuine believer like Grady—it, too, is dying.

The story of Grady appears in conjunction with Larry's employment at a rubber plant—at which Larry learns of communism as a viable alternative to religious belief. Larry meets Hans, a communist, and Nat, a long-serving employee. Hans believes that 'Marx charted the course of civilization almost a hundred years ago,' but Nat holds to the belief that 'the Good Book' is sufficient for all knowledge (177). Nat argues that 'it predicted the horseless carriages, the ships flying in the air, everything' (177). 'Marx! Marx! Telling us t'read Marx!,' Nat derides, 'read the Word o'God! That's all a workin' man needs t'know' (177). Unfortunately for Nat, both his and Grady's faith in the promise of a metaphysical moment of redemption prove wanting—they are both reminders of a once powerful fundamentalism that had been shaken to its core at the Scopes Trial but which now must face a far worse fate. Larry meets Grady for the final time on a park bench in Grand Circus Park, Michigan. Giving Grady ten dollars, Larry learns that 'with that ten dollars [he] c'n live at the Helping Hand Mission fer a long time' (187). Even the

[9] 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

food and shelter of the Mission now has a price, as the Depression looms large. Grady ultimately becomes one of many similar stories in the newspapers of those 'found beside the railroad tracks' (187). He receives no reward for his faith and neither does he convert to communism, as may have been the case if Conroy were attempting to rework Jack London or Upton Sinclair. Conroy also fails to argue that communism would have been a solace even if Grady had accepted a communist economic vision: Hans suggests that religion and communism 'may all work out the same in the end' (177).

The final section of *The Disinherited* sees the Depression finally hit. Conroy writes that 'the Market had just crashed to the cellar, leaving a sick and empty feeling in the stomachs of cockroach capitalists' (211). Joe Hill—a member of the IWW and political song-writer—wrote "The Preacher and the Slave" (1911) in protest of the power that charity organisations like the Salvation Army had over the powerless and the dispossessed. Hill referred to them as the Starvation Army:

> And the Starvation Army, they play
> And they sing and they clap and they pray
> Till they get all your coin on the drum
> Then they tell you when you're on the bum[10]

Hill's work became an important song of protest throughout the Great Depression, and many artists rerecorded it.[11] However, the Salvation Army that Jack London had portrayed in *The People of the Abyss* becomes in Conroy's work a victim to the greater force of the Depression. 'The throbbing of the Salvation Army tom-tom died away' (212), as even it succumbs to the power and unrelenting force of the economic hard times—in an ironic reversal, the Salvation Army becomes the Starvation Army of Hill's song.

If the naturalists at the *fin de siècle* explored the implications that higher biblical criticism had for the inerrancy of the Bible, Conroy sees higher biblical criticism as a marker of social prosperity. His naturalism emerges not from the heady heights of a successful author—even if naturalists like London did spend time with the people of the abyss—but from a starving belly and desperate need for employment. Indeed, Mike Gold

[10] Joe Hill, "The Preacher and the Slave," JoeHill2015.org, accessed June 3, 2016, http://joehill2015.org/joe-hill/joe-hill-songs/the-preacher-and-the-slave/.
[11] Franklin Rosemont, *Joe Hill: The IWW and the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishers, 2002), 315.

suggests that Conroy was ‘‘the genuine article,’ who forged his writing on the anvil of personal experience.’[12] Conroy described himself ‘as a witness to the times, not as a novelist. And that’s what I prefer to be known.’[13] In *The Disinherited*, Conroy argues that if someone can sit around worrying about the Bible’s inerrancy, then they are either mad or not hungry enough—remember that London addressed both themes in *The Star Rover* and in *The People of the Abyss*. Conroy, therefore, writes that ‘the militant atheist forgot the knotty problem of where Cain got his wife’ (211). Even the fires of hell pale into significance: an ‘evangelist ceased his lurid description of hell-fire sizzling’ (211). Referring to the evangelist as a ‘prophet,’ Conroy incorporates Daniel 5:25 as a portent of divine intervention upon capitalism (212): ‘it seemed as if the prophet’s upraised bony finger had written *mene, mene, tekel upharsin* across the dull brick wall opposite’—God has brought your days to an end; you have been found wanting (212). Conroy revisits the prophetic connotations of the Depression later in the novel. Larry arrives at a migrant camp in New York’s Central Park, known as Hooverville (Figure 2).[14]

Figure 2. Hooverville in Central Park (circa 1933)
(Fair usage applied)

He narrates how in Hooverville ‘a preacher drifted in and rallied enough modern Jobs to erect a church’ that had a ‘pickle barrel for an altar’ (236). Conroy’s choice of Job is perhaps a satirical reference to Max Weber’s Protestant work ethic. Weber, referring to

[12] Douglas Wixson, introduction to *The Disinherited: A Novel of the 1930s*, by Jack Conroy (Colombia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 5.
[13] Ibid., 11.
[14] Hoovervilles were named after President Herbert Hoover (1874–1964), who held office during the early years of the Depression between 1929 and 1933.

the Puritans, argued that 'among the canonical books [of the Bible] … Job had all the more influence' because it provided a sense of the promise of God's blessing and a reward for hard work and suffering.[15] 'It won't rain no forty days and forty nights like it done in Scripture days. Lord promised every time you see a rainbow,' Larry's companion later declares in echo of such conceptions (256). For Conroy, though, the Depression becomes Satan himself, and Job becomes the American economy.[16] The residents of Hooverville may well have the ethical determination to work, but there are no jobs to meet the desire. Conroy refers to the Wobbly song of 1909 'Hallelujah, I'm a Bum' and cites that 'now it was possible to answer in the words of the Wobbly song book: 'how the hell can I work if there's no work to do?' (221). The inhabitants of Hooverville have no recourse but to put their labour to use in the construction of a place of worship that has no power to save them from the destitution that they all face. Hooverville's inhabitants construct the altar of their church upon the container of the only food that they can afford, pickles. 'Somebody was always trying to save our souls' (237), Conroy writes.

Conroy also builds upon the language of the Bible to explore the Darwinism that typified naturalist understandings of human relationships: whilst freezing and hungry at the edges of a railway track, Larry's companion notes that a squirrel 'has got a warm hole in that air tree, and likely a raft of nuts stashed away fer the Winter' (272). The Depression may have changed the environment for humanity, but the animal has no fear of death. Humanity has brought on its own demise through capitalism. The squirrel is fitter to survive the Depression, and it enjoys the fruits of its labour. It has no job to lose. Conroy frames this inherent conflict between humanity and the natural world with the satiric inclusion of Matthew 8:20: 'foxes have dens, the birds of the air have nests … and this son of a bitch hath nowhere to lay his goddamned haid!' (273).

The Disinherited, then, is an account of the lived experience of the Great Depression. James T. Farrell—reviewing *The Disinherited*—wrote that Conroy chose 'a field of American life that is rich in literary possibilities.'[17] I have demonstrated that Conroy's field of study was equally rich when approached from the cultural context of religious experience. Conroy's novel—a work that Wayne D. McGinnis rightfully regards as 'far from being famous'—demonstrates an affinity with earlier naturalism and

[15] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 110.
[16] Job was a prosperous man who suffered tragic misfortunes at the hands of Satan. Only when God brought Job to absolute submission did God restore him and bless him far greater than before.
[17] James T. Farrell, "A Working-Class Novel," *The Nation* 26 (December, 1933): 714.

which reflects the confusion and destitution of the Great Depression's hard times.[18] The novel closes at the scene of an auction. A farmer watches as his farm and possessions go up for sale, but hope emerges through human solidarity and a realisation that communist labour agitation is not a threat to America; it is, perhaps, its salvation. Those in attendance bid laughable amounts of money for the farmer's possessions and farm: 'Brother Haskin,' a spokesperson for the crowd, states, 'we've decided t' sell you back yer goods and chattels and the farm fer 99 cents. If you think that's too steep, we might shave it a little. I'll loan you the 99 cents' (282). 'The farmers are stirring' (284), a communist agitator celebrates, and as 'we throw the spark … sometimes it splutters and goes out, but again it will light a mighty blaze' (284).

The Grapes of Wrath: The Second Coming of the Naturalist Christ

That blaze took hold in perhaps the most influential work to come out of the Great Depression, John Steinbeck's (1902–1968) *The Grapes of Wrath*. The novel continues to be one of Steinbeck's most successful, and it charts the Joad family's economic migration from their failed farmland of Oklahoma to the orchards of California. *The Grapes of Wrath* explores the lives of the victims of economic determinism that Steinbeck infuses with the naturalistic theme of controlling forces acting upon humanity: the Joads become victims of the natural world and the over-farming of land. Figure 3 shows Joe Jones's "American Farm" (1936) that captures the spirit of a farm perched atop a dust-filled land.

Figure 3. Joe Jones, "American Farm" (1936)
(Fair usage applied)

[18] Wayne D. McGinnis, "The Art of Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited*, a Novel of the 1930s," *Academic Forum* 31 (2013–14): 1.

Throughout the novel, Steinbeck chooses to concentrate upon the economic ramifications of the Great Depression, rather than its lethal association with the dust bowl. At the outset of the novel, Steinbeck represents the bank as a force that 'is something more than men'; it becomes a 'monster' that men made but cannot control (36). Those who claim back forfeited land for the bank Steinbeck strips of their humanity: a tractor-driving employee ceases to 'look like a man … he was a part of the monster, a robot in the seat' (40). Whilst Steinbeck's work exposes the economic and social history of the nineteen thirties, *The Grapes of Wrath* is most important in the context of this dissertation for its relationship to the figure of Christ that Jack London and Upton Sinclair created in their work.[19]

The Disinherited was notable for its representation of the Depression in which religion became a victim of economic forces. Steinbeck, though, actively incorporates religious themes as a means through which to understand them. The concept of original sin, the figure of the Christ, the fallen preacher, and an exploration of a millennium of human endeavour all resurface in Steinbeck's work—as Steinbeck actively resurrects nineteenth-century naturalism. *The Grapes of Wrath*, according to Wixson, takes on a 'powerful, compelling myth of "the people."'[20] I argue that Steinbeck equally creates a mythological *religion of* the people. The power of stories told and retold throughout the narrative blur the lines between reality and fiction. Steinbeck contrasts the secular and the spiritual to create a novel that bristles with Christian imagery, and Steinbeck's familiarity with the Bible brings to the narrative a distinctly spiritual mode.[21]

Tamara Rombold explores in detail 'the span of Biblical allusions used throughout the novel.'[22] She contrasts passages from the Bible to paragraphs of Steinbeck's text to present a case for his indebtedness to it. The religious significances that Rombold identifies abound in the body of criticism. Elizabeth Napier, for example, reads *The Grapes of Wrath* against John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), and she argues that 'the parallels between the two books are striking.'[23] Furthermore, Napier argues that Steinbeck's work inverts Bunyan in its 'scepticism about conventional religious faith and

[19] John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*. London: Pan Books, 1980.
[20] Wixson, introduction, 22.
[21] Tamara Rombold, "Biblical Inversion in "The Grapes of Wrath"," *College Literature* 14, no. 2 (1987): 146. John J. Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero: Steinbeck's Use of the Christ Figure in "The Grapes of Wrath," *The Steinbeck Review* 2, no. 1 (2005): 25.
[22] Rombold, "Biblical Inversion," 146.
[23] Elizabeth Napier, "*The Grapes of Wrath*: Steinbeck's *Pilgrim's Progress*," *The Steinbeck Review* 7, no. 1 (2010): 51.

practices.'[24] Whilst the plight of the Joad family speaks to a much larger Exodus narrative, the characterisations of Jim Casy and Tom Joad have attracted the most critical attention; indeed, through both men, Steinbeck does most of the religious work that revives the themes of the nineteenth-century naturalists.[25]

The reader first meets Tom after his release from prison. Tom encounters Jim Casy, who is whistling and singing under the shade of a tree. Some sense of the space that Casy occupies in the novel is apparent from the outset: Steinbeck merges the sacred and secular through a reworking of Eddie Cantor's rendition of 'Yes, Sir, That's My Baby': Casy sings 'Yes, sir, that's my Saviour' (23). Tom remembers Casy as the preacher from his youth, but Casy has disavowed his former life and requests that he is 'Just Jim Casy now' (25). Here Steinbeck continues to appropriate the image of the fallen preacher common to earlier naturalism and which re-emerged in the work of Conroy. Furthermore, the reader receives a clue that Casy has disavowed his faith because of a greater purpose in life: socialism and the unity of humanity. Asked to perform grace, Casy states that 'he can't say no grace like I use' to say,' but he offers the words of Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 to expound his socialist convictions (89).[26] He believes that humanity can return again to holiness when 'they're all workin' together, not one fella for another fella, but one fella harnessed to the whole shebang' (89). Casy's words permeate the novel and stand in stark contrast to the 'hellfire Scripture' that Tom is used to hearing (442). 'An that's scripture,' Ma Joad asks incredulously of Tom, who—later in the novel—reiterates Casy's words that 'two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor' (443).

Through Casy, Steinbeck appears to introduce into the novel the tenets of the Social Gospel and Walter Rauschenbusch's regard for the individual as a member of 'a divine organism of mutual service.'[27] Rauschenbusch's repudiation of original sin—also common in early naturalist works—again emerges here. Casy explains that 'there ain't not sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's all part of the same thing' (28). For Casy, sin is a human construct that 'a fella builds … right up from the groun' (239). He explains that 'for anybody else it was a mistake, but if you think it was

[24] Ibid., 53.
[25] Jackson J. Benson provides evidence of Steinbeck's reading *The Golden Bough* (1926) - Jackson J. Benson, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 1984), 220.
[26] 9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: 10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.
[27] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 98.

a sin – then it's a sin' (239). Casy—echoing the spirit of Robert Ingersoll—regards love as the overriding spirit. Steinbeck's repudiation of Christian orthodoxy is most clear in Casy's understanding of Christ himself, which has a distinct tone of biblical criticism—particularly Strauss. Casy states that he 'does not know nobody name' Jesus,' and all that is known of him is simply 'a bunch of stories' (28). Indeed, John J. Han inadvertently incorporates the Straussian into his claim that Steinbeck 'uses a humanized, demythologized, or de-Christianized' message.[28]

In Jim Casy, Steinbeck creates a fallen preacher, who rejects the concept of original sin and who preaches the message of socialism. Towards the close of the novel, Casy becomes a labour leader. Those that assail and beat him to death refer to him as 'a red son-of-a bitch' (408). Moreover, Casy is unmistakably a muscular workingman. Steinbeck writes that Casy possesses 'a long head, bony; tight of skin, and set on a neck as stringy and muscular as a celery stalk' (23). Masculinity, a rejection of orthodoxy, and socialism all come together in Casy. If Steinbeck looked to the work of naturalists like Crane and London, then Casy certainly has the potential to take on some sort of Messianic role in the novel. As it transpires, this is exactly what critics have argued, albeit without basing such assumptions on the argument of an inherited theological transformation, as I do. Steinbeck was willing to explore the figure of the Christ throughout his career, but Casy himself has attracted the most critical attention as the figure of Christ in the novel.[29]

Martin Shockley unequivocally argues that 'I see Jim Casy as a simple and direct copy of Jesus Christ.'[30] Han also provides a comprehensive reading of Casy as Christ, or a fictional transfiguration.[31] Most obviously for Han, Casy bears the initials J.C., which resurrects Stephen Crane's characterisation of Jim Conklin—another J.C.—in *The Red Badge of Courage*.[32] Not all Han's arguments are convincing, but I explore some of most compelling here. Casy is associated with light throughout the novel, and Han argues that Steinbeck creates a halo effect around him—'the light of the coming morning made his forehead seem to shine' (75).[33] Indeed, when Casy meets his death toward the end of the novel, vigilantes who are attempting to prevent union activism refer to him as 'that shiny bastard,' thereby associating him with some intangible difference from others (408). For

[28] Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero," 25.
[29] Doc in *Cannery Row* (1945) and *Sweet Thursday* (1954) are other examples of the Steinbeckian Christ.
[30] Martin Shockley, "Christian Symbolism in *The Grapes of Wrath*," *College English* 18, no. 2 (1956): 88.
[31] Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 8.
[32] Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero," 29.
[33] Ibid., 29.

Han, Casy's words just before his own death are also suggestive of the Christ.[34] Casy echoes the words of the crucified Jesus: 'you fellas don' know what you're a-doin' (408).[35] Of course Casy's claim that 'I been thinkin ... I been in the hills, thinkin,' almost you might say like Jesus went into the widerness' overtly makes the relationship between him and Christ clear (88).[36] Finally, when Tom knocks out a deputy charged with defending an unscrupulous landowner, Casy volunteers to take the blame—thereby acting as the Messianic scapegoat.[37] What Han overlooks here, though, is that when the deputy attempts to rise to his feet in order to shoot Tom, Casy kicks him into submission. Steinbeck then refers to Casy as 'the Reverend Casy,' which is one of only three times he does so in the novel (281). Perhaps, then, here is a member of the clergy that Steinbeck can respect: one who takes the part of the working classes and becomes a fighting preacher—thus revealing the legacy of muscular Christianity in later naturalism. I argue that Steinbeck's association of Casy with socialism speaks to the politicisation of Christ common to nineteenth-century American socialism. Han also suggests that 'Casy is akin to Christ in his development of a new theology' which replaces one that is 'invalid or unrealistic for people's pressing needs.'[38] He does not expand upon the implications of the 'new theology,' but Han has inadvertently captured the same theme of the naturalist Christ-figure that I have argued appears in the work of Jack London and Upton Sinclair.

Casy as Christ, though, has not met with universal acceptance. Alan Paton and Liston Pope reject the notion because the response that the reader has to Casy is one of 'pathos rather than awe': Casy is 'doomed to die at the hands of a brutal mob.'[39] Charles Dougherty continues the work of Paton and Pope and expects a Christ figure to express more of the divine rather than the human. Dougherty writes that 'no Christian can be satisfied with a Christ-figure who does not reflect the divine nature of Christ.'[40] He argues that, in the nineteen thirties, Christians often 'emphasized in a special way the human nature of Christ,' but such attempts he believes to be mistaken.[41] Dougherty complains that the reduction of the divine Christ to the human prophet, necessarily results in Christ's

[34] Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero," 30.
[35] Luke 23:34.
[36] Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero," 30.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero," 30.
[39] Alan Paton and Liston Pope, "The Novelist and Christ," *The Saturday Review* (December 4, 1954): 59.
[40] Charles T. Dougherty, "The Christ-Figure in *The Grapes of Wrath*," *College English* 24, no. 3 (1962), 255.
[41] Dougherty cites Pietro di Donato's novel of Italian-American construction workers, *Christ in Concrete* (1939), and Karl Adam's *Christ Our Brother* (1931) - Ibid.

representation 'as the archetypal Wobbly.'[42] However, I believe that both Paton and Pope and Dougherty fail to read Casy as a naturalist Christ. In addition, Dougherty's use of the term 'archetypal' suggests a hackneyed and existing model of the working Christ from which he draws. I suggest that what Dougherty describes as 'archetypal' is actually an unconscious recognition of the works of the previous generation of naturalists. Casy as Christ, then, perfectly exemplifies Steinbeck's incorporation of the legacy of Crane, London, and Sinclair's working-class Christs. Yet in contrast, Casy's masculinity—and whiteness—do not do the same cultural work as Jack London's Christs: that is, Steinbeck does not share London's aim of removing femininity from Christ and endorsing an agenda of masculine, white supremacy.

This is due in part to the fact that the cultural context has changed, but the legacy of fundamentalism and its historical associations continue to appear in the narrative through Steinbeck's inclusion of the Holiness Movement.[43] Steinbeck introduces them through an unnamed woman who attempts to hold a meeting in the Joad family's tent. Despite Ma Joad's claim that 'we always been Holiness,' she refuses entry to this representation of camp Christianity—rather like Larry Donovan's mother in *The Disinherited* had also rejected the help of pious representatives of orthodoxy (224). If such a meeting were held, Ma explains '[she'd] jus' fly all apart' (224). For Steinbeck, organised religion offers little support to destitute and hungry workers; it mocks individuals with the promise of a future heaven. Steinbeck also incorporates London's ambivalence to the Salvation Army, which Jack Conroy had also expressed through the words of Joe Hill. Annie Littlefield, a member of the migrant camp, relates to Ma how the Salvation Army 'made us crawl for our dinner' and how they robbed her husband of 'dignity' (335). Steinbeck picks up on the same heaven-looking themes against which both Jack London and Upton Sinclair positioned themselves—he argues that the destitute have 'got to live before they can afford to die' (58).

As seen for the earlier generation of naturalists explored in this dissertation, associations with Christ often bring with them a promised Kingdom of Heaven. For Steinbeck, the eschatological associations of Christ's appearance manifest in California itself. Napier writes that 'Steinbeck … forcibly enters the Gates with his pilgrims' who

[42] Ibid., 225.
[43] Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 378–81.

expose the 'Celestial City.'[44] Rombold argues that Rose of Sharon, the Joad's daughter, is the agent for the 'new earth' and that she 'takes the place of God at the Last Judgment' in an inversion of the second coming narrative.[45] Shockley also recognises in Rose of Sharon 'the ultimate mystery of the Christian religion'; she becomes 'the resurrective aspect of the Christ' in her role as the mother earth and figure of Mary.[46]

If Rose of Sharon symbolises resurrection, then perhaps Tom himself symbolises the resurrected Christ, as Dougherty argues.[47] Tom's final words in the novel also resemble Christ's commission to his disciples. Tom states that 'I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where - wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there' (444). Here Steinbeck creates an omnipresent Christ who promises to embolden all who long for equal pay and reward for their labour. Rombold goes even further and suggests that the last names of both Tom Joad and Jim Casy also result in a J.C. and so signal two Christ figures.[48] I agree with Han, though, who argues that 'it would be more reasonable to see Tom as a St. Paul figure in his relationship to Casy.'[49] Viewed in this manner, the relationship between Casy and Tom is similar to that of the Bishop and Ernest in London's *The Iron Heel*. Ernest, for example, reveals to the Bishop a new way of looking at the world through socialism, just as Casy reveals to Tom.

Ultimately, though, to cast a definitive judgement on who is or who is not Christ in *The Grapes of Wrath* is not my intention; what matters most is that Steinbeck engages with the Christ at all. The same elemental themes of the socially conscious and masculine Christ that began in Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps*, and which became a common feature of naturalism at the *fin de siècle*, re-emerge in the naturalism of Steinbeck. For Steinbeck, the power of the Depression, its size and impact, can only be explained through recourse to an equally powerful force: the divine story of Christ. Life, death, and resurrection become means by which Steinbeck promises a brighter future and an end to suffering.

Cormac McCarthy and the Return of Religious Naturalism

Steinbeck continues to be an extremely influential literary figure both critically and popularly. Gavin Cologne-Brookes suggests that Steinbeck has clear associations with

[44] Napier, "*The Grapes of Wrath*," 55.
[45] Rombold, "Biblical Inversion," 163.
[46] Shockley, "Christian Symbolism," 89.
[47] Dougherty, "The Christ-Figure," 225.
[48] Rombold, "Biblical Inversion," 154.
[49] Han, "Jesus as a Cultural Hero," 32.

the work of the contemporary naturalist Cormac McCarthy. He contrasts Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (1947) with McCarthy's *The Road*, citing as similarities their 'tone, syntax' and 'moral vision.'[50] McCarthy has attracted growing attention regarding his relationship to naturalism. Steven Frye reads *The Crossing* (1994) as a work 'replete with passages of those found in the naturalist novels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.'[51] Eric Carl Link refers to Cormac McCarthy as '*the* prime example' of a contemporary naturalist.[52] Link argues that 'literary naturalism serves as a valuable lens through which to read the works of Cormac McCarthy.'[53] Indeed, he suggests that McCarthy joins 'in common cause with the American literary naturalists before him' in seeking to understand humanity's relationship to the natural world and the metaphysical.[54] Pizer suggests that 'the naturalist will dramatize the pathos of the waste of human potential' in characters who lack 'the cunning and strength to overcome' their circumstance.[55] He also argues that naturalism 'depicts man under pressure to survive' owing to 'his own limitations' and 'the crushing conditions of life.'[56] *The Road* expresses both these conditions through the relationship between a father and a son and their struggle to survive in an apocalyptic representation of earth that has undergone a world-changing disaster.[57] The result is a harrowing journey along a road fraught with starvation, sickness, and even cannibalism. Their aim is to reach the coast, 'everything depended on reaching the coast' (29). Whilst McCarthy may reconnect with the classic period of naturalism for themes of humanity's relationship to nature, religious themes also abound in the novel.

The naturalists at the *fin de siècle* shared a common cultural conception of Christ, which they used as a marker around which to create their narratives. McCarthy, in contrast, writes in a post-9/11 context in which America's relationship with religion has

[50] Gavin Cologne-Brookes, "*The Road* from *The Pearl*: John Steinbeck, Cormac McCarthy, and Stendhal's Mirror" (unpublished paper presented at the American Literature Association 19th Annual Conference, San Francisco, California, May 22–25, 2008), 8.
[51] Steven Frye, "Cormac McCarthy's "world in its making": Romantic Naturalism in "The Crossing"," *Studies in American Naturalism* 2, no. 1 (2007): 49.
[52] Eric Carl Link, "McCarthy and Literary Naturalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, ed. Steven Frye. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), 154.
[53] Ibid. 160.
[54] Ibid., 149.
[55] Pizer, *Theory and Practice*, 169.
[56] Ibid., 168.
[57] The reader only learns that 'the clocks stopped at 1:17. A longer shear of light and then a series of low concussions' (54). Some critics argue that this is a nuclear disaster, for example "A Tabernacle in the Dark: On the Road with Cormac McCarthy," Phil Christman, accessed June 3, 2016, http://www.booksandculture.com/articles/2007/sepoct/20.40.html. David Kushner, though, suggests that a meteor causes the apocalyptic event - "Cormac McCarthy's Apocalypse," David Kushner, accessed June 3, 2016, http://www.davidkushner.com/article/cormac-mccarthys-apocalypse.

changed significantly. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the wide-ranging expression of contemporary religion in America, but unforeseen acts of violence changed countless lives and demonstrated the fragility of existence. The close religious associations of the attacks resulted in a more militant and vocal expression of unbelief. The spirit of Robert Ingersoll reemerged in the "New Atheism" of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens (1949–2011), and Sam Harris, who each came to prominence post-9/11. Harris even suggests that he began working on *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004) on September 12th 2001.[58] In this work, Harris argues that 'the idea that any of our religions represents the infallible word of the One True God requires an encyclopedic ignorance of history, mythology, and art even to be entertained.'[59] There also resulted greater expressions of patriotism and an outpouring of fundamentalist declarations in favor of the Christian faith.[60] The late-nineteenth century saw a hard time within American evangelicalism, as it sought to adjust to the forces of liberalisation; post-9/11, religion itself was the target of both suspicion and, perhaps, even redemptive solace. The naturalists at the *fin de siècle* attempted to understand the relationship between the sacred and secular, but McCarthy attempts to re-establish a fractured connection in a hard time of spiritual and worldly uncertainty.

Tracy Fessenden describes how post-secular studies have recognized that contemporary society no longer divides the religious and the secular as suitable means of describing 'lived experience.'[61] McCarthy even hints at the fuzzy line between belief and unbelief in his suggestion that 'sometimes it's good to pray. I don't think you have to have a clear idea of who or what God is to pray. You could even be quite doubtful about the whole business.'[62] McCarthy's uncertain relationship with religion emerges in *The Road* through the imposition upon humanity, and all life on earth, of a new environment that is in the process of selecting the fittest to survive in an indifferent naturalist universe. McCarthy writes of the 'cold relentless circling of the intestate earth' and 'the crushing black vacuum of the universe' (11).

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[58] Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate, *The New Atheist Novel: Fiction, Philosophy and Polemic After 9/11* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 5.
[59] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 16.
[60] George McKenna, *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 353.
[61] Tracy Fessenden, "The Problem of the Postsecular," *American Literary History* 26, no. 1 (2014): 156.
[62] Quoted in Allen Josephs, "The Quest for God in *The Road*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*, ed. Steven Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 133.

The Road differs from Upton Sinclair's *The Millennium* because in Sinclair's vision of the future, the natural world continued to survive. Sinclair's apocalyptic moment only affected humanity, who could continue to prosper in a living earth. McCarthy, though, changes the relationship between humanity and nature in much more targeted exploration of Spencerian and Huxleyan notions of survival. These play out amongst the survivors of the unnamed cataclysm. The survivors hunt one another as a viable source of food and band together in uncertain unions with cannibalistic intent. The unspoken tragedy of the novel is that neither the good nor the bad can hope for survival in an earth that, as far as the reader knows, continues to die. The man and the boy carry 'the fire' in the novel, and they actively seek to hold on to a Huxleyan morality (87). The 'bad guys' in the novel are those who, like the cannibals, have chosen to struggle for supremacy against other humans; they become bestial as the veneer of society shatters (80).

Carl James Grindley argues that 'many interpretive issues' that relate to the novel's religious themes resolve themselves if *The Road* is read 'as a document of the so-called Tribulation of Judeo-Christian mythology.'[63] Grindley even suggests that the hour of the unnamed catastrophe, 1:17, refers to chapter and verse of Revelation. He proposes that 'the novel takes place post-Rapture and that the father may have missed 'the second coming by moments.'[64] Christ for Grindley, then, is absent from the novel, and so the assumption is that the earth becomes the biblical hell for those who were not saved. A tribulation—itself resonant with premillennialism—would suggest the presence of a Christ-like figure in the novel. Lydia Cooper, for example, argues that the boy takes on the role of the Holy Grail, thus revealing in *The Road* a grail narrative.[65] Cooper believes that McCarthy employs such a metaphor when the boy and father find shelter under a bridge. The boy is a 'golden chalice, good to house a god' and above him loom 'the hammered rivets, the wooden sleepers and crossplanks' of the bridge (78).

Of most interest to the present study are those critics who also read the boy *as* Christ in the novel. Allen Josephs points to the boy as Christ because the boy's vision of himself appears to resonate with the words of Christ. Josephs argues that the boy's use of 'Yes, I am … I am the one' mirrors Christ's own self-identification with divinity.[66]

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[63] Carl James Grindley, "The Setting of McCarthy's the Road," *The Explicator* 67, no. 1 (2008): 11.
[64] Ibid., 13.
[65] Lydia R. Cooper, "Cormac McCarthy's "The Road" as Apocalyptic Grail Narrative, *Studies in the Novel* 43, no 2 (2011): 222.
[66] Josephs, "The Quest for God in *The Road*," 138.

Josephs also argues that McCarthy's description of light that seemingly gathers around and follows the boy actually marks him out for divinity, very much like Jim Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath*.[67] McCarthy writes that 'there was light all about him … and when he moved the light moved with him' (296). In contrast, John Clute argues that *The Road* is a novel in which he finds it difficult to accept the redemptive possibility of a Christ-figure because 'it is the story about the end of the world in which the world ends.'[68] Clute and Josephs disagree over McCarthy's use of the word salitter. Each agree that McCarthy adopts the word from the German theologian and mystic Jakob Böehme (1575–1624) and that its meaning translates as divine essence. McCarthy writes that 'He walked out into the road and stood. The silence. The salitter drying from the earth' (279). Here McCarthy suggests that divine power is abandoning the earth, just as the earth itself is dying. Clute argues that the absence of the divine necessarily means that if the boy were to take on the figure of Christ in the novel, then he must somehow overcome the absence of divinity. For Clute, the image of the dirty, starving boy does not 'shape our gaze beyond' despair, let alone provide a transcendence of the hellish world.[69] Josephs, however, bases his argument upon textual evidence and the dying father's vision of the boy. He sees his son 'standing there in the road looking back' and 'glowing in that waste like a tabernacle' (293). For Joseph's this moment is indicative of a divinity that will return.[70] 'Why the singular most ecumenical term imaginable to express the essence of God?,' he asks.[71]

If *The Road* is a return, or at the least an extension, of late nineteenth-century naturalism, then perhaps a sensible treatment of the boy as Christ centres more upon expectations of who Christ should be. Clute and Josephs thus erroneously project onto the boy an expectation of a divinely mandated Christ—the very image of him that the naturalists at the *fin de siècle* rejected. Whether the boy is a Christ figure clearly resonates with the work that I have undertaken throughout this dissertation, but it also differs in fundamental ways. McCarthy makes no attempt to bring back the Christ of the Gospels to the twentieth century; the boy—if he is a Christ-figure—has no political message to preach. That Christ should be a boy in a naturalist text immediately sets *The Road* apart

[67] Ibid.
[68] John Clute, "End of the Road," *Sci Fi Weekly* (October 30, 2006), accessed June 3, 2016, ftp://asavage.dyndns.org/Literature/scifi.com/www.scifi.com/sfw/books/column/sfw13979.html.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Josephs, "The Quest for God in *The Road*," 139.
[71] Ibid., 140.

from those work that I have studied previously: manhood was a marker of the Christ-like for Crane, London, and even Steinbeck.

Perhaps, though, the point of *The Road* is to force the reader to question who, or perhaps what, they understand Christ to be. For McCarthy, the boy as Christ does not stand for politics, because politics no longer exists; he does not stand for a modernising theology, because theology is meaningless in the barren world. The boy as Christ is a symbol of optimism—a symbol of all that is good in humanity. He is the potential for a better world, an ideal that does transcend because he is the fire in each one of us. McCarthy's Christ reflects the spirit of Renan and the transcendentalists who saw Christ as possessing a spirit in which the divine lived but, crucially, was not divine himself. The reader experiences the spirit of the transcendent Christ in the boy's final embrace with a family, who find him following the father's death. Steinbeck's Rose of Sharon took on the role of Mary through her nurturing of the dying worker, and so, too, McCarthy seems to recreate the maternal family of Christ. The family's mother, or perhaps a representation of Mary, greets the boy with unsurprised expectancy—'oh, she said, I am so glad to see you' (306). She also appears to realise that her role is to instruct the boy spiritually: 'she would talk to him sometimes about God' (306). For the boy, his father becomes a God-like figure: 'He tried to talk to God but the best thing was to talk to his father' (306). The woman consoles the boy and suggests that 'the breath of God was his breath' and that it passes 'from man to man through all of time' (306).

Conclusion

From Conroy to McCarthy, twentieth-century naturalists continued to incorporate religious themes that built upon those first explored in the works of the naturalists at the *fin de siècle*. The hard times of the Great Depression and post-9/11 America revealed harsh environments in which humanity battled economic forces, the natural world, and each other in stories of survival. In order to describe these environments, though, the twentieth century naturalists looked to the divine to make sense of things.

Conroy and Steinbeck, both writing from the same hard time of the Great Depression, incorporated religious themes into their works in quite different ways. Conroy, in *The Disinherited*, treated religion as a weak, ineffective force unable to stand against the power of economic might. Steinbeck, on the other hand, most obviously resurrected the religious themes of earlier naturalism. Biblical religion was a means by

which Steinbeck attempted to make sense of the economic forces of the Depression. The legacy of the historical Jesus, the political implications of Christ's teachings and life, the conception of heaven as an endpoint for humanity, and the image of the fallen preacher each re-emerged in Steinbeck's mythic account of migration and Christian belief. Thus, while Conroy and Steinbeck may differ in their treatment of religious themes, they do share a commonality: optimism. The inherent optimism that the hard times will come to an end differentiates their naturalism from the cityscapes of Crane, but it holds them in common with Jack London's *The Iron Heel* and Upton Sinclair's *The Millennium*. Conroy and Steinbeck both rejected religious orthodoxy, but they turned to the language of religion in order to capture the lived experiences of their characters. Cormac McCarthy—himself separated from Conroy and Steinbeck by generations of theological and social history—also infused his post-9/11 narrative of the apocalypse with the language of the divine. Contemporary critics regard McCarthy as a twentieth-century naturalist, but McCarthy's characterisation of the boy perhaps becomes a reimagined naturalist Christ of the *fin de siècle*—a human being who manifests divinity without being divine himself.

The religious themes first explored at the end of the nineteenth century, then, continued to manifest during the hard times of the Great Depression and post-9/11 America. Conroy, Steinbeck, and McCarthy each demonstrate that naturalism and religion are not antagonistic forces but mutually compatible ways in which to address contemporary society. Edward Bellamy and Upton Sinclair looked forward to the year 2000 as a marker of a changed relationship between religious institutions and society, but the shear plurality of religious belief and its worldwide interconnectedness is something that they did not foresee. Religious institutions and religions themselves continue to guide and dominate individuals in the world, but they also continue to receive much criticism. As long as the past and present collide, then, perhaps naturalism will never fully disappear as a mode of expressing the relationship between the world and the divine.

Conclusion

Religion in Naturalism: Transformations

''Here I close. I can only repeat myself. There is no death. Life is spirit, and spirit cannot die…
What shall I be when I live again? I wonder. I wonder. . . .'[1]

Jack London - The Star Rover

The underlying concept of this dissertation has been one of transformation. I have demonstrated how and why a number of authors commonly associated with naturalism—a genre that owes so much to Darwinism and a rationalist interpretation of the world—extensively engaged with the controversies at work in a modernising and liberalising Church. Steven Frye writes that the relationship between science and religion in naturalism is 'commonly missed' because of an assumption that 'a simple dissonance between the claims of modern science and traditional religion' exists.[2] In this dissertation, however, I have argued for an approach of accord—naturalism is not purely a scientific and secular genre but one that actively represents considerable sensitivity to the religious history of the United States. The work achieved herein, therefore, has filled a gap in the criticism of naturalism through its development of an argument based entirely upon the close interaction between naturalism and religion.

Traditional religion—or Christianity in the context of this dissertation—can take many forms, and its history is a complex, multidimensional story that continues to develop.[3] I have explored one facet of Christianity's history: the post-Darwinian transformations that took place in American Protestantism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of early twentieth centuries. Whilst many forms of Protestantism experienced a process of liberalisation, I made particular reference to the process within evangelicalism—from which fundamentalism would emerge in the first half of the twentieth century—to understand the work of the naturalists explored herein.[4]

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[1] Jack London, *The Star Rover* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 329.
[2] Steven Frye, "Naturalism and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 154.
[3] See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2010).
[4] My use of the term evangelicalism was also as a definitional canopy that covered a number of differing denominations. I decided to employ the term broadly throughout the dissertation because I believe that drawing too heavily from particular denominations would have distracted from the texts of the naturalists,

The post-Enlightenment and post-Darwinian contexts of the late nineteenth century saw the naturalists exploring the supernatural and the secular within the triumvirate of evangelicalism, liberalism, and fundamentalism. The naturalists often approached manifestations of the divine through scientific lenses, but they did not do so with a spirit of antagonism. Rather, they questioned and attacked certain earthly powers of institutional religion that they believed had co-opted religion as a force of environmental determinism. The naturalist reacted against those who imposed upon humanity an orthodoxy that refuted common sense and reason. They also interpreted the Bible's teachings with a distinctly political agenda that they used both as a foil and as a way to understand the socioeconomic "hard times" from which their works emerged. The naturalists explored partook in a reappraisal of the very doctrines around which the Christian faith is based, and they sought to understand the place of the Church in their own contemporary societies, perhaps even in their own lives. Indeed, the biographical material I included demonstrated that the naturalists under consideration grew up in extraordinarily spiritual households. They were the sons of ministers, converts during their teenage years, or, in the case of Jack London, the child of multicultural and multi-spiritual environments. Naturalism is a genre that has religion in its blood.

Reading Religion in Naturalism

Naturalism itself is a broad definitional term that has meant different things to different people over time. I approached naturalism thematically in terms of its relationship to the post-Darwinian and post-Enlightenment intellectual developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I have demonstrated that religion manifests in the texts explored in three distinct ways. First, the narrative itself could be naturalistic, with religion touching the novel, short story, or reportage to provide historical context and cultural meaning. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of Streets* and Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited* are good examples of plots that explore the historicity of religion and religion's relationship to society set against distinctly naturalistic worlds. Second, the religious themes themselves could explore the reduction of the supernatural to the natural—which was a theme that fascinated Jack London in his representation of the human Christ. Frank Norris's "Lauth" also falls under this categorisation through its scientific exploration of resurrections.

which were of most importance to me. In other words, I wanted to avoid making this a dissertation about American theology that used the work of the naturalists as evidential material.

Third, the naturalists could expose characters and ideas associated with the supernatural to the forces of naturalistic worlds, thus resulting in displays of human fragility. Frank Norris's "Miracle Joyeux" and Upton Sinclair's *They Call Me Carpenter* fall under this categorisation, as does the experience of conversion in *Elmer Gantry*. Of course, these categories are not mutually exclusive, as Jack London's *The Star Rover* (1915) ably demonstrates. To borrow Charles Child Walcutt's definitional metaphor of naturalism, religion in the works I have explored emerges as a divided stream: sometimes it addresses the theological, sometimes socio-political, and sometimes it appears at the confluence.

Whilst I did not set out to form an overarching theory of religion in naturalism—or to create a formula by which to read all works of naturalism—it has become apparent that the naturalists explored passed the divine through the machine of philosophical and scientific naturalism to produce five distinct themes, each of which constitute the three modes of naturalistic religious representation just described. The themes appear throughout the naturalists' careers to varying degrees, and they are products of a cultural and religious context—verifiable both in the scholarship of theologians and lived out in the preaching and experiences of men like Walter Rauschenbusch and Billy Sunday. First, higher biblical criticism—itself a product of the much wider context of the Enlightenment—called into question the infallibility of the Bible through scholarship that explained and challenged the Bible's historical chronology, its narrative of events, and the composition of its texts. Second, Christology was central to the schisms and alliances of American Protestantism across the period that I examined, and I demonstrated that the naturalists approached the historical Christ in their works with diverse cultural and political aims. Christ became human as the legacy of higher biblical criticism stripped him of divinity. He became an historical figure open to the same temptations as humanity. In response to the feminised figure of Christ in the late nineteenth-century, the naturalist Christ became increasingly masculinised, and he often reflected nineteenth-century attitudes towards ethnicity. Third, human agency became a much more viable explanation as how the promised heaven of Christian eschatology would manifest itself; heaven became a myth, and the Brotherhood of Man could become a reality. Fourth, and directly related to the agency of human action, American socialists began to explore the economic implications of Christ's teachings in order to comment upon and react against what they viewed as the deleterious effects that capitalism had upon society—Christ's teaching became a vehicle for political change. Finally, the concept of original sin became difficult

to sustain in light of Social Darwinism; the culpability of the environment—from the streets of the Bowery through to the wastelands of economic and human disaster—was a far more likely explanation for the errors of humanity than an unverifiable sense of metaphysical iniquity. Of course, the environment also became a backdrop again which the naturalists explored the inability of religion itself to affect change.

These five themes, or perhaps *five fundamentals*, of religious expression in the works I have examined demonstrate how closely related naturalist texts and American religion were. When the naturalists incorporated religion into their works, then, they were not manifesting an unthinking reaction against the divine. They were actively exploring the divine and the secular during a period of theological and scientific upheaval. The texts that I have explored constitute a subset of the potential number of works that I could have used in a study focussing upon religion and naturalism.[5] That being said, I firmly believe that reading religion in naturalist texts against the backdrop of theological culture will continue to be a fruitful methodological framework.

The close interplay between secularity and religiosity found in the works of the naturalists that I explored also relates to current studies in post-secularism. Tracy Fessenden, for example, addresses the problems associated with viewing our current society as post-secular. She explains that the notions of religiosity and secularisation that hold today are artefacts of nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism, which is the same context that the naturalists explored contemporaneously and against which I argued that we should read their work.[6] Fessenden also argues that 'the term postsecular [sic] describes an environment in which the categories of the religious and the secular no longer divide the world cleanly between them.'[7] The work that I have undertaken certainly bears the hallmark of a post-secular study because the naturalists also failed to separate the sacred and the secular cleanly. Indeed, Michael Kaufmann's description of a post-secular study as a return to religious 'truth and meaning' and an attempt to add religion to discourses that include 'race, class, sexuality, and gender' describes this

[5] The work of Theodore Dreiser (1871–1975) is an obvious omission from a dissertation exploring naturalism. *Sister Carrie* (1900) would seem a prime candidate for a naturalist novel to explore *fin de siècle* religious themes, but reference to religion is, almost, entirely absent from the text. Joseph Epstein states that 'God cannot be said to be dead in this novel, for he never comes alive' - Joseph Epstein, ""Sister Carrie" at 100," *The Hudson Review* 54, no. 1 (2001): 26. *An American Tragedy* (1925) does incorporate evangelical themes, but Dreiser explores them as a product of generational shift, not theological development, and so they move out of the scope of this dissertation.
[6] Tracy Fessenden, "The Problem of the Postsecular," *American Literary History* 26, no. 1 (2014): 12.
[7] Ibid., 3.

dissertation well.[8] That being said, a crucial distinction to make between my work and post-secular studies is that the naturalists were not trying to re-establish connections between the sacred and secular; they were in the process of understanding how each could function and survive on its own terms.

Emerging out of the same critical contexts as the post-secular, Christopher Watkin explores how current French philosophical thinking dissociates the 'death of God' from the categories of 'imitative' and 'residual' atheisms.[9] Watkin's contemporary work extends beyond the scope of this dissertation, but his concept of imitative atheism provides a useful way to view the methods by which the naturalists represented religion. According to Watkin, imitative atheism replaces God, or the supernatural, with Man or Reason. In replacing God with these categories, Watkin believes, imitative atheism simply restates terminology, rather than consuming the space that God once occupied.[10] For example, if Man becomes God, then humanity has taken on a parasitic role of traditional theological categories. Viewing the naturalists through the lens of imitative atheism is helpful because it allows for a philosophy of the genre that both rejects the supernatural whilst also allowing its theological categories to remain. Whilst Watkin's larger argument is to establish a post-theological understanding of atheism, his work unexpectedly supports my analysis of naturalism as inherently related to religious history. For example, Jack London and Upton Sinclair both take a special interest in the person of Christ, but their very use of him as a means to reject traditional categories keeps alive the divine.

Religion in Realism and Naturalisms

The late nineteenth century also saw an explosion of authors exploring religious themes in a variety of modes and for quite different intentions. Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* thrilled the reading public's imaginations with a narrative of adventurous action and spirituality, and Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* challenged readers to re-evaluate their faith from the perspective of social action. I have argued that the naturalists were certainly aware of these enormously successful works, which, in turn, informed their own religious representations. The naturalists incorporated plots common to devotional

[8] Michael W. Kaufmann, "Post-secular Puritans: Recent Retrials of Anne Hutchinson," *Early American Literature* 45, no. 1 (2010), 32.
[9] Christopher Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jeau-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 16.
[10] Ibid., 2.

and homiletic works and transformed them into naturalist texts. Frank Norris's "Miracle Joyeux," Jack London's *The Star Rover*, and Upton Sinclair's *They Call Me Carpenter* each built upon the legacy of an emerging Christian literature, but each work also subverted the formula to create works of naturalist religious fiction.

However, religious themes are also present in the works of authors associated with American realism, not to mention throughout America's literary history. Rebecca Harding Davis's "Life in the Iron Mills" has demonstrated that a work appearing at the border between realism and naturalism could equally address the sociology of Christ's teaching, but so, too, did Mark Twain. Twain writes that 'there is a God for the rich man but none for the poor' and that religion cannot be expected to 'feed you.'[11] In *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), Twain also provides a sense of a realistic topological context to the life of Christ—very much as Norris had done in "Miracle Joyeux"—and writes that the area of Christ's ministry constituted 'no larger than an ordinary county in the United States.'[12] The naturalists, then, were not alone in their exploration of the Christian faith through literary forms, but perhaps Frank Norris's "Lauth" and "Miracle Joyeux" are two works that most resemble what could be regarded as a unique *religious naturalism*. Both works explore the divine within a framework of exposing the person of Christ and his associated miracles and resurrection to moral development and atavism.

The Naturalists and Comparative Religion

The United States in the late nineteenth century experienced significant population increase through immigration. An increase in population brought with it a much larger plurality of non-Protestant religions, including Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. I have briefly touched upon these other modes of religious expression throughout the dissertation to greater and lesser degrees, but I believe that a much more significant study is necessary to shift attention away from the type of Protestantism upon which I have concentrated. If, as I have argued, the naturalists—who were all white and all men in my study—responded to the cultural context of theological change within American

[11] Mark Twain, "To Orion and Mary E. (Mollie) Clemens 19 and 20 October 1865," Mark Twain Project, California Digital Library, The University of California. Accessed July 15, 2016, http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00092.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp.
[12] Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad; Or, The New Pilgrim's Progress; Being Some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land; With Descriptions of Countries, Nations, Incidents and Adventures, as They Appeared to the Author* (Hartford: Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1899), 502.

evangelicalism from their own personal and cultural reference points, then religious representations in naturalism from non-Protestant, non-white, and non-male perspectives may also reveal quite different expressions of culture.

That sustained work is yet to come, but James T. Farrell's *Young Lonigan* (1932), *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* (1934), and *Judgment Day* (1935) are good examples of works that explore Irish-American Catholicism. Farrell certainly explores the liberalisation of Catholicism, particularly in *Judgment Day*. His work also reflects the effects of the Great Depression, and so it would seem that Farrell is open to the same analytic approach that I have undertaken throughout the dissertation. Indeed, Chapter 5 began the process of examining Farrell's relationship to works like *Elmer Gantry*, thus crossing denominational boundaries to make wider discoveries of the relationships between texts associated with naturalism. Non-white religious expressions in naturalism appear in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946)—Petry also points to religion in naturalism from the non-male perspective. Indeed, Donna Campbell argues that Wright and Petry 'employed naturalism to register disillusionment with and protest against, the injustices visited upon Black Americans.'[13] Don Dingledine also views *The Street* in relation to Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, and so—as with *Elmer Gantry* and *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*—a widening interconnectedness of texts associated with naturalism begins to emerge.[14]

The Naturalists as Cultural Progenitors of the Historical Christ

Recognising, then, that religious themes constitute a significant aspect of naturalisms throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the naturalists that I have explored were not theologians in a conventional sense of the word. They were, however, capable of representing in their art the same theologically probing questions that caused fractured relationships amongst theologians. Indeed, the naturalists' affinity and understanding of theology was the most surprising feature of my research. Moreover, I suggest that the naturalists—through their religious representation—certainly contribute to the history of American religious fiction, or perhaps create their own liberal religious fiction. *Ben-Hur*, for example, became a novel against which the naturalists reacted for its overt orthodoxy,

[13] Donna Campbell, "American Literary Naturalism: Critical Perspectives," *Literature Compass* 8 (2011): 503.
[14] Don Dingledine, ""It Could Have Been Any Street": Ann Petry, Stephen Crane, and the Fate of Naturalism," *Studies in American Fiction* 34, no. 1 (2006): 92.

but *In His Steps*—itself so connected with liberalism—provided the necessary impetus for the physical and spiritual rise and fall of characters in the naturalists' texts.

The naturalists were far more than distant authors from a Victorian society that, at first glance, appears so far removed from our own. They were the progenitors of populist cultural expressions of the divine; they were trailblazers who were not afraid to question established norms and sacred ideas precious to so many. To be sure, what has struck me is just how close the naturalists are to our own contemporary society in terms of the questions that they ask about the relationship between the human and the divine. An unexpected development of my research from its original conception was the extent to which I would incorporate the figure of the historical Christ. Indeed, his presence has been an important—although not exclusive—feature of this dissertation. I gave an account in the Introduction of just why Christ should appear so readily, but here I want to expand the scope of research to further twentieth-century artistic representation of Christs and relate them to naturalism. The naturalists established a legacy that crosses artistic boundaries. From Martin Scorsese's (1988) cinematic interpretation of Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1955) through to Philip Pullman's *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ* (2010), artists continue to explore the historicity of Christ. Speaking of his recent role as Christ in the film *Last Days in the Desert* (2016), Ewan McGregor also explains that 'this film is very much about the human side of Jesus, because I don't know how you go about shooting the divine side.'[15] None of these works would be possible, I contend, if it were not for the naturalists who struggled at the genesis—at the collision—of science and religion.

In this sense, then, the naturalists act as markers of religious social change. Stephen Crane's poetry revealed an undoubted interest in the topic of God, but the battles of the Bowery and the Civil War saw Crane exploring religious themes as part of a much larger societal context. For Frank Norris, the laboratory of a mediaeval scientist became the means by which to explore the resurrection of Christ as a mythic construct, but Norris also represented Christ directly—although his Christ was not omnipotent enough to defeat the editor's pen. Crane and Norris, therefore, certainly explored religious themes in their works, but they revealed a liberalisation that had not quite gone *mainstream*. Jack

[15] Ethan Sacks, *Ewan McGregor Explores 'The Human Side of Jesus' in 'Last Days in the Desert,'* New York Daily News, April 30, 2016, accessed May 12. 2016, http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/movies/ewan-mcgregor-seeks-jesus-humanity-days-desert-article-1.2620082.

London's exploration of the Christ that ranged from the Alaskan wilderness to first-century Jerusalem, in contrast, demonstrated the widening influence of liberalisation. London's masculine and socialist Christ raged against the established Church, but London also appropriated common nineteenth-century attitudes towards race and femininity in his representations of Christ. London was an author who explored the editorial boundaries of the fictional Christ in a society in which the theological tides ebbed and flowed. Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis took up where London left off, but their religious themes were far more overt explorations of American society. The Jazz Age made a celebrity of Jesus, as eschatological doctrine—and even the emissaries of God—became dangerously comedic in post-Scopes America. Jack Conroy, John Steinbeck, and Cormac McCarthy, though, demonstrated how the image of Christ, and, indeed, the very foundations of the Christian faith, continued as means of naturalist expression throughout the twentieth century and up to the present day. The figure of Christ was clearly important to the naturalists, but his presence should not be viewed as mandatory for a study of religion in naturalism—I have also demonstrated above the importance of four other non-Christological themes, and these should be explored further in future research of this kind.

Conclusion: 'I Could Almost Believe in God'

This dissertation, then, sought to understand the place of religion in a group of authors commonly associated with naturalism. Stephen Crane's ode to the universe explored the indifference of nature to humanity, but the naturalists explored herein were certainly not indifferent to religion. They were scientists, philosophers, and non-conventional theologians who understood the fundamental character of a changing American religious landscape. Religious themes permeate the work of the naturalists that I have explored; they act as markers of social change and perhaps even provide an insight into the spiritual lives of the naturalists themselves. Religion and naturalism coexist in a complex relationship that ebbs and flows between orthodoxy and liberalism, but never do they deny the right for the other to exist. I believe that studying the religious history of our societies through their literature is of pressing interest. Over a century may have passed since Crane's imagining of the universe, but the relationship between the sacred and secular continues to press upon human existence. American literary naturalism, I have demonstrated, provided—and continues to provide—a means through which to test and to understand more fully this relationship.

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