



Zweymahl zwey und funffzig  
 Außerlesene  
**Bibliche Historien**

Aus dem  
 Alten und Neuen  
**Testamente,**  
 Der Jugend zum Besten abgefasset

von  
**Johann Hübner,**

RECTORE des JOHANNES  
 zu Hamburg,

Nebst einer Vorrede  
 E. Hoch-Ehrwürdigen MINISTERII  
 der Stadt Hamburg.

Mit Er. Königl. Majest. in Pohlen und Churfürstl.  
 Durchl. in Sachsen allergnädigstem  
 PRIVILEGIO.

Leipzig, 1731.

Bev Johann Friedrich Gleditschens seel. Sohn.

[Titlepage from Johann Hübner, *Zweymahl zwey und funffzig Bibliche Historien aus dem Alten und Neuen Testamente, Der Jugend zum Besten abgefasset*. Leipzig: Joh. Friedrich Gleditsch und Sohn, 1731]

# Protestantism and Modernisation in German Children's Literature of the Late 18th Century

*Gottfried Adam*

To deal with this topic in an appropriate way it is necessary to take a look at developments before 1750, a year which is significant in the emergence of the specific genre of children's literature. Children's literature before that year tended to take the form of "Bibles for children." Therefore I shall take a closer look at Martin Luther's *Passionalbüchlein*, which appeared in 1529, and at Johann Hübner's *Zweymahl zwei und funffzig Biblische Historien, Der Jugend zum Besten abgefasset*, which was published in 1714. In the main part of the article I concentrate on the period between 1770 and 1790, which was a peak time for the publication of Protestant religious literature for children. In this regard I will comment on Rudolph C. Lossius, *Die ältesten Geschichten der Bibel für Kinder in Erzählungen auf Spaziergängen*, published in 1784, in order to show the shifts that took place in religious educational theory and practice. To conclude I present a short summary of my findings and hints for further research.<sup>1</sup> My main but not exclusive focus throughout is on publications in the German language.

1 A short remark on terminology: the German word *Geschichte* is well known in the German language, to be sure, it is an integral part of the language. The similar term in French is *histoire*. In differentiating between "story" and "history," the English language has not one, but two words for what can be expressed by one term in German. As far as our area of interest, Bibles for children, is concerned, we can however neglect the differentiation of meaning in the English language because in our context the words "story" and "history" are used interchangeably.

## Developments before 1750

### Children's Bibles

Although 1750 is usually considered to be a decisive year for the emergence of the genre of children's literature,<sup>2</sup> an important sub-genre of religious literature for children in fact existed before then in the form of Bibles for children.<sup>3</sup> These children's Bibles have often been overlooked by researchers in the field of 18th-century literature. This is true even in theological and religious educational research. For instance, in the *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, published in 1999, there is a short article by Monika Born on *Religiöse Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, but it contains only a few remarks on the topic of children's Bibles.<sup>4</sup> Even authors who explicitly include religious literature in their research seem to overlook the real impact of children's Bibles. Samuel F. Pickering selects only the aspect of imagination fostered by religious literature.<sup>5</sup> Patricia Demers states quite correctly that religious and moral literature written in England and America from the 16th to the 19th centuries has been neglected by the literary establishment. She seeks to prove that this genre is worthy of in-depth discussion, yet she herself overlooks the relevance of children's Bibles.<sup>6</sup>

I think that children's Bibles played a crucial role in the emergence of fiction for children, more specifically in the Protestant realm, though there is some evidence of interaction between Protestants and Catholics in matters concerning Bible stories. There is an understandable reason for this difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In the Catholic Church, catechisms always played a major role, while in the Protestant churches the Bible had the central position. Therefore the Protestant tradition in continental Europe as well as the Anglican and Protestant traditions in England and the United States are of special interest in this matter.

Ruth B. Bottigheimer points out: "For two generations before the emergence of intentional children's fictions around 1750, Bible histories had been

- 2 For further details of this literary process, compare Hans-Heino Ewers in his introduction to children's and youth literature of the Enlightenment: Ewers, ed., *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Aufklärung*, 5-59, especially 7-10.
- 3 Ruth B. Bottigheimer, in her article "The Child-Reader of Children's Bibles", presents evidence for this fact.
- 4 Lange, ed., *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, I, 339-414.
- 5 Pickering, *Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children*, especially 1-30: Allegory and Eastern Tale.
- 6 Demers, *Heaven upon Earth*.

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composed for Protestant and Catholic children in Germany, France and England." She continues: "Of the fundamental issues with which children's Bible authors wrestled in this period, four underlay the substance of early children's fictions: social class, paternal roles, moral content, and evident truth. Children's Bible authors identified the form in which they were adopted into early children's fiction in the middle of the 18th century."<sup>7</sup>

As I cannot examine all four issues explicitly, I will particularly deal with the question of moral content because it seems to me that this is of special interest for our topic.<sup>8</sup> I would like to illustrate the early developments by means of two examples of children's Bibles published before 1750 in order to produce evidence that specific children's literature already existed before 1750. We first consider a Bible written by Martin Luther and then turn to another, published by Johann Hübner.<sup>9</sup>

### Martin Luther's Passional

The leading figure in the time of Reformation, Martin Luther (1483-1546), published in 1529 a book that may be called the first Protestant Bible for children. It takes the form of an illustrated, or "picture" Bible. Luther called his book a "passional". He added it as an appendix to another book that dealt with prayer: "Ein betbüchlin mit eym Calender und Passional, hübsch zugericht, Wittemberg 1529".<sup>10</sup>

The pamphlet, small in size like a pocket book, contains illustrations and the language of the text is German, not Latin. Since a Latin edition also exists, the booklet was evidently written in German and later translated into Latin. It follows medieval tradition in that it represents the type of book called

- 7 Bottigheimer, "Children's Bibles 1690-1750", 101. Hans-Heino Ewers also states in his introduction to Brüggeman and Ewers, eds., *Handbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, 10 et seq., that already in the 16th, 17th and early 18th century there was a number of religious, moral and didactic publications that aimed specifically at children and youth, even though it was not always meant for them only. This type of literature was - according to Ewers - by no means a mere precursor or preliminary stage.
- 8 The question of paternal roles, esp. paternal and patriarchal sinning, is treated in Bottigheimer, "The Child-Reader of Children's Bibles", esp. 50-52.
- 9 Bottigheimer, "The Child-Reader of Children's Bibles", discusses all known Bibles for children.
- 10 Published by Hanns Lufft. A Facsimile-Edition edited by Frieder Schulz was printed in Kassel: Johannes Stauda Verlag 1982. In the overall scholarly edition of Luther's works (*Weimarer Ausgabe*, Vol. 10 / II, 458, 12-470, 6) the Calender was not even included, whereas only the biblical texts without the pictures were printed from the Passional. This shows that the editors did not really understand Luther's programme underlying the pamphlet.

“passional”. In these pamphlets the life of Christ is central. Luther’s passional differs in that, among Old Testament stories, it contains not only the creation narrative, but several others as well, such as those about Noah, Lot, Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. The passional starts with the Old Testament story of God’s grace in creation and ends with the resurrection of Christ, his coming again at the end of time, and the missionary injunction to teach the gospel to the whole world.

Luther called his passional a *Laienbibel* [Bible for the laity] and aimed it explicitly at children and simple folk rather than educated adults. It was part of a threefold volume containing a prayer book, a calendar and a biblical section. This shows that Luther intended to create a book for everyday use. In the foreword he explains his programme in the following way: “I considered it good to add the old passional pamphlet to the prayer book, above all for the sake of children and simple folk, who are more moved by pictures and parables to remember the holy stories than by mere words or dogma. As St. Mark shows, for the sake of simple folk even Christ himself preached nothing but parables.”

The pamphlet consists of 50 woodcuts matching 50 biblical texts. When one opens the pamphlet and looks at the two pages, the one on the left hand side always contains a woodcut of a biblical story, while the page on the right contains a text in very elementary language telling in six to ten lines the essence of the biblical story that can be seen in the picture.

This means that the pictures are not mere illustrations of the text that were added one way or another, but constitute an integral part of Luther’s passional so that they play a vital part in the process of understanding. The pictures “tell” more about the biblical story than the few lines of text can say. The woodcuts were specially carved for this publication. The publisher Hans Lufft ordered them, but we do not know who actually made them. What we do know from the relevant correspondence is that Luther himself was very much interested in the illustration of his publications and discussed these matters with his publisher.

We here have a type of children’s Bible in the form of a picture Bible containing a narrative close to the biblical text.<sup>11</sup> The book was reprinted several times in the 16th century, but was forgotten subsequently. The use of

11 For further details see Adam, “Luthers Passionalbüchlein”, 74-78. See also Bottigheimer, “Martin Luther’s Children’s Bible”, 152-161.

catechisms became much more widespread in the following years. Evidently the time for this kind of Bible for children had not yet come. Bottigheimer's judgement seems correct to me: "In terms of children's Bibles, Luther represented a textual position far in advance of his age."<sup>12</sup>

### Johann Hübner's *Biblische Historien*

From Luther's pamphlet we take a big step and turn, while omitting other authors<sup>13</sup>, among whom particularly Justus Gesenius<sup>14</sup> should be mentioned, to the Protestant children's Bible that can be called the most popular and longest selling Bible of its type: Johann Hübner's *Biblische Historien*.<sup>15</sup> This is a Bible designed for use in schools.<sup>16</sup> The full title is *Zweymahl zwey und funffzig Auserlesene Historien aus dem Alten und Neuen Testamente. Der Jugend zum Besten, abgefasst Von Johann Hübner, Leipzig: Joh. Friedrich Gleditsch und Sohn 1714*. Hübner (1668-1731) is undoubtedly the most famous author of a German Bible "Historie" book. Christine Reents lists about 270 reprints, new editions and extracts of this book between 1714 and 1902, the year of its last printing. However, even more editions than this exist. In Siebenbürgen, Romania, I have personally found four additional editions not included in Reents's list.<sup>17</sup> Considering its content, it has to be said that Hübner's publication is structured according to the needs of children. Its concept reflects the social and economic changes of society.

Its presentation of biblical stories shows a very clear conceptual structure of four distinctive steps: biblical narrative, questions, precepts, pious thoughts. First of all, there is a short biblical narrative that closely follows the text of the Luther Bible. Second, a number of "clear questions" (*deutliche Fragen*) follow. The purpose of these questions is for the reader to gain biblical knowledge.

12 See Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children from The Age of Gutenberg to the Present*, 35.

13 Sagittarius, *Biblische Historien Altes und Neues Testaments*; Lenderich, *Kleine Historische Biblia*; Weissmann, *Kinder-Bibel*; Zeidler, *Bilder-Büchlin*.

14 Gesenius, *Biblische Historien Altes und Neues Testaments*. This text is designed as a Bible for adults as an aid to their parental religious education. Incidentally, this book only reached a second printing while the catechisms of Gesenius were reprinted many times. Gesenius deserves being mentioned since his method of dealing with biblical stories made him a forerunner of Johann Hübner. For further information see Reents, *Die Bibel als Schul- und Hausbuch für Kinder*.

15 For an overall view of the printing of Bibles for children in Europe and America, see Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 38-52.

16 Basic to Hübner: Reents, *Die Bibel als Schul- und Hausbuch für Kinder*.

17 A scholarly edition was published by Lachmann and Reents, *Zweymahl zwey und funffzig Auserlesene Biblische Historien*.

The next step is "useful precepts" (*nützliche Lehren*), seeking to repeat the biblical stories so as to find situations for moral applications in everyday life. The final step is "pious thoughts" (*gottselige Gedanken*), in which prayers and hymns are included. This step aims at the integration of religion into the personal life of the individual.

Hübner created a special literary genre, notably the "catechetical Bible for children". This concept was very effective and to a great extent structured the teaching of religion in schools for many years. Hübner's intentions were:

- the selection of texts appropriate to children's understanding;
- a text close to Martin Luther's version of the Bible;
- enriching the text with additions helpful for understanding the Bible;
- portraying the life of biblical persons in order to present them as either good or bad moral examples. The child reader could learn from bad examples what not to do and from good examples how to behave correctly.

Hübner's method facilitates close attention to the structure of the text, which his reader is expected to repeat several times and learn by heart. The four steps of the method (biblical text, clear questions, useful precepts, pious thoughts) pursue an understanding of human nature focusing on the intellect and will of children. The memory is trained by means of the "clear questions," the human mind is trained through the "useful teachings" and good intentions are inspired by "pious thoughts" presented in the form of rhymes. For each biblical story, three useful precepts are formulated. They are directed toward the practical behaviour of the young Christian person and future adult member of society. Personal piety and the needs of the community are closely interrelated. The use of the Bible strongly emphasises ethical learning. Therefore the following virtues are often emphasised: piety, charity, humility, hard work, truthfulness, peacefulness, modesty, patience, obedience, and a solid life in wedlock. Sin is not primarily seen as the turning away from God, but as plain disobedience to the Ten Commandments. The vision of Christian life governing this school Bible is dominated by reason and experience and is directed toward practical piety and usefulness. It stands exactly on the threshold between Lutheran Orthodoxy and the early Enlightenment.

Hübner's Bible for children was an outstanding achievement. It was a best-seller in its time and for centuries remained one. In Germany, Switzerland and beyond it was the most widely used school Bible and children's Bible of the early 18th century. This is evidenced by the fact that we know about 270 editions and fifteen translations into European languages. Theologically,

Hübner developed his programme of the *Biblische Historien* in the context of the so-called Reform-Orthodoxy, a theological school within Lutheran Orthodoxy that underscored the practical side of the Christian faith. Pedagogically he stayed in line with educational realism. As far as his relationship to the Enlightenment is concerned, he belongs to the early phase.

### *German Publications with Religious Content in the 18th Century: a Survey*

The change in the contemporary view of the child that lies behind developments around 1750 was brought about particularly by the writings of the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) and the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). The impact of Locke was highly significant. In his book, *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), he commented on the place of the Bible within the educational process. He required special Bibles for children and gave criteria for selecting Bible stories.

There is no doubt that the remarks of John Locke, as a philosopher of the early Enlightenment, had a tremendous influence on the publication of children's Bibles in all of Europe. In England we find early examples of Bibles as a type of children's literature in "The History of Genesis" (1690), and the first "complete" Bible written specifically for children in English, *A Compendious History of the Old and New Testament*.<sup>18</sup> Both publications are associated with the French author, Nicolas Fontaine (1625-1709). It is quite surprising that a French Bible evidently intended for children long remained the basis for Protestant children's Bibles in England; this is an area which calls for further research.<sup>19</sup>

In her study, *Biblische Geschichten für die Jugend erzählt*, Sybille Peter-Perret provides helpful information with a bibliography on religious literature for children and youth in the 18th century.<sup>20</sup> In total she lists 248 titles published in the German language. This list encompasses different types of publications: school-books, catechisms, picture catechisms, prayer books, hymnals, books containing the Christian doctrine, collections of biblical sayings, children's Bibles and picture Bibles for children. Of these publications, 44 are by

18 London: Joseph Hazard, 1726.

19 For initial information, see Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 43f.

20 Peter-Perret, *Biblische Geschichten*, 175-247. An overview is presented in the diagram on p. 103.



Catholic authors, a handful have a nondenominational background and the overwhelming remainder are of Protestant origin. Peter-Perret has established that 73% of 18th-century religious literature for children and youth has a Protestant background. Several reasons can be advanced for the fact that much less literature of Catholic than of Protestant origin appeared. One of the causes for this is to be found in the different styles of religious socialisation in the two communities. The Catholic mode of religious education follows a more ritual pattern, entailing socialisation through participation in Mass, going to Confession and practising prayer. The Protestant way puts more emphasis on reading the bible and understanding what is written in the bible. The emphasis is on *Glauben und Verstehen* (faith and understanding).

Another reason is the difference in attitude toward the Enlightenment generally. The Catholic Church as a whole was very critical of the Enlightenment, whereas the Protestant side was much more open-minded and reacted positively to the educational impetus of the Enlightenment. In Catholicism, Bibles for children lag far behind catechisms and books containing religious teaching. On the Protestant side, conversely, Bibles and collections of biblical verses along with biblical readers outnumber all other kinds of religious literature.

During the first half of the 18th century, only 22 such books were printed, whereas 226 books were published in the second half of the century. The statistics of Protestant literature show that the period between 1770 and 1790 was a peak time for religious literature and, within this general genre, for children's Bibles in particular.<sup>21</sup> Since the entertaining narrative literature of the Enlightenment as well as the journals of the time (for instance *Der Kinderfreund*) included a large measure of religious thought and information, specific religious literature, including Bibles for children, decreased significantly in quantity after 1800.

21 There were 9 publications in the first half of the century, whereas 25 books were published between 1750 and 1770. Between 1770 and 1790 there were 119 and from 1790 to 1800 only 26 more publications (see Peter-Perret, *Biblische Geschichten*, 102). On the Catholic side children's Bibles in the German language were published very late and only a few at that: von Felbiger, *Kern der biblischen Geschichte*; Mutschelle, *Geburt und Jugendgeschichte Jesu*; von Schmid, *Biblische Geschichte für Kinder*.

## *Children's Bibles after 1750 and the Process of Modernisation*

Within Protestantism, educational issues were regarded with a great deal of interest. There were close links between Protestantism and the philanthropist educational school. This interest can be observed in the field of educational philosophy as well as in didactic and methodological issues. Rudolph Christoph Lossius's children's Bible is an excellent case in point. How, then, did Protestant children's Bibles<sup>22</sup> deal with questions arising from modernisation?<sup>23</sup>

I now propose to consider the impact of modernisation on religious literature by examining the following points: (1) literary form, (2) theological perspectives, and (3) educational dimensions.

### Literary Form

Before the Enlightenment, Bible stories were a means of conveying the teachings of Christianity. Johann Hübner's *Zweymahl zwei und funffzig Biblische Historien* (1714) is a good instance of this type of literature. In the period of the Enlightenment we can observe a shift to *Sittenlehre* (elementary ethics) and information about the fundamental principles and basic terms of religion. Because of this trend, the specifically Christian perspective becomes less important, while the central categories of natural theology (notably God, immortality and virtue) become dominant.

This goes hand in glove with a shift in the intention of children's literature: it is now expected to be a source of amusement and entertainment. That means that the biblical stories are told more freely and in greater detail. Moreover, if the biblical text is not adhered to too closely and additions, explanations and embellishments are allowed within the narration of the experiences, questions and opinions of the people of biblical times, then the hermeneutics

22 A great deal of information on children's Bibles is contained in Brüggeman and Ewers, eds., *Handbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*. Here one can find a bibliography of children's literature from 1750 to 1800, biographical information on authors, and a special section, "Religiöse Schriften" (681-812).

23 Of course there still is the other reaction to modernisation: a conservative position, very critical of "modern times" and adhering to the old values. To hazard a guess, I would think about one third of the religious literature for children in the realm of Protestantism at that time followed this line.

changes and contemporary problems are articulated. Therefore such biblical narratives tend to become books for the entertainment of young people rather than textbooks or educational literature.

An example of this type of biblical narrative is the publication: *Biblische Erzählungen für die Jugend. Altes und Neues Testament*.<sup>24</sup> According to the introduction, the work aims at attracting the heart, addressing delight and taste and providing the human mind with instructive information, rather than simply exercising the memory, as the older children's Bibles had attempted. In narrating biblical stories, use tends to be made of everyday language as though the youth were being told a completely new story. The good example provided by biblical persons, especially Jesus, is heavily emphasised. Jesus' character is explained according to the understanding of virtue common in the time of the Enlightenment.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in accordance with the theology of the Neology Movement, Jesus is turned into a teacher of morals. Jesus is therefore not a man of miracles, but a special person given authority by God. The handling of moral questions is done extremely emphatically. This way of retelling biblical narratives, moreover, accords with modern developments.

## Theological Perspectives

How did the changing scholarly approach to theology affect children's Bibles and alter their style? The all-inclusive moral perspective has already been mentioned. For the theological current of the Neologists, which was quite influential in Germany, Jesus was the outstanding teacher of ethics. Virtuous behaviour for the moral improvement of human individuals is the declared aim of that period and many theologians adapted to the moral code of the period.

All this is true for Johann Friedrich Heynatz, as we can see in his *Auserlesene Erzählungen aus biblischer Geschichte*.<sup>26</sup> Besides, the willingness of the theologians of the time to free themselves from earlier dogmatic positions is

24 [Ed. by the "Ascetische Gesellschaft" in cooperation with Johann Jakob Hess und Johann Kaspar Lavater], Zürich: Orell, Geßner, Fießlin und Comp. 1772 und 1774.

25 Another illustration of this type of children's Bible is to be found in Feddersen, *Das Leben Jesu*. Feddersen also focuses on the relevance of Jesus' virtues for children. Christ's hard work, sincerity, frankness, truthfulness, obedience toward his parents, humility, love of humankind and fondness for children make him a model for children. These virtues are quite modern, but not necessarily central to the biblical text. One can find further information in Brüggemann and Ewers, eds., *Handbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, 732-735.

26 Edited in Frankfurt/Oder: Strauß, 1776.

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another sign of participation in the process of modernisation. This led to a differentiated interpretation of Bible stories. Heynatz attempts to demonstrate his understanding of the Bible as that text in which the real Word of God is purified from layers of tradition superimposed on it in the course of its transmission. His basis is therefore no longer the text of Martin Luther, but the original Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible to which he reverts.

He seeks reasonable explanations for strange events and intends to guide children to a differentiated understanding of the Bible. He devotes much time to the discussion of biblical miracles, but does not eliminate them as other authors do. Wherever possible, he tries to find a reasonable explanation. In the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, Heynatz omits any mention of miraculous happenings. He explains the event in the following way: The whole area was full of bituminous coal mines. After Lot had left, flash after flash of lightning struck these mines so that the lower ground levels consisting of that material caught fire. The result was that the upper level with its houses and people became engulfed in the resulting landslide.<sup>27</sup> The author explains the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrha with a geological specificity. This shows an interest in natural science as much as an alertness for the principle of cause and effect.

In the Bibles for children there is a common tendency to ignore those miracle stories for which a logically sound explanation can hardly be made plausible.<sup>28</sup> Attempts to remove the miraculous aspect from stories show that the spirit of the Enlightenment had its impact on the authors of children's Bibles.

### Educational Dimensions

In Protestant areas, the Enlightenment had a distinctive profile in its close connection with education. Therefore the question arises as to whether new pedagogical approaches in philosophy of education and in methodology change the style of children's Bibles, and if so, in what manner.

As an example of the close relationship between Protestantism and education I have selected Rudolph Christoph Lossius (1743-1813), *Die ältesten*

27 Heynatz, *Auserlesene Erzählungen*, 24.

28 Another crucial point relevant for the process of modernisation relates to the fields of mathematics, geography and the natural sciences. It is quite interesting to observe how nature studies progressively became an integral part of literature for children and youth. In fiction this integration increased rapidly after 1750. It was not unusual for children to gain interest in geographic information about other countries and areas of the world.

*Geschichten der Bibel für Kinder in Erzählungen auf Spaziergängen. Mit einer Vorrede von Christian Gotthilf Salzmann.*<sup>29</sup> This publication seems particularly apt because the author cooperates with Christian Gotthilf Salzmann (1744-1811), one of the most renowned pedagogical theorists of the German Enlightenment, who was a Protestant and deeply interested in religious education. As a philanthropist he developed a completely new system of religious education in response to the questions that presented themselves in the process of modernisation. He thoroughly explored the fundamental issues as well as the didactic and methodological questions of education.<sup>30</sup> We cannot go into details, but the overall structure of his concept is easily understood. The keywords are ethics (*Sittenlehre*), religious teaching (*Religionsunterricht*) and Christian religion (*christliche Religion*). By analogy, his three books on this matter have the following titles: (1) *Erster Unterricht in der Sittenlehre für Kinder von acht bis zehn Jahren* (1803), (2) *Heinrich Gottschalk in seiner Familie oder erster Religionsunterricht für Kinder von 10 bis 12 Jahren* (1804) and (3) *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion* (1808).

This theory reflects the process of secularisation within the theory of religious education itself. The specific religious questions are “postponed”. God is not mentioned in works for very young children; instead ethical questions come first.

With his mode of re-telling the Bible stories in *Die ältesten Geschichten der Bibel für Kinder in Erzählungen auf Spaziergängen*, Lossius very closely follows the educational theory of Salzmann. This form of children’s Bible is really a “classic example” of how religious educators of the second half of the 18th century thought the modernisation process could and should be coped with from a Protestant point of view.<sup>31</sup>

As mentioned above, Salzmann wrote an introduction to the book. He reflects on the difficulties of teaching Bible stories in the Age of Reason. In former times, he claims, young people believed everything that a teacher or an adult told them. In response to any difficult question one could merely refer to God and the children’s questions were considered to have been answered. In the period in which he is writing, however, he feels that it is necessary to select

29 Edited in Erfurt: Keyser, 1784.

30 See Lachmann, *Der Religionsunterricht Christian Gotthilf Salzmanns*.

31 To show that there was a large movement in the field of children’s Bibles, I name some other authors: Miller, *Erbauliche Erzählungen*; [Anonymous], *Poetischer Bilderschatz*; Hager, *Kleine Kinder-Bibel*. For details, see the bibliographies of Reents, *Die Bibel als Schul- und Hausbuch für Kinder*, 374-381, and Peter-Perret, *Biblische Geschichten für die Jugend erzählt*, 175ff.

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the stories carefully and diligently. The teaching involved has to be elementary, which means it should be suitable for the child. Children should find their way from a lower to a higher level of knowledge and understanding. Under the influence of philanthropist pedagogy rather than theology, pedagogical considerations constitute the beginning of the educational process. The child and the child's abilities are central and basic to all didactic and methodological reflections.<sup>32</sup>

Religious education that is to be understandable for children should exclude three types of biblical texts: (1) Genealogies, anecdotal family stories, geographical information and religious rituals and ceremonies of the Israelites, (2) unclear issues, for instance the Fall (Genesis 3) and most prophecies, as well as (3) all "offensive" stories.

An important basis for understanding is an appropriate grasp of the language and the topic of the text. Salzmann points out that a change of perspective has meanwhile occurred. "The character of the times before the arrival of the Saviour is different from the character of our times. There was darkness, here is light, there was childhood, here is adulthood, there was rawness, here is refined sensibility."<sup>33</sup> This sentence shows that doctrinal interpretation of the Bible is left behind and Salzmann espouses a historical understanding. He even goes further by allowing criticism of the biblical contents. The persons in the Bible are good examples for ethical learning, yet they are people of their time and "ordinary" human beings, not saints. This gives us the right to judge their mistakes. But according to Salzmann this does not detrimentally affect the prestige of the Bible. We notice that Salzmann has discarded the understanding of the Bible as a doctrinal corpus (in contradistinction to J.F. Hübner, who still held this view) and instead views the Bible in its historical dimension.

When we consider *Die ältesten Geschichten der Bibel für Kinder in Erzählungen auf Spaziergängen*<sup>34</sup>, we can say that Lossius not only endeavoured to follow the concept and proposals of Salzmann, but actually did translate them into

32 For an overview of philanthropism see Ewers, ed., *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, 40-45 (Introduction).

33 Lossius, *Die ältesten Geschichten*, 11.

34 Lossius published a second volume of Old Testament stories: *Die ältesten Geschichten der Bibel in Erzählungen für Kinder an Feyerabenden*. Subsequently he wrote a volume of New Testament stories: *Die neuesten Geschichten der Bibel oder das Leben Jesu in Erzählungen für Kinder*. It is sufficient to analyse the first of the three volumes because Lossius is consistent in his approach. On Lossius, see also Brüggemann and Ewers, eds., *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, 770-774 and Peter-Perret, *Biblische Geschichten für die Jugend erzählt*, 138-155.

practice. He used a completely new method of approaching the Bible stories. These were to be narrated to the children by an adult. In his book Lossius proposes the forming of a group of five children. The story-teller is the teacher. The setting is typically seen as a walk through the fields and meadows from May until the end of summer. When the group stops for a rest, the teacher tells the selected biblical stories. This new method was widely practised in the second half of the 18th century.

For his book Lossius selected stories from the beginning of the Bible, starting with creation and ending with the death of Jacob. The chapters are divided into meaningful sections. There is always one section per walk. Nineteen such stories are presented in this book. The first two walks are devoted to the theme of creation. By using the method of walking it is quite easy to correlate natural theology and biblical understanding of creation. During their walk the children can become impressed by nature. They see, they notice, they feel. Then the biblical narrative is told. There is a good chance that the story of creation and the present experience of the boys and girls can become correlated with each other.

Considering the narratives in the book of Lossius, it is evident that the teacher is rather free in using the biblical texts. Unlike Hübner's aim and that of others, this method is not intended to lead to a sound knowledge of the Bible, but rather to present stories that suit the children, to delineate moral principles, to give practical advice for life and to cultivate critical thinking as this was understood in the Age of Reason.

The language used is no longer Martin Luther's language. The words used are those of everyday language. No verse from the Bible is quoted directly any more. The free use of the Bible text is obvious. It is clear that the author Lossius knew his pupils and that he was able to present the Bible stories in such a way that the capabilities of the children of his time are taken seriously.

An integral part of his new method is the conversation. The teaching person and the boys and girls can make use of it in order to deepen what is said, to inquire about what is not understood and to foster moral learning through stories of exemplars.

### Results

With his Bible for children Lossius illustrates how the changes in society have their impact on the view of children and the aims and methods of education. The discovery of the child as a child and not just a future adult had far-reaching consequences. Most important of all, there is a basically positive attitude toward children. This can be recognised in Lossius's publication quite clearly. The process of modernisation impacted in many ways, which we can see in the changing varieties of children's Bibles:

- There is a tremendous change in attitude towards tradition, resulting in critical examination of all values and norms of the past through autonomous reasoning.
- A consequence of this is a change in the method of teaching: a shift from the catechetical method (the teacher asks, the pupils answer the questions) to the Socratic method (a dialogue between the teacher and the boys and girls).
- The church as an institution is criticised for dictating to people what to think and believe in matters of faith, the intention of the criticism being that individuals find out about religion themselves.
- By giving logical reasons for what is difficult to understand or even incomprehensible, the authors do their utmost to make such material intelligible for children.
- The intention is always to teach a salutary lesson. Even when it is quite obvious in the narrative itself, the authors frequently formulate the teaching explicitly once more, sometimes by directly addressing child-readers themselves.
- As for the content, all emphasis is placed on the ethical aspect of religion, while neither the dogmatic nor the aesthetic dimension is important. Even Jesus is portrayed as a good example: a pious child who is obedient, shows excellent behaviour and wants to grow in virtue - in short someone who lives a life of virtue.
- Humans are viewed primarily as rational beings. Yet there is also a gender-specific aspect to be seen: In Lossius's narratives for instance, the boys talk more, the girls less. Religious education is evidently more a matter for fathers than for mothers. Thus male dominance in religious matters can be identified.
- The emphasis on reason frequently tends toward a rigid Rationalism, which as a result led in the following decades to either Romanticism and the Romantic period with its totally contrasting emphasis on feelings and heart, or conversely to a reversion to a more conservative position.



## Transitions

I would like to close with a few thoughts about further developments in the field of children's Bibles post the 18th century. Two important children's Bibles appeared at the beginning of the 19th century, the first by Johann Peter Hebel (1824), the other by Christian Gottlob Barth (1832), showing two different ways to handle the tradition of the Enlightenment.

### Johann Peter Hebel

Johann Peter Hebel (1760-1826) was a theologian and educator. He was also a well-known poet of the Alemannian dialect. His opus during his old age was *Biblische Geschichten. Für die Jugend bearbeitet*,<sup>35</sup> which he wrote for use in the schools of Baden. Hebel handles the biblical text very freely, using fantasy, offering explanations, adding remarks as well as moral and philosophical reflections. He tries to present God as a kind father and therefore omits stories which do not fit this image. Similarly, Jesus is presented as the good Saviour, meek and kind to humans. In literary respects, this is a work of high quality, a poetic transformation of the Bible. As manifested by his intentions, Hebel still belongs to the tradition of children's Bibles of the Enlightenment in its late phase, at the transition to the Biedermeier period.<sup>36</sup> By incorporating his poetical abilities and his special kind of aesthetics he became 'an enlightened person with a heart' (*Aufklärer mit Herz*).

### Christian Gottlob Barth

Christian Gottlob Barth (1799-1862) was the author of an equally successful Bible for children to be used in schools.<sup>37</sup> In 1945 the 483rd impression was published. The first edition was published without the author's name: *Zweimal zwey und funfzig Biblische Geschichten* (Calw 1832).

Barth came from a family with a pietistic background and is one of the most popular representatives of the *Erweckungsbewegung*. He was very active in matters concerning Foreign as well as Home Missions, but he was also an important author of religious literature for youth. In 1838 he left his pastorate to have more time to serve this latter task.

35 Latest edition, Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1992.

36 For further information see Tschirch, *Bibel für Kinder*, 40-46. Also Wunderlich, *Johann Peter Hebel's 'Biblische Geschichten'*.

37 See Brecht, "Christian Gottlob Barths 'Zweimal zwey und funfzig biblische Geschichten'".

## Protestantism and Modernisation in German Children's Literature

As one may guess from the title of his children's Bible, Barth had a model for his publication, one we have already encountered, that of Johann Hübner. In his selection of biblical texts Barth followed Hübner to a great extent. He added a few theological and ethical remarks, but on the whole he stayed very close to the biblical text and to the words of Martin Luther's translation. His reaction to modernisation was to turn back to the text of the Bible in a way which might be called biblicist. He intended his Bible to rival the children's Bible by Christoph von Schmid, which according to Barth was too sentimental and not close enough to the biblical text itself. Barth's method was one of conservative theologising. He was very successful. Over two million copies of his publication were sold and it was translated in 87 languages.

### *Summary*

Protestant children's Bibles constituted a form of literature for children and youth in an early period, at least in the German speaking countries in Europe. This topic promises much for further research and it would be well worth also investigating the comparable Protestant literature of the English speaking countries. There is a good deal of evidence that German Protestant literature for children in the form of children's Bibles constitutes primary material for the study of the impact of the process of modernisation and its transformations. Later on, the process of secularisation sprang from the field of religious education itself, in that religious matters were deferred to an older age-group in order to locate the ethical dimension as central. Moreover, the method of religious instruction reflected the process of modernisation quite clearly. Instead of a top-down learning process, we find a dialogue between adults and children, with which the questions and experiences of the children become a vital part of the communication process. This resulted in a completely new method of religious education through nature walks accompanied by talks. Children's literature in the form of Bibles for children in German speaking countries appears to be a fertile area for further research.<sup>38</sup>

38 I thank my colleague Professor James A. Loader for giving me advice in matters of terminology of the English language.