Born-Again Digital:
Exploring Evangelical Video Game Worlds

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ABSTRACT

Vincent Gonzalez: Born-Again Digital:
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(Under the direction of Yaakov Ariel)

Evangelical Christians have been creating video games for over thirty years, outpacing

the efforts of all other religions. By the count that guides the present study, 773 games were

made for religious audiences through 2010, of which 474 identify their affiliation as only

"Christian," or "biblical." Like other artifacts of digital religion, these games allow us to see the

entanglement of people's theological and technological universes. However, unlike many other

aspects of digital religion, religious video gaming's novel artistic forms, cultural critiques, and

theological possibilities largely blossomed beneath notice. Evangelical video game culture, thus,

presents the creative production of a historically significant *avant garde* whose critical

perspective has been neglected outside its own community. In particular, Evangelical video

gaming transforms the concerns that connect it to other digital cultures – "violence," for instance,

or "immersion" – by attending to the moral status of the player-in-play.

This study combines the methods of Religious Studies, Science and Technology Studies,

and Cultural Studies to show how the popular artifacts of digital religion can shed light upon

their cultural context. My initial frame orients Evangelical video games through broad theoretical

concerns and a series of cultural histories then focus our attention upon specific telling instances.

My introduction applies a relational ontology to establish a vocabulary for examining religious

video games in terms of the digital, religion, and play. Chapter two considers how groups learn

to live with computers and details the specific stakes of digital religion for Evangelical Christians in the context of "spiritual warfare." Chapter three situates my catalog of religious games within a detailed history of digital religion. Chapter four focuses on the place of Evangelicals in the debates around video game "violence." Chapter five then considers how those debates are visible in seven Evangelical First-Person Shooter games. Chapter six provides a theoretical orientation to the future of Evangelical gaming by considering the notion of "immersion" in games. Chapter seven concludes by summarizing findings and offering suggestions for further research. Finally, an appendix presents a catalog of religious games as a resource for ongoing research.

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Three Fundamental Dynamics:
Digital, Religious, and Playful

"At another seashore between the land of atoms and the sea of bits, we are now facing the challenge of reconciling our dual citizenships in the physical and digital worlds"
- Hiroshi Ishii

"On the seashore of endless worlds, children play."
- Tagore as cited by D. W. Winnicott[1]

Illustration 1: The Guard at the Gate

You have been here before. Last time you entered Rome's under-city you survived for several hours. You walked with your sword out in front of you, down first into Rome's great network of attached basements, pursued by armed guards. Then further down through sewers, caves, and prisons, a great single tangle of incongruous architectural styles and building

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materials. But the demons overtook you. You fired bursts of Holy Spirit from your sword at the guards, aiming it like a rifle, and when hit repeatedly each of them converted to Christianity. But as the guards knelt there praying, demons clawed you to death.

So you have come back. You start walking toward the alcove where an angel –a flying man with a sparkling gold tunic and biceps as thick as his waist– will again give you the Sword of the Spirit. But this time you notice that just outside there are two guards standing at the entrance to an ambiguously pagan temple. Because you are not yet armed, the guards don't move to attack. Walking closer, you find the Romans wearing short, well-fitted, brass skirts over their muscular legs. Their faces are identical. As you kneel down beside one of them to look more closely, both soldiers turn their heads to look back at you, their faces rendered in fixed surprise. They begin to shout, "Whatta you looking at?" "Whatta you looking at?"

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Catechumen, this particular three-dimensional action game, was released by N-Lightning software in 1999 and marketed as a "high-quality, Christ-centered computer [game] (Phil 4:13)" "to be enjoyed by Christians and non-Christians," complete with "many verses of the Bible to be interpreted by the player as the Holy Spirit leads. (Psalm 68:11)"[2] The moment of dialogue with an in-game entity described above took place as I made my first steps into the field to begin my dissertation research. I had approached the temple looking for material traces of American religious life, particularly its popular manifestations in digital media. But at the soft place where my question of technological apparatus (the digital) met my question of distribution (the

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[2] Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" [KJV]. Psalm 68:11, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" [KJV]. N'Lightning Software Development, Inc., "Mission Statement," archived by the Internet Archive January 7, 2001, accessed March 3, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20010107205200/http://www.n-lightning.com/corp.htm .

religious), accelerated by peculiarities of play, I found more life than I had anticipated. Critically, "Whatta you looking at?" was not directed to my body in the chair, an analog mass of which the guard could be at best dimly aware, but to my body in the game, a digital entity with capacities for action nearly identical to those of the guard himself. We both carried swords, were deployed into those anachronistic mazes to fight one another, and neither of us could sit down. But most importantly, we each faced the other demanding an explanation for the intersection of our gazes.

The guard's question, "Whatta you looking at?" is a reminder of the entangled creation of ethnographic subjects and objects, drawing our attention toward the surprising range of agencies (including scholars) which emerge from religious applications of digital technology. To answer the guard's question, then: My dissertation is an historical and ethnographic exploration of the ways religious communities are coming to live among the new agencies and within the new models of human life presented in digital media. My primary vantage point in this exploration is the Evangelical Christian video game, particularly as it facilitates interaction between debates concerning media violence, and Evangelical engagements in spiritual warfare.

And if my digital interlocutors want to know *what* I am looking at, perhaps it is reasonable to assume that my analog readership would want to know *why?* The answer is that digital religion is thriving, but no scholarly effort has yet combined the methods of religious studies, cultural studies, and Science and Technology Studies [STS] needed to produce an adequate analysis. It has been sixty years since computers first read text on sacred matters (Dante, as translated for an electro-mechanical punch card mainframe); from their first moments in the late seventies, personal computers have been managing church finances and playing religious video games; by the year 2000, the Internet circulated religious information as widely

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as it circulated music; and at present, from online kabbalah courses, to Hindu meditation software, to the papal Facebook application, it has become difficult to find any religion not developing new ranges of expertise that mingle the domains of programmers and theologians.[3] This consistent growth of digital technologies toward religious ends calls for concerted theoretical analysis, and the diverse efflorescence of this growth requires that any theorization begin someplace in very particular.

Within the expanse of digital religion, I have selected video games as a data set, because it is a field small enough to address comprehensively, but too large to ignore. By my count, 773 religious video games were released between 1982 and 2011, of which 474 entries describe their religious affiliation only as "Christian" or "Biblical" (71 more name a particular Christian denomination as their intended audience). And, further, the religious video game is a compelling data set precisely because it has largely blossomed beneath notice. While computerized scripture indexes and religious web presences occasionally respond to the judgment of extrinsic intellectual (academic, ecclesiastical) professionals, the first thirty years of religious video gaming were evaluated almost exclusively in language that emerged together with the games themselves. Thus, if much of the theology visible in my opening description of *Catechumen* (the Sword of the Spirit as salvation rifle, for instance) seemed quite unlike theologies created for the pulpit or seminary, this should not lead us to high-minded dismissal, but to sober attention. Evangelical Christian video games are the creative production of a daring and historically-significant *avant garde.* To do them justice will require us to reshape our analytical categories,

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[3] Genevieve Bell, "The Age of Auspicious Computing," *Interactions* (Sept.-Oct. 2004), 76-77. Elena Larsen. "Wired Churches, Wired Temples: Taking Congregations and Missions into Cyberspace," (Washington D.C.: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2000), 8.

coming in the process to new understandings of many other phenomena as well.

Suddenly, humans live among – and are apparently outnumbered by – algorithmic entities like programs, viruses, bots, and video game characters.[4] To explain and manage these new relationships constitutes a new kind of expertise, a range of organic intellectual labor that can speak phrases like "the internet tempts us," "video games make children violent," "twitter challenges tyranny," and "educational software is the future." Much research has already been undertaken on how psychologists, state-censors, and other networks of neo-liberal expertise intervene at this juncture.[5] This dissertation shows the place of this expertise in digital religion by exploring a lively experiment now thirty years in development undertaken by an Evangelical network of gamers, developers, parents, commentators, and computers. This network negotiates the place of algorithmic entities in Christianity by discussing, designing, distributing and playing video games.

These negotiations usually concern whether and how video games might stop distracting children from the gospel, and perhaps even teach it to them. However, it is noteworthy that "violence" has become a key term in these negotiations, even to the extent that it sometimes sidelines "word," "truth," and other long-standing terms of Christian theological concern. While this word has its own history of theological controversy stretching from the differences between

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[4] Consider, for instance, a recent study which tried to compare human and automated Internet traffic: Daily Mail Reporter, "Over 60 Percent of Internet Traffic Now Generated by BOTS that Can Distribute Malware, Steal Data and Swipe Passwords," *Daily Mail* Online, December 13, 2013, accessed March 3, 2014, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2531021/Over-60-percent-internet-traffic-generated-BOTS-distribute-malware-steal-data-swipe-passwords.html .

[5] See, for instance, Matthew Scott Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Martin Spinelli, "Democratic Rhetoric and Emergent Media: The Marketing of Participatory Community on the Radio and the Internet," *International Journal of Cultural Studies 3.2 (08/2000), 268-278.*

Matthew 11:12-14 (where "the violent" succeed in entering the Kingdom by force) and Luke 16:16 (where the outcome is less conclusive), to contemporary debates over the relationship between Christianity and "just war," these are rarely referenced.[6] We find, instead, the emergence of a new Christian counterpublic with a novel mode of theological exploration, a network of computers and humans that constitutes itself by deepening, extending, and sacralizing concerns it shares with the simultaneously emerging public of worldly computing.[7] For instance, like the Entertainment Software Ratings Board [ESRB], Christian game developers tend to presume a syntagmatic chain from red spatters to blood, to violence, to viewer imitation, to age-restricted circulation; but unlike the worldly ESRB, the Christian developers intermittently strengthen, or challenge, this chain with Biblical mandates concerning art, blood, violence, or children. In this way, Evangelical game criticism accelerates popular media criticism until it opens unforeseen ontological possibilities within the ongoing public negotiations on violence, media and otherwise. This is my study's second "why:" worldly negotiations concerning media violence (including academic studies, literary and laboratory) tend to obscure their presumptions about the nature of the human as mere common-sense; by observing the edge where an Evangelical counterpublic exceeds these presumptions, we discover a trenchant and innovative critique of the ideological structures that undergird an emerging digital culture. In a word, as academic media scholars, we should study Evangelical video games and learn from them new

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[6] George Aichele, "Jesus' Violence," in Pippin, Tina, and George Aichele. *Violence, Utopia, and the Kingdom of God: Fantasy and Ideology in the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 72-91.

[7] Michael Warner, "The Evangelical Public Sphere" (presentation, Critical Speakers Series, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, September 22, 2011). Dr. Warner generously gave me his lecture notes, and quotations will be taken from this document. See also, audio of related lectures at: Michael Warner, "The Evangelical Public Sphere," accessed March 18, 2014, http://repository.upenn.edu/rosenbach/2/.

modes of critique.

Having briefly addressed *what* and *why*, a word on *how* my study is organized. The present introduction offers a vocabulary and methodology for exploring religious video games in terms of the digital, the religious, and play. By seeking out such capacious dynamics to frame the dissertation's object, this chapter presents religious video games as evocative objects that provoke surprising new perspectives for a great range of research. Chapter two presents a theoretical perspective on the ways particular groups and their digital technologies transform one another, and focuses our attention on the particular stakes of video gaming for Evangelical Christians. Chapter three then situates Evangelical video games as historical instances of digital religion.

Chapters four and five examine game-violence as a matter of concern through which Evangelical video games locate their counterpublic. Chapter four performs this work by historically situating Evangelical game critique within game-violence debates. Chapter five then explores instances of the First-Person Shooter genre as recreated for Evangelical Christians, engaging eight games in a way that approximates ethnographic field research, documenting the time I spent in them and the entities I lived among there.

Chapter six begins to close the study by organizing reflections on the future of Evangelical gaming in terms of "immersion." My dissertation then closes with a chapter recapitulating the previous chapters and proposing possible areas for research building upon the present study.

Concerning Dynamism

Attending closely to religious video gaming can transform our larger theoretical understandings of the world. That these curious artifacts have been so thoroughly neglected by academic research should lead us to wonder what else we miss, and when we apply the tools that their study requires, we find the world around them quite different than we remember it.

Even a full thirty years into its emergence, the phenomenon of religious video gaming remains *avant-garde.* That is to say, its creativity has consistently charged ahead into areas unmarked by extrinsic evaluative standards. Most of what has been said about religious games has remained in the communities that create and enjoy them. Every few years a newspaper discovers an example and writes an exclamatory article on the subject, and bloggers on obscure games have recently discovered religious instances as a convenient cluster for derision, but academic analysis has been almost entirely absent. Perhaps we academics have been mostly silent for the same reason newspapers have been titillated and trolls have been belligerent: the religious video game is simultaneously *digital, religious,* and *playful.* Whatever tentative sense we make of one category might be able to sustain the weight of a second, but with three, it is hard to know what to say.

Let us begin, then, by making dizzying complexity our foundational assumption. We can well situate the problematics of the digital, religion, and play as varieties of what Donna Haraway calls "contact zones." She herself adopts the term from Mary Pratt's studies of colonial interaction: "A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to one another … It treats the relations … in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often with radically asymmetrical relations of

power."[8] A contact zone, then, is a sort of plane, like the surface of the sea, across which we might say there was interaction, if it made any sense to say the various sides would exist without one another. They are spaces of co-becoming.

Like Haraway's *When Species Meet,* this dissertation seems to find contact zones everywhere. This is because both attempt to consistently apply "agential realism," a relational ontology developed through Karen Barad's work as both a physicist and feminist historian of science. From this perspective, "the primary ontological unit is not independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties, but rather phenomena. In my agential realist elaboration, phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of observer and observed, or the results of measurements; rather, phenomena are the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting 'agencies.' That is, phenomena are ontologically primitive relations – relations without preexisting relata."[9] An agential-realist ontology has no room, then, for "individualism" (including, but not especially human individualism), the indemonstrable, and finally unhelpful, ideology that parcels the universe into discrete "things."[10] Wherever it turns, an agential realist ontology discovers processes of co-creation.

In the context of the academic humanities, agential realism has especially interesting effects because it cannot locate *human beings* but only *human becomings*. Though we are professionally bound to consideration of the human, this ontology grants us permission to admit that our instruments cannot locate that creature's independent characteristics. The human is

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[8] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6-7, quoted in Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 216.

[9] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 139.

[10] Barad, 139.

entangled with the world around it, and the researcher emerges together with her/his object of study. Entelechies like *reason* vanish, making room for relational practices like *reasoning* (or at least *rationalization*). Our disciplinary focuses become gestures toward specific *dynamics.* Ranges of inquiry like religion, digital culture, or play describe immense contact zones between the human and the various others with which it emerges. From digital phenomena there emerge algorithms that raise questions about human intelligence; from religious phenomena there emerge border negotiations and cross-border commerce with angels, demons and other non-humans; from playful phenomena there emerge lively objects that we cannot quite place as either *self* or *other*.

Readers may freely (and will necessarily) disagree on the initial referent of "human" in these relational formulas. This diversity is not a problem to be solved. What matters is that relational statements of this kind are read as describing dynamics of emergence across which the reader's own humanity might entangle with mutually constitutive others.

The opening section already presented a few of the strange tendencies of the humanities with a contingent human. Above, the brief mention of the *awareness* of digital entities was not an attempt to impute human characteristics improperly (or metaphorically) to computer software, but only to describe the specific senses in which digital entities like that Roman guard can process their surroundings. From an agential realist position, awareness is an achievement within an economy of *knowing* that does not prioritize the human: "Brain cells are not the only ones that hold memories, respond to stimuli, or think thoughts… Knowing is a specific engagement of the world where part of the world becomes differentially intelligible to another part of the world in

its differential accountability to and for that of which it is a part."[11]

Likewise, without a firm, non-relational humanity, we cannot locate a secular sphere. Since this study is concerned with Evangelical Christianity, it describes the space outside that religion as "the world." Of course, both "worldly" and "secular" are English cognates of *saeculum*, meaning "of the present age," but locating them requires different ontological orientations. To locate the *secular* is to attain transcendent knowledge, to see *the age* without the distraction of any particular ontological orientation, a task which exceeds the ambition of the present study. To locate the *worldly*, on the other hand, only requires "mimetic skepticism," a good faith attempt to integrate the concepts under examination into the study in hopes that the paradoxes produced by this praxis are themselves analytically valuable.[12]

One does not apply a relational ontology in order to make things more complicated, but in order to do justice to complex situations. It is a strategy for producing reliable photographs of a blurry world. The religious video game emerges at the intersection of three dynamics, where religion, the digital, and play transform one another and bring one another into being. Programs, prophets, and players draw one another into existence, troubling our easy conceptions of what it means to be human. The remainder of this chapter will locate religious video games through these three dynamics so the remainder of the text can burrow deep into the specifics of Evangelical video gaming.

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[11] Barad, 379.

[12] Robert Alter, *Yoga in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Where Does the Digital Begin?

How shall we describe the potentials religious people discover in technology? Bruno Latour would have you remember the weight of a hammer in your hand. It is not simply that the hammer allowed you to enact preexisting desires; there are visions of action that only arise while you feel the hammer's heft. "It is what James Gibson has so well documented with the notion of 'affordance,' at once permission and promise: thanks to the hammer, I become literally another man."[13] Or, in Gibsons's own words, "The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes,* either for good or ill... an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior."[14] The implications of the subject/object collapse are clearest when we consider the affordances between similar animals: "We pay closest attention to the optical and acoustic information that specifies what the other person is, invites, threatens, and does."[15] But, even when we are considering the affordances at the juncture of very dissimilar entities, like a human and a hammer, an affordance describes the possibility for action in a co-creative interaction: driving a nail into wood is a task which neither you nor the hammer could perform apart, and as you take on this possibility you both become something new.

In this light, we can begin to discuss Evangelical video games as a new possibility, an

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[13] Bruno Latour and Couze Venn, "Morality and Technology: The End of the Means," *Theory, Culture & Society 19.5-6* (2002): 250.

[14] James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 1986), 127, 129.

[15] Gibson, 128.

affordance that only emerges where the Evangelical counterpublic and video gaming create one another anew. However, these are instructive subsets of the digital and the religious, respectively, and we cannot well understand the Evangelical video game without understanding the greater parallel affordance in *digital religion.* Toward that end, the following two sections present working definitions of the digital, and the religious. The presumption that there exists digital religion can be expanded as follows: digital media present algorithmic models for human life, and these models may be adopted and adapted, inhabited and inhibited by religious groups, transforming both the technologies and the theologies involved.

I place this initial assumption upon the mutually constitutive terrain of the affordance to prevent it from reading as a chiliastic species of technological determinism.[16] Quite the contrary, I hope to demonstrate that the history of digital religion is a trail of co-emergences that would be violently distorted were they to be framed as technologically, culturally, or theologically determined. While new models of humanity are at stake, the present study shares little ground with theorists who announce or anticipate the passing of *homo analogicus.* Already in 1998, Nicholas Negroponte asserted optimistically that "belonging to a digital culture binds people more strongly than the territorial adhesives of geography – if all parties are truly digital," and in 2001 Richard Stiver fretted that "technology is destroying the human capacity to symbolize our life-milieu."[17] If credible, either proposition would have profound implications for the possibility of religion. Yet neither is pertinent to the present analysis. The assertion that, because

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[16] That is, prediction and theorization on "last things," including, especially, the world's last days.

[17] Nicholas Negroponte, "Beyond Digital," *Wired,* June 12, 1998, accessed March 25, 2011, http://web.media.mit.edu/~nicholas/Wired/WIRED6-12.html; Richard Stivers, *Technology as Magic: The Triumph of the Irrational* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2001), 42.

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I could approach those guards and hear their question, I have *become digital* is only as true as the assertion that the guards *became analog*, in that their question actually provoked me to ask at what I was looking.[18] When we cautiously seek the break – either the analytical *last instance* beyond which the material and economic changes of *the information age* are determinative of the human consciousness surrounding them, or the apocalyptic/utopian *last instance*, the point of no return (perhaps already passed) of speculative futurists, beyond which humans will be more digital than analog – we find only hybridities, and never a change in kind. The first thirty years of the Evangelical Christian video game, and the history of digital religion more generally, give us little cause to anticipate the sudden arrival of a new age. Religious video games present a contact zone between the biological and the artifactual, the sacred and the scientific, an approaching past and a receding future.

Given the presence of entities like *Catechumen's* angels, demons, and humans – beings whose liveliness is so closely bound to the recent possibilities of digital computing – it would be disingenuous to propose an analysis free of surprising discontinuities. Surely there was a time when such things did not happen; certainly many worlds emerged and passed away before the creation of digital angels. The question is where to place this line historically, and to what material situation it corresponds. Both the question, and its answer, can be well introduced through the mathematical concept of *discretization*.

The "digital," significantly, is etymologically derived from the practice of counting on the *digits* of a human hand. The ancient farmer used her fingers to transform how *much* rope she

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[18] For an enthusiastic and highly speculative account of an epochal shift wherein most humans would come to consider most aspects of their lives in terms of "bits" rather than "atoms" see, Nicolas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York : Knopf, 1995).

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held into how *many* arm-lengths it was, by raising one finger with each comparison passed. No part of this process, however, was unambiguously discrete: both ropes and arms have soft edges, a nail never digs into a palm deeply enough to mark an absolute on/off distinction. But, for the purposes of memory (personal and transmitted) the simplification was quite effective. Four fingers and a stretched arm created a compound sign that could reproduce a workable approximation of that first rope from another. This is the work of discretization (dividing continuous quantity into countable units or stable ratios, including 1/0, on/off, yes/no). And beyond durable but imperfect mnemonics, discretization also allows for the manipulation of quantity through algorithms (finite sets of prearranged categories and commands arranged into logical chains, or to use a definition that recalls the Roman guard who opened our inquiry, "any sequence of instructions that can be obeyed by a robot.")[19] But the algorithm long predates the robot: if asked, the farmer could count off three ropes, each four arms in length.

Of course, if we were to follow certain theorists of the algorithm, like Daniel Dennett, it would become quite difficult to bound this study at all; the angels would always have been robots. He argues that sunlight (in producing cracks in clay), waves (in producing grains of sand), animals (in producing corpses), and brains (in producing language) are always only performing algorithms.[20] But to get to this point Dennett must declare that there is no mind anyplace, a proposition that requires a God's-eye-view of the universe, and which seems no less presumptuous (nor illogical) than its opposite. "Discretization," perhaps, is to Dennett's

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[19] Harold S. Stone, *Introduction to Computer Organization and Data Structures* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), 4.

[20] Dennett, D. C., *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 57.

one-eyed-god what "holiness" is to the Christian God.

To quote Bruno Latour "The Big Picture is just that: a picture." Any theory that claims to offer an image of everything can present only a "panorama," a closed system whose inclusions seamlessly connect to one another, preventing the entry of extraneous data.[21] So if we instead join Latour and Nietzsche in abandoning the study of *everything-at-once*, we might limit our use of "algorithm" to a range of material practices through which humans negotiate their world-facing edge. Whether humans claim to have painstakingly extracted an algorithm from surrounding reality, or carefully imposed it upon matter, this specific kind of algorithm marks a shifting frontier around humanity, a *robosphere* where the non-human world seems to scintillate with intelligence. If there are algorithms neither created nor discovered by humans, we need not concern ourselves with them.

In this range, systems of well-trained humans, gears, mechanical punch cards, vacuum-tubes, and transistors have each formed artifactual discretizing machines that have proven themselves sufficiently amenable to human prediction to encourage their application in more and more complicated algorithmic processes. For this dissertation, a chain of algorithmic machines is called "a computer." And where these machines discretize their own outputs to binary (on/off) sequences to communicate with one another, they are described collectively as "the digital." Everything else is identified as "the analog," with no presumption that the processes inside of digital machines (like the flow of electrons in wires) are *really* discrete, nor that processes out here (like the leaps of electrons from one atom to another) are *really*

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[21] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 187.

continuous.

Here, having provisionally limned the digital, I should take a moment to explain how this relates to our ongoing investigation. "Computer" designates a network of algorithms created or discovered by humans, and if those algorithms communicate in binary, they are "digital." Within these bounds, the digital is a historically specific affordance between the algorithmic and the human –a range of reciprocal interaction and emergence. Secondly, it is noteworthy that this definition of the digital marks a provocative boundary, at least from the human side. Perhaps because the digital necessarily includes communication between algorithms, or perhaps because of some secondary effect of that communication which humans read as confusingly familiar, the digital seems to provoke questions about the limits of humanity in ways that isolated algorithms do not. "Do computers have rights?" and "Is Deep Blue smarter than Kasparov?" are provocative questions, whereas "Does long-division have rights?" and "Am I smarter than rounding up?" are apparently incoherent.[22] In Latour's terms, the single algorithm is already a nature-culture hybrid that demonstrates the contingency of the division of humans from the world, but its challenge was long overlooked; the computer, however, as a system of algorithmic machines, is itself a "proliferation of hybrids" that highlight the liveliness of algorithmic agents.[23]

That computers raise questions on the nature of human intelligence should not surprise us. The first instance of digital computing was Herman Hollerith's punch card tabulation system for the 1890 US census, and it was invented specifically because "barbaric" human accounting

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[22] For a psychoanalytic study of the ways computer usage transforms the human subjectivization, with special attention to how changes in patterns of dreaming seem to indicate a provisionalization of the boundaries between the human interior and the world, see Raymond Barglow, *The Crisis of the Self in the Age of Information: Computers, Dolphins, and Dreams* (London u.a: Routledge, 1994).

[23] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 49-51.

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could not adequately perform the algorithmic tasks of human-counting: "It is to-day impossible to obtain the slightest reliable statistical information regarding the conjugal conditions of our people."[24] Sixty years later, an article by Alan Turing established the word "computer" as we use it today by externalizing algorithmic processes previously performed by human accountants: "The idea behind digital computers may be explained by saying that these machines are intended to carry out any operations which could be done by a human computer. The human computer is supposed to be following fixed rules; he has no authority to deviate from them in any detail."[25] This article, further, establishes "the imitation game" as an enduring standard for machine *intelligence.* To wit, it asks whether a computer could play a game whose only object is to imitate a human for a human judge, and whether it could win. "These questions replace our original, 'Can machines think?'"[26] With the ongoing creation of computers that regularly win the imitation game –as well as chess and "Jeopardy"– the nearness of computer and human intelligence has only become more perplexing since these beginnings.

Though the computer cannot be separated from this excitement, it must not be confused for it. As long as there have been computers, their nearness to humanity has invested them with mythical qualities. Steve Jobs, for instance, called the iPad "magical and revolutionary," and early players described *Super Mario Bros*. (Nintendo, 1985) as "jumping into a TV cartoon and

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[24] Herman Hollerith, "An Electrical Tabulating System," *The Quarterly (Columbia School of Mines) X.16* (April 1889), 238-255.

[25] Alan Turing, "Computer Machinery and Intelligence," Mind, 59 (1950), 433-460, digital version accessed March 3, 2014, http://www.loebner.net/Prizef/TuringArticle.html .

[26] *Ibid*

becoming the star character."[27] Historical computers and their attendant myths will inform our present study. The myths of possible computers – like those which will allegedly replace interhuman romance, or which contain the entire universe – will be approached as a type of story that accompanies historical computers. That is to say, if the games we study seem to be diverse or repetitive, simplistic or complex, or however else, it will not be because they were made on *computers,* but perhaps because they were made on *those computers*. In every instance, the mythical affordances of digital religion's specific computers will be our object.

　　To recapitulate, this section began with the notion of the *affordance,* a possibility created in mutual transformation, and set out to locate "the digital" as half of the affordance well named "digital religion."　The digital, it seems, is a strangely lively range among the algorithms that humans have claimed to discover or create. While the apparent intelligence of these algorithms always problematizes the location of the human a little, their automation and acceleration in binary computers has provoked startling new questions on who we are with respect to algorithmic life. Are we leaving our bodies for digital worlds? Are we leaving our lovers for digital ones? Will computers replace us altogether? These questions are interesting, for a study of this sort, because they are intimately connected with the entangled emergence of historically specific computers and their humans.

Provisional Definition of Religion

　　Toward an articulation of digital religion as an affordance between the digital and

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[27] Apple, "Apple Launches iPad," accessed March 3, 2014, https://www.apple.com/pr/library/2010/01/27Apple-Launches-iPad.html ; Nancy Mullen, "Nintendo reigns in Toyland, but parents rule at home," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA) December 5, 1988; Daniel Golden, "In Search of Princess Toadstool," *The Boston Globe* November 20, 1988, Sunday, City Edition.

religious, I deploy a definition of the digital which articulates it to religious studies. And, conversely, in seeking a definition of religion that allows us to meaningfully engage technocultures of popular computing, this dissertation follows David Chidester in referring to negotiations concerning the place of humanity among non-human entities as "religion."[28] Within this frame, I understand the work of religious studies to be the investigation of discourses and practices that structure commerce across borders of humanity, and/or negotiate that border's position. Religious studies, thus, might investigate the shrines, rituals, scriptures, and meditations through which humans and various non-human beings communicate, and the historical processes by which the exchanges at those sites change.

This definition is well suited to the study of Evangelical games, first, in that it allows us to discuss world-making projects shared between Christians, their God, and various other agencies without reducing any of them to analogies. And second, it allows us to observe interactions of this sort even when they are unclothed in an aura of factuality, and seem, ultimately, unconcerned. That is, it allows us to presume religion is real, without presuming that it is believed. If we frame the religious as a field of quite serious and fully believed notions, religious video games become unthinkable, but so too does most lived religion, that range of intrepid *ad hoc* practice that necessarily exceeds (and frequently transgresses) documented theologies. Robert Orsi's definition, created to grasp lived religion, and focused on "making the invisible visible" so it can be "negotiated and bargained with, touched and kissed, made to bear human anger and disappointment" would have produced an equally viable, though somewhat

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[28] *Authentic Fakes,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), vii-viii**.**

different study of religious games.[29] In the end, any definition that frames religion as the mutually-constitutive interaction between humans and equally contingent others, will work nicely. I selected Chidester's, however, because it was created to grasp not only the work of lived religion, but specifically of world-making projects that seem to neither apply seriousness, nor produce belief.

Let us consider, for instance, *Timothy and Titus* (Sunday Software, 2007)*,* an Evangelical game which, like *Catechumen*, we will want to call "religious," but which might not be *believed* by anyone. Here we have an action-adventure game starring the authors of the eponymous Epistles as a superheroic duo, traveling the Mediterranean in pursuit of a woman who escaped with Paul's letters to the churches. At the top of the screen there are meters for resources that the game calls "faith," "hope," and "love," and which a non-Christian game might call "magic," "lives," and "health." Thus, if I fall off a ledge, or am attacked by non-Christians, I lose a pre-arranged quantity of Love; when Love runs out entirely I lose one Hope. But this loss of Love can be prevented in various ways by expending Faith (it can be spent, for instance, on healing maneuvers, or to power my glowing-light defenses). That is, Faith, like magic in other games, is a sort of quantified electricity that can perform an assortment of in-game tasks.

The names of these three quantities seem to have been selected for their prominent place in 1 Corinthians 13:13, but how does that contribute to this game's *religious* work? Would, in fact, the game have been any different if they had been called "magic," "lives," and "health?" Note first how a rhetoric of *belief* does little to clarify what is happening. There is no proposition

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[29] Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 73-74.

Illustration 2: "Pick up yellow wings to get more Hope"

here to believe. If the player were to learn from this game, for instance, that there is a rigid

economy wherein Faith, Hope, and Love are exchangeable one for another in various ways,

those hoping to defend the game would easily disown the heresies thus produced as the fault of a

player who forgot that this was "just a game." In some cases this disavowal is offered by

developers - *The War in Heaven*'s (Eternal Warriors, 1999) instruction manual*:* "Although

spiritual warfare is a very real and serious subject, the War in Heaven is primarily a game, not a

theological treatise." - and in other cases it is fans who dismiss the heretical seriousness - A

positive review of *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* (Left Behind Games, 2006)*:* "I have to admit that

it's a bit unrealistic losing your faith just because you hear cussing or rock music by evil

musicians. Then again, it's just a game."[30] Likewise, reversing the process, for instance, by

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[30] Eternal Warriors LLC. "About the Game" in *The War in Heaven* (ValuSoft, 1999); "Left Behind: Eternal Forces," accessed March 18, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4855-left-behind-eternal-forces.

understanding in-game health through 1 Corinthians 13, while not heretical *per se,* produces gibberish ("Health points are patient. Health points are kind"). We can, however, say that these quantities are religious in that they negotiate the borders of humanity from where the player stands.

Not every game has variables that we might call "magic," "lives," and "health," but wherever they appear, these are the constitutive potencies of the player's presence in the game, quantities which must be managed at every moment of game play. The first empower most player actions, and the following two are macro- and micro-units of play itself. By identifying them as "faith," "hope," and "love," *Timothy and Titus'* design team has established a metonymic chain that binds the player's ability to play the game to their identification as a Christian. We cannot say that only Christians play this game, nor that all Christians recognize this verse from 1 Corinthians. We can say, however, that the game is staged as a quest *for* the Epistles *inside* the Epistles, played as their authors, and that this may inspire some players to read those texts, and others to remember them. Where this happens, the player may discover "faith," hope," and "love" as quantities that describe the human's relationship to the divine. For the player who holds the double reference in mind, "faith," "hope," and "love," describe the inhabitable place in two different worlds, and their presence in one affirms their presence in the other.

Those three words mean irreconcilably different things in those two worlds, but the player is invited to know herself across both worlds using them, simultaneously. We find the same dynamic wherever the Sword of the Spirit becomes an offensive weapon or pages of the Bible restore health, wherever saints are reimagined as action heroes or scripture knowledge can be traded for abstract reward points. This is the religious work of the religious game: they invite

the player to dual citizenship in irreconcilable worlds by circulating material that organizes what it means to be human in either, but can only be translated in terms of the religious player's simultaneous presence in them.

Following Victor Turner's analysis of initiation rites, we can call the materials through which the borders of humanity are negotiated, "sacra."[31] These are the "basic building blocks that make up the cosmos and into whose nature no neophyte may inquire."[32] In the games at hand, as in the rituals Turner studied, sacra are transmitted in "monstrous" form, and their reception facilitates membership in a religious community. The procession of video game sacra, in Evangelical terms seems to be: "X" defines one's situation as a human with relation to the game (a player); play is crafted to draw the player toward Evangelical discourse; Evangelical discourse explains that "X" defines one's situation as a human with relationship to the Lord (a Christian). The Evangelical game is religious, then, not because it encourages belief, but because it invites players to be a human in an Evangelical way and in relation to other Evangelicals.

Given, then, that "religion" designates negotiations concerning the place of humanity among non-human entities, we can perform a few conjugations: things (persons, controversies, performances, thoughts, texts, etc.) are religious when they stage such negotiations; a durable confederation of humans and non-humans that collectively negotiates the borders of humanity is a religious organization (or "a religion" for short). And, finally, this dissertation locates "digital religion" as an affordance between religious organizations and digital agencies. An affordance is a possibility for co-emergence between a form of life and its environment, and digital religion

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[31] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 102-110.

[32] Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, 106.

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can describe either digital life in religious environments, or religious life in digital ones. Limiting ourselves to the specificity of *religious organizations* will prove valuable in ways similar to the decision to observe historically localized computers. If it did not seek out relatively durable confederations, a study of religion may find itself attempting to describe a dynamic that appears wherever it looks. The relative durability of specific religions can be located in the practices and discourses that their human and non-human members share, and these leave traces we can study.

These working definitions may begin to clarify why digital religion tends to generate enigmatic and paradoxical cultural forms. The religious is the range of life that negotiates human borders, and the digital is a particular tendency toward the automation of intelligence within the algorithmic robosphere at humanity's world-facing edge. Digital religion, then, is an area of peculiar involution where texts and practices already concerned with the boundaries of humanity are accelerated, vivified, and further complicated through computerization. Again, to apply Chidester's words, the synergistic tangle of digital religion bestows a "certain degree of urgency upon questions of human identity."[33]

Religious studies has been developing its trade argot for the examination of digital religion for fifty years. If we count the production of philologically informed computer programs for indexing scripture as academic religious studies, our discipline *produced* digital religion, but even if we only retroactively identify with writers of articles, we have been there from quite the beginning. Jacob Neusner's essay "Scholars and Machines," perhaps the first academic evaluation of scripture's passage through computers, is significant, both because it well presents the urgency of digital religion, and because he makes no effort to extricate his own writing from

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[33] Chidester, 29.

it. Monumental mainframe computers had recently processed thousands of fragments of the

Dead Sea Scrolls, producing comparisons, corrections, and indexes on a scale never attempted by

humans. Neusner understandably began by asking whether scholars of "humane letters" (a field

which includes rabbis, priests and secular academics), would soon lose their jobs to

mechanization, a very real possibility for many other professions in 1965.[34] He comforted the

human humanists through the analogy of visual artists facing the invention of photography in the

late nineteenth century: both those who adopted the new technology and those who did not

discovered, when confronted with the camera's verisimilitude, that their work was never "the

technical representation of reality" but "the representation of what man actually sees."[35] Faced

with a similar challenge by the thinking machine, Neusner proposed that the computer would

free humane letters from pedantic sorting work, allowing scholars to focus on what he claims

was always their task. Humanists are those "most unmechanized of men" who explore texts by

prior humans "to recover and ponder the memories and wise insights of the mind of man"

concerning the "wisdom, heritage, and worth" of "man" and apply them to contemporary

"human issues;" "Then the humane search for truth becomes, in itself and in its consequences, a

statement of being.[36]" More than circular, the argument is epicyclical, a five-fold knot where

every loop turns around an unclarified notion of "human life." We need not attempt to discover

who this human is, nor whether we must agree with Neusner when he claims that its

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[34] It certainly includes "traditional Jewish students of the Talmud" as well as "the founders of Jewish Science," and others engaged in "philology and text-criticism." Jacob Neusner, "Scholars and Machines," in *History and Torah: Essays on Jewish Learning* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965): 74, 73, 70.

[35] Neusner, 69, 74.

[36] Ibid.

confrontation with computers clarifies an ancient task of self-discovery rather than beginning

some new process in which computers are also agents. For now it will be sufficient to note that

the efforts of machines to read the Dead Sea Scrolls provoked the great scholar of Judaism to call

out urgently for humans: while computers may be able to crunch text-as-number in ways humans

cannot, those texts have been charged with a task in the service of humans, and they cannot

perform it without our unmechanized reflection. The present study does not disagree. But we

must recognize that the image of humans humanely humanizing human texts through the

humanities is a provocative acceleration of the question itself, not yet an adequate explanation

for the sense in which we are not computers. Even if, at some point in these last fifty years,

humans and computers had stopped moving long enough for their outlines to be traced, the

difference may still not have become clear. Moving forward, Neusner's knot will serve as a

signal that the digital provides paradoxes of the sort that provoke scholars of religion (with the

hope that religion will provide paradoxes to provoke scholars of the digital).

Let us close this section's provisional definition of religion by directing this fascination

back along the path we have just traveled. Adapting the work of David Chidester, this

dissertation defines religion as negotiations of humanity's borders, and the movement of traffic

across them. Following Victor Turner, the materials that are rearranged in these negotiations and

transactions are called "sacra." Defining religion in this way allows us to consider religion as

processes of non-metaphorical encounter without presuming that it necessarily requires *belief* or

seriousness. A cursory look at the Evangelical game *Timothy and Titus* illustrated why a

definition of this sort is necessary. This game is religious not because anyone believes in it, but

because it mobilizes scriptural words and images to welcome players into an Evangelical

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counterpublic.

Having now established the two components of digital religion, the foregoing section closed with a rereading of Jacob Neusner's "Scholars and Machines." This first scholarly article on digital religion demonstrated the excitement produced where two dynamics complicate one another. And we must now add a third and final foundational dynamic to our analysis. It will not negate the peculiar liveliness of digital religion in any way, but it will make religious video games thinkable as a specific range of creativity.

Excursus on Play

"Play" here will designate those activities that the psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott situates across the lively "potential space" that comprises the soft border of the human subject: "It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world."[37] More precisely, in Winnitcott's clinical practice he observed that the sense that a person has a *self* distinguishable from *the world* depends upon shifting interactions across a "playground" of lively entities that resist both *othering* and *selfing*. Infants tend to have a few specific "transitional objects" which seem to have life of their own, and in time those objects lose their intrinsic value as the possibility of play is "spread out over the whole intermediate territory between 'inner psychic reality' and 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common,' that is to say, over the whole cultural field."[38] Across our weaned lives, the bewildering liveliness of those early transitional objects, now dispersed into *everything* continues to surprise us, catching us up in wild moments where

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[37] Winnicott, 51.

[38] Winnicott, 5.

we *lose ourselves*. Play, then, is a name for the way our subjectivity both emerges and dissolves through our grammatically complicated engagements with well worn blankies, religious artifacts, "culture," and the "electricity" upon a lover's skin; it is difficult to say whether we act upon them or them upon us.[39]

But play, as Winnicott envisions it, resists historical analysis. Play only exists in particular instances, never in general. Remember an infant loving her first possession; remember how merely washing it could render it foreign.[40] If no similar object can stand in for it, how much less can a general one? And without generalization, we do not have a history, but an endless expanse of specific, private exuberances. We can, however, historicize *toys* and *games* as machines for limiting play. Toys place the object of play within an extrinsic cultural continuity, and games place the process of play within a matrix of rules. Play thus structured, however, is not somehow inferior to Winnicott's vision of the primal play that develops into cultural play. We might consider the vectoral tendencies produced by toys and games like deeply worn paths in an open field, or currents in the sea. There are things, both collectively and personally, that can only happen when play is constrained by structure. In Victor Turner's words, "Consciousness must be narrowed, intensified, beamed in on a limited focus of attention. 'Past and future must be given up' -only now matters. How is this to be done? Here the conditions that normally prevail must be 'simplified' by some definition of situational relevance. What is irrelevant must be excluded."[41] Fortunately for our study, video games are both toys and games.

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[39] Winnicott, 54, 6, 98.

[40] Winnicott, 4.

[41] Victor Turner, "From Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology," *Rice University Studies 60.3* (1974): 87.

Like a ball crafted to invoke professional sports, a character-doll already invested with

stories, or a tiny lawnmower, a video game is a toy. It both limits and accelerates the possibilities

of play toward the enactment of familiar tales. Video games, as toys, can be studied in terms of

who presents them to what playerships in continuation of which stories. Walter Benjamin noted

that playthings are "imposed on [a child] as cult implements that become toys only afterward,

partly through the child's powers of imagination."[42] These further powers must not be neglected

in analysis, particularly because the discovery of perverse or pious play through differently

narrativized toys often produces new toys. Many Evangelical video games, for instance, have

been mods, hacks, or clones of worldly ones. But we should also not assume that the excesses of

play are consistently productive. Play sometimes just exceeds the toy:

> Playmobil makes a Nativity playset complete with camel, frankincense and myrrh, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the guiding star – all the necessary elements are there. But these pieces are not limited to reenacting a narrow telling of one sacred story […] other dolls like Playmobil firemen, Santa, Roman centurions, racecar drivers, and Snoopy – virtually any toy character you can imagine – can and do make their appearance at the manger as well.[43]

Like backgammon or dress-up, a video game is a game. It halts play where it reaches

particular limits. Brian Massumi usefully describes rules and the mechanisms for enforcing them

as transcendent relative to the immanence of play. The referee has the power to stop play when it

exceeds specific parameters, producing the specificity of a rule bound game that can recur,

allowing for later variation. "The inclusion of that anti-event-space in the event space not only

allows particular moves in the game to be qualified as to type (attributed intrinsic properties of

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[42] Walter Benjamin, "Toys and Play," in *Selected Writings 2.1,* Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith, and Rodney Livingstone, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2005): 118.

[43] Nikki Bado-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris, *Toying With God: The World of Religious Games and Dolls* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 61.

fairness or foulness common to any number of other moves)… The anti-event-space is the injection of *generality* into the *particularity* of the game, with which it channels into the *singularity* of the play (this game as *such*, *this* game, *an* event)."[44] Video games, as games, can be studied in terms of when and how they halt play, and how regulatory structures transform over time. Again, however, we should be cautious not to neglect the excesses of play. The cheat, the spoilsport, and the over-achieving player who takes on novel prohibitions transform games. Consider, for instance, the tendency of Evangelical game reviewers to evaluate whether it is possible to complete a game while avoiding features they find morally objectionable: "The game does promote violence with the car-jacking and stuff, although it is still optional, so you don't have to do it if you don't want to."[45]

If approached carefully, then, video games, being both games and toys, can ground a study of play in historical specifics. That said, scholarship on video games has not shared these findings with the many fields that could benefit from them. As the nineteen-nineties ended, the tone of academic responses to video games changed dramatically. Whereas most prior scholarship had only regarded the growing popularity of video games as a more or less severe threat to the well being of children, a new generation of "scholars, many of whom had by now grown up with [home video game] consoles" opened the new academic discipline of "game studies" around this time, offering a range of alternative evaluations of digital gaming.[46] This

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[44] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 71-80.

[45] Imfagentsamfisher, "Jak 2 (PS2)," accessed March 6, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/19-console/4479-jak-2.

[46] Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig De Peute, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xxv.

dissertation joins that recent wave of scholarship and may be classified as a work of game studies as well as of religious studies. With scholars like Espen Aarseth and Mark Wolf, I share the labor of examining video games as a data set for the humanities, and approach their surrounding cultures as interesting material for history and the social sciences. However, the first generation of player-scholars has tended to write for an audience that is at least as familiar with the games being discussed as with the theories through which they are being filtered. Some scholars, like Alexander Galloway, even take special pains to clarify his interlocutors as an imaginary generation composed entirely of gamers (an identitarian configuration hard to locate with any tool finer than bare assertion, despite the popularity of video games) and to dismiss outsiders as irrelevant to the conversation: "Our generation needs to shrug off the contributions of those who view this all as so new and shocking. They came from somewhere else and are still slightly unnerved by digital technology. We were born here and love it."[47] And even when such a division is not explicitly articulated, one is often created by embedding knowing references to specific popular games at the center of dense arguments, leaving no alternate path for those who have never played them. This has, unfortunately, nurtured an intellectual environment that partitions game studies away from the many scholars in various fields who might productively engage the emerging discipline's claims concerning the changes in popular media over the last fifty years.[48] Video games are sites of vital interaction among and across diverse social, technological, and ideological fields, and thus merit the analytical attention even of scholars who

[47] Alexander Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xii.

[48] *Spacewar!* one of the four primary contenders for "the first video game," and apparently the first electronic game to circulate on multiple computer systems, was created in 1962. Stewart Brand, "Spacewar: Fanatic Life and Symbolic Death among the Computer Bums," *Rolling Stone*, December 7, 1972, 40.

will never play them.

Video Games as Mundane Software

In response to scholarship that insists on provincializing research on video games, I propose that the stakes are too high to limit discussion of this cultural form to communities of fans. This chapter has sought to establish how video games productively complicate our understandings of lived religion, digital culture, and play quite generally. Thus I hope to invite non-gamers into the conversation on video games by explaining how both the *toy* and the *game* aspects of video games can be satisfactorily understood by anyone who has used a personal computer with a mouse-based interface.

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You could have been doing any number of things on your computer, but now you entertain the possibility of playing a game. Perhaps you do not even close your word processor and calendar. You pull a CD case from the shelf, snap the disc out, and place it into your drive. The computer asks if you want to autorun the program. You click. The screen falls black.

The darkened screen lights up with a logo, an array of rusty iron gears printed "Genesis 3-D." It is followed after a second by another logo, a reproduction of the fingertips from DaVinci's "Creation of Adam," God's finger almost touching Adam's, now over a spark of white light, clearly rendered on a computer rather than with ceiling paints, surrounded by the words "N'Lightning Software Development, Inc." A blast of thunder sounds, though the spark remains static. When it fades, one last logo sits at the top of the screen over a list of options: CATECHUMEN. The letters are colored to glow like molten steel, and two images of flaming

swords flank the options on your screen: Game, Options, Graphics, Sound, Credits, Exit. Like it usually controls an arrow, sliding the mouse now moves a sword up and down the list, each word growing slightly larger when your sword touches it.

This is frequently called a "start menu," or a "start screen." Note that it is unclear to what extent you have "played a game" so far. In a tangle of homophones greatly resembling Neusner's use of "human," game criticism, both academic and popular, broad and narrow cast, tends to use the word "game" for several components of this engagement. The disc in its case is a game, the program that this disk facilitates is a game, and now, if you click on the top option, you will run a sub-program within that program, also called "a game." And, should you be interrupted, you will complain that your game has been disturbed.

For the purposes of this study, all digital systems that delimit and accelerate play, combining the properties of toys and games, will be called "video games." The start-screen and its mechanics will be classified as "in-game." This term, usually applied in game criticism to designate only the diegetic layer of a game, will here identify all digital action facilitated by a video game, whether it is emerging from the screen and speakers, or churning in backgrounds inaccessible to the player. The intimately connected action in the analog world will be classified with the neologism "out-game." The in-game and out-game worlds emerge together. Consider the contact zone where your mouse touches you. Ask whether a screen has one side or two. We can start here.

The start-screen is a fitting place to begin our analysis of digital games because we have already encountered several pervasive features of digital games, but have not yet reached a place where we will be tempted to use the mystifying language of "immersion," nor have any elements

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appeared which lack meaningful parallels in a personal computer's interface. The sword-cursor

moves when you move your mouse, as your arrow-cursor moved on your computer's desktop. Of

course, as with your arrow-cursor, this interaction is quite limited. Rotating your physical mouse

in a circle only results in incidental jiggling in the on-screen cursor, whether it appears as a

sword or an arrow. Picking up the mouse and shaking it does approximately the same, and hitting

the keys of your keyboard does not affect it in any way. But when you resign yourself to using

the mouse as if it were laid over the plane of the screen, as the arrow-cursor is, whether or not

you continue typing, you can use it to interact with certain entities on the screen, though others,

like the hills printed on your desktop wallpaper or the flaming swords on the sides of

Catechumen's start-screen, seem not to sense your cursor at all.

It may seem peculiar to mention this surplus of motion, but it draws attention to a little-

considered aspect of computerized interaction: only a sliver of out-game action arrives in-game.

Just as, for some, typing is accompanied by muttering and finger drumming, so too do game

players often lean in their seats to follow the curves of a racetrack, or shout at their game

systems. In many cases, video games are accompanied by analog pressures that encourage or

limit surplus action, but there are necessary limits to what the digital apparatus itself can know.

Consider, for instance, dance-pad games, which are played by stepping on surfaces with

embedded buttons: some players might sway their hips to feel comfortable and rhythmic, but the

game cannot distinguish this behavior from awkward mechanical steps, or even from kneeling to

slap at the buttons with both hands. That is, the video game's properties as a *toy* interface with

the out-game world in places it cannot access as a *game.* This gap between what a video game

can perceive and what its supplemental materials might encourage is especially relevant in

religious instances. A press release might claim that one plays a video game featuring Christian music by "praising God," but the game's dance-pad cannot tell good-faith participation from mockery.[49]

In the context of video games, general purpose input devices such as the mouse and keyboard are called "controllers," as are specialized gaming devices like joysticks, or dance-pads. The relationship of a controller to in-game action is called a "control scheme." Conventionally, a control scheme is described in a second person that takes place on both sides of the screen: "when you press 'up,' you jump." Stewart Brand's *Spacewar: Frantic Life and Symbolic Death Among the Computer Bums*, perhaps the first piece of video game reportage, already placed *you* in the computer in 1972.[50] Here, again, the video game can be well understood by anyone familiar with personal computers, which apply the same grammar: "when you hit 'backspace,' you erased your work." Where these two *yous* must be separated for clarity, the digital one is a *player-character,* and the analog one is a *player*. Though player-characters occasionally present eyes, limbs, and other features that evoke the sympathy of the player, we must be cautious not to imagine that any easy anthropomorphism applies to all player-characters. In fact, most player-characters in Evangelical games look like cursors, and some are more abstract still. The human who participates in controlling a game is a *player,* just as a person who participates in any other piece of software is a *user*. Manuel Sicart describes it poetically: "The subjectivity of the player is our skin when interacting with a computer game: it marks the

[49] Digital Praise, "Dance Praise PC Dance Game Adds Global Flavor Through Expansion Pack Volume 5: Praise and Worship," archived by the Internet Archive, November 19, 2008, accessed February 15, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20081119151804/http://www.digitalpraise.com/pr/06272007.html .

[50] Brand, 50–58.

boundaries of the subject, but also determines how much we can interact with the digital world. Playing is putting on the player-skin and experiencing the world, and the game-world within it."[51]

However, though video games are quite like other software, we classify them separately because people *play* with them. Your word processor might be said to have a *game* aspect in that it limits you, but its *toy* aspect, its narrative situation, is usually directed *outward.* Even if you are not writing for a reason, you are using the software to write. In video games, the *toy* aspect justifies the *game* aspect. That is to say, they are situated within stories that make their limitations ends in themselves. And *purposelessness attracts play*. A video game's constraints are calibrated to entice players to defeat them, and cultures of gaming work to create the players the games require. We can study this process by examining particular games, and the specific cultures that enjoy struggling with them. Neither the technology (game) nor the culture (toy) of video gaming could have produced this effect independently, but at present they comprise a sort of mill that draws in play. The effect has been dramatic by any measure: fifty one percent of American households own a dedicated game console (a limited-function computer designed to run proprietary game software that is very easy to install, and prohibitively difficult to reproduce).[52]

The story that follows will observe the formation of a dramatic sub-process within this larger engagement with video games. Between the early nineteen-eighties and still accelerating in the present, a configuration of the culture and technology at the disposal of Evangelical

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[51] Sicart, 79.

[52] Entertainment Software Association, "Sales, Demographic, and Useage Data 2013," accessed March 16, 2014, http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/esa_ef_2013.pdf

Christians is redirecting the movement of *play,* through video games, toward Christ. Like other video games, the creation of Evangelical games entails the creation of both games and their players, though these, quite unlike their worldly parallels, will be crafted on both sides through the movement of sacra. This sacred context should not be mistaken for a violation of the purposelessness that attracts play through games. In fact, as we move forward, we will discover repeatedly that Evangelical games attend to the player's present moment, whereas worldly games tend to understand the act of play as a trajectory toward some other end.

Conclusion

We can triangulate religious video games at the intersection of three dynamics of co-emergence; they are digital, religious, and playful. Each of these adjectives gestures toward contested territories within which it becomes difficult and finally impossible to say what is a human. The complex senses in which we are and are not our computers, our souls, and our teams exacerbate one another rather than cancel one another out. The study of religious video games is a task for the humanities, because from whatever angle one looks, there seems to be a human face looking back, but one can never be sure. The human is the mystery at the center of this study, and religious video games emerge in the interaction of its shifting borders above/below, before/after, and inside/out.

This is also to say that the religious video game presents a liveliness that challenges our theoretical presumptions. It is religious, but not serious. It is a plaything of great consequence. It is a digital conveyance for spiritual presence. This chapter established its three dynamics in order to encompass the specifics that I encountered in researching religious games. Across my study, I

discovered that when my attention was focused on the often-dismissed creativity of religious video gaming, my peripheral vision filled with the most unlikely phenomena. This introduction was necessary to establish the tools that make religious video games comprehensible, but it is also intended as an enticement to further curiosity concerning lived religion, and sacred computing.

However, to conduct research through any of these dynamics, we must carefully withdraw from the general field to focus on what we are capable of studying. Not the digital as such, but *computers*, not religion, but *religions,* not play, but *games*. While the digital includes distant entities like the singularity and the AI with which you will fall in love, the tools of a cultural historian cannot reach them, so we must attend to historical devices and programs. Likewise, religion can designate all negotiations at the borders of humanity, but *a* religion is a durable confederation collectively negotiating those borders. And play is a primary practice by which human subjects develop boundaries with the world around them, but a game is a system of rules that restricts and accelerates this process in observable ways. By locating religious video games within these specific virtualities, the study of their liveliness can be populated with their bewildering details. To do justice to ambiguity, we cannot afford to be vague. We must seek out a religion, some computers, and the games that connect them.

Chapter 2

Between the Devil and Deep Blue:
The Stakes of Video Gaming for Evangelical Christianity

"What great opportunities we now have in cyberspace. But, with all good things, there is a twist from our adversary."

-Marty Bee, Christian game designer and critic[53]

Illustration 3: Demon, Neutral, and Saint in *Left Behind*'s promotional materials[54]

Imagine watching a square mile of Manhattan from the air. But don't imagine too clearly.

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[53] Marty Bee and Steve Van Nattan, "Computer Games: Are they Honoring to God?" *Blessed Quietness Journal,* accessed January 22, 2014, http://blessedquietness.com/journal/housechu/games.htm .

[54] Montage produced from Left Behind Games Inc., Images "evil/demon.jpg," "neutral/man_neutral.jpg," and "good/saint.jpg" archived by the Internet Archive October 5, 2007, accessed March 16, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/*/http://eternalforces.com/characters/images/*

Simplify your landscape until you cannot tell if this is Harlem or the Lower East Side; there are a few cars, but mostly the roads teem with a strangely homogenous humanity, all white, all of enlistment age, unclustered, empty handed, not running, not sitting, not falling over. Picture a gray circle around each of them, following as they walk. This is the baseline reality of *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* [LB:EF].

You have been stuck on the same mission for three days. The objective here, as in other levels, is to amass a Christian Army adequate to certain foreordained tasks. Specifically, you must make contact with visiting evangelists at the corners of the map. But as you convert gray-circled neutrals into green-circled Christians, and begin to speciate them into medics, soldiers, and ministers, the game's AI (on behalf of the Antichrist) is engaged in a strictly parallel effort, making red-circled antitypes of your troops –medics, soldiers, and "secularists" – and kills you with them. The biggest difference between the two armies is their orientation to deadly force. Every character has his or her own "spirit meter" that goes up with prayer, and down with fighting. So, the Antichristians grow more cohesive as they fire on you, but your Christians troops begin to defect – losing their conversions and wandering off gray-circled – when you give as good as you get it. Over and over, your little band reaches one corner, maybe two, before the entire city is overrun with Antichristians, and they shoot you to pieces.

So, after three days of failure, you try a new strategy: not a light, balanced strike-force that can zip from one corner to the next, but a juggernaut that crawls mercilessly through your enemies. When you start toward the first evangelist, your army is dense with surgeons, armored vehicles, and prophets, over a hundred of the game's best troops. And it works. You mash the "Q" key on the keyboard, keeping your army constantly praying, and a choir of elite gospel

singers praises the Lord from within the ring of soldiers, effectively preventing defection. It no longer matters that the entire city is against you; New York's constant infestation of minor rock-musicians and petty criminals has been fortified also, working together now with armored soldiers and demonists. But as you pray and praise, you kill hundreds of them easily. They do not bleed, and their bodies vanish after a moment on the ground, but you kill them so quickly that they seem to pile.

And fun, for a moment, is overwhelmed by a disquieting sensation. Every one of those vanishing corpses has a name and a little biography. Every one of them could have been converted. But by preventing you from playing casually at violence, the game led you to play at it enthusiastically. By making every character potentially redeemable, it had left you no choice but killing potential allies. Perhaps every design decision had been conscientious, even morally and theologically defensible, but for a moment they staged a sort of pyrrhic victory. You were embarrassed to be winning, and curious, suddenly, what your army's prayers would sound like if they had words.

Imagine strafing a square mile of Manhattan from the air. But don't imagine too clearly.

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To quote Leonard Cohen, "There is a war between the ones who say there's a war and the ones who say that there isn't." *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* (Left Behind Games: 2006) casts the "secularist" as the anti-type of the "missionary." This dissertation takes place upon terrain where the only possibility of *neutrality* is constant motion. This study is an experiment in exploring the interaction of mutually constitutive entities, clusters of agents that come into being together and

cannot be meaningfully separated. As we move forward, our task will be to locate Evangelical

video games among those entities without which they would not have their present form. Later

sections of this dissertation will seek out the seams across which Evangelical games are

embroiled in events as disparate as the Columbine massacre, and the smartphone boom. This

chapter, however, will attempt to understand Evangelical video games as the creative production

of an Evangelical community actively negotiating borders with two very different kinds of

non-human agents: the digital on one side, and the demonic on the other.

What is Evangelical Media?

Left Behind: Eternal Forces drives the player toward a moral crisis wherein the use of

lethal force and martial strategy is unfortunate, but unavoidable. In this near future (here so near

that no new technology of warfare has emerged, as opposed to the books, wherein new

communications and military technology set the conflict a few years apace before us), every

Christian must fight against "The Global Village Peacekeepers," a demonic cooptation of our

own United Nations, or be killed by them. In the early levels, rock musicians, gang members,

and secularists comprise the enemy force, but the battle is soon joined by tanks, spies, and

eventually by horned demons breathing fire. In a final, unprecedented, creative turn, the game's

final enemy is the Global Village Peacekeepers headquarters itself. You shoot at the building

until you are rewarded with a cinema of the Antichrist, still quite alive, punishing his generals for

failing to kill you. In this world there can be strategic, or even moral caution in the use of force,

but there can be no Christian anti-war movement. The algorithmic extension of *Left Behind*

co-author Tim LaHaye's out-game opposition to the United Nations, nuclear disarmament, and

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multiculturalism evokes a very particular Jesus: "he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."[55]

This is not to say, however, that the team that made *LB:EF* was of a single mind. Before the game was released, in fact, Troy Lyndon, the CEO of Left Behind games, situated himself strongly against precisely the depiction of death that would be applied in his own flagship game: "What's more damaging are games that show killing and then let the bodies disappear, desensitizing gamers to what's going on[.] Although seeing hundreds of dead bodies in *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* at the end of a horrific battle wasn't our original intent, we can't help but stay away from desensitizing gamers. It's our hope that we don't end up with a Mature-rated game...but we might. Ultimately, our argument is that it's more humane to show the reality of death than to desensitize in the name of a lighter rating."[56] The process by which the game earned its "Teen" and did precisely what its lead developer opposed cannot be recovered, but it is an enigma that should haunt our appreciation of the game. And such entrenched contradictions fissure sacred ground as well. The astute reader may have noticed that the game as described above deviated from Tim LaHaye's own theological position from which salvation, once achieved, cannot be compromised: "We can never lose our salvation."[57] Tim LaHaye, however, never renounced the game, nor even seemed to notice the dissonance: "for those who are into video games, Eternal Forces is the #1 most powerful vehicle for their hearts and minds that's

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[55] Luke 22:36 [KJV]

[56] Matt Peckham, "Unholy MMO-LY" sidebar to "God Mode: Fragging for King, Country, and Creator," accessed March 16, 2014, http://www.1up.com/features/god-mode .

[57] Tim LaHaye, *A Quick Look at the Rapture and the Second Coming* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 34.

been invented in our lifetime."[58]

What if we didn't dismiss this dissonance as a mistake, but welcomed it as an important feature of Evangelism? Evangelical Christians are people who have been born again by accepting the atonement of Jesus as described in the Bible, and who now seek to use various media to bring others to that same experience. But in human attempts to convey a divine message, the medium participates. In the case of *LB:EF*, it seems that particular conceptions of game-violence and character development were so active in the game's emerging form that they overrode the principled positions of its two most famous creators. This is not to say "the medium is the message." Jesus is the message. And this relational position should also not be mistaken for technological determinism. Evangelical Christians often choose to convey their testimony through a particular medium specifically because that medium was conspicuously lacking Christian presence. To quote Troy Lyndon again, "perhaps instead of **avoiding** the media, Christ-followers should focus on **transforming** the media."[59] Evangelical Christians are people committed to the challenge of creating and circulating Evangelical media. For some, the only media employed may be speech, or the testimony of their own lives, but these media are no less participatory than the digital ones that will occupy the present study.

For my purposes, Evangelical media is that which seeks to orient lives around the Bible and the Cross, welcoming strangers to new lives thus organized, and the already-committed to rededication. Though other sacra are variously present, Evangelical media orients itself about the

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[58] Troy Lyndon, "Left Behind: Eternal Forces statement from LB Games Inc.," archived by the Internet Archive, May 26, 2013, accessed January 19, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20130526172019/http://www.leftbehindgames.com/controversy.php .

[59] Troy Lyndon, "Using the New Media for Good," accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.leftbehindgames.com/blog/?p=3 . Bold in original.

Bible and Cross rather than any particular tradition of practice or interpretation.[60] This is not to

say that Evangelical media fails to produce the subcultural particularities and theological

specificity associated with denominational Christianity, but quite nearly the opposite. The

tradition that usually calls itself simply "Christianity" practices a "culturally adaptive biblical

experimentalism," recycling and recoding its biblicist discourse to gather a community out from

the world around it, wherever it finds itself, and in the process has created cultural forms as

varied and specific as has the world. Consider Christian rock music, comic books, and romance

novels: as Evangelical Christianity has found itself in new cultural contexts, it has found new

ways to redeem the lost, and the specific adaptations to digital cultures continue this tradition.

The media thus generated "never by themselves yielded cohesive, institutionally compact, or

clearly demarcated groups of Christians. But they do serve to identify a large family of churches

and religious enterprises."[61]

As I explained in my introduction, I have adopted the Evangelical rhetorical strategy of

describing the space outside of Christianity as "the world," as to avoid the implication of

neutrality or rationality encoded in the word "secular." Rather than "the church," however, I will

follow Michael Warner in calling the network of discursively connected Christians into which

Evangelical media draws users "the Evangelical counterpublic." That is to say, first, we are

observing a *public*, a "social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" allowing for

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[60] This definition of Evangelical Christianity is derived from David Bebbington's "four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed, *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort, *biblicism*, a particular regard to the Bible, and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross." D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3.

[61] Mark Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 13.

"poetic world making." Evangelical media, like worldly newspaper circulation or the literal

soapbox speech, produces a specific "relation among strangers" who are addressed both

personally and impersonally by the medium at hand.[62] But, in Warner's words, Evangelical

Christians constitute a *counterpublic* because "evangelical discourse sustains a highly marked

threshold of participation. To have full uptake in this field of circulation is to *be* an evangelical,

and thus to be different from an imagined mainstream."[63] This imagination should not misread

as personal fancy. Imagining a mainstream is the ongoing material production of the knowledge

that there is *a world out there.* And, for counterpublics, of collecting their members to

collectively distinguish themselves from it.

Left Behind: Eternal Forces will help us frame the work of gathering a counterpublic. The

game certainly speaks to a field of strangers, inviting them to imagine themselves as a Christian

army beset by the forces of the world, but its relatively explicit ecclesiology makes it an outlier.

We cannot know what people did with the 70,000 copies the game sold – it is improbable that

every sold copy was played, and at least one was played for research purpose – but we can

extrapolate the audience it hails.[64] Among the hundreds of Christian games I have played in

preparing this dissertation, *Left Behind* is one of the fewer than five that present positions on

issues concerning which Evangelicals (especially the newly converted) may disagree. Like the

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[62] I would contest, however, that the public of a game, a playership, is not "constituted through mere attention," but must develop and deploy physical skills in order to negotiate the game, a difference that will dramatically change the other components of this publicity. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 65-124.

[63] Michael Warner, "The Evangelical Public Sphere," 1.

[64] Troy Lyndon, "Exhibit 31.1: Certification," accessed October 15, 2010, http://www.faqs.org/sec-filings/091022/LEFT-BEHIND-GAMES-INC_10-K.A/http://www.faqs.org/sec-filings/091022/LEFT-BEHIND-GAMES-INC_10-K.A/ .

books, the game includes explicit discussion (here on sermonic splash-screens between levels) of evolution, political internationalism, and Biblical literalism.[65] Because they seek to clarify internecine conflicts, partitioning believers from "Nominal Christians," *LB:EF* is somewhat peculiar alongside the much larger class of Evangelical games that distinguishes their playership as Christians from the world, without clarifying a border between any two types of Christian (including non-differentiation into specific denominational identity). *LB:EF*'s willingness to take strong stances on contentious issues does not, however, separate it from the larger body of Evangelical games because it still presents its positions as unmarked Christianity. That is to say, Evangelical games are theologically diverse, but their divisions are arrayed quietly across a field within which all contained elements are self-described simply as "Christian," defining a complex border with the world.

Evangelical games, like most Evangelical media, do not frame themselves as part of any project except the gospel *as such*. This focus on the Bible and Cross not only conceals denominational particularity, but it also allows Evangelical messaging to present itself as medium-neutral in a very particular sense. The Evangelical counterpublic seeks to grow by adapting the gospel message to any medium that will not get in its way: "evangelicals would prefer not to poach on mass culture; their preference would be to transform mass culture, making it entirely evangelical."[66] We must note, however, that Evangelical media is not boundless. There are promotional images on Evangelical dating sites, but there is no such thing as Evangelical pornography; there are Evangelical action games, but no Evangelical "murder

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[65] Other instances include *Soldier of God* and *Bible Defenders* by AV 1611 Games.

[66] Heather Hendershot. *Shaking the World for Jesus : Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago, IL, USA: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 13.

simulators." The question, when facing any particular media artifact, is which part of it (if any) can bring people to Christ. To determine how their work should proceed, Evangelical critique acts upon worldly media like a centrifuge, attempting to separate its potentially redeemable elements from demonic corruption. While "contemporary evangelicals have, since the 1960s, developed a pop paraculture that allows adolescents to enjoy entertainments resembling those of 'secular' culture while lacking any 'harmful' influences," these have been consistently accompanied by debates over whether their projects are counterproductive.[67] Whether Evangelical heavy metal or rap is possible, for instance, remains a subject of debate in some quarters. And, pointedly, there are Evangelicals who discern a line that excludes much of this study's subject matter. To quote Neil MacQueen of Sunday Software: "I draw the line at KILLING, or Christian titles that are overtly violent, -even if they are targeted at the teen/young adult male gamers. I don't believe we need to imitate the violent secular games to reach the gamers with a message of hope and love."[68] Here, again, notice that there is a question over whether a particular sort of game can be used; MacQueen is not challenging the missionary possibilities of video games altogether (though other Evangelicals may). Evangelical video game culture, thus, is an effort to intercede at the line where the digital meets the demonic.

This section set out to locate Evangelical Christians and their media as mutually dependent and co-emergent without reducing the complexity of that relationship. Evangelical Christians will be located as people who use diverse media to draw others into new lives oriented around the Bible and the Cross, and to reaffirm the orientation of those who already share in this

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[67] Jason Bivins, *Religion of Fear* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

[68] Sunday Software Inc., "Sunday Software's Somewhat Infamous 'NO' Shelf," accessed January 18, 2014, www.sundaysoftware.com/noshelf.htm .

new life. The community created in this way can be understood as a counterpublic in that it seeks to collect a community that understands itself *against* an imagined mainstream. This understanding also gives Evangelical media critique the task of drawing lines through media, discerning which part can be redeemed and which must be removed. With regard to computers in particular, this practice finds Evangelical Christians in good company, as several intersecting publics are presently trying to discern general principles of interaction between humans and computers.

The Human-Computer Interfaith

The preface for J. Conrod's *Computer Bible Games* (BibleBytes) presents a paradigmatic description of Evangelical Christians and computers in interaction. Written in 1982 by a father-son team of Seventh Day Baptists, this first anthology of religious video games was a paperback manual for learning to program BASIC by creating one's own educational software. The preface sacralized the process:

> "God is the Creator of the laws of technology by which computers run. Man has made progress in the field of computers only by the discovery of and obedience to these laws of God.
>> God requires us to be good stewards of all that He has given to us, including computer technology. We have shown good stewardship with the computer in such fields as medicine, communications, etc. The purpose of this book is to encourage Christians to grow spiritually through the enjoyment of computerized Bible lessons and games."[69]

Though it is not explicitly cited in later texts by Christian authors, this sentiment seems to underwrite the ongoing surge in Evangelical software production, from church database software, to searchable Bibles, and through the Evangelical video game, as well as emergence of Evangelical critique of digital media: the digital is a gift to humans from God, and thus an object

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[69] J. Conrod, *Computer Bible Games* (Denver, Colorado: Accent Books, 1984).

of Christian stewardship. To be clear, we find this sentiment in non-Evangelical religious organizations as well; the Church of England, for instance, has officially clarified that "No part of creation is outside the care and concern of God, including cyberspace."[70] In my research, I discovered Evangelical Christians tending to agree that computers have become an intrinsic element of the human life world, and very few even passing comments suggesting that these technologies were irredeemable. The digital, like the natural (a prior and still more frequent area for discourses of "stewardship"), is a range across which sinful human nature will be expressed unless Christians conscientiously craft digital expressions of their Truth. Within this frame, of course, there are innumerable variations. In some formulations computers have inherent dangers that Christian stewards must redress, perhaps addictive qualities, or tendencies to produce violence and social isolation; in others the digital tends toward the rational and the educational, and needs only to be freed from misuse; and frequently the digital seems to be entirely without intrinsic qualities except perhaps as an amplifier and reproducer of human tendencies, good and ill.

To understand these various possibilities, we must step back and allow Evangelical specificity to illuminate a more general phenomenon. The cultural work of negotiating what it means to be a human living among computers is not, after all, a project unique to Evangelical Christians, nor do they engage in it alone. Evangelicals, in coming to steward computers, interact with other groups engaged in parallel and often opposed relations with the digital. Chapters four and six of this dissertation, for instance, will explore how Evangelical Christians consider the

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[70] Church of England, Board for Social Responsibility, *Cybernauts Awake: Ethical and Spiritual Implications of Computers, Information Technology, and the Internet (*Church House Publishing, 1999), 45.

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possibility of digital "violence" and "immersion" in ways that both replicate and disrupt

perspectives of the cultures in which they are embedded. The loudest voices in this regard are

conceptions of computing that circulate in the world rather than in other self-understood

religious publics. Toward an adequate understanding of Evangelical critique of other digital

cultures, then, we will require a terminology that can cross the boundary between Evangelicals

and the world in both directions. I propose "the human-computer interfaith" as a collective term

for the processes through which humans negotiate their borders with digital agents, even when

this takes place in the wilds outside of any nameable religion.

In 1983, when Stuart Card, Thomas Moran, and Allen Newell coined the term

"human-computer interface" in their seminal work *The Psychology of Human-Computer

Interaction*, they offered this face and its cognitive cross-section as illustrations.
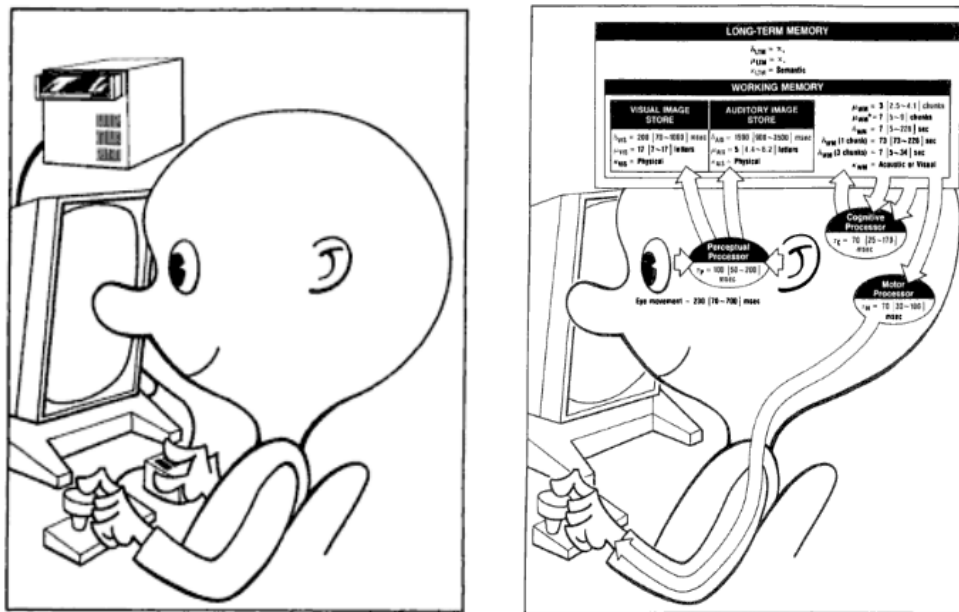
Illustration 4: The Human-Computer[71]

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[71] Montage produced from "Figure 1.1 The human-computer interface" and "Figure 2.1 The Model Human

Behold the new man. The human is a stack of two-dimensional sheets, a placid Cyclops flattened to the plane of the image. He smiles at a blank screen. How could he not grin as the machine juts in from unthinkable and nameless dimensions, exceeding traditional perspectives in drawing? And when the computer in front of him is gone, he smiles at the same blank screen, now amused, it seems, by the computer behind the smile, visible as another sheet between him and the viewer.[72]

Card, Moran, and Newell presented this mysterious image to argue that a single instrumental psychology could encompass both humans and computers, and that it would begin by tracing a line across their plane of intersection: "just follow a data path outward from the central processor until you stumble across a human being."[73] And once we had found both the CPU and the human, we could describe them homologically as two bounded individuals, each composed of smaller machines, invested with different capacities, though describable in similar terms. In particular, we are non-standard computers: "The recognize-act cycle, analogous to the fetch-execute cycle of standard computers, is the basic quantum of cognitive processing."[74]

Dutifully, Card, Moran, and Newell acknowledge the historical contingency of the schema wherein the individual subject of psychology interacts with a CPU across a complex

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Processor," Card, Stuart K., Thomas P. Moran, and Allen Newell. The Psychology of Human-Computer Interaction. (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1983), 5, 26.

[72] The invention of single-point perspective in the Renaissance has been convincingly tied to the emergence of an individual subject which may well be fragmenting as it is pulled along the vectors of new communicative media. This argument is made most articulately by Paul Virilio in *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997), where he argues that humanity is being transformed by what he calls "dromospheric pollution" (*dromos*: journey), a new kind of movement in stasis that explodes the horizon as vision approaches the speed of light.

[73] Card, Moran, and Newell, 4.

[74] Card, Moran, and Newell, 41.

channel of intermediaries, but they do so without unseating the proposed homology between the entities at either end. The first computers, they explain, required a coalition of operators working together to desire interaction (user), create punch cards (keypunch operator), and process them (computer-operator), but in the early eighties, with the commercialization of the personal computer, they argued that direct "conversational dialogue" between individual CPUs and humans had become possible. To understand this interaction they insisted that the individual human be schematized as a complex of perceptive, analytical, and mechanical functions with quantitative limits. And they predicted that this model, in which the human individual is understood as a second processor –a conception no less mythical than the notion that the computer contains a homunculus– though it could offer little traction toward understanding earlier eras of computing, would remain viable indefinitely into the future.

This foundational conception in computer science reminds us, again, that this study will not be able to retreat from its subject and rest upon neutral, rational, secular ground untroubled by religious dynamics. Evangelical Christians, in coming to understand their relationships to computers, are engaged with ideologically (and perhaps theologically) invested entities. This study, in examining those relationships, will continue to apply a *contact perspective*, observing that the agents involved are co-creatively entangled, without presuming that they are thus of equal strength. Since *The Psychology of Human-Computer Interaction*, new tools have emerged that will ground such a perspective.

Within computer science, embarrassingly, the model of human-computer interaction as the complicated conversation between fundamentally similar unitary user and CPU did not quickly collapse under the weight of its own contingency, and it continues to haunt research on

human-computer interaction into the present. But across the following thirty years, with the increasing centrality of Internet technologies, crowd/cloudsourcing, and other forms of distributed processing, as well as the emergence of distinct computing communities including those facilitated by online gaming, culturally solidified forums, and social networking applications, the dominant questions in this field began to change. Concerning both sides of the screen, theorists of human-computer interaction are now asking how clustered intelligence locates and in fact *constructs* the other with which it interacts. If my computer is a terminal that helps to process data that is spinning through hundreds of distant servers, and I am myself a point of aggregation for cultural forces that dramatically shape what I find in our interactions, then theory must seek to explain how we ever manage to cobble together abstractions of one another at all. If we look, for instance, to recent studies concerning the creation of computer systems for specifically enculturated users, or the epistemic relations of users to networked systems, we find a new vision for research on human-computer interaction as a science of co-emergence.[75]

I would like to add a single new layer to this complexity: the computer user does not only isolate a computer from among its networked components, but experiences her interaction with the computer within a more or less (often less) coherent universe that makes both computers and humans comprehensible beings. The human emerges as the non-computer and the computer emerges as the non-human, dialogically defining their relationship to a universe within which various commonly invoked differences between humans and computers become guides for

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[75] The recent special edition of *Metaphilosophy 43.4* (July, 2012), "Philoweb: Toward a Philosophy of the Web," includes several exemplary pieces within this new trajectory of HCI research. Alexandre Monnin and Harry Halpin, "Toward a Philosophy of the Web" (361-379); Yuki Hui, "What is a Digital Object" (380-395); and Johnny Hartz Søraker, "Virtual Worlds and Their Challenge to Philosophy: Understanding the 'Intravirtual' and 'Extravirtual'" (499-512) are especially salient for the present study.

ongoing interaction. Complex notions like "the purpose of technology," "freedom," "intention," or "intellect" are sacra in as much as they mark this boundary. This is the religious work of theorists like Card, Moran, and Newell, clarifying what it means to be human in a world that includes computers. Two recent theories concerning religious applications of media technology, namely, Heidi Campbell's "religious-social shaping of technology," and Stewart Hoover's notion of the "plausible narrative of self" will show how religious studies can help us navigate this terrain.

Campbell's work, a direct outgrowth of Science and Technology studies, establishes a first firm foothold toward understanding particular instances of human-computer interfaith. She stresses that the adoption of new technologies is a slow process involving complex processes of communal negotiation that must be understood within a community's historical context. Thus, the scholar of digital religion must adequately investigate the "(a) history and tradition of the community, (b) its core beliefs and patterns related to media, (c) the specific negotiation processes it undergoes with a new technology, and finally (d) the communal framing and discourses created to define and justify their technology use."[76]

These techniques are necessary, and her theory is absolutely correct as far as it goes. But her focus on "communities" in motion tends to produce stories wherein theologians and other communal authorities exercise a conservative control over social development. This both obscures the creative work that takes place among the non-experts that comprise the majority of a religious group at any instance of its history, and it prevents her theory from extending into the

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[76] Heidi Campbell, "How Religious Communities Negotiate New Media Religiously," in *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture,* 85.

wilds that religious groups find at their borders. However, to hybridize her theory with

Chidester's definition of religion, which seeks out border negotiations with non-humans, would

allow us to discuss history and tradition, core beliefs and patterns, specific negotiations, and

communal framing even in worldly technoculture. To do so allows academic media studies to

stay apace with Evangelical media critics who have been identifying the investments of worldly

media at lease since their confrontation of the novel in the mid-nineteenth century.[77]

But if not communities, with what do technologies emerge? Stewart Hoover, by directing

attention to the "plausible narratives of self" crafted by media users, allows us to seek emerging

subjects instead. These narratives are the complex of stories that people tell about themselves to

explain and guide their use of media technologies.[78] In his broad study of American families as

they negotiated both media use and religious life, he found that people's behavior rarely mapped

neatly onto their own stories, but that they necessarily told stories to themselves and others in

order to mediate their mediation. For instance, people were prone to explaining that they watched

shows of which they did not approve, but that they only did so rarely, and frequently for good

reason. His meticulous exploration of "accounts of the media" shaped my own focus on the

conversations Evangelical Christians hold on game review websites concerning the dangers,

powers, and proper uses of video games. These sites explain that computers are educational,

children are impressionable, games are (or are not) addictive, and dozens of other claims,

mapping a world across which the relevant media can be developed, critiqued, and enjoyed. And

if we again allow Chidester's location of the religious to extend our attention into the wilds that

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[77] Robert Lawrence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)*,* 20.

[78] Stewart Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), 94.

surround *religions,* we discover that this work takes place wherever media is reviewed, discussed, and shared.

To hold Hoover and Campbell's theories together with Chidester's makes it possible to understand the human-computer interfaith. The human discovers digital entities upon the grounds that they are two different sort of being, but those stories are constantly changed by the practice of human-computer interaction. The study of human-computer interfaith is not an approach that applies to people or groups we know in advance to be "religious," but rather a rigorous insistence on including the "humanity" in the terms that must be negotiated as people, embedded in their particular communities, develop their plausible narratives of self. I propose that any particular human-computer interaction is best understood through the messy dialog through which people, embedded in their larger communities of meaning, come to understand that they are not computers. This frame, as well as helping to explain groups conventionally termed "religious," could well apply, for instance, to the ways Facebook users, in the context of digital capitalism, come to know themselves as the components of human-computer interaction who have identities to protect and currency to convert into credits.

That said, this study primarily concerns the peculiar involutions at human/nonhuman boundaries maintained by relatively durable confederations of humans and non-humans circulating sacra (that is, *religions*), so we would do well to return to those practices. Consider, for instance, a computer scientist who approached the Lubavitcher Rebbe in the sixties, asking "I know that everything that exists in the world, even something that we discover later in history, has its source somewhere in the Torah. So, where are computers found in the Torah?" The Rebbe

answered that the Jewish practice of laying tefillin anticipated computers.[79] "You walk into a room and you see many familiar machines: a typewriter, a large tape recorder, a hole puncher, a calculator. What is new? But under the floor cables connect all these machines so they work as one." Just so, "you put on Tefillin. First thing in the day, you connect your mind, your heart and your hand with these leather cables – all to work as one, and with one intent." Humans, faced with computers, discover themselves in relation to them using the materials that are near to hand, and those resources are transformed as well. In religious communities, those resources can include persons divine or demonic.

It was a long detour, but it will prove useful. This section set out to establish that Evangelical Christians are one among the many communities who have been trying to understand what it means to be human among digital entities for the last several decades. But we cannot understand the process adequately by holding Christians only alongside other nameable religions that mobilize sacra to make sense at the human-computer border. Computer scientists and worldly video game review magazines are also persistently locating, describing, and shifting the borders between humans and computers. Evangelical media critique anticipates this perspective in that it tends not to mistake worldly media for a neutral secular sphere. To understand the human-computer interfaith as negotiated by the Evangelical counterpublic, we must return again to the line that Evangelical critique draws through various media, partitioning what can transmit the gospel from what must be discarded, now with the suspicion that the waste products will be worldly understandings of human-computer relations.

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[79] In Jewish ritual practice, morning prayer requires binding two boxes (*Tefillin*) containing verses of scripture to the body by means of leather straps, one against the forehead, and one on the upper arm. The Shluchim Office, "Tefillin: Jewish Wrap (2004)," accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.shluchim.org/content/img/mivtzoim/tefillin.pdf .

Video Game Critique and Spiritual Warfare

Evangelical video gaming culture manifests a counterpublic because it not only understands itself in terms of computers, but in terms of the world's understanding of computers. It seeks to understand how what it is doing is different. In my research I discovered, to my surprise, that worldly conceptions of computing were frequently understood through the intercession of demons. In particular, Evangelical video gaming tends to reflect the spiritual warfare theology that was ascendant in global Evangelicalism across the 1980s and 1990s. They present the computer as a battlefield. Demonic forces are arrayed against the human users, making the digital both a range for tactical training, and potentially a place of grave spiritual danger.

This urgency in subject formation may initially be difficult to locate because the most frequent genre of Evangelical video game might be identified as the "digitized Sunday School exercise." Games with names like "Bible Scramble," "Bible Quiz," and "Bible Crossword" present tasks that had previously been conveyed on worksheets, and which were little changed by their digital remediation.[80] It is likely that these digital word searches, word scrambles, and fill in the blank quizzes appeared early, and have proliferated widely because they are relatively easy to make. Transforming a paper quiz into a digital game requires little programming or graphical design, and effectively no additional play design, even when they are embellished with

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[80] My list includes, for instance, *Bible Jumbles, Gil's Bible Jumble, Bible Scrambles, Bible Book Scrambles,* and *Bible Cryptos*. In addition to two different games titled *Bible Quiz*, I have also found *The Party Quiz: Bible Edition, Children's Bible Quiz, New Testament Quizzler, Kid's Bible Quiz, Bible Books Quiz, Bible Quizzer, Bible Quizzes, Bible Knowledge Quiz*. Non-Evangelical examples include *Buddhist Quiz, and LDS Games: Quiz*. To offer only one more dense category, the list also contains *Bible Crossword* (2x)*, Bible Crossword Puzzles, Crossword Puzzles, Islamic Crossword Puzzle, (Jewish) Crossword*, and *People in the Torah Crossword*.

flourishes like victory animations, or parallel score keeping for multiple players.

To encounter these games as the primary scene of religious video gaming should prevent us from applying susperstitious notions of "immersion" when initially understanding the subjectivizing work of video games (for those who find this word compelling, my sixth chapter deals extensively with the possibility that games may somehow be growing more immersive). Rather than assuming that games interpellate the player as a little jumping humanoid, consider, instead, "the most-played computer game of all time": Microsoft *Solitaire*.[81] As in *Solitaire*, the most frequent player-character in religious games is the mouse cursor. It is a player-character easy to inhabit, but difficult to describe inhabiting. One may say "I clicked," "I won," or "I got a thousand points," but the sentence "I am the mouse cursor" never became conventionally possible among computer users, and the impervious pointer never becomes a "me" affected by the world that surrounds it. That said, *Solitaire* was conscientiously deployed as a subjectivizing machine. Windows, when it appeared, was a frightening creature and Microsoft's lead product manager for entertainment explained that they created Solitaire to "soothe people intimidated by the operating system."[82]

Who, then, is the subject hailed by *Bible Word Search* (Cliff Leitch, 2000)? First, Evangelical media, like the larger culture around it, tends to presume that video gamers are usually children, but unlike their worldly parallels, Evangelical games focus upon the moral status of the player-in-play. Play matters because the player can learn the Gospel (or even, in

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[81] Microsoft, "Microsoft Solitaire Collection," accessed January 27, 2014, http://www.windowsphone.com/en-us/store/app/microsoft-solitaire-collection/282592d5-5c50-496d-921e-b6ef523ad4d9 .

[82] Joel Garreau, "Office Minefield: Computers Make Work a Lot Easier. They Make Play Easier Too," *The Washington Post*, March 9, 1994.

some contemporary networked gaming, share it). Whether or not this conception of play creates a *zero-sum* game culture in which one is either gaming with Christ or against him varies. The historical examinations in this study will tend to locate voices that understand most games to be relatively benign, though we will also hear from Evangelicals for whom gaming is either a spiritual support or a danger. However, the perspective that presents video games as *harmless* seems largely absent from Evangelical critique. Thus we can begin to see how even *Bible Jumbles* (Jerry D. King, 1993) situates the player in a context of spiritual warfare. To play Evangelical games creates a player who is equipped to stand against the wiles of Satan.

This becomes even clearer when we consider Evangelical games that contain some visualized player-character. The catalog that organizes this study includes Evangelical racers, adventures, shooters, puzzlers, flight simulators, game shows, role-playing games, and several other genres that present the player somehow on screen. These narratively-oriented games tend to offer spiritual warfare theologies, most obviously, in that the player-character tends to be a Christian who must fight (and/or convert) coordinated Antichristian forces to survive. As in my opening anecdote from *Catechumen*, these frequently include demons, the possessed, and sometimes even Satan. This, of course, is connected to the history of video gaming as an entertainment medium. In even the simplest game-worlds – irrespective of whether they model racetracks or mazes, inner cities or outer space – narrative progress, or even survival in the world, tends to be opposed by algorithmic entities. Thus, though there are some game-worlds without enemies, the vast majority from which Christian game developers draw inspiration include a class of entities that will constitute themselves as an Antichristian army wherever progress is presented as Christian task. To redeem Pac-Man by replacing the dots with pages of

scripture would transform the ghosts into the object of spiritual warfare. That said, no such extrinsic cultural determinism can explain the prevalence of spiritual warfare in Evangelical games. There could, after all, have been widespread revulsion at the staging of sacred matters through the confrontational conventions of popular video games. The following section will offer a historical hypothesis concerning the prevalence of spiritual warfare in Evangelical games, but before we arrive there, the ubiquity of this theme bears examination.

Because Evangelical media creation is a primary mode of their media critique, we cannot ever fully separate these aspects of their emerging game culture. However, when we examine Evangelical video gaming through any of the three dynamics at hand, in terms of computers, religions, or games, we prominently discover spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare, religiously, will be particularly visible in critique, public disputation on the place of these games among humans. Spiritual warfare will relate to computers most clearly in "development," the co-emergence of a development team and its software object. And in terms of games, it is visible at the edge where communities of play and the game (here designated "gameplay").

In critique, spiritual warfare manifests in conversations about games wherein communities gather to discuss – frequently using online game review sites – the power of various games to help or hinder the cultivation of prayer warriors. In many cases these conversations simply reiterate the moral superiority of Evangelical games over their worldly parallels, but they also frequently open discussions about the power of digital media more nuanced than those offered in worldly media. For instance, the creators of *Axys Adventures: The Truth Seeker* (Rebel Planet Productions, 2007), and game developer/distributor Sunday Software, both offer the possibility that "shooting" in games is inappropriate, even if the target is a demon,

a critique that departs significantly from worldly critique, in which the word "violence" can be evaded entirely by changing the face of the enemy.[83]

In development, spiritual warfare theologies manifest in attempts to create games and development teams that are conduits for angelic rather than demonic forces. In my participant observation at the 2011 Christian Game Developers Conference, I found myself on a landscape teeming with demons. I was told about students who had found the remnants of ritual sacrifice in a drainage pipe under George Fox University, and how they were then plagued by demons; I learned how the "forces of Satan" were arrayed across the game industry, turning children toward violence and the objectification of women, and how Christian developers must infiltrate their strongholds to "do battle," to "take back the mountaintops of culture."

In gameplay, spiritual warfare manifests in gaming practices that enact the player's life within a world that integrates out-game theology with the game's internal metaphysics. That is, modes of play which encounter Biblical text on screen as scripture, and in-game conflict as edifying for out-game life create theological formations not otherwise possible, like the Bible as dismissible on-screen pop up, or demons who move according to simple combat algorithms. Whether or not these theological novelties enduringly shape the out-game religious lives of players, it is evident from Evangelical game critique that much is discarded when the game ends, inconsistencies being dismissed as reminders that this is "just a game." That said, when games are incorporated into spiritual warfare, the work of play certainly includes learning to live among (and live as) entities that emerge from contact between out-game theologies and algorithmic

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[83] Sunday Software Inc., "Sunday Software's Somewhat Infamous 'NO' Shelf," accessed January 18, 2014, www.sundaysoftware.com/noshelf.htm.

possibilities.

The total edifice of Evangelical video gaming as discovered through these three dynamics, bound at every point by multiply constituted entities like the production/game/product and the player/critic, can be characterized as an abstract machine for establishing computers as a front in spiritual war. My dissertation explores the theological work performed through these new conjunctions by exploring how Evangelical gaming responds to the shared concerns of Evangelical Christianity and worldly computing. The histories of computing technologies will thus occupy most of our time together, as we observe Evangelicals interacting with new technologies with their attendant fears and hopes. "Violence" and "immersion," respectively, will be prominently shared by Evangelicals and the world outside. Before moving in that

'Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' – Matthew 11:29

Illustration 5: Spiritual Warfare in *Tinothy and Titus*

direction, however, spiritual warfare might be well understood through its historical connections

to and differences from other popular anti-demonic activity.

The Satanic Panic

Though it is an outlier in that its vision of the worldly emphatically contains a range of

nominal Christianity, *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* is quite typical among Evangelical video

games in that the edge between the Church and the world is imagined as a front in a spiritual

war. This is not primarily because of the small number of games (among which *LB:EF* is

especially visible) that highlight the entanglement of their creators' perspectives upon earthly war

and upon the heavenly host, but because of the far greater number of them (among which *LB:EF*

must be also counted) that build upon the Christian spiritual warfare tradition. In spiritual

warfare life is imagined as an epiphenomenon of a great war between divine and satanic powers

in which humans are necessarily participants, but for which they can become increasingly

prepared. And "imagination" can be used here in the quite specific sense of image production,

whether these are news images of spray painted pentagrams, the facial sculptures of the

possessed, or the complex of demonic mental images and the variously theological media that

refract them, from sermons, to paintings of Michael slaying Satan, to *The Exorcist*. Though

Christian theologies of this sort frequently refer to the exorcism of Legion in the synoptic

gospels, and Paul's admonition in Ephesians that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but

against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the

spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms," we would be remiss to treat spiritual warfare as

co-extensive with Christianity. Spiritual warfare is a theological emphasis that fares variously

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across the broad sweep of historical Christianities. It is as present in the Seventh Day Adventist understanding of history as "the Great Controversy" between God and Satan, or Pentecostal "deliverance" ministries, as it is absent in most mainline and social gospel Christianities, even when they invoke a "kingdom of evil."[84] I was surprised across my dissertation research to find, first, that Christian video gaming is a range of cultural production overwhelmingly informed by spiritual warfare theologies, and, second, that Christian training for a life among demons could not be easily separated from Christian training for a life among computers.

The presence or absence of spiritual warfare within a particular Christianity must be located along a landscape of imagination rather than belief. This is necessary, first, because we as scholars of religion have little access to the latter, our instruments being more readily able to record *reports* of belief. But, further, an insistence that spiritual warfare must be located as a "belief" makes much of its circulation incoherent. This becomes apparent when we attend to nearly any specific struggle in the spiritual war. Consider, for instance, the libel suit that Procter and Gamble filed in 1982 against Amway, alleging that Amway was propagating a rumor that the P&G logo had "666" encoded in it, and that the corporation paid part of their profits to the Church of Satan.[85] It is unclear whether Amway had spread the story, but it is clear that across twenty years, Christians sent thousands of angry phone calls (and later emails) threatening legal, economic, and prayerful action against P&G as a front in the spiritual war. It is also clear that these messages change over time. The "owner" who hailed Satan on the Phil Donahue show

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[84] Walter Raschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: MacMillan, 1917), 86-87.

[85] Sandra Salmans, "P.& G.'s Battles with Rumors," *The New York Times,* 22 July 1982.

would eventually become the "president" who did so on Sally Jesse Raphael.[86] If we situate

ourselves upon a landscape of "belief" (or apply a research model focused on theological

authority) these changes become incoherent, and those making the phone calls become credulous

rubes. What we do have here, however – as in the case of otherwise-unattested occult "high

priests" reporting that their particular tradition was the inspiration for various artifacts of popular

culture – is the development of Christian counterpublics which must be spiritually armed and

trained upon an imagined martial landscape.[87] Prayer-warriors and their demonic opponents

appear in a gradual simultaneity, and cannot be located separately. That is to say, we cannot

designate spiritual warfare a complex of beliefs, inasmuch as the notion of belief presents the

believer as a preexisting subject and remains agnostic as to the reality of the faith-object.

Spiritual warfare is a set of practices through which Christians and Demons emerge together.

Though the greater spiritual war in which these games are both training exercises and

legitimate battlefields situates itself as an authentic interpretation of biblical mandates, and has

rich precedent in Christian demonological practices including the Catholic rite of exorcism, it is

necessary to specify that spiritual warfare manifests differently in different places and times.

Digital religion did not intersect the antidemonic war at large, but a very specific phase and

location within it. As the following chapter details at length within a fuller history of digital

religion, both Evangelical production and critique of video games appear around 1982 in a

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[86] James R. Lewis, *Satanism Today* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 216.

[87] While Stephen Dollins only attests that his former high priesthood in the Church of Satan allows him to find the secret teachings in Harry Potter media, William Schnoebelen attests that the creators of Dungeons and Dragons actually attended his coven to "make sure the rituals were truly right 'from the book.' The Prophecy Club, "Stephen Dollins: Occult Holidays Revealed," Accessed January 25, 2012, http://www.prophecyclub.com/meetings_dollinsholidays.htm ; William Schnoebelen, "Straight Talk on Dungeons and Dragons," accessed January 25, 2012, http://www.chick.com/articles/dnd.asp.

sudden surge. Over the subsequent decade, religious gaming goes into decline, but then the roughly simultaneous application of Nintendo's first game console and DOS-based home computers as platforms for Evangelical gaming across the mid-1990s create a first major leap in distribution, visibility, and absolute quantity of games. Between 1996 and 1999, Internet technologies empower another peak in Evangelical game critique and design.

This is to say, the first wave of Evangelical video gaming takes place in the context of the "Satanic Panic" of the 1980-90s, as well as the Evangelical boom in spiritual warfare theologies as exemplified in the "Spiritual Mapping" movement. The connection here should not be moved in the direction of causality, but these conditions could certainly produce a context in which games that situate the player in terms of anti-demonic war might be accepted as edifying.

Both of these public struggles with the demonic seem to emerge in continuity with new public conversations about "Satanism" that emerge in the 1970s.[88] The Satanic Panic, however, presented police, legislators, and therapists rather than prayer-warriors as the front line. It was a cultural moment wherein popular cultural themes like pentagrams on heavy metal albums were connected by American news media to a temporary rise in prosecution of Satanic Ritual Abuse, creating a feedback loop that accelerated the search for (and thus the discovery of) incidents of this kind. The efforts by police and psychotherapists to locate Satanic ritual crime between the 1970s and 90s in Britain and the US were only very rarely examples of spiritual warfare in themselves –in that Satanic conspiracy was fought through arrest, not exorcism, and the forces invoked were arrayed across state and therapeutic hierarchies rather than angelic ones. That said,

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[88] Robert Glenn Howard, "Crusading on the Vernacular Web: The Folk Beliefs and Practices of Online Spiritual Warfare," In *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World,* Trevor J. Blank, ed. (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2009): 163; Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 1993), 21-22.

the two cannot be fully disentangled. The civic combat against demonism often produced the dossiers of evidence that motivated Christian campaigns of the same. For instance, Pat Pulling, founder of BADD (Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons) –a "Judeo-Christian" (she was Jewish, though she appealed largely to an Evangelical readership) campaign for public awareness and action concerning Role Playing Games as a vector for non-metaphorical demonic possession– deployed legal accounts of Satanic Ritual Abuse to argue that mothers of sons afflicted with dangerous gaming should "Get outside help, preferably with a therapist *and* a clergyman of the family's faith (your child is in psychological and possibly physical danger as well as spiritual danger)."[89]

Though the Satanic Panic was not consistently characterized by spiritual warfare, they were bound together through several shared matters of concern. Dungeons and Dragons, heavy metal music, and a loose nebula of "occult" religious practices including Satanism, were encountered as attempts to corrupt the youth in various ways, ranging from losing their faith to becoming demon-possessed murderers. Perhaps surprisingly, it seems that actors could coalesce around these concerns though they might disagree concerning the existence of *actual demons.* Bruno Latour is again helpful here, defining "matters of concern" as "Highly uncertain and loudly disputed, these real, objective, atypical and, above all, interesting agencies are taken not exactly as object but rather as gatherings."[90] Critically, Satanic Panic and spiritual warfare shared a central concern with the potential for violence within children, and a particular

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[89] Pat Pulling, *The Devil's Web: Who is Stalking Your Children for Satan?* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1989) *,* 120.

[90] Latour, Bruno. Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 114.

emphasis upon the adolescent male.

The widespread presumptions that adolescent men are both naturally attracted to games, and naturally attractive to demons (the former being precisely as provable as the latter) created an environment of urgency for Evangelical media production and critique. The work is a slowly emerging "demonology within," a cartography of the haunted interiority of children.[91] For Evangelicals and the world, however, the stakes of this struggle were different, as will become clear in chapter four, where the two conceptions of adolescent male danger find their way into the video game violence debates. Unlike worldly critique, which needed primarily to keep young men away from dangerous media, Evangelical critique sought to train youth to fight against demons. This tendency will be difficult to locate in the context of Satanic Panic, as it does not coincide with therapy, censorship, or policing, none of which is capable of framing the adolescent as an active moral agent.

Spiritual Mapping as Historical Context

The spiritual mapping movement, unlike the Satanic Panic, was little publicized in non-Evangelical media, though its historical significance in mobilizing bodies against demonic forces seems to have been significantly greater. Its beginnings are in the emergence of a sort of empirical sacred geography. The great commission to bring the Gospel to all the world is always historically instantiated, and air travel and other twentieth century technologies had facilitated unprecedented globalism of missionary efforts. Gatherings like the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, the 1966 World Conference on Evangelism in Berlin, and the 1974

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[91] Bivins, 17.

International Congress for World Evangelism in Lausanne, Switzerland allowed evangelists to generalize the fortunes of their ongoing work and strategize. The Lausanne conference set itself apart by generating the Lausanne Covenant, a para-creedal statement on evangelism signed by 2,300 "members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations."[92] In this document, point 12 of 15, "Spiritual Conflict," explained that Christians "are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armour and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer."

In this period, the prayer that functions as a spiritual weapon, prayer to which God responds with power, was frequently designated "intercession." Across the 1980s, some Evangelical prayer ministries began to move from older models of intercession to develop what came to be called "strategic-level intercession," intercession directed at breaking demonic control over large areas.[93] In 1989, at the Lausanne II conference in Manilla, representatives of the Church Growth movement presented this much more specific vision of those principalities and powers of evil, and of how, precisely, prayer was to be used against them. Following a demonology that had been developed by networks of intercessors, it was now explained that the great commission to preach the Word to the entire Earth was being hindered by organized hierarchies of "territorial spirits," demons, often masquerading as local deities, who push back

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[92] J. Gordon Melton, "International Congress for World Evangelism" in *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 295; The Lausanne Movement, "The Lausanne Covenant," accessed Feburary 14, 2014, http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html .

[93] C. Peter Wagner, *Spiritual Warfare Strategy: Confronting Spiritual Powers* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1996), 251.

missionary efforts and harden the hearts of specific, geographically delimited populations.[94] At

Lausanne II, a formidable attack was mounted by an international team of "widely respected

intercessors" who prayed constantly for the eleven days of the conference.[95]

After the conference, coalitions emerged to lead ongoing battle with these territorial

spirits, raising up prayer warriors, often collected into international organizations such as the

World Prayer Center, or Youth With a Mission. These warriors could attack specific demons by

praying toward, or even physically circling areas, while compelling the demons to desist in the

name of Jesus. In some cases, these geographically-oriented missions struck out after local gods

understood to be demons, and in others after large areas like the "10/40 Window, a piece of

geography between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude [where] More than 90 percent of the

least-evangelized peoples of the world live." In either case, demons were located as the

underlying cause of problems that others may have identified in sociological or cultural terms:

"the unprecedented challenges to evangelism presented by the powers of darkness dominating

the 10/40 Window."[96]

For approximately ten years, organizations dedicated to strategic intercession became a

notable feature of the Evangelical landscape, praying to locate demonic forces, praying to break

their power, and praying for the establishment of churches. Around the year 2000, however, the

Spiritual Mapping movement seemed to transform from a dense network of institutions into a

looser network of practices. One significant reason for this was the planned and timely closure of

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[94] René Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina 1989-2005: A Geography of Fear* (Boston: Brill, 2009)*, 95.

[95] Wagner, Spiritual Warfare Strategy, 19.

[96] Wagner, Spiritual Warfare Strategy 29, 255.

AD2000 United Prayer Track which had organized many strategic level interventions, some claiming the participation of up to 40 million intercessors.[97] But the change came from bottom-up simultaneously: in some churches, mapping and strategic level intercession became regular practices, no longer relying upon those organizations, and other churches, convinced that a public emphasis on the demonic was alienating new members, allowed spiritual mapping to drift from the pulpit to the periphery.[98]

It seems quite likely that the diffusion of strategic level intervention into a loose network of Evangelical practices established the ground upon which Evangelical gaming culture could build. The digital is a quasi-geographical range, and those who interact with it describe themselves variously as *inside* of it. Video games in particular, even when they offer the player no on-screen representation, are conventionally described as a place one goes. It should not surprise us that demons followed (or perhaps led) humans there. The context of Spiritual Mapping, unlike Satanic Panic, explains why players continue to go there and fight demons.

The game *Spiritual Warfare* (Wisdom Tree, 1992), for instance, demonstrates the influence of the spiritual mapping movement quite explicitly, sending the player on a mission to fight a specific devil who is corrupting a city from his lair under the local prison. The spiritual mapping movement also seems to have shaped the creative context for many Evangelical games that lack this overt reference. Those Evangelical games that situate the player within narrative worlds almost inevitably follow the common video game convention of escalating combat leading to a final confrontation with a "boss" who has coordinated all previous conflict. This

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[97] C. Peter Wagner, "The AD2000 United Prayer Track," accessed February 15, 2014, http://www.ad2000.org/re00623.htm .

[98] Holvast, 148-9.

structure, even outside of the many cases wherein the final boss is a great demon, presents the game world itself as a territory ruled by coordinated evil, a structure that segues smoothly with spiritual mapping's presumptions. Beyond this, just as spiritual mapping framed local religions as the facades of satanic activity, just so does Evangelical game critique, in its frequent emphasis on Satan's appropriation of digital entertainment, situate the cultural space wherein games are gaining popularity as a front for which prayer warriors must be specifically equipped. And, returning to the overlap between Satanic Panic and spiritual warfare, Evangelical games frequently use the digital apparatus to demonstrate that the player is herself infested by demonic danger, sometimes even showing that the demons inside the computer are inside of them as well.

Conclusion

To briefly recap a strange journey, we can well understand the development, critique, and enjoyment of computer software as parts of a complex process by which humans come to locate themselves as non-computers, the human-computer interfaith. On one side, this process is a religious-social shaping of technology, and on the other, it is the development of plausible narratives of self. Humans craft computers with the understanding that they are separated from them by slippery notions like "intelligence" and "freedom," and computers craft humans back, transforming these notions. Together, the human emerges as the non-computer and the computer emerges as the non-human. How this dialog takes place varies as it is variously entangled into diverse technocultural situations.

In particular, Evangelical Christian media present a culturally adaptive experimentalism that works to orient lives around the Bible and Cross. However, to bring any medium into this

work, Evangelicals must determine what parts to remove in making way for the gospel. Computers, recruited as allies in this salvific work, have found themselves embroiled in an ongoing anti-demonic war. In some cases the demons are working to mobilize digital technology against evangelism, and must be pushed back, in others the computers are recruited to simulate a demon-haunted world to assist Christians in training for spiritual warfare. In practices of critique, creation, and play, Evangelical gaming culture is widely permeated by spiritual warfare. In some sense these seem to reflect the Satanic Panic that was taking place during Evangelical gaming's first two waves, but the human-computer interfaith of Evangelical gaming seems to more directly reflect the Spiritual Mapping movement. In Evangelical video games, when they present demons, young people are provided with strategies for combatting them, and are not only framed as their prey.

This leaves us with two further dynamics to examine; we require greater specificity on the computers and the games of Evangelical Christianity. The following chapter will meticulously place Evangelical games in the context of digital religion, proceeding through successive technological generations.

Chapter 3
Holy Ghost in the Machine:
The Historical Situation of Evangelical Video Gaming
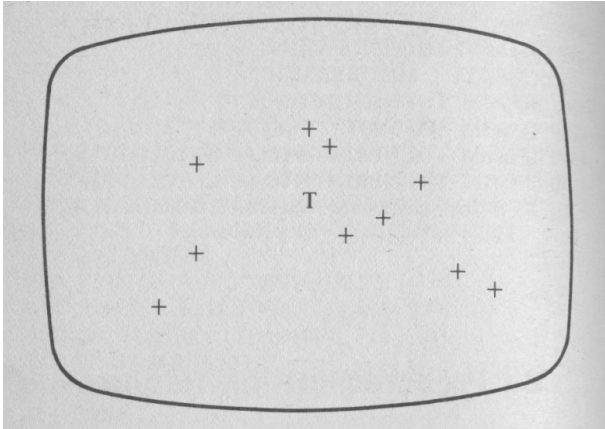
Illustration 6: End Times Ministry in *Computer Bible Games* and *Left Behind: Rise of the Antichrist*

Before and *after*: along one plot arc, these two pictures are separated by the "twinkling of an eye" (I Corinthians 15:52). On the left, we see evangelism immediately before the Rapture, the player trying urgently to save as many souls as possible so they can meet Jesus in the air and go to heaven without death. On the right, we see evangelism immediately after, the player trying to save souls among those left behind so they can protect one another from the hordes of the Antichrist, and await Christ's return after the seven-year Tribulation.

Along another plot arc, these two pictures are separated by nearly three decades of digital religion, a challenging distance to map. The scene has moved from print distribution to CD-ROMs, from a father and son pair of hobbyists to a multi-million dollar corporation, and from coordinate-guessing to real time strategy. The subject of in-game evangelism, the digital

agent to which players minister, has developed from a letter "T" to a polygonal humanoid with its own name and tiny biography.

The present chapter seeks to do justice to both stories, the theological and the technological, by observing their entanglement in the ongoing emergence of digital religion. In the first half, Evangelical video games will serve as paradigmatic examples, guiding our theoretical orientation to the history of digital religion. In the second half, they will serve as signal flares, showing us where to steer as we traverse six decades of only faintly-mapped history.

Thinking in Curves: Theoretical Grounds for a History of Digital Religion

We can locate the Evangelical video game as an instance of digital religion easily if we provisionally continue to apply the categories "digital" and "religious" as limned in my introduction (other definitions, of course, are possible, including those where the religious excludes games and other frivolities entirely). "Computers," for the purposes of this study, means   a chain of systems that perform algorithms (finite sets of prearranged commands arranged into logical chains), so a room of children working to solve a single algebra problem would count as a computer. The "digital," however, only describes computers whose systems communicate exclusively with on/off signals, and these seem to appear with Herman Hollerith's experiments in punch card based computing in the 1880s. Here digital entities, those curious beings whose existence is only possible within digital systems, first appear.

It is clear that the viruses and the files of the digital world are different from their analog homophones in many ways, but we must take care when we describe that difference. Though

various determinisms are defensible – for instance, digital entities may be significantly more limited than natives of the analog wilderness, or they may be accelerating human potential, or causing us to kill one another – this study will, for better and worse, never have an opportunity to observe the computer as such. What we see, instead, are particular digital entities whose tendencies are shaped by a complex of factors including their budgets, licensing, and cultural situation, no less than their hardware constraints. A story of these particularities serves as a scaffolding for several generations of religious attempts to describe and harness the possibilities of the digital in general.

Applying this dissertation's operative definition of "religion" as "negotiations concerning the place of humanity among non-human entities," we might argue that the digital is always necessarily religious (in that human-computer difference is at stake). But if we limit our scope to durable confederations of humans and non-humans that collectively negotiate the borders of humanity – that is "religious traditions" or simply "religions" – we can limit "digital religion" to an affordance, a co-becoming, between them. "Digital religion" designates the new possibilities that religions and digital agencies gain as they reshape one another. Bounded in this way, there does not seem to have been any digital religion before 1951. The Human-Computer interfaith may be locatable earlier, as it is likely that certain programmers reflected on the theological consequences of their work before this, but there is no evidence that digital entities were invited into any religious organization, nor that they tried very hard to insinuate themselves.

Bounding digital religion as the co-becoming of digital technologies and religious organizations places Evangelical video games alongside computerized concordances and church websites, offering a trajectory for this chapter's historical survey. However, this formula must not

be confused for the similar proposition that religions make space for digital entities. If religious and digital technologies are both presumed to precede their combination, digital religion will appear as a syncretic derivation in every instance. If we are not cautious, everything will arrive late. How, then, can the historiography of digital religion account for technocultural history surrounding and preceding religious affordances without obscuring the novelty of these technologies and theologies? If it is to address the *novum,* a history of digital religion might well begin with a theory of *secondarity*.

A concise vision of the secondarity popularly understood to characterize digital religion is well expressed by what we might call the "Frye Curve," after Patrick Frye, Lead Engine Designer for the Evangelical company Xrucifix/Two Guys Software: "With the resources we're forced to work with we can only produce games that are five to seven years behind the game play curve (or worse)."[99] The observation itself is hardly surprising. Many reviews of Evangelical games describe them along a curve of this sort; *Saints of Virtue* (Shine Studios, 1999)*,* for instance, was reviewed as "five years out of date."[100] In 2005, *Eternal War* (Xrucifix, 2003)*,* Patrick Frye's own most visible game, was reviewed on the Evangelical game review site PlainGames. James Young of PlainGames – finding no problematic "sexual content" or "promotion of an alternate religion" in the game – "first and foremost" criticized *Eternal War's* "violence," but none of these elements was explicitly temporalized with relation to worldly media. The control scheme, however, is identified as a "throwback to the Wolfenstein key setup,

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[99] "Interview with Game Developer Patrick Frye," accessed January 18, 2014, http://mlarcherstories.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html.

[100] Christian Gaming.com, "Saints of Virtue," accessed January 18, 2014, http://www.christiangaming.com/oldsite/Reviews/XSOVirtue.shtml .

having the default keys using the arrow keys instead of the standard WASD controls found in modern first person shooters" (a convention popularized with *Quake* (Id games, 1996)), and its graphics are likened to those of *GoldenEye* or *Quake II*, both released in 1997.[101] Though, with these comparisons, Young argues that Fry's game was eight or nine years behind, rather than five to seven, both the Evangelical developer and his Evangelical critic seem to agree that some sort of lag is at hand. What is a curve, and is it an analytical device that we want to apply in telling a history of digital religion?

To locate curves we have to limit our purview of salient data to produce a two-dimensional matrix. If one assumes, first, that time proceeds along a single, consistent line, and, second, that some single type of behavior by a single type of actor can be well understood by counting instances as they overlap (ignoring, provisionally, the differences between diverse sub-types of actors and behaviors) we find curves for a great number of technocultural phenomena. Innovators pioneer a new tendency (whether nations practicing democracy, or people using iPods) defining an initial low point, then they are increasingly imitated until that behavior, for whatever reason, begins to decline. Though diffusion studies mapping the contagious power of innovation had been conducted since the late 1930s, the curve's contemporary shape – a smooth, symmetrical dome – seems to have been codified in Everett Rogers' 1962 study, *The Diffusion of Innovations*.[102] With the subsumption of deviance and user-end creativity as "re-invention," it is possible to say that "an innovation is not necessarily a

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[101] Jason Young, "Eternal War: Shadows of Light," accessed Janaury 18, 2014, http://www.plaingames.com/games/reviews/review.asp?id=59.

[102] Everett Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovations* Third Ed (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1983); H. Earl Pemberton's "The Curve of Culture Diffusion Rate," *American Sociological Review 1.4* (Aug., 1936), pp. 547-556.

fixed entity as it diffuses within a social system," casting innovations as singular, if mutable entities.[103] With this in mind, we can return to Frye's four to six year delay of Christian games on a "game play" curve. The relevant actor seems to be the game development team, and the behavior to be the creation of games that deploy some single technology-of-play.

To observe a specific game play curve shared by Evangelical and worldly instances will clarify what happens when we begin to think in curves. Here, then, is a game play curve for dance-pad games, those games that invite players to rhythmically stomp on surfaces with embedded buttons:[104]
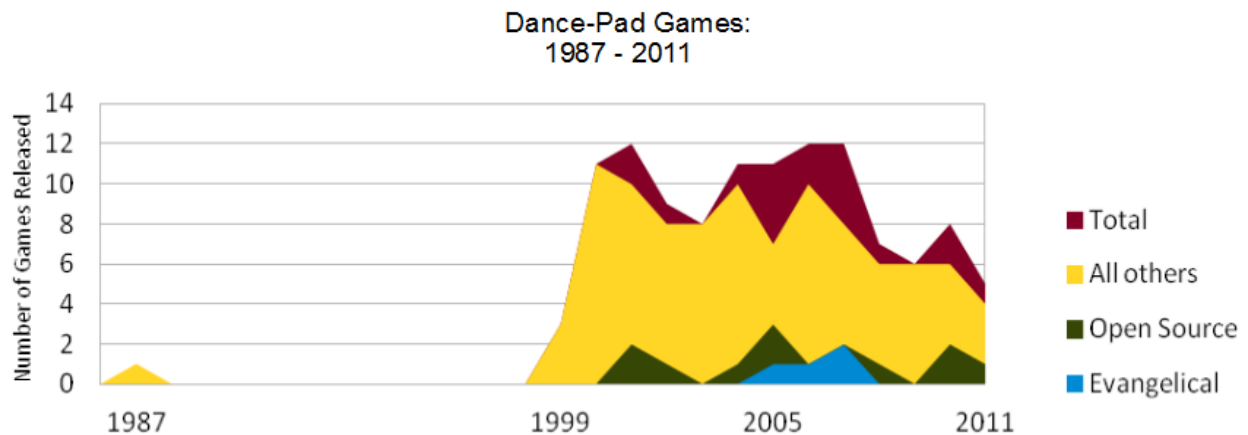
Figure 1: A Game Play Curve

In 1987, Nintendo created *Dance Aerobics,* apparently the first game to offer a floor-mat with embedded buttons on which players dance. Nintendo was years *ahead of the curve* in this, because it was only following the release of Konami's *Dance Dance Revolution* [DDR] in

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[103] Rogers, 176.

[104] DWIExtreme, "Releases," accessed January 18, 2014, http://www.dwiextreme.com/series/ (multiple releases by numbered Level have been called single games); Wikipedia Contributors, "Dance Pad Video Games," accessed January 18, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance_pad_video_games; CBS Interactive, "Search Games: Rhythm>> Dancing," accessed Janaury 18, 2014, http://www.gamefaqs.com/.

1998-1999 that release of dance-pad games leaped suddenly in frequency. The initial upward leap describes a wave of commercial imitations hoping to capitalize upon *DDR'*s success in arcades (including Konami's own imitations in new versions of *DDR*, those imitations comprising the *Dance Maniax* franchise, and the productions of various Korean arcade game manufacturers whom Konami would soon take to court). But profit motives do not entirely explain the curve, nor can it be reduced to the action of relatively established game studios: In 2001, at the curve's initial peak, *StepMania*, a free open source dance-pad game was created. And it is only in 2005 (four years after the initial peak, seven years after DDR, and fourteen years after *Dance Aerobics*) that Digital Praise released *Dance Praise* (Digital Praise, 2005)*,* the genre's first Christian instance.

In this way we can apply the Frye Curve as a limited, but adjustable tool for comparing Christian technologies with their worldly parallels. In some cases Frye's calibration at five to seven years seems quite precise. For instance, though action role playing games first appear in 1982-4, Nintendo's *The Legend of Zelda* (1986) marked the sharp ascent of this game play curve, and was followed six years later by *Spiritual Warfare* (1992), its Christian reimagining. But in other cases we may need to calibrate our curve to describe larger distances from original to adaptation: Evangelical 3D platform games like *Bongo Loves the Bible* (Sunday Software, 2005), *Bible Champions* (Third Day Games, 2006), and *Timothy and Titus* (Sunday Software, 2007) appear a full decade after *Super Mario 64* (Nintendo, 1996) popularized the genre, following the curve's peak by approximately eight years. Likewise, *Axys Adventures* (Rebel Planet Productions, 2007), an Evangelical action role playing game greatly resembling Nintendo's *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (1998), but with 3D platforming elements appears, again,

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about eight years late. But sometimes the Frye Curve cannot be adjusted to fit the data at all, as in the case of Evangelical First-Person Shooters [FPS], which distribute themselves evenly across the curve's advancing peaks, ranging from two to seven years late as new gaming technologies emerge. The first Christian FPS, *Super 3D Noah's Ark* (Wisdom Tree, 1994) appears atop the curve only two years after *Wolfenstein 3D* (Id Games, 1992) popularized the genre, and *The War in Heaven* (1999) introduces polygonal First-Person Shooting only three years after its popularization in *Quake* (Id Games, 1996). However, 1999 also saw *Saints of Virtue* (Shine Studios, 1999) with its 1993-era game engine, and the *Quake* engine was still being applied by Christian FPS games like *Eternal War* as late as 2003.

The problem, however, is not that thinking in curves works inconsistently, because we can always change our variables and discover it more-or-less correct. Thus, we could smooth our dance-mat curve further by looking more specifically at games in which the player steps in the direction of arrows that rhythmically drift across the screen, a convention that begins with *DDR*. *Dance Aerobics,* which ordered foot placement using an on-screen instructor and a highlighted representation of the mat, would be excluded, but nearly all others would remain. The history of imitable on-screen instructors in dancing games, on the other hand, would plot a very different curve. Beginning with *Spinnaker's Aerobics* for Atari in 1983, it would include Nintendo's *Dance Aerobics* (1987) but exclude most of the *DDR* franchise and all Christian instances thus far, and only inconsistently rise until a sudden jump in frequency around 2008, as motion-sensing dance games surpass dance-mat games in popularity.

I offer this series of possible adjustments, not to assert that we must choose proper variables, but to demonstrate that describing technological *innovation* using a frequency curve of

this kind makes the *novum* imperceptible. To locate phenomena behind, ahead of, or upon the

curve discovers mimesis by presuming identity. Because a curve identifies every phenomenon as

somehow identical to other phenomena distributed across a temporally removed rise and decline

in concentration, they can locate "first" instances, but not "unique" ones, nor even "originals"

(should we assume that origination implies ongoing change). To do justice to Frye's own game,

Eternal War: Shadows of Light, to *Dance Praise,* or to any other piece of technocultural history,

we must learn to discuss some range of its features which have neither obvious predecessor, nor

successor. It is possible, for instance, that *Eternal War* is the only game that will ever include a

"weapon" called "Smite" that produces "Boom! A rippling explosion that disorients most

enemies" (with a "secondary attack" that produces "Several explosions at once, sending the

target flying backward").[105] It is likewise possible that *Dance Praise*'s "Tune Into You" mode,

which "sets the dancing at your pace so you'll always be at the right level," leaves it with neither

precedent nor successor as a dancing game that automates a good faith effort to match rather than

defeat the player.[106]

Any single, gameplay curve would render these particulars invisible, but so too would a

historiographical atomism which refused to even heuristically suggest identity between similar

games. Between the popular faith in "the curve," and the overwhelming flatness of total

difference, we might describe, instead, a complex arrangement of "some curves" to draw novelty

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[105] Xrucifix, "Manual: Weapons," accessed January 18, 2014, http://www.xrucifix.com/anvil/manual.php?id=7.

[106] According to www.tvtropes.org, there are three rhythm games that feature "dynamic difficulty" of this sort, but one of these is a button mashing game (*DJMAX Portable*), and the other two are more (*Guitar Hero 5*) or less (*Rocksmith*) stylized guitar games. TVTropes Contributors, "Dynamic Difficulty," accessed January 18, 2014, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DynamicDifficulty; Digital Praise, "Dance Praise: Over 50 Songs," archived by the Internet Archive, August 18, 2007, accessed Janaury 18, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20070818201931/http://www.digitalpraise.com/flash.php.

into focus. The curves for "divine potencies rendered as player abilities," and "First-Person Shooters," or "dynamic difficulty" and "dancing games," for instance, meet in ways that gesture toward the *novum*. Following this logic, this history of technological innovation strives to describe the interference pattern produced by the intersection of all waves relevant to the phenomenon at hand. If we were to return to our dance pad curve, then, and historicize it as the intersection of the separate fortunes (that is, the curves) of specific trends in techno music, on-screen instructors, moving arrows, floor-mats, motion detection accessories, open source gaming, and digital Christianity, we would still only have a crude simplification, but we would begin to detect the ways these trends transform one another. Though counting instances would still remain relevant, such a methodology would work to draw the *how* out of *how many.*

If we apply this practice to the history of digital religion, it need not be understood as a series of tardy imitations of digital practices by religious confederations, nor the tardy imitation of religious practices by digital ones. A history of digital religion is a record of consequential intersections between two technocultural histories, both of which are themselves the interference patterns of innumerable further curves. To envision digital religion as a vast interference pattern of interacting curves leaves us with a narrative principle much simpler than Frye's own maxim, one not unrelated to Marxist questions about the ownership of the means of production: When a digital technology becomes accessible to a sufficiently wide range of digital creatives, someone will find a religious use for it.

In conclusion, a curve can be a valuable tool if we do not mistakenly present it as a once wild entity captured by our research. Particular kinds of questions and research methodologies produce curves. We, thus, must carefully explain what it is we are counting, where we found

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instances, and what was excluded, without accidentally naturalizing these decisions. The Frye Curve, which emerges when one compares some very few religious games with blockbuster games that inspired them, is, in fact, a very helpful heuristic if regarded carefully. The lag of a few years between the popularization of various gaming technologies and their application in Christian games seems to reflect restrictive licensing in some cases, and slow processes like game development, or software training in others. For analysis to coherently frame these diverse factors, analysis of any curve must direct focus to the literally innumerable potential curves of which the present curve is a two-dimensional slice. A complete accounting of those potential curves is impossible, but the best study is that which presents the reader with as many curves as she will bear.

How to Count Religious Games

Just as Evangelical video games can tell us much about digital religion, so too does that broader frame reveal much about these specific instances. More specifically, if we were to observe the curve of Evangelical video game production, we would observe the marks of various technocultural shifts that transformed other aspects of the digital as well as the religious. This chapter's historical survey begins with the advent of digital religion as such, but with the emergence of religious video games in 1982, its rhythm is set by changes in their production. With this in mind, we can now consider a quantified history of religious video games:

Religious Video Games:
1982 - 2010
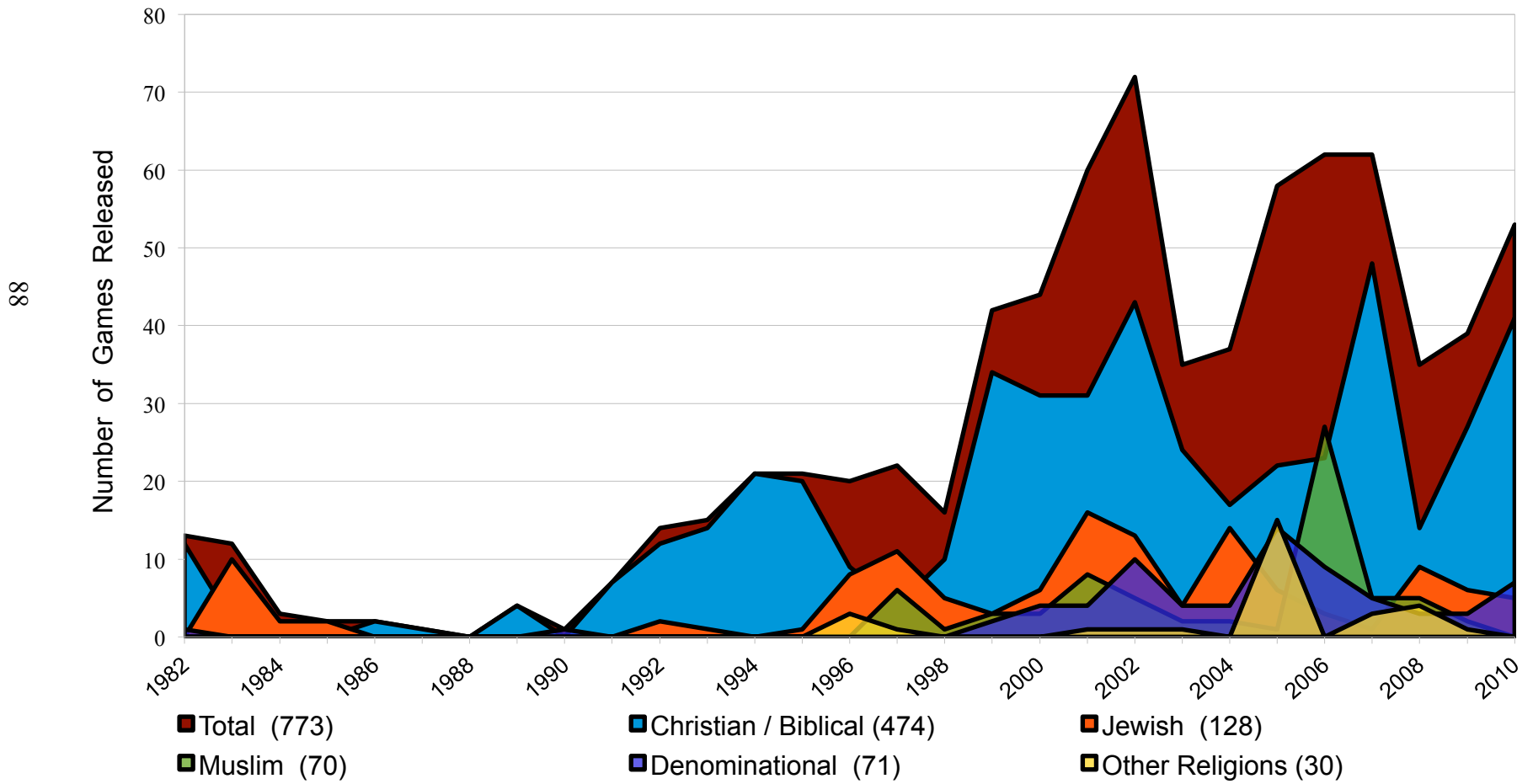
Figure 2: Religious Video Games (1982-2010)

Legend:
- Total (773)
- Christian / Biblical (474)
- Jewish (128)
- Muslim (70)
- Denominational (71)
- Other Religions (30)

Y-axis: Number of Games Released

These are the 773 religious games for which I have been able to plausibly determine a designer or distributor's name, a year of release, and which I am relatively certain actually existed, playable, on someone's computer. The catalog appears in full as an appendix to this dissertation, and I expect that it will be corrected, expanded, and better understood through ongoing research. Producing this catalog of religious video games has been a significant component of my research, and its scale is unprecedented. By way of comparison, Wikipedia counts only 45 Christian games, Moby Games lists 65 "educational-religious" games and Digital Islam counts 26 "Middle Eastern and Islamic video games."[107] A complete catalog of religious video games is not possible, however, and this should not be mistaken for one. Many games on this list have quite nearly vanished already, leaving only scarce traces in archived websites or limited-circulation magazines. I am certain that many further games have been lost without a trace. The list is, likewise, necessarily incomplete because it was mapped according to my specific selection criteria. Had I made different decisions as to what is religious, a game, or a single instance, it could have been a very different catalog.

Nearly all of my research has taken place online and in digital periodical archives. My initial search terms simply juxtaposed "game" or "video game" with words that I suspected religious groups would use to hail like-minded web browsers. I tried words insiders might use to describe themselves (e.g. "Hindu," "Wiccan"), and diverse sacra including precious names (e.g. "Hubbard," "Abraham"), and books (e.g. "Bible," "Quran,"). When I found any instance that fit

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[107] MobyGames, "Game Browser: Religion," accessed January 27, 2014, http://www.mobygames.com/browse/games/x,84/list-games/ ; Wikimedia Foundation, "List of Christian Video Games by Release," accessed January 27, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_video_games_by_release ; Vit Sisler, "Middle Eastern and Islamic Video Games," accessed January 27, 2014, http://www.digitalislam.eu/findInSection.do?limit=50&sectionId=1115&page=1,

my working definitions, I added them to the list, and made their name a new search term, seeking out pages that may have cataloged that game alongside others. When I found websites selling, reviewing, or digitally distributing games, I used the Internet Archive (www.archive.org) to see if further instances could be excavated from the website's past. Working in this way, my purview of non-English games has been relatively limited, and I am fortunate that some few games released in Arabic, and one each in German, Swedish, and Thai found their way in. Games with no traces on contemporary websites are not included. There were probably more Christian games programmed in BASIC than I have been able to locate, and many of those may have been shared between friends. Limited distribution only excluded games from this study when it pushed them beyond the reach of my tools. What I could not find, I could not document.

In determining whether a piece of software is a "game" or "religious," I have supplemented in-game images and processes with distributor-authorized text, such as flavor text in catalogs, and the page titles of websites. Consider *Hebrew Learning* (Ulrich Greve, 2002) and *Arabic Alphabet*" (Islamic Playground, 2006), both of which are included in the chart. If these had been produced by Rosetta Stone, or another company specializing in language instruction, users may have tended to describe them as neither games nor religious. However, I have resolved that the former is "religious" because Ulrich Greve, its creator classifies it as "Jewish Software," and the webpage offering instructions on it describes a session of use as "a new game;" in the latter case, the fact that it is distributed through a site called "Islamic Playground" resolves both questions.[108] Where I have located distributor-authorized text describing a piece of software as a

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[108] Ulrich Greve, "Hebrew Learning for Windows CE 3.0/Pocket PC 2002/Pocket PC 2003," archived by the Internet Archive, February 9, 2005, accessed January 18, 2014; Islamic Playground, "Islamic Playground," archived by the Internet Archive, August 10, 2006, accessed January 18, 2014,

"game," as "fun," or as something one "plays," I have called it a game.

The identification of games as "religious," however, was quite complicated, as I could include neither all games made by religious people, nor all games containing citations of religious tradition. First, religious people and organizations occasionally produce artifacts which are not themselves religious. For instance, though *Bap* ("How fast can you move your mouse? You need to be fast to play this game!") was distributed through www.christiancomputergames.net, I have not classified it with religious games, but with Hebrew National Hotdogs and Oneida Silverware as *exports* from religious groups.[109] I identified the religious by first identifying sacra. That is, religious organizations manage their negotiations at the borders of humanity by transferring materials of various kinds, and only games that used these to draw their players into the ongoing border negotiations of specific religions were identified as "religious" for this study.

If it had been possible, I would have abstained from the question of whether original characters created by religious production companies are sacra. Because some games were based entirely around them, though, I could not, and decided that they alone were not able to do religious work. Fortunately, in most cases the games that contained them also contained less ambiguous sacra. Some characters, like Bibleman or the Torah Tots, make the problem easier still by refusing to travel apart from sacra. Thus, *Music Machine* (Sparrow, 1983) for Atari 2600 is not on this list because it contained Stevie, Nancy and the evil Mr. Pims, but because the

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http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp.

[109] Christian Computer Games.Net, "Bap," archived by the Internet Archive, December 20, 2001, accessed Feburary 10, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20011220085307/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/OL_bap/index.html .

player tries to catch icons which the manual explains to be love, patience, gentleness, faith, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-3).[110] It is possible that "The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything" of Veggie Tales fame will eventually be sacra in their own right, but for now their inclusion was not enough to get a game onto this list.

That said, there is no spiritually invested material, no matter how established, that is always sacred. Consider *Devil World* (Nintendo, 1984):

Illustration 7: Devil World

This game, unreleased in the United States due to Nintendo of America's restrictions on religious imagery, starred a dinosaur who could breathe fire when it carried a cross, and who completed levels by placing four Bibles into a skull-block. After a bonus stage, the Devil would fly to the next level, repeating the process endlessly until the player lost or gave up. What does it

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[110] Atari Age, "The Music Machine: Manual," accessed February 10, 2014, http://atariage.com/manual_thumbs.html?SoftwareLabelID=321 .

mean to say that the imagery is religious, but the game is not?

Any sometimes-sacred material can be invoked to manage human-human borders, rather than those at humanity's edges. We might identify *fantasy* and *blasphemy* as prevalent tendencies of this sort in popular media. Literature conventionally labeled "fantasy" is connected by the presence of "supernatural content [that is] believed by few or no audience members and is believed by audiences to have been believed by another culture."[111] Unlike believers in extravagant magics or in dragons, who are exiled to the vague past, the others underwriting fantasy may in some cases just be separated from the audience by banal religious difference. Thus, vampire-fighting games, though full of crosses, souls, and holy water, are *fantasy with religious citation*, rather than *religious*. Games like *Devil World,* or Konami's 1992 *Noah's Ark*, would be out of place on this list because they present non-human agencies as human fantasy, and not as external beings with whom borders must be negotiated. Blasphemous games, likewise, were not included in the list. "Crucify-me! Jesus," for instance, sarcastically describes itself as "another exciting toy for your Christian child" then delivers a combination of Jesus wailing in pain, and cynically expounded Bible verses quite consistent with the embedded caveat "Warning: This game is not to be viewed by christians [SIC], unless they have a REALLY good sense of humor."[112] This blasphemous game does not meet my operative definition of religion because it does not seem to mobilize border negotiations between humans and non-humans, but between two groups of

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[111] Brian Laetz and Joshua J. Johnston, "What is Fantasy?" *Philosophy and Literature 32.1* (April 2008), 161-172; 167.

[112] Created by Aaron Chapman of www.nogod.com and circulated largely through www.newgrounds.com, 2000. "Crucify Me Jesus," accessed January 18, 2014, http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/1545 .

humans, one of whom views the other as foolish.[113]

The final problem for producing this list was deciding how many games add up to one. Here the polysemy of "game" again becomes relevant to our analysis. Consider *Bible Adventures,* a cartridge for the NES game console, released by Wisdom Tree in 1991; it is frequently described as "a game." Upon starting, the player's first choice is to select among "Noah's Ark," "Baby Moses," and "David and Goliath;" these are each also frequently described as "a game." The present tally counted these as one game, rather than four, or three. However, when Yalon Keret, creator of six Jewish games that were packaged together in *Avner and Brachot* (Torah Educational Software, 2000), released them on his own website as separate games, I count these as a total of seven games, and did not count the website distributing them as an eighth.[114] Though divisions of this sort created new entries, I did not count the repackaging of older games into anthologies as the creation of new games. Likewise, ports of games from one computing platform to another did not count create new entries, even when graphics were updated in the process. And several crossword puzzles, jigsaws, or mazes distributed together, each using the same engine, though with different levels, would be counted as containing a

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[113] As with religious games, blasphemous games seem to be largely oriented with regard to a (Anti-)Christian public. Though I have not sought blasphemous games with the rigor I applied to the search for religious games, thus far, by the above definition, I have located 15 blasphemous-Christian games (i.e. *Beep Me, Jesus; Biblebelt Man; Bible Fight; Broken Garden; Crucify-Me! Jesus;   Giant Laser Jesus; Jesus Blastafon 9000; Jesus Dress Up; Jesus of Nazareth Interactive Fiction; Myth Hunter; Nail Jesus to the Cross; Pope Wars; Running Jesus;   Run Jesus, Run: The 10 Second Gospel; Super Jesus: The Game;* and *The You Testament*), seven blaphemous-Catholic games (*GTP: Vatican City; Nun Blaster; Operation Pedopriest; Pimp my Pope; Vatican Raiders; Vatican Quest; Whack the Pope*) only one blasphemous-Scientology game (*Escape from Scientology Land*), one blasphemous-Muslim game (*The Making of a Prophet*), and the two blasphemous-Ecumenical games of the *Faith Fighter* series.

[114] "Yalon Keret, "Game Programming & Graphic Design," archived by the Internet Archive June 5, 2008, accessed January 18, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20080605115400/http://www.yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6.

single game. This final matter of counting was by far the most challenging, as there is no unambiguous demarcation between the engine and the level.

In conclusion, I made a series of decisions to delimit what I would call a religious video game, and every one of them is contestable. As throughout this dissertation, I sought out video games that include the sacra of the specific religious communities in which they circulate. I interpreted this to exclude some kinds of blasphemy and fantasy, and decided that the licensed characters of religious entertainment are not yet sacra. Further, new levels distributed with their original games are absorbed into them, as are ports and anthologies. Charts which expand wildly to accommodate every game with a cross in it, or contract to describe only those which have been played by a thousand people of good faith are much needed, and if other studies produce them, I hope our charts can meet amiably along a single set of axes.

Thus translating "religious video game" into quantifiable criteria, we find a chart that seems to have several curves within it. After three decades of digital religion, a first wave jumps up and dives back for nearly a decade's lull; a second wave rises and falls across the 1990s; the turn of the century sees an unprecedented spike; and another wave crests across the mid-aughts. The remainder of this chapter presents a history that follows this rhythm. For the sake of narrative coherence, a section describing digital religion before video games opens the story, and the final section includes the peak still rising at the chart's end. Each of these curves is an interference pattern produced by innumerable further curves. The waveforms of mail-order and Internet distribution, of CD-ROMs, personal computers, and restrictive game console licensing had strong effects, but none of them should be mistaken as a curve's singular cause. The history of digital religion is a symphonic complexity, and this is an attempt to do it justice.

In the Beginning was the Word [1951-1982]

Between 1951 and the late nineteen seventies, digital religion began with a series of experimental translations, moving scripture from languages that mediate between humans and the divine into languages that mediate between humans and machines. With the end of the Second World War, the monumental mainframe computers designed to guide missiles and break codes began turning their attention toward civilian accounting under the supervision of various universities and corporations with close government ties. In 1951, it seems, several projects of feeding holy text into these demilitarized mainframes begin to take shape, the two most famous of which were Christian, non-Evangelical, "high church" projects: In this year Father Roberto Busa S.J. created a concordance of one canto (136 lines) of *The Divine Comedy* using IBM's enormous mechanical-electric punch card computers, and the American Philosophical Society granted Episcopal Rector Rev. John W. Ellison funding to collate and compare various Gospel manuscripts on magnetic-tape-based UNIVAC mainframes.[115] Each project gave their lead theologians/engineers sufficient social capital to assemble more ambitious teams of humans and computers toward more elaborate indexing projects; Ellison published a concordance of the recently published Revised Standard Version in 1957, and Busa collated the complete work of Aquinas into the *Index Thomisticus* in 1974.

But even in this first period, when digital religion manifested as circuits of coders, students, maintenance personnel, and literal tons of storage media carrying sacred text between esteemed theologians and exclusive mainframes (usually producing expensive bound

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[115] D. Harbin, *Formatting the Word of God: An Exhibition at Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University (10/1998-1/1999)*. Edited by Valerie R. Hotchkiss and Charles C. Ryrie, "Fiat Lux: The Electronic Word" (Bridwell Library, Dallas TX, 1998); D. M. Burton, "Concordances and Word Indexes: The Fifties," *Computers and the Humanities 15.1* (Jun. 1981)*,* 1-14.

concordances), diverse projects were emerging, and computers were coming to understand scripture in wildly divergent ways. Consider two projects digitizing *lashon kodesh* (Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic, and the two in combination): in my introduction I mentioned a project of digitizing the Dead Sea Scrolls that unsettled Jacob Neusner, prompting one of the first academic meditations on digital religion. This project, also led by Father Roberto Busa, treated the Dead Sea Scrolls like the *Index* treated Thomistic Latin, as a series of strings of letters. While it could thus search forward or backward, it could only connect dissimilar words if humans tied them together by adding *themes, chapters,* or other metadata to the text. The mainframe project at Bar Ilan University, on the other hand, approached the Hebrew text of Rabbinic *responsa* as a collection of conjugated words, producing a computer that could examine Hebrew texts according to three-letter radicals, even when conjugation removed letters from immediate proximity.[116] The former, which could be configured to do nearly anything, but which did not have any strong basis in the language it was examining, was conceptually influential in the emergence of the digital humanities at large. The latter, on the other hand, being developed in Israel with an algorithmic preference for Semitic languages, was quickly framed as a database of "Jewish culture," and grew to include both Talmuds, and dozens of other Hebrew texts, including literature by Nobel Prize laureate Shai Agnon.[117] Here we see how digital religion manifests as the acceleration of the human-computer interfaith; a Jesuit project's presumption that the *lashon kodesh* mediating between the human and divine is composed of strings of letters leads to very different projects than does an Israeli project's presumption that it is composed of

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[116] Aviezri Fraenkel, "The Responsa Storage and Retrieval System: Whither?" accessed November 25, 2013, http://www.wisdom.weizmann.ac.il/~fraenkel/.

[117] "Database of Texts on Jewish Culture Available," Computerworld, May 17, 1982.

conjugated radicals.

Digital religion was diverse even in its first phase, when it was entirely composed of translation and indexing projects, but an "information age" is a tenuous temporality, only extending as far as it can be carried by algorithmic agents and their discretizing instruments. Thus, it is not surprising that the initial engagements between mainframe computers and sacred text did not prominently include Evangelical projects. They, like other groups that did not have sufficient social capital to access mainframes owned by IBM, Harvard, or various national governments, had to wait until 1975 and the emergence of affordable home computers to face the problematics of coding the sacred.[118] And the growth of personal computing opened that challenge rapidly: By 1982, approximately 600,000 bourgeois American families, as well as the schools, businesses, and places of worship that served them, had begun to use personal computers to restage the complexities of daily life as questions of *data.*[119] Of course, a cursory consideration of journaling, bill paying, and chess playing shows that there were informatic, even algorithmic, aspects to personal life before personal computers, but only here were these practices coded to be processed digitally. For instance, in this period computerized Bible searches began replacing concordances in pastoral preparation of sermons – "The Word Processor" released by Bible Research Systems in 1980 for Apple II computers, was followed quickly by Drew Haninger's initial DOS version of the *Olive Tree* Bible software, a program that would continue to demonstrate the sacred possibilities of popular computing for the next several

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[118] Jeremy Reimer, "Total Share: 30 Years of Personal Computer Market Share Figures," accessed November 25, 2013, http://arstechnica.com/old/content/2005/12/total-share.ars/ .

[119] Gregory S. Blundell, "*Personal computers in the Eighties*," *BYTE* January 1983, pp. 166-182.

decades.[120] Similarly, the memberships and finances of places of worship began to migrate from carbon paper to silicon as programs like PARSEC (Parish Secretary), Manna, A.C.T.S. (Automated Church Transaction System), and MMS (Ministry Management System) circulated alongside ad hoc record keeping programs developed within individual congregations.[121]

The Birth of Digital Religious Entertainment [1982-1990]

In this milieu of experimentation with personal computers by diverse religious communities, the Institute for Computers in Jewish Life invented the religious video game. Rabbi Irving Rosenbaum (a polymath and amateur electrician who had helped to create Jewish television programs for children in the 1960s) founded the institute in 1978 to help Hebrew Theological Seminary (Skokie, IL) and other Jewish schools in the area access the Israeli databases of Jewish culture already considered, and to create original educational software. [122] Among these first educational programs were a series of action and adventure games that fit biblical narratives into the mechanics of popular games (*The Jericho Game, The Philistine Ploy*) and others that placed a ludic frame onto quizzes (*Jewish IQ Baseball, Mitzvah Munchers*). As these first religious games were initially distributed within the relatively enclosed network of the

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[120] Scott Lubeck, "Scrolling through the Bible," *Texas Monthly* December 1984, 206-208; "25th Anniversary for Bible Software is Celebrated with New Release" Business Wire, October 11, 2005.

[121] Scott Mace, "In Focus: Spiritual Software," *InfoWorld* December 27, 1982, 15-16; Tom Shea, "Linkletter: Computers for Church," *InfoWorld* October 11, 1982, 1; "Business System Answers Church's Prayers," *Computerworld*, December 13, 1982, 22.

[122] For some further description of Rabbi Rosenbaum's life, see Illinois Senate (94th General Assembly, 2005), "SR 0041" which honors his memory. Accessed March 18, 2014, http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=&SessionId=50&GA=94&DocTypeId=SR&DocNum=41&GAID=8&LegID=15758&SpecSess=&Session= ; IMDB Contributors, "The Magic Door," accessed November 25, 2013, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0368521/ .

Institute for Computers in Jewish Life, further research is required to determine which instance should be described as "the first religious video game." Games were not placed in this dissertation's official chronology from this point, as it is unclear when various games began circulating on the Institute's computers. It is clear, however, that in 1983, Rosenbaum founded the Davka Corporation to distribute these programs by mail to a broader audience of Jewish Apple II owners, making their public release approximately simultaneous with the appearance of the first Christian video games.

In 1982, at least a dozen Christian games emerged for various home computer systems. In New York, Anglican Brother Tobias Stanislas asserted, "I've written what I believe may be the first ecclesiastical computer game. 'Pax-Man.'"[123] But parallel firsts were also occurring in Texas – where the Conrods, a father-son team of Seventh-Day Baptists, published *Bible Computer Games*, a book teaching aspiring BASIC programmers how to make their own Biblically inspired video games – and in California – where "Sparrow Distribution," an Evangelical record label, began marketing ten different *Family Bible Fun* quiz games for the Atari 400/800.[124] It was a dramatic first year for Evangelical gaming, but 1983 only saw two new releases, including an adaptation of the Christian television show "The Music Machine" (the first religious game for a dedicated game console). 1984 then only sees one new Christian computer game, and 1985 doesn't see any at all. The steep decline of Christian gaming after that impressive first year accompanies a brief surge of Jewish games as Davka publicly released their first ten games between 1983 and 1985. When that surge ends, religious gaming nearly vanishes

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[123] Mace, 15.

[124] "Computer games introduced at Family Bible Fun Breakfasts," *Infoworld 5.40* (Oct. 3, 1983), 22.

entirely.

Looking back across the length of my study, the initial surge of religious gaming seems to present patterns that remain visible for the following 30 years (the "seems" here is critical, as historical patterns only become visible due to their specific selection criteria). First, we must note that the Atari 400 and 800 were marketed as personal computers, whereas the 2600 was a game console. This means that aside from *Music Machine*, all of these games were designed for home computer systems rather than dedicated video game consoles. Because licensing has tended to be much more affordable for multi-purpose computer systems, these will remain the mainstay of religious gaming into the present (of the 773 instances through 2010, only 33 were released for game consoles). There seem also to be some enduring patterns in game design from the outset: The majority of the first releases are digitized educational worksheets and quizzes (e.g. *Family Bible Fun*; *Children's Bible Quiz*), but there is a significant and diverse minority of games that invited the player to identify with an on-screen character. In the first year, these already include redeemed adaptations of worldly games (e.g. *Pax Man*), playable scriptural narratives (e.g. *The Philistine Ploy*), and non-scriptural adventures built upon algorithmic adaptations of out-game theology. *Music Machine*, the first instance of this final design trend, presages the later adaptations of Bible Man, Veggie Tales, Adventures in Odyssey, Left Behind, and Torah Tots franchises into video games. Though it adds the burden of maintaining continuity with those franchises' narratives, developers continue financing their creativity and justifying their innovations through continuity with religious entertainment franchises.[125]

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[125] Rabbi Rosenbaum's puppet-based television show for Jewish children, "The Magic Door," certainly counts as a religious entertainment franchise, as it used a recurring cast of novel characters to illustrate religious teachings across diverse media (in this case, television and records). Thus, though there seems never to have been a computer

But between 1984 and 1991, no surge of games matches the initial outpouring of creativity. Why does religious video gaming dry up? It seems there was a larger vanishing at hand; to quote the president of a department store chain in 1984: "The electronic toys are dead... where we would have sold 1,000 video games, now we are only selling 20."[126] Thus, the long lull in the history of religious games seems to demonstrate the consistent entanglement between digital religion and other digital emergences; or, in the language of waves that opened this section, here we see the Frye Curves of worldly and religious game production shifting together as developers attempt to predict the presence of an audience.

Religious gaming's fruitful first year had been a year of wild over-production for video games in general, and the years of scarce religious gaming begin with what historians of digital culture tend to call "the great video game crash."[127] Sales of games had increased from $15 million in 1975 to an estimated $1.2 billion in 1981, and apparently it seemed for a moment that any video game would sell.[128] That year, a December *TV Guide* announced "It makes no difference whether you've been naughty or nice; chances are that Santa will be dropping off a

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game coded to recreate the fantasy world of that show, we might assert that the religious entertainment franchise is an intersecting history without which that of the religious game cannot be sufficiently told.

[126] Jennifer Lin, "Toys: Video Games Zapped by Lure of the Traditional" *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* Wednesday, August 29, 1984.

[127] To demonstrate the broad currency of this term, consider its use in literature for video game enthusiasts, as well as designers and marketers: Nadia Oxford, "Ten Facts About the Great Video Game Crash of 1983," accessed November 25, 2012, http://www.ign.com/articles/2011/09/21/ten-facts-about-the-great-video-game-crash-of-83; Wesley, David T. A., and Gloria Barczak, *Innovation and Marketing in the Video Game Industry Avoiding the Performance Trap* (Farnham [Surrey, England]: Gower, 2010).

[128] Arthur Howe, "Warner Slump May Signal End of Video-Game Craze" *Philadelphia Inquirer,* Friday, December 10, 1982.

video game under your tree this year. It's almost unavoidable."[129] Atari's dedicated game

consoles led in sales, but their 5200 Super System was released in 1982 alongside the

Commodore 64, ColecoVision, the ZX-Spectrum and several others.[130] Atari's over-printing

millions of *Pac Man* and *E.T.* cartridges (rated in 2006 as the sixth and second worst games of all

time, respectively), thus, did not *cause* the crash, but it did display the surprising miscalibraton of

a significant company to their audience, and was emblematic of the crisis of confidence which

convinced many would-be game designers that their creativity would be wasted on video

games.[131] The release of nine *Family Bible Fun* games in a single year seems to show that the

same over-confidence that characterized the worldly video game market of 1982 also extended

into Christian game development, and their place on the Atari 400/800 allowed the Christian

market to participate in the crash as well (though it was marketed as a personal computer rather

than a game console).

In retrospect, it seems that the burial of gaming's first prototype biofeedback system (the

Atari *Mindlink*), and millions of cartridges of the *E.T.* video game in a New Mexico landfill

signaled only a collapse for the first generation of home game consoles, not of video games as

such, and was in part caused by the continuing proliferation of personal computers, which

remained platforms for new religious games.[132] DOS games began to appear in 1986 with

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[129] Len Albin, "The Best Video Games of 1982," *TV Guide* December 4-10, 1982, 50.

[130] Roberto Dillon, *The Golden Age of Video Games* (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor and Francis, 2011), xvii.

[131] Gametrailers.com: Best & Worst Games (TV 2006), MTV, 14 November 2006 (USA); IMDB Contributors, accessed November 25, 2013, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0910891/; Dillon, 72-73.

[132] "Atari Parts Are Dumped," *The New York Times,* 28 September 1983; http://www.atarimuseum.com/videogames/consoles/2600/mindlink.html (accessed 11/25/2013); Debora L. Carr, *Home on the Strange: More Tales from My Albu-Quirky Journals* (Dog Ear Publishing, 2010), 62;

Christian Text Adventure #1 (Bob Nance), and in 1990, TechnoCrafts Unlimited used that

operating system to release *Nephi's Quest,* the first game for Latter Day Saints.

In this quiet period, it remained clear that digital religion was productive of original

creativities, and not merely derivative of secular technologies. In particular, just as the indexing

projects of the 1950s were the first experiments in the burgeoning field now called "the digital

humanities," the digital religious creations of the 1980s were frequently "ahead of the curve"

regarding various technologies of digital distribution. For instance, shareware, the tendency of

software distributors to circulate more-or-less complete versions of their wares for free, has been

credited as a primary force in the reconceptualization of personal computers as gaming consoles,

and credited with the success of genre-creating game software like *Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3D*.[133]

Shareware, however, was pioneered by hobbyist programmers, and emerged first from an

experiment in digital religion. According to Jim Knopf, he created *PC-File*, the first program to

be distributed in this way, because he: "needed a program to print mailing labels for a local

church congregation."[134] Likewise, 1989's Franklin KJ-21 was the first dedicated electronic

book reader, a digital pocket dictionary redesigned as a biblical concordance and reader.[135] And

in that same year, the *Bible Library,* with 9 Bible versions and 21 references, seems to be the first

popularly accessible work using CD-ROM technology to offer intertextual access to the digital

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[133] Robin Clark, "The Shareware Age," accessed March 30, 2013,
http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/the-shareware-age-article.

[134] Jim Knopf, "The Origin of Shareware," accessed March 30, 2013,
http://www.asp-software.org/users/history-of-shareware.asp.

[135] Peter N. Yianilos, "The Franklin Bible," accessed April 26, 2012,
http://pnylab.com/pny/products/bible/main.html.

humanities.[136]

Technologies of Bricolage and Religious Gaming's First Bloom [1990-1998]

The death of the video game console was precisely the sort of death video games tend to

describe: dramatic, but brief.[137] Between 1983 and 1988, Nintendo refined a marketing and

licensing campaign for their new NES console that succeeded in repopularizing the format. As

the NES moved from Japan to the US in its second year, Nintendo redesigned the machine to

ambiguate the border between computer and toy, and began selling it at consumer electronics

stores, but most importantly they attempted to prevent another glut of terrible games by

implementing various mechanisms to insure that only games that met their "quality" standards

(and whose developers agreed to pay 20% of their wholesale cost to Nintendo) could be played

on the system.[138] Of particular interest for a history of digital religion, Nintendo of America

would not license games for their home-console that

> reflect ethnic, religious, nationalistic, or sexual stereotypes of language; this includes symbols that are
> related to any type of racial, religious, nationalistic, or ethnic group, such as crosses, pentagrams, God,
> Gods (Roman mythological gods are acceptable), Satan, hell, Buddha.

Officially, this meant that Nintendo of America's policy grouped swastikas, blackface, and

crucifixes as a single type of *language* problem (which apparently did not include Mario's

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[136] The Bible Library, "About Us," Accessed June 18, 2012, http://www.biblelibrary.com/ee_aboutus.htm; *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, edited by Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), accessed March 18, 2014, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/.

[137] Dominic Arsenault, "System Profile: The Nintendo Entertainment System [NES]," in *The Video Game Explosion: A History from PONG to Playstation and Beyond* edited by Mark J. P. Wolf (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 2008)*, 109-112.

[138] Luis Levy and Jeannie Novak. *Game Development Essentials: Game QA & Testing* (Clifton Park, N.Y.: Delmar/Cengage Learning, 2010), 11.; Charles W. L. Hill, *Strategic Management Cases: An Integrated Approach* (Mason, OH : South-Western/Cengage Learning, 2010), C166-7.

representation of Italians), and forbade them with the same force as "sexually suggestive or explicit content" or "graphic illustration of death."[139] The two primary mechanisms for enforcing their licensing were a "lock-out" chip, and threats to withdraw their entire library of licensed games from any store that carried unlicensed ones.[140] By Christmas of 1988, the NES had already provoked the resurgence of the console market that has continued largely unabated into the present.

But Nintendo's quality standards largely prevented digital religion from sharing the console resurgence along authorized channels (*Taboo: The Sixth Sense*, a Tarot simulator, and perhaps the first non-monotheistic religious game, is the one conspicuous exception, and no one seems to understand how it slipped under Nintendo of America's radar, particularly as it also included nudity).[141] Of the several companies that found work-arounds to the lock-out chip, the most successful was Tengen, an Atari spin-off that fought Nintendo in court for their right to make unlicensed games (and lost); number two was the Arizona company Color Dreams.[142] Unlike Panesian or AGCI, whose releases included pornographic and bloody games (respectively, approximately), Color Dreams produced relatively innocuous action and puzzle games. In 1990, however, Color Dreams created the subsidiary Wisdom Tree company, which

[139] For an evaluation of these policies as grounded in specific censorial decisions, see: Jim McCullough, "Nintendo's Era of Censorship," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.filibustercartoons.com/Nintendo.php .

[140] David Wesley and Gloria Barczak, *Innovation and Marketing in the Video Game Industry: Avoiding the Performance Trap* (Farnham [Surrey, England]: Gower, 2010), 34.
[141] Moby Games, "Taboo: The Sixth Sense," accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.mobygames.com/game/nes/taboo-the-sixth-sense .

[142] For technical details on Color Dreams' circumvention, see Jon Valesh, "Nintendo, America!" accessed January 19, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/19990220025116/http://www.valesh.com/~jon/computers/nintendo.html ; Chris Woodyard, "Nintendo Keeps Color Dreams Up Worrying : Video games" October 24, 1990, accessed January 19, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-10-24/business/fi-2859_1_video-game-market .

made seven unlicensed cartridges for the NES (and one each for the Gameboy, Sega Genesis, and Super Nintendo consoles).[143] Unlike the worldly license-dodgers who attempted to enter the general video game market, Wisdom Tree circulated their games through Christian bookstores, which were not interested in selling the console's slicker games, and thus had little to fear from Nintendo's reprisal.[144] Though their games were not as graphically sophisticated as several contemporaneous religious games for personal computers (c.f. *Captain Bible in Dome of Darkness* (Bridgestone Multimedia Group, 1994)), Wisdom Tree's move onto game consoles gave them unprecedented reach for an artifact of digital religion. *Bible Adventures,* in particular, sold 250,000 copies, and has been by far the most frequent point of conversational reference in discussing this dissertation with others.[145]

In 1996, Wisdom Tree released a program for indexing the Bible, a less complex organ than the mainline coalition led by Rev. John W. Ellison had created for the RSV in 1957, but it was as small as a book of matches, and was bundled with a video game, *NIV Bible & the 20 Lost Levels of Joshua*. The first 40 years of digital biblical indexes transitions from the immobile mainframe to the hand held Gameboy cartridge. In some senses, the Bible's first appearance on a game console resembled the Franklin Bible readers released seven years earlier, but it is significant that this cartridge actually packaged a game and concordance as a single piece of software. The late 1990s, we may remember, were the years of "multimedia;" a vogue for

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[143] "Wisdom Tree: The Spiritual Gamefare," January 19, 2014, http://www.nesworld.com/wisdomtree.php.

[144] Jeremy Parish, "Illicit Thrills and Dubious Pleasures," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.gamespite.net/toastywiki/index.php/Games/G5-IllicitThrillsAndDubiousPleasures.

[145] Nick Gibson, "Interview: Brenda Huff," accessed Janaury 19, 2014, http://www.sega-16.com/2006/08/interview-brenda-huff/.

showcasing the ability of computers to combine various things. Of course, if by "multimedia" we mean only cultural formations that "appealed simultaneously to the eye and to the ear and combined verbal with non-verbal messages" we would locate multimedia in "rituals, spectacles, masques, plays, and operas, musical as well as visual, from the drums and trumpets of military parades to the accompanying indoor performances" even before print.[146] The significant trend in the late nineties, then, was not multimedia as such, but a sort of international fascination, and wave of creative production, surrounding the specific combinatory possibilities of computers. Across the 1990s, for instance, we find software increasingly bundled into peculiar multi-program packages that situated entertainment as one facet of complex digital-cultural experiences. The "Microsoft Home" software line, for instance, began publishing a broad array of popular software from 1993, and by 1994 these were being packaged into official "samplers" and somewhat-less-official "packs" that might include an encyclopedia, various pieces of office software, and a few choice games.

Though Wisdom Tree's foray into console-based digital religion well illustrated the bricolage of 1990s digital culture, these Microsoft collections, being published on CD-ROM, exemplify one of the two technologies that most prominently staged new convergences across the present period: the World Wide Web (debuted in 1993) and the CD-ROM (became standard on home computers around 1996). Microsoft collections were published on CD-ROM, one of the two technologies that most significantly transformed digital life across the 1990s. In particular, the World Wide Web allowed the creation of religious *sites* where communities could connect

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[146] Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 33-34.

through and with simple programs, and the CD-ROM drive empowered the storage and

transmission of far more complicated programs, including the replication of archives previously

restricted to mainframes. And significantly, as in the *Joshua/KJV* cartridge, these new

technologies offered spaces of contact where games, reference programs, educational guides, and

other forms of digital religion might interact.

But before the World Wide Web, or the CD-ROM, the 1980s and early 1990s had seen

the popularization of several now dimly-remembered communication protocols such as BBS,

FTP servers, and gophers, all of which drew people and programs into dense contact, providing

content and momentum for later modes of circulation.[147] I bring these up only now because they

seem not to have been significant vehicles for religious games in the 1980s, but the first

Evangelical Bulletin Board Services like *Computers for Christ* had appeared alongside the first

religious games, and other religious Boards, like the *Makom Ohr Shalom BB*, had been online

since the mid-1980s.[148] The Bethany Bible Collection which featured "26 different high quality

Bible games and educational programs, including: *Captain Bible, Bible Baseball, Creation

Station, Exodus, Where's Noah?, Tobiah's Quest*, and many others," being organized as a FTP

site for a short while in 1996 before being released as a CD-ROM, seems a rare, shining example

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[147] File Transfer Protocol [FTP] servers appeared in 1971, and offered a dispersed network of computer users simple access to the files they stored. Bulletin Board Systems [BBS] are versitile, usually text based computer systems that users could log in to in order to communicate with one another and access files as early as 1978. Gopher pages did not appear until 1991, and they offered a browsable interface that resembled the roughly contemporaneous World Wide Web, though their protocol was strictly heirarchical, rather than rhizomatic. None of these protocols, incidentally, has gone away entirely, and the resource list compiled by the Internet Christian Library in 1996 includes some examples, like pharos.bu.edu, which continue to be maintained. "Not Just Bibles: A Guide to Christian Resources on the Internet," accessed January 7, 2014, http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/christian-resources.text/cres-04.txt .

[148] "Computer Exchange Spreading Christian Message," *New York Times* August 24, 1984; Ira Rifkin, "Kibitzing in New Tongue: by Computer: Valley New Age Synagogue Operates 'Bulletin Board'" *Los Angeles Times* January 7, 1988, accessed January 9, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-01-07/local/me-33963_1_bulletin-board.

relevant to the present study, and an excellent segue to this section's first great technology of bricolage.[149]

CD-ROMs, relative to the magnetic diskettes that preceded them, were amazingly capacious, one CD holding approximately the same quantity of data as 500 diskettes. This sudden leap in storage capacity offered two major developments for digital religion, both of which have significant effects upon religious gaming in particular. The first, and certainly the better remembered, is how the CD-ROM empowered the creation of programs with vast built-in stores of information. The immense databases of the emerging digital humanities, like the above mentioned collection of Jewish culture at Bar Ilan University, could now be distributed as consumer software. New collections like "The Encyclopedia of the First Millennium of Christianity," not only imitated the possibilities of the older archives, but included "multimedia" material like video, audio clips, and color images.[150] In video games, this last potential manifested as improvements in graphics and sound quality, and became visible in Evangelical games quite early. In late 1991, the first CD-ROM based game console, the Philips CD-i, was released, as were five Evangelical video games, including *Moses: Bound for the Promised Land* and *Noah's Ark* (Interlight Productions Inc.).[151] These were pioneering releases in CD-ROM based gaming, and in popular CD-ROM usage more generally. Likewise, for PCs, games like

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[149] Robert Woeger, "New Bible Internet Extensive File Library," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.theoblogical.org/dlatur e/itseminary/Dialogue/mail/msg00112.html.

[150] Maged N. Kamel Boulos, "Encyclopedia of the First Millennium of Christianity 1998 – Second Edition," accessed December 23, 2013, http://www.zeitun-eg.org/encyclop.htm.

[151] The Sega CD/ Mega CD accessory for the Sega Genesis was released within a few days of the CD-i, but it is not a contender for the first CD-ROM console, as it had no stand-alone operation. For devices of this sort, the Turbo Grafix 16 had a CD-ROM accessory as early as 1989. Carl Therrien, "CD-ROM Games," in *The Video Game Explosion: A History from Pong to Playstaion and Beyond* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008), 121-126, 122.

Captain Bible in Dome of Darkness (Bridgestone, 1994) created new spaces that integrated complex animation and sound into play. These, however, were not quite as early, seeing as PC based CD-ROM gaming had begun with *The Manhole* (Cyan, 1987).

The other new potential offered by CD-ROMs was a mode of circulation that vividly demonstrated the bricolage of 1990s digital culture. That is, as well as allowing the admixture of "multimedia" elements within individual programs, CD-ROMs also allowed multiple programs to be clustered together in new ways. And, most importantly for this study, while large software corporations were releasing samplers, so too were independent developers. Shareware, having continued to blossom for a decade at this point, now presented a networked community across which small offerings could be shared much more efficiently in thematic bundles. From 1993-1999, the Public Software Library distributed shareware to their subscribers on CD-ROMS, rather than on floppy disks, producing a new marketplace for a range of niche softwares, including digitally religious. To take a single instance, the March 1995 disk focusing on "Home-Education" contained a folder of DOS files which contained twenty seven folders full of topical materials including ASTROLGY, BIBLE_GA, BIBLE_ST, CHURCH, and CHURCHMG; another folder of Windows files included the subfolders RELIGION and ASTROLGY (largely populated with different programs rather than conversions of the DOS offerings).[152] Significantly, these disks offered both motivation for the creation of new software, and a means for circulating older works, drawing some programs that would have otherwise never been seen by anyone except their creators into relative accessibility.

While one might find a "Jewish Screensaver," some "memorable writings from the

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[152] The Public (software) Library, accessed December 13, 2013 http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv3nv03/HOME/DOS/ .

Buddhist and Hindu philosophers" concerning women, or a program that "converts between Gregorian, Julian, Jewish, Moslem, French Revolutionary, Icelandic and liturgical calendars," most experiments in digital religion distributed on CD-ROM by the Public Software Library in this period were Evangelical projects.[153] The forty-four religious games included in my study which I located through their archives, for instance, continue the first non-monotheistic trend in religious gaming with the next three Tarot reading games after *Taboo* on the NES, and *The Pesach Adventure,* but all others games seem to have been Evangelical entries. In addition to a broad cluster of trivia games with "Bible" in their names (e.g. *Bible-Q, Bible Book Scrambles, Bible in Mind, Bible Men*), these included an assortment of adventure and arcade games, most of which also emphasized biblical knowledge.

It is difficult to say with certainty which religious communities began using the World Wide Web toward sacred ends first, but several seem to have emerged online in 1994 (for context, the World Wide Web only became publicly accessible in April 30, 1993).[154] Notably, many of those religious groups that arrived on the Web first had been engaged in digitally networked religion using the various communication systems that immediately preceded it (some of which are well understood as part of the Internet, in that they used TCP/IP network protocols).[155] Three prominent examples that reached the Web in 1994 should serve to establish

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[153] The Public (software) Library, accessed December 24, 2013 as archived by cd.textfiles.com, http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv3nv04/FILESBBS/UTIL_WIN/VID_UTIL.BBS; http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/psl9312/DOS/ELEC_PUB/_DIRLIST; http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslmonthly25/reviews/ed_03 .

[154] "Twenty Years of a Free, Open Web," http://wayback.archive.org/web/20131208134409/http://info.cern.ch/ , archived by the Internet Archive December 8, 2014, accessed January 18, 2014.

[155] "Internet," Dictionary of Information Science and Technology (Hershey, PA: Idea Group Reference, 2007), 361.

the pattern: Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Kazen was answering religious questions from a distinctly

Lubavitch perspective over Fidonet as early as 1988; the network of rabbis and students that he

spent six years building on various bulletin board services seem to have joined him in launching

chabad.org, that critical first year.[156] Dr. Richard J. Krejcir's "Into Thy Word Ministry,"

likewise, had an online ministry before it was technically on the Internet: "In 1992, we went on

Prodigy with an index site and in 1994, we were the first or second ministry on the Internet, I

believe (there many people with sites that had Christian materials, but no ministry online). But

this was enough to radically redesign how we 'did' ministry. Instead of printing out booklets, we

had downloadable fact sheets, outlines, and a few articles."[157] And, to complete our sampling of

1994's digital religious pioneers, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's (Gurudeva's) ecumenical journal

Hinduism Today, which claims (and seems) to have produced the "first major Hindu website,"

used a network of Macintosh computers to facilitate their magazine's design and editing from

1988 onward. "1994 was the year Hinduism Today and the Tirukkural, started spreading their

tendrils through the Internet nadis. Power to the modem!"[158] While their network was not

publicly accessible, like the above Jewish and Christian examples, it is clear that they were

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[156] "'Ask a Rabbi' on the Web: Online Rabbis Offer Answers," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.jta.org/2006/09/11/archive/ask-a-rabbi-on-the-web-online-rabbis-offer-answers; Amy Harmon, "Yosef Kazen, Hasidic Rabbi and Web Pioneer, Dies at 44," *The New York Times* December 13, 1998, accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/13/nyregion/yosef-kazen-hasidic-rabbi-and-web-pioneer-dies-at-44.html.

[157] Richard J. Krejcir, "ITW History," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?blogid=3895&view=post&articleid=50131&fldKeywords=&fldAuthor=&fldTopic=0&contentonly=true.

[158] "Nine Mac II's Enhance Hawaii's Hindu Network," *Hinduism Today Magazine (Web Edition)* October 1988, accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=561; Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, *Yoga's Forgotten Foundation: Twenty Timeless Keys to Your Divine Destiny* (Malaysiia: Sampoorna Printers, 2004), 190; "1994: Year in Review," *Hinduism Today*, December 1994, archived by the Internet Archive November 5, 1996, accessed January 19, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/19961105222607/http://www.hinduismtoday.kauai.hi.us/Dec94.html.

appreciating the potential of digital networking in ways that would prepare them for the Internet: "The publisher of Hinduism Today, for instance, can maintain continuous contact with all members of the newspaper staff disbursed in several buildings without leaving the chair of his powerful Mac II work station. Also, through a program called Tops, all forms of data and information can be transferred with ease from one computer to another with but a push of a button." Their website not only published the magazine, but included pamphlets for printing, archives of sacred text, a method for communicating with Gurudeva, among other tools.

Whichever of these sites was first hardly matters; what matters is that religion on the World Wide Web went viral (about the same time, incidentally, that the word "viral" went viral). Already in 1996, the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life [ARIL] offered a curated list of religious resources because "Given the number of religious sites on the Web, surfing the Internet can be like opening your door one Saturday morning to find a representative of every church, synagogue, mosque, or cult group camped out on your front yard, all clamoring for your attention." That their initial list of nine "world religions," seventeen Christian, eight Jewish, eleven Buddhist, eight Muslim, and eleven Bible study websites was already a great simplification, though most of these pages included links to dozens of others, speaks to the rapid proliferation of religion on the World Wide Web.[159]

Facing this sudden efflorescence of online life, coalitions of religious people began to gather to discuss what the Internet is and how they would interact with it. On one hand, the

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[159] Association for Religion in Intellectual Life, "Interfaith Internet – Website Catalogue and Reviews," archived by the Internet Archive, October 29, 1996, accessed January 19, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/19961029045955/http://aril.org/ ; Catholic Information Center on the Internet, "Catholic Information Center on the Internet," archived by the Internet Archive February 4, 1997, accessed January 19, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/19970204074851/http://catholic.net/RCC/homepage/CICI_Info.html .

Internet Evangelism Coalition formed in 1997, connecting representatives from approximately 70 different ministries, including the Billy Graham Center. Rufus Wells, an organizer of the coalitions' conferences, presents a generous vision: "Jesus told his disciples to go out into all the world and make disciples of all men. Now you don't have to fly all over the world to do this".[160]

   A contrary vision of the Internet (though, notably, not a position advocating avoiding it entirely) is present in the emergence of content filtering services and software in this period. Christian Internet Service Providers "Integrity Online," and "Safeplace.net" began presenting an Internet free of objectionable content in 1996 and 1997 respectively.[161] X Safeplace.net, in its early years as "Family Based Internet" demonstrated their specific perspective on the Internet by stating in bold letters atop their "about us" page: "Did you know over 275 new pornographic web sites are added to the internet every day?"[162]

   At the intersection of this period's two extraordinary technologies of bricolage, surprising new creativities became possible. Printed on CDs and sold on the Internet, the Egyptian company Future Soft released the first six video games for a Muslim playership in 1997. To adopt the categories provided by Heidi Campbell in her excellent article "Islamogaming," *At Home, At Street, Juz Amma, Stories from Ahadith, Stories from Al Seera,* and *The Prophet's Wars* were all "games designed for religious education," or, in terms presented earlier in this chapter, they are largely "playable scriptural narratives" and "non-scriptural adventures built upon algorithmic

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[160] Dina Sanchez, "Evangelists Work to Spread the Gospel in Cyberspace – Ministy Leaders are Teaming Up With Technology Professionals to Harness the Power of the Internet," *The Orlando Sentinel* November 2, 2000.
[161] Integrity Online Bouncing Back from the Online Bombs," Mississippi Business Journal September 9, 2002, accessed March 8, 2014,
http://msbusiness.com/blog/2002/09/09/integrity-online-bouncing-back-from-dotcom-bombs/ .

[162] Family Based Internet, L.L.C., "About us," archived by the Internet Archive June 24, 1998, accessed March 10, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/19980624014153/http://www.safeplace.net/home/aboutus/aboutus.htm .

adaptations of out-game theology."[163] Digitized worksheets appear as sub-games within these

programs, but these would not become a major standalone edifice in Muslim gaming until games

became playable online directly.

New Playspaces and the First Great Acceleration [1998-2004]

Just as the history of digital religion marks the 1990s as extraordinary for their new

technologies of bricolage and the spaces of complex contact they created, the same history

discovers the early 2000s opening spaces for play where none could have been imagined

previously. The middle of a web page and the palm of a hand gain the potential to host complex

digital playspaces. This does not only mean new spaces for games narrowly defined, but a great

range of newly spatialized activities that facilitate action at the border of the human. I will, of

course, continue to give games special priority, and this period finds me in good company; here

we also see various new groups created to structure religious conversation on the potentials and

pitfalls of digital play.

Returning to the chart that gives this chapter its rhythm, we must now try to understand

the impressive wave of religious video games that seems to crest across the turn of the 21st

century. The wave can be understood in several ways: new religious communities began making

video games, developers started making several small games rather than a few large ones, and

games moved increasingly onto websites, leaving their traces accessible to research decades later

(that is to say, it is possible that this spike documents a change in the possibility of research no

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[163] Heidi Campbell, "Islamogaming: Digital Dignity via Alternative Storytelling," in *Halos and Avatars: Playing Video Games with God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 63-74. "Welcome to Future Soft: Products," archived by the Internet Archive January 28, 1999, accessed January 19, 2014, *http://web.archive.org/web/19990128161335/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/Products.htm*.

less than a change in its object). But all of these tendencies seem to follow a now established

pattern wherein the Frye Curve of religious gaming spikes where it intersects with a rising curve

of financially accessible software development tools. We saw similar movements in digital

religion's interaction with changes in game console licensing, and with the boom in personal

computing. In this case, the new technology was the appearance of three different

web-enhancing programming languages between 1995 and 1996, Java, JavaScript, and Flash, all

of which allowed programs to be placed directly into web pages. To quote an excited reporter

observing its emergence, Java applets could present "animations, interactive games or other

parlor tricks."[164] Across 1996, both Macromedia Flash, and the distinct, but similarly-named,

JavaScript joined the larger effort to "bring full interactivity and sophisticated user interface and

typography concepts to the formerly static Web."[165]

Though these new programming languages are disproportionately visible through the lens

of religious gaming, they cannot be separated from the more general phenomenon of ongoing

Internet popularization, and its specific surge in popularity as a tool for religious instruction. To

speak in impressive approximations, in the year 2000, 35 million Americans searched for

religious information online (for comparison, 36 million people downloaded music that year).[166]

Likewise, the first browser-accessible Bibles had appeared in the Web's initial years, but they

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[164] Julio Ojeda-Zapata, "Take a Sip of the Future at Hot Java Sites," *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* Monday, December 11, 1995.

[165] Rick Waldron, "The Flash History," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.flashmagazine.com/news/detail/the_flash_history/; Steve Champeon, "JavaScript: How Did We Get Here?" accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/javascript/2001/04/06/js_history.html .

[166] Genevieve Bell, "The Age of Auspicious Computing," *Interactions 11.5* (Sept.-Oct. 2004), 76-77; Elena Larsen. "Wired Churches, Wired Temples: Taking Congregations and Missions into Cyberspace," (Washington D.C.: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2000), 8.

continued proliferating, offering a growing range of features for specific theological communities, though they tended to continue using HTML rather than Java-type languages.[167] Likewise, though most congregations could not afford to hire programmers able to use all of the Web's new possibilities, there were 20,000 congregational websites in the year 2000, followed by a new range of church management software "to manage your Site at the same level of competency that larger churches with teams of technical people can."[168] That is to say, the wave we are observing is an emergence of browser-based religious gaming, proliferating in the boomtown atmosphere of the Internet around the millennium.

Between 1996 and 1998, a dozen religious games programmed in Java were released online, clustered on two websites, and comprising less than a quarter of total religious game production in those years. Since there is not, as far as I know, any common term for them, we can call websites that offer simple access to lists of browser-based games "game suites."[169] Appearing alongside better-funded worldly gaming projects such as Gamesville ("Wasting your time since 1996") and Swirve, religious game suites were among the first organized attempts to harness the browser as a gaming environment.[170] As with religious games generally, it is notable

[167] The "Online Bibles and Commentaries on Bible Versions" list maintained by True Grace ministries offers an interesting perspective on this continuing growth. This page counts three online Bibles in 1996, six in 1997, eleven in 1999, and nineteen in 2000. True Grace Ministries, "Online Bibles and Commentaries on Bible Versions," archived by the Internet Archive, December 25, 1997; August 7, 1997; November 16, 1999; December 16, 2000, accessed January 19, 2014.
http://wayback.archive.org/web/20011115024736/http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/bible.html .

[168] Church Web Works, "Web Freedom," archived by the Internet Archive, October 11, 2003, accessed January 11, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20031011145435/http://www.churchwebworks.com/site/web_freedom.php.

[169] As part of their final exam, the undergraduate students in my 2010 "Religious Games and Sacred Play" course compiled this wiki page with links to 11 religious game suites. Religious Gaming Wiki Contributors, "Online Game Suites," accessed January 11, 2014, http://religiousgaming.wikia.com/wiki/Online_Game_Suites .

[170] Virtual Advisor Inc., "Gamesville.com: Wasting People's Time Since 1996," archived by the Internet Archive,

these first two online suites of religious games – *Zigzag World* (1996) and *Jewish Funland* (1997)– were made for Jewish publics, but as with religious games generally, Evangelical Christians soon became the liveliest range of production. With seventeen new Java games distributed over six game suites, nearly half of the religious games released in 1999 were released in online suites. Four of these game suites were Evangelical (one more being made for a Mormon, and another for a Jewish playership). Each of the next three years would best 1999 in the production of game suites, but the proportions stayed fairly consistent: seventy-nine new games, and thirteen new Evangelical game suites, as well as two new suites for Jewish players, one for Mormons, one for Seventh Day Adventists, and one for Messianic Jews. These suites used diverse programming languages, and a few used several, not only including Flash, Java, and Javascript, but also presented games created through clever application of more standard web technologies like HTML (e.g. *ArmoQuest* (Rick Ellinger, 2001)), or Common Gateway Interface (e.g. "Two Paths").[171]

The games that structured this new playspace greatly resembled those that had appeared on DOS and Windows systems over the preceding years. Sunday School exercises originally designed for papery play (e.g. crosswords, word-finds, quizzes, mazes, coloring, and hangman) as well as those which would require a bit of specialized equipment (e.g. jigsaws, card games, slider puzzles, dreidels, and sticker books) took prominent place. One online card game in

October 6, 2000, accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.va-interactive.com/inbusiness/editorial/biztech/articles/gamesville.html; Swirve.com, "Games," archived by the Internet Archive, October 6, 2000, accessed January 19, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20001006230832/http://games.swirve.com/.

[171] The Christian Bible Reference Site, "Quiz Trouble," archived by the Internet Archive November 11, 1999, accessed January 19, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/19991111155742/http://www.twopaths.com/quiztrouble.htm .

particular, *Unity* (Yeshuateinu Company, 2000) was tied for the first Messianic Christian video game. And, though this period never saw online games with the graphical sophistication possible on CD-ROMs, every category of character-based game found a place in these online playspaces. Games set within scripture (e.g. *Sim Abraham* (Good Book Games, 2003)) appeared alongside non-scriptural adventures built upon algorithmic adaptations of out-game theology (e.g. *Epic* (CCC Ministries, 2000)). Though there were earlier instances, among the redeemed adaptations of worldly games, BoMToons – that is "Book of Mormon Cartoons" – deserves special mention for its whimsical Mormon in-jokes like *Donkey BoM* (stories from the Book of Mormon recreated in the style of *Donkey Kong*). From 2005, this "crazy idea of a few returned missionaries who wanted to feature some of the funnier things from the Book of Mormon and Mormon culture" troubles any simple dichotomy between blasphemous and sacred games, by attracting what seems to be a public that can laugh at its own sacra.[172]

One of these game suites' most interesting properties was how their value as a linkable resource created channels between Christian communities. Links to game-suites hosted on other sites both allowed websites with no games to offer entertainment to their visitors, and for those few sites with their own original games to augment their playspace. For instance, in 2004 the online version of *Guide Magazine*, an instructional and entertaining publication for Seventh Day Adventist youth, introduced a section entitled "game launch." This page collated a social picture captioning game that had been on their site since 2001 with two new quiz games (*FACTory Pop Quiz,* and *Instant Recall*), and a dress-up game. It also provided a link to www.twopaths.com,

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[172] Nick Pasto, "Why a Redesign?" blog post January 6, 2008, archived by the Internet Archive, September 10, 2010, accessed February 1, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20100918172645/http://bomtoons.com/index.php?start=35 .

which

> "began in January, 1996 with the publication of *Wisdom of the Bible* at members.aol.com. The TwoPaths.com domain was registered in 1999 and now includes *Bible Quizzes*, *Jesus' Teachings as Told in the Gospels*, *Bible Word Search Puzzles*, and *Bible FAQ*. Webmaster Cliff Leitch is the son of a Baptist mother and a Presbyterian father, and husband of his Catholic wife, Helen. However, the Bible study materials at TwoPaths.com are not primarily his own interpretation, nor do they represent any particular denomination or tradition."[173]

Given our present understanding of Evangelical media as that which works to orient lives around the Bible and the Cross, rather than to any particular tradition of practice or interpretation, we would do well to consider how ecumenical practices of hyperlinking might have at times made otherwise denominational communities *more* Evangelical. This effect should not be overstated, however, because linking is substantially less symmetrical than many other ecumenical practices – organizing shared holiday services, for instance: while the Adventists linked to Two Paths, it does not seem that a link ever pointed back. And with having arrived at this qualified excitement for the Evangelical potentials of online playspaces, we can move on to the pocket, this period's second new type of playspace.

There had been some small amount of precedent in *Joshua/KJV* and the Franklin Bible readers, but the last period saw very few artifacts of digital religion that fit into a pocket. The popularization of hand-held computers at the turn of the century, however, created spaces for sacred programming, presaging the smartphone boom that marks this study's own technocultural moment. Because the Gameboy and the dedicated reader open only to programmers who can either hack or license their way in, digital religion had little purchase. The first pocket computing platforms, like the Psion Organiser II (1984), the Apple Newton MessagePad (1993), and Palm

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[173] The Christian Bible Reference Site, "About," archived by the Internet Archive, August 14, 2001, accessed January 19, 2014, "http://web.archive.org/web/20010814124016/http://www.twopaths.com/about.htm .

Pilot (1996), however, opened spaces for tiny programs – the entities not yet called "apps" – and it would not be long before they became the scene of digital religion. Somewhere between 1996 and 1998, there began to appear programs for Psion organizers that could calculate the dates of holidays, with Easter apparently spawning several targeted projects.[174] The beginning of digital religion as designed for pocket computing came in 1998, with the release of the *Olive Tree* Bible for Palm organizers, and PocketBible for Windows CE.[175] To date, *Bible,* a tiny program that provides biblical quotations on nine topics, is the only religious program I have been able to locate for the TI-85 graphing calculator, but because this platform was so popular among novice programmers who frequently shared their programs between peers using a simple cable, I suspect this was a particularly fruitful platform for ephemera of digital religion.[176] The Palm OS and Windows CE, on the other hand, organized communities of programmers who shared and stored their programs online, generating a fascinating wave of pocket-sized programs, and preserving them for later research. As of Feburary 2001, PalmLDS.com had dozens of programs for genealogy and scripture reading and reported that "The Church is now producing documents formatted for handhelds."[177] In 2004, *Mobile Ministry Magazine* began promoting organized

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[174] Helmut Heller, "Hello, Welcome to My Psion Page," accessed January 30, 2014, http://heller.userweb.mwn.de/psion/psion.html .

[175] Bob Dasal, "The Olive Tree Bible Software Story – Using PDAs to Study the Word" *Pulpit Helps,* March, 2004, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.pulpithelps.com/www/docs/1090-6962 ; Laridian Electronic Publishing, "Welcome to Laridian!" accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.laridian.com/content/about.asp .

[176] Though this page is called "games," I suspect that the word was used as a catch-all for entertaining programs, some of which do not seem to be games in any other sense. Because *Bible* describes itself only as "this program" at the level of code, and it contains no elements that might be understood as either imaginative or competitive, I have not included it in the list. The Ticalc.org Project, "TI-85 Basic Games," accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.ticalc.org/pub/85/basic/games/ .

[177] Doug and DeAnn Jenkins, "Palm LDS Resources," archived by the Internet Archive, Feburary 2, 2001, accessed January 12, 2012, http://web.archive.org/web/20010202024400/http://www.palmlds.com/.

reflection "on the mobile aspects of technology and how it can be used best in ministry."[178] The

first religious game I have been able to discover for this new range of computing is *Bible Game

B* (Danny Newport, 2001) for Palm. The following year this game was followed by more

Evangelical entries, as well as two Jewish games, and the quite separate *Qabalah Trainer* (Brian

Berge, 2002) for Palm*,* a game designed to entrench sacred correspondences in the minds of

Occultists.[179]

Before we move on to new groups created to structure religious engagements with video

games, we might follow *Qabalah Trainer* toward a sort of intermission: magically efficacious

games. Moving beyond its precedent in Tarot software, in 1997 Steve Nichols released an

Enochian Chess program digitizing a sacred system once transmitted by the Hermetic Order of

the Golden Dawn: "You may use the game for practical ACTIVE divination, to alter & influence

events as well as to simply predict."[180] *The Journey to Wild Divine* (Wild Divine Project, 2003),

likewise, joined the tiny pocket of games attempting to brings back biofeedback gaming after the

Atari Mindlink's literal burial.[181] Unlike other games played with biometric sensors, however, it

provided a New Age context complete with shamans, pagodas, and Deepak Chopra; play

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[178] Antoine R.J. Wright, *Mobile Ministry Magazine 1.1* (2004), accessed March 11, 2014,
http://www.mobileministrymagazine.com/Issues/mmm_v1.pdf .

[179] Erik Zimmerman, "Kabbalah Trainer V1.99," accessed January 19, 2014, http://www.qabalah-trainer.com/
(accessed 1/19/2014); Brian Berge, "My Palm Software: Qabalah Trainer," archived by the Internet Archive,
October 10, 2002, accessed January 19 2014,
http://web.archive.org/web/20021010034800/http://www.brianberge.net/software/qabalahtrainer/ .

[180] Steve Nichols, "The Enochian Chess CD," accessed March 11, 2014,
http://www.hermeticgoldendawn.org/nichols-chess.html ; Steve Nichols, "Enochian Chess," accessed March 11,
2014, http://enochian.net/ .

[181] Vincent Gonzalez, "Imagining the Self-Controller: 'The Wild Divine Project' as an Experiment in Religious
Game Interface," accessed Feburary 2, 2014,
http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2010/04/14/imagining-self-controller-wild-divine-project-experiment
-religious-game-interface .

resembles magic, as does its promised results: "Enhanced powers of creativity and intuition," "Greater awareness of mind and body," and "A sense of being in balance, connected, and in the 'Zone.'"[182]

In this period, several new groups emerged and set out to restructure religious engagement with video games, not only by presenting new instances, but by offering flexible discursive frames. Several of these groups emerge to decry what they describe as occult tendencies in popular gaming, but they seem never to have actually intersected with contemporaneous magical gaming. For instance, the Evangelical video game review site Christ Centered Gamer appeared in 2001, presenting "Occult/Supernatural" as a full 20% of a game's total "morality score." A game can lose all of these points only if "occult magic is used by the player" in "an environment that is filled with major occult references," and CCG clarifies that this includes only "games that base their magic system off of an actual religion such as Wicca or Satanism and should not be confused with magic systems in games that are made up for make believe purposes to provide a safe fun fantasy environment."[183] However, rather than attack *The Journey to Wild Divine* – which seems to be its perfect object of critique – this site has focused on games like *Devil May Cry 3* (Capcom, 2005). The reviewer notes that the main character "uses magic that can temporarily turn him into a demon, which I think can easily be viewed as explicit occult magic."[184]

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[182] The Wild Divine Project, "The Game," archived by the Internet Archive, December 16, 2003, accessed February 1, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20031216014946/http://www.wilddivine.com/content.php?cont_id=2 .

[183] CCGR, "Christ Centered Gamer Reviewing Standard," accessed February 2, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/faqs/15-game-reviews/16-christ-centered-gamer-reviewing-standard .

[184] Ratrap 99, "Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening (PS2)," accessed February 2, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/19-console/4478-devil-may-cry-3-dantes-awakening-ps2 .

The difficulty of locating this practice among the practitioners of "an actual religion" should not distract us from the historical significance of this website. In the year 2000, *Shepherd's Staff*, *Christian Gaming*, *Christian Gamers*, Christiananswers.net's *Guide 2 Games*, and *The Dove Foundation* all began to offer video game reviews for Christian players. *Christian Computer Game Reviews* [CCGR, later *Christ Centered Game Reviews*] and *The Staging Point*, appeared the following year.[185] No less than religious software, these sites themselves present newly quantified modes of Christian life in their structures of critique. The standards of *Shepherd's Staff*, for instance, are quantified but not yet algorithmic, arranging games according to a five point "Overall Christian Rating" scale. The game reviews presented by *The Staging Point* and *The Dove Foundation* divide their evaluations into several categories, the former offering numerical values for "Fun Factor," "Technique," "I.Q. Level," and "Responsibility," where the latter did the same for "sex," "language," "violence," "drugs," "nudity," and "occult/other." *Guide 2 Games*, *Christian Gamers*, and *Christian Gaming*, on the other hand, each made the propriety of games for Christians a single quantity equally weighted alongside several others. Those categories might measure morally unweighted factors like "Game Engine," and "Game Play" (Christian Gaming), or juxtapose such categories with "Violence" and other moral categories of worldly game critique (Guide2Games and Christian Gamers). CCGR,

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[185] Christian Gamers, "Main," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.geocities.ws/christiangamers/ ; Christian Gaming Staff, "Main," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.christiangaming.com/ ; The Dove Foundation, "Game Search Results," accessed March 2, 2014, http://dove.org/reviews/GameSearchResults.asp ; Christiananswers.net, "Guide 2 Games," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/games ; Tim Emmerich, "Shepherd's Staff," archived by the Internet Archive February 14, 2004, accessed June 4, 2011, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040214141745/http://www.graceworksinteractive.com/ShepStaff/index.html ; CCGR, "Main," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.ccgr.org ; The Staging Point, "Game Ratings," archived by the Internet Archive, February 6, 2002, accessed March 2, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20020206221424/http://stagingpoint.com/games/.

presents the most complex algorithm for Christian game critique, juxtaposing an equally

weighted "game score" and "morality score," each of which are subdivided into five categories

and guided by five separate itemized rubrics.[186]

This trend cannot be separated from the game-violence debates that reached peak

newspaper-presence in this period. They cannot be entirely understood through them either,

though, and since my next chapter covers those debates at length, we might do well to juxtapose

them with a related emergence of digital religion: In 1998, Paramount pictures threatened legal

action against Sunrise Video in American Fork, Utah, which operated a mail-in service to

remove the nudity and sex from VHS cassettes of Titanic for five dollars a cassette.[187] Little else

was heard about this trend until 2002 when Utah-based Trilogy Studios released, and began

advertising, MovieMask, a program for Windows that could place a corset over the nude scenes

in Titanic or cover on-screen gunshot wounds.[188] That August, the Director's Guild of America

announced that they were ending several years of near-silence by filing a lawsuit against Trilogy

Studios and six other companies who facilitated clean viewing in various ways.[189] The Director's

Guild worked to frame film-editing as profiting off of a derivative work, and emphasized the

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[186] CCGR, "Christ Centered Gamer Reviewing Standard," accessed February 2, 2014,
http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/faqs/15-game-reviews/16-christ-centered-gamer-reviewing-standard
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[187] Rachel Roemhildt, "Family Fare Folks Find Ways to Clean Up Offending Films," *Insight on the News,* December
25, 1998, accessed March 18, 2014,
http://theeditedmovieencyclopedia.blogspot.com/1998/12/family-fare-folks-find-ways-to-clean-up.html .

[188] PR Web, "Trilogy Studios Announces Launch of 'Movie Mask' Website," PR Web January 23, 2002, accessed
January 31, 2014, http://www.prweb.com/releases/2002/01/prweb32292.htm.

[189] "DGA Files Lawsuit Against Entities that Provide Unauthorized Altered Versions of Videocassettes and/or
DVDS (August 20, 2002), accessed January 31, 2014,
http://www.viewerfreedom.org/legal/20020820DGA/DGAfileslawsuit.PDF

possibility that people may be confused as to which version was the director's original.[190] The

ensuing court battles granted a strange neutrality to digital agents. While it is illegal to make

parts of VHS cassettes "imperceptible" and sell them, "the creation or provision of a computer

program or other technology that enables such making imperceptible […] if no fixed copy of the

altered version of the motion picture is created by such computer program or other technology,"

was judged to neither confuse anyone, nor steal anything.[191] This technology, though its legally

delimited task is to *make imperceptible,* invites users to become directors and share their schema

for film transformation. Today, the ClearPlay DVD player applies an immense library of such

files, including new cuts of more than 2700 films.[192]

To close this curve by returning attention to our primary focus, we should note that this

period also saw the emergence of groups that restructured religious video gaming, by changing

how games are made. The Christian Coders Network, for example, appeared online in 2000,

presenting forums that very quickly came to connect a global network of programmers. By 2002,

there seem to have been participants in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland,

France, Indonesia, Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, Slovakia, Trinidad, the Netherlands, New

Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam.[193] While this network

self-described as a place "for everyone, not just Christians" to "share information on

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[190] Associated Press, "Court Rules Against Sanitizing Films," Fox News Online, www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_wires/2006Jul08/0,4675,FilmSanitizers,00.html .

[191] "Family Movie Act of 2005," Section 202: Exemption from Infringement for Skipping Audio and Video Content in Motion Pictures. http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/pl109-9.html (accessed 1/20/2014).

[192] Family Safe Media, "Filter Library," http://www.familysafemedia.com/filter_library.html, (accessed 1/20/2014).

[193] Christian Coders Network, "Member List," archived by the Internet Archive August 23, 2002, accessed March 7, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20020823112116/http://www.christiancoders.com/cgi-bin/ubb-cgi/memberlist.cgi .

programming games, the web, business systems, or anything else a coder may be working on",
Christian game design projects had pride of place.[194]

Tim Emmerich, a Christian game designer and the founder of Shepherds Staff game
reviews, began a conversation in these forums, asking whether the Christian Coders Network had
enough interested members to create something like the annual Game Developers Conference
without the "secular 'junk'."[195] The following conversation is fascinating because, faced with the
possibility of gathering intentionally as a parallel gaming culture, developers started asking in
what sense there already existed an "industry" of Christian game design, and where there seemed
not to be one yet, how one might be created. Active companies were listed, developers circulated
their own skills and time commitments, and general reflection on the successes and failures of
Christian gaming were gathered into a hypothetical second-order structure for Christian game
design.

In 2002, Emmerich succeeded in gathering 30 participants and convening the first
Christian Game Developers Conference [CGDC] in Oregon. Attendance over the next few years
triples then plateaus: 90 attend in 2003, "over 100" in 2004, and 100 in 2005.[196] These
conferences, though numerically small, might be considered one more of this period's significant
new spaces of play. They were, first, places where games were played and shared, and by

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[194] Christian Coders Network, "About the CCN," archived by the Internet Archive January 27, 2001, accessed March 7, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20010127010700/http://www.christiancoders.com/about.shtml .

[195] Graceworks (Tim Emmerich) "Christian Game Developers Conference?" accessed March 10, 2014, http://ccnarchive.christiandevs.com/thread.php?f=HelpWanted&t=000004

[196] Ibid., International Christian Game Developers Association, "Welcome!" archived by the Internet Archive February 11, 2005, accessed March 11, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050211053050/http://www.cgdc.org/ ; International Christian Game Developers Association, "Welcome!" archived by the Internet Archive December 1, 2005, accessed March 11, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20051201143840/http://www.cgdc.org .

bringing prolific companies like Wisdom Tree into collaboration with ambitious newcomers, they spur game making. And from the beginning, these conferences have been interrogating the nature of digital religion in ways that we, as scholars of religion, might productively imitate: "similarities and differences between seeking capital for a secular game and a Christian game?" "Where does one draw the line between the content that goes into a Christian game versus the content that goes into a secular game?"[197]

Apps, Profiles and the Bounds of this Study [2004-2010]

The next spike in religious video game creation, like the ones before it, overwhelmingly reflects the increased participation of gaming technologies which had only a few appearances in the previous period. And, again, this period contains a few examples that defy the Frye Curve by giving technologies sacred work while they are still cutting-edge. But there is not a section after this one to see how those technologies mature. In 2011, I performed my first search for "bible game" in the "Marketplace" (later "Play Store") where Google distributes software for smart phones and tablets, and I immediately declared my historical survey closed: I was standing at the foot of a peak in Christian gaming approximately five times the height of those of 2002 or 2007. The Bible game seemed to have acquired some new tendency that would require new analytical instruments. But the curve-and-a-half leading up to this shift will provide clues to guide the treks that will chart the new peaks and valleys of digital religion. This is the period where digital religion becomes something one signs-up for, a matter of *apps* and *profiles.*

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[197] Via Tech LLC, "Topics" archived by the Internet Archive October 20, 2003, accessed March 11, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20031020124556/http://www.cgdc.org/pages/topics.htm .

Both of these technocultural trends might be well framed through the release of

Pope2You. In May 2009, Pope Benedict XVI celebrated World Communications Day as popes

had every year since 1967; he presented a letter to the Church.[198] In keeping with the year's

theme of "New Technologies, New Relationships," this letter was embedded in a website that

also unveiled a Youtube channel, a wiki facilitating conversation on papal messages, and links to

two applications, *H2Onews* for iPhones, and *Pope2You* for Facebook.[199] These artifacts of

digital religion are each embedded within a system of personal subscriptions, and while the first

two allow anonymous viewing, none of them allows further interaction until the user *signs-up*.

Registered users can then use the software to communicate in specific ways. The *Pope2You*

Facebook application, for instance, allows users to share carefully-chosen images and quotations

of the Pope without the possibility of commentary. It seems, in fact, to resemble Facebook's

native photo-sharing in every way except that this one cannot be accessed or seen by the

uninterested, nor can anyone disrupt the Vatican's messaging with her own commentary.

Both this program and *H2Onews* for Apple's iOS based hand held computers are

designated "*applications," or "apps*," to classify them within the ongoing vogue for centralized

"digital distribution" (meaning distribution without physical portage of optical or magnetic

media). Apps, whether for game consoles, phones, personal computers, or subscriber

communities like Facebook, are usually distributed digitally from a single service that manages

licensing and some aspects of quality control. The app is thus intimately connected with the user

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[198] Catechesis of the Popes, "World Communications Day," accessed March 11, 2014,
http://catechesisofthepopes.wordpress.com/other-themes/media/world-communications-day/

[199] Pontifical Council for Social Communications, "Pope 2 You," archived by the Internet Archive May 25, 2009,
accessed March 11, 2014,
http://wayback.archive.org/web/20090525104517/http://www.pope2you.net/index.php?id_testi=6

profile. As a rule, to access software, users are required to create a file by which the service can identify them, create a password to protect that file, and contractually agree not to share the password. These files, interchangeably called "profiles," "user accounts," or various other service delimited names, extend far beyond (and before) app based computing, organizing our exchanges, for instance, with online discussion forums and Automated Teller Machines. Their content varies wildly according to the system that applies them, and that content is differently accessible to differently permitted users. Consider, for instance, how different your Facebook profile looks when accessed by you, by a "friend," by Facebook staff, by advertisers, or by the National Security Agency. In this last period, the profile became a dominant formation of human identity, not only as we are understood by computers, but as we understand one another and ourselves. Religious communities discovered the relationship of this new humanity to their own sacra both by creating new services and by applying the affordances of apps and profiles in surprising ways across existing systems.

Though profiles can be traced back through Multi User Dungeons and online forums back into the early 1980s, and may go much further back along other lines, it is with the popularization of websites like Myspace and Facebook in this period that the maintenance of profiles becomes a dominant identity practice among computer users. These websites, commonly called "social networks," allow users to make some aspects of their profile visible to other users, including a range of aesthetic elements that encourage (and emulate) personal identification between the user and his profile. But we should not assume that these networks are entirely populated by humans. As vehicles for the circulation of sacra, these services also empower asymmetrical networking with God, and other powerful non-humans. Today, in very particular,

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the Facebook *Message from God* app says: "Today we believe God wants us to know that circumstances don't make you, they reveal you."[200]

The profile elements visible between networked users at the standard level of access allow for various forms of religious identification. Myspace's basic profile information, for instance, includes a drop-down menu of fourteen possible religions. Facebook, on the other hand, provides an open space in which users can write whatever answer they choose to the question "religion." Users can then decorate their profile and share it with other users. Here too, the major social networks offer different options, all of which provide religious opportunities. Consider how Myspace, in allowing users to include music, animations, and *sparkles* on their profiles, created room for an outpouring of religious creativity. Other websites quickly began providing images formatted specifically to enhance profile pages by emphasizing users' various specific interests and demographics. In 2007, for instance, both Imikimi.com and ImageChef.com began generating digital photo frames for use on Myspace. The website Zingerbug, in categorizing these frames, immediately included an "Angels" category as well as categories for various holidays, and by 2009 it had material to populate a free standing "Christian" category.[201] These images were, in many senses, a continuation of Christian clip art, an art form that had been evolving at least since 1987 when it was included in T/Maker's influential *ClickArt* software.[202]

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[200] All Devotion, "Daily Message from God," Accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.alldevotion.com/

[201] Zingerbug.com, "Customizable MySpace Angel Comments,"archived by the Internet Archive, November 7, 2007, accessed January 24, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20071107083211/http://www.zingerbug.com/Comments/Customizable/angels_page 1.htm ; Zingerbug.com, "Customizable Imikimi Comments, Glitter Graphics and Templates: Christian," archived by the Internet Archive, March 3, 2009, accessed January 24, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20090303104934/http://www.zingerbug.com/Comments/Customizable/christian_pa ge1.htm .

[202] Justia Trademarks, "CLICKART CHRISTIAN IMAGES – Trademark Details," accessed March 13, 2014,

Unlike previous Christian clip art, however, digital crosses no longer circulated along the limited ambit of the church bulletin, but through differently constrained networks that users described as somehow equivalent to themselves.

For some users, however, profile-level modifications of this sort were inadequate. In 2007, *Myspace* was answered by the Christian alternative, *ThySpace*, and *YouTube* was answered by *GodTube.* Without accidentally confusing a website's *name* for its *project,* we might note that this parallel shift and its associated social networking projects were created the year after *Time Magazine* put a mirrored monitor on its cover and declared *YOU* the person of the year. In turning social networking from an egoistic project to one of divine focus, these websites did more than change the label on the box. In terms of content organization, *GodTube* makes devotionals and newsletters parallel priority alongside videos, and *ThyWorks* (as *ThySpace* renamed itself) supplemented music pages and personal profiles by partnering with Christian comic books like *David's Mighty Men* and *Archangels: The Saga.*[203] By creating new services rather than applying worldly ones in Christian ways, digital creatives attempted to shift the center of the social network from the individual to the God they serve.

However, though there is a significant difference, religious work on shared networks and religiously organized networks do not stand in a clean dichotomy. This becomes clearer when users are given more options than profile modification and heavily constrained play. Consider, for instance, *Second Life*, a three-dimensional online world created in 2003, in which users can interact with any scripted object, inhabit any space, and *wear any body* that they or another user

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http://trademarks.justia.com/744/64/clickart-christian-images-74464970.html .

[203] ThyWorks.com, "About Us," archived by the Internet Archive October 29, 2007, accessed March 13, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20071029134513/http://thyworks.com/about_us.php .

can design. Homesteading by religious communities in this world seems to begin in 2006 with

the appearance of locations like the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Second Life, the

Humanism Garden, and Second Life Synagogue Beth Israel, followed by the Anglican Cathedral

of Second Life, and ALM CyberChurch of Second Life in 2007, and Kannonji Buddhist Retreat

in 2008.[204] These early settlements of various religions in *Second Life* are important because

each of them shows how religious subscribers can create worlds within the worlds provided to

them by specific services. Though the spatialized format of *Second Life* makes these particularly

dramatic, welcoming users to sit in a pew before a polygonal pulpit or to wander through

Heaven, the creation of religious interest groups on Facebook demonstrates the same principle:

Where the tools are provided, religious communities frequently establish enclaves in which their

sacra can circulate, affirming those who already know them and inviting new participants to join

in as well. These tools can be as large as trends in computing, or as small as particular features of

pieces of software.

While video games had been networked in various ways for decades, in this last period,

Christians began discovering the potentials of networked video games as spaces for building

communities. The late 1990s had seen the birth of both clans and guilds, teams of players that

seem to emerge in networked games, whether or not the games themselves provided tools for

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[204] Kenneth Sutton, "Going to Church in Second Life," *UUWorld Magazine* (Feburary 2, 2007), accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/16206.shtml ; Torin Golding, "SL Humanism Group," accessed March 12, 2014, http://slhumanismgroup.blogspot.com/ ; Julian Voloj, "Virtual Sanctuary," *Jewish Daily* Forward, February 16, 2007, accessed February 11, 2014, http://forward.com/articles/10101/virtual-sanctuary/ ; Anglican Cathedral of Second Life, "History," accessed January 29, 2014, http://slangcath.wordpress.com/about/history/ ; Dokimos.org, "Cyber Church in Second Life," accessed March 12, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070208182449/http://dokimos.org/secondlife ; Cathy Lynn Grossman, "Faithful Build a Second Life for Religion Online," *USA Today,* accessed January 29, 2014, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/gaming/2007-04-01-second-life-religion_n.htm

their management. Anyone playing under a consistent name could include a marker of her clan affiliation, and the Internet would facilitate the fuller work of profile making. By 2002, Christian guilds like "Tribe of Judah" began to appear, using private servers to play First Person Shooters without the foul play present on worldly servers.[205] In our present period clans of Christian gamers begin to give way to ministries like +CGO+, "Christian Gamers Online," which seek to network Christians as gamers, and to access online networks of gamers as mission fields.[206] And where games legitimate clans and guilds by granting them digital real estate or other perks, these ministries find ways to apply them toward in-game congregation. This legitimation, and with it, the appearance of Christian congregations, seems to characterize many Massively Multiplayer Online games at present. [IXO He Will Return IXO], for instance, is a clan extending its Christian presence across many of the largest MMO worlds, ministering to players in *Age of Conan, Star Wars Galaxies, Warhammer Online,* and *World of Warcraft.*[207] In 2009, reports begin to circulate of a stable church community conducting weekly services in *Ultima Online:* "Here there was a female pastor espousing the virtues of non-denominational Christian faith in, of all places, Sosaria. West of Trinsic near the Bog of Desolation to be precise. I felt awkward to be wearing a wizard hat."[208]

　　　As with social networking services, this period witnessed some religious communities

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[205] Tribe of Judah, "Community FAQ," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.toj.cc/toj.php?x=main/faq/2 .

[206] Christian Gamers Online, Inc., "Position Statement," accessed March 12, 2014, http://christiangamers.net/cms/index.php/2012-12-30-22-09-12/positionstatement .

[207] IXO He Will Return IXO, "Home," accessed March 12, 2014, http://www.guildportal.com/Guild.aspx?GuildID=238745&TabID=2009410 .

[208] GreyPawn, "Vas Rel Sanct – Church in UO," accessed March 12, 2014, http://stratics.com/community/threads/vas-rel-sanct-church-in-uo.162454/.

shifting beyond the ambiguous practice of building in worldly systems to create their own

networked game worlds. Alongside the emergence of the first Christian FPS clans, *Eternal War:*

Shadows of Light (Xrucifix, 2003) empowered players to participate in cooperative networked

play, fighting demons together as angels. *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* (Left Behind Games,

2006), similarly, allowed for networked combat between players; here, notably, one player had

to play as the forces of the Antichrist. In 2008, the Islamic social network, *Muxlim Pal* (Muxlim)

became the first stable multi-user online world organized for a religious public. In 2010, three

different Christian games – *Yahero* (Yahero)*, Godstoria: The Bible Online* (FIAA GmbH)*,* and

Bible Bible Town (Third Day Games) – present very different visions of how biblical truth can be

transmitted through shared game-worlds. *Godstoria: The Bible Online*, was a territory

management and war strategy game wherein each player would play as Abraham, pursuing

God's promises and building a colony upon a great plain populated by other players who were

also Abraham. In my six months as a settler in that world, I found the combat against other

Abrahams quite difficult to explain to myself or anyone else. *BIG Bible Town* also invites players

to create their own biblical villages, but this game avoids the theological problem of multiple

instances of key biblical characters competing against one another by casting the player as a

customizable child living in a dusty era that unifies all of biblical history. While witnessing the

sacred narrative in the embedded game worlds, which are unlocked weekly for paid subscribers,

each player gathers tokens that can be spent building a town for other players to visit. *Yahero,*

our final multi-player Christian game world, largely avoids the problematics of biblical

remediation by working in a sci-fi idiom. The player is cast as a protector of "Zioden," a flying

city built around a great homiletical tree. Though I completed most of the content released for

Yahero before the service closed down, collecting *the Logosphere of Creation* and various *lumiscrolls,* I never succeeded in talking to other players in the game world. Through some malfunction, perhaps my own, other Yaheros offered only ghostly companionship, standing still in unlikely places, speaking empty text boxes.

Having explored some of the principles of networking within recent profile-based services, we can now better understand the organizations that are deploying them. Moving from *how* to *who,* then, the leap beyond our capacity became possible because in this period religious games became both larger and smaller business than ever before.

To begin with the grandiose, this period saw the emergence of multimillion dollar religious game development. New corporations like Left Behind Games and Digital Praise remediated Christian franchises like Left Behind, Veggie Tales, and Adventures in Odyssey in attempts to hold cultural ground alongside worldly media franchises. Likewise, this period also witnessed a return of digital religion to dedicated gaming consoles. Though consoles had long stopped banning religious content, they continued to limit the range of software through prohibitively expensive licenses and development kits. The return to consoles, then, is made possible by non-religious companies hoping to profit from religious publics. Crave Entertainment released *The Bible Game* (2005), and *Larry Boy and the Bad Apple* (2006). Under each name, they released two different Evangelical games, one each for Game Boy Advance, and the other for Playstation 2 (and XBOX as well, in the case of *The Bible* Game). The three Yoga games released for handheld consoles between 2007 and 2008, similarly, are produced by Square-Enix, Konami, and Ubi Soft, three of the largest worldly games companies active

today.[209]

The only work of an explicitly religious company in the return to consoles recalls the

foundations Roberto Busa laid for digital religion. The Xbox 360 game console offers a forum

for downloadable community-created games (read: apps), and Lifeway Books, perhaps the

biggest Evangelical publisher today, saw it as an opportunity to spread the Gospel. Aaron Linne,

who headed the project, explains it eloquently:

> *"Bringing the Holman Christian Standard Bible translation to the Xbox via Bible Navigator X begins the fulfillment of a dream I have had since the Xbox 360 launched, and they announced that there would be downloadable games."*[210]
> "Now, in our first go at putting this most sacred content onto a video game system via Bible Navigator X, it works with the medium so perfectly: It feels natural and nice, like the XBOX was made to host the Bible. "
> "The Xbox isn't just secular entertainment anymore. We can use technology that other people developed to study Scriptures through a new medium. Some people are just more comfortable with a controller in their hands than a book."[211]

But, again, that religious gaming became big business only explains a small number of

elaborately produced entries. While these have done much to energize the field and to circulate

sacra, the surprising number of games released in 2011 was only possible because religious

games also became small. Of course, religious video games have always been small. If the word

designates the daring and under-funded creativity of auteurs and small development teams,

religious gaming has been *indie* from its first days in the early 1980s. But across the 2000s, new

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[209] Begin with the DS: Tipness's Yoga (2007, Square-Enix); Let's Do Yoga (2007, Konami); Quick Yoga Training (2008, Ubi Soft).

[210] Aaron Linne, "First-Person: An Xbox Dream," accessed January 20, 2014, http://www.baptistpress.org/BPFirstPerson.asp?ID=32218 ; Microsoft, "Bible Navigator X: HCSB," accessed March 17, 2014, http://marketplace.xbox.com/en-GB/Product/Bible-Navigator-X-HCSB/66acd000-77fe-1000-9115-d80258550415?purchase=1.

[211] Aaron Linne, "B&H Introduces 'Bible Navigator X' for XBOX 360," accessed January 20, 2014, http://hcsb.org/hcsb/b/authorjournal/archive/2009/11/10/b-amp-h-introduces-bible-navigator-x-for-xbox-360.aspx.

tools accelerated the circulation of indie games and enhanced their visibility, resulting in the emergence of a self-aware indie games movement whose energy would benefit religious game designers. For instance, the 2002 Game Developers Conference saw the release of Steam, a relatively open platform for digital distribution of computer games, as well as the first "Indie Game Jam," in which developers attempted to create innovative games under severely constrained time limitations.[212] The Christian Coders Network's speed game competition, founded in 2006 and still active into the present, wherein participants have less than a month to create original games, seems contiguous with a self-aware indie games movement. Unfortunately, because I only discovered the contest in the weeks before my dissertation's submission, the present count of 773 religious games only includes those of the speed games that were published elsewhere as well (i.e., *G.M.L. Armor* (Barry Ijmker, 2010)*, Souling's Quest* (Hanclinto Games, 2010), and *Finding Adina* (Washburn Bros, 2007)). In continuity with the indie games movement, this contest self-presents as an engine of innovation. In early years, winners were separately selected for "Best Fun Game" and "Best Presentation of Christian Teaching," but today, these categories include "Polish" and "Creativity/Innovation" as well.[213]

With these elements in place – the adoption of subscription computing services by religious publics, the discovery of religious possibilities within them, and the infusion of religious gaming with large budgets at one end and indie game energy at the other – the immense increase of religious games in 2011 will no longer appear mysterious. Since the 1990s, smartphone usage had been largely contiguous with the limited market for palmtop computing,

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[212] Chris Hecker, "IGJ0," accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.indiegamejam.com/igj0/

[213] Christian Coders Network, CCN Speed Game Contest, archived by the Internet Archive June 15, 2009, accessed March 7, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20090615061630/http://www.gameace.org/~ChristianCoders .

but even here there was some religious creativity (the Olive Tree NIV Bible was released for Blackberry, for instance, in 2005).[214] But in 2007 the iPod touch and iPhone both appear followed by Google's Android devices in 2008, and these new app based platforms move computers into pockets with surprising speed. 2011, the year that may have contained as many Christian games as all prior years, was also the year that found a full third of American adults carrying computers in their pockets.[215]

Android and iOS devices have many similar features such as touch screens, cameras, accelerometers, and Internet access, all of which will interact with sacra in surprising ways. However, as we have seen with computers ranging from mainframes to game consoles, nothing impedes digital religion quite as severely as restrictive licensing, and the difference between Apple and Google's app platforms in this regard is visible in the range of religious applications produced for each of them. The Android Play Store is centralized *de facto,* whereas the iOS Appstore is centralized *de jure.* While Google's own hub for digital distribution is the most common way to download Android software, the operating system is open source and users can choose to download apps from other websites at their own risk, or even use other distribution hubs if they prefer. IOS, on the other hand, is a closed, proprietary operating system, and the Appstore is the only way to install software on an unhacked device. Whereas Google occasionally removes software from the Play Store when it violates their terms of service, Apple must approve all software used on their devices. Their *quality standards,* while not explicitly

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[214] Olive Tree Bible Software, "NIV Bundles Now Available," accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.olivetree.com/newsletter/issues/2005/OTNL_20050518.html .

[215] Aaron Smith, "Smartphone Ownership 2013," accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/06/05/smartphone-ownership-2013/

directed against religious creativity as were Nintendo of America's standards for their early game consoles, have had a similarly chilling effect.

Consistent with previous generations of digital religion, scripture remains a primary form of digital religion on smartphones. In 2009, Android gets both *The Talmud* and *Holy Bible – King James Version*, and Olive Tree already reports hundreds of thousands of religious texts downloaded for iPhones.[216] Beyond this, perhaps the smartphone boom's effects on digital religion might be best understood by gesturing to the device's various parts and observing their recreation as affordances for religious publics: cameras gain transcendent vision from apps like *Christian FrameIt!,* and *Christian Cross Sticker Widget* (2010); headphones begin to play religious radio apps like *K-Light* (2010); GPS is oriented to sacred landscapes like that of *Christian Praying Compass*; even barcode readers take on sacred possibilities through programs like *QRyptic Jude* (2011).[217] This quick sampling of Christian possibilities is meant only as a hint. Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Pagan apps abound for both iOS and Android, and they consistently uncover new sacred possibilities for these increasingly ubiquitous devices.

The licensing difference creates a differential in sacred possibilities, however. The Android platform abounds with artifacts of digital religion produced by a range of religious

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[216] "Holy Bible – King James Version," http://appgravity.com/android-app/lifestyle/indiaNIC-android-TheHolyBible (accessed 1/20/2014); Joseph Barclay, "The Talmud," http://appgravity.com/android-app/lifestyle/indiaNIC-android-TheTalmud (accessed 1/20/2014); Olive Tree Bible Software, "The Dominant Animal in Mobile Bible Publishing," accessed March 15, 2014, http://blog.olivetree.com/2009/08/12/olive-tree-in-the-newspaper/

[217] Technicow Creations, "Christian FrameIt!" accessed January 24, 2014, http://appgravity.com/android-app/media-video/com-technicow-christianframeit/ ; Hedgesoft, "Christian Cross Sticker Widget," accessed January 20, 2014, http://appgravity.com/android-app/lifestyle/com-hedgesoftsolutions-widgets-christiancross; DJBSoftware Inc, "K-Light," accessed January 20, 2014, http://appgravity.com/android-app/entertainment/com-djbapps-klight; GeoLinx, "Christian Praying Compass," accessed January 24, 2014, http://appgravity.com/android-app/tools/com-prayingcompass-christian; Verse Ability, "QRyptic JUDE," accessed January 24, 2014, http://appgravity.com/android-app/arcade/air-QRypticJude

creatives to whom iOS would be unattainable. Apps whose only task is displaying animated

crosses, pentagrams, or other sacra, for instance, comprise a sprawling mediascape that slants

hard away from Apple. This difference, as it manifests in religious games creation, is already

visible in the last years of my present history. Whereas I was able to locate only three religious

games for iOS – *Bible Blocks* (Jonathan Giles, 2009), *Bible Reference Game* (Thy Word Is True,

2009), and *Word Cross* (Michael Surran, 2010) – Android had seven games in 2010 – *Bible*

Stories Word Search (LittleIslandGames), *BibleTet* (ApproS)*, Bible Traveler: Bible Numbers*

(Sam Mejias), *Brain Cafe: Test Your Faith* (Urbian), *Game- Books of the Bible* (PaKeSoft), *Race*

on Squares: Bible Edition (ApproS), *Sort the Name: Bible Puzzle* (Sam Mejias).

In 2011, the time was right. Hundreds of developers suddenly found themselves able to

do something new. They could create their own vehicle for the Good News and send it out to

everyone. Apple's more restrictive licensing practices recall digital religion's first days on those

jealously guarded mainframes slightly more than do Google's, so it stands to reason that Android

presents a wilder efflorescence of religious games, but the difference is minute compared to how

far digital religion traveled in sixty years. Recall that in those first days the computers were not

only massive, they were *distant.* Initially, the most widely circulating objects of digital religion

were bound indexes, and those were themselves enormous, costly and rare. Devices like Bible

readers had increased portability, but had never sought ubiquity. But now the staggering

demographic of humans willing and able to maintain a smartphone plan has become a missions

field. Every day it becomes more likely that a person looking for a game about the Bible will

have a device in her pocket ready to provide it.

Conclusion

Are Evangelical games five to seven years behind the game play curve? Having fragmented the notion of a singular curve as a cross-section of innumerable interacting curves, and used this frame to consider the historical expanse of religious video gaming, both "yes" and "no" seem to be good answers. Some religious games have in fact been made using technologies and modes of play that saw their peak popularity some half-decade earlier, while others have raced ahead of their technologies' popularization.

A lag, of course, is easiest to see when religious games are framed as vehicles for outdated technoculture. In some cases, game critics and developers make this frame attractive by centering those elements that were previously featured in popular games. *Spiritual Warfare* (1991)*,* though it included a much more flexible primary weapon system than any *Zelda* game to date (to name only one interesting difference), seems to have been received as the Christian *Zelda*; *Dance Praise* (2005) has always been the Christian *DDR*. But we can locate religious gaming upon a leading edge as well: *The Philistine Ploy* (1983) was one of the first graphical text adventure games, appearing a year before *King's Quest*; Interlight's Bible games for CD-i (1991-1992) were among the first CD-ROM console games; religious games were shareware before *Wolfenstein*; and the first religious game suites proliferated in perfect step with their worldly counterparts. Within two years of the Android marketplace's creation it was so full of religious games that it had to be set aside for a later study.

But digital religion is neither late nor early, and it reveals its most surprising possibilities when we seek its particularity. This survey highlighted some extravagant specificity as in a game packaged with a digital Bible reader, or games with magical powers, but the broad center merits

the same attention. From the beginning to the present, religious video gaming has taken worldly games, Sunday school exercises, scriptural narratives, and out-game theologies and recreated them, invested now with their characteristic liveliness. Even the dozens of Bible word scrambles and jigsaw puzzles should not be distorted into a simple secondarity. Sunday schools whose students are anonymous to one another, and jigsaws that become animated Bible scenes when assembled, should not be framed as derivative. They are lively, peculiar, specific, and entrusted separately with sacred work.

Seeking this particularity, we now turn toward an investigation of particular games. The next two chapters will open this work with a study of Evangelicals in the game-violence debates, then consider how those debates manifest in Evangelical First-Person Shooters.

Chapter 4

Swords Into Plowshares and Back Again:
Evangelical Christians and the "Game-Violence" Debates

"Dear Father, In the days of Noah, You were so angry about the violence in the world that you sent a flood. Today You're probably just as concerned about the violence in video games. Change our hearts so we'll desire a better way, and help us to seek games that are not violent. Amen."

– A prayer for families considering video games from the Southern Baptist periodical *Home Life*[218]

Illustration 8: Feeding Animals in *Super 3D Noah's Ark*

First, a person shooting:

You are B.J. Blazkowicz, an American soldier trapped in a Nazi fortress. You throw the

door open and find yourself facing a crimson swastika banner; the hallway stretches to both

sides. To your right a guard dog barks. You wheel frantically toward the lunging beast, but it

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[218] Robert G. (Bob) DeMoss Jr., "Media Play: When You Haven't Got a Prayer," *Home Life 53* (December 1998): 60-61.

bites into you before you can shoot it. You unload two pistol rounds into its face and the German Shepherd whimpers, collapsing into a pool of blood. A guard hears the gunfire and comes running, shouting in German and firing a machine gun. You draw back into the doorway to catch your breath.

Then, a person shooting:

You are B.J. Blazkowicz, a soldier from the Republic trapped in a fortress of the Master State. You throw the door open and find yourself facing a banner emblazoned with a great blue +; the hallway stretches to both sides. To your right a giant rat barks. You wheel frantically toward the lunging mutant, but it bites into you before you can shoot it. You unload two pistol rounds into its face and the hideous creature whimpers, collapsing into a pool of blood. A guard hears the gunfire and comes running, shouting in English and firing a machine gun. You draw back into the doorway to catch your breath.

Once more, a person shooting:

You are Noah, God's chosen caretaker, only trapped in the ark for five more days. You throw the door open and find yourself facing the bent bars of some animal's broken cage; the hallway stretches to both sides. To your right an angry goat bleats. You wheel frantically toward the lunging beast, but it bites into you before you can feed it. You feed it two pieces of fruit from a slingshot and the goat snores loudly, falling asleep on the floor. An antelope hears the twang of your slingshot and comes running, clattering its hooves and spitting its inexplicably dangerous saliva. You draw back into the doorway to catch your breath.

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Since the first vogue for arcade gaming, rhizomatic networks of computers and their users

(including those who primarily use them as rhetorical foils) have been engaged in lively disagreements over the possibility that video games may cause humans to kill one another. These debates concerning the referent and importance of "violence" with respect to computer software have significantly shaped the entanglement of computers and humans. The *game-violence debates* are the primary context for such basic notions as adulthood, morality, and good taste as they relate to computers. As such, these debates merit the attention of religious studies, cultural studies, Science and Technology Studies, and other disciplines concerned with the historical mediation of morality. For the study of American religion, however, the game-violence debates are of particular interest because they showcase how the emerging counterpublic of Evangelical computing constitutes itself by deepening, extending, and sacralizing concerns it shares with the simultaneously emerging public of worldly computing. Specifically, they tend to agree that problematic media violence enjoins cutting-edge technologies of photorealism to depict the emission of "blood and gore" where weapons (including bodies) presumed to be accessible to audience members come into conflict. However, while the hegemonic worldly discourse on game-violence only works to prevent murders Evangelical games must forge virtues. Alongside consequentialist concerns flickers a vision of non-violence that orients children to spiritual warfare. We will come to understand this substantive and paradoxical opposite of media violence as *sacred play*.

This chapter and the one that follows it will present the game-violence debates by beginning with First-Person Shooters [FPS]. These are games wherein the immediate object of player control is a camera that fires projectiles into the game world. While most genres –whether fighting (*Mortal Kombat*), adventure (*Grand Theft Auto*), or racing (*Carmageddon*)– have

periodically offered instances for public scrutiny within these debates, the FPS is the only full genre which is regularly queried as potentially irredeemable. In some cases, the genre even becomes a synecdoche for game-violence as such, and begins to absorb a surprising variety of media: "They call them first-person shooter games. They are one of the most popular and troubling genres of video games. First-person shooter games include 'Doom,' 'Quake,' 'Mortal Kombat,' 'Turok,' 'Killer Instinct,' 'Sin,' 'Half-Life,' 'Rainbow Six,' and 'Tribes.' These video, computer, and Internet games rip, slice, and blow up body parts and scatter them across the screen in 3D realism."[219] I offer an Evangelical example here, but worldly instances abound; what matters is that two of these are only FPS games if that category is interchangeable for "problematic violence." We will need a more substantive definition, but this one provices a provocative place to start.

First-Person Shooters

The three moments of play that open this chapter welcome us into the genre's flexibility. The first moment is situated within the 1992 release of *Wolfenstein 3D* for DOS based home computers, the game most frequently cited by game critics as the seminal instance of the FPS, and the following two are situated within *Wolfenstein's* adaptations for the Super Nintendo [SNES] game console. The second moment is frequently derided as an object lesson in the incoherence of video game censorship; Nintendo of America's official SNES adaptation of *Wolfenstein 3D* removed Nazi imagery to avoid offending players, but sought no narratively

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[219] Ken Reaves, "Video, Computer, and Internet Games," *Living With Teenagers Parent Ministry Edition 22* (July 2000), 31.

coherent alternative. The third moment is from *Super 3D Noah's Ark* (1993) [*S3DNA*]*, a FPS

created by the Christian company Wisdom Tree for audiences who hope to avoid violence.

Brenda Huff, former sales associate and current owner of Wisdom Tree is quite clear: "We were

offering parents and gamers an alternative to the violence of so many other games. We were

FAMILY FRIENDLY before family friendly was popular."[220]

These adapted games should not be dismissed as the further evacuation of an already thin

cultural form, and we learn little by identifying them as censorial efforts. Yes, of course, the

production of non-violence entails removal, but the identification of specific elements as

problematically violent is itself a complex creative process, and in every case these evacuations

leave spaces in which surprising creative work takes place. *Super 3D Noah's Ark* places players

into a sealed menagerie structured according to rigid mathematical specifications, safe from the

destruction outside, but crowded with mythically charged wildlife. As part of the larger cultural

conversation on video game-violence, Evangelical creativity creates contact zones wherein we

can observe the co-becoming of theologies and technologies, market pressures and moral panics,

and agencies human, animal, machine and divine. To understand these spaces, though, we must

enter by following one agency or another. Let's begin with the code all three games share.

In many senses, *Wolfenstein 3D* was nothing new. The games *Maze War* (Steve Colley,

1974) and *Spasim* (Jim Bowery, 1974) had inaugurated the FPS formula eighteen years earlier:[221]

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[220] Gibson, "Interview: Brenda Huff."

[221] Though game historians tend to agree that these two games are the first instances of the First-Person Shooter, this particular citation is notably from a history of the form written by Theodore Beale, the primary designer of the Christian FPS *The War in Heaven.* Vox Day (Theodore Beale), "Halo and the High Art of Games: A History of the First-Person Shooter," in *Halo Effect: An Unauthorized Look at the Most Successful Video Game of All Time*, ed. Glenn Yeffeth and Jennifer Thomason (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2006), 154-155.

One plays by exploring the game world to locate and shoot specific targets; these will generally be active opponents (either computer or human controlled), but may also include strategic or whimsical targets (e.g. shooting a candle to light it, or shooting out windows for fun). *Wolfenstein 3D* is certainly not remembered for its narrative innovations, as Id games apparently took nothing from the many explorations of FPS story-telling from those intervening decades, like characters who engage players in dialog or items with purposes beyond killing enemies or opening doors.[222] Nor, even, is *Wolfenstein 3D* significant for unprecedented quantities of blood depicted on screen (c.f. *Commando Libya* for Commodore 64, the self-described "sadism game" in 1986).[223] *This game* is remembered as the watershed of the FPS genre, rather, because of the surprising number of agencies it brought into collision: on the analog side of the screen, the game was the first FPS blockbuster, selling more than 100,000 copies in its first year, and on the digital side of the screen, it efficiently deployed the increasing power of personal computers to create thrilling hordes of Nazi enemies.[224] And, most importantly, as thousands of players each killed hundreds of Nazis, *game* studios swarmed the battlefields hoping to continue the frenzy and redirect it in support of their radically divergent projects. Or, in the words of *Wolfenstein*'s celebrity programmer John Romero, "Wolfenstein 3-D was the first fast-action FPS and officially ushered in the genre." Of course, since Romero said this as the single most established character in the history of First-Person Shooting, his judgment of a game's "official" status is

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[222] For some narratively rich outliers in the history of FPS games, see: *The Colony* (1987, Mindscape), *The Terminator* (Bethesda, 1990).

[223] *Commando Libya* (Robert Pfitzner, 1986).

[224] Jay Wilbur, then CEO of Id Software, estimated that a million free demo versions (shareware) were circulating as of 1993. Dwight Silverman, "`Doom' Bursts Onto College Computer Networks," *Houston Chronicle*, December 15, 1993.

both nearly tautological (he demonstrates the strange power of this office by declaring "DOOM officially set the genre on fire.")[225]

Another feature that begins with *Wolfenstein* and remains a significant feature of the FPS landscape is the relative separability of game worlds and "game engines." These provide "the core algorithms controlling a game. It reads controller input from the user, drives characters through game levels, fabricates behavior, generates sound at specified times, and generates real-time display."[226] And they are readily reapplied to divergent projects. The opening instances of play demonstrate some peculiarities this generates, as each of them presents only agencies possible within *Wolfenstein 3D*'s game engine: a body that can run but cannot fall, enemies that can hear and see but cannot collaborate, walls that always meet at right angles. But the two adaptations use the *Wolfenstein* engine to accommodate play by very different publics. One strove to satisfy the moral requirements of "families" at large (by way of Nintendo of America's quality standards) by retaining blood but scrambling the potentially offensive context, and the other attempted to welcome Evangelical Christians in particular by removing blood as part of a fuller recontextualization, turning the shooter into a playable version of the Flood narrative.

While it might be easy to say in the abstract that FPS games compel any single type of action (murder, for instance), the multiple, parallel lives of a single game engine might be applied as a palliative in temporary bouts of technological determinism. *Doom*, the FPS which

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[225] The Romero [John Romero], comment on "Ultima Underworld: The Sygian Abyss's Influence on Wolf3D," accessed January 20,2014, http://rome.ro/smf/index.php?topic=2798.0;wap2.

[226] Adrian Herwig and Philip Paar, "Game Engines: Tools for Landscape Visualization and Planning?" accessed January 20, 2014, http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.134.75&rep=rep1&type=pdf, 4.

built most directly upon the technology and the success of *Wolfenstein 3D*, became the architecture for both official training exercises for US Marines, and for *Chex Quest* (Digital Café, 1996), a bloodless cereal-themed shooter.[227] The movements of shared technologies mark bright lines between disparate gaming publics, but so too do the skills (e.g. the ability to play a FPS), and tropes (e.g. the image of children who naturally enjoy "action") that orient the application of those technologies.

Finally, to understand Evangelical play we will have to understand the game-violence debates to which they are oriented. Having located the FPS game as both a site of intense contestation and surprising malleability, we can begin to understand it as a representative site of these creatively productive debates. First-Person Shooters are games where we look out through the player-character's eyes. They prepare a place for us, but to do this they must make assumptions about who we are.

Presumption and Playership

As game-violence debates orient the circulation of these technologies, skills, and tropes, what, if anything, distinguishes the diversity of Evangelical creativity from the diversity of worldly creativity? In a word, *playerships*. A game implies a humanity who will play it. A playership can be identified by some combination of its particular desires, talents, literacies, ages, genders or nearly any other set of features. The games at hand have been crafted for different groups with different understandings of "violence" and different orientations to it. The

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[227] For information on "the military entertainment complex" see Timothy Lenoir and Henry Lowood, "Theatres of War," in *Collection, Laboratory, Theater Scenes of Knowledge in the 17th Century*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, and Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); 427-457. For information on "advergaming" see Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Video Games* (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2007).

presence of a game, however, does not require such a humanity to actually exist anywhere.

Some simple questions will help us see overdetermination which accompanies in-game solutions to out-game moral concerns: "Was *S3DNA* created in order to convey a Christian message?" Perhaps some members of the team had that intention, but there is no way to know. We can certainly say that this intention would not have been sufficient to create the game, as Wisdom Tree received the *Wolfenstein* engine because Color Dreams, their parent company, purchased it for a gory adaptation of the movie *Hellraiser*.[228] So we may ask instead, "Is *S3DNA* biblical?" Well, it depends what you mean. Where Genesis 7:2 places seven pairs from every species and two pairs from every unclean species into the ark, this game includes 250 to 400 instances each of five different clean animals. But the Bible was clearly consulted, as the six unique animals that serve as level bosses are all ceremonially unclean.[229] But these ambiguities are not the province of Christian adaptations alone. If we ask "Did *SNES Wolfenstein* adaptation successfully remove the Nazi presence?" again, it depends what we mean. The DOS original made no reference to historical atrocities committed by Nazis, so we might question whether a struggle against Hitler-in-a-robotic-suit-with-Gatling-guns-for-arms ever had Nazis to remove. When game critics complain that removing this "Hitler's" mustache produces "a generic shoot `em up romp against generic bad guys" (and they do), they are not complaining that the loss of Nazi insignia fragments an otherwise coherent historical recreation, but perhaps that without

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[228] Martin Nielsen, "The Story of Color Dreams," accessed January 20, 2014, http://www.nesworld.com/colordreams2.php ; "Hellraiser," accessed January 20, 2014, http://www.uvlist.net/game-7863-Hellraiser .

[229] Propadeutic, "Super 3-D Noah's Ark 'Walkthrough,'" accessed January 20, 2014, http://www.gamefaqs.com/snes/563038-super-noahs-ark-3d/faqs/18347 .

those insignia it is less pleasurable to play at killing these simulated humans.[230]

Neither game seems to have reached its intended playership. Nintendo of America calls their public "families," and Wisdom Tree calls theirs "Christians." Both are imaginary collectivities that have specific *modes of play*, hailed by games designed to accommodate them and distributed to find them. Nintendo, for instance, designed a game reflecting the maxim that *family play* does not involve swastikas, and Wisdom Tree that *Evangelical play* references the Bible somehow. But these modes of play are always imperfect fits with real playerships. Just as few families seem to have been impressed by *SNES Wolfenstein* friendliness, Christian games have not yet become the primary form of entertainment for any denomination that I could locate. And we need not apply a free-market model of desire – situating players as *consumers* within a self-correcting marketplace – to observe the manifold transformations produced in these mismatches between modes of play and playerships. Failures to locate playerships inspire the creation of new games, but these attempts might not come any closer to their object. In observing either worldly or Evangelical attempts at non-violence, we see a growing heap. Without assuming improvement, nor even that each successive layer's direction of growth is the same, we will call this progress.

The difference is that *S3DNA* seeks a child who is a budding prayer warrior. While both games seek out *the child,* Nintendo's child is the child imagined by media studios seeking to

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[230] Approaching narrative coherence from a very different angle, the Japanese adaptation makes this a story about how Blazkowicz is fighting a sort of zombie-factory overseen by Corporal Adolph Troutman. Clubey, "The SNES Version and the SFC Version," archived by The Internet Archive October 30, 2011, accessed January 20, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20111030062857/http://www1.linkclub.or.jp/~clubey/other%20platforms/snes2.html; Quote above from Jay Wilbur of Id software. "Jaguar Version of Wolfenstein 3D Restores Original Plot, Unleashes the Power of 64-bit Technology; 64-bit Technology of the U.S.-Made Jaguar Flexes its Muscle Once Again," *Business Wire,* August 1, 1994.

avoid litigation. In working primarily to create media that does not *hurt* children, Nintendo has imagined the child as an almost entirely passive creature. This child is *innocent* and *impressionable*; its pleasure is a species of "fun" of which it seems to be the passive recipient. Its only active capacity seems to be *growing,* and even that, with regards to both educational and recreational software, is so framed by mediated influence that it usually sounds like the emergence of television's potentials rather than the child's own. The child as located by Evangelical media, on the other hand, is not conceived as children-in-general, but quite the opposite. The child growing to be *in* but not *of* the world is presumed to be an already moral agent. What they put into their minds matters, not only because they may express undesirable traits later, but because maturation is the process across which they "put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11, KJV). Neither game, again, might ever locate the child they seek, but these very different conceptions of the player will mobilize the design and circulation of very different games.

Since the first Evangelical game-review websites appeared in the mid-1990s, they have tended to rate games as mixtures of toxic elements, "violence," "occultism," (foul) "language," and "sex" being the most frequent list. The claim that a game contains a great amount of any single element is sufficient reason to declare it inappropriate for Christians, or even for humans at large. This mode of media critique is continuous with previous Evangelical critique of radio and television in that Christians are trying to decide whether or not worldly modes of communication are fit to transmit sacred messages. That said, we should not assume that Evangelical critique has had any static set of concerns with worldy media.   It seems that Evangelical media critique emerged across the 19th century with a gradual shift of attention from

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the problem of sin to the problem of 'vice.'[231] At both ends of this transition, the theater was a dominant popular entertainment, and throughout, Evangelical declamations (though that medium has rarely lacked battles) concerned "filth" and "licentiousness" rather than "violence."[232] The following chapter follows the development of the word "violence," as a lens through which we can observe the emergence of Evangelical games. However, we cannot map "violence" onto a curve of any kind.

Even were we to pursue the referent of "violence" within video games alone, we would find an unruly collection of shifting criteria. While we could make a tidy chart of games that include flesh-colored bipeds that emit red-stuff or cries of pain when removed from play, games with items named after out-game firearms, or myriad other indexes for "violence," none of these would fit the occurrence of the word "violence" in Evangelical critique, nor for that matter its worldly cognate. Any consistent criteria we choose will locate instances that diligent critics ignore. Nor can we resolve this complexity with recourse to a hermeneutic of family resemblance. There is no reason to assume in advance that the surname "Violence" is not a homophone with several non-intersecting meanings. Should a family resemblance appear, our task would be to try and discover what holds the family together, and to never presume things similarly named are naturally related.

Nor have the laboratory studies of video games and violence that have proliferated over

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[231] Dominic Erdozain, The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2010).

[232] Herrick Johnson, *A Plain Talk About the Theater* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1882), accessed January 20, 2014, http://books.google.com/books?id=1wIOAAAAYAAJ&dq ; Rev. Samuel Govern Winchester, *The Theater* (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1840), accessed January 20, 2014, http://books.google.com/books?id=v5MVAAAAYAAJ&dq ; James Buckley, *Christians and the Theater* (New York: Nelson & Philips, 1875), accessed January 20, 2014, http://books.google.com/books?id=vZEXAAAAYAAJ&ots.

recent decades solved this problem. In trying to correlate two things (and a distinct publication

bias seems to make *trying* a fair allegation), these studies have been unreliable on both ends.[233]

At times, indices for violence have presumed the neutrality of the state by tracking criminal

convictions, while at others they have imposed a neurological determinism by assuming certain

kinds of brain-waves are the site of "violence."[234] On the game-side, things are even less

reliable, as game selections have consistently introduced multiple variables, comparing, for

instance, puzzle games with fighters.[235] There seems to never have been any quantitative attempt

to validate or debunk the actual practices of game studios seeking to avoid violence. If *Chex*

Quest actually causes anyone to go easier on a punching bag, it remains solidly unproven.

That said, though the object of the present study is the debate, and not its legitimacy,

whether or not video games do in fact cause out-game violence is an important question, and my

deconstruction should not be mistaken for a dodge. If we were to interrogate a "violence" which

includes all crippling force against human bodies or threats thereof, including those shielded by

state sanction or caused by dangerous labor conditions, that is, if we included institutional and

structural violence, we would require methods neglected in the debates considered here. Toward

an investigation of game-violence of this sort, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter's *Games of Empire*

applies Hart and Negri's *Empire* to investigate structural violence, global labor conditions under

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[233] Christopher J. Ferguson, "Evidence for Publication Bias in Video Game Violence Effects Literature: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Aggression and Violent Behavior 12* (2007), 470-482.

[234] Jeffrey Goldstein, "Violent Video Games" in *The Handbook of Computer Game Studies,* Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 341-357.

[235] Lillian Bensley and Juliet Van Eenwyk, "Video Games and Real-Life Aggression: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Adolescent Health 29* (2001): 244-257.

neo-liberalism, and video games.[236] If we were to include police and military violence as possible effects of video gaming, we could even find concerted attempts to produce it. There seems, in fact, to be a vast feedback loop in which technologies developed for the gaming industry are applied by the US military and vice-versa, a *military-entertainment complex*.[237] With reference to Atari games, Ronald Reagan famously quipped, "Many young people have developed incredible hand, eye, and brain coordination in playing these games. The Air Force believes these kids will be our outstanding pilots should they fly our jets."[238] The present study cannot inject this concern into the game-violence debates, but perhaps we can move forward by asking how it was written out of them.

Locating Violence

Between governmental critics, game designers, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board [ESRB; the video game industry's rating authority in the United States], television pundits, child psychologists, ministers engaged in prophetic media criticism, video game review websites, and the several other intersecting expert systems whose efforts to locate game-violence shape the creation of Evangelical games, there is a surprising consensus concerning which games include violence. It surprises because it emerges despite and not through efforts to define game-violence. But the doxa successfully incorporates one of the tensions that causes "violence" to resist definition: even in the Latin root word *vis,* the "force" denoted already includes both the

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[236] Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig De Peute, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
[237] Lenoir and Lowood, "Theatres of War."

[238] Quoted in Detweiller, 2.

imposition of force by one human on another, and the force of specific emotions over the human subject (as in "violently in love"). At present, both senses display a strong, even determinative, relationship with "violation" of good order.[239] Since at least the 1960s, broadcast news media have deployed "violence" to designate only force which is not authorized by properly constituted authorities, classifying, for instance, harm done by protesters as "violence," while applying a variety of alternative terms to harm done by police.[240] Simultaneously, in much popular discourse, we find that even force against inanimate objects is liable to be identified as "violent" if it is deemed inappropriate: In 1972, 58% of American men agreed that burning a draft card was violent, and at present it is common for newspapers, when describing street protests, to categorize dumpsters and windows as potential victims of violence.[241] And public controversies over "media violence" seem to apply the same conservative impulse to the good orders of imaginary worlds: a British study of reactions to cinematic and televised images found the "most prevalent general rule seems to be that behaviour which is judged to be appropriate, fair and justified – even when overtly violent – is not usually seen to be seriously or 'really' violent."[242] Thus, when a particular instance of force is identified as violence, especially as *serious* violence, we can read this classification as proposing appropriate relationships between entities of various kinds.

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[239] Raymond Williams, *Keywords*: A Vocabulary of Society and Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 330.

[240] David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 449.

[241] *Science* 23 (June,1972),1300-1303, as cited in Alan Bäck, "Thinking Clearly About Violence," Philosophical Studies 117.1 (Jan. 2004). 219-230; 219.

[242] David E. Morrison, et al., Defining Violence (Lutton, UK: University of Lutton Press, 1999), 6.

In religious studies, then, we can often use locations of "violence" to mark the boundaries of religious communities. When Dr. Thomas S. Fortson, President of Promise Keepers, says that *The Passion of the Christ* "is not a violent film, but it is very graphic," he is not measuring a quantity of blood, but describing his organization's relationship to the film's sacra.[243] And where this fails, the difference between varieties of violence often does similar work: "Of all the violent acts that have occurred in the history of the world, the Cross was by far the most important."[244]

Thus, before we can evaluate the rhetorical development of these proprieties, we must acknowledge that force applied in a digital world differs dramatically from either the secret violence of emotions or the material violence of bodies. To understand the stakes, we must do the word itself some violence, wrenching it out of its understood meaning.[245]

A conversion experience: In 1988 the game *Maniac Mansion* (Lucas Arts) was adapted and rereleased for the Nintendo Entertainment System [NES]. The original game, produced for home computers the previous year, cartoonishly parodied the conventions of low brow science fiction and horror films: "Disembodied tentacles hopping around. Chainsaws in the Kitchen. Plants with unusual appetites."[246] To release the game on the NES, that is, in order to market

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[243] Promise Keepers, "This is a Movie You Have to See!" archived by the Internet Archive, February 13, 2004, accessed January 20, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040213013151/http://www.promisekeepers.org/paff/pass/paffpass20.htm#fortson article .

[244] Michael Karounos, "Movie Review: 300," accessed January 20, 2014, http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2007/3002007.html ; Brett Willis, "Movie Review: The Passion of the Christ," accessed January 20, 2014, http://christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2004/thepassionofthechrist.html.

[245] A meaning of "violence" dating from the early 16th century. Williams, 331.

[246] The specific home computers were the Commodore 64 and Apple][. This is copy from the back cover of the Apple][version. Petr Maruska, "My Lucasarts Collection: Maniac Mansion," accessed May 4, 2011, http://collection.maruska.cz/detail.php?id=01&name=Maniac_Mansion.

Maniac Mansion to the four million American households which had made the console 1987's

best selling Christmas gift, the dark humor had to be tempered to fit Nintendo of America's

quality standards.[247] Douglas Crockford, the programmer who headed the conversion, later

recalled that he was never quite sure what would offend Nintendo's quality controllers. He

explained that Nintendo's standards

> "prohibit 'depictions of excessive and gratuitous violence,' which would seem to ban any game in which your character met people, killed them, took their money, and then bought more weapons. But in fact most Nintendo games are still faithful to that theme, so we were unclear as to how to interpret Nintendo's policy. In the Super Mario Bros games, which are considered clean and wholesome, kids routinely kill creatures, and the only motivation is that they are there."[248]

 Crockford's *reductio ad absurdum* sets a logic baseline for our inquiry into

game-violence. Note that he is perversely using the word "kill" in places where Nintendo

consciously avoided it: Crockford continues, "The central activity in most Nintendo games is

killing things. The image and the act are good, but the word is bad, even if the word does not

suggest the image or the act."[249] But Crockford's grammar is more interesting still. What is

being killed, and by whom? The object is a set of entities that Crockford simultaneously

identifies as "things," "people" and "creatures," an ambiguity which makes sense because the

killing subject is not Super Mario or B. J. Blazkowicz, but an entity named both "your character"

and "kids." Game heroes and game enemies emerge together from the immanence of code, only

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[247] Nathan Cobb, "'Gleelok's is Four' 'Digdogger's Five' Toys Go Back to the Future as Home Video Games Return in a Big Way," *Boston Globe,* 13 March 1988.

[248] Douglas Crockford, "Now You're Really Playing With Power: The Expurgation of *Maniac Mansion* for the Nintendo Entertainment System, The Untold Story," accessed January 20, 2014 http://www.crockford.com/wrrrld/maniac.html .

[249] *Ibid.*

becoming distinct entities when distributed along the surface of the screen, so their killing can be described by its graphical face (i.e. "Mario kills turtles"). The actions of the conjoined subject "kid-character" (a subset of "player"), however, occur along a complex of loops cutting orthogonal to on-screen representation. Thus entities that "kid-characters" kill need not be described according to their visual similarity to human beings, as this has no consistent relationship to the types of agency with which they engage their players.

The sequence of three *Wolfensteins* that opened this section demonstrate this fact, showing how Nazis, non-descript villains, and angry animals can be graphical overlays on the same algorithms. *SOD* (1999) by art-game designers Jodi pushes us to the brink of Crockford's *reductio*.[250] Here *Wolfenstein 3D* is again modified, but now all images have been replaced with non-representational monochromatic designs. The same AI controls the floating checkerboard pattern as controlled the Nazi soldier and (unnervingly) it dies with the same scream. From the dizzying incoherence of *SOD* and Crockford's palpable bitterness, we can establish a logical baseline for what "violence" might mean: action that overtakes other agents, even digital ones, constraining their ability to act, and/or driving them toward the immanence in which they cease to be agents.

Through this lens, a surprising amount of what one does on a computer could be interrogated as forms of violence. For instance, Crockford's *reductio* potentially allows us to see the use of antivirus software as unambiguously violent, as its users constrain and destroy entities capable of both resistance and reproduction. But so then is deleting any piece of software, and perhaps so too is deleting a digital photograph, or backspacing over a single letter. But public

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[250] JODI, "SOD workshop," accessed January 20, 2014, http://studio23.free.fr/JODI-workshop/ .

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scandals over violence concern force improperly applied, rather than force as such, so while the "Antivirus is Murder" campaign will never be born, the actions of hacker collectives like Anonymous are occasionally decried as "violence."[251] The negotiations concerning which agencies can constrain and/or destroy which others with impunity comprise the movements of a moral universe, a system of stratified powers within which human action has value. Thus the debates over game-violence, even in their most general form, are an appropriate data set for religious studies, but they will be especially instructive as their historical unfolding both binds Evangelical to worldly publics and clarifies their different moral sensibilities.

In conclusion, to describe an event as "violence" (or "serious violence," in some cases) is a way of marking it as force in violation of good order. Thus, the declaration of violence should be heard as a way groups separate themselves from what they oppose. Notably, only a tiny fragment of what occurs in digital worlds tends to be described as violent, but the rule remains that the label "violent" is leveraged against digital actions deemed to be violating good order. With this established, we can now set out to trace the overlapping and divergent practices of naming game-violence between Evangelicals and the world.

Evangelical and Worldly Histories of Game-Violence

Because the whole of Evangelical discourse on any given topic is too wide and wild to examine coherently, I have selected a fragment. Between 1985 and 2008, the Southern Baptist

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[251] See, for instance: Tom Brewster, "Security Firms are Getting Hit by Increasing Numbers of Attacks, as Hackers Get More Violent Against the Industry, a Security Expert Warns," archived by The Internet Archive, April 17, 2011, accessed January 20, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110417154447/http://www.itpro.co.uk/632788/hackers-get-more-violent-against-security-firms .

Periodical Index lists seventy-six articles referencing "video games." This section will present the sixty-four of these that I was able to access through the corporate library of LifeWay Books as a telling slice of Evangelical Christian discourse, and place them alongside the results of similar searches in worldly newspaper databases.[252]

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Video games are born in the secrecy of the laboratory, and they jump sharply in popularity when they move to the secrecy of nightclubs and bars.[253] But neither *Spacewar* at MIT, nor *Pong* in the corner of a tavern, became sites of controversy concerning violence.[254] As a bar game, *Death Race* (Exidy, 1976), wherein the only action is running over blocky, monochromatic gremlins ("We were quite careful not to call these figures people"), garnered condemnation, but this seems to have quieted again quickly as the scandal of a single violent anomaly.[255] The first moral panic concerning game-violence began when games began circulating as objects of youthful secrecy, migrating into the dark, unregulated space of the video arcade.[256] In 1981, the year that *Pac-Man* (Namco, 1980) ate four billion American quarters, Dr.

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[252] That is, I am examining every instance of "video games" from Christian Health, Christian Single, Church Recreation Magazine, Home Life, Living With Children, Living With Preschoolers, Leading Student Ministry, Living With Teenagers, Proclaim, Parent Life, Youth Ministry Update between 1985 and 2008.

[253] Dmitri Williams, "A Brief Social History of Game Play" in *Playing Video Games: Motives Responses, and Consequences* edited by Peter Vorderer and Jennings Bryant, (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2009), 237.

[254] Bar games did occasionally raise the specter of gambling, however, and thus share some territory with the widespread banning of pinball in the 1930s. For a history of controversies and innovations in pinball and novelty games as they contribute to the social possibility of the video arcade, see the opening chapter of Stephen Kent's *Ultimate History of Video Games* (Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing), 1-17. Especially valuable to the present discussion is the image of New York's mayor Fiorello LaGuardia smashing a pinball machine with a sledgehammer to publicly inaugurate a ban against them.

[255] "Sick, Sick, Sick," *Newsweek,* January 10, 1977, 54.

[256] "The Battle for America's Youth," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1982.

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Stuart Kaplan, chief of adolescent and child psychiatry at the Long Island Jewish-Hillside

Medical Center identified the draw of these spaces as "sublimated violence:" "It's the shooting,

killing and destroying, combined with the sounds and colors."[257] But it was the possibility that

young men, drawn in by the destroying and the colors (and by the greedy, exploitative

shopkeepers, another tantalizingly demonic figure in many of these stories) would gamble, fight,

and sell drugs in the arcades that led several American towns to regulate these spaces across the

early 80s:

> "Only the bad kids go into them, and we worry about the young children not old enough to make value judgments. Those without strong moral codes can be drawn in. […] The game rooms teach gambling and breed aggressive behavior […] Children snatch purses and gold chains for money to put in these machines."[258]

That is to say, the concern at this point was not that video games portrayed violent

actions, but that they cultivated an action-oriented atmosphere in which young men would be

prone to violence.

The first reference to video games in the Southern Baptist Periodical Index, notably, is to

a pair of articles in *Church Recreation Magazine* written to assess these specific fears about the

arcade and determine whether churches should install arcade-style machines on their premises.

One side was frankly bewildered – "there is no past experience to which we can refer"– but the

other presented a defense not only of the arcade, but of the video game as such, specifically

because, as long as the on-screen antagonists do not resemble humans, video games are "no more

violent than skeet shooting." To fight with computerized enemies, in fact, was framed as a noble

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[257] "Pac-Man Fever," *Time*, April 5, 1982; Ellen Mitchell, "Video Game Rooms Targeted by Towns," *The New York Times*, December 13, 1981.

[258] Peter Kerr, "Issue and Debate: Should Video Games be Restricted by Law," *The New York Times*, 3 June 1982.

task which neither encouraged nor resembled interhuman conflict: "The machine itself is the opponent, and of the highest caliber."[259]

The Southern Baptist Periodical Index reports no instances of "video game" between 1986 and 1992, a silence which harmonizes elegantly with a period of relative quiet in the game-violence debates, as observed through other newspaper and journal databases. But this quiet does not mean that negotiations stopped, only that they were highly professionalized in this period. I do not refer here to the fact that half of all psychological laboratory studies on game-violence published before 2001 date between 1985-87, but to the shift that seems to precipitate this research focus: across this period Nintendo's game consoles became the most popular toys in America, followed closely by Sega's rival offerings.[260] This means, on one hand, games migrate from the public secrecy of the video arcade into the privacy of the living room, and with that shift, talk of delinquent violence is replaced with talk of parental mismanagement.[261] And on the other, Nintendo of America's quality control policies – those which inspired Crockford's *reductio* –   seem to have largely succeeded in avoiding "random, gratuitous, and/or excessive violence" as judged by purchasing parents.[262] Kids were killing appropriately.

But when video games came to share the living room TV, they also had to share a public

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[259] David Napier, "The Use of Video Games in the Church," *Church Recreation Magazine 15* (Jan. – Mar. 1985): 47-48; Robert Rauss, "Video Games: Another Perspective," *Church Recreation Magazine 15* (Jan. – Mar. 1985): 49.

[260] Lillian Bensley and Juliet van Eenwyk, "Video Games and Real-Life Aggression: Review of the Literature," *Journal of Adolescent Health 29* (2001): 244–257.

[261] Though home consoles had been available since the early 1970s, home consoles only become more profitable than arcade games in 1989. Dmitri Williams, 230.

[262] This formula is taken from Nintendo of America's "Quality Standards," as discussed at length in chapter three.

conversation on violence in children's television that had grown increasingly ornate, though not increasingly systematic, since the late 1960s when they were first suspected of causing Robert Kennedy's assassination.[263] Heather Hendershot notes that in the 1980s, "like today, violent images on TV were often simply referred to as 'television violence,' as if television representations *were* violence in the same way that, say, a kick in the head is violence."[264] But there is an elegance to this sloppiness, and one which it will retain as it slides into video game discourse: the standards boards of television broadcasters, the anonymous repositories of expertise which exercised most power over television, were primarily concerned with *imitable* violence. We might generously assume that media corporations are concerned with the health of their youthful viewers, but we must also recognize that costly lawsuits are a primary way they receive notice of failure. To prevent children from mimicking televised action, cartoon characters with handguns are regulated in ways characters with lightning cannons are not; cartoon villains tack toward the faceless, the robotic, and the inhuman.[265]

In 1993, the first congressional hearings on video games and violence opened by rooting this concern with childhood imitation upon terrain shared among government, capital, and religion: "Today is the first day of Chanukah and we've already begun the Christmas season; it is a time when we think about peace on Earth and good will toward all people, and also about giving gifts." Throughout the hearings, Senators Lieberman and Kohl made it quite clear that their purpose was to prevent *Night Trap* (Digital Pictures) and *Mortal Kombat* (Midway), two

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[263] Heather Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors: Television Regulation Before the V-Chip* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 28.

[264] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning,* 34.

[265] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning,* 50-51.

popular games from the previous year, from being given to children as presents.[266] What

enticement to childhood use of force was so dangerous that Congress had to work to prevent it?

The games on trial have little in common: one is a lonely strategic thriller, and the other a

competitive fighter; and most remarkably, *Night Trap* is almost entirely free of visible blood,

though *Mortal Kombat* will nicely redress the balance. Condemnations in the name of all

reasonable people ("*Mortal Komba*t and *Night Trap* are not the kinds of gifts that responsible

parents give") and declarations concerning the games' similar influence over children (they

"teach a child to enjoy inflicting torture") serve to bind the games together, but tell us little about

how they were initially identified as "violent." In this regard, the key word throughout the

hearings was "realism:" "Night Trap uses actual actors and achieves an unprecedented level of

realism."

The "real" that includes *Night Trap*'s vampires and *Mortal Kombat*'s fire-breathing

ninjas seems to be almost exclusively an evaluation of the games' shared deployment of gaming

technologies that had only recently become affordable for console development. Both *Mortal*

Kombat and *Night Trap* presented their in-game entities as digitized video footage of human

actors.[267] Prior to these two, most games for arcades, home computers, or consoles employed

graphics that tended to evolve toward increasingly subtle cartoonishness rather than

photorealism, as only expensive laser disk players had previously been capable of digitized

video. But as technologies of digital photography became more pervasive, and the computational

power needed to place them in games less expensive, this sort of "realism" became a public

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[266] CSPAN, "Video Game Violence (December 9, 1993)" accessed January 21, 2014,
http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/52848-1 .

[267] *Lethal Enforcers*, to be released soon after the hearings was similarly a full motion video game.

concern. And in 1993 Id games, the creators of *Wolfenstein 3D,* apply this technology to the FPS

for the first time. *Doom,* another frenetic, simplistic shooter, surrounded the player with demons

digitized from clay models.[268] Echoed in contemporaneous journalism already nostalgic for the

innocence of *Pac-Man*, this is a "realism" identified by the density of its visual rhetoric, not by

its resemblance to any out-game world, allowing its referent to shift with technological advances.

The Washington Post, for instance, called *Doom* "ultra-realistic" and presented the production of

the real very clearly: "Like the best fantasy novels, all of the elements of Doom coalesce around

a clearly realized vision to create a believable -- if bizarre -- universe. Holding everything

together is the ingenious 'Doom engine,' a 'spiffy algorithm' that allows players to move

through the detailed landscape of interconnected tunnels and rooms."[269]

Thus "realism" drifts, alarmists tending to agree with advertisers as to its referent in any

particular year. But *Doom,* unmentioned in the hearings, would soon assert itself its reality,

despite the polygonal "realism" (spatial models composed of geometrical shapes) popularized in

Id's later shooters.[270]

The morning before the 1993 hearings, representatives from several large video game

corporations, including Nintendo and rival home console manufacturers, announced that they

would take up collective self-regulation before regulation was forced upon them. The two

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[268] David Kushner, *Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture* (New York: Random House, 2003), 134.

[269] Dave Nuttycombe, "Pac-Man, Tetris -- and Now It's Doom's Day; Here's a Game on the Cutting Edge. And the Slicing Edge. And Hacking. And Gouging…" *The Washington Post,* October 10, 1994.

[270] In August 2011, Germany's 17 year long restriction of *Doom* to adult players was lifted, because the ongoing graphics had become so dated that the game was no longer violent. "Germany lifts Doom sales ban after 17 years," *BBC News,* September 1, 2011, Accessed January 1, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-14748027.

systems that emerged the next year each established graded scales for violence that identified

"blood and gore" as a mark of severe violence, but otherwise varied significantly.[271] By 1997,

however, game designers were only applying for ESRB ratings.[272] This new system resolved the

Illustration 9: Constructing *Doom*'s Realism[273]

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[271] The Recreational Software Advisory Council [RSAC] system which rated computer software, as opposed to console games, did not articulate violence to a typology of players, instead giving separate scales for "Sex," "Violence," and "Language" running from zero to four. Violence was 1) "Harmless conflict; some damage to objects," 2) "Creatures injured or killed; some damage to objects; fighting;" 3) "Humans injured or killed with small amounts of blood;" 4) "Humans injured or killed; blood and gore," "Wanton and gratuitous violence, torture, and/or rape." C. Dianne Martin, "An Alternative to Government Regulation and Censorship: Content Advisory Systems for Interactive Media," in *The V-Chip Debate: Content Filtering from Television to the Internet*. Monroe Edwin Price, editor (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1998), 179-194; 182.

[272] Federal Trade Commission, "Marketing Violent Entertainment To Children: A Review Of Self-Regulation And Industry Practices In The Motion Picture, Music Recording & Electronic Game Industries: A Report Of The Federal Trade Commission," (September 2000) Appendix D, 17, archived by The Internet Archive May 1, 2013, accessed January 21, 2014, http://www.ftc.gov/os/2000/09/index.shtm.

[273] John Romero, [Adrian Carmack modeling *Doom*'s Baron of Hell, ca. 1993], accessed March 16, 2014 http://romero.smugmug.com/Video-Games/The-Archives/480_BdMqY#14482_rE9zd

problem of game-violence by proposing a taxonomy of humans correlated to the specific types

of violence "appropriate" to each of them, mimicking the strategy applied in MPAA ratings since

1968 (and consanguineous with TV Parental guidelines of 1996). The ESRB initially partitions

humans into "Early Childhood," "Kids to Adults," "Teen," and "Mature," marking

developmental breaks at 3, 6, 13, and 17.[274] The first category includes no "objectionable words

or depictions whatsoever" (an interesting possibility, given the range of depictions to which

cultural critics from Adorno to Falwell have found objection), its early bound being defined by

cognitive and motor limitations rather than moral ones.[275] The "Mild Animated Violence; Comic

Mischief; and Animated Violence" appropriate for six-year-olds (a group that will be renamed

"Everyone" as of 1998) is defined with reference to "Road Runner" cartoons and "The Three

Stooges." At 13 it is safe to engage in "Realistic Violence," though "Animated Blood and Gore;

Realistic Blood and Gore" is only appropriate for people over 17.[276]

If the notion that older children can participate in more "realistic" violence in-game

without becoming violent afterward, or the specificity of 17 and 13 as the moments of maturation

seems like a folksy application of the MPAA's rather arbitrary schema for human development

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[274] The additional category "Adults Only" is not a demographic marker, as it designates only the "Mature" category with the additional possibility of "Strong Sexual Content." It marks an optional development for people over 17 who happen to enjoy pornography. No game console has licensed games with this rating, and only 21 PC games have ever received it and decided to publish with it rather than revising in order to earn a lower age rating. "List of AO Rated Products," accessed January 21, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_AO-rated_products.

[275] Adorno's critique of cartoons in general and Donald Duck in particular might be well considered here. Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 110.

[276] Jack Heistand, "Video Rating System," Testimony before U.S. Joint Congressional Committee. *Rating Video Games: A Parent's Guide to Games, Witness Panel #7.* (HRG-1993-SJS-0035; Date: Dec. 9, 1993; Mar. 4, Jul. 29, 1994). Text in: ProQuest *Congressional Hearings Digital Collection*; Accessed: January 21, 2014.

to a new medium, that is because it was.[277] The ESRB standards drew upon a variety of sources,

but they "placed priority on meeting consumer' needs," reflecting popular understandings of

child health as measured in focus groups rather than the positions of "social scientists." Thus the

timing and character of maturity as understood by the MPAA (PG-13 was adopted in 1984, and

17 was set for X rated films in 1970) were carried over by parents already acclimated to them.[278]

And parents were told in no uncertain terms that they already agreed with the scheme for

humanity defined here. These are "independent judgments of people like themselves."[279] From

here legislation will primarily attempt to place the force of law behind ESRB ratings by

restricting the sale of games below their demographic, or mandating signs that explain the

ratings.

Evangelical game critique in this period largely echoes the concerns of the 1993 hearings

and the strategy of the ESRB. It is presumed that all children (and all boys particularly) enjoy

video games; "violence" is a primary concern that continues to be located primarily in "realism"

which must be sequestered from younger children to prevent contagious influence. But across the

1990s, Evangelical game critique also interrogates game-violence within a constellation of

concerns not voiced in the congressional hearings: "Tell your preschooler, 'We need to fill our

minds with good things, not bad things.'"[280] At times these concerns share territory with

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[277] The break at 6 is rather harder to trace, but it may reflect the same tendency which made TV-Y7 and its cognate TV-Y7 FV (with "fantasy violence") thinkable in 1997.

[278] Bruce A. Austin, *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1989), 110; Claudia Eller, "FTC Playing Parent or Big Brother?" *Los Angeles Times, September 29, 2000.*

[279] Heistand*,* "Video Rating System."

[280] Kay W. Moore, "Parents: Sharing and Supporting," *Living with Preschoolers 21,* (October – December 1993), 26-27.

psychology, attending to violence in tandem with the possibility that "young teens can become addicted" or develop "excessive preoccupation" with "mesmerizing" games, but they should not be hastily glossed as another species of media "effects" literature.[281] Though Evangelical game criticism frequently attends to "effects," there is a curious attention to the child-at-play which does not necessarily concern the child-after-playing. Biblical verses that require Christians to keep their minds pure (Mark 7:20-22),[282] or exhort them to attend to "whatever is true, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable (Phil. 4:8)" are entirely foreign to the modes of play enjoined within a worldly public and will require separate analysis. The question is: "Would I be embarrassed to play this game with Jesus?"[283]

Remembering Columbine

For both Evangelical and worldly game criticism, negotiations concerning game-violence gained a new urgency on April 20th 1999, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered themselves and thirteen of their classmates at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado. The two boys' diaries –entitled *The Book of God* and *A Virtual Book: Existences,* respectively– reveal that they had been planning far worse for over a year; guns, knives, and 99 explosive devices were readied for a spree that would have killed everyone in the school and continued into surrounding neighborhoods, had faulty equipment and (perhaps) cognitive dissonance not

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[281] Pete Carpenter, "Inside Out: Curing the Video Game Addict," *Living with Teenagers 17* (April 1995), 6; Carol L. Bruning, "Video Mania," *Living with Children 15* (October - December 1992), 14-15; Wilson Wayne Grant, "Your Teen's Health: Can My Teen Overdose on Video Games?," *Living with Teenagers 15* (April-June 1993), 41.

[282] Charles Lawless, "Pharisees and Video Games," *Proclaim 22* (April – June, 1992), 48-49.

[283] Robert G. (Bob) DeMoss Jr and G.W. Austin, "Media Play: The Games People Play," *Home Life 51* (June 1998), 60-61.

intervened.[284] But, *The Book of God* and *Existences* also raise the alarming possibility that playing FPS games might be, for some players, a process of ethical and metaphysical reorientation that would be well characterized as religious. In Chidester's terms, the tragedy cannot be separated from ways of being a "human person both in relation to the superhuman and in relation to whatever might be treated as subhuman" that Klebold and Harris seem to have found in the specific affordances of *Doom*.[285]

Not only had *Doom* introduced new technologies of photorealism and continued to demonstrate the profitability of the FPS, driving well-financed creativity, its creators had also released tools that allowed players to design their own gamescapes complete with new weapons and enemies using the Doom engine: *modding*.[286] In *Doom* and many subsequent FPS games, the engine was deliberately left open for fan-created levels. That is to say, a game like *S3DNA* could now be made by any sufficiently dedicated amateur.[287] Further, though the frequent claim that *deathmatching* (networked player-on-player fighting) starts with *Doom* displays a tautological acceptance of branding logic*, Doom* made this sort of combat possible over the Internet, and brought it wide recognition. Both modding and deathmatching facilitated the

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[284] The collapse of the two boys' horrific initiative is largely psychologist Jerald Block's extrapolation from survivor accounts that observe Klebold and Harris sparing students without clear reason across the second half of the tragedy and even appearing to lose interest. I will follow Block in refraining from trying to reconstruct what, precisely, was happening in the boy's minds, but I would like to flag this moment as the process, viewed from without, of the perpetrators coming to realize that their violent video games in fact *did not* train them to kill human beings. Jerald Block, "Lessons from Columbine: Virtual and Real Rage." *American Journal of Forensic Psychology 28.2* (2007), 5-34.

[285] David Chidester, *Authentic Fakes*, 18, viii.

[286] *Masters of Doom,* 166.

[287] I have been unable to locate any *Doom* mods that circulated as non-violent or biblical alternatives for Christians. The *Christ Killa* mod, in which players shoot "hordes of homicidal Jesus Christs," however, might give pause to anyone who attempts to locate a meaningful difference in games along a line of "Christian symbolism." Rachel Wagner, "The Play is the Thing" in *Halos and Avatars,* 58.

growth of a lively online community in which Klebold and Harris were active. The boys seem to have found community in deathmatching, and alienation among their high school peers, and Eric Harris in particular was a talented level designer. Without *Doom*, of course, the boys may have planned some different horrific act, but their very specific atrocity is poorly understood without reference to how the specific affordances of *Doom* allowed them to play these games as members of a counterpublic *Doom*'s developers had not anticipated.

Harris' *Book of God* (apparently named for *Doom's* "god-mode" in which the player was invulnerable to attacks) seems to frame *Doom* as the template for a sort of ritual. The massacre was planned as a species of human sacrifice that attempted to give the welter of high school *meaning* by forcing its elements into the schema of the game world: "Everyone should be put to a test, an ULTIMATE DOOM test." And where reality exceeded that model, Harris planned to access his memories of play as the monastic practice which had taught him to live in that world: "I have a goal to destroy as much as possible so I must not be side-tracked by my feelings of sympathy, mercy, or any of that, so I will force myself to believe that everyone is just another monster from Doom like [Former Humans] or [Lost Souls] or Demons, so it is either me or them. I have to turn off my feelings."[288]

But Harris' journal only shows that *Doom as religion* is possible, not that it was widespread beyond this tragic case. By April 1999, *Doom II* had already sold over a million copies, the original *Doom* had already become one of the first three PC games ever to sell over 2 million copies, and approximately 15 million people had downloaded a sample version of the

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[288] Block, 18, 22.

game that included nine levels and allowed deathmatching.[289] Without access to their journals,

we cannot know how *Doom* related to the world making projects of these millions of *Doom*

players who seem never to have ritualized the game. We can, however, extend Chidester's line of

questioning to consider the religious dynamics of Colombine far beyond the school itself.

Within hours of the massacre, the names of these two boys and their school, this game

and its genre, become a technical argot for describing adolescent desire and the effects of video

gaming in American newspapers. Under Chidester's definition of religion, the sudden appearance

of a widespread notion that a set of humans can be turned into murderers by a specific

non-human agency should be understood as a religious moment. The formula, as presented in

news media, was "teenage boys enjoy games that are violent like *Doom*, but playing them may

lead to another Columbine." In 1999, Factiva reports that 40% (608/1527) of newspaper articles

discussing "video game violence," "violent video games," or "violence in video games" did so

through reference to "Columbine." This declines annually across successive years, but remains

significant: 24% (243/994), 20% (123/602), 13% (75/556), and 15% (106/708). Newspapers

discussing the possibility of "another Columbine" specifically hit 223 instances in 1999,

declining to 158, 107, 65 and 47 in 2003.[290] After this and into the present, the memory of the

Columbine tragedy less fades than becomes inseparable from the larger cultural field. In 2002,

the US Army functionalizes the new conception of youth by publicly releasing a FPS as a

recruitment device: *America's Army*, the game.[291]

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[289] "Id Software Names New Designer." *Business Wire,* March 1, 1999; Wagner James Au. "Masters of 'Doom,'" *Salon.com,* accessed January 21/2014, http://www.salon.com/tech/feature/2003/05/05/doom/print.html.

[290] Factiva searches performed September 1, 2011.

[291] Gloria Goodale, "Video Game Offers Young Recruits a Peek at Military Life," *Christian Science Monitor,* May

To say that the religious role of the Columbine tragedy was the creation of images orienting the interactions of youth and media is not to dismiss the work of religious traditions in mourning or organizing. Consider, for instance, the myth of the girl who said "Yes," and how it placed Evangelical identity near the center of collective memory on the tragedy. The story is that while Kliebold and Harris were in the library, one of them aimed at a young woman, and asked her if she believed in God. She said "Yes," and in most accounts that was her last word. But tellings vary. Valeen Schnurr, who survived, recalls the confession as her own and forensic evidence seems to support her, but the families of Cassie Bernall and Rachel Scott, both of whom died that day, each held that their daughter had said "Yes" before her death, and each worked to spread their daughter's testimony as an inspiration to others.[292] Of these, *She Said Yes,* the account published by Cassie Bernall's mother, circulated most widely, even spending several weeks on the New York Times best-seller list. Here we see a characteristic Evangelical attempt to frame youth as moral agents rather than passive recipients of entertainment: "It is also easier to get angry, to point fingers, or to lose oneself in what the media calls the 'larger' issues. In the wake of Columbine that has meant gun control and video games, school security and Hollywood violence, preventative education and separation of church and state. All of these issues are important, but at the end of the day they may not be the things that really count."[293] She sees teens "crying out for relationships" and frames her daughter's "Yes" as bravely "choosing to

31, 2002, accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0531/p18s01-algn.html .

[292] Kevin Simpson, "Who Said 'Yes' Blurs With Time," *The Denver Post*, December 16, 1999.

[293] Misty Bernall, *She Said Yes* (Nashville: Word Publishers, 1999), 158.

extend a hand rather than recoiling judgmentally."[294] The Christian youth is conceived, again, as

an active moral agent, here armed with friendship against alienation and tragedy.

Evangelical game criticism in response to the Columbine massacre, as in response to

video arcades, or game-violence in general, both shared the effects emphasis of worldly

criticism, and occasionally complicated matters with an attention to the moral status of the

player-in-play. Notably, these divergent rhetorics of violence often share close quarters. One

article, for instance, combines descriptions of school shootings with a grotesque echo of

Crockford's reductio, identifying the violent act as that of play: "Severed heads and broken

spines in '*Mortal Kombat IV*.' Your teen is the one who delivers the fatal blows."[295] And in Bob

DeMoss' editorial response to Columbine in the Southern Baptist periodical *Home Life,* this

combination becomes a radical act of media criticism. He opens by agreeing with worldly news

reports in indicting violent video games as causes of the tragedy, but then subverts this

indictment by classifying the games and those news reports as part of the same problem. He

presents the news footage of Columbine as a species of "reality television," implying that

television's simplifications of Klebold and Harris' motivations only serve to exacerbate the

"deficit in the souls of our kids." He closes with a solution: "Kill your TV."[296]

Even when Evangelical critique tacks hard toward emphasis on media effects, the

attention to the player as a moral agent opens these sorts of radical potentials. Richard Abanes,

for instance, places the Columbine massacre alongside military use of FPS games as training

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[294] Bernall*,* 159.

[295] Mike Nappa, "Media Minutes," *Living With Teenagers* October 1999, 32.

[296] Bob DeMoss, "Media Play: Violence at School," *Home Life* November 1999, 60.

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devices, producing the compound image he labels "little Manchurian Candidates."And when he seeks to dampen the mood of fear, the possibility of positively-valued media effects he adds include some which are salient to the immediate well-being of the player: "[Video games] can be fun, instructional, and therapeutic (intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually), not to mention helpful in the creation of deep friendships and family relationships."[297]

It is in this milieu of urgency concerning game-violence, and with this blend of positions, that Christian video game review websites began to emerge. As I explained in my third chapter's history of digital religion, "Christian Gamers," "Christian Gaming," The Dove Foundation, Christiananswers.net's "Guide 2 Games," and "Shepherd's Staff," all began to offer video game reviews for Christian players in 2000; Christian Computer Game Reviews [CCGR] and The Staging Point appeared the following year.[298] These sites each host a wild diversity of interpretations of "violence," but all of them place it among their stated concerns, and the discourse on each site, from the organizational level to the public discussion boards, locates violence using the same aesthetic criteria as the ESRB. "Violence" remains strongly correlated to technologies of photorealism whose productions range from "cartoonish" to "lifelike."[299] The criteria of imitability is again located through a small set of iconic objects and tendencies, the most consistent of which is blood. CCGR clearly marked the shared territory in their 2002

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[297] Richard Abanes, *What Every Parent Needs to Know About Video Games* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2006), 76, 115.
[298] Christian Gamers, "Main;" Christian Gaming Staff, "Main;" The Dove Foundation, "Game Search Results;" Christiananswers.net, "Guide 2 Games;" Tim Emmerich, "Shepherd's Staff;" CCGR, "Main;" The Staging Point, "Game Ratings;" Pure Fun, "Games."

[299] "Sin," Staging Point.

review of the Christian FPS *Catechumen*: "This game isn't violent, you don't see any blood."[300]

And, like the ESRB, every one of these sites articulates danger to age distinctions, though these now lose their clear year-based demarcation. For instance, though a cut-off age is never offered, Shepherd's Staff's reviews frequently state that a game with high "Overall Christian Rating" is particularly appropriate for children or "the whole family," while reviews offering "acceptable" Christian Ratings frequently add that discretion should be made as to player age.[301]

But it seems that even in the structure of some of these sites we can still detect concerns with violence attached to the moral status of the player-in-play, rather than concerns for his behavior after play. The reviews on CCGR, for instance, have always located violence on the terrain shared by Evangelical and worldly criticism, but as of 2005, these standards have been presented as a grading rubric (that is to say, an algorithm), so the priority of various indices of "imitability" can be compared. Of the 10 points allotted, one quarter are for "blood" and another quarter for "gore," with the remaining 5 points coding all other signs of violence. These later points arrange a series of non-exclusive criteria from wildly divergent modes of game criticism into a single scale, such that it would be difficult to "check only one" in most cases.[302] In

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[300] CCGR, "Catechumen," accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4514-catechumen .

[301] http://www.graceworksinteractive.com/ShepStaff/ (archived by the Internet Archive, Febuary 16, 2011, accessed January 22, 2014.

[302] That is, "Violence (Check only one)
___ - No Violence (-0 pts)
___ - Sports Violence (Ex. Fighting in Hockey or Rushing the Mound in Baseball) (-1pts)
___ - Cartoon Type Silly, Non-Deadly Violence (Ex. Simpson's Hit and Run, Crash Bandicoot) (-2 pts)
___ - Non Deadly Violence (Ex. Knockout Kings, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles) (-2.5 pts)
___ - Killing non-human realistic creatures (Ex. Deer Hunting) (-2.5 pts)
___ - Shooting objects that represent enemy aircraft, tanks etc. (Ex. Star Wars Rogue Squadron) (-3 pts)
___ - RPG Violence (This is where you enter a command and watch it happen Ex. Final Fantasy) (-3 pts)
___ - Killing non-human, fictional beings (Ex. Robots or Aliens) (-3.5 pts)

general, visual depictions of humanity, and narrative implications of motive and mortality are the criteria for severity of violence, criteria like those applied by the ESRB. But the territory shared with worldly critique is marbled by Evangelical specificities: Both vehicular-shooting games and menu-based Role Playing Games receive -3 points for violence, irrespective of the graphical humanity or the narrative "cold-blood." The specific number, like other algorithmic arbitrations of morality, evades specific explanation, but it is certainly a ludic criterion where the ESRB consists entirely of visual and narrative ones. Perhaps we are seeing a discomfort with anti-human violence conducted from a dispassionate distance mapped onto certain play-mechanics. We cannot know. But in drawing our attention to the ways game-violence is connected to player interaction, this seems to be another Evangelical reminder to "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" even while playing games (Romans 12:9).[303]

Divine Violence and Sacred Play

This history will carry us from the first debates over game-violence through the creation of the most recent Evangelical FPS game, but to understand its relationship to Evangelical play requires theorization. Crockford's reductio, which raises the potential reading of all force against digital agencies as "violence," produces a strange vantage upon the game-violence debates, sensitizing us to the fact that in every case the removal of violence is in fact a strategy of

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___ - People killing people in self-defense (Ex. Medal of Honor) (-4 pts)
___ - People killing people in cold blooded murder (Ex. Grand Theft Auto 3) (-5 pts);" CCGR, "Christ Centered Gamer Reviewing Standard," accessed July 12, 2012 http://www.ccgr/org/index.php/faqs/15-game-reviews/16-christ-centered-gamer-reviewing-standard .

[303] Ken Reaves, "Video Game Violence," *Living* with *Teens,"* September 2001, 31.

substitution.[304] The question is perhaps necessarily *what* a video game will invite players to destroy, rather than *if.*

And, it is clear that Evangelical and worldly game criticism tend to use the same criteria to identify the violence. Problematic violence is 1) "realistic," 2) "graphic," and 3) "imitable." That is to say, more specifically, 1) it employs cutting-edge technologies of photorealism 2) to depict the emission of "blood and gore" 3) where weapons (including bodies) presumed to be accessible to audience members come into conflict. And, second, both ranges of game criticism are strongly concerned that these games may provoke or train imitation by adolescent boys outside of the game (or "desensitize" natural resistance to such behavior).

This sharing of analytical territory is consonant with the findings of studies in other Evangelical media from Christian Contemporary Music to comics, cinema, and dating manuals: "In other words, evangelicals, who strive to be 'in but not of the world,' have produced media that overlap in interesting ways with unabashedly 'worldly' media. For nonevangelicals, Christian media are uncanny: both distant and intimate, familiar and unfamiliar in their references."[305] In Evangelical game critique, this distance seems to be the occasional (and this inconsistency cannot be stated too clearly) tendency to interrogate the moral status of the player *in the act of play,* and not only the ways game-play might translate into "real-world" action.

This difference can be well framed through Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence." Here he notes that violence, as judged by the state, is always evaluated as a relationship between

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[304] This is a further extension of David Morgan's work on "The Violence of Seeing:" "Iconoclasm, in other words, is not a purging of images *tout à fait* but a strategy of replacement." *The Sacred Gaze* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 117.

[305] Hendershot. *Shaking the World for Jesus,* 212.

means and *ends*, which is to say, it is evaluated teleologically. An application of force might be judged illegal (under positive law) because it involves means without historical precedent, or (under natural law) because it leads to ends that cannot justify the use of force. Together, these two theories of law form a single mechanism that directs overwhelming force against violence that threatens the present power structure.[306]

In the consensus shared between worldly and Evangelical game-criticism, a strictly teleological system concerned primarily with the proper training of adolescent men, we find responses to game-violence that mirror these theories of law. The problem of unjust *means* is addressed mostly through Bowdlerization, making violence incoherent so it cannot be imitated.[307] We see this strategy, for instance, in the replacement of bullet-based weapons with energy-weapons, or the substitution of zombies or robots for more explicitly humanoid victims (note that this includes changes to enemies as well as weapons, as it is a reconfiguration of the game itself as a means, and not merely means as represented in-game). The problem of *ends,* conversely, is addressed largely by assenting to the notion that the game is a training exercise, but changing the object of training. The FPS games made by the US Army or Hezbollah are the most obvious instances of this tendency.[308] Force can evade evaluation as "violence" either by becoming *just a game* or by becoming *a game of justice.* Again, inasmuch as Evangelical

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[306] Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Selected Writings 1*, edited by Marcus Bullock, and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2005): 236-252.

[307] To expurgate (a book or writing), by omitting or modifying words or passages considered indelicate or offensive." "bowdlerize, v." Oxford English Dictionary Online. June 2011. Oxford University Press. Accessed January 24, 2014. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/22199 .

[308] These two FPS games, each the licensed product of a standing military, each claiming to offer players the experience of "real" soldiers have become a matched pair in critical game studies. For contextualization of both within the military and publicity operations of each see "Banal War: Full Spectrum Warrior" (97-122) in Witheford and De Peute, *Games of Empire*.

criticism is contiguous with worldly criticism, these are appropriate readings of the FPS games that I examine in chapter five. Swords that shoot Holy Spirit beams are a species of energy weapon, and firing it at a human to convert them to Christianity is a species of justified war.

But inasmuch as non-violence in Evangelical gaming can be read through that part of Evangelical critique that engages the player non-teleologically, situating critique around their moral status in the moment of play, these games seem to include instances of what Benjamin calls "divine violence." Divine violence, Benjamin claims, does not make law at all. It is a boundless affirmation transmitted through unqualified negation. It is action already oriented to a new world. Inasmuch as they are acts of moral consequence in the present, consuming Bible-scrolls or using the Sword of the Spirit to tame demons (and other surprising events within Evangelical games) are not metaphors. These are events occurring in an elsewhere inhabited by the player who is somehow also still in her chair.

And it is in the possibility of a multiply-constituted player that we can finally understand the work of non-violence with respect to Evangelical play. The games that occupy the following chapter are voices within the Evangelical conversation on game-violence, meaning, in large part, that they replicate worldly concerns and techniques, perhaps using biblical images rather than other non-imitabilia, but nonetheless do the same work of defining the perimeter of the authentically human. In the context of the Columbine massacre I suggested that this work might be well classified as religious, in that it negotiates what it means to be a human person, both within the tragic enclosure of the school and out in the world that attempted to make sense of it.[309] But calling it religious does not adequately address what makes the flickering, multiply-

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[309] Chidester. *Authentic Fakes*, viii.

embodied, emerging prayer warrior different from the worldly player. There may, after all, be a religion out there as well. We could easily follow Agamben and frame the construction of *homines sacri* –humans set apart for sacrifice – from the bodies of minorities, labor, and other "exceptions" as a durable religious tradition in secularity.[310] With the addition of Crockford's *reductio* we could even begin to notice how the disposable bodies of First-Person Shooters create a space for those desacralized victims, and consider the possibility of the military-entertainment complex holding a transhuman deaconship in this religious tradition.

But something other than religious grouping may be located here. Inasmuch as there exists an Evangelical Christian counterpublic bound without by its separation from the world and within by individual attention to Evangelical subject formation, there exists an Evangelical mode of play that invites players to deepen their Christianity through acts of concerted non-violence. The vector of growth flickers between a developmental future-past axis, and a cosmological upward-downward one. In terms of the first orientation, these games may present an immediate danger, but in terms of the second, there may be good reason to endure it. Now the player is invited to growth toward safety, and now to immediate performance of spiritual warfare. Following the College of Sociology, then, I would like to emphasize that this mode of play is the precarious work of co-emergence of the human and its world in the exercise of force upon entities engaged as the barriers to subjectivization. It is "that which causes one to tremble with fear and delight;" it is *sacred play*.[311]

In this sense the Evangelical FPS games might be read as a paradigmatic case of digital

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[310] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[311] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 129.

religion, casting it as, again, something more than a re-use of existing technology. In *Music Machine, Pax Man,* and *The Jericho Game,* religious video games began with what I have called redeemed adaptations. Perhaps, though, we should remember that the allegedly former games were still present alongside their religious doubles. Along a temporal axis, the consequentialist concerns with games never entirely vanish, but the cosmological axis traces a line along which the player can grow in relationship to his own spiritual capacity. Why did Evangelical game designers make so many FPS games in the wake of Columbine? Perhaps they stage sacred play, not despite the dangers of the medium, but because of them. The dangers of play and the urgency of play oscillate rapidly. Both the entities within the games and the games themselves are part-subject in the interactions that constitute Evangelical subjectivity, but only as they are being actively managed by the always-emerging Evangelical subject. The player fights the game.

In the words of a prominent Evangelical game review site, "Is there a danger in pushing through too much garbage to get a small nugget of goodness? A guiding verse might be Philippians 4:8 Whatever is true, noble, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy... think about these things." But make no mistake, the urgency of non-violence is the context of spiritual war: "We are the soldiers tasked with the rescue of this digital generation. God has put the passion of gaming in our hearts to reach these people, and it is a high calling. "[312]

Conclusion

You look down at your hands. What have you done?

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[312] Flyingmonk, "God Loves Gamers, Reaching the XBOX Generation," accessed February 22, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/easyblog/entry/god-loves-gamers-reaching-the-xbox-generation

This chapter situated the word "violence" as, itself, a site of struggle. While it is important for many activities to establish themselves as non-violent, the word resists definition because its prevailing uses only mark violations of good order as seen from particular positions: an unjustly broken window is violence, but a just execution is not. This situation becomes more complex still where the word is applied to mediated creativities because extrinsic standards of good order tend to lose much in translation. But across the twentieth century, the hegemonic voices in media criticism have been those who risk lawsuits from imitations of their media, and strong patterns have emerged. Problematic violence enjoins cutting-edge technologies of photorealism to depict "blood and gore" from weapons presumed to be accessible to audience members, and it is set aside for older audiences. Media that hope to avoid classification as violent, and the age-limitation of their audience, need only avoid these traits, for instance by substituting humans for robots, guns for magic, or applying cartoonish colors.

In general, Evangelical media shares this specific understanding of violence, and these tactics for avoiding it, but a different standard which disrupts the world's consequentialist motives for avoiding violence flickers alongside it: "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think on these things" (Philippians 4:8, NIV). Thus, for Evangelical critique, the child-at-play is not merely a consumer who must be prevented from becoming a murderer, but is also an active moral agent and his play is understood as meaningful in itself.

Thus, though Evangelical non-violence often resembles worldly attempts to remove the dangerous possibilities of play, it can also be well framed as "divine violence." Spiritual warfare through non-violent games enjoins players to apply force in ways that escape all consequentialist

logic, existing already in another world, rather than working to create a future. The prayer warrior who comes into existence at this edge is engaged in sacred play. It took some time, but this is a complete vision of the religious game as an affordance. These games do not only adopt older technologies and transform them, but emerge as something new. This particularity will only become clearer as we direct our attention to specific case studies.

Chapter 5

Taking the Kingdom By Force:
Living and Dying in the Evangelical First-Person Shooter

Shambler   Teneb

Death Knight   Captain

Illustration 10: Enemy morphology in *Quake* (left) and *Eternal War: Shadows of Light* (right)

The parallel increase in bodily complexity from Shambler to Teneb, and from Death

Knight to Captain, seems to evidence a parallel evolutionary leap: the limbs have become lithe,

and the teeth more numerous, the spattered blood has blended into the textures around it. We might propose a variety of causes for this jump: the games were released eight years apart (Id , 1995- Xrucifix, 2003), and the latter's creators described their work explicitly as an interpretation of the former. But it is not clear how, from these bodies, we could detect that we are witnessing a transition from worldly to Evangelical media, that the former are just monsters whereas the latter are demons, or that when the former are destroyed it is violent and when the latter are destroyed it is not. As this chapter explores the six Evangelical First-Person Shooters created across approximately the same period, the reader would do well to be haunted by these creatures. Their similarity and difference demonstrates the historical trajectory of a cultural form that blossomed wildly, but has not been seen for a decade now, and which reveals much about the relationship between digital religion, the Evangelical counterpublic, and violence.

The preceding chapter staged a simple question: How do Evangelicals decide what constitutes violence in video games, and what happens when they try to remove it? Through examination of the intersecting histories of the game-violence debates and Evangelical game criticism as they develop across from the emergence of mass video gaming through the aftermath of the Columbine massacre, this historical analysis arrived at four conclusions: The likelihood that the dominant voices in both worldly and Evangelical media criticism will identify games as "violent" increases in proportion to the presence of certain historically specific cues selected by American movie and television rating authorities (i.e. when they use contemporary technologies of photorealism to depict "blood and gore" released from humanoid bodies by weapons presumed to be accessible to the audience); they also agree that this is primarily a problem because these games may provoke, train, or encourage adolescent boys to perform similar acts

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outside of their games; Evangelical critique diverges, however, by adding a supplemental concern with the moral state of the player-in-play, claiming that the Bible forbids thinking about this specific kind of violence; I then concluded that the non-violent struggles staged by Evangelical games constituted "sacred play," in that they allowed the player to manage her relationship with God by performing non-violent sacrifices. Before moving on to historical instances of this sacred play, we must slow down and observe how these sacrifices work.

To observe the space for sacred play staged in non-violent shooting, let us again consider the Christian adaptation of *Wolfenstein 3D* into *Super 3D Noah's Ark* [S3DNA] and its worldly adaptation into the Super Nintendo game *Wolfenstein*. The original game included paradigmatic acts of imitable and prohibited force: shooting humans and dogs with a handgun. Both adaptations escape allegations of contagious violence by bowderlizing away the possibility of imitation. Nintendo retained the imitable weapons, but replaced Germans with Masterstaters and dogs with mutant rats. The Christian company Wisdom Tree, on the other hand, replaced the guns with fruit-launchers, so while the new enemies simulate animals that exist out-game, the device being used upon them does not, staying imitation. Both of these, clearly, are modifications in the "means" by which games apply the force of influence upon players, and both can be easily understood through the "effects" discourses shared between Evangelical and worldly game criticism. Where, if anywhere, does the Evangelical game demonstrate the attention to the player-in-play that distinguished Evangelical game critique? In light of the previous chapter's conclusions, this is to say, what is sacred here?

The answer cannot simply be that *S3DNA* empowers players to participate in a Bible story: The player-character does not perform any specific action ascribed to the biblical Noah,

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the game ark does not match biblical specifications, and the casts of animals vary wildly. But we can nonetheless locate sufficient similarity between the two Noahs to identify some of the specific changes that make room for player engagement. Both Noahs are their world's crucial exception to otherwise universal destruction, both produce a habitable space for humans, and in both cases, Noah's movement toward a human place is paced by interaction with animals. Here we can identify a difference rooted in emphasis on player interaction: the playable edition is a ritual wherein player-action progressively creates that human place. This is clearest, perhaps, as concerns the story's temporality. In the biblical account of the Ark, Noah does not know how long he will be on the Ark and animals (the dove and crow) pace the time to land by scouting. In *S3DNA*, on the other hand, the anonymous (and potentially divine) narrator states plainly that land will be reached in six days, but these days take exactly as long as it takes Noah to locate and subdue six unclean animals (which, in gaming argot, are the level bosses). Likewise, the biblical account of the Flood presents a tidy distinction between animals and humans, quite unlike those other Bible stories which include animals that speak like humans, humans who graze like oxen, bestiality, or winged humanoids; in the game, on the other hand, player action creates the human/animal distinction. Awake, the game's animals move like Noah and shoot like he does, but when put to sleep, the animals stop resembling Noah and come to resemble the scenery instead.

S3DNA escapes "effects" critiques through appeal to widespread disbelief in fruitlaunchers, and otherwise by being rather implausible, but the possibility of sacred play is not a matter of belief at all, and the sacred significance of in-game action is only indirectly related to the out-game viability of the actions represented. That is to say, an act of sacred play with

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S3DNA would be one wherein player action both situates Noah's humanity with respect to the animals, and the player's humanity with respect to Noah's God, but this does not require or induce the player to carry Noah's fruitlaunching subject position outside the game. What matters is that the subjectivizing work within the game occurs with relation to entities that provide reference to Christian subjectivizing practices on the far side of the screen. Though in some senses this Noah resembles the Bible's Noah as little as either resembles the player, some players are capable of holding the double reference in mind, turning "Noah" into an inhabitable space in two different worlds. This identification does not coincide with the process of Evangelical subjectivization in all cases, of course, but inasmuch as the Evanglical is a person who learns to envision his own life as best understood through a particular reading of the Bible, play that holds these Noahs together is a powerful invitation to self-understanding as part of the Evangelical counterpublic. Alongside Noah, then, the animals and mysterious voices that describe boundaries of humanity are likewise reference points for life in the game, in the Bible, and in the Evangelical counterpublic that holds them together. Caring for animals or attending to the voice of God out here is quite different, but if the player is part of a Christian community he or she will be directed to the Bible for further clarification. By obeying the voice, and pressing back the animals, the Evangelical player creates a human space, and (in some cases) becomes an Evangelical subject.

It is notable, however, that of the seven widely-circulated Evangelical First-Person Shooters [FPS games] to date, *S3DNA* is the only one where animals form the constitutive outside of in-game humanity. In five of the others*,* demons are cast as the proper object of First-Person Shooting (*Saints of Virtue*, the other exception, is explained below and found to

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continue the pattern in most significant senses). The player will create a human place by marking

off the human from the demonic, and the sacra that bind the games to the Bible tend to be

scriptures that interpolate the player as a prayer warrior, and subject of spiritual warfare. This is

interesting for several reasons, not least of all because *Doom,* one of the most influential FPS

games, and the primary instance that cast the genre as a vector of contagious violence, was a

game about shooting demons as well. To understand the religious work of the Evangelical FPS

game, we must first understand in what sense their demons are *sacra*, and shooting them is thus a

ritual action, whereas in *Doom* they are not sacra.

The Demonic Archipelago

Let us imagine the demonic archipelago: Within the vast nebula of cultural productions

that contain demons, from ancient masked rituals to contemporary horror films, *Doom* and these

five Evangelical games form a small constellation. We are considering only ten years of FPS

demons. Their inhabitants, without ever meeting, share the characteristic marks of their shared

ancestry: leathery red skin, black horns, bulging, glowing eyes. Their basic form is

anthropomorphic, but occasionally and indiscriminately cut through with theriomorphisms,

wings and serpentine appendages, hooves and fangs. Explaining this trope of wild admixture,

Derrida identifies the demonic as the realm of undisciplined combination that precedes the

clarity and responsibility of the human subject, "that which confuses limits among the animal,

the human, and the divine, and which retains an affinity with mystery, the initiatory, the secret or

the sacred."[313] Demons are powers not yet tamed, and the demonic archipelago is a compound

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[313] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

eye considering the paradox of the human before and outside of subjectivization.

Be that as it may, we must be cautious not to assume that every horned creature called "demon" shares a single task, because the subject is not everywhere identical, nor are the processes of its production. Bakhtin, for instance, points out that the demons of European folk humor prior to the seventeenth century, and still visible in the writings of Rabelais, represent an underworld as ambivalent as the lower half of the human body. They were both destructive and generative, merciless in their pleasure seeking, but entirely without strategy. But these tendencies were directly connected to the place of demons in the medieval carnival, a ritual practice that brought even clergy, scholars, and royalty "low," and which entirely lacked footlamps dividing the actors from their audience. In such a space demons could not present a the curable lownesses of satirical and didactic tales. The demons presented the absolute lowness that even hieratic humanity retains, the organs of reproduction, excretion, and digestion. But when power came to root itself in "the stability and completion of being" –Enlightenment in philosophy, bourgeois Capitalism in economics, footlights in theatre, in a word, "modernity" – demons came to increasingly present a relative rather than an absolute underside, a problem that could be transcended, an image whose ambivalent form, in satire, retains moral polarization.[314]

And in large part this change prepares us for the twentieth century's contributions to the demonic archipelago, which make Doom's demon's thinkable. While today's popular demonic only infrequently highlights the ambiguity of defecation and generation, it remains a space of ambiguation between seriousness and levity. Some demons, of course, will seem to be held fast

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[314] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 101.

within the weave of a particular theology, but they cannot be trusted. Casual demons can become

serious without notice; theologically bound demons can burst suddenly into dismissible,

humorous contexts. It would require a separate study to say with certainty when the ambiguously

playful devil was born, but the Underwood Deviled Ham mascot, appearing in 1895, seems to

have been an emergence. Though he signified the spicy indulgence of spiced meat, he was

nonetheless "a real he-goat, half man, half goat, with horns, pronged spear and a tail. He was a

leering demonic Lucifer, frequently portrayed in early ads dipping a whole ham into a boiling

caldron as flames roar in the background and Satan's sons dance with glee."[315] We find another

early emergence in the writings of Mark Twain. Consider, for instance, the Satan of "Letters

from the Earth" (1909), striking hard at the theological and social fault lines running beneath the

church, his arguments crueler and harder to forget because of their humor.[316] The cinema

offered at least two different lineages of half-serious devils, with horror's amusingly frightening

Satan emerging as early as 1913 in *The Student of Prague,* and a screwball comedy devil in

1929's *Seven Footprints to Satan*.[317] An athletically-ambivalent devil, likewise, emerges across

the century as a sports mascot, striving to intimidate one team and encourage another: DePaul

gets "The Blue Demons" (1901); Duke, "The Blue Devils" (1922); Northwestern State

University, " Vic the Demon" (1923); and Arizona State University, "The Sun Devils" (1946).[318]

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[315] BG Foods, "About," Archived by the Internet Archive, February 20, 2009, Accessed May 5, 2011, http://www.bgfoods.com/underwood/underwood_about.asp .

[316] Mark Twain, "Letters from the Earth," accessed January 25, 2014, http://www.sacred-texts.com/aor/twain/letearth.htm .

[317] Carlos Clarens, *An Illustrated History of Horror and Science Fiction Films: The Classic Era (1895-1967)* (New York: Putnam, 1967),10; W. Scott Poole, *Satan in America : The Devil We Know*. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 134.

[318] DePaul University, "Welcome to DIBS Domain," accessed January 25, 2014,

Around 1960, we see a dramatic change in Underwood's ham-demon – "The current red devil has been stripped of evil. He is a happy Satan, smiling, carrying his spear, and apparently waving at the potential customer. His footwear appears to be elves slippers." – but this may be because the notion of a devil that is merely spicy had become unextraordinary in American popular culture.[319] *Doom*'s demons are true natives of the twentieth century's demonic archipelago; low, but never genital, they are purchased like spicy ham, enjoyed like comic fops, feared like movie monsters, and played like college sports.

The demons in Evangelical games, unlike those in *Doom,* are sacra. This claim does not relate to the shape of the demons, their behavior, or the ways one addresses them; across the demonic archipelago we find red, horned, AI controlled beings, and we shoot them. These demons are *sacra* inasmuch as they are encountered in acts of play oriented to an Evangelical counterpublic that frames humanity with respect to demons through various theologies of spiritual warfare. Building upon the "Armor of God" described in Ephesians 6 and increasingly prevalent in Evangelical media since the 1970s, these are Evangelical visions of Christian subjects (whether individual or collective) that emerge in armed struggle against demons.[320] Because Evangelical FPS games invite an embattled counterpublic constituted through this

http://www.depaulbluedemons.com/trads/dibs-den.html ; William E. King, "Why a Blue Devil: The Story of the Duke Mascot," accessed January 25, 2014, http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/uarchives/history/articles/bluedevil ; Leah Jackson, "Vic – The Next Generation," accessed January 25, 2014, http://news.nsula.edu/home/vic-the-next-generation/ ; Arizona State University, "The New ASU Story: Athletes," accessed January 25, 2014, http://www.asu.edu/lib/archives/asustory/athletes.htm .

[319] B G Foods, "About;" The Gold Country Girls, "Then and Now #10: Underwood Deviled Ham," accessed January 25, 2014,   http://goldcountrygirls.blogspot.com/2008/09/then-and-now-11-underwood-deviled-ham.html .

[320] For the political valences of this theology, see Bivins, *Religion of Fear,* 34. For its global reach in Charismatic Christianity see Joel Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," *Annual Review of Anthropology 33 (2004),* 117-143.

theology, killing demons in Evangelical games is religious, again in Chidester's terms, because it is "discourses and practices that negotiate what it is to be a human person both in relation to the superhuman and in relation to whatever might be treated as subhuman."[321] So within this Evangelical mode of play, demons are only the liveliest of a number of agents (others include Bible-verses, the Armor of God, etc.) that make play a moment of *being* Evangelical.

Doom is a vehicle for the circulation of entities that are sacra in other contexts, but the game does not invite sacred play. Consider the use of pentagrams; if the game stressed the balance of the elements, the vital connection between nature and spirituality, or other concerns that define a Wiccan counterpublic, these stars-in-circles could invite a Wiccan mode of sacred play. Likewise, were the goal human betterment through alignment with Satanic power, the inverted cross which began the second episode of *Doom* could hail play within a Satanic counterpublic.[322] The closest thing *Doom* provides to a point of connection to any further ontological orientation is the elliptical statement that "You wonder where bad folks will go when they die" when you have apparently destroyed Hell at the end of one episode.[323] It may, of course, occasionally become part of sacred play, but this will necessarily be an anomalous moment in its circulation, as it does so little to invite it.

That said, the Evangelical counterpublic is neither a static nor a singular entity. Even given that shooting demons in Evangelical FPS games is a sacred act, we can only understand it

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[321] Chidester, *Authentic Fakes,* vii-viii.

[322] Episode 2, Map 1, The Deimos Anomaly.

[323] In the "The Plutonia Experiment," a set of separately playable *Doom II* levels released as part of *Ultimate Doom* (id Software, 1996)*,* there is one further hint that the Hell of Doom has some relationship to out-game theology. Upon completing the game "Hell has gone back to pounding bad dead folks instead of good live ones." "Hell," accessed January 22, 2014,   http://doom.wikia.com/wiki/Hell .

	Super 3D Noah's Ark	The War in Heaven	Saints of Virtue	Catechumen	Ominous Horizons: A Paladin's Journey	Rev 7	Eternal War: Shadows of Light
Year	1994	1999	1999	2000	2001	2003	2003
Developer	Wisdom Tree	Eternal Warriors	Shine Studios	N'Lightning Software	N'Lightning Software	Marty Bee	2 Guys Software / XRUCIFIX
Engine / Other Uses	WOLF 3D / "SNES Wolfenstein"	Custom engine / none	A4 / 3D Hunting (MacMillan, 1998)	Genesis 3D / Barbie Generation Girl Gotta Groove (Mattel Interactive, 1998)	Genesis 3D / Special Force (Hezbollah, 2003)	Genesis 3D / Ethnic Cleansing (Resistance Records, 2002)	Quake Engine / Half-Life (Valve, 1998)
Role of Bible	Setting	Setting, Frame quotations	In-game "keys"	In-game "health"	In-game "health," "objectives"	Setting, Frame quotations	Largely absent
Equipment	Fruit Launchers	Ephesians 6:10-18 (and demonic analogues)	Ephesians 6:10-18	Ephesians 6:10-18	Ephesians 6:10-18	Breakfast launchers	"Spirit Sword," Original Holy Energy Weapons
Enemies	Animals	Angels / Demons	Metaphorical vices ("Worldly Wisdoms")	Demons, possessed humans, animals, mythical creatures	Demons, possessed humans, animals, mythical creatures	Demons, mythical creatures, metaphorical vices	Demons
Effect of player action	Animals fall asleep	Angels fly away; Demons descend in flames	Wisdoms dissolve	Humans convert; Animals sleep(?); Demons and mythical creatures dissolve	Humans convert; Animals sleep(?); Demons and mythical creatures dissolve	All fall over and fade	Demons are banished

Figure 3: Evangelical First-Person Shooters

as it relates to the shifting technological and theological fields through which the Evangelical counterpublic was manifesting at any particular moment. From here we cannot yet see the relationship between spiritual warfare theology and Evangelical concerns with the internal states of children in general and adolescent boys in particular. From here we cannot yet see the specific ways that coming to inhabit the overlapping worlds of these games and of the Bible works to forge the identity of prayer warriors. And we cannot yet see the ways that changes in video gaming seem to have produced changes in theology. To understand the sacred work of non-violent struggle, I spent several months destroying the demons in these games. The second section of this chapter attempts to string Christian FPS games into a single historical narrative. The chapter then concludes with analysis, and reflections upon where this trajectory seems to have led.

The War in Heaven[324]

The demons of Evangelical FPS games are sacra inasmuch as they are part-subject in processes of human identity negotiation taking place on both sides of the screen. But only in their first appearance, and never again, were these sacred demons an invitation for Christians to play demonically. For the developers of *The War in Heaven* (Eternal Warriors LLC, 1999), this was necessary in order to make player choice morally significant ("we really can't teach much about making a good choice if there isn't any choice"), but many Christians found this an irresponsible use of in-game freedom ("Our biggest hurdle there is that many Christian stores are loathe to carry a title that has a demon on the cover, or that allows the player to choose the evil

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[324] Celia Wren, "Point, Click & Cheat: 'War in Heaven,' the Computer Game [Software Review], *Commonweal 127.6* (March 24, 2000).

path").[325] The sacred demons thus emerge through a fissure in the FPS's Evangelical public,

defining the genre's enduring dilemma: If player choice is morally significant, how can a game

empower significant good without also empowering significant evil?

Unlike most of the Christian FPS games that follow, this first instance refracted a

nameable theological movement, rather than claiming orientation to an unmarked "Christianity,"

or emerging simply from "the Bible." Alongside the links to download a demo, read reviews, or

purchase the game, Eternal Warriors' website offered a tab which led players to the writings of

Dr. Greg Boyd, a minister, scholar and prominent advocate of "openness theology."[326] While the

creators of *War in Heaven* knew Boyd first as their personal pastor and an inspiration in their

thinking on spiritual warfare, in 1999 he was a celebrity because of the divisions his theology

was causing among Evangelicals. The controversy of this game engages a larger Evangelical

controversy through the possibilities and constraints of digital gaming.

Openness theology had emerged in its mature form in 1994 with the publication of *The

Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understandings of God*, an edited

volume in which five Evangelical theologians had asserted that "God, in grace, grants humans

significant freedom to cooperate or work against God's will for their lives, and he enters into

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[325] "Andrew Lunstad of Eternal Warriors, Makers of 'The War in Heaven' Offers Some Insights into their Game and the Christian Gaming Market," archived by the Internet Archive, March 16, 2009, accessed January 22, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20090316094147/http://www.christiangaming.com/Reviews/XWarInHeavenInterview.shtml .

[326] The game manual also gives "Special Thanks To Dr. Greg Boyd, whose sermons on spiritual warfare first inspired this game." We can perhaps locate the entrance of sacred demons into the FPS at Boyd's Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. Greg Boyd, "Spiritual Warfare: Free Will and the Legacy of Augustine" (1997). Archived by the Internet Archive, February 26, 2000, Accessed January 22, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20000301200152/http://www.eternalwarriors.com/ .

dynamic give-and-take relationships with us."[327] This position, while it sounds much like the choice-driven Semi-Pelagian theology of most American Evangelicals, emerges from a novel understanding of the relationship between human volition and divine foreknowledge.[328] Greg Boyd expresses it well: "I affirm (because Scripture teaches) that God is absolutely all knowing. There is no difference in my understanding of God's omniscience and that of any other classical theologian, but I hold that part of the reality which God perfectly knows consists of possibilities as well as actualities. The difference lies in our understanding of the nature of the future, not in our understanding of God's omniscience."[329] The fissure this position defined in American Evangelical thought is well located by the controversy stretching between 1999 and 2001 wherein Boyd's theological position was officially rejected by the Baptist General Council, but his professorial position at Bethel, the university and seminary represented by that same council, was retained.[330]

Openness theology resembles Process Theology, in that God moves with humans through

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[327] Clark H. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 7.

[328] That is, most American Evangelicals hold that "the initiative in salvation is on the human side even though full salvation can only be by God's grace" even if this is in conflict with their church's official doctrine. Though we could locate the choice-emphasis in American Evangelical belief through a variety of sources, I find Roger Olson's reflections as an Arminian minister and seminarian especially telling. He offers ethnographic notes from the seminary demonstrating that his students could not distinguish Arminian theology from Calvinist, because they had always taken a folk theology of almost total freedom for granted. Roger E. Olson, "American Christianity and Semi-Pelagianism," accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2011/02/american-christianity-and-semi-pelagianism/ .

[329] Greg Boyd, "A Brief Outline and Defense of the Open View," accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.gregboyd.org/essays/essays-open-theism/response-to-critics/ .

[330] Truett M. Lawson, "A Personal Account of the Foreknowledge Dispute at the Conference," archived by The Internet Archive, March 5, 2001, accessed January 22, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20010305214118/http://www.bgc.bethel.edu/4know/report.htm; Ross Moret. "Beyond Sola Scriptura: Open Theism within American Cultural Trends." *Stone-Campbell Journal 10 (Fall 2007),* 213-229; 216.

time, but it directs this temporality in the service of a literalist hermeneutics emphasizing willed choice. This reading practice, for instance, clarifies God regretting Creation because of human choices, and gives moral weight to the War in Heaven mentioned in Revelation; God could, in some sense, be surprised by these willed decisions because the moment we share with God is conceived as the seam between two different textures of time. God is omniscient in that God not only knows the smooth, stable time of the past, but knows the future as well, a time textured by a finite number of choices that branch the universe into real, but really limited, trees of possibility. God strategizes, then, by knowing the finite number of possible choices and outcomes, and accounting for all possible choice: "We might compare this view of God to a master chess player… He 'wins the game' not by meticulously controlling it or by possessing 'inside information,' but by being the infinitely wise God that he is."[331]

Boyd and other openness theologians orient the choices made by humans to this cosmic game through biblical images of demons: "The challenge of explaining how God could create beings who can resist his will and genuinely war against him is epitomized in Satan."[332] But the chess-demons of openness theology are not yet the FPS demons that concern us in this chapter.[333] Theodor Beale, *The War in Heaven's* primary designer (and author of a Biblical fictional novel of the same name), proposes the necessary jump by equating the faculty for choice shared among humans, angels, and demons with the problem-solving capacities of

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[331] Greg Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy"* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 113.

[332] Boyd, *Satan, 17.*

[333] Greg Boyd did endorse the final product, however, allowing his own 14 year-old son to play it, and comparing it favorably to previous Christian games. Ellen Barry, "New Media Let Christians See No Evil, Hear No Evil," *Boston Globe,* 12 December 1999.

Artificial Intelligence: "When seen from the posthuman point of view, we are all nothing more than [AI Controlled Characters] running around the virtual environment of [a Massively Multiplayer game] called the World of Man."[334] He is not, notably, saying that the model we are about to see is actually a fair representation of our own Artificial Intelligence, but Beale's reduction of choice to algorithmic processes lays the ground for a game wherein player decisions can be meaningfully paralleled to those of their Artificial Interlocutors.

Because Beale modified Boyd's theology so human and angelic choice could now be imagined as resembling the decisions made by AI, conceived as resembling moves in a computerized game, the sacred demon can be born in a moment of player choice: "While some Christians may object to our decision to allow the gamer to play as a fallen angel and receive short-term rewards in return for evil actions, we believe that our design is in accordance with Biblical teachings. God gave every individual the gift of free will, and because the choice to serve Him or not is so vitally important, we felt that the ramifications needed to be highlighted, not avoided, in this game." And highlight the ramifications they did: immediately upon starting *The War in Heaven,* the player can choose "The Divine Path of Obedience" or "The Fallen Path of Power."

A cruciform mouse cursor passes back and forth between an angel and a demon, the female protagonists of the game's two paths, standing armed in discrete panels. The decision to obey or oppose God is reduced to a single decision across an absolute binary, less like making a move in chess game than choosing to play as black or white (or, to use the convention of

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[334] Vox Day [Theodor Beale], *The Irrational Atheist Dissecting the Unholy Trinity of Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens* (Dallas, Tex: BenBella Books, 2008), 283.

team-based FPS deathmatching, already well established in 1999 and perhaps visible here, red or blue). During play, the moral weight of this initial decision relative to other in-game entities will become clear, but upon first play, the decision is informed only by the images on screen and whatever theological presumptions the player has about them. If one's presumptions were drawn from openness theology the very starkness of the choice may be theologically-compelling, as this theology maps the forks in textured future-time to a form of choice that is beyond persuasion: "agents (human and angelic) are the ultimate cause and explanation for their own free behavior."[335]

Once the choice is made, in whichever direction, the next six hours will be spent in battlefield ethnography. In either direction, the player moves from one stronghold to the other, learning first her own culture and proceeding into that of the enemy. And to designate the patterns of life of angels and demons "cultures," is at most mildly hyperbolic. In each location the angelic player gains one article of the "Full Armor of God" as described in Ephesians 6, but for each Godly article there is a corresponding demonic one (The "Breastplate of Righteousness," for instance, and the "Breastplate of Sin"). The differences between the two sides reveal the opposition of life-worlds in which each side is deeply invested. When the player enters as an angel, the toad-like *Lo Nakei* [Hebrew: Unclean] will only reveal its capacities to lumber, waggle, and belch lightning, but Eternal Warriors filled this world with evidence that these monsters are engaged in aesthetic, and even moral collaboration and growth.

Angelic aesthetics emphasize singularity, and demonic aesthetics emphasize multiplicities: An untrained angel wields the single line of a sword, and an inexperienced demon

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[335] Boyd, *Satan*, 420.

meets it with a two fingered claw; elite angels call down fire and lightning with long smooth trumpets, unbroken by slides or valves, and demons do the same by splaying their tattooed fingers. While both sides keep books of instructive poetry on their battlefields, enshrined on lecterns, lit by candles and sealed with sacred images (crosses or pentagrams, respectively), these books contain different scripts, and, most importantly, their poetry addresses the player from the consistency of mutually exclusive ontologies. Demonic poetry calls the player "Goddess" and demands merciless self-improvement even at the expense of other demons. Angelic poetry calls the player "daughter of the King" and demands submission to and reliance upon the Lord. And these visions of the good are grounded in sacred space at both ends. In their fifth mission, in either direction, the player must defile the enemy's sanctuary. An angel must enter "The Hall of Idols" (which a demon would remember as their second level, "The Tree of Knowledge") and destroy statues of great demonic generals, now revered as Gods. A demon must climb to "The Shrine of the Lion," which resembles images of the Jerusalem temple designed for Sunday school felt-boards, all white marble and grassy courtyards, to smash golden crosses and colossal scrolls.

All of this, even if casting Christian children as demons defiling the things of the Lord is disturbing to some, can be read as the symmetry necessary for a good faith demonstration of how choice works in openness theology. But, as will frequently be the case, the procedural rhetoric exceeds its inspiration in out-game theology. Late in *The War in Heaven*, demons acquire "The Corruption Spell," the single ability for which angels have no parallel. While angelic folklore says that demons can repent, and should be accepted if they do, this would presumably be a private affair between one demon and her own conscience before the Lord, and in any case the
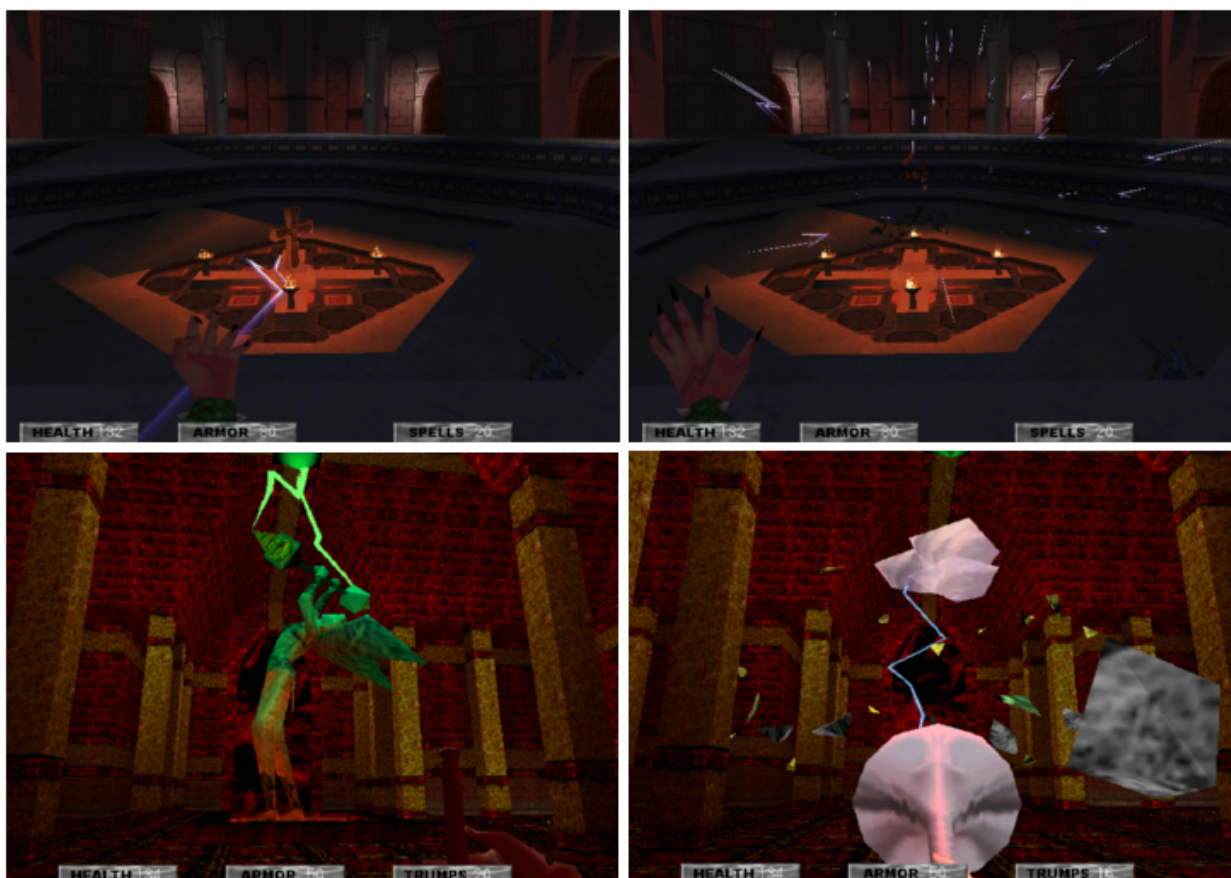
Illustration 11: Destroying Sacra on the Path of Fallen Power (top), and the Path of Divine Obedience (bottom)

game never illustrates the possibility. But demonic religion drives toward apotheosis, so by the fifth level when the Spell becomes available, the player's character recognizes herself as a Goddess. While one could only become an angel by submitting to the Single, High God, angels can become demons by pursuing the vision of strength embodied in any great demon. The Corruption Spell makes this playable; if a Goddess allows a weak angel to attack her, waving her hand over the angel's face rather than fighting, the exposed angel will convert and become a demon as well.

In this moment we can see the complex situatedness of sacred demons. Clearly, we cannot say that the game simply presents simulations of demons in which Evangelical players

believe. The corruption spell presents a moment wherein the game betrays openness theology's emphasis on freedom and moral responsibility, the very emphasis that was the developers' defense against detractors. In Boyd's words, "Admitting that Satan and demons can sometimes *influence* our thinking and behavior does not mean they can *determine* our thinking and behavior."[336] But the same stark classificatory divide that made the initial selection such an exemplary frame for an openness theology vision of choice, when applied to the ways AI can be "influenced," created a vision of choice that no longer made sense outside the game and sealed it with the shocking blasphemy of the player-character being adored as a demi-goddess.

But the player does not learn to do out here what they do in there. The sacred demon has one face inside of the screen against which players can develop a subjectivity as a chooser, experiencing the paths as almost perfectly symmetrical, though one ends with generosity and reward and the other with cruelty and betrayal. And the sacred demon has a face on this side of the screen that may in some cases articulate to Boyd's specific spiritual warfare theology and in others to the variety of ways that Evangelicals understand demons. But the demons' manifold tasks on this side of the screen, like appearing on the games' packaging, marking it as a controversial Evangelical commodity, are always also the scene of their subjectivizing work. In all cases the two sides remain in unstable relation. Just as the player and the player-character form a flexible whole, so too do these demons, and interacting with them negotiates on both sides of the screen. It is not surprising that many Evangelicals thought this sacred work was not appropriate for their children. An anonymous reviewer on CNET speaks eloquently for the part of the Evangelical counterpublic uncomfortable with the moral dilemma *The War in Heaven*

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[336] Boyd, *Satan*, 168.

stages: "Any Christian who would make a game in which people could choose to fight against God and/or God's angels as a demon is seriously weak in his Christianity. Sick idea. Skip this game - playing 'demon' is not something anyone should do, whether or not this game teaches The Bible the context in which it teaches is WRONG."[337]

Saints of Virtue

In 1996 David Slayback, then a member of Evangelical Free Church in Fresno California, was a programmer at Sierra Online, working on *The Realm*, a cartoonish role-playing world that allowed players to fight one another for their possessions.[338] He quit, complaining that his work was "increasingly violence-oriented," and used personal loans and money from relatives to start *Shine Studios* with artist Michael Ulrich.[339] "We lived on faith -- faith in the vision God gave us." *Saints of Virtue*, their only game, sold 15,000 copies in its first year (*War in Heaven* had sold 10,000 across the same period), and was praised by Christian game critics for its "cutting-edge 3D graphics [and] great sound."[340] Of course, some part of this praise was hyperbolic, and it seems that many Christian gamers could enjoy the game while recognizing that the user-friendly Gamestudio A4 engine was not "graphically up to par" with contemporary offerings from better

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[337] "Hmmm," User Review (June 5, 2000), accessed January 22, 2014, http://download.cnet.com/The-War-In-Heaven-demo/9241-2095_4-1498884.html?messageID=781233 .

[338] "David Slayback," accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.mobygames.com/developer/sheet/view/developerId,14233/ .

[339] John G. Taylor, "Spiritual Battlefield: Fresno Man Creates a Computer Game that Puts Right Over Might," *The Fresno Bee*, Monday, September 11, 2000**.**

[340] Ken Reaves, "Video, Computer, and Internet Games (Review)," *Living With Teenagers (Parent Ministry Edition) 22* (March 2000), 31; Julio Ojeda-Zapata, "Christian Video Games: Teen-Age Gamers Pick Up the Battle of Good Vs. Evil," *The Vindicator* (Youngstown, OH), October 14, 2000.

funded game developers.[341]

Saints of Virtue opens with a short video illustrating the stakes of the game to follow. We see a character who seems to be Shine Studios' imagined public, an adolescent White male, standing between his bed and his personal computer, contemplating his own precarious moral situation: "I fight the powers of darkness for control of my mind. The battlefield isn't even a physical one, the battles rage within the kingdom of my heart, deep within my very soul." Then a rogue's gallery of the game's enemies flashes past in unsituated darkness. The "masks of humanity" are a series of floating blue masks covering totemic objects: Worldliness conceals a globe, Self-Righteousness a powdered wig, and Self-Indulgence a brain seething with lightning. Back in the bedroom, the boy says "I truly am a warrior" as the camera zooms into his right eye, down a spiraling red tube of meat, to his beating, schematic heart. Now we see the boy in the darkness, progressively encased in Ephesians 6's "full armor of God." Once he is wearing gold from head to toe and armed with "the Sword of the Spirit," a great television screen tuned to static lights up the dark room and the masks flee down a hallway. Where are we?

The manual, box, and in-game text situate game-action within "the Kingdom of the Heart" and describe the masks as "personified tendencies of the flesh."[342] This is to say, the adolescent boy who opened the game is both the hero and the battlefield; he is fighting inside himself to expel the semi-foreign presence of his own body. Gameplay precedes from the "Amphitheatre of Apathy," through the "Labyrinths of Legalism," and "New Age Nirvana," until

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[341] Ojeda-Zapata, "Christian Video Games;" Shine Studios, "FAQ," accessed January 22, 2014, http://saintsofvirtue.com/faq.html .

[342] See, for instance, Shine Studios, "Gameplay," accessed January 22, 2014 http://saintsofvirtue.com/game.html#gameplay .

the player-character arrives at the "Domain of the Heart," each of these areas being further subdivided into allegorical environments.[343] Every location presents a set of thematically appropriate moral problems translated into the ludic idiom of a FPS. Often these encounters require the player to enact a parable in order to proceed (e.g. smashing an idol in "The Temple of Man"), but in others the player is invited only to observe an allegory (e.g. the pendulum in "The Caves of Loneliness" "has no purpose other than as a reminder of the lonely things of life").[344] Between these two poles, the Heart is full of optional interactions. "The Mall of Distraction," for instance is crowded with Vanity masks and commodities like sports equipment or clothing on mannequins, those presumed to be desirable to the ideal player. Interaction with these objects is of consequence for the player, not for the in-game character: "You try to take it. But it crumbles in dust."

Consistently across its various biomes, the Heart is partitioned by gates that are sealed with "Worldly Wisdoms" and unlocked with Bible verses. In *S3DNA* the game had been an illumination of a Bible story, but no scripture had been quoted in game at all. *War in Heaven* both illustrated a Bible story and included scripture as the Angelic counterpart to Demonic poetry. But in *Saints of Virtue* scripture enters the game as a swarm of interactive objects. One must find "Words of Truth" and use them to refute untruths which bar progress between areas, for instance using "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart

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[343] These are 1) "Caves of Loneliness," "Pits of Despair," "Mall of Distractions," "Gallery of Nothingness," "Media Maze;" 2) "Twisty Maze," "Trap Dungeon," "Trap Room," "Abstract Maze," "Rules Maze;" 3) "Love and Peace Temple," "Mountains of Relativity," "Shrine of Heaven," "Earth Shrine," "Temple of Man;" 4) "Swamplands of Selfishness," "Ruins of Pride," "Paths of Perseverance," and "Temple of the Heart."

[344] Shine Studios, "Hints," accessed January 22, 2014, http://saintsofvirtue.com/hints1.html .

will be also." (Matthew 6:20-21)" to refute "The one with the most toys wins."[345]

For the present study, what is most interesting about the Kingdom of the Heart is that it seems to be simultaneously the heart of the player-character and the player him/herself. Ignoring the character's (hegemonic and unmarked) gender/sex, race, and class, the game's accompanying materials describe both the protagonist and their ideal player as a young Christian: "When it comes to this generation of young people, Christians are out of excuses for not providing them with world class products for thinking and playing." "We developed Saints of Virtue with the viewpoint that the player is a Christian. While the game can be enjoyed by anyone, it has far greater meaning and depth for the Christian."[346] Thus the curious fact that the character is both the adventurer and the terrain to be explored, through the FPS convention of looking out through the eyes of the player-character, seems to cast the player as both terrain and adventurer as well. Thus, at the game's end, when the player places Jesus on the throne in "the Temple of the Heart," we need not claim that the moment is accompanied by a percussive instant of conversion to say that it is a *Christianizing* performance. The game hails a counterpublic that *is* Evangelical inasmuch as they fight to order a Christian interior.

This makes *SoV*'s sacred play decidedly unlike the morality plays from which it draws inspiration. We still have vices surrounding and challenging "Christian," our "Everyman," and the story still stages moral conflicts on homiletically named landscapes.[347] But the relationship

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[345] Shine Studios, "Game," http://saintsofvirtue.com/game.html (accessed 8/20/2011)

[346] Shine Studios, "Shine Studios: Our Mission," accessed January 22, 2014, http://saintsofvirtue.com/shine.html; Shine Studios, "Core Issues," accessed January 22, 2014, http://saintsofvirtue.com/core.html; http://saintsofvirtue.com/game.html .

[347] This is, of course, a simplification. For a detailed historical exploration of narrative movement in morality plays, see C. N. Manlove, "The Image of the Journey in "Pilgrim's Progress": Narrative versus Allegory," The Journal of

between the human-figure in a morality play and the implied audience seems relatively

sympathetic rather than *empathetic* when held alongside this new medium.[348] Where the

morality play always moved through its conflict by illustrating moral combat, *SoV* only reaches

its end for players who enact several hours playing as if they are themselves infested with vices

that must be placed into proper relation to the emerging Christian subject. And though we cannot

know how many of the thousands of purchasers completed the story, because Eternal Warriors

invited "winners" to post their comments online, we know that it was done at least hundreds of

times: "This game lead me a lot closer to God!" "I am 8 years old and the game helped me learn

to be brave." "The hard level was very difficult, just like our real battles of spiritual warfare.

Praise God for the victory!"[349]

Catechumen and *Ominous Horizons: A Paladin's Journey*

Though both of the previous two FPS games had been released after the Columbine

massacre, their production was well in advance of it, so while their reception was doubtlessly

changed by that tragedy, it is unreasonable to examine game structures for traces of its influence.

In *Catechumen* and its sequel *Ominous Horizons: A Paladin's Journey* (2000-2001, N-Lightning

Software), however, perhaps we can see both sacred demons and the subjectivizing work of play

presented in a distinctly post-Columbine form.

Narrative Technique, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter, 1980), pp. 16-38.

[348] "Empathy – projecting oneself into the situation of another – and sympathy – the correspondence or harmony of feelings among people – are similar emotional processes but ultimately quite different in their ethical and social consequences." David Morgan. *Visual Piety* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 59.

[349] Quotes are from Jonathan N., Brett J., and Bill W. Shine Studios, "Saints Hall of Fame (May 1999- May 2000)," accessed January 22, 2014, http://saintsofvirtue.com/hallfame2.html .

Ralph Bagley, the founder of N'Lightning Software, had long been disturbed by the violence he saw in popular games, but was unable to find any investors who would help finance a non-violent game of the quality he envisioned. "I submitted the concept for *Catechumen* to some investors and they flatly turned me down. Then, after Columbine, they called me back and said, 'Let's do this thing.'"[350] The $830,000 that went into *Catechumen's* production, advertising and distribution was explicitly and consciously applied to match the moral sensibilities of Evangelical families concerned that adolescent boys were particularly susceptible to the contagious violence of FPS games.

As in nearly all Christian FPS games, the primary weapon in these games is the Sword of the Spirit, and the enemies are largely demons. However, while the angels used the Sword to order heaven in *War in Heaven*, and the hero (and the player) used the Sword to order his own heart in *SoV*, N'Lightning's two heroes use the Sword to manage demonic activity in terrestrial human history. And while the player-character is described as a (White, male) Christian in both games, his efforts no longer work to create a Christian interior, but to create an external world in which Christianity is possible. This change significantly complicates the work of establishing a human place through First-Person Shooting, because the Sword will now have to interact simultaneously with entities already organized into strata as humans or animals. It is the incompletion of N'Lightning's solution to this challenge that most clearly bears the signature of post-Columbine negotiations.

In *Catechumen,* set beneath Rome, circa 171 CE, all humans are either Christians or

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[350] Adrian Chen, "Q & A: Ralph Bagley," *Willamette Week,* July 20, 2005, accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.wweek.com/portland/article-4626-ralph_bagley.html .

demon-possessed. The player character is the eponymous catechumen, a young Christian whose teacher has been captured by a Romano-Satanic alliance and is being held underground. Along the path downward, a series of angels present the player with various forms of the Sword of the Spirit, and other weapons that fire beams of holy light. This light is *Catechumen*'s primary mode of social interaction, and when it contacts various entities it has various effects depending on the place of its recipient in a particular Evangelical hierarchy of beings. When a non-Christian is exposed to light fired from the Sword or other holy weapons, he or she converts, falling to kneel in prayer. Christians seem not to be affected in any way. Demons scream and writhe, burning into smears of red light. Though they are never explicitly described as "demons," shooting *Catechumen's* human/animal hybrids –ogres, minotaurs, sea-monsters, and werewolves– positions them upon the same moral stratum as demons, burning them alive, producing similarly-simulated pain. Lions, *Catechumen's* only unambiguous animal antagonists, fall on their side when defeated and stay physically present. Here, perhaps, we are observing a pacifying effect of holy energy derived from the story of Daniel in the lion's den and applied in a historical situation of Christian martyrdom. Halfway through the game, however, the player climbs down into "The Abandoned Farm" and finds a place where design exceeds any out-game theology. Here, guarded by exploding demons, are some small pens of pigs. It seems the designers placed these pigs in *Catechumen's* underworld as mere scenery, but their place in its economy of violence should give us pause.

Because the game booklet listed "lions" as enemies, but not "pigs," I was unsure what these creatures were doing here. Nearby, a group of exploding demons were sitting around campfires, a first in the game. "Maybe," I considered, "demons had farms." The game gave no

further clue, so I climbed into the pen with the pigs. They ran around randomly, neither causing

me harm nor really seeming to notice me. So I shot them. At first, the pigs ran from me and

squealed. Apparently holy energy is painful for pigs. So I shot the adorable piglets a thousand

times. I poured an incredible amount of holy energy into them, keeping one of the game's

strongest Swords focused on a single pig. And after a full 15 seconds of light from the

tri-repeater Sword, the pig charged me. Instead of dying, the piglet suddenly became the most

dangerous enemy in the game.

Punishing in-game cruelty is not itself a novel feature distinguishing *Catechumen* as a

Evangelical game. For instance, from 1992 on, games in the *Legend of Zelda* franchise have

frequently included chickens which displayed this same mechanic: when struck a few times they

would squawk and run away, but when exposed to extravagant violence, the chickens would

retaliate as formidable enemies.[351] Within worldly modes of play, cruelty punishments are

interesting, first, as cruelty acknowledgements. It is much more common in situations of player

cruelty –when the player treats a harmless or helpful simulation of out-game life ("an innocent")

as an enemy– for a game to give no confirmation of the act at all, keeping player action against

them out of the game's economy of violence. That is, generally, chickens and shopkeepers are

impervious to player attacks, so attacking them is either impossible (e.g. the "attack" button is

disabled) or produces no consequential effect (e.g. bullets cause them to complain, but they

never die). Notably, this non-recognition of player violence is the surest way for game

developers to evade public critique. Making violence against innocents possible, required, or

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[351] In *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* (Nintendo, 2002), this tendency was displayed through pigs. For a growing fan-produced catalog of games displaying this tendency, see http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/VideoGameCrueltyPunishment (accessed January 22, 2014).

beneficial though optional, tends to be treated as morally equivalent in non-academic game

criticism, whether worldly or Evangelical.[352] In worldly modes of play, even when cruelty is

acknowledged, at present there seems to be no pattern to when it will be punished or rewarded.[353]

Evangelical games tend not to acknowledge cruelty any more than worldly games do, and

this single instance in all FPS games reviewed, may just be a riff on *Zelda.* But situated within an

Evangelical mode of play, considering the moral work performed during play, the cruelty

punishment becomes interesting precisely because it belongs in a worldly game. The pig is a

reflective boundary between two modes of play. Quite simply, it should not be here: unlike

pacifying lions, where the light seemed to be directing miracles into historical martyrological

narratives, shooting a peaceful piglet invites no miraculous intervention. And in this moment of

misuse, it becomes clear, suddenly, that the holy light hurts. And it does not only hurt demons, if

it is used for a purpose aside from creating divine order, it hurts whatever it faces. But when that

pain crosses a critical threshold, it again does the sacred work of classification by creating a new

hero. The light creates a monster that evicts the perverse player from the game, managing the

boundary of Evangelical play.

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[352] For instance, *Duke Nukem 3D*, allowed players to give money to pole-dancers and then shoot them, but the money was not deducted from any quantified fund, giving it to the dancers had only graphical and auditory effects, and shooting them did not yield any points. *Grand Theft Auto III,* on the other hand, allowed players to expend in-game currency to have implied sex with sex-workers, granting a health bonus, then kill the sex-workers to recover the money. Setting aside the small expenditure of ammunition in each case, these might be regarded as roughly equivalent acts of cruelty, though the first game makes it optional, while the second rewards. Bloggers criticizing the violence in these games generally failed to note the distinction, however. Mediawatch, for instance, says that "In Duke Nukem bonus points are awarded for the murder of these mostly prostituted and partially nude women" Media Watch Blog, "Teaching Boys to Kill," archived by the Internet Archive, March 13, 2005, accessed January 22. 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050313213900/http://www.mediawatch.com/wordpress/ .

[353] This inconsistency is visible even within single games. *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*, while it does contain the aforementioned punishment for striking chickens, also fails to acknowledge violence against humanoids, and contains creatures as harmless as unprovoked chickens against whom violence is rewarded ("rock/bush-crabs").

Ominous Horizons: A Paladin's Calling (*OH:PC*; 2001, N-Lightning Software),

Catechumen's more sophisticated sequel, again offers a vision of human history infested with

sacred demons and holy weapons. In this story, told through the same shooting mechanics,

Gutenberg's press has been destroyed by demons and the player must travel around the world

gathering pieces of his first printed Bible so he can emerge from despair and resume his printing

efforts. But *OH:PC* draws just barely to the Evangelical side of the porcine border, never

allowing the holy light to be misused, but also never attaining the theological clarity present in

most of *Catechumen*.[354] Instead of focusing on the power of the Sword to convert people,

OH:PC has most enemies occupy the quasi-demonic space that lions or mythical creatures held

in *Catechumen.* The protagonist travels around the world being attacked by rats, bats, beetles on

one hand, and Grendel, "ninja-demons," and Annubis on the other, but every human in the game

is a Christian who fails to react when fired upon.[355] The game neither presents the possibility of

redemptive miracles, nor the possibility of misuse.

Though I do not want to cast the Columbine massacre as too firm a border in the history

of Evangelical play, it does seem that the simplification of the game's ethical problematics only

continues the shift that both of the N'Lightning shooters demonstrate when contrasted with the

previous two FPS games. These games offer no suggestion that the evil to be managed is within

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[354] As *Ominous Horizons* is not one of my primary field sites, this data has been gathered from examinations of recorded game-play. DragonsDream18, "Videos," accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/user/DragonsDream18 and Altmer451, "Videos," accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/user/altmer451/videos .

[355] Though some enemies are called "druids" in the official walk-through, they have skulls for faces and bones for hands. When they are shot sufficiently they vanish into a cloud of smoke. The one unambiguous human who appears in the Anasazi ruins is apparently also a Christian, protecting a cross that mysteriously appeared there from demons, and claiming no other religious orientation.

the player herself. Subjectivity is still won by arranging a self with respect to demons, but these demons are neither playable, nor are they cast as dangers within the player. Spiritual warfare is now the work of creating an exterior world habitable by a Christian subject rather than an internal one. The question of whether Evangelical youth (particularly those who enjoy FPS games) have within themselves a potential to misuse force is no longer raised at all. Whether this reflects the important place of Columbine in Evangelical game criticism or not cannot be determined, but it is clear that N'Lightning, financed to create a shooter that would not lead to "another Columbine," figured the sacred work of Evangelical play in the same way as those who found *War in Heaven's* active management of evil unthinkable.

Rev 7

By his own account, Marty Bee took up game design "after seeing a demon-head and pentagram displayed prominently on a CNN special on game designers." His ongoing efforts to create a non-violent shooter then were perhaps less about demons indigenous to adolescent minds than those within the game industry: "The industry is built on four pillars or false gods […] Baal (the god of sex and eroticism), Molech (violence and mayhem), Mammon (money), and finally Satan himself (the occult)."[356] But the primary strategies for removing violence from his *Rev 7* (2003, Marty Bee) mirror the consensus between Evangelical and worldly criticism wherein violence is only bloody or imitably inter-human force: "Seeing as you are really not shooting anything human, that solves the moral conundrum of killing things in games for a concerned Christian or parent. Also the enemies dont [SIC] explode in a spray of blood and guts,

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[356] Bee and Van Nattan, "Computer Games: Are they Honoring to God?"

they just fade away most times (its just a story anyway.)[357]"

Inspired by the best-selling *Left Behind* novels, Marty Bee decided to make the book of *Revelation* playable.[358] Had he taken a resolutely historicist hermeneutics, the result may have resembled *Catechumen,* crafting a specific embattled Christian community in the past; a futurist hermeneutics could have produced a range of soon-to-come end times simulators (like the *Left Behind* games, for instance); *Rev 7,* however, applies an idealist hermeneutics, imagining the drama of *Revelation* neither suspended in the past nor the future, but subsisting transtemporally within Christian experience blended freely with elements from the other two.[359] In particular, the game creates a shooter environment from each of the seven churches described in the second and third chapters of *Revelation* by applying several different canons of interpretation and aesthetic styles simultaneously.

Rev 7 anticipates a counterpublic for which every aspect of play is simultaneously an engagement with a computer and with a Bible. Its player's manual is two pages of technical information followed by twenty pages of questions reflecting on scripture.[360] And while installing the game, as with most software, one must click a button which confirms that the user "agrees with the above terms and conditions." Here, the entire text of the terms reads "artwork

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[357] Marty Bee, "Post-Mortem: Rev 7," accessed January 22, 2014, http://firstpersonshooters.net/Games/Rev%207/postmortem.html .

[358] Marty Bee, "Interview," accessed January 22, 2014, http://firstpersonshooters.net/Games/Rev%207/interview.html .

[359] These three possible readings of *Revelation* are taken from Mark Reasoner, "What Does the Bible Say About the End Times?" in *Rapture, Revelation, and the End Times: Exploring the Left Behind Series,* Bruce David Forbes and Jeanne Halgren Kilde, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)*, 71-98;* 78-9.

[360] Marty Bee, "To Him That Overcometh," accessed January 22, 2914, http://firstpersonshooters.net/Games/Rev%207/Overcomers%20Study%20Rev7.html .

and interpretation (c) Marty Bee, 2004 / original manuscript, John (c) A.D. 90 / original message, Christ (c) A. D. 90."[361]

The hermeneutic of Bible study in *Rev 7*'s instruction manual invites untutored reflection on every word of the text as explications of the player's own experience: "List some 'false apostles' that you might know of today," "If the seven lamps are the seven churches, what do you think can put out our 'light' today?" But this radical nearness of the FPS to the practice of Bible study seems to bring Marty Bee's own unsystematic associations into the game from all sides. Because "quiet time" with Jesus "usually" happens in the morning, ammunition and health items are donuts and coffee.[362] Some enemies are metaphorical images of vices, like clocks with handguns, while others are horned demons. The landscapes sometimes reference the historical cities in the book of Revelation and at others include images decrying 20th century New Age spirituality. The aesthetics in some places are grim, even grisly, and in others reflect the quasi-futurist aesthetic of the Jetsons or antique motel signs. This, we must remember, is one thing that might be meant by "literalism."

The demons emerge with the complex markings of this biblical hermeneutic. Because the letter to Smyrna says "the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried" (Rev 2:10), the accompanying Bible study invites serious reflection on the possibility of persecution. The game, however, condenses several lines of reflection into the image of "Beezlebubba, the Sherriff of Smyrna," a horned demon that speaks like a cartoon's stereotype of a poor white southerner, chasing the player-character shouting "Get over *heah* boy!"

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[361] Bee, "Rev 7 Interview."

[362] More specifically, the dart-gun requires cookies, the grenade launcher requires pie, and both the chain gun and rocket launcher use donuts; Bee, "Rev 7 Interview."

An Evangelical mode of play that develops through interaction with Beezlebubba and these other intuitive blendings welcomes the player as an invested but unsystematic reader of the Bible. The game, in fact, seems to be a machine for desystematizing Bible-study, welcoming play into the Christian subject's moral reflection.

Eternal War: Shadows of Light

Eternal War: Shadows of Light (2003, XRUCIFIX), the last Evangelical FPS game to date, returns us to the explicit concern with adolescent interiority that characterized *Saints of Virtue.* We again begin in a teenage boy's bedroom, but John's voice does not resemble our brave anonymous hero/battlefield from *SoV*:

> "I'm sitting on my bed, holding a knife to my throat. A war rages within my mind, to simply make one strong thrust and end my pain forever, or hold onto what remaining shards of reality I still grasp and try to regain my life. Images pierce my mind like nails into my skull. I can't take this tormenting life anymore, I want to end it. I will end it!"

But John does not need to be brave, only willing. In this game, unlike *SoV*, the haunted adolescent is merely a patient, simultaneously acted upon by angels and demons, both conceived as autonomous agencies. And, pointedly, the player is always an angel. This is, in fact, the only Evangelical FPS to include any multiplayer mode – a surprising lacuna given how influential "deathmatch" practices have been in the popularization of the genre – but "Players can only assume the roles of angels in single player and multi player."[363] This means that the developers have successfully deployed the "lifematch," reconceiving the FPS as a space of collaboration between angels, but have done so by making the player the solution to adolescent malaise but not

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[363] Tim Emmerich, "An Interview with Two Guys Software, the Producers of Eternal War: Shadows of Light," accessed January 23, 2014,   http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/games/2002/interview-eternalwar.html .

its victim.

Separated from the paradoxical identification of the player with both the protagonist and the infested game-world that characterized *SoV*, the adolescent interior becomes a landscape of death: "In the distance, I saw several tall, dark strongholds pierce out of the harsh wasteland. The cries and screams of demons echoed from the monuments of evil." When the developers describe this as "The Quake of Christian Games" they seem not to be referring to the fact that this is in fact an application of the Quake Engine, but to the gruesome aesthetics that opened this chapter's inquiry.[364] In some places, in fact, the demons that inhabit John's heart do Id's successor to *Doom* one better, adding extra jaws, rows of teeth, and rotting tentacles in the process of sacralizing the monsters. The gruesomeness, however, still invites a consciously contrived act of non-violence, at least in as much as it continues to avoid the criteria for identifying violence shared between Evangelical and worldly critique: "Gore isn't a factor in Eternal War, you can't rip demons up into red meaty pieces. When you strike demons with your holy weapons, darkness will emit from them and they'll groan, that's about the extent of it."[365]

Having removed the specific cues that raise the question of violence, *Eternal War* moves outside of the game-violence debate, and is now at liberty to include flourishes that sharply draw our attention to the *erotics* of game-violence. First, unlike the protagonists in any of the FPS games discussed here so far, Evangelical or worldly, the Angel Mike seems to get pleasure from shooting his opponents. Were we firing bullets at humans, a hero who shouts "Does that sting?" or "Yes!" when his shots make contact would run the risk of disgusting players and inciting

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[364] CCGR, "Two Guys Interview Part One," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.ccgr.org/index.php/reviews/21-misc-articles/4263-two-guys-software-interview-part-1 .

[365] CCGR, "Two Guys Interview Part One."

censors.[366]

And while the most humanoid demons in *Eternal War* are rotting zombies, their intelligence exceeds anything attempted in previous Christian FPS games. When the genre finally includes demons that can hide, collaborate, and use multiple attacks, they have been separated entirely from identification with the player. They move like humans, but they are problems in someone else's soul. Our last vision of FPS non-violence invites play as a merciless therapist/exorcist, a lifematch warrior. One plays as an Evangelical by solving the problem of adolescent interiority, but not one's own.

Afterward: Into the Rain

Comparing the modes of play welcomed by Evangelical FPS games, we seem to observe a single, slow shift that is simultaneously technological and theological. In 1994, *Super 3D Noah's Ark* situated players as already a biblical hero, divinely commanded to engage physical danger, but morally secure. There were no demons. But with the boom in FPS popularity that cast the entire genre as "Doomclones," shooting became a space for engagements in spiritual warfare. In early 1999, *The War in Heaven* and *Saints of Virtue* both imagined Evangelical play as a process of moral development. Here the Christian subject was embattled within, and putting on Ephesians 6's armor of God became a process of managing internal demons. But after the Columbine massacre, Evangelical game criticism came to face a possibility of adolescent evil too palpable to be played with. N'Lightning's two FPS games, *Catechumen* (2000) and *Ominous*

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[366] *Duke Nukem 3D* (3D Realms, 1996) included comments of this kind, the player-character saying "Oooh, that's gotta hurt!" or "Hehehe... what a mess" when an enemy is killed, but this game received the highest possible RSAC rating for violence.

Horizons: A Paladin's Calling (2001), financed specifically as games that would not turn

adolescents into killers, cast the player as the protector of the Christian tradition, just as

inevitably virtuous as Noah, but now responsible for the salvation of others.

My research has not uncovered any Evangelical FPS games released between 2003 and

2014, not so much as a Fight-the-Pharaoh mod for Quake, nothing.[367] But perhaps we had

reached a sort of stopping point, an elegant ambivalence on the meaning of spiritual warfare and

its relation to adolescent amusement. On the right hand, in the stark clarity of *Eternal War,* the

Evangelical shooter becomes a single-minded attempt to clear out the demons in the adolescent

interior. And on the left hand, the player is simultaneously suspended at all of the borders which

game-violence crosses, through the dizzying polyphony of *Rev 7*: it is a grotesque cartoon, the

trademarked property of Christ, in the head and in the world, historicist, futurist, and praeterist.

But both strategies found ways to welcome players into an Evangelical subjectivity defined by

spiritual warfare without having to impute that there is something potentially demonic about or

within the player.

But elegance is not an explanation for the end of Christian FPS creativity. The decline of

a curve, no less than its rise, is an interference pattern of innumerable other trends. And,

pointedly, the disappearance of the Evangelical FPS has not signaled a decline of the Evangelical

video game. Perhaps in the vanishing of Evangelical FPS games we witness the diffusion of

spiritual mapping into an Evangelical practice rather than a network of Evangelical

organizations. The decade without an Evangelical FPS has also been the Facebook decade, so

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[367] This is corroborated by Nick Gibson's recent article on Christian FPS games. Nick Gibson, "Christian FPS Games," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.hardcoregaming101.net/christianfps/christianfps.htm .

perhaps we are seeing a shift toward more broadly shareable Christian software for the context of "social media." Maybe the growing alienation of the player-character from the demonic landscape has mimicked the movement of video game culture from a sub-cultural edge to a cultural center, and a movement, with it, of Evangelical gamers out from a space where they had to justify their games with unambiguous spiritual warfare.

We might begin by observing the emergence of networks emerging to share a new way of playing a FPS as an Evangelical FPS in this period, moving away from concerns with violence as previously defined. Around 2002-2003, often networking through the emerging culture of online Evangelical game criticism, several groups like "Tribe of Judah" began to appear, using private servers to play FPS games like *Unreal Tournament, Team Fortress,* and *Counter-Strike* in distinctly Evangelical ways.[368] These games tend to feature humanoid opponents, but with the possibility of disabling on-screen blood. "Christian Crew Gaming," one of the oldest and most vibrant of these communities, shows a new set of concerns in the story of their own emergence: "The Christian Crew came about amongst a group of gamers who were tired and distressed at the continuing lack of social morals and overwhelming profanity, pornography, and outright disregard for fair play and good sportsmanship found on the average game servers, specifically Counter-Strike game servers of the time."[369] Echoed in the parallel emergence of Evangelicals guilds in Massively Multiplayer Online Games like *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard), it seems a growing number of Evangelicals have lost the need for their own shooters, developing, instead, modes of sacred play and Christian communities of play for worldly games.

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[368] Tribe of Judah, "Community FAQ," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.toj.cc/toj.php?x=main/faq/2 .

[369] Christian Crew Gaming, "History," accessed January 23, 2014, http://ccgaming.com/about/history/ .

In early July 2011, as this chapter was cooling and taking on its present shape, I traveled to George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon to attend the tenth annual Christian Game Developers' Conference. In-flight, I spent the majority of my time considering the interaction of sacred violence and interiority. The proximate cause of my reflection may have been my decision to do fieldwork from the plane; I was both immersed in the violence of *The War in Heaven* and itchingly aware that the pleasant elderly man sitting next to me was either making faces because I was furiously killing angels and taking notes, or that was just the face he tended to make on planes. I couldn't know. But as I subtly shifted my screen angle, deadened my facial affect, and lowered the volume of my headphones, I realized I was participating in one of the mysteries explored in this chapter: game-violence, like the mythic violence that orients Christianity, is the migration not only of images of public violence, but of their enactments, into human interiority, and the public displays this movement compels.

The following evening, in the parking lot of George Fox University, not having previously studied Christian Crew Gaming and similar groups, I was surprised to find myself playing *Halo: Reach* (Bungie, 2010), a popular, worldly FPS, with prominent Christian game developers and their children. Violence was again drawn toward an interior, but here the mode of Christian interiority was the XBUS, "a converted 40′ transit bus that has been outfitted [with] 16 networked Xbox 360 game consoles so […] each player gets their own 27" HDTV."[370]   Inside, the blood invisible to anyone else on the street, a (small, but literal) busload of attendees at the Christian Game Developers' Conference was playing the current edition of Microsoft's

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[370] Xbus Games, "About," archived by the Internet Archive, April 9, 2012, accessed January 23, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20120409093949/http://www.xbusgames.com/about-xbus-games .

best-selling FPS series. To consider the game through the various semiotic indexes of violence that have proven significant thus far, blood spattered when players were shot, and for one round we played the "head hunter" mode, which caused a skull to appear whenever a player was killed, but in neither case would "gore" be a likely complaint (the skull was clean and was not visibly extracted from the fallen body); while some imitable weapons like combat knives and a golf club are included in the game, the XBUS employees consistently selected an assortment of "energy" weapons instead.[371] Relationally, of course, it was more complicated. The XBUS allowed me to be killed by the other players in diverse ways, as the modes changed every few minutes, and I was exceptionally poor at all of them. Aside from the conspicuous absence of swearing, the shouts inside the XBUS were the typically paradoxical chatter of competitive gaming: "Arg! Who killed me?! Ha! He's killing everyone!" It sounded like a sort of answer to the Baptist debate almost twenty years before on whether churches should install arcade cabinets.

While *Halo* deathmatches at the Christian Game Developers' Conference seem to reflect the change in Evangelical FPS gaming since 2003, my experience at the conference showed that this has not been a homogenous movement, nor should it be understood as a stopping point. The conversations I had with participants revealed a divide between those who had gathered for a conference of "Christian-Game Developers" and those who came for a conference of "Christian

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[371] Christ Centered Game Reviews gave the game 5.5 for violence, explaining "Halo: Reach is pretty tame for an M-rated game, much like the other games in the series. The entire game is spent shooting things, but the violence is not graphic. The enemies are all aliens, and none of them look even a little human. There are blood splotches throughout the game (and depending on the weapon, blood will hit the walls) but no dismemberment." "Headhunter is pretty simple, with control points scattered around that periodically move as the map continues. Kill opponents and capture their skull (it's nothing graphic), then take it to a control point to gain a point. You need points to win, so capturing skulls is vital to winning. It's a pretty crazy and hectic variation on standard Halo play, and adds a lot to the game." CCGR, "Halo: Reach," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.ccgr.org/index.php/reviews/19-console/5204-halo-reach-xbox-360 .

Game-Developers." Chris Skaggs, proprietor of Soma Games, and organizer of this year's

conference, figured it as the latter:

> "While Soma Games is a group of Christians making video games, we're not what you might call a
> 'Christian Video Game company' and it's important for us to be very clear about this to avoid inaccurate
> expectations. We're making games that will be founded upon, and informed by Christian thought and the
> Christian understanding of reality - however, we don't plan on making games that teach Christian theology.
> There are no scripture references, no Biblical characters and no telling of the Jonah story - other companies
> have been there and done a fine job. We hope to try something a little different.[372]"

Soma Games' first release, *G: Into the Rain,* however, is in some sense a single prolonged

retelling of the Noah's ark story, again, specifically configured to answer concerns about

violence. As a strategic, top-down, space shooter wherein the player must harvest resources from

an encroaching cloud of "The Rain," "The Arc series provides a stimulating alternative to

violence-packed games."[373] Because of this intentional concealment of sacra and attempt at

cross-over appeal, *G* did not find a place in this dissertation's catalog of religious games.

As in *The War in Heaven,* the game opens with a choice, but the moral significance of

this choice is radically different. One now chooses for which of ten corporations they will

become an employee. These corporations, with names like "Panis Global," "DASA Corp,"

"Clarifex" and smoothly designed geometrical logos, seem to be entirely plausible entries into

the corporate culture of the early 21st century. *G* even follows this choice with an unnerving

simulacrum of a contract: "I, the oversigned, understand that this constitutes a working

agreement between myself and New World Incorporated and that failure to complete my duties

faithfully and effectively will result in breach of contract and subsequent denial of pay." Barker,

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[372] Soma Games, "About Us," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.somagames.com/about_us.php .

[373] Soma Games, "G: Into the Rain," accessed January 23, 2014, www.somagames.com/ARC/index_g.php .

your in-game guide, speaking as a fellow crew member, incentivizes the game's point system by identifying it with unjust labor practices: "Time doesn't matter, but supplies do. Each rocket you use comes out of our pay." And regardless of one's choice of corporation, it quickly becomes clear that play is always configured as morally dubious: "Be Advised: Several competitive firms making conflicting claims. Legal status of your mission is unclear and ambiguous. Do not engage."

Echoing this concern with the violence that comes with working for an unethical corporation, the Christian Game Developers Conference was largely preoccupied with the question of how to influence game design in a Christian direction if one happens to be a game designer working for a non-Evangelical company. But, at present, this new imagination of an Evangelical counterpublic that emerges in interaction with the corporations that create games as much as the communities that play them, or the entities within them, still seems to be only partially imagined. A vocal minority was fearful, telling stories of game designers who requested not to work on a game because it included excessive violence only to be fired and blacklisted from future employment, and motivational speaker Os Hillman framed the work in Dominionist terms as an Evangelical subversion, "Taking back the mountains of culture." But the dominant tone was the curious and playful ethical reflection one might expect of game designers, straining toward a vision of Evangelical play unmarked by explicit sacra.

One discussion session, led by Tim Johnson, an entertainment consultant who worked on several Veggie Tales games, asked how participants could design games that "reflected God's truth" in the mode of Christ's parables: "If you open a treasure box [in a game] and there is a Bible inside, we lose the metaphor … When Jesus told a parable, he didn't tell the parable of the

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man who sold everything he had to buy a field because there was a Torah buried in it." His session cited Bible verses and encouraged designers to make games that enjoined "Cooperation," "Individuality," "Sacrifice for Later Reward," and "Eucatastrophe," taking his examples of these "Christian principles" from Nintendo games and other "family friendly" productions rather than Evangelical ones. During the question and answer session, the room descended into confusion. Several participants had worked in the game industry for years and had specific anecdotes about the resistance of players to any moment wherein these mechanics became ethically challenging enough to merit description as specifically Christian. One designer related that he had made a game where players had to sacrifice a well-liked, AI-controlled teammate in the act of play. But players wouldn't do it. They would play the scene again and again, convinced that they will eventually stop making what they could only perceive as a mistake. Tim Johnson's response was two-fold: it has to be fun, and there has to be an analog Christian outside the game to explain the greater truth to which the game points. Again, Chris Skaggs set the tone: "This isn't about converting people, it is about blessing people… Just to bless people, all the people, the secular people."

Alongside established patterns, a new kind of sacred play seems to be emerging wherein the Evangelical player is interpellated as an exegete, sacralizing worldly games into the service of Christian truths, and the Evangelical designer labors to better fit games for that task. And like the earlier shifts in Evangelical play, it is again visible in game criticism. The recent edited volume *Halos and Avatars: Playing Video Games with God* contains articles by Kevin Newgren and Craig Detweiler that propose that worldly FPS games like *Fallout 3* and *Bioshock* are *already* better for Christian subject formation than the last generation of explicitly Evangelical

entries because their blood and gore are context for complex moral dilemmas in-game.[374]

At the conference, I found neither the end of Evangelical concern with violence, nor with spiritual warfare (I have not, in fact, ever been told so regularly that demons are a live issue in my own life). But attention may be shifting to another contact zone, one that figures Evangelical gamers themselves as sacra, binding out game religion to algorithmic structures through their own presence on either side of the screen. In some ways it seems that the next mode of Evangelical play may be the play of Evangelism itself, and we cannot know in advance how it will relate "blood and gore" to the blood of Christ.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore Evangelical FPS games as sacred play, then considered why there have not been any new instances of this genre in ten years. If the development and disappearance of these games are told as singular narrative, the overall trajectory seems to begin with the player as both soldier and battlefield, and end with the player as a confident angelic being who intervenes in a spiritual war outside of himself. Faced with the horror of the Columbine massacre, these games pressed moral ambiguity to the margins, increasingly envisioning a player who fights evil but does not contain any. It is a story of clarification and maturation across which the subject of sacred play seems to grow in coherence until it is capable of walking out of Evangelical media without losing an Evangelical humanity.

The sacred demons of Evangelical gaming, like other video game characters, can easily

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[374] Kevin Newgren, "BioShock to the System: Smart Choices in Video Games" 135-149; Craig Detweiler, "Born to Play," 190-196; see also Mark Hayse, "Ultima IV: Simulating the Religious Quest," 34-47.

feign death without disappearance. No amount of Holy Spirit launching can prevent them from reappearing when the game is started anew. But as these Evangelical FPS games recede in memory and their publishing companies close, some kinds of demon seem to be drifting into obsolescence. While later games still often include demonic opponents, they tend not to approach as a horde that fills the whole field of vision. They are now more likely to be final bosses or rare enemies, evil concealed behind the world. As the spiritual mapping movement transformed from a network of organizations into a network of practices, so too has sacred play apparently become a paradigm for engagement with (and avoidance of) the demons in the world. This transformation does not seem to presage the disappearance of Evangelical gaming, but a shift in Evangelical human-computer interfaith.

Chapter 6

Digital Baptists Against Digital Immersion:
An Eschatology for Evangelical Gaming

"In the classic sense of the word, anything is baptised that is immersed. Immersion alone is classic baptism. But immersion alone is not Christian baptism. Christian baptism demands faith and repentance in the thing baptised."
- F. G. Allen[375]
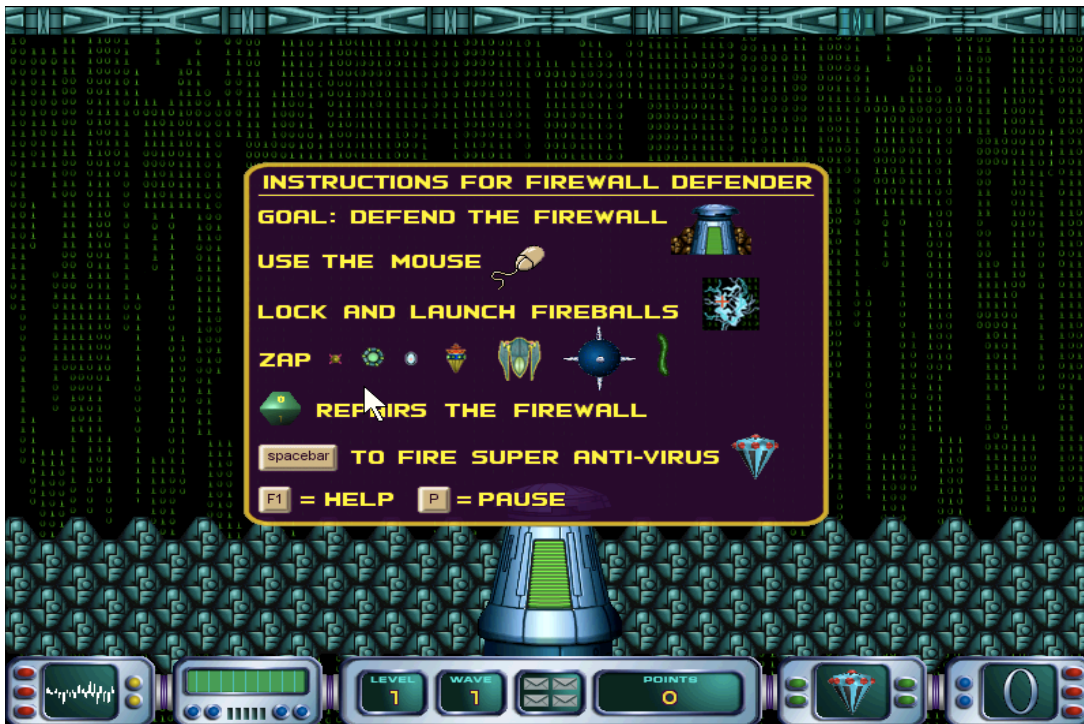
Illustration 12: Firewall Defender

The first game-within-the-game(-within-the-game) is called *Firewall Defender*. You seem

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[375] F. G. Allen, "The New Birth: Its Nature and Necessity," accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=3452 .

to be facing down into a ravine of abstract information. In the deep distance, binary code slides past in punctuated green columns; the data-aesthetics evokes *The Matrix*, conveying a vague flurry of digital activity beyond your comprehension. Nearer to you, thickening out of the informatic mixture like curds out from milk, the field of play is peopled by solid algorithmic entities such as "viruses," "logic gates," and "the firewall" itself, all of which resemble tiny spaceships. The game between these entities is scored on an interface resembling burnished steel, dotted with colored lights and single-purpose screens, closer and more communicative than the game field. And then, off the screen through the speakers, in the air over your shoulder, the voices of two children take credit for your actions in the game and disagree about what they mean. Both rejoice when you win, and groan when you lose, bickering intermittently like a vaudeville comedy duo.

> *"What's this game rated anyway?"*
> *"U... for even YOU could play it."*

You are of two minds. Specifically, your minds are two teenagers, a bookish blonde girl, and an excitable African American guy. Both are residents of Odyssey, Ohio. As Mandy, you are cautious, awkward, and distracted; as Michael, you are reckless, computer savvy, and game-focused. Both of you, in the opening cinema, agreed to go *inside the computer* using "the Room of Consequence," a poorly-explained sort of virtual reality chamber in your local community center's "Bible Room." As Mandy, you went in because you are writing a paper about computers for school; as Michael, you seem to pursue flashing lights without reserve or explanation. Your Michael-self goads you toward danger, and your Mandy-self answers with calls to discretion.

Unsurprisingly, then, it is as Michael that you disable the "safety protocols," allowing deeper entry into the game, but barring escape. And as Mandy, discovering you are trapped, you quickly forget why you came inside at all:

"I could have done a report on okra. Why did I choose computers?"
"You can't play with okra."

Michael presses you onward and inward through six more games - *Spam Dodger, Binary Bridge, Virus Viper, Brig Breakout, Debugger,* and *Hard Drive Havoc.* Each game brings multiple levels of computerized reality into collision: circuitry, email messages, raw binary, the mouse cursor, and the physical magnetic hard drive apparatus all appear to interact visibly. In each game, your task is managing the interaction of "good" and "bad data" ("*Grab the good and zap the bad,*" Michael explains).Your reward after the games is access to emails from friends back in physical reality, but instead of explaining how to get out of the computer (which one may reasonably expect, as one of those friends designed the Room of Consequence), the emails offer only aphorisms, most of which concern the importance of time management:

Choices and Consequences 098: "One should be just as careful in choosing one's pleasures as in avoiding calamities." -Intercultural Wisdom
Value of Time 032: "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff that life is made of." -Benjamin Franklin, American Statesman, Scientist, and Philosopher (1706-1790)

At the center of the system, you encounter Seepi Yu, the computer's Central Processing Unit [CPU] reimagined as a kind of Dracula whose body integrates an exposed human brain and electronic circuitry. The eloquent parasite first offers, then compels you (both of you) to stay forever inside of the computer playing video games. Seepi-Yu maintains a slave-colony of hideously aged children, and feeds upon the time they waste playing games: "Time, life, same thing."

Illustration 13: A Designer of *Immersive* Games and His Audience

But when you finally defeat the monster, you discover that it was all a ruse; you were safely inside a simulation that dramatized the danger of computers. But your Michael-self learns a valuable lesson about time-management nonetheless, and your Mandy-self is still vindicated, and neither seem upset about being trapped in a seamless simulation of mortal danger.

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I open this study's last substantive chapter with *Adventures in Odyssey: The Great Escape* because a cultural history does well to settle its accounts by establishing an orientation to the future, and at present it seems quite nearly impossible to describe the future of gaming without saying the word "immersive." This is not to say that the games of the future will immerse us, but rather that media criticism – both Evangelical and worldly – seems to anticipate that they will. Given my present attention to the human-computer interfaith, I take the possibility of immersion seriously, but I must regard the proposition that computers will ever contain as much life as humans can experience as a statement of faith rather than one of fact. That conviction, however, mobilizes material productions of the future, and the ambivalence *The Great Escape* presents

concerning the entry of humans into computers will allow us to close this study with a sense that Evangelical gaming might proceed into the future quite differently than its worldly equivalent.

In the context of Evangelical gaming, our approach to the word "immersion" well begins with the Michael-Mandy dialectic, an interplay of fear and fascination at the prospect of being pulled inside a computer. As with game-violence, Evangelical understandings of immersion are not contrary to their worldly cognate, but are densely entangled and frequently inseparable. Again, the possibility of a radically divergent understanding seems to flicker within Evangelical critique, and an attempt to isolate it will be worth the effort. Immersion, in either case, presents a curious *chronotope,* a co-emergent spatiality and temporality, a *time-space.*[376] The time-spaces of immersion appear where the human-computer interfaith confronts the possibility of the human with relation to the ongoing development of computer technology: As more and more of life becomes computable, humans are both thrilled and terrified that we seem to be going *inside.* We can easily locate worldly narratives of immersion ranging from the fearful (e.g. *The Matrix,* or the periodic public concerns over "internet addiction") to the fanatical (e.g. *ReBoot* or The Quantified Self Movement).[377] These two faces of worldly immersion, however, are united as surface effects of computing technology's leading edge; even cautionary discourses on immersion are frequently held together by their production as consumer computing's current marketing sensation, and by their attentive anticipation of another leading edge. Consider *The Matrix* as a significant synecdoche of this tendency: a blockbuster movie that unveils dazzling new computer technology to foretell a future of oppression by computers.

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[376] M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

[377] Quantified Self Labs, "About the Quantified Self," accessed January 24, 2014, http://quantifiedself.com/about/.

Evangelical stories of immersion, on the other hand, occasionally disrupt the vision of consistently progressing time upon whose horizon immersion appears to be inevitable with a quite different notion of time. As Evangelical critique of game-violence occasionally abandoned teleological motivations, considering instead the player-in-play, this is a vision of time that stretches down into the present rather than out into the future. It is not a time that one uses efficiently or inefficiently toward future projects, but a time that one treasures or squanders in the present. To use Walter Benjamin's theoretical argot, we could call it *jetztzeit*, "now-time." In biblical terms, this is the chronotope in the parable of the ten virgins: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour (Matthew 25:13)." But the formula presented by Adventures in Odyssey is elegant as well: "Time, life, same thing."

Journey to the Center of the Art

We should not be surprised that the first discussions of entrapment in a computer emerged when the computers were becoming increasingly present to public consciousness. Like digital religion, the notion that there is a space for humanity inside the computer seems to have been a product of specific human-computer interfaith movements emerging in the wake of the Second World War. Arthur C. Clarke's 1948 story "Against the Fall of Night" concerned a future humanity who had conquered death and mastered memory technologically, but his recreation of the story in 1953 as *The City and the Stars* seems to have been the first work of fiction to suggest that a human personality could be stored inside of a computer.[378] This story, as well as Frederick

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[378] Robert Geraci, Apocalyptic AI: Visions of Heaven in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 54-55.

Pohl's "The Tunnel Under the World" (1955), and those contemporaneous stories by Stanislaw Lem that present human minds as storable on computer hardware, however, do not consider the computer as a place for the human, but as a substitute for the fleshy brain: "An electronic brain, gentlemen, wishes us nothing but good; however the endurance of coils and tubes has its limits too."[379] The eponymous "total environment simulator" in Daniel Galouye's *Simulacron 3* (1964), seems to have been the first literary projection of a computer system in which human *minds* could conduct what seem to them to be complete lives: "I brushed straggling hair off my forehead and gazed out on my counterfeit world. It screamed back at me that what assailed my eyes was only a subjective, simuelectronic illusion. I cast about for something that would blunt the impact of that staggering realization."[380]

To this point, however, we can frame these visions of entry into computers as instances of a trend that predates computers. The fantasy/fear of passage into a medium seems to frequently accompany a widespread cultural fascination with that medium. For instance, consider the similarly ambivalent fantasies that emerge alongside the early twentieth century's fascination with the cinema: Buster Keaton climbs into a movie screen in *Sherlock Junior* (1924) and his body is bizarrely stable alongside the flickering cinematic natives, producing some danger and much comedy as lions and cliffs appear and vanish around him. Similarly, in *Hellzapoppin* (1941), a fight in the projector room causes Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson to be comically pinched when their own film goes out of frame, and humorously endangered when they are accidentally

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[379] Frederick Pohl , *The Tunnel Under the World*   (Project Gutenberg ebook collection, April 14, [1955] 2010), accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31979/31979-h/31979-h.htm ; Stanislaw Lem, "The Eleventh Voyage," *The Star Diaries: Further Reminiscences of Ijon Tichy* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 38-73; 45.

[380] Daniel F. Galouye, *Simulacron 3* (Phoenix Pick, 2011), 86.

thrust into a western. Elmer Rice's literary serial in the *New Yorker,* "A Voyage to Purilia" (1930) offers a vision of the improbable, action-packed world where all movies take place: "I shall make only passing reference to the floods, the avalanches, the tornadoes, the mine-explosions, the bursting dams, and the forest fires which impeded our progress and imperiled our lives."[381] In these cases at least, wandering inside reveals the incompatibility of the human with the media-world, and the results are darkly comical.

And so too with the immediately following fascination concerning television: In Roald Dahl's 1964 novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* Mike Teavee insists on being "the first person in the world to be sent by television," and is thus miniaturized to his parents' dismay.[382] Hanna-Barbera's *The New Alice in Wonderland* (1966) opens the story with Alice chasing her dog through the TV, rather than a rabbit down a hole, then proceeds to depict joys and perils much like those of the novel, though now with Flintstones cameos. EL Doctorow's *Book of Daniel* (1972) imagines children escaping a world of political and economic oppression by getting into the box: "The children were sitting on the floor, too close he thought. Too close. He made no move to interrupt their attention. If they could get inside the television set they would be better still."[383] And these ambivalent visions of immersion were followed soon after by grotesque possibilities as in *Poltergeist* (1982) and the *Twilight Zone Movie* (1983), where the television becomes a space where children can be trapped, even a kind of cartoonish hell.

The difference between immersion in a computer and immersions in television or cinema

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[381] Elmer Rice, "A Voyage to Purilia – X," *The New Yorker* December 14, 1929, 130*; Ian Jarvie, *Philosophy of the Film: Epistemology, Ontology, Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 33.

[382] Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1964), 152-155.

[383] E. L. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel* (New York: Random House, 2007), 155.

is not that one fantasy outlives another (the three presently coexist happily), nor certainly that immersion in computers is somehow real where immersion in television or cinema was metaphorical. The significant difference is that immersion in computers, unlike the other two, became a widespread theoretical construct. The notion that people can currently go partially into computers, and the attendant anticipation that we will soon be able to immerse ourselves entirely have become principles of design and widespread conceptions of computer users' own practices.

The Emergence of the Immersive

The second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary declared the word "immersive" obsolete. Though one might be *immersed* in mathematics, superstition, or a book any time from the 1660s to the present, as of 1989, the adjectival form, "Characterized by or involving immersion," was temporarily antiquated.[384] Without this word, however, the popularization of home computing and video gaming was becoming tangled up with new stories about humans going inside computers. Like prior vogues for stories of this sort, the tone was decidedly ambivalent. William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1984), for instance, described a space called both "cyberspace" and "the matrix" that "has its roots in primitive arcade games […] and military experimentation with cranial jacks."[385] The Lawnmower Man (1992), visually, presented filmic representations of life in a computer that have influenced game and interface design, and, narratively, offered a wild array of possibilities for better sex, augmented intelligence, and a sort of non-metaphorical Godhood complete with psychic powers that

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[384] "2. transf. and fig. To plunge or sink into a (particular) state of body or mind; to involve deeply, to steep, absorb, in some action or activity. Chiefly pass. or refl." "immerse, v.," *OED Online*. December 2013, Oxford University Press, accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91880?result=2&rskey=NAdHqk& .

[385] William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace Books, 1984), 69.

continue to work offline. The Net (1995), with its protagonist whose social world is entirely mediated through – and in danger from – the Internet, presented a differently digitized humanity that would soon be remembered through the archaic neologism.

Factiva's first citation for the word "immersive" in any newspaper comes from 1991, and concerns the development of virtual reality for military training. Dennis Breglia hoped that computers would soon train soldiers in "a three-dimensional, dynamic, interactive, computer-generated, highly compelling environment, which is perceived by the user as immersive. He shouldn't be able to tell if it's real or artificial."[386] Here, notably, "immersive" is aspirational, it describes soon-coming technologies (particularly *virtual reality*), and it is in this context that the word begins to circulate rapidly: "Will users be able to cope with the immersive (and possibly drug-like) aspects of virtual worlds?"[387] Across the late nineties, however, the word "immersive" went from *aspiration* to *advertisement*, and had to increasingly bear the load of a diverse field of variously impressive things: "Today, immersive gaming is the sound of bullets ricocheting around you, spent shell casings bouncing off a stone floor, the roar of a beast behind you, and a thumping techno soundtrack shaking your game room."[388]

This usage of "immersive" has remained dominant into the present, so it is this one we must consider when asking what the next generation of games will be like. In both worldly and Evangelical game critique, players call a medium "immersive" when it looks, sounds, or feels

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[386] "Navy Ponders Move to Virtual Reality," *Defense and Aerospace Electronics* 1.20 (November 4, 1991).

[387] IFIP World Computer Congress, Karen Duncan, and Karl Krueger. Linkage and Developing Countries Information Processing '94: Proceedings of the IFIP 13th World Computer Congress, Hamburg, Germany, 28 August - 2 September, 1994 (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1994), 192.

[388] Gordon Ung, "Big Audio," *Maximum PC* (May, 1999), 51.

like they are somehow inside of it. It is a flexible notion that can identify as many different media tendencies as there are ways of identifying the boundaries of a fiction. "Immersive" can be used to describe encounters with convincing character dialog, novel modalities of game control, or contemporary technologies of photorealism.

In this sense, Evangelical game review sites seem to use the word "immersive" and its cognates in quite the same way worldly websites do. Plain Games presents a range of meanings: *Call of Duty 3* (Activision, 2006) on Wii is immersive because of motion controls; *Scratches* is immersive at least partially because of "excellent music and ambient noises;" *Two Worlds* (Reality Pump, 2007) is immersive because the game world changes dynamically.[389] Christ Centered Gamer, similarly, locates games with "immersive story lines," "music," and "control schemes," among other indexes.[390] Shepherd's Staff uses it to praise relatively high tech Christian games, like *Catechumen,* and *One Nation Under God* (Inspired Idea, 2002)*,* though without explaining what the word means.[391]

Taken together, all such applications of the word in popular discourse on technology seem to gesture toward a possible synthesis: new technologies are called "immersive" when they

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[389] James Tench, "Call of Duty 3," archived by the Internet Archive, February 10, 2007, accessed January 24, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070210175825/http://www.plaingames.com/games/reviews/review.asp?id=215; Stephan Mack, "Two Worlds," archived by the Internet Archive, February 14, 2008, accessed January 24, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20080214123805/http://www.plaingames.com/games/reviews/review.asp?id=241 .

[390] Werner, "Call of Duty," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/5376-call-of-duty-modern-warfare-3 ; Deepfreeze32, "The Wolf Among Us," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/5603-the-wold-among-us-pc ; IBJamon, "The Legend of Spyro: The Eternal Night," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/19-console/4943-the-legend-of-spyro-the-eternal-night-wii-ps2 .

[391] Tim Emmerich, "Exceptional Game List," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.graceworksinteractive.com/ShepStaff/exceptional.htm .

interrupt the feedback loops through which humans find their place in the world, but obscure those disruptions such that users continue to report full use of their faculties. At least to date, this effect is only possible temporarily. A virtual reality helmet is a window when it is new, but it becomes a blindfold when what it shows is no longer regarded as *realistic*. As technologies and their accompanying rhetorics of immersion are replaced, new advertising and fan-speech across successive generations promises *immersion,* pointing toward a future where no new replacement will be necessary. In this way, something we might call "the Tron Ideology" has emerged as a given within popular technological discourse: *There is a place in the computer for us, and a new interface will take us there soon.*

These last two sections presented the story of a new conception of media emerging in continuity with an older one. When cinema, the mainframe computer, and television took hold of creative imaginations, stories began to present the ambivalent possibility that people would soon go inside of the medium. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, when personal computers became increasingly popular, a new wave of media told similar stories. The difference, however, is that the notion that we *can,* that we *shall,* even that we *should* go into the computer, has become a relatively unified discourse on technology shared among theorists, technicians, and casual computer gamers. The word "immersive" presently does much of the work that holds this field together. Successive generations of computer technology enjoyed in this environment gesture toward a future where we will finally go *inside the computer.* With this groundwork laid, we can consider how Evangelical games do and do not reinforce the Tron Ideology.

Evangelical Disruptions to Immersion

As we saw in game review sites, Evangelical game critique frequently shares the language and practice of immersion with its worldly counterparts. The Christian Developers Network forums, for instance, use the word "immersive" over a hundred times to refer to cutting-edge monitors, graphical engines, sound systems, and narrative styles. But, as with game-violence there seems to be a second possibility flickering through Evangelical video gaming. This section locates that possibility across the period of *The Great Escape*'s emergence, considering, first, that story's various strands, then three specific moments in Evangelical computing that appeared in the years between its cartoon and video game versions.

In making *Adventures in Odyssey: The Great Escape*, the Evangelical parachurch media empire Focus on the Family greatly resembles the characters Eugene and Geoffrey who make the deceptive game-within-the-game (also called "The Great Escape Simulation"). This CD-ROM game, based upon prior moralistic radio dramas and cartoons, cultivates a player who is both Mandy and Michael, who desires entry into computers but regards them with suspicion. Notably, Christian computing is not exempt from this ambivalence. Though the eponymous town of Odyssey "has a small-town feel about it, and most folks there still live by the traditional values that often characterize such places" – that is, though it is a fantasy of a space where organic conservatism could flourish – the very popular *Adventures in Odyssey* radio show nonetheless also presents it as a space where Evangelical Christians produce hyper-advanced technology to forward the teaching of the gospel.[392] The 1993 story "Into Temptation" introduced the Room of

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[392] For a list of inventions in the radio program, see Aoiwiki Contributors, "List of Inventions," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.aiowiki.com/wiki/Inventions ; Description quoted from Aoiwiki Contributors, "Odyssey," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.aiowiki.com/wiki/Odyssey .

Consequence specifically to show how dangerous *Evangelical* games could be if mismanaged.[393] Despite his parents' exhortation that he not do so, Jimmy Barclay considered buying "the ultimate portable action video game experience," the "Mach-10 Bible action computer game." Mr. Whittaker, *Adventure in Odyssey's* central character, offered the Room of Consequence as a device that "will let you play out the future," and see what would happen if Jimmy made the wrong decision. As we watch the tragic consequences of disobedience unfold, the show's moral concerns are fairly unambiguous: Jimmy shouts, "I mean it is a BIBLE GAME!" to which Whittaker's voice replies "That doesn't matter."

The plot wherein the Room of Consequence became both the game apparatus and a simulation of its own dangerous inner workings was first presented in the radio play "Gloobers" (November 14, 1998), then again in the cartoon *Escape from the Forbidden Matrix* (2001).[394] In these cases the plot was almost identical to that later presented in *The Great Escape,* but the games being played were not yet about computers themselves, and the time-leech was called "Master Brain." Also, the less adept second player was not yet feminized, though his hesitation was absolutely consistent. Likewise, the ambiguation between the informatic and mechanical strata of the computer was established in *Gloobers* where, already, the characters cannot stop "playing the game from the inside" because of the "big drop to the keyboard." And the moral payload challenging the value of time spent immersed in video games was already established here, before the message was carried by a video game: "You see, time is one of God's most

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[393] Aoiwiki Contributors, "Into Temptation," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.aiowiki.com/wiki/Into_Temptation .

[394] Aoiwiki Contributors, "Gloobers," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.aiowiki.com/wiki/Gloobers .

precious gifts. It is a shame to squander it on such frivolous activities as computer games. Of course that doesn't mean you can't play computer games on occasion; the key is to master them instead of letting them master you."

Between the release of *Escape from the Forbidden Matrix* as a video and its playable adaptation, *The Great Escape,* a few new pieces of digital Evangelical media offer compelling extensions of this principle. Consider, for instance, Covenant Eyes, an online accountability system launched in 2001, and "Fully recommended and endorsed by Focus on the Family." To quote their statement of purpose, "Job 31:1 states, 'I have made a covenant with my eyes.' It is our stated purpose to provide a tool enabling Internet users to maintain that covenant, regardless of whether their temptation is to pornography, gambling, or simply time spent on the Internet."[395] The software monitors users' internet activity and sends reports to the user's "accountability partners."

The model was soon imitated by other Evangelical services like Accountable2You (2006), Safe Eyes (2006), and Saavi Accountability (2010), and whatever conclusions we draw from these software will to some extent apply to similar software for other religious publics, like WebChaver (2008) and Halal Gate (2008). Accountability services of this kind should not be confused with content filtering services like Integrity Online and Safeplace.net presented in chapter three. In fact, though both are operating properly when they are preventing users from looking at pornography, in terms of *immersion* these two ranges of software are quite nearly opposites. Whereas filters attempt to produce a seamless presentation of a clean Internet,

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[395] Covenant Eyes, "Purpose Statement," archived by the Internet Archive, April 7, 2003, accessed March 8, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20030407062654/http://www.covenanteyes.com/about.php .

accountability software aims to disrupt the Internet experience by injecting the presence of an extrinsic humanity.

In the five years we are considering here, 137 new Evangelical games were released and most of them are not terribly forthcoming on the time-management principles they propose for their users. There are two in particular, however, that gesture along the same line as the above accountability software. First, *Caught in the Web* (Gibson Productions, 2002) is an interactive fiction programmed using the Windows help file format, and packaged with a stand-alone die rolling program.

Illustration 14: *Caught in the Web*

You are surfing the Internet when something quite remarkable and distressing happens to you. By mistake you end up at a dark website called 'The Dark Druid' and, as you enter the page, you feel yourself grow drowsy and your head slumps down onto the desk before your computer monitor. Before you know it, you find yourself reappearing in cyberspace as a 'Cyber Spirit Warrior'.

Scenes alternate between those textually describing *you* trapped in a "small virtual prison cell," "a virtual dungeon," or other online oubliettes, and those which use the help file format to produce web-like pages for the player to click on directly. The image is a unified field of online danger complete with pornography, gambling, and get rich quick schemes. In victory, you escape

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from the Internet by assembling clues, and solving embedded jigsaw puzzles. In failure, the player is forced to manually reset the game, staring at a screen with no links, options, or narrative, just the words "The Dark Lord."

A second resonant game bridging the adaptations of *The Great Escape* was in fact published, as was that game, by Digital Praise. *Light Rangers: Mending the Maniac Madness* (Digital Praise, 2005), is a cartoonish action game starring AJ, Angel and Amos, crime-fighting child heroes whose secret base is hidden in the Angel Town Community Church. The game's presentation of technology is crisply dichotomous. On one hand, the Rangers' mentor "Dr. Goodman has designed all his villain-stopping gadgets in such a way that only those with a good understanding of God's word can charge up their energy." On the other hand, four villains are using different technologies to control the minds of Angel Town's children. In three quadrants of town, the *no-ma-virus* is making children disobedient, billboards are making them vain, and robotic teddy bears are making them selfish. Though each of these demonstrate interesting fears of the technological control of children, the toy factory relates most directly to the present conversation. Here the villain Fast Forward is creating toys "programmed to say things that make kids impatient." The Light Rangers, however, cannot infiltrate the factory because "His zoom-bots are way too fast" so, instead, the player controls Crash, the Light Rangers' robot. That is to say, the digital can accelerate children until they cannot bear the slowness of analog life, but it can also accelerate them so they can selectively dismantle those technologies from *inside*.

Here, solidly in 2005, the year *The Great Escape* was released as a video game against the dangers of video games, we can consider how these Evangelical technologies might imply a chronotope of *immediacy* that intersects that of immersion. As *The Great Escape*'s story

developed, the medium of its transmission and the media it examined underwent a gradual

convergence. A vector from radio shows, to cartoons, to video games joined up with a vector

from out-game life with video games, to video games themselves, to video games about video

games. Quite unlike the progression of the Evangelical FPS in the preceding chapter, which

seemed to distance the player from his or her own conflicted interior, *The Great Escape* is a

video game that challenges the player's *present* playtime. The reminders about time-management

challenge the player to ask whether he or she should have done what it took to earn those

reminders.

The Evangelical games and Internet accountability software that appeared in the space

just before *The Great Escape*'s convergence, some of which were connected to Adventures in

Odyssey by shared publishers and endorsements, show a similarly active ambivalence.

Accountability software facilitates *counter-networks,* inviting trusted humans to disrupt the

dangerous slickness of the Internet by using Internet. Likewise, *Caught in the Web* and *Light*

Rangers propose different dangers for their different playerships, but both the adults of the

former and the children of the latter are endangered by immersion. In both cases, the

technologies of enjoyment can either entrap users through time-distortion, or, if skillfully and

properly used, free them.

"Immersion" has several homophonic meanings, but in Evangelical and worldly game

critique it describes a specific chronotope, a time-space in which moving forward in time means

moving also into the computer's interior. Though Evangelical gaming frequently performs its

creativity in ways that match this chronotope, the subject of Evangelical computing is also

invested with a flickering potential that seems not to move forward in time, but more deeply into

the present. In Walter Benjamin's terms, Evangelical computing locates a messianic potential in its users by situating them as "subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]."[396] Immersion is not something on the horizon, but a present possibility and a potentially dangerous one. The player is addressed as already inside the computer in some significant sense, but still able to receive messages that remind him or her how precious time is. This is not time that moves forward at all, it is time in the immediate.

The question, in this light, is not whether there will someday be computers *large enough* for humans to fit into them entirely, but whether we shall allow ourselves to become *small enough* to fit. There may someday be a culture whose members overwhelmingly accept themselves as having only capacities that can be expressed digitally, and who contain those capacities entirely within digital systems. The creation of such a world requires further expansion of digital technology, and further reduction of our notion of the human. These might be understood as the material practice implied by the chronotope of immersion.

As we move in this direction, there are new problems to address, problems that Crockford's *reductio* might productively help us designate "violence." The parts of ourselves that we locate inside of computers are subject to specific dangers not present in the analog world. Consider webpages, for instance. While (one is tempted to say "because") they are endlessly reproduceable, they are also absolutely disposable. As of 2013, humans seem not to know, nor have any way to reliably reconstruct, what the first webpages looked like in 1990. "We don't

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[396] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations,* trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 261.

really know what the first one looked like," said Dan Noyes, a web manager at CERN. "It may

be impossible to get it back – it may be overwritten."[397]

A shape of this principle particularly relevant to the present study would be the tendency

of Bible reading apps to delete all of a user's notes when the software updates. Todd75238

complains of *NIV Bible* (2012, Tecarta), "This used to be a great app until they just couldn't leave

it alone. With a new update I have lost all my margin notes (tons of notes) and all my highlights.

The newest update was supposed to correct that but still can't find any of notes. They are

somewhere saved online, but how I get them back to my iPhone app I haven't figured out."[398]

When this occurred on the *GLO Bible* app, a creation of "Immersion Digital," CK complained "I

currently have lost trust and will now return to my faithful paper Bible with all of its notes,

highlights, and post-its."[399] The contrast between the physical and digital Bible resembles a

question of family-time presented by Covenant Eyes: "Are you less involved with your spouse or

friends because of your involvement with the Internet?"[400]

The subjects of immersion, should they ever exist, will be humans for whom violence

against their digital aspects will be understood as violence against their whole selves. We heard

fore-echoes of it in the prior chapter's closing, where the players of First-Person Shooters shout

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[397] John Murawski, "Hunt for the World's Oldest WWW Page Leads to UNC Chapel Hill," *News & Observer* May 24, 2013   http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/05/24/2915835/hunt-for-worlds-oldest-www-page.html .

[398] Todd75238, comment on "NIV Bible (Tecarta): Customer Reviews," accessed January 24, 2014, http://app-store.appspot.com/?url=viewContentsUserReviews%3FpageNumber%3D0%26type%3DPurple%2BSoftware%26id%3D310295776%26onlyLatestVersion%3Dtrue .

[399] CK, comment on "Important Update for PC, Mac, iPad, and iPhone," accessed January 24, 2014, http://globible.com/blog/?p=1826&cpage=1#comment-59996 .

[400] Covenant Eyes, "Danger Signs of Internet Addiction ," archived by the Internet Archive December 11, 2001, accessed March 8, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20011211181344/http://www.covenanteyes.com/addictionsigns.php .

"Argh! I am dead again!" Or imagine the strange sentences people would say if Facebook were to suddenly lose all of its data, "I have lost all of my friends," "How am I supposed to remember what I like?" But for now these are homophones for which we assume every computer user has at least two meanings ("I don't mean I really died, I just died in the game"). The Tron Ideology guides the emergence of a human for whom such words refer only to aspects of themselves fully subject to the special vicissitudes of digital removal. And it seems there is a flickering possibility within Evangelical media critique that conceives of the human as a being that does not move forward in this way, but is invested, instead with precious *immediacy.*

We could propose several reasons for why Evangelicals seem to have a disruptive attention to the *immediacy* of their computer interactions alongside the *immersion* they share with the world. Perhaps successive generations of Christian computer users, each framing the digital medium as temporary in comparison to the eternal message of the Bible – a contrast all the more distinct when the computer *carries* the Bible – came to share a conception of the digital as *shallow waters* and never grew entirely comfortable with the notion of immersion. Perhaps the rival future of eternity in heaven has resonated powerfully alongside the emerging tales of transhuman immersion, leaving fissures in the latter and preventing it from hardening into its worldly form. Perhaps because Evangelical Christians have *souls* and they do not fit without remainder into computers. It is hard to say, but we need not close our eschatological arrival in the present with etiological myths.

What matters is that there is a difference here, a sense in which the human-computer interfaith of Evangelical Christians cannot be equated with that of the world. As with "violence" this difference is, again, an attention to computer users, even in their most dismissible moments,

as consequential moral agents. Even when they eagerly anticipate the next-generation game consoles (and they often do), Evangelical Christians are sometimes called back to the present by a voice that exists in a more deeply embedded *now*.

With respect to the chronotope of immersion, we might have closed this dissertation by asking whether more and more convincing technologies of play will be applied by Evangelical Christians in the future. It is fortunate that Evangelical media critique has demonstrated this to be an inadequate frame for the time-space of technology, because instruments for measuring future events are not amenable to academic citation. But to attend to the present, we might notice that the massive spike in Evangelical game production that ended chapter three's history seems to be dominated by what are commonly referred to as "casual games," games designed to host play sessions potentially scalable down to a few minutes, or even a few seconds. In fact, though "casual" was not yet a major genre designation among game critics, the online suites that transform Evangelical gaming around the turn of the century tended to be quite "casual" as well. Perhaps, finally, Evangelical casual play should not be hastily equated with its worldly equivalent, nor only read as a result of ease of programming. Perhaps Evangelical games are narrowing to become a film that the player can flit in and out of, always coming back, an anti-immersive digital space that one plays to return from playing.

Conclusion

The future presents a horizon rolled up like a scroll. This chapter examined a curious phenomenon, usually called "immersion," wherein new digital media obscure their interruption of the analog world such that humans say that they are *inside* those media. With successive

generations of digital media, this has developed into a worldly mythology that there is room for us inside of the computer, and that some new interface will soon arrive to welcome us into it. While "immersion" is an ideal shared by many Evangelical game designers and players, there seems to be some significant dissonance within Evangelical gaming, much like the dissonance on the problem of violence. Evangelical media production draws users back to the present, offering an *immediacy* that complicates *immersion*.

As the dominant chronotope of unchallenged immersion continues to mobilize the creation of new technologies, and an attendant humanity that increasingly comes to understand themselves as potential inhabitants of the computer, the Evangelical attention to immediacy is evocative. It is unlike the ambivalence that tends to accompany popular exuberance myths about entry into one's media (including recent health discourse concerning "unplugging"), because the time retrieved has no future-directed purpose. This is not the time of health or efficiency. On one hand, it seems to be unnecessary to even stop using the computer to experience this *now-time*, but on the other, it creates a situation from which immersion becomes temporarily unthinkable. Significantly, Evangelicals have forged this alternate relationship to the worldly chronotope of digital progress, not *despite* but *through* their own digital projects.

We can anticipate the subjects of immersion, the humans who cannot imagine a part of themselves that does not fit into a computer, but we cannot know whether they will ever arrive. Should they eventually appear, it is difficult to predict how they might interface with Evangelical Christianity. Christians may dedicate themselves to explaining that this full immersion is a misconception, that the complete person has a significantly analog life, or they may cheerfully embrace the subjects of immersion as potentially Christian people, extending current projects in

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digital religion to meet the needs of an immersible humanity. Evangelicals have created a digital

culture that draws their own attention back to the present, to rediscover the urgent work of living

now, when humans are always still outside, and it makes the speculative futures of immersion

hard to tell. We can be certain, however, that should the subjects of immersion ever arrive, they

will have Bibles and religious games to instruct them.

Chapter 7

Conclusion:
The New Creation

"Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.
They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."
- I Corinthians 9:25 (NIV)

Illustration 14: Game Saved

Your grandmother's face is different in heaven. But then again, everything is different.

When you were a child, she gave you a toy rocket ship, and after she passed away it helped you

to remember her. Even when you became an adult, and an astronaut, you wore that toy rocket as

a necklace. You had it on when your real ship was struck by an asteroid. But it seemed to be

gone when your grandmother found you lying there – *somehow* – on the green grass of heaven.

She thought it was funny that you didn't recognize her perfected form.

In her new body and under her new name, *Axis*, your grandmother leads you to Christ's

Great Throne. She guides you through the golden streets, explains heaven's radiant machinery, and shows you a modified Hebrew alphabet for solving puzzles. She walks on water and rides a winged horse – anything she can do to bring you to Christ. Everything is glorious, and everything is surprising.

….

Heaven: The Game (Genesis Works, 2009) is a particularly fitting beginning for our parting reflections because it merges several different kinds of last-things, materials from the book of Revelation, from science-fictional futures, and from personal reflections on human mortality. Paul McCauley first registered www.lastdays.org in 1998 as an online ministry focused on end-times preparation. Between then and his trademark on "Heaven: the Game" in 2002, several components of the final game seem to have already come together under the names *LD2, The Awakening* and *Heaven: Home of the Kings*.[401] Heaven's architectural style already included golden towers, spinning rings, and a great gate like a single shimmering pearl, the roar of the lions had already been recorded, the spaceship theme was established, and the face of your angelic grandmother had already appeared, though it once belonged to "Trishal," whose hair and clothing were slightly different.[402] But early promotional materials also describe scenes featuring a "Book of Life," and "Marriage Supper," neither of which arrived in the final game.[403] These might appear in McCauley's later games, or they may vanish entirely. At present, we are

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[401] Last Days.org, "LD2: Music Internet Video," archived by the Internet Archive, May 1, 2002, accessed March 14, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20020501115907/http://www.lastdays.org/ld2lowt.htm .

[402] Heaven the Game, "Enter," archived by the Internet Archive, October 17, 2002, accessed March 14, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20021017103929/http://www.heaventhegame.com/ .

[403] Heaven the Game, "Time Dome," archived by the Internet Archive, October 24, 2002, accessed March 14, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20021210220305/http://heaventhegame.com/timedomet.htm .

almost a year past the promised release date for *Journey to Heaven,* but this may not mean anything. *Heaven* itself was promised for six years before players could access its "World Immersion Technology."[404]

Heaven: The Game thus reminds us that our visions of things to come are tangled up with the present from which we view them. To see what is coming changes us, and as we change so too does our vision of the future. McCauley's vision of Heaven bears bright marks of his own milieu, but this is harmonious with his intent to deploy visions of the future in saving souls *now.* My own present task lacks these dramatic stakes, but it is structurally similar. I must now consider what will come after a study from which I have not yet extricated myself. To envision a horizon beyond the present text mobilizes *conclusion,* but it seems we must move forward through *recapitulation.*

This study began by situating religious video games within Karen Barad's objective realist ontology, discovering the "digital," "religious," and "playful" as relational dynamics rather than fields of objects. Each of these came to resemble an involution at a border of humanity – with algorithms, non-human agents, or playthings, respectively – and the religious video game, as located though all three, was discovered to be a site of extraordinary liveliness. We then began to clarify this study's particular object by considering the stakes of gaming for Evangelical Christianity. Evangelicals share a media project in that they seek to draw people out from the world and organize their lives around the Bible and the Cross, conducting this work through any medium that will sustain it. But this requires Evangelical media criticism to discern

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[404] Genesisworks LLC, "What is Heaven?" archived by the Internet Archive April 5, 2013, accessed March 14, 2014, http://wayback.archive.org/web/20130405055943/http://www.heaventhegame.com/

which part of any given cultural form can transmit the Gospel, and which part must be discarded. Evangelical media criticism encounters the video game through two very different tensions that add up to more than a single whole. The first project, *the human-computer interfaith*, extends far beyond nameable *religions* and helps us understand what Evangelical creativity can tell us about the religious dynamics of digital culture more generally. The second project, *spiritual warfare,* helped us to grasp the specificity of Evangelical media, not only as the engagement of different cultures, but of different creatures. On one side, Evangelical video games negotiate what it means to live among the digital, and on the other they negotiate what it means to live among the demonic.

The following pair of chapters then offered historical specificity for this engagement's halves. First, the work of religious game creation and critique in ongoing negotiations between computers and communities of faith was further clarified through a full history of digital religion. I explained how I located 773 religious games released between 1982 and 2010, and presented that list's four major *curves* as an interference pattern produced by other technocultural phenomena like changes in licensing, the creation of new systems of distribution, and shifting Internet cultures. The three decades of digital religion before religious games set the stage for their emergence by showing how computers first entangled with religious communities, and recent *app* based computing granted them a dramatic finale, skyrocketing beyond this study's capacity.

Spiritual warfare was then clarified through an exploration of the place of Evangelical Christianity in the game-violence debates. This chapter found that criteria for identifying game-violence are largely shared by Evangelical Christian critique and its worldly parallel:

"blood and gore," cutting edge technologies of photorealism, and presumed imitability. Worldly

media, however, orient the problem with game-violence as a consequentialist matter, working

primarily to prevent murder and its attendant litigation, while Evangelical media critique

contributes the additional possibility of treating the player-in-play as a significant moral agent.

In response to video arcades, the appearance of "Full Motion Video" in games, and the

Columbine massacre, Evangelical critique consistently disrupts their own agreement with

worldly understandings of violence by refusing to accept out-game shooting as the only

meaningful danger of games. This flickering further possibility of critique created room for what

we might call *sacred play*, and after theorizing it through Walter Bejnamin's "Critique of

Violence," I devoted the following chapter to tracing one vector of its historical transformation.

A focused examination of Evangelical First-Person Shooters demonstrated that both

demons and the ritual practices of video game nonviolence are in constant motion. Six

successive First-Person Shooters stage conflict against demons who relate variously to the

player's own moral terrain. Taken as a series, these games seem to *other* the demons further and

further, moving them from positions wherein they can entice the player to make mistakes and

face the consequences, to locations where they can only serve as villains without motives. I did

not attempt to explain the sudden (and now decade-long) vanishing of the Evangelical FPS, but I

shared my experiences in First-Person Shooting at the Christian Game Developers Conference to

frame a closing possibility that these games may have been replaced by an emerging mode of

sacred play that extends into worldly shooters.

Rather than closing with predictions for the future of Evangelical gaming, my study

instead closed with some specific reflections on how Evangelical gaming might relate to futures

as such. As Evangelical and worldly media critique had tended to agree on the referent of

"violence," but not on its importance, so too do these fields of critique tend to use the word

"immersive" to describe a progressive tendency of users being further and further brought *inside*

computers, but Evangelical media critique seems to present a variant temporality that injects

caution into our understanding of the process. Examining Evangelical games alongside Internet

accountability software, I presented the possibility that, again, Evangelical critique contains a

possibility for considering human-computer interactions in the present that disrupts future driven

worldly understandings. An attention to the player's present seems to disrupt any approach to an

immersed future.

Where to Go From Here

To return again to the vision of *Heaven* above, I offer a "save game" screen because, of

the various kinds of ending video games offer, these greatly resemble the ideal conclusion for a

study of this sort. Digital religion is a field in motion, and Evangelical video gaming shows no

sign of losing its place as one of digital religion's most vibrant ranges of creativity. This

summary seems to be neither an unqualified defeat ("Game Over"), nor a conclusive victory

("The End"), but a pause where we can record our progress, a place to begin again later. The

saved game is a place to which we can return.

What, then, are the affordances of a study of this sort? What can one do with it? It

depends, I suppose, which parts one interacts with and how. Some elements are relatively

detachable, while others could only be extracted in connection with their various examples,

arguments, and puns. Immediately after this concluding chapter, for instance, my table of

religious video games presents the most comprehensive vision of this field yet complied, and I formatted it specifically for easy portability. I hope someone tries simply offering the list to undergraduates stumped for research topics. On the other hand, I expect "Crockford's Reductio" would help scholars of game-violence understand the debates, but I would recommend that one let the phrase pack some context when it travels, lest it arrive sounding like frivolous, if poetic, bitterness. In either case, the dearth of attention that has been paid to religious video gaming thus far is surprising, and I hope this dissertation will help to attract that attention, and perhaps even help to focus it in valuable directions. I will close, then, with four possibilities for how this material might be well extended into later studies.

Evangelical media critique is complex and in constant motion. The traction it provides against worldly media critique, including our own as scholars of religion, merits further appreciation. Like the chapters above examining different applications of "violence" and "immersion," future studies would do well to consider other matters of concern around which Evangelical critique clusters. Studies of how Evangelical games negotiate the meaning of "sex," for instance, could examine song selections in Christian dance-pad games, and draw findings into conversation with material cultural artifacts like purity rings, and finally even bodily structures, and comportments. A study of "occultism," likewise, might examine Evangelical alternatives to Role-playing games like the *Forgiveness* trilogy, or situate *Spiritual Warfare* and *Axys Adventures* as specific responses to the *Legend of Zelda* series, but it could then tie these to the religious debates surrounding *Harry Potter*, Dungeons & Dragons, and the Ouija Board.

But this study also hopes to inspire focused research projects running parallel to this one, outside of the Evangelical counterpublic. A thorough examination of Jewish or Muslim games,

for instance, would be particularly valuable, and the appendix to this study would provide hundreds or dozens of case studies, respectively. Traditions like Yoga, Tarot, and Mormonism, because their game creation has been relatively limited, have not even received the scant scholarly attention that has been paid to the larger gaming cultures, and the instances I found could easily ground a chapter in a larger study of these religions' various digital explorations. Though this dissertation focused on religious traditions, further, I also attempted to gesture toward other phenomena in the broader nebula of religious activity unmoored to *religions*: The travels of sometimes-sacred materials like crosses and pentagrams outside of religious playerships would be immense, but rewarding. In particular, concerted studies of blasphemy and fantasy in video games would allow us to speak with new clarity on practices of meaning-making and meaninglessness in contemporary play.

As two final possibilities for future research, I would like to recommend *experience-near* experiments in digital religion. I was asked several times, as I conducted this study, whether I was going to set up situations in which I could observe people playing Christian games. The short answer is that I did, but I situated my findings as background information. In the end, I applied my own experience of play as a necessary part of the research apparatus and contextualized myself among the ghostly players implied by published accounts, and by the games themselves. I adopted this tact because, early in my research process, I taught a course on "Religious Games and Sacred Play" in which I invited all of the undergraduate participants to play religious games and document their experiences. I learned from this work that researching particular instances of play requires methods almost wholly incompatible with the cultural history I hoped to perform. In the context of the classroom, the students encountered the games

as exercises rather than as evangelism or entertainments, and their descriptions of play reflected this, but their descriptions were also brilliantly perverse and particular, reflecting biographical specifics that I was not equipped to contextualize. No player can stand in for any other. To understand *players* instead of games, scholars would have to apply intensive psychological attention to specific people, or ethnographic attention to particular communities. What is needed is the opposite of the laboratory studies that reduce children to abstract quanta of potential violence. Inspired by the attention that Evangelical critique directs toward them, scholars whose disciplines specialize in such things would do well to perform intimate studies of players-at-play.

But the study which I most hope follows the present one would be a more personally opinionated academic study, perhaps like Andrew Beaujon's *Body Piercing Saved My Life.*[405] As a music critic, he crafted his study of Evangelical popular culture from an academic margin that both demanded historical rigor, and offered space for nuanced reflections on his own enjoyment of, and frustration with, Christian rock music. I have argued that video games are a special sort of software primarily because they mobilize play, and a study that centers the writer's own *jouissance* while engaged with religious games would reveal a great deal. Though I suspect that I will not write it, I hope someday to read an autoethnography in which the author undergoes religious conversion through engagement with digital religion. On which note, though I have shared some specific moments of joy, confusion, and moral perplexity, this dissertation avoided any general statement on whether Evangelical video games are enjoyable. So, in closing, yes, some of them are wonderful, unforgettably good games. And all of them are surprising.

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[405] Andrew Beaujon, *Body Piercing Saved My Life* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2006).

Appendix: Religious Video Games (1982-2010)

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
1	Computer Bible Games	1982	Christian / Biblical	BASIC	BibleBytes
	http://www.computerscienceforkids.com/Pages/BibleGamesHistory.aspx				
2	Family Bible Fun: Book of Acts I	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-book-of-acts_13319.html				
3	Family Bible Fun: Great Men	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-great-men-of-the-bible_13318.html				
4	Family Bible Fun: Great Women	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-great-women-of-the-bible_13317.html				
5	Family Bible Fun: Know Your Bible I	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-know-your-bible-i_13316.html				
6	Family Bible Fun: Know Your Bible II	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-know-your-bible-ii_13315.html				
7	Family Bible Fun: Life of Christ I	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-life-of-christ-i_13314.html				
8	Family Bible Fun: Life of Christ II	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-life-of-christ-ii_13313.html				
9	Family Bible Fun: Life of David	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-life-of-david_13312.html				
10	Family Bible Fun: The Patriarchs	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-the-patriarchs_13311.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
11	Family Bible Fun:The Prophets	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Homecomputer Software Inc.
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-family-bible-fun-the-prophets_13310.html				
12	The Great Gospel Game	1982	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Endehl Public Domain Software
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-great-gospel-game-_20040.html				
13	Pax Man	1982	Christian (Episcopalian)	VIC 20	Brother Tobias Stanislaus
	http://books.google.com/books?id=FzAEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PP1&pg=PA15				
14	Children's Bible Quiz	1983	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Moses Engineering
	http://books.google.com/books?id=40a5AAAAIAAJ&q=%22moses+engineering%22				
15	Music Machine	1983	Christian / Biblical	Atari 2600	Sparrow
	https://atariage.com/software_page.html?SoftwareLabelID=321				
16	Bible Baseball	1983	Jewish	Apple II	Davka Software
	http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=3591				
17	Brachot Boxes	1983	Jewish	Atari 800	Davka Software
	http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=3591				
18	Catch a Hamantash	1983	Jewish	Apple II	Davka Software
	http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=3591				
19	Game of the Macabees	1983	Jewish	Atari 800	Davka Software
	http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=3591				
20	Israel Geography Game	1983	Jewish	Atari 800	Davka Software
	http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=3591				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
21	Purimaze	1983	Jewish	Apple II	Davka Software
	http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=3591				
22	Samson and Delilah	1983	Jewish	Commodore 64	The Software Group
	http://www.lemon64.com/?mainurl=http%3A//www.lemon64.com/games/details.php%3FID%3D4152				
23	The Game of Jericho	1983	Jewish	Atari 400/800	Davka Software
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-game-of-jericho-_2157.html				
24	The Lion's Share	1983	Jewish	Apple II	Davka Software
	http://www.retrogames.co.uk/036052/Other-Formats/The-Lions-Share-by-Davka-Corporation				
25	The Philistine Ploy	1983	Jewish	Apple II	Davka Software
	http://www.lysator.liu.se/adventure/Davka.html				
26	The Party Quiz Game: Bible Edition	1984	Christian / Biblical	Atari 400/800	Suncom
	http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-pq-the-party-quiz-game-bible-edition-1_3892.html				
27	Crumb Chaser	1984	Jewish	Commodore 64	Davka Software
	http://www.commodore.ca/gallery/magazines/ahoy/Ahoy-issue-08.pdf				
28	Search for Your Israeli Cousin	1984	Jewish	Commodore 64	Davka Software
	http://archive.org/stream/run-magazine-16/Run_Issue_16_1985_Apr_djvu.txt				
29	Mom and Me	1985	Jewish	Atari ST	Just For You, Inc.
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110914071220/http://www.asterius.com/atari/pdf/catalog-1986-q2.pdf				
30	Murray and Me	1985	Jewish	Atari ST	Just For You, Inc.
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110914071220/http://www.asterius.com/atari/pdf/catalog-1986-q2.pdf				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
31	Bible-Q	1986	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Wisdom Research
	http://cd.textfiles.com/pcsig08/601_700/DISK0628/BIBLEQ.DOC				
32	Christian Text Adventure #1	1986	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Bob Nance
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20111012231126/http://www.wurb.com/if/game/53				
33	Moses: Old Testament Text Adventure #1	1987	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Three Rivers Software
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/moses-old-testament-adventure-1				
34	Computer Bible Games Book 3	1989	Christian / Biblical	BASIC	BibleBytes
	http://www.computerscienceforkids.com/Pages/ComputerBibleGamesBook3.aspx				
35	Destiny	1989	Christian / Biblical	DOS	PC-Sig
	http://cd.textfiles.com/pcsig08/1301_400/DISK1327/FILE1327.TXT				
36	Heather's Easter Egg Hunt	1989	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Ginnie and Tom Reynolds
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110701141416/http://wurb.com/if/game/75				
37	Taboo: The Sixth Sense	1989	Christian / Biblical	NES	Tradewest
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/nes/taboo-the-sixth-sense				
38	Nephi's Quest	1990	Christian (LDS)	DOS	TechnoCrafts Unlimited Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/nephis-quest				
39	Bible Adventures	1991	Christian / Biblical	NES / DOS / Sega Genesis	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/games/bibleadv/				
40	Exodus: Journey to the Promised Land	1991	Christian / Biblical	NES / DOS / Sega Genesis	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/games/exodus/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
41	King of Kings: The Early Years	1991	Christian / Biblical	NES	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/arcadeking.html				
42	Moses: Bound for the Promised Land	1991	Christian / Biblical	CDi	Interlight Productions, Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/cd-i/moses-bound-for-the-promised-land				
43	Noah's Ark	1991	Christian / Biblical	CDi	Interlight Productions, Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/cd-i/noahs-ark				
44	Panoplia: The Full Armor of God	1991	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Choice Software
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/panoplia-the-full-armor-of-god				
45	Paul's First Journey	1991	Christian / Biblical	DOS	RMC Software
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv2nv08/FILESBBS/BIZ_DOS/RELIGION.BBS				
46	Bible Builder	1992	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Everbright
	http://www.hotud.org/component/content/article/47-education/22146				
47	David and Goliath	1992	Christian / Biblical	CDi	Interlight Productions, Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/david-and-goliath				
48	Defender of the Faith	1992	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Solid Rock (David Gosset)
	http://www.hotud.org/component/content/article/43-action/22760				
49	Gold Mine	1992	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Castle Enterprises
	http://web.archive.org/web/20000201060412/http://www.castle-ent.com/coffee3.html				
50	Joshua: Battle of Jericho	1992	Christian / Biblical	NES / DOS / Sega Genesis	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/games/joshua/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
51	Moses: The Exodus	1992	Christian / Biblical	CDi	Interlight Productions, Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/cd-i/moses-the-exodus				
52	Noah's Ark	1992	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/games/noahsark/				
53	Onesimus: A Quest for Freedom	1992	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Ark Multimedia Publishing
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/onesimus-a-quest-for-freedom				
54	Spiritual Warfare	1992	Christian / Biblical	NES / DOS / Sega Genesis	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/games/spiritualwarfare/				
55	The Story of Jonah	1992	Christian / Biblical	CDi	Interlight Productions, Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/story-of-jonah				
56	The Story of Samson	1992	Christian / Biblical	CDi	Interlight Productions, Inc.
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/cd-i/story-of-samson				
57	Words of Jesus	1992	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Testament Software
	https://archive.org/details/WordsofJesus_1020				
58	Hebrew: Divide and Conquer	1992	Jewish	Apple II	Davka Software
	http://www.worldcat.org/title/hebrew-divide-conquer/oclc/32877972				
59	Jerusalem Stones	1992	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.thejewisheye.com/pack2.html				
60	Assorted Trivia	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Genesoft
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv2nv07/FILESBBS/GAMES/DOS/TRIVIA.BBS				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
61	Bcryp	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Jim Fox
	http://cd.textfiles.com/sv/svgold/TEXT/DIR19				
62	Bible Book Scrambles	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Dale Heinold
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/psl9312/REVIEWS/CH_03				
63	Bible Buffet	1993	Christian / Biblical	NES	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/arcadebb.html				
64	Bible in Mind	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Reno Proulx
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
65	Bible IQ Challenge	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	R. K.West Consulting ASP
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/psl9312/REVIEWS/CH_03				
66	Bible Jigsaw	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Dale Heinold
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
67	Bible Jumbles	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Jerry D. King
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
68	Bible Mixer	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Affordable software
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/psl9312/REVIEWS/CH_03				
69	BibleMen	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Byxbe, Ronald B. ASP
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/psl9312/REVIEWS/CH_03				
70	Church Works	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Software Sharing Ministries
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/psl9312/REVIEWS/CH_03				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
71	Jesus Matchup	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
72	Multiple Choice Challenger	1993	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Useful Software Systems
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
73	Sunday School Colors	1993	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Randall Alaimo
	http://thelutheran.net/christmas/children.htm				
74	The Pesach Adventure	1993	Jewish	DOS	Avi Gobbler Productions
	https://archive.org/details/ThePesachAdventure_1020				
75	Animated New Testament	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Tom IV Guthery
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
76	Bible Books	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Bible Games
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
77	Bible Logic	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Wisdom Research
	http://cd.textfiles.com/goldmedal/volume3/ALLFILES/RELIGION.BBS				
78	Bible Super Games	1994	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Bob Thompson
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020202033226/http://www.biblepuzzlepro.com/history.htm				
79	Captain Bible in Dome of Darkness	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Bridgestone Multimedia Group
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/dos/captain-bible-in-the-dome-of-darkness				
80	Church Games IV	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Software Sharing Ministries
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
81	Forerunners	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
82	In Christ	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
83	King's Glory	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
84	Kingdom Keys	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
85	Men of Renown	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Integrity Software
	https://archive.org/details/MenofRenown_1020				
86	New Testament Quizzler	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Lawrence Truett
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
87	Proverbs of Solomon	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Philip Kapusta
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
88	Rhema	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
89	Sanctified Scrolls	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
90	Super 3D Noah's Ark	1994	Christian / Biblical	SNES/ DOS	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/games/super3dnoahsark/				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
91	Sword of the Spirit	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
92	Sword of the Spirit 2	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
93	Swordmaster	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Capstone Software
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv2nv08/FILESBBS/BIZ_DOS/RELIGION.BBS				
94	Three Fold	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
95	Tidbit Bible Trivia	1994	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Matthew Fecher
	http://cd.textfiles.com/beachware/DOSGAMES/TRIVIA/CGABIBLE/README.TXT				
96	Acts of the Apostles	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Philip Kapusta
	http://www.scovetta.com/archives/nightowl/nopv20/050A				
97	Adventure Bible Handbook: The Rescue	1995	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Zondervan
	http://www.amazon.com/The-Rescue-Zondervan-Publishing/dp/0310204739				
98	Adventures in the Old Testament	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Stacy Mueller
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv3nv04/DOS/RELIGION/FILES.BBS				
99	Animated Old Testament	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Tom IV Guthery
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
100	Bible Concentration	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	SONsoft
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv3nv10/DOS/RELIGION/files.bbs				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
101	Bible Crossword Puzzles	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Philip Kapusta
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv3nv05/DOS/RELIGION/FILES.BBS				
102	Bible Marathon	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Melvin E. Chasteen
	http://cd.textfiles.com/teacher2000/MSDOS/RELIGION/FILES.BBS				
103	Every Good Gift	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
104	Fruit of the Spirit	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
105	Here a Little, There a Little	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Philip Kapusta
	http://cd.textfiles.com/jcs/bestbestzips/HTML/10430/HAL.HTM				
106	Jonah	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/dosfreeware.htm				
107	Kids' Bible Quiz	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Rev. Thomas O. Scarborough
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
108	King James Quest	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Randall Alaimo
	http://cd.textfiles.com/aspcd9605/PROGRAMS/RELIGION/FILES.DOS				
109	Questions from the Bible	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Philip Kapusta
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
110	Scrypt-o-grams	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	H. F. Buerer
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
111	Sunday Funday	1995	Christian / Biblical	NES	Wisdom Tree
	http://www.wisdomtreegames.com/arcadesundayf.html				
112	The Fall of Jericho	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Sonsoft
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
113	The Little King: The Story of the Nativity	1995	Christian / Biblical	Windows	King's Crown Games
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070427180734/http://www.kingscrowngames.com/				
114	Versequest	1995	Christian / Biblical	DOS	ATS Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/19970412124404/http://clcoc.simplenet.com/games.htm				
115	Where's Noah?	1995	Christian / Biblical	Windows	SONsoft
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv3nv10/DOS/RELIGION/files.bbs				
116	Noah and The Rainbow	1995	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://huc.edu/tartak/guide/SoftwareHJ.pdf				
117	Bible Grand Slam	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://www.sundaysoftware.com/grandslam.htm				
118	Bible Puzzle Pro	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Bob Thompson
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020202033226/http://www.biblepuzzlepro.com/history.htm				
119	Bible Wonders	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Adaptive Systems
	http://www.worldcat.org/title/bible-wonders-a-game-of-bible-knowledge/oclc/49282237				
120	Big Genius Bible Trivia	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	King's Crown Games
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070427180734/http://www.kingscrowngames.com/				

Appendix: Religious Video Games (1982-2010)

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
121	Crossing the Red Sea	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	H. F. Buerer
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv09/FILES.BBS				
122	Grape Vine	1996	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Philip Kapusta
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv4nv11/HOME/DOS/BIBLE_GA.TXT				
123	Noah's Ark	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Family Interactive
	http://www.worldcat.org/title/noahs-ark-version-103/oclc/52982577&referer=brief_results				
124	Scripture Challenge	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Philip Kapusta
	http://cd.textfiles.com/jcs/bestbestzips/HTML/10430/CHALL.HTM				
125	The New World: The Story of Creation	1996	Christian / Biblical	Windows	King's Crown Games
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070427180734/http://www.kingscrowngames.com/				
126	Ami: My People	1996	Jewish	Windows	Melitz
	http://www.sites.huji.ac.il/melton/cdmelt.html				
127	Gemara Tutor	1996	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://www.worldcat.org/title/gemara-tutor-technology-for-learning-gemara/oclc/741057223				
128	Hanukkah Activity Center	1996	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.worldcat.org/title/hanukkah-activity-center/oclc/35901602&referer=brief_results				
129	Hebrew Game Time	1996	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=235				
130	Mitzva Man	1996	Jewish	DOS	Torah Educational Software
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050224002130/http://www.jewishsoftware.com/products/107.asp				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
131	Search for Your Israeli Cousin II: Global Quest	1996	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.att.org/pages/judaic_software_page/108.php?cid=253				
132	The Hannukah House	1996	Jewish	Online	Zig Zag Inc.
	http://www.zigzagworld.com/hh/				
133	Why Don't Zebras Play Chess	1996	Jewish	Online	Zig Zag Inc.
	http://www.zigzagworld.com/zebraChess/				
134	American Indian Tarot	1996	Occult	Windows	Dr. Scott Swanson
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv5nv04/HTML/1HO.HTM				
135	Egyptian Tarot	1996	Occult	Windows	Dr. Scott Swanson
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv5nv04/HTML/1HO.HTM				
136	Rider Tarot	1996	Occult	Windows	Dr. Scott Swanson
	http://cd.textfiles.com/aspcd9606/PROGRAMS/RELIGION/FILES.WIN				
137	Heavenword Children's Bible	1997	Christian / Biblical	Windows	HeavenWord
	http://web.archive.org/web/19980203124218/http://www.heavenword.com/cb.html				
138	Jezus Messias	1997	Christian / Biblical	Cdi/ Windows	Zoutewelle Multimedia
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/jezus-messias				
139	Life's Battle	1997	Christian / Biblical	DOS	Hummer Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011020123211/http://hummersoftware.com/about.html				
140	Time Travelers: Explore the Bible	1997	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Standard Publication Company
	http://www.amazon.com/The-Time-Travelers-Explore-Bible/dp/555937315X				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
141	Aleph Bet Schoolhouse II	1997	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://huc.edu/tartak/guide/SoftwareHJ.pdf				
142	Aleph Bet Puzzle	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
143	Bible Quiz	1997	Jewish	Windows	Computronic
	http://www.allgame.com/game.php?id=29103				
144	Bible Trivia	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
145	Hangduke	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
146	Hebrew Picture Game	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
147	Israel's Map (and other Puzzles)	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
148	Israeli Prime Ministers	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
149	Who Stole Hanukkah	1997	Jewish	Windows / Mac	JEMM Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010219122732/http://www.ejemm.com/cdroms.html#hanukkah				
150	Word Match	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
151	Word Search	1997	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
152	At Home	1997	Muslim	Windows	FutureSoft
	http://web.archive.org/web/19990417034719/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/Home.htm				
153	At Street	1997	Muslim	Windows	FutureSoft
	http://web.archive.org/web/19990417062402/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/Street.htm				
154	Juz Amma	1997	Muslim	Windows	FutureSoft
	http://web.archive.org/web/19990424155145/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/Amma.htm				
155	Stories From Ahadith	1997	Muslim	Windows	FutureSoft
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991008002519/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/feat-s1.htm				
156	Stories from Al Seera	1997	Muslim	Windows	FutureSoft
	http://web.archive.org/web/19990417050719/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/Seera.htm				
157	The Prophet's Wars (Al-Ghazawat al-Kubra)	1997	Muslim	Windows	FutureSoft
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030222131522/http://www.future-soft.com/newweb/feat-gzw.htm				
158	Enochian Chess	1997	Occult	Windows	Steve Nichols
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20061230092553/http://www.enochianchess.com/				
159	ABC Bible	1998	Christian / Biblical	DOS	John McKissack
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv6nv12/FILES.BBS				
160	Actual Reality	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991106050142/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/actual.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
161	Adventures in Odyssey 3D	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Rhinosoft
	http://www.odysseyscoop.com/merchandise/softwareA.htm				
162	Adventures with Chickens	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Xtreme Games
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/adventures-with-chickens				
163	Bible Books Quiz	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	David James
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040605124113/http://www.christians.freeserve.co.uk/Downloads.html				
164	Bible Memorize and Word Search Game	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Kingdom Software
	http://www.kingdomsoftware.com/Pages/BibleMemorize.htm				
165	Bible Sequence	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	David McMaster
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv7nv06/FILES.BBS				
166	Heaven Quest	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Top Meadows
	http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/games/2000/heavenquest.html				
167	Interactive Parables	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	GraceWorks
	http://interactiveparables.com/				
168	Space Race	1998	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://web.archive.org/web/20000201060412/http://www.castle-ent.com/coffee3.html				
169	AlefBetGo Challenge	1998	Jewish	Online	Zig Zag Inc.
	http://www.zigzagworld.com/AlefBetGo/				
170	Aleph Bet Schoolhouse Collection	1998	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://huc.edu/tartak/guide/SoftwareHJ.pdf				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
171	Hanukkah Lights	1998	Jewish	Online	Zig Zag Inc.
	http://www.zigzagworld.com/hanukiah/				
172	Jewish Holiday Funhouse	1998	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.judaicacatalogs.com/davka-computer-software/jewish-holiday-funhouse.html				
173	Language Fun	1998	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060813224604/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
174	Islamic Thought	1998	Muslim	Windows	Innovative Minds
	http://www.inminds.co.uk/islamic-thought.html				
175	Bible Basher	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Creation Tips
	http://web.archive.org/web/19990915075730/http://www.users.bigpond.com/rdoolan/games.html				
176	Bible Birdie	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Achieve Software
	http://cd.textfiles.com/psl/pslv7nv06/FILES.BBS				
177	Bible Books Match Game	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Steeple Top Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010309165221/http://steeple-top-software.8m.com/				
178	Bible Cryptos	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Harry Buerer
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053747/http://smartquiz.com/index.phtml				
179	Bible Hangman	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Harry Buerer
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053747/http://smartquiz.com/index.phtml				
180	Bible IQ	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Harry Buerer
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053747/http://smartquiz.com/index.phtml				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
181	Bible Quiz	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Harry Buerer
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053747/http://smartquiz.com/index.phtml				
182	Bible Quizzes	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Cliff Leitch
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991118231505/http://www.twopaths.com/biblequizzes.html				
183	Bible Scrambles	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Harry Buerer
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053747/http://smartquiz.com/index.phtml				
184	Bible Time Machine	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070430053137/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				
185	Bible Touchdown	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Barbour Software
	http://www.barborsoftware.com/btd.html				
186	Bible Treasure Hunt	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Harry Buerer
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053747/http://smartquiz.com/index.phtml				
187	Bible Trivia for Children	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christ-Centered Mall
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991013140322/http://christcenteredmall.com/kids/games/index.htm				
188	Gil's Bible Jumble	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Top Meadow
	http://www.topm.com/jumble/index.php				
189	God$ Money	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050208050656/http://castle-ent.com/down.html				
190	Hang Haman	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christ-Centered Mall
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991013140322/http://christcenteredmall.com/kids/games/index.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
191	James Games	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050208050656/http://castle-ent.com/down.html				
192	Kingdom Games	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050208050656/http://castle-ent.com/down.html				
193	Luke's Journal	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050208050656/http://castle-ent.com/down.html				
194	Qoheleth	1999	Christian / Biblical	DOS / Windows	Rothware Christian Software
	https://web.archive.org/web/20010515225550/http://www.rothware.com/index.html				
195	Quiz Team	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050208050656/http://castle-ent.com/down.html				
196	Roman Road	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Castle Enterprises
	http://castle-ent.com/down.html				
197	Saints of Virtue	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Shine Studios
	http://www.saintsofvirtue.com/index.html				
198	Sheep Maze	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christ-Centered Mall
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991013140322/http://christcenteredmall.com/kids/games/index.htm				
199	Stop Satan	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://www.timshen.truepath.com/bwg.html				
200	The Beginner's Bible: Birth Of Jesus Activity Center	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Graceworks / Brighter Child Interactive
	http://www.amazon.com/The-Beginners-Bible-Activity-Software/dp/1577910249				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
201	The Beginner's Bible: Moses Activity Center	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Graceworks / Brighter Child Interactive
	http://www.amazon.com/The-Beginners-Bible-Activity-Activities/dp/1577910273				
202	The Beginner's Bible: Young David Activity Center	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Graceworks / Brighter Child Interactive
	http://www.amazon.com/Beginners-Bible-Activity-Melodies-Software/dp/1577910257/				
203	The Call	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070430053137/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				
204	The War in Heaven	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Eternal Warriors
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/war-in-heaven				
205	The Way	1999	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070430053137/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				
206	Towers of Babel	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christ-Centered Mall
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991013140322/http://christcenteredmall.com/kids/games/index.htm				
207	Visitor's Quiz	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Creation Tips
	http://web.archive.org/web/19990915075730/http://www.users.bigpond.com/rdoolan/games.html				
208	Word Search	1999	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christ-Centered Mall
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991013140322/http://christcenteredmall.com/kids/games/index.htm				
209	LDS Seminary Scripture Mastery	1999	Christian (LDS)	Online	Ben Holladay
	http://web.archive.org/web/19991012053730/http://geocities.com/Heartland/Garden/2852/sm/default.htm				
210	Divine Destiny	1999	Christian (SDA)	Windows	Krohne Family Media
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20010826082340/http://www.twlakes.net/~dkrohne/divine.html#top				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
211	(Holiday) Sliding Puzzle	1999	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/hanukkah-slide.html				
212	(Holiday) Word Search	1999	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/hanukkah-seek.html				
213	Parsha on Parade: Bereishit	1999	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://www.torahtots.com/shoppingcart/cds.htm				
214	The Book of Allah	1999	Muslim	Windows	Innovative Minds
	http://www.inminds.com/fun-learn.html				
215	The Life of Muhammad	1999	Muslim	Windows	Innovative Minds
	http://www.inminds.com/fun-learn.html				
216	The Lion of Allah	1999	Muslim	Windows	Innovative Minds
	http://www.inminds.com/fun-learn.html				
217	Adventsquiz	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Robert Augustin
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/adventsquiz				
218	Amen	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Bible Games Company
	http://www.biblegamescompany.com/AmenHelp/amenGame_Rationale.htm				
219	Battles of the Bible: Joshua	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207223557/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/arcadegames.html				
220	Bible Quizzes	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Eden Communications
	http://web.archive.org/web/20000229123942/http://christananswers.net/kids/menu-act.html				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
221	Bible Word Search	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Cliff Leitch
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001017230426/http://www.twopaths.com/wordsearch.htm				
222	Catechumen	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	N-Lightning Software
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4514-catechumen				
223	Epic: Choose the Adventure	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	CCC Ministries
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030622233946/http://www.choosetheadventure.com/credits.html				
224	Firey Darts	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/				
225	Firey Darts 2	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Godly Games
	http://www.godlygames.com/software/				
226	Fruit Games	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207224423/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/fruitgame.html				
227	Galatians 6:9 Getting the Harvest	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20081008042323/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/oct/gl69wg.htm				
228	Good Sam the Samaritan	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001101164347/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/sam.htm				
229	Jarod's Journey	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Tim Emmerich
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20130211042553/http://www.wurb.com/if/game/1134				
230	Jigsaw Puzzles	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207224151/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/puzzles.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
231	Jonah and the Whale	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Zeitun-eg.org
	https://web.archive.org/web/20011224030043/http://www.zeitun-eg.org/jonah/jonah.htm				
232	Josh and the Big Wall	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001109002000/http://www.bigidea.com/kids/				
233	Lobby Solitaire	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207225127/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/cardgames.html				
234	Mark 13:31 Catch the Stars	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20000816095312/http://akidsheart.com/bible/august/mk13_31.htm				
235	Matthew 2:10 Decorate a Star	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011215190541/http://akidsheart.com/bible/dec/mt20wg.htm				
236	Matthew 9:38 Bobbling for Apples	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001208082500/http://akidsheart.com/bible/oct/applebob.htm				
237	Parable of the Weeds	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207223557/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/arcadegames.html				
238	Phillipians 4:13 Picture This Rebus	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020701010749/http://akidsheart.com/bible/august/ph413wg.htm				
239	Proverbs 22:2 Coming Together	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20000816095320/http://akidsheart.com/bible/august/prv22_2.htm				
240	Psalm 56:3 Find the Verse	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20000816095308/http://akidsheart.com/bible/august/ps563wg.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
241	Scripture Solitaire	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Inspired Idea
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050306053550/http://www.inspiredidea.com/home/index.html				
242	The Picnic Miracle (Christian Critters in...)	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Shaddai Software
	http://www.amazon.com/Picnic-Miracle-Christian-Critters-In/dp/0965489000				
243	The Sojourner	2000	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20080605234323/http://timshen.esmartguy.com/thesoj/whole.html				
244	The Wise Men's Journey	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207230143/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/mazes.html				
245	Trivia Games	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050308033317/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/trivia.html				
246	Word Search Game	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Eden Communications
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001205111800/http://christiananswers.net/kids/menu-act.html				
247	Xerxes Jigsaw	2000	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001120052900/http://www.bigidea.com/esther/funstuff.htm				
248	The Catholic Church 99	2000	Christian (Catholic)	Windows	Catholic Software
	http://www.worldcat.org/title/catholic-church-99/oclc/47103707				
249	Conflict in Jerusalem	2000	Christian (Messianic)	Windows	Saltshakers ltd
	http://www.saltshakers.com/mall/ama.htm				
250	Risen!	2000	Christian (Messianic)	Windows	Saltshakers ltd
	http://www.saltshakers.com/mall/ama.htm				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
251	Unity	2000	Christian (Messianic)	Online	Yeshuateinu Company
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001029151630/http://oursalvation.com/unity.htm				
252	Avner and Brachot	2000	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Torah Educational Software
	http://www.avnergames.com/edu01.htm				
253	Bible Challenge Game	2000	Jewish	Online	Nurit Reshef
	http://web.archive.org/web/20001202103700/http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/yreshef/funland/funland.html				
254	Interactive Haggadah	2000	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.yomtovstars.com/store/judaica-interactive-haggadah-win.html				
255	Jewish Fact Attack	2000	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://davka.com/cgi-bin/graphics.cgi?product=77				
256	Let's Keep Kosher	2000	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://www.jewishsoftware.com/products/Let39s_Keep_Kosher_88.asp				
257	Mitzvah Mania	2000	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080415164444/http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=97				
258	The Story of Prophet Eisa	2000	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040207220837/http://shop.harf.com/shopexd.asp?id=43				
259	The Story of Prophet Ibrahim	2000	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031215232251/http://shop.harf.com/shopexd.asp?id=44				
260	The Story of Prophet Musa	2000	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031215232259/http://shop.harf.com/shopexd.asp?id=42				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
261	ArmoQuest I	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://rhinoprints.net/games/				
262	Bible ABC	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/dutch/OL_abc/a_b_c_gb.html				
263	Bible Crossword	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Drew's Animals
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.drewsanimals.com/Games/Crosswords/crosswords.shtml				
264	Bible Game B	2001	Christian / Biblical	Palm	Danny Newport
	http://www.freewarepalm.com/religion/biblegamec.shtml				
265	Bible Time Fun: Old Testament	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Krohne Family Media
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20021012124112/http://krohnefamilymedia.com/Children.html				
266	Bible Time Fun: New Testament	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Krohne Family Media
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20021012124112/http://krohnefamilymedia.com/Children.html				
267	Colouring Book	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/OL_colouringbook/index.html				
268	Diggin Deeper	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011212072749/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/page4.html				
269	Epic 2: Intensity	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	CCC Ministries
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010412235511/http://choosetheadventure.com/index.html				
270	Flash Cards	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011212072749/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/page4.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
271	II Corinthians 6:18 Breakout Game	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010618031126/http://akidsheart.com/bible/june/iicor6_18.htm				
272	Interactive Animation	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/OL_in_the_beginning/index.html				
273	Jigsaw Lost Son	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/OL_puzzel_verlorenzoon/index.html				
274	Life of Jesus Quizzes	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011212072444/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/page5.html				
275	Memory Game	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011212071732/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/page3.html				
276	Moses and the Burning Bush Slide Puzzle	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/OL_schuifpuzzel_mozes/index.html				
277	Nacah	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Virtue Games
	http://www.gameboomers.com/reviews/Dd/Derekbynamma.htm				
278	Old Test. Books	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011212071732/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/page3.html				
279	Ominous Horizons	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	N'Lightning Software
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4121-ominous-horizons				
280	Proverbs 20:12 Baby Parts	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010412103113/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/april/pr2012wg.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
281	Psalm 3:5 Going to Bed	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/march/ps35wg.htm				
282	Put Us In the Right Order	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/OL_rightorder_OT/index.html				
283	Quest of the Apostles	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	New Mercies Ministries
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061124225600/http://www.tsm-soft.com/category/games/gmspro014.html				
284	Square Puzzles	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207225237/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/squarepuzzles.html				
285	Stories About Jesus	2001	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011212072444/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/page5.html				
286	The Adventures of CJ's Closet	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Kay Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20050206035656/http://kayproductions.com/products.html				
287	The Key	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Mug Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021121222623/http://www.godcentric.com/thekey/games.htm				
288	The Last Bible	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	DistantStar Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051210062655/http://www.distantstarproductions.com/				
289	The Prodigal Son	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011006034745/http://sundaysoftware.com/prodigal/prodigal.htm				
290	The Ten Commandments	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021205012120/http://sundaysoftware.com/tenbrief.htm				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
291	Word Search Studio: Bible Edition	2001	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Family Interactive
	http://www.christianbookstore.net/wordsearch-studio-bible-edition-by-nlc/catalog-3923921/				
292	Challenge Catholic Bible Game	2001	Christian (Catholic)	Windows	Divinity Religious Products
	http://www.amazon.com/Catholic-Challenge-Bible-Game/dp/1586260227				
293	Challenge Catholic Catechism Game	2001	Christian (Catholic)	Windows	Divinity Religious Products
	http://www.guidinglightvideo.com/shop/catholic.html				
294	Prophecy	2001	Christian (Messianic)	Online	Dan Olds
	http://www.unitygame.com/prophecy/prophecy.html				
295	Caption the Critter	2001	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/caption.asp?type=cartoon&id=9				
296	Ramayana Interactive Epic	2001	Hindu	Windows	Image Infotainment Limited
	http://www.image-in-asian.com/ramayana.html				
297	(Holiday) Hangman	2001	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/tubshevat-hangman.html				
298	Bubbe-Meisas	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/http://babaganewz.com/games/babameisas/babameisas.htm				
299	Caves Logic Game ("Where's David")	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/http://www.babaganewz.com/games/caves/puzzle0/caves.html				
300	Crossword	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021209153442/http://babaganewz.com/games/				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
301	Dreidel 4	2001	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/dreidel4.html				
302	Hanukkah Refrigerator Poetry	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/http://www.babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=hanfridge				
303	Hebrew Match Game	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://davka.com/cgi-bin/graphics.cgi?product=77				
304	Parsha on Parade: Shmot	2001	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20011007154823/http://www.torahtots.com/parshacd.htm				
305	Parsha on Parade: Vayikra	2001	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20011007154823/http://www.torahtots.com/parshacd.htm				
306	Shuki	2001	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=116				
307	Slider Puzzle	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021209153442/http://babaganewz.com/games/				
308	Space Arcade 3D	2001	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://www.jewishsoftware.com/products/Space_Arcade_3D_342.asp				
309	Torah Tots: Jigsaw	2001	Jewish	Online	Torah Tots
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010828180631/http://www.torahtots.com/holidays/rosh/roshfng.htm				
310	Torah Tots: Word Find	2001	Jewish	Online	Torah Tots
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010828180631/http://www.torahtots.com/holidays/rosh/roshfng.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
311	Wisecrackers!	2001	Jewish	Windows / Mac	JEMM Productions
	http://www.judaism.com/display.asp?etn=JDCCC				
312	Wordfind	2001	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20011108110811/http://www.babaganewz.com/games/wordfind/wordfind.html				
313	Abu Saleh	2001	Muslim	Windows	Sound Vision
	http://www.soundvision.com/shop/pview.asp?item=3369-001				
314	Islamic Fun	2001	Muslim	Windows	Innovative Minds
	http://www.inminds.co.uk/islamic-fun.html				
315	Journey to the Three Mosques	2001	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031013092409/http://shop.harf.com/shopexd.asp?id=45				
316	Rashid and the World of Quran	2001	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://www.eislamicsoftware.com/rashidquran-a.htm				
317	Rashid Games	2001	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://www.eislamicsoftware.com/rashidgames.htm				
318	The Story of Prophet Sulaiman	2001	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031219063706/http://shop.harf.com/shopexd.asp?id=40				
319	The Story of Prophet Yusuf	2001	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031208150359/http://shop.harf.com/shopexd.asp?id=41				
320	Ummah Defense	2001	Muslim	Windows	Islam Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040923145708/http://islamgames.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
321	Abraham and Sarah	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020207045217/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/abe/abe.htm				
322	Acts 13:30 Memory Match	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020310083949/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/april/act13_30.htm				
323	ArmoQuest II	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031011104926/http://www.rhinoprints.net/games/				
324	ArmoQuest III	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031011104926/http://www.rhinoprints.net/games/				
325	Babble	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Good Book Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031204160613/http://www.goodbookgames.com/GBGames/Babble/index.html				
326	Bible Challenge	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Good News Broadcasting Association Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://drewsanimals.com/Games/Bible_Challenge/bible_challenge.shtml				
327	Bible Contents	2002	Christian / Biblical	Palm	John Woo
	http://www.freewarepalm.com/religion/biblecontents.shtml				
328	Cal and Marty's Scripture Memory Game	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020213220638/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/luther-calvin/index.htm				
329	Caught in the Web	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061121055446/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				
330	Christmas Quiz	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021225222946/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
331	Crossword Puzzles	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	BibleWise
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021213122238/http://biblewise.com/kids_korner/fun_games/fun_games.htm				
332	David and Goliath	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020912190259/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
333	Feed my Sheep	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Philip Kapusta
	http://www.pc-shareware.com/sheep.htm				
334	Fish Tales	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061121055446/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				
335	Fishermen	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020623011111/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
336	Fluffy and God's Amazing Christmas Adventure	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021204213425/http://sundaysoftware.com/fluffy/index.html				
337	Galilee Flyer	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020604001227/http://sundaysoftware.com/flyer.htm				
338	Gil's Quiz Show	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Top Meadow
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020813141913/http://www.topm.com/				
339	Godspeed 3D	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Inspired Idea
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20060103203432/http://www.inspiredidea.com/home/index.html				
340	I John 4:19 Decorate a Heart	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020816195320/http://akidsheart.com/bible/june/Ij4_19.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
341	I John 4:8 Order the Critters	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020816194923/http://akidsheart.com/bible/july/Ijhn4_8.htm				
342	Job 27:4 Monkey Mouth Game	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020601222441/http://akidsheart.com/bible/may/job27_4.htm				
343	Joseph's Story	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021204220002/http://sundaysoftware.com/joseph/index.htm				
344	King's Call	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	CBH Ministries
	http://www.kingscall.org/index_nodetect.html				
345	Legends of Leefe: The Great Volcano	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Living Rock Production
	http://www.gog.com/forum/general/legends_of_leefe_the_great_volcano_free_game/page1				
346	Leviticus 22:31 Picture Puzzles	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021203074237/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/sep/lv22_31.htm				
347	Mission Zone: Cross Word	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	CBH Ministries
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030201081539/http://cbh.gospelcom.net/zone/games/crossword/				
348	Mission Zone: Word Search	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	CBH Ministries
	http://www.cbhministries.org/zone/mission_zone_wordsearch.php				
349	Monsters from Hell	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Robert W. Benjamin
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040713113029/http://www.rb59.com/software/monsters/				
350	One Nation Under God: Christian Founders	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Inspired Idea
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20060103203432/http://www.inspiredidea.com/home/index.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
351	Proverbs 14:34 Color the Flags	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010725052957/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/july/pr14_34.htm				
352	Proverbs 4:23 Snatch Your Heart	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20010817194109/http://akidsheart.com/bible/august/pr423a.htm				
353	Psalm 14:83 Picture Fill-In Game	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20020310083733/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/may/ps148_3.htm				
354	Romans 13:10 Jigsaw Puzzle	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021203074829/http://www.akidsheart.com/bible/sep/rm13_10.htm				
355	Secret Message	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Child Evangelism Fellowship
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021015152341/http://wonderzone.com/games/?type=word				
356	Spiritual Millionaire	2002	Christian / Biblical	Palm	John Woo
	http://www.freewarepalm.com/religion/spiritualmillionare.shtml				
357	The Shepherd	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				
358	The Sojourner 2: Warriors of the Ssorc	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Gibson Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20130302154829/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/thesoj.html				
359	The Zambardi Mystery	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://timshen.tripod.com/				
360	Veggie Tales: Jonah	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/games/2002/jonahaveggietalesgame.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
361	Veggie Tales: Mystery of Veggie Island	2002	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Big Idea
	http://www.gamefaqs.com/pc/915350-veggie-tales-the-mystery-of-veggie-island/reviews				
362	Word Puzzle	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Child Evangelism Fellowship
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040817022155/http://www.wonderzone.com/games/?type=thinkers				
363	Yield: Parable of the Sower	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	The Faith Lobby
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050207225127/http://www.faithlobby.com/lobbypages/cardgames.html				
364	LDS Games: Bible Brain Twister	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
365	LDS Games: Coloring Book	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
366	LDS Games: Concentration	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
367	LDS Games: Crossword	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
368	LDS Games: Jumble	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
369	LDS Games: Quiz	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
370	LDS Games: Scriptorian	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
371	LDS Games: Swap Puzzle	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
372	LDS Games: Wordsearch	2002	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021021110130/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
373	Dress Guide Dog For Camporee	2002	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021026131539/http://www.camporee.org/html/games_index.htm				
374	Avner Travels in Time	2002	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://www.avnergames.com/edu02.htm				
375	Brachot Blastoff	2002	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=237				
376	Find the Afikomen	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20021105005853/http://www.babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=afikomen				
377	Goldie's Thrift Shop	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20021027141901/http://www.babaganewz.com/shop.html				
378	Hebrew Learning	2002	Jewish	Windows CE	Ulrich Greve
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050209162936/http://www.tichnut.de/jewish/hebrewlearning.html				
379	Jewish Heroes	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031202020955/http://babaganewz.com/games/				
380	Jewish Memory Matching Game	2002	Jewish	Windows CE	Ulrich Greve
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050306021527/http://www.tichnut.de/jewish/wincememory.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
381	Pesach Memory Game	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/http://www.babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=memory				
382	Purim Costume Maker	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/http://babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=costumemaker				
383	Schin Game	2002	Jewish	Windows CE	Ulrich Greve
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050306022029/http://www.tichnut.de/jewish/winceschin.html				
384	Shabbos with Shuki	2002	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=236				
385	Sukkah Builder	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/http://babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=sukkahmaker				
386	Truth Games	2002	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.babaganewz.com/thinking.htm				
387	Bah ya Bah Activity Center	2002	Muslim	Windows	Fine Media Group
	http://www.furqaanbookstore.com/bah-ya-bah-activity-center-cd-rom-english.html				
388	Maze of Destiny	2002	Muslim	Windows	Islam Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041016142505/http://www.islamgames.com/maze.html				
389	Rashid and the Clock	2002	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://www.islamicbookstore.com/a5857.html				
390	Rashid and the Treasure	2002	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://www.simplyislam.com//iteminfo.asp?item=60368				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
391	Rashid at the Library	2002	Muslim	Windows	Harf
	http://www.furqaanbookstore.com/rashid-at-the-library-arabic-pc.html				
392	Qabalah Trainer	2002	Occult	Palm	Brian L. Berge
	http://lilytears.com/software/qabalahtrainer/				
393	ABC With David	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030429002436/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
394	ArmoQuest IV	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031011104926/http://www.rhinoprints.net/games/				
395	Bible Books	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Drew's Animals
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031205004119/http://drewsanimals.com/Games/games.shtml				
396	Bible Names	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030621102313/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
397	Bible Search with Heidi	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030429002436/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
398	David vs. Goliath	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Full Armor Studios
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041027002631/http://www.fullarmorstudios.com/index.html				
399	Eternal War: Shadows of Light	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	XRUCIFIX
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20100818152537/http://www.twoguyssoftware.ca/games.html				
400	G-Force 1.1	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-1-1-powercel-cards-older-children-P001208777				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
401	G-Force 1.2	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-1-2-powercel-cards-older-children-pkg-5-P001231846				
402	G-Force 1.3	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-1-3-powercel-cards-older-children-pkg-5-P001234657				
403	Heaven Bound	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Emerald Studios
	http://www.christianbook.com/heaven-bound-on-rom/9780972896603/pd/896603				
404	Isles of Derek	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Virtue Games
	http://www.gameboomers.com/reviews/Dd/Derekbynamma.htm				
405	Millionairs	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030429002436/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
406	Minnesota Cuke And the Coconut Apes	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/25-faqs/4417-veggie-tales-minnesota-cuke				
407	Rev 7	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Marty Bee
	http://firstpersonshooters.net/Games/Rev%207/				
408	Sheep Game	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030621102313/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
409	Sim Abraham	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Good Book Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041109114334/http://www.goodbookgames.com/Educational/SimAbraham/help.html				
410	The Grace Quiz	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061121055446/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/indexgames.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
411	The Jesus Quiz	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Salvation Outreach Ministry
	http://web.archive.org/web/20031228150915/http://www.matthew223.org/				
412	The Nem Rehsif	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Gibson Productions
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040205210211/http://www.timshen.truepath.com/tag.html				
413	Treasure	2003	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030621102313/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
414	Veggie Tales: Veggie Carnival	2003	Christian / Biblical	Mac / Windows	ValuSoft, Inc.
	http://www.allgame.com/game.php?id=43863				
415	Veggie Tales: Creativity City	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	ValuSoft, Inc.
	http://www.allgame.com/game.php?id=42953&tab=screen				
416	Victory at Hebron	2003	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Brethren Entertainment
	http://www.brethrenentertainment.com/products_vah.html				
417	2,000 Stripling Warriors Maze	2003	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030801073537/http://www.ldsgames.org/stripling/				
418	LDS Games: Hangman	2003	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030807163057/http://www.ldsgames.org/				
419	LDS Games: Jigsaw Puzzles	2003	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030408133930/http://ldsgames.org/				
420	Quest for the Plates of Brass	2003	Christian (LDS)	Online	LDSGames.org
	http://web.archive.org/web/20030815231517/http://www.ldsgames.org/quest/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
421	BabagaNewz Sports Mania	2003	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20030514234643/http://www.babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=baseball				
422	Parsha on Parade: Bamidbar	2003	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20031204000934/http://www.torahtots.com/parshacd.htm				
423	Shalom Uvrachah Interactive	2003	Jewish	Windows	Behrman House Inc.
	http://huc.edu/tartak/guide/SoftwareHJ.pdf				
424	Silly (Holiday) Story	2003	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/sillyhanukkah.html				
425	Special Force	2003	Muslim	Windows	Hezbollah
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20101126150738/http://www.owfiles.com/spf/				
426	The Jar Activity Center	2003	Muslim	Windows	Fine Media Group
	http://www.noorart.com/the_jar_activity_center_arabic_software				
427	The Journey to Wild Divine: The Passage	2003	New Age	Windows	Wild Divine Project
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051203044742/http://www.wilddivine.com/20J3K4K1/				
428	ABC Bible Coloring Book	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041126045910/http://akidsheart.com/gamesd/biblegames.htm				
429	Adventures in Odyssey: The Sword of the Spirit	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Digital Praise
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4686-adventures-in-odyssey-sword-of-the-spirit				
430	Adventures in Odyssey: The Treasure of the Incas	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Digital Praise
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4491-adventures-in-odyssey-treasure-of-the-incas				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
431	Armor of God	2004	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040430174313/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				
432	Awesome Bible Stories	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041024211136/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/awesome/				
433	Bible Knowledge Quiz	2004	Christian / Biblical	Online	BibleWise
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051219235346/http://biblewise.com/kids_korner/fun_games/quiz.htm				
434	Bible Scrambles	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Krohne Family Media
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040610113300/http://krohnefamilymedia.com/Mini_CD_Children.html				
435	Fish Dodge	2002	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041207035326/http://www.bigideafun.com/jonah/default.htm				
436	G-Force 1.4	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-1-4-leader-guide-P001243860				
437	G-Force 2.1	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-2-1-cd-rom-dvd-pack-P001244772				
438	G-Force 2.2	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-2-2-leader-guide-P001244768				
439	G-Force 2.3	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-2-3-leader-guide-P001244769				
440	Library of Ages	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Full Armor Studios
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041027002631/http://www.fullarmorstudios.com/index.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
441	Manna Munchers	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Full Armor Studios
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041027002631/http://www.fullarmorstudios.com/index.html				
442	Noah's Adventures	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Cougar Interactive
	http://www.gamealbum.com/game/noah-s-adventures/				
443	Secret Chamber	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Full Armor Studios
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041027002631/http://www.fullarmorstudios.com/index.html				
444	The Walls of Jericho	2004	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Full Armor Studios
	http://archive.org/details/TheWallsOfJericho				
445	Gospel Trivia	2004	Christian (LDS)	Palm	Chuck Banes
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20091024140647/http://geocities.com/gospeltrivia/				
446	Outpost Zarahemla	2004	Christian (LDS)	Windows	Cleanware
	http://www.cleanware.com/lds-games/				
447	Guide Factory Pop Quiz	2004	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110108154049/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/game.asp?id=1				
448	Instant Recall	2004	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111230190716/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=3				
449	Dig it	2004	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/dig-it-masada				
450	Dreidel 6000	2004	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://www.babaganewz.com/kids/dreidel-6000/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
451	jbop	2004	Jewish	jbop	JEMM Productions
	https://web.archive.org/web/20101020121332/http://www.jbop.com/jbop3/product.htm				
452	Jewpardy	2004	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/jewpardy-classic				
453	Mitzvah Car	2004	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040623042403/http://www.jewishsoftware.com/products/Mitzvah_Car_678.asp				
454	Parasha Challenge	2004	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Davka Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041114010209/http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=345				
455	Parsha on Parade: Devarim	2004	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20041014023122/http://www.torahtots.com/parshacd.htm				
456	Pop 613	2004	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	http://pop613.com/				
457	Shimon	2004	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041204071932/http://www.babaganewz.com/games/shimon				
458	Tanach Quest: Ehud's Courage and the Cunning Blade	2004	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Davka Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20041205234617/http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=344				
459	Torah Tots: Paint and Print	2004	Jewish	Online	Torah Tots
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040914030603/http://www.torahtots.com/holidays/rosh/roshfng.htm				
460	Torah Tots: Sliding Puzzle	2004	Jewish	Online	Torah Tots
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040914030603/http://www.torahtots.com/holidays/rosh/roshfng.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
461	Ulpan Alef Interactive	2004	Jewish	Windows	Behrman House Inc.
	http://huc.edu/tartak/guide/SoftwareHJ.pdf				
462	Zoons	2004	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/zoons				
463	Children of Jerusalem	2004	Muslim	Windows	Hezbollah
	http://www.digitalislam.eu/videoAndGames.do?articleId=1425				
464	Ummah Defense 2	2004	Muslim	Windows	Islam Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20040923145708/http://islamgames.com/				
465	31 Realms of Existence	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/RealmsOfExistence/RealmsOfExistence_02_content.html				
466	Abhidhamma Puzzle	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/AbhidhammaPuzzle_1/abhidhammaPuzzle1_10_content.html				
467	Bad Deeds	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/TenBadDeeds/badDeeds6_content.html				
468	Buddhist Quiz	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/BuddhistQuiz/buddhistQuiz4_content.html				
469	Dharma Dancer	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/DharmaDancer/danceDoGoodMain_content.html				
470	Feed the Turtles	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/FeedTurtle/feedTurtle03_content.html				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
471	In the Footsteps of the Buddha	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/BuddhaFootsteps/budJigsawMain1_content.html				
472	It's Meditation Time	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/MeditationTime/meditationTime3_content.html				
473	Mara's Garden	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/MaraGarden/maraGarden5_content.html				
474	Save the Swan	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/SaveSwan/saveSwan5_content.html				
475	Three Roots of Evil	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/EvilRoots/evilRoots3_content.html				
476	Wheel of Life Pinball	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/WheelLifePinball/wheelLifePinball6_content.html				
477	Words of Wisdom from the Dhammapada	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/DhammapadaWords/dhammapadaWords05_content.html				
478	Your Six Senses	2005	Buddhist	Online	Dharma Media
	http://www.dharmagames.org/Buddhist%20Games/SixSenses/sixSenses05_content.html				
479	Adventures in Odyssey: The Great Escape	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Digital Praise
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4725-adventures-in-odyssey-the-great-escape				
480	Bible Catch	2005	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Computer Games.Net
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050507181136/http://www.christiancomputergames.net/english/frame_home.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
481	Bible in Mind	2005	Christian / Biblical	Online	Cyberspace Ministry
	http://www.cyberspaceministry.org/Menu/eng/eng-game.html				
482	Bible Man: A Fight for Faith	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Covenant Studios
	http://www.familyfriendlygaming.com/Reviews/Review%20Bibleman%20A%20Fight%20For%20Faith.html				
483	Bongo Loves the Bible	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://www.sundaysoftware.com/bongo/index.html				
484	Buzby: Breakin' All the Rules	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Digital Praise
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/hermie-and-friends-buzby-breakin-all-the-rules-computer-game-P001293071				
485	Captain Saint	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	3rd Day Studios
	http://www.3rddaystudios.com/captainsaint/				
486	Creation Design	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Roxie Carroll
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050718073321/http://akidsheart.com/gamesd/biblegames.htm				
487	Dance Praise	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Digital Praise
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080914082506/http://www.digitalpraise.com/				
488	Elijah and Jonah	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050419205517/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/Elijah-Jonah/				
489	G-Force 2.4	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-2-4-family-cd-rom-P001244791				
490	G-Force 3.1	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-3-1-leader-guide-P001274546				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
491	G-Force 3.2	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-3-2-visual-pack-P001274559				
492	G-Force 3.3	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Fellowship Church
	http://www.lifeway.com/Product/g-force-vol-3-3-cd-rom-dvd-pack-P001274564				
493	Hermie and Friends – Flo: Return of the Water Beetles	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Digital Praise
	http://intellichristian.com/store/Hermie_Flo_Return_of_the_Water_Beetles				
494	Light Rangers: Mending The Maniac Madness	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Digital Praise
	http://www.lightrangers.com/				
495	Solomon Says	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Cloud 9 Games
	http://www.prweb.com/releases/2005/12/prweb320085.htm				
496	The Beginner's Bible: Noah's Ark Activity Pack	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Brighter Minds Children's Pub.
	http://www.amazon.com/Beginners-Bible-Noahs-Ark-Multimedia/dp/1577911423				
497	The Bible Game	2005	Christian / Biblical	Game Boy Advance	Crave Games
	http://www.cravegames.com/games/BibleGame/gba.html				
498	The Bible Game	2005	Christian / Biblical	Playstation 2/ Xbox	Crave Games
	http://www.cravegames.com/games/BibleGame/ps2_xbox.html				
499	Veggie Tales: Super Silly Fun!	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://www.amazon.com/Veggie-Tales-Super-Silly-Cd-rom/dp/B001E91ELA				
500	ZJ the Ball	2005	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.zjtheball.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
501	20-in-1 Minigames	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=7				
502	Baptism Racer	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=4				
503	BMX LDS	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=3				
504	Book of Mormon Challenge	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	James H. Fullmer And Mark Anderson
	http://web.archive.org/web/20050210184439/http://www.jamesfullmer.com/game/				
505	Brother Nephi's Adventure	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=9				
506	Donkey BoM	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=8				
507	Elder	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=2				
508	Gideon Fu	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=6				
509	Overcome	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=5				
510	The Missionary Game	2005	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=1				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
511	Twinkle	2005	Christian (LDS)	Palm	Michael Duersch
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061027204019/http://twinkle.sourceforge.net/				
512	Pathfinder Pairs	2005	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110927115841/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=4				
513	River Run Game	2005	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110927115824/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=2				
514	Search for the Sons of Jacob	2005	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110928154810/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=7				
515	(Holiday) Memory Game	2005	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/purimpairs.html				
516	AfikoMan	2005	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051205025012/http://www.babaganewz.com/games/afikoman/				
517	Holli Day's Putt Putt World	2005	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/holli-days-putt-putt-world				
518	Nano Bob's Rescue Adventure	2005	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/nanobobs-rescue-adventure				
519	People in the Torah Crossword	2005	Jewish	Online	Jewish People
	http://www.jewishgames.com/crossword/torahpeople.html				
520	Tanach Quest: Devorah's Song and The Battle of Kishon	2005	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=359				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
521	Activity Mosque	2005	Muslim	Windows	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051104042755/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
522	The Journey to Wild Divine: Wisdom Quest	2005	New Age	Windows	Wild Divine Project
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051201032546/http://www.wilddivine.com/20J3K4K44/				
523	ArmoQuest V	2006	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20051215202103/http://www.rhinoprints.net/games/				
524	ArmoQuest VI	2006	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20071112071140/http://rhinoprints.net/games/				
525	Axel	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/axel/				
526	Bible Defenders	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	AV 1611 Productions
	http://www.freewebs.com/av1611games/				
527	Breakthrough Gaming Arcade	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/arcade/				
528	Breakthrough Gaming Bounce	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/bounce/				
529	Breakthrough Gaming Match	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/match/				
530	Deliverance: Moses in Pharaoh's Court	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	West Creek Studios
	http://www.parable.com/i.Deliverance-Moses-in-the-Pharaohs-Courts-West-Creek-Partners.0689076927666				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
531	Forgiveness	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.forgivenessrpg.com/				
532	Hermie and Friends: Camping the Bug-a-boo Way	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Digital Praise
	http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=2938				
533	LarryBoy and the Bad Apple	2006	Christian / Biblical	Game Boy Advance	Crave
	http://www.ign.com/games/larryboy-and-the-bad-apple/gba-823041				
534	LarryBoy and the Bad Apple	2006	Christian / Biblical	Playstation 2	Crave
	http://www.gamefaqs.com/ps2/932577-big-ideas-veggie-tales-larryboy-and-the-bad-apple/critic				
535	Left Behind: Eternal Forces	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Left Behind Games
	http://www.mobygames.com/game/windows/left-behind-eternal-forces				
536	Missions Match	2006	Christian / Biblical	Online	CBH Ministries
	http://www.cbhministries.org/zone/missions_zone/mission_match/mission_match.html				
537	Nik and Kit	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/nikandkit.html				
538	Quest for God's Armor	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Cyberspace Ministry
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20061205053823/http://tagnet.org/cyberspace/eng-menu.html				
539	Soldier of God	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	AV 1611 Productions
	http://www.freewebs.com/av1611games/				
540	The Missionary Game	2006	Christian / Biblical	Online	Kommunion
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060806030359/http://www.themissionarygame.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
541	Tina's Pinball Game	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/pinball/				
542	Veggie Tales: Dance Dance Dance	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20111120081225/http://store.veggietales.com/veggietales-dance-game-with-pad.html				
543	Word Search	2006	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Character Builders
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061114001924/http://www.christiancharacterbuilders.com/				
544	Zippy the Circle	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/zippythecircle.html				
545	ZJ the Ball 2	2006	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/zjtheball2.html				
546	Book of Mormon Battles: Matching Game	2006	Christian (LDS)	Online	James H. Fullmer
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060505022159/http://www.bookofmormonbattles.com/More/Matching/index.html				
547	Keep Your VL	2006	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=11				
548	Moroni's March	2006	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=12				
549	Noah's Ark	2006	Christian (LDS)	Online	Michael Herrmann And Peter Lewis
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080218045934/http://www.mormonfind.com/mf_games/ark				
550	Get a Clue	2006	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20061209001423/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/CLUE_OTChars_fin.html				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
551	Quizzin' With King Sol	2006	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111230185642/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=11				
552	Shoot the Numbers Bible Game	2006	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111230185637/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=10				
553	Gospel Champions vol. 1	2006	Christian (Catholic)	Windows	Third Day Games
	http://www.thirddaygames.com/bibleChampions/retail/order.asp				
554	Rescue Riders	2006	Christian (Lutheran, ELCA)	Windows	The Deaconess Community ELCA
	http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=6339				
555	Bubbie's Bubble Adventure	2006	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://www.babaganewz.com/kids/bubbies-bubble-adventure/				
556	Interactive Hanukkah Treasure Hunt	2006	Jewish	Windows	Torah Educational Software
	https://www.jewishsoftware.com/products/Interactive_Hanukkah_Treasure_Hunt_506.asp				
557	The Shivah	2006	Jewish	Windows / iOS	Dave Gilbert
	http://www.wadjeteyegames.com/the-shivah.html				
558	Abu Isa: A New Dawn	2006	Muslim	Windows	Abu Isa Games
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070719022647/http://www.abuisagames.com/and.html				
559	Abu Isa's Arabic Adventures	2006	Muslim	Windows	Abu Isa Games
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070719022647/http://www.abuisagames.com/aa.html				
560	Abu Isa's Quest For Knowledge	2006	Muslim	Windows	Abu Isa Games
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20070717152156/http://www.abuisagames.com/qfk.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
561	Alphabet Puzzle	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
562	Apple Drop	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
563	Arabic Alphabet	2006	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
564	Build a Mosque	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
565	Camel Collection	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
566	Camel Run	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
567	Chubby Skiekh and his Plane	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
568	Chubby Skiekh Coin Game	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
569	Islamic Crossword Puzzle	2006	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
570	Islamic Jigsaw Puzzle	2006	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
571	Kaba Jigsaw	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
572	Letter Blast	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
573	Matching Games	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
574	Mecca Bus Driver	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
575	Memory Game	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
576	Memory Game	2006	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
577	Prophet Nuh and the Ark	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
578	Quran for Kids	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
579	Quranic Study Pack	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
580	Salat Wordsearch	2006	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
581	Skateboard Ali	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
582	Special Force 2	2006	Muslim	Windows	Hezbollah
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20101126150738/http://www.owfiles.com/spf/				
583	Spot the Difference	2006	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060810192930/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
584	Underground Mine	2006	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20060226023356/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
585	Ethic Game	2007	Buddhist	Windows	Khondee
	http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/03/13/kids_video_for_good/				
586	Adventures in Odyssey: Answer that!	2007	Christian / Biblical	DVD	Digital Praise
	http://www.odysseyscoop.com/merchandise/AnswerThatDVDGame.htm				
587	ArmoQuest VII	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20071112071140/http://rhinoprints.net/games/				
588	ArmoQuest VIII	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Rick Ellinger
	http://web.archive.org/web/20071112071140/http://rhinoprints.net/games/				
589	Axel 2	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/axel2.html				
590	Bartimaeus	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
591	Breakthrough Gaming Activity Center	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/activitycenter.html				
592	Breakthrough Gaming Activity Center: Geography	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/activitycenter_geography.html				
593	Breakthrough Gaming Activity Center: Math & Numbers	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/activitycenter_mathandnumbers.html				
594	Breakthrough Gaming Activity Center: Words and Letters	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/activitycenter_lettersandwords.html				
595	Breakthrough Gaming Arcade 2	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://breakthroughgaming.com/store/arcade2.html				
596	Breakthrough Gaming Gym	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/gym.html				
597	Breakthrough Gaming Match 2	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.breakthroughgaming.com/store/match2.html				
598	Charlie Church Mouse Early Elementary	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Life Line Studios
	http://www.charliechurchmouse.com/games.html				
599	Charlie Church Mouse Kindergarten	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Life Line Studios
	http://www.charliechurchmouse.com/games.html				
600	Charlie Church Mouse Preschool	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Life Line Studios
	http://www.charliechurchmouse.com/games.html				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
601	Dance Praise 2: The ReMix	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Digital Praise
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4955-dance-praise-2-theremix				
602	Dance Praise Party	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Digital Praise
	http://www.cbn.com/700club/guests/bios/peter_fokos_082907.aspx				
603	David and Goliath	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
604	Easter Egg Hunt	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	LittleAngelsGames.com
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20081121081529/http://www.littleangelsgames.com/games.aspx				
605	Exodus Adventure	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://web.archive.org/web/20070513212309/http://www.sundaysoftware.com/Exodus/				
606	Finding Adina	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Washburn Bros.
	http://finding-adina.software.informer.com/				
607	Forgiveness: The Second Chapter	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.forgivenessrpg.com/				
608	Genesis	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
609	Gethsemane	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
610	Hearts	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
611	Inkvisitor	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	West Coast Entertainment
	http://games.softpedia.com/get/Shareware-Games/Inkvisitor.shtml				
612	InVerse Bible Memory Software	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	BerBible
	http://www.bibleinverse.org/				
613	Jericho 2	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
614	Jewels of Sinai	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Bible Arcade
	http://www.biblearcade.com/plume/?/Games/				
615	Jigsaw Puzzle	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
616	Mission Journey	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	CBH Ministries
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/http://cbhministries.org/zone/missions_zone/mission_journey/mission_journey.html				
617	Nik and Kit 2	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.nikandkit.com/				
618	Noah	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
619	Noah's Ark	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	LittleAngelsGames.com
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20081121081529/http://www.littleangelsgames.com/games.aspx				
620	Paul's Second	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
621	Rainbow	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	LittleAngelsGames.com
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20081121081529/http://www.littleangelsgames.com/games.aspx				
622	The Antique Chronicles	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Distant Star Productions
	http://www.distantstarproductions.com/antique/episode.asp				
623	The Axys Adventures: Truth Seeker	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Rebel Planet Productions
	http://www.therebelplanet.com/axys-adventures-truthseeker/232.html				
624	The Sower	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
625	The Ten Commandments	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	LittleAngelsGames.com
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20081121081529/http://www.littleangelsgames.com/games.aspx				
626	Three Wise Men	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
627	Timothy and Titus	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://www.sundaysoftware.com/titus/				
628	Tower of Babel	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				
629	Tower of Babel	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	LittleAngelsGames.com
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20081121081529/http://www.littleangelsgames.com/games.aspx				
630	Two of Each Kind	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	Bible Game Zone
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080815103122/http://www.biblegamezone.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
631	Veggie Tales: Veg out family tournament	2007	Christian / Biblical	Gamewave	Big Idea Productions, Inc.
	https://web.archive.org/web/20120226054547/http://playgamewave.com/product/detail.cfm?product_id=18				
632	Where is that?	2007	Christian / Biblical	Online	CBH Ministries
	http://web.archive.org/web/20070209204324/http://cbh.gospelcom.net/zone/mission_zone.php				
633	Zoo Race: Noah's Adventures 2	2007	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Cougar Interactive
	http://www.zoorace.com/				
634	BoM Beat Battle	2007	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=15				
635	BoM Search	2007	Christian (LDS)	Online	BoMToons
	http://www.bomtoons.com/playgame.php?id=14				
636	Puzzle Out these Plates	2007	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111230185712/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=12				
637	Bible Champions, vol 2	2007	Christian (Ecumenical)	Windows	Third Day Games
	http://www.thirddaygames.com/bibleChampions/retail/order.asp				
638	Jesus in Space	2007	Christian (Ecumenical)	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://www.sundaysoftware.com/jesus/				
639	Strip Dreidel	2007	Jewish	Online	Yenta North America
	https://web.archive.org/web/20120311201919/http://www.stripdreidel.com/				
640	Al Quraish	2007	Muslim	Windows	Afkar Media
	http://www.quraishgame.com/qe_index.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
641	Arabian Lords	2007	Muslim	Windows	Quirkat
	http://www.quirkat.com/site/our-games/arabianlords/				
642	Arabic Alphabel Drag and Match	2007	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20071127211259/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
643	Arabic Alphabet Memory Game	2007	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20071127211259/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
644	Islamic Coloring	2007	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20071127211259/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
645	Begin with the DS: Tipness's Yoga	2007	Yoga	Game Boy DS	Square Enix
	http://www.joystiq.com/2007/10/04/the-yoga-game-arms-race-heats-up/				
646	Let's Yoga	2007	Yoga	Game Boy DS	Konami
	http://www.nintendo.com/games/detail/yM75veVCOtxdSKdo6Kca8PYw97-SPber				
647	Antagonist	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Rebel Planet
	http://antagonist.theproject.us/				
648	Build a Church	2008	Christian / Biblical	Online	Child Evangelism Fellowship
	http://web.archive.org/web/20120908155640/http://www.wonderzone.com/games/load/church				
649	Chariots	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Heaven's Blessing Tiny Zoo
	http://www.chariotsgame.com/				
650	Forgiveness: The Third Chapter	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Breakthrough Gaming
	http://www.forgivenessrpg.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
651	Guitar Praise	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Digital Praise
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080914082506/http://www.digitalpraise.com/				
652	Heavenly Harmony Gold	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Cloud 9 Games
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/5015-heavenly-harmony-gold				
653	Left Behind: Tribulation Forces	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Left Behind Games
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/4937-left-behind-tribulation-forces				
654	Old Testament Mothers and Children	2008	Christian / Biblical	Online	BibleWise
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080505011609/http://www.biblewise.com/kids_korner/fun_games/old_testament.htm				
655	Quest for Compassion	2008	Christian / Biblical	Online	Compassion
	http://questforcompassion.org/				
656	Rhematype	2008	Christian / Biblical	Online	Pneuma Game Studios
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20140205225445/http://www.artwerkz.com/ws/index.htm				
657	Solomon Says Bible Trivia for Kids 2: Amazing Animals	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Cloud 9 Games
	http://www.rejoicechristian.com/products/kids/solomon_says_bible_trivia_for_kids:_vol._2_amazing_animals/				
658	The Tomb of Moses	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Vida Entertainment
	http://www.tomb-of-moses.com/				
659	Weekly Interactive Wordoku	2008	Christian / Biblical	Online	Cyberspace Ministry
	https://web.archive.org/web/20081103093334/http://www.cyberspaceministry.org/Wordoku/eng-inte.html				
660	Words of Light	2008	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Tireswing Games
	http://www.tireswinggames.com/wol.htm				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
661	Escape from Punch Bully Ranch	2008	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://guidemagazine.org/guide-online-games/727-escape-from-punch-bully-ranch-				
662	Mouthless Bob's Balloon Shoot	2008	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111230190343/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=13				
663	Mouthless Bob's Bounce	2008	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.guidemagazine.org/guide-online-games/12-mouthless-bobs-bounce				
664	Moksha	2008	Hindu	Windows	Elektromedia
	http://www.swarnabumi.com/em/msp.html				
665	Is it Kosher?	2008	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/is-it-kosher				
666	The "Ha'adamah" Blessing Game	2008	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Yalon Keret
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6				
667	The "Ha'etz" Blessing Game	2008	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Yalon Keret
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6				
668	The "Hagefen" Blessing Game	2008	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Yalon Keret
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6				
669	The "Hamotzi" Blessing Game	2008	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Yalon Keret
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6				
670	The "Mezonot" Blessing Game	2008	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Yalon Keret
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
671	The "She'hakol" Blessing Game	2008	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Yalon Keret
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://yalonkeret.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6				
672	Ulpan Arcade	2008	Jewish	Windows	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=467				
673	Parasha Challenge	2008	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/kids/itchekadoozy/parshah_game_show_cdo/aid/725535/jewish/Ki-Teitzei.htm				
674	Ali's Baggy Thoub	2008	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080306010027/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
675	FAARIS: The Boy Who Became a Warrior	2008	Muslim	Windows	Qadimoon
	http://www.qadimoon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=99&Itemid=127				
676	Islamic Word Scramble	2008	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20081217021332/http://www.islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
677	Muxlim Pal	2008	Muslim	Online	Muxlim
	https://web.archive.org/web/20081212035051/http://pal.muxlim.com/				
678	Space Search	2008	Muslim	Online	Emaan Productions
	http://web.archive.org/web/20080306010027/http://www.emaanproductions.com/				
679	Guru Meditation	2008	New Age	iPhone/ Atari	Ian Bogost
	http://www.bogost.com/games/guru_meditation.shtml#meditation				
680	The Night Journey	2008	New Age	Windows	Bill Viola
	http://www.thenightjourney.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
681	Quick Yoga Training	2008	Yoga	Game Boy DS	Ubi Soft
	http://www.nintendo.com/games/detail/xNm6eE72agGKw9MGt6U0WECjQETHeaS_				
682	Adam's Venture	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Vertigo Games
	http://www.adams-venture.com/				
683	Amazing Bible	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Digital Praise
	http://www.christcenteredgamer.com/index.php/reviews/18-computer/5095-amazing-bible-pc				
684	Attack of the Sunday School Zombies	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Sunday Software
	http://www.sundaysoftware.com/zombies/				
685	Bible 101 Jigsaw Puzzles	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Krohne Family Media
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20040610113300/http://krohnefamilymedia.com/Mini_CD_Children.html				
686	Bible Blocks	2009	Christian / Biblical	iOS	Jonathan Giles
	https://itunes.apple.com/app/bible-blocks/id304711588?mt=8				
687	Bible Reference Game	2009	Christian / Biblical	iOS	Thy Word Is True
	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-reference-game/id335724587?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D6				
688	Breakout the Bible	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows / Mac	Divine Games
	http://www.divinegames.net/?page_id=43				
689	Chris and Joy's Super Splash	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/chris-and-joys-supersplash.aspx				
690	Followers of Christ	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	My Bible Games
	http://www.mybiblegames.com/games.php				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
691	Giant Puzzle Adventure	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/a-giant-puzzle-adventure.aspx				
692	Gizball	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/gizball.aspx				
693	Gizmo's 3 Point Shootout	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/gizmos-3-point-shootout.aspx				
694	Gizmo's Gigabyte Grab	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/gizmos-gigabyte-grab.aspx				
695	Gizmo's Lab Round-Up	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/gizmos-lab-round-up.aspx				
696	Heaven: The Game	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Genesis Works
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20120503153813/http://www.heaventhegame.com/				
697	Joy's Super Word Search	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/joys-super-word-search.aspx				
698	Manna from Heaven	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	My Bible Games
	http://www.mybiblegames.com/games.php				
699	My Adventures Through Heaven	2009	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Wisdom Spiral
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20101117002912/http://www.wisdomspiral.com/main_en.html				
700	My Bible Millionaire	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	My Bible Games
	http://www.mybiblegames.com/games.php				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
701	Phoebe's Photo Recall	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/phoebes-photo-recall.aspx				
702	Superbook Artifact Adventure	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/superbook-artifact-adventure.aspx				
703	Superbook Matchup	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/superbook-match-up.aspx				
704	Superbook Says	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/superbook-says.aspx				
705	Tower of Babel	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	My Bible Games
	http://www.mybiblegames.com/games.php				
706	Vorago	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Godlimations
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20110130090251/http://www.godlimations.com/games/vorago.php				
707	Wheel of Verses	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	My Bible Games
	http://www.mybiblegames.com/games.php				
708	World's Greatest Guitar Star	2009	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20091118134247/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/worlds-greatest-guitar-star.aspx				
709	Hidden Pictures	2009	Christian (LDS)	Online	Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/http://www.lds.org/friend/online-activities/activities/hidden-pictures?lang=eng				
710	Matching Games	2009	Christian (LDS)	Online	Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20130525042144/http://www.lds.org/friend/online-activities/activities/matching?lang=eng				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
711	Puzzles	2009	Christian (LDS)	Online	Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20130523041547/http://www.lds.org/friend/online-activities/activities/puzzles?lang=eng				
712	How Mitzvah Giraffe Got His Long, Long Neck	2009	Jewish	Windows / Mac	Davka Software
	http://www.davka.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?product=493				
713	Eli's Matzah Grabber	2009	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?aid=863551				
714	Luvav Mitzvah Matcher	2009	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/kids/whatif/default_cdo/aid/989952/jewish/Game.htm				
715	Mitzvah Moonwalk	2009	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/kids/whatif/default_cdo/aid/902760/jewish/Game.htm				
716	The Rambam Game	2009	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/kids/whatif/default_cdo/aid/951801/jewish/Game.htm				
717	Tzedakah Tracks	2009	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/kids/whatif/default_cdo/aid/884570/jewish/Tzedakah-Tracks.htm				
718	Fix the Letters	2009	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100104153948/http://islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
719	Slide Puzzle: Mosques	2009	Muslim	Online	Islamic Playground
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100104153948/http://islamicplayground.com/Scripts/default.asp				
720	Yoga	2009	Yoga	Wii	Trine Games
	http://trinegames.com/yoga/				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
721	12 Apostles Quiz	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.biglightgames.com/cat/106/-bible-games-for-christians/newest-1.html				
722	4 Degrees: Bible Trivia	2010	Christian / Biblical	Gamewave	ZapiT Games
	https://web.archive.org/web/20120226053019/http://playgamewave.com/product/detail.cfm?product_id=4				
723	Bible Brain Busters	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20100926163357/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/bible-brain-busters.aspx				
724	Bible Catcher	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100424073348/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
725	Bible Characters (and other word finds)	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
726	Bible Match Up	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
727	Bible Stories Word Search	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	LittleIslandGames
	http://appgravity.com/android-app/brain/com-devnetmedia-BSWSOT				
728	Bible Tic Tac Toe	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	BibleWise
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100314132428/http://www.biblewise.com/kids_korner/fun_games/tictactoe/index.htm				
729	Bible Traveler: Bible Numbers	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	Sam Mejias
	http://bible-traveler-bible-numbers.soft112.com/				
730	BibleTet	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	ApproS
	http://appgravity.com/android-app/brain/net-appros-biblesequencesfree				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
731	Big Bible Town	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Third Day Games
	www.BIGBibleTown.com				
732	Brain Cafe: Test Your Faith	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	Urbian
	http://appgravity.com/android-app/brain/org-urbian-android-quiz-bible/				
733	Build a Church	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
734	Crossman	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
735	Feed the Cows	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Barry Ijmker
	http://christgaming.com/feed-the-cows/				
736	G.M.L. Armor	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Barry Ijmker
	http://christgaming.com/g-m-l-armor/				
737	Game – Books of the Bible	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	PaKeSoft
	http://appgravity.com/android-app/brain/com-BibleBooksGame/updates				
738	Get Bob to Church	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
739	Gizmo's Firm Foundation	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20100926163357/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/gizmos-firm-foundation.aspx				
740	Godstoria	2010	Christian / Biblical	Windows	FIAA GmbH
	http://godstoria.browsergamez.com/				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
741	Jesus Birth Bibleionaire	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
742	Keys of the Kingdom	2010	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Left Behind Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20101102171028/http://lbgstore.com/keysofkingdom.html				
743	Left Behind 3: Rise of the Antichrist	2010	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Left Behind Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/http://www.leftbehindgames.com/LBGStore/index.php/leftbehind/left-behind-3.html				
744	Little Shepard	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100424073348/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
745	Noah's Ark Hidden Objects	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
746	Noah's Memory Mixup	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Tireswing Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100531054151/http://www.tireswinggames.com/freegames.htm				
747	Online Coloring Book	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	BibleWise
	http://biblewise.com/kids_korner/fun_games/online_coloring/index.htm				
748	Pattern Word	2010	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Wisdom Spiral
	http://www.wisdomspiral.com/freegames.html				
749	Praise Champion	2010	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Left Behind Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20101102171335/http://lbgstore.com/praise-champion.html				
750	Praying Jesus Jigsaw	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
751	Professor Quantum's Amazing Fruit Tree	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Christian Broadcasting Network
	https://web.archive.org/web/20101206071158/http://superbook.cbn.com/games/amazing-fruit-tree.aspx				
752	Race on Squares: Bible Edition	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	ApproS
	http://appgravity.com/android-app/brain/net-appros-raceonsquares/				
753	Save the Bibles	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Big Light Games
	http://web.archive.org/web/20100819232942/http://www.biglightgames.com/index.php?task=category&id=106				
754	Sort the Name: Bible Puzzle	2010	Christian / Biblical	Android	Sam Mejias
	http://www.androidpit.com/en/android/market/apps/app/samsapps.games.sortthename/Sort-the-Name-Bible-Puzzle				
755	Souling's Quest	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Hanclinto Games
	http://christgaming.com/soulings-quest/				
756	Tap and Teach: The Story of Noah's Ark	2010	Christian / Biblical	Game Boy DS	Southpeak Interactive
	http://www.familyfriendlyvideogames.com/TapAndTeachTheStoryofNoahsArk				
757	Testament	2010	Christian / Biblical	Windows	Immersive Learning
	http://wayback.archive.org/web/20100819044942/http://www.testamentgame.com/				
758	The Edge	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Barry Ijmker
	http://christgaming.com/the-edge/				
759	Two By Two	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Untold Entertainment Inc
	http://christgaming.com/two-by-two/				
760	Word Cross	2010	Christian / Biblical	iOS	Michael Surran
	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-cross-bible-study-game/id377784964?mt=8				

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	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
761	YaHero	2010	Christian / Biblical	Online	Yahero
	https://web.archive.org/web/20100308155744/http://play.yahero.com/				
762	Paolo's Journey	2010	Christian (Catholic)	Windows	Fr. Maximo Villanueva Jr.
	http://balangadiocese.com/FrJun/Resources/Brochure_Paolo's%20Journey2.pdf				
763	Articles of Faith Memory Quest	2010	Christian (LDS)	Online	Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
	http://www.lds.org/friend/online-activities/activities/articles-of-faith-memory-quest?lang=eng				
764	Missionary Maze	2010	Christian (LDS)	Online	Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
	http://www.lds.org/friend/online-activities/activities/mazes/missionaries?lang=eng				
765	Spot the Differences	2010	Christian (LDS)	Online	Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
	http://www.lds.org/friend/online-activities/activities/spot/differences?lang=eng				
766	Fellow Sheep	2010	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111230181711/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=16				
767	Missionary Plumber	2010	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20111206043917/http://guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=6				
768	Nile River Frog	2010	Christian (SDA)	Online	Review and Herald Publishing Association
	http://web.archive.org/web/20110927115812/http://www.guidemagazine.org/gamelaunch/playgame.asp?id=15				
769	Do You Know Your Berakhot?	2010	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/do-you-know-your-berakhot				
770	Do You Know Your Seder Plate?	2010	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/do-you-know-your-seder-plate				

	Title of Game	Year	Religious Group	Platform	Developer / Publisher
771	High Holiday Raceway	2010	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/high-holiday-raceway				
772	Po (Here) or Sham (There)?	2010	Jewish	Online	Behrman House Inc.
	http://babaganewz.com/games/po-here-or-sham-there				
773	Latke Stacker	2010	Jewish	Online	Chabad-Lubavitch Media Center
	http://www.chabad.org/kids/whatif/default_cdo/aid/1063365/jewish/Latke-Stacker-Game.htm				

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