THE PROFIT MOTIVE AND THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE: A MULTICULTURAL READING OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE CHRISTIAN MARKET

by

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(Under the direction of JOEL TAXEL)

ABSTRACT

Christian publishers occupy a small niche in the children's book industry. These publishers have a stated mission to print excellent stories that help Christians apply Biblical truths to their lives, but they deal with the same market forces that drive the editorial and marketing strategies of secular publishers which may cause the books to offer a narrow range of themes. Publishers refer to their books as "safe," which generally refers to the lack of controversial content. My reading of 29 books and interviews with four editors and/or publishers in the industry revealed that the range of topics and representation of characters mirror the conservative nature of the consumers, who are primarily white and middle-class. The image of Christians which I read from these books was that they are white, middle-class suburbanites who own their own homes, who live in families with two, heterosexual parents, and who experience no dysfunction, disabilities, or addictions. Christians are much more diverse than this, however, and they live in a

world filled with diversity. I maintain that while Christianity begins with and is empowered by a personal relationship with God, Jesus calls Christians to follow the model he lived that was recorded in the New Testament Gospels. I claim he was a social activist for whom service and self-sacrifice were the hallmarks of his life. He crossed cultural, traditional and legal boundaries to help people. For most of the books, a typical character's relationship with God was a personal one that often did not ask characters to move out of their comfortable communities and show compassion and love to others who were unlike them. I suggest that Christians' public relationships are also important Biblical themes to be included in children's literature. Christian children of all kinds need to see themselves in literature, and they need to read literature about others who are different from themselves in order to be better able to live a life of service. I approached the books in two ways to rate characters' Christianity, both private and public. I used Christian practices of prayer, scripture reading, and God-talk, or conversations about God between characters, to determine the degree to which the presence of God was integrated into the characters' lives. I used the presence of multicultural characters and plot lines to discern the extent to which characters became involved with diverse peoples or situations that required them to go outside their communities or sacrifice for others. There were notable books among my sample that engaged issues of social justice, such as racism, or class or gender distinctions, but they were few. Still, their presence indicates that publishers could successfully expand into markets that include the diversity of Christians as well as provide books that show Christians living in the world as it is, modeling a life of service.

INDEX WORDS: Children's literature, Christian, Christian practice, Christian service, Christianity, Critical theory, Ideology, Liberation theology, Multiculturalism, Publishing, Social justice

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

. . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-3, NIV)

Strange Fruit
Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh,
And the sudden smell of burning flesh!

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop. (Meeropol, 1939)

Background of the Problem

The fruit of the Spirit cannot be death, but people who call themselves Christians have denied, turned a blind eye, or even participated in dealing death to others whom they are commanded to love. The first time I read the lyrics to *Strange Fruit* was in a good friend's apartment at a Sunday school party. There was a poster in a dim corner, a washed out photo of a lynching with the song's words scattered and falling across it. It's not an image that fades easily when it graces the wall of a gentle man, a friend of many years who has hidden his feelings about racism from me. I wonder how the fact of my being white closes the mouth of my friend when the fact of my being Christian has made us brother and sister in Christ. We live as a people divided by race, divided by gender,

divided by class, yet the call to be children of God is one that recognizes our unity in our diversity. We who identify ourselves as seekers of God must bear the fruit of love. To live in this manner implies more than a private relationship with God; it requires a living out of his commandments in the world, a religion lived publicly in our very diverse world, a world filled with people who are not the same.

How does one prepare to live one's religion publicly? Even more specifically, how do we prepare the children within the Christian community to bear the fruit of the Spirit in this diverse world? The work that has been done to theorize multiculturalism in education is useful for thinking about this question, as are the theories of liberation theologians. The former is concerned ultimately with issues of social justice for all school children while the latter champions social justice for the oppressed peoples of the world. Proponents of multiculturalism suggest literature as one component of an education that allows for children to both experience difference and see themselves as necessary and contributing members of a diverse society. Liberation theologians suggest that the church must provide the structure for religion to grow from its foundations of a private relationship forged with God to a public service to people in need. I suggest that literature written for Christian children that adds to their understanding of life outside their community and challenges them to think beyond private religion into public religion will help them bear good fruit. Whether or not this does occur begs the question of whether literature can affect children's moral development, and thus is beyond the scope of this study. However, the phrase 'bearing good fruit', which in the Christian community is a common way of referring to evidence of a Christian life, is commensurate with educational or discipleship goals often stated by Christian publishers.

There is a thriving industry of children's literature published for the Christian market, but those who desire to share Scriptural truth and good stories with children are constrained by the marketplace to make a profit. It is reasonable therefore to expect tension between Scriptural truth and marketability in books. Indeed, corporate

appropriation of children's literature as a commodity whose primary value is economic rather than educational or artistic has affected the availability of quality books for children generally as well as in the literature that has found a niche in the Christian market. Some symptoms are the homogenization of themes and plots and a proliferation of books that are formulated to appeal to a broad audience. Advocacy for social justice, however, is not a popular stance, and I will discuss in the following pages whether the Christian children's books I examined address it. The mission of the Christian publisher is to bring stories to children that are rooted and grounded in Scripture, which I contend includes both the private religion of one's relationship to God and the public religion for which Jesus, the social activist, was killed. I believe that constraints of the marketplace make it less likely that publishers explore the thorny issues of the revolutionary lifestyle modeled by Jesus in his life and exhortations in Scripture. Such concerns may therefore leave gaps in children's books' depiction of that lifestyle as we live it in today's diverse society, and it is this tension that leads to my study.

This dissertation is a critical qualitative study that combines a textual analysis of children's books published for the Christian market and an interview study with publishers of these books to identify the Christian worldview in the books from a multicultural perspective. I chose to read a sample of books for 8-12 year olds for several reasons. While written for children, they are long enough to have some depth and complexity in the plot and characters. In addition, books for this age group represent 89.5% of the sales of youth/children chapter books in Christian bookstores (STATS, 2003). The study is important as the rapid growth in numbers of books available and new books being published is outstripping the overall growth of children's publishing. Heretofore, studies of children's literature for this market looked at the theology in the books or how they fostered a transcendent spirituality in children. As recent examples, following on the release of the films of the first two books of Tolkien's (1954, 1955) *The Lord of the Rings*, Flieger (2002) wrote about Tolkien's creation of language from living

in the Word (an expression that refers to being in relationship with Jesus and reading the Bible consistently). Birzer and Pierce(2002) illuminated the images from Catholic Christianity that Tolkien incorporates in his work. Another example is Howard's (1994) description of C.S. Lewis'(1952, 1953) use of "cases in point" in his *Narnia* series. He asserted "…in the figure of Aslan, children in our world will come upon something which scarcely exists in their own world, but which lies at the bottom of all political and social efforts, namely, absolute authority which is absolutely good" (p. 40-1). For Howard, Lewis' books are notable for their classical images of a moral world that teach us virtue. I have not found work that discusses how Christian books for children approach living the Christian life in this world.

To further develop the background of the study, I will discuss my Christian heritage to illuminate my perception of the Christian life as modeled on Jesus' teachings, defining social justice in a biblical sense, and then give a definition of Christian literature for children. I briefly think through some difficulties inherent in biblical interpretation as it concerns this project then describe a children's book, *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002), to familiarize the reader with Christian literature and as an example of how I am thinking about my sample through the issues I raise. I describe it in light of the Christian publishing industry and Christian ideology, that is, the assumptions that define a particular culture or worldview and govern how and what it produces. I also discuss the book in relation to multiculturalism in children's literature to show why social justice is an important component of literature and must be considered in its criticism. I conclude with the research questions for this study and a description of the following chapters.

My Christian Heritage

I have formed my beliefs and practices concerning a Christian lifestyle from socializing for nearly 25 years with a community that intensely studies the Bible and deliberately applies the lessons learned thereby to both personal and public relationships with God, fellow believers, and those outside the fellowship. Such beliefs and practices

have led me to understand that the ministry of Jesus was what we today would call social activism. Christians believe that Jesus is alive, the son of God who was born into humanity to become the instrument of reconciliation with God for a fallen humanity. Within my community, the official primary goal is to spread this Gospel: literally, the "good news" or the story of Jesus' redemption of humanity. I believe this goal should be animated by a love for people; becoming a Christian should not be a prerequisite to experiencing the love of God through the church. Jesus often scandalized his followers as he spent time with outcasts and non-Jewish people, teaching them how to love God and others, eating with them, and healing them. I believe that children learning to live as Christians should be exposed to literature that inspires them in the manner of Jesus, whose compassion for the oppressed, the impoverished, and the disabled is a vital theme in the writings about him.

As it is Jesus who embodies the reason and purpose for becoming a Christian, so also I believe it is his church that is the vehicle for working out those purposes modeled on his example and words. The models I experienced for learning about service to the community were our church programs directed at those outside our fellowship. This consisted of many organized activities including short visits to those who were house-bound and performing chores for them and week-long task-oriented mission trips whose goal was to complete the walls of a new church in Mexico, for example, or repaint the exterior of an orphanage in Alabama. These services were useful to those who accepted them, but they did little to change the circumstances of their lives materially or spiritually. Financial support of permanent missions in far-off places has more long-term impact on people's lives, but I am motivated to disrupt the day-to-day oppressions people perpetrate in this country, often through ignorance of what life is truly like for those who are not born to privilege.

While there are many Christian organizations that are dedicated to helping the poor and oppressed, those organizations do not target children in the way that books that

are written for the Christian market do. In my experience, children who are involved in helping others do so through adult programs and with adult intervention. Organizations that are more directly concerned with family issues are those such as The Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council. These national organizations produce magazines, books and radio programs, maintain "watches" on political and economic activity, and their leaders serve on educational, philanthropic and governmental boards (see **www.cc,org**, **www.family.org**, **www.frc.org**). These organizations focus their efforts on providing information to families that will help them raise their children in the faith including biblical instruction; information on upcoming legislation or political contests; on educational policy and textbooks; and on social issues, parenting, and health. While I believe it is important to be vigilant in teaching and protecting the community of believers, I also believe that Jesus taught that believers should be in the forefront of those advocating for justice across the mix of society.

Defining Social Justice

My understanding of the biblical description of the Christian church is that it is composed of people who are in relationship with each other because each one has a relationship with God through Jesus (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13, NIV). The church is an institution established by God and built through adherence to the relational rules laid down in scripture. It is different from human institutions in that the goals of the church do not primarily serve humanity, but God. Because of this allegiance to divine purposes, the church has a stronger mandate of *service* to its own community and those outside it rather than institutional *productivity*, and it is in this service that the seeds of what I am calling social justice are nurtured. Other, human institutions such as government or the market, for example, define justice and whose responsibility it is quite differently, so that justice is what is received as one's due, following on one's actions and sometimes justice is about not being penalized unduly. Government is concerned with protecting the rights of individual citizens and of the state, and market justice is tied to obedience to the rules

of the marketplace and unconcerned with the consequences of peoples' actions, as long as they follow the rules (Forrester, 1997). For example, legally, a person may be fired from her job if she is abusing drugs. The government protects her rights in that there must be due process in her firing. The market champions the employer in that an unproductive employee changes the cost/benefit ratio so that she becomes an unprofitable liability. The market justly rejects her because she did not maintain productivity. The government justly rejects her because she did not fulfill her contract. Though no situation would be so simplistic, a relational component concerned with the person's well-being does not exist in legal or market justice.

Communal relationships are intrinsic to the idea of social justice as expressed through liberation theology and based on the notion of self-sacrifice. In my mind, social justice is not an emphasis on just deserts, but a proactive stance that insists on equitable opportunities for and treatment of people irrespective of their race, class or gender, for example, as well as just consequences for their actions. Liberation theology contributes to this definition through its insistence that Christ's mission on Earth was to identify particularly with the poor and oppressed; that is, those who have not had equitable opportunity or treatment throughout history, but through him they were given equal value in God's judgment and equal claim on human relationships. I see the strength of Christ's death as a redemptive act in that it extends to all: the poor and the wealthy, the oppressed and the oppressors, without qualification. Justice in the common sense of deserved consequences is inoperable, for redemption is available no matter what the particular sins are. Jesus' death satisfied God's stark demands of justice for human sinfulness and also released divine power over sin that became accessible to humanity through Jesus' act of sacrifice. When people claim that power through the process of becoming Christian, they become able to act towards others with love—not self-serving love, but an all-encompassing one. The community becomes the body of Christ, the church. This is its primary identity and the key to creating a just society. What saves this image from

utopianism is the realization that it is a process, a way to learn to live together in service to God until there is an end. Jesus said that we would always have the poor with us (John 12:8, NIV). The struggle is to tap the "*resources we need to live in peace in the absence of the final reconciliation*" (Volf, 1996, p. 109, italics in original). The difficulty that Volf (1996) explained is that there is an unresolvable conflict between a Christian desire to live in love and embrace others and the human ability to do so. Making a choice to live as a Christian is making a choice to live with the tension of being called to live by Jesus' example, one that is contrary to self-serving and all-too-human motivations.

As an example of how people can live justly, Jesus told a story reported in the Gospel of Luke that is usually referred to as The Good Samaritan. This story is perhaps the clearest injunction he gave concerning how believers should respond to others unlike themselves. The audience that originally heard it would have understood that an Orthodox Jew would neither touch nor talk to Samaritans for they were hated foreigners, considered half-breeds physically and spiritually. Jesus was challenging Jewish understanding of the moral order. This is the story: robbers set upon a (presumably) Jewish man and left him for dead beside the road. A religious leader, a Jewish priest who came by, crossed the street and passed by on the other side so that he would not be contaminated in a ceremonial sense by touching someone who might be bleeding, diseased, dead, or from a proscribed ethnic group (a legal distinction—a just choice). A Levite, a lay assistant to the priest who could also have been expected to help, also passed by the man for the same reasons. Then a Samaritan, ignoring the strongest cultural and religious taboos against touching or talking with a Jewish person, took pity on him, dressed his wounds, and took him to an inn where he paid for his care. He promised to check back with the innkeeper when he returned and cover any additional charges.

A key to this story is the way it was framed. It began when someone asked Jesus how to apply the scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27, NIV) by asking him, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29, NIV). Jesus turned the question

around when he asked, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (Luke 10:36, NIV). He changed the emphasis from looking at others in terms of fulfilling the law to benefit your own relationship to God to looking at others in terms of meeting their needs. In other words, to be a neighbor is to care for others—before legal constraints, taboos, or traditions. This is social justice. It is incumbent on every person to serve others. I believe Jesus did several things with this story. In answering as he did, he shifted the focus from the intellectual question about the Other (“Who is my neighbor?”) to the practical application of a scriptural command. “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10: 27, NIV) became an injunction to the questioner who must show he is a good neighbor by his actions: “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37, NIV). In this case, loving this man as we would love ourselves meant giving him medical care, food, and shelter: needs that each of us have and make sure we fulfill for ourselves. He made it clear that compassion takes precedence over legal or cultural distinctions among people. He also interpreted God’s commandment as a practical application, something lived out in action that puts service to others ahead of one’s own needs or allegiances.

Social justice in this sense is a misnomer, for it is enabled and carried out through grace; it is not just deserts; it is not a consequence of people’s actions. It is a proactive attempt to build a community that is responsive to the material and spiritual needs of others. It is a process that holds love to be the goal of humanity, not simply freedom. Legal justice is a matter for the courts; social justice is a matter of the heart.

In a long serman recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches about the attitudes that a believer should maintain to enter the kingdom of heaven. Here are just a few of his teachings that help round out the picture of the believer’s life who, as I maintain, must also advocate for social justice. “…if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your

gift" (Matt. 5:23-4, NIV). I interpret this passage to emphasize the importance of maintaining relationships with others, to the point that your worship of God would be hindered if you did not. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you…He [God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? . . . Do not even the pagans do that?" (Matt. 5: 44-8, NIV). I take this passage to mean, among other things, that in the same way that God's blessings are impartial, we are not to discriminate against others based on our allegiances. Finally, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matt. 7: 1-2, NIV). This is perhaps the clearest of the three I include and gives believers guidance when considering how to respond to others. In my discussion of liberation theology, I will also address who Jesus is and what he said. I return to the different nuances in the definition of social justice in my discussion of multiculturalism and critical theory as well, drawing on these theories to connect what I see as Jesus' example of Christian advocacy to the real world situations authors create in books. These theories particularly dwell on the injustices that children have suffered in educational institutions, and as such have explored issues that frequently surface in education that fall under the umbrella of social justice: for example, racism, class, and gender distinctions. How these issues are treated in multicultural literature informs my study of Christian literature.

Christian Literature for Children

Christian storytelling has been a staple of English language children's literature from its beginning. Most books up to the early 1800s that were written for children in England and later in the United States were "specifically aimed at directing young children to the right path" (Nodelman, 1996, p. 71), an exclusively Christian path. Christian textbooks were the staple of schools until the turn of the 19th century. In part because of increasing disagreements between Protestants and Catholics, in part because

of the Progressive movement in education, Christian sentiments and historical viewpoints gradually were written out of textbooks (MacLeod, 1994). Fiction based on biblical stories or truths still, however, claims this promise: "all Scripture is God-breathed, useful for teaching…and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3: 16, NIV). The moralistic stories of the past that as often as not had good children dying young to receive their heavenly rewards (MacLeod, 1994) are a far cry from current popular Christian series books such as *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002). Yet the idea of a moral message continues to be important to publishers who produce books for the Christian market (Richardson, 2001). The foundational assumptions of Christianity that inform Christian fiction for children concern who Jesus is and what his role is in a Christian's life.

Jesus gave two "rules" to his disciples, quoting the Jewish scriptures, about how to live a Godly life: 1) "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength", and 2) "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12: 30-31, NIV). The working out of what each rule means has been left to communities of Christians to discern. I acknowledge that for centuries, prominent Christians, factions, and governments have rationalized heinous behavior with biblical texts. Christians have been responsible for both honorable and horrific events based on their interpretation of God's will for themselves and others. I do not wish to imply that there is a Christian worldview that is the right one, the only one. There is such a wide range of interpretation of what is appropriate Christian behavior that I can only emphasize that I speak from my beliefs learned in community, my reading of the Bible, and my experiences. However, the fact that the consumer base for Christian literature is a demographically narrow one implies that the *books'* view of Christian behavior might fall in predictable patterns. The study will show that the characters, events and settings of the books do in fact substantially match the demographics of the consumers. For example, CBA (Christian Booksellers Association) estimates that white, middle-class women

purchase between 77% of Christian products from Christian bookstores (cbaonline, 1998) to 96% of children's books (Richardson, 2001).

Christian fiction is written for a specialized market, and until recently writers often began with "a strong and very specific truth or lesson they want to convey to young readers" (Maifair, 1998, p. 16). Contemporary Christian authors, and those not specifically identified as Christian authors are subtler about their message. In *Suncatcher*, a biography of Madelaine L'Engle, Carole Chase (1998) writes this about why L'Engle's work reflects her Christianity. "Although the primary purpose of her fiction is to tell stories—not to teach readers about the Bible—the theology, the word *about* God, is implicit in her stories" (p. 47, italics in original). L'Engle's work is God-breathed in the sense that Christianity is the ideology from which she writes, but her books also contain symbols and themes from other mythologies as well (O'Brien, 1998) which is one reason she is not marketed as a "Christian" author. Christian fiction may also "incorporate Scripture by framing a story in a biblical theme, such as sacrifice, redemption, or forgiveness" (Chase, 1998, p. 48).

Other markers of Christian fiction are described in a study identifying the presence of religious expression in Newbery Award books: "1) compassionate or charitable deeds, 2) telling others about God, 3) prayer, 4) worship attendance, or 5) reading the Bible" (Martin, 1990, p. 3). A study of American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults also analyzed religious content by asking these questions of the texts: "Which characters (if any) express a belief in God?…How are those beliefs demonstrated?…Does anyone pray?…Do characters justify or explain any of their actions as motivated by religious beliefs?" (Piehl, 1991, pp. 269-70). These identifying characteristics can be summarized in Christian fiction as stories that show characters learning how to live as Christians, exemplifying Jesus' restated commandments to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. Specific markers that were the most common

in the books I read were that characters prayed, read or referred to scripture, and had conversations about God.

Biblical Interpretation

I need to acknowledge the difficulties of interpreting and applying biblical injunctions. My individual understanding of the biblical texts is compounded from 25 years of study and discussion in an Evangelical church. I use the term as defined by Barna Research Group, which Barna (2001a) applies to 8% of American adults or 15 to 20 million people. Evangelical is not a name that people take for themselves in his research but the word he uses to describe people who have the following characteristics. They describe themselves as "mostly conservative" on social and political issues, as people who base their moral decisions on religious perspectives, and who believe in absolute moral truth. They are a group of individuals who believe that their relationship with Jesus Christ will provide them with eternal life and who accept a variety of Bible teachings as accurate and authoritative. Confusingly, the word appears as a catch-all in the popular press to describe “conservative Christians,” often pejoratively, without any definition of what beliefs are claimed. One recent article claimed a Gallup poll in December of 2002 found that 46% of Americans call themselves Evangelicals “or born-again Christians” and went on to warn about the consequences of ignoring what is becoming an influential group (Kristof, 2003). A figure that might be comparable to this is a group Barna (2001a) also identifies as born-again Christians (41% of adults), but which he divides into two groups. Born-again, non-Evangelical refers to 33% of adults who do not agree with the Evangelicals (8%) as to the accuracy of the Bible. The distinction is important to my study as I base my beliefs about the way the Christian life should be lived on the stories related in the Bible. Though I identify myself as Evangelical, I also recognize that language is a human invention and what I make of biblical text is just that: my interpretation. However, what is reported in the Gospels about what Jesus did is not obscure or abstruse, and most of the stories he told are easily

understood. I submit that it is in people's application of Christian precepts that most of the tension in biblical interpretation arises.

Let me give a few examples to describe some of the tensions and how they apply to my project. The writer of Proverbs states, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Pro. 22:6, NIV). On the surface, this seems to be saying that what we teach children when they are young will be important to who they will be when they are adults. But what is it we should teach them? I have heard this scripture used in widely varied ways, from validating corporal punishment to advocating Christian education. Interpretations of what it is important for children to know directly affect publishers' choices, and this crucial point is determined by the editorial staff. Bob Jones University Press has published extensive position papers on their web site that explain what basis they use to determine the content of their textbooks and fiction. Other houses are less open about what informs their decisions. I will return to this point in the next chapter in my discussion of critical theory.

Another kind of tension comes from Christians' choices about how to share the redemption story and yet remain respectful of others. The Bible prescribes a particular path to being in relationship with God through acceptance of Jesus as Savior, yet I believe the Bible is clear that all people are loved by God even though some will not choose to confess Jesus as Lord. Innumerable mission societies attest to believers' following this commandment, and unfortunately, so do ancient and modern massacres of unbelievers, such as the medieval Crusades of Europeans to recapture Jerusalem from the Saracen, or the war between Protestants and Catholics still ongoing in Northern Ireland or between Christians and Muslims in Asia and Africa. How we live in community with people who are not believers is an aspect of children's fiction, but as I will show, only a few of the books in my sample attempt to show this aspect of the Christian life.

A closely similar conflict that surfaces in the discussion of how Christian children's fiction describes the Christian life also concerns evangelism, but in this case it

is how the commandment to share the gospel interacts with preserving "the remnant," the faithful believers. The Christian culture is insular in that it attends to the needs of believers in the community. Yet there is also an ethic of care that extends to outsiders from the belief that all people are made in the image of God and from scriptures such as The Good Samaritan. In practice, this ethic of care collides with the commandment to spread the message of redemption through Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God commands the teaching of the gospel to the world (Matt. 28:18-20, NIV), yet the world may see this as cultural imperialism (Achebe, 1994; Freire, 1970/1999). It is this conflict of ideologies that I believe is most difficult to navigate in reality or in fiction. Even in the extensive discussions about multiculturalism in children's literature, where advocacy for an active social justice is a central theme, there is not an acknowledgement that some cultural beliefs are so vehemently opposed that neither can allow for the existence of the other. The September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center and recent conflicts between the United States and Iraq are grim reminders of this. Part of what fuels the urgency I feel for taking stock of what Christian literature shows the Christian life to be is that I believe that the example Jesus gives of self-sacrificing service to others (Volf, 1996) is a model that can bear the fruit of peace, love and joy, among others, for all humanity. Let me turn now to an example of a children's book written for the Christian market to further discuss these issues. There are three sections that interact with my descriptions of the book: Christian Publishing, Christian Ideology in Children's Literature, and Multiculturalism in Children's Literature.

Christian Publishing

The offerings of books for the Christian market have expanded dramatically in the last decade, even as overall numbers for children's fiction have steadied or declined. The $1 billion home school market, 80% of which is Christian-based (Kiesling, 2001), and the group of people who identify themselves as fundamentalist Christians are representative of the white, middle-class consumer base for these books (Bogart, 2000).

In a 2002 survey of the book reading and book buying habits of adults and teens in the United States, George Barna's research group found that half of all Americans read Christian books and one-third buy them (Barna, 2003). While this survey does not specify what the books were, it does indicate the extent of the market. Specialty publishing houses such as Tyndale House and BethanyHouse serve this 'niche market,' a reference to a smaller, easily identified market that is underserved by larger publishers, and produce books for a range of ages and purposes, much as publishers like Lee and Low do who specialize in multicultural books. Evangelical Christians rely on these publishers to provide them with biblically based materials for home and school. The increase in the number of Christian schools and people schooling their children at home are factors in the increase of children's books available to this Christian market. Other factors are improved marketing strategies, entry into the secular market, and a general increase in sales of books that have spiritual themes (Richardson, 2001).

The growth potential in the Christian market began to stir interest in the late 1980s among multinational corporations that have been acquiring publishing houses at a steady rate over some 15 years so that 8 publishers now control most of the book publishing in the United States (Cullen, 2003). Some corporations have begun religious publishing divisions (for example, Time Warner in 2000) or purchased successful smaller companies (for example, HarperCollins' buyout of Zondervan in 1988) (Davis, 2001). It is only recently that Christian publishers began to employ the marketing strategies that spell success for secular publishers. These include online sales; retail sales in discount stores and grocery stores; interactive web sites for children; and direct sales through book clubs. They operate within the larger context of American book publishing and reflect the "complex social relations of literature's production, accessibility, and consumption" (Taxel, 2002). This phenomenon is met in Christian book publishing with a push for well-crafted stories whose attention to writing is as important as attention to a biblical message.

A Children's Book: *Star Status*

The book weighs no more than a pound, and the postage stamped prominently on the puffy manila envelope is far less than the charge I paid for "media mail." I wondered whether it was ebay or the bookseller who kept the extra money. Even with postage, the books are cheaper to purchase from Internet sites than in an independent Christian bookstore, though some titles are now stocked in discount retail outlets and grocery stores. *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002) has traveled extensively from BethanyHouse, the largest publisher of Christian children's literature, to me the reader. This "used" book came shrinkwrapped. The cover was unbent; there were no markings. Perhaps it was a remaindered book, bought by discount houses along with others that didn't sell quickly and were returned to the publisher, then sold in lots. However, the date is 2002; at most, a year has passed since its printing before I bought it.

The paperback's cover has realistic artwork of a young girl on the slopes, standing with her skis in one hand, holding aloft her ski poles in the other with a triumphant smile on her face. The cover has a bright blue stripe down the side with the words "GIRLS ONLY!" repeated throughout in an engaging graphic. *Girls Only!* Is the title of the series of books of which *Star Status* is number 8.

The slim volume is an easy read for 8-12 year olds, and as might be expected from its length, 120 pages, it has a simple story that is nevertheless engaging and comfortable. The pages just inside the back and front covers are filled with references to Beverly Lewis' other books published by BethanyHouse—over 60 titles, including the series entitled *Cul-de-sac Kids*, *SummerHill Secrets*, and an adult series, *The Heritage of Lancaster County*. BethanyHouse has *forty* such series listed in its spring catalog, with from 3 to 40 titles each, and only *three* single titles listed under the category of "Youth/Children Single Titles." Christian publishers find the same strategies that secular publishers use to be successful in producing and marketing their books, and therefore the offerings look much the same.

Christian Ideology in Children's Literature

For the Christian publisher, what sells is a "good story" that embraces Christian themes that are "tried and true" (Heuser, 2001) and therefore uncontroversial, though with wide appeal across the diverse beliefs of Christian communities. It is not only Christians who buy the books, however. Three out of every 10 adult book buyers bought three or more Christian books in the past year, but Evangelical Christians (defined above, with more explicit characteristics listed below) are the most likely to purchase Christian books. 75% of them bought 3 or more in the past year (Barna, 2003). The name Evangelical is given to the group by researchers who identify them by these reported beliefs:

- They have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today
- Eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works
- Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth
- They will go to Heaven when they die
- Faith is very important in their lives
- They have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians
- Satan exists
- God is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today
- The Bible is accurate in all that it teaches (Barna, 2003)

While I identify myself as Evangelical because I agree with the central necessity of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I believe that salvation is only the beginning of the Christian life. Scripture exhorts us to care for one another, embodying God's love for all people. I propose that the core of Christian ideology is a universal message of love that contains a strong sense of social justice, which I have defined as

service to others ahead of selfish considerations, and that this message should be present among other themes in the literature for children so that they shall be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 4:4, NIV). Most of the literature that is available today has themes that center on one's relationship with God and how one lives as a Christian. As I will show, however, few books have children or families that actively pursue a lifestyle that confronts social injustices like the effects of racism. Moreover, few even have characters or situations outside of white, middle-class suburbia, the demographics that match the buyers. The books which sell well are series books that are formulaic and episodic; these types of books dominate secular children's literature as well. They provide parents with a "safe" literature, but that may also mean that the content of the books skirts controversy in any aspects of the Christian life (Heuser, 2001; Richardson, 2001; Sperling, 2001). That literature is a medium for teaching children how to live in their society is widely contended. Hunt (1994) wrote, "It is arguably impossible for a children's book (especially one being read by a child) not to be educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology. All books must teach something" (p. 3).

Nancy Lohr, acquisitions editor for JourneyForth, talked about what the content of their books should be like. Themes should be "both timeless and timely" (Lohr, 2003). Themes should be matters such as "true love, true kindness and compassion, real courage as opposed to bravado" that can be in any cultural or chronological setting. The company's goal is this: "We desire to develop in our children a love for and an understanding of the written word ultimately helping them love and understand God's word" (Lohr, 2003). To this end, books do not have to be "explicitly Christian, but…clearly in harmony with scripture." Her example was that if a child lies in a story, then there should be a consequence, because scripture "tells us there is a sowing and reaping principle. I don't want children to come away thinking, hey, that works in some situations" (Lohr, 2003). Not only is the message important to this publisher, but also

developing functional literacy. JourneyForth is the trade book division of an educational publisher, Bob Jones University Press. The Christian ideology in *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002) was present, but confusing, in my reading of the book.

A Children's Book: *Star Status*

In *Star Status*, I believe the author expects the reader to understand that a relationship with God affects the way someone thinks and lives. The characters attend church and pray, but this activity is background; if the reader did not believe in God, the characters' concerns and actions might seem foolish or nonsensical. The religious beliefs of the authorial audience (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) are defined through references to devotions, to church and youth group attendance, discussions about God with friends and family, and prayer. In the first chapters, Manda's friend Heather, who is home-schooled, prays with her about enabling her not to worry about her absent dad, but just to ski for herself. Then her mother, in a comment about a new man she's dating, says, "Matthew and I have been praying quite seriously about our friendship" (p. 29). When Manda pushes her, she responds, "…let's do this in God's timing" (p. 31).

The story is about one girl's quest to win an important race that will put her in line for an Olympic bid and about how she allows her friendships and relationship with God to suffer because her attention is solely on winning. The pressure from her friends to participate in their activities, her ongoing grief over her dad's rejection, and the desire to excel all affect her focus. Her solution is to block out everything except practice and the goal: to win. She asks: "But could sheer determination, total concentration, and physical prowess snag her the coveted first place? Was there more to winning?" (Lewis, 2002, p. 25).

When Manda tells her mother about a poor practice and the coach's scheduling an early-morning run to see if she's still able to focus, her mother tells her that she has to put everything else out of her mind. "I'm going to lose friends over my amazing ability to concentrate. It's a full-circle nightmare. I focus on the race and ignore my friends, which

helps me ski well but stinks socially. Then, because I'm a self-imposed loner—at the moment—I hear about it from all sides. It's eating me up" (p. 47). Her mother's response is that Manda's attitude isn't healthy. She echoes Manda's coach's admonishment to focus entirely on the race: "The Dressel Hills race is your zenith this year—it's the culmination of everything you know. Everything you are" (p 55-6). Manda quotes a verse of scripture to herself (the only one mentioned in the book) to reinforce her belief that she must focus exclusively on skiing: "[God's mercies] are new every morning" (Lam. 3:23, NIV).

The news that her mom's new man might be leaving puts her in a tailspin again, and she begins to reflect on her mom's trust in God and her own distance from Him. She gets permission to stay out of school and church activities for the few days remaining before the race. Her mom notes, "Winning is everything for you right now" (p. 86). As she begins her run on race day, she thinks, "This day was all about Miranda Garcia. Her dazzling, bright future. *Ski for yourself…ski for you*" (p. 92). She wins, but feels empty as she thinks her friends are not there to support her and she had not prayed once about the race. She did it on her own, but did not feel the joy she had expected. Her Uncle Frank, who has been instrumental in paying for her hobby, helps her to get perspective, suggesting she forgive her dad for leaving her and ask her friends to forgive her for leaving them. The climax of the book is not her win, but her reunion with her friends and her turning back to God.

I find the book confusing in its meaning, for although Manda's mother sees her relationship with God as a vital component of her relationship with a future husband, she does not counsel her daughter to include Him in her quest for winning. She seems to be saying that Manda has to find the strength to win only within herself. Manda's question in the beginning was how do I focus without losing friends? This question is never answered; the story shows that the way she chose to do it did not bring her joy, but there is no direction for how to maintain a relationship with God and with friends and achieve

your desires. The question that seems to be answered is how to deal with rejection. In praying for forgiveness, forgiving her father for leaving, and asking her friends to forgive her, Manda is able to heal her broken relationships. Though the text expects the reader to believe that a relationship with God is important, the only direct reference to God is in the 3 or 4 prayers that are made throughout the text.

Beverly Lewis' books are important commodities for BethanyHouse in that her name and the series she writes are well known and marketable by virtue of their familiarity. This "brand name" awareness is a deliberate strategy publishers employ to increase sales through a synergistic momentum from several different products that are recognizable to consumers through the name (Taxel, 2002). The books are consistent sellers with a loyal following, which highlights their economic importance. However, I feel the main character in this particular book is not challenged to put her time, talents or skills to use in any way other than to further her own desires, a contradiction to the model of Christian life I have outlined. The company's mission statement, published on their web site is "The purpose of Bethany House is to help Christians apply biblical truth in all areas of life . . . . We are diligently committed to offering the best in editing, design and marketing to make each book as inspiring, challenging, enjoyable and attractive as it can be" (www.bethanyhouse.com). Natasha Sperling, an editor of children's books for BethanyHouse, commented on how they balance the Christian message with producing a "good story." "If there's no moral lesson then we wouldn't consider it, but it doesn't have to have a conversion scene…oftentimes the characters are Christians already, that's just a part of their character. People in the secular market will accept that as part of their character." (Sperling, 2001). BethanyHouse approached Ms. Lewis with the idea for this series, and the book appears to be written with a broader market in mind than conservative Christians. However, the moral lesson of the story, instead of being muted, is confused.

Multiculturalism in Children's Literature

Many scholars have written generally about the efficacy of literature in teaching children about their world and shaping their views of diversity in particular (e.g., Apol, 1998; Hunt, 1994; Nodelman, 1996; Taxel, 1994). In the academic literature written about children's literature, it is theorists like Mingshui Cai, Rudine Sims-Bishop, Sonia Nieto, and Violet Harris who are concerned that all children are represented in the books they read, for the purpose of affirming each child and also for developing an appreciation of difference in others (e.g., Cai, 1998; Harris, 1993; Nieto, 1999; Sims-Bishop, 1997). These theorists write about multicultural education and multicultural literature as means of teaching that diversity is strength in our society. The hope is that through exposure to multiple cultures through multicultural literature, children will be better equipped to positively affect social injustice. I believe that Christian literature should also reflect this goal, even though realizing that while not everyone will accept Christ, Christians must still learn how to extend the love of Christ to them. In other words, while the ultimate Christian goal is reconciliation with God for all people, it is vital that Christian love be practiced toward people who are not yet and may never choose to be Christians. It is this belief that enables me to see the goals of multiculturalism and the Christian life walking alongside each other. Literature is one means by which children learn about their world, so by studying children's books published for the Christian market, I hope to gain an understanding of what they say to children about how to live in the manner of Jesus in today's diverse, multicultural society.

A Children's Book: *Star Status*

Girls Only! has four characters who are featured in the series. Manda is the 12-year-old skier whose story is told in *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002). She lives with her mother, and her father abandoned them some 10 years before. Heather Bock is an ice dancer. She and her brother are home schooled. Jenna Song, a gymnast, lives with her Korean-American family and attends a Korean church. An ice skater, Livvy Hudson, lives nearby

with her widowed father and grandmother. The three girls act as a foil for Manda in a few ways. They are all well-to-do and Manda has to depend on her uncle for funds for her sport; they're concerned with Manda's spiritual health and their friendships while Manda pulls away. I find the common denominator of their wealthy families enabling them to compete at a high level in athletics dampens any differences that ethnicity might play in the story. The only difference I sense is the setting, which is described in a limited way. But, it's a setting that few people experience, and therefore adds impact to the context that young "stars" would seek to live as God wants them to. This particular book is a glimpse of a different world, but not of difference within it. Many children would see someone who looks like them in this story, but many would not, and I think the story would be unlikely to help any of them become aware of how people negotiate living in community with others who are culturally different from themselves.

Conclusion

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 4:4, NIV)

Star Status is typical of my sample of books that are available for 8-12 year olds in the Christian market. It is one of a series, an episodic, formulaic book that could be considered a "safe" pick for Christian parents and also a "safe" sell for publishers. Christian parents who feel that their children should be protected from reading material that may include worldviews they find dangerous to their spiritual welfare could have confidence that the books do not promote contrary material. Publishers want to provide material that meets these needs, combining a good story with a biblical foundation. However, I am suggesting that because of marketing issues, publishers are unlikely to provide content that would risk controversy, preferring to offer books that appeal to more people because they are only about issues that are acceptable to parents across Christian communities. In doing so, they ignore large parts of the Christian life as modeled by Jesus in Scripture, leaving a skewed picture of how Christians should live in our diverse

world. I also suggest that most books are about children's private relationships with God or other people and do not discuss more public Christianity or show communities that are actively involved in promoting social justice, or serving others. I believe that this is problematic because literature is one way that children learn about society and should do more than perpetuate a middle class, white view of the world we live in. If literature functions to help children see beyond the familiar, to help them understand the causes of social injustice, and to equip them to change society, then I contend that the example of Jesus is a productive model, and children need to see how his model works in the world. The purpose of this study is to discover whether children's books for the Christian market incorporate this aspect of the Christian message.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

In this critical qualitative study, I will combine a textual analysis of children's books published for the Christian market and an interview study with publishers of these books to identify the Christian worldview in the books from a multicultural perspective. My study of how publishers bring the message of Christ to children who live in a multicultural society leads me to ask three questions of the publishers and the books.

1. How do publishers negotiate the political economy of publishing from a Christian perspective?
2. How are Christian practices portrayed in children's books published for the Christian market?
3. What is the relationship between issues explored in multicultural literature and Christian practices in children's books published for the Christian market?

Preview of Study

In Chapter 2 I lay out the theoretical framework of the study from a critical theory perspective. I take into account four frames: ideology in children's literature, multiculturalism in children's literature, liberation theology, and the political economy of publishing. I also describe some of the literature that has been written from a critical

perspective about children's books. Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter, outlining my gathering, analyzing, interpreting and writing up of my data from the 29 books in my sample and the interviews with my informants. In four sections in Chapter 4 I analyze the data, beginning with the economic and cultural background as my informants in the publishing industry explain it. Then I discuss what Christian practices I found in the books and how the issues of social justice often explored in multicultural literature compare with the Christian practices in the books. In Chapter 5 I bring all the strands together in conclusion, summarizing to identify my reading from a multicultural perspective of the Christian worldview in the books.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research in children's literature that is framed within critical theory is cognizant of historical, cultural, economic, and political structures in which the production and usage of literature are embedded. Critical theory raises questions about hidden structures and assumptions that necessarily function to enculturate children but may also serve to maintain oppressive attitudes and practices that are ideologically represented in literature.

I use critical theory as context for a discussion of four specific frames for my study: ideology in children's literature, multiculturalism in children's literature, liberation theology, and the political economy of publishing. The study design employs critical theory to read against the discourses (the complex conversations that are also contextually situated) of ideology in children's books published for the Christian market, investigating the Christian worldview(s) in the writing, publication, and my reading of these books from a multicultural perspective.

In separate discussions of critical theory and critical inquiry, Fay (1987) and Crotty (1998) identified four applications that are common in research. The first is that critical inquiry identifies current *ideologies* that are present in or create structures of domination (in my case, in children's fiction for the Christian market). The second discusses those ideologies in terms of *crisis*; for example, Apple (2001) critically examined the "religious right" and their increasing (negative) influence on national educational policy. The third theoretical move is to offer a *plan for action* that mediates the crisis, as Shor (1996) did in his work on sharing decision-making in the college classroom. Fourth, the purposes behind social action are the eventual achievement of

social justice for those in crisis, as exemplified by the teachers working with the LEADS group in Athens, GA, elementary teachers who investigated their own practice to promote social justice in their classrooms (Allen, 1999). *Social justice* in this discussion means assuring that children have equal access to and representation in the curriculum in schools. It is concerned with creating an awareness of injustice and a process to remediate the effects of injustice. Critical theorists' work that identifies and exposes how ideology produces structures that may prevent such access and representation is useful for this study. In order to be effective in social advocacy, I believe one must be able to understand how injustices are perpetuated and remediated, specifically in this study, through literature.

There is a danger in emancipatory research of essentializing the issues under study. It is not just that the issues are extremely complex, but also that they are firmly embedded in the contexts of culture, politics, economics and history (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Taxel, 1994). Apple (2001) cautioned that "the romantic possibilitarian rhetoric of some of the writers on critical pedagogy is not sufficiently based on a tactical or strategic analysis of the current situation" (p. 195). And further, Ellsworth (1989) warned that critical theory can effectively silence the very diversity it seeks to empower through "repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination". Ellsworth (1989) attempted to apply critical theory to a college class on racial diversity. She found that assumptions concerning the efficacy of critical pedagogy did not bear out because the discourse perpetuated the problems that it sought to solve. For example, "dialogue," as a way to promote equality in the classroom, proved to be impossible because of the complexity of the choices that students face in speaking or being silent. In our present society, Ellsworth (1989) submitted that it is not possible for people to achieve equal dialogue concerning racial issues. The class was able to talk about oppression and formulate actions to counter it only when they "disengaged" from rationalistic discourses of "highly abstract language" that in practice led to reproducing "relations of domination

in the classroom" and moved in a direction of classroom practice specific to the "social identities and situations" of the group. When employing critical theory to investigate issues of domination, she encouraged the kind of communication that takes into account the potential oppression caused by our choices and recognition that whatever we do, our efforts will be partial and in our best interest. Only under these realizations can people come together in alliance for constructive change. As a reader and writer, I need to be aware of the implications of my choices or beliefs when I am interpreting Christian children's literature to expose the ideologies it produces and is produced by (Hollindale, 1992; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998; Williams, 1977/1990).

Ideologies in Children's Literature

An ideology is an idea that has been reified in institutions and beliefs, which has material consequences for society. Sarland's (1996) definition is useful:

> …all espousal, assumption, consideration, and discussion of social and cultural values, whether overt or covert. In that sense it will include common sense itself, for common sense is always concerned with the values and underlying assumptions of our everyday lives. . . . considerations of ideology can neither be divorced from considerations of the economic base, nor from considerations of power. (p. 42-3)

In *Educating the "Right" Way* Apple (2001) described the effective efforts of neoliberals and neoconservatives in the Evangelical movement in the United States to move the arguments over education onto Evangelical ideological ground. One focus of the conservative argument is that an emphasis on multiculturalism will dilute the unity of American citizenry. The material consequences of this ideology may be that children who are not represented in classical curriculums are disfranchised from full citizenry (Apple, 1990). Other theorists besides Apple who challenge this position include Nieto (1999) and Sleeter (1996) and their championship of the needs of all children to be represented

in the curriculum, both for each child to see herself as a valuable member of society, and to introduce children to others who are different from themselves.

An example of an ideology from a more specific arena of education, children's literature, is that children should be protected from the harsh realities of life, a myth whose creation and consequences Nodelman (1996) discussed in *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. Children's stories written by those who espouse this ideology (consciously or not) may avoid mention of difficult circumstances of which, ironically, the children may be well aware if they experience them every day. Both of these types of ideological assumptions can be hidden because they are "obviousnesses"; people consider them to be common sense rather than a constructed ideology that at the least should be recognized for what it is, and at most may be harmful. If such ideologies go unrecognized, then their function in schooling or literature is not questioned and so continues to reproduce the belief that they are givens or true. Literature is a powerful instrument of such ideologies, one that has long been recognized for its place in teaching the young. Eagleton (1976) described literature as a "…vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic forms of the dominant ideological formation . . . " (p. 56). Giroux, (quoted in DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1995), contended that such ideology in text functions to reproduce and legitimate the interests of the powerful. "Reproduction refers here to texts [language and communication patterns] and social practices whose messages, inscribed within specific historical settings and social contexts, function primarily to legitimate the interests of the dominant social order" (pg 29).

Hollindale (1992) listed three levels in a taxonomy of ideology in children's literature. The first is the active desires of the author to express "explicit social, political or moral beliefs" (p. 27) to children through the story. Whether the message of the text is conventional or seeks to resist the status quo through a revolutionary message, this type of ideology is easily detected. However, readers who are not taught how to read a novel

can miss the subtlety of such ideologies and thereby misinterpret the work altogether. Hollindale used Twain's (1885/1986) novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, to illustrate this point, noting the controversy over the apparent racism of the main character.

The second type of ideology Hollindale (1992) discussed is the unexamined assumptions of the author. These are values that are taken for granted by the writer, "and reflect the writer's integration in a society which unthinkingly accepts them" (p. 30). For example, in the books *Words by Heart* (Sebestyan, 1979/1997) and *Amos Fortune, Free Man* (Yates, 1950), the authors assumed a submission theology that portrays Black Christians as long-suffering, patient, and submissive to the point of death (Trousdale, 1990). Finally, there are the commonalities of the age—such obvious truths about the way society functions and people relate to each other that they go unnoticed and unmentioned. Hollindale (1992) noted that in today's diverse society, there exist commonalities of national scope and local particularity that "evolve" over time. These commonalities of society are those ideologies that function hegemonically to reproduce the material positions of those who are dominant in the society. An example of a book with this type of ideology is *Caddie Woodlawn* (Brink, 1935/1990) in which a young girl comes to accept and cherish what her parents consider her proper role as a pioneer woman in the United States, though it differs substantially from the freedom she had as a girl.

Literature exists in a dialectical relationship with these hegemonic interests, which are rooted in the sociocultural, political, and economic contexts of history (Williams, 1977/1990). Literature, and by extension, children's books, cannot help but reflect hegemonic themes, but at the same time, children's books exist in a dialectic with those themes. A good example of this is the book, *The Misfits*, by James Howe (2001). This is the story of four students in a middle school who are outcasts, and who band together to fight against the casual barrage of slurs and epithets they suffer from their classmates. The story of the underdogs who resist persecution is an old and highly

acceptable one, but the identity of the underdogs in this story is not. Two of the students are typically outcast: the brain and the nerd. The other two are wholly postmodern: the punk, and the gay boy. Howe (2001) uses a legitimate theme in literature to neatly align acceptable outcasts with those who are still unacceptable, and thus both legitimates and challenges the story of the underdog against the establishment.

Ideology also exists in the language of story: the structure of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Stephens (1992), in his discussion of how language and ideology work in children's literature, details how narrative and discourse extend domination through the text. The characters themselves are affected by relations of power, expressed through the discursive process of representation, and the mediation between writer and reader as to what is significant in the text also is a form of power relations. Ideological practices and assumptions inherent in content can also be expressed overtly or implicitly in the form and language the writer uses. In sum,

> Fiction presents a special context for the operation of ideologies, because narrative texts are highly organized and structured discourses whose conventions may either be used to express deliberate advocacy of social practices or may encode social practices implicitly. They may do both, as when a desired ideological significance is grounded in specific social practices at story level. A text may overtly advocate one ideology while implicitly inscribing one or more other ideologies. (Stephens, 1992, p. 43)

Ideologies may also figure in the selection process of fiction that is made available to children by parents, publishers, librarians, or teachers. The political economy of publishing is a complex example of this and is explored later in this chapter. The concept of an ideological critique is useful for this study as it placed the books I read within their sociocultural, historical, and economic contexts, questioning both how these contexts produced the books, and how the language and themes of the books reproduced the context.

Multiculturalism in Children's Literature

Multicultural literature is commonly defined in terms of function, reflecting its close ties to multicultural education. The literature has expanded its definition from books written by and about different racial groups to literature that challenges the traditional conceptions of race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, age, and to a lesser extent, religion and language (Cai, 1998; Davis, 2000; Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 1999; Taxel, 1997). Banks, quoted in (Fullinwider, 1996), suggested in 1977 that the focus of multicultural education should be limited to "those groups which are victims of discrimination because of their unique cultural characteristics" (p. 16). By 1991, Bullard (quoted in Cai, 1998) asked "which groups should be included in multicultural plans—racial and ethnic groups, certainly, but what about regional, social class, gender, disability, religious, language and sexual orientation groupings?" (p. 312).

In an effort to clarify the definition of multicultural literature, Cai & Sims-Bishop (1994) created a taxonomy tied to literature's pedagogical use, though they recognized that there is a tension between pedagogical definitions and literary ones. Instead of "suggesting unifying literary characteristics… [multicultural literature] implies a goal: challenging the existing canon by expanding the curriculum to include literature from a wide variety of cultural groups" (p. 59). Their discussion focused on racial, ethnic, or cultural groups and did not include other oppressed groups. The taxonomy identified three categories of multicultural literature. *World literatur*e included "folktales, fiction, and the like from non-Western countries or other underrepresented groups outside the United States" (p. 62) and such work that has been adapted by American writers. *Cross-cultural literature* included two subcategories: 1) works that are "explicitly about interrelations among people of different cultures" (p. 63) that do not focus on a particular group, and 2) works written by a member of one cultural group about a different cultural group. *Parallel literature* was the most important category for pedagogical use in Cai & Sims-Bishop's (1994) taxonomy. This is literature that highlights the parallel experiences

and customs of different cultural groups but that is written by members of the group. The authors stressed that each category of literature is important and has its uses, but that parallel literature has the best chance of portraying an accurate picture of a cultural group, without the common small mistakes or egregious errors that those who write cross-culturally can and do make. The authors did not address whether such parallel culture books are written for members of their own culture or to address audiences of another culture, though presumably either would still fit the category.

In 1998 Cai revisited the problem of definition, stating that "at present, defining multicultural literature is still a matter of determining the parameters of the prefix 'multi'" (p. 312). He categorized the debate into three views from the perspective of content rather than authorship while maintaining a pedagogical focus: multicultural literature is either 1) inclusive of "as many cultures as possible with no distinction between the dominant and dominated;" 2) "focus[ed] on racial and ethnic issues;" or 3) maintains that "every human being is multicultural" (p. 313). Cai (1998) concluded that it is important to read all literature from a multicultural stance, which helps students to deal productively with issues of social equity and justice. It is also vital to help students "find ways into" multicultural literature that is specifically about dominated cultures, both to help them overcome resistance to such literature and the ideas it proposes, and to further help them "change their perspective[s] on the Other" (p. 322). The goals that Cai (1998) lays out for multicultural literature are useful for this study in that he focuses on the need for children to be able to situate themselves in the society of which they are a part so that their understandings of how to live include consideration of others' need and desires. This goal is consonant with the commandment to love others as yourself because it emphasizes looking beyond self-serving behavior to a concern for others. Reading literature from a multicultural stance points the reader to a critical interpretation of literature, so that the reader asks questions of the literature such as, "Why are there no people of color in a book that takes place in a setting where realistically, there would be

many kinds of people?" or "Why are the villains in these books mostly from the lower class?" The first question points to an awareness that this mythical book's events are not situated in the sociocultural milieu of the day, which effectively degrades the importance of difference. The second question recognizes that there is an ideology at work that assumes that thieves or bullies are most likely lower class. Questions like these expose the ideologies that may be in literature and continue to produce the effects of social injustices such as racism or class distinctions that deny some people and acknowledge others as valuable. Taking both a multicultural and critical stance toward literature acknowledges that children need to be exposed to diversity and examines the ways in which literature is diverse.

As this dissertation shows, Christian literature for children fits into the larger category of Christian literature as it is written by insiders for insiders and generally does not cross over into secular venues without the identifier "inspirational literature." By the same token, I show that there are few characters or situations that invite the reader to take a multicultural stance as Cai (1998) defined it. The occasional inclusion of a multicultural character in the books I read reminds me of a common metaphor for multicultural books: the smorgasbord, where readers are treated to visits to different cultures, sampling holidays, foods, and dress through simplistic and occasionally erroneous stories (Fang et al., 1999). Using books that highlight these aspects of culture exclusively may reinforce cultural stereotypes because what students learn is the Western "tourists'" view of surface culture. Fang, Fu and Lamme (1999) discuss how the European American retelling of other cultures' stories can create "inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and false notes" (Fang et al., 1999. p. 265) which the untutored reader may neither recognize nor challenge. I submit that occasional, cross-cultural, and perhaps inauthentic inclusion of multicultural characters can create the same kind of unrecognized inconsistencies and false notes. I suggest that there may also be a concurrent inability on the untutored reader's part to

recognize what is left out of books that would set them more accurately within the complexity of life as it exists for all types of Christians living in a diverse society.

Critique that centers on questions of cultural representations, racist or gendered stereotypes, or authenticity issues of authorship (Hade, 1997b; Taxel, 1997) or presentism (Adkins, 1998), for example represent a shift that began about 30 years ago away from the view that critique should only be based on literary characteristics. Cai and Sims Bishop (1994) argued that consideration of how children's literature is used in the classroom highlights the importance of ensuring that children are exposed to a diverse body of literature, as well as ensuring the quality of that literature. Harris (1999) also wrote about reading children's literature critically, in terms of whether literature even *can* be read and discussed with only aesthetic questions in mind, or whether one must also consider questions of authenticity, authorship, and stereotypes. She read a picture book to test her theories and found it impossible to set aside her own experiences and understanding of racial stereotypes and just experience the book as a literary piece. And even though the book she read was beautifully written and produced, accepting the book with only those values in mind crippled both the critique and the understanding to be gained of its impact on children. Taxel (1986) wrote that the standards of authenticity and accuracy in the depiction of characters and history, and those of aesthetic quality are both vital to the function of literature because books are powerful carriers of cultural identity and teach children through stories about how society works. Critiques of children's literature that only consider aesthetic qualities of books are "specific cultural allegiances wrapped in the mantle of art and labeled handle with reverence" (Kelly, 1984, quoted in Taxel, 1986, p. 250). Hade (1997b) goes further to say that "[t]here can be no difference between a literary reading and a multicultural reading" (p. 251) because "[t]here cannot be a context free of cultural and social influence" (p. 252). He argues that multiculturalism brings three aspects to reading, and I would say also to critique, and without an understanding of how these aspects operate, children remain "tourists" in

literature rather than readers equipped to understand how race, class, and gender mean in story. The three aspects are

1. multiculturalism is a critique of the ideology of westernness…
2. [it is] the challenge of living with each other in a world of difference…
3. [and it is] a reform movement based upon equity and justice.

This list clearly shows the contextual nature of literature and therefore its criticism. Taxel (1997) supported this point in his discussion of political correctness in children's literature. "The point here is that it is impossible to understand the evolution and development of children's literature without situating the books of a given era in the sociocultural and political milieu of that period" (p. 437). Extending Taxel's (1997) argument, the basis for our understanding of the goals of multiculturalism in children's literature is "a function of how we view literature's place in, and relation to, society" (p. 436).

Considering the place of children's literature in, and its relation to Christian society, alters the argument in a profound way, because such literature is intended for spiritual discipleship along with other expectations we have for literature written for children such as entertainment or education. Christian children's literature attempts to write the world with "whole sight" (Palmer, 1993), accepting as part of life the needs and expectations of living a spiritual life as 'real' life. I am not claiming that this is the only literature that writes the child as whole within his/her world, that is, considers the spiritual dimensions of life as well as the mental, physical and emotional; of course many secular authors write with this understanding. But, the fact that the literature claims this as a particular goal ups the ante in the same way as Matthew and Luke recorded Jesus' words describing the weight of responsibility God gives anyone gifted in a particular way: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from he who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12: 48, NIV), and "…if anyone causes one of these little ones [children] who believe in me to sin, it would

be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:5, NIV). Literature that purports to explain relationships with God, to illuminate His kingdom, to picture Christian worldviews—story attempting to show children how society *should* work—should accept its serious responsibility. The arguments about whether multiculturalism as expressed in children's literature is merely political correctness or a deeply vital and important shift in thinking are an appropriate model for consideration of issues of diversity and spirituality in the portrayal of a Christian worldview. None of the aspects of the conversation surrounding multiculturalism imply that children's books should preach, but instead that they should authentically portray the way life is, and that they should be read and talked about with an understanding of the way life was when they were written. I suggest that the same should be true for Christian books for children; they don't need to be preachy or didactic—they still have to be marketable—but there is surely a wide range within those parameters to expect that they will authentically show aspects of a Christian life that deal with living in a community beyond Christian friends, school, and church and promoting justice for all within that community.

Multicultural literature is essential to achieving equity in educational settings because it is one of only a few ways to expose children to difference no matter where they live or are taught. This is especially crucial if children are schooled in homogeneous settings such as Christian schools or at home where they may have less contact with people who are different. If these arguments for the efficacy of multicultural literature hold for all of children's fiction, then they ought equally to be applied to the literature that is written and published for the Christian market.

I contend that a critique of a genre of literature such as Christian literature for children must therefore be situated in its sociohistorical and economic contexts in order to expose and understand the ideologies that produce it and which it produces. It must take into account, but go beyond the quality of story, or the degree of markers of

Christian practice that an author uses in character and plot. The reasons include the following:

1. Publishers imply that Christian literature is controlled so that the events that occur and the speech of the characters are presented within the framework of biblical truth. The obvious questions there are whose truth? Or which truths? What is left out?
2. If the literature is to be taken seriously, as publishers certainly do, it must be able to justify the tradition of selection that produces the books.
3. Many of the books are light fiction, neither weighty in the emotion the reader invests nor in the consequences the characters feel, but with the very important intended consequence of contributing to children's spiritual discipline.
4. Many of the books are serious literature, award-winning books that will be available for children to read for a very long time. Their aggregate depictions of life should show the realities of life in all its complexity.
5. As the primary literature of particular groups of people, it must represent others and the world authentically within the social, cultural, historical and political contexts of the time.
6. If the literature is to be used in conjunction with teaching, then there needs to be a variety, a diversity that helps children understand their world outside their ken without perpetuating stereotypes.
7. Finally, if the literature represents a Christian lifestyle or worldview, and this brings me full circle, it should be based on biblical truths, but selective only in that themes should be tempered for age appropriateness.

Liberation Theology

The civil rights movement for freedom from repression that burgeoned in the United States in the 1960s sprang from African-Americans, from women, from

environmentalists and also from theologians. In Christian theology, the concern was that religion had somehow separated itself from the person of Jesus as the Christ, and from the Bible. Culture-religion is the term Herzog used (in Rieger, 1999) to describe the move to use orthodox religion to sanctify culture, allowing religion to be "defined as status before a morally righteous God" (p. 137), leaving Christ as a vague figure. "*That Christ could also be the fundamentally new structure of human selfhood is not envisioned"* (italics in original, p. 137). Morality or ethics became separate from religion, allowing people to see only themselves and their relationship with God as their religion, and not their relationship to the rest of humanity as being a religious imperative.

Herzog (in Reiger, 1999) traced this split of private self and public structure to Descartes and the humanist project that reduced a person's relationship to God to a private matter that was based on the self's exploration and understanding of divinity. Individualism as a movement, supported by capitalist economics, reduced people's relationships to others to their cash value. Liberation theology sought to repair public relationships by turning religious consciousness away from the exclusively private self-economy to the corporate self-in-community: to the freedom that is found in faith in Jesus as the Christ, the redemptive Savior. This freedom is not merely personal freedom, but also the 'public space for freedom to become operative" (p. 103). To fully understand the revolutionary impact of liberation theology, especially in Latin America, it is important to realize that it springs from the Catholic tradition, where the emphasis on a personal relationship with God is complicated by the role of the priest. In the Protestant tradition, each individual is responsible to "continue to work out your salvation with fear [that is, reverence] and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12b-13, NIV). However, the Catholic priest functions as a spiritual go-between: instructing his parishioners; absolving them of sins; and carrying some of the responsibility of lay people's relationships with God and each other. For Catholics then, the idea that the church should relinquish any theological

determination to the people is a radical one, but it is one that makes sense in light of the postmodern influences of the last half of the century.

In the United States, the position that the church is responsible for helping the poor and oppressed is well-established, though far from universal. From our earliest history, Christians have made this a priority. For example, seminaries trained teachers to go to the South during Reconstruction and teach in Black schools; Jane Addams' Hull House ministered to the poor immigrants of Chicago; myriad inner city ministries of Catholic and Protestant churches alike seek to give people the means to earn a decent living. What has been missing, that liberation theology calls Christians to create, is a Christendom-wide, society-wide recognition that all of us, with divine help, are responsible for each other's health and happiness. In the same manner as postmodern discourse expects those who have been marginalized by discourse to enter and perhaps disrupt it, liberation theology opens up the traditions of the church to include those in need outside of its normal structure.

Chopp and Taylor (1994) proposed that liberation theology reflects five discursive shifts that are consonant with linguistic and philosophical theory, and which enabled the church to reach out to the poor and oppressed in ways it had not previously: (1) in the United States, the metaphor of the melting pot was once used to describe the univocal nature of the American citizen. Recognizing the failure of the metaphor to explain reality, society is now often pictured as a mosaic, a blending of diversity that coexists rather than co-opts. Voices that were marginalized previously are now recognized as vital to the conversation. Whereas once it may only have been priests who defined theology for the church, now the populace is also recognized as an important voice. (2) A second discursive shift was the emergence of a language of crisis. Christian practices and theological discourses have reinforced or sustained "problems of destruction, devastation, abuse, and imperialism" (p. 5), and liberation theology in particular seeks now to engage the church in the community in an effort to help the

oppressed realize their humanity. It is this point that most clearly draws from the work of Paulo Freire (1970/1999). (3) Postmodernism, with its attention to the value of "ambiguity, fragmentation and openness" enables questions about God's relation with the world and with the coherence of theology in how people live. A postmodern discourse softens the rigidity of an absolutist doctrine and opens spaces for interaction that can help the religious community to reduce the devastations of poverty, for example. (4) A postcolonial sensibility moves theology from the univocal reasoning of modern Protestantism to global contexts. Again, it's the shift to a public focus rather than a private one that permits restructuring ways of living together in community. (5) The fifth discursive shift was towards "a spirit of mutual critique and dialogue" with other world religions. Christian evangelism has assumed a superiority that positions other religions as inferior, pagan or native. Recent decades have seen a new willingness among Christian churches to find points of cooperation with other religions to benefit the people, Christians or not.

Chopp and Taylor (1994) emphasized the opening of the theological mind to embrace the needs of oppressed peoples. They admitted the implication of Christian symbols and doctrines in past abuses of those people, yet they also skirted the problem inherent in establishing a "true" religion even while acknowledging this is a goal of Christianity. Liberation theologians emphasize Christ's identification with the poor, his compassion for them, and his injunctions to aid them. The liberation church (meaning the people that make up the body of Christians as well as the organizations that have grown to stabilize its functioning) recognized that achieving social justice is vital in all respects including education and economics. Christ made it clear that the poor would always exist, but he made it equally clear that all people are responsible for each other. The key is tapping into divine power that makes our community work according to his design. The possibilities of successfully promoting self-realization among the poor through cooperation among the religious are worth the doctrinal skirmishes that are inevitable.

In an earlier book, Chopp (1986) drew on the legacy of Paulo Freire to discuss liberation theology's beginnings in Latin America. Freire's (1970/1999) process of conscientization, a critical inquiry that enables persons to "become emancipated agents in their social contexts", is revised in liberation theology to become an activity of faith: becoming human in solidarity with God and with the poor. Freedom is enacted through education and through grace, which depends on God's interaction with the oppressed. Three assumptions underlie the process, which are points of contact with my project in children's literature. Chopp (1986) quoted Segundo Galilea:

> (1) the present situation is one in which the vast majority of Latin Americans live in a state of underdevelopment and unjust dependence; (2) viewed in Christian terms, this is a "sinful situation;" (3) hence it is the duty of Christians in conscience, and of the church in its pastoral activity, to commit themselves to efforts to overcome this situation. (p. 7)

Latin American liberation theology reinterprets "Christian faith as a radical engagement of the church in the world" and the church's purpose turns to an active witnessing for God who "creates, liberates, and redeems history" (p. 20). The church has the obligation to make visible in its structure the message of salvation that it carries. The connection to children's literature is that this movement of God in history, the work done in community to enable people to live humane lives, is the model of living that I have attributed to Jesus, and have suggested should be a theme in literature that is Christian by design. A particularly clear injunction as to how we are supposed care for others is expressed in these verses quoting Jesus:

> Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fires prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. (Matt. 26: 41-43, NIV)

Liberation theology takes for granted Jesus' power to effect change in people's lives. Herzog (in Rieger, 1999) asserts that

Liberation theology is a function of the liberation church. An event [Christ's resurrection] has taken place in the history of mankind that has not been forgotten. A unique configuration of history is remembered in a community that asks *the* question [What has Christ got to offer *anyway*?] over and over again. (p. 104)

The critical nature of this question suggests a point of intersection for critical theory and liberation theology. They are both "characterized by praxis and a commitment to the oppressed and the marginalized" (Oldenski, 1997, p. 78). Their concern with ethics and politics find form in the desire to "develop a more just and democratic society for all". But liberation theology separates from critical pedagogy in that it views and understands this project "as being integrated with the practices of one's religious faith and commitment".

Liberation theology sees in Christ's sacrifice of his life for our redemption a choice that God made to identify with the poor and oppressed. Christ's mandate to the church is to be his body in this world and thus to care for those who will always need care. In this view, the church should actively teach its members how to extend God's love in a Christian praxis that is founded in both faith and social action for and with those who suffer. The lessons of liberation theology are useful to this study in that they can illuminate the ways in which children's literature for the Christian market represents this public religion, the purposes of the church, to readers.

Political Economy of Publishing

Recent History

Children's literature, as a segment of the publishing industry, underwent a dramatic change in the 1980s. Before 1980, most children's books were sold through libraries and schools. A market study of children's books and magazines from the 1970s shows that of the books sold in bookstores in 1976, only .7% were classified as children's

books (Duke, 1979). In the early 1980s, the Association of Booksellers for Children was formed, chain bookstores such as B. Dalton, Barnes and Noble, and Waldenbooks, potent forces in retail growth, expanded children's book sections, and publishers responded by developing children's divisions and products with a "strong retail profile" (Porter, 2001). Children's books for the 12 and under group became a separate category from young adult fiction as mass market series such as *Sweet Valley High* gained popularity. The library community may have dismissed them as shallow, but they helped fuel books' new availability in non-bookstore venues, and they have since come to dominate the offerings in both secular and Christian markets. By the end of the decade, libraries only accounted for 70% of sales as retail outlets strengthened (Porter, 2001). Outlets other than bookstores had a huge share of the juvenile market by 1990. In that year, 83% of books for juveniles were purchased in outlets other than bookstores (NPD Group, 1991). Children's and young adult books account for 1/3 of all book sales today, and 90% of those sales are through bookstores, book clubs, mass merchandisers and the Internet (Milliot, 2003). As sales of children's books to individual consumers rose, prerogatives of marketing once reserved for adult books became important for selling children's books as well, which increased the emphasis on profitability often to the detriment of desirability. The factors that account for the shift from librarian to retailer as the gatekeeper for children's book publishing are well-documented (e.g. Hade, 2002; Schiffrin, 2000; Taxel, 2002; Zipes, 2001). They stem from the gradual decline of the independent publishers and booksellers and the rise of megacorporations and chain bookstores.

Changes in the publishing industry were accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s through two major factors: first, just one effect of the civil unrest of that time was that it brought to national attention the serious deficits in resources for minorities in the United States, including literature that featured other cultures besides the dominant one. Legislation was passed in the 1960s that supplied federal money to libraries and schools

to buy books to address the imbalance. This created a book boom that broadened the diversity of offerings as well as made more books available generally. This boom continued for nearly two decades. Eventually, government funding was diverted to other programs, and the publishing industry began, like others, to consolidate and form conglomerates with other media enterprises. Where there were once hundreds of independently owned publishing houses and bookstores that decided what books would be printed and sold, there are now 8 megacorporations that in the year 2000 together produced more than ¾ of the books reviewed in two highly influential journals, *The Horn Book Magazine* and *School Library Journal* (Hade, 2002). In the 1972 census, 81% of bookstore outlets were one-unit firms (Duke, 1979); today independent bookstores hold just 15% of the market share of units sold (Cullen, 2003). Independent publishing houses of the past, whose sole commodities were books, maintained about a 4% profit margin; now the conglomerates push for the same 10-20% profits that they receive from products in their film, video, television, and newspaper businesses. Whereas once a publisher's desire might have been to put *high quality* literature in the hands of children, the prevailing ideology today is to put *profitable* literature in their hands (Taxel, 2002).

While publishers have always had an eye to the bottom line, the push for higher profits has changed books, characters, and authors into brand names. Especially in the case of children's books, "brands" promote (or are promoted by) products for the kitchen, bedroom, and bath; lunchboxes and backpacks; classroom aids; all manner of gadgets and collectibles; and even television shows and films. Synergy (Hade, 2002; Taxel, 2002) is created through cross-promotion of *brand*-name items and also licensing of the names. Hade (2002) reported that "forty-four of the fifty [1999] top-selling children's hardcover titles as listed in Publishers Weekly were licensed books" (p 514). Taxel (2002) noted that the *Harry Potter* trademark has been licensed to over 500 products expected to earn over $2 billion (p. 165)! The brand phenomenon, with its emphasis on readily recognizable titles, has spawned innumerable series.

Series books, sequels, and books penned by entertainment stars proliferate in part because the value of a recognizable name increases sales potential. These "brand names" rely on the synergy of different products' sales: books and other products that create name awareness for each other. For example, in the children's series *Dear America* and *Royal Diaries,* the authors' names, as they vary, are not on the book covers, emphasizing the series title. Of course, *Dear America* characters have also been transformed into dolls and the name used with other goods (Taxel, 2002). Recently, HarperEntertainment announced that they will publish a "surfer-themed *Luna Bay: A Roxy Girl Series*, a venture co-partnered by HarperEntertainment and Roxy, a unit of Quicksilver Inc. that produces sportswear for girls" (Lodge, 2003). Roxy also produces a reality TV series about surfing competition for girls. The paperback series is independent of the TV show though HarperEntertainment will cross-promote series and show. What is so startling about this process, which includes a search for an author who is experienced in surfing to provide authenticity and can provide a new title every month, is that it is programmed synergistically as a marketable product from beginning to end. Roxy Girl and other series books are written to formulas and readers expect to read about the same characters or the same themes. Books like these are often the products of careful market research, as Christian-Smith (1987) documents in the case of Silhouette's romances for young adults. Celebrity books are a relatively new phenomenon. The singer and film star *Madonna* is just one new children's book author, with a five-volume illustrated children's storybook series under contract (Zeitchik, 2003). Children's literature enthusiasts goggle when they consider that her previous publication was the $165 adult book, *Sex* (Madonna, Meisel, & O'Brien, 1992).

The implications of the commodification of children's literature are many and complex, but I am primarily concerned with the restrictions that attention to profit margins put on editorial decisions. I will return to this concern after I review Christian Publishing and Consumers of Christian Literature.

Christian Publishing

The Christian market sector has grown more rapidly than overall book publishing in the last 10-15 years, evidenced by the rapid expansion of religious book divisions of secular publishers and expansion within Christian publishing houses. In 1988, HarperCollins bought out Zondervan, the largest Christian publisher, becoming the first secular publisher to "incorporate the religious book genre into the mainstream industry" (Davis, 2001). Random House, Putnam and Time Warner have all either purchased or created a religious division. Concurrently, chain bookstores such as Barnes and Noble or Books-A-Million created separate store divisions for religious or inspirational books. Their interest has been fueled by the blockbuster sales of books such as those by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Publishers Weekly* reports that the last five installments of their series, *Left Behind*, have debuted at No. 1 on the best-seller lists for *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Publishers Weekly* and CBA (Maryles, 2003). The eleventh book of the series, *Armageddon* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2003) came out in April of 2003 with 2.5 million copies, a new radio serialization, and a "street team" of 14,000 sales promoters. Three of the books in the children's spinoff series, *Left Behind, the Kids* were in the Top 10 youth bestseller list for 2002 in Christian bookstores (STATS, 2003). There are numerous authors who have "crossed over," selling books in both Christian and secular markets, and many of these write for both adults and children. Frank Peretti and Gilbert Morris are two notables. As with many businesses, growth was checked in 2002 due to the events that have followed on the September 11, 2000 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the national recession, resulting in scaling back for some. The trend for growth, though, is undiminished.

Christian publishers have also established separate divisions for children's books. BethanyHouse did so about 10 years ago. They do not print Bibles, but have the largest offering of fiction books, printing about 50 books per year. To give a comparable from the secular houses, HarperCollins children's division prints over 500 books per year

(Grossman, 2001). Tommy Nelson, the children's division of Thomas Nelson that was established in 1996, has outperformed other divisions within the publishing house and showed a fourfold increase in revenue in its first four years ("New Tommy Nelson Head Sees Music, Internet as Source of Growth," 2000). Now, Tommy Nelson, ZonderKids, and Tyndale House account for nearly half the sales of children and youth books in Christian bookstores (STATS, 2003), edging out publishers who do not spend as much on marketing new releases, or creating "brands." Christian children's publishers differ from secular houses in that they still rely heavily on their backlists (books published prior to the current year) to maintain a steady income. As an example, JourneyForth is the children's imprint of Bob Jones University Press, a Christian textbook publisher. They publish 8 to 10 fiction books for children and young adults per year. The May 28, 2002 edition of *Christian E-tailing Newsletter* reported that 65 JourneyForth books have quizzes that are available through Accelerated Reader, a reading management program popular in elementary schools, which represents a number of viable books from their backlist. BJUPress is instrumental in the home school market, as well, promoting most of their texts through home school conventions and seminars for parents on campus and at local sites (Lohr, 2003).

Home schooling is a factor in the growth of the market in Christian books for children. Kiesling (2001) claims that the number of home-school students is rising at the rate of 7% to 15% a year, though the growth is no longer attributable entirely to religious reasons. *Publishers Weekly* quoted the director of a wholesale company that caters to Evangelicals: "it's a $1 billion market" (Kiesling, 2001). Evangelicals are defined as conservative Protestant Christians who claim Jesus as Savior and the Bible as truth. It is not only those who claim to be Evangelicals who read Christian books, however.

Consumers of Christian Literature

In a recent survey of the book-buying habits of adults and teenagers, Barna Research Group (Barna, 2003) reports that overall, 70% of adults purchased at least one

book last year with an average of five books per person. One third of all adults reported buying at least one Christian book (besides the Bible) last year, representing about half of all adult book buyers. 30% of teenagers reported buying a Christian book (not including the Bible), and half had read one. What is surprising is that millions of people who are not Christians purchase and read Christian books. Barna wrote, " [these sales figures give] rise to realistic hope of being able to increase the penetration levels for Christian books among those audiences".

Indeed, even JourneyForth, children's imprint of the extremely conservative publishers Bob Jones University Press, have two lines of books. One is explicitly Christian, and the other they "consider classic fiction which have a Christian worldview…but they would not be found offensive in a public library or in a public school. They're just good solid literature. Those books we feel could have a market in places like WalMart, on spinners in grocery stores . . ." (Lohr, 2003). Tommy Nelson, ZonderKids, and Tyndale House, in particular, have had staggering growth over the last decade, 20-30% in some years, primarily because they began to market their books in secular venues (Kress, 2000; Richardson, 2001). The effect of marketing to secular outlets was expressed cogently by Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners* magazine, a Christian publication. He was quoted in U.S. News & World Report as saying, "The question becomes, 'What do people want?' rather than 'What do they need to hear?'…Unless a book is a potential bestseller, it may never get on the list." (Sheler, 1995, p. 63).

Figures are unreliable for sales of Christian children's books in all outlets, but there are some interesting numbers reported for sales from Christian bookstores. Annual retail sales are nearly $94 million for youth and children titles (STATS, 2003). This includes literature and Bibles. Better than 40% of that are trade paperbacks, and keep in mind that bookstores have a substantial, but small chunk of overall sales of books. Only in the last year have Christian bookstores begun to report figures consistently, so it remains to future data collection to be able to note and project trends industry-wide.

However, demographics of purchasers do show that most of the people who purchase products from Christian bookstores are middle-aged, white women, a telling point when one considers editorial decisions on book content or themes.

Christian publishers have been working at expanding their market for several years. They hope to lure men with legal thrillers, futuristic tales and adventure stories (Reiss, 2000). They cautiously move toward expanding their multicultural offerings. Moody Press has an African American imprint offering young adult and adult books. Walk Worthy Press is three years old. They have published a few books each year and are beginning to look for children's titles. Thomas Nelson has worked with Big Ideas to create Spanish translations of their books. Still, as Heuser (2001) said, at this point, any multicultural book is a "tithe" book; they don't have the distributors or consumer base to support multicultural titles. This is perhaps the clearest example of how finances affect editorial choices, though secular publishers are also restricted by their consumer base.

An Example in Conclusion

Taxel (2002) provided an example of the effects of the political economy of publishing on one sector of the market: multicultural books for children. Multicultural books began to be published in larger numbers in the 1960s, as a direct result of the civil rights movement and subsequent legislation funding libraries' purchases. However, the percentage of multicultural books published out of all books has waned considerably over the last 40 years, so that today African American books by African American authors number less than 2% of all books published and other ethnicities have even less (Taxel, 2002). Taxel (2002) pointed out the crucial matter of marketability of multicultural books. When books are written to appeal to the widest audience possible, that is, the widest consumer base, then what is often sacrificed is the authenticity of ethnic diversity. The issue in contention is how "authentic" a book can be and still sell. Authors writing for a broader audience "may feel compelled to homogenize language and omit crucial internal issues and conflicts. Alternate views of the world are ignored, toned down, or

explained at the expense of the story…" (p. 178). The underlying argument is that *cross cultural* literature that is written by a member of one cultural group about another cultural group "tends to downplay the particulars of the culture and, in the view of many critics, simply get it wrong" (p. 178). However, *parallel* literature that is written for and by members of one group represents the experiences of growing up within a culture from an insider perspective. In the hands of skilled writers such as Mildred Taylor or Walter Dean Myers, such literature allows children and young adults to experience the reality of life for minorities now and in the past without sensationalizing it or invoking prejudicial, stereotypical characterizations of their cultural group. As Taxel (2002) showed, unless publishers can meet the high profit percentages demanded by parent corporations, they will not publish books that do not appeal to a broad audience. He did see hope in the rise of small publishers such as Lee and Low or Walk Worthy Press, that serve niche markets. On their own or in distribution partnerships, they can make editorial choices to print books that authentically portray various cultural groups, profitably.

> The domination of the industry by huge multimedia conglomerates seeking to maximize the synergistic interplay of their holdings, thereby devaluing individual works that are viewed less as discrete properties than as one of so many links in a media chain, surely will continue. However, the concept of niches, so helpful in understanding the progressive fragmentation of the market for books for young people, also provides some grounds for hope for the future. (Taxel, 2002, p. 182)

Christian publishing can also be viewed as serving a niche in the market, with an addition to the mandate that books should educate and/or entertain: books should nurture children's spiritual development. The theme of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association Book Editors Conference in March of 2003 was "In Search of Balance" and the keynote speech explored mission in face of profit. Gary Richardson (2001), former editor of ZonderKids, described how his company's mission has had an impact on the content of their products. ZonderKids wants "to be the leading publisher of biblical,

innovative and imaginative products that meet the spiritual and developmental needs of children ages 12 and under" (Richardson, 2001). He notes that having 185 products "in the pipeline" has become possible because of secular outlets. They offer children's Bibles in mass-market editions and have also marketed a higher-priced edition that has sold well in some of their outlets, so clearly the content is not affected in this case, just the packaging. Richardson would also like to raise picture book prices so that they're closer to competitors' secular book prices, as he maintains that value in the consumer's mind is connected to price. At the time of the interview, he had not expanded into multicultural offerings as he hadn't found book proposals that matched his expectations of a biblical base, appropriate child development level and strong writing. Susan Heuser (2001), former editor at Tommy Nelson, also felt that while multicultural books are important to their mission, she wanted to see strong writing and wanted to know "what are the benefits and futures?" Nancy Lohr (2003) at JourneyForth also spoke about books needing to make a profit. Every once in a while, she feels justified in taking a chance on a book that really advances their mission, but she has turned down books that she loved but simply couldn't afford to produce, especially picture books whose artwork is about 7 times as expensive as chapter books'.

What this review shows is that the importance of profit-making can't be underestimated. Editors are pushed to find products that will make a high percentage of profit and at the same time are expected to give their marketing departments books that will satisfy known markets and perhaps push into new ones. For Christian publishers, finding and exploiting new markets may mean softening the Christian message and allowing financial concerns to override the central mission. Recently, BethanyHouse resolved this conflict by selling the publishing arm of their company to Baker Book House in order to concentrate their resources on training and sending out missionaries, which they considered their primary calling from God (*Bethany House on the Block*, 2002). The final evidence of how well publishers balance these concerns are the books in

print, the subject of Chapter 4. Before I move to an explanation of the methodology of the study, I first survey the critical literature that discusses children's books.

Literature Review

Multicultural Literature

This review is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to make the reader familiar with what types of books have been analyzed and how critical theory has been applied to them. What these analyses have in common is the belief that sociocultural, historical, political and economic contexts must be taken into account when literature is read and critiqued so that the reader may both appreciate it and think critically about meanings that come from the reading.

Several studies have been done which make obvious the disparity in the numbers of books which have authors or characters of different races or ethnicities. For example, Larrick (Larrick, 1978) reviewed over 5,000 trade books published during 1962-64, and found that only 349 included 1 or more African Americans. When her 1965 study was replicated 10 years later, the percentage of African Americans in books had more than doubled, but that still meant that 85.6 percent of the books published did not include Black characters (Taxel, 1986). Adams (quoted in Pirofski, 2003) looked at Newbery and Caldecott award books for multicultural representation of characters. Less than half the books contained some of the criteria she established for multicultural content, including socioeconomic status, disabilities, and ethnic ancestry (Pirofski, 2003). During the 1980s and 1990s, only 4 books with African American characters sold over 1,000,000 copies. (Pirofski, 2003). These kinds of studies are stark in their evidence of the paucity of multicultural literature available to children. Of even more concern, however, is the literary quality of those books and their authenticity.

In 1979, the American Library Association included *Words by Heart* (Sebestyen, 1979/1997) in its list of Best Books for Young Adults. Prior to that time, only one negative review had been published, and that written by a Black reviewer. In 1980,

Interracial Books for Children Bulletin printed several reviews, including one by Rudine Sims (1980). In it she says

"Love thy neighbor" and "overcome evil with good" are worthwhile themes. In an ideal world, where racial differences don't count, it wouldn't matter which characters exemplify those themes. However, in a book set in the real world, where racial differences *do* count, when the responsibility for loving, forgiving and overcoming evil with good lies solely with the book's Black characters, the action takes on racist overtones. (italics in original, p. 142)

Her comment reminded me of something C.S. Lewis (1952/1980) wrote concerning how much easier it is to believe something to be true when it is set in a realistic tale. In his words,

> I think what profess to be realistic stories for children are far more likely to deceive them. I never expected the real world to be like the fairy tales. I think that I did expect school to be like the school stories. The fantasies did not deceive me; the school stories did. All stories in which children have adventures and successes which are possible, in the sense that they do not break the laws of nature, but almost infinitely improbable, are in more danger than the fairy tales of raising false expectations. (p. 214)

Sims (1980) does not find fault with the Christian themes and symbolism that are presented in *Words by Heart* but the way in which they are subverted to "misinform readers and reinforce racist attitudes" because of a "flawed…outsider's perspective on Black lives," failing to "recognize the political, racial and social realities that shape the Black experience in this country" (Sims, 1980, p. 133). Following on Lewis' (1952/1980) thoughts, it is these errors of representation hidden in the adventure of the story that deceive the reader into believing that Black people in history were submissive and non-confrontational. The presence of plausible attitudes and actions on the part of characters or narrators, especially in *cross cultural* (Cai & Sims-Bishop, 1994) literature (works

written about one culture by a member of another culture) is a form of racism that critical theorists work to expose in children's literature. In the same way, antediluvian attitudes about women's roles, about people with disabilities, or about class distinctions are critically examined in children's books as part of the call for readers to be aware of hidden ideologies that effectively perpetuate oppressive practices (Hade, 1997b; Sarland, 1996). As I have established, fiction carries the ideologies of the times and the author, both hidden and explicit. Sims' (1980) indictment was of the author for using a racial setting for her theme that lacked an understanding of Black experience, but she also indicted the literary community that awarded such a book based on sentimentality without considerations of the deeper issues she raised. False images of history or people can be caused by misappropriation of symbols or by casting characteristics in inauthentic roles, but it can also occur through silencing oppositional viewpoints by excluding them from books.

The notable absence of African Americans in the body of children's literature set during the American Revolution (Taxel, 1981) is misinformation of the same degree, perhaps, but not the same kind. When a wide selection of literature about a pivotal time period in history only speaks to the children of its white families, the effect of ignoring the lives and concerns of those who lived in slavery is to denigrate their history and deny their worth as a people. It is an absence of authentic, viable characters and stories—both in individual books and in the body of children's literature—that fuels concerns of critical theorists who see too few positive or too many distorted role models for children of color, for girls, or for disabled children, for example, in children's books.

Racial Issues in Children's Books

Racism is pernicious; like a virus, it is tenacious in that subtle but telling changes keep it viable from era to era. In 19th century and early 20th century literature for children, Brown (quoted in Harris, 1993) noted seven racist stereotypes that prevailed in adult literature, which Harris (1993) demonstrated also existed in children's literature: "'the

contented slave', 'the wretched freeman', 'the comic Negro', 'the brute Negro', 'the tragic mulatto', 'the local-color Negro', and 'the exotic primitive'" (p. 168). These images of African Americans persisted in children's literature for decades, supported, wrote MacCann (1988), by the schools, churches, and the press in ways that perpetuated a myth of White supremacy. As an example, Harris (1993), describes a children's book that has remained a favorite storybook through the present day for many white families: Bannerman's (1899/1976) *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. Harris described the illustrations as showing "Black people as simian-like or with protruding eyes and large, red lips, extremely dark skin, and in the case of males, long, gangly arms" (Harris, 1993, p. 169). "For many, primarily Whites, the title engenders fond memories. . . . By contrast, some African Americans conjure up images of discrimination, name calling, and grotesque caricatures of their race's physical features. . ." (p. 169). Like Harris (1993), I have also had students in children's literature classes that remember this book with affection and while some are resistant to the idea that it denigrates African Americans others are saddened that their memories of the book are tarnished as well as disturbed that racism is so hard for them to recognize.

In the early years of the 20th century, as African Americans became better educated and gained some economic power, publishers began to produce fiction for children of color. Harris (1993) described, for example, an "oppositional text," *Hazel* (Ovington, 1913) that, while giving African American children positive role models still presented the characters that most resembled Whites (through light skin or straight hair) as the ones embodying the most desired traits. She notes that toward the middle of the 1900s, that the "shift from an emphasis on explicit racial themes and consciousness in literature to a more assimilationist posture utilizing only subtle racial undertones probably corresponds with the changes in the status of African Americans and the increased push for integration that occurred during the period" (p. 176). Smith (2000) calls the period the New Negro Renaissance and credited writers with believing in the

"power of the child to alter the social and economic conditions of black America. Literature became the tool by which children were trained for this important calling" (p. 6). Even with the advent of many books that pictured normal African American life, the reality was that racism was entrenched and enduring. The attempt to show that African Americans had experiences and emotions that were universal to all people may have cloaked cultural differences that allowed racism to continue in subtler ways.

After the turbulence of the 1960s, Sims (quoted in Harris, 1993) noted that literature became "culturally conscious" in that African American authors spoke to African American children from the perspectives of their own culture. However, *cross-cultural* (Cai & Sims-Bishop, 1994) literature about African Americans continued to be written throughout the 1900s (and in some cases, granted notable awards) that perpetuated the racist stereotypes that have existed for a hundred years; some of those books are still in print.

A book written in 1950, *Amos Fortune, Free* Man (Yates, 1950) makes use of the image of "the contented slave" cloaked in this case under the guise of a distorted view of Christian forgiveness (MacCann, 1988; Trousdale, 1990). In her study of award-winning children's books that include portrayals of Black Christianity, Trousdale (1990) found a selective tradition operating in some books to uphold a submission theology that makes out the Black characters to be suffering servants who accept their fate. While ostensibly multicultural, the books promote a Eurocentric worldview that also narrowly represents Christian beliefs. "[P]erspectives on black culture and religious beliefs which these books present are distorted and inaccurate. They are informed by a selective view of history, and they have the effect of perpetuating that view" (p. 136). These books are still in print and widely read partially because they are award-winners, but the most recent was published originally in 1979, and they were not targeted to the Christian market specifically.

Another study that obliquely discusses Christianity in children's literature

expands Trousdale's (1990) findings concerning *Words by Heart* (Sebestyen, 1979/1997). Hade (1997b) shows how the racist treatment of the Black characters negatively impacts the story. The author uses an image of a Black man within White society to explain a Christian principle, but while the events explore what forgiveness means, they also position the man as powerless and submissive to White authority. While the point may be easy for Whites to accept because of their interpretation of the positioning of the Black man as submissive, the incipient racism can invalidate the Christian message for the person of color who reads it. Blindness to this phenomenon not only leads to alienating the people who are denigrated, but also leads to an acceptance of those stereotypes by those who read such stories unquestioningly (Hade, 1997a; Nodelman, 1996, 1997).

Gender Studies in Children's Literature

Boys' books and girls' book have been a fact of children's literature for some 260 years—ever since John Newbery thought of a marketing ploy that personalized his books to appeal more directly to a child. (Segel, 1986). Initially the differences in books were to make them more interesting; eventually the differences were to socialize children to different roles in society. Industrialization created a "polarization of gender roles" so that women became ensconced in the domestic role as men went out to conquer the world. Children's literature reflected these changes, and boys' books tended toward adventure while girls' books remained quietly at home. Zilboorg (1990) suggested that *Caddie Woodlawn* (Brink, 1935/1990) is a truly progressive novel for its time, countering the domestic novel with a new sense of womanhood for a young girl who "wants to be come a woman in terms other than those offered by mid-nineteenth-century standards" (p. 111). This author believes that the novel acknowledges feminist persistence, after feminism had gone underground until it reemerged in the 1960s. Caddie has a new view of what a woman could be, not concerned with clothing, and domestic arts, but with nation-building, and other male prerogatives. It is important to note that Zilboorg builds on the

idea of a changing feminity, that while acknowledging the stereotypic view of women as domestic partners, it was still moving toward a different sense of self than the 19th century sense of womanhood.

Pleasant Company's *American Girl* books, dolls, and other paraphernalia were created to showcase girls living between 1774 and the present. Nardone's dissertation (2002) examined the sales catalogs and books for the seven dolls in the series and interviewed girls in the marketing age range of 7-12 to determine how these young girls incorporated the texts into their lives. She found that the ideology represented in the texts is an invisible, yet nonetheless powerful force for constructing young girls' identities. The advertising implies a liberating ideology, but in fact the books and dolls support traditional feminine stereotypes. Considering that Mattel bought the company in 1998 for $700 million, and they showed 7% growth in the line in 2000, the economic impact alone is significant.

Modern romances for older girls are another genre that capture girls' fantasies and do so with sophisticated research and marketing programs that invite girls' opinions on the books and what else they'd like to read (Christian-Smith, 1993). Girls are positioned as objects of desire in these novels, both by the books themselves and the marketing machine. "This time it is the corporate sector wooing readers to become material girls as they immerse themselves in the affluent world of the teen romance novel" (p. 60-1). Working class young women glimpsed this world as bystanders, and their dreams were realized in their reading, not in reality. Christian-Smith (1993) found that "teen romance novels not only sell millions like jeans, but are often a series of commercials for consumer goods promoting a way of life based upon conspicuous consumption. These are not only expressions of economic relations, but have political dimensions as well" (p. 61-2).

Ann Trousdale (2002) combines a study of gender and religion in children's

books. She looks at spiritual quests and children's struggles with religious beliefs in a selection of books that are about religious conflicts, but not necessarily written from a Christian perspective or by Christian authors. She finds that the stories have conflicting ideologies. For example, in Yolen and Coville's (1999) *Armageddon Summer,* the otherwise strong female character is saved in the end by her friend who is a boy. The same is true of Lasky's (1994) *Memoirs of a Book Bat* in which a girl, with the help of a boy, escapes from her parents and their involvement in an extremist Christian sect.

These studies show historical, economic, and sociocultural influences on books that are produced for children—and not books alone, but all of the products that are marketed in an advertising synergy (Hade, 2002; Taxel, 2002) that can mask the ideologies in the books. The last group of studies I want to look at are those that examine Christian children's literature.

Studies in Christian Children's Literature

Critiques of Christian literature for children focus on issues of spirituality; for example, how does the author represent spiritual themes in his/her work (e.g. Howard, 1994) or a discussion of spiritual instruction in story (e.g. Tolkien, 1988). In a discussion of C. S. Lewis' (1952, 1953) work, O'Brien (1998) wrote about the spiritual point that he believes Lewis makes when he merges the "old pre-Christian literary world" with Christian theology.

> In the Narnia series Lewis intends to say that all creatures, even those that are imperfect and fallen in one world, might be unfallen in another and, by inference, might be restored to grace in our own through Christ. He is making a very important point about the creativity of God. In another universe, or on another planet, God easily could have chosen to make fauns and satyrs and centaurs. The forms of creaturehood might be different from ours, but the moral order of any and all universes God chose to create would remain the same. (p. 129)

O'Brien is a modern writer, a Roman Catholic, whose book is directed to parents. He wrote about the subversion of ancient symbols of evil in modern times through story and the subsequent corruption of children's understanding of good and evil. He explores particular modern works in detail, but only with an eye to the impact upon a child's spiritual discernment. His critique is aimed toward enabling parents to understand why some literature that is written by "Christian" authors may include ideologies that are counter to biblical themes. In addition to explaining the theology of prominent Christian writers such as C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and George MacDonald, O'Brien (1998) cautioned against accepting novels as theologically sound simply because the writers are Christians. As a case in point, he examined the work of Madeleine L'Engle (e.g. 1962). He revealed her use of pagan symbolism in what he believes is an attempt "to show us that certain Christian fears about the supernatural are groundless" (p. 98). He wrote that she based her ideas on misapprehensions of the nature of supernatural evil, when the characters of good in the world both "inhabit" others without their knowledge to enable them to fight evil, or embrace the evil spirits and so render them harmless.

> This sentimentality (and it is not so rare as we might suppose) is really based on a misunderstanding of the nature of various beings. Modern psychology has played its part in the decline of discernment of spirits: If we are to believe that there are no longer any evil persons (in the sense of people completely ruled by evil), and if such people are now to be considered merely ill, does it not follow that there are now no longer such things as evil spirits, merely sick ones? In the end, does the salvation of the world come down to finding an appropriate cosmic therapy? (p. 101)

Critiques of Christian literature for children typically concern these types of spiritual issues. I, too, am concerned with spiritual issues in the books in my sample. However, where most critiques stop at the portrayal of theology in literature that helps children understand who God is or their relationship with him, I am concerned with how

that theology moves beyond a personal relationship with him to a response toward others in the world, especially considering the diversity of society among which Christians live and work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I laid the ground for my reading and interpretation of the 29 books in the study. I approached the study from a critical theory perspective, using four frames to inform the work: ideology in children's literature, multiculturalism in children's literature, liberation theology, and the political economy of publishing. I brought these together in the study in two ways that are connected by my contention that children's literature for the Christian market should represent both a private religion, that is, one's relationship with God, and a public religion, that is, how that relationship affects the way that one lives, especially in our diverse society. First, there is a tension between the demands of the marketplace on publishers and their Christian mission as conceived in literature. The goals of the marketplace, to sell books at a profit, are perhaps incompatible with the goals of Christianity, as what may be sacrificed in either instance in order to achieve the goals is quite different. The marketplace is never focused on service to others; making a profit means minimizing costs and maximizing revenue, which only allows for decisions that primarily concern financial feasibility. Christian goals, based on relationships between a person and God and a person and others, are primarily concerned with service to the other: God and people. This conflict produces books that primarily fulfill the goals of the marketplace and only partially fulfill Christian goals as I've defined them. The second way that I use the frames in the study is tangential to the tension between marketplace and service goals.

I have defined public religion as advocacy for social justice, and my definition of social justice is based on Jesus' model of public religion from the Gospels of the New Testament. What I call social justice is the attempt to live in community with others such that their needs are met in the same way that we meet our own needs. Practically, this

means that the barriers of culture, tradition, or law should not stand in the way of service to others. I contend that children's literature that is for the Christian market should reflect this attitude of service to others. I draw from the four frames to support my contention through both their approaches to the issues of social justice and their particular concerns. For example, critical theory discusses social justice issues from the perspective that injustices are produced through ideologies operating to produce structures of domination (Apple, 1990, 2001; Fay, 1987; Hollindale, 1992). It assumes that ideologies (in this study, Christian ones) are at work in literature to produce certain societal understandings in children, and that often, these are prejudicial to certain segments of society. Social justice is best served by a literature that takes into account the diversity of society non-prejudicially. Multiculturalism discusses social justice issues in terms of how children see themselves in literature and how literature that exposes them to diversity enables them to have a broader perspective when dealing with difference (Cai, 1998; Sims-Bishop, 1997). Some of the assumptions of multiculturalism which support my contention are that literature should reflect the diversity of society with authority and authenticity, and that children should be able to see themselves as well as others in literature (Harris, 1999; Taxel, 1994). Liberation theology discusses social justice issues in terms of how Jesus' redemptive act both enables and requires Christians as the church to minister to and advocate for the poor and oppressed (Chopp, 1986; Rieger, 1999). It assumes that the structure of the church should make visible biblical injunctions to serve others in Christian praxis. This is the description of public religion that I use to analyze the books' investment in social justice issues. Critical theory, multiculturalism, and liberation theology all include the specific issues of, racism class, and gender distinction as effects of social injustice, which give me particular issues to examine in the books. The discussion of issues of social justice ties back into the political economy of publishing because the constrictions the market places on how the publishers' achieve

their Christian mission can be revealed through the books' engagement or lack thereof with advocacy for social justice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I read 29 books for 8-12 year olds that were published for the Christian market and interviewed four editors or publishers that worked for Christian publishing houses. My analysis of the textual data was informed by the idea that language is a tool for mediation of culture, particularly in the experience of reading a book (Smagorinsky, 2001). An author either implicitly or explicitly imbues a book with ideologies (Hollindale, 1992) as well as constructs an authorial audience (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) through language use, such that the books mediate the process of reading. I imposed frames of reference on my reading through my definition of social justice and my expectation that the books should engage in issues of social justice so that my interaction with the books was mediating the process of reading as well. In addition to these research tools, I also used ethnographic methods to analyze the interviews I conducted, using coding, categorization and thematic sorting to determine the major points under discussion.

Research Tools - Books

The 29 books I read for this study were published for a particular group of consumers: those are, Christians who value literature for their children that is based on biblical themes and can be described as wholesome. As a Christian adult who has grown up in and still regularly interacts with other Christians in community, I am knowledgeable about the expectations many conservative Christians have for such literature, and I am comfortable in discussing and describing it in terms that are easily understandable to my community. I know what adults expect their children to learn about

Christianity through the church and family and can discern whether books are considered suitable for my community. In short, I am privy to the reading codes of the genre, that is, those turns of phrase or expectations that authors have that mark the genre, because I have been enculturated within a Christian community that shares goals and values with the purveyors of the literature; I am part of an interpretive community. I therefore "have access to the meaning potential that [these codes] are inscribed to suggest" (Smagorinsky, 2001, p. 143). However, my reading was not certain to produce the same significance as another's might because as an individual, I have singular experiences and understandings that I brought to the reading event. This being true, I could not speak about particular significances another reader might find in the literature, but I can speculate about meanings anyone familiar with the same reading codes might understand. There is also a functional aspect of the reading event that is important here.

For Smagorinsky (2001), the book is a tool that focuses the reader, enabling meaning to emerge. The “experiential space” of a reading transaction "provides the arena in which cultural mediation takes place, including the act of reading. I view this space not as a sealed area connecting two discrete entities but as a dynamic, permeable zone whose instrumentality is a function of culture" (p. 141). This idea was important to my research in several ways as I considered the books themselves to be produced by authors within a certain social context. Also, my reading was "subjective, constructed, variable, and idiosyncratic" (p. 136) even as it coincided in some respects with the set of conventions that I share with my community. The role of a book in mediating culture also underscores the importance of reading critically so that the reader can recognize those ideologies in literature that emerge from the sociocultural contexts of author and book and reader.

Even as I read within my own subjectivities and made sense of the literature in the context of an “experiential space,” I was aware of the weight of the literature as a genre. Enough readers have made a similar sense of such books that there was a shared pattern of expectation in at least two ways: the topics that the books explore and how

accurately the books represent what the Bible teaches about Christianity (Richardson, 2001). As I spoke with publishers, this is a question that came up in several conversations: How do you ground your decisions about whether the literature is biblically-based? The editors read book proposals within their own understanding of what this means, and they also make choices based on their vision of the beliefs of the parent-consumer and the child-reader, and finally, within their concept of the beliefs of the communities that worship the Christian God. These points of agreement about books in general within the interpretive community enabled the publishers to have confidence in their marketability (Richardson, 2001).

The particular concerns of promoting a genre that was specifically identified for a Christian audience folds back into the considerations of analyzing those books. I had expectations that are particular to Christian literature that involve the language used (or not used!) in the book, the journeys the characters make, and the outcome of the story. In studying these books, I needed to "respect the text's fundamental requests", p. 6) and to recognize the "authorial audience." The idea of an authorial audience is that the author, through the writing of the book, constructs a particular audience that can be discerned through textual clues. I would extend this to say that the editor and publisher, through their separate jobs, also participate in this construction. It is in having identified what the author's expectation of this audience's understanding of the book is, and working against that expectation, that my individual interpretation took on significance. Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) would charge that a mis-analysis could result from studying a book without considering the authorial audience.

> It is even more difficult to imagine such a detour [talking seriously about language in a book] in any study that involves confronting the ideology of what is represented in an imaginative text—for representation is necessarily representation from a particular point of view, and attitudes toward what is

> represented can only be analyzed seriously when that point of view is taken into account. (p. 17)

Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) discussed the work of literary analysis as necessarily involving the relationship between an author's projection of audience and the actual reader. As an example of this interaction, let me quote from the first pages of one book and then comment:

> Keri put her head out the window as they passed and stared back at the building until it disappeared from sight. Most of the roofing was gone, and sunlight poured into deep pink and blue rooms. All the windows and doors had been taken out, leaving jagged holes where even the frames had been hammered away. The walls were scarred with little holes like chicken pox. *No one needed to tell Keri they had come from gunfire.* (Hardy, 2002, p. 14, emphasis added)

The scene continues to describe the search of a mother from this village for a missing son and the emotional responses of Keri and her family when the mother and son are reunited. I contend that the description of the ravaged village quoted here expects the audience to understand the implications of war. Subsequent references to prayer, scripture, and questioning God about his allowing such suffering grounds the story in the Christian community and also expects the audience to understand this way of dealing with suffering. For example, an African pastor who shares some of the experiences of this family later in the book explains the loss of his family to bandits in a situation similar to the one Keri came upon. He particularly dwells on one grandson, Dzumisana, whose name meant, "let us give praise." The eventual revelation of the survival of this grandson embodies the praises the pastor lifts up for God's care in the face of immeasurable loss. The publication of this book suggests that the (implied) community is interested in investigating such a question.

Reading within a dialectic between reader and book highlights the ways in which the reading transaction is also a political process. In Giroux's words (quoted in DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 29),

> Knowledge has to be viewed in the contexts of power and consequently the relationship between writers, readers, and texts has to be understood as sites at which different readings, meanings, and forms of cultural production take place. In this case, reading and writing have to be seen as productive categories, as forms of discourse, that configure practices of dialogue, struggle, and contestation. (p. 29)

When it is a reading of children's literature, especially by an adult, that is the product of conversation and practices that surround reading, then the status of the writer, the book, and the reader is also of concern. Hunt (1991) cautioned that group power is also an important consideration when reading books. The codes of particular books, such as an absence of profanity or quoting scripture in Christian literature, may be valued because they are those of an elite group that has power over the choices to be made in the writing, production, and distribution of literature, such as Evangelical Christians may in terms of their influence over children's literature for the Christian market. This situation is exacerbated in reading children's literature because "the books they work with are uncanonical and the audience unfranchised" (p. 8). Hunt (1991) maintained that children do not have a voice in book selection. In the case of books in the Christian market, there appears to be a deliberate choice by consumers to maintain the elite status of the works and have them reflect a particular worldview, a point drawn out further in a discussion of the publisher's words.

While I have insider status as a Christian, my critical stance called me to question the function of group power in the market. It may be that the range of topic and style of children's books for the Christian market; that is, the very thing that makes them acceptable and saleable, is also what maintains the narrow interpretations of what

constitutes desirable biblical themes in books for children. Williams (1977/1990) discussed this observation in his work on cultural production in literature. Books are produced out of the societal milieu of the author and in turn the author reproduces to a certain extent society as s/he knows it, of course allowing for the creative imagination. In the same way, I posit that the books that I read are both a product of the cultural group from and for which they're written and that they reproduce the beliefs of the group.

Methods of Data Collection – Books

Book Selection

Publishers

My purpose in selecting books for this study was to collect as broad and inclusive a sample as possible within the constraints of time and availability. I chose books for 8-12 year olds because I wanted to read books that allowed for a complexity of plot and characterization and also because there is a much wider selection in this age group than in young adult fiction. The first criterion for inclusion in the sample was that the publisher self-identify as a Christian publishing house. I was looking for publishers from a range of Christendom, including Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, and Quakers, for example. I began by compiling such a list from the following sources: Publisher's Weekly, the CBA web site (an association of Christian booksellers), the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association members list, the Catholic Book Publishers Association, *Christian Writers' Market Guide* (Stuart, 2002), and Internet searches of online sources such as christianbook.com and amazon.com and searches for publishers' web sites.

The publishers I selected included several different types. Most were independent houses such as Tyndale House, and Bethany House, publishers whose offerings range from 10 books a year to 250. These publishers acquire their own manuscripts, but they may have printing and distribution agreements with other publishers that would not affect editorial decisions. There are also once-independent publishers such as ZonderKidz that have been purchased by a secular publishing house or Christian divisions developed

within secular houses. Bob Jones University Press and Moody Publishers are both subsidized in part by their parent educational establishments, Bob Jones University and Moody Bible Institute. Finally, there are self-publishing authors who sell to retailers through the books expos that are held around the country several times a year or self-published ebooks only available through an Internet site.

I investigated nearly 100 publishers whose materials were readily available. Most of these were listed as accepting manuscripts for children but did not actually have any books published for this age group. I ordered books from every publisher that offered children's books that fell into the criteria (listed in the next section) which ended up being less than a quarter of the original list. In one case, Eerdmans Publishing Company, I found myself rechecking the description of the company to be sure I had not made an error. The contexts of the books I read from their catalog seemed little different from most realistic fiction for children. The site proclaims the following:

> Founded in 1911 and still independently owned, Eerdmans Publishing Company has long been known for publishing a wide range of religious books, from academic works in theology, biblical studies, religious history, and reference to popular titles in spirituality, social and cultural criticism, and literature. (www.eerdmans.com)

This description could lead a reader to believe that the books range through different religions, but the titles show the books to be concerned with Christian history and literature. In contrast, the web home page for BJUPress, a publisher associated with the conservative Bob Jones University in South Carolina, has as its title: "Christian resources for education, edification & evangelism" (www.bjup.com).

Online sources were important, as the current catalogs did not always include books I wanted to read, and I was able to find many used books online. I began reading and analyzing books before I finished ordering them all, as I kept finding more sources. It took nearly three months to select, order, and read all the books. There are two notable

exceptions in my final list: first, no books from Catholic publishers. One Canadian Catholic publisher listed books for children in the catalog, but when I received them realized they were young adult books for readers of high school age, and other Catholic publishers only offered books on hagiography, the biographies of saints.

The second exception is that I could not find any authors of color who had written for this age group. Moody Press has an imprint that caters to the African American community, but they have only a few young adult books; most of their offerings are for adults. I called an African-American author whose young adult books are published by Moody, but she was unable to give me any names of authors who write for children. Walk Worthy Press, a Christian publisher who specializes in African-American fare, is just beginning to look for books for children from authors of color, and the publisher there had no suggestions. The publishers who I interviewed likewise had no authors and knew of none in the market, though one of them was African-American. I found a reference in an online article in Publishers' Weekly (*CAABA introduces new Christmas 2000 catalog to African Americans at 650 Christian bookstores*, 2002) to a catalog that had been published in California that included books and products for Christmas for the African-American market, and I contacted the number that was included. It was the advertising agency, and I spoke with them three times. They promised to send me the catalog each time, but I never received a copy. There certainly are Christians of color writing fictional books for children from 8-12 years old that draw on biblical themes. One example is Walter Dean Myers' (Myers, 2003) *A Time to Love*. However, I was unable to locate any whose work was published through Christian publishers. Appendix C is an annotated list of the 19 publishers whose books are included in this sample.

Books

I selected books advertised generally for 8-12 year-olds, though some had a slightly different age range. I looked for a cross-section of publishers, genres, themes, gender and ethnic variety in author, characters, and plot, and whether the book was a

series title or a stand-alone book. Series fiction dominates the offerings. Some series, such as the Detective Zack books, are written about the same group of characters, though often a different child will be the focus of each book. Other books, such as the Trailblazer Books about Christian heroes, are a series in terms of theme, such that historical time period, character, and place can change from book to book. Some of the series books were the first of that series and others were subsequent titles. I selected historical fiction, fantasy, and realistic fiction but decided not to use biographies or devotionals, the other two main genres available to children, as I was interested in how ideology is implicated in *story* in particular. Out of 50 books in my original sample, I discarded those that were clearly young adult and those books with themes or contexts that were repetitive within the sample. I determined not to use more than one book from a single author, and I usually chose no more than two from a single imprint. Because Moody Press offered the greatest variety of topics, and because BethanyHouse had so many popular authors, I have 3 and 4 books from those publishers, respectively. I cross-referenced authors and book titles with various best-sellers lists from the online sources mentioned in the previous section. Quite surprisingly, as it was unintentional, I ended up with equal numbers of male and female protagonists. My final sample separates easily into three divisions, which I am calling God as Setting, God as Sage, and God as Character. This unplanned serendipity supports the viability of the sample as the range of the presence of God in the characters' lives represented by markers such as God-talk, prayer, or devotions, is distributed fairly across the sample. Appendix A is an annotated bibliography of the 29 books in the sample.

Reading the books

My research log provided a tracking system for sources as well as a means of recording observations about books and ideas for discussion and further research that occurred to me as I read and thought about the material. While I originally planned to tape record thoughts as I read, I found it too disruptive. Instead, I completely read each

TABLE 3-1: Book Genres, Series, and Genders of Main Character

Number of publishers/imprints	20
Genres	
Historical Fiction	9
Realistic Fiction	17
Fantasy	2
Fictionalized Biography	1
Series books	
Series with the same theme	4
Series with the same characters	17
Stand-alone books	8
Protagonists	
Female protagonists	14
Male protagonists	9
Both, though female takes the lead	1
Both, though male takes the lead	5
N = 29	

book and wrote a synopsis listing the characters, descriptions of how Christian markers such as prayer, God-talk, or scripture verses were present in the book, and descriptions of the themes emerging from the reading along with my overall reaction to the book. I then went over the book again more carefully, summarizing each chapter and noting useful quotes. During this second phase I most often found myself reminded of other books, realized common characteristics of the books, and discovered interesting treatments of themes and contexts. For example, all the books in the God as Character group have a vital adult mentor for the child protagonist, and most of the others have a viable adult-child relationship that is central to the child's success. This aspect of Christian fiction may be a notable departure from secular books where the absence of adults is often

important to the plot, a topic of recent discussion on the Children's Literature Listserv hosted by Rutgers University. (http://email.rutgers.edu) In none of the books in my sample are children abandoned, figuratively or in fact, though one parent's death is used in a few of the stories as the impetus to the action. They may place themselves in danger, but their parents never do. For example, in the popular children's series *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by author Lemony Snicket (e.g. 1999), the entire premise of the books comes from the fact that the children are orphaned and certain adults are after their inheritance.

The research tools I used in my reading were helpful in that I was conscious not only of myself as an individual reader, but also of the reader I felt the authors wanted me to be through their handling of the language and topics of their books, and of the multiplicity of voices that the critical theorists I've quoted brought to the readings. I constantly reworked my categories and understandings of what the books meant to me as I considered deeper levels of meaning and how those meanings were constructed in my reading. For example, my first readings of the books suggested discussing them based on how obvious the markers of Christianity were in the books. On subsequent readings, I was aware of how the books treated the issues of social justice I intended to discuss. I created charts for both of these categorizations, and in doing so realized that the degree of what I've called God's presence in the books did not correlate with the books' engagement of social justice issues. This suggested to me that part of the worldview portrayed if the books is that a deep relationship with God is vital for being a Christian, but that being a Christian did not necessarily have consequences beyond an individual's life. I am suggesting that the dichotomy of private and public religion may be evidenced in this disconnect between relationship with God and activism in society.

Methods of Data Collection – Interviews

I conducted three preliminary telephone interviews of 30 to 45 minutes with publishers of children's literature for the Christian market, two from religious houses and

one from a religious division of a major publisher. Two are women and all have been in the industry for over 10 years, though one was new to this particular job. I emailed them initially to request an interview, then sent them the questions before I called them. These interviews were completed between October and December of 2001. These people gave me permission to speak with them again, though I was only able to contact one of them for a subsequent interview. The questions that I asked initially were:

1. What can you tell me about the history of _____ (name of publishing house).
2. How has the content of books you publish changed over time?
3. What are the factors that you feel have influenced the rise in sales of children's literature for the Christian market?
4. How would you describe children's books for the Christian market within the larger market for children's books?
5. How do you approach including multicultural literature in your offerings?

The follow-up questions I asked my informant was based on the readings and analysis, and I also contacted another editor of a smaller publishing house.

1. How do you describe your mission?
2. Can you describe a situation in which you feel you had to choose between economic expediency and ministry?
3. What guidelines do you give authors concerning the biblical themes they use in their books? Who is the audience you envision for them? Are there themes you ask them to avoid in the books you publish?
4. What has changed in the publishing industry since we talked last in the late fall of 2001?

"Data collection" and "data analysis" are not discrete portions of the research process. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) caution, "Analysis is not…the last phase of the research process. It should be seen as part of the research design and of the data

collection" (p. 6). These portions of the "reflexive activity" that is research do have different tasks to perform, however, though each is dependent on the other in order to complete them. Therefore, my analysis of these data will be modeled on qualitative methods as applied to books and interviews.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research usually consists of some combination of three forms of data collection: through documents, participant observation, and interviews. I like Wolcott's (1994) advice about the process of working with data as I "cautiously construct studies". He said, "…maintain a healthy skepticism toward description, analysis, and interpretation as facets of research [and] extend it to the whole research ethos as well. Watch for the tendency to employ research as a basis for self-validation" (p. 38). I systematically sifted textual and interview data through the concept of coding, what Coffey and Atkinson (1996) called "approaches to and ways of organizing qualitative data…codings link different segments or instances in the data…The important analytic work lies in establishing and thinking about such linkages" (p. 27). I "wr[o]te my way into" (Richardson, 1990; St. Pierre, 1997) an interpretation, using the data to think with as well. This type of systematic comparison helped me to reconceptualize my data and open more analytical possibilities as reducing the data to smaller, meaningful chunks can lead to further questions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

I treated the written story as though it was a narrative gleaned from interview data. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) noted that success stories and moral tales are a frequent tradition in children's literature and a type of story that storytellers use to make a point. Such "stories" (in my case, authored ones) can be analyzed as a narrative from the point of view of what they tell about the individuals (*characters*), research setting (*the story and my reading it*), or how the stories are developed and built up (*linguistic forms used in the writing*). Thinking of analyzing the characters' stories similarly to the way that ethnographers analyze participants' life stories opened linkages to the ideologies in the

books. For example, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) described the use of narrative in the following quote, and I substituted a correspondence with authored stories to make the point.

> How social actors retell their life experiences as stories *(How authors write stories…)* can provide insight in the characters, events, and happenings central to those experiences. How the chronicle is told and how it is structured can also provide information about the perspectives of the individual *(character)* in relation to the wider social grouping or cultural setting to which that individual *(character)* belongs. (p. 68, italics added)

The authors noted that individuals use stories to "relay dominant voices…or 'give voice' to otherwise silenced groups and individuals" (p. 78). I next discuss the specific analysis process of the books and interviews.

Book Analysis

As Wolcott (1994) suggested, description, analysis and interpretation became interdependent activities in the construction of the study. The books and my notes from my reading of them became my primary data sources, though as I interviewed publishers and transcribed that data, I continued to revise my thinking and find new insights. As I worked through the summarizing activity described in the data collection section above, I constructed charts to compare and contrast the books more easily. Once I had read 8 or 10 books, I could no longer keep them in mind as fully, and I needed visual reminders that I could easily access. I began to select categories for comparison, and settled on charting factual categories such as the gender and age of the protagonist, genre, setting, presence or absence of multicultural characters, and/or events that revolved around those characters or social justice issues. Then I categorized theme, evidence of God in the book, and language use implicated in treatment of multicultural characters and themes. The chart was also important as I continued reading because it helped me reevaluate the

ongoing sample I was constructing; for example, at one point I had too many books that were mystery adventures.

I gravitated toward the book itself—the physical fact of it—as the easiest way to construct different categories and think about connections initially. I could sort and pile books by gender, for example, for a physical representation of how the books stacked up. I found it easier to remember piles than written lists, and the visual cues helped in book selection as well as suggested findings that would be important to discuss. I didn't realize that I expect books that are heavier, bigger, or longer to be weightier in message as well, though my earlier reading experiences would support this. I was also surprised by my response to cover art. The softer, more subtly executed covers were much more appealing to me; cartoonish covers with vibrant colors were off-putting. Portrayals of characters in an exaggerated, cartoonish sense had more impact on the way I approached reading than did the representational art in that they implied humorous or light-hearted stories. The prediction was not always correct, however! When I finished a book, I found that I often checked the cover illustration for accuracy of its depiction. I prefer to read a book without being positioned by cover art to interpret the character or action a certain way, but once I've read it, it's easy to dismiss or accept the artwork as "true" to my mental image. In the interviews, the publishers referred to cover design and its importance in sales. Several of the books included 4 or 5 black and white illustrations placed throughout the books, most often of the characters in a particular scene, but also graphics at the beginning of chapters.

Interview Analysis

The interviews with the publishers provide both a commentary on the industry and the authors, books and consumers, and a fertile ground from which I drew questions to ask of the books, their expressed ideologies and the meaning I made of it all. I used ethnographic methods (Moustakas, 1994; Wolcott, 1994) in analyzing the interviews. I read and reread the interviews, but there were some restrictions on the interviews that

limited the categories and themes I could determine. As noted above in the data collection section, I sent my informants a list of the questions I was interested in discussing. We spoke over the phone so that both myself and the informants were still within our normal workspace, and I had suggested that the interviews would be short—no more than an hour—so that the people would agree to take time out of their schedules to talk with me. The earliest interviews were conducted prior to my readings of the books and helped to frame the purposes for reading. The later ones were much easier because I had particular books published by my informants to use as examples in our discussion. As I reread those, and read subsequent books, I became curious about additional points and received answers to new questions through email communication. For example, Nancy Lohr of JourneyForth, the children's imprint of BJUPress, made this statement: "I can't go in the hole on books, even with a major name, unless I know I can make it back in a significant period." In rereading, I realized that I never asked about what the factors were that she considers when determining whether a book will be profitable, so we continued an email conversation.

Conclusion

I found critical theory to be most useful in my data collection, analysis and interpretation when considered with Smagorinsky's (2001) work on language as a mediator for culture, and Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) concept of an authorial reading, which asks the reader to consider how the language of the book implies who the audience is from the author's perspective. I used Hollindale's (1992) levels of ideology as a framework to discuss the author's implicit and explicit assumptions revealed in the book through Christian practices performed by the characters as evidence for an authorial reading. As such, my reading was mediated by the book with the theories I used and my frames of reference mediating as well (Smagorinsky, 2001). As I read the books in my sample, considered past interviews and conducted new ones, the implications of my

analysis and interpretations took shape in relation to the theoretical framework I laid, and those I discuss in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROFIT MOTIVE AND THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE

Introduction

The 29 books of this study are about the lives of Christian families living in the past and in the present. The books don't often refer to a particular denomination, but they all include practices that religious people take part in and which are often evidence of the importance of religion in their lives. These practices of praying, of reading scripture that is holy to Christians, or of talking about the things of God, are the evidence by which I have measured the importance of religion to the characters' lives in my sample of books through an authorial reading (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). A second set of evidence supports my discussion of how the books portray the diversity in our society and the efforts of characters to serve others outside their family or church, what I have called public religion. I begin with a sketch of the organization of the analysis, which consists of three sections: 1) ideological categories in which I place the books, 2) the evidence from the books that led to the categories, and 3) evidence for social advocacy. I preface those three sections with an analysis of the economic and cultural influences that the publishing industry brings to bear on book choice.

Ideological Categories

As I read and analyzed the books, I found it useful to group them into three categories which I have called "God as Character," "God as Sage," and "God as Setting." I placed the books into each category based on how apparent Christian ideology was in the text. Books in the "God as Character" category exemplified Hollindale's (1992) third level of ideology, in which the explicit beliefs of the author were made clear in the text.

These books showed the characters praying and expecting answers to prayer; characters referred to and shared passages from the Old or New Testament (scripture) in an effort to solve the problems they face; and they talked about God with each other to sort out what to do or to teach a younger person. In these books, of which there are 10 out of the 29 in the sample (e.g. Byrd, 2002; Hardy, 2002; and McCusker, 1995), God was intimately involved in the events of the story and the characters' lives. The "God as Sage" category had fewer and/or less obvious markers of Christianity such as prayer or scripture reading. If the characters prayed, their prayers were not as much for assistance in a present help, but an occasional checking in with God, as though he were a wise man off on a mountaintop that one goes to talk with occasionally but does not include in the day-to-day problems of life. They may have read scripture or talked about God, but as an intellectual exercise, not a search for answers. God's presence in this category of 12 books (e.g. Lewis, 2002; Morris, 2001; Windle, 1994/199/2001), was distant from the immediate events. This category also related to Hollindale's (1992) third level of ideology, though the evidence is watered-down. The "God as Setting" category, the remaining 7 books, exemplified Hollindale's first level of ideology, in which the Christian influence in the book was the template on which the story is written, not explicit or implied, but simply taken for granted as the way society works. Characters in these books rarely prayed, and those prayers could be perfunctory, such as a grace before a meal. Neither scripture nor conversations about God were resources they use. God was alive in the books, but not present (e.g. Cannon, 2002; Thomas, 2002). I use the categories in my discussion to show how Christian ideology both produces the books and is produced (Sarland, 1996; Williams, 1977/1990) in the language of the books to portray a Christian worldview.

Evidence for the Categories

I explain the categories of "God as Character," "God as Sage," and "God as Setting" in detail with examples from the books, and in the section that follows it, I detail

the evidence I used to place the books in the categories. I use the term Christian markers to describe the evidence. The markers include characters' use of prayer and scripture and the conversations that characters have about God, which I have called "God-talk." Only one book (Randall, 1999) did not include an actual prayer at least once, or a reference to praying such as opening a worship service. Prayers varied from desperate calls for God's help or protection in a time of need (e.g. Finley, 1868/1999; McCoy-Miller, 2000; Peretti, 1997) to a conversation that was an aside where the character expressed his/her thoughts in the form of prayer (e.g. Cannon, 2002; Mackall, 2002). Some books showed characters reading their Bibles to search for instruction on how to think about the problems they faced and thinking and talking about how to apply that scripture (e.g. Byrd, 2002; Wilson & Dengler, 2001). God-talk was used in several different ways, as the characters who had conversations about God could be parent and child (e.g. Thomas, 2002), other adults and the child (e.g. Rue, 2001), children with each other (e.g. Myers, 1993), or in sermons during a worship service at church (e.g. Byrd, 2002). The use of Christian markers in the books gave evidence for the ideology that was apparent in the books, but I did not find a correlation between the overt expression of a strong relationship with God, as revealed in the "God as Character" books, and the model of Christianity as social advocacy that liberation theologians base on Jesus' life as written in the gospels (the four books of the New Testament that describe his life on Earth, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

Evidence for Social Advocacy

Definitions

The distinction that liberation theologians use to describe Christians' involvement with the poor and oppressed of the world has to do with a person's personal relationship with God versus his/her commitment to serve others outside of a familiar community, a distinction that Herzog (Rieger, 1999) claimed grew from the humanist project of relegating religion to the privacy of home and church and allowing reason to rule public institutions. I use the terms private religion and public religion to note the distinction. I

did find books that engaged in some kind of social advocacy (e.g. Greegor, 1992; Hambrick, 2000; Hess, 1994), but there was often nothing concrete to link the choice of social advocacy to Christian beliefs. I believe this is evidence to support the idea that an ideological distinction still exists, operating on Hollindale's (1992) third level as a sociocultural influence, between religion as a private matter and public assistance as something that reasonable people do. In the last section of this chapter, I describe the evidence I used to determine whether the books did indeed promote social advocacy.

The evidence for a description of public religion included multicultural characters, class or gender distinctions, or events in which the characters were involved in advocacy for others outside of their families or church groups. I chose to analyze how three issues of social justice were approach in these books; that is, race, class and gender which are often included in discussions of multicultural literature (e.g. Hade, 1997b; Harris, 1999; Taxel, 1986). My definition of social justice is consonant with that of Jesus' model that is taken up by liberation theologians, and that is the divine mandate to serve others through the love of God, so that justice is a matter of the heart, achieved through self-sacrifice in service rather than a consequence of legal equity. It is important to note here that as gender is concerned, and as I will explain in more detail in that section, Jesus did not speak to the roles that society assigns people on the basis of gender, nor did he speak about the issue of homosexuality, two areas that are firmly decided in most Evangelical Christian communities: women and men are allotted specific roles in family and church, and homosexuality is simply forbidden in all aspects, effectively cutting off lesbians and gay males from Christian service and in many cases, vilifying them as abominations. For myself, I recognize the paradox contained in the idea of hating sin but loving the sinner, and it's a continual struggle to work that out in relationships with others. It is also difficult to juggle the different expectations for women in the conservative church and in the business and academic worlds, but I take comfort in Jesus' answers to these questions. Jesus consistently responded to questions about roles

in the home and church with homilies about service to others and God (e.g. Luke 10:38-42, NIV; Mark 10: 29-31, NIV). He did not recognize any distinctions of gender, class, race, or condition of servitude when it came to an individual's responsibility to serve God, so it is from this framework that my discussion of gender goes forward.

Evidence

To discuss evidence of social advocacy, I divided my sample of 29 books into categories depending on whether the story included any multicultural characters or included events that dealt with issues of race or class. I did not use gender in this process as there are men and women fulfilling roles in all of the books. Six books (e.g. Myers, 1993; Pistole, 2002) did not have any multicultural characters and did not engage in any way with issues of race or class other than by ignoring them, which I will address in that section. Another 11 books (e.g. Littleton, 2001; Maselli, 2002; McCaffrey, 2001) included multicultural characters in them but their ethnicities, class, disablilities, or age were window-dressing, a nod to a sensibility to diversity (Heuser, 2001). The characters' diversity was often expressed through one or two comments about their color or age, but their differences were not substantial and had no effect of the events of the stories (e.g. Lewis, 2002; Littleton, 2001). Only one character in a book set in this country has a different religion, and that's a historical fiction book (Rue, 2001). There are three books that occur in other countries (Hardy, 2002; Morris, 2001; Windle, 1994/1999/2001), and the natives of those countries aren't Christians. Those who are non-Christians here do not have any specified religion, but are part of the community in some way (e.g. Maselli, 2002; McCusker, 1995). These books are examples of one type of *cross-cultural* literature (Cai & Sims-Bishop, 1994) in which characters of other cultures are included in books written by a member of a different culture. The rest of the books (e.g. Lawton, 2002; Jackson & Jackson, 2001; Hess, 1994) did engage issues of race and class through the events of the stories. Most of these were historical fiction books and most of those dealt with issues of immigration and westward expansion. These, too were all *cross-*

cultural; there were no *parallel culture* books in my sample written by authors of color because I couldn't find any; those are, books that are written about a culture by a member of that culture.

I will show that some of the books do have an awareness of race and class distinctions and do provide literature for Christian children that would encourage them to practice a public religion. However, a larger portion of the books may well impede this movement by using multicultural characters in a way that denies their differences and hides the effects of those differences. And some of the books simply don't move out of a white, middle- class neighborhood in any way. Prior to my discussion of the categories, the evidence of those categories, and the evidence of social advocacy, I will set the stage by discussing what my informants from the publishing industry had to say about their work. Our conversations concerned their impressions of the reasons for increasing sales in inspirational literature, of their customers, of marketing practices, and of the content of their books.

Section I: The Publishing Industry

This section answers the question, how do publishers negotiate the political economy of publishing from a Christian perspective? To answer this, I talked with four people who are editors or publishers of children's books in Christian publishing houses. I told them that I was doing a study of children's literature for the Christian market, and I was interested in talking with them about how they choose literature. I sent them a list of questions to think about, and then talked on the telephone with them. I was able to talk with Natasha Sperling and Nancy Lohr more than once. Natasha Sperling is the editor of the children's book division of BethanyHouse, a publisher with perhaps the largest number of books available for children in the 8-12 age range in their current catalog, including over 40 series. I talked with Ms. Sperling in December of 2001 and again in May of 2003. Gary Richardson no longer works for Zonderkidz, the children's division of Zondervan, one of the largest Christian publishers. They are the only one of the four

publishers I talked to who are part of a media conglomerate. They are owned by HarperCollins, which is part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. I spoke with Richardson in November of 2001, and he now works for a secular publisher. Susan Heuser is out of publishing, but in October of 2001, she was the editor of Tommy Nelson, a division of Thomas Nelson, also one of the largest Christian publishers. My fourth informant is Nancy Lohr, acquisitions editor for JourneyForth, the children's division of Bob Jones University Press. Ms. Lohr publishes about 10 books a year, to BethanyHouse's 50. I spoke with her first in April of 2003 and have had several conversations since then.

Tommy Nelson and Zonderkidz, because they are part of much larger firms that not only print fiction, but also Bibles and many other types of literature for the adult and child market, emphasize frontlist sales to provide substantial income. The frontlist is the new books they print each year. With strong marketing departments, these publishers are able to create new "brands," which usually means a series of books aimed at a particular age, interest, and/or gender. They rely equally on sales from Christian bookstores and secular venues such as WalMart, grocery stores, and even stores such as pharmacies or Cracker Barrel. BethanyHouse sells primarily through Christian bookstores and relies more on their backlist, the books they keep in stock or reprint regularly, for steady sales as does JourneyForth. Sperling says, "We had a run of probably 6, 7 years that were very strong where we were kicking out series after series. Some of those we're starting to pull out of print now as their numbers start dropping. Fiction right now as a whole is not doing as well as it has in the past and it's just kind of …things go in waves. Fiction series have always been our mainstay." In addition to maintaining a strong backlist, JourneyForth reprints books that have gone out of print. Most of their sales are educational as Bob Jones University Press prints textbooks for Christian schools and home educators. Table 4-1 summarizes basic information about these companies and my informants.

TABLE 4-1: Publisher Information

Company	**Bethany House**	**JourneyForth**	**Tommy Nelson**	**Zonderkidz**
Name	Natasha Sperling	Nancy Lohr	Susan Heuser	Gary Richardson
Title	Editor	Editor	Publisher	Publisher
Owned by	Christian company	University owned	Christian company	Secular company
Market	Christian bookstores; libraries	Homeschools; Christian schools; some public schools	Christian bookstores; secular outlets; libraries	Christian bookstores; secular outlets
Large backlist	X	X		
Frontlist			X	X
Sells series	X		X	X
Sells stand-alone books		X		
Children's division begun	1993	1986	1996	1998

Richardson of Zonderkidz and Lohr of JourneyForth both read parts of their mission statements to me. It was important to them that those statements set the tone of our discussions. Sperling of BethanyHouse and Heuser of TommyNelson referred me to their web sites to find similar information. I've included the salient parts of those statements to begin the discussion of what they had to tell me about the Christian marketplace and how they looked at their company's offerings.

Mission Statements

> Zonderkidz: To be the leading publisher of biblical, innovative and imaginative products that meet the spiritual and developmental needs of children ages 12 and under.
>
> Tommy Nelson: The kid's division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. was created to place into the hands of children of all ages a wide variety of high quality, enjoyable products that are consistent with the teachings found in the Bible and designed to

> expand children's imaginations and nurture their faith while pointing them to a personal relationship with God.
>
> BethanyHouse: The purpose of Bethany House is to help Christians apply biblical truth in all areas of life. . . . We are diligently committed to offering the best in editing, design and marketing to make each book as inspiring, challenging, enjoyable and attractive as it can be.
>
> JourneyForth: Because our God speaks to us through His Holy Bible, we are rightly called "a people of the book." We desire to develop in our children a love for and an understanding of the written word, ultimately helping them love and understand God's word. We aim to produce well-written books for readers of varying abilities and interests. Books excellent in every facet of their presentation.

All four statements share elements, though the tone varies with how each begins. Both Zonderkidz and Tommy Nelson reflect their "frontlist" orientation as they begin their statements with a marketing message. BethanyHouse and JourneyForth begin with a reference to the biblical reason for the books they publish. The statements are directed to individual spiritual development, though as I have shown, Christianity is about far more a personal relationship with God. BethanyHouse sparks a possibility of a religion that looks beyond the personal (applying biblical truth to all areas of life), but the concern of liberation theologians that modern day religion is basically a private affair between an individual and God (Rieger, 1999) is not challenged in these statements. None of them are specific enough to determine just how they base their work on biblical truth or what teachings of the Bible they look to for consistency. Richardson remarked that all of Zonderkidz' books go through independent "theological reviews," though he did not explain what that meant. JourneyForth is the only one of the four that provides more definitive explanations.

JourneyForth, through Bob Jones University Press, perhaps because they are an imprint of educational publisher, has extensive position statements on the philosophy the

company uses to choose and publish books. I quote at length from a discussion of censorship in education so that the reader may have a sense of the thoroughness and seriousness with which they approach the subject. This white paper, published on BJUPress' website, was originally printed in *Christian Education: Its Mandate and Mission.* (Horton, 1992). The chapter describes what the author calls the permissivist and exclusivist moral positions on educational censorship in detail and then shows why a moderate biblical position is the one BJUPress uses. This excerpt gives a rationale for whether or not a particular "evil" person or events that are "evil" can be considered acceptable when they are in a book that will be used in an educational setting.

> The Biblical position adopts the pedagogical method of the Scriptures in teaching moral understanding. The Bible teaches by means of precept and example. Its examples are both positive and negative. The writers of the Old Testament enunciate emphatically the commandments of God and reinforce them with many examples of right behavior and many more of behavior to be shunned. They associate good or evil consequences with good or evil behavior. New Testament writers draw on these examples, positive and negative, for encouragement and warning. . . .
>
> The basis of a truly Biblical position concerning censorable elements is the following distinction. If a work of literature or other element of the curriculum treats evil in the same way that it is treated in the Scriptures, we regard it as not only acceptable but also desirable reading, listening, or viewing for someone of sufficient maturity as to benefit from comparable portions of the Scriptures (with the qualification that visual or auditory effects are more potent than those of reading). If it does not treat evil in the way evil is handled in the Scriptures, its content is not good. Evil in the Bible appears dangerous and repulsive. Reflections of evil appear in the Bible in the form of negative examples so as to

> create a defense against what they represent or to give hope to the fallen for forgiveness and recovery from sin. (BJUPress, 1992, p. 7)

Ms. Lohr (2003) also applies this type of rationale to the literature that she edits; this is one example of the guidelines that are a basis for her editorial choices. The other three publishers do not have any more information on the biblical basis of their books on their web sites or in their catalogs, and my informants offered little more in explanation. I do not mean to imply that there *are* no guidelines for their decisions; there were allusions to mission, to theological checks on books, but I was unable to ascertain them. In any case, they are not publicly accessible as are those from JourneyForth. We did talk about some of the considerations that go into choosing which books to print.

Choosing Books for Publication

Books that "fit" publishers' missions, their audiences, or budgets all work into the decisions of what books to publish and which ones to reprint. My informants speak in this section about their audiences. Sperling talks about what she believes the consumers expect from their books, noting that BethanyHouse avoid controversial subjects in the contents of their books. Lohr explains their market niche. I edited the quotes here and throughout this section slightly for readability.

> Sperling: First and foremost we want a good story; if there's no moral lesson, then we wouldn't consider it, but it doesn't have to have a conversion scene—not overtly Christian. We try to stay pretty—I don't want to say mainstream and I don't want to say middle of the road because that sounds…kind of negative. But any really extreme ideas I guess that we kind of steer clear of. We do venture a little bit into some charismatic things, at least in the adult arena. Children's publishing, again, we're not going to be dealing with a lot of real theological…anything that's up for debate.
>
> Lohr: We have a huge niche in the home school market. . .we're trying to meet the needs of a variety of types of readers. . . . children of Christian families

> primarily. We do have a segment of people who would be probably considered politically conservative, who may or may not accept that Christ is the Son of God and that their eternity depends on him being their Savior, but the conservative approach of the books speaks to them, and they're willing to tolerate a religious overtone, if you please. But I see my market more as the child than the parent who is footing the bill, and that may make me different from the publishers who are looking more toward the profit line.

Lohr is defining Evangelical Christians as her primary audience with the reference to what the political conservatives may or may not believe about Christ. JourneyForth has a much narrower audience than the other publishers for their frontlist, and as a consequence, a deviation from their usual books may be more of a financial risk for them. These are additional comments concerning financial considerations in my informants' reasoning for selecting certain books to publish.

> Sperling: We do require a certain number of books to be sold; as things come up for reprint…we've found we've had to make some tough decisions about some books that they're just not earning back…we've decided not to do a new contract…but just let the series finish out and that's it. And then just sell it as backlist. And part of it is the series has probably just run its course; it's also in light of the current financial climate out there.
>
> Lohr: We consider the strength of the literature along with the nature of other titles in print and the general climate in the marketplace. If we have done our research well, each title is a calculated risk, but not a shot in the dark.
>
> Heuser: When you build your financial on the library market, the books may not make on hardcover, but they'll make enough to get in libraries and make more when they get into book clubs.
>
> Richardson: Parents want the best for their children. They have more disposable income and are willing to spend more money on things if it'll help their children

> get ahead. We moved up picture books [prices raised]…if the value's there…our sales team comes and says, this needs to be $15.99: it needs a higher price to get a higher value. Consumers say, 'This is an important book.'

Richardson tests his choices against what HarperCollins (Zonderkidz' parent company) is doing with their books and prices. His discussion of raising the price of a book to generate an impression of value, combined with his expectation that parents will pay for something they believe will help their children clearly demonstrates the power of the marketplace mentality in his decision making. In these comments and those following, the publishers' courting of consumers sounds very like the marketing practices of the secular publishing industry in Taxel's (2002) discussion of the industry at the turn of the century. My informants all were keenly interested in the prospects of expanding sales through changes in venue, book design, content, or consumer.

Expansion

All the companies had plans in place to either research the next step for growth into new markets or expanded markets, or were waiting to implement those plans. Most of the comments reflect the growth that has occurred through secular outlets such as "big box retailers" or grocery stores. This push for expansion to secular outlets, especially as it has a concurrent requirement of downplaying the Christian content of books, raises an interesting paradox. A broader market may make it possible for more people who are not Christians to be exposed to a literature in which the Christian ideology is present at every level (Hollindale, 1992). However, in order for the books to appeal to this broader market, the message must be softer, less obtrusive. At what point is the mission compromised by selling to the broader market? Here is what my informants have to say about expansion.

> Richardson: We want to look more at the public library. The research is done to go into this market, but we need a different salesman. We want to keep different products accessible to the consumer; each outlet is a different situation, and

pricing is dependent on the outlet. Maybe we'll partner with Big Idea [a company that produces videos as well as books, best known for Veggie Tales] with a licensed type of product.

Heuser: Twenty years ago, the Christian book market did not compete well with what comes out of ABA [American Booksellers Association members]. The CBA [Christian Booksellers Association] market still tends to imitate the general market, but our books are definitely competitive in formatting, color, art and writing now, especially our picture books. In Tommy Nelson' newest series [Today's Girls], not all of the characters are Christian. These books will have some settings where you'll have a divorce. That's an expansion where before, everyone was perfect, the all-American family.

Sperling: We've got a special sales guy now who devotes himself to those markets, the big box retailers such as WalMart or Target. As far as a Barnes and Noble, I think it's kind of tough to get in there with kids product. Occasionally one of our picture books might make it in there.

Lohr: And clearly we would like to broaden our market and broaden our profitability. We began developing a focused marketing group about 18 months ago. . . . We do not have a major bookstore presence at this point; this marketing group will have that as an initial goal when they start into the trade area. We have a number of our books with quizzes available through Accelerated Reader. So that has brought us into more of the public school setting than we were before.

None of my informants spoke about expansion in relation to how it would affect their overall Christian mission, nor did they talk about what the increased sales would enable them to do, though I did not ask that question directly. Because JourneyForth is an imprint of Bob Jones University Press and BJU Press is a subsidiary of Bob Jones University, some of their profits support programs within the university. It is interesting that the recent sale of BethanyHouse to Baker Book House was done in part to place

more resources into Bethany Fellowship's primary focus, which is supporting the work of overseas missionaries (*Bethany House on the Block*, 2002), so the implication is that there are other considerations in expansion than purely profit.

Marketing

Richardson and Sperling both emphasize that the company name should stand for a book parents can trust. "I want parents to know that if they see a ZonderKidz logo, they can know it has undergone careful development—it's biblically and developmentally appropriate" (Richardson, 2001). "When friends or parents see that [an author's name they know] they'll think, 'I trust that name. I trust Bethany,' and they'll pick it up for their kids or grandkids" (Sperling, 2001).

Heuser believes that the people who buy their books in secular outlets are the same ones who would buy them in Christian bookstores if it were their habit to shop there. Barna's (2003) research figures concerning the number of non-Christians who buy books would seem to contradict her, as he reports that half of all adult book-buyers bought at least one Christian book last year. Whomever buys the books, by placing them in outlets where Christians' shop, Christian publishers have dramatically increased sales. Both Richardson and Heuser acknowledge that their growth has come from secular outlets; they account for half their sales. "Mass market merchants have discovered inspirational sales. That's where our growth has come from as that's opened up" (Richardson, 2001). Book design strategies are quite different from publisher to publisher for these outlets. Sperling aims for the Christian customer. "The children's product needs to appeal to all denominations or most denominations . . . . The big box retailers are able to offer a different, much discounted price. And they are appealing more to a general market, but we haven't run into a design problem where we thought this wouldn't appeal out in the general market, or we thought it would appeal just as well in the Christian bookstores as it would elsewhere."

JourneyForth is more pragmatic, offering two lines to balance their offerings between the fundamentalist Christian and those politically conservative, but not necessarily Christian people who want "safe" books for their children to read. Lohr says, "We have those [books] we consider explicitly Christian, and in the catalog, they would have a little cross beside them. And Bible verses might be referenced; the families might have devotions, that sort of thing. We have others that we would consider classic fiction which have a Christian worldview, have a moral basis, but they would not be found offensive in a public library or in a public school. They're just good solid literature."

Zonderkidz designs and prices products according to the outlet, and they offer books that push the boundaries of what has been acceptable in the Christian market in the past as has Tommy Nelson. Richardson predicted that in another two or three years, more of the books coming from CBA publishers will match ABA books in their content, too, though he took pride in the efforts they make to be sure that their books are both biblically sound and developmentally appropriate. As an example of what I mean by pushing the boundaries, the book in my sample from ZonderKidz is a fantasy in which a laptop computer has the ability to change the future when one of the main characters types a story about the way he wants things to go. Many conservative Christians would shy away from presuming that anyone or anything other than God could affect the future, even if one considers the laptop a means of prayer.

There is a sense of pride in this growth that comes through the conversations. "We had 8 products in the pipeline in 1998, now 185 products . . . . Harper [HarperCollins] looks at us, little children's division and says, 'You guys are a selling machine; how do you sell all those books?'" (Richardson, 2001). Without sales there would of course be no way to work out their mission, but the emphasis on profit was unmistakable in my conversations. With the exception of Nancy Lohr, the answers were sketchy to the questions about mission and about how their book choices were judged to

be biblically sound, or how they balanced mission with profit. Here is the sense of their answers.

Balancing Mission and Profit

Zonderkidz' Richardson asserted that their mission to produce biblically and developmentally appropriate books had a "major impact" on the content of every product. BethanyHouse's Sperling said that "it's not so much that they go looking for particular topics, but they look for writers who can write out of their own experience . . . . It's more where a proposal comes in, it's well written, its characters are compelling, and it fits with our mission of spreading the gospel through our books." Tommy Nelson's Heuser spoke about the quality of the books entirely from the aspect of marketability: format, quality of writing, artwork; our conversation never considered the aspect of mission in books, and I was unable to contact her again to clarify her thoughts. Richardson was most interested in talking about the work he was doing to make sure books were developmentally appropriate for children rather than spiritually, the other designation in Zonderkidz' mission statement. He did not explain what it meant to have products "reviewed theologically." Sperling also seemed to take for granted what their mission was and how books stacked up in relation to it; the statement above is the only time she mentioned the gospel.

This point of the intersection of the profit motive and the prophet's message, or market and mission, is crucial to the study because the influence that the market appears to have is to dilute what moral message exists in the books. My contention is that because these publishers are Christian, there is an obligation for them to adhere to the principles set out in the Bible, including those that may raise controversy, but their choices overwhelmingly go toward those books that have a ready market. Perhaps 50 years ago, publishers might have used their more profitable books to finance those that did not have as broad an appeal, but in today's economic climate, each book has to provide a respectable return (Taxel, 2002). In the face of the incompatibility of capitalistic

commerce and meeting human needs, I believe there is still room to resist market pressures and accommodate ministry. Several publishers do so by turning their profits over to support other types of missions (e.g. Moody, BethanyHouse, JourneyForth), though this does not answer the question of how the books themselves portray a Christian life. As I said earlier, Jesus' example was one of social activism, and he demonstrated time and again that God's invitation is extended to all (e.g. John 4: 4-42, NIV), giving those who choose to accept it a strength and power otherwise untapped. Christians are commanded to love one another, which requires us to move beyond our personal relationship with God. Those who write about the need for a theology that emphasizes liberation speak consistently of the love of God enacted through service to others (e.g. Chopp, 1986; Moltmann, 1998; Volf, 1996). Two of my informants responded obliquely to these issues in response to question concerning whether their books aimed for personal discipleship or more extensively how to live a Christian life. These are their responses:

> Sperling: It's the non-fiction that's going to be more about discipling and whereas the fiction. . . .You've got to have an interesting story and that's going to be some sort of adventure or an aspect of life that intrigues other kids and seeing how, OK, seeing how we've got a character that's a Christian, how do they act in these situations. How does that affect them when they're out on the sports field, or how does that affect them when they're dealing with a sibling. That kind of thing.
>
> Lohr: When I look at the things that are being nominated for the Gold Medallion awards, [sales awards from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association], and that sort of acknowledgement in the publishing world, they're not generally the type of books we are publishing. They tend to be more devotional study guides, gift book types of things. And our books are actually novels, and they are people living out life in one way or another . . . . I do not want them to be overly didactic. I think the child who most needs the message is most apt to miss it in that kind of

> presentation . . . . That would be more our goal: to show Christianity worked out in a situation.

It is noteworthy that my informants did not give attention to these concerns for the most part. I do not know whether they simply took for granted the aspect of mission in their work, though the lack of a definitive statement about the biblical basis of their work, with the exception of JourneyForth, is perhaps indicative of their attitudes.

Richardson, Heuser, and Sperling did not articulate a clear connection between their choices of books and their mission statement. All my informants referred to their companies as "niched" in terms of their market segment, but the focus of the discussion we had about mission, for these three publishers, was centered on the market niche over the philosophical one. In other words, the difference to me was that they described themselves as Christian publishers because they sold to Christians rather than that they sold Christian books. The distinction is important because it seems to me to presage the same shift in attention from product to consumer that has occurred in the secular market (Taxel, 2002).

For example, according to Sperling, BethanyHouse books are "niche specific," "gender specific," or are generated to match a certain "interest for people." The sports series for girls, *Girls Only*, was an internal idea that BethanyHouse pitched to Beverly Lewis, who returned a proposal for the books. Or, authors have come to them and said, "This would be cool; I know a lot of kids are into this. Let's do a series about it." In contrast, Lohr talks about book acquisition in terms of ministry. "The majority of my authors would be mothers and teachers who have a hankering to write. They would like to advance their ministry in that way. . . .I feel that if I am meeting Christian standards of thought, feeling, action, if the book is well written, I am giving something to marketing that they can sell. And I let them worry about the dollars. . . . so that [the mission statement] is really my focus as the acquisitions [editor]. The message clearly needs to be

in harmony with scripture. That does not mean it has to be explicitly Christian, but it has to be clearly in harmony with scripture."

I doubt that the other three publishers would disagree with Lohr's statement, but my point is that in talking about mission, their consumers, the market in general, market research, and expansion, their focus was on fitting the book to the consumer. I garnered my impressions of the industry from only a few interviews: ½ hour to 2 hour conversations with my informants, and the course of each conversation was much different. However, within the structure of my questions, which were initially the same to all informants, I allowed them to direct the course of the topics I raised, and most of our time was spent talking about marketing aspects of the business. One aspect of publishing for children that provides another means of talking about how publishers approach market considerations in terms of mission is multicultural literature. Neither Christian nor secular publishers do a creditable job of publishing literature that reflects the diversity of our society (Harris, 1993; Taxel, 1994, 2002), though I maintain that Christian publishers have a mandate to serve as God requires, not as the profit motive requires, which may mean taking risks that seem economically foolish. What my informants had to say about multicultural literature clearly expresses the conflict between the goal of producing a literature for (presumably all) Christians and the goal of maintaining a profitable business.

Multicultural Literature in the Christian Market

As I will show in the next section of my discussion and analysis, my reading of the books shows few children in any circumstances of life today that anyone other than a middle-class white Christian would experience, and only if that person lived a very sheltered life. If that reading holds to the many books available, then I wonder how the publishing companies would define "Christian" in their mission statements. Evidently "Christians" does not mean "all" Christians, or even all Evangelical Christians. I asked all my informants about whether they include multicultural books or authors in their

acquisitions programs, and I asked about the multicultural content of their books, and they had similar responses. The publishers went to some length to clarify their points, and the issues they raise are important. What they highlight are market concerns: the books have to pay for themselves, and if the market isn't there, then the publishers can't afford to print the books.

> Heuser: Judson used to hit the African American market. The CBA has responded more by making books more multicultural, or like in Today's Girls, switching lead roles in each book, or a secondary character might be someone. . . . The problem is that reaching the market, to develop and create the book, you base it on what you want to project sales to be, to pay the writer. . . . We've had a few books come in we really like, but we don't have the market to support it. . . . It's a tithe book; we're not going to make money on it, but just have to have a commitment.
>
> Richardson: Our first book called *Legend of the Valentine* (Bond, 2002) has all characters of color; the writer is white, but we found an African American illustrator. My challenge given to a couple of African American groups is this: if you can hit the kids of our market, their needs and development . . . . We haven't found the right group to partner with. It's hard to find authors there; we're pretty niched. We rejected one recently; the writing wasn't quality. It was put together too fast. We want to partner with an organization that has its own marketing base and can help us to do it. On a smaller basis on the child side, there wouldn't be any resistance to that [publishing a multicultural book] at all.
>
> Sperling: We don't buy or sell multicultural literature because we don't have the audience or venues for selling. We won't go looking for one, but if one comes, we'd be thrilled. I think a lot of it is we just don't get the proposals from them because they don't see us as that kind of publisher.

> Lohr: Where the ethnicities fit naturally, they are there. We are not attempting to do anything that would be an agenda to present this thought or that thought . . . . We want authors to write what they know. That's where they are most comfortable and presumably the most successful. At this point, all of my authors are Caucasian, and that makes a difference in what they're comfortable writing about. I was working with a lovely African American woman a year ago and we got her piece developed, and it ended up being much more for the adult fiction market, which we don't even attempt to get into. So sadly, she moved on, but it was a gorgeous piece, and I hope she will come back with something for children . . . . If the Lord provides manuscripts of that sort, I will certainly be happy to publish them. I'm clearly in the position of knowing here's what I would like to put out this year, but if the Lord doesn't provide the manuscript, it's not going to happen. So, at this point, as we pray for direction and provision, if he provides manuscripts like that, I'll publish them. If not, I can beat the drum and beat the bushes and everything else, and my efforts will be for naught.

Lohr's statement is a stark reminder of the major difference between a secular publisher and a Christian one. God's work is immanent in hers. Her words could be read as using the name of God to legitimate her choices, which is a charge that has been made against Christians, often rightly so, throughout history. Reading from an insider perspective, her statement is not a justification for *her* choices but rather an acknowledgement of how God moves in history, and an affirmation of his Lordship over her work. The desire to further the gospel is inherent in the work my informants do; it is the foundation for their business, but each one has to work out his or her faith in the secular business world, and so the work of interpretation of the Christian mandate is carried on corporately. As Chopp and Taylor (1994) noted, however, when speaking of the work of the Catholic church, it is vital to consider not just the inner workings of the church, but how the structure of it can affect the people it serves. The same is true of

Christian publishers. The effects of their internal choices about how to go about publishing books spreads beyond the person who reads the book, just as the message a worshiper hears at a service in church spreads beyond its doors in how that person chooses to live out the word s/he's heard. Publishers' mission statements attest that their books can affect the spiritual and developmental growth of children, so how much attention do they give to the message that the books carry versus the marketing of them as "products?" There are a number of ways that they negotiate the answer.

Conclusion

As Heuser said, the CBA publishers imitate the ABA publishers in terms of the quality of the design and construction of their products, and if Richardson is right, some will also continue to move closer to the topics and writing styles of ABA books. In the last decade, as inspirational sales became a magnet for the large publishers, mass-market outlets are more available to the Christian publishers, too, and in fact are in large part responsible for the tremendous growth some have experienced. Some publishers have also consciously adapted their lines or designs to appeal to the non-Christian consumer, garnering additional sales from those who would be put off by an overtly Christian message. All of my informants affirmed that a high quality story, and not a didactic one, are vital for successful sales, and just as vital, stories have to resonate with scriptural themes or truths to maintain a thematic standard. The real difficulty lies in the fuzziness of just what is theological or scriptural or biblical, and what makes one book acceptable when another is not. The mission statements, often the only reference to the Christianness of their books in web sites or catalogs, do not provide for a detailed understanding of how publishers mesh their biblical standards with their marketing prerogatives:

-- to be the leading publisher of biblical, innovative, and imaginative products
-- consistent with the teachings found in the Bible and nurture their faith while pointing them to a personal relationship with God.

-- help Christians apply biblical truth in all areas of life

-- a love for and an understanding of the written word, ultimately helping them love and understand God's word.

JourneyForth does have extensive position papers that set out what standards they follow for choosing literature to publish. They, too, look to the books that are good, moral literature, but not overtly Christian to expand their markets.

The implication to me is that for most publishers, Christian books are defined primarily by what sells. Decisions that are made about a book are weighted by marketability such that some publishers are unwilling to take a risk on books that fall within their mission, but not within their market. From a market perspective, this only makes sense, though 50 years ago, publishers found it easier to take risks on some books, bolstered by the profits from others. The fact that there are a few multicultural publishers attempting to broaden the market to include books that appeal to non-white Christians is hopeful, but especially in terms of multicultural literature, the publishing industry as a whole does not do a good job of meeting these needs. I believe Christians are held to a higher standard than the market.

I am suggesting that by identifying as a Christian, there are deeper missions that must be considered, which include an element of service that is difficult to justify to a bottom line. Heuser's remark about "tithe books" alludes to that. I am reminded of the difficulty, in Jesus' words, of serving both God and mammon. To negotiate the political economy of publishing, Christian publishers strive to produce books that are rooted in Christian values and meet the needs of their traditional consumers as well as appeal to a more broad-based buying group. To do this they have adopted many of the buying, packaging, and selling strategies of ABA publishers.

Some of my informants speak of books for children as "products" of "brands" that must turn around a profit in order to stay in print. Others are concerned with licensing, with creating "book product" that appeals to the parent through its appearance, or is

known by its title and author, and hopefully, is read by children. The language, methods, appearance, and to a small degree, the content of books from the secular publishing houses has been duplicated by Christian publishers as they push to expand into new markets. I suggested in my introduction that the influence of emphasizing business over books in the secular publishing industry has degraded the quality of literature that is available for children, but Christian publishers feel that their sales have increased in part because the quality of their books is stronger, and also because the Christian message in the books is no longer as obvious, making them more attractive in secular outlets. There are no answers here, just a question about how much influence the culture can have on a Christian book before it is no longer what it says it is.

This section has explored the economic and cultural ground for the books in the sample, through my informants' discussion of how they negotiate the political economy of publishing from a Christian perspective. In the next section, I begin the discussion that explores how Christianity practices are portrayed in the books and how issues raised in multicultural literature are related to Christian practices.

Section II: The Presence of God

Introduction

There is a great deal of ideological variance in these 29 books. They range from books that have a clear agenda expressed in a didactic tone (e.g. Thomas, 2002) to those that I had to double-check to be sure they were printed by Christian publishers (e.g. High, 1997; Whelan, 1979/1993). To help explain the ideological assumptions that appear to drive the character development and plots in the stories, I grouped the books in reference to the presence of God in the stories. I also use the groupings to explain how Christian practices are used in the books. The first group of books I called "God as Character." In these stories, God was integral to the action of the story. The characters not only sought his wisdom, they incorporated it into their decisions. They expected by habit his involvement in their lives, and they assumed that the purpose of their lives was to honor

him. In a typical book in this category (e.g. Finley, 1868/1999; Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001; Wiggin, 1995), the characters often turned to God in prayer. They may also have had family devotions, attended church, and conversations about God at other times. He was fully present in action of the story through the characters' reliance on him. This category had many examples of the level of ideology that Hollindale (1992) refers to as explicit, when an author's agenda is easily discerned, and it also provided examples for the other two levels, sociocultural influences, and the implicit beliefs of the author. However, there was no correlation in any of these categories to the characters' involvement in social justice advocacy; that could as likely occur in a book where God was fully present as in one of the other two groups.

The second category I called "God as Sage." The premise of these stories may have been a life lesson based on a teaching from the Bible, or characters may have turned to God to solve a problem, for the first time or habitually. However, there was a sense of God as the fount of wisdom, the wise person who had the answer when needed, one who provided warnings against evil and guidelines to aid discernment, but who watched "from a distance," in the words of a popular song. In one of these books (e.g. Hambrick, 2000; Morris, 2001; Randall, 1999) a typical character might have prayed occasionally in thanks or for an extra bit of help at the last minute. Characters might also have quoted scripture, but more in support of the action than as a resource. Conversations about God were rare in this group.

The third category is "God as Setting." These books have characters who were engaged in a Christian enterprise of some sort or who simply ascribed to being Christian. The prayers or discussions about God, if any, tended to be descriptive. While most characters acted as though they believe in God, he did not appear to take part in the action of the story in any active manner. These books varied widely in content and style (e.g. Hess, 1994; McCaffrey, 2001), but what typified them was an absence of the practices that were evidence in the other two groups of the presence of God. In these

books, God was alive, but absent. Excerpts from these books are good examples of Hollindale's (1992) level of ideology that referred to the sociocultural influences that necessarily contribute to the writing and reading of a book, resulting in a common sense of the way society works that is often unquestioned because it seems so obvious.

I placed the books in each group by my understanding of the degree to which God is present in the stories. Some of the markers of Christianity—prayer, scripture, and God-talk—were in all the books. The differences I sensed in the presence of God in the stories came not only from the markers themselves, but also how they were used. For example, there were variances in the timing and amount of the practices of prayer, scripture reading or God-talk. On one extreme, characters prayed only when they got into difficult situations that were beyond their abilities to untangle (e.g. Windle, 1994/1999/2001), which indicated to me that God was not present in the story. On the other end of the continuum, prayer was a regular conversation with God about all aspects of life (e.g. Lawton, 2002). The same was true of scripture reading. In some books, there was none (e.g. High, 1997). In others, a scripture was the focus of the story or provided the solution to events (e.g. Wilson & Dengler, 2001). In terms of God-talk, some characters didn't have conversations about God at all (e.g. McCaffrey, 2001),and for others the conversations occurred throughout the story (e.g. Rue, 2001), helping the characters understand what happened and how to react.

How characters developed through the events of the book was another was to gauge the presence of God was character development. Typically, characters grew in some manner—in understanding of their own need for God, in confidence in their own abilities, simply reaching a milestone that was in question, or maturing to accept new roles in their family or community (e.g. Rue, 2001; Cannon, 2002). If an individual's growth was portrayed as the outcome of perseverance in circumstances, where the credit went to the character of the individual, then I placed that on one end of the continuum (e.g. Whelan, 1979/1993) where God was not present. The other end included books

where growth came in relationship with God or in an awareness of the needs of others outside oneself (e.g. Byrd, 2002).

Who in the story was given credit for the outcome of events was another source of information about God's presence in the stories. Some books gave friends and family the credit for helping solve the character's problems (e.g. Randall, 1999), or the characters realized that their own inner strength, combined with their community, was sufficient to solve their difficulties (e.g. Cannon, 2002), an indication of self-sufficiency, not depending on God. Others focused entirely on God's gifts of learning, of protection, or of provision, and the outcome became a combination of things where the primacy of God was not taken for granted in the unconscious sense, but taken for granted in answer to prayer (e.g. Mackall, 2000). Table 4-2 shows which books I placed in each group. The table includes author and title, genre, setting, the publisher, and whether the book is part of a series or is a stand-alone title.

I use excerpts from the books throughout the descriptive analysis to give specific examples for discussion, but I recognize that the content of the excerpts also raises issues that aren't sufficiently addressed in this section or the next. For example, there are excerpts that portray Native Americans in a highly stereotypic manner, or girl as helplessly dependent on her brother, or the class bully as someone from the lower class. I will come back to these issues in the section on social advocacy.

<u>God as Character</u>

This group of books brings the characters fully into a life where God is central and involved. The high use of the practices of religion: prayer, scripture reading and conversations about God for the purpose of bringing children to accept Jesus leads me to believe that the authorial audience for many of the books in this category (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998), which has to do with the beliefs the author imputes to the reader, is primarily children who live in Christian families but are not necessarily Christians themselves. The first excerpt is from a book in the *The Adventures in Odyssey* series. The

series includes books, audio plays which air on Christian radio stations, and videos available in Christian bookstores and in some video rental stores. Each book deals with situations that are common to many young Christians. *Point of No Return* (McCusker, 1995) tells about 11 days in Jimmy's life. As the story begins, Jimmy and his sister are home alone. Donna is on the phone and not paying attention when Tony comes over, and the boys smoke a cigar in Jimmy's room. As Jimmy gets ready for bed after his parents

TABLE 4-2: Book by Categories

God as Setting - 7 books					
Author	**Title**	**Genre**	**Setting**	**Publisher**	**Series?**
Cannon	*Charlotte's Rose*	Historical Fiction	Mormon trail from Iowa to Utah, 1856	BehtanyHouse	Stand alone
Hess	*Dust of the Earth*	Fictionalized Biography	Georgia and Pennsylvania, 1930-present	Kregel	Stand alone
Jackson & Jackson	*Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace*	Historical Fiction	New York City and Dowegiac, Michigan, 1854	BethanyHouse	Thematic series *Trailblazer Books*
High	*A Stone's Throw from Paradise*	Realistic Fiction	Pennsylvania	Eerdman's	Stand alone
McCaffrey	*Emmanuel McClue and The Mystery of the Shroud*	Fantasy	London; Boston; Turin, Italy; and Agrentina	Ambassador	Stand alone
Thomas	*Secret of Noah's Flood*	Realistic Fiction	In several western states	Faith Kids	Series *Detective Zack*
Whelan	*A Time to Keep Silent*	Realistic Fiction	Rural Eastern US	Eerdmans	Stand alone
God as Sage - 12 books					
Author	**Title**	**Genre**	**Setting**	**Publisher**	**Series?**
Hambrick	*The Year of Abi Crim*	Realistic Fiction	Suburban US	Bob Jones University	Stand alone
Lewis	*Star Status*	Realistic Fiction	Colorado	BethanyHouse	Series *Girls Only*
Littleton	*Tracks in the Sand*	Realistic Fiction	Island on the Outer Banks, North Carolina	Baker	Series *Ally O'Connor Adventures*

Mackall	*A Horse of a Different Color*	Realistic Fiction	Rural US	Concordia	Series Horsefeathers
Maselli	*Double-take: Thinkgs Are Not What They Seem*	Fantasy	Emisburg, Georgia	Zonderkidz	Series *Laptop*
Morris	*Painted Warriors and Wild Lions: Travel in Africa*	Realistic Fiction	Africa	Moody	Eries *The Adventures of the Kerrigan Kids*
Myers	*My Life as a Smashed Burrito with Extra Hot Sauce*	Realistic Fiction	Suburban US, summer camp	Word	Series *The Incredible Worlds of Wally McDoogle*
Peretti	*Flying Blind*	Realistic Fiction	California	Tyndale	Series *The Cooper Kids Adventure Series*
Randall	*The I Scream Truck*	Realistic Fiction	Suburban US	Broadman & Holman	Series *Heebie Jeebies*
Wilson & Dengler	*The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert*	Realistic Fiction	Western US desert	Moody	Series *The New Sugar Creek Gang*
Windle	*Cave of the Inca Re*	Realistic Fiction	Bolivia	Kregel	Series *The Parker Twins Series*
God as Character - 10 books					
Author	**Title**	**Genre**	**Setting**	**Publisher**	**Series?**
Byrd	*Take a Chance*	Realistic Fiction	Island off Los Angeles, California	BethanyHouse	Series *The Hidden Diary*
Finley	*Elsie's Impossible Choice*	Historical Fiction	Southern plantation	Mission City Press	Series *A Life of Faith: Elsie Dinsmore*
Greegor	*Trouble of the Northwest Territory*	Historical Fiction	Muskingum River in Ohio, 1870s	EPub2K	Stand alone
Hardy	*The Wooden Ox*	Historical Fiction	Mozambique, Africa, 1980s	Kregel	Stand alone
Jenkins & LaHaye	*Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice*	Fantasy	Israel, Illinois, present time	Tyndale	Series Left Behind: *The Kids*
Lawton	*Courage to Run: A Story Based on the Life of Harriet Tubman*	Historical Fiction	Southern plantation, 1850s	Moody	Thematic series *Daughters of the Faith Series*

Pistole	*The Palomino*	Realistic Fiction	Virginia	Pacific	Series *The Sonrise Farm Series*
McCoy-Miller	*The Journey of Yung Lee: From China to America*	Historical Fiction	China, San Francisco, California gold fields, 1854	Cook Communication	Thematic series *The Immigrants' Chronicles*
McCusker	*Point of No Return*	Realistic Fiction	Odyssey, a make-believe suburban US town	Focus on the Family	Series *Adventure in Odyssey*
Wiggin	*The Mystery of the Sunken Steamboat*	Realistic Fiction	Lake Michigan island	Moody	Series *Hannah's Island*

have come in, sent Tony home, and put Jimmy on restriction, he looks at the photo of his grandmother.

> She'd lost a lot of weight since that picture was taken. The cancer did it. It had been eating her alive a few years ago, but everyone prayed for her, and it went into remission. Jimmy wasn't so sure prayer had made her better, but he didn't dare say so out loud.
>
> You wouldn't know how ill Grandma was if you saw only the picture…her bright blue eyes…made Jimmy feel funny because he suspected they could somehow see much deeper than eyes should be allowed to see.
>
> Grandma Barclay was a very devout woman. As far as anyone knew, she had never missed a day of church in her life. Hers was a deep-rooted, practical faith. It was as real and natural to her as breathing. Jimmy's father felt the influence of that faith and tried to instill it in both Jimmy and Donna. Donna liked church. Jimmy thought it was boring. . . .
>
> Jimmy's parents fussed with him for a while about his lack of faith. They did everything they could to get him interested. But lately it was as if they had given up on him. His mom said that they had decided to stop worrying and let God do the rest.
>
> That was fine with Jimmy, because God seemed to want to leave him alone, too.

> Grandma didn't fuss about it at all. When she found out Jimmy didn't like church, she just smiled and said he would enjoy it eventually. *He would have to. The call in his life was too strong.* (italics in original, McCusker, 1995, p. 6-8)

The word "call" has a specific meaning when it used in Christian dialogue or used at it is in this sentence. She may literally be referring to a knowledge that this is now the time to respond, but she may also mean that Jimmy will feel a personal sense of avocation. One is "called" to one's life work by God. It is holy work, meaning that one is set apart to do it, and no one else can meet this particular call. The fact that Jimmy does decide to become a Christian the next night at a youth meeting at church is an example of an implicit belief of an author that infuses his work (Hollindale, 1992). The expectation of this Christian family is that it is only a matter of time until Jimmy accepts Jesus. The language of this excerpt tells us that Jimmy lives in a Christian family but is not interested in church or God himself. There is a sense of "it's only a matter of time" in the parents' "leaving it to God" or the grandmother's "the call is too strong."

Jimmy's hope that because he accepted Jesus he would not get into any more trouble is quickly dashed. His life falls apart rapidly, and the rest of the story makes the second point that is implicit: being a Christian is not a guarantee of happiness; it takes work to walk with God, but he will help you. Jimmy experiences rejection from his friends, but quickly receives support that is credited to God. He wakes up Monday morning to a preacher who is talking about how Peter, a disciple of Jesus, was filled with the Holy Spirit, witnessed to a crowd, and converted 3,000 people. Jimmy decides that if Peter could do that, he can tell his friends what happened to him. He is unable to articulate the gospel the same way Dave did, though, and his friends laugh at him and make fun of him. When he gets home, he wished

> --no it was really a prayer, though Jimmy didn't realize it—that he could talk to somebody who understood how he felt. At that moment, he thought he was the

> only person in the world who had ever become a new Christian and was teased about it. (p. 65-6)

He looks in his closet for something to do and finds the Bible that his grandmother had given him. The inscription read,

> For Jimmy,
>
> Do not let people look down on you because you are young, but be to them an example in your speech and behavior, in your love and faith and sincerity. (I Tim. 4:12, NIV)
>
> Love, Grandma B.
>
> Was this the answer to his wish-that-was-really-a-prayer? "Don't let people look down on you," it said. "Be an example in your speech and behavior." Is that what God wanted him to know? He couldn't be sure. (p. 66)

Jimmy kneels to pray but Donna charges into the room, and he quickly pretends to be looking for something. She has come to tell him Jacob, the pastor's son, has come to visit. Jacob heard about his rough day and shares with Jimmy how Jacob felt and what happened when he first tried to witness to friends.

> Jimmy sat down on his bed next to Jacob. He looked intently at the brown-haired kid who didn't talk much but came by at just the right time as if he had been sent by someone.
>
> Jimmy realized he wasn't alone after all. His wish-that-was-really-a-prayer had been answered. (p. 65-8)

In this way, the story makes plain that everything that is happening to Jimmy has a purpose, moving him to understand how God will work in his life to teach him what he wants him to know. The explicit ideology (Hollindale, 1992) of the author is apparent throughout these examples, and the events of the book, in a family home that is very involved in church, to church youth activities, to sharing the gospel at school proclaims the sociocultural ideology of the community (Hollindale, 1992). This book is well-

written without didacticism, yet the whole story details a boy's experiences and interpretations of how God works in his life. His family, his friends, old and new, and his thinking all contribute to the idea that God is right there, waiting for Jimmy to come to him and then working with him as he learns to trust God. This story is wholly concerned with those topics, however. There are no multicultural characters or situations where Jimmy is made aware of the needs of people unlike himself. The theology expressed is not one of liberation, but of personal relationship. While this is a story of a boy becoming a Christian in the usual way, *Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001) is about people becoming Christians in desperation.

The four main characters in the *Left Behind* series all became Christians after their families were taken up into heaven, and they were left behind. They met at a church in the first book where they learned about what was happening from a preacher who was intellectually knowledgeable about God but who had never accepted Jesus. The series is based on the judgments that are prophesied in Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, and *Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice*, #18 in the series, is about the fifth judgment (there are seven altogether). At each judgment, many people are killed, and the infrastructure of the countries is gradually broken down. The kids know that they are completely at God's mercy and they pray,

> "God, you were able to stop the lions from eating Daniel," Mark prayed. "You saved Noah from the water that flooded the world. Now we're asking for another miracle. Help us figure out a way to keep warm during this judgment."
>
> When they finished praying, Melinda scooted her sleeping bag next to Vicki. "Are we going to die?" Melinda whispered? (p. 149)

And there the book ends. The presence of God is pervasive in these books primarily because they take place during the time of Judgment, a prophesied event that represents an ideological belief of Evangelical Christians about the "end times." This ideology permeates the book: it is in the premise, the conversations of the characters and

the setting. The story is all about wrath and very little of it is about the love of God. Every character who is not yet "saved,"; that is, has made a decision to accept Jesus, is presented with the gospel and encouraged to convert: an obvious and explicit message. The characters spend little time in worship, prayer, or study, because they are outrunning the Global Community police, but every occurrence is acknowledged to be from God, and they constantly listen to preachers who are interpreting Revelation so they will know what will happen next. All the religious details of these books come from Revelation, and those are doled out from book to book in the series. It's worth noting that three of the books in the series were on the CBA list of the top 10 sellers in 2002, which is due to marketing and the influence of the adult series rather than the quality of the children's books. The books are packed with action, violence, and distress, but the dialogue is choppy and uninspired, and there is little description of characters or settings, and no transitions from one scene to another, just a space in the text. Had I not read the first book in the series, I would not have known who anyone was, and there were several characters who were completely mysterious as they were not identified in any way. The God of wrath in *Darkening Skies* is in great contrast to the gentle and compassionate God in *Elsie's Impossible Choice* (Finley, 1868/1999).

The *Elsie Dinsmore* series was originally published beginning in the late 1860s, after the American Civil War. A foreword addressed the changes made to this edition: "In the belief that Elsie's exciting stories have much to say to modern readers, Mission City Press has carefully adapted the original series, preserving the unique style and flavor of Miss Finley's work but updating content and language for 21st century audiences" (p. ix). One of the main changes in the book is the language that's used to refer to the slaves and the dialect of their speech. Similarly to the Dr. Dolittle series written in the same era, the egregious racism of the books was expunged as new editions were printed (McKissack & McKissack, 2002). It is worth noting, however, that reprints of the originals are also

readily available. The foreword explained what Elsie's Christian upbringing would possibly have been like in that era and also what medical care people had available.

Elsie Dinsmore, the main character, is a young girl in this book, recently reunited with her father after her mother's death. Her understanding of scripture and determination to be Godly in all she does is remarkable in such a young person, but carried convincingly throughout the book. Elsie's "nursemaid," Aunt Chloe, a slave, and Mrs. Murray, the housekeeper where she lived until she was 4, taught her that the Bible is the true word of God. This passage is from the first page of the book, setting the tone for what follows, and clearly setting forth the author's ideological beliefs in the importance of reading one's Bible, praying, and maintaining a close relationship with the Lord.

> The frost had disappeared by the time Elsie was dressed. As she did each morning, she settled into her little, rosewood rocking chair—so prized because it was a gift from her father—to read her Bible and talk to Jesus, her beloved Savior and Friend. She enjoyed this time with the Lord immensely. She began by asking the Lord to open her heart and mind to the Scriptures; then she read and reflected on a passage and memorized a verse from the passage she had read. Finally, she knelt to say her morning prayers and asked the Lord to grant her the "fruit of the spirit" of which Paul spoke in the fifth chapter of the Book of Galatians—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (p. 3-4)

Elsie's entire outlook on life is governed by scripture, and this is where the difficulty in the story arises. Her father is not a believer and finds his beloved daughter's piety annoying. They become estranged, and throughout the time of their separation, Elsie depends wholly on the Lord to help her. Her father gradually divorces her from all her Christian influences, and finally sends Aunt Chloe to a different plantation. After Aunt Chloe leaves, Elsie is surprised to hear her father tell her that Chloe has encouraged her rebellion. She answers,

> "But, Papa, Aunt Chloe would never support me in disobeying you. She's always taught me to yield a ready and cheerful obedience to *all* your commands and wishes, unless they are contrary to God's Word."
>
> Horace stiffened. "There!" he said sternly. "That is just it. Aunt Chloe and that Mrs. Murray brought you up to believe that you and they are wiser than your own father. That you and they are more capable of interpreting the Bible and judging right from wrong. But *they* are wrong, Elsie, and you must accept *my* authority." (italics in original, p. 158-9)

The issue of filial obedience is the second theme in this book, but the constant refrain an ideological belief that may not have seemed as overdone in 1868 as it does today, as it was more common for books to teach such virtues to children in the past (Hunt, 1994; MacLeod, 1994). Elsie's father is not a Christian, and there is the crux of the matter. He leaves her alone, and the following passage illustrates what occurs several times in the story as Jesus comforts her.

> Reminded of his love, she felt her losses like new knives to her heart, and her body was convulsed with sobbing. Her head pounded, but just when she thought the pain might kill her, a voice more gentle than the softest spring breeze whispered, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." She listened, and the voice came again, "When your father and mother forsake you, the Lord will receive you." At these words, Elsie's sobs subsided, and her head began to clear. Then the voice spoke once more: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you."
>
> And Elsie fell asleep. (p. 159)

Miss Finley's writing is so gently authoritative that this improbable story becomes tender and engaging, almost able to make me forget the setting of privilege that makes such a story possible. The issue of racism is never brought to the fore, as the fact of slavery is understood but not approached directly in the story. I count this story as one

that has multicultural characters, therefore, but does not engage in the issues. I will return to this point in the section on social advocacy. God's presence, though permeating this story, is directed to two tasks: sustaining Elsie in her trials and drawing her father to Jesus.

The final example in this section is a story that is also concerned with evangelism, but with the side benefit of enlightening characters about their prejudices toward Native Americans. *Trouble – of the Northwest Territory* (Greegor, 1992) was published on the Internet through a Christian group that for a small fee offers books that would perhaps not be published otherwise. I included it because self-publishing is a viable enterprise today primarily because of the inexpensive medium of the Internet. It may not have a wide readership, but it shows the range of what is available in the genre.

I found this ebook problematic in several ways, and therefore did some reading about the Delaware to check the accuracy of the setting. The historical account I read bears out the time and place of the story (Sultzman, 2003). It is set in the Ohio Valley in the 1780s or 1790s. Several groups of Moravian Christian Indians of the Delaware Tribe moved to this area from Pennsylvania. In 1782, 90 of them were killed by Pennsylvania volunteers and the deaths were blamed on the Delaware. The Christian Indians, who maintained their neutrality, were caught between the white settlers, called "Long Knives," and the Delaware who wanted the Christian Indians to fight with them against the whites. This story is set some time after the Delaware burned an army colonel at the stake in revenge for the Indians' murders, and most of the Christian Indians moved again to go further north and west. There are two of these Christian Indians in this story; they stayed behind with other Delaware when their group moved on because one of them was too ill to make the journey.

Jeremiah's family homesteads on the river and hears about a new family downriver. Mr. Daniels and Jedd, who at 16 is four years older than Jeremiah, came west to avenge the deaths of Mrs. Daniels and his other children, who were "massacred" by

Indians. Jeremiah's family are Christians who respect the wishes of the Indians and stay off their land, believing that there is fault on both sides. The ebook does not address the question of the white theft of Native American's lands. When Jeremiah disappears, the Daniels are ready to hunt Indians, but Jeremiah's father continually speaks caution. He is not willing to blame the Indians for Jeremiah's disappearance without evidence and believes that the only ones violating boundaries (which, indeed, they don't recognize) are the Daniels. Jeremiah's father bases all he says on Scripture and prayer; in fact, as they begin a search for Jeremiah, Jedd complains,

> "You and your everlasting praying," grumbled Jedd. "Seems to me that's all you'd get done, as much of it as you do. You'd be better off just to get busy and take care of things yourself."
>
> "Well, Jedd, I've found that things go a lot better when I let God take control of any situation. Sometimes that means I have to get out and get busy, and sometimes it means I have to wait on God and keep a close fellowship with Him. He's seen me through a lot already, and I know He'll see me through this, too, if I let Him." (p. 57)

This type of declaration of the importance of God in their lives is repeated throughout the book and frames the family's expectation, similarly to the ideology in *Point of No Return*, that Jeremiah will become a Christian as well. Jeremiah's disappearance has given the Daniels a chance to see Mr. Walker's Christian beliefs in action as he prays, gives credit for his plans to God, and trusts him to provide a way to find Jeremiah. Mr. Walker crossed the river in the midst of a raging storm to look for Jeremiah, and Jedd didn't know if he was "brave" or "just crazy." The boy did not intend to stay away. He was tracking his pet raccoon, Trouble, and fell and broke a leg. During the night he has prayed, but has doubts about the point of prayer since Jedd's opinions have challenged his father's. In the morning, he sees an Indian across the creek, and this is his response.

> Other than the gurgling of the creek, Jeremiah had not heard a sound. His mind was on Trouble and her injury.
>
> When he did look up, his eyes grew wide, his heart jumped, and he opened his mouth to yell for help, but nothing came out. He had never known fear like this. There, just across the creek, stood the dreaded Indian looking straight at him. The Indian's skin was a deep brick red; his eyes were as dark as coal; and his braided black hair hung far below his shoulders. The Indian wore buckskin breeches and a shirt made of the same material, but Jeremiah could still see Indian's [sic] bulging arm and leg muscles. A bow and arrow seemed almost a part of him. Fear gripped Jeremiah. He wanted to run faster than he had ever urn before. But he sat dead still.
>
> The native made the first move. He pointed to himself and said slowly, "Name…Andrew." (p. 62)

This picture of strength and nobility is further heightened as Andrew shares with Jeremiah his belief in Jesus, causing Jeremiah to accept Jesus right then. Andrew splints his leg, makes a crutch "as swiftly as only an Indian can" and takes him home and he miraculously appears in the woods on two more occasions when Jeremiah, and then Jedd need help. Andrew's Christianity becomes a testimony to the power of God, which I do not mean to denigrate, but his Christianity completely ignores the political difficulties, and it even causes Mr. Daniels' change of heart about his hatred of Indians.

> "I saw these Indians go into my cabin," Mr. Daniels told the silent group. "I quietly followed, and I've been standing here at the door listening to your whole conversation with my boy. I've been wrong – mighty wrong. I heard what this squaw had to say, and I just realized that many Indians have had the same thing happen to them as I've had happen to me. Who knows? Maybe those Indians who killed my family were seeking revenge, too. That can be a mighty vicious circle with too many innocent folks getting killed. Yes, sir, Esther's way

> is the right way. Jedd said he's a Christian. His ma would have been glad to hear that; but that's no thanks to me, but to all you folks. Mr. Walker, I think I need to know more about this Christianity stuff." (p. 126-7)

Andrew ends the scene by relating how much easier Indian/white relations will be now that the Indians don't have to fear Mr. Daniels' anger because he has become a Christian, another ideological belief that is based on biblical teaching, and that is that the love of God has the power to change people's hearts. In reality, the war between the Delaware in the Ohio Valley and the "Long Knives" continued until 1795 when the Indians were finally driven out of Ohio (Sultzman, 2003). The author sums the story thusly:

> Jeremiah thought back to the beginning of the summer before he had become a Christian. He had felt rejected – like Trouble was his only friend. Now he was surrounded by very special Christian friends, and their part of the Northwest Territory had become a safer place for settlement because of Christianity. (p. 129)

What is especially troubling is the positive picture of Christianity as manifest destiny, related through the Christianity of the native character! Mr. Daniels' words (a self-professed murderer of Indians) reduces the years of bitter fighting over the Ohio Valley to a misunderstanding of motive. In addition, Andrew is left to explain to the non-Christian Indians in his town why he let Jeremiah escape, why he brought supplies to the white people, and why he is off their land. It is as though it is incumbent on the Indians, the victims, to risk their lives to make it clear to their persecutors what the cost of bigotry really is. Perhaps the message here is that such a complex story is disserved by such a simple treatment, but my reading of the book is that the author's ideological assumptions maintain that it *is* this simple: if everyone would become a Christian, hatred and bigotry and violence would cease. I agree that it's possible; the problem is that even Jesus acknowledged that not everyone would choose to come to the Lord (Matt. 10: 11-5,

NIV), and Christians need more than platitudes to negotiate life. God is present for this family and their neighbors in his provision for them in need, in their daily interaction with him in prayer and study. This story does attempt to engage in issues of racial discord, but with the disturbing assumptions I've noted. I will also return to this story in my discussion of social advocacy.

These few excerpts show the range of the practices of religion which mark this group of books as stories that fully involve God in the characters' lives. I feel that many of the stories position the reader toward accepting Jesus in their lives and/or learning how to live as a Christian. Elsie and Jimmy's grandmother's prayers are like conversations with a close friend, and they have conversations about God with others, too. Jimmy talks with his parents, his pastor, and a store owner about God to learn more about this journey he's undertaken, while Elsie's conversations are an attempt to convince her father of his need for Jesus. All of these books demonstrate Hollindale's (1992) three levels of ideology, in their portrayals of the way society works, in the implicit beliefs about Christian relationships, and in the didactic explanations of conversions. *Elsie's Impossible Choice* (Finley, 1868/1999) and *Trouble – of the Northwest Territory* (Greegor, 1992) do approach issues of social justice, though I will show that their handling of these issues perpetuates negative stereotypes. *Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001) and *Point of No Return* (McCusker, 1995) on the other hand, do not include social issues at all. They clearly show a disconnection between a strong sense of God's presence and a concern for social justice. Social consciousness is not consistently linked in these stories with a close relationship to God, further confirmation of the split in private and public religion. The books in this category render Christianity as a close relationship with God in which he supports the believer in his/her learning about that relationship, and that for children in Christian families, it is an inevitable step in their maturing to become believers. There is a strong sense of rightness and comfort in being "in the fold," and *Point of No Return* especially struck familiar

chords for me as a reader about the way the Christian community I have experienced works.

God as Sage

In this category, there are few examples of an explicit ideology (Hollindale, 1992) expressed in the events or language of the book. The practices of religion are less immediate—less present—yet the implicit beliefs of the author and sociocultural influences are still important. The books seem less targeted toward nurturing a relationship with God and more toward entertainment, so the sense of an authorial audience (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) for these books in less pointed. The reader must know something about Christianity in order for the point of the books to be apparent, but the stories are enjoyable even so. Four of the books in this group have girls as the main character. Two of them are horse stories that were difficult to place in a group, and the deciding factor was how the girls regarded God in the course of their lives. For example, in *A Horse of a Different Color,* (Mackall, 2000), Scoop's Aunt Dotty prays all the time. She appears to be constantly in touch with God through prayer, but she herself is a resource for Scoop, not an authority. Scoop, however, prays just a few times in the book; each one is quite different. For example, when she takes a little time off of studies and work, she and her horse Orphan go on a picnic. "*God,* I prayed, *thank You for making this spot for Orphan and me.*" (italics in original, p. 111). When an acquaintance in school tries to tell her that her partner Maggie was cheating in school, Scoop prays, "S*tephen's wrong, God. . . .He's wrong. Maggie would never cheat like that."* (italics in original, p. 154).

Both of these prayers show that God is distant from Scoop. She thanks him for the beauty of the countryside, which implies his involvement in the universe, and her thoughts about a worrisome situation are directed at him, which implies that she considers him as someone who is important. Another person tells her about Maggie's strange behavior, and Scoop asks God to help her sort it out. The final example of prayer

occurs when she challenges Maggie to tell the truth, and she asks God to "make her understand." These last two imply that God can and will interact in life, but these two short prayers are the only times in the book that occurs. Scoop's example of a Christian's relationship with God is one that is comfortable enough to have conversation in prayer, but not close in the sense that her purposes are to honor God in her work. He is more distant than Elsie's God. Maggie, her partner, is African American, and the third partner is deaf, but those facts are not important to the story, nor is there any consideration of what it might mean in a small town for a white girl and an African American girl to be in business together. The stable in this story, unlike some others, is not a riding stable where wealthy young women come to ride, but still caters to those who can afford the lifestyle and need help with difficult animals. The issues the book explores are honesty and friendship.

The humorous book, *My Life as a Smashed Burrito with Extra Hot Sauce* (Myers, 1993), is like reading a TV cartoon. The characters are all larger than life, exaggerated for comic effect. Wally struggles to do what's right in Christian terms, but he succumbs to the temptation to get back at the bully who makes his life miserable. The camp counselor, to give them an object lesson in choosing wisely, pairs Wally with Gary the Gorilla in a competition for who can "*out*serve and *out*love the other" (p. 71). Nothing much changes in Wally's life, but he does figure out that it's smarter to live by God's instruction than his peers'. As he gets on the bus to go home, this is what happens,

> I looked around and spotted Gary toward the back. As usual, he has the required empty seat beside him. It looked kind of inviting, but I knew better than to join him. It's true, we'd both gone through a lot of changes—especially in the wisdom department. I mean, I learned all about choosing friends, and being kind to others, and not judging someone by how they look and on and on.
>
> And Gary? Well I can't say for sure. But he definitely learned a lot more about trusting people—and maybe even about trusting God.

Yet, with all of that wisdom, I still didn't think it was such a good idea to sit in his empty seat. I mean there's also wisdom in not putting yourself in bodily danger, right?

The bus lurched into gear, and I went staggering backward into the nearest empty seat. It was beside a little fifth grade beauty. Hmm, maybe my luck was improving. As an upperclassman in the sixth grade, I figured I'd go ahead and brighten her day by flashing her my famous McDoogle smile. "Hi there," I said.

Her response was exactly as I expected. "Oh gross. Do you like really have to sit here?" (p. 113)

Christian ideology is muted in the book, though assumed as real. The students are all going to "Camp Whacko" in which the counselor discusses "Wisdom" which he's defined in terms of God's will. Jesus is never mentioned in the story, though at one point Gary has to trust the counselor will be able to catch him and prevent his being swept over the falls, a metaphor for trusting God that is set up this way as the boys head downriver in a canoe:

"That Dale, he's something."

No answer.

"Gary?"

"I heard you."

I tried again. "He's a pretty cool guy, huh?"

"He's all right."

I swallowed, took another breath, and tried a third time. "I mean you can really trust him and stuff."

No answer.

"Specially what he says about God. You know, about letting go and trusting Him and everything. Sure, it's kind of scary, but you know, the thing is—"

"Weasel?"

"Yeah, Gary."

"Shut up."

Well, that about wrapped up my days as an evangelist. Billy Graham could rest easy. No way I'd be taking over his job. Or so I thought. But in less than an hour things started to pop. (p. 94-5)

This book is funny, though the message is quite serious, but God is not a part of what happens; he's the subject of discussion. Wally's better decisions are based on a supposition of the things he's learned in church, but I feel the author assumes I know what those are. The construction of the authorial audience (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) is quite subtle in this book, reflecting the lack of an explicit ideology. All the understanding of the point of trusting God comes through the events themselves. Even though the characters are stereotypical, implying a treatment of social issues: the bully, the nerd—the humor of the story came from exaggerating those stereotypes, and came across to me as gently self-derisive. There are no multicultural characters in the book.

I placed most of the action-adventure books in this category. I discuss three of them in the next section where I present the evidence for the placement of the books in these three categories, but I include a brief mention of them here to show the breadth of the grouping. These books distinctly include God in the story, though not centrally and quite differently. In *Cave of the Inca Re* (Windle, 1994/2001), he is the powerful God and shows it by preventing Jenny and Justin from going insane when they take refuge in a cave with a reputation for driving people mad who dare to go into it. I placed the book in the "God as Sage" category because the children don't call on him until they are where they aren't supposed to be: in the cave. "We've got to pray," Justin whispered back, his own lips trembling. "Only God can help us now!" (p. 120).

In *The I Scream Truck* (Randall, 1999), Jesus is the Savior who breaks curses. There is one point in the book when the main character reads a passage from the Bible, and he applies that to his own situation. "I decided that if Jesus could redeem humanity

from the curse of death, he could easily redeem me from a bizarre family curse" (p. 37). However, there is no point in the book where Rob actually prays for help or gives credit to God for helping him. One other character mentions at one point that she can't save him, only God can, and they affirm to each other that they both believe in Jesus, but that's it. Otherwise, I would not have known that this book is a Christian book. It's a very simple story; each chapter has a cliff-hanger ending, and I barely had time to notice anything other than the action. This is another story that draws on stereotypes, in this case, the villains: money-grubbing relatives who want the inheritance. The little in the story that refers to the character's personal relationship with God would not make sense unless the reader already had a grasp of Christian principles.

In *Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem* (Maselli, 2002), God is the grantor of wisdom to his believers, which they are to use to help others. "Well, just like Jesus, we're all growing—and your strength is your wisdom. Use your smarts with the laptop and you can teach Hulk a thing or two." (p. 22). Placing this book in the "God as Sage" category was problematic because of a plot device, a laptop computer which changes the future, which appears in each book of the series. In all of these examples, God remains removed from the action of the story. He or the Bible are consulted in quiet moments and put aside. This would not be true for this *Laptop* series story if you assume that the computer the boys use is really communication with God and that the alteration in events is his intervention. However the story does not make this claim overtly, and I did not realize the possibility of this interpretation on my first reading of the book. *Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem* is one book that does engage issues of class, which I will discuss later, in terms of the assumptions of poverty and ignorance about the bully in the story. The main character is also shown going out of his way to serve people in need, an important component of public religion. I feel that the "help" rendered in this situation is problematic, however, because of the assumptions hidden in the plot: that it's the smart, capable Christians who help the poor, ignorant non-

Christians. Even so, his reason for service does come from his belief that God would have him do so, the only book in the sample for which this is true.

There is one more action-adventure book in this group. Frank Peretti's books are best-sellers; he is not as prolific a writer as the Jenkins and LaHaye team that write the *Left Behind* series, but in my opinion his work is better-crafted. His adult, young adult, and children's books consistently make the CBA lists as well. The one I read for this study was *Flying Blind* (Peretti, 1997). The premise of *The Cooper Kids* series is that a father, an archaeologist, and his two children, Jay and Lila, go around the world to different sites where they inevitably run into evil in some form. This book departs from the rest of the series as it is about an accident on a routine plane excursion Jay makes with his uncle. Jay has to land the plane after they were caught in turbulence from a jet, and his uncle was knocked unconscious, and he was blinded from a head injury. The characters ask God for his protection and guidance and whatever the outcome, declare their faith in his goodness. Lila said, "God is with you, and He loves you, and He can guide your hands, I just know it! Nobody has to die today if God doesn't want it to happen! You can land it, Jay, I know you can!" (p. 98).

As with other prayers for protection, the statement, "Nobody has to die today if God doesn't want it to happen!" implies that the reader understands and likely believes that God does take an interest in the details of life and has the ability to change outcomes. This affirmation of God's ability to determine the course of events is repeated at the end by Jay. "You know," Jay said, looking out across the water, "I was ready to leave it all and go home to be with the Lord, but I'm still kind of glad the Lord said, 'Not yet'." (p. 131).

There are a few other places where the presence of God is brought in obliquely, showing the author's implicit belief in God's sovereignty over the situation, and his expectations that the reader will pick up his references. Jay asks his father what he should do, and his father

> "only had a few seconds to think of an answer. It would be a choice between saving Jay's life and most likely losing them both, and yet, with a strange, unnatural peace, the answer came to him. He knew what his son would do, given the choice." (p. 99)
>
> Jay had only a brief second to cry out to the Lord.
>
> "It's all Yours," he said.
>
> And then he shoved the throttle forward.
>
> "Let's land it!" he yelled.
>
> Only a few feet off the water, The Yank roared to life, nosed up, and climbed like a homesick angel. (p. 101)

Where does the "strange, unnatural peace" come from? In my experience in an Evangelical tradition, this phrase: "I have a peace about it" is a common way to indicate that God has communicated with you and given you leave to do what you're planning. And, "It's all Yours" is a shorthand way to say that the one who is praying is giving control of the situation to God, making the assumption that God will physically, emotionally, and intellectually direct the outcome through the individual's or others' actions.

The reason why I placed the book in this group is because in order to get his message across, the author relied heavily on a reader's understanding of how one interacts with God. The dialogue I've included here is the bulk of prayer and discussion about God. There are 3 or 4 other short prayers, all for protection. I am reminded of Will's lament in the last book I will discuss in this category, *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001) when he says that Christian secrets are still secret from him.

The Discovery, set during World War II, is one of the best books in the selection I read. The characters were well-developed, complex people, and the writing was evocative. I cared about the outcome of the story and appreciated the characters'

struggles. I will talk about this book in detail in the next sections because it is also one that engages issues of race and shows a character going outside his family to serve someone in need. It still supports my contention that private and public religion are separated in these books, because Will's help does not come from a desire to do God's work, but because he wants to right a wrong. For now, I'm interested in the difference between this book and *Point of No Return* (McCusker, 1995) which I placed in the "God as Character" category. Will knew that he was not in step with his family, and he obtains advice throughout the book, from an Anasazi sage, a pastor, and his mother that points him toward God. An immature reader would, I believe, realize that God is waiting for Will at the end of the story, but in my reading of how God works, I saw the circumstances of Will's life moving him toward a decision to "trust" God, similarly to the other Focus on the Family book, *Point of No Return*. However, Jimmy's experience more explicitly stated that God works through the circumstances of life to draw someone closer to him, to become a believer, and to learn to live for God's purposes. It is the lack of explicitness in Will's experience that led me to place *The Discovery* in the group, "God as Sage," where the presence of God exists as someone who is available for advice, to point the way, to warn, but not always as a close companion. It is interesting that basically the same story line is so differently treated, so that Jimmy's Christian understandings are experienced at the level of explicit ideology (Hollindale, 1992) while Will's are implicit.

Will's relationship with his mother is central to the story, but she does not feel capable of helping him when he begins having difficulty at school and home. She explains this to him near the end of the book in her only extensive conversation about God when she tells him about the choices his first father made.

> "He didn't have the faith in God that I had," Mom told Will. "Even when he finally did get a job, we were so far in debt that he started stealing from the company—just to pay off the bill collectors who were forever knocking at our

> door." Mom gave Will a firm look, her dimples deepening. "Stealing never pays off, no matter why you do it," she said . . . .He was sent to prison, and shortly after that he died of pneumonia.
>
> "He just didn't know what else to do to try to provide for us," Mom said. "That doesn't make it right. I just never could convince him to turn to God—who would have helped him if he'd let Him. That's why when I suspected that you were taking things from here and you started turning away from me, I wanted you to spend time with Bud. Do you see? I wanted you to get straight about God." (p. 170-1)

This category contained the most books, and also the most variety of approaches to a story that has Christian ideology implicit in the events and outcome and in the expectations that the authors have of the reader. All the books are written with the "obvious" assumption that Christianity is the basis for the community; in fact, there is only the Anasazi sage in *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001) who has a different identified religion. Multicultural characters don't extend much beyond multicultural Christians in the books set in this country. Those set elsewhere do have natives who aren't Christian (e.g. Hardy, 2002). As in the other categories, there are books that engage issues of social justice (e.g. Rue, 2001), and others that ignore any diversity in life (e.g. Randall, 1999), but the unifying characteristic is the distance that God maintains from the action of the story. Part of this is because many of these stories are action-adventure, in which there is little character development of the people, let alone of God, but these books represent those that my informants referred to as books whose message is softened, and therefore more appealing to non-Christian readers.

These books portray Christianity as a personal moral choice that leads to a better life. God is important to the shape of the world as the characters know it. There is an implication that he is able to interact with people and willing to do so, but he is not often asked to. The personal morality of the characters is based on biblical values, and

characters feel obligated to be honest, to be kind and even helpful to others in order for them to feel good about themselves. Though I have no evidence for this conclusion, I feel that the worldview in these books more nearly matches the majority of Christians' attitudes as they go about their daily lives.

God as Setting

The seven books in this category are those that are "good moral stories," but do not have an Evangelical base as many of the "God as Character" books do, or as much implicit authorial ideology that is apparent in the action of the story or the conversations of the characters. God's presence may be apparent to one character in the story, but the action goes forward without their calling on his intervention, praying or reading the scripture. Three of the books in this group are historical fiction books, dealing with quite different settings. *Charlotte's Rose* (Cannon, 2002) is the story of Welsh Mormon immigrants in 1856 moving to Salt Lake City. I recognize that most Evangelical Christians would say that Mormons are believers in another religion because of their prophet, Joseph Smith, and the other books that they regard as scripture. However, they identify themselves as Christians, and for that reason, I include a book from a Mormon publisher. The Welsh immigrants are impoverished, and their means of transportation are handcarts, which they push from St. Louis to Salt Lake City. The main character, Charlotte, does not feel the strength of a relationship to God that her mother, who died in Wales, did, nor does her father. Charlotte's prayers tend to be thanks to God for having things go her way, or pleas in extremity. Her father's philosophy is that God allows for differences in his children, "even in Zion" so he may be forgiven for not adopting all the beliefs of the Mormons. These are highly moral characters, and the strength of the book is the portrayal of how important the community is. There are a few scenes that specifically describe Mormon beliefs, including a sermon that tells the story of Joseph Smith, an example of a scene written into the story that, while it makes sense in the course of the book, it is also an explicit piece of ideology that the author is sharing with

the reader (Hollindale, 1992). Other than these few scenes, their religion is just the reason they are there and shapes their ideas of community, and in this it becomes part of the obvious fact of their society. It is the day to day strength of individuals and their dependency on each other, rather than God, that is predominant in this book. For example, at the end, one character who begins the descent into Zion (Salt Lake City), declares

> "When Brother Bowen and Brother MacDonald found me in Liverpool, I felt hope for the first time in a very long time. Only, I had nothing to offer God in return for noticing me again. 'God wants nothing from you but a broken and contrite heart,' those missionaries told me."
>
> Now Catherine looks up, and though the sun beats down upon her face, she does not close her eyes or flinch.
>
> "So. God. After much sorrow and even more sin, I offer you a contrite heart. A humble heart. But it is not broken. My spirit is not broken and will never be broken! I give you instead a stout and loyal heart. It is yours, God, to do with what you wish."
>
> Catherine looks at us again.
>
> "Thank you, my friends, for making me one of this community." Then Catherine Jones turns, gives her handcart a shove, and sends it crashing down the mountainside.
>
> It smashes and splinters into a hundred pieces.
>
> I gasp.
>
> "Now!" shouts Catherine. "I enter my new life as I entered my old one. With no possessions to my name! With nothing but my stout heart!"
>
> Catherine flings back her head and strides like a queen down the trail.
>
> We are all in shock, I think except for Papa. He has a look on his face that I have not seen since Mam was alive. And he is smiling. (p. 238-9)

This is the only time God is directly addressed in public in the book. There is a worship service early on, but it is chiefly for the purpose of identifying the characters as Charlotte pays no attention to the proceedings but makes up stories about each person instead. As in the other books in this grouping, God is certainly important to the characters, but he is not important to the story. I will return to *Charlotte's Rose* and the other two historical fiction books below as they all engage in social issues of race and/or class.

Dust of the Earth (Hess, 1994) and *Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) are both about the benefits of hard work and moral character. When Kip's new family tells Rev. Brace they want to keep him, these are the reasons they give:

> "What Ray's trying to say, Rev. Brace, is that we'd like to adopt Kip as our son. We're not sure how we ever got along without him! In fact, Ray is here tonight because Kip gave him a priceless gift—the ability to get back on his feet."
>
> Kip was astonished. Not just stay, but…adopted?
>
> She turned to Kip. "We were going to tell you tomorrow—for Christmas."
>
> Dr. Donaldson nodded. "This is one clever boy, Rev. Brace. He's going to go far. But it's not just because he invented this knee brace for me. My wife and I had already decided we wanted Kip to become part of our family—no matter what." (p. 144-5)

Their thanks is given entirely to Rev. Brace. It's difficult to tell whether the author is basing Rev. Brace's concern for street children on religious or philanthropic grounds, but the results are certainly in line with Jesus' stance on serving others. God is only mentioned in an aborted worship service, in the song they sing. One curious note: if the information implied in this book is correct, it was only white children which the Society helped; in any case, I only "saw" white children on the streets or anywhere else in their travels.

I included four other books in this group: *A Stone's Throw from Paradise* (High, 1997) is about a family that left the Amish community, and when the wife died in a car accident, the father moved away entirely. The story is about his daughter's recovery of her memories of her mother and the extended family when she goes to spend the summer with her grandmother. Lizzie asks her,

> "So why don't you just leave the Amish, like Mama and Pa did?" I asked….
>
> Granny Zook sighed. "Being Amish is my life, Lizzie. It's all I've known for sixty-nine years, and I'm too old to change now. Not only that, I like being Amish. I like the sense of community, the close-knit people, the peace and comfort in my soul of knowing who I am and where I'm going someday. I like being not of this world, and not part of the rat race ways of the English. I am *unser Satt Leit*, Miss Lizzie, and always will be. It would kill me to be released from the Amish and sent out into the world." (p. 108-9)

As a reader, I knew that Lizzie was a Christian; she mentions their church in one sentence, and speaks a prayer or two. The way that her family operates and the Amish community also provide the clues to the sociocultural setting of the book. It is this that leads me to place it in this grouping, where God is only apparent as part of the background of the story.

Secret of Noah's Flood (Thomas, 2002) is a very different kind of book. It is entirely constructed to present scientific evidence of the biblical account of a flood covering all the earth against an evolutionary account to determine the age of the earth. While the book is firmly set in the Christian worldview, it's about "evidence" for understanding geologic time and is written like a science report. God's part in it is that he set the world in motion and recorded some facts in the Bible to help us understand what's happening to the earth. The book is framed by a conversation Zack has with a friend about how old the Earth is. Zack and his family go on a driving tour around the United

States to examine evidence that counters the arguments Zack's friend had brought up. God is considered the creator of the universe, but then the clues he left are for us to figure out:

> "I looked at my notebook. "When you see the way the earth is put together, Noah's flood makes the most sense. With the rock layers and the deep canyons, the Bible has the best answer. You can look around and see clues everywhere that a big flood really happened."
>
> ". . . Zack, what is the biggest difference between you and Bobby?"
>
> "…you've been raised to believe in God, and Bobby hasn't. He has always been taught that science and scientists have the answer to questions about where we came from and why we are here on earth."
>
> "But his 'millions of years' idea doesn't fit all the clues! There are a lot of questions it can't answer. It has big problems." I was sure Bobby could see that.
>
> "But what if a person doesn't believe in God?" Dad asked quietly. . . .
>
> "I guess if you don't believe in God, evolution's millions of years is probably the best idea you'll find." (p. 118-9)

In the last pages, Zack and his father have a short conversation about God's love: that it is more important that Zack show God's love to his friend than that he convince him of the "truth." The last book I want to mention is *Emmanuel McClue and The Mystery of the Shroud* (McCaffrey, 2001). This is one of the books that was difficult to read because of the poor writing, but it was the only one of the present time books in this category that had multicultural characters. The father is African American, and the mother is from El Salvador. The author tells us this in the first pages, but unfortunately, their ethnicity is neither mentioned again not has any consequence to the story or their son, Emmanuel that I could tell. I believe God is the setting for this book because of the topic: the family is investigating the Shroud of Turin (though I never did know why) and find that some mysterious strangers broke in 12 years ago and were chased away. The

next scene is somewhere in South America, and we meet a clone of Jesus, Joshua. The author expects the reader to know what the Shroud of Turin is (traditionally, the burial cloth of Jesus) and why it would be politically advantageous to have a living clone of him. The story resolves because Joshua gets sick and is expected to die, so no one is interested in him anymore. The only direct reference to God is a few prayers that the mother utters when the boys go missing. I believe the lack of a coherent message in the book may extend from the vagueness of the mission explained on the publisher's web site. It says Ambassador Books is

> founded on the belief that by living up to our motto, Spiritus et Veritas (Spirit & Truth), and staying faithful to our mission, we will render an important service to our fellow man and we will continue to prosper so that our work may continue.
>
> Our motto, *Spiritus et Veritas* (Spirit and Truth), is the context for everything we do. We endeavor to produce unique books and we do not wish to be constrained by publishing one kind of book.
>
> (http://www.ambassadorbooks.com/about.html)

I included the book because it is an example of the range of literature that is readily available in this market, though it is certainly not indicative of the quality of most of the books I read.

These examples show how the presence of God is something that inhabits the universe of these characters, but he is not directly involved in the problems they face or instrumental in the solutions they find. These books portray Christianity as a social commitment over a religious one. The community of people who worship God, or the strength of individuals within it are more important in many of the stories than God is. His presence is often a background to the stories, or a reason for the story to happen, so in that sense I have called this category "God as Setting." In support of my contention that private and public religion are largely separate in the books, 5 of the 7 books in this

category engage social justice issues in their plots, and I discuss those in the next sections.

Conclusion

This section has shown how 29 books published for 8-12 year olds in the Christian market approach the ideological construction of Christianity. I separated the books into three categories based on the number, type, and use of markers of Christian practice in the books, such as prayer, scripture reading and conversations about God. Based on Hollindale's (1992) taxonomy of ideology in children's literature, I drew examples from the books to show how authors explicitly wrote their ideas about Christian practice into their work. These included scenes such as Elsie's astonishment at her father's belief that anyone would encourage her to disobey him in *Elsie's Impossible Choice* (Finley, 1868/1999), that speaks to the author's belief that filial obedience is a primary duty of childhood. Jeremiah's conversion scene, when he first meets the Delaware, Andrew, in *Trouble – of the Northwest Territory* (Greegor, 1992) is one of several similar scenes in the books which explicitly show children following the expectation that they will accept Jesus, which has also been expressed in conversation or questions about the child's beliefs.

Hollindale's (1992) second level of ideology is the implicit beliefs of the author that help shape the story, but which would be present in any story the author wrote because of who s/he is. For example, in *Flying Blind* (Peretti, 1997), Jay, his sister, his father and the other members of the family all petition God briefly in prayer for his protection. What is implicit in these actions is that God is able to care for believers and will intercede in events in their behalf. The characters do not discuss this point or bring it to the reader's attention, but simply operate on that belief. Wally, in *My Life as a Smashed Burrito with Extra Hot Sauce* (Myers, 1993), is a self-deprecating wise-aker who is well aware of what the camp counselor is trying to tell him. Implicit in the book is that one can learn important life lessons through reading and applying Bible lessons.

The third level of ideology is the sociocultural influences of the time and place of the authors' life. These are understandings that are commonplace to the writer and likely also to the reader, and largely go unnoticed. These authors are writing for a Christian market, and I find it easy to believe that they are members of a Christian community, because I have read many books and articles that portray Christians, but because of inadequate *cross cultural* (Cai & Sims-Bishop, 1994) understandings, they get it wrong. I am using this level of ideology to indicate the "obviousnesses" of Christian beliefs that frame the books, but I also believe that there is evidence that at this level, the distinction between private and public religion still operates to create plots where the concern for social justice issues does not emanate from the heart of the believer who does service to God by helping others, which is the justification liberation theologians give, but from philanthropic reasons. For example, Will in *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001), does not become a Christian until the end of the story. His championship of Fawn, an Anasazi girl, happens because he thinks that her life is unfair, and he likes her. The obviousnesses in this story and indeed all of them are that Christianity is the right way to frame your life, that duty to and love of family is vital in life, and that God is alive and real in the world.

As authors draw on these ideologies in creating their work, so too do they recreate their beliefs in their stories (Sarland, 1996; Williams, 1977/1990). Christianity is rendered in a complicated kaleidoscope of images. The books in the category, "God as Character," show characters living within the presence of God in all aspects of their lives. They seek to honor him through their actions, they depend on him by studying scripture and praying, they share their lives with other believers to encourage each other, and he graces them with support and comfort and love. The books in the category, "God as Sage," step back from this wholly inclusive picture of God and life to show characters consulting him in prayer or scripture, but off to the side, not during the action of their lives or in a public way. There is only one book in this group in which a worship service is portrayed (Windle, 1994/1999/2001), and for the most part, God comes alongside the

characters' lives in some way, but he is not a major participant in what occurs. The third category, "God as Setting," shows even less participation. Some of the markers of Christian practice occur in all the books, but in a muted and unimportant fashion. God is important to the characters in these stories; they believe in him, but he is not important to the story other than as a setting for the beliefs of the characters.

The next section explores the markers of Christian practice in detail, showing how the books portrayed the use of praying, reading scripture, and conversing about God which led to the construction of the categories I discussed in this section. In the final section, I link the issues which are often noted in discussions about multicultural literature with the Christian practices in these books which I've identified as public religion.

Section III: Markers of Christian Practice

Introduction

The categories of Section II were founded on the markers that authors used in the books to show their characters' involvement in Christian practice. I've included 3 in my analysis of the ideologies that are present in the stories: praying, reading scripture, and conversing about God. Depending on several characteristics of the markers, including how often they appear, who is performing them, and their effect on the story, I sorted the books into 3 groups, each with a different level of the presence of God in the books. In this section, I will describe, with excerpts, how the markers are used in the books. Again, some of these excerpts raise questions that are not fully explored in this section, but are deferred to Section IV, where I discuss issues of social advocacy.

Christian Markers

> While the pond was quiet and its water too dark to let you see much of what went on in it, the creek kept moving and you could look right down through clear water to the sandy bottom. There were some days when all you wanted was the quiet of

> the pond. Other days you felt like watching the scramble of the creek. (Whelan, 1979/1993, p. 74)

Building a relationship with God is like this. Some days you trust in the quiet of the deep abiding presence that is an awareness that you cannot see or touch but absolutely know is there. Other days run fast and clear, and you know his voice speaks to you in everything you hear. Learning to recognize his voice takes time, and it takes interaction. By talking to him, reading his word, and living with his people, you come to recognize his handiwork and his cautions. In children's fiction, these things are evidence of characters' relationships with God, and I call them markers of Christian practice in literature.

I found that the passages in the books that include prayer, scripture, and God-talk, conversations about God and the Christian life, operate at several ideological levels, described by Hollindale's (1992) taxonomy. The first ideological level occurs when an author's agenda is explicit in the text. Authors may use a particular prayer coming from a particular character at a chosen point in the story to recommend the efficacy of prayer (e.g. Hardy, 2002). The second level of ideology occurs when an author's particular beliefs about the way that society works or what is true are immanent in his or her work. For example, several authors use a storyline that pairs a capable child with a bully for the purpose of helping the bully pass a class (e.g. Maselli, 2002; McCoy-Miller, 2000). The stories all present the bully as someone from a lower class home, often with a single parent whose character isn't the best. This is a convenient stereotype, but also reveals authors' beliefs about bullies. The books also show parents and children engaged in wrestling with spiritual questions and choosing to spend time together at the cost of other activities (e.g. Pistole, 2002; Wiggin, 1995), implying a belief that family is important.

The third level in Hollindale's (1992) taxonomy is the ideologies that are often hidden because they are so common that they seem obvious. One assumption in these books that is so "obvious" that it is never questioned is that Christians pray. This activity

is shown to be a normal part of life, missed when it does not occur. Prayer is appropriate and desirable in all circumstances, and this is exemplified through quite a variety of prayer use in the books (e.g. Finley, 1868/1999; Mackall, 2000; McCusker, 1995). I have the sense from reading the books that the authors believe unquestioningly that Christians read the Bible, as well, and that they have conversations about God in the course of their lives at home, work, school, or church. I submit that these are "givens" in the books, simply the way that the children's lives operate.

Christian markers of prayer, scripture, and God-talk both identify the books as more or less overtly Christian, and the way they are used in particular works reveal the ideologies that are present in the books. Prayer is the most common marker in the books, occurring in all but one (Randall, 199).

Prayer

Most characters who pray are asking for help, for protection, for safety, or for provision. They ask forgiveness and they give thanks. The nature of prayer in the books changes in reflection of a character's maturity and life circumstances, but in nearly all the books, characters pray. Most of the stories involve children who already know God so that their prayer-lives are already something important and useful to them (e.g. High, 1997; Morris, 2001), and there are several stories that show a child praying to accept Jesus (e.g. Greegor, 1992; Pistole, 2002). It is interesting that there is no discernable distinction between prayers directed to God and those directed to Jesus, though generally, children seem to pray to Jesus and people new to Christianity seem to talk to God as the one with whom they are more familiar. In Christian theology, the three persons of the divinity, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are both the same and separate, so there is no injunction about praying to a particular one. I believe it's a matter of personal preference and training. God is also most often the receiver of prayers of praise and protection, while the prayers to Jesus tend to be about the believer's relationship with God. While the books that have a conversion scene (when someone accepts Jesus as their Lord)

explain the gospel, and others allude to it, none of the books explicitly address the differences between God and Jesus, especially as it relates to prayer. Only one of the books mentions the Holy Spirit at all (McCusker, 1995), and that in passing. Nancy Lohr, acquisitions editor of JourneyForth, suggests that the idea of the Holy Spirit may not be pertinent to the story. To include references to the Spirit may be too much information in the way that an explanation of the internal workings of a generator is too much information in a children's book on electricity (Lohr, personnal communication, 2003).

Prayer in books in the "God as Character" category

Prayer in this category of books reveals characters' long-standing relationships with God, so that asking for his help is the natural outgrowth of an established partnership. Perhaps understandably, the historical fiction books had more characters with a mature relationship with God that was reflected in their prayers. Some of the historical fiction books are about real people who are known to have practiced their faith. Others are not, but the sense of the story having already happened imbues their prayers with a weight of success, unlike present-day fiction where there is a possibility of change in someone's future who is still "alive." I already know the story ended well for those who lived in the past. For example, Harriet Tubman's story has been fictionalized by many authors. In *Courage to Run: A Story Based on the Life of Harriet Tubman*, Lawton (2002) tells about Harriet's childhood, emphasizing how she learned to rely on God to know when she needed to be courageous. In this telling of her story, the songs of her people are her scripture and teach her about God. *Go Down, Moses* and *Wade in the Water* are favorites, the first because it is about Moses, who led his people out of Egypt, and the need for freedom is a constant refrain in her life. *Wade in the Water* is about baptism, a demonstration of a love for God, but it also tells of a way for an escaped slave to evade pursuing dogs. Her often repeated prayer is

> "Lord Jesus, help me be strong for You. Help me to stand when I need to take a stand, to run when You call me to freedom, and to return when You call me back" (p. 133)

In this book, the author's assumption about the use of prayer shows the presence of God in the story, and also reveals an ideology which in this book is explicit: God is able to care for his children, even those in such horrible circumstances as slavery. Harriett talks to God as though she can see him sitting next to her, and she hears his voice in song and a few times, literally out loud. She's talking to a friend. Harriett's prayer for help has a quiet assurance that everything is in God's timing; she's just sharing that she knows that and she's waiting on his timing. Again, "call" refers to being set apart for God's holy work. This book does not make me feel at all that Harriet is submitting out of Christian principle to her owner and those he hires her to. Rather she is resisting the injustice she lives under in any reasonable way she can, and is waiting only for the proper time to run.

In a much less desperate circumstance, a realistic fiction story includes many prayers: for provision, comfort, of thanks, and dedication. In *The Palomino* (Pistole, 2002), Jenny's family moved to Virginia and began to establish their new home when the company that hired her father collapses. The family prays both for a way to earn a living and a way that Jenny can fulfill her summer plans to go to horse camp. She is able to do so. This prayer is for comfort when Jenny realizes how much she loves horses and wants to continue even though there's not enough money for her to do so.

> "Father, thank You that we can come to you with any troubles, great or small. We pray for Jenny today. We thank You for her enthusiasm and for her deep love for horses. We trust You, Lord, that You know everything about us. We give You this problem. I pray that Jenny will finish the week safely and with joy. Amen." (p. 30)

Jenny prayer of thanks spontaneously comes from the joy of God's presence that is expressed in her heightened awareness of the beauty of the morning. She wakes to the grandeur of the sunrise.

> She allowed the majesty of the sunrise to fill her with awe for a God who could create such radiance. He was her God, and He created this miracle every morning.
>
> "Father God," she whispered, "thank You for letting me share this moment with You.
>
> You are an awesome God. I want my life to be a witness to You." (p. 48)

When this character states that she wants her life be a witness to God, I understand her to mean that her life will be evidence to those around her of God's existence and his goodness. It's a kind of pledge to actively pursue an understanding of God and a relationship that is lived out through the circumstances of life. This book has many examples of prayer that bring the sense of God's presence into the characters' everyday lives, however this is one of those books in which the characters deep personal relationship with God does not translate into public religion. The series is based on a fantasy (owning a horse) that many little girls may have, but very few are able to realize. Three of the books in my selection have something to do with horses (e.g. Byrd, 2002; Mackall, 2001); the girls in all 3 do have to work for their opportunity to ride; the books aren't completely blind to the privilege inherent in such an activity. In one of the horse books, the owner buses children from the city out to ride every two weeks during the summer. Other families in this category experience financial setbacks and turn to God in prayer.

In *The Mystery of the Sunken Steamboat,* (Wiggin, 1995) Hannah's family lives in Maine on an island in the middle of Moosehead Lake. When they discover they need an expensive new septic system before they can complete the repairs on their fishing lodge, they turn to God in prayer for his provision. The children discover a sunken steamboat

(that really did sink in 1938) and bring up some valuable artifacts that cover the costs. One of the things Hannah found on the steamboat was a trunk with a rare set of china dolls. The family loaned the dolls to the library so that the whole town could enjoy them, then an attempted theft made her father realize they needed to take more care with them. Hannah asked him why, and he answers with an important concept in Christian ideology that is a good example of Hollindale's (1992) second level, an implicit belief of the author.

> "But Papa, I *prayed* for my dolls last night."
>
> "So did I," Papa affirmed. "And we *do* trust the Lord. But in a world of sinners, we keep our doors locked…"
>
> "And we bring our valuable dolls home, at least until the publicity blows over," Mama finished Papa's sentence. (p. 94)

"Trusting" the Lord has multiple connotations. In this example, I understand it to mean that when Papa prays, he has confidence that God can answer his prayer, and further, will answer it in a way to serve his purposes, though the timing is uncertain. To trust in the Lord can also mean seeking his counsel through his word, so that one does not "lean on your own understanding" (Pr. 3:6, NIV) It can mean that one will not worry or be anxious about the future, but trust the Lord for it. The most basic meaning would be that one is making the decision to ask Jesus to be Lord, as in the phrase, "I've decided to trust in God (or Jesus)." The phrase indicates a confidence in the goodness of God and his care for his people in any setting.

I have one more example of prayers that are woven into the stories such that they're part of the fabric of the characters lives, a natural consequence of being Christians and an indication of the presence of God. The main character in *The Journey of Yung Lee* (McCoy-Miller, 2000) is a 12-year-old girl who emigrated from China and landed in San Francisco with her older brother. The officials separate Lee and Fong, after one of them tried to buy her. They put Lee in a room by herself where one of the guards

overhears her talking to Jesus, and he lets her know that he is also a Christian and will do what he can for her and her brother.

> "Oh, thank you, Jesus," Lee whispered, grateful for her new friend. "You sent someone to help us! If he can get us out of this awful place, things will be much better. That isn't too much to ask all in one day, is it? I know You can help." (p. 40)

Lee is a character who talks to God throughout the book and talks to others about him as well. I will come back to this book in the next section, as it engages issues of race and class in its story. Here, though Lee's shy confidence in her Lord comes through in this prayer, echoing many other characters words: "I know You can help."

These excerpts show characters who have a mature relationship with God that shows in the abundance and variety of their prayer life. In the next section, I show prayers that show relationships that are not as close.

Prayer in books in the "God as Sage" category

The books in this category show a distance in the relationships between the characters and God. In the last section, God is a confidante and friend; in this section he is more often an authority who is appealed to like a counselor or sheriff, or as in this case, the characters pray to involve God, but they do it silently, so we don't know what their feelings are. *Tracks in the Sand* (Littleton, 2001) is set on the Atlantic Ocean coastal islands. Three of the characters, Ally, John, and Nick, discovered that two men who have been acting suspiciously are trying to harm a herd of wild horses. They don't know what the men plan or why, and want to find out more, so they decide to follow them. Ally wanted to go back to their parents and get help, but she reluctantly agreed to follow the men. Then she asks:

> "Hey, shouldn't we pray first?"
>
> "Ally," Nick said, "come on."
>
> "I think we should just pray, that's all."

"Why?"

"All we'd be doing is making sure God is involved," John said, then he looked Nick in the eyes and said, "Doubter."

"Hey, I'm not a doubter," Nick said. "I just think we should do something, not just sit around and pray."

"We're gonna do something," Ally insisted. "Let's just ask God to help us."

"Okay," Nick said. "Then let's get moving!"

Ally and John bowed their heads and in silence offered fervent pleas to God. (Littleton, 2001, p. 51)

Ally and John intimidate Nick in this situation to get him to go along with their desire to petition for God's help: "Doubter!" In Ally's case, she was unhappy about taking off after the two men; in John's, there was an element of putting something over on Nick. Nick tells his parents at the end that they prayed when they got in trouble as though that was an acceptable choice over obeying his parents. The message about prayer here is mixed, partially because the author does not take the time to separate the issues of obeying parents' rules and relying on God's help, something that occurs in the next excerpt as well.

Prayer for God's help in a difficult situation occurs in about a third of the books (e.g. Maselli, 2002; Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001; McCoy-Miller, 2000). Sometimes, as in Ally and John's case, they ask for God's help before they're in a crisis situation. In others, it's only when danger looms and the characters realize they've gotten themselves in a fix that they turn to God. In *Cave of the Inca Re* (Windle, 1994/2001), which takes place in Bolivia, Jenny and Justin have been following smugglers, trying to get enough evidence about their activity so that the authorities will believe they have witnessed thefts of valuable artifacts. The smugglers find out they're being followed and chase the children into a cave that is "home" to an ancient, evil god.

> "…Justin put an arm around his sister, who was now shaking with cold and fear. Pressing his other hand to his aching side, he leaned his head back against the wall.
>
> Jenny groped for his hand.
>
> "I'm so scared!" she sobbed.
>
> "We've got to pray," Justin whispered back, his own lips trembling. "Only God can help us now!" (p. 120)

This story is didactic, preaching about the power of God, and I felt it was unconvincingly contrived to make its point. The cave has been brought up throughout as an example of superstitious belief in false gods, and the children predictably end up in the cave. As an adult reader, the message of the prayer I excerpted became, no matter how many poor choices you make, or how often you ignore the directives you've been given by the responsible adult, God will answer your cry for help. I don't disagree with that sentiment, but found it disconcerting that there is never a consequence for the poor choices that the twins make in this story other than their sojourn in the cave. It is also disconcerting that Jenny is usually fearful, holding back, and advocating caution, but she goes along with her brother against her desires even though he proves to be quite a poor leader. Both *Tracks in the Sand* and *Cave of the Inca Re* show the characters turning to God for protection, but I put the books in this category because these are the they only pray when they need help. God is not present in other areas of the characters lives.

Several stories end with prayers for forgiveness (e.g. Byrd, 2002; Morris, 2001), when the characters realize that they have been prideful, or have not trusted God to care for them, or have been willful or rebellious. Such a prayer certainly implies that God is all powerful—if he can forgive the guilt of mistakes that characters make. Much of Christian theology is implicit in such a prayer. In the following excerpt, Will has yet to learn all that is behind his prayer, showing how such a prayer does not necessarily mean that God is fully present in that characters' life. In *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001) Will's

father has been listed as missing in action during World War II. Will and his mother moved to Santa Fe where she found a job teaching second grade in the same school where he is in sixth grade. He lied to his new classmates about how well off they are and lied to his mother about his situation at school. His lies caused him to steal to maintain the fiction, and he also falsified a family heritage project. He is miserable and tangled up with no clear way out.

> That night, Will lay on his bed after the lights were out and tried to think of a way to pray. He was tempted to look in his *Growing Up Indian* notebook for the way the Indians prayed—throwing grain or something—but he knew that wasn't what he "must do." In fact, he knew he was going to have to do his whole project over again.
>
> Finally, he just whispered into the darkness, "Untangle me, would You, God? I really messed up and I'm really sorry and I want to know about…You know…about Jesus." Maybe that was enough for right then. He fell asleep without wishing he was somebody else. (p. 175-6)

Will has two mentors in this story to help him understand what it means to have a relationship with God. One of them, Quebi, is the grandfather of the Anasazi girl who has become Will's friend. It's he that explains how important one's heritage is and that what Will "must do" is find out what his own heritage is—not desire the Anasazi religion because it's new and different. Will's prayer comes from an awareness that he wants to know the God of his people. I believe one of the implied ideologies in this story is that God expects Christians to examine their faith and understand why they believe as they do so that their faith is a vital part of their lives, but the impetus for Will at this point is not to know God better, but to be part of something. God is not yet a friend, but the hope is there. I will discuss both *The Discovery* and the next book in the section on social advocacy as both stories contrast different belief systems.

In *Painted Warriors and Wild Lions: Travel in Africa*, (Morris, 2001) Duffy and her brothers and sister traveled with their father, a photographer, to Africa to stay with a Masai family group for a few weeks. Duffy has acted insufferably, telling the people what is wrong with what they eat and the way they do things. Their friend and guide, a Masai warrior, finally helps her see that she has to respect people in order to become close to them.

> After the Kerrigans' evening meal and their daily family Bible time, Duffy said she was going to bed early. But she lay awake for a long time. She began to pray again that the Lord would give her a different attitude.
>
> "Oh, God, I've been so wrong," she prayed. "And I'm sorry. I want to be able to accept people. I don't have to accept their ways in order to accept *them*. And, Lord, I do love the Masai people, but I'm afraid that Simel hates me. I've been so terrible to him."
>
> She lay listening to the sounds of the African night and asking God to show her what to do about Simel. Finally she thought she knew. She said, "Amen," and went to sleep. (p. 109)

Duffy, like Will, honors her upbringing and turns back to God to help her surmount the obstacles she has put in her way and heal the relationships she's broken with her rebellious attitude. She has held herself away from God and only turns to him at the end as he "counsels" her about what to do. This book is one of a few examples that show missionary activity in other cultures. As I show in the next section, one of the ideologies that the author implies is that the people would be better off if they were Christians, a rather imperialistic notion. Morris is an author similar to Jenkins and LaHaye that has written dozens of books that can be found in secular outlets and the public library as well as Christian bookstores. It's unfortunate that the quality of the books is also poor, proving that marketing brand names maintains sales even when the books themselves are poorly written.

These excerpts show characters praying to God in extremity or for forgiveness, situations that occur occasionally and do not show God as a part of their every day lives. The few number and timing of the prayers help to place the books in the "God as Sage" category.

Prayer in books in the "God as Setting" category

The few books in this category do not have many markers of Christian practice. There are some with examples of prayer, but it is perfunctory and occurs only a few times with little impact on the story (e.g. Cannon, 2002; McCaffrey, 2001; Whelan, 1979/1993). I am reminded of movies where one scene is added in which the characters use profanity so that the movie can achieve a certain rating. Similarly, a few prayers mark the book for the Christian market, though the characters do not appear to rely on God or consider him in their actions. My excerpts are necessarily short.

Charlotte's Rose (Cannon, 2002), the story of the Welsh immigrants, has a willful Charlotte praying to make Sister Roberts fall. *"Dear God,* I say in my head, *I know I asked you to make Sister Roberts slip and fall on the deck. But a rat is a much better idea. Thank you."* (italics in original, p. 21). And hoping God will help her renege on her offer to carry the orphaned baby, Rose, *"Dear God, I think I might only have been teasing last night when I said I wanted to carry the baby to Zion. Please make Thomas Owen want his daughter back soon . . ."* (italics in original, p. 95). Charlotte does think in asides like this in more serious situations—when the Indians come, or when Rose gets sick, for example. However, she gives much more credence to her own will to affect situations than God's, though she does not deny him in any way.

In *Emmanuel McClue and The Mystery of the Shroud* (McCaffrey, 2001), Emmanuel's mother prays this prayer when the boys are camping on the mountain and a storm comes.

> Graciela began to pray. "Dear God, please be with Emmanuel and Joshua, and protect them from all harm and all evil." she said. (p. 109).

I believe this is the only prayer in the book. The prayer reveals, again, that God is certainly important to the character, it's just that she does not call on him at other times in the book. The last example is from *A Time to Keep Silent* (Whelan, 1979/1993), a reprinted book with a powerful story. The only reference to prayer, however is as a grace before a meal,

> We sat in front of the fireplace eating our hot dogs. Father had said grace, but it was a weird one: "Lord, make room in the woods for two more of your creatures and let them learn from the wildings to take no more than their share." (p. 29-30)

Later that evening when a bat scared her out of their new home and she took refuge in the car, she looked up.

> I looked up at the moon. The pale face that looked down at me could have been my own—or my mother's. You weren't supposed to pray to people—only to God—but I looked up hopefully. (p. 31)

Prayer also is not a practice that the characters in this book use to help them in life. These few excerpts show the lack of markers in the category "God as Setting." The ideologies that are present in the story are not the explicit ones I found in the other two categories. God is mentioned; he is often part of the premise of the story, such as Clair's father in *A Time to Keep Silent*. The use of prayer in the books is one means that I used to group the books ideologically. Another practice that helped designate the presence of God in the books was reading from or referring to passages from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Scripture

Scripture appears to have several purposes in the sample, ranging from convincing a character that his or her behavior has been wrong (Byrd, 2002) to confirming the truth of one's identity and value (Hess 1994). These excerpts show how authors use scripture in ways that identify the books as Christian literature and indicate

the presence of God. Because there are fewer examples of characters reading scripture, I discuss them as a whole.

Take a Chance (Byrd, 2002) is written to showcase a passage of scripture, Luke 14:11. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (NIV). The publisher includes the scripture reference as part of the book cover design, and all that the character goes through moves her toward an understanding of what humility is and how acting humbly allows God to work in her life. This book is in the "God as Character" category because the character comes to this understanding through the presence of God in study, prayer, and discussion. Early in the story, Lucy had been humiliated when someone laughed at her horse-riding skills and told her she should be on a donkey. The following Sunday, when the pastor of her church talked about humility, she confused the two. She asked her dad later what he thought about all "that humiliation business." When he figured out what she meant, he said,

> "Lucy, humiliation is different from humility. . . . Humiliation is when someone puts you down in a rude way," Dad said. "They're not thinking of anyone except themselves, and they think it's funny to hurt someone. It's the opposite of showing respect. That's not what the Bible is talking about. Humility, on the other hand, is when you gently lower yourself, not putting yourself or your wishes first. It's the opposite of pride, and it's a great way to show respect to others and to God." (p. 41)

Lucy has been helping to clean up a ranch so that it may be selected as the site for filming a series of commercials, which would bring in badly needed operating funds. Lucy has been snubbed by Julie, the girl the owner asks to help oversee the process, and Lucy still wants to ride one of the stallions before the week is out—one of her original purposes in coming to the ranch. Through her refusal to seek out and accept the advice of someone who has more experience, Lucy jeopardizes the whole enterprise. She knows that her behavior has been wrong and has been thinking about humility throughout the

story. The following is the scene where she is convicted that she has to own up to what she has done and try to do things God's way.

> As she reached into her jeans pocket for a Jelly Belly, her hand touched the piece of purple paper from church last Sunday, with the doodle of the large horse and small girl. And the Bible verse.
>
> Opening the paper brought tears to her eyes. Now she really felt like that small girl, in a very unhappy way.
>
> She read the words she'd scribbled down just a few days earlier. "*Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor." Proverbs 29:23*.
>
> Now that her dad had explained humility to her, Lucy realized she hadn't lowered herself at all, not really. Oh yeah, when it was easy or fun, like painting or stuff for Serena, her best friend. But not when it was hard. She hadn't wanted to ask Julie for anything. . . .She definitely hadn't wanted to humble herself in front of Julie.
>
> Lucy opened Cal's Bible and read over the verse in Proverbs again. Somehow it seemed even stronger read right out of the Bible. She heard Carla and the others walking toward the barn. Lucy shut the Bible and closed her eyes. (italics in original, p. 84)

As Lucy and Serena sit together in the hay loft at the end of the book, Lucy writes in her diary:

> *God's been teaching me…about lowering myself just a little to serve others and waiting for Him to lift me up, at just the right time, in just the right way. Carla took a chance on our plan, and it worked out just fine. I took a chance and did it God's way after messing up. It worked out just fine. In fact, it feels great. Thank you, Jesus."* (italics in original, p. 104)

In this book, both scripture and prayer are important to the character's decisions about how to act in a given situation. Lucy depends on what she learns from church lessons, her father, and her own reading and prayer to discover how to live.

Circumstances work out for the ranch in spite of her prideful actions, and through humbling herself, she begins a tentative friendship with Julie. As a reader, I felt that occasionally Lucy was too nice a person to be believable, always attempting to find a way to rationalize meanness in others. Overall, however, she came across to me as someone who was struggling to mature in her faith, desiring a deeper relationship with God and working to accomplish that. This was communicated through her reference to scripture and prayer and conversations with her friends and family, and also through her application of those things to the circumstances in her life. It is important to note here that the idea of humility has been used oppressively in literature and in history, as Trousdale (1990) showed in her analysis of *Words by Heart* (Sebestyen, 1979/1997). The humility attributed to Ben Sills' Christian beliefs about forgiveness eventually causes his death. It is a false humility, an example of a significant error that a *cross cultural* book can make, when Sills makes his daughter promise to forgive her murderer, who is white, implying that he need not suffer any consequences for his act. Liberation theologians also talk about humility: Jesus' model of service to others did begin with his humbling himself, not with the result that he was exploited by the people in power at the time, but so that God's purposes were accomplished in his life and in others' lives as well. The next two excerpts come from books that are in the "God as Sage" category.

Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem (Maselli, 2002) is written as though it is realistic fiction, but it has an element of the supernatural that makes the deep Christian spirituality of the characters surreal. It is also based on a particular scripture as is *Take a Chance*, but in this case, instead of the events of the story illuminating the meaning of the scripture, the boys use the scripture to illuminate their lives in the sense that they believe it and look in their lives for evidence of how God is working out this truth. This is the second book in a series about 4 junior high school boys who found a laptop computer with the ability to change the future in small, but telling ways. The boys consider it a gift from God, and *how* they choose to use it is a subtext of the story. In the

current book, the biggest, meanest guy in the school, Hulk Hooligan, has threatened one of the boys to force him to help him pass an English exam. Hulk doesn't know that Matt is the one who caused him to be caught at cheating. One of the coaches was accused of changing students' grades to enable them to play on the team, and Matt used the laptop to have the real culprit change the grades again. Matt's friends videotaped Hulk returning to the scene of the crime, and so he was caught. Matt now feels guilt and fear and distaste at the prospect of working with Hulk. In this scene, his friends help him realize what he should do and what his attitude should be.

> Matt sat down at his desk chair and ran his right hand over the laptop's black plastic case. "God knows that I need help tutoring him. I guess it's worth a shot."
>
> "Yeah," Lamar said. "Remember the 2:52 thing Pastor Ruhlen taught us? The Bible says when Jesus was our age, he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Well, just like Jesus, we're all growing—and your strength is your wisdom. Use your smarts with the laptop and you can teach Hulk a thing or two."
>
> Matt nodded. Maybe Lamar was right. Maybe he really could help Hulk, It was worth a shot. (p. 22-3)

Both scripture and prayer have a place in the story, especially if the suggestions Matt types on the laptop are considered prayer. However, as the title implies, things are not what they seem, and Matt constantly misjudges who Hulk is and what he is capable of, though Matt believes he is being compassionate. The interesting twist is that when Matt, satisfied with his efforts to help Hulk, assumes that they are now friends, Hulk very clearly brings him up short, challenging him for his stereotypical attitude. Although, the author has done a pretty good job of stereotyping the character by naming him Hulk Hooligan and giving him ignorant-sounding speech patterns. Hulk tells Matt,

> "…Listen to the tone of yer voice when ya speak to me. Until ya can get

> over whatever throne ya think ya live on because of yer smarts—cuz ya think yer better than me—nothing's gonna change." (p. 118)

Matt is chagrined, but the ending reveals that he still harbors some misapprehensions about what compassion and wisdom are.

> No, Matt knew he hadn't solved all of Hulk's problems like he'd hoped he could. And he'd found a few challenges of his own to work through. Still, he had, at least, made things a little better. And that was what having an amazing laptop was all about. (p. 121)

An interesting ideology that I feel is explicit in the use of the laptop in this story is that popular culture can effectively symbolize Christian beliefs. A conservative position could easily be that using a laptop to symbolize the prayer relationship with God is idolatrous and also validates the "New Age" idea that there are other forces in the world besides God that can affect reality (O'Brien, 1998). However, this intriguing discussion is outside the scope of this study. I placed the book in the God as Sage category because the introduction of the scripture and the few prayers sort of jumpstart the story and move it along at important points as though a connection with God spurs things along from a distance, but he doesn't really interact with the characters. He is important, but in an abstract way. I come back to this book in the next section for its treatment of the bully, Hulk. The second excerpt from a book in this category is one that was difficult to place. It could have gone in either of the first two categories. There is no question that God is central to the way the characters think and that they take his Word, the Bible, seriously. The book shows very well how scripture is useful in making decisions that impact real life, another example of an explicit ideology. However, there is still a feeling of "going to the well" and then coming back out into life.

The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert (Wilson & Dengler, 2001) is based in part on a very popular series written by the first author's father and first published beginning in 1939. The old books are supposedly a favorite of Les' (the main character's) father,

and when his family moved to the area where the books were set, Les and four friends make up a new *Sugar Creek Gang*. The old gang was seven white boys, the new one is three boys and two girls, with mixed ethnicities. They won a week working with archaeologists on a dig, but shortly after they arrive, bones and tools begin to disappear from the site. The irascible head archaeologist lets them know that if it were up to her they would not be there, and she can't wait until they're gone. She treats them with contempt and is verbally abusive, even to threatening them for stealing. Les talks with his father on a cell phone and complains about her. His father responds,

> "Remember what Jesus said?"
>
> "I remember lots of stuff He said. What?"
>
> "Sermon on the Mount, last part of Matthew 5, I think. Anybody can love friends and nice people. He wants us to love enemies and pray for them."
>
> "Yeah, but—"
>
> "And Paul in Romans. Just a minute. I'm looking for it."
>
> Now, notice here, when Dad said, "Just a minute," he was talking about a cell phone minute that was costing him money. That shows you right there how serious he was. . .
>
> His voice came on again. "Here it is. Romans 12:18. 'If it's possible, as much as lies in you'—that is, as much as you can—'live peaceably with all.' Next verse: 'Don't avenge yourself but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.' I've also seen that translated as 'Never avenge yourself, but leave room for the wrath of God.'"
>
> I know Dad was reading out of the King James Bible because that has always been his favorite. But when he would read to me, he'd make some of the words more modern. That way it sounded more like it was for me and not just for someone four hundred years ago.

He wasn't done yet. "And here's the kicker, Les. Verse 20: 'Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

"Yes, but—"

"That's day-to-day living. He's talking about where we are in our everyday lives, not Sunday school."

"Yeah, but Dr. Royer would be so busy ragging on us, she wouldn't even notice if we were good to her."

"Pray for wisdom, Les. All of you. Then see what God will do. . . .Call me back in a day or two." (p. 50-2)

The Sugar Creekers gather together as Les explains what his dad told him. Lynn finds a Bible and reads the passage again. They discuss what they think it means for them in this situation and agree on a "plan:" They will be nice to Dr. Royer no matter what, neither protesting at her unfair pronouncements nor arguing with her assignments and being as helpful as possible. The book plays out the plan in the rest of the story. The application of scripture in this instance was a way for the children to solve a difficult problem, and the means of their doing so was also instructive. As the scene unfolds, the author has the children consult a trusted adult, reread the Bible passage, discuss the scripture and devise a plan using it. Later in the story, they hold each other accountable to their agreement, and ultimately, see the plan bear fruit in their ability to work with Dr. Royer to solve the mystery. The author's beliefs about how scripture is useful to a Christian are clear, yet skillfully entwined in the structure of the story. This book is unusual in the sample in that the children are separated from their parents. Even so, Les' father provides the teaching on which the plot revolves. I feel the language of his sharing the scripture with his son indicates that this searching of the scriptures is something they have done many times, and that he has confidence in Les' applying the scripture to good

effect. My last excerpt is from a book in the "God as Setting" category. It shows how exposure to scripture in someone's youth can be fruitful in his or her adulthood.

I took this passage from the afterword of a fictionalized biography, *Dust of the Earth* Hess, 1994). Some scripture was included in the fictionalized story, as it was important to a peripheral character, but it wasn't important to the main character until he was much older, and therefore didn't play a part in the fictionalized tale. Mr. Pace, the African American man whose story is told in this book, grew up in the south before World War II. His family were sharecroppers. As a young boy, he was humiliated on his first day of school because he stuttered badly and refused to talk, so he quickly dropped out of school and did not learn to read. A white storeowner in the town and a black boy a few years older than he, both Christians, became his friends, and he eventually enlisted in the army with the young man. Mr. Pace became a Christian later in his life, and his motivation to finally learn to read came from his desire to read the Bible for himself. Most of the book is about his young life and middle years before he became a Christian. This excerpt is from the afterword; it is quoted from an interview with him. It confirms the eventual primary importance of scripture in this man's life, but I felt the author missed an opportunity to show how motivating the Bible can be in changing lives by not including it in the story itself. However, there is much that is problematic about this book, and these issues are unavoidable in reading this excerpt. The author is a white woman who works at a university. The biography appears to be well-researched and in fact echoes many of the same type of events and feelings that are expressed in the incomparable works written by Mildred Taylor (e.g. 1976, 2001) about an African American family who lived in similar circumstances. Mr. Pace grew up in a time when African Americans were deliberately excluded from full citizenship and their education was far less important to white employers than their able bodies. As I've discussed, Christian teaching was often the occasion for continued oppression, as well, though the author is careful to show how the town turned against the white store owner when they

burned him out for his championship of the young black men. I feel that the scenes where the characters discuss racism imply that part of the reason for Mr. Pace's early rejection of Christianity is the people of his town who said they were Christians who were also racists. In this excerpt, Mr. Pace shares his beliefs about scripture and how it helped him learn who he is.

> "First verse that I ever read was in Philippians, and I found out who I was—I was a Christian. Then, after that, when I read the Preamble to the Constitution, then I found out that I was an American. I put them together, and that made my life unique. Years ago I had learned how Abraham Lincoln freed me; but when I could read, I found out he didn't free me. Christ freed me over two thousand years ago—I just didn't know it.
>
> "After I began to memorize Scripture, I found the verse that says that I came from the dust of the earth. All people came from the same dust. I said, 'Wow, God made me. He made me out of the dust, and He painted me the color He wanted me to be painted, for Himself, not for me.' I accepted that, and my life began to grow." (Hess, 1994, p. 191-2)

Personal testimony has always been a powerful part of Christian worship and fellowship for me, and I've often heard it said, "You can't argue with someone's experience." What's remarkable about Mr. Pace's expression of belief, that is more powerfully expressed for me in his words than in the fictionalized story, is that he was able to overcome the experience of racism at the hands of Christians to come to his own understanding of God's word.

I have discussed a range of scripture use in this section. Some books, such as *The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert* (Wilson & Dengler, 2001), make scripture an integral part of the characters' experiences. It is portrayed as an authoritative, effective source of guidance on how to live with others. Other books are written exegetically, so that whatever the characters live through is explicitly tied to a particular scripture (e.g.

Maselli, 2002). It may be that these characters receive further insight into the scripture's meaning, or the story may be read as an application of the scripture to life. Other books, in much the same manner as with prayer use, either do not quote the Bible at all, or the scriptures are more perfunctory: important, but perhaps not ultimately useful in the circumstance (e.g. Randall, 1999). The use of scripture as a marker of Christian practice has been the topic of this section; the next excerpts explore how characters talk about the Christian life.

God-talk

The final marker of Christian practice that I describe in this section are the conversations that child characters have with family members, with adult mentors, or with other children who help them deal with their Christian "walk." Some of these conversations are evangelistic in nature (e.g. McCusker 1995), but many are about such things as how to act toward friends (e.g. Mackall, 2000), or how to resolve a "mess" (e.g. Rue, 2001). While the uses of prayer and scripture reveal much of an author's beliefs, these excerpts are especially telling of ideological assumptions because they show how the family enacts their beliefs in their lives. Since I'm showcasing conversations, these excerpts are long. The conversations all take place in books where the presence of God is important to the story or the character, so none come from the "God as Setting" category. I've separated the excerpts into conversations between a child and a family member, or another adult, or another child.

Conversations between a child and a family member

Only one of the books has an unresolved antagonism between the child character and a parent, and that is the fictionalized biography, *Dust of the Earth* (Hess, 1994). Of the others, the difficulties between parent and child are always lovingly worked out. Anger at a parent's choices figures in two of the books (e.g. Rue, 2001), and both are a result of the child's willfulness against a parent's decision. A parent's authority in a child's life is sometimes tested, but never questioned, and by the same token, sometimes

momentarily neglected, but never abused (e.g. High, 1997). Several characters have single parents (e.g. Lewis, 2002; Whelan 1979/1993), but the family is strong nonetheless, often with aunts or uncles around. One of the strong markers of this literature is an emphasis on a functional family, an ideology that is an assumption at the sociocultural level (Hollindale, 1992) through all the books. When there is a missing parent, there are other adults that fill the gaps as mentors or caretakers of the children. No main character is left without a loving adult in his or her life except for the homeless children in *Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) and the children who were "left behind" in *Darkening Skies* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001) the futuristic book. Adults are not uniformly portrayed as perfect or as having all the answers, but they are mature people who work out difficulties with God's help. In most books, the communication between parent and child is remarkable (e.g. Hambrick, 2000; Wiggin, 1995). They all seem to be able to talk to each other and help each other solve life's problems.

In *A Horse of a Different Color* (Mackall, 2000) Scoop and her younger brother have lived with their Grandfather, now passed away, and their Aunt Dotty since her parents died when she was 7. Scoop has a business with two other adolescent friends where they stable and train horses. In an effort to get more business, one of her friends, Maggie, pretends to be a few years older to entice a wealthy young man to let Scoop help his horse. Scoop had dramatically caught the runaway horse before he could harm himself, and the young man recognized her as the "teenaged horse whisperer." Scoop goes along with Maggie's little white lies until things get pretty tangled. She sits on her grandfather's bed one night, and her Aunt comes in to see what's wrong.

> "I'm sorry I woke you up, Dotty,"
>
> "Nonsense," she said, patting my knee through our blankets. God Hisself sees fit to wake me up at this here hour of His day. Seems like the best time to pray."

> "I wish I could be like you, Dotty," I said. Everything always seemed so simple for her. Things were right or they were wrong. Everything that happened or might happen or didn't happen was fair game for her prayers. "You're amazing. You pray about everything."
>
> "Well now," she said, kicking her slippered feet slightly, where they dangled an inch from the floor. "I reckon I always was of a mind to take advantage of a good thing when I seen it. It ain't me that's amazing for praying. I reckon it's God who's amazing for listening, don't you reckon?" (p. 194)

Scoop asks her if it's OK to pray about the little things, and Dotty tells her that if the little things have her so knotted up that she feels apart from God, that's a good sign she needs to spend some time in prayer. Scoop does and eventually confronts Maggie about what she's doing, and Maggie lets Ben go and owns up to who she really is. Interestingly, Maggie is not a Christian, and Scoop never presses her to become one, but she does hold Maggie to her own standards of honesty, which Maggie knows are based on her Christian beliefs. Scoop is a mature young woman, and while Dotty is her mentor, she is a resource for Scoop rather than an active instructor. Their conversation indicates that while God is very present for Dotty, he is not so for Scoop, though perhaps will be. For this reason, I placed this book in the "God as Sage" category.

In the next passage, from *Point of No Return,* (McCusker, 1995) Jimmy is young, 10 years old, and having difficulties everywhere in his life because he has just become a Christian. His friends are teasing him; in order to try to maintain his friendship with them, he vandalized a park gazebo and is in trouble for that; and worse, his beloved grandmother is dying. In this scene, his family has come to the hospital to be with her, and Jimmy has a chance to talk with her. This conversation reveals the importance of the presence of God to the characters; this book is in the "God as Character" category.

> "Hi, Grandma," Jimmy said. "How're you feeling?"
>
> "Awful, but I'll get over it," she said, chuckling. "How are you doing?"

"Okay," he said.

She patted the mattress as a signal for him to come closer. "I mean, how are you doing now that you've met Jesus?"

Jimmy was puzzled. "I asked Him into my heart, Grandma," he said. "But it doesn't feel like I really met Him."

"Those feelings will come," she said. "Keep your faith and the feelings usually follow."

"Is that what you wanted to tell me?" Jimmy asked.

Grandma closed her eyes as if she felt a deep pain somewhere. Then she opened them again. "I have so much to tell you. I wish we had years. I would love to…to see you grow up in your faith."

"You will, Grandma. We're praying for you!" Jimmy said.

"Good," she said, her voice raspy and broken. "Pray hard. Not because I'll get better, but because you should pray. Learn to talk to God, Jimmy. Talk to Him all the time. He's listening. He's always listening. Things won't always work out the way you want, but He's always there. He knows what's best."

Jimmy leaned forward, his elbows pressing into the mattress. "You have to get better, Grandma. It wouldn't be fair for you to leave me right after I became a Christian." He paused as the full reality of the situation came to him. She was going to die and leave him. "I need you."

Grandma turned her head so she could look Jimmy in the eyes. For a moment, they seemed as bright and clear as when she was healthy—the way Jimmy always remembered her. "You don't need me," she said firmly. "You need Jesus."

"But Jesus isn't here," he said. "And I don't have anybody else."

"You have your family. You have your church. You have friends—some you haven't even met yet. Jesus is in them." She raised a finger and pointed at Jimmy's chest. "You have Him in there."

> "But it isn't fair. I didn't know it was gonna be this hard."
>
> She coughed and grabbed Jimmy's hand. "Fair has nothing to do with it. Look at me, Jimmy. Nobody said the Christian life was fair—or easy. Nothing in this world is fair or easy. Growing old and dying of cancer isn't fair or easy. But God is good." (p. 98-99)

Jimmy's grandmother dies that evening, but his memories of her sustain him, and the occasion of her death sparks additional conversations with his parents and a mentor about the difficulties of learning to depend on God. There are no easy answers in this book; Jimmy's friends don't stay with him, but he does begin to understand her last words to him that "God is good" when another boy asks him at school about his newfound faith. This book is open about the losses that can occur when a child decides to become a Christian and explains that the process of learning faith can be understood as God's refocusing a person's attention from worldly concerns to him. Jimmy's mentor promises him,

> "…that God never takes anything out of our lives unless He's going to replace it with something else—something that will help us the same way or more. You just have to keep your eyes open for it" (p. 122).

Jimmy's grandmother is called a wise woman, and that seems to be her function in this book; as the matriarch of the family, she holds an important position and is revered for her wisdom, her humor, and her sensible hold on life. Many of the books have adults other than the child's parent who have a significant role to play. The next section looks at two books where children have met someone who helps them over a rough spot.

Conversations between a child and an adult mentor

The first excerpt is from a historical fiction book, *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001). Will found out that the father he reveres, who is missing in action in World War II, was his mother's second husband, and not his "real" father. He also felt as though he didn't have a sense of what his religion was or should be, hence his desire to become Anasazi.

He has been gently redirected by both the Indian sage he met and his mother to talk with the new pastor of their church. This passage is part of his first conversation with the pastor.

> "How come Christians don't have sacred secrets like the Indians?" he said.
>
> Bud stopped with a forkful of lemon meringue pie halfway between the plate and his mouth. He put it down and said, "We have sacred beliefs, but they aren't a secret. The whole point is that they're available to everybody."
>
> "They're a secret to me," Will said. He pushed a cherry around on his pie plate. "No offense, but I never heard any of them in a sermon."
>
> "No offense taken," Bud said. "I think we sometimes talk way over people's heads.
>
> I'm trying to work on that."
>
> "Then they're still secrets. How am I supposed to learn them?"
>
> "You'll learn them because you want to," Bud said.
>
> It sounded so much like Quebi saying, *Do what you must*, Will almost dropped his fork.
>
> "It isn't a secret," Bud said. "But it *is* a mystery."
>
> "What is?"
>
> "The way God works. Ever since I tried to run you over that day, I've been praying for you. The mystery is that somehow God heard and He protected you and brought you here." (p. 172-3)

Will explodes, angrily demanding why God hasn't protected him from the difficulties he's been in, and why he hasn't protected his Anasazi friends, and why Rudy isn't his real dad. Bud helps him by sharing the unexplained sorrows in his own life and his confidence in God, and they agree to talk about these things more. Again, in this excerpt, I find no pat answers, but a suggestion that a Christian life is one that is a process, an evolving relationship with a person (Jesus or God) who is dependable. As I

explained earlier, Will's interaction with God comes late in the book, so God is not as present as he is in the excerpts from the next book.

This same theme of God's ability and desire to care for his people is worked out in *The Wooden Ox,* (Hardy, 2002), a book that takes place in the 1980s, in Mozambique. A family from the United States is in the country to assist with relief efforts for refugees from the ongoing civil war, and in the beginning of the story they are traveling to villages with an African pastor to deliver clothing. On the family's way to help with the clothing delivery, they traveled with an army convoy. They witnessed an attack on a village which the soldiers routed. After dinner one evening, when the conversation turns to the bandits, the pastor shares his family's story.

> "I come originally from a village to the west of here," Pastor Makusa explained. "It is a beautiful land where the Limpopo makes a large sweep around a flat-topped hill. There is plenty of water for crops and good grazing on the steep slopes.
>
> "My two sons lived on farms next to mine. When I came to Chibuto to pastor the church, they took care of my land. I brought Rute, my oldest granddaughter, to help my wife and go to school.
>
> Keri remembered what Rute had said about her parents being dead. Her hands turned cold. She wiped the sweat on her skirt.
>
> "Not long after that," Pastor Makusa continued, "one son died of malaria. Rute's father built a new hut in his homestead and brought his brother's widow and her children to live there. Just after the harvest the bandits came. They stole all the grain and set the houses on fire while everyone slept. All are dead but Rute—my children and six grandchildren, including a new baby we had never seen."
>
> Keri stared at the chicken broth puddle on her plate. Closing her eyes couldn't shut out the memories of flames lapping thatch or sobbing refugees.

> "Only one grandchild's body was not found. We do not know what happened to him. He was the oldest boy, Dzumisana. He was seven years old—just your age." The old man looked at Kurt. "He used to tend the goats on the side of the hill and bring them to a little corral at night. Surely he died too, but the bodies were so badly burned we couldn't tell." He shook his head sorrowfully.
>
> "How sad," Mom said softly. "Dzumisana means 'Let us give praise,' doesn't it? What a beautiful name! How long ago was this? Perhaps he fled and will make his way to you in Chibuto like Pastor Ndima's children."
>
> The old man shook his head. "It has been five years now since they died. I clung to hope for a while, but it has been too long."
>
> *Five years*, thought Keri. Dzumisana would have grown and changed. Would Pastor Makusa even know his grandson if he met him?
>
> The pastor smiled a wise smile. "God doesn't always answer 'yes' to our prayers. We don't know why. He let Job suffer in the Bible, and Job never knew why."
>
> His face was deeply lined. "This world is full of sin and suffering. Christ died for our sin, and in His death He shared our suffering." He paused and murmured almost to himself, "Dzumisana! Let us give praise!" (p. 40-2)

This man does not so much talk with the children about God in the remainder of the story as show them, through his behavior to his family, his church, and the bandits that capture them, how a person can walk in his faith, loving his enemy while resisting the evil that they do. I discuss more of this book in the next section as it addresses issues around white missionaries in Africa, so I'll limit my comments here to this conversation. The author implies that God is able to care for people even in horrific circumstances, and the rest of the book carries through this ideology as Keri learns for herself that God cares for her.

These excerpts have dealt with children's relationships with adults other than family members and show that the Christian life is one that means learning how to listen

to God, expecting change in your life, and expecting help along the way. Few of the conversations between parents and children or other adults were concerned with how the Christian lives among other people, which would be an example of a response to God I have identified as public religion and will address in Section IV. Another means of exploring the Christian life is conversations that occur between children. Sometimes it is siblings who speak together, other times good friends, but also adversaries who have come, at the least, to respect each other, and at most, to become friends.

Conversations between children

Both of the books from which I've drawn these excerpts show characters who live fully in the presence of God. A historical fiction book, *The Journey of Yung Lee* (McCoy-Miller, 2000), also quoted above in the prayer section, repeats a common plot setup, where a bully, who does not do well in school, and a more capable child are paired by their teacher so that the bully might pass academically. This book is complicated by being a story of an immigrant from China to the California gold fields in the 1850s. Howard, the bully, who is Irish, is won over by Lee's kindness to him in spite of his meanness to her. One day at lunch, when they are supposed to be studying, he asks her why she has been kind.

> "How come you're nice to me? He asked, still looking away. "I figured as soon as you got your teacup back, you wouldn't teach me. I know Miss Thompson said you had to, but I thought you'd just make out like you was helping and let me fail. How come you never told Miss Thompson I took your teacup? And I know you ain't afraid of me, so my threats didn't have nothing to do with it," he hastily added, finally turning back to meet her gaze.
>
> "I did have some unkind thoughts about helping you when Miss Thompson first gave me the assignment," Lee replied with a giggle. "But I gave you my word that I would help you if you returned my teacup."

"You could have kept your word without being nice to me," he interjected. "That's true! And there were times when it was hard to be nice to you. But when I was thoughtful, you finally began treating me better. . . .One of the last things Mrs. Conroy told me before I sailed for America was to return kindness for unkindness. I've learned that's a very hard thing to do."

Howard listened intently. "I'm not so sure that works all the time—that stuff about being kind."

"Maybe not, but it's better than being hateful. When I say and do mean things, I feel bad down inside." Lee replied, pointing toward her heart. "How come you were so mean to me, Howard? Did I do something that made you want to hurt me, or was it just because I look different?" Lee asked cautiously.

Howard stared at her thoughtfully. "I guess it's just the way I am. I make fun of people."

" . . . Nobody is ugly or worthless in God's eyes, Howard. He created each of us to look different. Mr. Smith says he thinks God likes variety. I think so too," Lee said, returning Howard's smile. (p. 101-2)

"Do you really believe that Jesus loves me?" Howard asked.

"I know that Jesus loves you, Howard. He may not love the things you do or the way you sometimes act, but He loves you," Lee vowed. (McCoy-Miller, 2000, p. 103)

These children are 12 years old, and they have spent several days by this time working together, which explains the length and depth of the conversation. Lee has been open and talkative all the way through the book, so this seems in character for her.

While this story was well written, I found it too didactic, as the passage also shows in its solution of what must have been a long-standing behavior for Howard. Also, I found it unusual that the Chinese immigrants lived with a black family, and all the

children of the community went amicably to school together. The teacher was warm and welcoming, and other than Howard's family and the customs officials, Lee met with no racism. I'll return to this book in Section IV.

Another example of evangelism occurs in the futuristic book, *Darkening Skies: The Judgment of Ice,* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001). I include this for several reasons. It is from a series, *Left Behind: The Kids* that are best-sellers. However, it is a poorly written book, and the plot driven action reminds me of revival preachers who storm into town, preach hellfire and brimstone, convert dozens of people, and then leave them with no support for learning to live in their new faith. It is unashamedly evangelistic, and even through the clumsiness of the prose, almost seductive in its brash, take it or leave it attitude about the judgment of God and the need for everyone to convert, today. The characters are bravely surviving in a hostile world environment, with people who are trying to find them to either kill them or reeducate them. I had trouble knowing who was who; there were too many characters who were undistinguishable since I had not read all the books. Lionel in this excerpt is an African American who is part of the original four "kids" who were "left behind" when all the Christians were transported to heaven in the event known as the Rapture. Their mission has been to bring in as many people as they can as believers while trying to stay away from the nonbelievers who have taken over the world. This passage is a telephone conversation between Lionel and Samuel, the son of one of their enemies.

> One afternoon while Judd and Nada were exercising, Lionel took a call from Samuel. "I have been thinking about what Dan and Nina said before they died, and the verse you gave me."
>
> Lionel had almost forgotten about the words he had handed to Samuel. It was the strangest verse he had ever given a nonbeliever, but he thought it applied.

The words of Jesus were found in Luke 12. “From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or the other way around. There will be a division between father and son…” Lionel had finished the note by writing, *The truth may divide you and your father, but it’s always best to stick with the truth.*

Samuel said, “I have read that verse over and over. I had always thought to obey my father was the best thing I could do as a son.”

“You’re supposed to honor your father,” Lionel said. “But if your dad believes something that’s wrong, or asks you to do something that goes against what God wants, you have to disobey him.

“I’ve always believed that if I do the right things I will someday get to heaven. But I have been reading this rabbi’s writings on the Internet, and I have been reading the words of Jesus in the Gospels. I don’t know how to get to heaven.”

“There’s only one way,” Lionel said.

Lionel explained that Jesus was not just a good teacher, but God in the flesh. “His mission was to live a perfect life and die as a sacrifice for your sins and mine. And he did that.”

“Dan and Nina always said I could never earn my way into heaven,” Samuel said.

“They were right,” Lionel said. “The way to heaven is open right now. And God will show you what to do about your dad.”

“Will I have to leave home if I pray this?”

“I don’t know,” Lionel said. “Becoming a believer doesn’t make everything smooth. As a matter of fact, if your dad finds out, things will probably get worse. That’s why I wrote what I did after that verse I gave you. It’s better to find the truth and follow it than to live a lie.” (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001) p. 106-7

This book proposes a future for the world based on the New Testament book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, an apocalyptic book of prophecy that appears at the end of the New Testament. It's authorship is attributed to John, a disciple of Jesus. For Christians who believe that the Bible is true in its portrayals of history and predictions for the future, Revelation has been a source of endless speculation about what will happen when God decides it is time to end this world as it now exists. I attended a retreat in the spring of 2002 where the main speaker was a well-educated, articulate Messianic Christian (one who is also Jewish). She has a web site and extensive list serve on which she reports current day events in Israel and interprets them from her apocalyptic perspective (**http://www.foryourglory.org**). In the early months of 2003 she moved to Israel, convinced that the last days have begun, and the Rapture that is played out in the *Left Behind* series will become a reality in her lifetime. When Christians pray for "the Peace of Jerusalem," (Jesus) we understand that we are praying for the violent events to occur which will herald his return. I do not have firsthand knowledge of the groups that are sequestered in the United States who also believe that Armageddon is at hand, but I am reminded of *Armageddon Summer* (Yolen & Coville, 1999), which explores what can occur when people lose sight of present reality. The attitude that the end is coming soon may contribute to an every-person-for-him-or-herself mentality that would be counter to the model of living in society that Jesus left for us. *Darkening Skies* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001) is the only book among those I read that deals with prophecy; the others are mundane in their subject matter.

God-talk such as I've described in this section occurs mostly in the books in which characters are facing difficulties in their relationship with God or are considering becoming Christians (e.g. Mackall, 2000; McCusker, 1995). The next most common example would be those such as *The Wooden Ox* (Hardy, 2002), where a character's relationship with God is threatened by circumstances beyond her control. In these cases,

the presence of God is revealed to be quite important to the characters' decisions and well-being.

Conclusion

In this section, I presented the evidence that led me to categorize the sample into groups that helped explain the levels of Christian ideology (Hollindale, 1992) in the books. The 3 categories were based on the use of markers of Christian practice, including prayer, scripture, and God-talk. In some cases, characters prayed in all circumstances, or relied on scripture and discussions with family members to help them make decisions about their problems (e.g. Finley, 1868/1999; Lawton, 2002; Wiggin, 1995). In others, there were less use of the markers in the books, indicated a more distant relationship between the characters and God (e.g. Lewis, 2002; Myers, 1993; Peretti, 1997). The smallest number of books had little sense of the presence of God in a concrete way. The ideology of the books placed the characters in Christian communities in families that operated on Christian values, but the evidence of it was implied more than substantial. In the final section of my data analysis, I discuss the evidence of social advocacy in the books, linking the Christian practices that touch on public religion and multicultural issues such as treatment of race and class in literature.

Section IV: Multicultural Literature and Christian Practices

Introduction

This section addresses the relationship between issues often raised in multicultural literature and Christian practices in children's books published for the Christian market, and presents the characters' involvement in events that touch on social advocacy (or ignore it) as evidence for the practice of public religion. Multiculturalism in literature for the purposes of this study is concerned with two main ideas. The first one is that all children should see themselves in literature, or conversely, literature should authentically reflect the diversity of society. The second point is that literature that is

diverse is an important component of curricula because of the assumption that children who are engaged in discussions of social justice are better able understand others.

I define the Christian practices of social justice through my understanding of the biblical injunction; love your neighbor as yourself. What this entails is being willing to let go the claims of privilege so that all people can enter into full citizenship with all its rights and privileges. I am not looking for utopia (this side of heaven), just a fairer sharing of our current resources. On a practical level, I have suggested that children's literature, especially a genre that is based on biblical principles, should include stories where characters engage with issues of racism, classism, and gender in family roles in order to encourage child readers to see themselves as part of a diverse society and also to challenge them to practice a public religion of service to others. I agree with Nieto (1999) and Sleeter (1996) that all children should see themselves and others as equally worthy and valuable. In literature that is supposedly based on Christian beliefs, to suggest otherwise is contrary to the manner in which Jesus lived and taught. I do not suggest that every book that is published must be a serious treatment of social advocacy, but I do suggest that books should neither treat race, class and gender issues cavalierly nor pretend they don't exist.

I will discuss the books in the sample in light of their treatment of 3 particular issues: racism, classism, and gender in family roles. Table 4-3 shows the books as I interpret their attention to the issues of race and class. I did not use gender as a means of dividing the books as every book has both men and women, girls and boys filling family and community roles, while only a portion of the sample engaged in social advocacy. I have included author, title, genre, and what the multicultural content is. I also noted whether the books were in the "God as Character" category, "God as Sage", or "God as Setting". The fact that multicultural content occurs across the categories indicates to me that the authors of these books are primarily concerned with deepening children's relationships to God. The depth of the presence of God, in other words, is not related to

how he encourages Christians to work in the world, which makes me wonder whether Christian authors see social advocacy in biblical or secular terms? Table 4-3shows how I grouped the books in terms of the presence of multicultural characters and/or content. The table includes the category of the presence of God (God as Character, Sage, or Setting), author, title, genre, and multicultural characters, plot lines, or events.

Books That Do Not Address Issues Of Race or Class

Six out of the 29 books in the sample are set in Virginia, the Midwest, Maine, and in unidentified towns (e.g. Pistole, 2002; Thomas, 2002). They are all about families with a mother, father, and siblings who appear to be middle-class, with their own homes and good jobs. The characters are all European Americans, which seems reasonable in that some of those states have many towns with an ethnically homogeneous population. The Christian worldview in these books is limited to little variation in family and community life. Christianity seems to be about one's relationship with God, whether that means biblical values form the family's value system, or whether there is an intense personal relationship with God. The stories are centered on private religion.

If all the books I read chose to show only images of white, middle-class families with a mother, father, and two children living in their own homes, then their silence would contribute to the "oxygen of racism" (Hade, 1997b). *Point of No Return* (McCusker, 1995), *My Life as a Smashed Burrito with Extra Hot Sauce* (Myers, 1993), and *The Palomino* (Pistole, 2002) all have characters who are interacting with people outside their families, yet with the exception of "a Latino girl" as a reference to a new friend in *Smashed Burrito*, they are unrelievedly white. There is a difficulty here that is paradoxical. If I agree with the theorists who insist that an author should only write about his or her culture (MacCann, 1998; Sleeter, 1996), then these books are what they should be, written by white people about white culture. Then the problem becomes whether or not publishers print *parallel culture* (Cai & Sims-Bishop, 1994) books in sufficient numbers to provide variety. Christian publishers certainly do not, as my selection shows,

and secular publishers do not do a good job in this regard, either (Harris, 1993; Taxel, 2002). However, this line of thinking assumes that there is a white culture that is somehow independent of others, and my contention is that *that* is the myth which perpetuates racial and class divides. Not only that, but I believe if we become separatist in our literature, showing people who only interact among others like them, then we offer children no pictures of how they can successfully live among others.

BOOKS WHICH DO NOT ADDRESS ISSUES OF RACE OR CLASS AT ALL - 6 BOOKS				
Category God as Character, Sage, or Setting	**Author**	**Title**	**Genre**	**Multicultural characters, plot lines, or event**
Character	McCusker	*Point of No Return*	Realistic Fiction	None
Sage	Myers	*My Life as a Smashed Burrito*	Realistic Fiction	None
Character	Pistole	*The Palomino*	Realistic Fiction	None
Sage	Randall	*The I Scream Truck*	Realistic Fiction	None
Setting	Thomas	*Secret of Noah's Flood*	Realistic Fiction	None
Character	Wiggin	*The Mystery of the Sunken Steamboat*	Realistic Fiction	None
BOOKS WITH MULTICULTURAL CHARACTERS - 11 BOOKS				
CHARACTERS OF DIFFERENT RACE				
Character	Byrd	*Take a Chance*	Realistic Fiction	One Hispanic character/family
Character	Finley	*Elsie's Impossible Choice*	Historical Fiction	Slaves
Sage	Littleton	*Tracks in the Sand*	Realistic Fiction	One Japanese American/Mr. Tomoro helps htem capture the villains
Sage	Mackall	*A Horse of a Different Color*	Realistic Fiction	One African American, one deaf character, rich customers
Sage	Peretti	*Flying Blind*	Realistic Fiction	One African American and one Asian American in tower crew
CHARACTERS OF DIFFERENT CLASS				

Sage	Lewis	*Star Status*	Realistic Fiction	Four girls well-to-do; one dependent on wealthy uncle
Sage	Maselli	*Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem*	Fantasy	One character from poor side of town
CHARACTERS OF DIFFERENT RACE & CLASS				
Character	Jenkins & LaHaye	*Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice*	Fantasy	One African American, formerly poor and rich kids
Setting	McCaffrey	*Emmanuel McClue and The Mystery of the Shroud*	Fantasy	Wealthy family of African American and Latin American mix; poor people in Argentina
Sage	Wilson & Dengler	*The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert*	Realistic Fiction	Lower class cowboys and elitist university professors
Sage	Windle	*Cave of the Inca Re*	Realistic Fiction	Wealthy white businessmen; poor Bolivians
BOOKS THAT ENGAGE ISSUES OF RACE AND/OR CLASS - 12 BOOKS				
Category God as Character, Sage, or Setting	**Author**	**Title**	**Genre**	**Multicultural characters, plot lines, or event**
Character	Greegor	*Trouble of the Northwest Territory*	Historical Fiction	Western settlers and Native Americans; interactions between them
Sage	Hambrick	*The Year of Abi Crim*	Realistic Fiction	African American teacher and student and racists comments toward them; Abi acts on principles
Character	McCoy-Miller	*The Journey of Yung Lee*	Historical Fiction	Chinese immigrants stay with African American family and interact with Irish American family
Character	Lawton	*Courage to Run: A Story Based on the Life of Harriet Tubman*	Historical Fiction	Slaves and wealthy landowners; preparation for escaping from slavery

Sage	Morris	*Painted Warriors & Wild Lions: Travel in Africa*	Realistic Fiction	Wealthy Americans in Africa with Masai who figure wealth differently than Americans do; interactions between groups
Sage	Rue	*The Discovery*	Historical Fiction	Mexicans, Anasazi Indians, interactions between children of these groups and white main character
CHARACTERS OF DIFFERENT CLASS				
Setting	High	*A Stone's Throw from Paradise*	Realistic Fiction	Amish and lower income main character
Setting	Jackson & Jackson	*Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace*	Historical Fiction	Homeless children and benefactors
Setting	Whelan	*A Time to Keep Silent*	Realistic Fiction	Wealthy reverend moves to rural area with cut in pay/privileges
CHARACTERS OF DIFFERENT RACE & CLASS				
Setting	Cannon	***Charlotte's Rose***	Historical Fiction	Welsh immigrants meet Americans, Native Americans, persecution
Character	Hardy	***The Wooden Ox***	Historical Fiction	Americans helping with relief during Mozambique civil war encounter different groups of people there; most very poor
Setting	Hess	***Dust of the Earth***	Fictionalized Biography	African American growing up in the South as a sharecropper; becoming successful businessman

Therefore, the challenge is to write literature that portrays a character's views of others without demeaning those others through stereotypic, stock characterizations or by relegating them always to secondary character roles. This approach would take diligent

research and editing, but I believe would be a truer rendering of what life is like. This category of books have the same flavor as those I read in childhood because of the rosy picture of family life; few characters are really bad. For example, the villains of the story (and this is true in the other categories as well) are mostly peripheral characters, one-dimensional with bad habits rather than bad souls. Only a few books have any reference to killing someone (e.g. Wiggin, 1995); the others only have vandals or thieves as villains. Villainy in general is a plot device; the books don't delve into any psychological aspects of evil (except for the apocalyptic book, *Darkening Skies* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001)), and children are rarely intentionally hurt by adults, physically or emotionally. Interestingly, those characters who are cast as villains are a better cross-section multiculturally than the main characters, as they vary by race, class, gender and age. The 6 books in this category include those that did not address issues of race and class at all. Books with multicultural characters in them, the second grouping, attempt to present a more diverse, modern world, but often fall short.

Books with Multicultural Characters

Many of the books make a nod at multiculturalism, but this usually consists of adding one or a few characters of color, though those characters' ethnicities do not impact the story, and there is nothing about them but physical descriptions that cue their differences. Immigrants and Native Americans do sometimes speak a pidgin English, and in one story, a character's reaction to a deaf girl shows his objectionable personality (Mackall, 2000).

The diversity in character is both of color and of economic standing, though the stories themselves are not engaged with issues of race and class. There are Americans whose ethnicity is African (e.g. Wilson & Dengler, 2001), Japanese (e.g. Littleton, 2001), Chinese (e.g. Morris, 2001), or Mexican (e.g. Byrd, 2002), and people from other countries such as Bolivia, Israel, or Africa (e.g. Hardy, 2002; Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001; McCaffrey, 2001). The economic diversity includes wealthy families (e.g. Lewis, 2002),

people who are comfortable or watchful of their finances (e.g. Thomas, 2002), people who live in the "bad" part of town (e.g. Maselli, 2002), or criminals seeking easy money (e.g. Wiggin, 1995). There are stereotypes in schools: bullies, computer geeks, jocks (e.g. Maselli, 2002); and in terms of religious differences, there are Christians and those who are not (e.g. McCusker 1995), but none of the stories in any category have people living in the United States who are committed to other religions. This noticeable characteristic of the books is indicative of a selective tradition (Taxel, 1981) that has the effect of denying the existence of those people who worship differently than Christians.

In one respect, I find it encouraging that authors include characters of different ethnicity to attempt to represent the diversity of our society in their characters' lives. However, it is problematic when those characters are peripheral only, or the differences in them are only of color. People, like myself, who have grown up with racial and class privileges, often are unaware of the daily indignities suffered by others without the same privileges. To read books that never note the real differences between characters of color and white characters denies that there is a difference in people that is important in society. In my experience, people of color who are comfortable economically still feel the sting of racism in countless ways, and do not appreciate others' ignorance of that reality.

Treatment of race

For example, in *Take a Chance* (Byrd, 2002), one of the characters, Lucy, is from a white family. Serena's family all have Hispanic names and at one point Lucy admires her smooth brown skin, but otherwise they are very much the same as Lucy's family. I would expect to see more extended family; it is unusual for a Mexican American family in California to live separately. Not at all impossible, just unlikely, so that Serena's name and color is a difference which makes no difference. Chopp and Taylor (1994) refer to the "discursive shift" in the last half of the 20th Century which has changed the way scholars think about diversity in the United States. Instead of the "melting pot" with its idea of a univocal citizenship, which *Take a Chance* seems to promote, the metaphor

more commonly used is a "mosaic," a blending of distinctive cultures. The same situation exists in several other books (e.g. Morris, 2002; Wilson & Dengler, 2001). *Tracks in the Sand* (Littleton, 2001) has one character, a neighbor, who is an old Japanese man who lives on the island by himself. The author described him this way:

> The old man, a widower, took special pride in being a naturalized American citizen, even though he was one of the first Japanese-Americans to be put in a containment camp at the beginning of World War II. (p. 32)

That statement stopped me in my reading because it was so out of context with the rest of the story and because that's the only information I read about this man. It seems an odd way to characterize someone. One editor referred to the practice of using stereotypes to add dimension to a character (Lohr, 2003, personal communication), so that by relying on a popular culture view of what an old Japanese-American man is, the author does not have to engage in character development. Whether the practice is conscious or not, I believe it reinforces the reality of the stereotype. In this story, the gentleman and the children apparently have a good relationship, and they turn to him for assistance twice in the story, and they also say hello and thank you in Japanese to him, a respectful addition.

Similarly, the *Girls Only* series has five main characters; one is Jenna Song, who is the gymnast and whose family attends a Korean-speaking church. *The New Sugar Creek Gang* has five kids, too: Lynn Wing, whose father is Chinese and mother Japanese—an unusual mix—Tiny Wilson, the African-American boy, Mike Alvarado, whose grandparents came from Mexico, and two white kids, Les Walker (the main character) and Bits Ware. Mike's being able to understand Spanish does come in handy at one point, which is a positive comment on bi-lingualism, and he refers to his extended family a few times in the book in comments, which lends credibility to his character. The *Horsefeathers* series has one partner who is deaf, one who is African-American, and one who is European American, again, the main character. In *Flying Blind* (Peretti, 1997), of

the people in the tower crew, one is African American and one "Asian-American." The head of the crew is a white man. And so on. The only book with main characters in this group that are not white are in *Emmanuel McClue* (McCaffrey, 2001). The father is African American and the mother is from El Salvador.

Only one of the books has a negative portrayal of people of color, and that's in *Cave of the Inca Re* (Windle, 1994/2001). The twins meet several Bolivian people and are not disrespectful, but the people are all poor, living in adobe homes. The twins at one point go explore the village to see *"real live Incas."* They talk to one poorly dressed man who speaks English and who turns out to be working with the smugglers. They also run around with a boy who is their guide, and they argue with him throughout the book about his beliefs, accusing him of adhering to superstitions. At the end of the book, they run into Pedro again, and this is what happens.

> There was something different about Pedro today, and he [Justin] suddenly realized the defiance that usually showed even through Pedro's cheeky grin was gone.
>
> 'Pedro, what's happened?" he asked as he sat down. Beaming with happiness, Pedro answered shyly, "I wanted to tell you that I have asked Jesus to come in and save my heart. Last night I asked Him."
>
> "Pedro, that's wonderful!" the twins exclaimed together.
>
> "I am sorry now that I laughed when you tell me about God," Pedro continued slowly. "I did know in my heart that the old gods were not good—that they were evil and cruel.'" But I would not believe your words. I wanted no part of a God of weakness. When I saw you come out of the Cueva de la Inca Re and saw that the curse of the old gods had no power to touch you, then I believed. I knew that your loving God was truly strong to protect you, and I asked Him to be my God, too." (p. 141)

It seems that the Christian's only response to someone who is different is to be sure that person hears the gospel. John, a disciple of Jesus, wrote that miracles, also called signs and wonders, help people believe (John 20: 20-31, NIV) so perhaps Pedro is one of these, but it seems disrespectful to me to speak against his "superstitious" beliefs throughout the book. I find it difficult to negotiate this point, as I do believe that the "loving God" is the only God. However, there is an imperialist arrogance in the dialogue in the book that is akin to medical people who work on an illness rather than a person, or educators who are more interested in their teaching than a child's learning. Of course, set as this is in a foreign country, the echoes of earlier imperialism of Christianity that had devastating effects on cultures throughout South America and Africa and India ring in my ears as well (e.g. Achebe, 1994). Pedro does get recognition from the mayor of the town similarly to Jenny and Justin for his part in capturing the smugglers. All three children get a medal.

The book I find most problematic in its treatment of race is *Elsie's Impossible Choice* Finley, 1868/1999). As I noted in the previous section, this edition of the book is an updated version of the 1868 original. Other "classic" books such as the Dr. Dolittle series have been reprinted with the same sort of changes to update the language (McKissack & McKissack, 2002). The most obvious adaptations have to do with references to the slaves in the household. I read a reprint of an original book from this series, and the effect of the updated language in this book is that it makes the slaves nearly invisible. In the original their status was clear through the language used with them and by them; in this book they are servants. Aunt Chloe is Elsie's "nursemaid," and Pompey is the "chief household servant." The slaves' language in the original was dialectic, and they spoke and were treated like children. In this edition, they speak in the same manner as the other characters, except that they address the family as "ma'am" and "sir." There is only one parenthetical reference to slavery left in (or perhaps added to) this book, and that was when Elsie's father required Aunt Chloe to go to another

household so that Elsie would no longer have her affection and counsel. Aunt Chloe thinks:

> Chloe, who had always provided solace and wisdom when Elsie was troubled, could find no words of comfort this time. Her grief was every bit as deep as Elsie's. She was wracked as well by anger at Horace and by a growing fear that this separation would never be repaired. (Chloe was a slave, and long before she had been given charge of Elsie, she had experienced the bitter despair of being taken from her family to serve others. Sitting now, rocking Elsie in her lap and weeping her own hot tears, Chloe felt the pain doubly because her memory took her back to another time and other grievous partings from those she loved.) (p. 156)

In a book that is set in pre-Civil War days among wealthy people in the south, there will be slaves in the home. I applaud the removal of the stereotypic dialect and the suggestion that the slaves were only capable of child-like thought and behavior. However, I would wish that in addition to speaking in the foreword to the religious and health issues of the day that the editors had also chosen to address the issue of slavery that enabled the privileged, luxurious lifestyle Miss Finley depicts.

These books are still in print after 135 years and only recently have these updated editions come out. Several publishers produce editions of the original, and they are touted as "classics" that depict admirable, Christian values. Elsie's piety and adherence to scripture are remarkable, but in both this book and the other that I read, her religious beliefs are lived out primarily through her obedience to her father, and later her husband, and do not extend to care about the reality of others' lives who do not enjoy the privilege that she does. Her life is an expression of private religion, and does not include service to others outside her family.

The manner in which these 11 books in the sample include multicultural characters, as though all people are the same regardless of ethnic differences seems to me

to reflect an ideology at the sociocultural level (Hollindale, 1992). By that I mean that there is an assumption in the books that different people exist in society, but that they are all the same underneath differences which are in reality superficial. The ideology that seems to operate in class issues is less sanguine. The main characters in the books may have to work hard, but they are all middle-class. It is only the bullies and the villains who are drawn from the lower classes (e.g. Rue, 2001; Wiggin, 1995).

Treatment of class

Treatment of class issues is similar to the treatment of multicultural characters in this group of Christian books in that the characters are one-dimensional, but different in that they typically have pivotal roles. It is worth noting that the larger corpus of children's literature also does a poor job overall of portraying people of the lower class as well-rounded characters (Pirofski, 2003). As I described in the introduction to the study, *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002) is about a group of girl athletes, one of whom depends on a wealthy uncle to support her hobby. The financial differences between Manda and her friends only serves to point out her good-heartedness in that she is appreciative of her uncle, and he is important in her life beyond the funding of her sport. In *Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem* (Maselli, 2002), there is the oft-repeated plot device of a good student paired with a poor student, and as always, the poor student is from a broken family, lives in the poor section of town, and has redeeming qualities that haven't been discovered until the good student becomes privy to them. In this book, the difference is that the poor student is aware of the plot and points out the good student's arrogant assumptions about him. This author uses Hulk to break the stereotype by challenging the main character's attitudes, however, he does this through Hulk's one speech that I quoted earlier, "…Listen to the tone of yer voice when ya speak to me" (p. 118), and I felt it had little impact overall because the stereotype existed unchallenged until this point in the book.

The villains of the stories, while varying ethnically, are most often lower class, with base motives. For example, the cowboy who has been stealing from the archaeologists in *The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert* (Wilson & Dengler, 2001) reveals his low character (already suspect because of the shabby condition of his ranch), when part of the crew that has been working for him for a few days rounding up cattle are called back to the dig.

> "Surely you ain't gonna make 'em work for Royer. That witch is always getting on their case about something, when they can have fun here. And earn money besides." (p. 86)
>
> Buck started arguing about what a lousy person Dr. Royer was and that we were foolish to try to help her. He said she'd hate us just as bad after we did her work as she did now. (p. 89)
>
> [Speaking to Dr. Royer when he'd been caught stealing:] Buck's face turned red—not with embarrassment, it appeared, but with anger. "I'm gonna get off scot-free on this, and you know it! You're such a witch, nobody's gonna take your side. So you lost a couple little things. Who cares? You deserve it! . . . You ain't no dumb kid, Les. How do you like working for her? You gonna tell me she's nice?"
>
> "No, sir. But she's honest. She doesn't like kids much. But she's honest about that, too. She doesn't lie or pretend. And she cares very much about what she's doing." (p. 131)

Honesty and hard work are two traits that are examples of the implicit ideologies (Hollindale, 1992) in this story, partly through the juxtaposition of the lazy, dishonest cowboy and the honest, though waspish, hard-working university professor. These traits are important in other stories as well, such as in *Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) and in *The Journey of Yung Lee* (McCoy-Miller, 2000).

The apocalyptic book, *Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice* (Jenkins & LaHaye, 2001), treats race, class, and gender as simply unimportant under the conditions, but the four original characters were a rich, white boy, a poor, white girl, a middle class, black boy, and a middle class, white boy. The differences in them are no longer apparent in this book, the 18th in the series. They are all leaders of the Young Trib Force (Trib for tribulation, the time period between the Rapture when all the Christians were taken into heaven and the second coming of Christ). All of the children are equally without resources other than each other and their own abilities, so leadership appears to be a matter of who converted first and who has the most forceful personality.

I placed books in this group because they included multicultural characters in the stories, but they did not use the differences in the characters to think about the reality of living in a diverse society. At one level, this is a recognition that the world is diverse and that Christians, too, are diverse. At another level, though, diversity that is recognized without substance does not bring to light the real differences among people groups and power differentials that cause racism and classism. Neither do the books show characters engaging with others to become aware of the imbalances that racist and class attitudes have created in society, or even begin to redress them. The third group of books does address some of these issues with varying depth and success.

Books That Engage With Issues of Race and Class

The distinguishing feature of the 12 books that do engage with issues of race and class are that 7 of them are historical fiction, especially those that deal with race. Only one book I read deals with racism in the present-day world (Hambrick, 2000), and issues of class are acknowledged, but not challenged in any realistic fiction (e.g. High, 1997). Typically, the clash of races comes between white settlers and Native Americans (e.g. Cannon, 2002) during the period of westward expansion. The books also delve into the time of slavery (Lawton, 2002), the plight of families whose fathers were in World War II (Rue, 2001), and missionaries in Africa (e.g. Hardy, 2002). *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001)

and *The Year of Abi Crim* (Hambrick, 2000) are the books I enjoyed reading the most, partly because of the evocative writing, but also because the characters were involved in situations that people really have to deal with.

Treatment of race

The title, *The Discovery*, refers to Will's learning that the man he thought was his father (a World War II soldier) is really his mother's second husband. Already unhappy about their move and his new school, he spends several days acting out his grief and struggling to figure out who he is. As the story opens, he's arguing with his mom about going to a school where almost all the children are Hispanic.

> "Of course [they are]," Mom said. "Ninety-six percent of the population here in Santa Fe is Hispanic. What did you expect in the public school, Czechoslovakians?". . .
>
> "So you'll learn a new language," Mrs. Hutchinson said. "It won't kill you. I intend to learn more myself."
>
> "*I* don't," Will said. "I happen to be an American."
>
> "You happen to be a snob, and I don't know how you turned out that way. Now, is that all you wanted to say about going to public school? Because this is your last chance. As soon as we park this car, the subject is closed. For good." (p. 2, 3)

Will is convinced that he will not fit in unless he makes a huge impression and he does it through lying about his home and his income and his former school. He promises to buy war stamps to help in a competition, and ends up stealing to do so.

He meets Fawn after school, and she is very hostile, very aggressive. She is doing her best to deny her Anasazi heritage, not wanting to end up like her mother, who is a cleaning lady for rich white people and shunned by her family for marrying the wrong person. Will doesn't know she's Indian, just that she's not Hispanic, until she tells him

so. Will enjoys teasing her. Fawn tells him her mother works for a rich man, and Will asks her how she knows he's rich.

> "Fancy clothes. Fancy car. All those white-people things I'm gonna have some day."
>
> "How are you gonna get 'em?"
>
> "Not by living on the pueblo, that's for sure."
>
> Will could barely keep himself from grinning. This was too easy. "What's a pueblo?" he said.
>
> "The place where my people live. Only I'm not living there the rest of *my* life. I'm going to live like a white girl."
>
> "You can't live like a white girl. You're an Indian."
>
> "So?"
>
> "So—Indians are Indians and Anglos are Anglos and Spanish are Spanish." (p. 39)

This is the crux of the story—who is Will and what does it mean to know where you come from? The author breaks down Will's simplistic notions about who people are and what they can do through the events of the story. For example, he goes to the pueblo with Fawn and meets her grandfather, whom he finds intriguing and wise. Fawn, though, is angry with Quebi because he wouldn't approve her mother's marriage, and because of that, they are cut off from family. Fawn's father is in the army, but they don't get monthly stipends like Will and his mother do because her father is an Indian, and the government won't support them as they belong to the reservation. Will becomes more aware of the injustice in her situation, yet he is envious that she has a "heritage" that he no longer does since he doesn't know whose child he is.

Will gets caught trying to retrieve Fawn from the off-limits kiva after she has run away, and they are both thrown off the reservation so Will can no longer see Quebi.

Fawn's future is unsure. She will have to go to an Indian boarding school, but she also has taken Quebi's advice.

Quebi told me last night that if I want to live in the white man's world, I have to learn to behave myself better. I have to be strong—I can't be an eggshell like my mother and crack open when hard stuff happens."

"Yikes," Will said.

"Yeah."

"But I told you Quebi was wise," Will said.

"Oh, yeah—he gave me a message for you."

He felt his face light up. "For me?" . . .

"He said to tell you feathers and face paint and knowing the sacred secrets of the pueblo will never make you an Indian, and why would you want to be? Why wouldn't you want to look at your own people and find out the sacred secrets from your own wise men and matriarchs? He says that is what you must do." (p. 167-8)

Will admits to his lies to his classmates and is able through a bequest to pay back his mother and Margretta, from whom he stole. As I described earlier, he does talk to his wise men (Bud, the pastor) and matriarchs (his mother).

What I like about this book is the way that Will has to face his racist attitudes and how he comes to understand and deal with his prejudices. His attitudes toward the Hispanic children hurt him most of all. He ends up lying and stealing in order to pretend to be better than they are, and it's only through acknowledging his lies and apologizing to his class that he is able to straighten out the mess he made. In coming to know Fawn, he learns about the rules from the pueblo and the government that unjustly keep her mother and her in poverty and in the process he becomes aware of his own privilege. He tries to help her and again makes mistakes, and he does, after all, help her to realize that she can't walk away from her heritage any more than he can from his. The idea I took from

the book is that you have to understand who you are before you can make yourself who you want to be. The book does not have any answers for the larger questions surrounding the Anasazi's lives or racial relations; it addresses Will's misapprehensions about people and how his prejudices created trouble.

In this book, the Christian witness that Will's mother wants him to have extends beyond his own belief in God, his private religion. Her response to his fears of "being the only Anglo" is for him to learn Spanish. When he has difficulty with Fawn, she pushes him to learn about her and find out how he can be a friend to her rather than feed his expectation that his friends should suit him, an idea that is consonant with the story of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus challenged his listeners to be neighbors to others rather than expect others to be neighbors to oneself. Margretta is an example of someone who puts herself out to help her Anasazi friends negotiate the system, and Quebi, too, goes outside his comfort zone to help Will. The main characters all have faults and strengths such that they are distinctive without being stereotypic, creating a thoughtful and moving story.

It is more complicated to tease out the impetus for the care for others that is exhibited in the book. Only the mother and the pastor have long-standing relationships with God, so the others' motivations cannot come from their understanding of God's love and the mandate to extend it to others (public religion). However, Will has attended church all his life, and has lived with his Christian parents, so his values which he brings to the situation with Fawn and his classmates, are based on Christian teachings. The ideology is confused; it's clearly important that being open to differences and helping others is good, but whether that's because of God or because of humanitarian reasons, I can't tell. Perhaps in the long run the difference is unimportant if children are motivated to be more open about their interactions with others who are unlike them.

There is one other book in the selection that I believe successfully negotiates an exploration of what racism means to a Christian and how one should respond to it. *The*

Year of Abi Crim (Hambrick, 2000) is about a nuclear family of mom, dad, sister and brother. Abi is beginning sixth grade and is excited about her teacher, who is also the conductor of the orchestra. Abi is a violinist who expects to be concertmaster this year. On the first day of school, she finds Mrs. Cotton instead, her new teacher, and Tamika, a new student who also plays the violin. Both of them are African-American. Mrs. Cotton both terrifies and inspires Abi, who finds herself suddenly having to work to a higher standard in order to maintain her high grades and position in the orchestra. On the day of auditions for chairs, Abi smirks at Tamika who is carefully tuning her strings to the piano. Abi tunes her strings to her own A string, "like real violin players do." Unfortunately, when it is her turn to perform, she is a half-step off, and she ruins her own chance at first chair, but she realizes it is her fault.

At the dinner table that night, in telling her family about what happened, she related the incident at school where Jerry, another student, made a racist comment about Mrs. Cotton and Tamika. Her father, disappointed in her response (none) sends her to her room. He comes up to get her after he made a few phone calls, and they go to Tamika's house and Jerry's house, where Abi apologizes first for not standing up for Tamika, and then apologizes for not correcting Jerry. The next week, one of her friends in the school has a party, and Abi is uncomfortable with the way they talk about Mrs. Cotton, their teacher, and she's uncomfortable with the game they're playing, Truth or Dare. She picks "truth" when it's her turn and she is supposed to rank her friends in the class. It's then that she realizes Tamika isn't there, and neither are any of the other girls who aren't white.

> Someone got her a piece of paper and a pencil. She wrote down the names of the girls in the classroom order, which was alphabetical. Then she looked up and stared around the circle at the faces of the waiting girls. . . . Slowly, a realization hit her as she looked at the list in her hands and then around at the girls in the room: she realized who was missing. . . .

An odd, hot feeling settled in Abi's stomach and worked up into her heart. A feeling like pain and then anger.

"Mindy," Abi said, crumpling up the list of sixth-grade girls, "did you invite all the girls in our class to this party?"

Abi noticed the other girls looking around.

"Of course not," Mindy said. "Just my friends. Just us."

"Us?"

"You know what I mean, Abi," Mindy said. "Don't pretend you don't know what I mean." She was laughing, as if Abi was a silly little child coloring outside the lines. "I just wanted it to be us."

"Just us white kids?" Abi felt her voice shaking. She hoped she wouldn't cry. "Is that what you mean? Just us white kids?" Abi wanted her dad to burst through the door and rescue her. (p. 70)

Abi thinks about what's going on in her life differently than Will does in *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001) because the Bible is already an important source of information for her about how to live. They both talk to the adults in their lives, seeking advice and comfort, but Abi also recalls verses that pertain to her actions and decides how she wants to be a friend to all her classmates based on her understanding of what Jesus asks of her.

I like the way that this book brings a problem to the fore that, for Abi, had not existed previously. She knew she didn't like what happened, but without her father's encouragement and her own beliefs, she would not have known what to do. Her religion became more than her private relationship with God as she tried to work out the right way to behave when confronted with behavior in others she did not like. She used the resources she had to move beyond her personal relationship with God to meet a challenge outside her family. Racism in the past is also fruitfully explored in this sample.

Racism between Native Americans and settlers is a subtext of *Trouble of the Northwest Territory* (Greegor, 1992) and *Charlotte's Rose* (Cannon, 2002). *Trouble*,

which takes place in the 1780s, presents a completely stereotypic image of the Delaware, overlayered with Christianity which serves to render Andrew and his mother even nobler and more self-sacrificing. Their dress, manner of speech, and knowledge of nature are stereotypic. They wear buckskins, they speak in short phrases separated by ellipses, and Andrew can whip up a canoe, a crutch, or a home remedy as needed. This story does not begin to plumb these Christian Indians' suffering in their attempts to maintain their land, their way of life and their religion. The images of the settlers are similarly stereotypic, from the wife at the hearth to the down-to-earth farmer to the angry Indian-hater, all of whom have been replayed in TV and movies, examples of the selective tradition which has maintained often pejorative images of people in history (Taxel, 1981). It would be interesting to see whether self-published books make more use of stereotypes in characterization than those publishing houses contract to print.

Charlotte's Rose, taking place 80 years later, is a more adroit handling of a child's coming to an awareness of racist attitudes. Charlotte is first made aware of her difference when they disembark at Boston and a young woman, weeping, hands her a pamphlet. Charlotte's friend John explains that the horrific pictures are meant to show how Mormon leaders sacrifice their children to pagan ideas. Charlotte also learns that the governor of Missouri forced all Mormons out of the state. Later, when their handcart train comes in contact with a wealthy wagon train, a girl near her own age named Rebecca Keller, with beautiful hair and a beautiful dress that fits her well, flirts with John, who has learned some English, and snubs Charlotte for her lack of English and her old, dirty clothes. Then, Charlotte encounters Indians.

> I think about the sailor on the *S. Curling* and the stories he told about Indians—how they would kill us and take our scalps for trophies. . . .
>
> Instead, they want gifts. They want to trade. . . .They also share with Captain Bunker information about the trail ahead. . . .

Still, the Indians make me nervous. I hate the way they thunder out of the horizon like a sudden and violent storm.

I see them now, approaching on horseback beneath a cloud of dust. They have painted faces and single strip of black hair running down the center of their otherwise clean-shaven heads.

Captain Bunker walks out to greet them. The Indians dismount, tie up their horses, and start wandering through our camp, laughing and picking through our things. Captain Bunker has explained that they don't intend to be rude. It's just their way.

Well, I don't care for their way.

One of the braves stops in front of Sister Roberts and touches the cameo at her neck.

"Gift?" he asks. "For me?"

Sister Roberts shrinks back.

"No!"

The rest of the women respond the same way when the Indians touch them. . . .

My stomach is rolling.

A brave. He sorts through the possessions in our handcart and drags out Mam's yellow quilt. "Gift? For me?"

The quilt flaps in the breeze like a banner. The Indian smiles at me. Even though he is young, most of his teeth are gone. The rest look like dry kernels of corn.

I snatch the quilt from his hands. "No!"

He moves toward to me. Closer. Closer still. I can feel his breath on my cheek.

"I give good present for you," he says, still smiling, and lifts a strand of my wild hair. Then he reaches over my shoulder and touches Rose.

I step back. He will not touch her again!

A frown steals across his face.

Papa is by my side. He takes the hat off his head and hands it to the brave. "Present." He says the word in English. "For you." (p. 135-6)

The Indian gives Charlotte's father a garnet ring in exchange, but Charlotte doesn't want to look at it. She imagines that it was stolen from a woman the Indians killed. The Indians stay for the evening, and she watches the one who is wearing her father's hat and laughing. Then they leave "as suddenly as they came…Riding fast and hard beneath the evening's new stars" (p. 137). As soon as the Indians have left, a two-year-old child is missed, and Charlotte has an "ugly thought." She believes the Indians kidnapped George. When George is found a few minutes later asleep in the wrong tent, Charlotte thinks,

How could I have gotten everything so wrong?

In my head I see the Indian's yellow teeth. My skin remembers the feel of his hot breath. He was so…different.

Rose lets out a halfhearted cry. I whisper and coo, and I keep thinking about Rebecca Keller. The girl with the light yellow braids who once looked down upon a certain Welsh girl because she was different, too." (p. 138)

Charlotte's second encounter with the Indians, weeks later when their food has run out, shows how differently she thinks about them.

There is the rumble of horse thunder in the distance. I know this sound. Indians.

I look up, squint, see them coming. They wear rich flowing robes stitched out of the skins of many animals. Their long hair is the color of ravens, and the

manes of their sweating horses stream behind them in the wind like wings in motion.

My knees go weak. My eyes fill with tears. These Indians look like screaming angels descending upon our camp. Angels coming to save us all. . . .

The man touches Rose's hair before he leaves, and I think his touch is a blessing that will keep Rose safe from wolves.

Almost as quickly as they came, they are gone, their cries filling the air around us. (p. 189-90)

The Indians in the two encounters are not of the same tribe, but they seem similar to Charlotte. Their purpose, to trade goods, and their skill with horses, mark them. Yet, as she learns more about living with others in community through the trials they undergo on the trek, her attitudes toward the Indians change. In her extremity, during the second encounter, the horses' thunderous approach is no longer threat, but salvation. The painted faces and rudeness of the first group becomes richness and motion in the second group. The "brave's" touch in the first encounter becomes the "man's" blessing in the second. Charlotte fears and distrusts the Indians at first, though their Captain knows them and accepts them as they are. She still sees them as strange, but wonderfully so at the end. This book does not discuss the forced changes on the Indians as settlers continue to stream into their land; nor does it challenge the right of the settlers to do so: the perspective is all from Charlotte's side. I do appreciate the fact that she realizes that difference is not grounds for hatred, persecution, or even distrust, as she has experienced and chooses not to visit on those whose differences extend beyond language and religion and class. Charlotte has a relationship with God, but he is not a factor in this story at all. This is another case where the motivations for her change of heart are unclear. *Charlotte's Rose* also has a subtext of class issues, as Sister Roberts was a wealthy woman before her husband lost his job, and they emigrated. She is portrayed as snooty and believes her former position gives her the right to tell others what to do, but she

carries her load without complaint and helps others when they need it. Charlotte comes to understand that her superior attitude is her defense against the changes she is enduring. *Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) does speak to issues of class.

Treatment of class

Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace is another historical fiction book that engages issue of class, though it ignores racial differences. It is set in the late 1800s, the fictionalized story of homeless children in New York City who were taken in by the Rev. Charles Loring Brace's Children's Aid Society. The newsboys who live on the streets are brought to the Boy's Home, but they're expected to continue to work and pay for their upkeep. There is night school and new job skills for them. The girls who are in the dormitories do not work, but do attend night school. Eventually they are taken to Michigan on an orphan train to join new families. The children became homeless in different ways. Kip, a newsboy, had been indentured to a shoe tanner four years before by his father. He had run off to live on the streets where Rev. Brace sought him out as a leader among the newsboys. Two girls, "swells" with wool coats and velvet collars, and frilly pantalettes peeking out beneath their dresses, had been with a governess for two months while their parents were overseas. The governess was getting married and had not heard from the parents or been paid for a month, so she brought the girls to the Children's Aid Society. Three other children were living in tenements with their ailing mother and step-father. When their mother died, the step-father abandoned them. Since Rev. Brace knew them from the night school they attended, they also moved into the dormitories at the Society.

The question raised for me is what other children might have been on the streets of New York City in 1854, and whether all of the two hundred thousand children who rode the orphan trains were white. On one web site about orphan train riders, the pictures show only white people (http://www.orphantrainriders.com/riders11.html). It is

interesting that *Charlotte's Rose,* with its images of the wilderness and hardship, takes place at the same time as this story, but the picture of the United States is very different. *Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loring Brace* is set in the big cities until the children reach Dowegiac, Michigan, yet there, too, is civilization: settled farms and towns near the railroad with churches, doctors, judges, and even veterinarians. Horses don't thunder, they trot sedately in front of carriages. Christianity is a given in the lives of the people in *Street Rover*, no one encounters any differences other than class, or any prejudices other than against young thieves. This book is another one with the implicit ideology that hard work and honesty is the way to a good future life.

Treatment of race and class in books set in other countries

Issues of race and class are treated quite differently in the books that focus on the experiences of Americans in other countries. There are two in this group, *Painted Warriors and Wild Lions: Travel in Africa* (Morris, 2001) and *The Wooden Ox* (Hardy, 2002). The first is a realistic fiction book about a family who lost their mother 3 months before the story begins. The only effect of this seems to be that now the father either has to find a housekeeper or take the children with him on assignment (he is a writer/photographer). He decides to take them on a trial trip. There are four children: his natural daughter Duffy (white) is the main character. He and his wife had adopted a Nigerian boy who is older than Duffy, called Seth, a Chinese girl, Pearl, from Hong Kong, and a Mexican boy, Juan, all from orphanages in their own countries.

The children accompany their father on a trip to a village in Tanzania where his assignment is to photograph and write about the Masai. They arrive in Mombasa where they rent a Land Rover, purchase camping equipment and "helmets to keep off the burning sun" (p. 52). They drive to a little village where they're to meet their guide. Pearl is nervous about seeing lions, and Duffy is disappointed that everyone wears clothes that look like theirs. Their father assures them they'll see many "native things" when they get further into the country. They wait for the guide, disappointed that he isn't already there.

> "Maybe he forgot," Duffy said. "Or maybe he just hasn't got here yet. I read that people don't pay much attention to time in Africa."
>
> "That's pretty well true," her dad said. "The people don't live by their watches the way we do. That's because, remember, most of them don't have any watches." (p. 53).

The "Masai warrior" who is coincidentally a Christian arrives and Duffy is struck by his extraordinary appearance. He is tall and thin, very handsome, she thinks, in his red garment and carrying a steel-tipped spear. He has reddish hair in plaits, and his legs are striped with ochre. He speaks English well as does everyone else they meet. They share lunch on the way to the village, and he tries peanut butter for the first time. He tells them that they mostly live on milk and blood from their cattle and he describes how they do so. Duffy is disgusted and says so, which is the first of many occasions when she expresses her distaste or horror at the practices of the Masai, including the food they eat, arranged marriages, multiple wives, the work the women do, the laziness of the men, and their unbelief in Jesus. When she hears the description of the blood mixed in milk, this is what happens,

> Duffy made a bad mistake then. "That sounds *awful!* I would never drink anything like that!"
>
> Her father frowned at her in the rearview mirror and said, "Duffy, you're going to find out that the customs are different here. Every country has its own special way of doing things."
>
> But Duffy was truly horrified. "I don't see how you can do that."
>
> Naiko looked back at her. He had a thin nose and piercing dark brown eyes that had a kindly look. When he smiled—which he did then—he was really a fine-looking man. "I hope you will not be offended by some of my people's ways. Before I became a believer in Jesus, it was hard for me to accept the ways of the white man. And it may be hard for you to learn the ways of my people." (p. 56-7)

The story weaves a lot of information about the Masai into what occurs. When Naiko or the children that the Kerrigans meet speak about their people, their songs, or their customs, the book takes on a *National Geographic* tone. It is Duffy, with her abrupt judgments who is out-of-step with everyone else. At the wedding when Duffy says how awful it is that the groom already has two wives, Naiko responds,

> "That is the Christian way," Naido said quietly. "But my people have not yet accepted the Bible."
>
> "Duffy, keep quiet!" her father muttered fiercely. "Quit criticizing the way these people do things. They are not believers in Jesus yet."
>
> "That is true," Naiko said. "But they will soon come to know better how to live, now that some of us know Jesus. Just now they love their old ways. I once did, too. It will take more than a day to stop these practices." He had a sad look in his eyes. Then he said, "You see, Jesus must be in their hearts first. *Then* they will change."
>
> For some reason, Duffy was beginning to feel terrible about what she had said.
>
> Naiko laid his hand on her shoulder. "Be kind in your thoughts to those who are different," he said. Then the big Masai turned and walked away. (p. 77-8)

Duffy has a change of heart, publicly apologizes, and proves her willingness to think differently by drinking a cup of milk with blood in it. The point of the story is to be kind to others who are different, but there also a sense throughout that many of the differences in the way the Masai live will change when the people become Christians. The conversation about time quoted above is an example of how differences are noted. Being "disappointed" that the guide isn't waiting for them implies he can't tell time:

> " . . . remember, most of them don't have any watches." (p. 53)

This is one example of the condescending way that the characters note differences. Throughout the book, there is no sense that the differences are not surface

differences, but a result of an entirely different mode of being in the world. Why would anyone need a watch in a Masai village, for example, except of course to be "on time" for the Americans? The change that occurs in Duffy is not that she stops measuring difference from her own standard of what is acceptable in human society, but that she stops commenting on it.

> Duffy had to bite her lip. She knew that every Masai drank the mild form of beer they called honey beer. She almost said, "I think it's wrong to drink beer." But she didn't say that. She had learned a little, and now she simply swallowed and said, "Let me help you do some other things too." (p. 107)

"If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all" is a familiar adage, and it's an important understanding about how to live in polite society. However, used as it is here, when the characters are guests in another country, I read it as an admonition to just wait: once the Masai understand the Christian way, these annoying differences will be corrected. I believe this misrepresents the importance of the changes that becoming a Christian makes in a person, and it also denigrates the "native." I am suggesting that we can think about people from different cultures not simply in terms of their differences from our own culture, but in their own terms. As a Christian, I have breath and being in the Lord, and I wish that all people shared my perspective on God, but not so that they will become like me, but so that they will be more themselves, completely human in God. Certainly the first century Christian church looked nothing like what Evangelical Christians in the United States are today. Volf (1996) makes this point when he describes the need to embrace others in recognition of difference rather than exclude others because of difference.

The Wooden Ox is also about an American family in another country. Keri, whose father is the head of an African relief and development team, lives in Maputo. His job seems to be to organize distribution of goods that are brought into the country from the United States for the refugees of the civil war that occurred in Mozambique in the 1980s.

Keri's interaction with the people is very different than Duffy's, however. Keri has been in the country for 3 years, so that she would be used to different foods and customs. The people they are with are also Christians, so they share beliefs and traditions that arise from their worship of God. The book is also about a kidnapping—so the emphasis is on Keri's ability to handle the fear and distrust she feels in the months her family is forced to stay with bandits, a far more serious situation than a photographic visit to a peaceful group of people.

In one scene, the author lets the reader know that the clothes distribution will draw bandits, so the description of a dinner in a village where they have been forced to stay overnight when their Land Rover broke down is framed by the expectation of violence at any minute.

> Pastor Makusa, as guest of honor, had entered first and sat at the far end of the table. He had Kurt by his side. . . .The order of seating in Africa was very important, and she had been taught not to presume. Chief Mbuluzi smiled at Keri and nodded for her to follow her mother. . . . Keri smiled eagerly. Her favorite. The soup was made by simmering sugar beans on a wood fire, pounding them with stampers in a hollowed out log and then straining the stock back into the pot. . . .The soup plates were removed, and platters of white, grainy, stiff porridge were brought to the table along with a bowl of the inevitable stewed chicken . . .(p. 52-3)

There is poignancy to the reference to a stamper in the passage above, as it is this cooking implement that is used to murder these villagers a few hours later. Keri's family and the Pastor are taken by the bandits, and there is a boy that becomes their particular guard. The family is force-marched across the country, where at one point the Pastor is abandoned on the road, and the others go on to stay with the bandit's family for some time. Keri strives to learn skills such as carrying water on her head and is embarrassed by her inability to do it and the teasing she endures. Keri worries about the girl who has

befriended her; she was stolen from another tribe and wants to go home when the war is over. She worries about Kurt, her little brother, becoming more warlike in his play the longer they stay with the bandits. They eventually discover, through playing at building a farm like the one Pastor Makusa described in the passage I quoted earlier, that the young guard is Dzumisana. Keri confirms that his family still wants him, but he is consumed by the fear that he killed his parents and the others when the bandits made him fire the homes. He runs away, and Keri demands of God that he save Dzumisana as well as themselves. On their final march to the checkpoint where they will be returned to the government officials, Keri realizes Dzumisana is tracking them. She tells him where they are going and to make his way there, and even though they are flown over the mountains, he manages to find the pass and cross over and is reunited with his grandfather, who was found and saved by friendly forces.

The person who wrote this book lived for five years in Mozambique during this time and many of the experiences she shares were ones she or people she knew experienced. Cultural differences are apparent, but as a matter of explaining characters and setting, not as a point of interest. I was intrigued by the portrayal of the bandits, especially. Keri is terribly frightened of them and wholly convinced of their evil, yet they attempt to take good care of her and her family, albeit for their own purposes. She comes to know and love Commander Dube's family. They observe him when his youngest daughter dies of malaria, even though they gave him the last of their malaria pills to try to help her. But she never forgets the murders of the villagers, and at one point directly accuses one of them of murdering the Pastor.

> Keri stood up. She walked straight to Pedro. "Where's Pastor Makusa?" she demanded. "Commander Dube said he'd meet us at the river." Her voice had a hard tone she didn't recognize as her own.
>
> Pedro shrugged. "*Sei lá*."

> "You killed him, didn't you?" she accused. Her eyes narrowed in angry slits. "After everything, you killed him just like you killed the others!"
>
> She flew at the man and batted his head with her fists. . . .
>
> "No! No!" the African insisted. "We didn't kill the *velho*. We even left him a lump of porridge and a little water." (p. 95-6)

Pedro is horrified that she thinks they would go against the "spirits" and kill a man so obviously protected by a powerful spirit. This is just one scene in which the cultures clash and the characters' dialogue has no common ground on which to meet. As a reader, I see the scene from Keri's perspective. She realizes that the bandits aren't operating on her value system, though their fears and needs as rebels against an oppressive government are valid in a way she can't accept, when it has meant the death of her friends and her own family's deprivation. The book is about Keri's coming to terms with her belief in God's ability to protect her, but in her journey I am given a glimpse of the complexity of territorial disputes in a country at war, and the devastation it wreaks on the people who live there. This book both decries the violence done to people in war and realizes the humanity of the combatants. It shows how Keri accepts that though she cannot understand why God allows such horrible events, she can trust him through it.

She cannot rest in her private relationship with God; she is forced to either deny him, or bring him into the interactions she has with others, believing that he cares and can act. She has models in her parents and in Pastor Makusa of how to do so.

These two books are examples of Americans' interactions with people in other countries. In the first, the family's short-term stay results in a *National Geographic* portrayal of the Masai in which we learn about their customs and traditions, though Duffy's dislike of their customs seems tied to the fact that they are not Christians. In the second book, Keri's relationship with God is challenged by the experiences she has as a captive, and her question of whether he cares can in part be answered by how she reacts

to those she calls bandits. I believe that the condescension of the first book, masked by an appreciation of the interesting lives of Masai people, does not show what it purports to show: that one must be kind to others in order for them to hear you when you speak to them about Jesus. *The Wooden Ox,* however, shows the characters attempting to live their beliefs in the midst of great difficulty, so that the kindness they show to others comes from the love they themselves have experienced from God. I believe the latter is akin to the model that Jesus lives in the Bible.

Conclusion

In this section I discussed those books that engage in issues of race or class, some successfully showing children move beyond their personal relationship with God to serve and interact with others who are different from themselves. The excerpts show that the books in this sample are most comfortable engaging in these issues through historical fiction books; those books that include multicultural characters in books set in the present day use those characters as window-dressing. The differences in ethnicities have little impact on the stories, effectively denying that there is any significance in cultural differences. In this respect, the books do not do a good job of portraying the diversity of society, and that would be true of most of the books. So it is that many Christian children would not see themselves in these books if they are other than white, middle class people from a two-parent family.

Those few books (e.g. Cannon, 2002; Hambrick, 2000; Hardy, 2002; Jackson & Jackson, 2001; Lawton, 2002; Rue, 2001) that show characters growing in their awareness of difference and their ability to learn from those situations are not consistent in the motivations they give for change. In looking for evidence of public religion in this sample, I find only a few books that clearly link a character's service to a response to God's love (e.g. Hambrick, 2000; Hardy, 2002; Lawton, 2002). The others confuse Christian ideology with philanthropy, so that the characters may be motivated by the love of God or they may be concerned about people they have come to know. These findings

suggests that overall, the books for Christians in this sample do not actively promote learning to live in a diverse society, but are still at a level of multicultural awareness that Banks (2001) calls the knowledge construction process. This is problematic for those children whose primary source of books are those published for the Christian market if the construction of the Christian life in terms of interaction with others denies that there are differences that impact those interactions. The old stereotypes of ethnic differences may not come into play, but they have been replaced with what are really white people with colored faces and exotic names. In a different vein, I also want to discuss the treatment of gender in family roles in the books, though not framed by feminist arguments. As I have used Jesus' view of how Christians should live in relation to issues of race and class, so also I want to use his views of gender in family roles in my discussion.

Gender in Family Roles

A biblical view of gender in family roles

Gender is often included in multicultural discussions of difference because women have historically been denied full citizenship in the United States as have African Americans, Native Americans and other groups. In the Evangelical Christian community, discussion of the roles of women and the responsibilities of parents can be divisive. Conservative church congregations, such as those I have been a part of, use the letters of Paul to determine how the roles of authority should be filled in the church. He has a good bit to say about women and men in terms of family relationships and roles in the church, but Jesus had only one reported conversation about women and the jobs they fill. It takes place in the home of three siblings, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, who he visits more than once in the course of his ministry. This is what happens.

> As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all

> the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"
>
> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10: 38-42, NIV)

Women in my church have often said, usually as a guilty apology for some perceived lack of spirituality, "Well, I'm a Martha, not a Mary!" I have heard speakers explain the passage to mean that pursuit of spiritual things is better than pursuit of mundane things. I believe this explanation is part of that humanist mentality the liberation theologians speak of in relation to the division of private and public religion. I don't believe that Jesus meant that at all, which is an example of the difficulty in interpreting biblical text in order to apply it to the way one lives. My interpretation stems from Martha's distraction that the Lord points out to her. It is not the activity that Martha and Mary are involved in that is important, it's the purpose behind it. A servant heart does not focus on the work one is doing, but on service to God. It is easy to be "weary in well-doing" if the focus is on the job itself instead of the One whom you serve.

In his ministry, Jesus spoke to women and children as well as men (e.g. John 4: 7-30, NIV), and though he spoke of the importance of the care for children (e.g. Luke 18: 15-6, NIV), especially, he warned that one's allegiance to God comes before that to family (e.g. Matt. 8:21-2, NIV). His focus was on an active love for others that came from knowing one was loved of God. Concerns about roles, though the disciples brought it up on more than one occasion (e.g. Matt. 20: 20-8, NIV), were not important to him. He always countered those kinds of questions with a description of a loving servant. In that light, my focus on the discussion of gender in family roles is not in a feminist sense, but in a biblical sense, that I interpret to mean that women and men and girls and boys are wholly able and expected to serve the Lord.

In that light, I have already shown both boys and girls dealing with their relationship with God and with others (e.g. Byrd, 2002; Hambrick, 2000; McCusker, 1995; Rue, 2001). However, there are ideological issues that are related to the attitudes that (especially conservative) Christians take on family roles that are directly related to the topics that publishers believe are appropriate for the books. As I discussed in Section I, my informants said that though they want their books to appeal to as broad a market as possible, their choices are very conservative when it comes to the issues that are discussed and the type of characters that are in the books. I believe that gender in family roles as portrayed in the sample is one example of the attempt to maintain a conservative stance in the books for this market. What follows, then, is a discussion of the typical family that is portrayed and what is not portrayed in the sample in relation to typically gendered roles.

Homosexuality

Not surprisingly, none of the books explores the idea of gender in terms of bisexuality, transsexuality, or homosexuality. Evangelical Christians consider a lesbian or gay male lifestyle sinful, in the same way that a heterosexual union outside marriage is considered sinful, yet sin is supposed to be something apart from a sinner. Philip Yancey (1997), an Evangelical minister and writer, had this to say about a lifelong friend, prominent in the Evangelical Christian world, who came out of the closet:

> I should make clear that I have no desire to delve into the theological and moral issues surrounding homosexuality, important as they may be. I write about Mel [White] for one reason only: my friendship with him has strongly challenged my notion of how grace should affect my attitude toward "different" people, even when those differences are serious and perhaps unresolvable. (p. 148-9)
>
> An issue like homosexuality presents a special case because the difference centers on a moral, not a cross-cultural, issue. For most of history the church has

> overwhelmingly viewed homosexual behavior as a serious sin. Then the question becomes, "How do we treat sinners?"
>
> I think of the changes that have occurred within the evangelical church in my lifetime over the issue of divorce, an issue on which Jesus is absolutely clear. Yet today a divorced person is not shunned, banned from churches, spit upon, screamed at. Even those who consider divorce a sin have come to accept the sinners and treat them with civility and even love. Other sins on which the Bible is also clear—greed, for example—seem to pose no barrier at all. We have learned to accept the person without approving of the behavior. (p. 158)

Yancey (1997) expressed well the difficulty I face in loving people and condemning sin. I do not believe I have the right to tell people how to live their lives; I do believe that in my interactions with them I need to be honest about what I believe is right or wrong. Yet, the problem is more difficult, because what I believe on a personal level gets translated into institutional rules that make choices legal or illegal. I don't have an answer for this and may never have one, though I will continue to think about it. My expectation is that what Yancey (1997) calls a moral choice (sexuality) will become a lifestyle choice that doesn't create the difficulty in mainstream churches that it does now, and Evangelicals will become more alienated from the general populace. It is also true that I never knowingly met anyone who was a lesbian, a gay male or a transsexual until I came to graduate school. In the conservative church of which I was a member for over 20 years, there was one incident that was handled well, I think. I found out after the fact that a woman I knew slightly was a transsexual. I had invited her to help me with a summer Bible program for children and some parents complained. The elders supported her working in the program, but she and her boyfriend (a longstanding church member whose wife had died several years before) were asked to leave the church a few months later when they asked for prayer to help them resist cohabitation without marriage, but they refused to move into separate living quarters. I don't know what happened to them, and it

is indicative of the difficulty surrounding the issue that what I do know, I found out from third parties, and I never contacted them directly. I do not find it surprising that the books in my sample have no characters who deal with this difficult issue in their lives or of those they love. However, there is diversity in what roles characters assume in their families.

Family roles

I was surprised to find that traditional western gender roles of the working father and stay-at-home mother, or the boys and girls in training for those roles, are only apparent in 5 of the books (e.g. Finley, 1868/1999; Windle, 1994/1999/2001); in 3 of them, the women and girls take part in the adventures, but they always defer to the men and boys for comfort and decision-making (e.g. Thomas, 2002). The other two are historical fiction stories set in the 1780s and 1860s, respectively, that use stock characters in stereotyped roles. The rest of the books, even the historical fiction books, consistently portray women and girls as capable, adventurous, courageous, and loving (e.g. Hardy, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Wiggin, 1995). A few of the other historical fiction books do have mothers and daughters filling traditional roles (e.g. Cannon, 2002), but the women are portrayed as partners with their husbands, and the children are not relegated to particular futures based on their gender. There is even a female criminal in one of the books (Littleton, 2001). There are families such as Abi Crim's where the father is the spiritual head of the family, but those fathers' wives are not cowed, subservient women. For example, at dinner one evening, the Crim family gets a call.

> "Mark," Mom said, turning to her dad who was staring at her, mesmerized, it seemed, by the iron in her voice. "I am going to see Iris. I may…" she paused a long while and nodded her head as if talking to herself and answering, "be gone for several hours. I will tell you everything when I return. Right now, there's not time."

"Just tell me this," Dad said weakly. He took a deep breath, "Do I need to try to find a substitute for Mrs. Cotton?"

Mom paused for the briefest instant. "No," she said firmly. "No, you do not."

. . .Dad said, "Mom has something on her mind and up her sleeve, but don't worry. All will be well. I've seen her in this mode before. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, believe me, something big is about to change in the family." (p. 100-01)

Abi's father expresses confidence in his wife's decisions; the story led me to expect that she would take over for Mrs. Cotton, so it is not as abrupt an occurrence for the reader as it is for the family.

There are some stereotypical views of women and men: those examples of women who are emotional, and whose emotions are tolerated as inevitable and expected of a woman (e.g. Thomas, 2002). There are also men who are strong and quiet, or angry and aggressive (e.g. Greegor, 1992; Hardy, 2002). These are few, fortunately, and typically, characters are given rounded personalities with emotion, assertiveness, dependence, and sense evenly distributed. The children also have a range of personality, from the fainthearted to the courageous, but again, most of them are whole people whose experiences and personalities are not tied to whether they are girls or boys.

Most of the families in the books are those with a father, mother, and often two children. The only children who have temporarily lost the adults in their lives are those in the story about the orphans of New York City and those in the apocalyptic novel whose parents were Raptured, or taken up to heaven. Divorce is fleetingly mentioned in one book (Lewis, 2002), but none of the parents were unmarried when their children were conceived. It is noteworthy that children such as Hulk Hooligan in *Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem* (Maselli, 2002), Julie, in *Take a Chance* (Byrd, 2002), or Judd, in *Trouble of the Northwest Territory* (Greegor, 1992) who are set against the main characters of the story are usually living with only one parent, who is incapable of giving the child all s/he needs, either because of having to work too much or not caring enough.

I believe the "obviousness," or the sociocultural ideology (Hollindale, 1992) apparent in this is that a Christian family with two, heterosexual parents is the best model. In the 9 books that do have single parents (e.g. Lewis, 2002; Morris, 2001; Whalen,19791993), there are other adults in the church and/or family that help mentor their children.

A healthy child/parent relationship is another "obviousness" in the books. One-third of the books do have some tension in that relationship, which figures in the plot in some way (e.g. Greeg, 1992; Rue, 2001). For example, Yung Lee (McCoy-Miller, 2000) did not want to leave China, but her brother was her guardian, so she came with him. She is not rebellious or contentious, but she does talk to him about Jesus all the time, which he finds annoying. Another example is Lizzie in *A Stone's Throw from Paradise* (High, 1997). She thinks her new step-mother has crowded her out of her father's heart, but when he acknowledges how much he still misses her mother, and they go together on a pilgrimage to her memory, she is able to see the love he has for Mae-Mama as good, and she joins with them to make a new family. Some children are at odds with their single parents because they are in rebellion against decisions they have made (e.g. Whalen, 1979/1993), but all come to understand that they can't hold on to their childhood but have to live in the present, and to do so they need the love and support of their parent, just as the parent needs theirs.

The only chores that are mentioned in the books are cooking and dishwashing, shopping and laundry, and these are usually incidental, to mark the time of day or a period for the character to be thinking. For example, Abi Crim does the dishes after her mother leaves, though on another day, it's her brother's turn (Hambrick, 2000). There is an egalitarian attitude toward those household chores that are included in the stories; families get along, though peripherally there are occasionally those who do have difficulty. In *Star Status* (Lewis, 2002), Manda's father left when she was 2 years old. Scoop in *A Horse of a Different Color* (Mackall, 2000) lost her parents when she was 7 and lives with an aunt. And, in *A Stone's Throw From Paradise* (High, 1997), Lizzie's

family left the Amish community of her parents. It is the non-Christians in the story who often have difficult home lives. In *The Discovery* (Rue, 2001), Fawn's mother has been denied a life on the pueblo because of her marrying into the wrong clan. Dorrie, Clair's new friend in *A Time to Keep Silent* (Whelan 1979/1993) has a vindictive father who is in jail and a grandmother who keeps the money child services gives her but lets Dorrie live alone in the woods in a shack. I've already mentioned the bullies in the stories who come from questionable backgrounds (e.g. Maselli, 2002). These examples serve to reinforce the notion that a Christian family may have occasional rifts, but they are able to work it out without lasting acrimony.

Conclusion

As Sperling (2001/2003) noted, the books stay away from any "heavy" topics such as abandonment, drugs, abuse, or from the lack of such things in the sample, even topics that carry less stigma such as mental or physical disabilities. Yet Christians no longer have a statistical advantage: they divorce and have alcoholism, disability, and other life problems in similar numbers as the rest of the people in the country (Barna, 2001b). That these things do not occur in children's literature for the Christian market shows conservatism that reveals marketing assumptions as well as ideological ones. The target market will see themselves in these books, but others will not. Children of unmarried or divorced or non-heterosexual parents or children who live in dysfunctional families are not represented as I have shown. The roles within the families portrayed in these books are often non-stereotypical, but the make-up of the families themselves is oriented toward the heterosexual, two-parent family with 1 to 4 children. Those families who have single parents have all lost one parent through death (e.g. High, 1997; Peretti, 1997) except for Will's dad, who's missing in action (Rue, 2001) and Manda's dad, who left them 12 years earlier (Lewis, 2002). The books all have this sociocultural expectation of the two-parent family, and I believe this confirms that the publishers target the content of their books to the conservative Christians. As Lohr (2003) noted, people who are non-

Christians will read books with conservative themes, but the Christians will not buy books that include topics they do not believe are appropriate. Gender does play into the roles that people have in some of the books, but given the conservative approach to family as a concept, there are surprisingly few images of traditional roles in the sample.

In Chapter 4, I discussed my analysis of the 29 books in the sample and the interviews I conducted with my informants from the Christian publishing industry. I began with the economic and cultural background for the books by discussing my informants' views on their market, their mission, and how they negotiated a Christian mission in the face of market imperatives. Next I turned to the books themselves, grouping them by the degree of the markers of Christian practice that reflected their Christian ideology. I then detailed those markers: praying, reading, and conversing about God, to determine the ways that Christian practices were used in the books. The final section I devoted to examining the relationship between Christian practices and issues raised in multicultural literature, within the framework of the public religion of liberation theology. The next chapter concludes the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I read 29 books that were published for children in the Christian market using several theoretical frameworks to identify how the books approached living a Christian life in a diverse world. I began the study with the supposition that Christian literature which is mindful of private and public religion can help children bear good fruit in their wider communities, which I call social advocacy. I defined a personal commitment to social justice from a Christian point of view as living proactively in service to others such that all people have equal opportunity to pursue life happily and receive equal treatment from others in that pursuit. Other definitions of social justice supported my identifying particular issues, such as racism, and class and gender distinctions in literature, as a means to "rate" the books' engagement in social advocacy. Critical theorists in education raise issues of social justice in terms of the effects of institutionalized racism, or class and gender inequities that effectively maintain power structures for the dominant group in society (e.g., Apple, 1990; Nieto, 1999). Those who write about multiculturalism in education, particularly multicultural literature (e.g. Cai, 1998; Hade, 1997b; Taxel, 1994), are concerned about the power of literature. They submit that children should be authentically and fairly represented in literature in the classroom and that there should be sufficient choices of diverse literature to enable children to become familiar with diversity and to care for others. The ethic of care is championed particularly in the Christian world through liberation theologians, who believe Jesus identified with the poor and oppressed and challenged the church to continue to work for their welfare as he did (Chopp, 1986; Oldensky, 1997).

Following on liberation theology, I explained the model for a Christian life that I believe should be implicated in Christian literature for children. I drew my examples of the way a Christian should live and think about others specifically from those books of the New Testament in the Christian Bible that relate the life of Jesus, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In the belief that literature can have an impact on the lives and thinking of children. I used the work of Hollindale (1992), Rabinowitz & Smith (1998), and Nodelman (1996) among others to think generally about how authors imply or explicitly share their beliefs through the language of books with a reader and then specifically about the evidences of beliefs in the books I read. Finally, publishers of Christian literature believe that literature is an important component of a life of discipleship and therefore of children's spiritual growth as confirmed through their companies' mission statements. My examination of the political economy of publishing (Taxel, 2002) revealed the tension in their stated goals and their compliance with the market.

In this chapter I bring together these perspectives to consider the questions that prompted my multicultural reading of the Christian worldview in children's books for the Christian market. First I revisit the conflict that publishers negotiate in having a Christian mission that is often incompatible with market prerogatives to answer the question, how do publishers negotiate the political economy of publishing from a Christian perspective? Next I consider the evidence of Christian practices in an authorial reading (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) of the books to answer the question, how are Christian practices portrayed in children's books published for the Christian market? Finally, I conclude with the topic I have called public religion in the books to answer the question, what is the relationship between issues explored in multicultural literature and Christian practices in children's books published for the Christian market?

The Problem of Market vs. Mission

Children's books written for the Christian market take the road of least resistance to fulfill their mission of providing literature that is highly moral, exciting to read and eminently marketable. The hedge on one side of the road is the common beliefs about traditional morality, and it appears to be densely planted and well grown. The hedge on the other side of the road is the market, which is more like tumbleweed than English holly. Publishers carefully navigate between the hedges. They like parents to know that they can "trust" books published by their company, and that generally means that there will not be scenes that involve sex, profanity, blasphemy, or other evils. The books are also trustworthy in the sense that they are predictable. Series after series are printed that target particular consumers through their titles, design, and where they are sold. Christian publishers reproduce the marketing strategies of the secular publishing world through the domination of series books, the attention to "brand names" that spur sales, and the requirements that each book pay out a profit in order to stay in print (Taxel, 2002) regardless of the aspect of mission. The book that wanders outside the bounds of acceptability is rare, for in today's economy it is difficult to build a case for a stand-alone book that does not have a ready market. In the past, publishers more often used profits from best-sellers to support books for alternative markets, but today, the emphasis is on the bottom line for each book (Taxel, 2002). Publishers depend on hearing from their market through bookstore owners and directly from parents to know what they like, and they plan new books from what their agents send them that "fits" their market or from research into what kids are interested in these days. Still, the bounds of acceptability seem to be traditional expectations about moral stories, or those common understandings of what the Bible teaches about right and wrong that form an ideological base for author and reader ENRfu(Hollindale, 1992; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). So it is that trust between publisher and consumer tends to be defined in terms of what is absent from the

books, and it is difficult to get a sense of what publishers believe about what *should* be in the books.

The Market

The Christian publishing industry is a step behind the secular publishing industry when it comes to market exploitation. The boom in inspirational sales is young, and so are the divisions that service the children's literature market. They've had to work hard to improve the quality of the books they offer to be competitive, beginning with the writing, but also the format and design. Taxel (2002) describes the changes that have occurred in the last two decades in publishing overall and the effects those have had on children's literature generally. Independent houses have been gradually bought by corporations, their editorial departments merged, and the process involved in obtaining manuscripts, printing and selling books streamlined. The result has been a proliferation of readily marketable "book product" (Sperling, 2003). Christian publishers have also been bought by the media conglomerates, and secular houses have opened divisions for religious publications, but the independent Christian publishers still have the strongest connection to the Christian market. The industry's obsession with marketing books as brand-name products and licensing brands for use on clothing or toys or lunchboxes is not as wide spread among Christian publishers (Sperling, 2003). Like the secular publishers, however, the brands in the Christian market are primarily series; in fact the larger publishers don't even speak about acquiring books in terms of individual manuscripts, but conceptually in terms of a new series or reprints of old series. I sense that *what* to print is not nearly as consuming a task as knowing *for whom* to print it, *how* to package and market it, and *where* to sell it. In other words, the question a publisher asks about a potential book is weighted. Not, does this book help our company represent biblical morality to our readers? But, can we sell this book? Why does this imbalance matter?

The answer is rooted in the attitude toward morality that is revealed in the characters' choices in the books. They are not choices that require characters to go

outside the comfort of traditional, personal morality to a socially active morality that I suggest is also biblically based. Publishers negotiate their book offerings between the "hedges" of traditional morality and the market. They offer books whose contents explore those topics that do help Christians apply biblical truth to their lives, but the challenges characters face are those that help develop a personal morality, what I have referred to as private religion. Jesus asks, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers; what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?" (Matt. 5: 46-7, NIV). It is God that enables us to love beyond what is natural, and we are commanded to do so. But if publishers try to move away from the constraint of traditional topics, they run into the market. Lohr (2003) suggested that a conservative topic in a book is a good choice because both Evangelical Christians and conservative non-Christians will buy it, but the reverse may not be true for a book that pushes the boundaries of "biblically sound" themes. The secular world might consider the question of mission vs. marketing frivolous; after all, every publisher has particular content in their books, and they take a risk on books because they think they will sell. I contend that the claim to Christianity makes the question vital because the publishers often explicitly state that their literature is for the purpose of helping Christians learn how to apply biblical teaching to their lives. I believe that my study shows that Christian publishers are selective about which Christians they purport to help and which biblical teachings they choose to apply. I think my conversations with the editors and publishers show that they are comfortable in this partial fulfillment of their mission and are not willing to either expand the understanding of their current consumers with books that include authentically diverse characters or plots that consider how to live in a diverse world, nor are they willing to risk expansion into alternative markets with books that reflect the lives of Christian children who are not white, middle-class, and have two, heterosexual, married parents. The result of this attitude is that the books in my sample perpetuate a view of Christian life that is

compatible only with the views of the buyers, and this lack of diversity is something that proponents of multiculturalism have identified long since as a prescription for the perpetuation of injustice (e.g., Harris, 1993; Sims-Bishop, 1997; Taxel, 1994), which is antithetical to the teachings of Jesus. If the purpose of publishing is to provide Christians stories about applying biblical truth to their lives, then it is vital that the Christian worldview in the stories be based on a complex understanding of those truths. Critical theorists ask questions about the structures that are created and the effects of those structures on people when particular truths are communicated as commonplace, particularly in this study through literature. The Christian practices I have explored are evidence of the truths that are ideologically present in the books in my sample, which leads to the answer to the second research question concerning Christian practices as they are used in the books.

Christian Practice in the Books: Private Religion as Traditional Morality

Christian practices are communicated in books at several ideological levels; Hollindale (1992) suggested three levels that express ideological assumptions in children's literature. He suggested that an author's explicit political, religious, or moral beliefs constitute an agenda that can be communicated through dialogue, characters or the events of a story. A second level of ideology are the implied beliefs of an author that are not intentionally written into a story, but which are there because of what the author brings to his/her work from the experiences life and training, for example. The third level consists of those "obviousnesses" that are hidden because they are the commonplaces of life, simply the known way that society operates. In a genre of literature such as Christian literature, the commonplaces are of the Christian community: their values and traditions.

My contention is that the ideological pattern in the books follows a traditional morality, though biblically based, that primarily governs personal choices about behavior and not interactions in the wider community. The moral choices characters make are most often private: should I lie, should I steal? Characters consistently choose to abstain

from or turn away from evil behavior (e.g. McCusker, 1995; Rue, 2001), an example of an ideological stance that speaks to the beliefs that authors and/or publishers hold about moral behavior and also about children and what they are capable of understanding ENRfu(Nodelman, 1996; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). Natasha Sperling (2001), editor of children's books for BethanyHouse, said their books have to have a "moral lesson," but this begs the question of whose morality? The answer seems obvious—biblical morality, though interpretation becomes problematic—but as I read this sample of books, they remain safely within the easily accepted topics like conversion, forgiveness, humility, community, charity, or reliance on God.

Moral behavior is learned from a person's earliest experiences with others and the assumptions about right and wrong in these books are among the most "obvious" and therefore ideologically the substance of the sociocultural milieu of the times ENRfu(Hollindale, 1992). Child characters always know when they're choosing to do something that is not right to do. Jimmy, from *Point of No Return* ENRfu(McCusker, 1995) might say,

"That's a really dumb question. It wasn't that I didn't know I shouldn't be setting off firecrackers in the gazebo in the park. I just didn't know how not to do it when all my friends were there thinking it was a cool thing to do."

Abi from *The Year of Abi Crim* ENRfu(Hambrick, 2000) would agree.

"Yeah, it's really hard to be the only one who says no when all your friends want to do something. When I left Mindy's party that night? I was afraid that I'd have no friends at all on Monday at school, but what could I do? It wasn't right what they were doing, and I didn't want to be there."

These two characters had help. Both of them had families who gave them guidelines and consequences for their actions and cheered them on when they chose "rightly." But there was really no question that they *would* choose rightly. The possible universes for these children don't include failure in the long run, primarily because they

have Jesus on their side. The moral landscape of the books that commends them to consumers would be familiar to anyone who grew up in a suburban area where most of the people went to church, were white, had their own homes and good jobs and an intact, heterosexual, two-parent family. Of course, the historical fiction books are set differently, but there is still the cultural familiarity of the importance of family, of God, of community, and that the characters deserve to experience success (at least the white characters do). The road the books travel through this landscape proves Sarland's ENRfu(1996) point for all literature; that is, "considerations of ideology can neither be divorced from considerations of the economic base, nor from considerations of power" (p. 42-3). While the books clearly and strongly travel the "narrow way" in terms of morality, they do it in Chevrolets, mirroring the economics of those who buy the books and reproducing a middle-class worldview that in turn authors draw from ideologically to write their books ENRfu(Williams, 1977/1990).

Christian practices do show how children can achieve and deepen a personal relationship with God, but I suggest that they do not extend to a public religion that takes the Christian relationship to others outside the community. My discussion for the third question about the relationship between issues explored through multicultural literature and Christian practices relies on the frames of liberation theology and multiculturalism in children's literature for support.

Multicultural Literature and Christian Practices: Public Religion as Social Advocacy

I believe Christians are commanded by God to go public with their religion, not just to proselytize—though that's clearly part of it—but to care for others even when that care challenges tradition or culture or belief. Liberation theologians suggest that the structure of the church should be made visible by moving out of tradition into the lives of those who have been marginalized through power differentials or through racism, for example (Chopp, 1986). Following on Cai's (1998) and Nieto's ENRfu(1999) work concerning why children need a multicultural literature, the importance of including the

biblical truths about public religion in Christian children's literature is in its impact on children's understanding of how to interact with people who are different from them; that is, how to go about living in a Christian manner within the diversity of our own society. How these books treat diversity is a way into understanding how they choose to remain within a traditional morality rather than venturing into social advocacy.

Frankly, the books lack color.

Minty, from *Courage to Run: A Story Based on the Life of Harriet Tubman* ENRfu(Lawton, 2002) might ask,

"And where are all the black people? Still in the kitchen and the stable, doin' for white folks?"

No, there are no servants in the realistic fiction books; no one has enough money for that, but the people who represent the members of our society who aren't white are relegated to secondary roles, and except for the color of their skin and their names, are mostly indistinguishable from the main characters. There are African Americans, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese Americans, Native Americans, and Latino Americans (e.g. Lewis, 2002; Wilson & Dengler, 2001). There are a few older people, and one minor character who is deaf (e.g. Littleton, 2001; Mackall, 2000). These characters show what Heuser (2001) called "a multicultural facet" which is a nod to an awareness that the publishers have some responsibility to combat one of the most pernicious effects of racism, and that is an absence of people of color as authors or major characters in much of children's literature ENRfu(Harris, 1993; Taxel, 1981). Will's mother, in *The Discovery* ENRfu(Rue, 2001), might say,

"The world is full of different people, and it isn't fair the way some of them are treated. You know, I think Will's father got in trouble because he had a false sense of having to provide for us all by himself. He wouldn't turn to God; he wouldn't let anyone else help us, and he ended up in jail and then died. It was a long time ago, but I don't want Will to think that it's OK to just take care of himself. He has to see other people for

who they are in God's eyes. I was so proud of him for caring so much about Fawn. Of course I could have knocked him into next week for running away with her, but still, he was overwhelmed with the injustice of her family when they threw her mother out of the pueblo, and what about Uncle Sam? We still can't believe that Fawn and her mother don't get any benefits from the Army—Will and I do—because her father is an Indian. He's a soldier just like Rudy."

The Discovery (Rue, 2001) portrays Will and his mother living fully in their multicultural society. The majority of the books, though, do not show their characters affected by or concerned about the plight of those who are not as well-off as they are. The characters of color are presented quite similarly to the white characters: middle-class people who own a home, with two, heterosexual, married parents, and evidently no cultural ties to anyone or anything other than the immediate family (e.g. Byrd, 2002; Mackall, 2000). Cai and Sims-Bishop (1994) maintain that this kind of *cross-cultural* misrepresentation is counterproductive to helping children become aware of differences in cultures and learning to appreciate those differences. *Parallel cultural* books, however, do offer authentic representations of life in other cultures, but there are few authors of color publishing children's books for the Christian publishing industry. Publishers aren't actively seeking them out; it's more "if it comes to us, and it fits our market, we'll be glad to publish it." If these are the criteria, then most multicultural offerings will be doomed, because the market is white. To assume that books that only express the white experience of growing up and coming to know God truly meet the needs of Christians is to perpetuate the myth of white supremacy ENRfu(MacCann, 1998). It's not just that children of color need to see themselves in books, but also that white children need to see themselves in relation to all kinds of people in order to change this pervasive racist practice. Since there are books in my sample that raise issues of social justice and substantively explore them, albeit from a white perspective alone, this is evidence that

the market will accept this depth of story. Those books that "include a multicultural facet" can be held to a higher standard.

These issues are also apparent in the books' treatment of class. The lower class provides the characters who are the villains, and often those children that provide the tension that works against the main character and causes his/her growth. There is little character development of "bad guys." They universally sneer and snarl their way through the dialogue and are carried off by law enforcement in the end. The bad guys' poor choices always receive real world consequences. Hulk Hooligan, a bully in *Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem* ENRfu(Maselli, 2002) might say,

"Yeah, so my dad beats up on me sometimes and my mom took off a long time ago. So what? You want to make something of it?"

Even though Hulk has a little brother toward whom he is tender and protective, his urban dialogue and provocative speech are familiar stereotypes. The reader does get to see that there is more to the bully than the obvious school-based behavior as the main character reluctantly enters Hulk's world, but the fact remains that all the bullies come from homes that don't fit the litany of perfection. The main characters who "help" them, whether it is (as is most common) to pass a test or write an essay, are the ones in the place of power. They are smart, they are accepted by the powerful in society, and above all, they are Christians. *The Journey of Yung Lee* ENRfu(McCoy-Miller, 2000) subverts this somewhat, with mixed success. Lee, a Chinese immigrant, assists an Irish bully (another persona non grata in 1800s America) who is failing in school, has no friends, an abusive father, and he is not a Christian. He, too, has hidden talents that Lee discovers. At the end of the story he gives an amazingly competent speech in front of the whole town about getting along with people who are different than he is. I do not intend to mock the possibilities of healing and change that come to people who accept Jesus as their Lord; my point is the frequent use of the lower class stereotype as plot devices. The Christian worldview that I read in the books pictures people of the lower class as not just

lacking funds, but the ideological implication in my reading ENRfu(Hollindale, 1992; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) is that they are members of the lower class for reasons that stem from poor individual choices. Laziness, abusive behavior, not working regularly, and sometimes, bad luck, are all reasons why the family is unfortunate. But also, they are not Christians. The bullies don't always accept Christ; the characters don't always share him, but the implication is there.

Interestingly, this frequent plot device of one person being required to help another with their schoolwork is another example of what I believe Jesus requires of Christians in service to others. The children who helped had to sacrifice something—time, popularity—in order to carry out their task. And, in my experience, God often takes reluctant Christians and puts them in the way of helping others as a service to both—practical lessons for the one being helped, and spiritual lessons for the assistant. In these stories, Hulk was able to return a spiritual lesson to the boy who helped him (Maselli, 2002), and Wally McDoogle learned some things from his enforced time with Gary the Gorilla (Myers, 1993). Is the portrayal of a Christian virtue important enough that it vitiates the treatment of class in the stories? As the portrayal of racism hidden under Christian forgiveness in *Words by Heart* ENRfu(Sebestyen, 1979/1997) and *Amos Fortune, Free Man* ENRfu(Yates, 1950) shows, the answer is no ENRfu(Hade, 1997a; Sims, 1980; Trousdale, 1990).

Publishers seem to negotiate the concepts of gender in family roles with less assumption of tradition than race or class. I have the sense that in the wider society, gender distinctions have become more permeable than race or class distinctions over the last 40 years at least in terms of male and female roles in the family and community. The families in these books are mostly two-parent, but the roles the parents take are not traditional. The mothers work, and both parents take responsibility for spiritual instruction and discipline of their children and their physical care. Those books with single parents have twice as many fathers caring for their children by themselves as

mothers. There are successful single men and women (adults) who are variously represented in the stories. I have identified gender as being unimportant in Jesus' view of the Christian life; all people in his descriptions are equally empowered and commanded by God to live in service to others. It is the letters of Jesus' disciples to the churches that establish Christian traditions of gender roles in the family. If it is true as Hollindale (1992) suggests that ideology that is implicit in the books comes from the sociocultural influences on authors, then I suggest that since gender roles in the books are less traditionally bound than views of different ethnicities and classes, the authors, editors, and publishers all have grown up in families and a society where traditional gender roles have been challenged.

The worldview that I identified through my reading of these books is one where most characters either live or desire a middle-class life where hard work and good character brings rewards. It is important to the characters to recognize the sovereignty of God in life—to turn to him for provision, for protection from evil, and for help in distress. Characters know that God is loving and forgiving, waiting to be in lifelong relationship with them, and they respond to him in thankfulness for his gifts and in praise of his goodness. Few characters, however, move outward from this private relationship with God to what I have termed their public responsibility to act in service towards others ENRfu(Chopp & Taylor, 1994; Moltmann, 1998; Rieger, 1999; Volf, 1996). The model of Jesus in the Bible calls Christians to incorporate both private and public religions in their lives in order to fulfill the purposes of the church, and I contend that children's literature published for the Christian market should reflect both. Some of the books do have stories that challenge the thinking of characters concerning diversity in their community and sell well, suggesting that it is possible to develop this aspect of the Christian message in children's books.

The Biblical Model of Jesus' Life

Using Jesus' life and words as a model for Christian literature is both necessary and problematic. His being is the definition of Christianity, and as such, literature that claims to be for and about Christians reflects understandings of who Jesus is, how persons are in relationship with him and how that relationship affects their lives. However, Jesus' life is captured in anecdotes that were written long after he died, and the interpretation of the meaning of these writings is often disputed among scholars, theologians, and lay people. I suggested that in the actions he took, conversations he had with his disciples and others, and stories he told there is a cogent and coherent model for how God expects Christians to act in relation to other people in our close community and in the greater society. For example, one day when he was teaching in the temple courts, the "teachers of the law and the Pharisees [Jewish leaders]" brought a woman to him who was caught committing adultery. They wanted to know if he would uphold the Mosaic penalty of stoning her. Jesus' comment was, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8: 7, NIV). Again, as in the story of The Good Samaritan, he turns the intellectual question about legal justice (that had a very real consequence for the accused) into an answer that demands an accounting from the heart, where justice becomes an act of service rather than a consequence of behavior. The woman's actions no longer condemn her as an adulteress and therefore separated from society, but acknowledge her a sinner, and therefore in company with all those who accused her. I believe Jesus is asking us to carry the love and forgiveness that we have received from God to others in the world. Literature that stops short with our receiving his grace represents an incomplete gospel. I suggest that children need to see the world in its diversity in their literature, both for the acclamation of seeing themselves in the books and to become more mindful of others who differ (Nieto, 1999; Sleeter, 1996).

Many of the stories Jesus told concern the kingdom of God, which liberation theologians interpret as a spiritual kingdom made accessible to humanity by Jesus' death,

and that once entered into is, in Moltmann's ENRfu(1998) words, a place "in which God is wholly in the world and the world is wholly in God" (p. 2). In such a place, privilege resides in service rather than power, which is the basis for social justice in the world. As Jesus taught on several occasions, it will be those who humble themselves and serve others who will be great in the kingdom of God. He himself gave an example when he washed his disciples' feet before the Passover meal, a menial service. He said, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13: 14-5, NIV). Literature can provide such an example as well.

In order for *books* to be a place where children can learn about public religion, they must be concerned with the world beyond the enclosed Christian community. The characters of the books should meet with those who are different and learn how to interact with them in ways that do not violate their beliefs nor impose them on others, yet allow for the love of God to be expressed in that interaction. The books will still be highly moral, exciting and marketable, but the morality will not be just traditional, but also a morality of social advocacy. I suggested that Christian publishers have a mandate, because they identify themselves as Christian, to follow the precepts that are laid out in scripture. I find that they are able to complete this mission in regards to a private religion, but they do not in terms of a public religion. The consequence of ignoring the wholeness of Jesus' message may be to perpetuate the divisions in society that perpetuate racial, class, and gender inequities.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

My sample of books was small compared to all those that are available for 8-12 year old readers, representing at most 3 books from one publishing house, and only 21 publishers overall. I also looked at the range of books for just one age group, and both topics and complexity of story changes for younger and older readers. My readings are idiosyncratic. I draw from experiences with the Christian communities in my life and the

study that I have done to interpret scripture in the Old and New Testaments. I also included only a small portion of the biblical scriptures that Christians are accustomed to draw from for moral instruction. I chose to use just the words that are attributed to Jesus as this text is most commonly accepted across Christian communities, even those who do not agree that "all Scripture is God-breathed, useful for teaching…and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3: 16, NIV). I included books that were published in the last 10 years; older books are still available and may reflect even more traditional worldviews. I chose to limit the age of the books to reflect the period of the greatest growth in the inspirational market.

My informants were few as well, though representative of the different types and sizes of publishers in the industry, and I was only able to have multiple conversations and ask for a member check of the last section of Chapter 4 with two of them. My interview skills improved over time, so the information I received in later interviews was fuller and more applicable than were earlier interviews. The industry is so dependent on the economy that the significant events of the bombing of the World Trade Center and the subsequent war in Iraq had incalculable effects on consumer purchasing. The uncertainty of the market was uppermost in publishers' and editors' minds, though perhaps this underscores their reliance on market indications over book content to determine what to publish.

I would like to go back to my informants and talk to others to get a better understanding of how they determine just what "biblically sound" is in reference to their books. I am curious whether the seeming disconnect between a book that is full of the presence of God and a book that is aware of issues of social justice is an indication that authors and editors believe that service to others is a secular responsibility rather than a religious one. I also want to talk with the consumers of the books to determine who buys the books and where they buy them or borrow them. Do they indeed depend on particular publishing houses, and how does their buying change if they are home educators? I also

want to know what the readers like about the books they read, and what they would like if they had the choice. How does the steady of diet of series books, with their formulaic and episodic style affect their reading lives? As this is something that is rampant in the entire publishing industry, it would be interesting to see how the genre of a series makes a difference in children's reading habits, both in the home school setting and in Christian schools.

The study also points to an examination of other niche markets. How do others negotiate the desire to make particular kinds of books available when they have a specific consumer base? These questions all suggest that pursuing an ideological critique of children's literature is important and useful to people whose interest in literature is pedagogical. For Christians, my hope is that consumers would be equally concerned about what ideology the books promote through their reading as well as what can be safely assumed to be left out. For publishers, my hope is that they do not allow the dictates of the secular marketplace to overshadow the missions they have established to help all Christians apply all biblical truth to their lives. Legal justice emphasizes what not to do in society; it is left to social justice as exemplified by Jesus' life to show Christians what to do to work toward an equitable and caring society for all people.

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APPENDIX A

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography

Byrd, Sandra (2002). *The Hidden Diary: Book 7: Take a Chance. A Faithful Friends Series*. Minneapolis, MI: BethanyHouse.

This is the second book in a series, and the girls' friendships have been established already. Lucy's family is new to Catalina Island, and she has become best friends with Serena. Another friend of Serena's, Julie, does not like Lucy. The two girls go horse-back riding at the Double C Ranch and discover that the ranch's future is in jeopardy. While at another ranch, they overhear a possible way for Carla, the Double C's owner, to make money: have commercials made at the ranch. They help paint and clean up to make the ranch more presentable. Lucy has to overcome her negative feelings toward Julie as her help is needed, too, in order to get the ranch prepared in time. Lucy also wants to ride a stallion, and does so without permission. The stallion's good manners, when she was thrown, are what convinced the film company to use the stable.

Cannon, A.E. (2002). *Charlotte's Rose*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books.

Charlotte and her father are part of a group of Mormon immigrants who move from Wales to Salt Lake City in 1856. On their trip across the West, pushing handcarts, a baby is born whose mother dies. Charlotte, still a girl but longing to be a woman, volunteers to care for the baby, and carries her across country. In the process she learns what it means to live in community, about responsibility, and about how people, like the Welsh, the Indians, and the Americans, can be different but still people.

Finley, Martha (1868/1999). *Elsie's Impossible Choice: Book two of the A Life of Faith: Elsie Dinsmore Series*. Franklin, TN: Mission City Press.

Elsie is a young girl who has just lately been united with her father whom she loves, but she loves Jesus more. Elsie's father gives her a choice—to obey him in all things, or be separate. Elsie chooses to follow God's commandments, though she nearly dies of grief. Her father realizes how pigheaded he is being, and that Elsie is right. He comes to know the Lord in the end.

Greegor, Katherine (1992). *Trouble - of the Northwest Territory*. http://www.epub2k.com. 20 chapters 129 pages pdk

A family living in the Northwest Territory finds out new neighbors have moved in down the river. They come into contact with them and immediately the new people want to hunt and kill Indians, as the mother and some children of the family had been killed in a "massacre." One particular Christian Indian saves Jeremiah & Jedd from being lost and being very ill, and through this experience, the neighbors are brought to Christ.

Hambrick, Sharon (2000). *The Year of Abi Crim*. Greenville, S.C.: BJU Press.

Abi is looking forward to being concertmaster and first chair violinist in the sixth grade at her Christian school. Her expected teacher, Mr. Doyle, is a favorite. He unexpectedly leaves the school, and they get an African American woman, Mrs. Cotton, to replace him. She is fabulous, but Abi's arrogance in her own ability backfires when she doesn't tune properly at auditions and ends up first chair, second violins.

The new girl, Tamika, takes concertmaster position. Abi learns to work to Mrs. Cotton's standards, not her own, and so do folks around her. She battles racism among her classmates on her way to having a great year.

Hardy, Leanne (2002). *The Wooden Ox*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

A family that is in Mozambique to help with relief efforts is captured by bandits during the 1980s civil war. They witness the murder of a whole village and are kept by the bandits for 3 months. Kurt, the seven year old son, gradually loses his respect for people and gains respect for the power of the gun, but his relationship with Pastor Makusa helps him. During that time, Keri realizes that Dzumisana, one of the bandits, is the long-lost grandson of Pastor Makusa. The family eventually is released, and Dzumisana sneaks away to join them. Keri battles with her anger at God over the harsh deaths, the circumstances of their trek, and what she sees as his failure to protect his people. She makes it a condition of her continued belief that Dzumisana also be allowed to escape.

Hess, Donna Lynn (1994). *Dust of the Earth.* Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press.

This fictional biography features the son of a sharecropper from the Deep South. JT Pace stutters as a child and is ridiculed on his first day at school, so he never learns to read. He stays with his momma until he gets in trouble with a white boy in town then goes into the fields with his daddy. He joins the Army during WWII, goes to live with his sister, falls in love, but refuses a job with her daddy because he can't read. He makes a success of his life and finally learns to read when he receives Christ and wants to be able to read the good book.

High, Linda Oatman (1997). *A Stone's Throw from Paradise.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

Lizzie's mother died when she was very young, and her father won't talk about her. He remarried a year ago, and Lizzie has a baby brother and a stepmother who are really great, but she just can't let them take her mother's place. Her father takes her to spend the summer with Grossmummy, Granny Zook, her father's mother, who lives in an Amish community. Lizzie learns what really hard work is, but she never meets anyone in the community other than a young boy her age who helps out on the farm. After 3 weeks, her father comes to visit, and Lizzie wants to go home, but she doesn't want to leave, either. The night before she goes, Granny Zook tells her why she never sees them: her mother and father were shunned for leaving the Amish, and Granny Zook would be, too, if the leaders knew she had Lizzie there. She shares a memory box with Lizzie, and tells her that not too long ago, her mother's parents were also shunned for. Lizzie finds out she has an aunt, too, and goes home full of the future. Caring for the baby is no sweat, now, after her weeks of really hard work, and she finds that her stepmother is OK, too.

Jackson, Dave & Jackson, Neta (2001). *Roundup of the Street Rovers*. Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House Publishers.

Rev. Brace begins the Children's Aid Society in New York, establishing a school in the evening, a place for children to live (they pay) and a way to earn a living (shoe

business). Eventually they come up with a scheme to move the children west to families who want them to work & live with them.

Jenkins, Jerry B. & LaHaye, Tim (2001). *Left Behind The Kids: Judgment of Ice: 18: Darkening Skies.* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Kids.

A space of time before and just at the beginning of the fifth judgment of cold. The Young Trib Force eludes capture and others die as the GC closes in. The Illinois group struggles with unbelievers in their ranks.

Lawton, Wendy (2002). *Courage to Run: A Story Based on the Life of Harriet Tubman.* Chicago: Moody Press.

This is the story of Harriet Tubman's young life. She is hired out to several different families until she gets the reputation of a trouble-maker. No one will buy her, either. She is hit on the head when she gets in the way on purpose to help a slave escape. The sleeping sickness protects her further from being sold. She becomes strong, working in the fields. This book ends when she is still young.

Lewis, Bevery (2002). *Star Status*. Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House Publishers.

Manda is slated to ski in the biggest race in her career. She focuses to the extent of shutting out friends, other activities, and God. Even though she wins, she feels loss because of the result of her actions. She repents and realizes God's goodness.

Littleton, Mark (2001). *Tracks in the Sand*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

The families are on vacation and want to see the horses. In looking for them, they discover a plot to hurt them. The children get caught by the bad guys when they're following them, and through courage from trusting God, escape and get the police. The horses help!

Mackall, Dandi Daley (2000). *Horsefeathers: A Horse of a Different Color*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Scoop is worried about having enough income to keep the business going. She rescues a boy's horse, and he turns out to have connections that might give her a way to advertise her stable. One of her partners, Maggie, is smitten with the boy and lies about her age to him, about her whereabouts to her mother, and does not complete her responsibilities at the stable. She keeps asking Scoop to go along with her, then built up by Ben, tries to hog the publicity for herself, not the stable. Scoop finally admits her concerns to her aunt, and they spend time praying so that Scoop can get back to feeling right about herself. She challenges Maggie to do the right thing during the live show, and Maggie blows off Ben.

Maselli, Christopher P. N. (2002). *Laptop #2: double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz.

The QoolQuad has a computer that affects the future. A student has changed grades in the computer at school, and they find him out. He has to take a test over, and one of the boys has to help him. His little brother is very sick, and they help save his life. Hulk appreciates their help, but not their attitude.e and learn about being compassionate and

recognizing their own pride. One's own strength and wisdom can blind you to what you think strength and wisdom is in others.

McCaffrey, Tony (2001). *Emmanuel McClue and The Mystery of the Shroud*. Worcester, MA: Ambassador Books, Inc.

The family is new to the investigation business. They watch the beginning of an exorcism and are frightened by the demon. They go home to get another assignment, which is to investigate the possibility of the Shroud of Turin being Jesus' shroud. Before they can begin, they are sent to Argentina, where they encounter a man who has cloned Jesus from the genetic material on the Shroud, and is experimenting with the boy clone. A group is after Joshua to kidnap him, and Joshua is ill. They tell Joshua who he is, they decide he should stay with the family in Argentina, and the group no longer wants him because he is sick.

McCoy-Miller, Judith (2000). *The Immigrants' Chronicles: From China to America: The Journey of Yung Lee*. Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries.

A Chinese girl goes to the United States with her brother so they can stay together while he works to become rich in the gold fields. He doesn't know how hard it is. They are befriended by a black family and through her kindness, Lee wins over a boy who has been a bully. He in turn helps them when they are robbed.

McCusker, Paul (1995). *Point of No Return*. Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing.

Jimmy, who is frequently in trouble with his best friend, becomes a Christian and loses his new-found minister and son, his best friend, and his Grandma in a week. He learns to rely on God and trust him to replace what's gone with something new and wonderful.

Morris, Gilbert (2001). *The Adventures of the Kerrigan Kids: Travels in Africa: Painted Warriors and Wild Lions*. Chicago: Moody Press.

The family goes together to a photo shoot and Duffy can't accept the strange ways of the Masai. Only when she realizes her fault and asks for forgiveness does she create friendships with the people.

Myers, Bill (1993). *the incredible worlds of Wally McDoogle 1: my life as a smashed burrito with extra hot sauce*. Dallas, TX: Word Kids!

Wally goes to camp and is in the way of Gary the Gorilla who won't take anything off anyone. He learns that appearances are deceiving and it is important to have someone to trust—fear and foolish pride get in the way of trusting God.

Peretti, Frank E. (1997). *The Cooper Kids Adventure Series: Flying Blind*. Nashville, TN: Tommy Nelson.

Jay is flying for the day with his uncle when jet turbulence tosses the plane around. His uncle is knocked out, and he is blinded. The rest of the story is his flying the plane back to the airport and landing it with his father in a plane next to him.

Pistole, Katy (2002). *The Sonrise Farm Series: Book 1: The Palomino*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

A girl has a week on a horse ranch learning to ride, and she's asked to stay on for the summer as she is a "natural." She buys a horse from the knacker and she turns out to be only 6 years old and starved. She's a palomino. She learns to care for her and ride.

Randall, Rod (1999). *Heebie Jeebies: The I Scream Truck*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Zelda appears when Rob's great-uncle dies with a story about how Rob will die before he's 13 if he follows the pattern of the last 3 male, 12-year-old deaths by ice. He finds out he has inherited the great-uncle's money, and another branch of the family (of which Zelda is one) wants it, too. He is pursued by men in an ice-cream truck, but the 3 kids defeat them and Rob makes it to 13 through believing in Zelda's desire to help.

Rue, Nancy (2001). *Focus on the Family Christian Heritage Series: The Santa Fe Years: The Discovery*. Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House Publishers.

This is the story of Will & his mother who move to Santa Fe. His dad's in the Army in World War II. He goes to school with mostly Hispanic kids, and he lies to them about how wealthy he is in order to get some status. He finds out he is the son of his mom's first husband, which makes him feel he doesn't belong anywhere. He meets Fawn, an Anasazi girl where he stays after school. Will steals and lies to maintain the fiction at school, and he gets to know Fawn, who is unhappy because she wants to leave the pueblo and become a white girl. They run away, and end up at the pueblo, where he tries to rescue her from going in a sacred place. They both get kicked off, and he goes home, where his mother and a pastor help him sort things out.

Thomas, Jerry D. (2002). Illustrated by Odell, Lad. *Detective Zack: Secret of Noah's Flood*. Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries.

Zack is surprised by his friend when he says that the story of Noah's flood is a fairy tale. Zack's family goes on a summer trip to many geologic sites to discuss the scientific evidence for the flood and compare it to scientific evidence for evolution. Zack decides that the flood makes more sense to explain all the evidence.

Whelan, Gloria (1979/1993). *A Time to Keep Silent*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Clair's mother dies, and to get her father's attention, Clair stops talking. He realizes that things can't go on the way they are, so he quits his job and takes up a life-long dream to begin a mission church in northern Michigan. Clair, through a friendship with a girl who is hiding in the woods to escape her alcoholic, abusive father, comes to appreciate the surroundings and the value of friendship and work.

Wiggin, Eric (1995). *Hannah's Island: The Mystery of the Sunken Steamboat*. Lynnwood, WA: Emerald Books.

The family lives on an island in Moosehead Lake in Maine. They own and run a tourist lodge. The children are home-schooled. They have met with unexpected new requirements in expanding their lodge so are stuck with a loan they can't pay off if they

can't complete the rooms, but they are forbidden to do more work unless they put in a better sewer system, but don't have the money to do it. (Don't know why this wasn't discovered before work begun.) The kids are on the lake using sonar equipment and discover a wreck which turns out to be an eccentric's steamboat that was sunk in a storm decades ago. The children recover treasures to take care of the debt, and then recover other items that keep media attention. Hannah feels proprietary about the boat, and when it's raised, local malcontents burn it. The weak ice under where the boat was raised is the site of a skating accident where a friend drowns. She and her brother find the culprit. She feels she should burn the treasure she has kept, then realizes that instead she could sell it to benefit God. Her pride in the steamboat and in her part in it blinded her to Godly plans.

Wilson, Pauline Hutchens & Dengler, Sandy (2001). *the new sugar creek gang: The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert*. Chicago: Moody Press.

The kids go on a dinosaur dig and use kindness to combat the suspicions of the lead paleontologists when tools are disappearing. They find out who the bad guys are and find a great fossil.

Windle, Jeanette (1994/1999/2001). *The Parker Twins Series #1: Cave of the Inca Re*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications .

The twins go with their uncle to Bolivia on a business trip. They overhear suspicious talk by two unknown Americans who threaten them. They follow them and find out they are smuggling artifacts and are chased by them into a burial cave that has a reputation—people die who go into the cave if they come out. Most don't come out. The smugglers are overcome and found later, insane, the children depend on God to protect them. The boy, Pedro, who has been escorting them, comes to believe in their God because they are not driven insane in the cave.

APPENDIX B

BOOK INFORMATION

Appendix B: Book Information

Author	Title	Genre	Setting	Publisher	Series	Category God as Character, Sage, or Setting	Multicultural characters, plot lines, or event
Byrd	*Take a Chance*	Realistic Fiction	Island off Los Angeles, California	BethanyHouse	Series *The Hidden Diary*	Character	One Hispanic character/family
Cannon	*Charlotte's Rose*	Historical Fiction	Mormon trail from Iowa to Utah, 1856	BethanyHouse	Stand alone	Setting	Welsch immigrants meet Americans, Native Americans, persecution
Finley	*Elsie's Impossible Choice*	Historical Fiction	Southern plantation	Mission City Press	Series A Life of Faith: Elsie Dinsmore	Character	Slaves
Greegor	*Trouble of the Northwest Territory*	Historical Fiction	Muskingum River in Ohio, 1870s	EPub2K	Stand alone	Character	Western settlers and Native Americans; interactions between them
Hambrick	*The Year of Abi Crim*	Realistic Fiction	Suburban US	Bob Jones University	Stand alone	Sage	African American teacher and student and racists comments toward them; Abi acts on principles
Hardy	*The Wooden Ox*	Historical Fiction	Mosambique, Africa, 1980s	Kregel	Stand alone	Character	Americans helping with relief during Mozambique civil war encounter different groups of people there; most very poor
Hess	*Dust of the Earth*	Fictionalized Biography	Georgia and Pennsylvania, 1930 - present	Kregel	Stand alone	Setting	African American growing up in the South as a sharecropper; becoming successful businessmen
High	*A Stone's Throw from Paradise*	Realistic Fiction	Pennsylvania	Eerdman's	Stand alone	Setting	Amish and lower income main characters
Jackson & Jackson	*Roundup of the Street Rovers: Charles Loving Brace*	Historical Fiction	New York City and Dowegiac, Michigan, 1854	BethanyHouse	Thematic series *Trailblazer Books*	Setting	Homeless children and benefactors
Jenkins & LaHaye	*Darkening Skies: Judgment of Ice*	Fantasy	Israel, Illinois, present time	Tyndale	Series *Left Behind: The Kids*	Character	One African American, formerly poor and rick kids

Lawton	*Courage to Run: A Story Based on the Life of Harriet Tubman*	Historical Fiction	Southern plantation, 1850s	Moody	Thematic series *Daughters of the Faith Series*	Character	Slaves and wealthy landowners; preparation for escaping from slavery
Lewis	*Star Status*	Realistic Fiction	Colorado	BethanyHouse	Series *Girls Only*	Sage	Four girls well-to-do; one dependent on wealthy uncle
Littleton	*Tracks in the Sand*	Realistic Fiction	Island on the Outer Banks, North Carolina	Baker	Series *Ally O'Connor Adventures*	Sage	One Japanese American/Mr. Tomoro helps them capture the villains
Mackall	*A Horse of a Different Color*	Realistic Fiction	Rural US	Concordia	Series *Horsefeathers*	Sage	One African American, one deaf character, rich customers
Maselli	*Double-take: Things Are Not What They Seem*	Fantasy	Enisburg, Georgia	Zonderkidz	Series *Laptop*	Sage	One character from poor side of town
McCaffrey	*Emmanual McClue and The Mystery of the Shroud*	Fantasy	London: Boston; Tuin, Italy, and Argentina	Ambassador	Stand alone	Setting	Wealthy family of African American and Latin American mix; poor people in Argentina
McCoy-Miller	*The Journey of Yung Lee: From China to America*	Historical Fiction	China, San Francisco, California gold fields, 1854	Cook Communications	Thematic sereis *The Immigrants' Chronicles*	Character	Chinese immigrants stay with African American family and interact with Irish American family
McCusker	*Point of No Return*	Realistic Fiction	Odyssey, a make-believe suburban US town	Focus on the Family	Series *Adventures in Odyssey*	Character	None
Morris	*Painted Warriors and Wild Lions: Travel in Africa*	Realistic Fiction	Africa	Moody	Series *The Adventures of the Kerrigan Kdis*	Sage	Wealthy Americans in Africa with Masai who figure wealth differently that Americans do; interactions between groups
Myers	*My Life as a Smashed Burrito with Extra Hot Sauce*	Realistic Fiction	Suburban US, summer camp	Word	Series *The Incredible Worlds of Wally McDoogle*	Sage	None
Peretti	*Flying Blind*	Realistic Fiction	California	Tyndale	Series *The Cooper Kids Adventure Series*	Sage	One African American and one Asian American in tower crew
Pistole	*The Palomino*	Realistic Fiction	Virginia	Pacific	Series *The Sonrise Farm Series*	Character	None

Randall	*The I Scream Truck*	Realistic Fiction	Suburban US	Broadman & Holman	Series *Heebie* Jeebies	Sage	None
Rue	*The Discovery*	Historical Fiction	New Mexico, 1940s	JourneyForth	Thematic series *Christian Heritage Series: The Santa Fe Years*	Sage	Mexicans, Anasazi Indians, interactions between children of these groups and white main character
Thomas	*Secret of Noah's Flood*	Realistic Fiction	In several western states	Faith Kids	Series *Detective Zack*	Setting	None
Whelan	*A Time to Keep Silent*	Realistic Fiction	Rural Eastern US	Eerdmans	Stand alone	Setting	Wealthy reverend moves to rural area with cut in pay/privileges
Wiggin	*The Mystery of the Sunken Steamboat*	Realistic Fiction	Lake Michigan island	Moody	Series *Hannah's Island*	Character	None
Wilson & Denger	*The Case of the Dinosaur in the Desert*	Realistic Fiction	Western US desert	Moody	Series *The New Sugar Creek Gang*	Sage	Lower class cowboys and elitist university professors
Windle	*Cave of the Inca Re*	Realistic Fiction	Bolivia	Kregel	Series *The Parker Twins Series*	Sage	Wealthy white businessmaen; poor Bolivians

APPENDIX C

PUBLISHER INFORMATION

Appendix C: Publisher Information

The information about each publisher has been copied as is from the web addresses noted at the end of each section. I generally used all the information available except for those few who had several pages worth.

Ambassador Books, Inc

Ambassador Books is a Christian-focused book publisher founded on the belief that by living up to our motto, Spiritus et Veritas (Spirit & Truth), and staying faithful to our mission, we will render an important service to our fellow man and we will continue to prosper so that our work may continue.

(**http://www.ambassadorbooks.com)**

Baker Book House

No history or mission statement available.

BethanyHouse

Bethany House, a division of Baker Book House company, is located in Bloomington, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis. Bethany House has over 1100 titles in its current catalog and sells its books through many channels including Christian bookstores, general bookstores, mass merchants and online stores.

Mission

The purpose of Bethany House is to help Christians apply biblical truth in all areas of life-whether through a well-told story, a challenging devotional, or the message of an illustrated children's book. We are diligently committed to offering the best in editing, design and marketing to make each book as inspiring, challenging, enjoyable and attractive as it can be.

Reaching the World

Reaching our readership now requires us to focus beyond just these shores, and we are committed to taking Christian writing to the world. To date, Bethany House titles have been translated into more than 2,100 foreign editions with more

than 200 new translations added yearly. Bethany House titles are often found on the Christian bestseller lists and Bethany is recognized as the Leader in Christian Fiction. (www.bethanyhouse.com)

BJU Press

Children's books

BJU Press has great books for all ages, from read-aloud books for young children to exciting adventure stories for teens. Our Christian fiction books present clear scriptural applications and teaching. Our standard fiction, although not overtly Christian, offers a good story with a Christian world-view. (http://www.bjup.com/books)

Broadman and Holman Publishers

We all want our children to read, and come to love reading for themselves, but sometimes it's hard to find books for them that reflect the Christian values we also hope they grow into. To meet that need, we've brought together a collection of children's books that are certain to entertain as well as inspire--and that's something parents and kids can both be happy about! (http://www.broadmanholman.com/asp/category.asp?page=childrensbookscat)

Concordia Publishing House

Concordia Publishing House provides resources for every stage of life, for every need of the Christian, from birth to death. You will find resources that strengthen you in your faith, inspire you in your discipleship, and teach and educate you in what it means to stand on the enduring Word of God. The resources here will help you grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus so that, like the first Christians, you too may give an answer to those who ask about the hope that is within you as you witness to your Savior.

(http://shop.cph.org/Category.pasp?txtCatalog=CPHProduct&txtCategory=Books)

Cook Communications Ministries

Faith Kidz

Parents play the most important role in bringing their children to walk in the ways of the Lord. To help them do just that, Faith Kidz offers books, toys and games filled with "teachable moments" for sharing God's message of unconditional love with your youngsters. (http://www.cookministries.com/books)

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers

In all our books, we seek to nurture children's faith in God and help them understand and explore the wonder, joy, and challenges of life. (http://www.eerdmans.com/youngreaders/default.htm)

Emerald Books

No history or mission statement available.

Epub2

Epub2k exists to provide an alternative to the high cost, storage space requirements, environmental impact and time demands of building a conventional print library. Books from some of today's most well known (and yet-unknown) authors can, in today's technological age, be provided via a downloadable, instantly accessible and affordable product known as an E-book. There are many advantages of E-books over printed books.

Purchased from the comfort of your home!

Instant availability!

Environmentally friendly!

Extremely small storage requirements!

Twenty-four hour, seven day a week availability to buy!

Low overhead - low cost production!

More!

Epub2k also offers authors (whose submissions are accepted) the ability to be published at absolutely no cost to them (see our author's submission guidelines). There are literally thousands of authors who have useful and even important contributions to make to today's society who otherwise would have no outlet for their work. Epub2k provides this forum. (http://www.epub2k.com)

Focus on the Family Publishing

Our mission

To cooperate with the Holy Spirit in disseminating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, and, specifically, to accomplish that objective by helping to preserve traditional values and the institution of the family.

Our guiding principles

Since Focus on the Family's primary reason for existence is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a practical outreach to homes, we have firm beliefs about both the Christian faith and the importance of the family. This ministry is therefore based upon five guiding philosophies that are apparent at every level throughout the organization. These "pillars" are drawn from the wisdom of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian ethic, rather than from the humanistic notions of today's theorists. In short, Focus on the Family is a reflection of what we believe to be the recommendations of the Creator Himself, who ordained the family and gave it His blessing.

We believe that the ultimate purpose in living is to know and glorify God and to attain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, beginning within our own families and then reaching out to a suffering humanity that does not know of His love and sacrifice.

We believe that the institution of marriage was intended by God to be a permanent, lifelong relationship between a man and a woman, regardless of trials, sickness, financial reverses or emotional stresses that may ensue.

We believe that children are a heritage from God and a blessing from His hand. We are therefore accountable to Him for raising, shaping and preparing them for a life of service to His Kingdom and to humanity.

We believe that human life is of inestimable worth and significance in all its dimensions, including the unborn, the aged, the widowed, the mentally handicapped, the unattractive, the physically challenged and every other condition in which humanness is expressed from conception to the grave.

We believe that God has ordained three basic institutions — the church, the family and the government — for the benefit of all humankind. The family exists to propagate the race and to provide a safe and secure haven in which to nurture, teach and love the younger generation. The church exists to minister to individuals and families by sharing the love of God and the message of repentance and salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. The government exists to maintain cultural equilibrium and to provide a framework for social order.

Our commitment to these principles is apparent at every level throughout the organization. The values and techniques taught to parents are drawn from the wisdom of the Bible and Judeo-Christian ethic, rather than from the humanistic notions of today's theorists. In short, Focus on the Family is a reflection of what we believe to be the recommendations of the Creator Himself, who ordained the family and gave it His blessing.

Book publishing

Focus on the Family partners with several Christian publishers to create products ranging from fiction for children and teens to marriage-building resources, parenting helps, and inspirational books for men and women. More than half of

these products are created by an in-house team of writers and editors, and are supported by contributions from talented authors.

(http://www.family.org/welcome/aboutfof)

Kregel Publications

Mission statement

Our mission as an evangelical Christian publisher and retailer is to provide — with integrity and excellence — trusted, biblically based resources that challenge and encourage individuals in their everyday life and service.

Doctrinal statement

Our selection of products is guided by a conservative, evangelical faith which upholds the following primary doctrines: the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible as God's Word, inerrant in the original writings; one God existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the deity of Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; vicarious death, bodily resurrection, and personal return; the Holy Spirit who regenerates and indwells all believers.

History

In 1909 Louis Kregel established an early business of supplying new and used religious and theological books to individuals in the Grand Rapids area. While the majority of the early titles were written in the Dutch language, this changed over the years to primarily English language titles in response to customer demand. Today Kregel Used Books houses its constantly changing selection of over 200,000 used religious and theological works at 525 Eastern Avenue located in the central Grand Rapids area.

Sensing a growing need for solidly evangelical works, Kregel Publications began in 1949 to supply resources to meet the spiritual needs of evangelical readers as well as the professional needs of pastors, missionaries, teachers, and Christian leaders. In addition to reprints of classic works, new materials in the areas of

Christian education and ministry, Bible commentaries and reference, contemporary issues, and devotional books are also published. A limited number of titles in the genre of biblical/historical fiction are also available. Today Kregel Publications has over 600 titles in print.

Established by veteran missionaries to Spain, Harold and Esther Kregel, Editorial Portavoz continued in its publishing program from new offices in Grand Rapids in 1982. Today it offers a wide selection of over 200 solid, evangelical titles for the spiritual growth and encouragement of Hispanic readers world-wide.

Two full-service Christian bookstores operated by Kregel Bookstores were placed in Grandville on Chicago Dr. near Wilson Avenue in 1991 and in Grand Rapids on the East Beltline at Three Mile NE in 1995. Both feature a full selection of uniquely Christian products including books, Bibles, music, videos, cards, gifts and ministry resources carried in-stock everyday for one's shopping convenience. (http://www.gospelcom.net/kregel/about_in.html)

Mission City Press

Mission City Press is a Christian publishing and communications that is committed to creating products that inspire today's kids to develop a life of faith. That's why we call our brand of books and companion products "A LIFE OF FAITH"!

We take our mission very seriously because the future of our young people is at stake. We want them to love God and His Word with ALL of their hearts. God and His Word are the only sure compasses in this world.

Our aim is to inspire passionate devotion to Jesus Christ in believers, and to introduce non-believers to Him, through Christian products and resources which: present the power of our Christian heritage; reveal the wisdom and fruit of Christian character; promote profound understanding of and active obedience to the Word of God; challenge and affirm a growing faith in Jesus Christ; define and

creatively communicate the elements of a distinctively Christian, Biblical world view; and encourage true reverence for God.

(http://www.alifeoffaith.com/mission.htm)

Moody Press

The vision of an evangelist

Moody Publishers' humble beginnings were fueled by the huge vision of D.L. Moody to take the message of the gospel to the masses via Christian books. The formation of the Bible Institute Colportage Association (BICA) in 1894 came as the result of his frustrations as he asked booksellers, "What have you in the way of helpful reading for young Christians?" When the answer was "nothing," this take-action evangelist decided to do something about it.

Thus he began BICA with the revolutionary goal of promoting inexpensive Christian books for Christians to grow and non-Christians to have a quick introduction to the gospel. At the time, "Inexpensive religious literature was as scarce as mosquitoes in Antarctica," as the Chicago Daily News described it. "The price must come down," declared Moody. By launching large print runs, setting a uniform size and binding, and using inexpensive paper, he was able to sell books for twenty-five cents each. All of Grace by Charles Spurgeon was the first book in the new line. It is still in print over 100 years later.

By the time BICA had become Moody Publishers in 1941, almost 34 million copies of sermons, Bible teaching, and doctrinal books as well as New Testaments had been published. Additionally, over 43 million gospel tracts had been distributed.

Moody Publishers' unique role in worldwide evangelism

Moody founded BICA merely eight years after beginning only the nation's second Bible school. The Moody Bible Institute (MBI) today is one of the most well-known evangelical institutions training and equipping young people for the

mission field at home and abroad, pastoral positions, as well as other various forms of ministry. Moody Publishers continues to operate as the publishing arm of MBI.

This fact alone makes Moody Publishers unique in the Christian publishing business. Our profits are channeled back to MBI to support the tuition-paid education of more than 1500 students. Every book that Moody Publishers publishes contributes in a significant way to the training of students who will carry the gospel to all corners of the world.

Moody Publishers today

The vision of Moody Publishers is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and a biblical worldview in such creative and powerful ways that individuals worldwide will live in increasing measure as His fully devoted followers. Our mission is to educate and edify the Christian and to evangelize the non-Christian by ethically publishing conservative, evangelical Christian literature and other media for all ages around the world; and to help provide resources for Moody Bible Institute in its training of future Christian leaders.

Moody Publishers is far and above one of the most trustworthy publishers in the industry. In the 1960's, Moody Publishers adopted the slogan, "The Name You Can Trust" because of strong and positive customer feedback about our integrity.

Lift Every Voice

In our earnest effort to reach as wide an audience as possible, Moody Publishers has partnered with the Institute for Black Family Development in the creation of a new joint imprint – Life Every Voice. The vision for this endeavor is to see African-American Christians encouraged in their faith in Jesus Christ through quality books written by African Americans. While Moody Publishers already publishes several African-American authors, such as Tony Evans, Clarence

Schuler, Lois Evans, and Crawford Loritts, Lift Every Voice products will be targeted almost exclusively to African Americans.

Pacific Press Publishing Association

Originally established in 1874 to proclaim the soon coming of Christ through a little paper called The Signs of the Times, Pacific Press® continues to be a source of light and inspiration through the books and magazines that come from its presses.

From humble beginnings in northern California to the present operation in southern Idaho, the mission of Pacific Press® has been to lift up Jesus and publish the glad tidings of His salvation and soon return. That mission remains at the center of everything we do. Welcome and enjoy your cyber visit to Pacific Press® — "Where the WORD is LIFE."

Pacific Press publishes books and periodicals with Christian themes. We produce a full line of materials for children and adults, including many books dealing with biblical and inspirational topics. Books for Christian women are one of our specialties. Another is publishing books and magazines in foreign languages, including Spanish, French, Afrikaans, and even Samoan. (http://www.pacificpress.com)

Tommy Nelson

Our goal at Tommy Nelson is to nurture the faith of every child through books, videos and entertainment products. We spend all day everyday thinking about children and how we can impact their lives as they embrace their own personal faith in God.

Tommy Nelson, the kid's division of Thomas Nelson, Inc., was created to place into the hands of children of all ages a wide variety of high quality, enjoyable products that are consistent with the teachings found in the Bible and designed to

expand children's imaginations and nurture their faith while pointing them to a personal relationship with God.

More than a publisher, Tommy Nelson is, first and foremost, a children's company that creates, markets and distributes books, Bibles, home video and audio products, music and other related ancillary products such as plush toys, games and action figures aimed at children ages 0-14. This is our specialty. We love what we do for we have full confidence that God has uniquely designed each child's life. Our role is to assist in the connection and stimulation of these promising minds and hearts. Every age, every phase, every skill level and every style is presented here for your consideration. At Tommy Nelson, we understand the need to keep pace with our rapidly changing world, so our heart's desire is to continue to look for fresh, new ways to reach children with the timeless message of Christ. (www.tommynelson.com)

Tyndale Kids

Tyndale's heart beats for children, with a legacy of products that help parents raise their kids with rock solid faith.

"Tyndale House Publishers has been publishing products for kids since day one. My father's first book, Living Letters, was written in a simple and easy to understand language so that his kids could understand it. Taking the truth of Scripture and bringing it home in such a way that kids can understand and get excited about it--that really is the heartbeat of Tyndale Kids. It has been from the beginning and continues to be as we look out on the future. We will continue to minister to kids in the form of Bibles, Bible storybooks, devotional books, other children's books, music, videos, and games; whatever it takes to communicate to children. After all, that's what Tyndale House is all about. Our purpose is to minister to the spiritual needs of people--and that includes kids!" (http://www.tyndale.com/tyndalekids.asp)

Wendy Lamb Books

An imprint of Random House Children's Books

Random House Children's Books is one of America's foremost publishers of quality literature for pre-school children through young adult readers in all formats from board books to picture books to novels. Random House Children's Books brings together world-famous franchise characters, multi-million copy series, and top-flight, award-winning authors and illustrators. (http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/aboutus.html)

Word Kids!

An imprint of W Publishing Group

The written word has great power. It has the power to mend a broken relationship, to heal an aching heart, to inspire the most extreme pessimist. At W Publishing we know that when we pack up at the end of the workday, the power of the written word is touching lives across the world. Whether we are acquiring a new author, marketing an idea, or editing a manuscript, we each know that our role in creating written words will impact people forever.

W Publishing has long been recognized for the value our work inherently holds and we never take this for granted. Through the years, we have been privileged to work with some of the leading Christian communicators of our time. On a daily basis we partner with these gifted individuals so our efforts will bring glory to God and will enhance His eternal kingdom.

We value our customers and we appreciate your interest in our authors and our products. This web site consists of extensive information about every product currently available from W Publishing. As you click through the pages of this site, we trust you will see the rich heritage we have had through the years and the

promising future we anticipate for many years to come. Our prayer is that God will be honored in all we do.

(http://www.wpublishinggroup.com/wpg/about.asp)

Zonderkidz

Zonderkidz, the children's group of Zondervan, focuses on publishing and promoting developmentally-appropriate, biblically based books, Bibles, gifts, and videos. We partner with the leading child and parenting experts to create many of the world's best-selling Christian products to meet the needs of children ages 12 and under.

Through imaginative and innovative products, Zonderkidz is feeding young souls.

(http://www.zonderkidz.com/whoweare.htm)